



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 10, 2007  
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: One Day One School - Progress Report on the Active and Safe Trips to School Pilot Program

#### INFORMATION

The General Manager submits this report for INFORMATION.

#### COUNCIL POLICY

In March, 2005 Council approved the Community Climate Change Action Plan and a greenhouse gas reduction target of 6% below 1990 levels by 2012, and directed staff to implement a "*Green Trips to School Program*"

In May, 2006 Council directed staff to initiate a pilot program to increase sustainable travel to Vancouver schools (One Day One School) and to provide a progress report at the end of the first phase.

#### SUMMARY

The first phase of the One Day One School program has successfully engaged ten Vancouver school communities in taking a leadership role to increase sustainable travel to school. Committed school-based teams have been formed; travel data and parent surveys have been completed; best routes to school and desired infrastructure improvements are nearing completion; bicycle skills training is underway; and schools are preparing to implement their first year's plan to catalyze change.

Key findings from Phase I that are being incorporated into Phase II of the pilot program include:

- Community leadership is key in creating an effective environment for change.
- Initial school engagement including a clear understanding of program expectations, timelines, and commitments must be completed by May of the preceding school year to enable an effective program launch in the fall and maximize positive results by school year end.
- Providing modest amounts of direct support, guidance, and financial assistance is very effective in catalyzing school-community engagement and action.
- Having a single City staff coordinator and contact point for direct school engagement would be more effective than using consultants for this work.
- A pilot grant mechanism to support school engagement and action that is tied to program outcomes will be developed for Council approval by the fall of 2007.
- More than one year of support and engagement is required to embed the enthusiasm and knowledge that has been created around sustainable travel into a school's culture.
- Engaging a limited number of schools each year will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the program by enabling integration with existing City work programs/processes.
- There are numerous opportunities for enhanced partnerships with other school focused programs and organisations (such as Vancouver's Active Communities Initiative and Legacies Now).

For the second and final phase of the pilot program (to December 2008), the original ten schools will continue to be supported and five new schools will be invited to participate in order to fully apply the important lessons learned and develop recommendations for a city-wide, ongoing sustainable school trips program.

## PURPOSE

Update Mayor and Council on the progress to date in the One Day One School Pilot Program and describe the changes that will be implemented in the second and final phase.

## BACKGROUND

Light duty vehicles (cars, minivans, sport utility vehicles, etc) are responsible for approximately 25% of Vancouver's greenhouse gas emissions and 8% of light duty vehicle trips over a 24-hour period are school related. In 1985, only 30% of elementary school children in the region were driven to school but by 1999 this number had increased to 42%. This shift may be due to the rise of dual income families, increased perceived traffic and crime risks, and legislative changes enabling families to send their children to schools outside of the "catchment area" of their own neighbourhood.

Engaging schools and families in an effort to change the mode of travel to and from school was seen as an important initial action in the implementation of the Community Climate Change Action Plan because:

- the large majority of Vancouver children live within walking or cycling distance of the school they attend;

- by utilizing the existing Way To Go! Schools process and toolkit in combination with the support of their municipality, some schools in the region have demonstrated that it is possible to catalyze and sustain a measureable change in school travel modes;
- establishing sustainable travel habits in Vancouver's children was considered an opportunity to influence a wide-range of family travel decisions and an important step for the future sustainability of our city;
- working with school communities was viewed as an opportunity to connect with families and invite them to consider the full range of opportunities to reduce their impact on the climate through the One Day "umbrella" social marketing initiative;
- sustainable travel to and from school has a wide variety of significant co-benefits including increased children's fitness and learning outcomes and decreasing air pollution and traffic congestion.

In the spring of 2006, Council directed staff to initiate a pilot program to explore, develop, and test a variety of "best practices" for increasing the use of sustainable transportation modes, particularly walking and cycling, for trips to and from school.

## DISCUSSION

The One Day One School pilot program has successfully engaged and catalyzed sustainable travel leadership within ten Vancouver school communities. There is growing confidence and excitement within these communities regarding the changes that they can make with City support as they prepare to implement the sustainable school travel strategies that they have developed.

The following subsections describe what has been achieved in the first Phase of the pilot program and describe the changes planned for the second and final phase.

### *School Engagement*

A number of schools were invited to participate in the program in early June, 2007 and ten were selected for the pilot based primarily on the expressed commitment of the school administration and parents as well as City staff desire to see schools from across the city involved.

The ten Vancouver elementary schools currently participating in the One Day One School Pilot Program include:

- Kitchener Elementary
- Nelson Elementary
- Moberly Elementary
- Maple Grove Elementary
- Quilchena Elementary
- Livingston
- Elsie Roy
- L'Ecole Bilingue
- Khalsa School\*
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help\*

\* private schools

While the initial engagement of schools is through the administration and Parent Advisory Councils, school teams typically including the Principal or Vice-Principal, one or two teachers, and a number of parents are formed early in the process. The program gains increasing prominence in school communications (such as newsletters and notice boards) and engages a broader spectrum of the school community as the process progresses.

