

# Saving Money and Time With Active School Travel



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## *Executive Summary*

**As Manitoba works to balance budgets, we need policies that simultaneously reduce costs and support healthy lifestyle choices. Promoting active school travel is a proven way to increase the number of children walking, biking, or rolling to school, which saves limited resources for schools and other stakeholders.**

School divisions rarely consider the substantial practical benefits of getting children to be more active. When fewer students are driven, either by bus or private cars, schools can see huge savings on busing, construction and maintenance of school infrastructure, and staff time devoted to traffic control. In addition, there are indirect savings that come from healthier, more active students, such as better classroom performance and decreased absenteeism.

We know that schools are doing the best they can, and even with good intentions, it can be difficult to know where to start. [Green Action Centre's Active & Safe Routes to School program](#) introduced School Travel Planning (STP) in Manitoba to address this problem using demonstrated practices from STP programs around the world. We coordinate with community stakeholders to identify barriers to active transportation unique to individual schools, and use that information to develop a written action plan. When the plan is implemented, the result is an increased number of children getting to school by walking, biking, or other active means, and the return on investment is great—for a fraction of today's divisional transportation budgets, schools can not only save money, but leave students with good habits that last a lifetime.

## Overview

Canada is still facing serious concerns over the safety and health of our children and youth. Only 9% of Canadian youth aged 5-17 are achieving the recommended level of physical activity<sup>1</sup>. According to the World Health Organization, “Sedentary lifestyles increase all causes of mortality”, including “double the risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity, and increase the risks of colon cancer, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, lipid disorders, depression and anxiety”<sup>2</sup>. In Manitoba specifically, 24% of 12-17 year-olds were overweight or obese in 2011<sup>3</sup>, and the number of children in Manitoba with Type 2 diabetes is 12 times higher than any other province in Canada<sup>4</sup>. Traffic is an additional threat to children’s health—vehicle collisions are the leading cause of injury death in Manitoban children under 10, and the second-leading cause of injury death for youth 6-18<sup>5</sup>.

School Travel Planning (STP) is a comprehensive approach to addressing these and other problems. We bring together school divisions, municipalities, transportation planners, public health nurses, school administrators, police, and other community stakeholders to devise school-based Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plans for schools and municipalities.

In addition to health and safety benefits, there are countless ways that a properly planned and implemented school travel plan can save time and money for all stakeholders—principals reclaim time for other duties; superintendents see reduced transportation expenses; teachers enjoy the ties to curriculum; police save time enforcing traffic laws around schools; transportation planners hear fewer complaints; and doctors and nurses see fewer collision injuries and preventable illnesses.

## What is Active School Travel?

Active school travel is any form of transportation that requires physical activity (like walking, biking, in-line skating or skateboarding) to get to and from school. Active and Safe Routes to School encourages active school travel with School Travel Planning services. We also coordinate events throughout the year, like International Walk to School Month in October, Bike to School Month and Clean Air Day in June, and year-round Walking Wednesdays and Walking School Buses.

## Benefits of Active School Travel

Active school travel can be used to address many problems connected to inactivity and vehicle dependence. While some stakeholders are specifically interested in one or two of the following benefits, all are important to our school system.



*Walking to Stevenson School (Winnipeg, MB) for International Walk to School Month*

## HEALTH

Physical activity has an extensive range of benefits. It helps us reduce the risk of disease, sleep better, maintain a healthy weight, strengthen our bones, and improve our mental health<sup>6</sup>. Active children are more likely to remain active into adulthood<sup>7</sup>, so enabling active school travel improves quality of life and reduces the strain of preventable illnesses on our health care system. Furthermore, reducing our dependence on motorized transportation improves air quality in our communities. A report by the International Institute for Sustainable Development estimates that in 2015, smog alone cost \$36 billion to Canadians' health and well-being<sup>8</sup>.



Earth Day – children drawing and playing safely on a parking lot closed to traffic

Government agencies have recognized this problem and have begun to implement policies with the aim of getting children more active:

- Manitoba Education's Healthy Schools Initiative highlights the role of schools in promoting healthy behaviours.
- The Manitoba Government Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures All-Party Task Force report published in 2005. The report recommends a series of steps to improve health in youth. The report specifically recommends that the provincial government work with Resource Conservation Manitoba (now Green Action Centre) on programs that support active transportation for youth<sup>9</sup>.
- Provincial Planning Regulation Policy 7.2.1 states that "All modes of transportation, particularly more active and environmentally sustainable forms such as walking, cycling and public transit, are to be facilitated" to reduce "reliance on the automobile and its associated greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and congestion."<sup>10</sup>
- In 2005, Manitoba Healthy Living built on another recommendation of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures report, by introducing a low-cost bike helmet initiative "to promote the increased use of helmets and safer bicycle riding skills as well as make affordable helmets more accessible to families in Manitoba"<sup>11</sup>. Since then, more than 104, 000 low-cost helmets have been purchased through the program<sup>12</sup>.
- In the 2015-16 Manitoba Department of Children and Youth Opportunities Annual Report includes the objective "To strengthen the delivery system that develops and supports recreation, sport and physical activity opportunities at the community, regional and provincial level". One of the stated responsibilities of the department is "delivering recreational opportunities, wellness practices, volunteerism, physical activity, and community development opportunities at the local and regional level."<sup>13</sup>

Promoting active school travel is an effective and low-cost way to get children more active and reverse the decades-long trend towards inactivity.

## LEARNING

The ability to concentrate is a crucial predictor of students' later success in life<sup>14</sup>, and active school travel helps children focus. A Danish Study in 2012 found that children who arrived at school using active transportation could concentrate significantly better than other children for four hours after their trip to school<sup>15</sup>.

