

Safe Routes to School

School Area Safety

Why Parents Keep Driving

What Needs To Change?



What is Safe Routes to School?



- Safe Routes to School is comprised of two separate types of walking programs for children.
 - A walking program with signage, sidewalk and pavement markings, traffic calming and safe street crossings.
 - A walking school bus program in which parent volunteers take turns walking groups of children to school along a specific route, picking up children along the way.

What is Safe Routes to School?

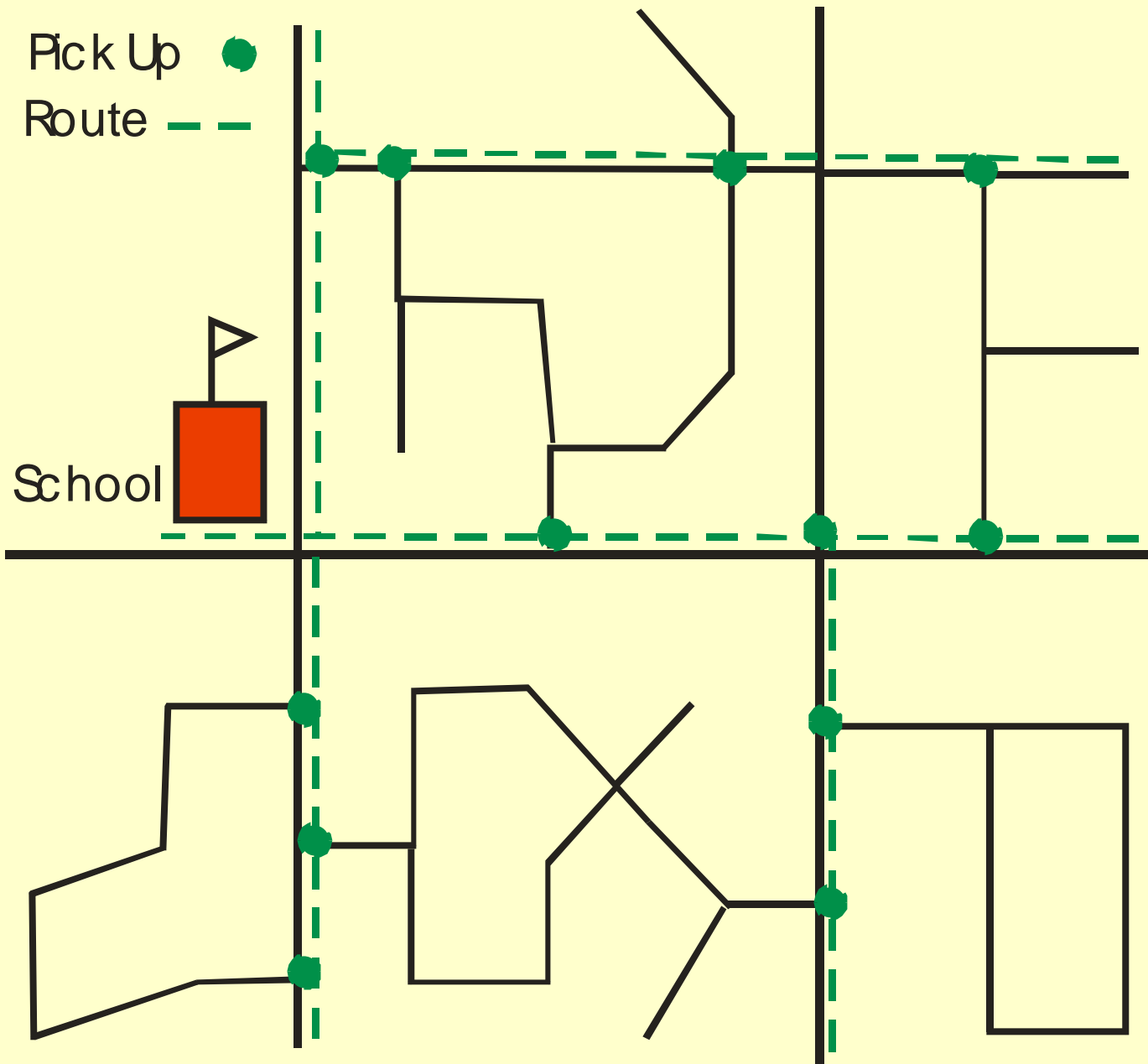


- The first program is created through consultation with parents, school officials and a transportation planner.
 - They plot the location of students on maps, create simple routes to school, develop a signage and markings plan, create routes and develop flyers of specific routes.
 - The city then uses the plan to implement the special signs and markings along the respective routes that lead to the school.

