



SAFE SCHOOL ZONES FOR ALL TO WALK 'N ROLL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are School Streets?

School Streets are a type of traffic calming intervention designed to re-balance the public space around elementary schools, where walking and rolling to school is unsafe for students, due to traffic congestion. These programs do so by restricting vehicular traffic near the school during drop-off and pick up time, and prioritizing that space for people walking and rolling to and from school. They are a very effective initiative that started in Europe a number of years ago, and has been successfully tested in a number of cities in Canada, over the last 3 years. Cities that have piloted School Streets include: Victoria, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and more recently, Montreal, Hamilton, Kingston, Markham and Mississauga. These School Street pilot programs were restricted to select schools, and varied a lot with regards to duration and frequency (from 1-5 days, a day a week for a full month, every day for a month or for a full year).

2. Why School Streets?

School Street Programs have been shown to not only significantly reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, but also effectively increase safety around schools and encourage students and their families to be more active on the way to and from schools, thus helping create happier, healthier and more inclusive communities.

3. Isn't this initiative just penalizing parents who drive their children to school?

This initiative is not intended to do that; the goal is to create a car-free environment in front of the school and safer conditions for all students. Studies have shown that driver behavior during drop-off and pick-up is often responsible for increased pedestrian-motor vehicle collisions, and puts all of our students (hundreds of them!) at risk every day: those who walk or wheel to school, and those who are driven. Dangerous driver behavior includes U-turns, 3-point turns, illegal stopping to drop-off, illegal parking, etc. By restricting through traffic on Downing St and redirecting drivers to drop-off/pick up or park a block away, we will eliminate vehicle congestion and increase safety for all.

4. What streets will be closed and for how long?

A final decision hasn't yet been made about this, but the plan is for the pilot to take place for 2 weeks this coming spring (between May and June), and likely only affect Downing Street and Julies Walk. However, the closure will only be 45-60 minutes in the morning, and the afternoon during drop off and pick-up time. Decisions are to be made by GW's School Streets Action Team, a group made up of school staff, parents/guardians, school community members and others in consultation with residents and HRM Traffic Services.

5. Will residents be able to access their home during School Street closure?

Yes, there will be traffic control barriers at each end of the street closure and local residents living within the street that is closed to traffic will be able to come and go from their homes during the closure. But, we will ask those who need to enter or leave the school street during the closure to drive at a 'walking pace' in order to keep everyone safe, and allow School Street volunteer monitors to properly alert pedestrians about the car presence and walk along with them while driving through it.

6. Will cars that are parked on the affected streets have to be moved?

No, any cars that have parking permits on the affected streets during the street closure will not need to be moved, but only those who live on the affected streets or have a valid parking permit will be allowed to enter the school street during the closure hours.

7. Will delivery trucks or visitors still be able to access the homes of the residents who live within the School Street or the school?

Yes, deliveries and visitors will be allowed to enter the street during the closure hours, but in order to minimize the amount of traffic, we will kindly ask residents to inform delivery companies of the street closure and request that they avoid those times if at all possible.

8. Will families with accessibility issues still be able to drive their children to school?

Yes, accommodations will be made for students or parents/guardians who are unable to access the school by active transportation due to physical disabilities or other valid limitations. Our School Streets Action Team will develop an exception plan to allow for this and ask that those who need special access for this reason contact us in advance to obtain a permit, so that they can drive through during the closure at walking speed along with a School Street volunteer monitor to ensure everyone's safety.

9. Will this not shift the traffic congestion issue to surrounding streets?

No, not really, based on the evidence we have from previous School Street pilots elsewhere... With a School Street program drivers can't drive all the way to the front of the school, so they need to drop off / pick up the students a block or two away from school, or park there and walk the rest. And by doing that, traffic congestion is dispersed in various directions, not just shifted from A to B. According to the results from these pilots, neighbouring streets did not show a significant increase in traffic volume or congestion, and in fact, led to reduced traffic overall.

10. How will School Streets contribute to students' understanding of road safety?

School Streets are a great opportunity for our students to learn about road safety, how to safely navigate our city streets and practice their skills. For this reason, Our School Streets Action Team will be working with our teachers and School Police Liaison Officer to deliver age-appropriate lessons as needed prior to launching the pilot. And we will also work with our School Streets Program Lead to develop area maps highlighting (a) safe drop-off/pick-up areas for parents/guardians who need to drive but are willing let their children walk or wheel part-way to school, and (b) parking zones for those who prefer not to let their children walk alone, so that they can practice those skills that will eventually lead to become mobility independent.