
SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

Frank J Ney Elementary



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www.nanaimo.ca/goto/safer-school-travel



www.sd68.bc.ca/students-parents/getting-to-school



www.hastebc.org

Summary

The purpose of this School Travel Plan is to provide a summary of the 18-month School Travel Planning process at Frank J Ney Elementary (hereinafter: Frank J Ney). The School Travel Plan is a living document belonging to the school that should be revisited regularly in order to update the status of the School Travel Action Plan and to incorporate future evaluation findings. The School Travel Plan identifies and prioritizes engineering, encouragement, and enforcement actions aimed at creating a safer and more comfortable environment for students and their families to walk, bike, and roll to school.

This document consists of information compiled since the School Travel Planning process began in the winter of 2018.

Background

In 2014, the City of Nanaimo completed its Transportation Master Plan, which included a need to identify and promote Active and Safe Routes to School as part of a refreshed approach toward neighbourhood transportation to reduce the negative impacts of vehicle traffic while encouraging walking and cycling; enhancing their liveability and sustainability.

Over the next few years, City staff worked with the Nanaimo Ladysmith School District and various stakeholders to determine the best approach to achieve the City of Nanaimo's goals. In December 2017, the City of Nanaimo put out a call for proposals for consulting services to develop safe and active transportation plans in 4 of its schools. HASTe (the Hub for Active School Travel) was chosen to implement the School Travel Planning process as the foundation of the City of Nanaimo's Safe Routes to School project.

School Travel Planning

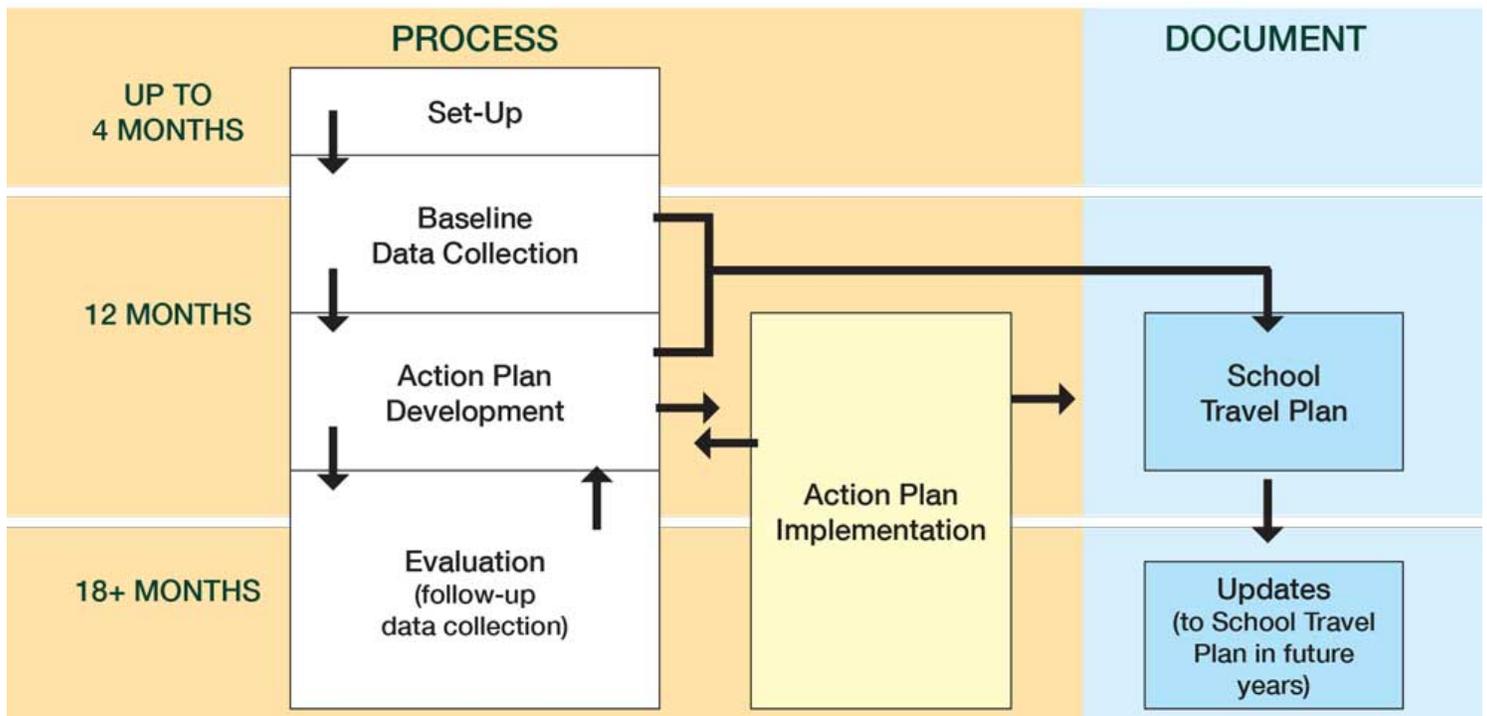
School Travel Planning (hereinafter: STP) is a community-based planning process that has been used with success to date in communities across Canada to increase the number of families choosing active transportation modes to get to and from school. STP uses a collaborative approach, working to involve all relevant stakeholders and enable communities to tackle the root causes of their schools' transportation challenges.

Key benefits of STP are:

- Improved physical and mental health
- Improved traffic safety
- Reduction in pollution
- Improved air quality

STP involves a network of representatives of key school-transportation stakeholder groups who make up a Steering Committee and inform and support the STP process. Organizations and individuals that contributed to the STP process at Frank J Ney included administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students from the school as well as staff from the City of Nanaimo, the Nanaimo Ladysmith School District, RCMP, ICBC, and other community partners.

At individual schools, the STP process is led by an STP Facilitator, who convenes a School Committee, comprised of staff, parents, and administration, to outline specific active school travel barriers and solutions, developing the foundation and specifics for each school’s Travel Plan.



▲ The School Travel Planning Process

School

Frank J Ney is a community elementary school located in North Nanaimo, a residential neighbourhood in the northern end of the City of Nanaimo. The school was originally constructed in 2000 and underwent substantial renovations in the summer of 2018.

297 students were enrolled at Frank J Ney in the 2017/18 school year. This number is expected to increase to 445 students in the 2018/19 school year when the school is set to receive many students who formerly attended nearby Rutherford elementary.

Frank J Ney has a large and active Parent Advisory Committee (hereinafter: PAC), which meets every month and regularly has more than 10 parents in attendance. Additionally, parents volunteer at the school in a variety of capacities throughout the school year.

One such capacity is as part of an Active Travel Committee, which works to ensure the safety of students travelling to and from school and address transportation-related challenges associated with the closure of Rutherford Elementary. The Committee was formed upon the announcement of the closure of Rutherford elementary. However, Frank J Ney parents have been working with the City of Nanaimo to address transportation safety in the catchment area since 2009.

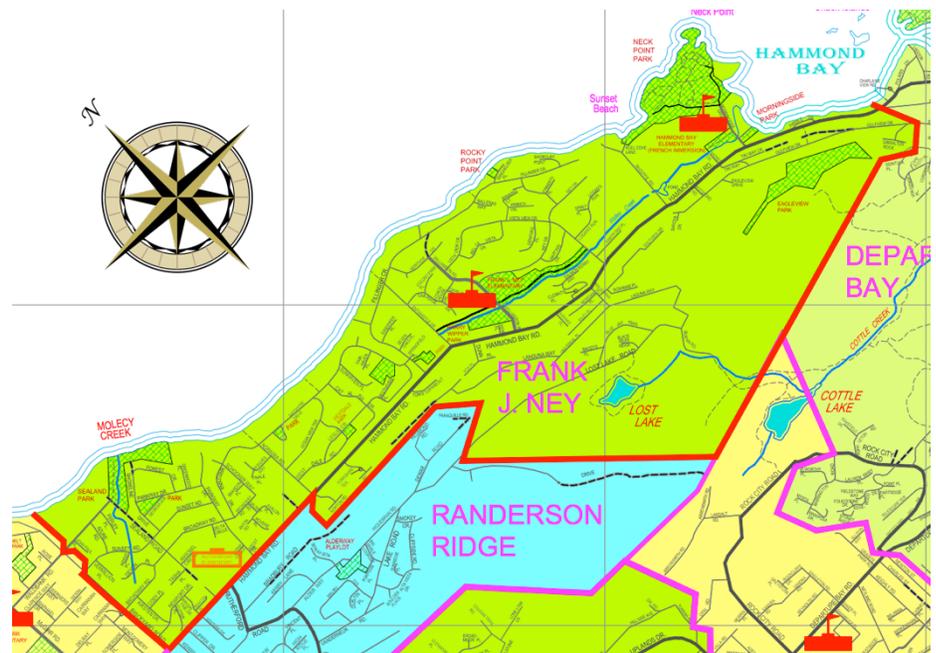
Frank J Ney's school plan places a strong focus on literacy comprehension, self-assessment, and student motivation. The school offers many extracurricular activities and sports, along with a vibrant student leadership program. Frank J Ney offers before- and after-school care for students run by the North Cedar Before and After School Care Program Corp.

Catchment

Frank J Ney is located on the north side of Harry Wipper Park, a municipal sports field. The school's website highlights its location "in a beautiful, natural setting surrounded by green spaces, trails and a stream," and notes that students use Harry Wipper Park for classes and recess.

The North Nanaimo neighbourhood is one of the newest parts of the City. The section of the catchment area on the north side of Hammond Bay Rd. is primarily residential and features a number of housing strata and a typical suburban street network. The section of the catchment areas on the south side of Hammond Bay Rd. is built on the northern slope of Linley Ridge, which features steep grades and switchback roads.

In the summer of 2018, to accommodate many of the former students of Rutherford elementary, Frank J Ney's catchment area was extended westwards by 1.2km. A single-track French immersion school, École Hammond Bay, is located in the eastern end of Frank J Ney's catchment area, a little less than 2km away.



▲ Frank J Ney Elementary catchment map

Transportation

The front entrance of Frank J Ney faces east towards Williamson Rd., a two-lane street with sidewalks on its west side. The section of Williamson Rd. adjacent to Frank J Ney is a signed school zone with a 30km/h reduced speed limit.

South of the school lies Hammond Bay Rd., a busy major collector road that runs east-west through the Frank J Ney catchment area. Hammond Bay Rd. features sidewalks on at least one side of the

road through the catchment area, intermittent bike lanes, and is part of the route for BC Transit's #20 bus.

The Walley Creek Trail, one of the City of Nanaimo's multi-use paths, runs east-west to the south of Frank J Ney between the park and the school. The trail continues east across Williamson Rd. through the Walley Creek Trail Park. There are a number of small parks and a few additional pedestrian pathways scattered throughout the northwest corner of the school's catchment area.

Frank J Ney has a Walk Score of 4/100, suggesting that its neighbourhood is largely car-dependent; Walk Score is a measure of neighbourhood walking accessibility, and is often an indicator of community health and well-being (www.walkscore.com).

Methodology and Results

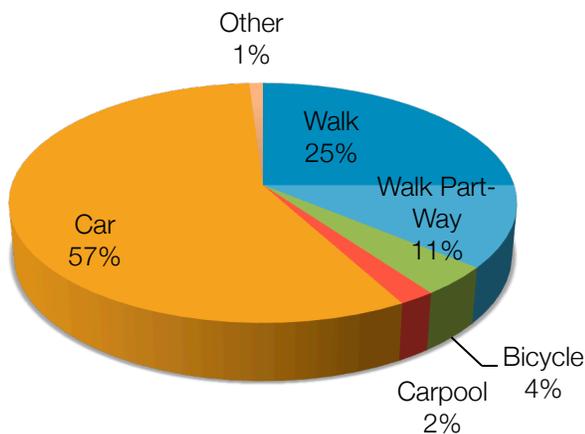
Baseline school travel data was collected through a variety of methods, including student hands-up surveys, family take-home surveys, a walkabout of the surrounding neighbourhood, and meetings with the school community.

Baseline hands-up surveys and family take-home surveys were completed in February 2018.

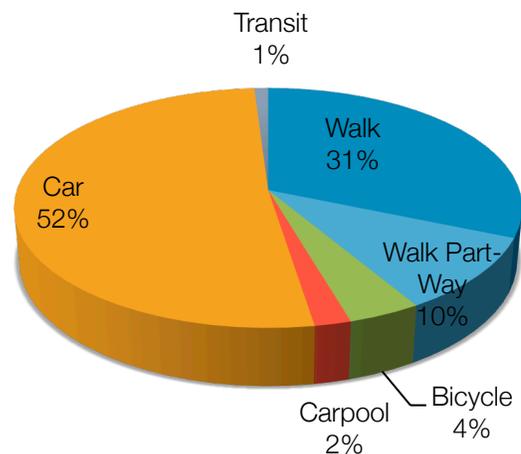
The neighbourhood walkabouts at Frank J Ney took place on Monday, March 12th and Wednesday, May 2nd, 2018. The walkabouts were attended by administrators, parents, students, and members of the municipal Steering Committee. Participants observed the school’s travel patterns and toured the area to investigate and examine concerns. The walkabouts informed the Travel Challenges section of this report, the Best Routes to School map (Appendix B), and the School Travel Action Plan (Appendix A).

