

Walk to school! It's closer than you think.

By Caroline Cox

As your family develops a back-to-school routine this fall, consider walking or wheeling for your school journey. With new wayfinding signs at four local schools, it's never been easier.

The new signs are designed to remind families that it's not far to walk to school. The signs are located along preferred walking and cycling routes and encourage families to choose active methods of travel. Selected routes serve a high number of families in the school neighbourhood so it's easy for students to walk together. They prioritize roads with sidewalks, which are safer and have more pedestrian traffic. Participating schools are Ecole Gron Morgan and Edgewater Park Public Schools and St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Margaret Elementary Schools. Signage will be installed throughout September.

Live too far to walk? Park your car along the route and follow the signs the rest of the way. Meet your friends at their house or at a local park and walk together—it's a great way to start your morning!

Wayfinding signs are part of the Walk Or Wheel Thunder Bay program delivered by EcoSuperior and the Health Unit. This project is made possible through financial support from Green Communities Canada and the Government of Ontario.

In a similar campaign, which has been run by the Thunder Bay Walkability Committee in downtown Port Arthur and Fort William since 2016, Thunder Bay residents said that wayfinding signs contributed to a pleasant walking experience, demonstrated that it's not too far to walk to popular destinations, and encouraged them to walk more.

Studies have shown that traveling actively to school increases alertness and attention in class. Active school travel has also been shown to decrease stress, depression, and anxiety and increase happiness. Other benefits include reducing traffic volumes, improving air quality and safety in the school zones, and improving physical health.

Signs will be installed by volunteers during family-friendly walks early this fall. If your family would like to volunteer, please email Caroline@EcoSuperior.org.