
SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

McGirr Elementary



Introduction 4

Summary 4

Background..... 4

School Travel Planning..... 4

Overview 6

School 6

Catchment..... 6

Transportation 7

Baseline Data 9

Methodology and Results 9

 Hands-Up Baseline Data 9

 Family Survey Baseline Data..... 10

 Transportation Walkabout 14

School Travel Challenges 16

 1. Traffic safety in the school zone 16

 2. Traffic safety on Dover Rd..... 17

 3. Pedestrian crossing safety at the intersection of Dover Rd. and Blueback Rd./Uplands Dr..... 18

Implementation 20

Education and Engagement..... 20

 Drive to Five Plus..... 20

 Best Route to School Maps..... 21

 Pop-up Infrastructure 22

Engineering..... 23

Ongoing Efforts and Evaluation..... 24

Members and Endorsement 25

School Travel Planning Members 25

 School Committee..... 25

 Municipal Steering Committee 25

List of Appendices 26

- Appendix A: School Travel Action Plan
- Appendix B: Best Routes to School Map.....
- Appendix C: Hands-up Survey
- Appendix D: Family Take-home Survey
- Appendix E: Baseline Survey Heat Map.....



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 McGirr Elementary School (hereinafter: McGirr Elementary). 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 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.

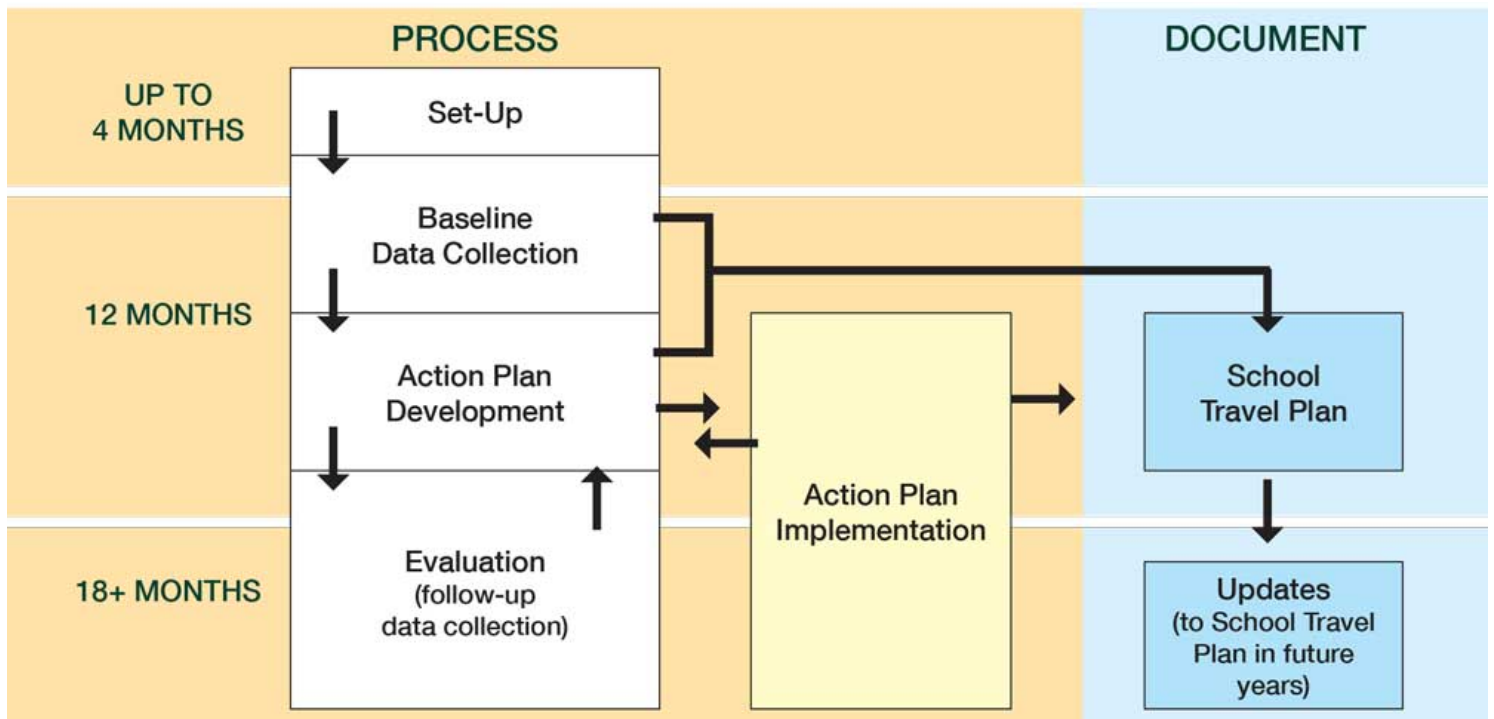
Key benefits of STP are:

- 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 McGirr Elementary 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

McGirr Elementary is a community school located at 6199 McGirr Rd. in North Nanaimo, a residential neighbourhood in the northern end of the City of Nanaimo.

404 students were enrolled at McGirr Elementary during the 2017/18 school year. This number is expected to increase to 455 in the 2018/19 school year when the school is set to receive 38 additional students who formerly attended nearby Rutherford elementary. None of the new students live further than 1km away from the school.

McGirr Elementary has an active and engaged Parent Advisory Committee (hereinafter: PAC). The PAC meets once a month, with approximately 4-10 parents regularly in attendance. Prior to the beginning of the STP process, the PAC had already been actively working on transportation issues in the school's catchment area.

McGirr Elementary's school building houses a StrongStart program on-site, which provides free drop-in programming for pre-K children and their families during the school year.

Catchment

McGirr Elementary is located on McGirr Rd., which it shares with two other popular community destinations, both of which are located within a few blocks of the school. The McGirr Sports Fields, a large outdoor multi-sport complex, lies just south of the school. Dover Bay Secondary School is situated south of the sports field and enrolls approximately 1400 students. In addition to the sports field, there are five parks within 500m of the school.

The North Nanaimo neighbourhood is one of the newest parts of the City. McGirr Elementary's catchment area is predominately residential, with a commercial area along its western edge. The housing stock in the area is composed primarily of single-family detached dwellings, though there are also a number of housing strata composed of multi-unit buildings and condominiums in the southwest corner of the school's catchment area. A fire hall is located within the catchment area.



▲ **McGirr Elementary catchment map**

Transportation

McGirr Elementary is located on the southwest corner of an intersection of two major roads: Dover Rd., a major/minor collector that runs east-west on the north side of the school; and McGirr Rd., a minor collector that runs north-south on the east side of the school. There are other major roads in the school's catchment area, including Uplands Dr., a major collector which runs north-south a few blocks west of the school; and Hammond Bay Rd., an arterial/major collector which runs east-west along the southern border of the school's catchment area. Dover Rd., Uplands Dr., and McGirr Rd. are all transit routes.

Most major roads in the McGirr Elementary catchment area feature sidewalks on at least one side, though many small roads do not. There are a number of off-street pedestrian paths scattered through the catchment area, many of which are located in or provide access to parks and green spaces.

Over the past few years, there have been several recent upgrades to active transportation facilities and traffic calming in the McGirr Elementary catchment area. These include expanded sidewalks,

enhanced crosswalks and bike lanes on Dover Rd.; curb extensions on McGirr Rd. through the school zone; and painted sharrows and “share the road” signs on McGirr Rd.

McGirr Elementary has a Walk Score of 42/100, 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

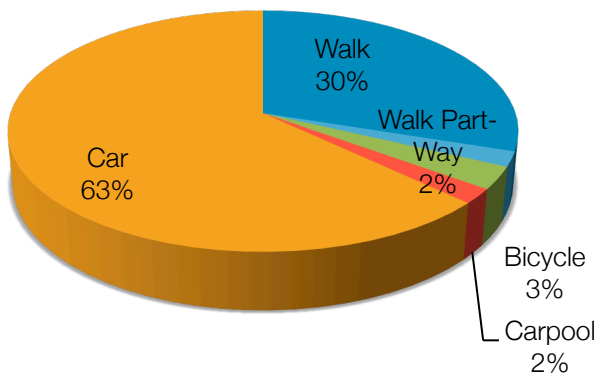
Baseline school travel data was collected through a variety of methods, including student hands-up surveys, family take-home surveys, a walkabout of the surrounding neighbourhood, and meetings with the school community.

