

Excerpts from “Way to Go” Website –

We have requested printed materials on this program [Trans. Alternatives team].

<http://www.waytogo.icbc.bc.ca/>

## Excerpt 1. What is it?

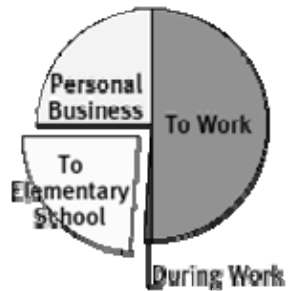
Schools, particularly elementary and middle schools, are important places for students and parents to learn about making safe choices on our B.C. roads when they walk, cycle or drive. Providing school communities with the tools required to develop traffic safety awareness and to increase the opportunities for students to walk, cycle, rideshare or take transit to school, is a positive step toward making the school journey safer, healthier and more environmentally responsible.

The **Autoplan Broker Road Safety Program** - a partnership between **Autoplan brokers** and **ICBC** - is committed to providing communities with the resources they need to create safer traffic environments on local streets. The **Way to Go! School Program** is one example of how **Autoplan brokers** address a community's traffic issues.

Reasons For Concern

### Reasons for Concern; Time for Action

- *Did You Know?*
- *The Cost of our Transportation Choices*
- *School Traffic Reduction Programs: Benefiting Families and Communities*
- *Hazards of Automobility*



### Greater Vancouver Regional District: Morning Peak Trip by Purpose

*About one-quarter of total person trips made during the morning peak are to elementary schools. If these trips are made by automobile, they contribute to traffic congestion, accident risk and pollution.*

**"...we do our children no favors if we confine them to a car-dependent mobility."**

Phil Goodwin, Professor, Transport Policy,  
University College London,  
Inaugural Lecture, October 1997

### Did You Know?

- Nearly half of all children in urban and suburban B.C. travel to school by car.
- During rush hour (peak period) 20 - 25% of person trips are travel to and from school in a typical community. A generation ago, most of these were walking or biking trips.
- Chauffeur children to school often results in two vehicle trips: one to the school and one returning home, creating up to four additional vehicle trips per day.
- There are one million registered vehicles in the Lower Mainland.
- 30,000 additional vehicles are registered in the Lower Mainland each year.
- Automobile ownership in Canada has risen from 310 vehicles per 1,000 people in 1970 to 484 per 1,000 in 1994.
- Twenty five years ago 26% of new vehicle purchases were vans, trucks, sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and commercial vehicles which are larger and less fuel efficient than conventional cars. Currently, these heavier vehicles represent almost 50% of all vehicle purchases.

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### The Cost of our Transportation Choices

- Transportation is the largest single source of air pollution emissions in British Columbia. In the Greater Vancouver region, transportation contributes more than 75% of air pollution. These pollutants are harmful to human health and the environment.
- Short motor vehicle trips contribute significant amounts of air pollution because they typically occur while an engine's pollution control system is cold and ineffective. Shifting 1% of automobile trips to walking or bicycling trips decreases emissions by 2% to 4%.
- Vehicle emissions contribute to air pollution which erodes human health due to the effects of the particulates and gases that are a byproduct of burning fossil fuels. This pollution particularly affects children's respiratory systems, as they

breathe more rapidly than adults and pollutants have an impact on the development of their lung function.

- The use of fossil fuels also leads to the release of greenhouse gases, contributing to warming the earth's lower atmosphere and resulting in global climate change.
- Increasing levels of air pollution and greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere have a negative effect on the quality and quantity of available drinking water, contribute to a reduction in agricultural production and are leading to the destruction of ecosystems on land and in the ocean.
- Traffic noise constitutes a significant proportion of the ambient sound in cities. In some instances overwhelming noise from vehicles leads to psychological and physical illness.
- In Canadian urban and suburban communities, roads and parking cover between 30% and 50% of the land base. If just 5% of a watershed is covered with impervious surfaces, such as roads and parking facilities, water quality of streams and waterways is seriously degraded due to oily runoff from the streets.
- A typical urban or suburban parking space costs \$5,000 to \$10,000 to build. Increased school parking means less money for educational services and less land for greenspace and play areas.
- Children who travel by car for every journey never have the opportunity to learn to walk safely or to review safe pedestrian practice with a responsible adult.

