

Active and Safe Routes to School Final Report 2018



CRD

Making a difference...together

Overview

A generation ago, most children in the Capital Regional District walked or biked to school. Now, only a third are using active transportation for this trip. Safety concerns, increased traffic and constraints on family time are among the reasons for this decline. Yet, it's the kids that are missing out. We all know that exercise, time outdoors, and time with family and friends is best for our children but how do we make this happen? By working together.

The CRD, local governments, schools and school districts, RCMP/police and families have been working together to get more kids walking and biking to school. After only two years of the Active and Safe Routes to School planning and programming, schools increased active transportation and decreased driving as the usual form of travel.

How was this done? With the oversight of a coordinating body and with each person and organization contributing and improving where they could. For example, the Sidney and Langford municipalities improved school crosswalks; ICBC and the RCMP worked with a number of schools to remind drivers to slow down in the school zone; Galiano Island students increased their skills and confidence with bike and skateboard lessons; and Sir James Douglas Elementary hosted Walk and Wheel celebration stations with prizes.

The Active and Safe Routes to School program helped many children and their families enjoy walking and biking to school.

In 2015 several municipalities asked the Capital Regional District (CRD) to coordinate the delivery of a school travel planning program. In response, the Board approved and contributed funding to a two-year Active and Safe Routes to School program. Twenty schools from four school districts, ten municipalities and one electoral area participated in the full program.

Goals

- Motivate and encourage children, youth and their families to use safe, active travel more often.
- Identify solutions to address traffic and transportation challenges in and around schools.
- Conduct targeted research to support local infrastructure investments and the adoption of sustainable transportation policies.

Benefits

The Active and Safe Routes to School program benefits students, families and communities in many ways:

Improves Health: Students and their families using active transportation to and from school get more physical exercise, which leads to better physical and mental health.

Improves Learning: Students who walk or bike to school, even part way, arrive at school more alert and ready to learn.

Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs): Transportation is the Capital Region's leading contributor to local GHG emissions. Switching more trips from cars to active transportation reduces local GHGs and air pollution.

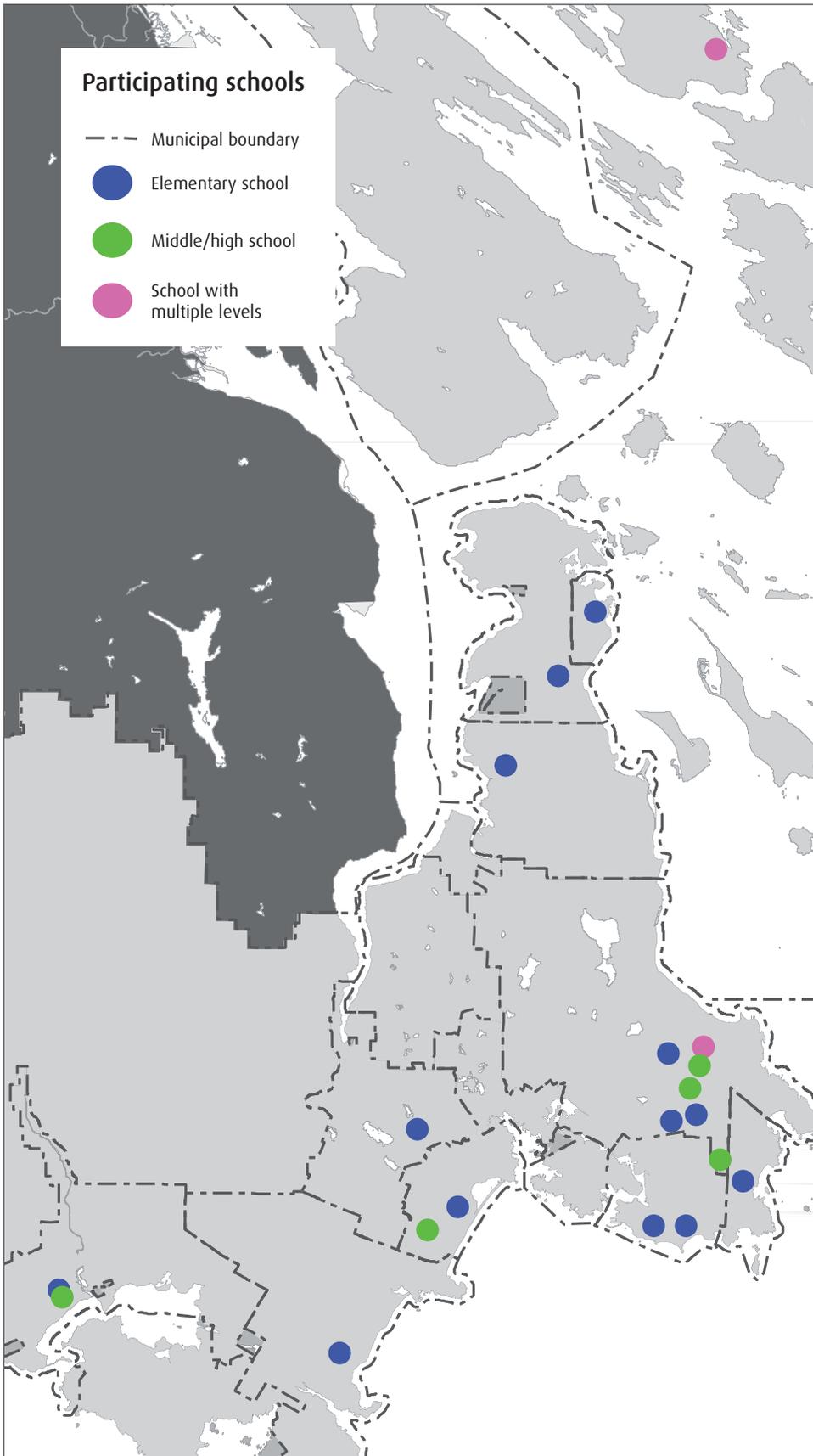
Reduces Traffic Congestion: The school drop-off loop is stressful and can be unsafe for students. Fewer car trips to school reduces the congestion in front of the school and in our community.