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

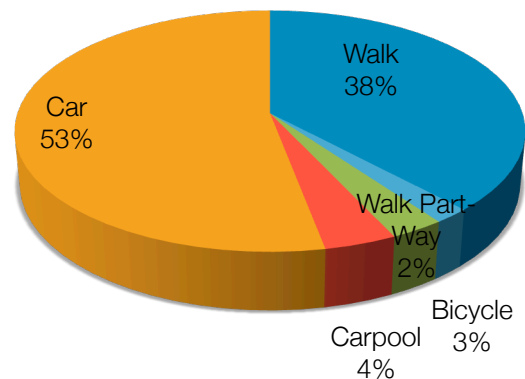
The neighbourhood walkabout at McGirr Elementary took place on Tuesday, March 13th, 2018. The walkabout was attended by administrators, parents, and members of the municipal Steering Committee. Participants observed the school’s travel patterns and toured the area to investigate and examine concerns. 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

15 divisions from grades K-7 participated in hands-up surveys at McGirr Elementary. 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 McGirr Elementary driven both to (65%) and from (57%) school, either as a single family (63%/53%) or as part of a carpool (2%/4%). A significant number walk to (30%) and from (38%) school, while a few students walk part-way (2%) or ride bicycles (3%).

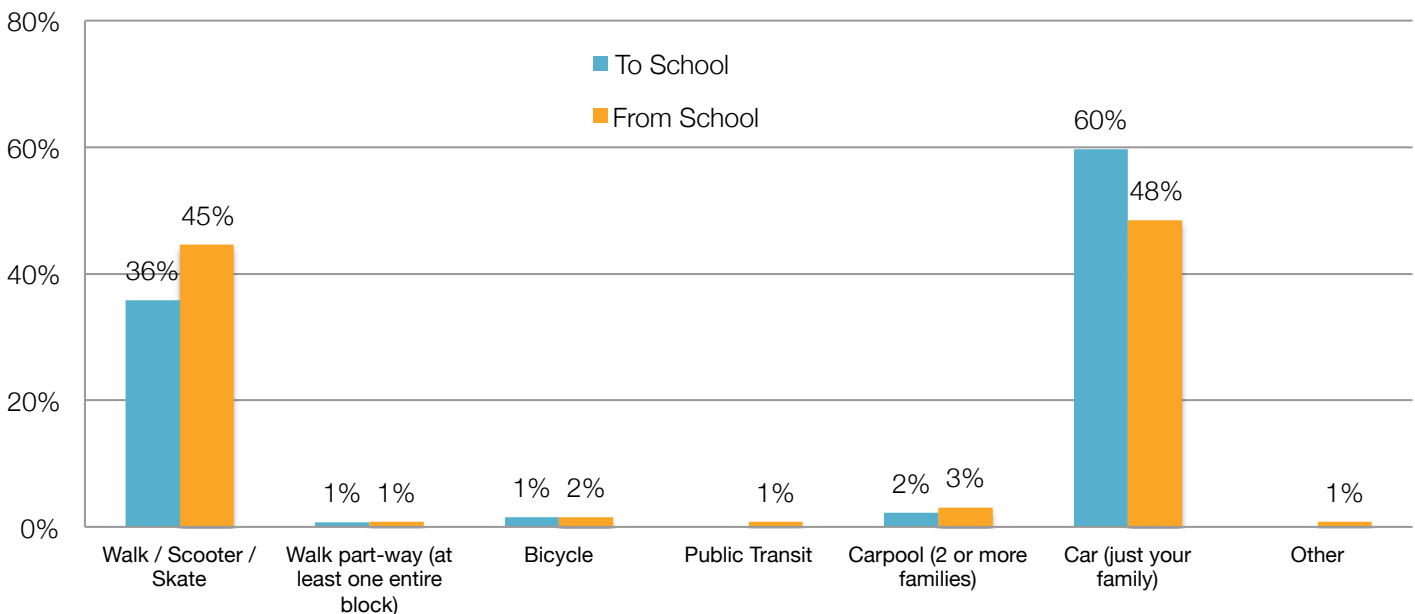
A copy of the baseline hands-up survey is attached to this document as Appendix C.

Family Survey Baseline Data

Family take-home surveys were sent home with each student at McGirr Elementary. 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.

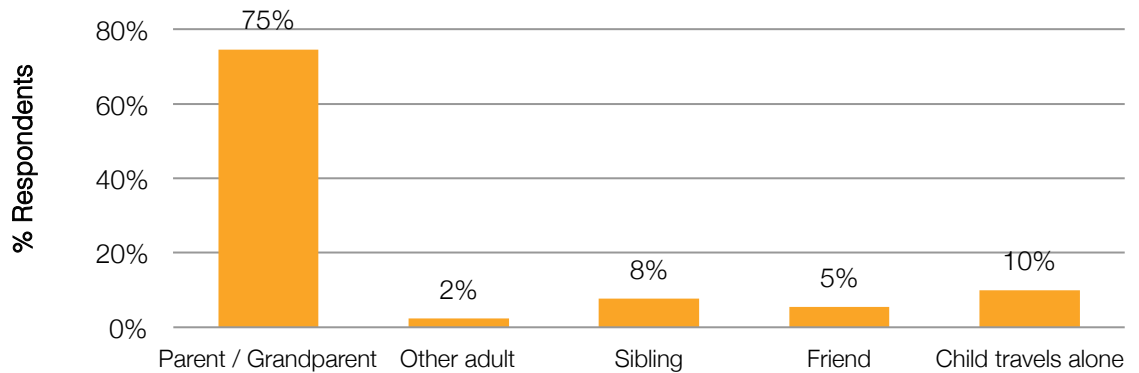
135 families representing 200 children completed the survey at McGirr Elementary, a return rate of 49%. The findings from this survey are presented below.

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



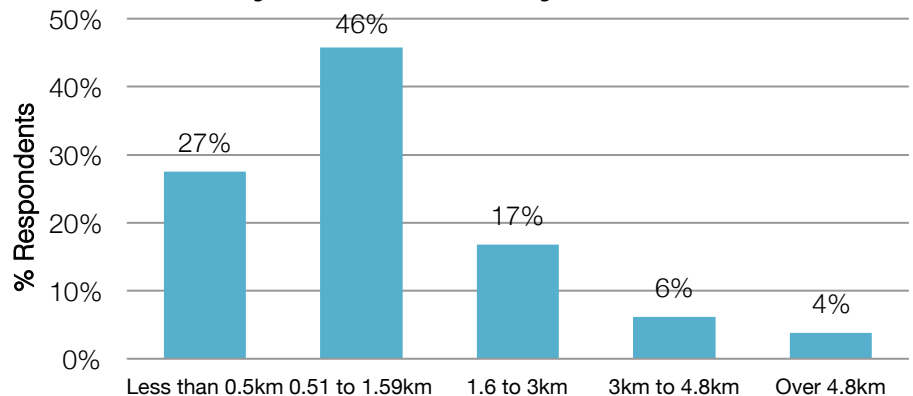
Mode share splits from the baseline family take-home survey show more walking and less driving than were recorded by the baseline hands-up survey.

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



The majority of students at McGirr Elementary travel to and from school accompanied by an adult (77%), mostly parents or grandparents (75%). 8% of students travel with siblings, 5% with friends, and 10% make the trip to and from school alone.