Engaging the schools at the end of their school year led to some confusion about roles and expectations resulting in some delays in getting organized in the fall. For Phase II of the pilot, schools will be engaged in May to ensure that everyone has a clearer understanding of the program, roles, expectations, and timelines.

In addition, while the consultants hired to engage and support the schools for Phase I have been excellent, they have recommended that in Phase II, staff should be tasked and trained for this role. It is believed that this approach will reduce administrative and communication challenges, increase program cohesiveness, establish a stronger relationship between the City and the participating schools, facilitate improved integration with other City/school teams and programs (such as School Traffic Safety Committee work and the Active Communities Program) and test a model of program delivery that is more sustainable in the long-term.

### *Student Travel Mode Surveys*

Classroom-based student surveys were administered by the schools to document daily travel modes for the trip to school for an entire week in the fall of 2006. This data establishes a baseline to determine the efficacy of the One School program in switching travel modes over time. The surveys will be conducted again in the fall of 2007 and 2008.

The Student Survey results surprised some schools; they did not realize nor recognize the percentage of students traveling to school by car. In addition, some large differences in car travel were observed between schools with similar pedestrian environments.

In most cases surveys were completed for all classrooms but in some schools, teachers did not complete the forms. In order to ensure more consistent data collection for Phase II, efforts will be made to utilize leadership classes (Grade 6 or 7 students) or parent volunteers to conduct the surveys.

### *Parent Surveys*

After the Student Surveys had been conducted, schools distributed a Parent Survey to develop a better understanding of their attitudes, concerns, and willingness to participate in the program. The school-based teams analyzed the data to ensure they understood how and why parents make the transportation choices they do and the results were communicated back to the broader school community.

In Phase II a standardized format for data summary and reporting will be implemented.

Overall, the Parent Surveys indicated significant support for the project and a willingness to be involved and included in the process to reduce the number of children traveling by car for this day to day journey. Parent concerns and considerations with respect to their decisions about transportation were noted and used to inform the development of Best Route Maps and discussions during the school site traffic safety audits described below.

### ***Best Routes to School Mapping***

School teams, working with base maps of the school catchment area (prepared in the summer of 2006 by City staff), aerial photos, walkabouts, and the team's own knowledge of the neighbourhood are currently in the process of identifying the best routes to their school. This exercise catalyzes both the synthesis of the information accumulated up to this point as well as a real engagement of the school community.

As part of the Best Route mapping process, City staff from the Greenways & Neighbourhood Transportation Branch visit the school to meet with the team to review their concerns regarding signage, crossings, sidewalks, and typical "unsafe" driving behaviors. Together they discuss potential engineering solutions to concerns, identify desired changes, and discuss existing programs and opportunities for implementing change.

The opportunity to discuss traffic safety in a comprehensive manner with City staff has been strongly appreciated by the schools. In addition, this collaborative approach appears to help the schools develop realistic expectations of what changes can be implemented and how effective they might be. The responsiveness and assistance of staff has been a key element in building a strong school/City relationship while energizing and providing real credibility to the One School program. While some changes have been initiated immediately, others are referred for a detailed assessment for prioritization in existing City infrastructure improvement processes. Schools appear to understand that not all requested changes will be accommodated and even those changes that are confirmed priorities still may take over a year to implement.

One significant issue that came up in meetings with the Vancouver School Board and again during the school site and mapping process is the effect of road and building construction on the real and perceived risks to children on their best route to school. While staff are working to better accommodate pedestrian and cyclists impacted by construction in or around the pilot schools, they will also work to develop a better system of planning and communicating construction impacts on Best Routes in Phase II of the pilot.

### ***Bicycle Training***

One popular component of this program is bicycle skills training (including class room, school yard and on-street components) for the Grades 3 and 4 classes at the pilot schools. The training, partially funded by TransLink, has been very well received in the three schools that have completed it so far, and is highly anticipated in the remaining schools. Some schools have indicated this training is what initially attracted them to sign-up for the pilot program while others are planning to independently fund additional training.

Staff are exploring a variety of models to fund and deliver this training to enable it to be delivered in a sustainable fashion across the school district in the future. Some of these approaches include seeking voluntary parental contributions, working to secure on-going funding from external partners, and/or training teachers and providing them with the tools needed to deliver it themselves (in whole or in part).

The Vancouver School Board has committed to ensuring that there will be adequate bike racks to accommodate school cyclists.

### *School Grants*

The consultants hired to engage and support the schools originally intended to hire additional staff and complete a number of the program tasks on behalf of the schools. In the end, recognizing the critical importance of school community engagement and leadership required in order for this program to be successful, they opted instead to provide training for school administrators, teachers, and/or parents combined with financial assistance to catalyze and enable school community involvement.