Hands-Up Baseline Data

13 divisions from grades K-7 participated in hands-up surveys at Frank J Ney. Teachers asked students to raise their hands when identifying their method of travel to and from school and recorded responses daily over the course of one week. Results from this survey are presented below.



▲ Travel Mode to School



▲ Travel Mode from School

According to baseline hands-up survey results, the majority of students at Frank J Ney are driven to school, either alone (57%) or as part of a carpool (2%). About a quarter make the trip on foot (25%), while a few walk part way (11%), ride their bicycle (4%), or arrive by “other” means (1%). For the trip from school, the rate of driving decreases slightly (52%) while the rate of walking goes up (31%).

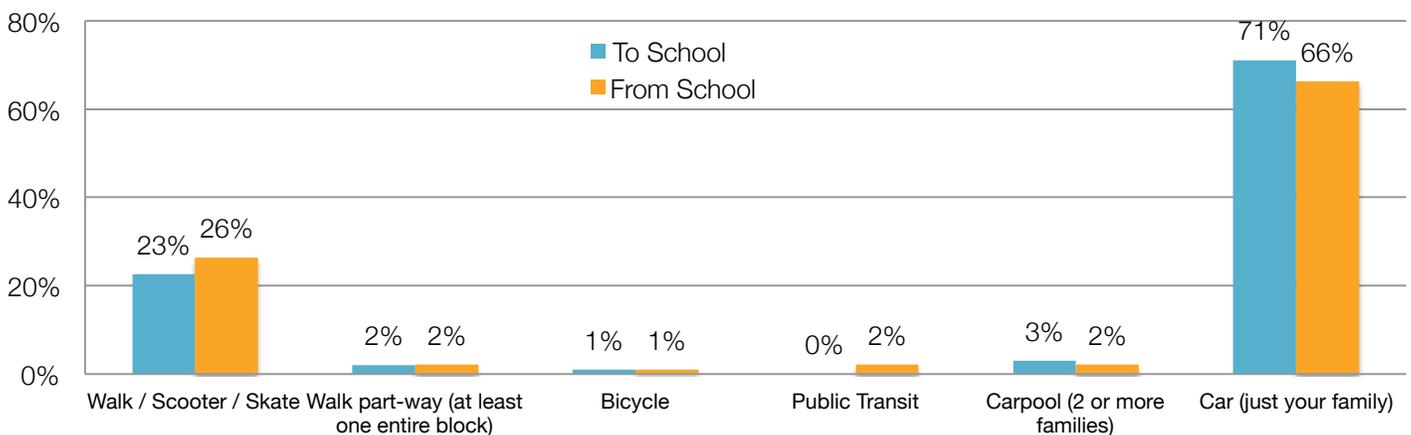
A copy of the baseline hands-up survey is attached to this document as Appendix C.

Family Survey Baseline Data

Family take-home surveys were sent home with each student at Frank J Ney. Families were asked to complete the survey and return it to the school within one week. Families were asked about their child(ren)’s travel choices to and from school, factors that influenced transportation decisions, and local transportation concerns. A copy of the baseline family take-home survey is attached to this document as Appendix D.

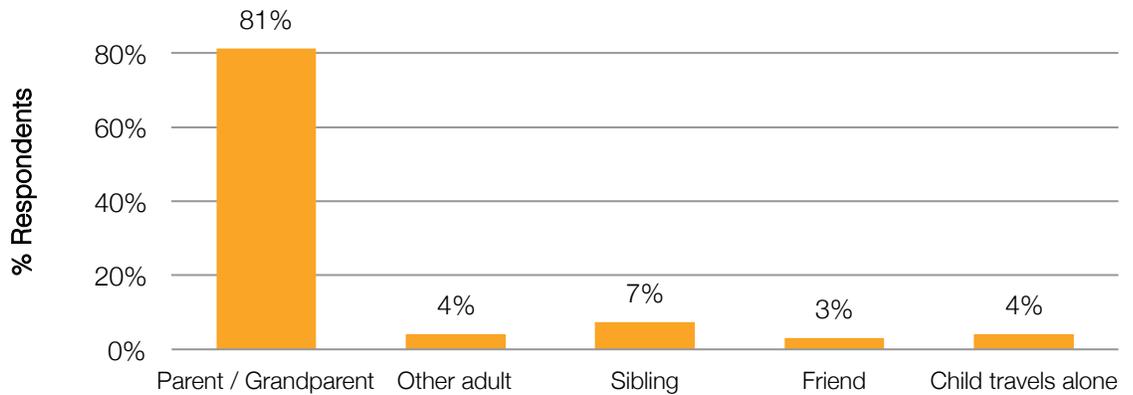
97 families representing 154 children completed the survey at Frank J Ney, a return rate of 52%. The findings from this survey are presented below.

▼ How does your child(ren) usually get to and from school?



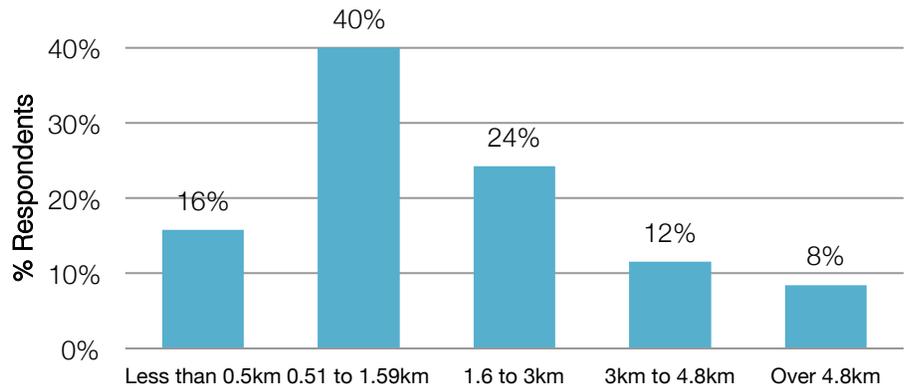
Mode share splits from the baseline family take-home survey show more driving and less walking than were recorded by the baseline hands-up survey.

▼ Who usually accompanies your child on the way to school?



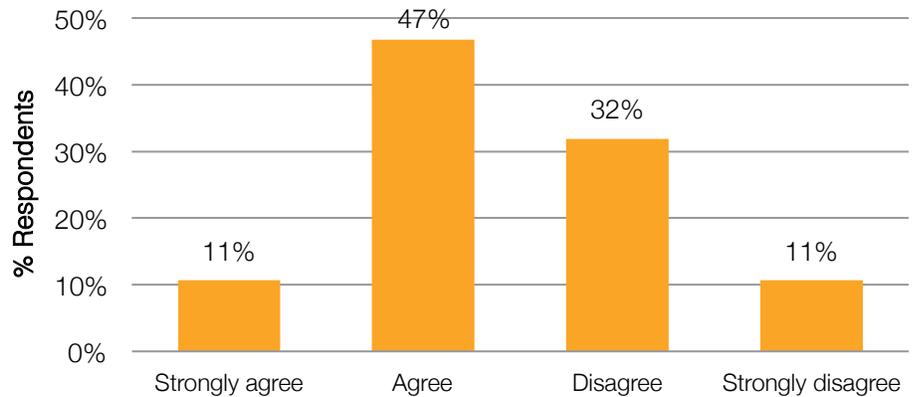
Most students (85%) at Frank J Ney travel to and from school accompanied by an adult. 7% of students travel with siblings, 3% with a friend, and 4% by themselves.

▼ How far away from school do you live?



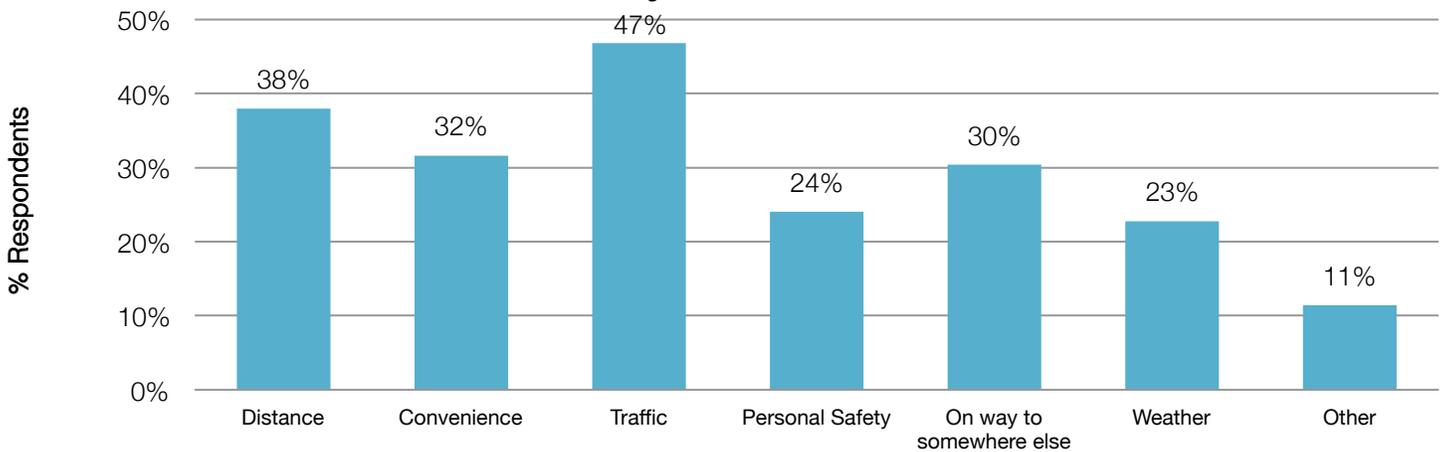
The majority of students (56%) at Frank J Ney live within 1.6km of the school, generally considered a walkable distance for elementary school-aged children. 24% live between 1.6 and 3km from the school; 12% live between 3 and 4.8km from the school; and 8% live more than 4.8km away from the school, beyond the walking limit set out by the Nanaimo Ladysmith School District.

▼ **Our neighbourhood is safe for children to walk to school**



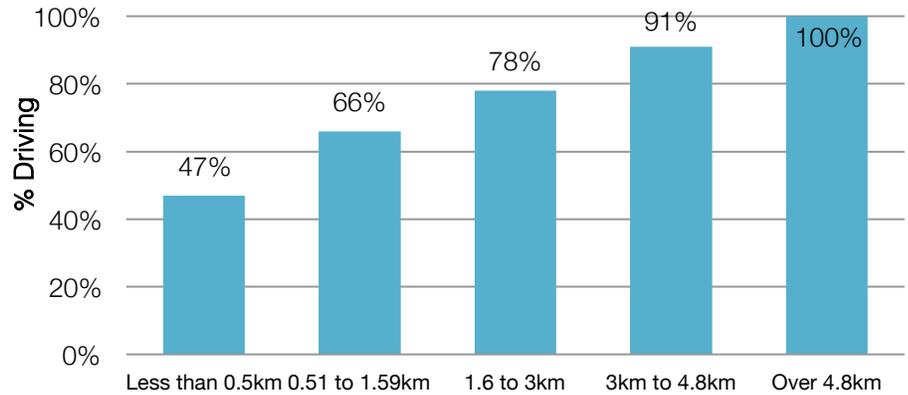
The majority of parents at Frank J Ney either agree (47%) or strongly agree (11%) that their neighbourhood is safe for children to walk to and from school. About one-third disagree (32%) with this statement, will 11% strongly disagree.

▼ **What are the main reasons your child(ren) is/are usually driven to/from school?**



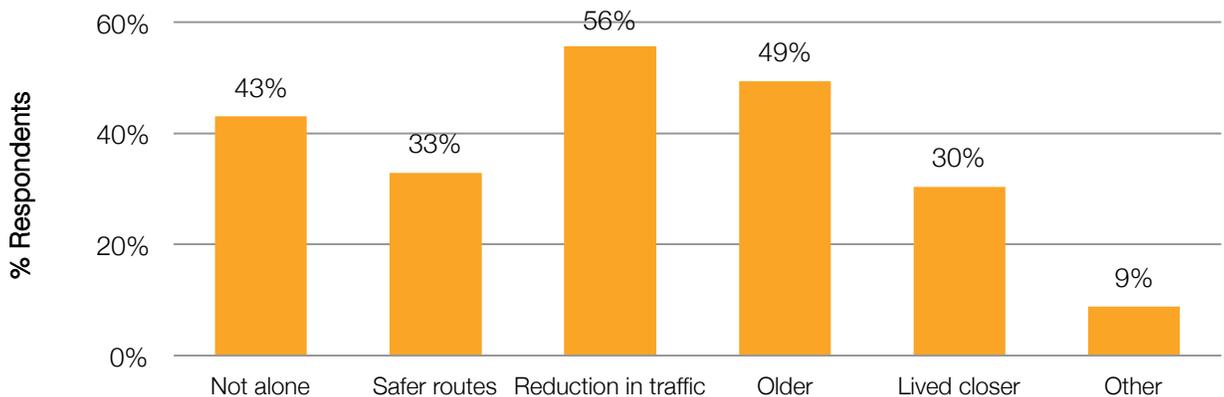
When asked why they drive their child(ren) to school, parents at Frank J Ney were most likely to select “traffic” (47%) among the available answers. “Distance” (38%), “convenience” (32%), and being “on the way to somewhere else” (30%) were other popular reasons given.

▼ **Percentage of students who are driven to school based on how far away from Frank J Ney they live**



Data from the family take-home survey suggests that distance does indeed impact driving rates at Frank J Ney. As illustrated above, the likelihood they are driven increases the further a student lives from the school.

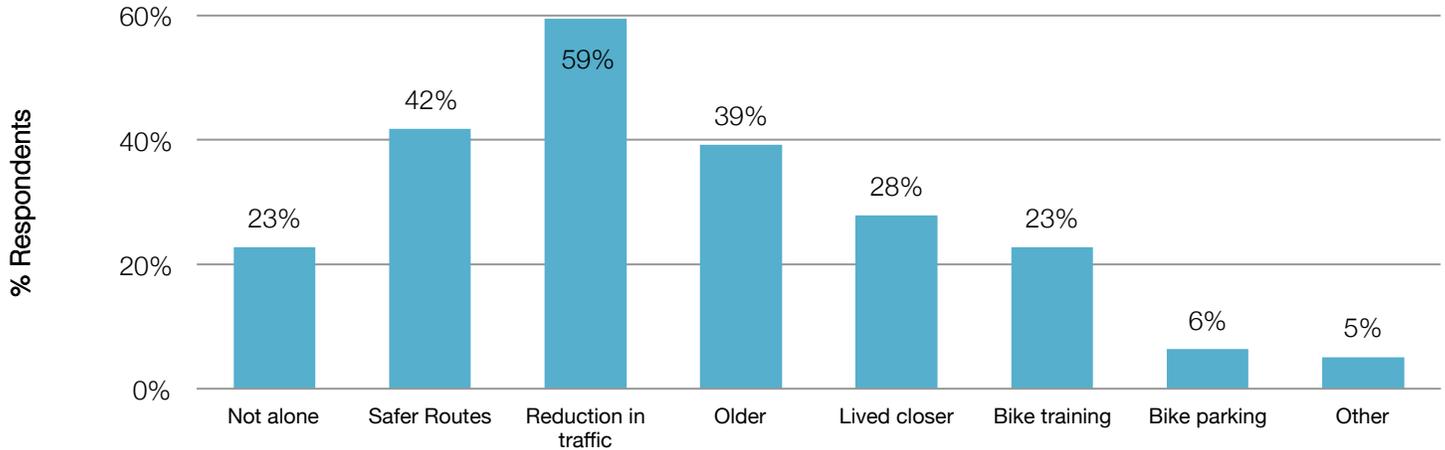
▼ **I would allow my child(ren) to walk to school if...**



When asked about the conditions under which they would allow their child(ren) to walk to school, parents at Frank J Ney selected if there were “a reduction in traffic” (56%) over any other available answer. Other popular conditions were if they were “older” (49%) or “not alone” (43%). Data from the family take-home survey suggests that age does indeed impact walking rates at Frank J

Ney: only 17% of students aged 4 to 6 walk to school, compared to 31% of students aged 10-12 who do so.

▼ **I would allow my child(ren) to cycle to school if...**



When asked about the conditions under which they would allow their child(ren) to cycle to school, parents at Frank J Ney selected if there were “a reduction in traffic” (59%) over any other available answer. Other popular conditions were if there were “safer routes” (42%) or if their children were “older” (39%).

Transportation Walkabout

Two walkabouts were held for Frank J Ney elementary: the first on Monday, March 12th at 8am; and a second on Wednesday, May 2nd at 8am.

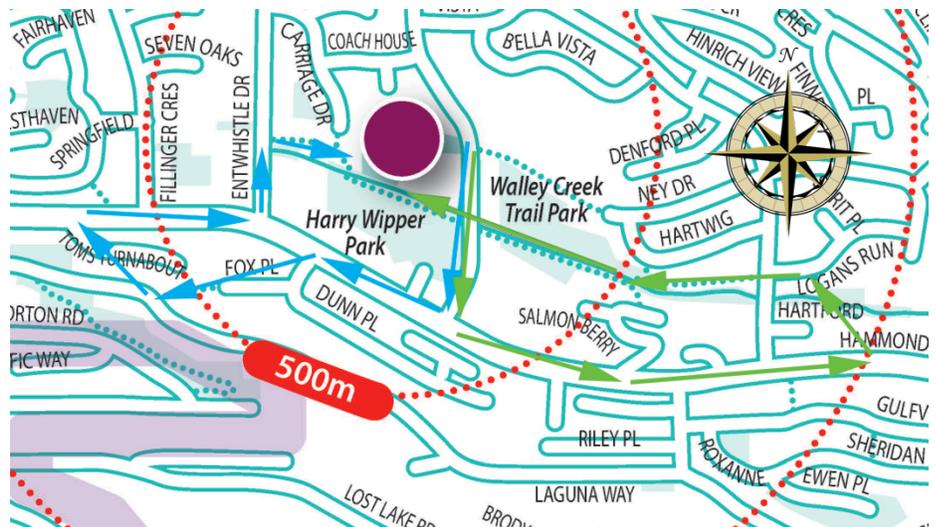
More than 20 participants attended the first walkabout at Frank J Ney, including members of the School Travel Planning steering committee and parents of students at Frank J Ney and Rutherford Elementary.

Walkabout participants gathered near the front entrance of the school to introduce themselves and review the routes they would walk. During the walkabout, participants:

- Observed vehicle traffic and pedestrian crossing facilities at the intersection of Williamson Rd. and Hammond Bay Rd.

- Reviewed a walking route and trail connection on Fox Pl. before descending back to Hammond Bay Rd.
- Observed crossing conditions at the intersection of Hammond Bay Rd. and Entwistle Dr.
- Looked for potential park-and-walk locations east of the school.
- Reviewed the crossing facilities at the intersection of Logan’s Run and Vista View Cr.
- Observed walking and trail conditions in the Walley Creek Trail Park.

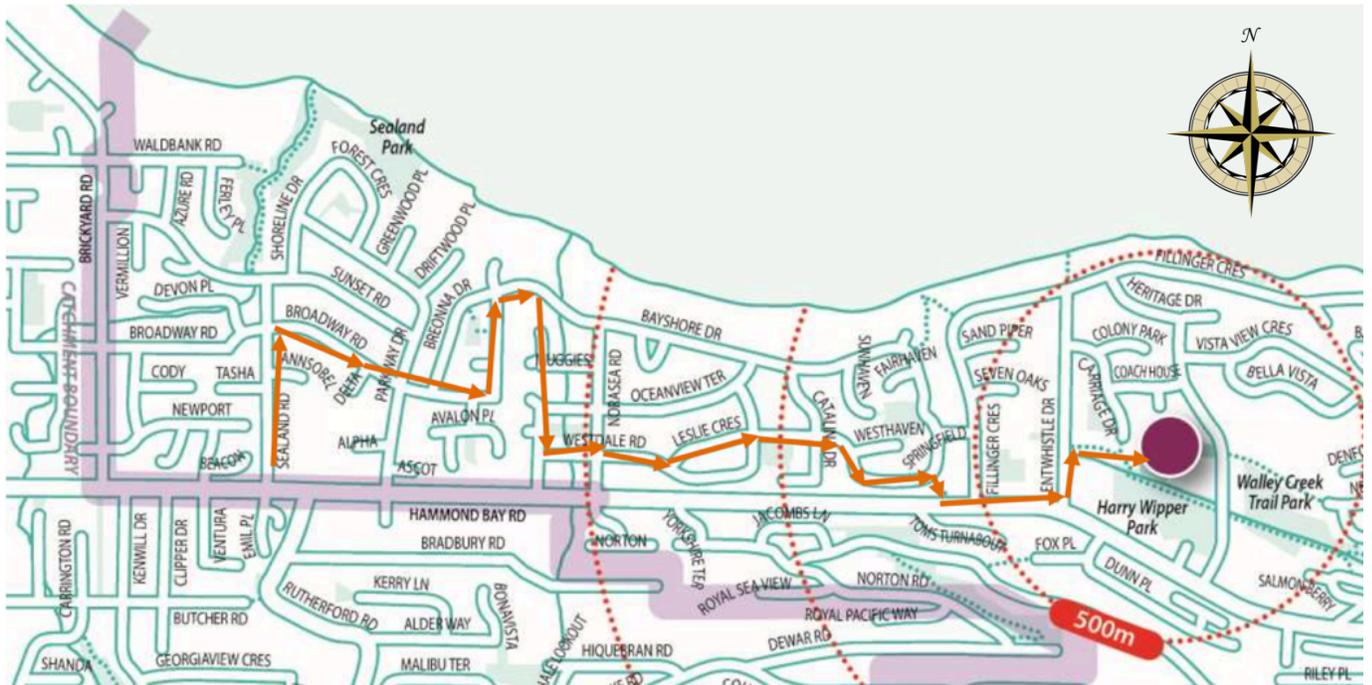
Discussion during and after the walkabout focussed on the need for a school bus to transport students from the Rutherford Elementary to Frank J Ney, the safety of students walking and cycling on and across Hammond Bay Rd., and questions about enforcement and traffic safety directed to the RCMP officers attending the walkabout.



▲ The routes for the first walkabout at Frank J Ney

The second walkabout took place on Wednesday, May 2nd at 8am, and focussed on travel between Rutherford Elementary and Frank J Ney. It was attended by parents of students from Rutherford elementary, along with members of the School Travel Planning steering committee.

The walkabout followed a route between the two schools that largely avoided Hammond Bay Rd. Participants discussed walking and cycling route options, reviewed pedestrian infrastructure and crossing facilities in the area, and identified potential improvements and park-and-walk locations. A number of participants remarked on the length of the route and its suitability for young children.



▲ The route for the second walkabout at Frank J Ney

School travel challenges are the barriers to active travel faced by students, families, and staff at Frank J Ney. These challenges were identified through the take-home surveys where parents identified on a map the areas of their highest concern, and through conversations with the school administrators and other members of the school community.

This section, along with Frank J Ney 's School Travel Action Plan (Appendix A), identifies some of the challenges and presents solutions, drawn from the school community and best practices in the field of ASRTS, to overcome the barriers to active travel at Frank J Ney.

1.

Catchment shape and size

In the summer of 2018, the west side of Frank J Ney's catchment area was expanded to include the majority of the former Rutherford elementary catchment area. The new segment of the catchment area is between 1.5 and 2.5km away from the school.

In addition to being large in size and irregular in shape, the Frank J Ney catchment area is bisected by a major collector road, Hammond Bay Rd. In the family take-home survey and in meetings at the school, parents mentioned that the topography of the catchment area, which features a number of hills and steep grades, also serves as a barrier to students walking and cycling to school.

Among the schools that participated in baseline transportation data collection in the winter of 2018, Rutherford elementary registered the highest to- and from-school walking mode share (43%). However, when asked how they planned to travel to Frank J Ney, only 10% of then-Rutherford parents indicated that they expected to walk, compared with 79% who indicated that they expected to drive. When asked why they planned to drive, 88% of parents gave



▲ **Hammond Bay Rd. runs east-west through the Frank J Ney catchment area.**

“distance” as a reason, more than any other option. When asked under what conditions they would consider allowing their child to walk to school, 81% of these parents chose “if they lived closer to school”, again the most commonly selected option.

In the spring of 2018, the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District authorized a 1-year trial special school bus to transport students living in the new part of the school’s catchment area to Frank J Ney.



▲ **Wide, winding streets are common throughout the Frank J Ney catchment area.**

2.

Poor pedestrian connectivity in the catchment

Most of Frank J Ney’s catchment area features a typical suburban street network, with wide, curving roads. This type of street layout and design reduces overall connectivity and, along with inconsistent pedestrian infrastructure, reduces walkability in the catchment, requiring pedestrians to walk longer and further between points in the neighbourhood and promoting driving and higher vehicle speeds.

The one consistent throughway in the catchment is Hammond Bay Rd., a major collector road that runs east-west through the Frank J Ney catchment area. Unfortunately, based on data collected in the family take-home survey, Hammond Bay Rd. is a major source of traffic safety-related concerns for the Frank J Ney school community.

3.

Pedestrian safety on Hammond Bay Rd.

Hammond Bay Rd. received the majority of the written comments and concerns expressed by Frank J Ney parents through the family take-home survey. Parents raised concerns about high motor vehicle speeds and traffic volumes; lack of separation between vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians; intermittent bike lanes; and inconsistent pedestrian infrastructure on the east side of the catchment area.

Parents also raised concerns about the safety of pedestrians crossing feeder streets when travelling on Hammond Bay Rd. All intersections with feeder streets have stop signs to control traffic, painted crosswalk lines, and curb letdowns. However, curb return radii are universally large, reducing the visibility of pedestrians waiting to cross, allowing vehicles to turn while maintaining speed and increasing the time and distance that pedestrians must spend in the roadway.



▲ Frank J Ney students and parents on Hammond Bay Rd.



▲ A parent points out their concerns about a crosswalk across Hammond Bay Rd.

Facilities for pedestrians crossing Hammond Bay Rd. also drew concerns from parents. Some intersections have marked and signed north-south crosswalks, two of which (at the intersections with Malaspina Rd. and Entwhistle Dr.) are supplemented with pedestrian activated flashing beacons. Regardless of the presence or type of infrastructure, all were sources of concern for Frank J Ney parents, who cited high vehicle speeds, lack of attention and failure to yield by drivers, and poor visibility among the factors that make crossing Hammond Bay Rd. a barrier to active travel.

The City of Nanaimo has made a number of upgrades to active travel facilities on Hammond Bay Rd. in recent years, including installing sidewalks, crosswalks and bike lanes to improve conditions for walking and cycling. A full list of recent upgrades can be found in Appendix F.



▲ **Morning traffic on Williamson Rd. observed during the walkabout**

4.

Pedestrian safety on Williamson Rd.

Williamson Rd. is a two-lane local road from which motor vehicles access Frank J Ney's parking lot and pick-up and drop-off loop. This stretch of Williamson Rd. is a designated school zone with a reduced 30km/h speed limit. In the school zone, there are a sidewalk and street lights on the west side of the roadway, and a wide gravel shoulder on the east side of the roadway which is often used as a parking and drop-off area by Frank J Ney parents during the periods before and after school.

Through the family take-home survey, parents expressed concerns about the safety impacts of high motor vehicle volumes and speeds on Williamson Rd. Several mentioned that driving parents often drop their children off on the east side of the road, leaving them to cross unassisted in front of the school's busy driveway. Parents also raised concerns about the lack of sidewalks on the east side of the road, which requires walking students approaching the school from the southeast to cross Williamson Rd. at Hammond Bay Rd., an intersection many parents feel is unsafe.



▲ **Parents use the shoulder on the east side of Williamson Rd. as a drop-off location**

In anticipation of transferring many students from Rutherford elementary to Frank J Ney in the summer of 2018, the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District expanded the school’s parking lot and driveway. The new driveway, which features an additional vehicle lane and wide curb returns, only has a sidewalk on its south side and will require walking students approaching the school from the north on Williamson Rd. to cross a longer section of roadway and reduce their visibility to drivers entering or exiting the school’s driveway.



▲ Frank J Ney’s new, widened driveway

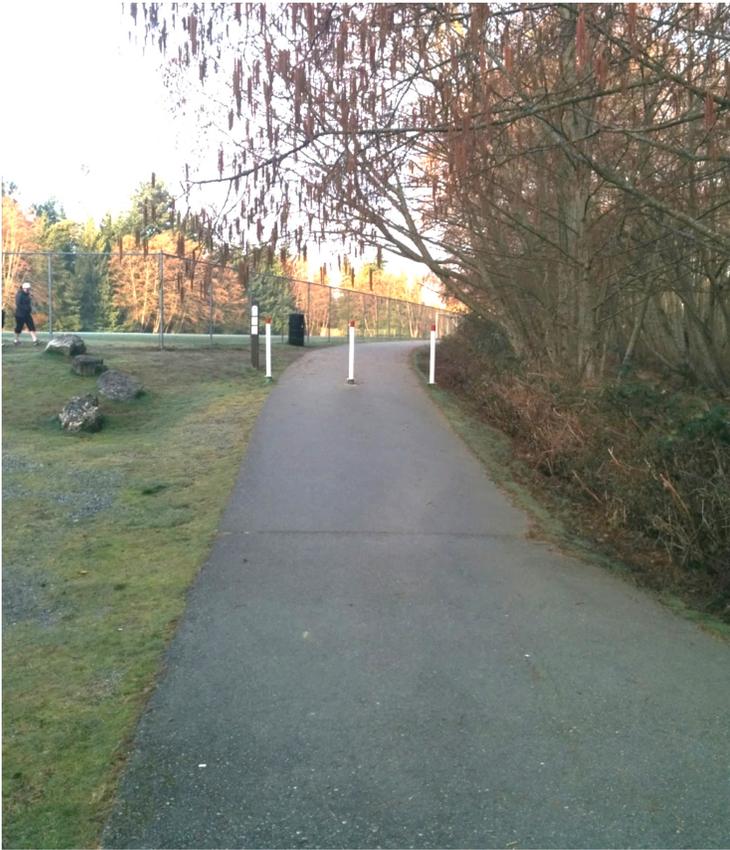
5. Safety on trails

Frank J Ney is bordered by several parks, including Harry Wipper Park to the southeast and Walley Creek Trail Park to the southwest. The Walley Creek Trail is a paved multi-use trail that runs east-west through both parks. It connects to the school, and its two halves are connected by a marked and signed crosswalk across Williamson Rd.

Through the family take-home survey, parents raised concerns about the safety of children using the Walley Creek Trail, relating to stranger danger and wildlife, specifically cougars; and the absence of on-trail lighting.



▲ Multi-use trail near Frank J Ney



▲ **The Walley Creek Trail runs east-west to the south of the school**

The City of Nanaimo's Partners in Parks is a public participation program designed to bring the ideas and efforts of volunteers together with city staff and resources in order to develop and improve its parks and open spaces. The program includes a number of initiatives through which the Frank J Ney school community can address its safety concerns and help students become familiar with the parks near the school and the Walley Creek Trail.

In 2019, the City of Nanaimo Parks Department will be initiating the development of a Parks and Trails Master Plan to guide the development of and set priorities for its park and trails moving forward.

Over the course of the STP process at Frank J Ney, a number of interventions were undertaken to address barriers to active school travel and encourage walking and cycling trips to school. Education and Engagement interventions inform members of the school community about active transportation; Encouragement interventions encourage students and families to travel actively; Enforcement interventions compel awareness of and compliance with traffic laws and bylaws; and Engineering interventions are physical changes that make walking and cycling safer, more comfortable and more convenient.

Interventions undertaken during the STP process at Frank J Ney are detailed in the section below. Interventions identified that have yet to be undertaken can be found in Frank J Ney's School Travel Action Plan (Appendix A).

Education and Engagement

Pop-up Infrastructure

In the spring of 2018, the City of Nanaimo installed temporary flashing beacons at the intersection of Hammond Bay Rd. and Williamson Rd. to simulate the presence of pedestrian activated flashing beacons.



▲ Temporary flashing beacons and a “Yield to Pedestrians” sign on Hammond Bay Rd.

