

# Project Overview

## High School Pilot Project 2010-2012



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December 2012



*The Ottawa School Travel Planning High School Pilot Project was an initiative of Green Communities Canada. This project was coordinated by:*

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*The project was supported by a number of partners:*



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## Executive Summary

In September 2010, Green Communities Canada (GCC) staff in Ottawa began adapting the School Travel Planning (STP) model to the high school context. Working directly with students, the high school model focused specifically on youth engagement and the development of leadership skills amongst participants. Over the course of two school years, GCC piloted STP at seven local high schools to develop a working model for the program. At each school, the GCC Facilitator worked with a group of students and a lead teacher to administer a peer-to-peer transportation survey and develop a two-year action plan.

The peer-to-peer transportation survey produced useful data on high school transportation habits. Interestingly, only 22% of students who live close enough to commute actively to school (within 3km) actually walk or bike. We also learned that students are not always the primary decision makers when it comes to how they get to school and that many students share this decision with their parents. For more survey results, see page 5.

The high school model was adapted several times based on the challenges encountered and lessons learned throughout the pilot. Challenges included;

- limited time with students,
- low exposure to active transportation amongst youth,
- maintaining project momentum,
- the large amount of facilitator time required.

For a full summary of challenges and lessons learned, see page 7.

Over time, the adapted model produced some encouraging success stories, including the implementation of a school-based bike share, and the behaviour changes inspired by “Walk & Roll Challenges”. More success stories are outlined on page 8.

If you are interested in working with high schools, please read on and do not hesitate to contact us with questions.

We’d love to hear about your results working with youth to promote active transportation. In the spirit of sharing, please send us your experiences and lessons learned ([info@saferoutestoschool.ca](mailto:info@saferoutestoschool.ca)).

## Background

### *School Travel Planning*

School Travel Planning (STP) is a national project that aims to increase the number of students choosing to commute to and from school using active modes of transportation. The STP process was developed for elementary schools based on international best practices and has been disseminated across Canada since 2008. STP continues to expand, reaching over 120 schools across all of Canada's provinces and territories. For more information on STP, visit [www.saferoutestoschool.ca/school-travel-planning](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/school-travel-planning).



Figure 1. Elementary students participate in Winter Walk to School Day

### *Developing an STP model for high schools*

In 2010, Ottawa was asked to adapt the STP model to the high school context. Working directly with students themselves, the new STP model focused specifically on youth engagement and the development of leadership skills amongst participants.

The high school STP process consisted of 4 steps:

#### **1. Program Set-up**

- (a) The STP Facilitator investigates whether or not the school has a lead teacher and a group of students who would be interested in participating in STP.
- (b) Participating schools sign a two-year letter of agreement to ensure that they are committed.

#### **2. Peer-to-Peer Transportation Survey**

The STP Facilitator helps students create, administer and analyze a transportation survey of their peers.

#### **3. Action Planning & Implementation**

- (a) Based on the results of the survey, students devise a two-year Action Plan containing at least 5 actions.
- (b) With the help of the STP Facilitator and the lead teacher, students implement the actions in their action plan.

#### **4. Team Building & Creative Thinking**

Throughout the STP process, students are continuously engaged in simple activities to build a sense of community in the group and to challenge their assumptions about transportation.



## 2010-12 Pilot: Overview

### *The Schools*

In 2010-11 GCC worked with 3 different schools; École secondaire publique Louis Riel, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School and St Matthews Catholic High School. Of those schools, both Louis Riel and Sir Wilfrid Laurier administered a transportation survey, created action plans and carried out at least one action item. St Matthew's organized a few activities to recruit students to the club, but did not carry through with the project into the survey stage.



Figure 3. Location of High Schools (2011-12)

For the second year of the pilot project (2011-12), Sir Wilfrid Laurier carried on with STP, and 4 additional schools were brought on; A.Y. Jackson Secondary School, All Saints Catholic High School, Frederick Banting Alternate and Rideau High School. All four of the new schools administered surveys, created action plans and implemented at least one action item.

This report covers the STP activities at high schools between September 2010 and June 2012. The project continued during the Fall semester of September-December 2012, but with limited success due to the cancellation of extra-curricular activities at many schools.

### *Types of Committees*

We worked with a variety of different school committees on STP. The type of committee depended on the preferences of the lead teacher. The table below outlines some of the pros and cons of different models.

