

February 2013

School Travel Planning in Action in Ontario:

Successes and Lessons in Active and Sustainable School Transportation



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INTRODUCTION

"[STP] alleviates the parking problem, which seems to be getting worse every year. The effect it has had on me is I'm getting more exercise. I get to talk to my kids more."

Parent, Hamilton

"The [STP] project has improved the students' awareness and their efforts to walk to school."

Principal, Mississauga

"I encourage kids to walk to school because it's way more fun than driving, you get to hang out with your friends, get away from your parents, it wakes you up in the morning and helps you focus."

Student, Hamilton

Supporting more students to walk or bike for the school journey sounds like a simple way to address traffic issues around schools while improving student health through increased physical activity. However, achieving this goal in practice is complex, requiring the coordination of effort across multiple stakeholders in the community including school staff, school boards, parents and students, public health, police, traffic and transportation, planning and others. Sometimes infrastructure needs to be improved to make routes safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Sometimes education, encouragement, enforcement of by-laws or changes to policy are needed to support a shift in travel behaviour. And, often a combination of all these elements is required.

School Travel Planning (STP) is a flexible process, with a customizable toolkit, that brings community stakeholders together to: identify the barriers to active and sustainable transportation in a given school-community using data collection tools; devise an action plan for dealing with the issues identified; then implement those actions; and measure the resulting changes in attitudes and travel behaviour. This process is led by one or more STP Facilitators and a team of community stakeholders who each have an important role to play. The Canadian STP model has been pilot-tested in all provinces and territories, most extensively in Ontario communities. These projects provide a rich and varied base of experience and lessons learned. For more information about STP in Canada and Ontario, visit www.saferoutestoschool.ca/school-travel-planning and www.metrolinx.com/schooltravel.

This study provides qualitative and quantitative evidence from a diverse sample of schools that demonstrates how STP can be successful¹ in addressing barriers and promoting active and sustainable school travel in a variety of Ontario communities in diverse parts of the province including small, medium and large; urban, suburban and rural; as well as northern communities.

The Process

Interviews were conducted with STP experts from each community to collect input about how STP worked in their community, what activities were particularly effective in their setting, and what factors they considered critical for STP success and sustainability. This document summarizes the success factors that were common across multiple types of communities (Common Success and Sustainability Factors) and provides a case study of each community's STP activities and approaches (Profiles of School Travel Planning Success).

¹ Successful School Travel Planning comes in many forms. One measure of STP success is travel mode shift: increasing rates of walking and cycling, and decreasing rates of driving for the school journey. STP success can also be measured by its contribution to making school routes safer for the children who already walk or bike. The progress made in building partnerships among community stakeholders, changing policy, and shifting mindsets and habits are other key indicators which lay the groundwork for sustaining success over the longer term.

The table below includes a list of the communities and schools that participated in the study.

Case Study Communities & Schools (lowest population to highest)

Region/Community & Population ²	School(s) Profiled & School Population
Haldimand County <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cayuga (1,622) Caledonia (9,999) 	J.L. Mitchener (280 students in JK-8) Notre Dame (359 students in JK-8)
Niagara Region - Fort Erie (15,568)	General Vanier (161 students in JK-8)
St. Thomas (41,688)	Mitchell Hepburn (614 students in JK-8)
Waterloo (98,780)	St. Matthew (450 students in JK-8)
Thunder Bay (102,222)	École Gron Morgan (688 students in JK-8) Corpus Christi (330 students in JK-6)
York Region - Markham (301,709)	Wismer (509 students in JK-8)
Hamilton (519,949)	St. Patrick (282 students in JK-8) St. Ann - Hamilton (197 students in JK-8) Holy Name of Jesus (406 students in JK-8)
Peel Region - Mississauga (713,443)	Ridgewood (722 students in JK-5)
Ottawa (933,596)	Viscount Alexander (133 students in JK-6) Broadview (790 students in JK-8)
Toronto (5,130,000)	St. Cecilia (595 students in JK-8)

² Population statistics noted are for 2011, as cited at www.citypopulation.de or wikipedia.

Case Study Communities & Schools - Locations



"The [STP Facilitator] played an integral role...it was a really fun process."

Lorinda Mazza, Principal,
St. Cecilia Catholic School,
Toronto

"From the school's perspective, it was invaluable to have a Facilitator who knew the background of STP and was a champion leading the process forward. It was really helpful that she could share what other schools had done."

John Klein, Principal,
St. Matthew CES, Waterloo

"Waterloo Region is fortunate to have a really strong stakeholder committee that's been in place since 2000. It's a solid group, with all members actively involved and committed. This has been critical to our success."

Leslie Cook, Citizen
Volunteer, Waterloo STP
Stakeholder Committee

"Incorporating STP as a topic into the Healthy School Program will help schools be aware of the role for community partners to assist with 'school travel planning' and help ensure this work will be sustained."

