

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

YEAR 2

2022-2023



Birch Cliff Public School



**School Travel Plan for
Birch Cliff Public School, Toronto District School Board**

Green Communities Canada, July 2023
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- Staff, students and families of Birch Cliff Public School
- Toronto District School Board staff
- City of Toronto Transportation Services staff
- The Office of Councillor Gary Crawford

The School Traffic Safety Program is delivered by Green Communities Canada (GCC) on behalf of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

Traffic Safety Program Committee Members

School Community

Heather Cairns – Principal

Dilo Selliah – Vice Principal

Laura Calce – Teacher

Richard Karnjec – Teacher/Street Duty Volunteer

Kerry Cotton – School Council Chair & Parent

Marvin Macaraig – Parent/ Health Promoter and Scarborough Cycles Coordinator

Glenn Kremp – Parent

Jason Leaver – Parent

Paula Schulze – Parent

Natalie Reid Paananen – Parent

Dave Sharpe – Parent

Thomas Hugh Nelson – Parent

Shawn Milley – Parent

Scarborough Day Nursery

Lisa Dundas – Centre Supervisor

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Parthi Kandavel – Former School Board Trustee (2021-2022)

Malika Ghous – School Board Trustee (2022-present)

Green Communities Canada (GCC)

Sabat Ismail – Traffic Safety Program Facilitator

City Councillor's Office

Gary Crawford – City Councillor (Ward 20)

Kirstin Campbell – City Councillor's Office (Ward 20)

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Introduction

School Travel Planning at Birch Cliff Public School

Birch Cliff Public School was invited to participate in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Traffic Safety Program in the **2022-2023** school year, delivered by Green Communities Canada on behalf of the TDSB.

This program includes one year of intensive support from a Facilitator, including evaluation, action planning and reporting, and coordination of a Traffic Safety Committee. This is followed by a year of “as needed” support from a Facilitator once the school has taken over leadership of the program.

Staff and caregivers at our school worked with a variety of stakeholders to contribute to the development of this School Travel Plan document. We are working together to:

- Increase the number of students regularly using active modes of transportation to and from school;
- Increase school bus ridership among students who are eligible to be transported by school bus; and
- Decrease traffic congestion and traffic-related safety concerns at the school and along routes to school.

Achieving these goals is no simple matter. It requires a shift in how we think about our current travel behaviours and multiple community stakeholders working together.

School Travel Planning in the Toronto District School Board

Compared to previous generations, fewer students in Toronto are walking and cycling to school and more are being driven. This increased dependency on cars to get to and from school is associated with rising environmental, health and safety concerns. Recognizing the benefits of active transportation to students and the environment, in 2013, the TDSB’s Board of Trustees approved a **Charter for Active, Safe and Sustainable Transportation**¹, committing to supporting active transportation more fully in TDSB schools.

¹ See <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Innovation/Active-Transportation-Charter>

The School Travel Planning Process

School Travel Planning (STP) is a community-based model for supporting active school travel.

To ensure a comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable approach to getting students walking, wheeling and traveling by other sustainable modes, active school travel programs are most effective when they address all of the 'Five E's':

- **Education**
- **Encouragement**
- **Engineering**
- **Enforcement**
- **Evaluation**

Through STP, school and community stakeholders collaborate to create and implement school-level action plans that use the Five E's to:

- address on-going transportation and traffic safety problems; and
- increase the number of students using active and sustainable modes for all or part of the journey to school.

Further details pertaining to the School Travel Planning process can be found in the Canadian School Travel Planning Toolkit and in the School Travel Planning Guide for Facilitators², maintained by Green Communities Canada.

Key Document 1 is the Action Plan for this school.