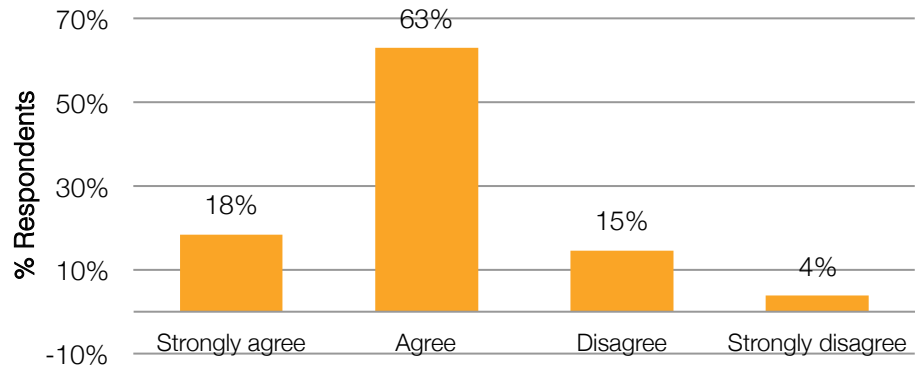
▼ **How far away from school do you live?**



The majority of students (73%) at McGirr Elementary live within 1.6km of the school, generally considered a walkable distance for elementary aged children. 17% of students live between 1.6 and 3km from the school, 6% live between 3km and 4.8km from the

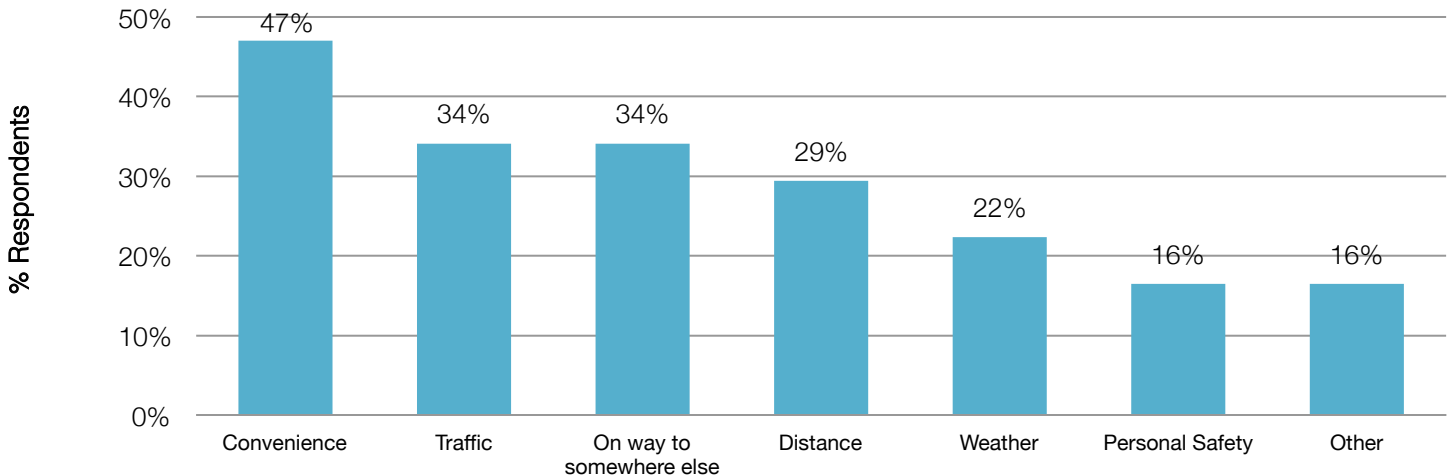
school, and 4% live more than 4.8km from the school, beyond the walking limit set out by the Nanaimo Ladysmith School District.

