

# Active Travel to School Toolkit

Active, safe, healthy schools



# Contents

1. Why active schools?
2. Identifying champions
3. Educating parents and carers
4. Practical first steps
5. Picking safe routes
6. The school environment
7. Managing traffic
8. Activities

# Why active schools?

## Benefits for your school

- Children arrive energised, refreshed and alert.
- Active travel establishes healthy practices for good long-term health outcomes, for students and parents too.
- Builds a strong school community amongst students and parents.
- Fewer traffic movements close to school means less risk to children.
- A cleaner, greener and more pleasant school with less environmental impact.

# Identifying champions and leaders

## Staff, students or community members

- Building an environment that supports active travel takes leadership. Identifying a champion within the school community is an important first step.
- A champion could be a staff member, parent, from a bike user group, a representative from the local community, educator, or more.
- Having a student group engaged in the process is vital, as they will help promote the benefits of active travel amongst their peers and make the student body feel more invested in the initiative.
- They could be student council members, prefects, or consider setting up a specific active travel group of interested students.

# Education

## For parents and carers

- Ultimately, it is the parents and carers who are the decision makers around school travel, and so engaging them in the process of developing an active travel community is important.
- Parents can play a role in surveying appropriate routes for riding, walking or scooting to school, organising active travel events, leading 'bike buses' and more.



# Education

## Continued

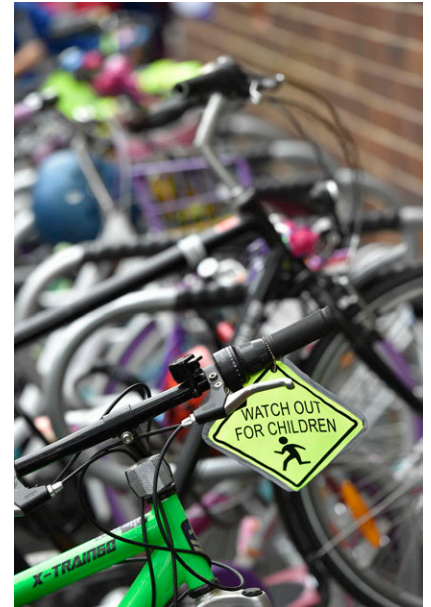
- Not all parents will be supportive, and many may come with preconceived ideas of safety and practicality. It's important to have a clear rationale for the development of an active travel community and information prepared in response to their concerns.
- This may include making them aware of the benefits to the school community and to them personally, some of which may be less obvious, such as reduced costs with less car travel, potential time and stress savings of active travel versus car travel etc.



# First steps

## Mapping and surveying

- Ensure the school leadership – this may include staff and P&C groups - are supportive of establishing an active travel culture, understand the benefits, and the steps that will be needed to implement change.
- Plot student's homes on a map. Not all students will live within a distance suitable for active travel, but alternative options such making part of the journey by car and the remainder on foot might exist.



# First steps

## Continued

- Survey parents and students to form a clear picture of existing travel patterns. A survey might be formal, such as take-home form to be filled in for a week, or an informal 'hands up' classroom survey. You may identify opportunities straight away for developing active travel 'buddies' or options for students and families who live close to each other to travel by bike or walk together.
- Chat with families who already ride, walk or scoot to school to learn more about the routes they take and why.
- Plot out some routes that are suitable and safe, ideally looking for routes that are close to as many student's houses as possible.





# Picking suitable routes

## What to look for

- Route finding can be a big barrier to overcome for busy families. Time is precious, and not having the time to invest in finding the safest route can see families opt for the default of driving rather than exploring active travel options.
- When identifying for suitable routes, remember that the direct route is rarely the best. The way you drive to school is unlikely to be the best option for walking or riding.
- Look for existing infrastructure - such as cycleways or shared paths - map out streets which have wider footpaths, lower traffic volumes and slower speeds. The City of Sydney cycling map can help you plan safe routes – you can order copies for free. Identify safe crossing points and avoid streets with a heavy concentration of busy driveways crossing the footpath.

# The school environment

## Making your school conducive to active travel

- When it comes to supporting active travel, the immediate school environment has a huge bearing given the density of people movements close to the school itself. Some key considerations:
  - Vehicle parking and drop-off points should be kept separate from active travel routes, with priority for access given to active travel.
  - Ensure footpaths are kept free of any obstructions to give us much space as possible for people walking and riding to pass each other. This may include encouraging parents to socialise in other areas away from school gates.



# The school environment

## Continued

- Install bike parking within school grounds, close to entrances, in areas where it will be secure.
- Pedestrian crossings should be located as close as possible to the school entrance, on direct walking routes.
- Consider activating additional school entrances, if this helps create more direct routes for walking and riding.



# Traffic management

## Reducing traffic movements near school

- Traffic congestion and speeds around schools is one of the major impediments to creating an active travel friendly school. Improve safety for active travellers by shifting parking locations and drop-off points away from school entrances and promoting park-and-walk options.
- Ask your council to implement parking restrictions, including no stopping zones adjacent to school entrances.
- Shift kiss-and-drop locations away from active travel routes and the school entrances used by students walking and riding.
- Promote park-and-walk options. Ideally these should be located between 500m and 1km from the school, allowing a mix of vehicle and active transport, helping kids meet some of the daily physical activity needs.

# Activities and events

## Engaging the school community

- Build involvement in active travel with fun and engaging activities and events.
- Get involved in the annual National Ride2School Day.
- Set up a 'bike bus' or 'walking bus' service, where a parent/carer or other adult rides/walks to school along a safe route, picking up students and parents along the way at designated stops.



# Activities and events

## Continued

- Run bike skills and safety days, or education days, with on-site education from visiting experts.
- A rewards or recognition scheme for kids and parents who ride, walk or scoot to school regularly.



# Actions

1. Identify champion/s from within the school community
2. Educate the parents and carers about the benefits and the role they can play
3. Survey families to learn more about their current travel behaviours
4. Map out safe routes and identify opportunities for buddy travel or other safety measures
5. Consider changes to the immediate school environment to support active travel
6. Implement traffic changes to reduce vehicle movements close to the school
7. Use events or other ongoing programs to involve the student population and create a fun culture of active travel

For more information, resources and advice  
visit:

[cycleways.sydney](https://cycleways.sydney)

