

York Catholic District School Board

Active School Travel Strategy



February 2024

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SECTION ONE

1.0 Introduction

The York Catholic District School Board's (YCDSB) Active School Travel (AST) Strategy is a plan for encouraging walking, wheeling, rolling and sustainable methods of transportation to and from school. This includes walking to bus stops for students eligible for bussing. Over the last fifteen years, the York Catholic District School Board's (the Board) approach has evolved from a primary focus on physical school site enhancements and designs with communication to an approach focusing on encouragement, communication and education. Currently, there is a range of AST initiatives at each individual elementary school and they can change from year to year from being involved with municipal pilots to sharing Board promotion materials to no engagement with AST. Based on the Board's experience, for AST to be successful, it requires collaboration of multiple stakeholders: the school (admins, staff, students), the community (families and residents), the local municipality and regional municipality (York Region), school board and various levels of government and Ministries. It requires ongoing commitment, communication, encouragement and education as communities are constantly changing year to year with new residents, students, parents, changes in school administration/staff, municipal staff and community partners.

In recent years, municipalities have recognized and placed more emphasis and focus on safety for all road users (e.g., drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.) as a response to various issues in communities. They have identified that AST initiatives can help address some needs in the community. For example, the City of Vaughan is implementing the MoveSmart Mobility Management strategy (MoveSmart), which is comprised of four programs area: road safety, mobility management, sustainable mobility and data management. Fourteen out of twenty-nine initiatives have been launched to date and are consistent with Vaughan's Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Plan, Urban and Corridors Studies, Community Safety Zone Review, Safer School Zone Plan, School Crossing guards program, a joint traveller safety plan with York Region and other local municipalities and the launch of an AST pilot program comprised of eight schools, all which focus on road safety enhancements and supporting active and sustainable travel. More details about Vaughan's MoveSmart program can be found at [MoveSmart Mobility Management Strategy | City of Vaughan](#). As municipalities engage in the work to encourage AST, there are increased requests for school board participation and input into committees, plans, strategies, pilots and addressing complaints.

The purpose of this YCDSB AST Strategy is to address demands in the community and identify the Board's commitment to AST by setting consistent Board-wide system expectations for elementary schools with respect to communication and tools available to encourage AST. One of the goals is to establish consistent communication across all schools in the Board to promote/educate AST and related work; a second is to work with our municipal partners and other stakeholders to provide access to students and families for the sharing of information and resources regarding AST and the implementation of their programs. This strategy could also be linked to other school programs such as York Region's Healthy Schools Programs.

The Strategy is intended for:

- all YCDSB elementary schools, including schools with predominantly bussed students as it applies to students who qualify for bussing to walk to/from the bus stop
- School administrators and parent councils

- Stakeholders (e.g. municipalities) to understand YCDSB's commitment and support to AST

1.1 What is Active School Travel?

Active School Travel is the use of any form of human-powered travel, such as walking, rolling and wheeling (cycling, scootering, rollerblading, skateboarding), to get to and from school or to and from bus stops (for students eligible for bussing). School buses, public transit or carpooling are also encouraged as part of the AST initiatives as they are considered sustainable forms of transportation.

AST has many proven benefits, including:

- Improves physical and mental health
- Increases academic performance by preparing students to learn
- Improve air quality (reduce pollution)
- Promotes social development
- Builds lifelong habits of active and independent mobility

1.2 Policies

There are a number of policies at the Board and municipal government level which support AST:

York Catholic District School Board

York Catholic District School Board has a number of policies which promote or encourage active, healthy lifestyles and well-being, such as policies 201, 201A, 201B, 203 and the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Student Transportation Services Policy 203 sets out criteria for busing eligibility:

3.0 Parameters

3.1 Eligibility for transportation to and/or from a student's designated home school is a function of the distance from their residence to their home school and grade level as follows:

- i) Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 – a student whose residence is more than 1.2 kilometres from their home school is eligible for Board-provided transportation;*
- ii) Grades 4 to 8 - a student whose residence is more than 1.6 kilometres from their home school is eligible for Board-provided transportation; and*
- iii) Grades 9 to 12 –*
 - *A secondary student whose residence is more than 4.8 kilometres from their home secondary school is eligible for Board-provided transportation.*
 - *A secondary student whose residence is more than 3.2 kilometres from their home secondary school, who's home address is not transit served, is eligible for Board-provided transportation.*

3.5 In circumstances where students are deemed to be ineligible to receive Board-provided transportation, as noted above, it is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians and/or students to determine and provide the most appropriate and safe means of arrival to and/or departure from school.

