This document is a sample school board ethics application for a School Travel Planning project.

Note that school boards in Canada often have a research AND evaluation committee that oversees data collection conducted at schools. Although you will be conducting a program evaluation for the School Travel Planning Project and not a research project, it is likely that you will use the same application form and apply to the same committee as is required for research projects. This sample application provides text (in blue) that may be used verbatim in local school board ethics application forms. Ensure that you consult the local school board policy, documentation and timelines when completing an application. Apply early to allow sufficient time for receiving feedback and submitting revisions.

This sample application was based on a template commissioned by the Ontario Education Research Panel (OERP), whose members come from various education communities, including university faculty, school board researchers, and researchers from other education organizations. The Association of Educational Researchers of Ontario (AERO), an organization that supports researchers and research activity in school boards, developed the application.

# Sample ethics application to conduct School Travel Planning

## A. APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name Date

Address Tel. *(Res.)*

Tel. *(Bus.)*

Email Fax

Institution/Agency

Position/Role

## B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND TIMELINE

Title of research proposal: [insert community name] School Travel Planning (STP) Project

Preferred start date:

Expected end date:

Expected date of report to board *(research summary submitted to the board/participating schools)*

Please list all other school boards to whom you are submitting an application to conduct this research.

## C. NATURE OF RESEARCH

❑ Undergraduate thesis ❑ Master's thesis ❑ Doctoral thesis ❑ University research

❑ Principal’s course ❑ AQ course ❑ Externally-sponsored project

✓ Other: program evaluation for the School Travel Planning project

**Proof of permission and/or ethical review is required from your university/institution.**

❑ the approval/ethics certificate from my university/institution is attached

❑ in progress (please provide details below, including expected date of approval/amendment)

N/A – this program evaluation is being conducted by the delivery organization [insert name] to assess travel conditions at the school and track progress for internal purposes. This program evaluation is not part of a research project.

## D. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a brief summary of your literature review and/or the theoretical foundations for your study.

The School Travel Planning (STP) Project will enhance efforts to address the health and safety concerns caused by school zone traffic congestion. The program aims to positively influence the transportation decisions of children, parents/guardians through the implementation of Active and Safe Routes to School strategies and the creation of a School Travel Plan.

***Brief description of the problem:***

Schools, school boards, and municipalities struggle with traffic issues created outside of schools during pick-up/drop-off times because of an increasing number of children who live within the walk zone or are eligible to take the school bus, but are driven to school. This results in chaotic traffic patterns, congestion, and serious health and safety threats for all students, including those who currently walk or cycle. For instance, children who walk or cycle are subjected to increased air pollution from idling vehicles. Traffic congestion in the school zone blocks fire routes and interferes with loading and unloading school buses. School Travel Planning helps to create comprehensive travel plans for local schools, resulting in safer school zones and routes to school, more active children and families, reduced emissions, and smoother bus operations. This School Travel Planning Project is based on the model framework for Canada, *Children’s Mobility, Health and Happiness: A Canadian School Travel Planning Model* developed 2008-2012 and refined in 2014-2015 (Green Communities Canada, 2018a). The Project uses Green Communities Canada’s School Travel Planning data collection tools that were recently updated through funding from the Ontario Active School Travel Program (Green Communities Canada, 2018b).

***Relevant Literature:***

A number of studies have demonstrated the importance of encouraging students to use active modes such as walking or cycling to/from school to increase overall physical activity (Chillón et al., 2014; Mammen et al., 2014; Buliung et al., 2011; Buliung et al., 2009). Although rates of active school travel are declining in many countries, active school travel can provide a significant source of physical activity for children. Buliung and colleagues (2011) evaluated a pilot project at 12 schools in four Canadian provinces, and found that an Action Plan facilitates desirable changes in patterns of school travel over time. Rates of active transportation increased from 43.8% to 45.9%, and 13.3% of households reported less driving. The main reasons that some parents continued to drive were weather, convenience and trip chaining (i.e., having multiple destinations along their route, such as school followed by work). Similarly, a nationwide study of the Walk to School program at 18 randomly selected schools in the United States found that active school travel was mainly related to parent perceptions (Chillón et al., 2014). However, parents were more concerned about the perceived challenges along the route to school (e.g., lack of cross walks) rather than weather. Evaluation of conditions specific to a school and school community can help to identify areas requiring consideration and intervention, and ways that programming may be tailored to increase rates of active school travel among students.