Funders

The 2016/2017 Active and Safe Routes to School Program was made possible through the generosity of funding partners including the Real Estate Foundation of BC, Victoria Foundation and CRD Traffic Safety Commission.



Participating Schools



City of Colwood

Royal Bay Secondary
Sangster Elementary

District of Central Saanich

Brentwood Elementary

Galiano Island

Galiano Community School

City of Langford

Ruth King Elementary

District of Metchosin

Hans Helgesen Elementary

District of North Saanich

KÉLSET Elementary

District of Oak Bay

Willows Elementary

District of Saanich

Braefoot Elementary
Cedar Hill Middle School
Cloverdale Elementary
Doncaster Elementary
Lansdowne Middle School
Maria Montessori Academy
Mount Douglas High School

Town of Sidney

Sidney Elementary

District of Sooke

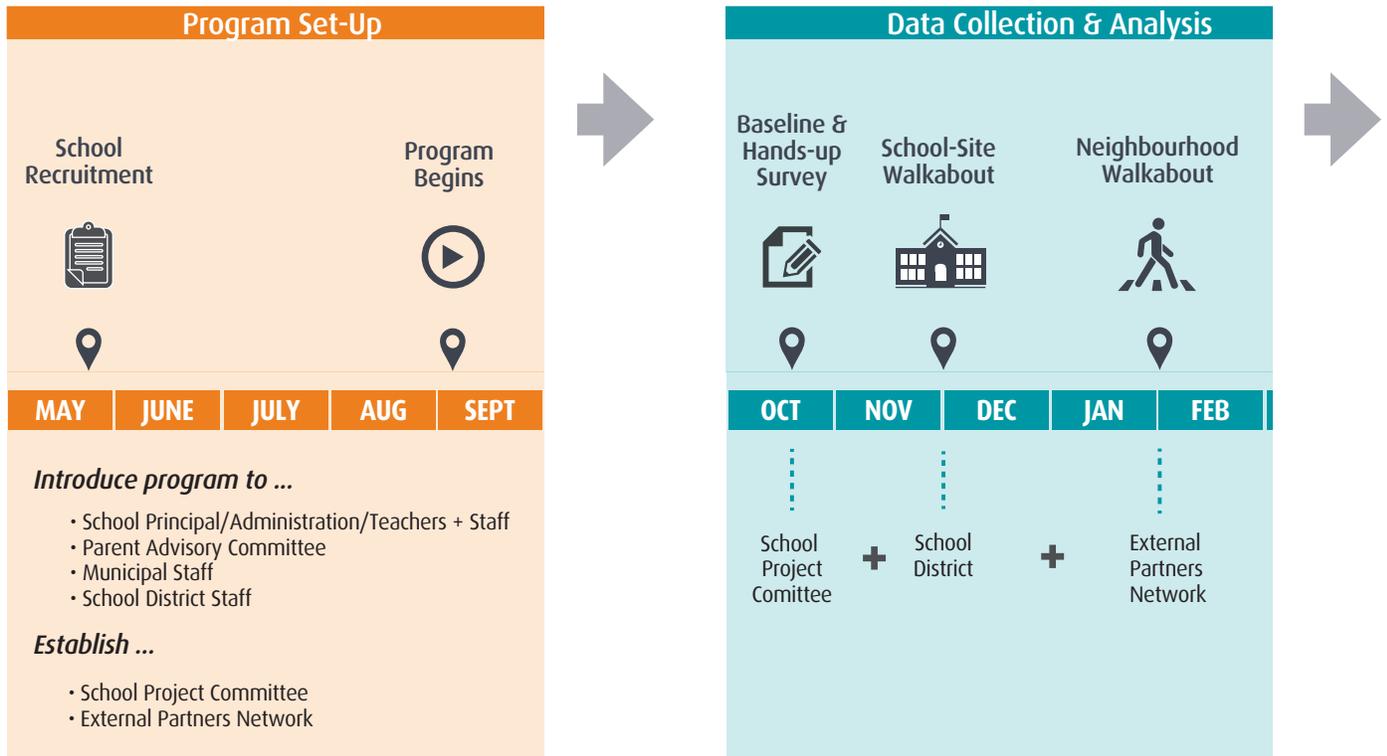
Journey Middle School
L'école Poirier Elementary

