

# Canadian School Travel Planning Pilot Test Final Report

March 2010



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

School Travel Planning (STP) is a community-based, comprehensive approach to dealing with travel-related issues at schools. It has been used with success in many countries around the world. After reviewing international STP activity in late 2006 and early 2007, Green Communities Canada developed recommendations for pilot testing School Travel Planning in Canada, combining ideas from multiple countries into a process and creating tools that were expected to work well in our country. Those recommendations formed the basis of a grant application submitted to the Public Health Agency of Canada in January 2007. That grant application was successful, providing funds to pilot test School Travel Planning in four provinces between November 2007 and March 2009.

This report summarizes the results of that pilot test along with key lessons learned. Twelve pioneering schools took part in the entire School Travel Planning process; three in each pilot province—British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

The most obvious measure of success with School Travel Planning is a shift toward more children using active modes of transportation to get to/from school. The pilot project data showed that School Travel Planning does have a positive impact on changing travel behavior: National hands-up classroom student survey results showed that rates of active transportation (walking, walking part-way or biking) increased from 43.8% during the baseline measurements to 45.9% during the follow-up measurements. Also, the family follow-up survey showed significant changes in driving behavior, with over 13% of parents reporting that they now drive less as a result of the STP project.

However, success can be measured in more ways than just transportation mode shift. School Travel Planning is successful if it creates safer conditions for children who already walk to school; and, the pilot test data showed a reduction in traffic around schools, which generally translates to improved safety conditions, reduced air pollution and fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

Data from the pilot test revealed that there is lots of potential for School Travel Planning to change behavior. For example:

- Use of active transportation is significantly higher after school than before school—if children are walking *home* from school, walking *to* school is clearly a viable option.
- Parents who currently drive reported that they would allow their children to walk if they were not alone (40%) or if there were reduced traffic dangers (22%), indicating there is potential for further reducing driving by developing neighbourhood walking groups or walking buddies and improving infrastructure for best routes.

The success of this School Travel Planning pilot project has already been recognized and funding has been secured to expand this effective model across the country. Of course, only a very small percentage of schools have been through the process so there is still much to learn. The next two years will provide an opportunity to discover how to further modify the School Travel Planning model to be effective in all Canadian communities.

## 2.0 Overview - What we set out to do & why

### 2.1 Why School Travel Planning?

After more than 10 successful years of running Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS)<sup>1</sup> programs in Ontario, and seeing similar programs become established across the country, it was clear that a new approach was going to be necessary to take the work to a sustainable level. As of 2006, most of the provincial/territorial ASRTS programs were managed by environmental non-profit organizations struggling with funding and capacity challenges. Despite offering an effective approach for getting more children to use active transportation to/from school (thereby improving children's health and safety as well as positively impacting the environment by decreasing the number of car trips<sup>2</sup>), the lead organizations were often faced with having to "re-invent" the program to be eligible for each new round of grant applications. Then, due to the limited capacity of these organizations, the programs had to rely heavily on volunteers to champion the work resulting in drastically different results from school to school, and loss of momentum whenever there was volunteer turnover.

It is clear that this type of work is desperately needed in many communities across Canada. Schools face many travel-related challenges and for a very large number of them, the twice-daily traffic congestion at the school is an ongoing issue. Dealing with travel-related issues takes up the time of school administrators, teachers, parents, municipal transportation staff, the police and public health professionals. And, when children who could walk or bike are driven to school, they are denied the opportunity for daily physical activity and the resulting increase in traffic congestion often leads to dangerous school zones, irate parents and increased air pollution.

School Travel Planning (STP) was identified as a potential approach that could help Canadian schools deal with travel issues. In September 2006, with funding from Transport Canada—Moving on Sustainable Transportation (MOST), Green Communities Canada began researching School Travel Planning experiences in other countries. That research resulted in the publication of two documents: *Review of International School Travel Planning Best Practices*, which summarized the different approaches being used in the UK, New Zealand, the USA and Australia; and *School Travel Planning Review & Recommendations*, which summarized the international information and recommended a framework for testing School Travel Planning in Canada. In the fall of 2007, Green Communities Canada received a grant from the Public Health Agency of Canada to pilot test the recommended framework for School Travel Planning in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> It is assumed that readers of this document have an understanding of Active and Safe Routes to School programs. If you are unfamiliar with ASRTS, visit <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/partnership/resources.asp#pres> for a good overview of programs across the country or visit <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/asrtsrg.asp> to check out ASRTS tools used in Ontario.

<sup>2</sup> For more details about the benefits of School Travel Planning, see Appendix A.

This report summarizes the results of that pilot test which took place at 12 schools from November 2007 through March 2009. A one-year extension of the initial project (funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and George Weston Limited/Loblaw Companies Limited) allowed expansion to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Yukon Territory as well as 24 additional schools. This report also includes some information about work that has taken place in that additional year, primarily in Section 5.0 Current Activities.

## 2.2 What is School Travel Planning?

School Travel Planning brings community stakeholders together to devise detailed plans for making active travel a safe and realistic choice for children at individual schools. School Travel Plans are based on travel demand management (TDM) principles and they benefit not only the schools they are designed for, but also the municipalities that surround them.

Successful School Travel Planning depends on the involvement of all relevant community stakeholders as part of a Municipal STP Steering Committee, including:

- School district representatives
- Transportation planning/engineering professionals
- Public health professionals
- Police representatives—enforcement and education
- Municipal government representatives, e.g. Councilors or Mayor
- Local environmental groups and any other interested agency or organization, e.g. trails committee, Parks and Recreation, Block Parents

At the school-level, planning is done by a School STP Committee that consists of:

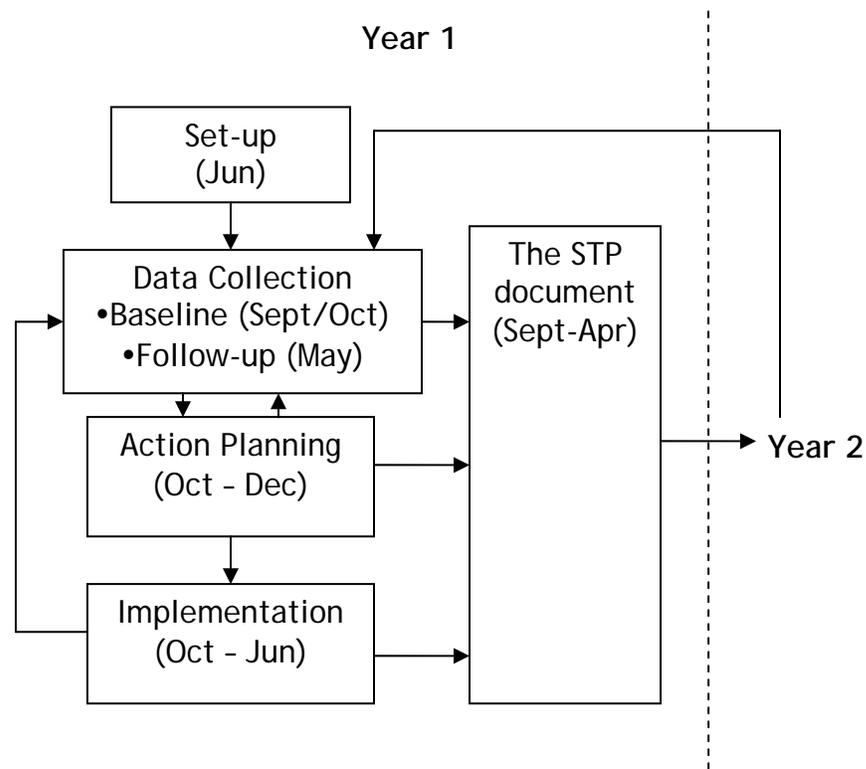
- School administration (Principal or VP)
- Teachers
- Parents
- Students
- Possibly local residents and representatives from local NGOs with an interest in active transportation, air quality, children's safety or physical activity

School Travel Planning involves five phases:

1. Program Set-Up
2. Data Collection & Problem Identification
3. Action Planning
4. Implementation
5. Ongoing Monitoring

Experience in the pilot test showed that the process does not, in practice, follow a linear progression. Instead, many of the steps take place simultaneously. The diagram on the next page shows how the five steps of the STP process typically flow. It also notes the ideal timing for these steps—taking into account the best times of year for working with schools. What the diagram does not show is that the School Travel Planning process is ongoing—after year 2, the process continues with new data collection, revision of the plan and implementation of action items. The process is

never finished, although certainly the bulk of the effort is needed in the first couple of years.



### What is a School Travel Plan?

*A School Travel Plan is both a policy document and a process; addressing the issues of sustainability, safety and health associated with 'the school run' using a collaborative community-based approach.*

## 2.3 Pilot Test Details

### 2.3.1 Municipality and School Selection

School Travel Planning was pilot tested in four provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia. The partner provinces were selected based on the following criteria:

- The province represents a region distinct from other selected provinces (climate, demographic, east/central/west);
- Existing capacity to deliver the pilot;
- Level of interest - how keen they were to participate;
- A well-advanced existing Active and Safe Routes to School program;
- The amount of in-kind support they were able to provide; and
- The existence of strong working relationships with municipalities in their province.

Each province worked with three “pilot” schools, taking them through the entire STP process, as well as two “control” schools which were just required to collect baseline and follow-up data. So, a total of 12 schools went through the entire process and 8 schools acted as controls. Specific criteria were identified to aid in the selection of pilot and control schools. The pilot schools selected were:

- Elementary schools.
- Enthusiastic about participating.
- Prepared to contribute in-kind staff and parent time.
- Located in municipalities that were prepared to commit to making School Travel Planning a priority in their community and provide funding for engineering measures that might be required. Most importantly, these communities were expected to demonstrate their commitment to School Travel Planning by including it in their applicable policies.
- Geographically and demographically diverse but typical of the community they represent, e.g. urban/rural, varying income levels, culturally diverse.
- Inexperienced with school travel initiatives (ASRTS programs) prior to the pilot. Note: This was not always possible since many schools have been involved in popular ASRTS events.

The control schools chosen were also elementary schools that were enthusiastic about participating and prepared to contribute in-kind staff time for data collection. Again, schools were sought with no, or very little, previous experience with school travel initiatives. Where possible, control schools were chosen that were similar to the pilot schools selected in each province, e.g. approximately the same number of students, in same city, in neighbourhoods with similar income levels. Of course, because there were more pilot schools than control schools it was not possible to mirror characteristics for all 12 pilot schools.

## 2.3.2 Pilot Project Resources

### *2.3.2.1 Staff*

At the local level, a part-time STP Facilitator in each province worked with the schools, guiding them through the process. At the national level, a Project Manager worked part-time to facilitate the creation of the various survey and communication tools for the project.

### *2.3.2.2 External Support*

After the project was underway and baseline data collection was done, an existing relationship between Green Communities Canada and the University of Toronto was expanded to include the STP pilot project. So, the University of Toronto handled data entry and analysis of the family surveys, provided input for slightly modifying the follow-up family survey, and created the data entry spreadsheets and instruction manual that are now part of the online STP toolkit.

### *2.3.2.3 Honoraria*

Pilot schools each received \$2,500 as compensation for their participation. Half of the honorarium was paid out once baseline data was collected and the other half was paid once the follow-up data had been collected. Control schools each received a \$1,000 honorarium, half paid after each of the data collection phases.

The original plan was to find unpaid volunteers to conduct traffic/pedestrian/cyclist counts at each school. It proved to be very difficult to recruit volunteers for these time-intensive counts, so funding was allocated to pay these volunteers: \$1,250 per school to be distributed among all of the volunteers.

#### *2.3.2.4 Incentive Items*

Funds were available to purchase incentive items for students at the 12 pilot schools as a 'thank-you' for participating in the pilot project and to encourage their further participation. Each student received a pencil case with the logo "It's Really Cool to Walk to School," along with pencils bearing the same logo. In addition, teacher/principal champions at each of the 12 pilot schools received reusable mugs bearing the same message as the student incentive items.

#### *2.3.2.5 Overall Project Budget*

For the period of November 2007 through March 2009, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) provided just over \$296,000 for the School Travel Plan pilot project. The project was extended another year, to the end of March 2010, with just over \$175,000 from the Public Health Agency of Canada plus an additional \$135,775 from George Weston Limited/Loblaw Companies Limited. Keep in mind that the activities described in this report were accomplished by March 2009 with the first batch of funding (with the exception of information in Section 5.0 Current Activities, which was funded with the extension funds from PHAC and the corporate funding).

### 2.3.3 Timeline

The original plan submitted to the Public Health Agency of Canada was for a two-year pilot test that was to begin April 1, 2007. Funding was not announced by the Public Health Agency of Canada until later than planned, in October 2007, so the time frame was shortened by 7 months. The pilot test officially ran from November 2007 through March 2009. See Appendix B - Actual Timeline for details about when each province completed the major milestones of the project.