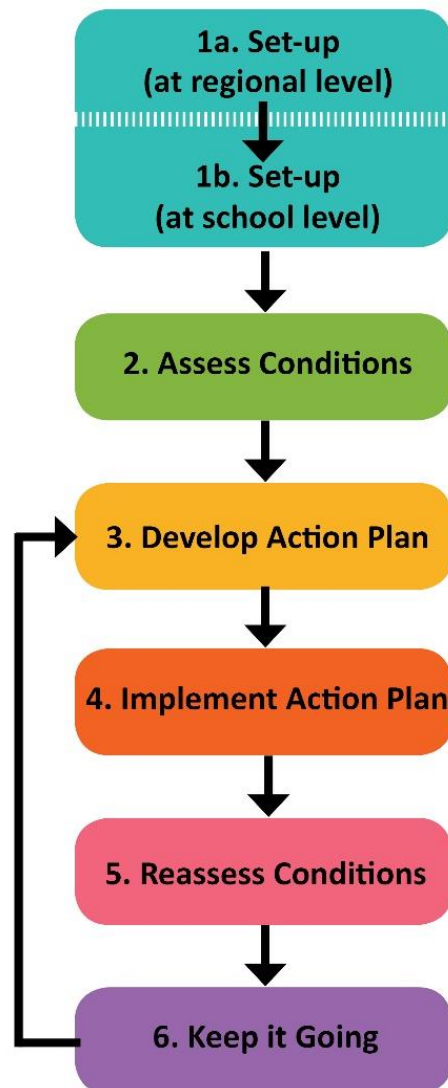


Figure 1: STP Process (Source: School Travel Planning Guide for Facilitators, 2018)²

² Available at <https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/>.

Vision and Goals

Our vision is:

“Enhancing student traffic safety and rates of active student travel. Decreasing congestion around the school site, improving visibility for students, and local drivers adhering to stop signs and speed limits.”

Our goals are:



To **increase the rates of walking or wheeling to school** for students living within the “walk zone” (i.e. within 1.6 km of the school).





To **increase the rates of taking the school bus** for students living within the “bus zone” (i.e. those eligible for transportation by school bus).



To **reduce traffic congestion and safety concerns** at the school and along routes to school.

Birch Cliff Public School Travel Profile

Total number of students (October 2021)		451
	“Walk Zone” students (i.e. students living within 1.6 km of the school) <i>Based on data from Toronto Student Transportation Group.</i>	78.8%
	“Bus Zone” students (i.e. students eligible for transportation by school bus) <i>Based on data from Toronto Student Transportation Group.</i>	2.3%

Notes: Figures are estimated based on available data. Some students may live outside the “Walk Zone” and “Bus Zone”.