*“Children who arrived at school using active transportation could concentrate significantly better than other children”*

## ENVIRONMENT

Active transportation is a key part of a coordinated effort to fight climate change and air pollution. Across North America, thousands of hours of driving and idling could be avoided by enabling safe active school travel. For every vehicle trip avoided, there is a corresponding decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutants that contribute to climate change and general pollution.

If traffic congestion around schools can be significantly reduced, school divisions can reconsider the need for paved guest parking and drop-off areas. Leaving green space intact improves the air quality around our schools.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

The Manitoba curriculum has responded to growing health and environment concerns with initiatives like mandatory grade 11 and 12 physical education, *Healthy Schools*, and *Education for Sustainable Development*. According to the Manitoba Education website, *“Through [Education for Sustainable Development] initiatives in schools and integration of ESD with curriculum, Manitoba students are acquiring knowledge of the interdependency of the three pillars of sustainability: human health and well-being, environment and economy.”*<sup>16</sup>

Active school travel naturally supports classroom materials in many subjects and particularly in science, social studies, and physical education. In conversations around active travel, students learn about the environmental and social impacts of vehicle dependence, from air quality and climate change to our health and interaction with community.

## SAFETY AND COMMUNITY

When fewer children are being driven to school the streets around the school are less congested and the risk of collisions decreases. The whole community benefits from fewer cars on the road and better active travel infrastructure. More people on the streets improves supervision for young children and provides opportunities to connect with others in the neighbourhood.

## **REDUCING COSTS AND SAVING TIME**

Stakeholders save money in unexpected areas when they embrace active school travel.

- **School Divisions / Boards:** Any reduction in the number of buses required to bus children to school saves thousands of dollars for school divisions.
- **Individual Schools:** Reduced traffic congestion means fewer staff or volunteer hours required to monitor drop-off and pick-up zones. Schools could reduce or even eliminate the monitors currently required to get children out of cars and into schools safely, freeing up staff time. Unnecessary stress and risk for staff is likewise reduced. Principals will spend less time discussing traffic problems with parents and local residents.
- **Caregivers:** Viable alternatives to driving can save caregivers several hours a week, along with fuel and vehicle maintenance costs
- **Community Agencies:** Public health and transportation management agencies are justified in focusing on programs to increase activity in children because of the significant long-term savings on health care and road infrastructure. Coordinating work between public health departments, transportation authorities, police, school boards and other community agencies can save time for everyone. For example, a traffic issue at school may escalate and take time from all stakeholders, especially if injuries occur.
- **Governments:** Less congestion means less wear on roads, reduces the need for expensive vehicle infrastructure, and lowers greenhouse gas emissions.

Opportunities to save money will be explored further in the Cost Savings section of this report.

### *Recommendations towards Sustainable Active School Travel in Manitoba*

As mentioned in Benefits of Active School Travel, Governments and other agencies have already produced a number of documents and recommendations highlighting the importance of getting children to use active transportation. All stakeholders must now take action to align their policies with their stated goals.

## **MANITOBA EDUCATION**

Manitoba Education should take the lead on promoting active school travel through school-based Transportation Demand Management initiatives. A shift in policy would help reduce transportation budgets and free up resources for the classroom, while supporting health, safety and environmental objectives. We recommend that Manitoba Education:

1. Encourage urban school divisions to establish an Active School Travel Coordinator (ASTC) position to incorporate School Travel Planning into safe schools or healthy schools policies. Refer to Appendix A- Active Transportation Policies around the World International Best Practices to see how mandatory School Travel Planning has worked outside of Canada.

2. Expand the transportation mandate to include safe transportation to and from school for all students, not just students who live far enough to be eligible for bus service.
3. Act upon the recommendation of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures task force to increase the number of youth using active transportation. Review existing guidelines for school division transportation policies and expand their mandate to include school-based TDM so that active travel strategies can be considered.
4. Provide funding for schools for active travel infrastructure like secure bike racks, signage, secure storage for inline skates, skate boards and helmets.
5. Implement a department-wide anti-idling policy for school buses, school vehicles and private vehicles stopping at school sites.
6. Work with school divisions and municipalities to include active travel in policies for new school siting, construction, and expansion.
7. Endorse municipal adoption of the [Child and Youth Friendly Land Use and Transport Planning Guidelines for Manitoba](#).<sup>17</sup>

## **SCHOOL DIVISIONS**

With leadership on active school travel coming from policy creation by key provincial departments, school divisions would be bound to implement some or all of the following recommendations:

1. Updating school siting policies to include walkability in the planning process. This includes building smaller schools that serve communities within active transportation distance, paving smaller parking lots, eliminating parent drop-off loops and adding new building code requirements that mandate a certain number of active transportation facilities (e.g. bike racks and equipment lockers) per number of paved parking spaces
2. Encourage schools to participate in the Healthy Schools initiative, and to apply for recognition as an Eco-Globe School.
3. Implement anti-idling policies encouraging all drivers, including school bus drivers, to curb fuel consumption by changing their driving habits.
4. Designate resources to support the needs of students who use active transportation, e.g. add active school travel to school division transportation responsibilities, either by expanding the mandate of the school division's transportation policies and adding an active school travel staff position.
5. Collect data on the full cost of accommodating vehicles through parking lot construction and maintenance, including snow removal and line painting, and share this information in financial statements.