### 2.3.4 Data Collection Process & Tools

Data was collected in two batches, baseline and follow-up, which involved different tools. The goal was that all baseline data would be collected by March 2008; most of the baseline data was collected between March and June 2008, with the traffic/pedestrian/cyclist counts in many cases being delayed until later than that. Follow-up data was scheduled to be collected by January 2009 so that the project could be wrapped up by March 2009, although it was recognized that this was not an ideal time for collecting this data. As it turned out, the follow-up data was collected in March-April 2009.<sup>3</sup> It would have been ideal to collect the follow-up data in May, after a full school year of School Travel Planning activity.

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<sup>3</sup> The timing of follow-up data collection was put off past the original January 2009 target because we hoped that we would receive an extension and additional funding from the Public Health of Canada (PHAC) that would allow the timeline to be shifted. The application for an extension was submitted fall 2008. When we had not received PHAC's decision about the extension by January 2009, we proceeded based on the assumption that we would *not* be getting an extension—we had to be prepared to wrap up by March 2009 if necessary. So, follow-up data collection was organized at the schools for March 2009. We did receive the positive news that PHAC was extending our project before the data was collected in March, but at that point it was too late to reschedule the data collection.

The baseline data collection tools for the pilot schools consisted of the following:

- **School profile form** that captures basic information about the school.
- **Hands-up classroom survey** that captures mode of transportation used by every student in the school to AND from school for one week.
- **Family survey** that goes home to every family to collect information about their present mode of school transportation, which route is taken to school and what barriers exist along that route, as well as attitudinal factors related to school travel.
- **School site visit & walkabout** involves all stakeholder groups in a walking tour of the school site and surrounding area, to actually see what the children face each day en route to and from school.
- **Traffic/pedestrian/cyclist count** that involves stationing people at each entrance to the school to track the number of pedestrians/cyclists/vehicles arriving via that entrance as well as noting information about unsafe behavior such as illegal parking or U-turns, unsafe crossing of roads by pedestrians, etc. This process yields extremely valuable information, however it is very labour-intensive—requiring five or more volunteers to be available for 30 minutes at both the beginning and end of each school day for a full week. As a result, this information was not collected at every school. Ontario and Nova Scotia completed these counts at two of their schools while Alberta and British Columbia only did it at one school each.

At the control schools, baseline data collection consisted of the school profile form, the hands-up classroom survey and the family survey.



*Key community stakeholders at École Grosvenor-Wentworth Park School in Halifax observe school traffic challenges during a walkabout*

The follow-up data collection tools at the pilot schools consisted of the following items:

- **Hands-up classroom survey**, the exact same as the one used for baseline data collection.

- **Family survey**, a shorter version than the baseline.
- **Exit interviews**, used to collect project feedback from all stakeholders in the project.

At the control schools, follow-up data collection consisted of the hands-up classroom survey and an exit interview with the principal.

At the end of the project, **provincial summary reports** were written by the STP Facilitators to capture their opinions about the STP process and tools, and to summarize their knowledge of what happened in their province during the pilot project.

### 2.3.5 Provincial Specifics

#### *2.3.5.1 British Columbia*

When the project began, the Autoplan Brokers of British Columbia and the Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC) were funding the *Way to Go! School Program*, the lead organization in BC with 10 years of experience running BC's active school travel program. Arthur Orsini of Urbanthinkers was selected by *Way to Go!* for the STP Facilitator position. Partway through the project, the Autoplan Brokers of BC/ICBC funding partnership dissolved and *Way to Go!* ended, but Orsini was able to stay on as the STP Facilitator until March 31, 2009.

Orsini worked with two municipalities during the pilot project. Two of the BC pilot schools were in the City of Port Moody while one pilot school and both control schools were in Coquitlam. The City of Port Moody was selected due to previous connections between the Transportation Engineer, who was very keen to become more involved in school travel work, and *Way to Go!* The City of Coquitlam was selected because both it and the City of Port Moody are in the same school district. The pilot schools were either recommended by municipal staff or selected because of previous interest in *Way to Go!* initiatives. The control schools were close to the pilot schools and would have preferred to be involved in the whole process, but settled on being control schools in the hopes that this participation would give them an opportunity to be selected for future STP work.

BC's pilot schools were:

1. Glenayre Elementary School in Port Moody (K-5 school with 395 students, 0% bussed)
2. Pleasantside Elementary School in Port Moody (K-5 school with 150 students, 0% bussed)
3. Riverview Park Elementary School in Coquitlam (K-5 school with 240 students, 0% bussed)

BC's control schools were:

1. Alderson Elementary School in Coquitlam (K-5 school with 155 students, 0% bussed)
2. Eagle Ridge Elementary School in Coquitlam (K-5 school with 360 students, 0% bussed)

Orsini worked intensively with the pilot schools in BC. He spent an average of more than 80 hours physically at each school during the project—the amount ranged from 55

hours up to 130 hours. This included time spent at School STP Committee meetings, walkabouts, directly interacting with students and participating in relevant school activities such as assemblies and walking events. Because Orsini spent so much time at his schools, he was very hands-on with many aspects of the project. For example, the day family surveys went home, he spoke to every student at Glenayre through a marathon series of 'short intros' to pairs of classes. During these interactions, students were given a sticker as a prize any time they could incorporate the phrase "these family surveys are really important so we need to get them filled out at home and then bring them back" into any statement or questions they gave during the 15 minute discussion. Orsini also worked with schools to have Grade 4/5 students conduct their own walkabout on the school grounds in addition to the official walkabout with committee members. He also worked to create a student leadership initiative at each school.



*View from the stairs at Riverview Park Elementary School in Coquitlam, one of BC's pilot schools, on Earth Day 2008*

#### *2.3.5.2 Alberta*

Safe, Healthy Active People Everywhere (SHAPE) Alberta was selected as the lead organization in Alberta based on their previous role as champion of that province's Active and Safe Routes to School program. Bev Esslinger was SHAPE's STP Facilitator for the pilot project.

Esslinger, based in Edmonton and working throughout the province of Alberta, saw the pilot project as an opportunity to deepen the reach of SHAPE's work and initiated the school travel work in Calgary. Esslinger invited both the public and Catholic school boards to the introductory meetings; however, the project was not able to pass the public board's risk assessment procedures in a timely manner. As a result, all of the schools chosen were from Calgary's Catholic school board, based on the board's recommendations about which schools would make the best pilot and control schools.

AB's pilot schools were:

1. St. Clare Elementary School (K-6 school with 570 students, 25% bussed)

2. St. Alphonsus Fine Arts School (K-9 school with 400 students, 9% bussed)
3. St. Basil Elementary & Junior High School (K-9 school with 800 students, 22% bussed)

AB's control schools were:

1. Monsignor E.L. Doyle Elementary School (K-6 school with 340 students, 13% bussed)
2. Our Lady of Peace Elementary & Junior High School (K-9 school with 875 students, 4% bussed)

Because of the distance between Edmonton and Calgary, after the initial meetings much of the communication between Esslinger and the STP schools took place via phone and email. Hands-on support was provided by Calgary staff member Raelene Lauzon who worked directly with schools. The team spent an average of 20 hours physically at each school during the project—the amount ranged from 14 hours up to 27 hours. This included time spent at School STP Committee meetings and walkabouts, as well as directly interacting with students.



