



## Solving the Physical Inactivity Health Crisis in Peel through Active Transportation

12/4/2014

11:45 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Brampton Safe City Association Board Room – 16 George Street North, Brampton

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**Attendees:** Suzanne Nurse - Peel District School Board, Kathy McDonald - Peel District School Board, Monica Irwin - Peel Health, Catherine Sim - Peel Health, Erica Duque- Peel Active Transportation, Wayne Chan - Peel Active Transportation, Larry Zacher -Brampton Safe City, Michele Robinson - City of Brampton Public Services, Kevin Minaker - City of Brampton Infrastructure Services, Patti Comeau-Young - Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board, Lorenzo Melé - Peel Region Health, David Laing – Brampton Bicycle Advisory Committee, Dayle Laing – Brampton Bicycle Advisory Committee, Pauline Thornham – Brampton Bicycle Advisory Committee, Bill McBain – Heart and Stroke Foundation

## Workshop #1 Problems, Programs and Opportunities

### Background

#### We know that:

- over 90% of school aged children in Peel Region are insufficiently active
- this inactivity contributes significantly to serious health challenges and risks for our youth
- cycling and/or walking to school can contribute significantly to daily activity levels
- the number of children engaging in active transportation continues to decline
- there are tools and programs which have been used successfully to reverse the trend
- it will take resources and sustained commitment to achieve long-term significant and sustainable results.

#### Task 1:

As a team, agree on a description of the problem we are trying to solve and summarize it in one or two sentences below.

#### Response:

The problem we are trying to solve is that we have inactive children and a culture of inactivity; we have engineered away activity from our lives. A number of perceived/ real obstacles prevent parents from allowing their children to use AT to go to school.

### ***Perceived Obstacles***

- Lack of amenities in the built environment,
- Lack of safety,
- Peer pressure among parents,
- Lack of time.

### ***Real Barriers***

Changing lifestyles over the last forty or fifty years mean it is now more common for both parents to be working outside the home, making students' school travel compete with parents' commuting. A whole culture shift in activity levels is needed, through a conscious effort, to improve the health of our children and our society.

### **Task 2:**

As a team, agree on the priority for solving this problem.

#### **Response:**

LOW: 0" MEDIUM: 0 " **HIGH: 2 groups\*** **CRITICAL: 1 group**

\* the rating was not "critical" in one group, because it is perceived there are not present deaths, but only predictions of future early deaths.

### **Task 3:**

As a team list one major action that is being done today to solve this problem.

#### **Response:**

We are gathering to address a strategy amongst the important stakeholders, to develop programs that are sustainable and that will become a way of life, with long-term goals and outcomes.

Evidence is being collected and collated from literature by various agencies and organizations, to show recent health and AT trends, and to report on best practices.

The Region of Peel is running a School Travel Planning pilot program. **It was agreed by those present, that this would be the most valuable first step for all schools.**

### **Task 4:**

As a team, agree on the answer to the following question. Is enough being done today to solve this problem?"

#### **Response:**

YES: 0" **NO: 3** - all groups agreed

### **Task 5:**

As a team, describe the best opportunity to solve the problem in one or two sentences.

### **Response:**

The best opportunity to solve the problem is to develop coordination and collaboration to “break the wall”, as in the anti-smoking campaign. Many small actions done by many different groups, will chip away at the problem until, like the Berlin Wall, it suddenly crumbles.

**We need top-down AND bottom-up strategies.**

### **Top down Strategies,**

Ontario Government, the residents of Ontario need to make it a policy to mandate cooperation among stakeholders. For a start, have the Ministries of Health/Education make it a priority. Secondly, we need a provincial policy that schools develop and implement school travel plans.

**Municipal Governments**, It is noted that the major factor in reduction of smoking was the enactment of municipal bylaws, so the **municipal level is a key driver in changing social behaviour**.

### **Bottom up Strategies**

Various **local organizations and stakeholders** need to **link AT to academic success**, in the minds of all stakeholders, in order to help give it the emphasis it requires. If we also create a financial link to using AT, in the minds of the public, it may give a further incentive to make the necessary changes in activity and lifestyle. We need to educate the public re safety concerns, emphasizing the positive value of AT, versus the risks.

We need to **include a student voice in our organizations**, to make sure that the concerns and barriers of youth are addressed, for example: “My bike will be stolen.” “Wearing a bike helmet isn’t cool.” “Where I park my bike, the school door is locked.”

**These actions will begin to normalize AT, and make it sustainable.**

## **Workshop #2 Barrier Identification**

### **Whole Group Task:**

Brainstorm the barriers standing in the way of achieving a sustainable long-term solution to the problem that the group has agreed upon. Write down the top 3 barriers below.

### **Response:**

The three top priorities are:

- I.     It is **too convenient for parents to drive their children to school**, and the alternatives are not convenient enough. Time is a large part of convenience, and hurried parents want to be assured that their children are getting safely to school. Their view is that it is easiest to drive them there themselves.
- II.    There is a **general lack of understanding of the level of risk of AT, versus its rewards**. The REAL rewards and risks of AT haven’t been shared with the public.

- III. **Parental perception of the safety of using AT** to get to school is a big barrier to AT. The perceived risks have been heightened by media reporting of incidents.

## Workshop #3 Action Planning

### Whole Group Task:

Brainstorm the high level tasks that need to be done to resolve the three prioritized barriers identified by the whole group.

#### Note: Who are those stakeholders who aren't represented at this meeting?

- Students
- Ward Councillors for the cities
- School Principals
- School board staff – PDSB, School Board Trustees -- DPCDSB

### What Can We Do?

- We can reach out to students, to inform them about the virtues of AT, as well as the health and other issues around vehicular travel to school. Then the students will be able to influence their parents about making healthy lifestyle choices in getting to school.
- We can address faith groups, who have a large influence in Peel Region, both in numbers and ability to change behaviour.
- We can call for school travel plans at all schools in Peel Region.
- We can make contact with school councils, with the intent of speaking directly to parents about the virtues of AT.
- We can investigate the Trillium Foundation's program of giving bikes to kids, as an incentive.
- We can arrange focus groups with parents, through schools, community organizations or faith groups to help communicate risks vs benefits of AT, the importance of the AT, the link between AT and academic performance as well as health and the economic impact of both.

### ONE SINGLE THING:

We will form a subcommittee of Peel Safe and Active Routes to Schools (PSARTS), to focus on AT to school, including representatives from the school boards, faith groups, students and parents.

Reconvene as this group in the Spring of 2015.