## ***MANITOBA DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL RELATIONS***

The Municipal Relations department can encourage a societal shift to active transportation by working with Manitoba Education to create active travel policies. Specific recommendations include:

1. Make active transportation planning a mandatory part of municipal transportation goals, with particular focus on school-based TDM (Transportation Demand Management).
2. Assign staff to help schools with travel planning (creating active travel policy statements, implementing TDM, and educating schools on the benefits of active transportation)
3. Provide funds for schools to complete and implement travel plans.

## ***COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS***

Communities don't need to wait for schools or governments to take action. There are many ways to promote active transportation in children. [Green Action Centre has compiled resources](#) that anyone can use to promote active school travel in their community.

## *Saving Money and Time*

School policy makers and administrators who have not yet built active school travel into relevant policies and mandates may not be aware of how extensive the benefits are. Others may understand the health and environmental benefits of active school travel, but are concerned that extensive programming will be costly or time-consuming for schools. In reality, we can have the health and environmental benefits of active school travel while saving money for schools and school boards.

*School travel plans are a “low cost way to promote a healthy lifestyle”*

Administrators are very important parts of the process, as they have the power to introduce policies that facilitate long-term and widespread economic, health and environmental changes. Principals who have implemented school travel plans have found it to be a “low cost way to promote a healthy lifestyle”<sup>18</sup>. For examples of effective policies at many levels, see Appendix A.

## *Busing*

According to Manitoba Education’s website, “Generally speaking, school divisions/districts are required to provide or make provision for transportation for all resident students eligible for transportation according to provincial requirements and local school board policy<sup>19</sup>”, and money is budgeted to transport these students by bus. However, there are no funds allocated to students who use active travel.

Manitoba Education and school division budgets fund bus transportation, which indirectly encourages, driving children to school. For 2017-18, budgeted expenses for transportation of pupils represented 4.4% of total school division expenditures for the province, representing \$103,311,658<sup>20</sup>. In 2016, pupil transportation cost \$101,404,559<sup>21</sup>. With a reported provincial enrollment of 204,750 students in 2016<sup>22</sup>, an average of \$495 per enrolled student was spent on transportation services, though only bused students benefit from this.

This funding arrangement poses an obvious barrier to schools trying to encourage active travel, as they are required to use discretionary funds or fundraise for signage, secure bicycle racks and storage facilities for equipment like inline skates and skateboards. Frequently, competing projects use up these funds, leaving little for active school travel.

Children who choose active transportation to school need and deserve the funding that most school districts do not allocate towards their needs. By initially spending a fraction of the cost to operate a bus, Manitoba Education and school divisions could implement active school travel programs and see short- and long-term benefits.

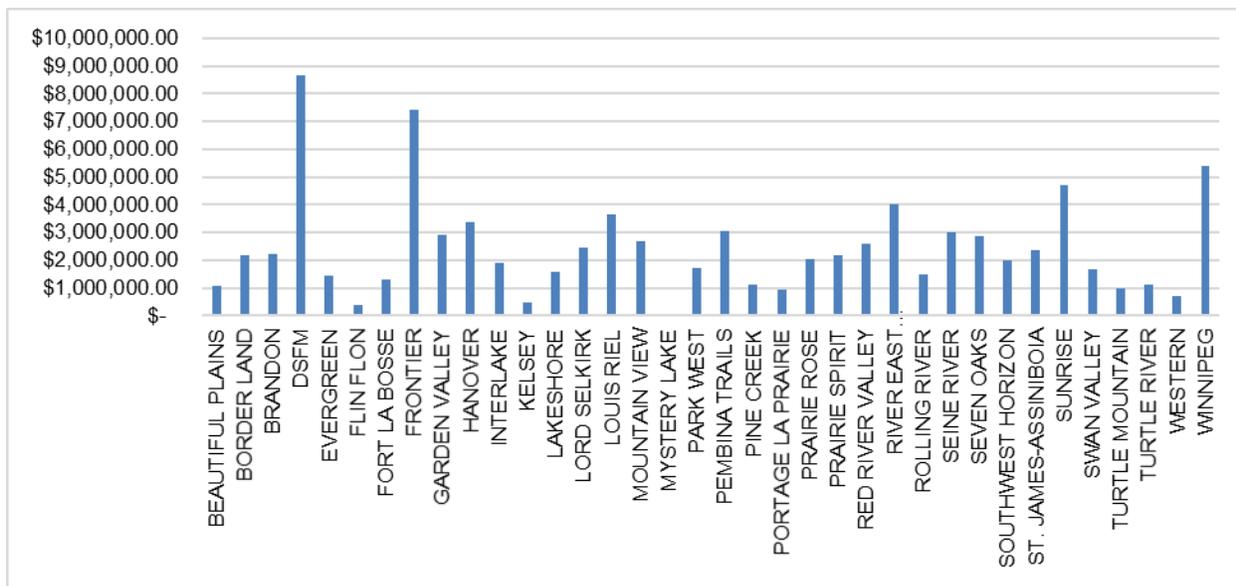


Table 1: Manitoba School Division Transportation Spending, 2016-2017 Budget ([http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/frame\\_report/2016-17\\_frame\\_budget.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/frame_report/2016-17_frame_budget.pdf))

## BUS RENEWAL AND MAINTENANCE

Provincial policy is that school divisions will receive funding to bus students living at least 1.6km from their designated school<sup>23</sup>. Individual school divisions may provide busing service for students living even closer.

Raising the minimum walking distance would reduce the size of the bus fleet required for student transportation—Though no schools have reported their savings due to an extension of the walking distances, at least one school in Ontario has documented an increase in the size of their bus fleet as a result of decreasing the walking distance. When Halton Region succumbed to severe parental pressure to reduce the minimum walking distance to 1.6 km from 3.2 km for grades 6 - 8, the region required 40 extra buses to serve the additional riders. It cost \$1.2 million to reduce the walking distance for only three grades<sup>24</sup>.