According to the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, children are less physically active than in previous generations, resulting in less fitness and poor health:

- Forty percent of Canadian children have at least one risk factor for heart disease: reduced fitness due to an inactive lifestyle.
- Children are 40% less active than they were 30 years ago.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon has also found that there are serious problems associated with children's inactivity:

In the past fifteen years the prevalence of obesity has grown by more than 50% in Canadian children aged six to eleven years and 40% in those aged twelve to seventeen. These children may become obese adults and be at a high risk of developing heart disease and diabetes.

- As well as traveling to most destinations by car, children's play habits have become more passive with the introduction of new technologies. Children are spending a great deal of time watching television, using computers and playing video games.
- Although many parents are concerned about the risk of "stranger danger," motor vehicles impose by far the greatest risk of injury and death to children.
- It costs over \$7,800 per year, on average, to own and operate a car. Driving an automobile typically costs 20¢ per kilometer and even more for short trips. Reducing your driving can save hundreds of dollars each year.
- In addition to user costs, each automobile driven in the Lower Mainland is estimated to impose about \$2,600 per year in external costs such as road repairs, policing, etc. costs paid by all taxpayers, whether they drive a car or not.

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## ***School Traffic Reduction Programs: Benefiting Families and Communities***

A growing number of schools and communities are using school traffic reduction programs to reduce congestion, pollution, accident risk and parking facility costs, to increase travel choices, and to encourage a more active lifestyle.

- Although pollution control equipment, increased fuel efficiency and alternative fuels can reduce some air pollutants, meeting emission reduction targets in urban and suburban communities also requires a reduction in total vehicle travel.
- Parents who walk with their children have the opportunity to teach their children how to walk safely. They have a chance to check their child's judgment and reinforce safe decisions.
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon has identified research that indicates that physical activity is essential for children and youth to promote healthy growth and development. Walking and bicycling are ideal ways for children to get regular exercise and to establish healthier lifelong travel habits. Regular physical activity develops cardiovascular fitness, strength, flexibility and also nurtures confidence and builds self esteem.
- Moderate to vigorous physical activity positively affects academic performance and skill development. Individuals have been shown to have improved concentration, enhanced memory and learning, enhanced creativity, better problem solving ability and improved mood for up to two hours following exercise.
- Walking and bicycling to school are opportunities for children to explore the world and experience an increasing amount of independence and responsibility. Such experiences are an essential part of children's healthy mental and emotional development.
- Walking and biking to school give children an opportunity to explore their community and to become aware of their neighbors and their neighborhood.
- Parents as well as children enjoy the benefits of travel alternatives. Walking and bicycling are increasingly popular forms of recreation and transportation, and many communities are promoting them for fun, fitness and to reduce traffic problems.
- Many travel alternatives, such as biking, walking, ridesharing and taking transit, reduce the time required for parents to chauffeur their children to school.
- Virtually every community has parents who cannot drive an automobile. Increasing school travel choices is particularly helpful to these mobility reduced households.

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## ***Hazards Of Automobility***

The hazards of automobility include increased health and safety risks that are a direct result of our relying on the private car as our sole form of transportation. When we take our children to school, to music lessons, to

**"Our society invests enormously in the fight against childhood diseases, but we accept the even greater hazards of automobility as if they were somehow natural and thus**

recreation and community centers, when they accompany us on errands and when we travel - we drive. Even when the opportunity exists for us to walk, bike or take the bus, we often don't consider an alternative to getting into our cars and turning on the ignition.

**unavoidable."**

John Barber,  
The Globe and Mail, 1995

A typical school zone at the beginning and the end of the school day is a testament to the dangers we create for our children when we become over-reliant on our cars.

A typical school zone at the beginning and the end of the school day is a testament to the dangers we create for our children when we become over-reliant on our cars.

Stand on the corner near a school when the school day begins or when it ends. A huge number of cars - often two or three hundred cars - converge onto one or two streets. Traffic rules and regulations are ignored as parents attempt to drop off or pick up their child(ren) as close as possible to the school doors. Parents and care-givers park in no stopping zones, make U-turns, back up into crosswalks, park on the wrong side of the road, double and triple park in order to be more conveniently located. This erratic driving behavior is combined with crowds of children walking across the streets, a few, perhaps, riding their bicycles. Many parents say that the most dangerous place on their children's journeys to school is the roads surrounding the school. Parents drive their children to school in order to ensure their safety, and, at the same time, their driving behavior often endangers their own and other children when they come to and leave school.

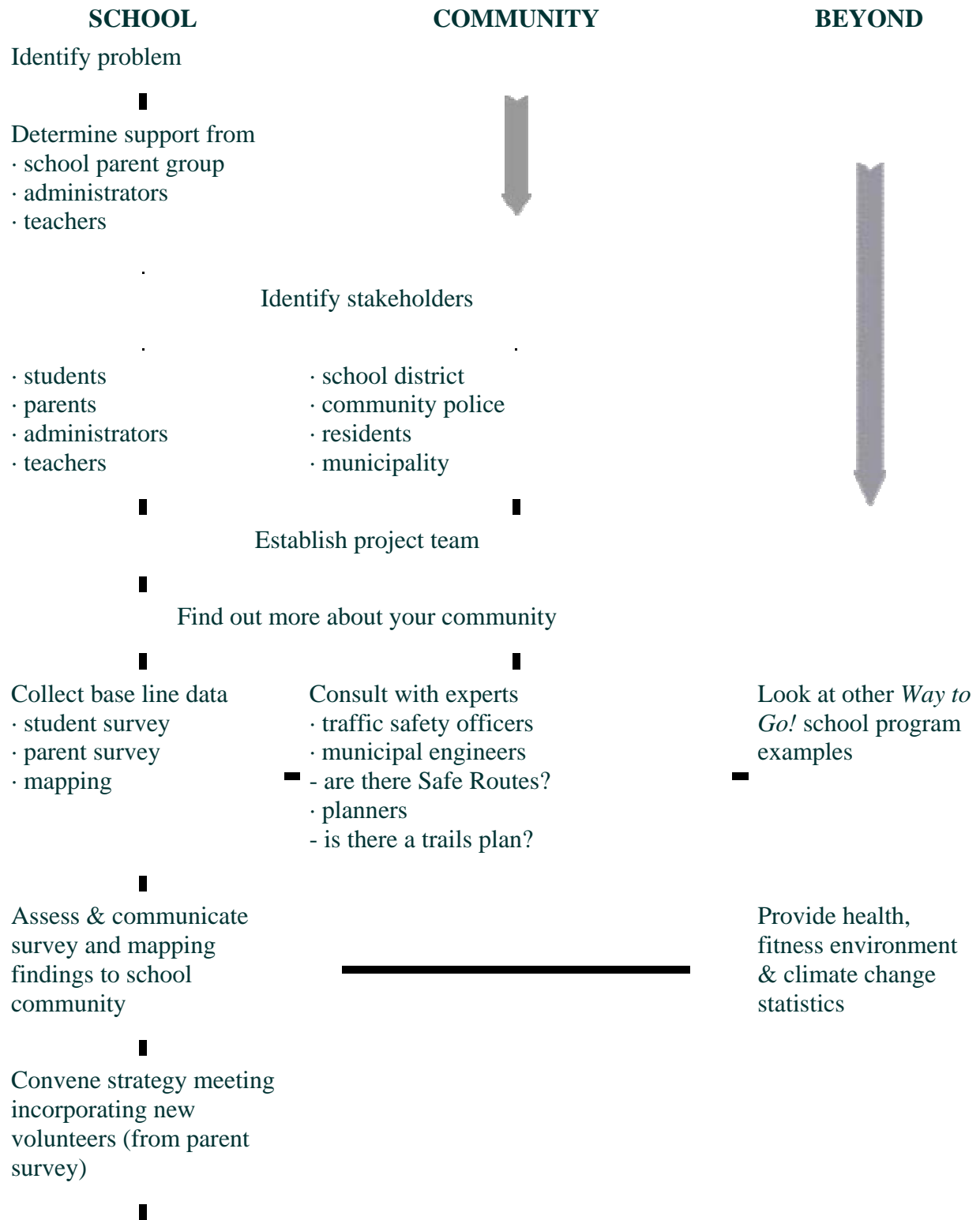
We need to stop, to rethink what we are doing and consider whether or not there is a better way for us to proceed.

There is a compelling need to change and the time to do so is now!

By considering this information you have taken the first step. You are on your way towards making a change. Simply raising this issue in your school community creates an awareness about the impact of our overuse and misuse of cars. The next step is to realize that, working together, your community can take action. If you use these program resources, you will be designing and implementing a program that will reduce car use and improve the safety and quality of your school environment. This program will also improve the quality of life for many of the children in your school. We hope that, as the children involved in your program grow up, they will be less automobile dependent. Involvement with this project will allow students to learn some very important and valuable life lessons. Reading and, hopefully, using this information for your school is a small step towards a significant difference. *Way to Go!*

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# Excerpt 2. Program Implementation



Determine walking, biking and school site traffic safety strategies



Develop strategies parallel with classroom projects



Have a kickoff celebration!