***References***

Buliung R.N., Mitra, R., and Faulkner, G. (2009). Active school transportation in the Greater Toronto area, Canada: an exploration of trends in space and time (1986-2006). *Preventive Medicine*. 48:507-512.

Buliung, R., Faulkner, G., Beesley, T and Kennedy, J. (2011). School travel planning: mobilizing school and community resources to encourage active school transportation.  *Journal of School Health.* 81:11.

Chillón, P., Hales, D., Vaughn, A., Gizlice, Z., Ni, A., and Ward, D.S. (2014). A cross-sectional study of demographic, environmental and parental barriers to active school travel among children in the United States. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity.* 11: 61.

Green Communities Canada (2018a). *Children’s mobility, health and happiness: a Canadian school travel planning model.* Retrieved from <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CLASP-2012-National-Results.pdf>

Green Communities Canada (2018b). *School travel planning toolkit.* Retrieved from <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/school-travel-planning/school-travel-planning-toolkit/>

Mammen, G., Stone., M.R., Faulkner, G., Ramanathan, S., Buliung, R., O’Brien, C., and Kennedy, J. (2014). Active school travel: an evaluation of the Canadian school travel planning intervention. *Preventative Medicine.* 60: 55-59.

***Purpose***:

The purpose of this School Travel Planning Project is to encourage more individuals to choose active transportation modes (like walking, cycling, inline skating) or more environmentally friendly options such as taking the school bus or carpooling, by working with community stakeholders to create conditions that make these transportation options safer and more appealing.

2. Explain the practical benefits and/or contribution of this research to the participants, to the district school board and/or to the education system in general.

***Contributions to the district school board and education system:***

Limited work has been done in Canada to understand relationships between schools and transportation challenges facing school boards and municipalities. This Project will identify factors affecting mode choice decisions among families that could guide future transportation planning, policy and programming.

A central component of School Travel Planning is to create stakeholder committees within the school (e.g., parents, students, staff) and wider community/region (e.g., public health, school boards, police, municipal councilors). Engaging school- and regional stakeholders to tackle transportation challenges may create synergistic relationships and coordination that can contribute to broader education goals like promoting well-being, ensuring equity, enhancing public confidence in the education system, and achieving excellence among school children (see [Achieving Excellence](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf)).

This Project also aligns with specific goals of the [school board’s strategic plan]: [insert relevant info].

***Contributions to the school:***

Through this Project, a comprehensive and tailored School Travel Plan will be created and implemented at each school. This Plan will identify school-specific challenges and issues related to active school travel and devise solutions that will increase the number of students who use active modes (e.g., walk or bicycle) or sustainable modes (e.g., school bus or carpooling), and decrease the number of students who are driven to school. Fewer vehicles in the school zone will improve safety around the school, reduce greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., from idling), reduce school staff time required for traffic management, and lead to potential savings in parking-related infrastructure and maintenance costs.

The School Travel Planning Project also provides access to lesson plans and teaching resources developed by Canadian educators that are aligned with curricular guidelines and span a range of subject areas including geography (e.g., mapping routes), mathematics (e.g., graphing school travel modes), and physical and health education. Integrating lesson plans may enhance school curriculum, give students rich and practical learning experiences, and reinforce decisions among students and their families to choose active modes of travel where feasible.

***Contributions to participants***:

Parents/guardians and students who participate in the Project will have the opportunity to reflect on their school travel choices and consider how they may adjust their behaviors to align with school-based curricula on human activities and the environment. For example, active transportation is a recognized component of the EcoSchools program. The School Travel Planning Project will offer students opportunities to contribute to curricular and extra-curricular activities that promote ecological literacy, road and/or bicycle safety, community leadership, and critical thinking about environmental health and consequences of a car-centric transportation system. Students (and parents/guardians who accompany them) who shift to active modes of travel will also reap the health and wellness benefits associated with daily physical activity.

## E. DATA COLLECTION AND/OR DATA REQUESTS

1. Describe the proposed data collection. Include the number of sites/schools required and the name of any preferred schools or sites.