Reducing a fleet by even a single bus would save roughly \$40,000 when accounting for the cost of renewal and maintenance.



*Ruth Hooker School (Selkirk) – This Walking School Bus can help eliminate the need for school buses*

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Since taking a single bus off the road can result in considerable savings on fuel, Manitoba Education and school divisions should strive to reduce the number of buses on the road by extending the distance deemed walkable by area children. In Ontario, in the 2008-2009 school year, two installments of extra funding equalling close to \$18 million were allocated by the Ontario Ministry of Education to cover extra fuel costs. An Ontario Ministry of Education discussion paper called *Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation* recognizes that area District School Boards (DSBs) must, “Take into account the fact that many students can

and do walk to school and therefore do not require transportation services; and the fact that the logistics in providing transportation become more difficult the further the students live from their schools<sup>25</sup>.

**Regardless of the size of a bus fleet, bus drivers should be encouraged to curb their idling times and drive with environmental caution, i.e. driving slower and using the brakes gently.**

## School Infrastructure

Many schools have tried to address safety concerns and traffic congestion by retrofitting drop-off loops or by including them in the original design of the school. Though slightly safer than dropping children off on the street, there are a number of drawbacks to this new infrastructure. These areas remain a safety hazard for children who are walking or cycling, paved areas are expensive to build and maintain, and they consume vast amounts of green space near schools.

## CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Asphalt pavement isn’t cheap. Typically, the cost of the pavement alone is \$3-4 per square foot<sup>26</sup>, which doesn’t include the cost of excavation, tree removal, drainage, city sewer hookup and site plan approval. The cost of a single parking lot can be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Ongoing maintenance also comes with a cost, as it is the school’s responsibility to clear parking lots and drop-off loops on their property. There is currently no data on how much money is spent clearing snow from lots and lanes built to accommodate children driven to school, meaning the full cost of this infrastructure is unknown.

## Traffic Control

### PRINCIPAL TIME

Principals are first in line for responsibility when it comes to solving traffic disputes. At many schools, this is a daily activity consuming valuable time that principals could use on other duties. Many principals spend at least 20 minutes at the beginning and end of each day supervising traffic. Adding this to the time they may spend on the phone or face-to-face solving disputes, daily traffic management activities could easily take an hour per day or 180 hours per year. With 623 elementary schools in Manitoba, that would translate to approximately 112,140 principal hours per year. That is a considerable amount of time that principals could be spending on other duties that are more directly in line with their roles as educators. The implementation of active school travel policies at schools means the role of enforcing traffic can be moved to the police and municipality where it belongs and time needed for this activity overall can be reduced.

*ASRTS  
programs saved  
teachers at St.  
Nicholas  
Catholic  
Elementary  
School 80  
minutes per day,  
adding up to 240  
hours a year*

### STAFF TIME

While staff time spent on active school travel programming could be justified as curriculum-connected, active school travel programs are built so that staff time is minimized. Many of the current programs operate with nominal use of school resources (mainly reserved for tracking of students choosing active school travel), often depending on parent and student volunteers with support from Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) professionals. Implementing a program should cost the school moderate resources in the first year and little time subsequently. In the meantime, it saves money and supports environmental and health-related curriculum and well-being.

Susan Dickert, principal of St. Nicholas Catholic Elementary School in Waterloo, Ontario, introduced ASRTS programming when she closed the school parking lot to non-staff. She had 44 staff members and 43 parking spots, and parents were vying for those parking spaces as well. Jointly closing the lot to parents and introducing ASRTS programs enabled her to reduce staff time policing traffic from two persons for 20 minutes twice daily to none. She reduced staff time spent on traffic control by 80 minutes per day, more than six hours per week and 240 hours per year.

If that time could be translated into cost savings, at \$40 per hour<sup>27</sup>, it would mean a \$9,600 savings per year for her school alone. Of course, instead of regaining that money, St. Nicholas realizes the savings in time that can be directly reallocated to curriculum or constructive extracurricular activities. Ms. Dickert is happy to report that in addition to the savings of time, she also no longer worries about child safety in the parking lot as she once had.

## Health, Safety and Other Indirect Costs

Beyond the cost and time savings to schools, active school travel has important benefits for the environment, health, and students' ability to learn. The Canadian Institute of Child Health asserts that:

*The developing body systems of the child, particularly tissues and organs, are more sensitive to environmental toxicants. Tissues that are under development are more susceptible to toxic effects because they rely on chemical messengers for growth. Organ development begins during early foetal life and continues into adolescence.*

*Children receive greater exposures than adults because they eat more food, drink more water, breathe more air per unit of body weight than adults. Furthermore, depending on their age, children's ability to metabolize, detoxify and excrete many toxicants is different from that of adults<sup>28</sup>.*

Active school travel programs can make a difference by eliminating short trips and starting children off with healthy and sustainable habits. Less vehicle traffic means less we increase air quality where our children spend a great deal of their time. We can bring down healthcare costs associated with air pollution and make it easier for children with lung-related illnesses to cope on a daily basis.

Often overlooked are the benefits that physical activity brings to the classroom. Since activity is shown to improve focus and behavior, it means that students learn more efficiently and less time can be spent in remedial programs. A study on Danish children found that students using active travel to get to school could concentrate significantly better for up to four hours after their trip<sup>29</sup>.