From York Region School
Travel Plan, Pilot Project
Report 2010-2011

Common Success and Sustainability Factors

STP success and sustainability factors that were common across many or all communities include:

- **Stakeholder engagement and commitment.** All of the communities profiled have strong STP stakeholder groups (e.g. teams, committees) with diverse representation from public health, transportation, traffic, planning, police, the school, parents and students. Many committees also include representation from school boards, student transportation consortia, municipal politicians, local not-for-profit organizations, GIS professionals and crossing guard services. Having diverse representation of stakeholders ensures a comprehensive School Travel Plan is written and implemented.
- **Dedicated facilitator support.** There is universal agreement among STP stakeholders that it is critical to have one or more Facilitators in a given community who are dedicated to coordinating the STP process. STP Facilitators provide an essential link between the school, the stakeholder group and the wider community. STP Facilitators ensure the process moves forward, coordinating and guiding stakeholder efforts. Who handles the role of STP Facilitator, where that position is housed, how much time that person dedicates to this work, and how the position is funded, varies from community to community. For example:
 - In Ottawa, two STP Facilitator positions, housed in a not-for-profit organization, are funded from a variety of sources including grants and contributions from the City of Ottawa and one of the school boards.
 - York Region has a full-time Facilitator position dedicated to Safe Routes to School that is funded jointly by the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board.
 - In other instances, the STP Facilitator role is adopted by existing staff within the local or regional municipality and/or public health unit. Often, it is a public health professional or active transportation coordinator with the municipality that takes on the role. Sometimes two stakeholders jointly share the role, e.g. in Hamilton, public health and public works split up the tasks, and in Thunder Bay, the responsibilities are shared between public health and a local environmental not-for-profit organization.
 - In Haldimand-Norfolk, a parent volunteer was the STP Facilitator at one of their schools.
- **Enthusiastic champions.** Internal champions are needed at each school, ideally the principal, teachers, parents and students. Schools cannot rely solely on the STP Facilitator for the momentum necessary to achieve success and sustainability.
- **Connection with existing programs and objectives.** Several stakeholders mentioned how STP fits well with environmental education and health and physical education curriculum, and existing programs and objectives, such as EcoSchools, Healthy Schools, and Safe Schools initiatives, thereby supporting work that is already being done in schools.

HAMILTON

Hamilton pilot-tested School Travel Planning (STP) with 16 elementary schools in a Metrolinx-led project called Stepping It Up between 2009 and 2011. The project implemented a complementary set of programs, policies and incentives aimed at achieving higher levels of active and sustainable transportation. When asked what had the greatest impact, representatives from the Hamilton STP stakeholder group identified the following:

Cycling activities were implemented including safety education, bike repair workshops, grants for bike racks and refurbished bike giveaways in a contest offered through a partnership with a local bike co-op.

An **encouragement event**, Wear Yellow Day, was held three times each year to raise awareness of the benefits of walking and cycling to school “by wearing yellow on Walk to School Days.” Upon arrival at school, students who used active transportation that day would add a leaf to a tree poster showing how they got to school, creating a large, visual showcase of active transportation success. Schools were encouraged to submit photos of their active transportation tree for a chance to win a prize. For more information visit: www.smartcommutehamilton.ca/en/schools/wearyellowday.

Through the Bike Rack Seed Funding Program offered by the City of Hamilton Public Works Department, using funding from the Ministry of Transportation, 16 schools purchased and installed new bike racks. Kids had been locking bikes up on trees etc. so having the new bike racks improved safety.



Students try out a new bike rack



A bike repair workshop



Hamilton students celebrating Wear Yellow Day



An active transportation tree

Photovoice was a unique activity undertaken in Hamilton at three of the 16 Stepping It Up pilot schools. STP baseline data from these schools showed that the majority of students were already walking to school, but there were social, economic and environmental issues that needed to be addressed to improve the safety and enjoyment of the students' walking experience. Photovoice proved to be an effective strategy that engaged students as leaders in identifying what needed to be changed in their communities and then advocating for those changes.

"Having the kids speak about what they saw in their neighbourhoods and share that with the Board of Health Council at City Hall was a very powerful way to engage these communities while using the information collected to move toward resolution of their concerns. Many of their suggestions are being integrated into the Neighbourhood Action Plans. Students are having a real voice."

Kelly Scott, Physical Activity Specialist,
City of Hamilton Public Health Services,
Healthy Living Division

Highlight of Travel Behaviour Change*

Despite already having high levels of walking, the three Photovoice schools experienced increases in walking and cycling rates and decreases in driving rates between baseline and follow-up measurements. Student travel classroom surveys measured:

	Holy Name of Jesus CES		St. Ann - Hamilton CES		St. Patrick CES	
	Baseline: Feb 2010 Follow Up: May 2011		Baseline: Feb 2010 Follow Up: May 2011		Baseline: Mar 2010 Follow Up: May 2011	
	To School	From School	To School	From School	To School	From School
Walking	+7%	+12%	+6%	none**	+1%	0%
Biking	+2%	+1%	+1%	none	0%	+1%
Driving	-3%	-4%	-2%	none	-4%	-5%

*The percentages shown in this table reflect the 'percent difference' between the baseline mode share and the follow-up mode share.

