

School Travel Planning NEWS



News & information about the Canadian School Travel Planning Project

New Funding Allows Canada-Wide Expansion of STP



Walking in the winter is a blast with friends!

2009 was a remarkable year for School Travel Planning (STP) in Canada, laying the groundwork for exponential expansion in 2010. By the end of the 2008-09 school year, the original 12 pilot schools across the country had written Canada's first School Travel Plans; yet, the STP process was already being adopted by many communities and schools outside

the scope of the original pilot test. Thanks to extended funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the generosity of George Weston Limited and Loblaw Companies Limited, plans were already in place to work with 24 schools during the 2009-10 school year. However, due to rampant enthusiasm in many provinces, STP initiatives are underway or being

planned in many more schools than initially expected, many funded by local or provincial funds. STP projects are now taking place in seven provinces/territories: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and the Yukon.

Early in January, Green Communities Canada received the exciting news that they will be getting funding from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer's CLASP (Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention) project, which is receiving funds from the Public Health Agency of Canada. This funding will allow the expansion of STP to every province/territory, and will link STP with sustainable happiness research headed by Dr. Catherine O'Brien of Cape Breton University. The University of Toronto is another key project partner, with Dr. Guy Faulkner leading the evaluation component and linking STP with their BEAT (Built Environment and Active Transport) project. Thanks to this new funding, 120 new schools will participate in the STP process over the next two years. For more information, visit www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/coalitions.

Provincial Partners:

Ontario

Green Communities Canada

Nova Scotia

Ecology Action Centre

Alberta

SHAPE Alberta

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan *in motion*

Manitoba

Resource Conservation
Manitoba

British Columbia

HASTE BC

Yukon

Recreation and Parks
Association of the Yukon

STP AT-A-GLANCE

For readers who are new to STP, this section provides an overview of what School Travel Planning is and how the process works. For more details, visit www.saferoutestoschool.ca/schooltravel.asp.

What is School Travel Planning?

School Travel Planning brings together community stakeholders to identify barriers to active transportation for each school and develop a written action plan for addressing those barriers. The flexibility of the School Travel Plan framework allows communities to customize their approach to fit local circumstances.

Through a five-step process, each school writes a School Travel Plan, with assistance from the community stakeholders, that includes an action plan describing steps they plan to implement such as:

- engineering improvements at or near school sites—e.g. pedestrian crossings, repairs/upgrades to sidewalks, signage;
- introduction of school infrastructure—e.g. bike shelters, bike racks, lockers;
- education—e.g. traffic safety education for pedestrians and cyclists, education about personal security;
- community mobilization—e.g. walking school buses, walking buddies, ride sharing;
- encouragement—e.g. celebrations of physical activity and environment, event days, recognition and rewards for walking/biking.