## Halton Region: School Travel Planning Case Study

The Halton Region School Travel Planning (STP) pilot project started with a public health employee who had watched active school travel programming at work in various regions for over 12 years. Jennifer Jenkins, working as a Health Promoter for physical activity in youth for the Halton Region Health Department, was keenly aware that while society became more dependent on cars, they relied less on active transport and that children may have suffered more than any other age group.

Jenkins admired the efforts of Green Communities Canada (GCC) to get more children walking and biking to school regularly with Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) programs, and so consulted GCC as her concerns deepened. Jenkins was struck by the fact that most of the ASRTS programming took place at the school level by one or two advocates who lacked the power to make it a long-standing practice. Jenkins’ insight and coaching by GCC led her to a new objective – to make active travel programming a sustainable practice for all the schools in the Halton Region, and that meant acquiring school administration commitment.

**Halton’s Steps to Success:**

- Creating** a steering committee
- Presenting** a great case
- Gaining** DSB support
- Maximizing** Walkabouts
- Following up** with lessons learned
- Sharing** the experience

### *CREATING A STEERTING COMMITTEE*

Jenkins rallied for the support of the community by pulling together a strategic steering committee. GCC was happy to consult with Jenkins and present to the steering committee as it grew. In the end, the committee included representatives from the Regional Health Department, the Halton District School Board (Superintendents and the Communications Manager), the Regional Community and Social Services Department (Public Health Nurses), the Regional Police Service (Community Officer), the Halton Transportation Consortia (General Manager) and Municipal Traffic Engineers as well as other various interested community groups. She brought together people who were equally enthusiastic about the project and people who had the particular skills this project required.

### *PRESENTING TO DECISION MAKERS*

Jenkins then sought out meetings filled with influential people to whom she could present a case for active school travel. She spoke to HEPA (Halton Elementary Principal’s Association); Halton Partners for Clean Air and eventually to the Halton Public Works traffic engineers. At these engagements, she made great impressions on decision makers who in turn wanted to help her reach her goals.

### *GAINING DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT*

As interest grew at upper administration levels, transportation problems grew at the school level. Principals became frustrated with the time traffic concerns routinely took from their school day – and they wanted solutions. Stephen Parfeniuk, Superintendent (and steering committee member), saw this

trend, and understood his promise to ensure the safe transportation of children to and from schools to include both bus travel and active travel. He wanted to correct car traffic at the schools in his district by encouraging more children to choose active transportation so parents could leave the cars at home.

## *USING THE WALKABOUT EFFECTIVELY*

Thanks in part to Jenkins' groundwork and to Parfeniuk's position on the matter, the Halton DSB accepted STP as part of the solution and so decided to run a pilot project from January 2008 to December 2008. By the time Walkabouts were scheduled for the eight schools that agreed to take part in the pilot project, Jenkins had full community interest. Outstanding attendance at the Walkabouts allowed immediate recognition of ground level concerns and some agreement upon solutions for those issues.

## *LESSONS LEARNED AND SHARING RESULTS*

After programming ran, student surveys collected data on the change in active transport behaviour and parent surveys collected data on the enablers and barriers parents faced that affected the decision to allow their children to use active school travel. A focus group comprised of participating school principals discussed the results and the experience, and the Halton Health Department prepared and released their "Report on the Active and Safe Routes to School Pilot Project" detailing the triumphs and pitfalls of their experience with the pilot project. Find the full report [here](#).

Jenkins was invited to a Board of Trustees meeting to report on the findings. After hearing the report, the Halton District School Board dedicated \$125,000 to extend and expand the project to 25 new schools in 2009/2010 and the Halton Catholic DSB has been invited to join the new project. The Halton pilot project was presented at a US National Safe Routes to School Conference as a model example of ASRTS implementation.

Thanks to the drive of one exuberant public health promoter and a committee filled with motivated, influential individuals, the region is one step closer toward creating a sustainable system that will see more children using active travel for the short trip to school for a long time to come.

Halton's Report on the Active and Safe Routes to School Pilot Project findings:

**Parents** need to be encouraged to not drive their children to school

**The more intense** the program delivery, the better the results

**Sustained** program activity results in sustained behaviour

**A school champion** is a key ingredient for success

**Programming** needs to address a variety of weather conditions

## *Appendix A: The Role of Policy*

Policies at many levels and in many agencies can support the choice by individuals to use active transportation. Making active transportation an easy choice with understood benefits is the only way that a lasting change can be made to the environment and our health. Because schools are inherently community-based structures that are usually within walking distance of the majority of people they serve, and because elementary-aged children are already the group that uses active transportation most often, it is most cost-effective to focus on transportation for the short trip to school when we build active transportation infrastructure.

A collective behavioural change toward active school travel will allow for reallocation of education budgets; reduce built transportation needs and maintenance; shrink healthcare spending; increase citizen health and reduce global warming over time. While policies concerning environment, health, transportation and education all play valuable roles in the implementation of sustainable behavioural change as it pertains to active school travel, the change can start with the commitment of any one.

### *Relevant Policies at Manitoba Schools*

#### **WALKING DISTANCES**

School divisions set the policies for walking distances to school based on guidelines set out by the Province of Manitoba. Students living outside what is deemed the acceptable walking distance are provided with bus transportation to school. As outlined under transportation eligibility in the Administrative Handbook, Section T3: “Urban school divisions/districts, that choose to provide transportation, may receive funding for K to Grade 6 students who meet the distance criteria. Urban school divisions/districts may also receive funding for students in Grades 7 to Senior 4 who reside more than 1.6 kilometres from a public transit stop and their school if transportation is provided to these students. In rural areas, funding is provided for the transportation of students enrolled in K to Senior 4 who meet the distance criteria.... Level II or Level III students and students with learning disabilities or physical handicaps who are unable to walk safely to school are eligible for transportation.”