What is Safe Routes to School?



- The second program is often implemented in conjunction with the first plan with the addition of parent volunteers to walk younger students to school.
- Parents are encouraged to walk their child to a specified point on the route from which parent volunteers walk their children the remaining part of the way to school.



What is the problem?



- According to a Study conducted in 1999 for the Centre for Disease Control, in the 1970's two thirds of students walked or biked to school. In 1999 less than 10% walk or bike to school.
- Vehicle traffic generated by parents driving their children to school has increased dramatically.
- Traffic and pedestrian safety near schools has decreased because of this increase in traffic.

What is the problem?



- Excessive speeding, excessive traffic volume, illegal parking and pedestrian safety issues are continually being brought forward to our department to deal with.
- School Boards complain to Public Works, parents complain to Public Works and homeowners complain to Public Works.
- The problem is that school properties and the surrounding road network were not designed to handle the burden of parents driving their children to school everyday.

What is the problem?



- Of Ontario Cities with a population of 100,000 or more, Windsor is the only city that does not have a school with an active safe routes to school program!

What is this problem causing?



- Traffic congestion near schools.
- Frustrated drivers, road rage.
- Parking, double parking, blocking of lanes, blocking residential driveways.
- Parents park in adjacent home's driveways
- Children must navigate a maze of parked cars to find their parents.
- Many, many near miss accidents.

Where did we go wrong?



- How many of us here walked to school?
- Why did we walk to school?
- What has changed since we walked to school?

Why are we doing this?



- What are the reasons parents drive their children to school:
 - Its too far for children to walk
 - The weather is poor
 - There is too much traffic
 - There are too many “bad” people out there
 - Busy lifestyle, after school / extra curricular activities.
 - Its just safer to drive than it is to walk...

Is it too far to walk?



- As a general rule, certain aged children are capable of walking certain distances based on their age.
- This distance increases with age.
- Most elementary school age children are capable of walking 2 – 3km to and from school each and every day.
- High School Children are capable of walking between 4 – 5 km to and from school each day.

Is it raining? Grab an umbrella...



- Some parents have told me that the reason they don't let their children walk to school is because the climate is not nice enough here in Windsor to allow their children to walk to school.
- Has the weather really changed that much since we were children that it necessitates us driving our children to school?
- Is our weather worse than Yellowknife? They have walk to school programs at their schools.

Have traffic levels increased?



- Yes. Why have they increased? Because children are being driven to school. Why are parents driving their children to school, because there is too much traffic etc... etc...
- Example – next PD Day take a note of the level of traffic on your way to work. Or compare the level of traffic during the summer with the same street during the school year.
- The traffic levels are so different that our department must focus our traffic count program during the school year to get an accurate picture.

Have traffic levels increased?



- According to the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), during peak travel periods (AM and PM rush hours) between 20 and 25% of all traffic on the roads are generated by parents driving their children to and from school.

Afraid of the “Boogie Man”?



- Are parents more paranoid? Is the media getting to them? I don't know.
- We do know however that the rate of abductions hasn't changed since the 1980's, and furthermore is most likely the same as when the rest of us were children.
- There have been 6 abductions of children under 14 between 2000 and 2006 in the City of Windsor.
- The media does play a part in preying on parent's fears about child abduction.

Is it safer to drive than walk?



- No, a recent study conducted by the Transportation Safety Board in the United States found that:
 - 75% of all fatalities and 84% of all injuries occurred when parents or other adults drove their children to school.
 - 22% of all fatalities and 11% of all injuries occurred while children were walking or cycling to school.
 - 2% of deaths and 4% of injuries occurred while children were on school buses.



What does this mean?

- Children are 3 times more likely to be killed in their parents car than they are walking to school
- Children are 37 times more likely to be killed in their parents car than on a school bus.