** none = data was not reported

The Photovoice Process

Students in Grades 4 to 8, with guidance from adult facilitators, took photos documenting what they saw, heard and smelled on their walk to school.



Taking photos of the school journey

Students expressed the concerns identified in their photos through poems, skits and drawings.



Students Disliked...



Students Liked...

Students from all three schools came together in a seminar to share experiences and brainstorm solutions to the issues raised.



Brainstorming solutions for issues identified

Findings from the Photovoice activity are informing and being linked into broader community initiatives. Community partners are continuing to meet, and engage with local residents, especially students.

Working Toward Sustainability

Recognizing that STP is about policy change, advocacy and building community capacity for lasting change, Hamilton engaged in innovative approaches aimed at moving toward longer-term sustainability, for example:

- A Sustainable Transportation School Certification program was developed through which schools can apply for recognition of their sustainable transportation efforts and may receive a bronze, silver or gold award.
- A Hamilton celebration and visioning STP workshop was held, followed by a School Siting and Site Design forum including a range of community stakeholders. The discussions explored how stakeholders envision, and can support, a sustainable Hamilton-wide STP initiative, and delved into how school location and design can promote a healthy, active community. The reports are available at:
 - www.smartcommutehamilton.ca/media/uploads/Files/School_Siting_Report_Aug_2012.pdf
 - www.smartcommutehamilton.ca/media/uploads/Files/HamiltonSTP_Workshop_Summary_Report.pdf

For more information about the Stepping It Up project and Photovoice activity, visit www.metrolinx.com/schooltravel.



Hamilton STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
- Green Venture (environmental not-for-profit organization)
- Hamilton Police Services
- McMaster University - PhD candidate in Geography and Health Sciences
- City of Hamilton - Public Health
- City of Hamilton - Public Works
- City of Hamilton - Planning and Economic Development
- Heart and Stroke Foundation
- Metrolinx
- Community members including a representative from the Joint Education Parent Advisory Group (JEPAG)

PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

OTTAWA

Ottawa introduced the School Travel Planning (STP) process to eight elementary schools in 2010. Over the next two years, the project achieved an overall average increase of 1% in walking to school and an average increase of 2% in cycling to school, for a total increase of 3% in active transportation (AT).

Ottawa's STP Facilitators noted that key factors contributing to success include:

The **Walking School Bus** (WSB) program has been especially successful at Viscount Alexander Public School. The WSB is operated in partnership with a community health centre that handles volunteer recruitment and liability coverage. WSB "drivers" are retired community residents or university students. The WSB program was in place prior to the introduction of STP at this school, but "it took the introduction of STP for it to really take off. Some days they have up to 25 students taking part." Their WSB best practices resource manual is available at: [www.sandyhillchc.on.ca/PDFs/Community Initiatives/WSB_engl.pdf](http://www.sandyhillchc.on.ca/PDFs/Community_Initiatives/WSB_engl.pdf).

Safety improvements had a big impact at Broadview Public School. This school had "horrendous traffic issues" before starting the STP process. Many safety concerns were identified through the family travel survey and have since been addressed. For example:

- A new adult crossing guard has been put in place at a critical location.
- Many changes have been made to street signs



Walking School Bus enjoying a stroll in the rain

"[The Walking School Bus] has been successful in decreasing the use of school buses [courtesy rides] by children who live within walking distance of the school; it has also increased engagement between the community, the school and parents of children who attend Viscount Alexander Public School."

Quotation from "Viscount Alexander's Walking School Bus: A Program Model & Best Practices Resource"

"As the transportation mode results from Viscount Alexander Public School show, a well-run and fully-supported Walking School Bus program can do wonders."

Jamie Stuckless, STP Facilitator - Ottawa, Green Communities Canada

Highlight of Travel Behaviour Change*

Two of the Ottawa schools are highlighted in this case study. Their student travel classroom surveys measured significant shifts to active transportation:

	Viscount Alexander		Broadview	
	Baseline: October 2010		Baseline: April 2010	
	Follow Up: May 2012		Follow Up: May 2012	
	To School	From School	To School	From School
Walking	+21%	+3%	+8%	+5%
Biking	+3%	+2%	+3%	+3%
Driving	-12%	-6%	-8%	-3%

*The percentages shown in this table reflect 'percent difference' between the baseline mode share and the follow-up mode share.

providing direction about stopping and parking, and a map was developed for parents that clearly identifies where it is appropriate to stop and where it is not.

