

SEVEN OAKS SCHOOL DIVISION

WARD 2

Diane CAMERON –

“As an active participant of the Manitoba Nature Action Collaborative for Children, committed participant in TWO: Two Weeks Outdoors, member of the James Nisbet Environmental Committee, and chair of Friends of Kildonan Park, I appreciate this question.

Given the way that housing developments were designed in the last 20+ years it would be impossible to ensure children can safely walk or bike to school independently at a young age. The loss of sidewalks and less density in neighborhood design makes it necessary to look to other ways to increase active transport. Community building is needed to develop such ideas as a “walking school bus”. Making areas around schools safer by not allowing cars to stop and unload on the school doorstep would encourage more families to walk. It is good to see the speed limit lowered.

Active transport is also linked to the whole idea of encouraging outside play and recreation. If outside play by children is once again normalized in neighborhoods then it would be logical that children can and will be more inclined to want to join others in a walk to school. Schools can also help by encouraging proper winter clothing and the happy use of the outdoors on a regular basis.

The newest areas of our community are being designed as walkable, with routes to school not necessarily attached to roadways. For many this design will be so unfamiliar that conscious encouragement and leadership from the schools will be needed so that it will be able to be used as intended. I would support and seek input from the community to make active transport a reality.”

Chris CLACIO – no response at this time.

Derek DABEE – no response at this time.

Cory JUAN –

“We have a responsibility as trustees to promote active transportation.

First of all our school are providing pathways to link the community with the school so students and parents can enjoy walking to and fro.

To provide and enhance safety active transportation, students have to know their neighbouring classmates so they can walk along together in the morning and in the afternoon.

Why do we promote active transportation?

To walk is to promote active and healthy living. Walking is only one among the exercises by which we can reduce mental health problems. Students will be more actively engaged in their studies if they are healthy and active. Parents at the same time play an important role model with their children by showing them that active living results to happy and healthy living.”

Michele KADING –

“As children attending school in the 1960s and 70s, my classmates and I walked to and from school every day – regardless of the weather conditions. If it was 40 below, we just wrapped another scarf around the hood of our snowsuits and moved faster. At noon, we ran home to eat lunch and back to school before the afternoon bell. Bikes were not an option in winter. Parents never drove or escorted their kids to school – except on the first day. After that, we were expected to walk with our siblings or friends for safety. We did not have cell phones but we knew that we could find help at any house displaying a “block parent” sign in its window. Otherwise, we were taught to stay away from strangers. There were no sidewalks so our parents and teachers taught us to safely walk on the side of the street facing the oncoming traffic. In high school, I was given the choice of attending the school within walking distance or taking the city bus to a larger school that was farther away. School buses were only used for special field trips (e.g. to the pool for swimming lessons) – not to transport students to and from school (unless you lived out in the country). Parents searched for homes in neighbourhoods with schools so their children could walk to school.

Getting to and from school was part of our overall education. We learned to take responsibility for ourselves and others. We were responsible for finding the way to school and getting there on time. We learned to dress for the weather rather than for fashion. We were alert to potential threats to our personal safety and knew how to find help when it was needed. We learned strategies to protect ourselves from strangers. We learned about road safety – as pedestrians and cyclists. And we got more daily exercise getting to and from school than we could possibly get in phys ed class.

Some things have not changed. Winters are still cold. Streets are still dangerous. Parents still worry about their kids and want them to be safe. Other things have changed. More children are bussed to schools of their choice – even within cities. Many children are driven to school – despite living within walking distance. There are more ways for children to get around (skateboards, scooters, in-line skates). Cell phone technology now provides greater safety and security.

Today, active transportation networks are considered essential in new communities – even those without any schools. Steps are being taken to retrofit older communities with active transportation networks to link new communities together with older communities. Unfortunately, compared to other parts of the city, the AT network within the Seven Oaks School Division is poorly developed. In Ward 2, it is almost non-existent. But we must not let the lack of AT infrastructure be an obstacle.

Active transportation should be the norm rather than the exception to the rule. Students, teachers, and support staff should be encouraged to use active transportation as their normal way of getting to and from school. This ideal cannot be achieved by a single trustee or even an entire board of trustees. There is too much to be done. It will take a community effort and involve parents and teachers plus many

different stakeholder groups, agencies, and levels of government. As a trustee, I will assist with the promotion of AT within the SOSD by:

- Developing a strategy to promote active transportation as an alternative to cars and buses for transporting children to and from school within the SOSD
- Championing the development of a School Travel Planning policy that integrates active transportation to complement the existing Transportation of Pupils policy
- Identifying costs necessary to support the policy, investigating possible revenue sources, and integrating associated revenue and expenses into the annual financial plan
- Advocating for hiring a Walk/Bike to School Coordinator for the Division to develop school travel plans for each school within the Division
- Ensuring that the design of new schools includes infrastructure necessary for Active Transportation (adequate and secure storage for bikes, scooters, skateboards, in-line skates, skis, etc.) and links to the community's AT network
- Liaising with the city of Winnipeg's Active Transportation Coordinator, the Winnipeg Trails Association, and the Green Action Centre (Active and Safe Routes to School Program) to identify existing AT paths and trails and potential safe school travel routes within the SOSD – in relation to each school location
- Supporting the integration of active transportation lessons and life skills into classes (e.g., bike maintenance and safety)
- Creating a committee (parents, community groups, police service, etc.) to address concerns about children walking or biking to school, identifying obstacles, and develop a community support network
- Supporting Walk to School Month and championing its expansion to the entire school year”

Greg McFARLANE – no response at this time.