*An Albertan school shows enthusiasm about getting active*

### *2.3.5.3 Ontario*

The lead organization for the pilot project in Ontario was Green Communities Canada (GCC). Under the direction of Jacky Kennedy, Director of Canada Walks for GCC, a municipality with a well-established municipal school travel committee was chosen—Region of Waterloo. The municipal stakeholder group in Region of Waterloo had been working collaboratively for about seven years already. Colleen Cooper, a public health nurse focused on injury prevention for the Region of Waterloo, was the lead member of that committee and she agreed to act as the STP Facilitator for the project. She did the work as part of her existing position with the Region, i.e. she was not paid with funds from the project. Notice that this is unique among the participating pilot provinces, and represents a sustainable model that other provinces may wish to emulate in the future.

One pilot school was chosen in each of the 3 cities that are part of the region—Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. The schools were selected based on input from the stakeholder group; all three schools had ongoing traffic problems. The three pilot schools in the Region of Waterloo were:

1. Mary Johnston Public School in Waterloo (JK-6 school with 500 students)
2. W.T. Townshend Public School in Kitchener (JK-8 school with 900 students)
3. Saginaw Public School in Cambridge (JK-6 school with 560 students)

Ontario's control schools were:

1. Hillcrest Public School in Cambridge (JK-6 school)
2. Forest Glen Public School in New Hamburg (JK-8 school)

Due to time constraints and other job responsibilities, Cooper did not personally spend much time in the pilot schools. Instead, she linked with the principals and teacher champions at the schools. Cooper spent an average of 12.5 hours at each pilot school during the project—the amount ranged from 12 to 14 hours. Most of this time was spent participating in high-level meetings.

Cooper also helped organize School Travel Planning workshops for 14 schools, three of which were the pilot schools. Each participating school completed classroom surveys and traffic counts prior to attending the workshops. The three STP pilot schools also completed family surveys and participated in walkabouts. For the workshop, each school was asked to bring a teacher, up to 10 students and parent volunteers. Each school presented the results of their data collection to the larger group. Schools then worked in their own groups to develop plans that included three walk to school-related activities they could implement by June 2008.

#### *2.3.5.4 Nova Scotia*

Ecology Action Centre in Halifax was chosen as the partner organization in Nova Scotia because of their involvement as the lead of Active and Safe Routes to School program in that province. Cheyenne Dickinson was hired by Ecology Action Centre for the STP Facilitator position.

Nova Scotia's three pilot schools were chosen based on perceived need (i.e. located in/near areas with known or suspected travel issues) and interest in the project. Their location and size were also important factors in the selection process. All of the schools are part of Halifax Regional Municipality—selected to limit travel time for the Facilitator who works in Halifax.

The pilot schools in NS were:

1. École Grosvenor-Wentworth Park Elementary School in Halifax (Primary<sup>4</sup>-6 school with 380 students, 25% bussed)
2. Shatford Memorial Elementary School in Hubbards (Primary-6 rural school with 75 students, 50% bussed)
3. John MacNeil Elementary School in Dartmouth (Primary-6 with 220 students, only special needs students are bussed)

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<sup>4</sup> Primary in Nova Scotia = kindergarten

The control schools in NS were:

1. Basinview Drive Community School in Bedford (Primary-6 school with 330 students, very few are bussed)
2. Westmount Elementary School in Halifax (Primary-6 school with 315 students, only special needs students are bussed)

Dickinson spent an average of 20 hours at each pilot school during the project; the amount ranged from 15 to 23 hours per school. Most of those hours were spent participating in face-to-face committee meetings. Very little, or no, time was spent directly interacting with the students.



*Students in Nova Scotia are keen to walk,  
whatever the weather*

## 3.0 National Results - What happened

### 3.1 School Travel Plans Written

One of the key objectives of School Travel Planning is to ensure that a written plan is created for each school that captures all of the information about school travel patterns, identifies challenges, sets goals, and outlines strategies for addressing challenges and encouraging higher levels of active school travel. As a result of the pilot test, Canada now has 12 completed School Travel Plans. As these are the first Canadian School Travel Plans ever written, they have particular significance. It will be reassuring to a new school to know that others have “pioneered” the process before them and it will be helpful to new Facilitators to have access to sample plans from their own country (and possibly, province).

### 3.2 Action Plan Items Implemented

It became obvious early in the process that schools are keen to begin implementation as soon as a good idea is agreed upon, rather than wait for the official Action Plan to be written. As a result, even though the pilot time frame was short, all of the schools were successful at getting some of their ideas implemented. Below are some examples of Action Plan items that were implemented by March 2009.

#### 3.2.1 Education & Encouragement Activities

- The most significant action item implemented in BC was Riverview Park’s Walk to School Days and the related components that stemmed from it such as bookmarks/punch cards, the Golden Sneaker award and ‘barricading’ the school driveway to traffic.



*Students at Riverview Park Elementary School were greeted with a very different school drop-off zone on Earth Day 2008.*

- Also in BC, each of the schools implemented an activity developed by a group of student leaders: Pedestrian Permit, Pie(d) Piper Walking Groups, Licence to Walk and Early Walker Soccer.
- After the walkabout at St. Alphonsus in AB, key parents were identified and a group was formed called STARSS (St. Alphonsus Active Route to a Safe School), which held regular meetings and planned/conducted awareness and education activities such as creating newsletter inserts, running a poster contest and assisting with walk to school events.
- St. Clare in AB planned a wellness fair, inviting many community partners to speak to students about health and safety initiatives including active travel to/from school. That same school also had staff logging the minutes students were walking and creating competitions to get students excited about it.
- WOW (Walk on Wednesdays) was implemented at AB pilot schools to encourage regular walking.
- Walking School Busses (WSB) were initiated at two schools in ON and plans were in place to get them started at the third as well. Grosvenor-Wentworth Park in NS also started a Walking School Bus program which was successful in getting about 20 participants per week (each Wednesday) to walk at least partway to school. Shatford Memorial in NS, whose student population is primarily bussed, also launched a WSB program; it happens once per month when the bus driver drops students off at the entrance to a trail about 500 metres from the school, and the students walk the rest of the way with parents/teachers.
- All three NS schools were part of the Pace Car program, designed to encourage people to drive slower and more carefully.