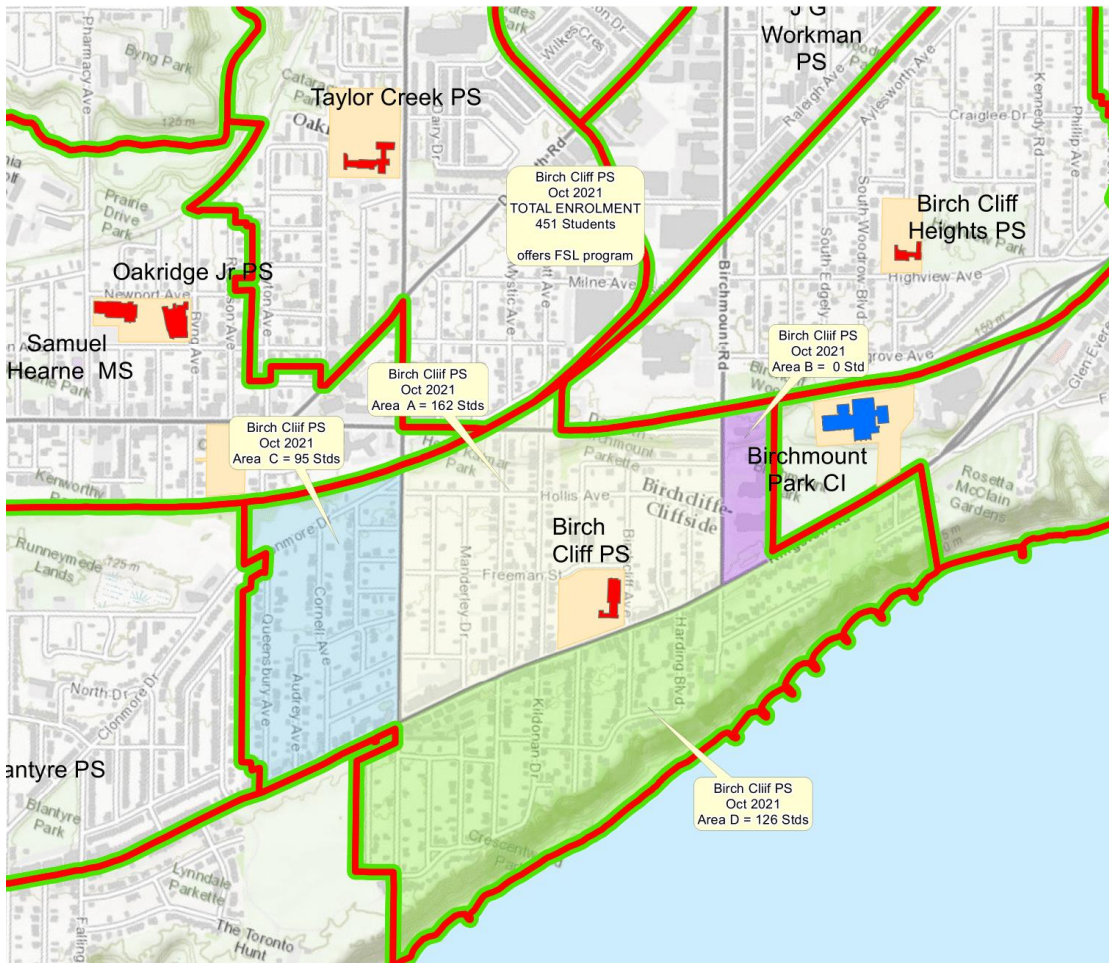


Figure 2. Map of School Catchment (Source: TDSB Strategy and Planning, based on statistics from October 2021.)

Other Key Information

Grades: JK-08

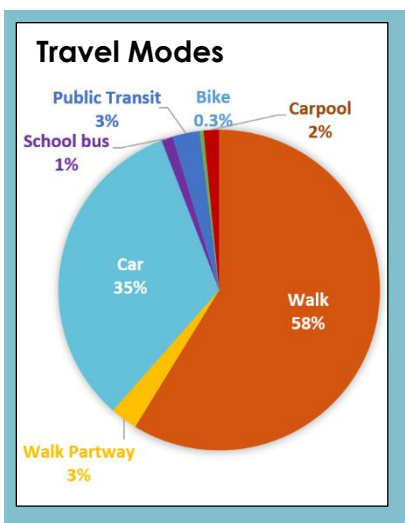
Number of School Buses that serve the school site daily: 2

How We Get to School

Key findings based on the Student Travel Survey results

Travel Mode Share (Average % of students)

Baseline Spring 2021	School Travel Modes for Birch Cliff PS	Bike	Walk	Walk Partway	Roll	School Bus	Public Transit	Car-pooling	Car
	To School	0.3%	56%	3%	0.3%	1%	2%	2%	36%
	From School	0.3%	59%	3%	0%	1%	3%	1%	33%



Estimated # of cars on site each morning

60*

The less cars come to the school, the safer it will be for everybody. It's better for our air quality, too.

*Does not include staff cars. Based on 36% of 96 students travelling by car, assuming an average of 1.5 students/car

Can more students walk to school?

Yes!

78.8% of students at our school live within the "walk zone" of 1.6km.

In this survey, only 59% of students report walking to school. There is an **opportunity gap** here!

Can more students take the school bus?

Yes!

2.3% of students at our school live within the "bus zone".

Only 1% of students reported taking a bus to school. Let's promote taking the school bus!

Notes on the Findings

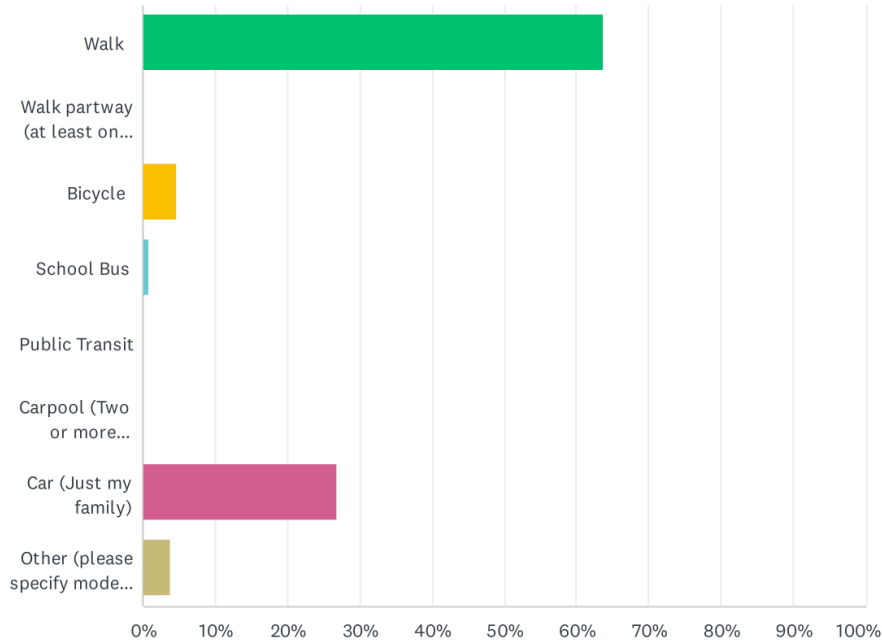
- The findings are from the week of March 28th 2022.
- This data does not account for absentees and students who didn't participate in the survey.
- Travel modes may differ at different times of the year. This represents a sample taken in early spring weather.
- Travel modes may differ in the after-school travel period.
- Proportion of students who participated in this survey: 66%
 - Calculated based on 267 participants per day, on average, over 5 days/451 total student population.