- The small infrastructure changes implemented are making a big difference; a piece of missing sidewalk was completed and a curb cut added so that people no longer have to walk out onto the road at that point in their journey.
- By-law officer presence has increased at the school to provide consistent enforcement of laws.

Encouragement events have been very successful at both schools. Viscount Alexander achieved a 95% participation rate during one of their walk to school events! At Viscount Alexander's Winter Walk Day, the profile of the event was raised through the participation of Ottawa's mayor, City Councillors, School Board representatives as well as media.

Cycling support and encouragement was provided to all STP schools in Ottawa:

- Bike rodeos helped students practice their bike handling and road safety skills. Public health nurses provided instruction about helmet safety and local bike shop staff discussed bike mechanics.
- In 2010, the City of Ottawa donated 10 bike racks that were installed at schools. This had a multiplier effect, resulting in some schools using their STP honoraria to purchase additional racks on their own.



Photo courtesy of EMC News

Enthusiastic participation in Winter Walk Day

CAN-BIKE instruction on the school grounds →



Well-utilized bike racks show the enthusiasm for cycling to school in Ottawa



CAN-BIKE instruction on the road →

Working Toward Sustainability

Progress has been made in Ottawa to build STP into “business as usual” and move toward longer-term sustainability.

- STP Facilitation in Ottawa is currently funded in part by contributions from the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and the Community Foundation of Ottawa, evidence that stakeholder groups are seeing the value in this work and investing in it.
- In May 2012, Ottawa City Council approved their Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategy which included a section in the Action Plan to engage schools through STP. Specifically, the Strategy calls for the City of Ottawa to “provide financial support for School Travel Planning” and “allocate some resources to additional school engagement outside the framework of the School Travel Planning program [which] could include the provision of information and promotion as well as services related to ridematching, cycling skills training, transit programs, and bicycle parking.” Ottawa’s TDM Strategy can be viewed at: <http://app06.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/trc/2012/05-02/02%20-%20Doc%201.htm>—see Item 3.3.2.
- Ottawa Public Health’s Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Strategy—approved by the Ottawa Board of Health in May 2012—recommends continuing “support to Green Communities Canada to implement the School Travel Planning project” and “expand[ing] Active and Safe Routes to School initiatives to increase the number of school aged children who use active transportation to and from school.” The HEAL Strategy can be viewed at: <http://app06.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/obh/2012/05-07/C-%20HEAL%20Report.htm>—see Recommendation 1, Item 2b.

“Since August 2011, the largest funder for the STP project in Ottawa has been the largest school board. By actually cutting a cheque to support this work, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board is sending a signal that the Board, at a high level, recognizes the importance of active school travel.”

Wallace Beaton, Coordinator - School Travel Planning -
Ottawa & Eastern Ontario, Green Communities Canada

Ottawa STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- City of Ottawa Planning and Growth Management
- City of Ottawa - Municipal Bylaw Enforcement
- City of Ottawa Public Works - School Zone Traffic Safety
- City of Ottawa - Sustainable Transportation
- Ottawa Public Health
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board - Facilities Management
- Ottawa Catholic School Board - Planning
- Consortium de transport scolaire d’Ottawa
- Ottawa Student Transportation Authority
- Conseil des écoles catholique du Centre-Est
- Ottawa Police Service
- Ottawa Safety Council
- Heart and Stroke Foundation



Students participate in a walk-about



Broadview students celebrate IWALK

PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

PEEL REGION

Peel Region pilot-tested School Travel Planning (STP) with 14 elementary schools in a Metrolinx-led project called Stepping It Up between 2009 and 2011, implementing a wide variety of activities aimed at achieving higher levels of active and sustainable transportation. One school in particular, Ridgewood Public School in Mississauga, measured a sizeable increase in walking to and from school. Student travel classroom surveys measured increases of 3% in walking to school and 10% in walking from school. Representatives from the Peel Region STP stakeholder group attributed the following initiatives as keys to success:

Encouragement events such as Walking Wednesdays helped get students excited about walking, especially when their teachers were there to greet them at school.

Healthy competition between classes by tracking participation and awarding points for each class increased enthusiasm for walking.

Walking routes maps and signage were created for Ridgewood as well as most of the other Peel Region Stepping It Up schools.

Support for cycling at Ridgewood included the relocation of a bike rack to the front of the school for increased safety and convenience.

School honoraria provided as part of Stepping It Up was an incentive that helped bring schools on board.

For more information about the Stepping It Up project, visit www.metrolinx.com/schooltravel.

"Walking routes maps are really important. They give parents a good sense of where the school is and where their home is, and how best to get between the two actively and safely."

Violet Skirten, City of Brampton,
Crossing Guard Supervisor

"Offering student rewards for participation can be a good motivator, even if it's a small item."