Why are parents doing this?



- Some studies suggest that parents believe that they are doing their children a “favour”.
- Some parents even believe that driving their kids gives them “status” or improves their rank among their parental peers.
- Many parents feel that forcing their children to walk is some form of punishment.

What are the effects on children?



- Childhood obesity:
 - More Canadian kids than ever are overweight, even obese, and a Canadian researcher thinks the problem is just going to get worse.
 - A study published Monday in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* shows the rate of obesity among Canadian boys aged seven to 13 tripled between 1981 and 1996. Girls in the same age group have twice the prevalence of obesity.
 - CBC News web site November 27 2000

What are the effects on children?



- Childhood obesity:
 - The number one reason for childhood obesity besides diet is the amount of activity children undertake.
 - Walking to school is one of the most simple, non time consuming means of keeping your children active.

What are the effects on children?



- Confidence and Independence:
 - Children who walk to school are more independent and are more confident in themselves.
 - Teaching our children the rules of the road is important for their safety, not just for walking to school, but also in other traffic situations outside of school time.
 - Driving children to school and not granting them the independence to walk on their own keeps children more dependant on their parents. This can affect children's self esteem and place a heavy burden on parents.

What are the effects on children?



- Parents vehicles idling waiting to pick up or drop off their children exposes them to vehicle emissions.
- This increase in traffic near the school exposes all children in the playground to vehicle emissions.

What has the City done so far?



- Implement kiss and ride programs.
- Change parking and no stopping zones around schools.
- Created drop off zones for parents.
- So far, the majority of these “solutions” have only dealt with the effects of parents driving their kids to school, rather than the root of the problem.

What can the City do?



- Expand parking and no stopping restrictions.
 - Result: Parents get mad, parents get tickets, nearby residents lose their parking.
 - These types of solutions work only when parents are on board with a safe routes to school program, otherwise we only get complaints.

What can the City do?



- Implement more “Kiss and Rides”
 - Result: We perpetuate the status quo.
 - Building lay bys, turn off bays cost money and solve nothing.
 - Neither the school board, nor the city have the resources to construct enough lay bys or parking areas to sustain this trend and doing so will only serve to pave every area adjacent to schools.

What do other Municipalities do?



- Most municipalities do not permit parking or stopping of vehicles adjacent to school property or parks.
 - Why? Because parking cars next to a school creates a visual barrier that prevents drivers from seeing children crossing or about to cross the road.
 - Windsor allows parking and stopping adjacent to most schools. (Our Kiss and Ride program is a good example of this problem).

What do other Municipalities do?



SCHOOL SAFETY BULLETIN



“IF YOU DRIVE YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL, OUR STUDENTS’ SAFETY COULD BE IN YOUR HANDS”

Serious safety concerns, created by some parents who drive their children to school, continue in the vicinity of numerous schools throughout the City of Oshawa.

Drivers often park or stop in “No Parking” or “No Stopping” zones, double park, make ‘U’ turns, block driveways, park in the school bus loading zone or park facing the wrong way on the street. Of particular concern are those drivers who stop in signed “No Stopping” zones, to discharge or pick up students. This action not only is contrary to law but it also creates a very unsafe situation as students often must walk across the street, through moving traffic, to reach the school grounds.

Drivers committing these violations are not simply disobeying the law, but are placing school children at risk of injury. To ensure the safety of our students and minimize the potential for conflict with cars, specific parking regulations are provided in the vicinity of schools, within the City of Oshawa.

Due to the serious nature of the concerns noted above, please be aware that By-law Enforcement Officers will continue their enforcement of the parking and stopping regulations in the vicinity of schools.

What do other Municipalities do?



- Other Municipalities have a strict enforcement campaign with bylaw officers assigned specifically to school sites during the school year.
- No warnings are given to drivers after flyers have been sent home.
- Ticketing is aggressive and tickets for offences in schools zones can be as high as \$200 in some municipalities.

What do other Municipalities do?