The Regional Municipality of York (York Region)

York Region has many policies in their Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan that support AST. York Region is also working on updating the Traveller Safety Plan to implement safety initiatives for all road users, including initiatives to support AST such as "Slow School Zone," pavement markings and speed reduction in

school zones. York Region is also currently developing a Sustainable Mobility Plan as an output of the Transportation Master Plan that outlines the importance of AST Programming and draws upon the successes of implemented AST pilots. As these documents are revised on a regular basis, more details about those policies can be found on York Region's website (York.ca).

In addition, policies can also be found at the local municipal level in municipal Official Plans, Transportation Master Plans or other municipal strategies or plans. Multiple municipalities, including Vaughan, Newmarket and Markham, are running AST pilots or initiatives. Richmond Hill has also expressed interest in exploring pilot opportunities in the near future. More details regarding municipal policies can be found in official plans for local municipalities in York Region on their respective websites.

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

For AST programs to be successful, the cooperation and commitment of multiple stakeholders are required. At the provincial level, various government ministries have roles and responsibilities to implement legislation, regulations or policies which can influence the success of AST. For example, the Ministry of Education (curriculum, approval of new schools, etc.), Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (land use, i.e., walkable communities), Ministry of Health (municipal public health units and AST health benefits) and Ministry of Transportation (transportation and Metrolinx) all have roles in AST.

Municipal and regional level governments can support AST through official plans, bylaws, transportation plans/strategies/initiatives, community recreation programs, and, most importantly, infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic calming measures, etc.), which all directly impact AST. Local municipalities oversee the land use and infrastructure planning within communities, including the location of school sites and the surrounding lands within a neighbourhood.

School boards can support AST through various policies, school board infrastructure (bike/scooter racks, etc.) on school property and integrating AST type programs and awareness into the curriculum. The Board can also partner with municipalities or other levels of government to provide access to school communities and students for education campaigns, pilot programs, data collection, etc.

All these roles and responsibilities are intertwined and have impacts on AST. For example, if the municipality has limited infrastructure, such as only roads for cars with limited/fragmented sidewalks that lead to the school site, then there are limited opportunities for residents to access the school via active travel, reducing the effectiveness of communication and promotion of a healthy active lifestyle. Conversely, having the infrastructure and traffic calming without promotion or education would create untapped potential and leave the infrastructure underutilized. Hence, partnerships are a critical factor in the success of AST.

The York Catholic District School Board's Active School Travel Strategy recognizes the importance of working together with other stakeholders and the benefits of disseminating information and educating our school communities. Through this strategy, the Board is committing to a consistent baseline of communication with all schools and encouraging school communities to work with stakeholders to implement programs and initiatives to support AST.

1.4 Guiding Principles and Goals

The guiding principles of this strategy are:

1. Health and well-being

2. Environmental and air quality protection
3. Effective and efficient use of resources
4. Education about AST
5. Community engagement

The goals of an active school travel strategy are:

1. To further contribute to enhancing student health and well-being
2. To increase the number of students and families journeying actively to school
3. To provide an active school travel toolbox for schools that can be easily and effectively applied
4. To educate and promote active school travel through an effective communication strategy
5. To improve the consistency and minimum baseline communication regarding active school travel for all elementary schools in the Board
6. Provide greater opportunities for students and families to learn and be involved in AST
7. To advocate for the importance and role of municipalities and other stakeholders to provide AST infrastructure, incentives to residents and programming

Integration of our Catholic faith

Caring for the environment has a long Catholic lineage, and there are many scripture connections.

Environment

One of the key principles of Catholic social teaching is Stewardship of Creation. As Catholics, the belief is that God has entrusted creation to humans and that we (as humans) have a responsibility to protect and cherish the Earth's ecological diversity, beauty and life-sustaining properties. Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for God by caring for the environment. Care for the Earth is a duty of the Catholic faith and a sign of our concern for all people.

Scripture connections:

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it: (Psalm 24:1)

Being Active

Being active and exercising regularly help us affirm the goodness of the body as a gift from God.

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? Therefore, glorify God in your body.” (Corinth 6:19-20)

The guiding principles are also directly connected to the YCDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan under the following strategic commitments:

Improvement of student achievement and well-being

Active school travel assists with helping students lead more active and healthy lives. Multiple studies have shown that students who lead more active and healthier lives are more prepared to learn, which contributes to higher academic performance.

Effective use of our resources

AST has been proven to:

- increase student performance and assist in addressing some behavioural issues in school;
- reduce vehicle traffic in and around school sites;
- increase pedestrian traffic to mitigate operational issues at school sites; and
- reduce the involvement of school Administration and Board staff in managing driver behaviour.