Why We Travel the Way We Do

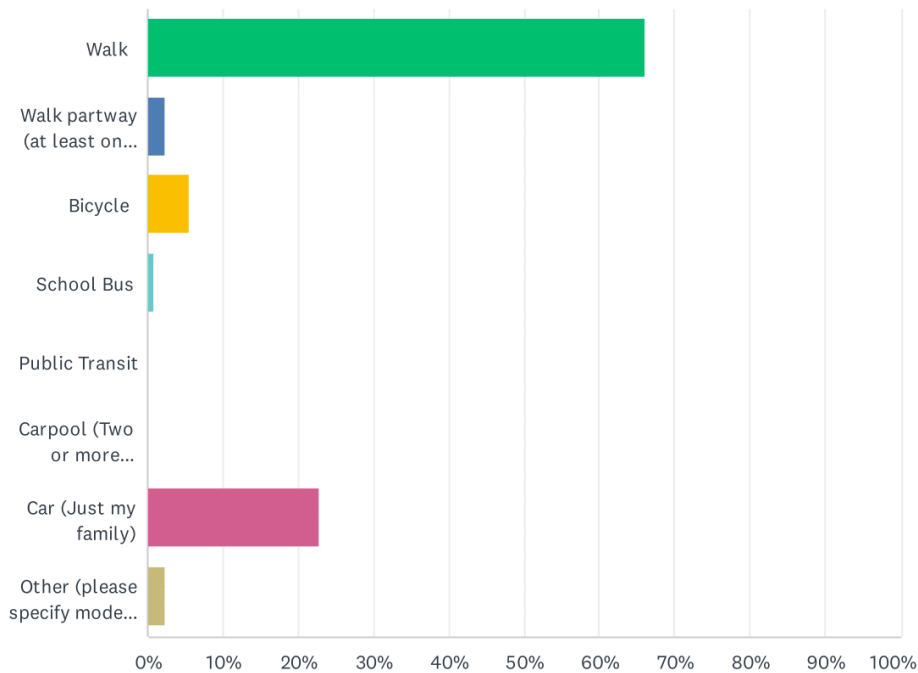
Key findings based on the Family Survey results

Total Respondents for Family Survey: 127

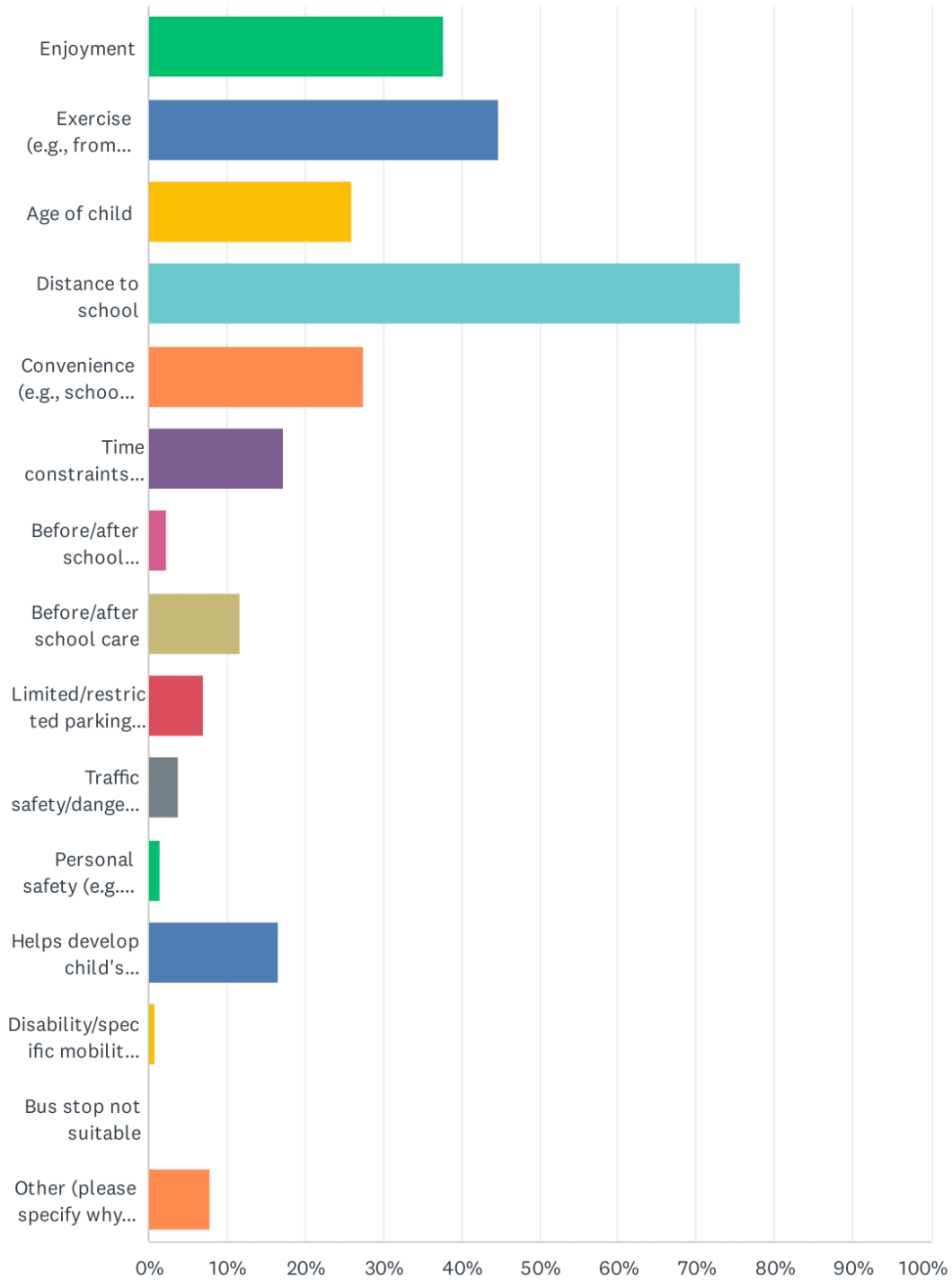
How does your child usually travel to school? (Answered 127, Skipped 0)



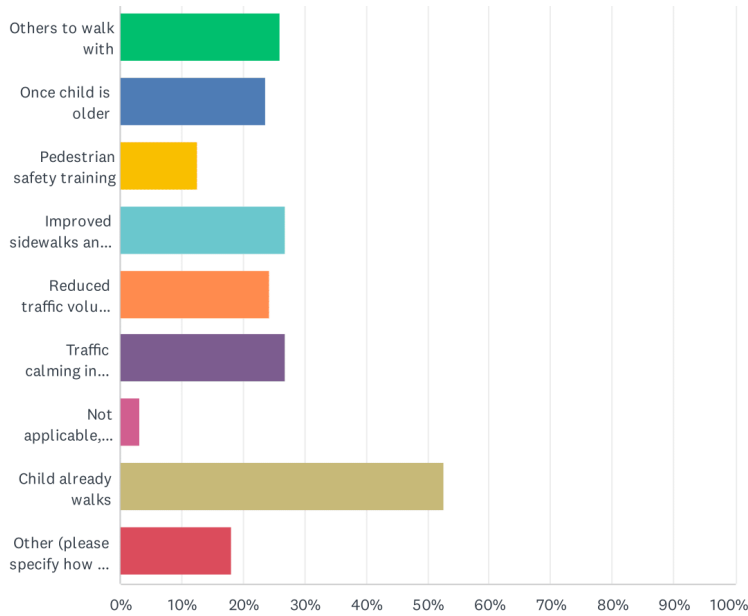
How does your child usually home from school? (Answered 127, Skipped 0)