It is anticipated that [insert #] schools in [insert community name] will participate in the Project in each year over [insert #] years, beginning [insert start date of project], for a total of [insert # of schools] schools by [insert end date of project].

These are the preferred schools for the School Travel Planning Project: [list schools; include selection criteria or indicate whether schools have expressed interest in the Project]

***Program Evaluation:***

The evaluation component of the School Travel Planning Project involves the collection of data (baseline and follow-up) to measure changes in travel patterns of students to and from participating schools. There are two voluntary and anonymous surveys involving students or their families, and three school-level data collection tools:

1. Student Travel Survey: a hands-up survey of all students conducted by classroom teachers every school day for one week. This survey collects data about school travel mode (to and from school). This survey will be conducted twice each school year (i.e., in October and May).
2. Family Survey: a take-home survey completed by parents/guardians to collect data on parental perceptions related to the school journey and areas of concern on school routes. This survey will be conducted at the beginning of the Project, and towards the end of the project (i.e., month, year)
3. School Profile Form: a form completed by the Project Facilitator and Principal that includes general information about the school (e.g., school type, year opened, bell times, description of location, special programs), students (e.g., total number enrolled, % who receive bus service), transportation facilities (e.g., # parking spaces, # bicycle racks), and a map of the school area (e.g., school location, catchment area, dot plot of where students reside). This form will be reviewed and updated once a year by the Facilitator.
4. Traffic Observation: an in-person observation of the traffic at or near the school conducted by a Facilitator and/or volunteers to document problem travel-related behaviors. This observation will be conducted at the beginning of the Project (i.e., month). The Traffic Observation may be repeated towards the end of the project.
5. Walkabout: an in-person walking tour of the school grounds and surrounding areas to view first-hand what the current routes to school are like. The Facilitator leads the walkabout with key project stakeholders (e.g., school, school board and municipal representatives) to assess opportunities and challenges in encouraging sustainable travel modes. The Walkabout will be conducted at the beginning of the Project (i.e., month) and may be repeated to reassess conditions towards the end of the Project.

*Key concepts measured by each tool:*

1. Student Travel Survey: travel mode (e.g., walk, walk partway, bicycle).
2. Family Survey: grade, school bus eligibility, travel mode, reasons for travel mode choices, travel time, factors that would encourage walking for the school journey, factors that would encourage cycling for the school journey, locations of concern, awareness of School Travel Programming.
3. School Profile Form: school characteristics (e.g., school type, year opened, bell times, description of location, special programs), student characteristics (e.g., total number enrolled, % who receive school bus service), transportation facilities (e.g., # parking spaces, # bicycle racks), map of the school area (e.g., school location, catchment area, dot plot of where students reside).
4. Traffic Observation: observe driver/cyclist/walker behaviour on and around school site and record any examples that are illegal, and/or unsafe (e.g., vehicles stopping in marked no-stopping or no-parking zones, rolling stops, jaywalking).
5. Walkabout: potential issues at school site (e.g., parking lot, facilities for walkers, walking paths, bicycle facilities), potential issues in areas surrounding school site (e.g., walking facilities and traffic observations, alternative safe parking locations, bicycle facilities), and non-traffic related items to consider (e.g., presence of shade trees, graffiti).
6. How many students will directly participate? [Complete this section as appropriate]

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of students | Grade/Program | Time required | Additional details |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

How many teachers will directly participate?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of teachers | Grade/Program | Time required | Additional details |
|  |  |  |  |
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How many other school personnel will directly participate?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of staff | Staff Role | Time required | Additional details |
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1. Describe any other requests for data from the district school board.

N/A

## F. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION/STUDY

1. Provide a brief summary of your planned method(s) of data collection. List all data collection instruments (e.g., tests, surveys, interview guides etc.) and attach copies to this application.

At the beginning of the STP Project, the Facilitator will contact the Principal at each school. As part of the initial discussion with Principals, the Facilitator will explain that there are two voluntary and anonymous surveys involving students or their families, and three school-level data collection tools. No identifiable information (e.g., names) will be collected from students or their families, and participation is always optional.

