

SCHOOL STREETS GUIDEBOOK



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The School Streets Guidebook provides information and resources to help community leaders, school officials or municipal and regional government representatives to develop and deliver School Streets. A literature review and a series of stakeholder conversations were undertaken to gather the information outlined.

The guidebook would not have been possible without the guidance of the Capital Regional District (CRD) and the City of Victoria. Furthermore, precedent School Streets and subsequent resources from Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Ireland greatly supported the development of this guide.



Making a difference...together



SCHOOL STREETS

A program that creates a car-free environment in front of schools at the start and end of the school day to prioritize safe walking conditions for children, their caregivers and teachers.



School Streets contribute to the well-being of communities

- ✓ **Creates Safer Environments**
- ✓ **Facilitates Independent Mobility**
- ✓ **Improves Air Quality**
- ✓ **Encourages Healthier Lifestyles**
- ✓ **Reduces Congestion**
- ✓ **Shapes opportunities for community connections**

School Streets are led by school officials, local governments, or community leaders. Programs restrict vehicular traffic for 15-90 minutes at the beginning and end of the school day (Monday - Friday) to create a safer and cleaner street for active transportation.

School Streets often start as a pilot project before being made permanent. Each program is unique to the context of the community and needs of the school. The duration of School Streets and exemptions for road users vary case by case.



Background on School Streets

School Streets encourage active transportation to and from school by restricting vehicular traffic on streets in front of schools at the beginning and end of school days. In the Capital Regional District, upwards of 23% of students who live within 500 metres of their schools are driven by car. A short distance to school can turn into a lengthy drive when accounting for traffic and congestion from idling cars. This contributes to increased traffic volumes on residential streets, poor air quality, and unsafe environments for children and families who are walking or wheeling to school. School Streets target these issues by creating car-free zones that encourage safe, active, and sustainable modes of travel.

School Streets create an environment directly in front of schools that facilitates safe, healthy and active travel for children and caregivers.

School Streets originated in Bolzano, Italy in the early 1990's when school communities were struggling to manage traffic during peak pick up and drop off hours. Community members, teaching staff and city officials all called for a solution. In response, several School Streets were launched on select roads to pilot the program. Streets were transformed into temporary car-free zones and congestion in front of schools was eliminated. The programs showed several positive impacts:

- Decreased levels of vehicular traffic
- Improved air quality
- More children walking to school
- Fewer children being driven to school
- Increased levels of motorist compliance in and around the School Streets
- Improved perceptions of safety

School Streets have been made permanent and widely replicated across Europe. In 2018, Denmark included School Streets as part of their road regulations and enforce School Streets as part of their standard practice. The concept is simple in nature and is igniting change across the world.



Benefits of School Streets



Safety

Children are more vulnerable to road danger. By restricting car access, streets are safer for all road users.



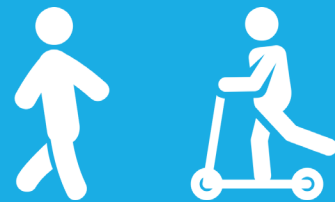
Improve Air Quality

56% of CO₂ emissions in the Capital Regional District stem from vehicular transportation. This compromises the air quality around schools leaving children and their developing lungs vulnerable. School streets mitigates idling time and encourages cleaner environments for all.



Healthier Lifestyles

Canadian studies have shown that 91% of children and youth are not getting the recommended levels of daily physical activity. Walking or biking to and from school can add upwards of 30 minutes of physical activity each day.



Independent Mobility

In the Capital Regional District, 47% of students are driven to and from school each day. School Streets lets children have more autonomy in the way they get to and from school safely.



Community Connections

School Streets bring community members together to make streets cleaner and safer. Working collaboratively with others contributes to broader and stronger community connections with one another.



Reduced Congestion

On average, 25% of road congestion during morning rush hour is related to school drop off. School Streets alleviate congestion in front of schools and encourage active modes of transportation.

Case Studies



School Streets. Photo by Play Out

Colinton Primary Edinburgh, Scotland - UK

In 2015, the City of Edinburgh selected Colinton Primary as one of the eleven schools to pilot School Streets. It was selected due to pre-existing road safety issues and high volumes of drivers picking up and dropping off students. The City led the program and documented impacts throughout the eight month pilot.

