

2023-24

Annual Report

School Travel Planning

Prepared By :

Leslie Maxwell

School Travel Planning Supervisor



+519-744-7575

stp@stswr.ca

www.stswr.ca/walkzone



Photo credit: Mathew McCarthy, TheRecord.com

Prepared by the School Travel Planning Team
at Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region
Ashley Cullen
Leslie Maxwell
Hayat Shariff
October 31, 2024

This report was prepared in an industrial office located 470 meters from the Grand River and the work it describes is performed across Waterloo region; lands traditionally used by the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Chonnonton People. As treaty people and uninvited guests, we acknowledge the enduring presence of the Indigenous people with whom we share this land. We appreciate their deep traditional knowledge, laws, and philosophies, which among other things teach us that when we walk upon the land, we come into a relationship with it and that the way we step upon this earth matters.

“Even if the grassland has been ploughed under, even if you’re passing canola fields...you can still feel the sun on your face, see the sky, hear the birds, sense the gentle contours of the land in the muscles in the legs...You’re not alone when you’re walking by yourself. You’re with the land and it is with you.” 1

1 Wilson, K. (2021). Walking as Embodied Territorial Acknowledgment: Thinking about Place-Based Relationships from the Side of the Road. *Performance Matters*, 7(1-2), 97–115. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1085315ar>

Table of Contents

About Us	2
----------	---

Executive Summary	5
-------------------	---

School Engagement	6
-------------------	---

Student Engagement	9
--------------------	---

School Highlights	11
-------------------	----

Systemic Actions	16
------------------	----

Financials	17
------------	----

Next Steps	18
------------	----

Summary	19
---------	----

About Us

We aim to make active travel part of every child's school journey.

Active school travel fosters healthy habits, reduces traffic congestion near schools, minimizes environmental impacts, and increases academic performance.

This report reflects the collective efforts of students, parents, schools, municipalities and school boards to create greater use of active school travel together through School Travel Planning (STP).

For a description of our STP method, see Appendix A.



Photo: Bike Bus at Sandhills P.S.

STP at Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region (STSWR) is a partnership co-funded by municipalities and school boards across the Waterloo region including The Regional Municipality of Waterloo, The City of Cambridge, The City of Kitchener, The City of Waterloo, The Waterloo Catholic District School Board, and The Waterloo Region District School Board.

Find out more about our services and programs at:

www.stswr.ca/walkzone

Our Vision

To be the beacon of excellence in multi-modal student transportation, setting the standard for safety, sustainability and innovation.

STP Aspiration:

One day, every child will walk or wheel as part of their daily school journey.



Our Mission

We positively influence children's lives by coordinating their safe and efficient movement between home and school in support of their educational journey.

Our Values

Safety

Trust

Environmental sustainability

Reliability

Efficiency

Equity

Exceptional customer service

Our Team

The School Travel Planning team at STSWR comprises three dynamic individuals who work together with rightsholders to bring great ideas to life. They are driven to bring people together, to tap into local community knowledge, to find common ground and to make active school travel an easier choice for families across the region.

This work cannot be completed without the unnamed students, caregivers, school staff, and financial partners who give of themselves and find creative ways to make good things happen.

Group Facilitation
Student Instruction
Communications
Event Coordination
Map Building
Solution Development
Data Collection
Traffic Flow Consultation

Community building
Creative problem solving
Volunteer hours/days/weeks
Financial contributions



Leslie Maxwell
STP Supervisor



Ashley Cullen
School Travel
Planner



Hayat Shariff
School Travel
Planner



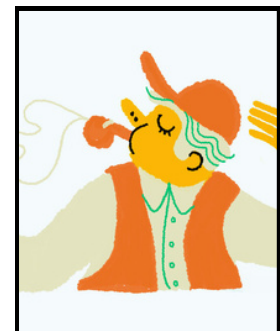
Students
Heart of STP



Caregivers
Key Decision
Makers



Administrators
Communications
Leads



Partners
Benefactors and
Defenders

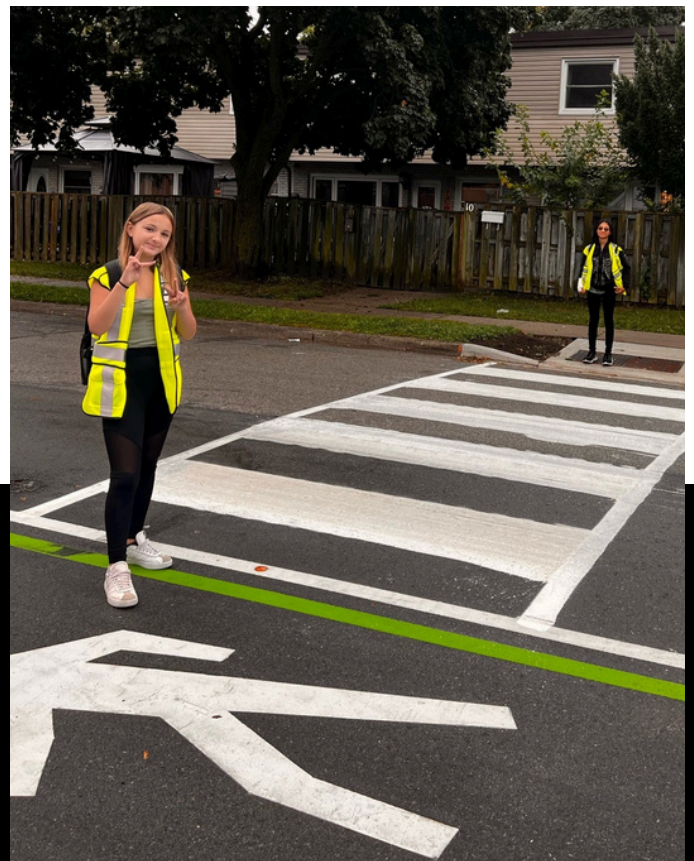
Executive Summary

During the 2023-24 school year, the STP team facilitated the STP process at its 82nd school. Waterloo region schools and communities are becoming more familiar with the initiatives we offer to manage school traffic and encourage active travel. They also know more about the benefits of active travel, and more and more people want the opportunity to walk and roll to school.

