This document is intended to showcase and celebrate significant milestones for active school travel in Waterloo Region from 2002–2018.

These milestones would not have been achieved without contributions from the following partners:

- Waterloo Region District School Board
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region
- City of Cambridge
- City of Waterloo
- City of Kitchener
- Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services
- Region of Waterloo Transportation and Environmental Services
- Waterloo Regional Police Service
- Waterloo Regional Block Parent Program
- Ministry of Transportation
- Canadian Cancer Society – Ontario Division

For more information regarding:

- Impact Report: contact Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services healthyschools@regionofwaterloo.ca
- School Travel Planning: contact Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region 519-650-4934
Executive summary

Since 2002, the Waterloo Region Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) Working Group has been working to reduce vehicular traffic near schools and increase the use of active and sustainable modes of transportation by students. Over the course of 16 years, this work has evolved significantly and the schools across Waterloo Region are now better supported to develop and implement school travel action plans.

A collaboration of partner organizations conducted research and implemented pilot projects to establish school travel planning* as the preferred approach to address traffic concerns around schools. This lead to the creation of an Active Transportation Charter, a team of school travel planning staff, and the launch of the Waterloo Region Walking School Bus Program. Much of this work was maintained by various grants and funding supports, along with in-kind resources from all of the partners.

Waterloo Region is now poised to better support schools to address school traffic concerns and promote walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel. Provincially, the Government of Ontario has established the Ontario Active School Travel program; and the Ontario Active School Council was initiated in spring 2018 to identify and pursue strategic priorities in active school travel.

This work will continue into the future!

How to read the report

As you read through this report, we encourage you to use the ASRTS timeline on page four, which highlights work done in each of the focus areas.

These six focus areas are the keys to our success and are detailed throughout the report:

- School travel planning
- Education and awareness
- Policy and advocacy
- Capacity building
- Partnerships
- Funding

*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.”

Source: Ontario Active School Travel

Active and Safe Routes to School – Impact Report 2002–2018

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Since 2002, the goal of ASRTS has been to reduce vehicular traffic near schools and increase the use of active and sustainable modes of transportation by students. This was done by focussing on a number of focus areas: **school travel planning, education and awareness, policy and advocacy, capacity building, partnerships and funding.**
ASRTS has been recognized as a leader, nationally and provincially, in helping to establish school travel planning as a best practice to address traffic issues around schools.

Waterloo Region participated in two national research projects that contributed to current best practices for school travel planning. From this work, it was determined that a dedicated position was needed to coordinate school travel planning amongst schools at the local level for optimal impact. This position was one of the first of its kind in Canada.

Key milestones

- **2007–2009**: School travel planning piloted in four provinces (funded by Public Health Agency of Canada) to identify supports and resources needed to assist schools with issues around road traffic. Waterloo Region was one of 19 sites in Ontario who participated – five Waterloo Region District School Board (public board) schools participated (three intervention and two control schools).

- **2010–2012**: Two Waterloo Catholic District School Board (Catholic board) schools participated in a national study to examine the cost effectiveness of school travel planning and to demonstrate a behaviour change approach that can be honed and utilized going forward. This was part of the larger “Children’s Mobility, Health and Happiness” project led by Green Communities Canada with funding from the Canadian Partnership against Cancer and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

- **2013**: Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services hosted a key stakeholder forum with representatives from nine organizations to talk about the added value of a school travel planning position.

- **2014–2015**: Sustainable Waterloo Region was contracted to support school travel plan development with three Public Board schools and one Catholic Board school with funds from the Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership.

- **2015–2016**: Sustainable Waterloo Region received additional funding from the Automotive Recyclers of Canada to continue support with the four schools for implementation of their school travel plans.

- **2016**: School Travel Planner position created through a collaborative funding model with municipalities and school boards to address increasing concerns over traffic at and around schools. A subsequent stakeholder forum was held to prepare for this position.
Education and awareness raising activities promoted the benefits of active travel using the key messages of:

- “It’s healthy.”
- “It’s safe.”
- “It’s clean.”
- “It’s fun.”

A number of strategies were used to communicate these key messages, including: ready-to-use resources for schools, media campaigns by individual partner organizations and targeted communication around specific issues such as roundabouts.

Partners acknowledged the importance of combining education and awareness activities with other strategies to address barriers for walking and cycling to school such as policy and advocacy and built environment changes.

Key milestones

**Annual** – Active school travel celebrated through three special walk to school days (fall, winter, spring).

**Spring 2014**: Wayfinding* project implemented in Waterloo to address a perceived barrier that walking to school takes too much time.
- Signs posted 400 m from select schools indicating that it was only a five-minute walk or two-minute bike ride to school from that location.
- Fun activities painted on sidewalks between the signs and schools as an added bonus.

**Spring 2017**: Walk in their Sneakers launched. Police and bylaw officers walked with students in the region over a four to five week period to bring awareness to road safety and offer tips for pedestrians and drivers.

* Wayfinding involves providing information to guide people through a physical environment and improve their understanding and experience of the space. This project has been adapted in other local municipalities since 2014.
Partners worked together to advocate for appropriate policies to support active school travel, not just within Waterloo Region, but also across the province. The purpose of this work was to guide decision making, clarify expectations and support enforcement activities to improve safety at and around schools.