The School Streets pilot resulted in a decrease in both vehicle speeds and volumes. The comparative study and feedback surveys indicate that vehicle speeds and volumes on the subject street and on surrounding roads saw 144 fewer vehicles, and 2.5mph average speed reductions. On all streets within the 1-2 block radius of the school, average vehicle speeds fell to 15mph or below. Today, the School Streets program at Colinton Primary continues.

Duration:

- 8 months of the year
- Monday - Thursday: 8:15am to 9:00am and 2:40pm to 3:30pm
- Friday: 8:15am to 9:00am and 12:00pm to 12:35pm

Partners:

- City of Edinburgh
- Local residents
- School staff
- Police Scotland

Lessons Learned:

- The City was able to streamline resident exemption
- Displacement is less of an issue if there is an alternative place for people to drop off students if necessary

Case Studies



School Street: Victoria BC. Photo by Katherine Brandt

Sir James Douglas Elementary School Victoria, BC

In 2019, parents and volunteers worked together to launch Victoria's first School Streets program. The idea was motivated by pre-existing concerns for safety during pick up and drop off times at the school. It was noted that drivers would often leave vehicles idling and neglect street regulations. There was also a great interest from the school's Active Travel Committee to further promote active transportation to and from school. Together, the volunteer-driven program became the first of its kind in Victoria.

One early challenge was determining which City permit was required. Once this issue was resolved with the support of City staff, volunteers canvassed the neighbourhood to find that the majority of households and parents were supportive of the program. The one-day trial gained support and the Working Group is developing ways to extend the pilot.

Duration:

- 1 day pilot subject to renewal
- 45 minute road closures during pick up and drop off times

Partners:

- Parents
- Residents
- School staff
- City of Victoria

Lessons Learned:

- Organized programs such as bake sales or play activities during the launch gets the community involved
- Remember to notify substitute teachers in addition to other stakeholders
- Displaced traffic was less of an issue than anticipated

School Streets in Action

Concept: During School Streets programs, the street in front of school entrances are temporary closed to cars and open to people. Signs are installed in visible locations to inform drivers of the temporary road closure. It is common for School Streets to provide exemptions for emergency vehicles, residents whose homes are located within the School Streets area, and those who need additional mobility support. Children, caregivers and school staff walk and ride bikes on the street free of vehicular congestion, car pollutants, and unsafe traffic conditions during School Streets.

Time Restrictions: School Streets operate for set periods of 15-90 minutes at the beginning and end of school days. Streets return to their usual function once the designated School Streets period has ended. Programs do not run during holidays and weekends. School Streets are typically piloted for upwards of 6 months before officials determine how the program can continue permanently.

Enforcement: There are many ways communities can enforce School Streets. Some programs simply have parents or teachers redirect traffic, while others use parking enforcement officers. Temporary barriers are often used to block traffic. Detailed signage noting when the road will be a car-free zone, alternative detour routes and other important information are commonly posted in and around the program site.

School Streets: Haddington, UK



Who's involved?

School Streets require support from various stakeholders. Working Groups can be established by City Staff or existing community organizations and often include representatives from the community, the school, and political leadership. Precedent case studies show that School Streets require cross-departmental collaboration. It is common for the Working Group to leverage in-kind support to coordinate School Streets.

Some tasks of the Working Group are:

- Outreach and community mobilization
- Permits and approvals
- Design communication materials
- School Streets coordination
- Data collection and analysis
- Enforcement
- Materials management



Developing a School Streets Program

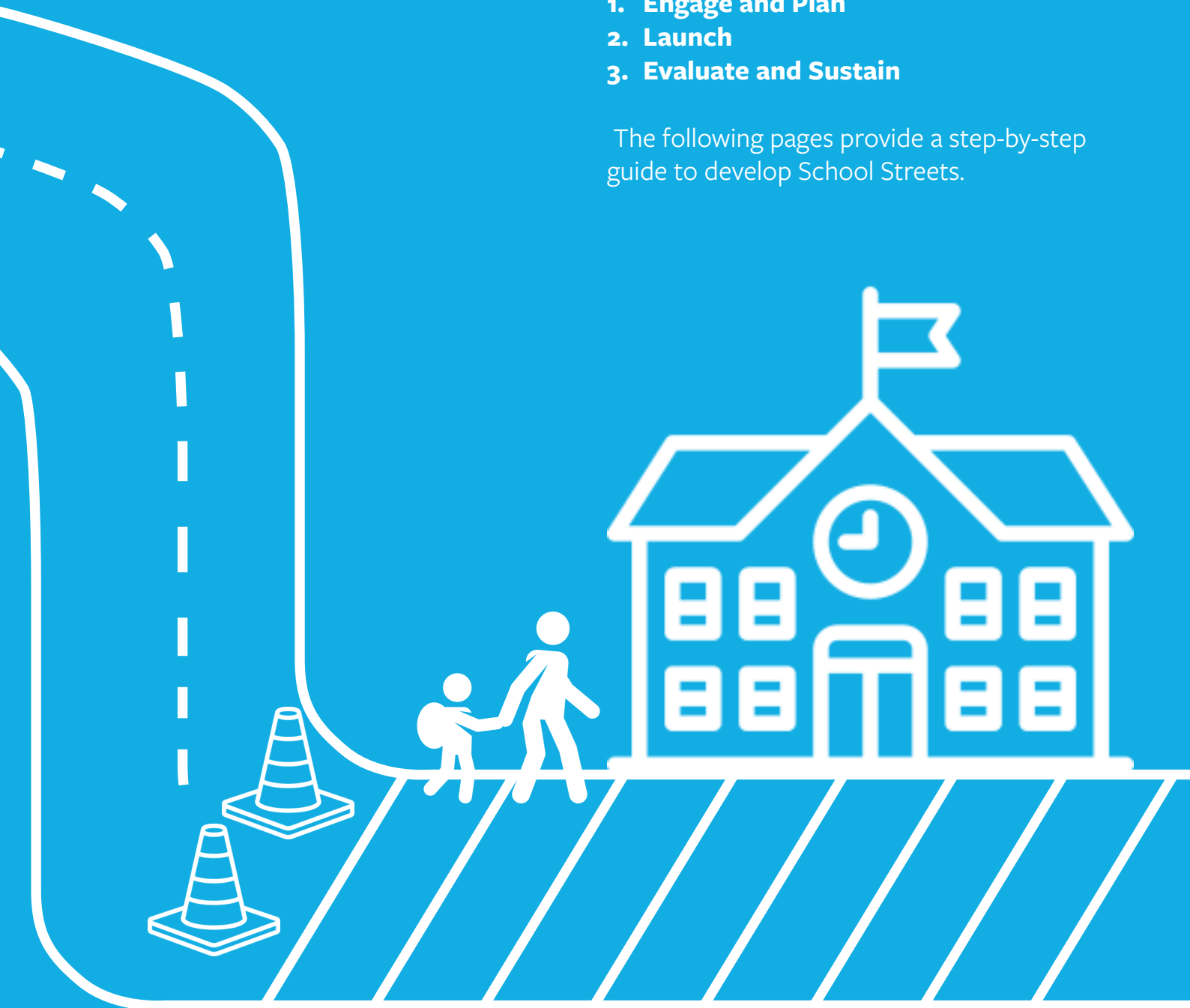
School Streets have been popularized in European cities and the programs have ignited interest and replication globally. School Streets are unique to the context of the street and community in which it is located. Some programs are led by dedicated advocacy groups and community

organizations, whereas others are led by city officials. Regardless of who takes the first initial step in coordinating the program, it always begins with identifying an issue and starting a broader conversation about community health and safety.

School Streets can happen in 3 steps:

- 1. Engage and Plan**
- 2. Launch**
- 3. Evaluate and Sustain**

The following pages provide a step-by-step guide to develop School Streets.



Phase 1: Engage and Plan

Establishing a Working Group is a key component in building School Streets. Some groups practice an ‘open door’ policy, which encourages anyone who expresses an interest in the program to reach out and get involved. It is critical to communicate what School Streets are broadly at the outset of the program’s development. Prioritizing immediate households and school parents will help garner support and inform the program’s design.