Evaluate the program



Make changes & adapt strategies as necessary



Maintain the program through newsletters, theme days



Reintroduce *Way to Go!* each year

■ Determine best routes to school using mapping results & if possible consult with engineers

■ Provide pedestrian and cycling traffic safety information

■ Local media coverage

■ Evaluate street safety improvements

■ Take part in community events e.g. cycling in annual parade

■ Street smarts & anti-bullying programs necessary?

# Excerpt 3: Toolkit

## *Student and Parent Survey*

- [Student Travel Survey](#)
- [Parent Travel Survey](#)

To view these forms, please get the [student survey](#) [parent survey](#) [free Acrobat Reader](#)

## **Find out More About Your Community**

Even if you have been involved with a school for a long time, it is important to research and collect basic information about your school. The more accurate and complete your information is, the more convincing it will be to your stakeholders. This step is essential to the formulation of a successful program. The following methods of research are suggested as approaches to this data collection.

### **School data collection**

This involves collecting as much general information about the school community as possible.

#### **Relevant information includes:**

- school population with a breakdown by grade
- number of ESL students, and the first languages spoken by these students
- number of families in your school community
- number of out-of-area children and out-of-area families
- number of students who attend after-school care

This very basic information will help you to develop and implement an effective *Way to Go!* Program. In most cases, your principal or the school district will have this information available and summarized.

## School surveys

These surveys provide a wide range of important information and data.

### Student travel survey

To start your research, plan to conduct a simple classroom survey of students in the school to determine the number (or percentage) of students who walk, bike, bus or travel by car to school. This survey can be easily carried out in each class using a show of hands or by requesting that students indicate on a chart the mode of travel they used to get to school. The classroom teacher, a member of the project team, or students in the older grades can conduct this research. It is best if this survey is conducted over a week in order to establish any daily changes in travel patterns. A sample chart for this purpose is available above as a PDF document which you can easily download.



This student travel survey constitutes your baseline data. Keep this information to compare with surveys you conduct after you have introduced walking and biking strategies.



Graphing the results of the surveys provides a useful visual representation of the results. Students in grades six and seven might be interested in converting the results to bar graphs or pie charts and mounting these graphs in the hallways of the school. Students will often want to decorate the work with colors, indications of the weather and pictures of walking feet or bicycles. This is a great opportunity to include students in the process and to provide some visual interest in the program.

### Student surveys provide:

- an immediate assessment of the numbers of children walking/ biking/traveling by bus/ traveling by car to school
- baseline information you can compare later to data collected after you have introduced the program

The student travel survey is conducted over a period of a week. This will establish students' current travel patterns.

### What to do with this survey?

1. Request teachers in a class or two (grade six or seven) to ask students to plot the results in graph form. This is a good way to actively incorporate students. The graphs are useful representations of the data collected.
2. Display these graphic results in the school hallways.
3. Convey these results to families via information in a newsletter which talks generally of the parent survey results, good reasons to pursue a car trip reduction program and tentative ideas for strategies to make a difference.

4.Refer back to these results a few months later; highlight your school's improvement and achievement.

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## **Parent survey**

Soon after you have surveyed the students, a survey of the parents should be planned. The simplest and most effective way to administer the survey is to have one printed for each child or family and to have it sent home with each student. If that is not possible in your school, a telephone survey of a sample of parents, an on-the-street survey and/or a focus group discussion can be used instead. A sample survey is provided above as a PDF document; use this as a model and adapt it for your own community. Make sure that the survey is accompanied by a short description of the *Way to Go!* Program and the reasons - traffic safety, environmental, fitness and health, etc. - your project team is considering introduction of the program.

This survey is a powerful tool. It serves as an important communication device as well as an important means of collecting information essential to developing walking and biking opportunities in your community.

- Parents are informed that a traffic reduction program is being considered and become aware of the reasons for it.
- Parents are asked for their ideas and invited to contribute to the development of the program in a meaningful way. Consulting with the entire parent community is tremendously helpful in assuring their eventual cooperation and participation.
- The information you gather gives you insight as to how best to structure your program. For example, you will learn the reasons why parents make their current travel choices.
- You will learn more about the barriers to and opportunities for developing walking and biking strategies.
- You will identify new volunteers and valuable support.
- The survey results will indicate the amount of parent support that exists for a *Way to Go!* Program. With sufficient support, you have a mandate to proceed with the program.