From 1986 to 2016, parents driving their kids to and from school increased by over 250% (over 8% growth annually). Kids cycling or walking to and from school has decreased by about 50% to 28% (Elliott, 2022). Indications from school administrators and professionals are that this trend has continued since, and an even higher percentage of parents are driving their kids to and from school as a result of COVID-19 and working from home (or hybrid work).

In 2010, Ontario's school principals collectively spent an estimated 720,000 hours coping with traffic problems around their schools (Green Communities Canada, 2010). This translates to about 180 hours per principal per school year. Any hours saved on traffic-related issues can be directly reallocated to education and student well being. In one Waterloo example, the improved student safety and reduced staff time spent on traffic control saved approximately 80 minutes per day, more than six hours per week and 240 hours per school year when the principal implemented AST measures (Green Communities Canada, 2010).

Implementing a baseline of communication across the YCDSB and encouraging the delivery of AST initiatives and programs would benefit the system, improve student and staff well-being and potentially reduce workloads for school administration. Utilizing this strategy would reduce administration's workload to deal with the issues, provide Principals (existing and new) with consistent ready-to-use tools to implement at all YCDSB elementary schools, and provide opportunities for stakeholders to work with residents through the Catholic School Councils.

Engaging Our Communities

This strategy about AST will help facilitate school-to-home communication on the topic and provide opportunities for those who are interested to play a role. The potential parent ambassador/lead on School Council provides the Board and other stakeholders with a community contact for local initiatives and programs.

Municipalities in York Region have also been requesting AST policies and strategies from the Board as a means to integrate with the development of their own new plans and strategies related to transportation, traffic and safety. This strategy provides opportunities to clearly and effectively profile the YCDSB in the public sphere, including with municipalities and the general public (in alignment with the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan).

1.5 What is Success?

There are many different ways to define the success of the AST strategy. Different school boards and stakeholders will have different perspectives on what is considered a success. For example, schools may consider success as more students using active travel to access school, less congestion in the parking lot, and a reduction in late arrivals. Municipalities may consider success in the reduction of vehicles on the local roadway, less infractions or complaints from the broader community, increased use of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, a general positive experience for residents within their municipality and a greater sense of belonging. Public Health may consider success in the increase in physical fitness, improved mental health and improvement in any factors in the social determinants of health. Some consider an approximately 0-5% increase in AST participation a modest success, and percentages around 10% and beyond are considered significant. Qualitatively, the consistent communication and education to the school community on a regular basis (e.g.

monthly) about AST is part of the success. Quantitatively, key performance indicators are identified in section 3.5 to help measure the progress and success of this strategy.

SECTION TWO

2.0 Active School Travel Framework and Tool Box

The active school travel framework is intended to provide School Administrators with a clear understanding of their role in promoting and supporting Active School Travel initiatives.

2.1 School Expectations and Toolbox

Through this strategy, all schools are expected to:

- Include AST related communication in each month’s newsletters;
- Identify an AST Lead/champion as a member of the Catholic School Council or school staff. This position would work with the school Principal, Board staff, municipal staff and other stakeholders to:
 - Assist or coordinate “Back to School Communications” to parents regarding AST and safety to and from school, including drop-off and pick-up etiquette and active travel to school. The communications should be sent out a minimum of 3 times a year in September, February and April
 - Assist or coordinate/revise template materials to incorporate active travel as part of safety week assembly and various initiatives, such as but not limited to:
 - Walking & Rolling Wednesdays
 - iWalk Month
 - Winter Walk & Roll Day
 - Active School Travel Safety Campaign Week (s)
 - Terry Fox Run
 - Assist in coordinating presentations and assemblies from stakeholders to reinforce AST initiatives, traffic safety or other relevant topics.

The tools will be provided to schools' administration in the AST Toolbox. The AST Toolbox includes template presentations, newsletters, program ideas, etc. School Administration is encouraged to share any additional resources or things which have worked at their schools in the Toolbox for other schools to access.

2.2 School Profiles

It is understood that despite the best intentions of local communities, some communities are more equipped for AST success than others. Table 1 provides common school and community characteristics and the relative potential AST success that could be expected. It should be recognized that many factors contribute to the impact of AST on certain schools, such as the built environment, layout of the school site (e.g., how many entrances/exits of school site, kiss and rides, etc.), surrounding uses and municipal facilities (e.g., residential, sidewalks, pathways, parks, etc.), local infrastructure, social/economic makeup of the community, geographic school boundary area, the distance of students from the school, presence of major arterial roads, etc. Please note that not all characteristics may apply; this is intended to be a general guide to assist with performance monitoring and evaluate potential for AST pilot(s).