Identify the School

Working Groups are often formed when a specific site has already been identified. When a municipality leads the charge, organizers must identify a partnering school and establish a Working Group from within the community. It is important to identify the school and key actors within the community to help champion the program. School staff may also be able to assess traffic challenges by providing information on how students currently travel to school, pick up and drop off behaviours, traffic accident history, and air quality levels.

Permitting / Legal

Early on in the planning process, it is critical to identify the legal processes for temporary road closures in the subject area. Similar street closures like Open Streets programs, street festivals or other local School Streets can be used as a guide to determine what permits will be needed. Depending on the context, applications may need a more rigorous review from the City. The local government staff should be able to identify the process to permit School Streets.

Consider Timelines

School Streets start as a pilot initiative before formally being incorporated into the City’s transportation system. Pilots can be implemented for a variety of timelines (a day, a week, a month, or a school year). The longer the pilot program, the more time will be required to plan, organize, execute, and evaluate. The Working Group should consider how long the pilot should run, the duration of the closures, and the times when School Streets should be in effect (peak pick up and drop off time).



Vancouver, BC

Site Assessments

Carry out site visits to assess the main entrance locations of the subject school. Be mindful of locations for visible signage and alternative drop off points. It is also important to visit adjacent streets or businesses to identify 'Drive to 5' spots or parking lots within walking distance of the school. Danish School Streets identify these areas as 'Step Spots' and promote them to caregivers who must drive students most of the way to school. Children are then able to walk safely from the Step Spots to school independently or supervised.

Collect and Analyze Baseline Data

A number of baseline surveys can be undertaken to compare data sets during the pilot to assess the impact of the School Streets program. Studies conducted ahead of the program launch can include; pedestrian travel counts, vehicle volume counts, and air quality measurements. This data is often collected by the city or through previous development applications of nearby projects. The focus of the data collection and analysis should be on the immediate subject area but it is common to study adjacent streets (two or three blocks away) to compare traffic volumes. Typically, the Working Group or City staff undertake this task, however in-kind support and community volunteers have also helped gather data.

Public Engagement

Face-to-face interactions are the most effective way to raise awareness about upcoming School Streets programs. Working Group members can host 'morning coffee meetings' during school drop off times to engage passers-by about the program. Alternatively, town halls or public workshops are common ways to inform and collaborate. It is critical to engage households on the subject street at the outset of the program to begin mobilizing support and understanding how many exemptions will be required.

Phase 2: Launch

Incorporating feedback from key stakeholders and other representatives, the School Streets Working Group can then develop a program to submit for city approval. The primary objective of School Streets is to restrict vehicular traffic during pick up and drop off hours while encouraging active modes of transportation. The duration of the road closure, data analysis, and other logistics are often modified.

Branding

Craft compelling graphic material for flyers and signage that clearly illustrates the intention of School Streets, and distribute throughout the community before the program launch. City or school staff often support the development of the branding, but this can also be completed through in-kind assistance.

Mobilize Support

Organizing the support of local representatives, residents, and businesses is critical to hosting a successful and safe School Street. This often takes the form of letters, pledges, or a petition. It is also common for cities to request letters of support and evidence of outreach with permit applications.

Promote the Program

Letting people know about the School Streets program before it launches gives everyone the opportunity to get excited about biking or walking to school. A primary school in Hackney, London gave students flyers about the program to relay to their caregivers. They call it homework for adults! This included email blasts and door-to-door canvassing.

Launch

With the support of the city and community, the School Streets program is set to kick off. Launching with a big event involving media, parents, community leaders, and city officials is a great way to generate enthusiasm, but isn't required. In Hackney, organizers launched their Safe School Streets Week program with a red carpet to welcome children coming to school!



BC Cycling Coalition: Victoria, BC

Phase 3: Evaluate and Sustain

With the School Streets program running, it is an optimal time to capture data. Using similar methods outlined in the before data sets, the data collected will be able to highlight trends or mode shifts. Outlined below are two common ways of evaluating School Streets.

Surveys

Physical and online surveys are often available for people to voice their opinions of the School Streets program. It is a way of capturing people's perceptions of safety as well as general feedback.