Type of Committee	School(s)	Pros & Cons
Existing Environment Club or Healthy-active living club	Sir Wilfrid Laurier, All Saints, Rideau, A.Y. Jackson	<p><u>Pros:</u> No need for student recruitment, club is already well known. Opportunity to combine related projects and not over-stretch students</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> Can be hard to fit active travel into an existing agenda, especially since not all students come to the meetings out of interest in promoting walking &amp; cycling.</p>
New Club	St Matthew	<p><u>Pros:</u> No “competing” agenda items, ability to form group goals around the interests of participating students.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> Need to spend lots of time on student recruitment. Can be tough to start a new club when students are already committed to other clubs they have a history with.</p>
Classroom - Leadership or Health	Louis Riel, Frederick Banting	<p><u>Pros:</u> No need for student recruitment and students are more likely to attend meetings since they are during class. An engaged teacher will be keen to help you plan activities in advance so they fit with the curriculum.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> Student attendance is mandatory so many students will not be interested in the topic, which will distract the students who are interested. If the teacher is not engaged, could mean extra time spent on discipline.</p>

### *Data Collection*

All participating high schools were required to develop and administer a peer-to-peer transportation survey. A sample survey is included in Appendix 1. To allow for differences between schools and committees, the survey is not standardized across all participating schools. However, several questions have been included in all surveys to allow for inter-school comparisons. Interesting survey results from our four 2011-12 surveys (806 respondents) include:

- Walking accounts for 12% of trips to school and cycling accounts for less than 1% (Figure 4).
- 79% of respondents have access to a bike
- Only 22% of students who live close enough to walk or bike (within 3km) actually commute actively to school. Similarly, 72% of students who drive actually live close enough to walk or bike (this goes up to 95% of drivers at one school) (Figure 5).
- 22% of respondents feel that we should reduce the number of cars coming to school and 25% of respondents currently using non-active modes of travel are open to walking or cycling
- Students have mixed feelings about walking and cycling to school (Figure 6)
- Less than half of respondents are the primary decision makers on how they get to and from school (Figure 7).

