

4.7 BEST ROUTE TO SCHOOL MAPS AND MAPPING

A school route map informs families of the safest and most convenient walking and bicycling routes to school. These are often created after a Neighbourhood Walkabout so that problem areas are addressed or improved.

A school walking and bicycling route map not only provides way-finding for the safest routes for students to walk and bike to and from school, but also where the adult school crossing guards and traffic control devices, such as signs, crosswalks and traffic signals, are provided. The map provides an assessment of the physical environment surrounding the school so that everyone knows the safest and most ideal route to school.

The maps should be reviewed on an annual basis to make any necessary changes to attendance boundaries as well as mapped walking routes and bike routes that may have been improved in the previous year. If your school has a School Travel Plan, this would be part of the annual review. New developments in the neighbourhood such as summer construction, new housing or commercial properties and changes in traffic control devices such as lights and crosswalks can be noted. Even improvements at the school, like new bike racks, can be added.

Mapping gives a visual overview of the school site and catchment area and provides a valuable reference for your traffic committee's strategic planning and discussions with traffic safety experts.

A map is a “picture” of where students and volunteers live; the routes taken by local and out-of-catchment families in vehicles; the location of laneways, crosswalks and parks; current and potential pedestrian or bike hazards and possible improvements. A map is the easiest way to show the logic of relocating a crosswalk, for instance, or identifying a hedge that needs trimming to improve visibility.

Mapping is an effective and time efficient method of collecting and presenting data to families and officials, and will help expedite decision-making.

A map of your school catchment area and neighbourhoods will identify:

- The location of your school site within the community
- Streets and entrances to school grounds
- The routes children bike and/or walk to school
- Locations where cars and/or school buses drop-off or collect children
- Where individual children and volunteers live
- Safety hazards and safety concerns (traffic and personal such as bullying, deserted buildings)
- Existing bike paths, best routes, crosswalks
- Traffic patterns of school traffic and regular traffic
- Conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians and/or cyclists

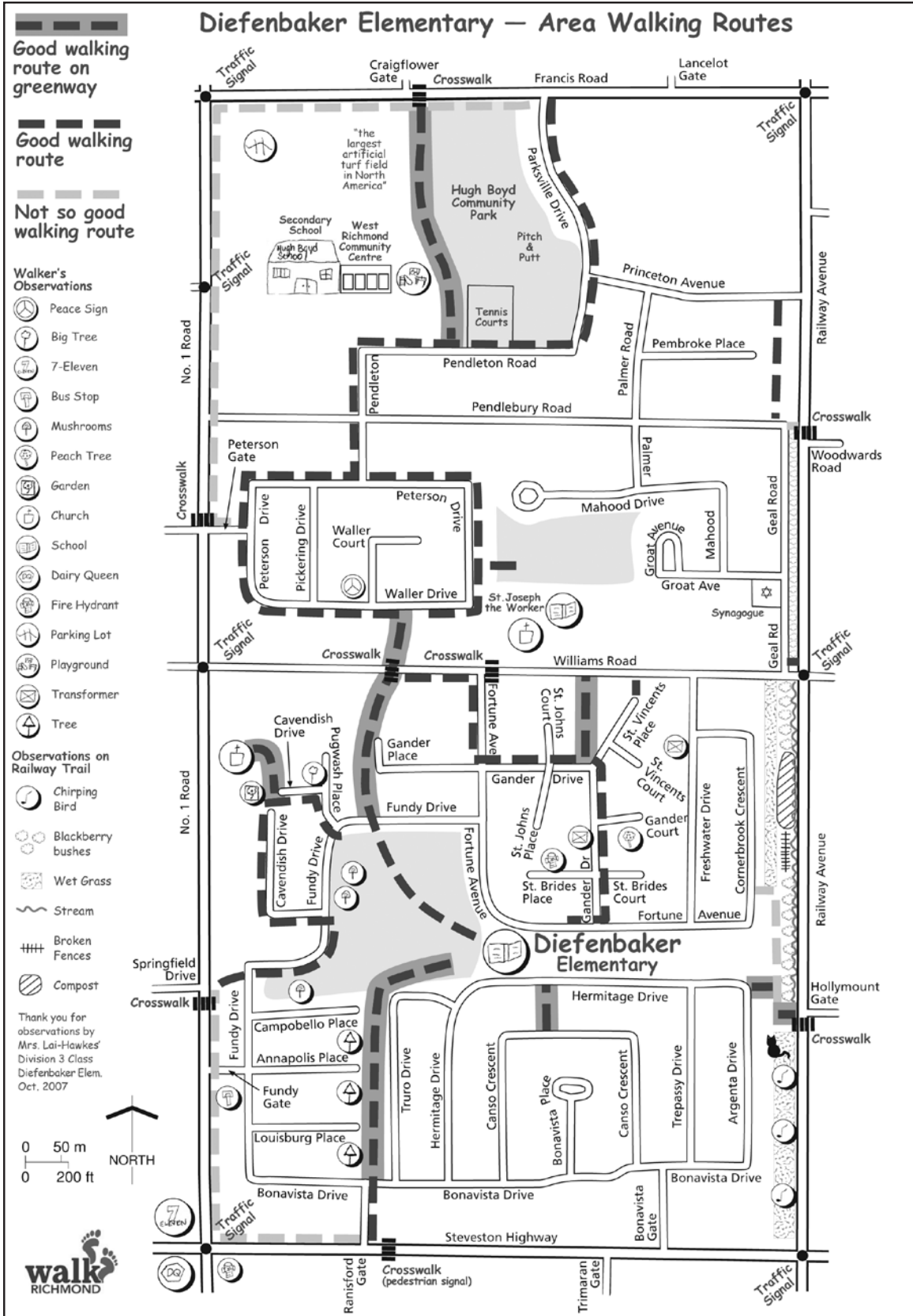
This information will help you to identify the measures that need to be taken to create a safer school site. You will also be able to identify the best routes for cyclists and pedestrians to travel to school and how to effectively coordinate school traffic in the area. There are a number of mapping activities that will help you collect the information you need.

Blazing Trails

Blazing Trails is a mapping activity designed for students. This resource is available online through the Ontario Active and Safe Routes to School Program at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/classroommapping.asp. The package includes a teacher's guide and handbook for students that can be downloaded and printed. The exercise makes an excellent class activity or take-home project to be completed with parents.

There are guidelines and mapping exercises that will help to determine the best route for children and families planning to walk or cycle to school. Routes are ideally established for travel from the various neighbourhoods where families live to the school. Use Blazing Trails to have each student identify their best-route to school, and use the most ideal and popular ones to help create Walking School Bus and Walking Buddy routes. Be sure to note that the route for children and families walking to the school may vary from a bike route. If that is the case for your school, clearly identify the best walking as well as the best bike routes for your community.

Here is a sample map from Diefenbaker Elementary School in Richmond, BC:



Here is a sample map from École Doncaster School in Victoria, BC:

