



**Promotion of Healthy Weights in the Early Years
February 23, 2008**

Jacky Kennedy, Director, Walking Programs

Green Communities Canada

- ❑ A national association of non-profit organizations that deliver innovative, practical environmental solutions to Canadian households and communities
- ❑ 35 member organizations coast to coast
- ❑ Energy, greenspace, waste reduction, sustainable transportation ... Leadership
- ❑ Active & Safe Routes to School - Ontario
- ❑ Canada Walks
- ❑ GCC: 12 employees; \$2.5 million revenues
- ❑ See: www.greencommunitiescanada.org



***Active and Safe
Routes to School is a
comprehensive
program that taps into
the latent demand for
safe, walkable
neighbourhoods.***

www.saferoutestoschool.ca

ASRTS Ontario

- 11 years growth
 - 3 Toronto schools → 30+ community-based initiatives
 - 2000+ schools
 - English and French
- Linked to provincial health targets and programs:
 - heart health
 - obesity
 - injury prevention
 - air quality
- Supported by Ministry of Health Promotion's HEAL initiative
- www.saferoutestoschool.ca



Walking to School in the 21st Century

Children's experience of transportation, while walking to school, is that of *wonder, discovery, adventure, connection and happiness.*

- What has changed since the 1980s?
- Why is a Walk to School movement even necessary?
- Are we even considering the needs and aspirations of children?



“We walk to school because we can see a kitty or a pup and sing along with the birds”



Decline in Walking to School

- 1975 Odense, Denmark: 85% reduction in traffic injuries/fatalities after implement of SRTS initiatives
- The Policy Studies Institute 1990 study (Hillman et al) showed a 25 year decline in children traveling to school unaccompanied by adults.
- In Canada almost 70 percent of students live within a half hour walk of their school – only 36 per cent walk regularly – and this number is going down.
- In developed countries, physical inactivity is the second most important risk factor for ill health, after tobacco smoking. (http://www.euro.who.int/transport/modes/20021009_1)

Why Safe Routes to School?



- **Concerns:**

- safety
- perceived convenience of driving
- reduced opportunities for daily physical activity
- increased greenhouse gas and air pollution emissions
- lack of sense of community
- loss of unstructured play time for children

- **Benefits:**

- safer streets
- greater public awareness
- increased physical activity
- reduced emissions
- social capital, community cohesion

Walking and talking with my dad was the best bit. We saw two slugs with no homes, but they still had their aerials, and someone had dropped their apple from their packed lunch. I wish my dad could walk with me all the time.

An urgent need for action

Decreased Opportunities for Daily Physical Activity

- It is estimated that less than one third of young people are sufficiently active to benefit their present and future health and wellbeing.

Impacts on Climate Change

- Nine families participating regularly in a Walking School Bus prevent the emission of 1,000 kg of carbon dioxide, a powerful green house gas
- They save money in fuel costs too!



An urgent need for action

Road Dangers

- Road traffic crashes kill more children and young people aged 5-29 than any other cause of death.

Air Quality and Children's Health:

- There appears to be no threshold for ozone levels that are safe, and children are particularly susceptible.

ASRTS works hand-in-hand with 5 E's:

- Engineering (Depts of Transportation/School Boards)
- Enforcement (Police)
- Education (Public Health/Depts of Transportation/
 - School Boards)
- Encouragement – (Schools)
- Evaluation (all)



School Travel Planning

- Engages children, parents, schools and boards, municipal planners, police, public health officials, politicians and others
- Maximizes healthy, sustainable ways of getting to and from school
- Identifies objectives for community priorities: transportation choices, air quality, safety, physical activity, and community cohesion
- Outlines strategies and timelines for achieving objectives
- Integrates actions with school and municipal plans and policies



Child & Youth Friendly Planning

- GCC ASRTS collaborating with Centre for Sustainable Transportation (CST)
- CST has created Child- and Youth-Friendly Planning Guidelines for Ontario
(www.uwinnipeg.ca/completed.html#kids_b)
- Promotion to Ontario municipalities
- Link the guidelines with ASRTS through a pilot project
- Funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation

Community Partnerships

Typical community stakeholders include:

- Health Units
- Municipal transportation departments
- Urban planning
- Transportation Demand Management
- Police
- School Boards/Districts
- Local NGOs/ENGOS
- Parent groups
- Others: e.g. Block Parents



Community-Based Social Marketing

Definition:

Community-based social marketing draws heavily on research in social psychology which indicates that initiatives to promote behavior change are often most effective when they are carried out at the community level and involve direct contact with people. The emergence of community-based social marketing over the last several years can be traced to a growing understanding that conventional social marketing, which relies heavily or exclusively on media advertising, can be effective in creating public awareness and understanding of issues related to sustainability, but is limited in its ability to foster behavior change.

