

21 Expand the existing mandate on school travel planning to include all student travel requirements and to include active modes of transportation.

While the majority of students used to walk or bike to school, this is no longer the case. Sedentary travel has a direct correlation to the alarming increase in physical inactivity levels and obesity rates in Manitoba's children and youth, resulting in major health consequences and societal costs. Current school travel planning is limited to bussing students who live beyond a 1.6 kilometre radius from the school. Diversified school travel planning that includes and promotes active transportation

is an effective tool to increase the number of children walking and biking to school and encourage healthier lifestyles. Travel habits developed at a young age may influence transportation decisions in the future and may help develop lifelong habits of cycling and walking. The process of planning transportation for all students should bring together stakeholders and experts from across the community to identify and address barriers that may prevent children from walking or biking to school. Community representatives should include municipal planners and engineers, police, public health professionals, school boards and trustees, educators, parents and students. This activity requires resources and supporting policies led by the province in consultation with school divisions.

High Schools Report Cites Many Challenges

At 31 per cent, more Manitoba children are overweight and obese than the Canadian average for children at 26 per cent. What's more, four of every 10 Canadian children have a least one risk factor for heart disease due to inactive lifestyles.

– *Manitoba Healthy Schools, March, 2011*²²

Cars Are Not The Only Answer To Our Transportation Needs

"Manitoba's budgeted expenditures for 2009-2010 show that, on average, \$440 per enrolled student is spent on school bussing – yet many students do not benefit at all from this expenditure. Conversely, individual schools that wish to encourage active school travel are faced with raising funds for secure bicycle racks and storage facilities for inline skates and skateboards – which is enough of a barrier to lead to the outright discouragement of active school travel."

– *Saving Money and Time with Active School Travel, Green Action Centre, 2010*²¹



▲ Student parking, Bairdmore School in Winnipeg, Manitoba

◀ Typical vehicle congestion on streets near schools during student drop off and pick up times.