We are thrilled to report that modal data shows that more than 60% of Waterloo Region students are taking “green trips” (using active travel or riding a bus), and that more students than ever have participated in our educational and encouragement programs. Finally, we hope you’ll take a moment to check out some school highlights on pages 11-15. These stories are worth repeating!

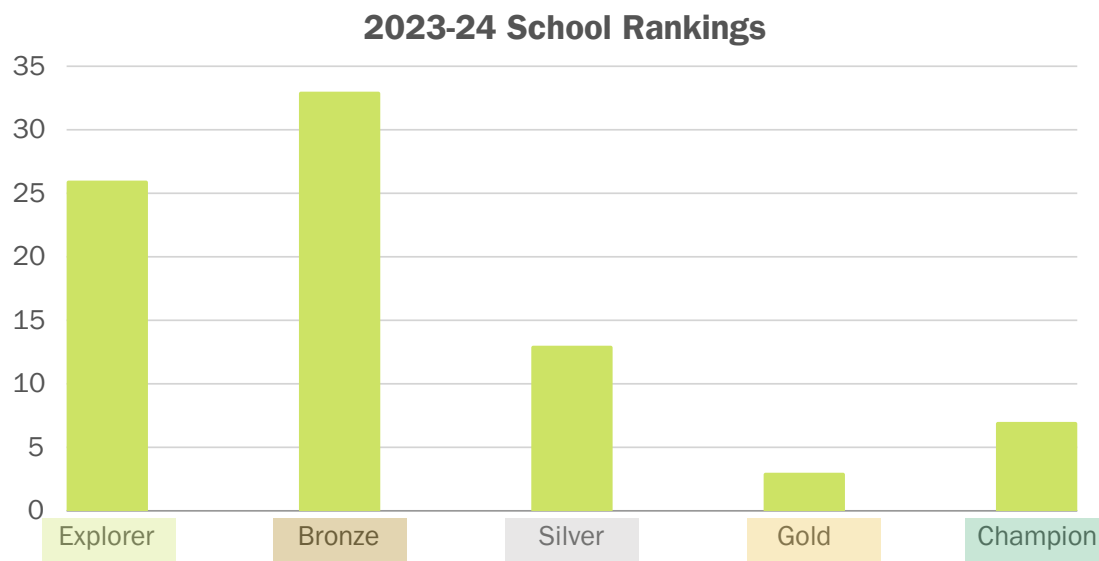
We adjusted our ranking system slightly this year, so that the schools that put reasonable effort into the process are being rewarded more fairly. We are hopeful that this will inspire even more schools to reach for Champion status, because we know that the more interventions they take on (944 counted this year!), the more sustained active school transportation use will be.

Students at St. Peter CES are the first CAA Standing Foot Patrollers to monitor a new crosswalk. Students remain off the road and advise peers of when it is safe to cross.



School Engagement

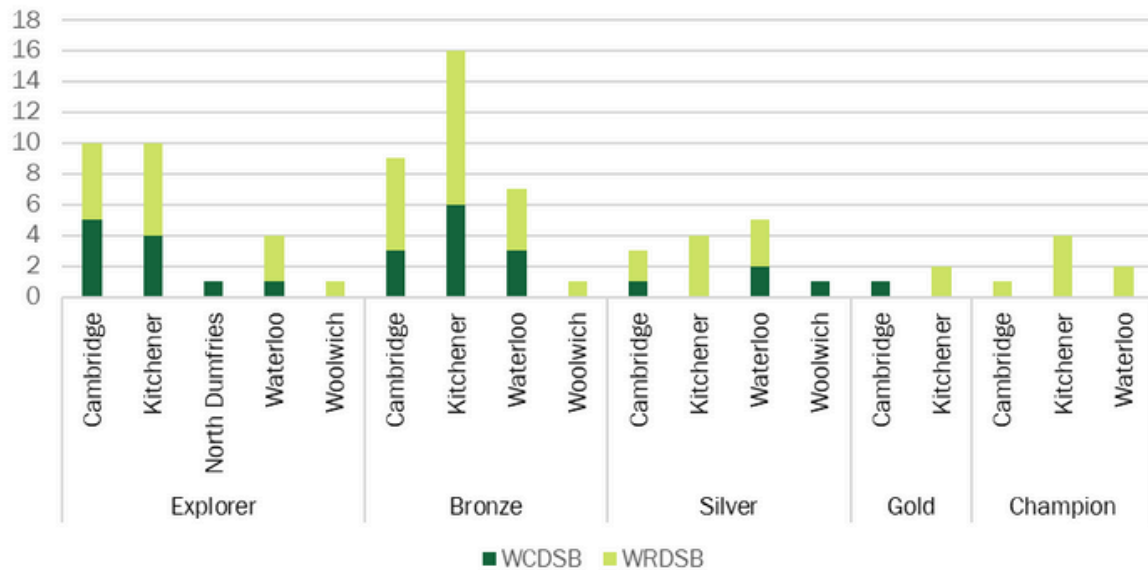
Each School Travel Planning committee works on different actions they feel will be most effective at their school. Their completed work is illustrated through STP rankings based on the number and balance of actions they complete. Actions that don't need to be completed twice (e.g. new crosswalk) earn lifetime points while other actions must be repeated annually (e.g. Winter Walk Day) or biennially (e.g. Sidewalk Smarts) to be reflected in their ranking.



