

Background

The City of Calgary's Active and Safe Routes to School program uses the internationally recognized School Travel Planning approach to coordinate engagement, education and encouragement with any needed engineering improvements and enforcement to support immediate and longer-term increases in active school travel.

Community Need

Grade school children in Calgary are increasingly travelling to school as passengers in motor vehicles. Between 2001 and 2017, active travel to school for this population decreased from 28.1% to 21.5% of the mode share while driving travel to school increased from 39.1% to 44.4%.

Currently:

- Children as well as those travelling, working, or living near schools are increasingly exposed to pollution, unsafe driving behaviours and stressful situations in the vicinity of schools.
- Many parents report feeling uncomfortable letting their children actively travel to school.

The act of walking or biking to school provides a child with:

- Opportunity to exercise, socialize, become familiar with their community and incrementally develop independence skills.
- Life-long behaviours to combat chronic diseases and mental health issues related to inactivity.

Programs like Active and Safe Routes to School can help break this cycle of traffic inducing traffic and the associated negative outcomes by engaging students, parents and communities who in turn become invested in seeing it succeed.

Current Program

The City has partnered with Ever Active Schools, a provincial organization that supports healthy school communities, to work directly with schools. Ever Active Schools facilitates a two-year process with each school to develop and implement a School Travel Plan and monitors progress towards achieving plan goals.

- Each school travel plan is unique based on a school's needs and interests with programming and activities that align with school curriculum.
- Students and teachers are directly engaged in the process by participating in walk-about to observe existing behaviour, developing and executing plans to change behaviour, celebrating success, and monitoring effectiveness over time.

The City supports each school by identifying, reviewing and addressing verified travel safety issues in school walk zones, collecting traffic data and implementing capital enhancements like curb extensions, signage changes and building missing links.

The images below show students participating in traffic observations at Connaught School and recent infrastructure upgrades at Manmeet Singh Bhullar School where the City built curb extensions to shorten crossing distances for students and improve visibility for people walking.



Figure 1: Image of participating Active and Safe Routes to School Program schools

Schools across the City are invited to participate in the program when they flag a traffic safety issue to their school board, through 311 or to their area Councillor. Staff also pro-actively reach out to schools adjacent to capital corridor projects. A list of participating schools is found below and we are still actively recruiting schools to join the program:

NE	NW	SE	SW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manmeet Singh Bhullar School • École la Mosaïque • Apostles of Jesus School • Calgary Islamic School - OBK Campus • Marlborough School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arbour Lake School • King George School • Connaught School • Hillhurst School • Captain Nichola Goddard School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copperfield School • École Sam Livingston • St. Isabella Elementary Junior High School • Dr. Martha Cohen School • École Notre Dame de la Paix • St. Teresa of Calcutta • New Brighton School • St. Marguerite School • St. Damien School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Ferguson School • École William Reid • St. Joan of Arc School • Rideau Park School • Griffith Woods School • Dr. EP Scarlett High School • Dr. Freda Miller School

Since the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020 several factors have influenced project delivery at schools including:

- Schools focusing on core operational needs and slowing down participation in program
- Limited opportunities for data collection with virtual learning
- Administration prioritizing response efforts and design resourcing constraints

We anticipate that these factors will be less impactful during the 2021/2022 school year and have identified additional internal design resources to implement projects efficiently in 2022.

Previous Council Direction

The Active and Safe Routes to School program is supported by a number of Council approved policies and strategies.

Calgary Transportation Plan

Goal #2: Promote safety for all transportation system users

Action Plan M4: Invest in active transportation infrastructure, including cycling and pedestrian networks as funding becomes available

Step Forward Pedestrian Strategy

Key Result 5: More children walking to school

Action Item 38: Collaborate with partner agencies and organizations to implement Active and Safe Routes to School programs, incorporating school travel planning toolkits and walking route maps for schools city wide.

Cycling Strategy

C39: Explore how to expand The City's scope to further support the Active and Safe Routes to school program in Calgary.

Council Notice of Motion

On September 13, 2021, Council adopted Notice of Motion PFC2021-1365 directing Administration to:

1. Report back directly to Council in November 2021 during the final year of the 2019-2022 Business Plan deliberations with a scoping report and funding recommendations for an expanded Active and Safe Routes to School Program that would identify for the next budget cycle, 2023-2026:
 - a. A framework for how the City will work and communicate with key stakeholders such as schools, school boards, school councils, Joint Use Coordinating Committee, community organizations, multiple City Business Units and provincial organizations to:
 - i. Identify and prioritize the required capital improvements to achieve the 5A Network Guiding Principles around schools by relying on the City's GIS data to identify priority schools to be included in the Active and Safe Routes to School program;
 - ii. Include in the prioritization the schools that are not currently on the 5A Map;
 - iii. Examine school size to determine potential users; and
 - iv. Ensure schools are included in 5A mapping analysis and recognized as important destinations for trips.
 - b. Funding required for operational activities around schools to meet 5A Network priorities that include but are not limited to:
 - i. Snow-clearing not part of current routes;
 - ii. Seasonal items such as planters, street furniture or temporary set-ups in the road right-of-way; and

- iii. Ongoing transportation surveys to measure connectivity between engineering improvements and travel choices;
- c. Funding required for capital infrastructure improvements around schools that include but are not limited to:
 - i. Adding potential pathway/bikeway/sidewalk alignments;
 - ii. Adding pedestrian-activated flashers, crosswalks, shorter crossing distances through curb extensions, and other engineering measures; and
 - iii. Upgrading infrastructure to meet 5A principles when lifecycle replacements are done near schools (paving, concrete rehab and road work).
- d. How Administration will approach 5A Network connectivity citywide as a mobility program to ensure cross-corporate coordination in consultation with key stakeholders for the efficient and timely delivery of the program.