TABLE 1. SCHOOL GROUPING:

Group	General School Characteristics (not all may apply)	General Details of Safety Concerns (not all may apply)	General School Site Physical Characteristics (not all may apply)	General Community Physical Characteristics (not all may apply)	Active School Travel Candidate
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low traffic concerns on-site or in the neighbourhood - High to average use of sustainable and active modes of travel (walking/cycling, bus well utilized) - Smaller school population or school utilization around 70% or less - There are limited number/percentage of families within 1.2 and 1.6 km of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little noticeable speeding - Low levels of vehicle congestion - Parents follow posted signage and line markings the majority of the time - Little congestion in the school's parking lot/kiss and ride (if applicable) low level of safety concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school is located in a remote location with little to no pedestrian connectivity. - The school has good separation between private vehicles and school buses (e.g., bus-only loop, kiss and ride, etc.) - There are multiple vehicular entry and exit points from the site 	The community is largely rural, with little opportunity for Active Travel to and from school or bus stops.	The impact of AST on this community could be low.
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderate traffic concerns on-site or in the neighbourhood - Moderate to low use of sustainable and active modes of travel (walking/cycling, bus utilization is average to low) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little to moderate speeding occurring - Noticeable levels of vehicle congestion and other poor behaviour (ex. U-turns) - Many drivers do not follow posted signage and line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school site is generally centrally located within a residential neighbourhood, with good pedestrian 	The community is well-served by pedestrian or cycling infrastructure.	The impact of AST on this community could be moderate.

Group	General School Characteristics (not all may apply)	General Details of Safety Concerns (not all may apply)	General School Site Physical Characteristics (not all may apply)	General Community Physical Characteristics (not all may apply)	Active School Travel Candidate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School utilization is around 70% to 90% or medium to large school population - There are a moderate number/percentage of families within 1.2 and 1.6 km of the school. - Specialty programs at the schools (e.g., FI, PACE, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> markings, leading to some congestion - Many students/families crossing mid-block or in random locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> connectivity to the surrounding community. 		
Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have identifiable administrative, teacher and/or parent champion support - Low use of sustainable modes of travel (walking/cycling bus utilization is average to low) - School utilization near or above capacity or larger school population - There is a relatively high number/percentage of families within 1.2 and 1.6 km of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High vehicle volumes/ concerns on-site or in the neighbourhood (e.g., U-turns) on a day-to-day basis - Drivers do not follow posted signage and line markings the majority of the time - High volumes of students/families crossing mid-block or in random locations - High levels of congestion in the school's parking lot/kiss and ride (if applicable), with driver/student behaviours posing safety concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centrally located school, good availability of infrastructure to support Active Travel - Located near or adjacent to municipal parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The community is well serviced by pedestrian or cycling infrastructure - Municipalities interested in a pilot of AST initiatives at school(s) 	This impact of AST on this community could be high.

2.3 The School Board

With the implementation of this Strategy, the Board and central Board staff are expected to:

- Develop monthly communication for schools to insert into their monthly newsletters:
 - “Back to School Communications” to parents regarding AST to and from school, including drop-off and pick-up etiquette. The communications should be sent out a minimum of 3 times a year in September, February and April
 - Walking and Rolling Wednesdays
 - iWalk month (October)
 - Winter walk and roll day
 - Active school travel safety campaign week(s)
 - Terry Fox run
- When possible, participate in Technical Advisor Committees (TAC) as it relates to AST
- Development of communication materials to incorporate active travel as part of safety week assembly for students (e.g., one in September/October and one in March/April timeframes)
- Seek out and secure funding for AST projects within YCDSB schools
- Coordinate the Board’s and specific school’s involvement in AST pilots and programs
- Represent the school board on various AST committees, AST Pilots, etc.
- Add bike racks and scooter racks during regular grounds projects

2.4 Pilot projects

In some situations, schools may be asked to participate or volunteer in Pilot Projects to further the success of AST. Pilots generally require specific commitments from multiple parties (e.g., municipality, the Board, the school(s), etc.) for the duration of the pilot, which may extend over multiple years. Requests of this nature are coordinated through the Community Planning and Partnerships in consultation with the appropriate Superintendent of Education and specific school(s).

Candidate schools should be prioritized based on their suitability and the potential of AST programs having the desired effect. Variables such as the proportion of non-transported vs transported students, the proximity of students to the school site, the availability of active transportation infrastructure in the community, and the participation of other stakeholders are all considerations for inclusion in a pilot.

SECTION THREE

3.0 Implementation

3.1 Communication Plan

A communication plan is critical to effectively and efficiently achieve the goals of this strategy. A broad range of communication tools and mechanisms should be considered to support the delivery of promotional messaging and tools identified in the Toolbox. This may include the Board's website, school websites, videos, graphics, municipal tools and other items.