Dennis RUGGLES – no response at this time.

Maria SANTOS – no response at this time.

Nirmal SIDHU – no response at this time.

WARD 3

Karen BEAUDIN –

“Physical activity is very important to the well-being of all people. Active transportation is important in our communities, and I would first do some research on where in our school division does a walking school bus or bicycle school bus already exist.

A walking school bus can be initiated to encourage students to walk from home to school and back home from school. This initiative would involve volunteers or paid staff to encourage students to walk to and from school.

Older students looking for volunteer hours can be the supervising person to walk and ride their bikes with the older students.

Adult supervision of child cyclists is essential until the child has good traffic skills and judgment. It is important that they understand the rules and display safe riding techniques.

Parents and students would have to be interested in pursuing active transportation activities.”

Baljit GILL –

“As a parent who highly values health education and living a healthy, active lifestyle, I would place a high priority on active transportation in our communities. Active transportation is an excellent way to help get our children to be more active and get more regular exercise, while making our communities cleaner and safer with less traffic congestion. To ensure child safety, some of the things that can be done are;

- Communities and city officials working together to find the safest and most efficient routes and ensure all neighboring communities are connected.
- School Travel Planning as described on the greenactioncentre.ca website.
- Ensure adequate bike racks/cages are available for all students
- Safety Awareness Week to ensure that all students are familiar and comfortable with all things safety related, whether it be traffic safety, bike safety, and so on.
- Ask community members and children themselves what they feel their biggest barrier in implementing Active Transportation would be, and try to address as many needs/concerns as possible.”

Teresa JAWORSKI – no response at this time.

Edward PLOSZAY – no response at this time.

Claudia SARBIT –

“I certainly am in favor of children walking or biking to school where possible, not only for the environmental benefits but also the known benefits for their health.

Our division believes in sustainable development to promote a greener planet and has a number of programs and initiatives to that end. For example, the division has acquired a Biovator as part of the recycling program within our schools that turns organic waste into compost. The compost is then used as bedding, fertilizer and soil enhancers.

The Seven Oaks School Board encourages children to walk to school. Research has shown that the main barriers that prevent students from walking to school are distance, traffic concerns, safety issues and the weather. One of the issues around many of our schools is the number of cars that drop their children off and pick them up at their school, which adds to greenhouse emissions and is also a real concern for the safety of our children. I welcome the reduction of speed zones to 30 kilometers per hour around our schools and am pleased that the signage has increased so drivers are aware of when to

reduce their speed. I believe this alone will encourage parents to feel more comfortable with their children walking to school.

We presently do not have protected bike lanes in Seven Oaks. Many bike lanes end abruptly, and in many cases motorists drive in the designated bike lanes. Some bicyclists drive on sidewalks for safety reasons, which could pose a problem for children who walk to school. This needs to be addressed.

Inclement weather and snow clearing issues can also be an impediment to students walking or biking to school. Sidewalks are generally plowed last and if children do not have a clear safe path to school, fewer children will walk to school. We have had issues with snow clearing at some of our schools. Our transportation director has had to address these issues with city staff to rectify the problem.

Although we have encouraged children to walk to school and have undertaken a number of initiatives to increase those numbers, the results have been disappointing. One of our priorities for this school year is to discuss the topic of active transportation (including walking and biking) to develop a concrete plan of action. It is important for us to meet with our stakeholders (parents, students and staff) for their input. I believe that resources from the Green Action Centre, our own research and the education of our stakeholders are the keys to success.”

Richard SAWKA –

“I am a lifelong resident of Seven Oaks, married, with 4 children ages 13 to 25. I am currently a school trustee so I would like to outline what has been done and what I would still like to do regarding active transportation.

Firstly, we have reduced the number of students taking the bus, especially for short distances (less than 1.2 km). This was accomplished by increasing bus fees in an attempt to recover more of the actual cost of bussing. Fees are higher for high school students who are able to walk longer distances. Some early years schools use a “walking school bus”, where a school patrol or adult walks a route through a neighborhood picking up kids along the way. When a student’s daycare is close to their school, daycare staff often walks the child over.

Secondly, biking to school needs to be encouraged. It is popular in middle years where many of our schools have caged compounds where bikes can be locked to racks and the gate to the compound also locked. Some are even monitored by video camera. It is cool to bike in middle school, but not so much in high school. This is an area that needs to be addressed.

Winnipeg has 5 to 6 months of snow cover which requires extra measures to ensure the safety of students. A path across a school ground is passible in summer, but when covered with 3 feet of snow becomes difficult. I would like to see these walking paths plowed just as sidewalks are ploughed.

I believe that biking on winter city streets is just too dangerous. The health benefit of biking is outweighed by the risks of a slippery winter road. More dedicated bike lanes and paths are needed in Winnipeg to make winter biking (and all biking) safer.

Increasing active transportation is needed to reduce dependency on the car and increase overall student fitness.”