




CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Transportation Planning and Parking Division

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	July 12, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	School Site Design Guidelines for Active and Sustainable Transportation (PED23158) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Brian Hollingworth Director, Transportation Planning and Parking Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

That the School Site Design Guidelines for Active and Sustainable Transportation attached as Appendix "A" to Report PED23158 be endorsed to inform the planning and design of new and existing school sites.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Site Design Guidelines for Active and Sustainable Transportation are intended to help stakeholders develop communities that foster active travel and sustainable travel to school through site design, neighbourhood design, and supportive policies, programs and resources. The strategies in this guide apply to elementary and secondary schools, existing and new schools, and urban and suburban contexts.

The guidelines operationalize many Hamilton Active and Sustainable School Travel Charter principles, a long-term commitment between the City and school boards to provide support, resources, and training toward Active and Sustainable School Travel. The Charter recognizes the role that the built form and stakeholder collaboration and partnerships must create a culture supportive of active and sustainable travel.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

The guidelines are part of the City's broader Active and Sustainable School Travel program. The guidelines result from several local workshops and forums around healthy community and school planning with the English Public and Catholic School Boards, and community stakeholders.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: None

Staffing: None

Legal: None

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Active and Sustainable School Travel program has been delivered as a joint effort between Transportation Planning and Public Health for nearly 20 years. The program has provided programs including school travel planning, special events, parent and student engagement activities, and school street events. It has also supported policy changes to make it safer and more accessible for students to get around. The program aims to increase the number of students who use active and sustainable modes (i.e. walking, cycling, and local transit) to get to school, to counteract the decline that has taken place over the last three decades.

In 2015, the City signed Active and Sustainable School Travel charters with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. Through the Charter, the parties jointly recognize that “changing school travel now will influence the mode choice of future generations towards an active and sustainable community.” These guidelines directly support the five principles of the Charter:

- Street design for comfort, convenience, and safety for all users;
- Supportive land use and site planning;
- Personal and community safety;
- Partnership, collaboration, and shared responsibility; and,
- A culture of active and sustainable transportation.

The development of the guidelines was funded through a grant received from the Ontario Active School Travel Fund.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Should Council approve this Report, staff, within Transportation Planning that review development applications, will apply the guidelines in the planning and design of new and redeveloping school sites in Hamilton. They will also be used by staff in Transportation Planning, and Public Health during the delivery of the Active and Sustainable School Travel program.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

A stakeholder workshop was held in November 2020 to review the working draft recommendations, after which the draft document was circulated for review.

Representatives from the following organizations and divisions were invited to attend:

- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board;
- Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board;
- Planning and Economic Development: Growth Management, Development Planning, Transportation Planning, Parking, Policy Planning and Zoning Reform, Community Planning;
- Public Works: Roadway Safety, Engineering Services, Transit, Transportation;
- Public Health: Climate Change and Air Quality; and,
- Other Hamilton Active School Travel hub organizations.

The draft guidelines were updated based on the feedback received during and after the stakeholder workshop.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The School Site Design Guidelines for Active and Sustainable Transportation are intended to help stakeholders facilitate communities that foster active travel and sustainable travel to school through site design, neighbourhood design and supportive policies, programs, and resources. The guidelines are an action of the Active and Sustainable School Travel Charters signed between the City and School Boards.

This guide is intended to help various stakeholders find common ground and clarify a common language to create partnerships and advance recommendations. The strategies presented in this guide apply to elementary and secondary schools, existing and new schools, and urban and suburban contexts. While Hamilton has the second lowest use of private automobiles to get to school in the greater region, more action is required to address health, climate change, roadway safety and transportation challenges due to the increasing reliance on private automobile use.