3.2 Volunteer from Parent Council or School Staff

Parent Councils play a critical role in representing local interests in the school environment. Successful interventions have involvement from a wide group of partners, including school staff, parents, students and community members, including the local municipality, local enforcement authority and other advocacy groups where possible (Mammen, 2016). This strategy suggests the identification of a volunteer AST lead (champion/ambassador) on the school council to provide a single point of contact at each school who can work in partnership with stakeholders to implement AST programs at their school. If a parent volunteer on the school council cannot be found, Administrators can ask for a school staff volunteer. The volunteer position would be responsible for the following:

1. Assisting with the implementation of this strategy at their respective school
2. Act as liaison between the school and the Board or external stakeholder
3. Assist School Administration with additional monthly or quarterly messaging to support specific initiatives.
4. Implementation/support to the school community with programs as needed

3.3 Timeframe

This strategy is anticipated to be implemented during the 2023-2024 school year at all elementary schools, pending Board approval. After three to five years, the strategy will be assessed, and amendments will be made as necessary. The following section provides a number of key performance indicators that will help assess the performance of the strategy.

3.4 Financial Resources

At this time, recognizing the financial situation of the school board, the strategy does not require a financial commitment for the implementation of this strategy. The Board's commitment is through the contribution of staff time, assisting with access to the school community and the installation of AST related infrastructure, including bike racks and scooter racks when scoping regularly scheduled grounds projects. This strategy does acknowledge the benefit of a modest annual budget at a future point to facilitate signage, promotional materials and meeting resources (see Appendix B for a sample list of items and costs) in promoting AST initiatives.

3.5 Key Performance Indicators

In an effort to measure the performance of implementing AST strategies, the following key performance indicators are intended to be used to track and monitor over the course of the school year to assess, depending on the Objective/Goal:

Goals	Performance Indicator	Target	Proposed Data Collection Tools
1. To further contribute to enhancing student health and well-being	Health and well-being indicator	Increase the percentage of well-being from start to end of the school year and trends	Classroom Survey recommended 2-3 times a school year through Google Forms (e.g., September, March, June)
2. To provide an active school travel toolbox for schools that can be easily and effectively accessed	The number of schools including AST material as part of the newsletter or communication	All elementary schools accessing the Toolbox to provide basic communication to school communities	Monitoring the access of the shared toolbox resource
3. To increase the number of students and families journeying actively to school, including riding the bus (for those who qualify per Board policy)	Number of students walking/biking, bussing to school; baseline data will need to be collected prior to starting to measure against	Increase in 1-5% year to year	Classroom Survey recommended 2-3 times a school year through Google Forms (e.g., September, March, June) Voluntary year end reporting from the Catholic School Council for participation
4. To educate and promote active school travel through an effective communication strategy	The number of schools including AST material as part of the newsletter or communication	100 % of all Elementary schools	Voluntary self reporting by schools (e.g., via Google sheet) circulated bi-annually
5. To improve the consistency and minimum baseline communication regarding active school travel programming for all elementary schools in the Board	The number of schools including AST material as part of the newsletter or communication	100 % of all Elementary schools	Self reporting by schools (e.g., via Google sheet) circulated bi-annually
6. Provide greater opportunities for students and families to learn and be involved in AST	Number of schools participating in AST pilot programs	Participation in one to two pilots (subject to municipalities running pilot programs)	Reporting provided by stakeholders
7. To advocate for the importance and role of municipalities and other stakeholders to provide AST infrastructure, incentives to residents and programing	Number of meetings and correspondences of advocacy from YCDSB to municipalities and other stakeholders	All municipalities (including the Region) in multiple forms at related meetings, topics, etc., annually	Self reporting by YCDSB staff (e.g., Planning, principals, etc.)

SECTION FOUR

4.0 Reporting

This strategy anticipates a progress/summary report at the four-year mark, which is expected to include results of Key Performance Indicators, where available, as well as any opportunities and challenges with the implementation of the strategy. The report will also summarize the trend seen in the previous four years and include any recommendations, necessary updates to the strategy, lessons learned and best practices from local municipalities. The progress report will be presented to the appropriate committee at the Board at the four-year mark.