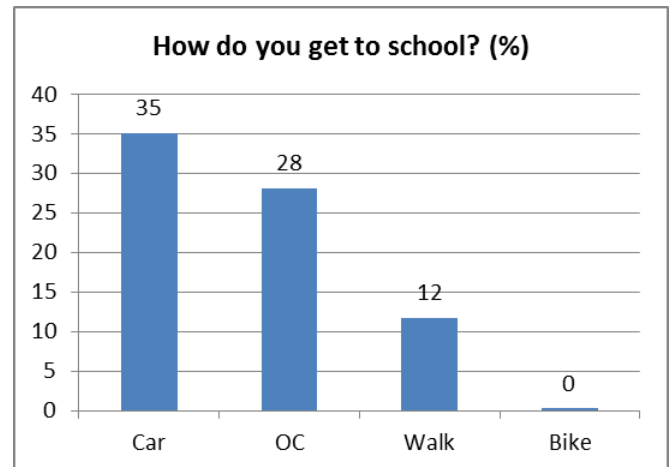


Figure 4. Mode of Transportation

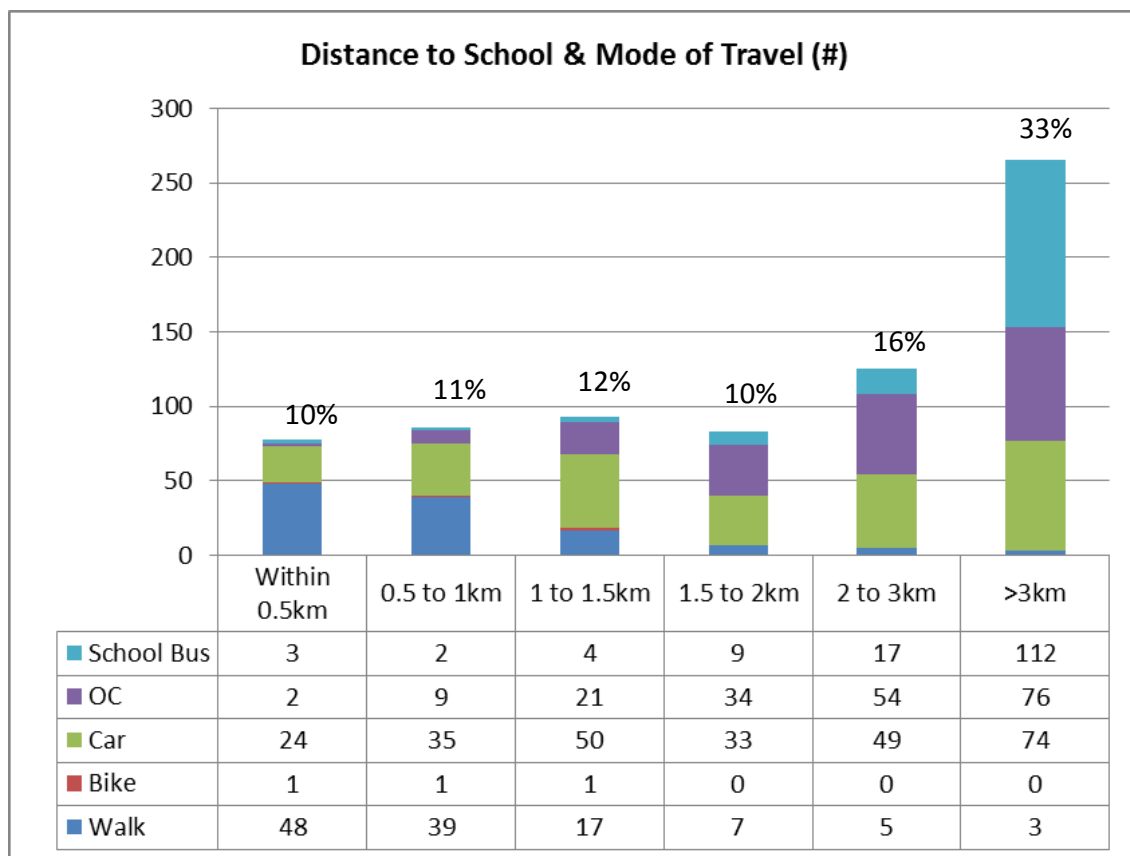


Figure 5. Mode of Transportation & Distance from School





## Walk & Roll Challenge

In May 2012, the STP Committee at Rideau High School launched a month long challenge encouraging students to walk and bike to school. The event was tied to morning attendance to encourage punctuality and teachers kept track of who was walking and cycling with stickers. The school partnered with Tommy & Lefebvre to award a series of prizes to participants. For example, the first 50 students to receive 3 stickers were given a water bottle. Additional prizes included t-shirts and hats, with a grand prize draw at the end of the month for a brand new bicycle! Participants were also able to order discount helmets through the school in order to participate. To complement the challenge, the committee organized a bike rodeo and a Wii Fit competition during lunch. Over 95 students and teachers participated in the challenge, many of whom had not previously walked or biked to school. The Walk & Roll Challenge was also organized by the A.Y. Jackson STP Committee.

### Committee Members Trying new Things!

*I felt like if I was going to encourage others to take the (Walk & Roll) Challenge, then it only made sense that I participated too!*  
- Sarina, STP Committee Member

Many of the students who join STP Committees are interested in promoting walking and cycling, but have never used active travel to get to school themselves. Sarina and Meaghan

are two such students who agreed to share their experience. They hesitated to walk to school previously because they felt that they lived too far. After learning through STP that they actually lived within the 3km walking distance, they decided to use the Challenge as an opportunity to try something new. It turns out, they liked it! Walking allowed them to “slow down” and spend time with friends while also exercising and helping the environment. Sarina explains that she now walks to school when she doesn’t have an activity in the morning and thinks twice before driving to Starbucks when the weather is nice. STP Committee members at each of the schools have been challenging themselves to try walking and cycling. Engaging the students in the room is an important first step to reaching the broader student population.

### Neighbourhood Walkabout & Stakeholder Outreach

A primary focus of STP has been to encourage students to reach out to stakeholders. When the STP Committee at All Saints wanted to address a few safety concerns in their neighbourhood, they invited City Councillor Marianne Wilkinson to join them for a walkabout. During the walkabout, students learned about courtesy lanes and how to apply for a bus shelter. The Committee plans to encourage the City to provide space for cyclists in the nearby roundabouts and work with the councillor to solicit student feedback about the upcoming development planned for across the street.



Figure 11: Discussing a crosswalk with Councillor Wilkinson

## Challenges & Lessons Learned

As with any pilot project, there were many challenges and lessons learned along the way. Challenges include:

**The cool factor:** Unlike at the elementary school level, safety is not the primary reason why students do not walk and bike. When an elementary school STP committee discusses active travel, their first points of action are generally focused on safety issues. At the high school level, the first barrier to address is the perception that active travel is hard, inconvenient and uncool. These are difficult issues to address at the start, and do not lend themselves to concrete actions like applying for an Adult Crossing Guard or a newly painted crosswalk. It is difficult to implement infrastructure changes, but possibly even more difficult to change cultural norms about transportation.

**Limited time with students:** Most committees meet weekly or bi-weekly over the lunch hour. By the time students gather their lunches, and then leave early to go to their lockers before class, most meetings are 25-30 minutes in length. If the agenda is being shared with other activities organized by the club, this can leave very little time for discussing STP. Many students are committed to several clubs, have part time jobs and after school activities and are not willing to regularly do work on the action plan outside of the scheduled meeting time, or communicate about it over email. Organizing an activity can take up to several months, which can mean students lose interest.

**Decision makers:** At the high schools, we work directly with students because of our original assumption that they are the ones making the decision about how they get to school. After interacting with the students, it became clear that this was not always the case, and survey results show that parents are involved in the decision about mode choice in 51% of cases. When a parent offers a student a ride, or is hesitant about their safety, very few students would resist a drive in favour of walking or cycling.

**Walking the Walk:** As mentioned above, many of the committee members do not walk or cycle to school. They are interested in promoting walking and cycling in general, but not always interested in challenging themselves or their peers to try it. This can make it difficult for students to identify barriers and, in return, develop workable solutions to address those barriers. If students don't see low levels of walking and cycling as a problem, it is hard to come up with solutions.

**Facilitation Time:** Facilitating a youth-led project requires a lot of advanced planning and preparation. Unlike a meeting of adults, you cannot expect everyone to show up, follow an agenda and take home tasks. Similarly, you should not hand students a paper "toolkit" of instructions to follow on their own. Meetings need to be interesting and interactive in order to compete with the other demands on student time.

These challenges are not insurmountable. The high school model has been adapted over the last two years and the result has been the success stories outlined above. Every school is different, but below are some lessons learned and general guidelines for running a successful high school STP program.

### *Lessons Learned*

**Meet with students to assess their level of interest:** It is essential to meet with students a few times before they sign up for STP. During these initial meetings you can explain the project and assess whether or not students are willing to attend & contribute to meetings and bring the project to life. Meeting with the principal or teacher is not enough. While a supportive principal or lead teacher is necessary, but the students must also be keen to participate.

**Work with the students in the room:** On any school committee, there is a tendency to work with a small group of students to plan events and activities to influence the behaviour of the broader school population. Before broadening your focus, spend time working to get the students in the room excited about walking and cycling. Facilitate activities that challenge their perceptions about transportation and organize actions, like walkabouts and bike maintenance workshops, to take place during meeting time to ensure that they participate. Committee members will be much more effective advocates when they are engaged in active travel themselves.

**Focus on one action & make it happen:** If you work with elementary schools on STP you may have committees that are working on 4 or 5 actions simultaneously. Because of the challenges outlined above, we have found it most effective to run one action at a time and make it a success. Especially with the first action, work hard to bring it to completion. It is important to engage students and encourage them to take on responsibilities; however, they may be hesitant at first. Once they see the first action come to life, they will be more likely to involve themselves in subsequent actions.

**Get students outside:** As mentioned above, committee members may not walk or bike themselves, or be familiar with the surrounding environment. Take them outside on informal walkabouts or bike rides so that they can get to know the benefits and barriers to active travel in their neighbourhood. Getting students outside has consistently resulted in infrastructure related action items that had not been highlighted previously.

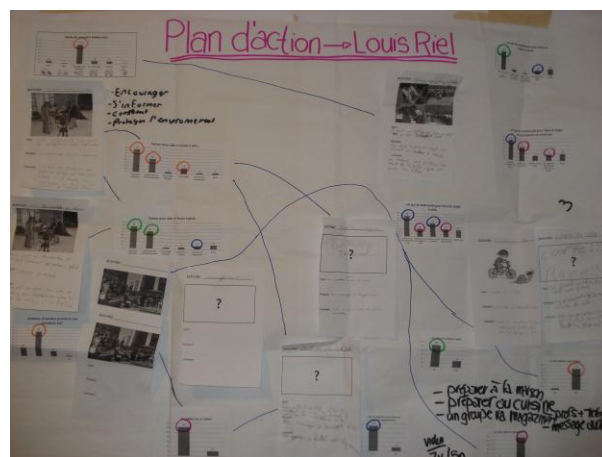


Figure 12. Linking action items to survey results during action planning phase

**Involve teachers:** In addition to the lead teacher, involve other teachers in any challenges and promotional activities that you run. They are natural role models for the students and they usually help to boost awareness and the momentum of the campaign.

**Engage parents:** As mentioned above, parents continue to play a role in deciding how high school students get to and from school. Students can be the best advocates for convincing their parents that walking and cycling are better choices than driving. Consider involving the school council to provide information to parents about the benefits of active school travel so that they are receptive to students who don't want a drive.

**Action plans are not one-size fits all:** Every student group will have different interests. A successful Walk & Roll Challenge run at one school may not be popular with a committee more interested in map making and letter writing. Take the time to get to know the committee so that you can play to their strengths and interests.

### *General Guidelines*

**Celebrate student contributions:** Celebrate student contributions big and small! This can be a simple mention during the meeting or over the announcements, by offering to write a short letter of recommendation for them or by submitting a write-up about a project to a community newspaper or blog. Students will continue to contribute when they feel valued.

**Avoid putting students on the spot:** Asking people to come up with ideas from a blank slate can be challenging. Provide sample actions, give them time to think things over between meetings and, if appropriate, ask for feedback in writing if the conversation is being dominated by one or two personalities.

**Imitate previous success:** When students are brainstorming about actions and how to organize them, encourage them to think about programs that have been successful in the past (either at the school or in their community) and use similar elements for their project.

**Use meetings effectively:** Students have a lot of demands on their time during the lunch hour, and they are choosing to spend it working on this project with you. Make sure to respect student time by using the meetings effectively and getting as much done during the meeting as possible to avoid sending students away with "homework". Give students a reason to choose your meeting over Tim Horton's or another club by making the meetings fun and producing results students can be proud of. Every now and then, bring in treats like homemade lunches - students are impressed when they are fed something other than pizza!

**Be prepared:** Take time before the meeting to prepare all of your facilitation materials and to prepare for alternative scenarios. If students aren't receptive to your initial ideas, have a back-up plan.

**Not all ideas should be brought to life:** It is very important to create a supportive environment for students, however, not all good ideas are ready to be put into action. Encourage creative thinking and maintain a positive environment during brainstorming

sessions, but make sure you think an idea is workable before embarking on it to ensure student success and to reduce stress.

**Assign specific tasks and help students follow through:** Work to ensure that student tasks are specific and manageable. Reduce your role in the execution of events gradually. Once you have run a successful introductory action and engaged the students, don't be afraid to let them know that things won't happen if they don't participate, if necessary. Student groups might be used to a teacher picking up the slack and events happening whether or not they contribute. This can lead to reduced student participation.

**Focus on the lasting impacts:** Students want to leave their mark on their school before they leave. Encourage them to envision the lasting changes they could make at the school such as providing a bike rack, the installation of a bike lane, or starting an annual walking and cycling challenge.

**Connect with Stakeholders:** Bringing stakeholders to the school to meet with students will help them recognize their own potential to make change in their community. Work with the students ahead of time to draft questions and comments for the stakeholder and ensure that they are prepared and confident. Students are willing to be engaged, but will typically not attend formal meetings - such as open houses - that are dominated by adults, take place outside of school hours and are far away from their homes. Work with community stakeholders to organize in-school workshops to seek student feedback.

Good luck! Please send us your comments and your own experiences.



## Appendix 1: Sample Survey

### Student Transportation Survey

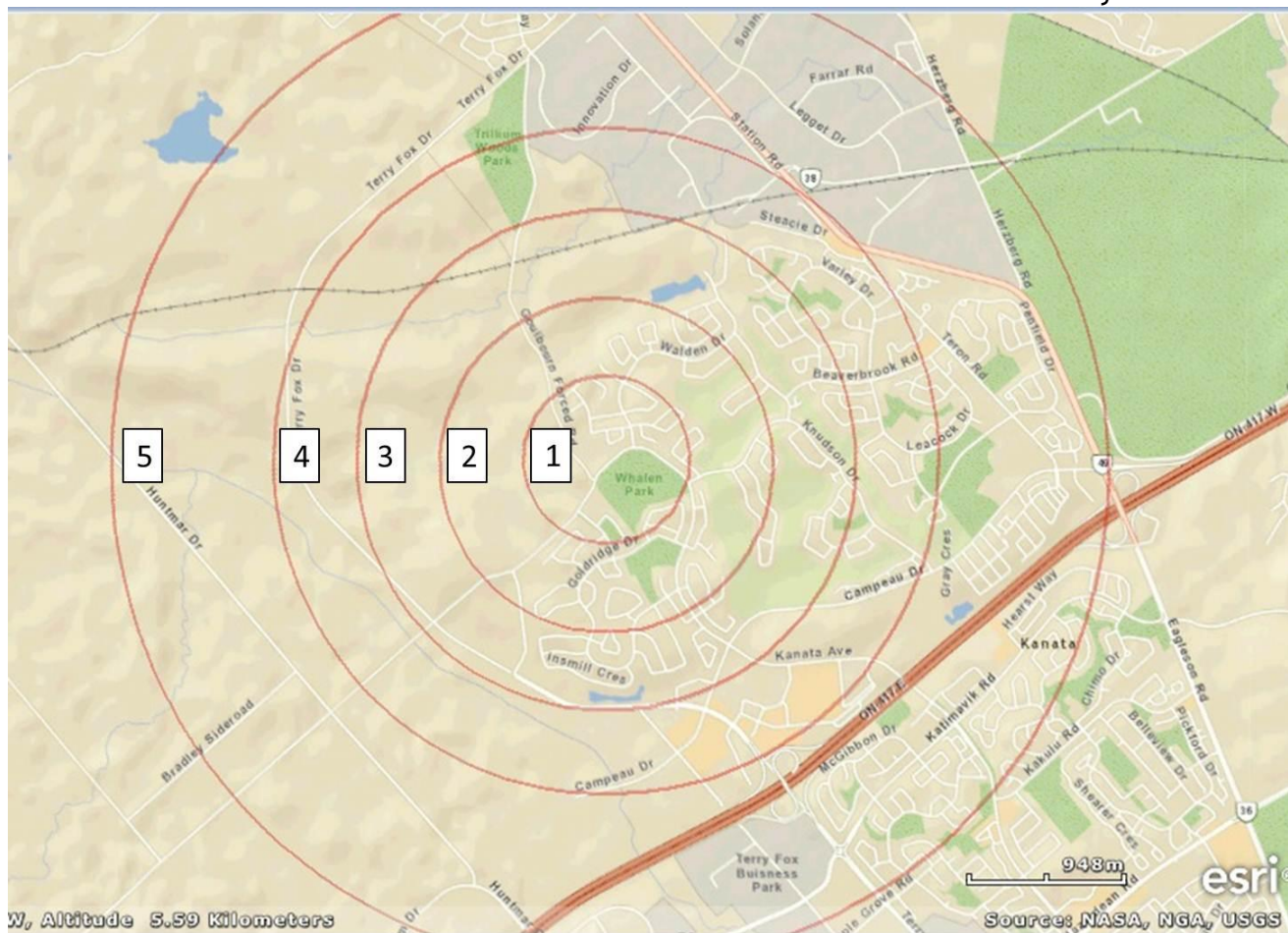
This survey was created by the Exposé Club at All Saints High School. The goal of the survey is to find out how students at All Saints commute to school and why. This survey is anonymous and will only take about 5 minutes of your time to complete.