***Data Collection Instruments: [attach copies of these documents to the application]***

1. Student Travel Survey
2. Family Survey
3. School Profile Form
4. Traffic Observation Form
5. Walkabout Instructions and Checklist

In brief, the methods of collecting program evaluation data are as follows:

* The Facilitator will contact key stakeholders from the local community (e.g., public health, school boards, police, municipal councilors) to form a Regional STP Committee
* The Facilitator will work with the Principal to recruit members for a School STP Committee (e.g., teachers, senior students) that will meet regularly to implement the Project
* The Facilitator and Principal will complete the School Profile Form
* Teachers or senior students will administer the Student Travel Survey in the classroom every day over a week-long period, asking about travel mode to and from school [if using an online version, explain that teachers/students will input data directly into a secure web-application; if using a paper version, explain that the Facilitator will collect paper copies of the survey and input data into a spreadsheet. Paper copies will be stored securely in accordance to school board requirements]
* The school will help administer the Family Survey (either a paper-based on online version) [if using an online version, include information about how parents will be contacted, e.g., emailed through a school listserve, and how families will be tracked at baseline/follow-up]
* The Traffic Observation will be conducted by the Facilitator [and possibly volunteers from the School STP Committee]
* The Walkabout will be organized and led by the Facilitator and attended by members of the School and Regional STP Committees

The Student Travel Survey will be conducted twice each school year (i.e., in October and May). The Family Survey may be repeated towards the end of the project (i.e., month, year). The School Profile form will be updated each year. The Traffic Observation and Walkabout may be repeated towards the end of the project, or following any actions (changes) that are likely to result in new data.

2. Describe your plans for communicating to parents and participants about the research. Explain your plans for obtaining informed consent for participation. Attach copies of all information letters, consent letters and other communication materials to this application.

Participation in this Project is voluntary, no personal or sensitive information is gathered, and minimal time commitment is required of students, classroom teachers, and parents/guardians.

The process of obtaining informed consent for participation will begin with the school Principal. The Facilitator will discuss the steps of the School Travel Planning process and provide the Principal with a copy of the *School Travel Planning (STP) Introduction for Principals* (attached). The Introduction document outlines the STP process, the school’s roles and responsibilities, examples of actions (changes) that have been implemented through the Project at other schools (e.g., traffic calmed streets and sidewalks), and benefits of participating in the Project).

Prior to initiating any Project activities, the Principal will provide consent for the school to take part in the project by signing the *School Agreement* (also attached). This includes consent for teachers to administer the Student Travel Surveys to students and record results on a tally sheet [or input directly into web-application], and consent for the school to disseminate and promote the Family Survey to students and their parents using existing communication mechanisms (e.g., email, school website, Synervoice).

For the Family Survey administered to parents/guardians, the first page provides brief information about School Travel Planning and indicates that responses are anonymous. It also explains that the purpose of the survey is to learn about school travel choices among families so that a travel plan can be created that considers everyone’s needs. Completion and submission of the Family Survey implies consent of the parent/guardian to participate in the program evaluation.

3. Briefly explain the data analysis procedures you will use for your research.

Analysis of Student Travel Survey data will involve calculation of pre- and post-intervention mode share (e.g., percentage of students using each mode of transportation, percentage of students in the walk-zone who report walking and percentage of students eligible for bussing who ride the school bus). We will also look at the distribution of active trips by student characteristics (e.g., grade level) and weather conditions (e.g., temperature).

Analysis of Family Survey data will involve calculation of mode share (i.e., travel mode of students). We will also look at the distribution of active trips by student characteristics (e.g., grade level, eligibility to ride the school bus, travel time, reasons for travel mode).

The School Profile Form will be primarily used for planning purposes at individual schools; however, data from the profile forms may also be aggregated to demonstrate the range of characteristics of program schools (e.g., charts showing average numbers of parking spaces at program schools).

Analysis of the Traffic Observation will involve creating summary charts listing common travel-related behaviours across schools (e.g., midblock crossings, U-turns, rolling through stop signs). The purpose of this tool will be primarily for planning purposes at individual schools, toward understanding where safety education should be targeted and toward brainstorming engineering interventions that may deter dangerous behaviours/encourage safe behaviours.

Analysis of the Walkabout will include organizing observations into action items to be added to the School Action Plan, to be addressed by specific project stakeholders (e.g., Transportation Services staff).

