

Traffic Observation

Gather data to understand more about school traffic activity

Theme: **Evaluation** • Audience: **Broader Community, Municipality, Parents, Principals, School Board, Students, Teachers** • School Grade: **1-3, 4-8, 9-12, Kindergarten** • Mode: **Car, Cycle, School Bus, Scooter, Skateboard, Transit, Walk, Wheelchair** • Issues: **Lack of Data, Traffic Problems**

Purpose:

To gain an understanding of the flow and characteristics of school-related traffic and identify un-safe behaviours and locations of concern.

Description:

A team of observers are positioned at select locations on and around the school site, focusing on those with higher volumes of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Each observer uses a tally sheet to record the behaviours that are most relevant to understanding the facilitators and barriers to active travel to the school (e.g. pedestrian volumes at key intersections and access points, location and frequency of illegal parking/stopping by vehicles, driver compliance with stop signs).

A Traffic Observation should be scheduled to coincide with the periods of peak school traffic volumes during the morning drop-off, the afternoon pick-up, or both. Pick a day that is representative of normal traffic patterns (mid-week is preferred) and consider repeating the observation at different times of the year to see how things change in different weather conditions.

A Traffic Observation can be carried out in combination with a comprehensive [Walkabout](#) to assess the safety and accessibility of the broader neighbourhood and the routes to school. Completing a [Family Survey](#) in advance can help identify priority locations for both the Traffic Observation and [Walkabout](#).

Once the observation results have been compiled, share them with the school as well as school board and municipal staff to foster a discussion and develop solutions for the locations and traffic behaviours of concern.

What you will need:

- Map of school site and surrounding streets to mark out observer location(s);
- Traffic Observation form (see Resources), clipboards, pens;
- Volunteers to act as observers (ideally two observers at each location).

Help:

Teachers, students, parents and caregivers, public health nurses, school board and municipal staff, elected officials.

Resources:

Traffic Observation templates and guidance are available in the “[Canadian School Travel Planning Toolkit – Phase 2](#)” by Green Communities Canada:
– [Traffic Observation Instructions and Form](#)