

Guidelines for safe, healthy school travel during COVID-19

The [Ontario Active School Travel Council](#) offers the following guidelines to assist school boards, school transportation authorities, municipalities and families to support active transportation (walking, cycling, scooting etc.) as a safe, healthy choice for the journey to school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guidelines for School Boards, School Transportation Authorities & Municipalities

- **Planning and communication should take into account all modes by which Ontario students journey to school: walking, wheeling (cycling, scootering, etc.), public transportation and driving, in addition to travel by school bus.** This reflects the reality that 60% of Ontario’s 2 million elementary and secondary students do not use school bussing services.
- **Walking and cycling (while maintaining social distancing) are considered safe and healthy activities by public health authorities and should be *intentionally* promoted as the preferred option for all students not travelling by school bus or public transit.** With capacity and ridership reductions in public transit and school bussing, this is crucial to preventing a significant increase in traffic congestion and safety hazards around schools due to more children being driven by car.
- **School boards and transportation consortia should engage with their municipal and police partners to assess the anticipated traffic impacts and identify traffic safety measures for school zones. This is necessary to ensure a safe environment for increased volumes of student pedestrians and cyclists during morning and afternoon bell times. These measures may include:**
 - Limiting drop-off and pick-up activity on and around school sites.
 - Making provisions for ‘park and walk’ locations 1-2 blocks away from school.
 - Full or partial street closures on local streets.
 - Enhanced traffic safety supervision and education.
- **Schools should be encouraged and supported to provide expanded facilities for bicycle and scooter storage:**
 - Arrange and monitor storage racks to ensure physical distancing is maintained when students are locking and unlocking.
 - Allow bicycles and scooters to be locked to school fences to help increase storage capacity and maintain distancing.
- **Support schools to communicate travel guidelines and route to school maps to their families.**

Guidelines for Families

- **Students and parents must:**

- Walk or cycle whenever possible.
- Stay at least 2 metres away from other students, parents/caregivers, Crossing Guards, foot patrollers and school staff at all times both on routes to school and at the school site. Wear a mask when this physical distancing is not possible.
- Walk and cycle in single file as much as possible. Where more pedestrians are present on sidewalks or paths near schools dismount from bikes.

- **Parents/caregivers should be encouraged to:**

- Allow their child to walk or cycle independently all or part way to school.
- Collaborate with other families and take turns leading small groups of children to walk or cycle together if their child needs to be supervised.
- Park their vehicle one or more blocks from the school site and walk the rest of the way if they choose to drive their child to school.

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