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The information contained in the guidelines builds on the existing Transportation Demand Management Guide for Development guidelines. In particular, the document can be used during key phases of a school's lifecycle including:

- **Designing New Schools:** This guide can be used during the school site design process, in conjunction with school board guidelines, for identifying the amenities and design considerations that facilitate access to the school by different active and sustainable modes of transportation.
- **Planning New Communities:** These guidelines can be applied during the secondary planning and/or subdivision application processes for choosing the school site, laying out the street grid, establishing planning and engineering standards, and building controls to help set up the school site for success.
- **Retrofitting Existing School Sites:** During renovations to school sites and buildings or to address existing deficiencies identified through the School Travel Planning process, these guidelines can play a role in the delivery of site enhancements on their own or bundled with other site updates.
- **Retrofitting Neighbourhoods:** During the School Travel Planning process, this guide can inform the Action Plan for changes around the school site to facilitate active travel. In addition, as roads near school sites undergo routine upgrades, reconstruction or resurfacing, this tool can inform the design of the new corridor to include improved pedestrian and cycling facilities.

These guidelines are presented in four chapters, which are described below.

○ **Chapter 2: Setting the Context**

This chapter informs the guidelines and recommendations by providing an overview of active travel and transportation demand management trends and further summarizing existing efforts to increase Active and Sustainable School Travel.

Travel to school by active modes has steadily declined locally and nationally, despite ongoing efforts to encourage Active and Sustainable School Travel. From 2006 to 2016, the share of students 16 years or younger walking or cycling to school has dropped from 41% to 32%, while auto modes have increased from 19% to 22%. Barriers to increasing active school travel have included perceived safety concerns, the convenience of driving, auto-centric infrastructure and built form.

○ **Chapter 3: Supportive Schools: Siting and Site Design**

This chapter focuses on the selection and design of the school site itself, including multi-modal access and layout, establishing planning and engineering guidance consistent with the new Complete Streets Design Manual, and building controls. The location where new schools are developed relative to homes, public facilities and transit service, along with the site's layout and amenities, can significantly impact mode choice for students, parents/guardians and staff.

This chapter focuses on the selection and design of the school site, including:

- **Optimizing school orientation and layout for active and sustainable transportation**, including considerations such as placement within the community and building orientation;
- **Improving site access for sustainable travellers**, including pathways, end-of-trip facilities, transit stop location and other amenities; and,
- **Providing safer motor vehicle access** in such a way as to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists.

○ **Chapter 4: Supportive Neighbourhoods: Access Around Schools**

This chapter focuses on the neighbourhood surrounding the school site, including guidance on traffic calming, street layout, intersections, integration with transit, and school routes. The surrounding neighbourhoods and streets play an important role in enabling Active and Sustainable School Travel. For this reason, multi-modal users need to be carefully considered when designing and planning the built environment around schools.

This chapter focuses on fostering neighbourhoods supportive of sustainable travel, and recommendations have been coordinated with the City's new Complete Street Design Manual. This chapter explores strategies to improve:

- **Connecting the school site to a robust and attractive active transportation network**, including sidewalks, crossings, cycling facilities, and trails;
- **Designing streets near the school site to improve safety and convenience for all road users**, including traffic calming measures; and,
- **Integrating transit infrastructure on/near the school site** to support transit trips from the school site and to other community destinations.

○ **Chapter 5: Supportive Environments: Programming and Policies**

This chapter provides information and recommendations around existing programs and policy initiatives throughout Hamilton. In addition to the school site's infrastructure and surrounding neighbourhoods, programming and policies play an important role in encouraging active and sustainable travel by students, staff and parents/guardians.

This chapter focuses on creating and supporting programs and policies. This chapter explores the following topics:

- **Supporting existing programming**, such as Active and Sustainable School Travel certification, the school bike rack grant program, and school travel planning;
- **Hosting special events** for students and staff; and,
- **Strengthening existing policies and creating new policies** to encourage schools and school boards to participate in City-wide programming.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Council could direct staff to modify the School Site Design Guidelines for Active and Sustainable Transportation and bring a revised document to Council for consideration. Council could also direct staff to utilize the guidelines to inform near-term projects and report on future results before formally adopting them. This option is not recommended since many of the concepts in the guidelines have already been demonstrated in Hamilton and other communities and would delay progress in achieving more complete communities and Vision Zero.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state of the art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PED23158 – School Site Design Guidelines for Active and Sustainable Transportation