SECTION FIVE

5.0 Summary

This summary provides a brief overview of the main sections of the Active School Travel strategy that are necessary in the implementation of this strategy. The **goals** for active school travel are;

1. To further contribute to enhancing student health and well-being
2. To increase the number of students and families journeying actively to school
3. To provide an active school travel toolbox for schools that can be easily and effectively accessed and implemented
4. To educate and promote active school travel through an effective communication strategy
5. To improve the consistency and minimum baseline of active school travel programming at all elementary schools in the Board
6. Provide greater opportunities for students and families to learn and be involved in AST
7. To advocate for the importance and role of municipalities to provide AST infrastructure, incentives to residents and municipal programming

Schools with a high(er) percentage of bussed students are also included as part of this Strategy as there are benefits of walking to/from bus stops for students (eligible for bussing). The **Toolbox** contains specific templates for Administrators, such as email communication templates, assembly presentations, data collection templates and potential AST tools to implement and monitor the progress of AST at each school.

With the implementation of this strategy, **all schools are expected to implement the minimum standard of practice**, which includes the following:

- Send out AST content within regular newsletters (e.g., monthly or every other month)
 - o Content will be provided centrally (also in the Toolbox); schools are welcome to add to this content and share with other schools/administrators.
- Identify an AST Lead/champion as a member of the Catholic School Council or school staff. This position would work with the school Principal, Board staff, municipal staff and other stakeholders to:
 - o Assist or coordinate “Back to School Communications” to parents regarding AST and safety to and from school, including drop-off and pick-up etiquette and active travel to school.
 - o Assist or coordinate/revise template materials to incorporate active travel as part of safety week assembly for students (e.g. one in September/October and one in March/April timeframes)
 - o Assist stakeholders with the development of materials to communicate various initiatives, such as.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Walking and Rolling Wednesdays ▪ iWalk month (October) ▪ Winter walk and roll day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active school travel safety campaign week(s) ▪ Terry Fox run
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 - o Assist in coordinating presentations and assemblies from stakeholders to reinforce AST initiatives, traffic safety or other relevant topics.

In some situations, schools may be asked or volunteer to participate in Pilot projects. In such cases, the AST lead and Board staff may assist with various aspects of the pilot.

SECTION SIX

6.0 Pilots and AST Facts

6.1 Markham Active School Program Pilot

- Pilot officially began in May 2019 and ended in June 2022 (schools have been encouraged to continue participation and promotions beyond June 2022)
- 9 schools were selected to participate (1 school dropped out after the pilot began – St. Francis Xavier CES)
- Funded and supported by the Ministry of Education through Green Communities Canada, City of Markham, York Region, YRDSB and YCDSB
- Schools selected using a process including a review from both City and Board staff
- Data collection occurred regularly through three methods –
 1. Hands-up survey in classrooms (monthly to every other month);
 2. traffic observations by City of Markham Staff and Active School Travel Coordinator; and
 3. Family and School Administration survey

The pilot had a tier system approach (6 levels) where each of the 9 schools was put into different tiers with different tools and approaches in each tier. Tier 1 would have base initiatives, including marketing, education and communication. Each increasing tier would have additional initiatives to promote AST, with tier 6 having the most initiatives/resources dedicated. All Saints CES and St. Francis Xavier CES were both tier 1 schools in the pilot based on consultation with the school administrators and their respective superintendents (see Figure 1 below for Tier initiatives). Both schools did have some pedestrian and traffic enhancements, such as flexi-posts installed on the municipal roadway and enhanced pedestrian crossings by the school as part of the pilot. See the diagram below:

Figure 1. Diagram of Tiers with tools and approaches

Level	Tools and Approach
Tier 1	Marketing/Education/Communication
Tier 2	Tier 1 + Classroom Competition
Tier 3	Tier 1 + 2 Family Connection (Group Walking)
Tier 4	Tier 1 + 2 + 3 + Sidewalk Stencils and Wayfinding Signage
Tier 5	Tier 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + Traffic and Pedestrian Enhancements
Tier 6	Tier 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + Kiss and Ride Closure Walking Wednesday Program * John McCrae PS

Figure 2. Active school travel pilot: school zone tools (Markham)

Active School Travel Pilot
School Zone Tools

You may notice some **NEW** School Zone Tools around your school community. Please review the tools below so you understand what they mean.

 <p>Wayfinding Signage Informs students how far it is to walk or bike to school. Also a great place to meet up with others and walk/bike together!</p>	 <p>Sidewalk Stencils Fun activities for students and families on the walking route!</p>
 <p>School Zone Pavement Marketing These markings indicate when a vehicle is entering the school zone.</p>	 <p>Ladder Crosswalks Enhances visibility of people crossing the road</p>
 <p>No Stopping Signs on Street Adjacent to School. Stopping a vehicle, including for pick-up or drop-off of students, is not permitted during the times shown.</p>	 <p>No Stopping "Red Zone" Supplemental to the existing "No Stopping" signs, the red line indicates where pick-up and drop-off activity is not allowed.</p>
 <p>Supervised Crossing Locations where a crossing guard is available to assist with crossing the street.</p>	 <p>Flexible Posts These flexi posts are used to reduce traffic speed for pedestrian safety.</p>

We encourage all families and students to use active modes to travel to and from school as often as possible (walk, cycle, and scooter). When doing so please follow public health guidelines and maintain physical distance.