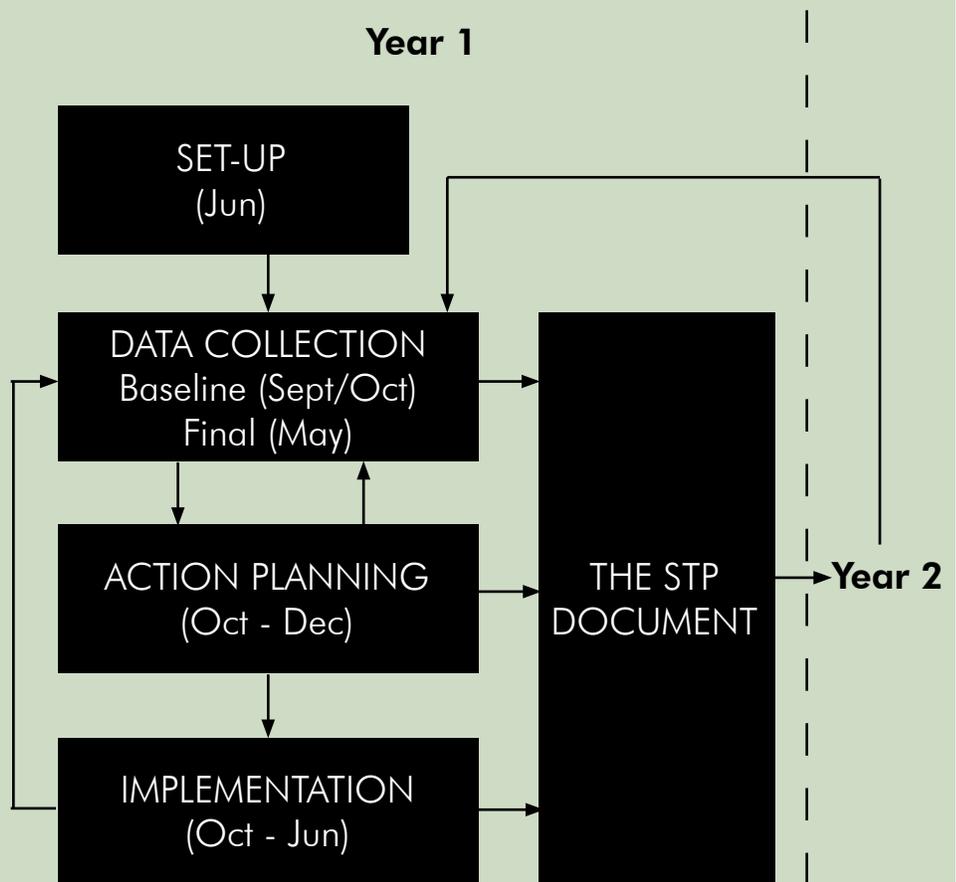


Overview of School Travel Planning Process: The Ideal Timeline

School Travel Planning involves five phases:

1. Program Set-Up
2. Data Collection & Problem Identification
3. Action Planning
4. Implementation
5. Ongoing Monitoring

Experience in the Canadian pilot test of School Travel Planning showed that the process does not, in practice, follow a linear progression. Instead, many of the steps take place simultaneously. The diagram below shows how the five steps of the STP process typically flow. It also notes the ideal timing for these steps—taking into account the best times of year for working with schools. What the diagram does not show is that the School Travel Planning process is ongoing—after year 2, the process continues with new data collection, revision of the plan and implementation of action items. The process is never finished, although certainly the bulk of the effort is needed in the first couple of years of the process.



Survey Reveals Potential for Shifting School Travel Behavior

Metrolinx and Green Communities Canada's partnership on a School Travel Planning pilot project in Hamilton and Peel is off to a vigorous start. As a part of that project, in fall 2009, Metrolinx conducted an in-depth study of household attitudes and travel mode choices in regards to elementary school travel in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) by surveying parents and guardians in 1,000 households. The survey results revealed that there is tremendous potential for shifting school travel behavior toward active choices.

Survey Result Highlights

- **There is room for a shift toward active school travel.** Nearly 60% of children being driven live within two km of the school; over half of these auto-

mobile trips are made solely for the purpose of dropping off and picking up a child at school.

- **Many parents are open to change.** Over 40% of parents whose children are driven would be interested in considering a different mode of school travel.
- **Children are capable of walking the distance.** Nine per cent of students travel differently on their trip to school versus home from school, with the most common combination being driven to school and walking home. If children are walking home from school, surely walking to school is a viable option.
- **Parents know children are capable of walking the distance.** Nearly 60% of parents say their child's school is close enough

that their child/ren could reasonably walk or bike.

- **Parents don't enjoy the task of driving their child to school.** The majority (73%) of parents whose children walk to school report that this mode of travel is preferred by them or their child, while those who drive their child say that they use this mode due to lack of other options or concerns about other modes.
- **Parents want their children to walk!** Over half of parents whose children are currently driven see the option of their child walking or biking to school as convenient and appealing.

The final study report with these findings will be available soon at: www.metrolinx.com/schooltravel.

Pilot Results Solidify Case For School Travel Planning

The STP Pilot Project revealed some interesting patterns and information regarding transportation choices among children and families. The data also helped to solidify the case for communities to adopt STP as part of a Transportation Demand Management solution that can help relieve traffic congestion, improve health and decrease carbon emissions all at once. As reported in the fall 2009 STP newsletter, classroom survey data revealed a 2.1 per cent overall growth in active travel; increasing from 43.8 percent to 45.9 percent. The Family Surveys revealed some additional information about the effectiveness of the School Travel Planning approach. Below are a few noteworthy results from the Family Surveys.