1. What grade are you in?      ☐ 9                      ☐ 10                      ☐ 11                      ☐ 12
  
2. How do you usually get TO school (select ONE option)?
  - ☐ Car - driven by a parent/adult
  - ☐ Car - carpool with others
  - ☐ Car - I drove by myself
  - ☐ School Bus
  - ☐ OC Transpo
  - ☐ Walked
  - ☐ Bicycled
  
3. Why do you choose the mode of transportation indicated in question 2 (select all that apply)?
  - ☐ Easy
  - ☐ Social
  - ☐ Fast
  - ☐ Enjoyable
  - ☐ Affordable/cheap
  - ☐ Because of the weather
  - ☐ Safety
  - ☐ My parents choose how I get to school
  - ☐ I get to school the same way everyday
  
4. How do you usually LEAVE school (select ONE option)?
  - ☐ Car - driven by a parent/adult
  - ☐ Car - carpool with others
  - ☐ Car - I drive by myself
  - ☐ OC Transpo
  - ☐ School Bus
  - ☐ Walk
  - ☐ Bicycle

5. Since September, have you
- |                        |                              |                             |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (a) biked to school    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| (b) walked to school   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| (c) driven/been driven | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
6. After school, where do you usually go?    ☐ Home    ☐ Work    ☐ Other
7. Do you have a driver's license?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
8. Do you have access to a bicycle?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
9. Do you have access to a car?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

10. We would like to know how far you travel to school. Please use the map below to indicate which area you live in. Each area is indicated by a circle.

☐ 1    ☐ 2    ☐ 3    ☐ 4    ☐ 5    ☐ beyond circles



11. Do you think that we should reduce the number of car trips to the school (select ONE option)?

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Unsure

12. Would you be open to walking or cycling to school?      ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Already do

13. In a few words (one to five), what do you think about the idea of walking or cycling to school?

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14. Are there safety concerns for students who want to walk and bike to school?

- ☐ Yes   ☐ No

15. If you answered “yes” to question 13, what are those safety concerns (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Fast traffic
- ☐ Reckless or inconsiderate drivers
- ☐ Poor condition of sidewalks
- ☐ Unsafe bicycling conditions
- ☐ Lack of traffic lights and crossing opportunities
- ☐ Bullying
- ☐ Being alone
- ☐ Dark alleys/hidden corners
- ☐ Generally not feeling safe

16. Who makes the decision about how you travel to school (select ONE option)?

- ☐ Usually I decide
- ☐ Usually my parents/guardian decides
- ☐ Sometimes I decide, sometimes my parents decide

Do you have any additional comments that you would like to make?

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Thanks for your time!

## Appendix 2: Sample Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Timeline	Status	Estimated Cost and Source
<b>Action #1: Active Transportation Challenge</b> <i>Goal: Encourage students to commit to walking or cycling to school</i>				
Encourage students to walk and bike to school during the first week of May. All students who walk or bike will be given a raffle ticket each morning to win great prizes. If event is successful, it can be repeated the next month	Organizing event logistics: committee  Handing out ballots: committee & student council	April 30 <sup>th</sup> to May 4 <sup>th</sup>	COMPLETE	Ballots - \$15 Bus pass - \$60 Bluesfest - \$95 Booster Juice - \$50
<b>Action #2: Awareness &amp; Distribution of Information (Large maps throughout the school)</b> <i>Goal: Inform students about the committee and about the safe &amp; convenient routes that exist for them to walk and bike to school</i>				
Create several large maps to post around the school containing; (1) information about the Environment Club, (2) reasons to walk/bike to school, (3) safe walking & cycling routes, (4) the amount of time it takes to walk/bike from different areas	Determining Info for Map: Committee  Creating Map : Committee & Jamie	Hang maps during challenge (April 30 to May 4 <sup>th</sup> ) and week prior	COMPLETE - map hanging in case in front of library	\$120 (printing of two maps at World of Maps)
Permission from office to hang the maps around the school	Student Volunteer & Teacher	April 2012	COMPLETE	\$0
<b>Action #3: Promotional Video(s)</b> <i>Goal: Give students reasons to walk or bike that are relevant to them and encourage participation in the challenge</i>				
Work with the audio club to create 1 or more short video ads about walking and cycling - can be used to advertise the challenge	Video themes: committee  Technical assistance: JTV students	April 2012	COMPLETE - videos used to promote challenge	\$0