Since we started ranking in 2016, 82 schools have participated in the STP process. Ideally, schools continue annual actions forever so that new students and new families continue to receive education and encouragement support, and a strong walking culture continues.

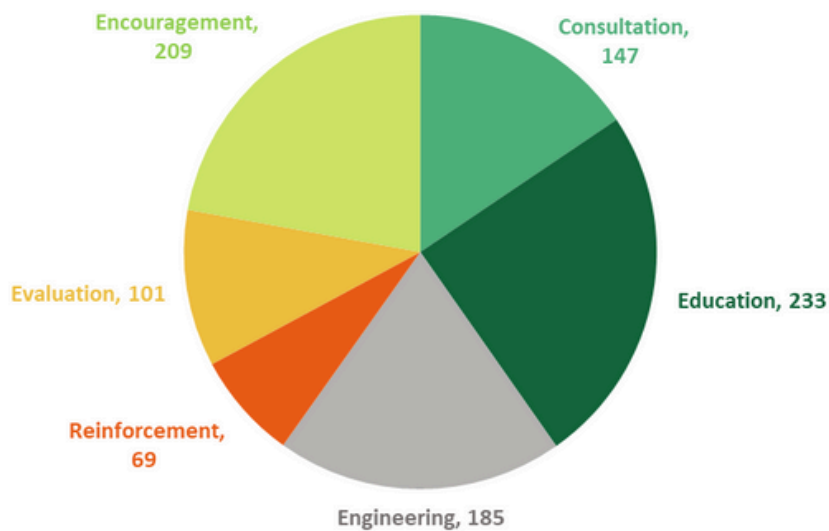
2023-24 rankings indicate a high number of schools requesting assessments (Explorer) and a higher number taking some action (Bronze). More schools than ever before achieved Silver designation while fewer earned Gold than in the previous year (3 instead of 4).

Schools by Rank, Municipality, and Board



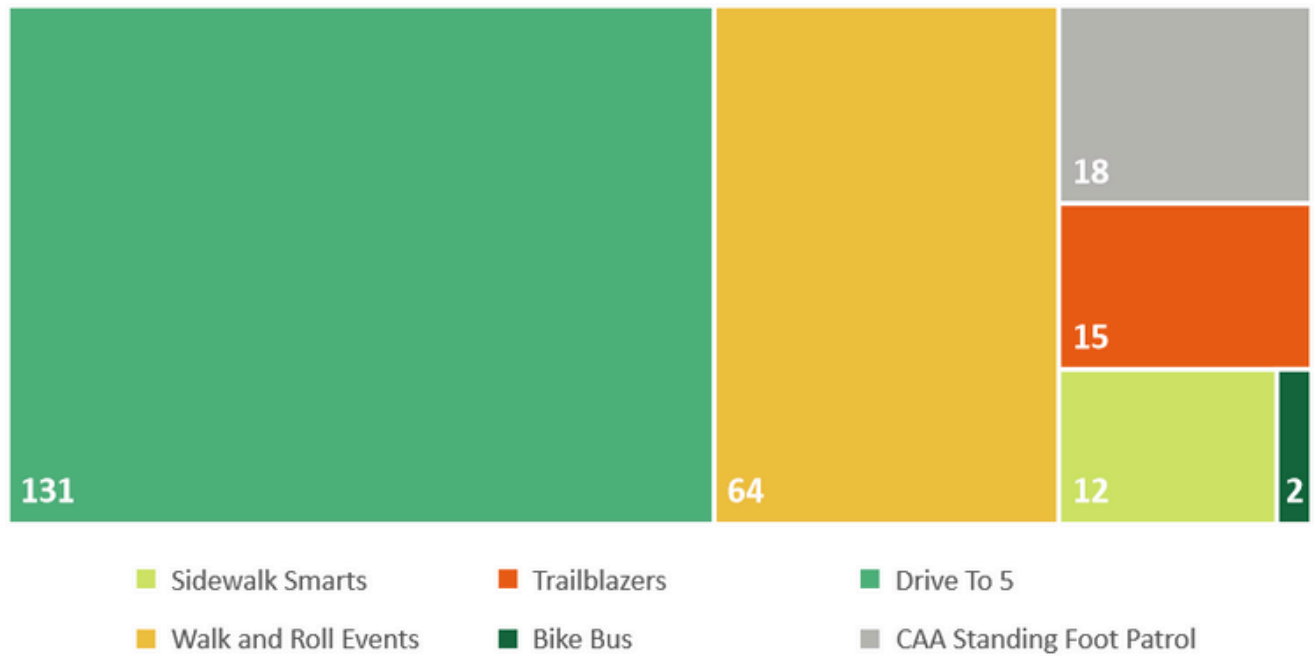
The Municipalities of Cambridge, Kitchener, North Dumfries, Waterloo, and Woolwich all have schools that requested assessments and have at least begun to examine the barriers that keep their students from using active travel. Kitchener and Waterloo in particular have a higher percentage of schools that moved from Explorer to Bronze, Silver, or Gold status. Schools are listed by name in Appendix B.

Number of Interventions



Nine hundred and forty four (944) actions qualified schools for their rankings this year. Engineering action points are valid for a lifetime because they rarely need to upgrade further; other actions must be repeated biennially or annually.

Number of Schools in Programs



Some programs and actions appeal to a wide array of schools. The most popular programs supported by School Travel Planning include Drive to 5 maps that indicate legal and safe parking a distance from the school and walking and rolling events like Winter Walk Day. Although nine (9) schools participated in Sidewalk Smarts in 2024, we teach both grade 3 and 4 so the 4 schools that participated in 2023 are also counted here because they are up to date. Two Bike Buses gave students a chance to practice cycling skills and learn new routes while having fun and socializing on the way to school. For a full list of programs and their descriptions, please see Appendix C.