People drive less

13% of families reported that they drive less as a result of the pilot intervention.

Fewer cars near schools

14% of families reported that there is now less volume of traffic outside of the school than there was before the pilot intervention.

Parents recognize that STP works

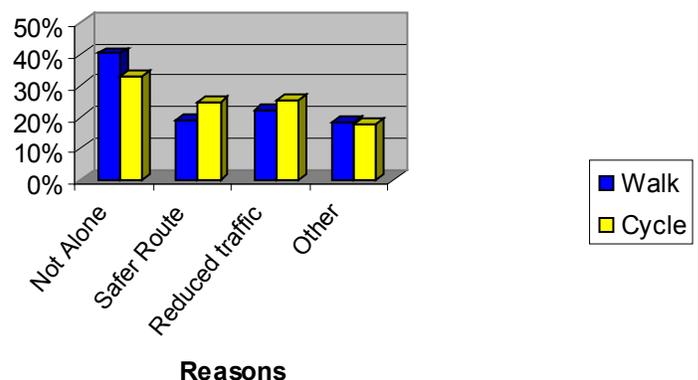
The three most effective school travel program activities, according to parents were:

1. Safety education (24%)
2. Special events (24%)
3. Infrastructure improvements (19%)

Further potential for Walking School Bus Schemes

The majority of parents who drive indicated that they would allow their children to walk/cycle to and from school if they were not alone.

Q21&22: I would allow my child to walk/cycle if...





Regional STP Activity - Communities Making it Personal

There is tremendous STP activity taking place across the country! Below is just a sample of what's going on in some of the provinces/territories.

Yukon Gold

Though it appears more white than gold these days, the Yukon is a shining example of how we can work through barriers like weather and darkness. While STP programming is in its development stages in the Yukon, the rest of the nation can take inspiration from the coldest and darkest of our regions – clearly, with the proper planning, gear, and safe routes, there are no excuses not to choose active travel!



Walking to school in the Yukon at 8:30 am

Growing Strong in Manitoba

St. James-Assiniboia School Division Board has demonstrated a solid commitment to active school travel by adding promotion of the Active and Safe Routes to School Program (including School Travel Planning) to their five-year Divisional Strategic Plan for 2009-2014. With this commitment, they lead the way for other school divisions and for their communities to embrace active transportation.

Meanwhile, the Manitoba STP pilot project is well underway, with participation from three schools in Winnipeg – Brooklands School, Carpathia School and École Howden School. Baseline classroom surveys and family surveys have been completed at all three schools.

Alberta Moves

Safe, Healthy, Active People Everywhere (SHAPE) has been active in Alberta, recently securing Edmonton's support of STP. A Community Stakeholder Committee met in the fall and has committed to supporting STP in the city. As Canada's second most populous city next to Toronto and the northern anchor of the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor, Edmonton's adoption of STP is an integral boost to getting more children to use active travel in western Canada. Schools committed to participating in STP so far are Baturyn School, Julia Kiniski School and George P. Nicholson School.

HASTE Wastes no Time in British Columbia

HASTE has secured participation in STP by the municipalities of Vernon and Surrey in BC. The Engineering Departments in these cities have stepped up to fund an STP Facilitator each to work with pilot schools for the 2009/10 school year.

Ongoing Travel Demand Management (TDM) work and infrastructure upgrades in Vernon are well supported by STP. In Surrey, STP survey tools are expected to facilitate a comprehensive school site assessment of 100 schools over the next two years.

Baseline data collection has begun at three schools in each city where municipal stakeholders eagerly anticipate the development of full School Travel Plans.



Vernon stakeholders get creative, using "Busabouts" to survey all outlying walking and cycling routes identified as problem areas by parent surveys (between 1 and 2.4 km away from the school) that would be beyond reach in a single Walkabout day.

Continued on page 5...



