

Quarterly update: 14

October 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.

National Active Transportation Strategy & Fund.

- Canada's first ever [federal strategy for active transportation](#), which includes a \$400 million dedicated fund, was announced 28 July 2021.
- The strategy is to be implemented between 2021-2026, and lays out the following vision: *"For Canadians of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, genders, and backgrounds to be able to safely and conveniently access active transportation in their communities and to significantly increase the 'modal share' of active transportation"*
The strategy was approached through a framework called A-C-T-I-V-E, which consists of awareness, coordination, targets, investment, value, and experience.
- GCC published a [blog September 2021](#), to provide an overview of the strategy and fund. A second blog is in development that will feature discussion with members of the Active Transportation (AT) Alliance about the advocacy work that led to the launch of the strategy, and their aspirations for next steps.
- The AT Alliance submitted a letter to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Communities shortly after the September 20th Federal election, containing recommendations for the next Ministerial Mandate Letter.

AST Canada Work Group

- Active School Travel (AST) Canada has convened a new group of volunteers to lead the Canada wide working group. Effective August of 2021, the AST Canada Working Group has the following volunteers on its Board of Directors:
 - Laura Hube - BC Healthy Communities
 - Kate Berry - Green Communities Canada
 - Laura Zeglen - City of Mississauga
 - Sankranti Patel - McGill University
 - Jamie Hilland - Urban Systems
 - Nicole Roach - Green Communities Canada
- The AST Canada Board is currently finalizing Terms of Reference and planning for the Fall Webinar meeting which will bring together the 60+ members from across Canada.

Ontario Ministry of Education (MEDU) - Student Transportation Review

- Didem Proulx, Assistant Deputy Minister, Capital and Business Support Division, released a memo to all Ontario Directors of Education and Senior Business Officials in August 2021 to provide an update on MEDU's Student Transportation Review. The goal of the review is to achieve a more effective, accountable and needs-based student transportation system in Ontario.
- As part of the review, a Student Transportation Advisory Group (STAG) was established with representatives from school boards, transportation consortia, and school bus operators to discuss transportation funding, consortia model and operations, and transportation contracts.
- MEDU plans to engage the sector in consultations over the coming months focused on the following three topics:
 - A Technical Committee on Reference Standards is being established to support the development of province-wide common reference standards (such as walk distance) for funding purposes, reflecting the recommendations made by the Auditor General in 2015, that could be applied to estimate need;
 - Establishment of a funding benchmark, reflecting the work of the external consultant and STAG, with factors that vary across the province such distance travelled that could be applied in a funding model; and
 - Enhance accountability and transparency in contract management, which may include a survey on current procurement and contract practices, such as the status of adoption of the Campbell Report recommendations.

Strategic Investment – Renewal of funding for the OAST program

- Current funding from MEDU for the OAST program expires 31st March 2022.
- GCC submitted a high-level proposal to MEDU in late September 2021 for the renewal of funding for the program, based on the successes of the provincial framework to date and the on-going need for support amongst Ontario communities. The proposal seeks funding to continue the OAST program from April 2022 to August 2025.

OAST Fund

- Total of 20 OAST Fund projects are currently underway – listing available [here](#).
- Projects are starting to implement their media events to raise awareness of initiatives:
 - Cambridge (Sept)
 - Ottawa (Oct)
 - North Bay (Oct)
 - Peterborough (Nov)
 - Niagara (Nov)
- The media events are a key opportunity for engagement with local elected officials, stakeholders and partners. Projects have until end of Feb 2022 to complete media events.
- **Special project: School Streets** – GCC is partnering with 80 Cities to deliver the *Ontario School Streets Pilot*. The project is testing the creation of car-free zones in streets adjacent to schools in three Ontario cities: Hamilton, Markham and Mississauga. Each local pilot is

being led on the ground by the local municipality and will develop recommendations for the planning, permitting and implementation of School Streets programs in Ontario settings. The three cities are currently selecting schools to participate and developing engagement plans, in preparation for implementation on the ground in Spring 2022. As part of the project, 8 80 Cities will deliver “How-to” workshops, a public webinar to share lesson-learned, and a new toolkit for use by communities across Ontario.

- **Special project: Parent engagement** – The recommendations from the OAST Council’s Parent Engagement Working Group will form the basis for a pilot project to develop, test and refine effective messaging targeting parents using a social marketing-based approach.
- **Special project: Skills education** – The core objective of this project is to enable efficient collaboration across communities on the delivery of walking & cycling skills training programs by providing expert guidance, as well as access to vetted processes and tools. The project is being led by Jamie Stuckless of Stuckless Consulting Inc. and will involve 10-12 partner organizations from across Canada to provide input through an online survey, review of program materials and facilitated virtual discussion. Project deliverables include:
 - A best practices audit and report on existing walking & cycling skills training programs across Canada, and;
 - The creation of an online resource hub to share curated content that supports the Active School Travel (OAST) network in implementing local walking & cycling skills training programs.

Events and campaigns

- **Back to School Campaign, August- September 2021**

GCC ran a month-long campaign to promote active transportation for the return to in-class learning by Ontario schools in September 2021. Campaign materials well received and used by OAST partners.
- **International Walk to School Month (IWALK), October 2021**

GCC updated and expanded the IWALK Resource Kit available for schools to download, re-opened registration and prizes for schools for the first time since February 2020, and is running an on-going social media campaign and contest. Although IWALK2021 is seeing lower level of school registrations than pre-COVID circumstances, there has been a significant uptick in online engagement and community activity in general.
- **On Your Feet Challenge, October 2021**

The Canadian Cancer Society launched the On Your Feet Challenge in Ontario as well as Quebec for 2021. The Challenge invites schools to register and track their active transportation trips, with the goal of travelling 6,000km – equivalent to going across Canada. GCC has promoted the Challenge on OAST channels as part of IWALK campaign activities.
- **Hop! Walk to School App launched, October 2021**

EnviroCentre and Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) launched a new Walk to School App, called Hop!, that offers a fun and innovative way to share resources, information and enthusiasm for active school transportation. The platform allows students and families to log trips, track greenhouse gas averted, distance and number of days walked, and more. Users receive digital rewards for their participation when they log their trips and participate in challenges. Hop! will support school communities in hosting successful IWalk Day, Winter Walk Day, and classroom challenges by providing them with helpful resources. Hosted online, the progressive web app is available at: <https://123hop.ca/>