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

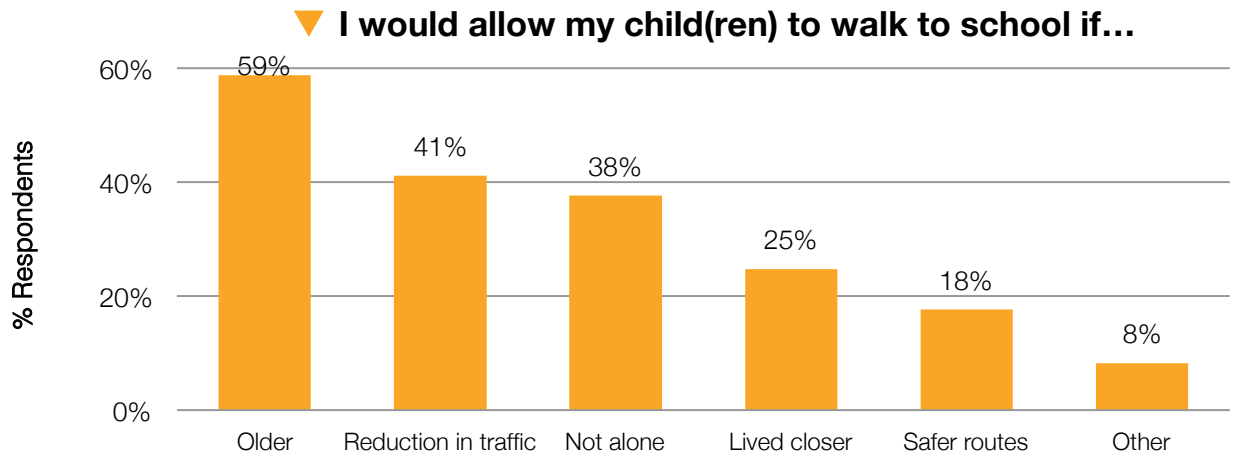


The majority of parents who responded to the survey either agreed (63%) or strongly agreed (18%) their neighbourhood was safe for children to walk to school. 15% disagreed with the statement, while 4% strongly disagreed.

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



When asked why they drive their children to school, parents at McGirr Elementary chose “convenience” 47% more often than any other available option. “Traffic” and being “on the way somewhere else” (34%) were other popular reasons given.

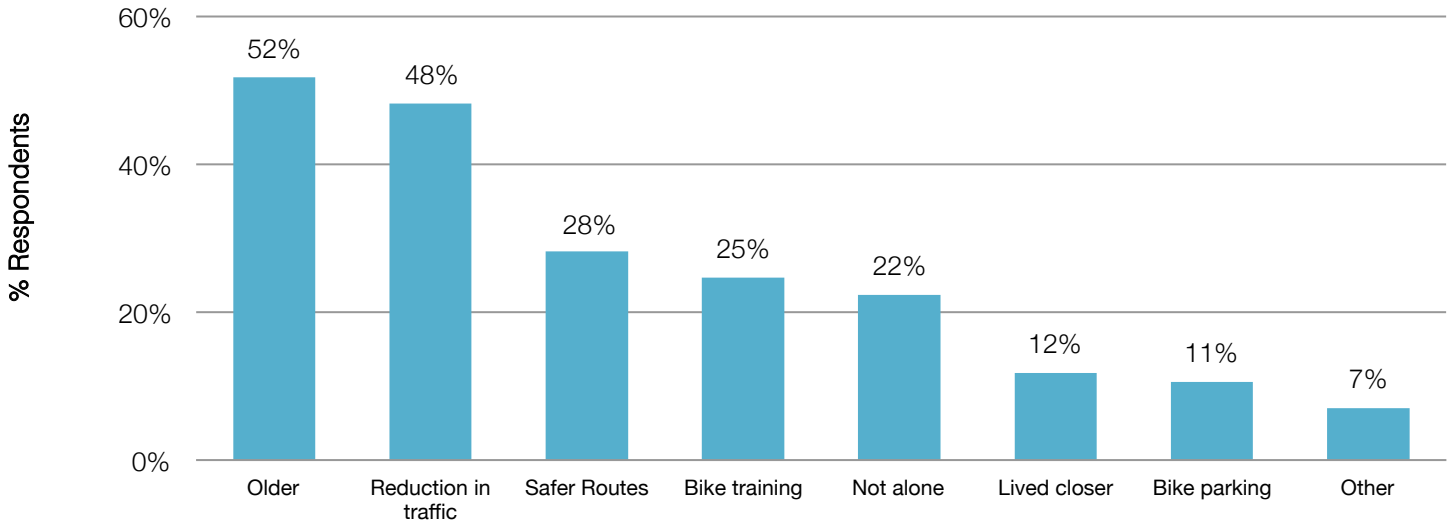


When asked under what conditions they would allow their children to walk to school, parents at McGirr Elementary chose “if they were older” (59%) more than any other available option.