Photo: Bike Bus at Empire P.S.

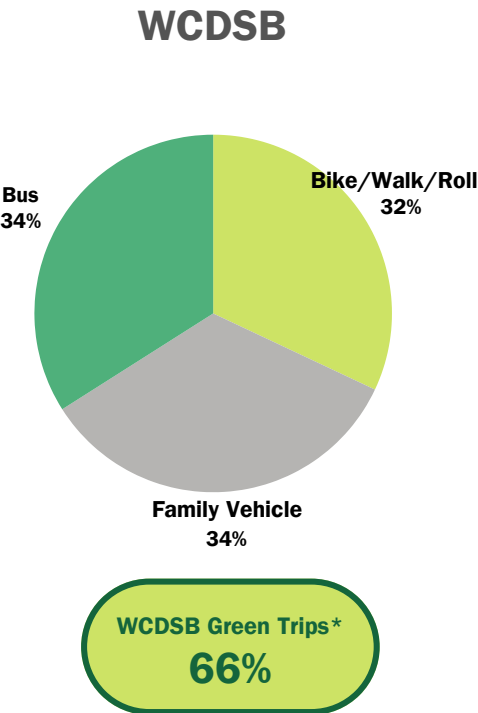
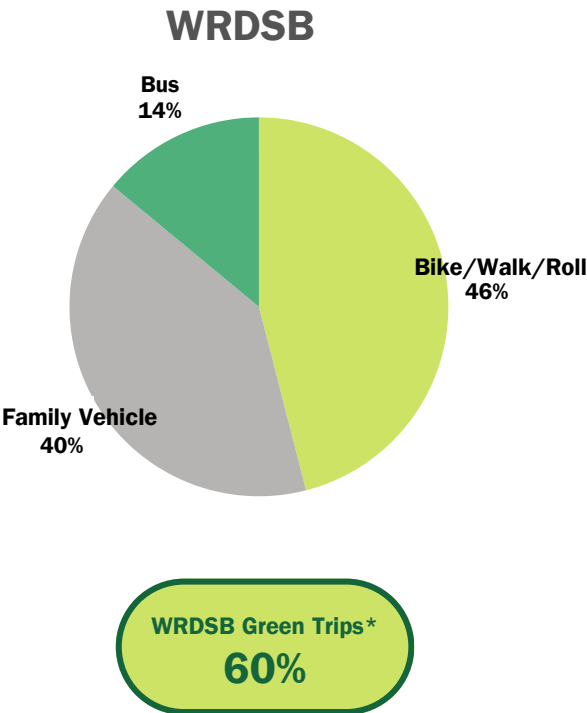
Student Engagement

How many students are actually using active travel to get to school? Counting student use of active school travel is difficult, so STP Planners are limited to collecting this data at 25-30 schools each year. The graphs below show average percentages of travel modes collected from select schools by hands' up surveys in classrooms at each board in the 2023-24 school year.

New this year, we are sharing “green trips” to school; this is the sum of the average number of active trips plus average number of bus trips to illustrate the average number of students who arrive by sustainable modes at the select schools we tallied.

Extrapolation of these numbers indicates that somewhere near 31,500 students in Waterloo region may be traveling by family vehicle.

Travel Modes

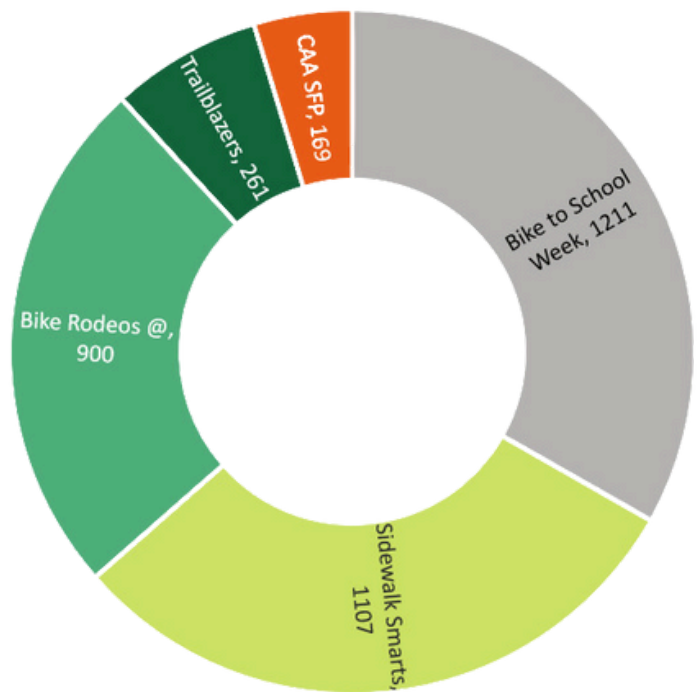


**Bike/Walk/Roll trips plus bus trips*

Student Engagement

Our education and encouragement programs prepare and inspire children across the region to walk and roll to school. Our biggest event, **Winter Walk Day**, was shared with **28,486** students this year. The rest of our program participation is illustrated below.

Student Participants Per Program

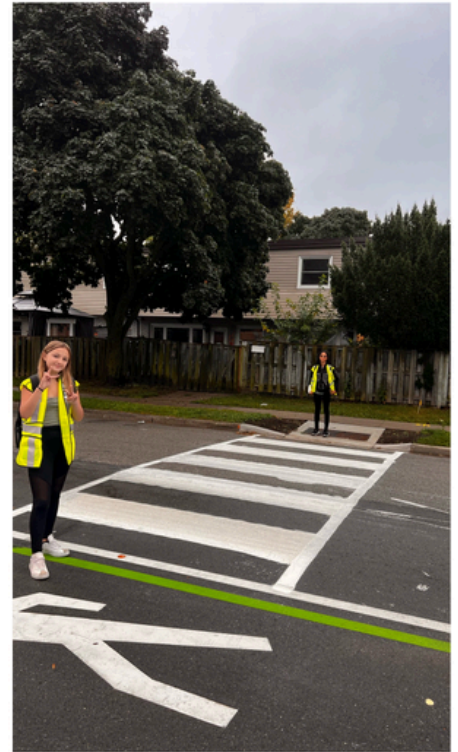


Demand continues to grow for road safety programs and events that teach students greater road skills, grow their confidence, and give them opportunities for community leadership.