*An example of a student-led Walking School Bus in Waterloo, Ontario*

### *3.2.2 Enforcement Activities*

- St. Clare in AB engaged the bylaw officer to help deter inappropriate double/triple parking.
- Saginaw in ON increased enforcement of traffic infractions by both by-law officers and the police.

### 3.2.3 Infrastructure Activities

- Shatford Memorial in NS converted a passing zone in front of their school into a no-passing zone.



*Passing lane eliminated in front of school—dashed line painted over*

- Shatford Memorial in NS initiated a campaign to build a trail that would serve their walking students. The connector trail will link the school grounds to the existing Rails to Trails corridor that passes through the community. This is a major project involving multiple stakeholders and when complete it will be a significant action item accomplishment for this small community.
- At John MacNeil in NS, the local councilor has begun an investigation into improving one of the key crosswalks, and their STP committee was successful at having a well-used local trail re-marked and getting a streetlight installed along a particularly dark street used as a school route.
- St. Alphonsus in AB arranged for trimming of hedges in front of the school.



*Crosswalk area improved out front of one of Nova Scotia's pilot schools*

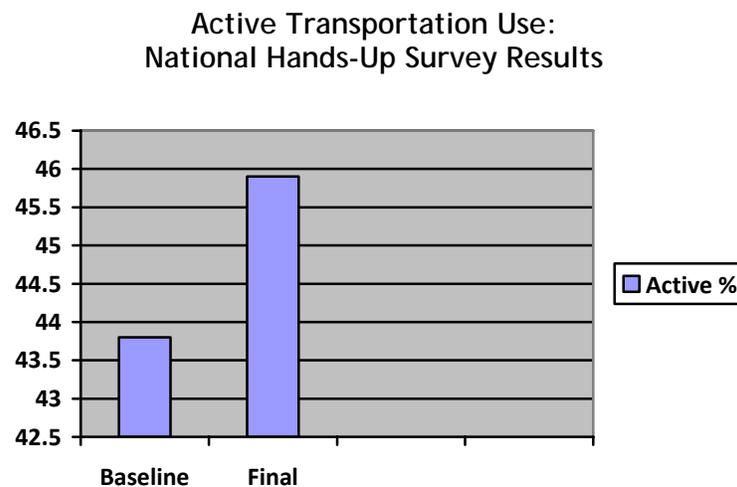
### 3.2.4 Other Activities

- St. Clare in AB adjusted their school dismissal time to help address some of the travel-related challenges their school was facing.

### 3.3 Behavior Change

The pilot project data showed that School Travel Planning has a positive impact on changing travel behavior:

- **2.1% overall growth in active transportation across Canada.** National hands-up classroom student survey results showed that rates of active transportation (walking, walking part-way or biking) increased from 43.8% during the baseline measurements to 45.9% during the follow-up measurements at pilot schools. This is larger than the increase seen at the control schools.<sup>5</sup>



- **13% of families report driving less.** The family follow-up survey showed significant changes in driving behavior, with over 13% of parents reporting that they now drive less as a result of the STP project.
- **Parents report fewer cars near schools.** The nation-wide family survey data revealed that 14 percent of families reported there was less volume of traffic outside of their schools after School Travel Planning efforts were implemented.

Furthermore, the data revealed the potential for School Travel Planning to change behavior.

- **Children are capable of walking the distance.** Across the board, use of active travel is higher after school than before school. National family follow-up survey data showed that 37% are using active travel to get to school while 44% are using active travel to get home. If children are walking *home* from school, surely walking *to* school is a viable option.

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<sup>5</sup> The national average percentage of students using active transportation at the control schools was 46.9 percent during the baseline measurements and 48.3 percent during the follow-up measurements, an increase of 1.4 percent. The control schools started out with a higher percentage of students using active transportation as compared to the pilot schools. It is interesting to note that even the control schools experienced an increase in active transportation. This could be because just completing the Family Survey has an impact on travel behavior or because the control schools were often schools that would have preferred to be pilot schools but didn't "make the cut." Since they were keen, perhaps they took small steps to address issues on their own and encouraged active school travel.

- **STP programming can further reduce driving.** Parents who currently drive reported that they would allow their children to walk if they were not alone (40%); or there were reduced traffic dangers (22%). They also reported they would allow children to cycle if they were not alone (33%); or there were reduced traffic dangers (25%). These results indicate there is still great potential for further reducing driving by developing more walking school buses and walking buddies, and improving route infrastructure.

The data also provided valuable information that informs the School Travel Plan solutions chosen for a given school.

- **Parents cite many reasons for driving, not always distance.** When cross-nation results were combined, the family follow-up survey revealed that parents drive their children to school because of weather (21%); convenience/time pressures (18%); and the parent is already en route somewhere else (17%). These reasons were the same during baseline and follow-up data collection.
- **Parents find widely varied STP activities effective.** According to family surveys, the three most effective STP activities are safety education (24%); special events (24%); and infrastructure improvements (19%).

### 3.4 Policy and Cultural Change

There were some early signs of School Travel Planning becoming integrated into the school culture or policies. For example:

- In BC, the STP pilot project allowed the pilot schools to “name” their school travel problems in a very specific manner and to organize the various activities, solutions and strategies under the name School Travel Plan, which suggests it will be integrated into policy relating to new students (e.g. welcoming new families into the school community with a ‘we often walk to school’ message).
- There are some early signs that culture is shifting at pilot schools in favour of active transportation. For example, at Riverview Park Elementary School in British Columbia, components of “walking to school” are now routinely included as part of staff meetings, and walk-to-school events are planned and promoted well in advance.
- In ON, all of the pilot schools reported that they really believed in the project and that many of the activities are now “entrenched” in their school community. As of March 2009, School Travel Planning was not yet integrated into school policy in Region of Waterloo, but the Facilitator continues to work toward achieving that goal through presentations to the school board. One school travel policy success story for Region of Waterloo is the adoption of a policy about school site design; schools will no longer be built with “ring roads” that give parents the impression they should be dropping their children off. Further, The City of Kitchener has a policy with regard to school sites, requiring the provision of bicycle parking facilities.
- Two of the pilot schools in NS have integrated School Travel Planning into their Home and School/School Advisory Councils. So, rather than having a separate STP committee, school travel issues will be added to the responsibilities of the existing broader committees.

### 3.5 Evidence of Sustainability

The STP Facilitators were asked at the end of the project if they believe their pilot schools will carry on with implementation beyond the end of the pilot test even if there is no further contact from the Facilitator. The responses were as follows:

- BC—Yes for all three pilot schools.
- AB—Two out of the three will continue for sure, and it is hoped the third will as well.
- ON—Yes, in the short term anyway.
- NS—Yes for two schools but unsure about the third.