Data collected through the baseline survey indicates that older students at McGirr Elementary do indeed walk to school more often than their younger peers: only 26% of students aged 5-7 years walk to school, while 32% of students aged 8-10 years and 51% of students aged 11-13 years do so.

“If there were reduced traffic (41%) and “if they were not alone” (38%) were also popular conditions under which parents suggested they would allow their child(ren) to walk to school.

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



When asked under what conditions they would allow their child(ren) to cycle to school, parents at McGirr Elementary chose “if they were older” (52%) more than any other available option.

However, data collected through the baseline survey indicates that older students at McGirr Elementary are no more likely to cycle school than their younger peers: according to their parents, 4% of students aged 4-6 years regularly cycle to school, while no students aged 7-9 years and only 2% of students aged 9-11 years do so.

“If there were reduced traffic” (48%) and “if there were safe routes” (28%) were also popular conditions under which parents suggested they would allow their child(ren) to cycle to school.

Transportation Walkabout

A walkabout was held at McGirr Elementary on Tuesday, March 13th at 8am. Parents came together with members of the School Travel Planning steering committee to review areas of concern and start developing solutions to overcome them.

Walkabout participants met in the main foyer of the school at 8am to introduce themselves and review the route they would take. During the walkabout, participants:

- Observed pedestrian activity and safety in front of the school.
- Observed pedestrian crossing conditions at the intersection of McGirr Rd. and Dover Rd., which sees high levels of pedestrian and vehicle traffic during the periods before and after school.
- Reviewed potential park-and-walk locations at McGirr Community Park and Groveland Park.
- Observed the new construction on Dover Rd. and the crossing facilities at the intersection of Dover Rd. and Invermere Rd.,

Following the walkabout, participants returned to the school to debrief their experiences and discuss potential solutions. After the discussion, a small group including McGirr Elementary’s STP Facilitator and a few parents walked south of the school to the intersection of McGirr Rd. and Mcrobb Ave./Sierra Wy. in order to observe pedestrian crossing and traffic safety conditions.



▲ The planned McGirr Elementary walkabout route

School travel challenges are the barriers to active travel faced by students, families, and staff at McGirr Elementary. 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 McGirr Elementary'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 McGirr Elementary.

1.

Traffic safety in the school zone

McGirr elementary is located on McGirr Rd., which it shares with two other popular community destinations: the McGirr sports fields, a large outdoor multi-sport complex; and Dover Bay Secondary, a public high school which enrolled 1401 students during the 2017/18 school year.

McGirr Rd. is a minor collector that runs north-south through the eastern end of the school's catchment area. It is a two-lane road, both of which are wide enough to allow parking without impeding traffic flow. There are sidewalks on both sides of the road, and the section adjacent to McGirr Elementary is a marked school zone with a reduced 30km/h speed limit. The curbs on both sides of McGirr Rd. have been extended in several places: at intersections; and near entrances to parking lots, driveways, and services roads.

Through the family take-home survey, parents expressed concerns about the impact of motor vehicles on the safety of students walking and cycling on McGirr Road. Concerns related to high vehicle speeds and traffic volumes, failure to yield to pedestrians at crosswalks, and driver inattention.



▲ Looking south through the intersection of McGirr Rd. and Mystic Wy.



▲ Crosswalks and curb extensions on McGirr Rd.

Parents have requested that the school zone and reduced speed limit be expanded south of its current limit to include the section of McGirr Rd. in front of the high school. The City has determined that neither this change nor additional traffic calming is warranted under current conditions, but has committed to continuing to review traffic safety conditions on McGirr Rd. moving forward.



▲ Dover Rd. in the spring of 2018

2.

Traffic safety on Dover Rd.

Dover Rd. is a collector road that runs east-west through the McGirr elementary catchment area. It is a two-lane road, both of which are wide enough to allow parking without impeding traffic flow. The section of Dover Rd. north of the school is a marked school zone with a reduced 30km/h speed limit.

In the family take-home survey, Dover Rd. drew more

attention than any other issue in the catchment. Parents raised concerns about vehicle speeds in the school zone, driver inattention, failure to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk, and the lack of sidewalk coverage on Dover Rd.

