

Traffic Survey and Neighbourhood Walkabout Questionnaire

Prepared by Active and Safe Routes to School Manitoba A program of Resource Conservation Manitoba

Identifying specific transportation and safety issues at school sites and preparing a plan of action to deal with the identified issues is paramount to the success of any Active and Safe Routes to School Program.

Why conduct a neighbourhood walkabout?

As you begin to develop your ASRTS program, it is a good idea to have a clear understanding of the issues you are attempting to address. The most common reasons cited for schools wanting to implement an ASRTS program are:

- Traffic congestion around the school that makes it an unsafe environment for pedestrians and cyclists
- Heavy traffic volumes and/or excessive speeds by motorists on streets around or near the school, making the journey to school unsafe
- Children who are walking alone and may be victims of bullying or harassment, and are vulnerable to abduction

Ultimately, what you want to end up with is a good written description of the problem(s) that you face at your school, aided visually with area maps indicating problem areas and ideal safe routes to school. School Boards or local Transportation Engineers can provide schools with maps, and will often be valuable contacts and allies in helping make positive changes in the community. Before conducting your survey, determine the scope of your walkabout – will you focus on the immediate area around the school or do you also need to investigate safety concerns further away?

Things that you want to consider initially when conducting a traffic survey around your school include:

- What are the current parking allowances and restrictions?
- Where do the conflicts between pedestrians/cyclists and vehicles occur and why are they happening?
- Where are the areas along routes surrounding the school where pedestrians/cyclists are most at risk from motor vehicle traffic?
- What are areas where pedestrian/cyclist traffic and vehicle traffic co-exist well? Why does this function in these particular areas?
- What changes can be made to problem areas that will help to improve the interactions between pedestrians/cyclists and motor vehicles?

Out of these questions and answers an action plan can be formulated that everyone agrees to – be sure to document who will take care of what and when. Agreed-to timelines and follow-up meetings help to keep everyone on track.

Through this all, it is important to remember that plans and situations change, and it is good to be flexible and open to new information throughout the development of your program.



I want to do a traffic survey around my school. Who should I involve and when should I conduct the survey?

Plan your traffic survey and neighbourhood walkabout for before or after school during peak pick-up and drop-off times - when the problems you are hoping to address through your Active and Safe Routes to School Program are most evident. It is equally important to involve people who have the capacity to make change in the community or who have particular expertise that you think is important to the success of your program. These people include, but are not exclusive to:

- School administration (Principal, Vice-Principal)
- Superintendent or School Division personnel
- Concerned parents and caregivers
- Local-police (many schools have liaison officers)
- School Trustees
- Representative from the local health unit
- Students (especially student patrols)
- Local residents groups
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- The Parent Advisory Council of the school
- Local transportation engineers
- Mayor
- City Councillor
- If you are hoping to include a school-bus drop-off zone away from the school as part of your ASRTS program, you may also want to invite a school bus driver or the transportation coordinator for your school division

Start your neighbourhood walkabout and traffic survey with an introduction by the Principal or parent representative so they can share new updates with the participants (i.e.: recent information about traffic volumes, what's been tried in the past, results of previous traffic surveys etc...). Introductions should then be conducted and participants should sign-in with their names and contact information for future reference and for distribution of minutes, etc.

Neighbourhood Walkabout and Traffic Survey Report

Add your findings from your walkabout and survey to your community map and provide a written report of the findings. Request that the Transportation Engineer include these findings in the master map for your area. Include photographs in your report of problem areas and areas with positive things you would like to see implemented elsewhere. Distribute a copy of the report to all participants from the walkabout and use it to lobby for positive changes in the community to help make it safer for children walking to and from school.

Other considerations:

There are many other things to consider when implementing your ASRTS program. Conducting take-home surveys for school parents is an important and valuable way to get information about their travel habits to and from school as well as their concerns related to letting their students walk or bike to school.

Specific considerations when conducting a traffic survey and neighbourhood walkabout:

School site:

- The number of arrival and dismissal times at school
- School entrances for kindergarten students
- Teacher parking area/available visitor parking
 - Potential for vehicle and pedestrian conflict
 - Size and design of parking lot. Is traffic flow clearly signed?
 - Pavement markings on the parking lot
 - Parking and driving behaviour of driving parents
- Walking paths to the school
 - Where are the access points for students
 - Potential for conflict with vehicles
 - Lighting along walkways
 - Maintenance of walkways, i.e. snow and ice removal
 - Alternate school grounds access routes
- Bicycle facilities
 - Bike racks
 - Bike paths or lanes
 - Potential for conflict with vehicles
- Location of School Bus Loading Zone, if applicable
 - Where do students wait for the buses; what type of supervision is employed
- Number of buses, vans and handicapped vehicles employed
- Location of garbage dumpsters and other school maintenance equipment
- Emergency vehicle access