City of Victoria

Sir James Douglas School
South Park Family School

Process

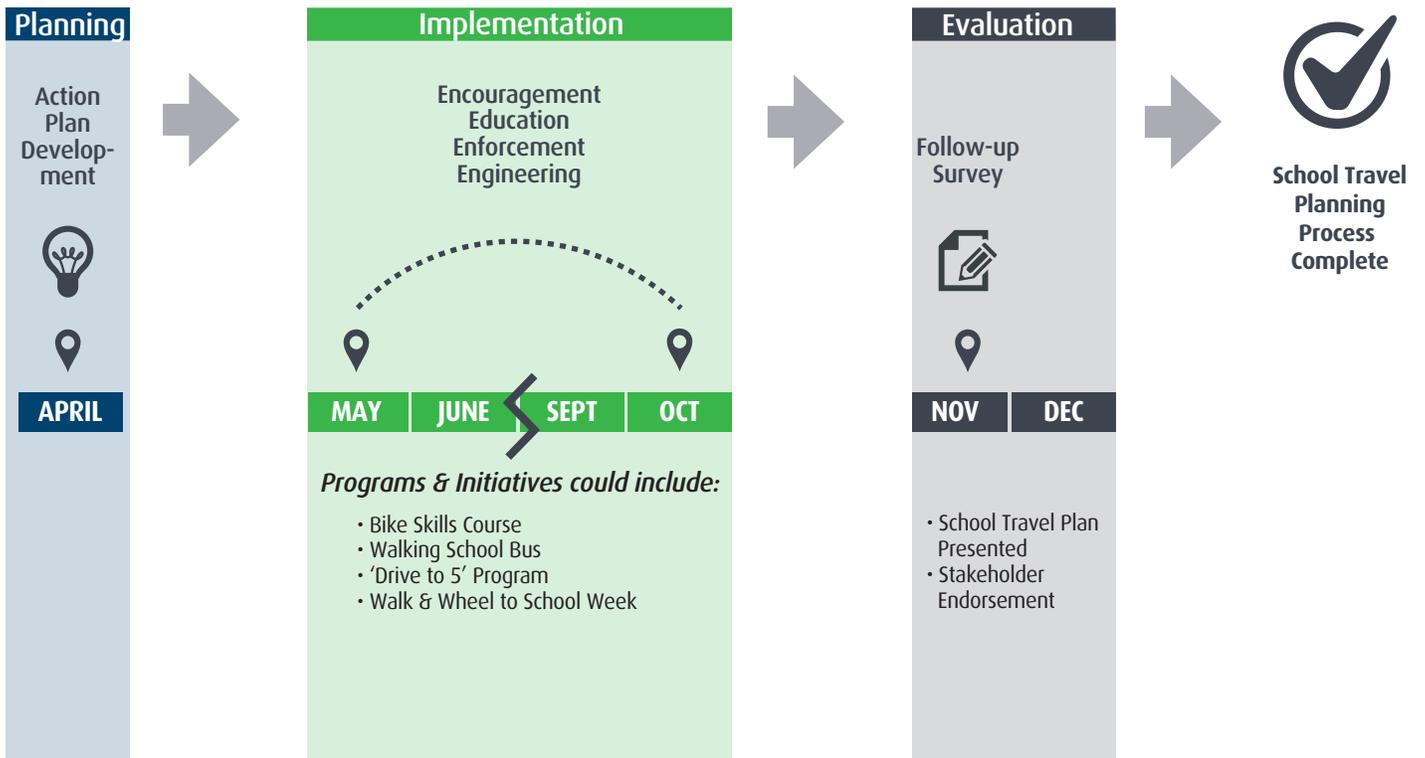
School Travel Planning



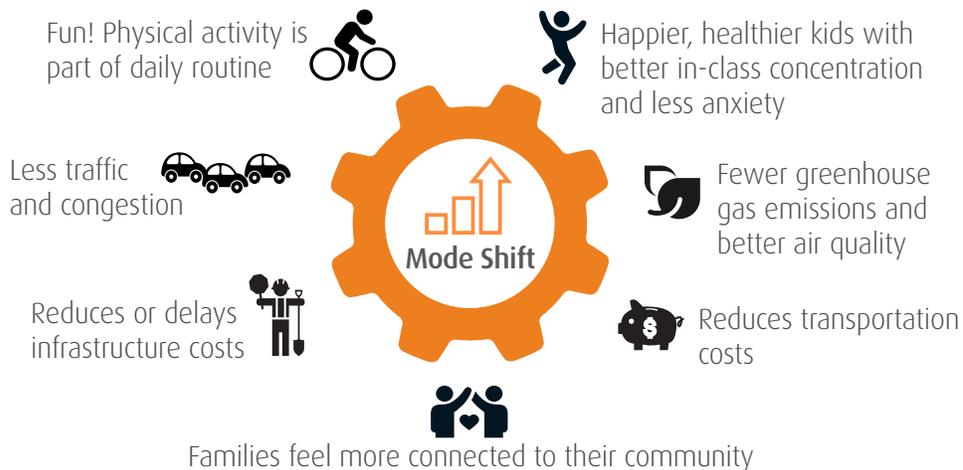
Approach

Collaborating to support more transportation choices





Why does increasing the use of active transportation matter?



Planning

Data collection

When the program had been launched at 20 schools across the region, baseline and hands-up surveys were used to understand how students travelled to and from school and the parent's perceptions of school travel.



67% of students live within **3km** of their school

Of students who live within **500m** of their school **23%** are driven

How students in the capital region travel to and from school



Increasing walking & cycling to school

Parents reported that they would let their child walk or bike to school if...

there are safer routes to school