Sidewalk Smarts grew to nine (9) total schools, instructing 1107 students in grades 3 and 4 across both boards. Five (5) schools were supported through City of Kitchener’s Vision Zero program.

Programs were offered in various formats depending on the school or community needs. For instance, bike rodeos were delivered in-class, after school, and as part of a community partnership. Trailblazer training mostly took place at Budd Park with CAA training, but was also delivered in-school for schools starting programs mid-year.

School Highlights



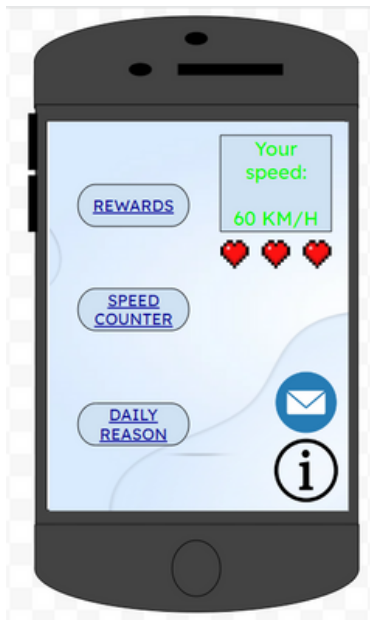
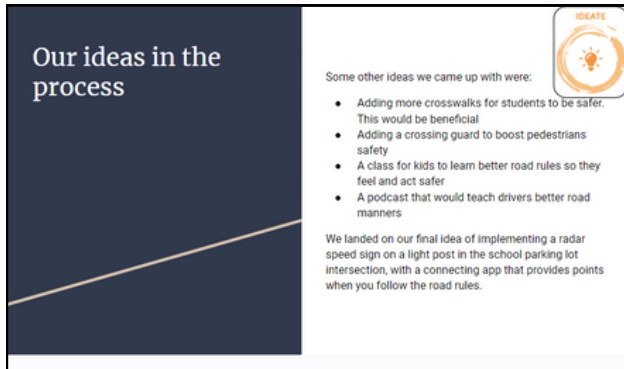
St. Peter C.E.S.

Neighbours Helping Neighbours



The St. Peter school community worked with area residents to solve the problem of student foot traffic mixing directly with vehicles on an access route. The City of Cambridge granted a Keep Calm grant and the Neighbours Helping Neighbours project was born. Residents, students, families, and staff used the funds to co-create a shared street that works for everyone.

Students now have a defined route into school, traffic is slowed and controlled, safety patrollers monitor crossings, and resident use is minimally disrupted.



Groh P.S.

A Design Thinking Project



At Groh P.S., teacher Emily Copping led her grade 7 science class through a design thinking project that challenged students to improve the school's transportation system so that it is safe, efficient, and reliable.

Their solutions included websites and podcasts to teach traffic safety, a web application to encourage drivers to be courteous & safe and another app to find legal parking, a reward system for using active travel, cycling education posters, and more! The class also promoted bike to school week across the school.



The Bike Bus starts with a few cyclists and grows as it weaves through the neighbourhood.



Adult volunteers demonstrate “pigs in the pen” bike handling activity at the bike rodeo.



A bike fixit station was provided by McPhails Bike Shop, ensuring students rode on road-safe equipment.

Sandhills P.S.

A Whole System Approach



Sandhills P.S. approached School Travel Planning in fall 2023, with a small committee of parents and staff working to solve the issue of traffic blocking bike lanes and driveways.

A walkabout with rightsholders brought forth a multi-pronged action plan to address this complex problem.

By the end of the school year, parking maps and traffic pamphlets were shared with families, a whole-school in-class bike rodeo taught and practice road skills, and students had their first bike bus ride to put their new skills to use.

Watch for more actions this school year!



Fourteen (14) students volunteered an entire PD Day to paint the crosswalks. The designs were created by fellow students and adapted slightly for ease of installation with gritty and bright traffic safety paint.

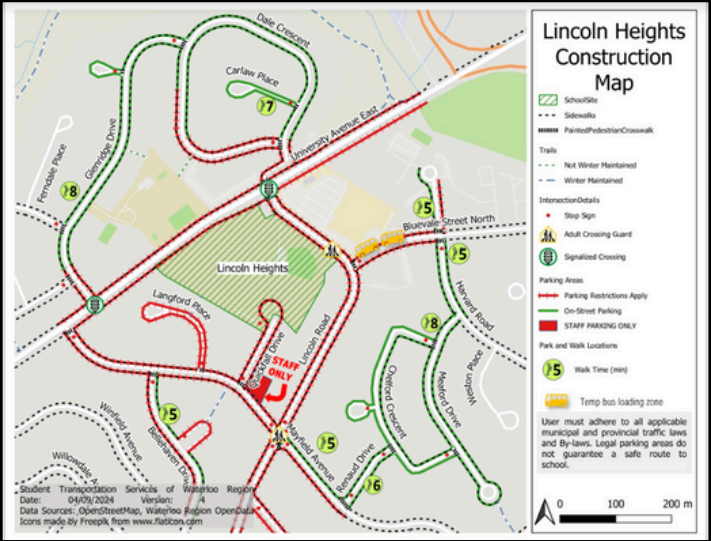
Resurrection C.S.S.