Areas surrounding the school site:

- Volume and speed of traffic on surrounding streets – perceived and real – obtain latest 24 hour counts
- Are there sidewalks? How far do they extend around the school and the surrounding community?
- Pedestrian crossing devices present and utilized
- Number and position of bus/student patrollers (if any – are they needed?)
- Sight distances of school crossings to road curves and bus zones
- Number and position of adult crossing guards (if any – are they needed?)
- Placement of school crossings in relation to driveways and bus loading zones
- Timing of traffic lights
- On-street signs
- Providing a “hand-to-hand” area where parents of kindergarten students can take their children into the school

Non-traffic items to consider:

- Types of buildings surrounding school: residential, commercial, industrial
- Location of other public spaces near school: parks, community centres, libraries, churches
- Number of shade trees on streets
- Green space vs. concrete space
- Graffiti on buildings
- Physical state of the sidewalks
- Size of the sidewalks
- Garbage along the routes to school
- Obstructions on the sidewalks (i.e. branches extending into walking space, broken concrete and tripping hazards, etc.)
- Block Parent or Neighbourhood Watch community – if so, where are Block Parents located

(This list has been used with permission from the Green Communities Canada Association ASRTS Resource Guide, 2nd Edition; Page 44.)



Are you concerned about the traffic conditions at your school during peak student drop off and pick up times?

Are you looking for options to increase physical activity at your school outside of regular physical education classes?



The Active and Safe Routes to School Program encourages the use of active modes of transportation to and from school.



Program benefits include:

- increased physical activity for children and youth
- less traffic congestion around schools
- safer, calmer streets and neighbourhoods
- improved air quality and a clean environment
- a healthier lifestyle for the whole family

The **ASRTS** program is offered free of charge to Manitoba Schools. It is flexible and can be tailored to meet the specific needs of each school and community. Program components include walking/cycling school buses, neighbourhood walkabouts, transportation surveys, walking clubs (e.g. Walking Wednesdays/Footloose Fridays), traffic-safety awareness training, no-idling zones and special events including the Clean Air Day Commuter Challenge in June and International Walk to School Week in October!



Resource Conservation Manitoba can help you establish a successful and sustainable ASRTS program at your school!



Please contact Jackie Avent at 925.3773 or asrts@resourceconservation.mb.ca for more information.

www.resourceconservation.mb.ca



Walkable Routes to School Survey

Take a walk through your neighbourhood and see how safe and easy it is to be a pedestrian. Place an "X" next to any items that you found to be a problem on the route to and from school and record the location of the problem after the item. Use this form to help you identify the safest route to and from school and identify and prioritize the problems in your neighbourhood that need to be made more safe.

Route taken: _____

1.	Sidewalks	Location
<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no sidewalks	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	There are sidewalks, but they are not continuous	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sidewalks are broken or cracked, making them unsafe or difficult to walk on	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sidewalks are blocked with poles, signs, shrubbery, dumpsters, etc.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sidewalks are too close to fast-moving traffic	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is not enough room for two people to walk side-by-side	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sidewalks do not have ramps (curb cuts) for wheelchairs, strollers, and wagons	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cars or trucks are blocking the sidewalk	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____	_____
Overall rating of sidewalks: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor		
2.	Street Crossings	Location
<input type="checkbox"/>	Road is too wide to cross safely	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Need traffic signals	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Traffic signals make pedestrians wait too long before crossing	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Need pedestrian crossing signals/audible signals	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pedestrian crossing signals are not long enough for pedestrians to reach the other side of the street	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Need marked pedestrian crosswalks	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parked cars on the street or utility poles are blocking the view of traffic	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trees or plants are blocking the view of traffic	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____	_____
Overall rating of street crossings: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor		

3. Traffic and Driver Behaviour	Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Drivers do not stop at stop signs	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Drivers do not obey traffic signs	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Drivers seem to be going too fast	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Drivers do not yield to pedestrians	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Drivers do not look before backing out of driveways	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____	_____
Overall rating of traffic and driver behaviour: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor	
4. Safety	Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not feel safe because of the amount of traffic	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not feel safe because of the behaviour of drivers	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Streets do not have enough lighting for walking when it's dark	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> People are loitering along the route	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Unleashed dogs are along the route	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant buildings and run-down property are along the route	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____	_____
Overall rating of safety: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor	
5. Appeal	Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Locations need more grass, flowers, trees, etc.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> There is garbage along the route	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____	_____
Overall rating of appeal: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor	
6. Overall Rating of School Route Walkability	
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent: Walking to school is easy, pleasant and safe	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Good: There are a few problems with walking to school, but children can do it safely	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fair: Walking is difficult; safety is a concern on many of the routes to school	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor: The routes to school are unsafe for children to walk	_____

What would you like to change most about the walk to school?