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# Excerpt 4. Toolkit

## *Development of Safe Walking and Biking Strategies*

- [Components of a \*Way to Go!\* strategy plan](#)
- [Plan Strategies: Considerations](#)
- [Determine walking, biking and school site traffic safety strategies](#)

### Develop Strategies

The following brief descriptions are sketches of the variety of organized walking and biking strategies your project team might want to consider. Forms, communication devices and organizational structures are all outlined in the *Way to Go!* Toolkit. The Toolkit provides model announcements, letters, forms and descriptions of how to approach organizing a variety of strategies. It also identifies some of the advantages and disadvantages of these strategies, so that you will be able to assess the utility of each for your community. Almost all schools have integrated a variety of these strategies, combining formal Walking School Buses, Walking Pools, Walking Buddies, Big Buddies, Eyes on the Street, etc., to give families a variety of options to suit their needs.

#### **Components of a *Way to Go!* strategy plan**

Although the program options are as diverse and varied as individual schools, a *Way to Go!* Program will have the following components:

##### **An automobile alternative**

Begin by identifying the most workable and acceptable alternative means of travel to school. In most cases this will take the form of walking. Other means which may better suit your school could include bicycling, public transit, ride sharing or a combination of these.

##### **Enhanced safety and convenience**

The next step involves making physical or organizational changes around your school to ensure that the proposed alternative form of travel is both safe and convenient. This involves identifying the safest streets and approaches for children traveling to school, organizing formal walking or biking groups, controlling intersections with student or

adult crossing guards, designating drop off points, organizing escorts, purchasing bike racks or lobbying for more traffic lights, crosswalks, sidewalks or paths in the area of your school. You might also want to consider discussing traffic calming measures with your municipal engineers. There is a short section on traffic calming in Appendix A of this manual.

You need to educate parents and students in pedestrian safety and educate drivers in the vicinity of the school about the need to drive safely. You might want to encourage the school traffic safety officer to establish visible enforcement of the speed limit and the parking by-laws in the area of your school. ICBC also has a Speedwatch Program in some communities that you can access. The objective is to promote participation in the program and to pro-actively anticipate and address as many safety concerns as possible.

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### **Plan Strategies: Considerations**

While you are planning your strategies, remember that your school is not alone. Many schools are addressing traffic safety and environmental concerns. Talk to parents at other schools, ask your municipal school traffic safety engineer, traffic safety officer or school district representative about the approaches other parents, teachers and administrators are taking. If possible, meet with parents in other schools and even parents in other school districts to find out what kinds of strategies and ideas have worked for them.

Speaking and meeting with other parent groups will provide you with ideas you might like to try in your community; it can also give your project team some necessary inspiration and support. In order to incorporate some fun into this interchange, your school might want to challenge another school, or schools already involved in traffic reduction might choose to challenge all other schools in the school district to get involved. As you plan, don't forget to include other community initiatives that can reinforce your program. If there is a Block Parent Program in effect in the neighborhood of your school, these parents might be willing to provide assistance in establishing the safety of children walking or riding through the neighborhood. You might wish to indicate the Block Parent houses on any maps that are distributed to the students. Some communities have a Parent Parking Patrol. This program is set up to ensure that people driving near the school are made aware of the importance of driving and parking safely. Some communities have Safety Councils and/or Community Policing offices. These organizations will often have programs that complement or help to reinforce your goals.

Every school community is unique. Locations are different, students and their families are different, school size varies and the staff and administration are different. Because of this there is no prescriptive solution to the traffic concerns many schools face. Your *Way to Go!* Program will be as unique as your school.

On the other hand, many schools have already been down the road you are about to travel and their experience can be beneficial to your planning. The following ideas for reducing car use have been tried and successfully incorporated in other schools and they may work for yours.

