

GTHA ASST REGIONAL HUB MEETING

METROLINX HEAD OFFICE

UNION STATION, TORONTO

2017.04.27

WELCOME Jessica Stronghill welcomed attendees to the meeting, both present and on the phone.

RESEARCH FINDINGS Jessica introduced Professor Ron Buliung, of UTM, who was invited to share research findings made by himself, Linda Rothman, of Toronto Sick Children's Hospital, and Tim Ross, a PhD student. The title of the research is “**A Systematic Review of Factors Influencing the Decline in ASST**”.

The objectives of the study were to look at all literature on Active School Travel, to discover the reasons for the decline in AST in North America, to create a universal statement, and to show all the factors in AST decline in North America. The study synthesized the findings of 63 peer-reviewed North American articles, weeded out from 14,000 articles retrieved. It excluded European idealized cities, and focused only on quantitative papers, rather than qualitative ones. The study will be published soon on the Metrolinx ASST website.

The study was organized beginning with individuals, then social environment, built environment, and last, policy.

Individuals

Male children are more likely to use AST than female.

AST use increases with age and grade level.

Racial diversity in a school increases likelihood of AST use.

Social

Positive attitude of children toward AT increases likelihood of AST use.

Parental education has a negative correlation to children's AST use, likely because higher education indicates higher income. There is a negative correlation with household income and children's AST use.

Positive parental attitude to AST increases likelihood of children's AST use.

A question raised by the research is: Considering the fact that low-income children use AST, what is being done to facilitate their travel to school?

Built Environment

The built environment on the route to school can affect children's AST use. Wide streets, vacant lots, broken windows, highways, and traffic all affect levels of AST use. Perceptions of danger and high traffic are often different from reality. Also, “walkability” is measured in a number of different ways, in different studies.

Another question arising from the study is “Who decides the walking/busing distances?” Between 1986 and 2006, the walking distance has shortened by 50%.

Conclusions

Distance is the main deciding factor in school travel mode, though the walkable distance has shrunk over the last generation.

Densification has an impact on AST, and should be considered in the planning process.

Diversity is also an area that needs to be further studied, as it relates to AST.

Convenience is mentioned among the top five factors in several studies as a reason for not using AST, although it is complex, and not well-defined.

The way distance and environment interact is complex, and affected by multiple levels of government, as well as real estate, zoning, et cetera.

Planning needs to consider future housing developments, when deciding the future of a neighbourhood school. The importance of walkability is not fully appreciated by city planners and developers, leading to closing schools for low attendance, only to build new developments later, requiring busing for new residents' children. More forethought is needed.

Research found that children in low-income areas suffer more pedestrian-vehicle collisions, while, in the TDSB jurisdiction in particular, children from high-income areas have more crossing guards.

METROLINX UPDATE

List Serve Jessica informed the group that all members of HUB are welcome to use the list serve, with no permission required.

Metrolinx is prioritizing ASST initiatives for 2017-18. The steering committee is to prioritize GTHA-wide initiatives.

Bike-to-School-Week has registered 265 schools in the GTHA (299 schools, as of May 2) for Bike-to-School-Week. This is up from 50-60 schools at this time last year. The total for 2016 was 301 schools in the GTHA, and the total for 2015 was 144 schools.

ASST Curriculum Support Lesson Plans Kristin Schwartz reported that the sets of three grade 1, 5 and 9 lesson plans are being piloted by teachers, and the feedback is expected by the end of May. This information will be used to refine the lesson plans, and the final version of the nine lesson plans will be completed over the summer, in time for the 2017 school year. The curriculum topics to which the lesson plans are linked are Matter and Energy for grade 1, Social Studies and Civics for grade 5, and physical and health education for grade 9.

Eglinton Crosstown AST Support Project This is a project to support AST for schools along the Eglinton Crosstown LRT route, to help with students' access to school. The upcoming report will include lessons learned over the two-year project, and what can be done to support future LRT projects.

Regional Transportation Plan Review Kyle Kellam of Metrolinx reported that the review of the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan is in its final phase. A draft of the review will be presented at the end of June, with the final review being published by December, and the "how", or methods, to be presented in January of 2018. A program for ASST in the region is upcoming, which will attempt to highlight the decline in AT modeshare, as well as the need for mobility in all people, from eight to eighty years old, especially using AT. A twenty-five year vision is the goal of the updated plan. Reach out to Kyle with any ideas that may help. When asked about updated data, considering the data in the report is five years old, Kyle said that new data would be available by fall. It is hoped that the AT modeshare will be greater than 1%. It was also suggested to ask businesses to help in tracking and changing the modeshare of AT, to which Kyle replied that AT data collection is a NEED, which has been expressed.

Smart Commute Program Becky Upfold, of Smart Commute, reported that there is a new relationship with the regions, in order to integrate with the municipalities' priorities. Most money is being targeted at custom projects, while some money is held back until results are seen. Some money is being given for stations, and so on. New materials are being provided for all modes of travel, including AT.

It was pointed out that the voluntary membership of businesses has not proven to be very successful, considering very few businesses have signed up to participate in promoting AT or transit use to get employees to work.

There are also intermunicipal gaps in AT infrastructure that need to be filled, in order to create a regional cycling network.

One of the issues with Metrolinx funding is that Metrolinx can only give funding to projects that involve capital assets that Metrolinx owns. Corridor access by AT may be in the new plan.