Operation Crosswalk

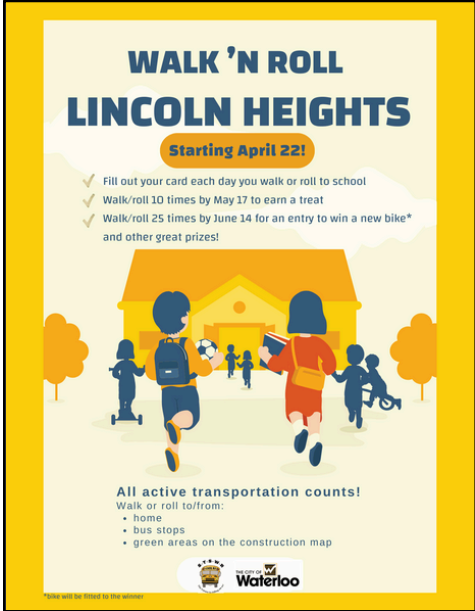


When Resurrection C.S.S. administrators approached STP Planners with concerns about student safety as they cross to busses and cars in the parking lot, we suggested a better defined crossing, and they took up the challenge!

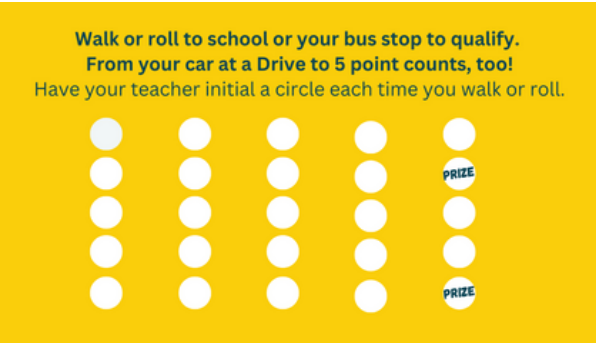
Art teacher Jessica Carey challenged students to design a bright crossing, and then organized a group of 14 students to install the painting. The result demonstrates school pride, a focus on pedestrians, and a joyful welcome to students and guests.



A map showed families where to park safely and legally.



A poster shared details of the contest.



Teachers validated punchcards for students who earned opportunities to win prizes.

Lincoln Heights P.S.

Construction Woes



To prepare for construction that would block their entire street for weeks, Lincoln Heights P.S. in Waterloo held a Walk 'n Roll event to encourage active school travel and discourage vehicle use in the construction zone. Supported by the City of Waterloo, 250 students earned ballots in the event and five of those students won some great, outdoor play prizes - just before summer break:

- A first grade student won a new bike, helmet, bell and lights
- A third grade student won a new scooter and helmet
- Three other students won prizes sports equipment and other outdoor activities

Systemic Actions

Our School Travel Planning team takes actions to boost active school travel-supportive laws, policies, and practices. Here are some that we worked on in 2023-24.

Cycling Education Review

A consultant's review co-funded by STP partners examined the success and challenges of our region's beloved and defunct Cycling Into The Future cycling education program, and took stock of the region's needs. From there, the review suggested a strategy to build a sustainable program for the future of cycling education in Waterloo region.

The STP team facilitated meetings of an energized partnership to take that work to the level. The baseline work continues into the 2024-25 school year and has left us hopeful that Waterloo region will again have a program to teach bike skills at the elementary level.

School Safety Zones Expert Survey

Under the co-leadership of the City of Hamilton and STSWR, a panel of rightsholders across the province came together to devise a survey for experts that would explore opinions of the Highway Traffic Act's definition and treatment of school safety zones (SSZs) in Ontario.

The survey showed experts believe local municipalities should have more control

over the length and position of School Safety Zones as they are already able to do with Community Safety Zones, that driving behaviours like U-turns and parking should be restricted within School Safety Zones, that pedestrian-first crossings should be mandatory, and that increased fines should apply. The group has issued a public survey next to discover whether public opinion aligns.

Vision Zero at the City of Kitchener

When the City of Kitchener Vision Zero team approached us to support their education goals for the program, we were ready to jump into action. We quickly expanded our plans for Sidewalk Smarts and were able to deploy to an extra five (5) schools in Kitchener last year. We also worked with the City's team to devise Vision Zero info sheets for caregivers and materials for children, and we've revised our Community Road Model program for the 2024-25 school year.

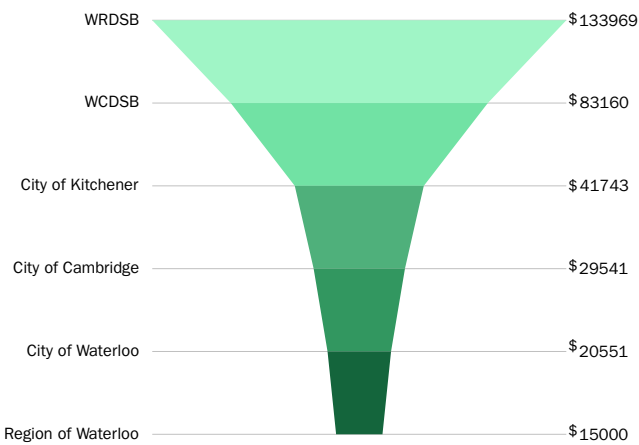


Financials

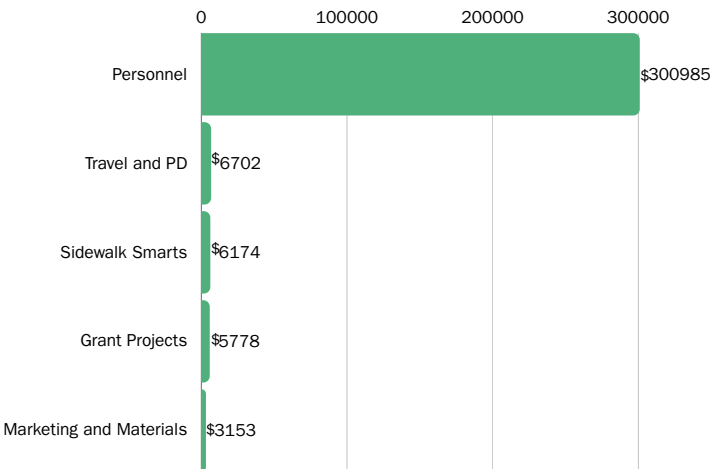
Funding for STP work is collaboratively supplied by municipal and school board partners. From September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 the total amount contributed was \$323,964; partner inputs are depicted in the funnel graph below.