Wayne Chan, Manager,
Sustainable Transportation, Public Works, Transportation Division



En route home from school in Peel Region - a crossing guard and crosswalk implemented as a result of the STP process helps families cross safely



Display showcasing a walking routes map, street sign, and Walking Wednesday participation tracking

Peel Region STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Region of Peel, Transportation Planning
- EcoSource (environmental not-for-profit organization)
- Peel Regional Police
- Brampton Traffic Safety Council
- Peel Public Health, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention
- Mississauga Traffic Safety Council
- Peel Health Services – Environmental Health

PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

THUNDER BAY

Thunder Bay pilot-tested the School Travel Planning (STP) process with two elementary schools—École Gron Morgan Public School and Corpus Christi Catholic School—from 2010 to 2012. Thunder Bay is already experiencing early signs of STP success, including improved safety and strong stakeholder commitment to continue working toward achieving higher levels of active and sustainable transportation. Representatives from the Thunder Bay STP stakeholder group identified the following as important to their success to date:

School traffic counts were impactful on a number of levels. The traffic technologist gained evidence detailing the day-to-day traffic patterns around the school and saw what children experience each school day. This has resulted in a sidewalk installation and changes to the parking rules in front of École Gron Morgan, as well as work underway to reduce speed limits at the back of the school. The Principal has since observed reduced congestion at the front of the school.

Bike rodeos were run at both schools for Grade 4 students, including CAN-BIKE training and bike repairs.

Bike racks were installed at both schools. École Gron Morgan purchased their rack while Corpus Christi School engaged the high school tech class to construct theirs. Having the high school students involved in this project raised the profile of cycling in the broader community.

Encouragement through incentives proved to be effective. Students tracked their walks on incentive cards. When a student had walked to or from school 20 times, they received a blinking safety light and were entered into a draw for a gift card.

"There is much potential in Thunder Bay for increasing the number of students walking and biking for the school journey. I know there are lots of kids riding the bus that don't need to [because of courtesy bussing] and I often see busses going by that are quite empty."

Ashley Priem, Program Coordinator, EcoSuperior



Bike racks are well used



Students check out the bike repair workshop

Thunder Bay STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Lakehead Public School Board
- Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- EcoSuperior (environmental not-for-profit organization)
- City of Thunder Bay Engineering
- City of Thunder Bay Planning
- Thunder Bay Police Services
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Parents
- Ward Councillor
- Citizens interested in walkability



Bike safety training on the school grounds

PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

ST. THOMAS

From 2010 to 2012, Mitchell Hepburn Public School in St. Thomas participated in a School Travel Planning (STP) pilot project. In addition, from September 2011 to June 2012, Mitchell Hepburn was a pilot school for the Wheeling to School project, a joint collaboration of Green Communities Canada and Share the Road Cycling Coalition that focused exclusively on the goal of increasing cycling for the school journey. The school experienced significant increases in cycling on “Wheeling Wednesdays” during the Wheeling to School project, as illustrated by the photos (below) of overflowing bike racks as well as bikes parked along the school’s fence. The following are key activities that contributed to safer cycling conditions and greater cycling mode share at Mitchell Hepburn:

A **Cycle-About** brought together stakeholders for the first time to survey the school community and identify collaborative actions to support cycling for school travel.

Safer cycling routes to school were identified and then promoted through safer cycling routes maps that were sent home with students.



During a Cycle-About, stakeholders cycle around the school community and identify issues that make cycling unsafe or undesirable. Many of the issues will have been identified in advance through family travel surveys and new issues may be discovered during the ride. After the cycling portion, stakeholders gather to explore solutions that will be included in the STP action plan.

Cycling safety training was provided during school hours to students in Grades 4 through 8 who rode their bikes to school on the day of the training. The training given was a modified version of the CAN-BIKE curriculum.

A **Wheels Rodeo** was held during school hours for students in Grades 4 and 5, with stations for students to rotate between, such as presentations on safety and proper helmet fitting.

Bike racks were purchased and installed using school honoraria funds from the STP project.

Safe cycling enforcement was introduced through blitzes conducted by the community police officer. Instead of handing out tickets, the officer, along with the school V-P, gave helmets to students riding without one. The helmets were donated to the police by a local community service club.

The Wheeling to School project case study is available at: www.saferoutestoschool.ca/sites/default/files/Wheeling%20to%20School-Case%20Study.pdf.