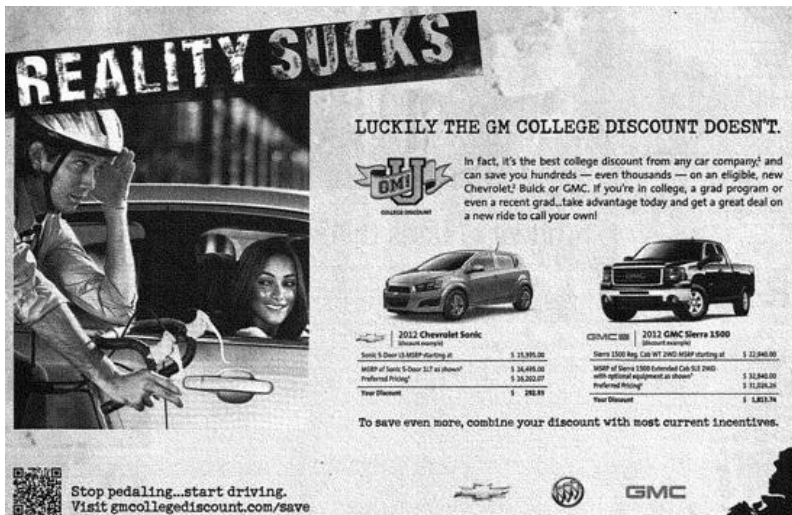
<b>Action #4: Bike Tune Up Day</b>				
<i>Goal: (1) Encourage students to bring their bikes to school, and (2) ensure that students are riding safe bikes</i>				
<p>Contact Kunstadt Sports or Cycle Salvations about providing bike mechanic guidance to students and/or discounts for students who bring their bikes in for a tune up</p> <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>Work with bike shop to offer discounted tune ups for students as a prize/incentive to get on their bikes</p>	Student Volunteer	Spring 2013		
Advertise the event to students (posters, announcements, video)	Committee	Spring 2013		Printing costs
Permission from office to use the parking lot/outside space for this event	Student Volunteer & Teacher	Spring 2013		
<b>Action #5: Contact Councillor about dangerous walking conditions on Eagleson</b>				
<i>Goal: Engage with City stakeholders and create a safer environment for students &amp; pedestrians</i>				
Letter/Phone Call to Councillor	Committee	TBD		\$0
Invite them to a walkabout or a meeting (TBD)	Committee	TBD		\$0
<b>Action #6: Spaghetti Dinner</b>				
<i>Goal: Reward students who use active transportation to get to school</i>				
Host a spaghetti dinner for students who use active transportation	Committee	Fall 2012		Food costs
<b>Action #7: Clear Identification for Bike Lanes on Abbeyhill</b>				
<i>Goal: Make it easier for students to use existing facilities</i>				
Talk to Councillor about getting some signage/paint to clearly mark the Abbeyhill bike lanes (cars currently park in them because they are only courtesy lanes)	Committee	June 2012		



Have By-law ticket the cars parked in the bike lane once it has been clearly marked	Committee	TBD		
<b>Action #8: In class bike training for students</b> <b>Goal: <i>Encourage students to cycle safely in the community</i></b>				
Have bike training courses for gym class or leadership class	Committee, CAN-BIKE, phys-ed teacher	TBD		

## Appendix 3: Facilitator Resources

### Challenging our Transportation “Realities”



Students will come up against many barriers while promoting active transportation, including attitudes about walking, cycling and driving. This activity is designed to get students talking about these attitudes, and about how they can be challenged.

Start the conversation by asking students about the benefits of walking and cycling and why they think that we are running School Travel Planning.

Then have students identify the barriers they think they will come up against while promoting active transportation amongst their peers. Students are then shown the General Motors “Reality Sucks” ad (pictured above), which illustrates one of the toughest barriers they will face - attitudes. Facilitate a discussion by asking students (1) what the message is, (2) whether they think that this attitude exists among their peers or family, (3) why they think GM made this ad.