To Provide For The Safest Movement Of Our Children Please Consider The Following:

- ♦ Walk your children between home and school.
- ♦ If you must drive, park in areas where you can legally park
- ♦ Do not use the school driveway for the discharge/pick up of students unless authorized by school authorities.
- ♦ Do not use private driveways for vehicle turn around or student discharge purposes.
- ♦ Car pool with other parents.
- ♦ Obey all traffic signs.
- ♦ Obey school bus flashers.
- ♦ Most importantly, be observant of children when you are driving in a school area.

What do other Municipalities do?



- Other municipalities, schools and parent groups are working to reduce the number of children being driven to school because of the safety problems it creates.

What is the school board's role?



- In Windsor, the local school boards have:
 - Acknowledged the problem
 - Asked for our help
 - Sent mailings home to parents asking them not to drive their children to school.

What is the school board's role?



- The school boards have asked for monies to expand Kiss and Rides.
- Have asked us to add more parking.
- To adjust traffic light timings.
- To implement more all way stops.
- None of these band aid solutions has solved the larger social issue.

What is the school board's role?



- Most schools and school boards maintain that once the children have left school property that they are no longer responsible for anything that happens to the children.

School Buses



- The role of the school bus is to provide transportation for children to and from school.
- School boards across Canada have different standards for what constitutes “reasonable” walking distances and bus eligibility distances.

School Bus Eligibility



- Windsor: Grade 2 students – 1.6 km
- Guelph: Grade 2 students – 2.4 km
- Peel Region: Grade 2 students – 1.6 km
- Province Wide Standards:
 - Nova Scotia: Grade 2 Students – 3.6 km
 - New Brunswick: Grade 2 Students – 2.4 km
 - Alberta: Grade 2 Students – 2.4 km
 - British Columbia: Grade 2 Students – 4 km

School Bus Eligibility



- Why are these distances so varied?
- Do you think that students in B.C. have to walk too far?
- B.C. has 400 schools participating in walk to school programs, they don't seem to have a problem with the walking distance, why do we? ("Way To Go" Newsletter Fall 05)
- <http://www.waytogo.icbc.bc.ca>

How to Start a Safe Routes to School Program



- Most safe routes to school programs are initiated by parents and school administrators.
- Parent groups raise the issues of safety near school properties.
- Parents must not blame other parents for these problems, creating conflict between parents will not solve the problem.

How to Start a Safe Routes to School Program: Step 1



- Individual parents speak with other parents interested in such a program.
- Parents form a group and hold a meeting, inviting all parents and school officials to speak about the safety concerns.
- Parents invite city officials to help answer questions regarding safety issues.

How to Start a Safe Routes to School Program: Step 2



- Create a map of the schools student catchment area.
- Have parents and children identify problems with their respective safe route to school:
 - Missing sidewalks, no safe street crossing, speeding traffic, sight line issues, safe and visible walking paths.
- With the help of school officials and City Staff, hold a meeting to identify those issues and to create a safe route plan for students.

How to Start a Safe Routes to School Program: Step 3



- If there is interest in a “walking school bus program” identify parent volunteers willing to walk younger children to school.
- Use the created map to ask the City to improve problems identified by parents and school staff.
- Identify with City Staff the proposed “Safe Routes”.

How to Start a Safe Routes to School Program: Step 4



- Try out the routes!
- Invite parents, city staff and school staff to walk each route to school to ensure that no issues have been neglected from the plan.
- Create final version of the plan including special signage, pavement markings, sidewalk markings and other traffic related adjustments.

How to Start a Safe Routes to School Program: Step 5



- Implement the program, get funding from the school board, the city or another resource to implement the signage, markings and any necessary traffic adjustments.
- Monitor the program and identify further improvements as the program takes off.

Did you know...



- That International Walk to School Week is from October 2nd to 6th? Is your child's school participating?
- That there have been safe routes to school programs across Canada since at least 1998!
- In Ontario, 38 regions / cities participate in safe routes to school programs right now! Those municipalities include Moosonee / Moose Factory on James Bay, Kenora, North Bay, Ottawa and Sarnia.



Resources:

- www.saferoutestoschool.ca
 - Ontario's Safe Routes to School Programs
- www.goforgreen.ca
 - Sustainable transportation information
- <http://www.greenventure.on.ca/>
 - Information on the City of Hamilton's program
- <http://www.waytogo.icbc.bc.ca/>
 - British Columbia's Safe Routes to School Program