Other evidence of sustainability beyond the end of the pilot project:

- In BC, Orsini was hired by the City of Coquitlam to conduct walkabouts at 15 schools during the Spring of 2009 and follow up with classroom discussions.
- While the Calgary Catholic School District has not instituted any specific policy about School Travel Planning, they have indicated a willingness to have all their schools look at this approach.

### 3.6 Anecdotal Evidence

Feedback from Municipal STP Steering Committee and School STP Committee members was glowing. Participants remarked:

- “I would recommend School Travel Planning to other schools because it gets results and brings awareness to all levels: students, parents, teachers, staff.”
- “School Travel Planning jump-started issues that have been on our school community’s mind for some time.”
- “Partnership/information sharing has been valuable; helped provide clarification re: who to connect with in other stakeholder groups.”

## 4.0 Lessons Learned - What will change going forward

### 4.1 Key Challenges Faced

- **Condensed timeline.** Because of a delay in the funding announcement, the pilot test time frame was significantly shortened—leaving 17 months for the pilot test rather than 24 months. Even more significant than the shortening of the time frame was the actual timing of the project. When working with schools, it is important to recognize that there are certain months of the year that are productive (October-November, January-May) and other months that are generally not (June-Sep, Dec). Starting the pilot project in November, already well into the school year, was not ideal.
- **Need for patience.** Behavior change is a process, not an event. Infrastructure changes, in particular, can take a long time to implement.
- **Stakeholder challenges**
  - **Busyness.** Making this work a priority for stakeholders can be a challenge because everyone is busy and has many demands for their time and attention. Action items were not always implemented as quickly as they could have been because stakeholders were busy with other tasks.
  - **Turnover.** Each of the provinces experienced turnover of key stakeholders, often resulting in delays.
  - **Jurisdictional issues.** Sometimes committees ran into uncertainty about whose responsibility it should be to deal with specific problems.
  - **Limits of parent as champion.** At Glenayre Elementary School in Port Moody, BC, the parent representative was such a strong leader and advocate of the program that it seemed to reduce the perceived need for the school staff to take a leadership role.
- **Too much reliance on STP Facilitator.** Particularly at schools where the STP Facilitator was very hands-on, there was a tendency for the schools to rely heavily on the STP Facilitator to drive the program. For example, at Pleasantside School in BC, while school staff support and contributions were great, there was a reliance on the STP Facilitator to lead the way rather than come up with their own innovations/actions/activities. Also, because the pilot test had an end date, there were questions from some schools about how the work could continue beyond the pilot and what they would do after the STP Facilitator's time with them was finished—further proof of heavy reliance on the Facilitator.
- **Difficulty recruiting sufficient volunteer support.** This was consistently a challenge for labour-intensive traffic/pedestrian/cyclist counts but it was also an issue when trying to implement some action plan ideas. For example, at St. Basil's in AB, the lead teacher was eager to establish a Walking School Bus before the school year began but her goal was delayed due to lack of volunteers.
- **Part-time STP Facilitator Role.** Orsini in BC experienced some schedule conflicts between this project and other contracts he had to take on to ensure he personally had sufficient work—challenges that would not have existed if the

STP Facilitator position had been full-time. Cooper in Ontario noted that if this project had been a full-time job for her, or at least a larger part of her overall job responsibilities, that there may have been an opportunity to bridge school personnel gaps more efficiently.

## 4.2 Keys to Success

Below are the most common threads that influence the success of the STP process.

- **STP Facilitator:** The role of STP Facilitator is key to the success of the program as these individuals provide an essential link between the school and the wider community. There were repeated examples of the need for the Facilitator to make sure the work was a priority and moved ahead, e.g. ensuring meetings were scheduled and ensuring data collection took place. School and municipal committee participants in the pilot project universally agreed on the importance of having a person dedicated to leading the process. Sample comments from the surveys conducted at the end of the project:
  - This project's success was a direct result of the STP Facilitator.
  - The presence of the STP Facilitator most definitely legitimized the program. It helped keep the focus and I know it was mainly because of the Facilitator that we got the attention of the government and the school board.
  - "[School Travel Planning] was not just dumped on the school, e.g. 'here's the binder & worksheet' rather a person [the STP Facilitator] came and did something."
- **Multiple champions:** To provide the initiative required to get through the process, internal champions are needed at each school. Schools cannot rely solely on the STP Facilitator for the momentum needed throughout the initial writing of the plan, and the champions' role becomes even more critical in subsequent years when the STP Facilitator is much less involved. Champions are typically senior staff at the school and parent volunteers. It is important that there be more than one champion—the project must not be dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of one individual as this is too large a task for one person and leaves the project vulnerable if that one person leaves for any reason.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** The more diverse the stakeholder group, the more comprehensive and successful the resulting School Travel Plan will be. It saves time and effort if the action plan items are agreed upon up front by the stakeholder groups that will be involved in their implementation. It can be challenging to get buy-in later from stakeholders that were not involved in the issue identification and decision making process. Each province was successful at bringing together most or all of the recommended key stakeholders to be part of the process, resulting in broad representation on the STP committees. See Appendix C - Stakeholder Group Representation for details about which stakeholder groups were represented on each province's committees. It is important to reach out to the broader community that will impact or be impacted by the School Travel Plan. For example, at St. Alphonsus in AB, committee members worked collaboratively with a charter school located

- across the street as well as the community league to address the physical challenges of busy roads with no crossing lights for pedestrians.
- **School community ownership:** The School Travel Plan must be perceived as the school's plan, developed by the school community for the benefit of its students. While the STP Facilitator typically writes the School Travel Plan document, the writing process is actually a compilation of the input of all the others, summarizing the group's ideas. School Travel Planning is NOT about an "expert" coming in and providing solutions.
  - **Incentives for schools:** In the Canadian national pilot, providing honoraria for the participating schools helped in recruiting initial involvement and served as an incentive to conduct data collection in a timely manner (since each honorarium installment was paid after surveys were submitted). It also demonstrated that the time and commitment from the school was valued. There is a cost to schools for being involved in School Travel Planning, for essential items like teacher release time as well as for optional items like prizes and small infrastructure improvements. Providing honoraria helps to cover some of these costs. With so many programs competing for schools' attention and time, it is important to offer an honorarium to emphasize the value of the STP work and make it a priority program for the school.
  - **Customized solutions:** The School Travel Planning process is flexible and helps each school identify the reasons for current travel behavior and address barriers to active travel in their Action Plan. For example, at Pleasantside Elementary School in BC, the primary issue for parents who drive was convenience and timing, i.e. parents cited very few options for travel to work other than driving and many drop children off at school on their way to work. So, one of the action plan ideas for that school was to focus on social networking—connecting families that live near one another to encourage children of different ages to walk/bike to school together.