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Coquitlam sets course

The Phase 1 STP Pilot Project has led to greater acknowledgement of the importance of active school travel by the municipality of Coquitlam. The project was part of the Canada-wide pilot funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and undertaken by Green Communities Canada; in Coquitlam, it took place at Riverview Park Elementary School. The experience led City Council to order an Elementary School Walkability Study conducted in 2009 at fifteen area schools in an effort to identify major barriers to active school travel.

The study identified both operational and capital improvements that General Manager of Engineering & Public Works Bill Susak recommended as a high strategic priority for Coquitlam's City Council. While some improvements will be accommodated immediately within the existing Traffic Operations budget or through the 2010 Sidewalk Program, Council will integrate others into the next five-year capital plan showing a long-term commitment to active school travel.

Bravo, Coquitlam! That will make a difference to a lot of children!

Getting Active with STP in Ontario

Green Communities Canada continues to expand the STP project across Ontario. New communities are lining up to take part, including London and the Region of Niagara.

The London project is being championed by the Thames Region Ecological Association in partnership with the City of London, public health, both school boards, London Police Service and London's Block Parent Association.

Niagara's project will take place in one school in each of four communities (Pelham, Grimsby, Fort Erie and St. Catharines) and is part of a larger 'Active Transportation Niagara' initiative.

Guiding Lights in Ontario

Halton District School Board takes the next step! After the completion of a successful one-year pilot project between the Halton District School Board (HDSB) and Halton Region Health Department (HRHD), the HDSB Trustees approved a budget of \$125,000 over 16 months to further expand the program to 25 schools. "Being the first school board to embrace the program in such a large way is truly progressive and sees new opportunity for the Active

and Safe Routes to School program becoming a norm for Halton Region" said Jennifer Jenkins, project manager for the program. Adding to the excitement, the Halton Catholic School Board (HCDSB) has joined the project, providing 5 of the 25-school expansion.



Halton Regional Council Chair Gary Carr, HDSB Trustee Chair Gillian Tuck Kutarna and Chief of Halton Regional Police Services Gary Crowell stand behind a sample starter kit received by each pilot school

Spreading the Word about STP Across North America

Jacky Kennedy, Director, Canada Walks, GCC, presented the results of the Canadian School Travel Planning pilot project at Walk21 New York City in October, at the U.S. Safe Routes to School conference in Portland, Oregon, and ACT Canada's Canadian TDM Summit in November.

Across Ontario

Jacky Kennedy has also presented the STP Pilot results to local municipalities across Ontario this fall, and looks forward to doing more of the same throughout the winter.

Across Manitoba

Active and Safe Routes to School in Manitoba is disseminating the *Child and Youth Friendly Land-Use and Transport Planning Guidelines* (see www.kidsonthemove.ca) to municipalities and developers across the province and has taken the opportunity to incorporate information about STP as a component of the process. Way to get creative and use your resources!



More People Walking and Cycling = Safer Active Travel

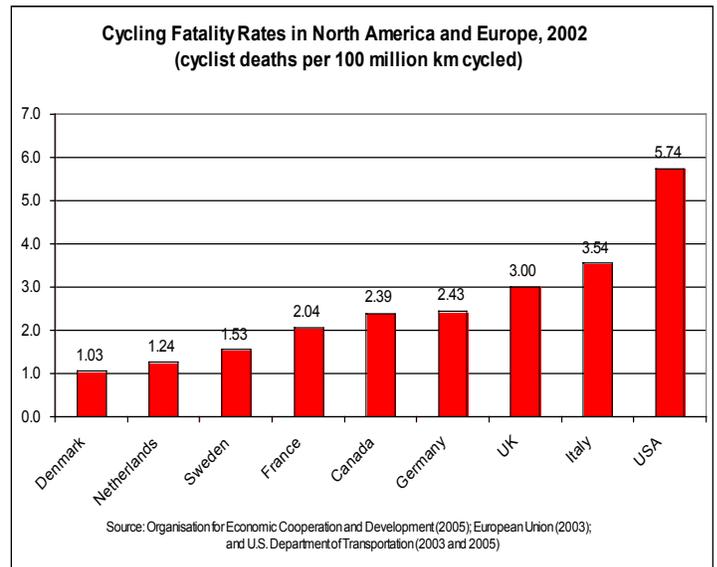
This graph shows cyclist fatality rates by country. Fatality rates decline in direct proportion to the quality of infrastructure in a country; countries known for having good infrastructure for cycling have lower fatality rates.