In Ontario, some school boards, like Durham Catholic DSB, are committed to a review of walking distance policies to improve efficiency. Durham’s recent review affected 782 students and saved the board \$300,000. Active and Safe Routes to School programming can encourage the students who are affected by loss of bus service by giving them strategies and guidelines that make active school travel safer and more desirable. School Travel Planning can go one step further by coordinating the efforts of the community to create safer pathways to school.

#### **HEALTHY SCHOOLS**

The Healthy Schools initiative in Manitoba promotes the health and wellness of students, their families, school staff, and school communities. Healthy Schools is a partnership involving Manitoba Health/Healthy Living, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, and Healthy Child Manitoba. It focuses on six priority health topics within the context of the school community, one of which is physical activity.

## EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECO-GLOBE SCHOOLS

As defined on the website, [Education for Sustainable Development](#) (ESD) “involves preparing students to live sustainably and to establish life-long sustainable development practices... Through ESD initiatives in schools and integration of ESD with curriculum, Manitoba students are acquiring knowledge of the interdependency of the three pillars of sustainability: human health and well-being, environment and economy. Students develop values that reflect the importance of continued balance and harmony among the pillars, refine the skills required to make equitable decisions and commit to life practices that show personal responsibility for a sustainable future.”

The [Eco-Globe Schools](#) recognition program singles out successful efforts to increase awareness, take action and create transformation at the school level. Sample actions taken by schools can include active transportation programs that support cycling, walking and public transit, implementing infrastructure such as bike racks, and daily physical activity campaigns among others.

As environmental damage to our world becomes more obvious, more and more people are becoming aware that measures need to be taken. Children hear and see signs in their neighbourhoods, in the media, on television shows, and from their friends and family that encourage them to take action. In Winnipeg, as part of their commitment to sustainability, St. James-Assiniboia School Division has committed to “Promote the Safe and Active Routes to School concept” and “Install secure bike cages” in their 5-year divisional strategic plan, with the indicators of success being more students are walking and biking to school.

The right policies can get large numbers of people working towards the same goals – and when everyone is working toward the same goals, significant improvement can be made to the impact our activities have on the earth.

### *Federal Policies Relevant to School-based Transportation*

#### HEALTH

In February 2010, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and the Coalitions Linking Action and Science with Prevention (CLASP), with support from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation, announced a \$15.5 million investment in chronic disease prevention. *Children’s Mobility, Health and Happiness: A Canadian School Travel Planning Model* is one of the seven funded projects. The funding will support the implementation of School Travel Planning in all provinces and territories in Canada and lay the foundation for future local sustainability. The long-term goal is to motivate changes to municipal and school board policies and practices so that active transportation to and from schools is commonplace.

In Manitoba, School Travel Planning is being implemented by Green Action Centre’s Active and Safe Routes to School Program. This funding will enable an expansion of the 2009-10 Manitoba School Travel Planning Pilot Project to a dozen more schools and beyond Winnipeg’s borders.

This is a critical and timely investment in light of how Canada's children and youth are suffering from lack of health and environmental well-being. Among 29 OECD nations, Canada ranks:

- 22nd when it comes to preventable childhood injuries and deaths
- 27th in childhood obesity
- 21st in child well-being, including mental health

A report delivered by Dr. K. Kellie Leitch to the Minister of Health in 2008 provides recommendations to the Minister of Health to increase Canada's international standing. According to Leitch, "Canada needs to take a long-term view. By planning carefully and using evidence-based best practice methods to create strong foundations, we pave the way now for our 'human' infrastructure to last longer and be more productive. That human infrastructure will then require fewer 'repair' costs in the future, and will pay out financially when compared to other government investments."

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) espouses similar wisdom when it recognizes on its website that Canada must "develop community-wide approaches to improve the safety of roads, parks and playgrounds, find a new approach to combat obesity in children, and we must find out more about the particulate matter of the air our children breathe."

The Healthy Living Strategy announced in 2005—and endorsed by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Health—has a goal of increasing the proportion of Canadians who participate in regular physical activity by 20 percent by 2015. Our public health, city planning, policing and education policies must support this initiative so that we can ensure that every possible child gets the message from a source they respect in order to make the greatest change.

## *ENVIRONMENT*

In 2000, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment endorsed Canada-wide standards for ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter (PM2.5) to be achieved by 2010. This policy must also be accepted and endorsed by provincial and local governing bodies to make a greater impact on our environment.

In March 2009, Transport Canada announced its commitment to green transportation in a program called ecoMOBILITY. The program, "seeks to cut urban passenger transportation emissions by helping Canadians choose public transit or other sustainable transportation options like walking, cycling and carpooling." Through this program, Transport Canada will encourage policies, programs, services and products that support or complement their efforts to reduce air emissions and address congestion in all transportation sectors. This program is part of their ecoTRANSPORT Strategy that seeks to work with municipalities to make transportation in Canada sustainable both economically and environmentally.

## **SAFETY**

Canada's Safety Council, a national non-governmental charitable organization, has identified improving safety for "vulnerable road users" as one of their priorities. Its vision sets a goal to reduce the percentage of pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists injured and killed on the roads by 30 percent.

There are currently no federal goals concerning children's safety as related to active transportation. Transport Canada's concern for child safety on the streets pertains only to activities while in private vehicles or on school buses. Canada still lags behind European countries where much attention is given to child pedestrian and cycling safety.