REGIONAL PLANNING FOR SCHOOL TRAVEL UPDATE

Jessica Stronghill stated that this was begun over a year ago, in order to obtain the background data on what is being done in all six regions. The aim was to build capacity and knowledge, as well as support ASST in each region. It was also aimed at documenting all stakeholders already involved, and engage new ones.

The five steps in each region were: 1- pre-planning; 2- workshop confirmation; 3- workshop; 4- review of information; and 5- presentation of report. Metrolinx will give out the reports to the regions, and ask for and answer questions and clarifications.

The same general format was used for each region. Ryerson interviewed stakeholders, and then needs for ASST were explored, as well as methods for monitoring and evaluating progress.

After the six workshops were held between September 2016 and March 2017, the reports were created and the final individual regional reports will be given out in May 2017, along with a summary of all six regions. Jessica Stronghill will make herself available to visit each region, to help with follow-up activities.

The reports can be used in creating an action plan, and in making presentations to regional and municipal councils, for example. A Work-to-Date table can be created for each region, and could be stored on Google Drive, with a detailed list of comments. This table could be used to help the other regions, as a reference.

Yearly updates to each regional report are to be done by one or two regional representatives. Stakeholder maps will be provided, with more detail, including contact information of stakeholders. This information will belong to each individual region, not Metrolinx.

The GTHA report will be published online this September, including Ryerson research, best ASST practices, priorities, challenges, and potential indicators for measuring success. Regional reports will not be published. This will be left to the regions to publish, not on the Metrolinx website.

A steering committee will discuss the HUB, going forward.

BIKE TO SCHOOL WEEK UPDATE

Kristen Schwartz of Culture Link reported that B2SW begins on the last Monday of May, May 29 this year. Some of the aids that have been created are a downloadable poster with space for individual school name and message, 45,000 stickers (most going to Peel Region), and a large poster for the stickers to be attached to, tracking the cycling of students. It is thought that laminating a simplified AT poster and using dry-erase markers would help with costs, as it could be used for a variety of events

and activities throughout the school year, and possibly for multiple years. A draft copy of the certificate of participation was shown. This will be given to each school after Bike to School Week.

A pledge card for teachers to fill out re active school travel was discussed. Suggestions were to have teachers bike the last 2 kilometres, for example. Other jurisdictions with good ideas are:

Vancouver Bike to School Week – <https://bikehub.ca/bike-to-school>

University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center Bike to School Day – www.walkbiketoschool.org

May 2 is the official deadline for online registry. As of May 3, the number of schools signed up for B2SW is 304, surpassing last year's 301. It is expected that there will be a few late registrants.

PEEL SHOOOL BIKE PARKING PROGRAM

Brandon Quigley and Erica Duque of Region of Peel reported that 41 schools have been given bike racks so far. The first round of racks were donated by Region of Peel, with the installation being provided by the school boards. The delay in installation of some of those racks was a problem. In 2016, the whole cost was borne by the Region of Peel. The shared cost with schools was a barrier in last year's project.

The impact of giving the racks to the schools was a rise of 21% in bikes parked on school property. The importance of school champions and crossing guards was mentioned.

This year, 100 schools applied for racks, and 90 racks are planned for installation at over 60 schools in spring 2017. The installation is being done by the same vendor that the PDSB uses, while a special arrangement is being made with the DPCDSB. The installation is, by far, the most complex part of the project.

ROUND TABLE REGIONAL UPDATES

Hamilton

1 – Dr. Dennis Corr arranged a Fresh Air for Kids event, with public health monitoring the air quality around schools, using a van with air monitoring equipment in it.

2 – One school arranged a BLOCK PARTY, in which the streets around the the school were closed for one block and the students had to walk or bike a block.

Toronto

Toronto Centre for Active Transportation, a nonprofit organization, has produced a new book, “Guide to Safer Streets Near Schools”, which can be found on the TCAT website.

There will be a webinar on May 9, with ASRTS Canada. This can be promoted on social media. There is capacity for 90 callers, with 60 spots taken, so 30 are left.

Brampton

Bike Brampton has obtained a new teardrop style banner, to advertise “Do the Bright Thing - Be Heard, Be Seen, Be Predictable”, from an MTO Road Safety Challenge grant.

Niagara

Municipalities are re-forming advisory committees, to meet twice a year.

The public health nurses are starting to engage with schools re AT, but more is needed.

They are holding bike rodeos for grade five students, and offering CanBike training for adults.

Niagara Navigator <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/exploring/navigator.aspx> is producing maps for parents to find routes to school for their children.

Culturelink

Kristin Schwartz reported that they are using the Region of Peel's Bike Rodeo kit. They are developing adjustments, such as a strong evaluation system, with Ajax's teachers, and reached 11,000 students in Toronto last year. It is an all-day program. They will share these developments with the other regions.

TDSB and Culturelink have a safety and cycling promo, with 61 schools involved.

Ontario EcoSchools

Eleanor Waslander said that next year's focus will be well-being. EcoSchools acts as a resource, or network connector. Next year, EcoSchools will be connecting to local organizations and events.

EcoSchools' Twitter links are available and should be shared. EcoSchools will be encouraging school boards to set targets, rather than mandating participation. However, mandating increases reciprocal support among schools and the boards. Many schools are submitting applications for ASST. Better data collection will be available, with more participants, and better collection methods.

Eleanor is willing to share data.

CAA

Christine asked for submissions of proposals for the School Safety Conference in Toronto on October 2. The deadline is May 15.

Region of Peel

Other upcoming events are PEYA's Amazing Green Race and the Peel Children's Water Festival.