As active transportation infrastructure improves, more people cycle and walk. As more people cycle and walk, active people become a common sight on the road, making drivers much more aware of – and reactive to – their presence.

Conversely, drivers who are not used to seeing active people on the road tend to be less respectful and comfortable driving alongside them.

Infrastructure that supports active travel is an integral part of STP and one of the main reasons why it is important to bring major municipal stakeholders together. When multiple groups are represented at the planning table, better infrastructure is planned and implemented for all citizens.

Graph: Cyclist fatalities per 100 million km of riding. Denmark, famous for their extensive walking and cycling infrastructure, has a fatality rate that is less than half that of Canada's.



Graph contributed by 8-80 Cities (www.8-80cities.org).



Children in Nova Scotia walk to school past high snow banks. More people walking means that active people become a common sight on the road, making drivers much more aware of and reactive to their presence.

Online Resources

STP Facilitator Guide & Toolkit

A step-by-step STP manual with 28 tools is available online at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/schooltravel.asp. (The toolkit is password-enabled; click on the toolkit and follow the easy prompts. Now available in French.)

Safe Kids Canada School and Parent Resources

Safe Kids Canada offers many valuable resources to help educate students and parents about pedestrian and cyclist safety. Check out their safety tip sheets at: www.safekidscanada.ca/SKCFORParents. Other safety education resources:

- Safe Kids Canada offers up to 200 Pace Car bumper stickers and window clings for free, including shipping. (See fall 2008 STP Newsletter for details on Nova Scotia's Pace Car Program.)
- Safe Kids Canada Crossing Guard Appreciation initiative, sponsored by FedEx – see www.safekidscanada.ca.



FUNDING NEWS

In addition to funding received at the national level from the Public Health Agency of Canada, George Weston Limited and Loblaw Companies Limited, School Travel Planning has received financial and in-kind support at the provincial/territorial and local levels. This tri-level funding approach is critical for the long-term sustainability of School Travel Planning.

The following local or provincial funders have allowed for greater participation in STP programming:

Ontario

- London – Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion contribution from Healthy Communities Fund
- Ottawa – Heart & Stroke Ontario’s SPARK Community Advocacy Fund and the City of Ottawa
- Toronto – Stepping it Up project

is coordinated by Metrolinx and funded by Transport Canada’s ecoMOBILITY program (see www.tc.gc.ca/ecomobility.)

British Columbia

- Provincially - Province of British Columbia
- Vernon - City of Vernon Engineering Department
- Surrey - City of Surrey Engineering Department

Alberta

- Grande Prairie - Alberta Sports, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation

Manitoba

- Provincially - Government of Manitoba, Climate Change Action Fund

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What we do...

Green Communities Canada (www.greencommunitiescanada.org) is a national association of non-profit organizations that deliver innovative, practical environmental solutions to Canadian households and communities.



UPCOMING EVENTS

National STP Meeting Being Planned

Green Communities Canada has begun planning for a national School Travel Planning meeting that will take place in mid March. This meeting will bring together all of the provincial/territorial partners along with national STP staff and University of

Toronto and Cape Breton representatives to wrap up the current phase of STP work and discuss plans for expansion, thanks to the new CLASP funding.

A press conference is being planned to coincide with this meeting.

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The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.



Reminder About June ASRTS Conference

Planning is well underway for the first Active and Safe Routes to School National Conference, “On the Move in the Community.” This two-day conference is being held in Montreal on Thursday June 3 and Friday June 4, 2010, during Montreal Bike Fest. The conference is being hosted by

Vélo Québec Association, in collaboration with the Canadian Active and Safe Routes to School Partnership.

If you are seeking ideas and inspiration to get your community more involved in promoting active transportation, this conference is for you!