

Hello, my name is Cassie Smith. I am speaking today on behalf of School Streets Ottawa. SSO is a coalition of local volunteers along with supporting organizations who are advocating for kids to have healthy and safe ways to travel around the city, with a focus on trips to and from school.

We are pleased to see that the draft Transportation Master Plan includes many policies that support our goals and recognize the ways that children have unique transportation needs.

We are particularly interested in the suggestion of piloting school streets. This is an initiative that we feel is central to safe and active school transportation. A School Street is a temporary exclusive walking and cycling corridor established during pick up and drop off times to allow children use of the road on the immediate approach to a school. These can be set up with temporary barricades and volunteers or more permanent installations, like those pictured here.

School streets have immense benefits for children.

- These are spaces where kids are safe from the threat of motor vehicles, which, at least as of 2019, was the leading cause of child death in Canada.
- They reduce air pollution, which children are particularly vulnerable to, by 40-60%
- They reduce noise pollution, an often underexamined health impact
- They also increase healthy physical activity. Currently in Canada, only 28% of children get the recommended 60 minutes of activity per day.
- And school streets have been shown to provide social connection and greater independence.
- All of these benefits for children translate to better learning conditions.

There are also benefits to the entire community. School streets lead to fewer car trips: data from one school in the UK showed that a school street led to a decrease of 96 thousand car trips per year. With fewer car trips there is less congestion and pollution. And, as kids learn these habits, it can lead to better health and climate outcomes for decades to come.

It is no surprise that with all of these benefits, school street initiatives have been implemented and accelerated in cities around the world including many of our peer communities in Canada such as Vancouver, Montreal, Kingston, Mississauga, Hamilton, and Markham.

You may have noticed that these benefits completely align with all the priorities of the TMP: to meet diverse mobility needs, to promote better public health, to improve safety, to reduce automobile dependence, to integrate transportation and land use, and to protect the environment.

We believe that there is nowhere that these priorities are more important than at our schools, benefiting our youngest and most vulnerable residents and leading the next generation to be able to live in alignment with the guiding principles of this plan.

So, what I don't understand is why, with this long list of benefits, proof from other cities, and complete alignment with the TMP priorities, Ottawa is only *considering a pilot* in a plan that is meant to outline the next decade or more in the city. "Policy 11-2 Prioritize Active School Trips" includes programs and collaborations that **can be pursued** to encourage active trips to school. This is not prioritizing active school trips. Prioritizing means putting first; to put kids first would require much more than possibly pursuing programs or pilots. When School Streets Ottawa conducted a survey before last fall's election, a majority of council members who won the election, including many of you here today, told us that you supported a **city-wide funded pilot**. We need your help to make this happen.

Schools and the trips students take to get to them touch the entire city, they are not limited to the block surrounding a school. So, In addition to suggesting a stronger pursuit of school streets we want to acknowledge some important measures, timelines, and funding we feel are missing in this plan from the perspective of safe and active travel for children.

For example, we would like to see:

- A true Vision Zero strategy
- Retrofits for existing neighbourhoods without sidewalks
- Immediate action on speed limits, low-speed design, and traffic calming.
- Intuitive and automatic green lights for people walking and biking near schools
- Reliable and frequent transit that enables parents, guardians, and older students to leave the car at home as they make walking or biking to school part of their daily trips.
- And many of the other issues addressed by previous delegates today

To reiterate, it is very reassuring to see thoughtful consideration and inclusion of children and schools in this plan. However, we believe the City of Ottawa can and should act more decisively on these important measures.

School Streets Ottawa regularly hears from parents who want their kids to be able to travel to school safely. Now is the time to make a clear commitment to a School Streets Program and other enhancements that will make Ottawa a safer and more enjoyable place for kids to live.

Thank you.