

Quarterly update: 12

February 2021

An overview of developments in active school travel with provincial significance during the past quarter. Please let us know if we've missed anything. For elaboration and discussion at the Council meeting.

OAST Program performance.

In December Green Communities Canada (GCC) provided the Ministry of Education (MEDU) with a detailed Summary Report for the first phase (Oct 2017-Aug 2020) of the Ontario Active School Travel program. The report documents the strong performance of the 3-year pilot framework and includes: key performance metrics; implementation highlights; successes, challenges and lessons learned; the results of an external evaluation; and recommended measures to sustain and strengthen the program moving forward. Highlights of the OAST program's performance (2017-2020):

Ontario Active School Travel Fund

- \$2.1m funding awarded to 28 community projects across the province
- \$2.3m matching funding (cash and in-kind) leveraged from local partners (109%)
- 289 schools received direct support, 996 schools benefitted overall
- 178 School Travel Plans created
- 14 communities established new School Board-Municipal partnerships

Central Support Services

- 85,052 users of OAST website
- 154 knowledge tools and resources delivered
- 19,212 users of School Travel Planning Toolkit
- 497,708 students participated in seasonal events
- 2,510 people subscribed to the Ontario Active School Travel e-newsletter
- 1,213 people followed OAST Social media
- 90 practitioners joined the OAST Network (online community of practice)
- 20 webinars and coaching sessions held, attended by 1,159 practitioners
- 2 Summit conferences held, attended by 202 practitioners and decision makers
- 6 School Travel Planning training sessions held, attended by 88 practitioners

Evaluation, oversight and sustainability

- 98% of overall framework tasks and deliverables completed
- 14 senior professionals enlisted as members of the Ontario Active School Travel Council
- 23 Environmental Policy Scans completed by local jurisdictions
- Provincial funding renewed until March 2022

GCC is planning to share key elements of the Summary Report with external partners in the coming months.

OAST Fund.

The OAST Fund has a total of envelope of \$1.0m to distribute to Ontario communities for 2021-22. GCC opened two streams of funding to applications in late 2020. Overall, the number and quality of submissions received was lower than in the previous two rounds of the Fund. GCC attributes this to applicant communities and organizations having less capacity to develop proposals amidst the restrictions and disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The applications received are well-distributed throughout the province, and included a mix of school boards, health units, municipalities, and student transportation consortia. All applications are assessed by an external review panel and the applicants receive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their proposal.

- **Round 3:** Of the eight applications received for [Round 3 of the OAST Fund](#), four projects are now moving ahead, each with a grant of \$60k: Windsor/Essex County, City of Timmins, Township of Selwyn (Peterborough County) and Town of Englehart. GCC is currently finalizing Funding Agreements with each project lead.
- **Innovate Stream:** This new funding stream was created to allow communities and organizations that had previously received support from the OAST Fund to expand, explore and experiment with initiatives that build upon their existing AST programming. A total of eighteen applications were received in December 2020. Following careful scrutiny by the external review panel, all but four applications were recommended for funding. GCC issued Notices of Decision at the beginning of February and is in the process of preparing Funding Agreements.

GCC created a new [Keys to Success resource](#) for Fund applicants and recipients, based on the findings of an external evaluation completed in summer 2020 involving interviews with 9 Fund recipients.

Winter Walk Day.

All [promotional resources](#) for this annual February campaign have been refreshed, including new bilingual social media ads, and new activity sheets (ex. colouring sheet, word search) have been added that can also be used by children who are learning at home. In light of the continued impact of COVID on the school system including school closures in many areas of the province, GCC cancelled the usual school registration & prize draw activity for Winter Walk Day for 2021.

OTC Vision zero working group.

After consultation with its newly formed Vision Zero Working Group, the Ontario Traffic Council has applied to the Transportation Association of Canada for funding to develop a Vision Zero (VZ) Guideline to provide a consistent approach for Ontario municipalities to follow when developing or actioning VZ or VZ-like programs. In addition to sharing best-practices the OTC foresees that the Guideline including information on data, education, communication, assessment/evaluation, engagement, and resources.

Canada Healthy Communities Initiative moving forward.

[Community Foundations of Canada](#) (CFC) has been chosen by Infrastructure Canada to administer the new [Canada Healthy Communities Initiative](#). It will provide up to \$31 million in funding to support projects that create safe and vibrant public spaces, improve mobility options or offer related digital solutions in response to COVID. CFC is presenting a bilingual [information webinar and panel discussion](#) on February 9th which GCC will attend.

National Active Transportation Strategy.

- The federal government's [latest climate change plan](#) released in mid-December included the following commitment: "Develop a national active transportation strategy, and explore ways to deliver more active transportation options, such as walking trails, cycling paths and other forms of active mobility, which are a complementary tool that can reduce reliance on cars and provide healthy transportation alternatives." This suggests a strengthening of the government's commitment to the strategy which was originally announced via social media only.
- The supplementary Mandate Letter issued last month to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities instructs her to "conduct Canada's first-ever national infrastructure assessment to help identify needs and priorities in the built environment." It also refers to delivering affordable, *active* and zero-emissions transit options. (emphasis added)
- The Active Transportation Alliance (GCC and CAA are members) held a consultation session with close to 20 AT stakeholders in mid-December to solicit their ideas and priorities for a national AT strategy. A summary of the themes from the session will be the basis of a forthcoming letter to MP Andy Fillmore who is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister and the government's lead on the strategy.

AT infrastructure eligible for federal COVID-19 funding.

Active transportation infrastructure, including parks, trails, foot bridges, bike lanes and multi-use paths are now eligible for enhanced funding support under the [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: COVID-19 Resilience stream](#) worth \$3 billion. The federal government will cover up to 80% of the costs for provincial and municipal projects worth up to \$10 million provided they get underway by the end of September and are completed by the end of 2021.