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## **Determine walking, biking and school site traffic safety strategies**

### **Safe walk/bike zone**

A safe walk/bike zone is not a traffic reduction strategy per se, but it supports the program by making sure that the immediate vicinity of the school is a Safe Walk (and bike!) Zone. "Other direct strategies to reduce the number of cars overall must be taking place in order for traffic congestion problems not to be just transposed one street over." The strategy involves designating an area within a block or two of the school and actively discouraging parents and caregivers from driving into this zone for the twenty minutes before and after school. This makes the zone safer for people walking or biking. Parents who must drive their children to school are asked to drop the children off outside of the zone and walk in to the school with them, or allow them to walk the rest of the way with friends. Several tactics are used to discourage drivers from traveling through the safe walk/bike zone (i.e.: signage, patrolled intersections, 30 km/h speed control measures). Measures are taken to ensure the zone is safe by having neighbor, parent or senior student patrols watching out for children and ensuring that there are safe street crossing points. *The Way to Go!* Toolkit includes examples of a safe walk/bike zone map and notice.

### **Walk a block**

Walk a block, or two or three! This strategy is similar to the walk/bike zone as it is designed to reduce the number of cars arriving at the immediate school site, thus making that area safer for pedestrians and cyclists. It can be particularly effective for school communities where students travel a distance to school and are not able to realistically utilize other transportation options. Combined with ride sharing or carpooling, this can effectively reduce the traffic congestion at a school. If students are dropped off a few blocks from school, it is possible for them to join other students walking to the school. If the students are young, the parent driver might be willing to walk the few blocks to the school with the children to ensure their safe journey to the school entrance.

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## **Walking school bus**

The idea of a Walking School Bus originated in Australia several years ago and has been incorporated into several school traffic reduction programs since then. The concept is simple. Parents act as bus drivers, each taking a shift or two per week. As bus drivers, they simply walk a prescribed route, at a prescribed time, to or from the school, picking up children along the way. This allows children the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of walking while parents' time commitments and concerns for their children's safety are minimized.

In order to initiate a walking school bus, refer to planning maps that indicate the safest routes to school and the areas where the greatest concentration of students live. Using these guides, establish specific bus routes, and if you wish, bus stops. Parents and children need to know that the bus will leave on time each day, going to and from school. If there is a specific after-school event, then a later bus can be scheduled. In order to make the bus service reliable, it is necessary to have substitute drivers for those days when the regular bus driver is not available or unable to walk the route. It might be worth trying one or two bus lines to begin with, in order to test the organization, and to see how well this strategy works.

In some programs, the drivers wear specific clothing - a yellow scarf, an identity badge, baseball hat or vest, and in others the drivers carry a piece of yellow rope for the children to hold on to. Bright colors make it easier for children to see the bus driver as well as making the school bus more visible to people driving cars. You can decide for your school which approach would work best; it is important, though, that the children are able to identify the bus drivers. As most of the drivers will be parents of children in the school, they will usually be easily recognized. Make sure that children know that they should only walk with an adult they know, or an adult wearing the identifiable bus driver clothing. Even though there is a designated bus driver, other parents are welcome to walk along with the bus if they want or need to get to the school. Ensure that your walking school bus drivers understand and practice pedestrian safety. It is important for them to communicate and reinforce these practices to the children walking with them. In *Way to Go!* Resources there are references to a number of Pedestrian Traffic Safety Manuals. These offer useful guidelines for teaching pedestrian safety to children.

Walking School Buses create a fun and enjoyable environment for the children involved as they travel to and from school. Walking School Buses can choose names for the group or colors to identify the walkers, etc. These names or colors can be posted at the Walking Group Bus Stop at the school and at any bus stops you might plan along the route to school.

Specific tools and ideas for Walking School Bus organization are included in the *Way to Go!* Toolkit.

The following variations of the Walking School Bus concept are also worth considering. When planning for these, make sure that the participants are walking (or biking) along the safest possible routes. As well, make sure that organizers have access to traffic safety information.

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### **Walking school bus from the bus**

A variation on a Walking School Bus involves establishing a walking bus route that operates from existing transit or bus stops near the school. This allows children the opportunity to take the bus to school, either alone or with their parents. Parents using

transit can then continue on to work, knowing that their children will be safely escorted to the school.

### **Big buddies**

Another Walking School Bus variation involves establishing a buddy walking system; older students take on the responsibility of picking up younger students on their way to school as they walk along the designated safest routes. At the end of the school day, the older students wait at a specified place inside or outside of the school. (This can be designated as the Walking Bus or Walking Group stop or meeting area and can include pictures or posters from the various walking groups with their names or their slogans.) The older students then walk home with the younger students. Once again, provisions must be made for situations where the older buddy is unable to escort the younger students to or from school. Substitute older buddies, or parents, should be available to make sure that each young child has a safe walk to and from school.