St. Thomas STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Elgin St. Thomas Public Health (2 people)
- Principal and Vice-Principal at Mitchell Hepburn PS
- School Council Chair at Mitchell Hepburn PS
- St. Thomas Police Services
- City of St. Thomas - Roads and Transportation
- City Councillor
- Parents & students (ad hoc)



PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

TORONTO

St. Cecilia Catholic School in Toronto pilot-tested the School Travel Planning (STP) process from 2011 to 2012. St. Cecilia is already experiencing early signs of STP success, including improved safety and strong stakeholder commitment to continue working toward achieving higher levels of active and sustainable transportation. Members of the Toronto STP stakeholder group identified the following activities as important to success to date:

The **Walk-About** was helpful in enabling stakeholders, including the municipal Councillor, to see the issues first hand then identify and quickly implement some actionable items. During a Walk-About, stakeholders walk around the school community and discuss the issues that make walking and cycling unsafe or undesirable. Many of the issues will have been identified in advance through family travel surveys and new issues may be discovered during the walk. After the walking portion, stakeholders gather to explore solutions that will be included in an Action Plan.

Surveys that are completed as part of the STP process proved to be a motivator for the school to implement their Action Plan because they knew the results were being measured.

Encouragement events, such as Walk to School Days and the Walk Across Canada activity in which students log their collective distance walked on a map of Canada, were effective for increasing awareness of the benefits of walking to school and creating enthusiasm for doing so.

Wheel Safety Education Day taught students about wearing helmets properly, bike maintenance and general road safety.

"[STP] helps make students feel like the community is theirs...their neighbourhood gets bigger and bigger as they feel safer."

Lorinda Mazza, Principal, St. Cecilia Catholic School

Toronto STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Principal, Vice-Principal & Teacher at St. Cecilia CS
- Toronto Public Health
- City of Toronto Police
- City of Toronto Councillor
- City of Toronto Transportation Services
- Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board - Student Transportation
- Metrolinx
- Parents



Students are enthusiastic about Walk to School Day



Students learn about cycling safety



Students practice their cycling skills

PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

WATERLOO REGION

St. Matthew Catholic Elementary School in Waterloo pilot-tested the School Travel Planning (STP) process from 2010 to 2012 and has experienced many STP successes, particularly with regard to improving safety. Representatives from the Waterloo Region STP stakeholder group identified the following activities as important to their success to date:

An **infrastructure change** was made, in part due to the diligent work of parents; a pedestrian island was installed on a major road, providing pedestrians with a safe place to pause partway when crossing the busy street. This change shifted travel behaviour, with some parents reporting they now feel comfortable enough to allow their children to walk to school instead of driving them. The STP process has provided a constructive forum for parents to have a continued dialogue with the municipality and work toward further improvements to the built environment around St. Matthew.

Parent interaction has been encouraged each year on the first day of school; an STP Facilitator (Public Health Nurse) sets up a table in the school gym, with refreshments and a laminated map of the school catchment area. Parents are encouraged to put a sticker on the map indicating where they live and conversations ensue, establishing important social connections between neighbours and facilitating the formation of informal walking groups.

Annual cycling activities include a bike inspection day for the whole neighbourhood and CAN-BIKE training for students. A bike rack has also been installed outside the school's front office window for maximum security.

Working Toward Sustainability

After working on raising awareness among school personnel, students and parents, Waterloo Region's stakeholder group realized that winning over individual school champions was not translating into sustainability from one year to the next. Buy-in was needed from the top and on a systemic level, so an Active Transportation Charter for school boards was developed by the stakeholder group to guide future policy development. The Charter was unanimously adopted in May 2011 by both school boards. Beyond the Charter, strategic next steps are being planned and work is underway to create a full-time STP Coordinator position. The Charter is available at: www.wrdsb.ca/planning/files/2012/04/Active-Transportation-Charter_WRDSB-only.pdf.



Students have their bikes inspected by a mechanic



Bikes parked safely by the front office

Waterloo STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Region of Waterloo Public Health
- Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Planning
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Healthy Living
- Waterloo Region District School Board - Planning
- Crossing Guard Coordinators from Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo
- Region of Waterloo Transportation Demand Management
- Police Services
- Citizen Volunteers (2 members)
- School Principal
- Ontario Ministry of Transportation

NIAGARA REGION

General Vanier Public School in Fort Erie was the first school in Niagara Region to undergo the School Travel Planning (STP) process, from 2010 to 2011. Student travel classroom surveys measured a 10% increase in the number of students walking or biking to school. Family travel surveys revealed that parental beliefs and perceptions around neighbourhood safety for walking or biking to school showed a marked improvement between baseline and follow-up; while only 35% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that neighbourhoods were safe for walking or biking in June of 2010, over 84% agreed or strongly agreed they were safe in June 2011.

Representatives from the Niagara Region STP stakeholder group identified the following activities as important to their success to date:

The **STP process**—including surveys, walk-about and action planning with stakeholders—was key to the progress made at this school. The process brought the right people together to support children's mobility.

Some **quick wins** were important for building initial enthusiasm and maintaining momentum. For example:

- A pedestrian walkthrough and a bollard were installed to improve safety.
- The timer at a light was extended to allow more time to cross.
- No idling signs were installed.
- Bike racks were purchased.
- Bike rodeos were held.
- A speed radar board was used to show speeds to cars passing in front of the school.