Results from Markham Pilot

Hands-up Survey Results (Classroom)

- Despite significant challenges over the 3 years of the Markham pilot (COVID, lockdowns, restrictions, union labour disruptions, etc.), the average rate of active school travel increased from 63% to 71% or a 13% increase compared to the baseline.
- The average rate of change across all 8 pilot schools varied from school to school.
- A large percentage of the school population at All Saints CES is eligible for bussing. As a result, the school saw a significant decrease from the baseline of 68% at the beginning of September 2019 down to 15% for September 2020. The significant decrease in active school travel can be attributed to a lack of confidence in families willing to put their children on the bus due to COVID-19, especially in 2020 and 2021 (based on survey results).
- St. Francis Xavier participated in the first year of the pilot and then withdrew.
- Average AST for Tier 6 School (John McCrae PS) rose by 16% from 75% to 92%, or a 23% increase in AST rate compared to the baseline.

Traffic Observations

- Data suggests that during the first year, drivers complied with the newly implemented no-stopping signs and red line zones. However, compliance decreased in the second year and into the third year.

Family Survey Highlights

- The top five AST tools families found to be most effective were:
 1. Walking and Rolling Wednesday Program
 2. School Zone Road Stencils
 3. Painted Red lines in no-stopping zones
 4. Sidewalk Stencils
 5. Additional crosswalks
- Top 3 traffic safety concerns identified in the school zone:
 1. Intersection and running stop signs issues
 2. Street congestion, speeding and poor driver behaviour (U-turns, stacking)
 3. Issues with a crossing guard
 - Top 3 items that would encourage a child to walk or roll to and from school
 1. Once my child is older (29%)
 2. Others to walk or roll with (e.g., group walking) (27%)
 3. Improved sidewalks and crossings (17%)
 - Top 3 suggestions or feedback about AST Pilot
 1. More programs and student and staff engagement (38%)
 2. No opinion (29%)
 3. More communication (18%)
 - 85% wanted the AST pilot program to continue

School Staff Survey Results

- 46% of staff noticed major changes
- 38% of staff noticed minor changes
- 8% of staff noticed no changes
- Top 3 AST tools found to be most effective:
 1. Walking or Rolling Wednesday program (69%)
 2. Cycle Pop-ups (61%)
 3. Walking and biking campaigns (61%)

Other Observations and Information from the Markham Pilot for YCDSB Schools

- Throughout the pilot, there were 2 main communications campaigns per school year to promote AST for the pilot. The communication campaign required the school Administrator and the Board (active school coordinator and communications department) to perform tasks (email communications to parents, posting on social media, banners and other physical promotional materials at the school site). Comparing the AST rate before the campaign to the AST rate after the campaign, it is largely successful in increasing active school travel. See Table 2 for results.

Table 2. Comparison of AST rates before and after the pilots for All Saints CES and St. Francis CES.

Communications Campaign		All Saints CES	St. Francis Xavier CES
Fall 2019	Before Campaign AST Rate	68%	53%
	After Campaign AST Rate	76%	56%
	Difference compared to before the campaign	+12%	+6%
Spring 2020	Before Campaign AST Rate	49%	Did not participate
	After Campaign AST Rate	69%	Did not participate
	Difference compared to before the campaign	+41%	Did not participate
Fall 2020	Before Campaign AST Rate	15%	N/A
	After Campaign AST Rate	21%	N/A
	Difference compared to before the campaign	+29%	N/A
Spring 2021	Before Campaign AST Rate	18%	N/A
	After Campaign AST Rate	26%	N/A
	Difference compared to before the campaign	+44%	N/A
*Fall 2021 (*limited communications campaign was sent out)	Before Campaign AST Rate	31%	N/A
	After Campaign AST Rate	31%	N/A
	Difference compared to before the campaign	0%	N/A
Winter 2022	Before Campaign AST Rate	28%	N/A
	After Campaign AST Rate	35%	N/A
	Difference compared to before the campaign	+25%	N/A

- Strong support from the school Principals and Superintendents of AST is critical to the success. As evidenced by the Markham, very strong support from All Saints CES Principal resulted in significant success.
- Delegation made to YRDSB Policy and Bylaw Committee in September 2022 supporting AST with requests to conduct a safety week campaign at each school; encourage AST participation at School Council and encourage both YCDSB and YRDSB to grow their AST program and teams.