### **Walking buddies**

This involves friends from the neighborhood, or friends from the same class, making a deal with each other to walk together to school. This is particularly effective for older students, as they support each other in making the decision to walk and they enjoy the trip to school. Parents need to make sure their children manage their time well and are ready to meet their friends at the assigned time. The school **Way to Go!** team need to inform teachers which children are part of a walking group which relies on leaving school at scheduled times. (This is similar to the organization used for facilitating Walking School Buses). Teachers can be asked to inform parents a day ahead if a child needs to be kept in for any reason.

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### **Walking pools**

This strategy works well when parents have already organized carpools and would like to incorporate more walking into their travel routine. The parents agree that they will walk children to school instead of driving on certain days, or on all days that they are responsible for taking a group of children to school. This is an adaptable strategy and can incorporate the flexibility necessary if children's routines change or if they have classes scheduled before or after school. It is also a strategy that works well when parents are not comfortable having their children walking with the bus due to age or the fact that they are unfamiliar with the children or bus driver. Often the parents walking with the children in the walking pools initiate pick up of other children on the route, as friends of the participants decide they want to walk to school as well.

### **Walking pool bank**

This involves developing a list of interested families wishing to connect with others in their neighborhood to form any kind of walking group. Once connected, the organization of the walking group can be developed by the interested parents and students themselves.

### **Eyes on the street**

This strategy is possible if the school is located within an active Block Parent community. Specific Block Parents on the designated routes are asked to stand at their front door or gate as the children go to and depart from school each day. A schedule is set up to ensure there is always a parent or neighbor watching. Depending on the number of Block Parents in the neighborhood, volunteers might only need to be available once or twice each week. As the students pass through the neighborhood, there will be a number of adults watching and ensuring that the children are safe as they proceed to school or home. Block Parent Houses are clearly identified; children should know that they can approach these homes should any problems arise.

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### **Bicycle options**

Biking options can be adapted from any of the above models in order to establish support for children and parents riding bicycles to school. It should be emphasized, though, that children should complete a Bike Smarts program to familiarize themselves with bicycle safety. These safety practices must be reinforced, and each child's judgments checked. All students should be required to wear their helmets at all times when they ride to and from school. This is an opportunity for the adults riding to model safe behavior and wear their bicycle helmets as well. When riding in low light circumstances, all bicyclists should wear reflective clothing and have lights to make them more visible.

### **Transit options**

Many of these strategies can also support transit options - you use the same kind of organizational strategies, but the students use transit instead of walking or biking. If there are younger students, it is advisable to have an adult traveling with the children. If the students are older, you might want an adult walking with the students to the bus stop and possibly an adult greeting the students on their arrival at the bus stop closest to the school.

### **Environmental contracts**

If your school has a large percentage of cross boundary students, you might wish to establish an Environmental Contract policy as a criterion for registration at the school.

Each prospective out-of-area family will formally commit to using alternative transportation modes for getting their children to school on a regular basis. This can include carpooling, biking, taking transit, etc.

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### **Organize your implementation plan**

When you have decided on a strategy, write out a step-by-step description of your proposed approach. This serves three important functions:

- The exercise of writing about the organization of the strategy helps the project team to formalize the details and ensures that you understand all components of the process.
- The written program can be used as a communication tool to inform stakeholders about the program details.
- A written description can be referred to on an ongoing basis and, in this way, serve as a checklist. Over time the plans can be revised, refined and reused by new project teams as the school situation changes and evolves.

### **Volunteer concerns**

Your *Way to Go!* Program may require some equipment purchases (cones, vests, baseball caps or scarves for bus drivers, etc.) or, at a minimum, funding for copying of information or signage. In many cases, school Parent Advisory Committees will be able to provide necessary funds (if the requests are not excessive). A *Way to Go!* program will usually meet the parent group's criteria for funding. In situations where funds are not available, alternative funding sources should be identified or fundraising efforts may be necessary.