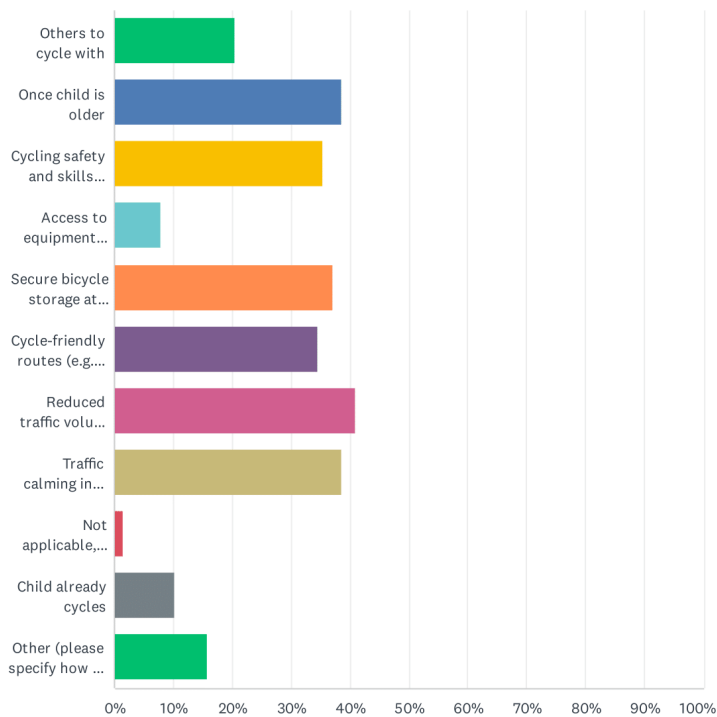
Why does your child usually travel to school in this way? (Answered 127, Skipped 0)



Which of the following would encourage your child to walk to/from school? (Answered 127, Skipped 0)

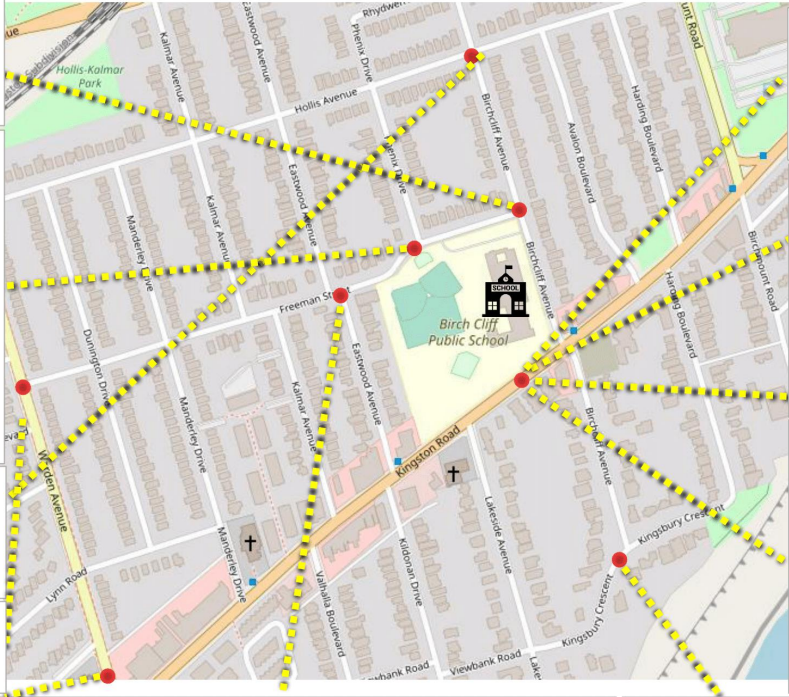


Which of the following would encourage your child to cycle to/from school? (Answered 127, Skipped 0)



Summary of Travel Challenges

The page summarizes the current locations of concern for traffic safety and travel challenges within the school community identified through the Family Survey, Walkabout, and discussions as part of our Traffic Safety Program committee meetings.