### 4.3 Recommended Modifications or Enhancements to the Framework & Tools

The STP toolkit, including a comprehensive guidebook for STP Facilitators and all the data collection tools and sample documents, is available online at <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/schooltraveltools.asp>. The toolkit is also available in French at <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/francais/schooltravel.asp>. As a result of the pilot test, parts of the recommended process and some of the actual tools will be modified. The toolkit will continue to be modified over time, based on lessons learned from each new community that goes through the process. Recommended changes to the process and tools based on the pilot include:

#### 4.3.1 Timeline

The pilot STP Facilitators all agree that it would be ideal if year one of an STP project is contained all in one school year to minimize turnover challenges and ensure baseline and follow-up data are collected from the same set of students. So, municipality and schools should ideally be chosen in the Spring of one school year, then be ready to immediately get started with the STP process in September of the next school year.

#### *4.3.2 STP Facilitator Position*

Going forward, it is recommended that the STP Facilitator position meet the following criteria when possible—based on feedback from the pilot STP Facilitators.

- Make the STP Facilitator role full-time so that the person can focus 100% on this work.
- Choose an STP Facilitator that lives close to the schools s/he is working with, although in rural areas this will not always be possible.
- Have each full-time Facilitator work with 12 new schools per year.
  - BC recommended 10 new schools per year. Orsini considers “student/classroom engagement an essential, non-negotiable component of the project” so his recommended number of schools reflects the time-intensive approach he took at schools.
  - AB recommended 5 to 10 new schools per year.
  - ON suggested 30 new schools per year—this makes sense given Cooper’s less hands-on approach than the other Facilitators.
  - NS suggested 8 to 10 new schools per year.
- Recognize that the ideal “location” for this position will vary from community to community, e.g. the Facilitator position could be integrated as part of a municipality’s Transportation Demand Management department, as part of the School Board’s transportation department, or as part of public health. The long-term objective is to see this position be taken on as part of “business as usual” within existing governmental departments rather than have it fall under a not-for-profit organization as is common now.

#### *4.3.3 Data Collection & Data Entry*

- Modify layout of hands-up classroom survey. For the pilot test, each classroom received two pages—one for tracking TO school mode used and one for tracking FROM school. Because these two surveys looked so similar some teachers did not notice the difference (or perhaps they just did not flip over the page to see the reverse side) and as a result only collected the TO school information and left the second page blank. To remedy the problem, this survey has now been modified so that both the TO and FROM tracking tables appear on the same side of a single page.
- Offer honoraria for data entry if possible. Data entry is a time consuming but important step in the process. For the pilot, the University of Toronto did the data entry of Family Surveys while the data entry of the Hands-up Classroom Survey was handled at the local level. STP Facilitators looked for suitable volunteers to do this task but in all cases ended up doing the data entry themselves. Going forward, all data entry will have to be done at the local level, i.e. the University of Toronto will no longer complete the data entry now that the data entry tool has been developed. To assist in the recruitment of data entry volunteers, it is recommended that honoraria funding be set aside. Data entry volunteers should be adults with excellent attention to detail.

#### *4.3.4 Collaboration*

It was suggested that cross-school collaboration would be helpful. Bring together students and teachers from all STP schools in a region for a workshop to share ideas, findings, successes and inspiration. This approach was used successfully in Waterloo Region in Ontario.

#### *4.3.5 Support in Year Two of the STP Process*

The Facilitators were asked “What role do you think an STP Facilitator should have with schools after they have been through the STP cycle once and are now in the ongoing maintenance phase? What kind of support would be beneficial for schools to have to ensure their STP remains a living document, updated on a regular basis?” All of the pilot STP Facilitators agreed that the STP Facilitator should continue to be available for telephone and email consultation and should plan to re-visit each school at least twice during year two to participate in special meetings or celebrations to maintain a sense of “continuing on” and to remind schools of the importance of collecting new survey data to assess how they are progressing and adapt their plans if necessary.

## 5.0 Current Activities - What's going on now

### 5.1 The 2009-10 School Year

By the time official word was received that PHAC was offering a one-year extension for this project, plans to collect follow-up data had already been finalized and work was wrapping up at the original 12 pilot schools. As a result, it was decided that the one year extension would be used as an opportunity to expand to new schools in the four pilot provinces as well as introduce STP to two new provinces and one territory. Work with a total of 24 new schools is being funded by the PHAC extension funds and the George Weston Limited/Loblaw Companies Limited funds, however STP is reaching more schools than that thanks to local and provincial government departments stepping up to fund this important work in some parts of the country.

In British Columbia, the pilot STP Facilitator had resigned to move on to other projects so HASTE BC, the Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions, was brought on board as the new provincial partner. Sandra Jones was hired as both a provincial level STP representative and the national STP training coordinator. Following Ontario's model from the pilot, HASTE sought out municipalities that were prepared to fund their own local STP Facilitators, who are being mentored by Jones. The municipalities of Vernon and Surrey are each funding a staff member to work part-time as an STP Facilitator with three schools during the 2009-10 school year. So, a total of six new BC schools are going through the STP process this year.

In Alberta, SHAPE continues to be the lead organization. Esslinger is working with three new schools in Edmonton, taking them through the STP process in the 2009-10 school year. The City of Grande Prairie has also initiated work with a community stakeholder group and work has begun with three schools in that city.

In Ontario, Green Communities Canada continues to be the lead organization. Continuing to follow the same sustainable model as in the pilot, Kennedy has recruited several communities willing to fund their own local STP Facilitator. STP work is underway in London, Niagara Region, Ottawa, Ajax, Halton Region and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

In Nova Scotia, Ecology Action Centre continues to be the lead organization. Dickinson is working with two new schools this year.

Saskatchewan *in motion* is a new provincial partner working with three schools this year.

Resource Conservation Manitoba is another new partner working with three schools.

Finally, Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon is a new territorial STP partner that is working to find their first school to take through the STP process.

## 5.2 January 2010 & Beyond

Early in January 2010, Green Communities Canada received the exciting news that they would be getting funding from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer's CLASP (Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention) project, which is receiving funds from the Public Health Agency of Canada. This funding of \$2.18 million will allow the expansion of STP to every province/territory, and will link STP with sustainable happiness research headed by Dr. Catherine O'Brien of Cape Breton University and the *Child and Youth Friendly Land Use and Transportation Planning Guidelines* created by the Centre for Sustainable Transportation out of the University of Winnipeg. The University of Toronto is a key project partner, with Dr. Guy Faulkner leading the evaluation component and linking STP with their BEAT (Built Environment and Active Transport) project. Thanks to this new funding, 120 new schools will participate in the STP process between January 2010 and March 2012. For more information, visit [www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/coalitions](http://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/coalitions).