### *Active Transportation Policies around the World*

#### **WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

The World Health Organization (WHO) urges that governing bodies across the globe put policies in place that support active transportation. This leading body submits that, "National and local governments should frame policies and provide incentives to ensure that walking, cycling and other forms of physical activity are accessible and safe; transport policies include non-motorized modes of transportation... Strategies should be geared to changing social norms and improving community understanding and acceptance of the need to integrate physical activity into everyday life. Environments should be promoted that facilitate physical activity, and supportive infrastructure should be set up to increase access to, and use of, suitable facilities."

A supportive environment would include the existence of national, provincial and local policies that promote active transportation, such as walking or cycling to schools and workplaces. The WHO acknowledges that, "Policy changes at the local level may be particularly effective at encouraging increased physical activity over the long term by making physical activity an easier choice."

#### **WORLD CANCER RESEARCH FUND**

Likewise, the World Cancer Research Fund / American Institute for Cancer Research (WCRF-AICR) specifies recommendations centred on physical activity for policies and actions that will reduce the burden of cancer and other chronic diseases. Specifically, the Institute asks that governments "ensure that built and external environments are designed and maintained in ways that facilitate physical activity and other healthy behaviour" and that the physical activity industry "promote goods and services that encourage participation in physical activity by people of all ages, rather than in competitive or elite sporting performance."

#### **NEW ZEALAND**

In New Zealand, a 2006 evaluation revealed that after active school-based transportation programs were introduced, walking increased by 3.6%. This was enough for the country to adopt policies that would continue to encourage the growth of the programs. The New Zealand Transport Authority is charged with

the task of allocating resources to contribute “to an integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable land transport system.” It should be noted that along with funding projects, part of their responsibility is to provide ongoing research into progressive development of sustainable transportation.

The New Zealand Transport Strategy works to integrate public health goals with transport funding, acknowledging the health benefits of active transportation. Through this program, the New Zealand government sets targets for increased active transportation, citing the health benefits as one of the key objectives in the strategy. The strategy states that by the year 2040, road users will be held fiscally responsible for the full costs of transport choices, including carbon charges. However, because active transport contributes to the reduction of congestion and increased health benefits, this choice may be eligible for subsidies.

The Land Transport NZ Programme funding manual (PFM) “lays out the policy, rules and procedures that road controlling authorities and regional councils must satisfy to be eligible for financial assistance from the National Land Transport Programme (NLTP) administered by Land Transport NZ.” The dedicated funds and accountabilities associated with active transportation in New Zealand are testament to their acceptance of active transportation as a solution that benefits the entire nation.

## *UNITED KINGDOM*

The UK government gained Royal Assent for the Education and Inspections Bill on November 8, 2006. This bill establishes a statutory responsibility for local education authorities to “assess the school travel needs of their area, and to promote the use of sustainable modes of transportation.” The nation’s commitment to active transportation to school is the tip of the iceberg in a movement toward creating a healthier nation.

In support of this bill the UK Department for Transport provides a wide range of guidance, toolkits and training packages including *Walking and Cycling: an action plan*, *Encouraging Walking and Cycling: success stories*, *Walking and cycling: ‘Links to Schools’ extending the National Cycle Network to schools* and the *Local Authority Cycling Grant Toolkit*.

This forward-thinking nation has created transportation planning policy guidelines that support the use of active travel. In particular, Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 on Transport states “travel plans should

*“The New Zealand Transport Strategy states that by the year 2040, road users will be held fiscally responsible for the full costs of transport choices, including carbon charges. However, because active transport contributes to the reduction of congestion and increased health benefits, this choice may be eligible for subsidies.”*

be submitted alongside planning applications which are likely to have significant transport implications, including those for... new and expanded school facilities which should be accompanied by a travel plan which promotes safe cycling and walking routes, restricts parking and car access at and around schools, and includes on-site changing and storage facilities.”

## *UNITED STATES OF AMERICA*

In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) was established, promoting active transportation for all citizens. The Act included a provision for Safe Routes to Schools (Section 1404) that dictated the dissemination of funds that would support infrastructure and organization projects that encouraged children to walk or bike to school. The provision allowed funds for this program from 2005 until 2009, in increasing amounts.

On June 16, 2009, the current U.S. administration made a key address showing support of active transportation ideals as noted in a statement by the Honorable Ray LaHood during a senate hearing titled “Greener Communities, Greater Opportunities: New Ideas for Sustainable Development and Economic Growth.” In the address, LaHood noted that the President has made livable communities a key aspect of his agenda recognizing that how a community is designed has a great impact on its residents and that reducing the need for motor vehicle trips can address the growing cost of living and lower household spending on transportation.

He said; “All segments of the population must have access to safe and convenient transportation options to get to work, housing, medical services, schools, shopping and other essential activities including recreation. Just as important, our transportation investment decisions need to be consistent with policies concerning greenhouse gas emissions. And efforts must be renewed to rescue other adverse effects of transportation on all aspects of the natural and human environment.”

In short, the address confirms the current US administration’s commitment to valuing communities and neighborhoods and it vows to continue to invest “in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods, rural, urban or suburban.”<sup>30</sup> The American Recover and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has a discretionary fund totaling \$1.5 billion that will be made available through September 30, 2011, for investment in projects that promote greater mobility, a cleaner environment and more livable communities<sup>31</sup>.



based on average per-pupil expense and the average number of children per bus

\*Image from [Safe Routes to School National Partnership](#).