Encouragement events such as International Walk to School Day (IWALK) were important contributors to shifting mindsets and transportation behaviour.



New anti-idling signs posted

Niagara Region STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- Bridges Community Health Centre
- Canadian Automobile Association
- City of St. Catharines - Transportation
- District School Board of Niagara - Transportation
- Niagara Student Transportation Services
- Brock University
- Healthy Living Niagara
- Niagara Region Public Works
- Niagara Region Public Health
- Niagara Regional Police
- Town of Fort Erie - Community and Development Services
- Town of Grimsby - Recreation, Facilities and Culture
- Town of Pelham - Planning and Development
- Town of West Lincoln - Alderman

"As an elementary school principal, the initial benefits of the School Travel Plan are obvious. By encouraging children to walk to school, we provide needed daily physical activity, improved health and nutrition, and take a major step towards reducing the pollution and traffic congestion that none of our schools were ever intended to accommodate.....Through the simple act of taking the time to encourage your child to walk to school, you are helping to build the safe, caring and confident community that every school is trying to achieve - one step at a time. Who would have thought it was that easy?"

Gary King, Principal, General Vanier

PROFILE OF SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING SUCCESS:

YORK REGION

York Region pilot-tested the School Travel Planning (STP) process with two elementary schools, from 2010 to 2012. Wismer Public School in Markham experienced tremendous success getting students using active transportation; on their third week of Walking Wednesdays, 70 percent of students walked to school. Feedback from the principal indicates that there has also been a lasting reduction in traffic congestion within the school zone. Representatives from York Region's STP stakeholder group described the following as important to success:

- The **school location and catchment area** are key factors. With Wismer, the distance of the school journey was already walkable for most students, with 80% or more living within 1.6 km of the school.
- It is important that **school principal commitment** to the STP process and shifting behaviour is high. This was the case at Wismer because the school had significant traffic issues.
- The **"Can Do" attitude of the STP group** was critical. When the community raised an issue, stakeholders with the ability to make decisions on the issue were at the table to facilitate change.
- **Teacher engagement** ensures that students are regularly encouraged to use active transportation; for example, at Wismer, fun, friendly competition across classes got teachers and students involved. At Wismer, the students also took a leadership role in convincing their parents to let them walk.
- A **large map of the school catchment area** was created by York Region's GIS group. Students used stickers on the map to indicate where they live. Wismer is a new school in a brand new community so people did not know one another. This activity helped connect people and provided an opportunity to meet neighbours.
- **Whole community engagement strategies** were popular at Wismer. A media launch event that had the whole school walk and enjoy a healthy snack excited the students. After this success, several community-wide events were planned. Among the most popular was a community scavenger hunt done on a Walking Wednesday on the way to school.
- **Traffic calming measures** were implemented including painting stop lines to decrease rolling stops and delineate pedestrian crossing areas, improving an unsafe intersection near the school, and using stationary solar and mobile police speed boards.

Working Toward Sustainability: School transportation work is showing signs of long-term sustainability in York Region. In 2008, the York Region school boards created a full-time School Traffic Planner position, which was transitioned into a Safe Routes to School Facilitator position in 2012. This staff works in collaboration with York Region Public Health and the municipalities to facilitate the work at the school level.

"It would be amazing to do a car count today! We have NO traffic anymore."
From York Region School Travel Plan - Pilot
Project Report 2010-2011



Large map of school catchment area



Kicking off ICANWalk to School campaign with Mark Strong from the Raptors

York Region STP Stakeholder Committee Members

- York Region Community and Health Services
- York Region - Transportation and Community Planning
- York Region District School Board
- York Catholic District School Board
- Town of Markham – Transportation
- City of Vaughan
- Windfall Ecology Action Centre
- Heart & Stroke Foundation
- Metrolinx

HALDIMAND COUNTY

Haldimand County pilot-tested the School Travel Planning (STP) process in two elementary schools—J.L. Mitchener Public School in Cayuga and Notre Dame Catholic Elementary School in Caledonia—from 2011 to 2012. These rural schools are already experiencing early signs of STP success, including improved safety and strong stakeholder commitment. An STP Facilitator from the Haldimand-Norfolk STP stakeholder group identified the following activities as important to their success to date:

Encouragement activities, such as assemblies to launch walking to school week and tracking kilometres walked, helped raise awareness of the benefits of walking and get kids walking.

Students taking a **group walk around the school neighbourhood** helped to create awareness and excitement about walking to school, and motivated students to talk to their parents about walking.

Bike rodeos helped provide important safety education while increasing enthusiasm about cycling.

New by-law signs were installed to limit where cars stop or park; having parents park 25 sidewalk slabs further from the school makes it easier for school busses to drop off students. To raise awareness of the new parking by-law, informational displays were put up at a school open house and parents were encouraged to ask questions. The county also sent a letter home to all parents explaining why the signs were put in place and emphasizing that the by-law would be enforced. Most parents shifted their behaviour in about a week.