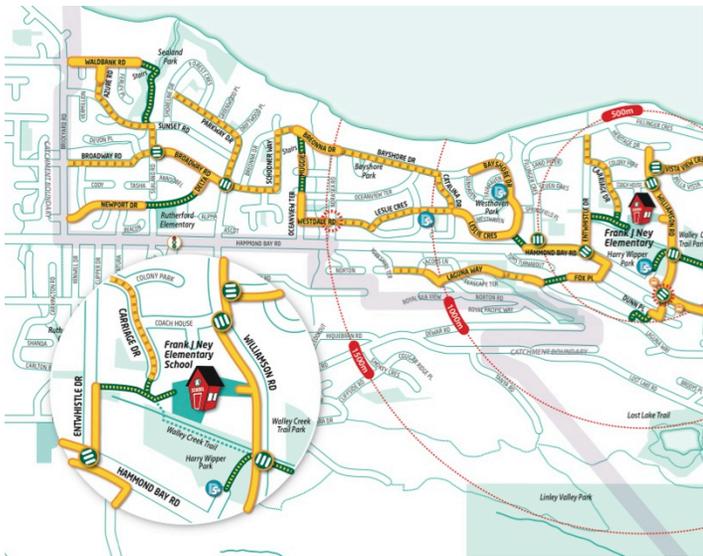
Signage

In the winter of 2018, the City of Nanaimo installed a permanent “Yield to Pedestrians” sign on the centre median of the north-south crosswalk at the intersection of Hammond Bay Rd. and Williamson Rd. in order to increase motor awareness of the presence of

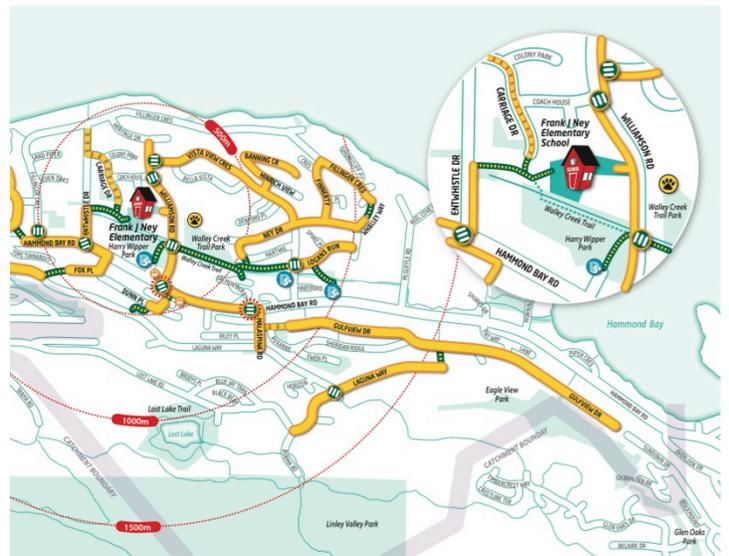
pedestrians using the crosswalk. In the fall of 2018, the sign was reported missing; it has not been replaced.

Best Route to School Maps

Two Best Routes to School maps (Appendix B) were developed for Frank J Ney: one for the east side of the catchment, and one for the west. The routes featured in the maps were based on information from the family take-home surveys, the walkabout, and consultation with the school community as well as other stakeholders. The maps show the best existing walking and cycling routes to school through the Frank J Ney catchment and should be updated as infrastructure changes and improves.



▲ The Best Routes to School map for the western part of the Frank J Ney catchment area.



▲ The Best Routes to School map for the eastern part of the Frank J Ney catchment area.

Drive to Five Plus

Drive to Five Plus is a program that encourages parents to drop their children off at designated locations that are a 5-15 minute safe and comfortable walking distance from school. Parents can either park and walk with their children, or drop them off and let them walk alone.



▲ **The City of Nanaimo installed permanent signs to identify Drive to Five Plus locations around schools**

In the spring of 2018, Drive to Five Plus signs were installed in several locations in the Frank J Ney catchment area. The locations were selected for their proximity to the school, the access they provide to popular walking routes, and the availability of parking.

Encouragement

Bike to School Week

In the spring of 2018, Frank J Ney students participated in Bike to School Week, an annual province-wide event that celebrates and encourages transportation cycling.

Over the course of the week-long event, Frank J Ney students logged 241 cycling trips to and from school, which translates to a 16% cycling mode share – a 300% increase in the rate of cycling captured by the baseline hands-up survey.



▲ Full bike racks at Frank J Ney during Bike to School Week

Enforcement

Think of Me

In the spring of 2018, ICBC and the local RCMP conducted a “Think of Me” education and enforcement campaign on Hammond Bay Rd., just south of the school. The “Think of Me” campaign is designed to raise awareness and appreciation of the human consequences of irresponsible driving.



▲ RCMP officers enforcing the speed limit on Hammond Bay Rd.

As part of the campaign, Frank J Ney students were given postcards with pedestrian and vehicle safety information on the back and blank spaces on the front. In those spaces, students were asked to draw and colour pictures on the topic of active transportation and transportation safety.



▲ A sample card drawn by a Frank J Ney program for the “Think of Me” campaign

Staff made colour copies of the cards, and local RCMP officers distributed them to drivers who were pulled over for speeding on Hammond Bay Rd. near the school. The enforcement campaign helped raise awareness about the importance of safe driving, especially near schools.

The formal STP process ends with the completion of the School Travel Plan – but implementation is just getting started. It is important that stakeholders continue to implement and update the School Travel Action Plan. Parent volunteers, students, teachers, and Principals can lead implementation at the school level.

Over the years, the City of Nanaimo has worked to improve conditions for active travel around schools (www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/projects). Since 2009, sidewalks were installed on the south side of Hammond Bay Rd. between Toms Turnabout and Dunn Pl. and pedestrian crossing beacons added to the north-south crosswalk at the intersection of Hammond Bay Rd. and Entwhistle Dr.

Moving forward, the City should continue to analyse, prioritize, and make improvements around the school; monitor progress; and engage directly with the school community when possible. The School Travel Plan should be considered when developing other community plans or projects that may have an impact on school travel.

Follow-up school travel data will be collected in the winter of 2019. Results and findings will be discussed with the steering committee, and the School Travel Plan will be updated with the results and any other changes. Families will be notified of the results via the school's newsletter.

School Travel Planning Members

The STP process at Frank J Ney involved members of the School Travel Planning school committee and the Municipal Steering committee. Key members of each committee are listed below.

School Committee

Principal: Jacquie Poulin

PAC Chair: Rachel Peace

Parent: Nick Baldwin

Parent: Carol Tuck

Parent: Charlene McKay

Municipal Steering Committee

City of Nanaimo Manager of Transportation: Jamie Rose

City of Nanaimo Transportation Engineer: Annalisa Fipke

City of Nanaimo Open Space Planner: Kristy Macdonald

SD68 Director of Facilities: Pete Sabo

SD68 Capital Projects Coordinator: Chris Baker

SD68 Executive Director of Communications: Dale Burgos

RCMP School Liaison Officer: Misty Dmytar

RCMP School Liaison Officer: Terry Crawford

BC Transit / RDN Superintendent of Transit Planning: Erica Beauchamp

ICBC Road Safety Coordinator: Caroline Robinson

Appendix A: School Travel Action Plan

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