The main expense for STP is personnel; the STP team spends time engaging with school communities, developing ideas from those communities, creating programs and materials, conducting data collection, building data reports, planning and executing events, and making maps.

Contributions



Expenses



Next Steps

We are excited to boost our presence in the 2024-25 school year in more ways than one! After deep exploration of our vision and mission, our team has determined a list of goals for the year that will visually and operationally streamline and strengthen our offerings. Our goals for 2024-25 include:

Align branding

The needs-based development of STP programs and services has resulted in bold programs whose branding doesn't match their strength. We are committed to branding STP products to show a unified approach no matter which actions are taken.

Build safe walking maps

Families that are not familiar with our streets and infrastructure will benefit from maps that show them sidewalks, crossings, signals, bike lanes and other features that make active travel an easier choice.

Create overviews for school

More accessible descriptions of our programs and tools will help school communities determine what actions they wish to take to address the exact problems they experience.

Improve access to information

We are exploring the use of a project management system to organize School Travel Planning activities, prompt workflow, link STP activities to individual schools, retain information

between and among STP Planners and allow robust reporting for funding partner stakeholders.

Explore School Streets

The City of Waterloo and STSWR have been invited to participate within the "Aspiring Communities Stream" of the National School Streets Initiative in response to requests for School Streets made by school communities and Council members. Aspiring Community partners may participate in School Street pilot projects to gather and share more information about the potential impacts of School Streets.

The Initiative is led by five core partners: Green Communities Canada, 8/80 Cities, Montreal Urban Ecology Centre, University of Montreal and Queens' University.



Summary

The 2023-24 school year brought many opportunities for further growth and development. Schools were more willing than ever to take on fuller action plans and to see projects through to the finish.

Multi-year engagement and repeat requests for interventions indicate schools are receiving the support they need to face traffic problems and to encourage more active school travel. Your STP team will continue to work with area partners to address the issues schools face.



Appendix A

STP Method

Ontario Active School Travel provides a toolkit and procedure that STSWR uses to guide STP processes. According to their website:

“School Travel Planning is a community-based model for implementing active school travel that systematically addresses barriers to and incentives for walking to school. School Travel Planning strengthens local commitment to active school travel.

“School Travel Planning (STP) is a proven cost-effective way to get more kids walking and wheeling to school. When effectively coordinated and implemented, it results in positive travel behaviour changes with health, safety, environmental, and economic benefits.

“Through STP, school and community stakeholders collaborate to create and implement school-level action plans that use all of the 5 areas to:

- address ongoing transportation and traffic safety problems
- increase the number of students using active and sustainable modes for all or part of the journey to school.[1]”

The 5 areas include:

1. **Education** - teaching students and community members about active transportation options and ensuring they have the skills to be safe near traffic
2. **Encouragement** - using events, activities, support systems, and incentives to promote AST
3. **Engineering** – working with partners to make improvements to the built environment on and off school property to increase safety; “the majority of the studies finding null effects on AST only focused on non-infrastructure strategies through either educational (Ducheyne et al, 2014; McMinn et al., 2012) or encouragement tactics (Bungum et al., 2014; Sayers et al., 2012; Hunter et al., 2015) without addressing environmental barriers.[2]”
4. **Reinforcement** – partnering with police and bylaw officers on traffic and crime concerns in the neighborhoods around schools and along school routes, encouraging administrators to supervise traffic on school property, and encouraging parents/guardians to abide by traffic laws while reinforcing better drop-off behaviours
5. **Evaluation** – bringing attention to the mode split and assessing the effectiveness of the interventions

[1] <https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/school-travel-planning/> extracted October 28, 2020.

[2] Mammen, George. *School Travel Planning in Canada: A Holistic Examination of Program Impact on Active School Travel*. University of Toronto, Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences. 2016; pp. 31.

Appendix B

School List

Rank	School	Municipality	Board
Champion	Chicopee Hills	Kitchener	WRDSB
Champion	Edna Staebler	Waterloo	WRDSB
Champion	Janet Metcalfe	Kitchener	WRDSB
Champion	Mary Johnston	Waterloo	WRDSB
Champion	Saginaw	Cambridge	WRDSB
Champion	Sandhills	Kitchener	WRDSB
Champion	Wilson Avenue	Kitchener	WRDSB
Gold	Brigadoon	Kitchener	WRDSB
Gold	Groh	Kitchener	WRDSB
Gold	St. Peter	Cambridge	WCDSB
Silver	Avenue Road	Cambridge	WRDSB
Silver	Elizabeth Ziegler	Waterloo	WRDSB
Silver	Franklin	Kitchener	WRDSB
Silver	Holy Spirit	Cambridge	WCDSB
Silver	Howard Robertson	Kitchener	WRDSB
Silver	Lackner Woods	Kitchener	WRDSB
Silver	Laurelwood	Waterloo	WRDSB
Silver	Moffat Creek	Cambridge	WRDSB
Silver	St. Boniface	Woolwich	WCDSB
Silver	St. Luke	Waterloo	WCDSB
Silver	St. Matthew	Waterloo	WCDSB
Silver	Trillium	Kitchener	WRDSB
Silver	Vista Hills	Waterloo	WRDSB

