

Active and Sustainable School Transportation in Ontario: Barriers and Enablers

Abstract

Metrolinx, the regional transportation authority for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), is working with stakeholders to support active and sustainable school transportation (ASST) in Ontario. To support this initiative, this document has been prepared to identify key ASST barriers and enablers.

This review summarizes twelve key issues identified from literature that represent both ASST barriers and enablers, with a focus on travel as it relates to school children and grade schools (i.e. from kindergarten to Grade 8). As shown in FIGURE 1, these issues are categorized into four groups—those related to ASST in general, to students and families, to communities where schools are located, and to schools themselves.

The report's sections address these twelve issues in turn. Each section begins with an overview of the issue's scope and importance and a qualitative summary of key barriers and enablers, followed by specific pieces of supporting evidence found in Canadian or international literature. Readers who wish to develop a more detailed understanding will find a list of cited references at the end of the document.

About active and sustainable school transportation (ASST)

Transportation to and from schools is a major traffic generator, and has real impacts on the environment, the economy, our health and our communities. Automobiles use fossil fuels, emit greenhouse gases, contribute to smog, and create congestion, delays and safety hazards around schools. Public transit vehicles and school buses, which move people more efficiently, are safer than cars and promote physical activity, are more sustainable. Active transportation is even more desirable—kids who walk or bike to school use their own energy, and they minimize wear and tear on public infrastructure, while getting physical activity that helps them develop and stay healthy. **Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS)** and **School Travel Planning (STP)** are increasingly common ASST initiatives in Ontario.



School celebration of ASST culture during an organized Walk or Bike to School Day at St. Marguerite d'Youville Catholic Elementary School in Hamilton, ON

FIGURE 1: Issues addressed in this review

General issues	Student and family issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandate, leadership and cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safety and security concerns ▪ Family capacity and lifestyle
Community issues	School issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community planning ▪ Neighbourhood infrastructure ▪ Road safety ▪ Community resources ▪ Geography and climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School planning and siting ▪ School facilities, design and operations ▪ Curriculum ▪ School resources