Traffic Counts

The objective of traffic counts is to determine modal trends or shifts. It is common for cities to provide automatic vehicular counters to study the impacts of traffic levels on adjacent streets. It is also standard to have volunteers or researchers count the total number of active transportation users manually.

Continue Mobilizing

Typically, School Streets pilot programs run for six months and are then subject to evaluation to determine if the program should be made permanent. Once the pilot project is running, it is critical that the Working Group does not lose touch with the mobilized base of residents and businesses. Sustaining engagement and support for the program is often leveraged to advocate for the continuation of the School Streets.

Share Impacts

Precedents have shown that School Streets positively impact the well-being of communities by managing traffic congestion, encouraging active transportation, and keeping the air cleaner in front of schools. Sharing the data and impacts broadly to community members and city staff can contribute to building further support.

School Streets are NOT...

There are a variety of other people-friendly street initiatives that cities undertake. Listed below are four examples of alternative

people-focused street concepts that are not School Streets.

Play Streets

Play Streets allow neighbours to play outside together in residential streets. The roads are temporarily closed off to vehicular traffic to accommodate space for children to play. Play Streets are commonly coupled with School Streets, however Play Streets can take place on any residential street whereas School Streets are tied to an adjacent school. The intention of a Play Street is to close the street to motorists and open it for public recreation while School Streets focuses on encouraging active transportation to and from school.



Play Street: Edmonton, AB

Open Streets

Open Streets temporarily close streets to vehicular traffic for people to use as extended public spaces. They often are a reoccurring event where people walk, jog, cycle, dance, shop and engage in general social activities on the street. Originated in Bogotá, the program is also known globally as a Ciclovía.



Car Free YYJ: Victoria, BC

Street Festivals

Led by an organization often with corporate sponsors, Street Festivals close streets off to traffic to celebrate various initiatives or host events. A distinctive feature of Street Festivals, in contrast to other people-focused street initiatives, is the presence of vendors selling food, playing music, or other forms of commercial and cultural entertainment.



Buskerfest: Victoria, BC

Shared Streets

Shared Streets, also known as Living Streets, have no curb on either side of the street. The objective of Shared Streets is to create an environment where automobile traffic are on the lookout for vulnerable road users such as children, older adults, or cyclists. They are most suitable to downtown corridors and other high density locations. The design of Shared Streets have shown to decrease the speed of drivers passing through while creating a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.



Shared Street: Banff, AB

**“It was a huge success
and the school children
loved not having traffic
immediately in front of the
school and being able to
play and cycle on the road
at the beginning and end of
the school day”**

- Katherine Brandt, parent and volunteer at Sir James Douglas School: Victoria, BC

Resources

The following section outlines a series of tools and resources to start School Streets programs. The sample resources include:

- Signage
- Traffic Counting Charts
- School Streets Survey
- Outreach Notice
- Sample Application

Sample Signage

School Streets

PEDESTRIAN
AND CYCLIST
ZONE



Mon - Fri
8:00 - 8:30 am
3:00 - 3:30 pm

School Streets

Closed to vehicular traffic on school days
Monday to Friday. Permit Holders Only.

Morning School Streets 8:00 - 8:30 am

Afternoon School Streets 3:00 - 3:30 pm



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Sample Travel Counts

Instructions: Mark every pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility device user that passes into the School Streets with a tick on that chart below based on their age and gender.

Name:

Location:

Date:

Time:

PEDESTRIANS A person walking.			CYCLISTS A person riding a bicycle.			MOBILITY DEVICE USERS A person who is using a devise (wheelchair, stroller ect.) to support their commute.		
AGE	MALE	FEMALE	AGE	MALE	FEMALE	AGE	MALE	FEMALE
0-4			0-4			0-4		
5-14			5-14			5-14		
15-24			15-24			15-24		
25-44			25-44			25-44		
45-64			45-64			45-64		
65+			65+			65+		

Sample Survey

Participation in this survey is voluntary. Any personal information provided will only be used to review public feedback related to this School Streets program.

1. This survey was completed_____.

- ☐ Before the School Streets program launched
- ☐ While the School Streets program was running

Please respond to the following questions based on your current interaction with [enter street name].