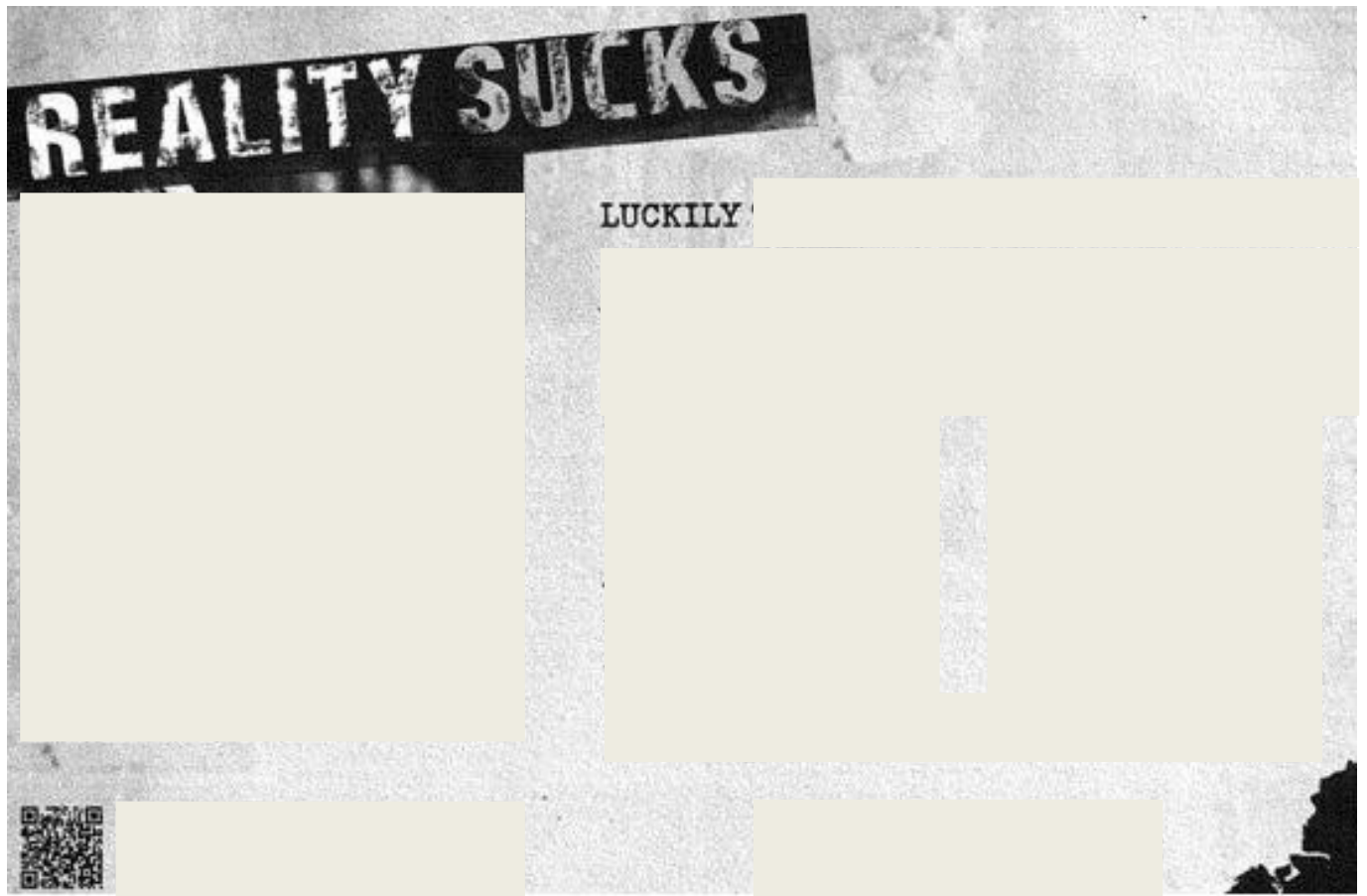
To continue the discussion, show students the “Cycling Sucks” video, found online here: <http://momentumplanet.com/videos/cycling-sucks>. This video is a humorous depiction of cyclists acting like cars. After the video, ask students (1) why is this video funny, (2) what is the message, (3) how does this challenge the message of the GM ad?

Finally, have students create their own “Reality Sucks” ad. The reality depicted in the GM ad is the reality shared by many North Americans, but it is not everyone’s reality. Ask students to create a poster using the ad to promote walking and cycling at their school. Clever taglines created by students in Ottawa include:

- ✓ Pictured: an overcrowded bus, Tagline: “Luckily a bike only has one seat”
- ✓ Pictured: student being driven past Starbucks each day, Tagline : “Luckily, your mom doesn’t have to know (that you stopped at Starbucks when you were walking)”
- ✓ Pictured: vehicle exhaust fumes filled with words describing cars (isolation, parking tickets, laziness, pollution), Tagline : Luckily you can ride a bike

Finish by having students share their posters with the group.

An Example...





**LUCKILY**

**CYCLISTS CAN BIKE RIGHT ON BY!**

Traffic jams are for suckers (and cars). Stop spending hours of your life frustrated and sitting in traffic – bike or walk to your destination and arrive on time and happy!



- ☒ The environment
- ☒ Your money
- ☒ Your health
- ☒ Your time & sanity



- ☒ The environment
- ☒ Your money
- ☒ Your health
- ☒ Your time & sanity



**Stop sitting...start pedaling!**

