

# Walking and Wheeling to School: A parent engagement strategy

SUSTAIN 3S03: Implementing Sustainable Change



The Daily School Route's logo, drawn by students at Strathcona Elementary School using chalk during the street activation event on October 25th, 2023.

Photo Credit: Eden Cassidy



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## Overview

Transportation accounts for over a quarter of carbon emissions in Canada, contributing to global warming.[1] Additionally, 62% of Canadian youth are not getting their daily recommended amount of physical activity.[3] Active school travel will reduce carbon emissions while promoting youth's physical activity, mental health, and development of social connections.[2]

In Hamilton, up to 40% of students within walking distance at some schools are driven daily.[7] Therefore, the Daily School Route (DSR) collaborates with school communities to increase active travel. One strategy is to engage students in 'activating' their routes to school with sidewalk chalk and working with parents to support safe active travel. The DSR collaborated with two SUSTAIN 3S03 teams, the other team focused on leading an activation event and our team focused on parent engagement. The goal of our project was to engage parents/guardians to use alternative drop-off locations and encourage their child's daily active travel to school.

## Objectives

1. Discover current travel routines and sentiments around active transportation.
2. Compare usage of active modes pre and post activation event.
3. Inspire change in travel behaviour through championing active transportation.

## Reporting

For our first objective, we conducted car counts one week before the activation event to evaluate the travel habits of Strathcona students. Data collection involved tallying the number of vehicles entering the school zone each morning. To ensure accuracy, we took data points from three drop-off locations by the school and analyzed sentiments related to active travel by examining the results of a hands-up survey in the classroom.

For our second objective, we conducted a comparative analysis by examining pre- and post-event surveys distributed to parents through email. The same survey was given a week before and a week after the event to assess changes in experiences and perspectives. Additionally, we performed car counts a week after the event to assess the event's effectiveness. A notable increase in active travel and alternative drop-off use was found following the street activation team's event.

For our last objective, we engaged with students directly at the street activation event through facilitating the group chalking experience. Afterwards, we created a post-event infographic for the Strathcona community summarizing the event and detailing the benefits of active travel. We co-authored a [Daily News article](#) publicly highlighting the event's success. We collaborated with the street activation team to create a step-by-step toolkit to host a street activation event and parent engagement strategy. We shared our toolkit on the DSR's website with the goal to inspire school communities across Hamilton to engage students as leaders and support parents as champions of daily active school travel.

## Collaborators

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