their child is not alone



Active & Safe Routes to School works with partners to identify infrastructure improvements and facilitate programming options to help alleviate parents' concerns

*Statistics based off 2016 Active & Safe Routes to School take-home surveys

School Walkabouts

Two types of walkabouts were held at each school to explore transportation challenges facing the school, and to begin developing strategies to help the school community overcome them.

A school site walkabout: attended by members of the school community, explored issues pertaining to the school site and campus.

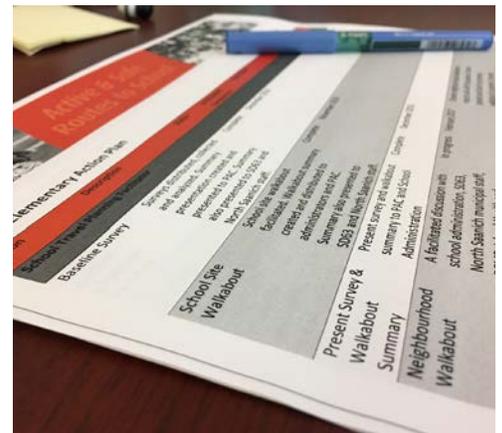
A community walkabout: attended by members of the school community and partner staff from municipal, school district, police/RCMP, and Island Health (Healthy Schools). The walkabout explored traffic safety issues and potential walking and cycling routes around the school.