"I think School Travel Planning has the potential to have a big impact in Haldimand County because our communities are rural. In these small communities, I see some of the students out and about, and they know me as the safety lady. Everybody talks. Kids go to the same school, play sports together...You see the same people everywhere you go. I am hopeful that behaviour change will be easier in such tightknit communities."

Karin Marks, Health Promoter, Child Injury Prevention



Students take a walk around the school neighbourhood

Haldimand County STP Stakeholder Committee Members

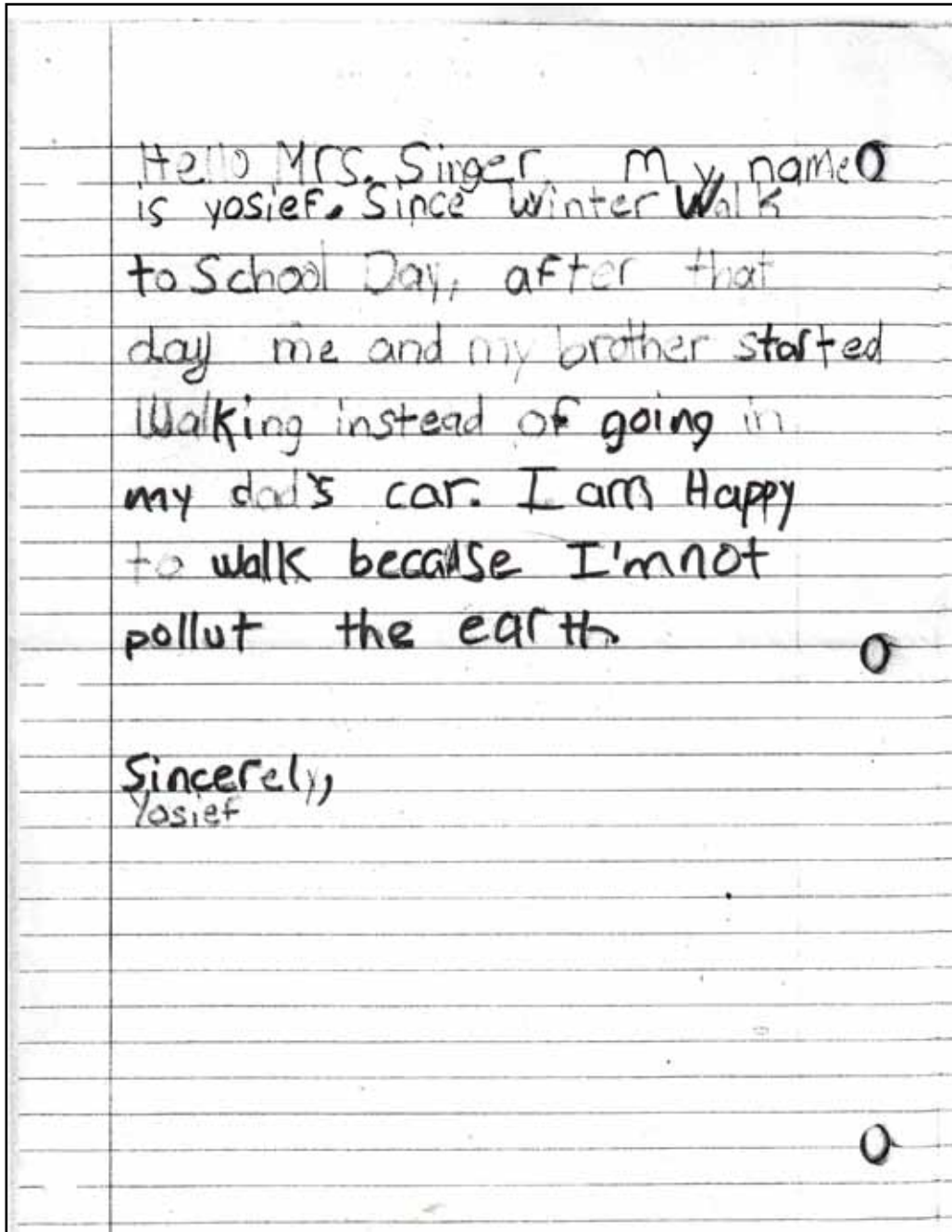
- Traffic/Transportation Department (3 people)
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist
- Building and By-Law Officer
- Ontario Provincial Police
- Grand Erie District School Board (3 people)
- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (2 people)
- Cypres Youth Centre
- Municipal Councillor
- Volunteers



Police provide support

A reminder of what School Travel Planning is all about...

...helping young people discover the joy of being physically active outdoors on their school journey.



A letter from an Ottawa student to his principal