School PACs have used the funds made available by the consultants in a variety of ways from providing prizes for class participation, purchasing food and paying for babysitting to draw parents to attend evening meetings, and paying for a substitute teacher to enable one of the regular teachers to play a larger role during work time. As the program progresses through to the end of Phase 1, financial support of the schools will ensure that volunteer efforts focus on implementing the school specific strategy instead of organising bake sales or other fundraisers.

While this training and financial support has proven to be a key component in catalyzing the involvement of the school community, school administrators have recommended that financial support should be staged and explicitly tied to program outcomes such as survey completion and tabulation, best route mapping and strategy development, and then strategy implementation.

For the Phase II of the pilot, staff will develop a pilot granting mechanism based on these recommendations to provide this critical spark and support for school engagement and report to Council by the fall of 2007 for their approval. A sliding scale of support is envisioned, making a larger grant amounts (up to approximately \$1200) available for schools just beginning in the program and decreasing this amount (up to approximately \$700) for schools in their second year of the program.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no additional or ongoing operating costs as a result of continuing this pilot program for its second and final phase. Staffing costs (temporary, part-time), school grants, bicycle skills training contract, and miscellaneous costs totalling an estimated \$68,000 through to December 2008 will be funded through existing Operating Budgets.

In an effort to offset these costs and to minimize potential future costs that may be associated with a permanent program for sustainable school trips, staff will seek outside funding from a variety of sources such as TransLink, the AutoPlan Brokers of BC, Environment Canada, Legacies Now, and even voluntary contributions from parents.

## PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

New temporary, part-time staff will work with the schools to facilitate their moving through the program in a timely and effective manner.

Impacts on existing staff include:

- Greenways & Neighbourhood Transportation Branch engineering coop student to work part-time in the summer of 2007 preparing base maps for the additional five schools
- Greenways & Neighbourhood Transportation Branch school liaison engineering assistant will support new schools in identifying their best routes and will be responsible for preparing final maps for these schools
- Additional studies and field checks will be required to prioritize traffic calming requests or improvements and to install these measures
- Sustainable Transportation Manager will have overall responsibility for the evolution, management, and completion of the pilot program

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Approximately 26,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions are produced in driving children to and from school every year; that amount is approximately double the emissions produced by all City fleet vehicles including parks, fire and police.

Based on the success of well supported programs in other jurisdictions, staff believe reducing auto trips to pilot schools by 20% (within two years) is a reasonable goal. If this program is successful in demonstrating that these mode shifts are achievable/sustainable and the program is gradually expanded to support all Vancouver schools it is estimated that greenhouse gas emissions could be reduced by 5,000 tonnes per year by 2012.

Although no work has been done to quantify the potential air quality improvements of this program, localised air quality improvements near schools are expected.

## SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Increasing active trips to school would play an important role in helping to improve children's fitness and reduce obesity, consistent with the City's Active Communities Initiative (lead by Vancouver Parks Board) as well as the provincial Act Now and Legacies Now objectives. Staff will seek opportunities to work closely with these programs to integrate efforts towards these shared goals.

In addition, research has indicated that decreasing traffic volumes and speed decreases children's stress levels and increases their connection and appreciation for their community. Increased fitness has been shown to improve academic performance.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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| Ongoing               | <p>Staff seek and develop partnerships for building program support and funding as well as integrating program into existing school and City processes.</p> <p>Staff invite feedback from the schools for program improvements.</p> <p>Staff evaluate best practices from other jurisdictions and seek to integrate into the pilot.</p>   |
| Spring 2007           | <p>Existing 10 pilot schools complete bicycle skills training, implement their change strategies, and invited to confirm their desire and commitment to continue participating through December 2008.</p> <p>Requested infrastructure improvements from original schools are assessed, forwarded to existing programs and prioritized.</p> <p>Invite and select five new schools to participate in the Phase II of the pilot.</p> <p>Engage the administration and parental leadership of all of the participating schools on roles, expectations, and process for September 2007 thru December 2008.</p> |
| Summer '07            | <p>Develop and seek Council approval for pilot school grants.</p> <p>Develop base maps for "best route" identification for the five new schools and prepare all of the materials and communications for remainder of 2007 and 2008.</p> <p>Implementation of priority infrastructure improvements under existing City infrastructure improvement programs begins (may take until summer '08 to complete).</p>   |
| Fall '07              | <p>All schools conduct travel mode and parent surveys.</p> <p>Original 10 schools develop and start implementing their strategies for change.</p> <p>New schools (with support from City staff) complete their Best Route Mapping process and develop change strategies; some new schools complete their Bicycling skills training.</p>   |
| Winter/<br>Spring '07 | <p>All schools implement strategies for change.</p> <p>New schools complete bicycle skills training.</p> <p>All schools celebrate success!</p>  |
| Fall '08              | <p>All schools conduct travel mode and parent surveys and continue implementing change strategies.</p> <p>Staff prepare One School Pilot Program final report and recommendations.</p>  |