Rank	School	Municipality	Board
Bronze	Abraham Erb	Waterloo	WRDSB
Bronze	Bridgeport	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Central	Cambridge	WRDSB
Bronze	Clemens Mill	Cambridge	WRDSB
Bronze	Courtland	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Elgin St.	Cambridge	WRDSB
Bronze	Forest Hill	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Hillcrest	Cambridge	WRDSB
Bronze	J.W. Gerth	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Jacob Hespeler SS	Cambridge	WRDSB
Bronze	Jean Steckle	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	King Edward	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	MacGregor	Waterloo	WRDSB
Bronze	Millen Woods	Waterloo	WRDSB
Bronze	Oak Creek	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Pioneer Park	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Preston	Cambridge	WRDSB
Bronze	Resurrection CSS	Waterloo	WCDSB
Bronze	Riverside	Woolwich	WRDSB
Bronze	Southridge	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	St. Agnes	Waterloo	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Anne (K)	Kitchener	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Augustine	Cambridge	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Benedict	Cambridge	WCDSB
Bronze	St. John	Kitchener	WCDSB
Bronze	St. John Paul II	Kitchener	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Mark	Kitchener	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Michael	Cambridge	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Nicholas	Waterloo	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Teresa Kitchener	Kitchener	WCDSB
Bronze	St. Timothy	Kitchener	WCDSB
Bronze	Suddaby	Kitchener	WRDSB
Bronze	Waterloo Collegiate Inst.	Waterloo	WRDSB

Rank	School	Municipality	Board
Explorer	Blair Road	Cambridge	WRDSB
Explorer	Blessed Sacrament	Kitchener	WCDSB
Explorer	Cameron Heights CI	Kitchener	WRDSB
Explorer	Coronation	Cambridge	WRDSB
Explorer	Hespeler	Cambridge	WRDSB
Explorer	Hillside	Kitchener	WRDSB
Explorer	J.F. Carmichael	Kitchener	WRDSB
Explorer	John Mahood	Woolwich	WRDSB
Explorer	John Sweeney	Kitchener	WCDSB
Explorer	Lexington	Waterloo	WRDSB
Explorer	Lincoln Heights	Waterloo	WRDSB
Explorer	Manchester	Cambridge	WRDSB
Explorer	Our Lady of Fatima	Cambridge	WCDSB
Explorer	Our Lady of Lourdes	Waterloo	WCDSB
Explorer	Shepphard	Kitchener	WRDSB
Explorer	Silverheights	Cambridge	WRDSB
Explorer	Smithson	Kitchener	WRDSB
Explorer	St. Anne (C)	Cambridge	WCDSB
Explorer	St. Brigid	North Dumfries	WCDSB
Explorer	St. Daniel	Kitchener	WCDSB
Explorer	St. Elizabeth	Cambridge	WCDSB
Explorer	St. Josephine	Kitchener	WCDSB
Explorer	St. Margaret of Scotland	Cambridge	WCDSB
Explorer	St. Vincent de Paul	Cambridge	WCDSB
Explorer	Williamsburg	Kitchener	WRDSB
Explorer	Winston Churchill	Waterloo	WRDSB

Appendix C

Program Descriptions

The following programs work in various ways to address barriers to active travel:

Active Transportation Celebration Events – Celebrates students who use active travel and encourages their peers to find ways to experience the active commute, sometimes for the first time. Individual school events can occur throughout the year.

Bike Bus – An organized system of getting children to school on bikes under the supervision of qualified adult volunteers.

Bike to School Week – Celebrates active modes of transportation like cycling and wheeling across Ontario. In Waterloo region, municipal partners provide incentives to join a region-wide celebration.

BikeWalkRoll – Allows schools to discover their modal split so they know how many children are walking, cycling, rolling (includes scootering and mobility devices), riding city transit, riding school buses, or being driven to school. This information is particularly useful in the action planning stage of school travel planning.

CAA Standing Foot Patrol – Trains student leaders to monitor school crossings by ensuring students cross roads near their school in a safe and responsible manner. Unlike Adult Crossing Guards, Patrollers do not stop or direct traffic. This program is provided by CAA through STSWR in partnership with Waterloo Region Police Services, and the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

Community Road Model - Asks all road users to pledge to obey traffic laws, use active transportation more often, and to be courteous road users. Students take the pledge in class and a take-home discussion primer helps students encourage their parents or guardians to take the pledge, drive more safely, and place decals in vehicle windows.

Drive-to-5 Maps – Identifies safe and legal street parking a short distance away from the school to disperse congestion and leave school access points safer for children on foot. This program is a steppingstone towards active travel for hesitant parents.

Kindergarten Package – Introduces parents to the expectation that our smallest children can walk to the bus stop or to school, and helps parents teach their children about walking and road safety. Can include milestone magnets outlining coaching how-to's and Kindergarten orientation flyers and presentation slides.

Parking Restriction Request Support – Helps schools build a case to advocate for changes to parking restrictions when and where necessary.

Program Descriptions

Continued...

Sidewalk Smarts – Introduces grades 3 and 4 students to complex pedestrian skills. Students learn in-class and then practice skills curbside to get real life experience on familiar streets. Students take home a checklist that parents can use to gauge their child(ren)'s readiness to actively travel independently.

Trailblazers – Trains student walking experts who walk preferred routes to school wearing class II safety vests. This program provides greater visibility of active school commuters, provides a greater level of pedestrian skill knowledge on school routes, and helps to highlight preferred routes to other students.

Walking School Bus - An organized system of getting children to school on foot under the supervision of qualified adult volunteers.

Winter Walk Day – a Region-wide event held on the first Wednesday of February to celebrate those who walk in all weather and to encourage those who don't to try it.