After the walkabouts, participants debriefed and discussed their experiences, and began brainstorming solutions to the challenges they had observed. The walkabouts and subsequent discussions informed the development of the School Travel Action Plan.



Action Plans

Building on the information gained from the surveys and walkabouts, each school developed a School Action Plan. The Plans identified actions that each participating organization could commit to that would make walking or biking to school more safe and enjoyable; municipal and/or school district infrastructure improvements; educational efforts to improve safety; compliance and courtesy; and promotional and support programming to encourage active travel. The Action Plans are living documents that can be used by a school and its partners for planning and project tracking over the coming years.



School Travel Plans

A School Travel Plan provides a summary of the school travel planning process at each school. A School Travel Plan is a living document belonging to the school and should be revisited regularly to update the status of the School Travel Action Plan and to incorporate future evaluation findings. A School Travel Plan identifies and prioritizes the engineering, encouragement, and enforcement actions needed to create a more safe and comfortable environment for students and their families to walk, bike, and roll to school.

Best Routes Maps

Best Route maps show the most popular and comfortable routes to walk or bike to each school. The maps were developed with the advice of project partners to show students and their families different ways to get to each school and to provide travel safety information and resources. Each school received an electronic version to distribute, as well as a poster to hang in a permanent location.



Implementation



School districts, municipalities, and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure committed to infrastructure improvements on and off of school grounds. Although most projects required budget allocations for the coming years, some immediate school and street improvements were completed during the program. These improvements included crosswalk relocations and improvements, sidewalk extensions and installation of new bike racks.

Each school undertook activities to encourage and celebrate active travel

Bike skills courses

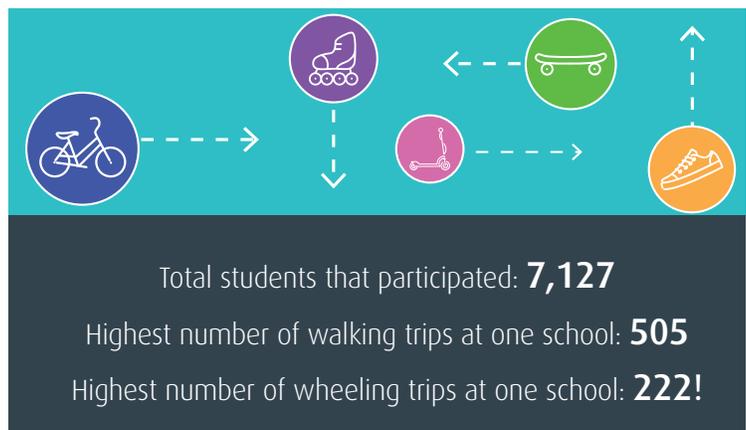
Students in the Active and Safe Routes to School program participated in fun, hands-on bike skills courses that helped them gain the confidence and skills to ride to school. The program provided a course to one class in each school. Interactive activities taught students to properly fit and wear a helmet, do a quick bike maintenance check, practice their hand signals, and cycle safely in traffic and on trails.

These courses built knowledge and confidence while addressing the parents' concerns that could prevent students from riding to school. But the courses were about more than the rules - students had a lot of fun too! Students rode their bikes through an obstacle course or played 'dabs' (who can ride the longest without touching the ground).

With theory, practice and games, students got up to speed on the rules of the road and felt more confident riding.

Walk and Wheel to School Week

From October 2-6, 2017, 22 schools in 8 municipalities and one electoral areas participated in the CRD's inaugural Walk & Wheel to School Week. Public and independent schools in four school districts saw increased numbers of students walking or wheeling during the free, fun campaign. Funded by a Community Wellness Grant from Island Health, the campaign encouraged and motivated students and their families to choose active travel — walking, biking, scooting and busing — for all or part of their school commute.