2. What brings you to the [enter street name]

- ☐ Going to School
- ☐ Dropping off a student
- ☐ Passing through
- ☐ Other _____

3. How did you get here today? Select option traveled for longest distance.

- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Bike
- ☐ Public transit
- ☐ School Bus
- ☐ Private car
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

4. How would you describe your commute to [enter school name]?

- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Bad
- ☐ Very bad

5. How would you describe the level of vehicular congestion on your commute?

- ☐ Very low
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ High
- ☐ Very high

6. How would you describe the air quality in front of the school?

- ☐ Very clean
- ☐ Clean
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Polluted
- ☐ Very polluted

7. How would you rate your feelings of safety in front of the school?

- ☐ Very safe
- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Unsafe
- ☐ Very unsafe

8. How do you feel about the School Streets program? The School Streets restricts vehicular traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, opening the street to pedestrians and cyclists.

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Negative
- ☐ Very negative

9. Why do you feel this way?

Sample Notice

School Streets



Coming to [enter street name] soon!

Dear Neighbour,

The School Streets Working Group at [enter school name] are considering running a School Streets pilot program on [enter street name] between [closet intersections]. This means that students and community members are free to walk or bike to and from school without the congestion and risk of vehicular traffic.

The proposed dates and times that [enter street name] would be closed to cars is noted below.

[enter School Streets logistics]

During School Streets, residents who need access by car can still pass through with an exemption, if they maintain a driving speed no faster than 10 km/h and are escorted by a program representative. Through traffic will be diverted.

The Working Group will apply for a permit in the coming weeks. If you are interested in finding out more, or have any concerns please contact us.

Cheers,

[name]

[email contact]



Sample Application

Council cannot guarantee that a permit will be made, and any permit made under this application will be revoked if any of the following conditions are not met:

1. You must pay the full cost of any damage to the street or street furniture or other loss or damage suffered by it and of any claims made against it as a result of the making of the permit and which arise from your negligence or the negligence of your organization's members or staff. It is strongly recommend that you take out Public Liability Insurance for the duration of your road closure(s).
2. If appropriate you must clean the street in order to return it to its condition prior to the closure. This must be done before the road is reopened.
3. A permit is made entirely for the purposes of School Streets - creating a friendly environment for children to travel to and from school.
4. It should be clearly outlined if the use of structures or barricades is applicable subject to review.
5. Vehicular access and egress for residents/businesses and emergency must be maintained during any closure period.
6. The road(s) may only be closed on the dates and times specified within the Order.
7. Events must be supervised by an adult.
8. Any barriers erected during the closures must be removed immediately if required for access for emergency services or other residents.
9. The City reserves the right to cancel any such order if the closures are not implemented in accordance with these requirements or the activities are not managed in a safe manner.

I/We confirm that all the information that I/We provide below is true and complete and that I am/ we are at least 18 years of age. I/We agree that the City may distribute to third parties and use publicly any of the information provided within these forms. I have read the conditions above and agree to accept and adhere to them if my application is successful.

Signature:

Date:

1. Applicant(s) Details

Name of Applicant(s):

Address:

Contact Number:

Email:

If more than one applicant please provide names of additional applicants on supplementary page

2. Road Closure Details

Name of road(s) to be closed:

Length of road(s) to be closed (if appropriate):

Day of event (ie. first Sunday of month):

Start and End time of event (max. 3 hours per session):

Will this event be reoccurring? Yes _____ No _____

If yes how regular will this event occur?

Attached (aerial) photo of subject street. Please identify the stretch of the purposed road closure. Information relating to road specifications can be provided by the City.

3. Barrier and Signs

Upon formal request, the City can provide appropriate traffic signs and traffic cones free of charge prior to the first date of your event. It is the applicant's responsibility to store these signs and cones off the street and out of the purview of the public. Future events as any additional signs and signs required will be chargeable. It is also the applicant's responsibility to erect all signs and position cones at each point of closure. Each closure must be supervised and maintained at all times by a responsible and clearly identifiable adult.

What arrangements have you made for the erection and supervision of signs and cones?

4. Notification to Affected Properties

It is a requirement that all affected properties must be consulted by way of letter. This means any property, residential or commercial, which is located on or accessed only by the road(s) you wish to close.

Please attach a list of the properties to whom you have sent a consultation letter to and a copy of the original letter.