The number of volunteers your program requires depends on the strategies you have chosen to include in your *Way to Go!* plan. Most programs require relatively few volunteers. When identifying volunteers, the following points should be kept in mind:

- Begin with your project team. In most cases, these individuals will extend their commitment beyond the initial stages of the program implementation and become ongoing volunteers.
- Finding volunteers is made easier if the program is arranged so that volunteers are required immediately before and after school. Many parents are already at the school at these times. For other parents wanting to be involved, phoning or preparing lists or forms can be accomplished during an evening or weekend.
- It is important to divide the volunteer commitments into short, manageable obligations. It is much easier to find twenty parents to do fifteen minutes of volunteer work per week than to find even a few parents who are willing to volunteer for an hour each week. Volunteers are even easier to recruit if replacements are easily available or a system of substitutes is set up.
- After you have recruited volunteers, it is worth spending some time to meet with them and provide some training. Each parent working on the program is an ambassador and is crucial to its ongoing success. Training increases the commitment a volunteer feels towards the project, reduces turnover and ensures a much stronger program overall. This is also an important opportunity to review the program goals: traffic safety, healthier children, making

transportation choices that reflect a concern for the environment. Make sure the traffic safety information is presented to this group. Ensure that any volunteers walking or biking with children are familiar with traffic safety issues and are prepared to educate children about pedestrian safety.

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## **Parent Communication and Education**

Communicate expectations to the whole community A *Way to Go!* Program seeks to inspire changes in behavior by creating an awareness of the good reasons to choose walking or biking as transportation options and then establishing opportunities that are safe and convenient so that parents and children can make different travel choices. Communicate clearly to the entire school community any changes your project team proposes, and state the reasons for these changes. This might include explaining to parents who must drive that they will be expected to drive with care and comply with parking and driving rules and regulations around the school site. You might include a request to drop off children at a designated drop-off, in order to minimize conflicts between child pedestrians and vehicles. Although the focus of this implementation stage is on the parents and caregivers, it is also necessary to include the children affected (regardless of age), teachers and other community members in all of your communication.

When you are planning to introduce specific strategies, make sure that parents, teachers, students, neighbors, and the school administration know about your plans and how these plans will affect them. Inform each group about the details of the program and the expectations, if any, you will have of them. For instance, if you are introducing a walk/bike safe zone, or a safe route to school plan, a simple letter, possibly supplemented with a map, is a good vehicle for indicating what you are doing, why, and how parents, and others in the school community, can support this strategy. Informing parents and teachers at a meeting is often a good idea, as plans and ideas can be more effectively communicated and questions about the program can be responded to immediately. You might request permission to attend a Teachers' Advisory Committee meeting or a Parent Advisory Committee meeting in order to introduce your strategies.

At this point it is helpful to increase the awareness of the need for the *Way to Go!* Program in your school. The key to the success of *Way to Go!* is to have the parents in

your community supporting the program. Parents' behavior is essentially what needs to change in order for children to have the opportunity to walk, bike and take transit to school. When you are working with parents, remember:

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- Parents lead complex lives. Many parents are single. Often, both parents work outside of the home. For most parents there are not enough hours in the day. Because of this, driving children to school is often the only travel option considered. Parents want the best for their children. In most cases, parents are completely unaware that driving their children to school might not be the best choice for them. It is likely that they believe that they are doing their children a favor by offering to chauffeur them to school.
- The best way to convince parents to change their behavior is to educate them. The *Way to Go!* Resources section of this manual includes references to environmental, health and fitness information. These resources provide excellent references to materials which can be used to design a parent education program. Many of the Active and Safe Routes to Schools projects that have been introduced in Canada have been motivated by concerns about the health and fitness of students in schools. Children's activity levels are far lower than they were for elementary school students even a decade ago.

As you choose the information that is the most relevant for your school population, determine how you will pass this information on to the parents in your school community. Here are a few ideas:

- Have regular articles, facts, stories, etc. included in your school newspaper/newsletter. Collect newspaper and magazine articles that support the aims of the *Way to Go!* program. Make these available in newsletters, or post them on the school bulletin board. Even a small regular *Way to Go!* information box in your school newsletter to provide facts and figures about health, safety and environmental issues can provide a context for your project.
- Have traffic safety, environmental, health and fitness fact sheets available on your school bulletin boards.
- Have a parent assembly or presentation hosted by your project team; if possible involve students in this event.
- Work with interested teachers to introduce traffic safety, health and environmental information as part of the classroom physical health and/or environmental curriculum and encourage students to take the information home to discuss with their parents.
- Set up an information booth at the next major school function.

You will probably use a combination of all of these methods in order to ensure that parents in your school have enough information to begin to make healthy and sustainable transportation choices for their families.

[end of excerpts – the above should more than illustrate the idea and benefit of this community-based program to encourage healthier modes of transportation]