Drive to Five

The Drive to Five program encourages parents to drop-off their children at designated locations within a 5-minute safe and comfortable walk to school. Parents can either park and walk with their children or drop them off. Drive to Five encourages children to participate in active travel for part of their trip to school, and can help ease traffic congestion around schools.

To facilitate this program, the CRD developed a Drive to Five toolkit to assist schools. As well, the recommended Drive to Five locations were identified on each school's Best Routes map. To encourage the use of Drive to Five locations, participating schools hosted celebration stations with draw prizes or organized geocaching activities near the designated site.

Think of Me

In partnership with ICBC and local police/RCMP, drivers who speed through school zones heard directly from the children affected. At six schools across the region, law enforcement handed out a different kind of ticket to cars exceeding the 30 km/hr school zone speed. Instead of fines up to \$368 and three points, drivers were given hand-illustrated cards from school children with the plea to think of them and please slow down. The enforcement campaign helped raise awareness about the importance of safe driving, especially around schools.

Walk and Wheel Wednesday

A number of schools hosted special days where students and their families were encouraged to use active transportation. This approach allowed families try walking and biking without having to make a commitment to do so every day, and the flexibility to adjust their schedules accordingly. Along with promotional information to students and families, school across the region hosted activities such as an outdoor dance party, principal's walk and celebration stations with draw prizes. Celebrating the fun of active travel helped students feel excited about physical activity in the morning.

Wildlife Awareness Program

Four schools in the Westshore/Sooke area are adjacent to forest and trail systems. During the consultation, families expressed concerns about potential encounters with bears and cougars on the way to school. Parents said the risk of a wildlife encounter was preventing them from allowing their kids to walk or cycle to school.

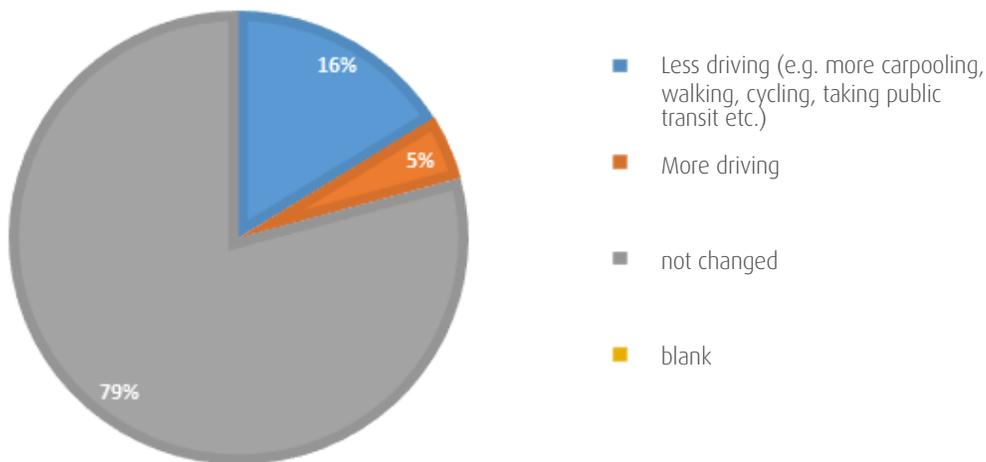
CRD Regional Parks developed a cougar awareness program for the Sooke schools to engage students about the benefits of cougars in the ecosystem, and what to do if they encounter a cougar. Almost 100 students from Poirier Elementary participated in an interactive cougar education and information program. Each participating student received a reflective snap bracelet to improve their visibility on local trails, as well as information on how their new knowledge could make their walking and biking to school more safe and enjoyable.