<p>Birchcliff Ave. and Freeman St.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interest in a three-way stop/crosswalk at the intersection or a crossing guard was expressed. -Frequent jaywalking because all-way crossings are not nearby. 	<p>Speeding on Kingston Rd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Speeding cars and trucks traveling over Kingston Road's 40 km speed limit noted as a concern on Kingston Road -Need better speed and safety enforcement on Kingston Rd.
<p>Freeman St.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Speeding vehicles failing to stop at stop signs on Freeman St. between Dunington Dr. and Birchcliff Ave. was highlighted as a critical concern. -Many cars parked, obscuring the visibility of pedestrians between Kalmar Ave. and Birchcliff Ave. -One respondent recommended that Freeman Avenue from Birchcliff Avenue to Eastwood Avenue become pedestrian only during school hours. -Additionally, vehicles have been observed pulling out of parking locations without looking, cars parked right up to stop signs. 	<p>Kingston Rd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It was described that there are more low-volume walking/cycling routes to school east of Warden, and less west, leaving many to walk along Kingston Rd. or Clonmore Rd., limiting safe routes to school -The area of the street in front of the school was also describes as too narrow for the volume of traffic.
<p>Birchcliff Ave. and Hollis Ave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondents described that vehicles speed along Hollis Ave. -Additionally, many vehicles frequently fail to make a complete stop at Birchcliff Ave and Hollis Ave. 	<p>Enforcement on Kingston Rd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It was recommended that there needs to be better speed and safety enforcement on Kingston Rd. -It was noted that as of spring 2022, there is a red light camera at Warden Ave. and Kingston Rd. that applies to north and southbound traffic, though it's effectiveness is limited because the primary area of concern is east and westbound traffic along Kingston Rd.
<p>Warden Ave. and Freeman St.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Speeding vehicles and vehicles parked onto the intersection obscuring sightlines underscored as a concern. 	<p>Freeman St. and Eastwood Ave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A concerning intersection for pedestrians, particularly in the morning. -An "awkward"/non-standard intersection for crossing and for pedestrian visibility. -The school bus outside the daycare usually limits visibility, -There are many cars search for parking, but there is limited parking available.
<p>Warden Ave. and Kingston Rd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interest in a 3-way stop/crosswalk at the intersection or a crossing guard. -Frequent jaywalking, because all-way crossings are not in close proximity. 	<p>Kingsbury Cres.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Along Kingsbury Cres. between Lakeside Ave. and Birchcliff Ave., construction has prevented access to the sidewalk, while vehicles have frequented that intersection, presenting safety concerns for pedestrians walking to school.

Additional School Travel Challenges

Respondents also mentioned how safety concerns in this neighbourhood relate to driver speeds, illegal parking and cars failing to stop at stop signs, which were emphasized as crucial ongoing traffic safety concerns. Drop-off and pick-up surrounding the school were described as geared toward motor vehicles.

It was underscored that traffic calming should be implemented around the school to reduce speeds and increase visibility for pedestrians and cars. Safety concerns were noted as impediments to independent student active travel. Some respondents emphasized how inattentive driver behaviour and the prevalence of drivers frequently parking as close to the school as possible to complete drop-off and pick-up. In addition, it was emphasized how there is a significant amount of contention, and a divide between different mode users noted.

Taking Action

Key Focus Areas

Overarching goals of this program are:

- To increase the rates of walking or wheeling to school for students living within the “walk zone”.
- To increase the rates of taking the school bus for students living within the “bus zone”.
- To reduce traffic congestion and traffic-related safety hazards at the school and along routes to school.

The highest priorities at this school are:

- Continue organizing the school biking bus to encourage students to become comfortable and familiar with biking to school.
- The installation of a zebra crossing and stop signs at Phenix Avenue and Freeman Street in the summer of 2023.
- The placement of more crossing guards around the school, particularly at Phenix Avenue and Freeman Street.
- Speed bump installation on Freeman Street.

Secondary focus areas include:

- Reducing the speed limit on Freeman Street.
- Encourage and promote safer crossing with students and parents related to mid-block crossing on Kingston Road and Freeman Street.
- Working with the city to support enhanced student safety on Warden Avenue following the city’s major road resurfacing in 2024; it will be pursued if Freeman Street and Warden Avenue may be a candidate for Local Geometric Safety Improvements, including a curb bump out/curb radius extension.