6.2 Town of Newmarket and City of Vaughan Active School Program Pilots

The Newmarket pilot ended in June 2023. The City of Vaughan is looking at its pilot programs through the Safe School Zone Plan, and recommendations will be provided in late 2023. It is anticipated that they will proceed with program expansion but require the support of all stakeholders. There have been some challenges with both pilots thus far for YCDSB schools, including changes in school Administration (Principals and Superintendents), the absence of the active school travel coordinator (and the lack of resources to support all the pilot schools such as data collection and event attendance), changing school landscape (COVID) and absence YCDSB of communications department (at times) to support, help coordinate and send out communications during the pilots with the schools.

6.3 Active School Travel Facts at a Glance

1. Only 9% of Canadian children and youth (ages 5-17) get the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity (Ontario Active School Travel, 2020).
2. Children who walk to/from school relative to those who are driven can gain an additional 2,200 steps and 15 to 45 minutes of daily physical activity.

3. This increased physical activity on the school journey has been found to lower BMI over time, improve cardiovascular health, and increase alertness and attention during the school day (Mammen, 2016).
4. Reducing traffic volumes creates safer school zones. Improving walking and cycling routes to school also enhances the safety, connectivity, and quality of life for the community as a whole (Ontario Active School Travel, 2018).

RESOURCES

Elliott, M. (September 5, 2022). Students are back in the classroom — the car chaos around our schools is back too. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2022/09/05/students-are-back-in-the-classroom-the-car-chaos-around-our-schools-is-back-too.html>

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Haug E, Smith ORF, Bucksch J, Brindley C, Pavelka J, Hamrik Z, Inchley J, Roberts C, Mathisen FKS, Sigmundová D. (February 2021). 12-Year Trends in Active School Transport across Four European Countries Findings from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*.

Mammen, G. (2016). *School Travel Planning in Canada: A Holistic Examination of Program Impact on Active School Travel*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Ontario Active School Travel (2018) Making the Case for Active School Travel: Fact Sheet & Reference List.

Ontario Active School Travel (2020) An Urgent Problem, bullet point 2 <https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/an-urgent-problem/>

APPENDIX A TOOLBOX (Sample of Tools)

Topic (Leading/Responsible Stakeholder)	
Education (All)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Media - School Council - Weekly/monthly Letters - Posters - Information Sessions - Welcome to school package - Curriculum night presentation - Welcome to kindergarten package - Making Tracks (YR) - Cycling Rodeos - Cycling Pop-ups - Safety Blitzs - Virtual information presentations - CAA Patroller Program - Seasonal mobile signs
Engineering (On Site- YCDSB/ Off Site Municipalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible Bollards - Signage - Redline curbs - Edgelines - School zone and sidewalk stencils - Radar boards - Crossing Guards - Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure - Walkways from parks/neighbourhoods
Enforcement (Municipalities and YRP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety –Campaign with municipal bylaw and YRP support (education) - Enforcement Campaign (active ticketing)
Encouragement (All)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walking or Rolling Wednesdays (weekly walking or rolling) - Special walking events (IWALK, Winter Walk and Bike to School Week) - Incentives - Student-led activities (clubs) - Videos - Group walking Initiatives - School Competitions - School led initiatives include Freddie the Footprint, spirit days, Scavenger hunts, etc. - Celebrations (Active living celebration) - Walking Wednesday ‘Closure of the Kiss and Ride’ program - School Streets (closure of the Road) - Winter Maintenance of walkways (on and off the school sites)
Evaluation (All)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hands-up Survey - Resident Surveys - Traffic data collection (volume, speed) - Air quality monitoring - Anecdotal

APPENDIX B SAMPLE COST LIST

Item	Cost (2021-2022 dollars)
Bike/Scooter Racks	2021 – School standard rack Rack, including installation without any work to an existing concrete pad, is approximately \$1000. Rack including installation and new supporting concrete pad: \$3500-4500.
Bike Locks	Quality anti-theft bike locks - \$75-100 each
Bike Bells	\$5-10/each
Reflectors	\$10-30, depending on the number per bike
Safety Vests	\$20-30 each
Promotional Signs	Varies depending on size About \$1200 per school - for 4 sandwich boards and 4 weathered banner/signs
Training/Education	Varies and dependent on the number and duration of sessions For example: Cycling pop-up Programs are approximately \$1000-1200, which includes 1 dedicated in-school education session and 1.5-2 hours of pop-up after school with additional education session and bike tune-ups/repairs for the school community