4. List the security procedures in place for the protection of participant privacy and data storage.

No personal or sensitive information will be collected in the Project. The Student Travel Survey and Family Survey data are anonymous to protect participant privacy. All paper copies of the Student Travel Survey tally sheets, Family Survey, School Profile Form, Traffic Observation and Walkabout will be either stored in a locked filing cabinet at the school or stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Facilitator’s office.

Data entered into spreadsheets and stored electronically will be saved in password-protected computers and folders only accessible to the Facilitator and staff directly involved in the Project. Schools and classrooms will be assigned identification numbers, and all electronic data will be stored under these numbers only, protecting privacy and maintaining confidentiality. The file linking identification numbers to schools and classrooms will be stored in a separate password-protected folder.

In any publications arising from the data (e.g., school newsletters, school website, media releases), results will be presented in aggregate form by travel mode, grade, school characteristics, etc.

As this is a program evaluation for an ongoing initiative and uses Green Communities Canada’s School Travel Planning data collection tools that will be administered provincially through the Ontario Active School Travel Program, it is important to retain all data indefinitely. This will ensure ongoing monitoring and tracking of program initiatives, and also permit comparisons between aggregated [insert community name] schools and schools across Ontario. Data will be stored anonymously by school identification numbers and using the security measures described above.

## G. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Facilities required (e.g., quiet workspace; gymnasium; classroom)

1. Student Travel Survey: classrooms; no dedicated facilities required
2. Family Survey: at home; no dedicated facilities required
3. School Profile Form: meeting with Principal; no dedicated facilities required
4. Traffic Observation: on and around the school (e.g., parking lot, streets facing school); no dedicated facilities required
5. Walkabout: on and around the school (e.g., parking lot, streets facing school, streets within school neighborhood); no dedicated facilities required

2. Assistance required (e.g., early access to room for set up; assistance with students)

3. Other resources or special arrangements required

## H. PROVISION FOR FEEDBACK

1. Please describe your plans to report results to participants, participating schools and/or the district school board office: [modify as needed]

First and foremost, the results of the data collected will inform decisions about how unique challenges faced by schools can be tackled.

Results of the Project will be shared with students, teachers and staff at school assemblies and through morning announcements. Individual classes may wish to graph and display their Student Travel Survey in classrooms. Schools may wish to display posters related to their STP action plans (e.g., changes implemented).

Results will be shared with parents/guardians and the school community through school newsletters, media releases (e.g., related to special STP events or survey results), and other communication mechanisms (e.g., Twitter feed, email).

Results will be shared with the district school board office at the end of each school year and when the Project wraps up at each school.

Results will be shared with the School and Regional STP Committees at each meeting.

Final School Travel Plan reports (when the Project wraps up at each school) will be submitted to the [School Board Ethics committee] as required.

2. Describe any publication/speaking plans for this research (e.g., academic press; social media; online news; conference presentations): [revise accordingly]

In any publications arising from the data, results will be presented in aggregate form by travel mode, grade, school characteristics, etc. Schools will not be identified.

We plan to present Project data at conference presentations (e.g., regional summit; teacher conferences), media releases (e.g., tied to special active school travel events in the school year), school newsletters, school social media channels (e.g., Twitter), and municipal meetings. Schools will not be identified by name, and only by characteristics (e.g., type of location).

In the future, aggregated [name of community] data may be compared with data from Ontario schools that take part in the Ontario Active School Travel Program administered by Green Communities Canada. The Ontario Active School Travel Program will be using the same data collection tools submitted with this application.

**SIGNATURES**

Researcher

I have received and read any district school board accompanying policy/guideline document about conducting research in the district and agree to follow its requirements if my application is accepted.

*Note that the final decision to participate in any research project always rests with the individual   
(e.g., principal, teachers, other staff; student through a parental consent form or a student assent form)*

Signature of researcher

Professor/Sponsor/Affiliated organization

This is to certify that the above described research proposal has been reviewed by myself/my organization and has been vetted for its academic soundness. Consideration has been given to ethical, legal and moral questions arising from the proposal.

Contact person (e.g., sponsoring professor, director of organization)

Name of organization

**RETURN TO***: District school board address inserted here*