To ensure a comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable approach to addressing our overarching program goals and priority focus areas for this school, our Traffic Safety Program addresses all of the ‘Five E’s’ of the School Travel Planning process:

- **Education**
Teaching skills and raising awareness about the benefits of walking and wheeling to school.
- **Encouragement**
Creating excitement and shifting norms around how we get to school.
- **Engineering**
Improving infrastructure to support walking and wheeling to school.
- **Enforcement**
Monitoring traffic and enforcing the rules of drop-off and pick-up.
- **Evaluation**
Assessing conditions and monitoring progress toward school travel goals.

The Action Plan (see Key Document 1) for Birch Cliff Public School was developed using data collected through this program, discussions at our committee meetings, and drawing on ideas and best practices from other schools across Toronto and beyond.

Ongoing Action Items

There are a number of Action Items that are intended to be conducted on an annual or ongoing basis. These include:

Evaluation:



Student Travel Surveys to be conducted annually or biannually (October and/or May).

Education and Encouragement:



“Routes to School Planner” map (Key Document 2) and “Drop-off and Pick-up Planner” map (Key Document 3) to be reviewed by committee members and shared with families on an annual basis. To update the maps, email standardsandcompliance@tdsb.on.ca.



Two or more Active School Travel Promotion Events (e.g. International Walk to School Day in October, Winter Walk Day in February, Spring into Spring in April/May and Bike to School Week in May/June) to be celebrated annually.



Other outreach activities as outlined in the Action Plan document (Key Document 1) to be done on an ongoing basis.

Next Steps

Beyond the 2022/2023 school year, the TDSB Traffic Safety Program has concluded at the school, and it is expected that the school will assume leadership in engaging the school community around traffic safety. The following steps will help ensure a successful program moving forward. Ongoing initiatives the school can continue to support traffic safety moving forward include the following:

1. Refer to and update the Action Plan regularly to track progress

- The Action Plan (see Key Document 1) is a “living” document, and is intended to be used as a central point of reference for action items. Items should be crossed off as they are completed, and new items added as they are identified.
- Ongoing action items, such as the Student Travel Survey and active school travel promotion events, should be continued annually, biannually, or as appropriate.

2. Refer to and update the list of committee members and other key contacts as needed

- Remember to include those who have been involved already.
- Names of committee members and other key contacts are listed in this document. This list should be updated as contacts change.

3. Use the Information and Resources already collected to guide your work

- It is recommended that this school set up a Google drive folder to store key documents and resources developed as part of this process. This central storage point for program materials should be kept up to date as new resources become available, and access shared with new committee members.

4. Remember to make it fun and welcoming for committee members

- Always look for ways to keep this work engaging and interesting for those involved, especially teachers, caregivers and students. They are the ones who can drive on the ground change in attitudes toward active and safe school travel behaviours.
- Invite new community members to keep the initiative fresh over time, and to relieve/replace members who may be ready to move on to new endeavours.
- Think about how to involve members of your school community who may be underrepresented. Key issues and barriers to active and safe school travel may be overlooked if your committee doesn't represent the diversity of your school community.

List of Additional Key Documents

All of these documents have been shared via email with school administration as part of the program. It is recommended that a Google drive folder, or alternative, is set up by the school as a way to centrally store all files related to this work.

1. Action Plan

This file, available in both Word and PDF formats, is a detailed list of action items, broken down by the 5Es (i.e. Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation), with notes about suggested timing, who is/should be responsible, and progress to date.

2. Routes to School Planner

This 2-page PDF file includes a map of the school neighbourhood, showing approximate walking and wheeling times to school, locations of crossing guards, and other key information for families to plan their routes to school. It also includes tips for safely getting to school by active modes. It is intended to be shared as a planning tool for families, and may also be adapted for use in the classroom.

3. Drop-off and Pick-up Planner

This 2-page PDF file includes a map of the school site with locations of drop-off and pick-up areas, and tips and rules for safe drop-off and pick-up by car. It is intended to be shared as a planning tool for families and may also be useful for school administration when planning for updates to drop-off and pick-up procedures.

4. Program Letter of Agreement

This PDF file describes the TDSB Traffic Safety Program, including details of what support the school will receive and what support the school is expected to provide as a participant in this program.

5. Traffic Observation and Walkabout Report

This file, available in both Word and PDF is a report based on the traffic observation and neighbourhood walk carried out by our Traffic Safety Committee in spring 2022. It includes notes on dangerous driver and pedestrian activities observed during the after-school pick-up period, and notes on areas for improvement in the neighbourhood along key routes to school.