In particular, parents raised concerns about the lack of a sidewalk on the north side of Dover Rd. between Invermere Rd. and Blueback Rd. During the summer of 2018, the City of Nanaimo completed this section of sidewalk as part of comprehensive active transportation upgrades to Dover Rd. More information about these upgrades can be found in the implementation section of this document.

3. Pedestrian crossing safety at the intersection of Dover Rd. and Blueback Rd./Uplands Dr.

Through the family take-home survey, parents raised concerns about the safety of pedestrians crossing at the intersection of Dover Rd. and Blueback Rd./Uplands Dr.



▲ Looking west through the intersection of Dover Rd. and Blueback Rd./Uplands Dr.



▲ Looking south through the intersection of Dover Rd. and Blueback Rd./Uplands Dr.

The intersection features a four-way stop and painted crosswalk lines. However, curb return radii on all quadrants are large, and three road-segments feature turning lanes, extending the distance and time that pedestrians must spend in the roadway while crossing, reducing their visibility to drivers.

Through the family take-home survey, parents noted that drivers often fail to notice or yield to pedestrians, both waiting to cross and in the intersection. Parents noted that the intersection is often busy and confusing during the period before school.

Over the course of the STP process at McGirr Elementary, 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 McGirr Elementary are detailed in the section below. Interventions identified that have yet to be undertaken can be found in McGirr Elementary's School Travel Action Plan (Appendix A).

Education and Engagement

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 kids 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 4 locations in the McGirr Elementary catchment area. The locations were selected for their proximity to the school, the access they provide to popular and safe walking routes, and the availability of parking.

On June 20th, 2018, the McGirr Elementary PAC hosted a meet-up at the Drive to Five Plus location at Groveland Park, north of the school. Eighteen families attended the meet-up event: children played in the park and parents chatted until everyone had arrived, and then proceeded to school on foot as a group.

Best Route to School Maps

A Best Routes to School Map (Appendix B) was developed for McGirr Elementary based on information from the family take-home surveys, the walkabout, and consultation with the school community as well as other stakeholders. The map shows the best existing walking and cycling routes to school through the McGirr Elementary catchment and should be updated as infrastructure changes and improves.



▲ Best Route to School Map for McGirr Elementary

Pop-up Infrastructure

During the STP process, many of the transportation safety-related concerns voiced by parents at McGirr Elementary focussed the safety of pedestrian crossing major roads near the school. McGirr Elementary's STP Facilitator worked with City of Nanaimo staff to develop pop-up infrastructure installations to explore the impact that improving pedestrian facilities in the school zone have on the transportation activities and experiences of the school community.

On June 20th, 2018, 2 pieces of temporary pop-up infrastructure were installed near McGirr Elementary:

- At the intersection of Dover Rd. and Invermere Rd. flashing beacons were installed at the north-south crosswalk to simulate an upgrade to the crosswalk.



▲ Flashing beacons at the crosswalk on Dover Rd.

- At the intersection of McGirr Rd. and Sierra Wy. signs and traffic cones were placed on the median of McGirr Rd. to prevent left hand turns in order to explore whether doing so would reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.



▲ Signs and traffic cones on McGirr Rd.

Engineering

In 2018, the City of Nanaimo invested in major upgrades to Dover Rd., a major/minor collector that runs east-west on the north side of the school. Changes include new sidewalks between Blueback Rd. and Invermere Rd., on-street bike lanes, and curb extensions at north-south crosswalks near the school.



▲ New curb extensions and pedestrian beacons on Dover Rd.



▲ New curb extensions and pedestrian beacons on Dover Rd.



▲ New section of sidewalk on Dover Rd.



▲ New on-street bikes lanes on Dover Rd.

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). 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 McGirr Elementary 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: Gregg Halfyard

PAC Chair: Leanne Lee

Parent: Jason Minter

Parent: Erin Warner

Parent: Rebekah Kirk

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

Appendix B: Best Routes to School Map

Appendix C: Hands-up Survey

Appendix D: Family Take-home Survey

Appendix E: Baseline Survey Heat Map