Partners also worked together to ensure that their respective policies aligned with the overall goal for active and safe routes to school.

**Key milestones**

- **2008:** Local partners successfully advocated for the inclusion of active and sustainable student transportation in the Ontario EcoSchools program. Active school travel activities became eligible to receive points towards an EcoSchools designation.

- **2011:** Active transportation charters were adopted by both the public and Catholic school boards in Waterloo Region. These have been adapted in a number of jurisdictions internationally.

- **2013:** Local partners contributed to the development of the provincial Active and Sustainable School Transportation Strategy Roadmap.
Capacity building

Since the beginning, many activities and initiatives have helped schools develop and improve knowledge, skills, equipment and other resources required to address barriers for students to walk or cycle to school.

See also, school travel planning (page six)

Key milestones

- **2004/2005:** Launched student leader training following successful implementation of a student-led Walking School Bus program at one local school.

- **2005:** Workshops offered to build skills of staff, students and parents to promote active school travel in seven pilot schools. Reference manuals were provided to the participating schools.

- **Fall 2016:** Two Walking School Bus pilot projects implemented by the Canadian Cancer Society and Waterloo Region Block Parents, respectively.

- **Spring 2017:** Waterloo Region Walking School Bus program launched as a result of collaboration between Canadian Cancer Society and Waterloo Region Block Parents.
Partnerships

School travel planning initiatives are more effective when there is collaboration and partnership between key stakeholders. As activities and initiatives were developed and implemented in Waterloo Region, additional partnerships were established with a variety of stakeholders.

What started with a small working group, gradually grew over 16 years to a larger multi-sector network.

Key milestones

- **2002**: Launch of ASRTS Working Group.
- **2004**: Working Group joined the local Heart Health Coalition – Together 4 Health.
- **2009**: Working Group becomes a self supporting entity when Together 4 Health funding ended.
- **2016**: School Travel Planning Steering Committee established to oversee the work of the School Travel Planner.
- **2017/2018**: Waterloo Region Walking School Bus Program launched as a collaboration between Canadian Cancer Society and Waterloo Region Block Parents.
Funding

The success of the various activities and initiatives would not have been possible without generous support from a number of sources, not least of which is the in-kind resources contributed by local ASRTS partner organizations. In addition, both school boards and the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo pooled funds to establish the first local School Travel Planner position.

Key milestones

- **2002**: Ontario Trillium Foundation funding through Green Communities Canada to establish ASRTS working group in Waterloo Region.
- **2004**: Together 4 Health Coalition funding to continue the ASRTS working group and its activities.
- **2007–2009**: Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) funding for the first school travel planning pilot in Waterloo Region.
- **2010–2012**: Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and the PHAC funding for the second school travel planning project.
- **2014**: City of Waterloo funding for the Wayfinding project.
- **2014–2015**: Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership for the third school travel planning project.
- **2015**: Canadian Cancer Society receives PHAC funding through the National Play Exchange Active Living Challenge to pilot the Trottibus Walking School Bus. One school in Waterloo Region participated.
- **2015–2016**: Automotive Recyclers of Canada's Grants in Gear funding to Sustainable Waterloo Region for continuation of school travel planning work.
- **2017**: Canadian Cancer Society received Ontario Trillium Foundation funding to support the establishment of multiple walking school bus programs across Ontario, and hired a coordinator for the Waterloo Region Walking School Bus Program.
- **2018**: Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo awarded Ontario Active School Travel grants to expand school travel planning support with two School Travel Planning Facilitator positions.
Looking to the future

Local
Waterloo Region is now poised to better support schools to address school traffic concerns through the promotion of walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of travel. This work will be supported by school travel planning personnel whose work is guided by a Steering Committee. Initial activities include:

• Waterloo Region Walking School Bus Program.
• Additional curriculum supports for the development of safe walking and cycling skills.

Provincial
In 2017, the Government of Ontario made a commitment to take active school travel to the next level. As a result, the Ontario Active School Travel program was established by Green Communities Canada. By creating a culture of active school travel, Ontario students will be better supported to travel to school safely.

The program is intended to provide expanded support to Ontario communities through resources, training, coaching, campaigns, peer networking and partnerships.

In spring 2018, the Ontario Active School Council was initiated to bring together provincial stakeholders. Chaired by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, its purpose is to identify and pursue strategic priorities for the continuing growth in active school travel.

http://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/about-ontario-active-school-travel/

Summary impacts
Through all of these activities, Active and Safe Routes to School in Waterloo Region has managed to change the conversation from “how to deal with traffic around schools,” to “how to change behaviour to reduce traffic around schools.” This was the result of using a comprehensive approach that involved increasing knowledge, skills, changing the environment around schools, changing policies and improving enforcement.

None of this would have been possible without strong partnerships and collaboration across a number of sectors – public health, education, police services, municipal and regional transportation, non-governmental organizations and many more. Through all of this, we have not only affected change in Waterloo Region, but also provincially.

Starting at the grassroots level, Waterloo Region has come to a point where school travel planning is now common practise and funding to support this work is dedicated – Way to go!