Results

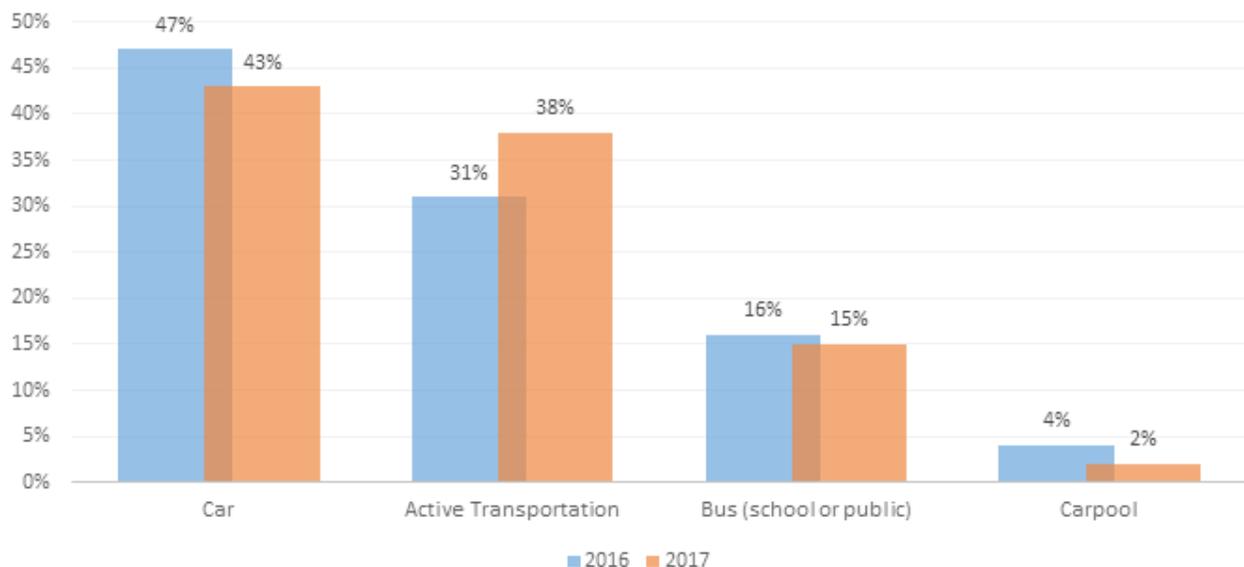
Following over a year of data collection, and planning, education and encouragement activities, the program succeeded in increasing active transportation to and from school. The follow-up surveys found that 16% of parents were driving less for school travel since the beginning of the Active and Safe Routes to School program.

Driving Habit Changes



More specifically, at the beginning of the program 47% of parents stated their usual form of school travel was driving, while at the end of the program this had decreased to 43% of parents. There was a significant increase in students using active transportation, including part of their trip, as their usual form of transportation.

Usual Mode of Travel



Summary

Active school travel is not the exclusive responsibility of any one organization yet benefits many, including students, families, schools, school districts, local governments and the health sector. Everyone can play a role in increasing the use, comfort and safety of active travel in our region.

Contributors

This program would not have been as successful without the dedication of all involved, especially the children and their families.

Schools contributed ideas and feedback, distributed information, promoted the program and hosted events and programming.

Local governments and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure provided planning and engineering expertise and committed to infrastructure improvements around the schools.

School districts shared school district transportation planning information and committed to school site improvements.

Students and families shared experiences and input, hosted and participated in events and programming – and walked, biked and scooted to and from school!

Parent Advisory Committees shared experiences and perspectives, gave input and organized events and programming.

Funders enabled the program to proceed. The Victoria Foundation, Real Estate Foundation and Traffic Safety Commission contributed funding.

Local police and RCMP participated in school discussion on safety, shared data and experience and delivered enforcement campaigns.

Community groups gave feedback on maps, delivered bike skills courses and partnered on events.

ICBC provided educational material and supported enforcement campaigns.

Island Health shared public health expertise and supported programming.

By the end of the program, students in participating schools used active transportation more often and parents drove to and from school less often. Principals, local Governments and school districts gave positive feedback on the program. The oversight of a coordinating body led to consistent program delivery, effective partnerships with government and non-governmental organizations, efficient use of resources, and information and knowledge sharing between schools.



Thanks in part to our partnership with you and the Town of Sidney we just received a \$35,000 crosswalk improvement.

Principal, Sidney Elementary

I want you to know how fabulous the program was for our school and community. Thank you.

Principal, SD 64

Many thanks for the fantastic program. We have been cycling every day since. I love that I got in trouble from my seven-year old for forgetting to signal the other day :)

Parent participant in Family StreetWise Cycling course

The whole program was valuable. We really appreciate this.

Principal, SD 61

Overall, was informative and useful process which identified/confirmed some existing issues.

Municipal engineering staff

Active and Safe Routes to School