*Appendix B: Transportation Spending at Manitoba School Divisions<sup>32</sup>*

DIVISION / DISTRICT	AMOUNT	TRANSPORTED PUPILS	PER PUPIL
BEAUTIFUL PLAINS	\$ 1,087,950.00	771	\$ 1,411.00
BORDER LAND	\$ 2,175,998.00	1538	\$ 1,415.00
BRANDON	\$ 2,221,600.00	3474	\$ 639.00
DSFM	\$ 8,672,562.00	4561	\$ 1,901.00
EVERGREEN	\$ 1,438,600.00	926	\$ 1,554.00
FLIN FLON	\$ 386,937.00	296	\$ 1,307.00
FORT LA BOSSE	\$ 1,320,740.00	675	\$ 1,957.00
FRONTIER	\$ 7,428,750.00	4950	\$ 1,501.00
GARDEN VALLEY	\$ 2,925,266.00	2534	\$ 1,154.00
HANOVER	\$ 3,385,000.00	5147	\$ 658.00
INTERLAKE	\$ 1,906,000.00	1584	\$ 1,203.00
KELSEY	\$ 471,035.00	400	\$ 1,178.00
LAKESHORE	\$ 1,564,890.00	778	\$ 2,011.00
LORD SELKIRK	\$ 2,444,525.00	2853	\$ 857.00
LOUIS RIEL	\$ 3,658,087.00	2631	\$ 1,390.00
MOUNTAIN VIEW	\$ 2,702,863.00	1432	\$ 1,887.00
MYSTERY LAKE	—————	—————	—————
PARK WEST	\$ 1,740,645.00	799	\$ 2,179.00
PEMBINA TRAILS	\$ 3,054,957.00	2625	\$ 1,164.00
PINE CREEK	\$ 1,141,463.00	548	\$ 2,083.00
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE	\$ 949,850.00	1070	\$ 888.00
PRAIRIE ROSE	\$ 2,038,482.00	1476	\$ 1,381.00

PRAIRIE SPIRIT	\$ 2,182,700.00	1110	\$ 1,966.00
RED RIVER VALLEY	\$ 2,586,889.00	1231	\$ 2,101.00
RIVER EAST TRANSCONA	\$ 4,016,500.00	3500	\$ 1,148.00
ROLLING RIVER	\$ 1,467,350.00	890	\$ 1,649.00
SEINE RIVER	\$ 3,004,500.00	2950	\$ 1,018.00
SEVEN OAKS	\$ 2,849,780.00	2825	\$ 1,009.00
SOUTHWEST HORIZON	\$ 1,980,100.00	816	\$ 2,427.00
ST. JAMES-ASSINIBOIA	\$ 2,356,943.00	2140	\$ 1,101.00
SUNRISE	\$ 4,710,498.00	3738	\$ 1,260.00
SWAN VALLEY	\$ 1,673,797.00	1272	\$ 1,316.00
TURTLE MOUNTAIN	\$ 1,002,619.00	532	\$ 1,885.00
TURTLE RIVER	\$ 1,135,394.00	422	\$ 2,691.00
WESTERN	\$ 702,643.00	950	\$ 740.00
WINNIPEG	\$ 5,377,700.00	2592	\$ 2,075.00
PROVINCE	\$ 87,763,613.00	66036	\$ 1,329.00

## Glossary of Terms

**Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS):** Active and Safe Routes to School programming addresses health and traffic safety issues while taking action on air pollution and climate change. School travel work in Canada has largely fallen under the ASRTS banner. ASRTS programs help to make it safe for children to walk / bike / inline skate / skateboard to and from school, and encourage them to do so. When implemented fully, these programs take into consideration the barriers to active school travel and use a collaborative community-based approach to deal with infrastructure challenges and apply proven social marketing techniques to encourage positive behavior change.

**The Canadian Active & Safe Route to School Partnership:** The Canadian Active & Safe Routes to School Partnership is a national group working to increase the number of school-aged children who travel to school using active, sustainable and safe modes of transportation.

**Green Action Centre:** Green Action Centre is a non-profit, non-governmental centre for environmental education and applied sustainability. Households, workplaces, schools, and communities look to Green Action Centre for practical information on active transportation, composting, waste reduction and resource conservation. The Centre delivers the Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) program in Manitoba, which is part of the Canadian Active and Safe Routes to School Partnership.

**Green Communities Canada (GCC):** Green Communities Canada is a national association of non-profit organizations that deliver innovative, practical environmental solutions to Canadian households and communities. The association works towards building capacity, sharing information, and building visibility of its 30+ member organizations. GCC started the Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) initiative in 1996. It is a comprehensive community-based initiative that taps into the increasingly urgent demand for safe, walkable neighbourhoods that facilitate the use of active and efficient transportation for the daily trip to school.

**Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU):** SAFETEA-LU is a US transportation bill designating funds for highway and safety programs through 2009, including significant funds specifically for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs across the country.

**School Travel Plan (STP):** A School Travel Plan is both a document and a process to deliver Active and Safe Routes to School; addressing the issues of sustainability, safety and health associated with ‘the school run’ using a collaborative community-based approach.

**Transportation Consortia:** Used in Ontario, transportation consortia gain efficiencies by blending multi-board (Public, Catholic, French and French Catholic) needs into a single bus system. By providing transportation for all students in a region, a consortium uses a single database of students, a single digitized route map and a single department to field calls about busing issues.

**Walkabout:** A physical scan/walk through of school surroundings performed by a group of stakeholders to determine the state and needs of the routes to school for area children. The Walkabout occurs early in the process to help determine solutions and items for the Action Plan.

**Walking School Bus:** Operates on the premise that there is safety in numbers. It is a group of walkers who pick up other walkers along the route to school so they can travel together. Walking School Buses are routed through residential areas with high concentrations of children and they are headed by parent or upper-level student volunteers.

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