- Work with local communities to identify issues and barriers
- Address those issues and barriers through:
 - modification of program and adaptable resources
 - pilot projects
 - media coverage
- Continuous improvement cycle
- Include incentives and rewards, i.e. the iwalk club
- Celebrate success – individual, group and community



Active and Safe Routes

- Innovative program elements engage school communities:
 - International Walk to School Month
 - Walking Challenges
 - Walking School Bus
 - IWALK Club
 - No Idling at School
- An international movement (40+ countries)
 - see: www.iwalktoschool.org

Morton Way - #1 In the World

- International Walk to School Award winner
- Presented at Walk21 Melbourne 2006
- **“Morton Way Walk and Roll”** – award winning program encourages:
 - students to walk and bike to school
 - weekly “Walking Wednesdays”
 - Parent led “walking school bus” program
 - walking club cards for the students
 - campaign to reduce traffic surrounding the school
 - physical activity awareness weeks:
 - International Walk to School Week
 - Earth Week
 - Environment Week



Liability

- Liability issues can have an impact. Our approach:
 - Safety of students is the key issue – if the routes to school are not safe then students should not be walking
 - Promote several strategies to deal with safety issues:
 - Neighbourhood Walkabout
 - Parent and Student Safety/Walkability Surveys
 - School assemblies with Police
 - Police and traffic engineers walk routes with families
 - WSB – 1 adult for every 3-4 children
 - Walking Buddies for older students
 - Initially all adults should walk together with children
 - Download WSB Risk Management Docs from website:
<http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkingschoolbus.asp>
 - If parents do not feel comfortable participating then they should not



Project BEAT (Built Environment & Active Transport)

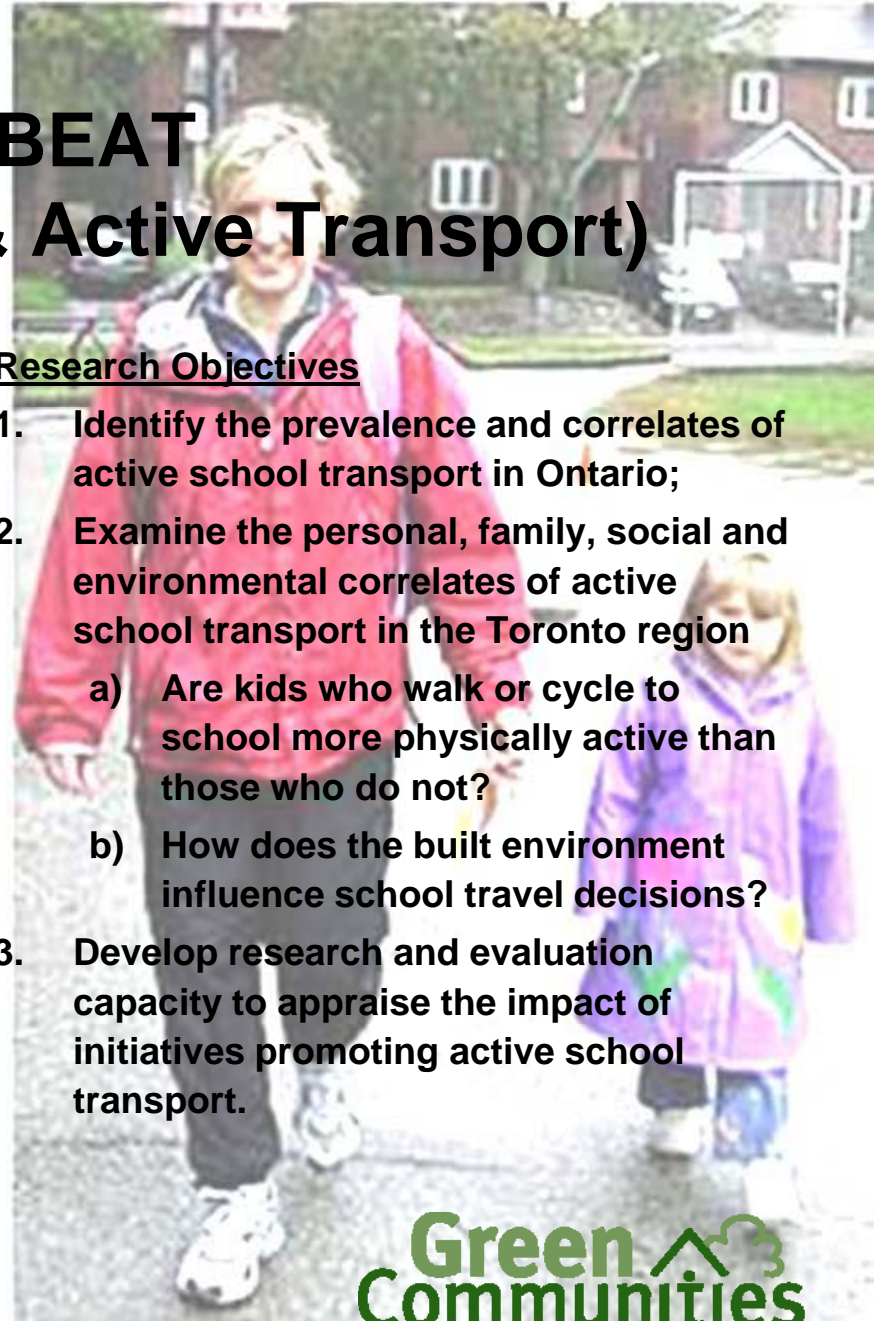
New research programme funded by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (HSFC) & the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR).

Three year, multidisciplinary research programme being led by Guy Faulkner (Faculty of Physical Education and Health, University of Toronto) and Ron Buliung (Geography, University of Toronto) with input from a broad base of researchers and policymakers.

For more details about the BEAT project contact BEAT@utoronto.ca

Research Objectives

1. Identify the prevalence and correlates of active school transport in Ontario;
2. Examine the personal, family, social and environmental correlates of active school transport in the Toronto region
 - a) Are kids who walk or cycle to school more physically active than those who do not?
 - b) How does the built environment influence school travel decisions?
3. Develop research and evaluation capacity to appraise the impact of initiatives promoting active school transport.



Green Communities
CANADA

Thank You!