## 6.0 Appendices

### Appendix A: Benefits of School Travel Planning

Although School Travel Planning is still too new in Canada for significant shifts in transportation mode to be proven, there is ample evidence from other countries that School Travel Planning has been effective at getting more children to walk/bike/skateboard/etc. to school and decrease traffic around schools. The main benefits of getting more children using active travel to and from school are:

- *Improved children's health.* Daily exercise is linked to numerous benefits including decreased risk of obesity. Cleaner air helps the children who suffer from asthma and other air quality-related ailments.
- *Improved student well-being.* Students who use active travel to school arrive more alert and ready to learn.
- *Environmental benefits.* Reducing greenhouse gas emissions helps combat global warming.
- *Improved children's safety.* School Travel Planning addresses concerns about traffic danger and personal safety (e.g. strangers, bullying).

Other benefits of School Travel Planning include:

- *Reduced costs.* In certain situations, when School Travel Planning makes it safe for students to use active travel to school over reasonable distances where they were previously bussed due to safety concerns, there is an opportunity for school boards to save money by reducing school bussing costs. Also, the coordination of effort between government departments and community agencies can reasonably be expected to result in synergies that save time. For example, after successfully dealing with congestion issues at a school, the need for police enforcement and/or municipal engineering interventions can be drastically reduced. The cost of principal/teacher time wasted in dealing with traffic-related complaints is also drastically reduced.
- *Development of life-long healthy habits.* Using active transportation to and from school is an easy and effective way to help children integrate physical activity into their daily lives and establish good habits of active living. Research has shown a correlation between physical activity in childhood and physical activity in adulthood.
- *Community benefits.* Many of the investments made in infrastructure contribute to more walkable and safe communities, encouraging all residents to use active modes of transportation more often. Also, the collaborative process involving all relevant stakeholders helps to build a sense of community.

## Appendix B: 2007-2009 Pilot Project Stakeholder Group Representation on Committees

### Municipal STP Steering Committee

The goal is to have representation from all key stakeholder groups on the Municipal STP Steering Committee. However, in reality, this is sometimes not achieved. Below is a summary table showing the participation by stakeholder group in each province.

2007-2009 Pilot Project Stakeholder Representation on  
Municipal STP Steering Committee, by Province

Stakeholder Group	BC	AB	ON	NS
Traffic/transportation engineer(s)	Yes - 1 Transportation Engineer for City of Port Moody + 1 Traffic Operations Engineer for City of Coquitlam	Yes - 1 City of Calgary roads representative (turnover 3 times)	Yes - Manager Traffic Operations + Supervisor of Crossing Guards + Coordinator of Crossing Guards	Yes - Halifax Regional Municipality Traffic and Right-of-Way Services representative (turnover twice)
Police/by-law officer (enforcement)	No	Yes - 2 constables from City of Calgary	No	Yes - representative from Community Relations/Crime Prevention (turnover twice)
Police (safety education)	Yes - 1 police liaison + 1 media relations officer ("support" but not very involved)	Yes - 2 constables	Yes - 1 school resource officer	Same as representative for police enforcement
School Board	Yes - 1 Manager of Communications for School District 43 ("support" but not very involved)	Yes - Calgary School Board	Yes - principal planner + planner + Active Living consultant	Yes - Sport Animator for Halifax Regional School Board (turnover once)
Public Health	No	Yes - representative	Yes - 2 public health nurses	Yes - representative

		from Alberta Health		from School Health Team, Public Health Services
Other	Yes - Recreation Marketing & Planning Coordinator for Port Moody Community Services	Yes - 2 representatives from Alberta Motor Association	Yes - Southwestern Regional Planner for Ministry of Transportation + Run for Life representative	Yes - representative from Halifax Regional Municipality's Regional Planning Department + individual from HRM Regional Trails

### School STP Committee

Again, the goal is to have representation from all key stakeholder groups on the School STP Committee. Below is a summary table showing the participation by stakeholder group in each province.

**2007-2009 Pilot Project Stakeholder Representation on School STP Committee, by Province**

Stakeholder Group	BC	AB	ON	NS
Principal and/or VP	Yes - Principal or VP at all 3 schools	Yes - principal was lead at 2 schools	Yes - principal involved at all 3 schools	Yes - principal at 1 school, principal & VP at 1 school
Teacher(s)	Yes at 2 schools (1-4 teachers), No at 1 school	Yes at 2 schools	Yes at all 3 schools	Yes at 2 schools
Parent(s)	Yes - 1-3 parent council representatives	Yes at all 3 schools	Yes - 1 or 2 parents at each school	Yes - at all three schools (ranged from 1 to 8 parents per school)
Student(s)	No	Yes at 1 school	Yes - 5 to 10 students at each school	No
Local residents	No	No	No	No
Other	No	No	No	Yes - one school had school resource officer, community response officer and local councilor

## Appendix C: Actual Pilot Project Timeline

Below is a summary of the *actual* timing of completion for the various key milestones of the project. Note that there were variations in timing for some milestones from province to province. There were also some variations by school within the same province, e.g. two schools in AB completed their walkabouts in June 2008 while one was not able to complete that portion of the work until October 2008.

Milestone	Completion Date - BC	Completion Date - AB	Completion Date - ON	Completion Date - NS
Municipal STP Steering Committees established and Statements of Support signed by each stakeholder group	Apr 2008	May 2008	Before project began	Feb-Mar 2008
Schools selected and School Agreements signed	Mar 2008	May 2008	Mar 2008	Apr 2008
Baseline data collected				
• Hands-up classroom surveys	Mar 2008	Jun 2008	Mar 2008	Apr 2008
• Family surveys	Mar 2008	Jun 2008	Mar 2008	Apr 2008
• Walkabouts	Jun 2008	Jun, Oct 2008	May 2008	May-Jun 2008
• Traffic/pedestrian/cyclist count	Jun 2008	Oct 2008	Sep 2008	Oct 2008 & Mar 2009
Draft Action Plan written	Apr 2008	during walkabouts	Apr 2008	May-Jun 2008
Draft School Travel Plan written	Dec 2008	Feb 2009	Nov-Dec 2008	Dec 2008
School Travel Plan finalized and approved by committees	Jan 2009	Mar 2009	Nov-Dec 2008	Jan 2009
Follow-up data collected				
• Hands-up classroom survey	Mar 2009	Mar-Apr 2009	Mar 2009	Mar 2009
• Family surveys	Mar 2009	Mar-Apr 2009	Mar 2009	Mar 2009