

# ONTARIO ACTIVE SCHOOL TRAVEL SURVEY



Early in 2021, the HEALab worked with Green Communities Canada and Ontario Active School Travel (OAST) to conduct a policy scan of existing by-laws, regulations, programs and policies at school board and municipal level to better understand how they affect students ability to travel actively. The results of this policy scan were used to create a qualitative survey to ask parents, community members and other professionals their opinions on where current gaps exist and how they propose that they can be filled. The results were coded and will be used to guide interviews with key stakeholders and provide further recommendations regarding how to make AST a more viable option for families in Ontario.

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## POLICY SCAN BACKGROUND

The OAST Policy scan consisted of the analysis and recording of 317 and 347 school board and municipal policies respectively. The objective of the policy scan was to identify the policies and procedures that affect students' choice of transportation to/from school to provide evidence-based recommendations for policies to support and promote the use of active school travel (AST) by Ontario students.

## PARTICIPANTS

**Parents**  
**School Staff & Admin**  
**Student transportation consortia**  
**Provincial officials**

**Municipal officials**  
**Public health officials**  
**Emergency services**  
**Researchers**

## SOCIALPILOT

Using social pilot, a multitude of tweets tagging different organizations accounts from all across Ontario were created. The purpose of these tweets was to inform potential participants of our survey and ensure we reached people not just locally, but all across the province.

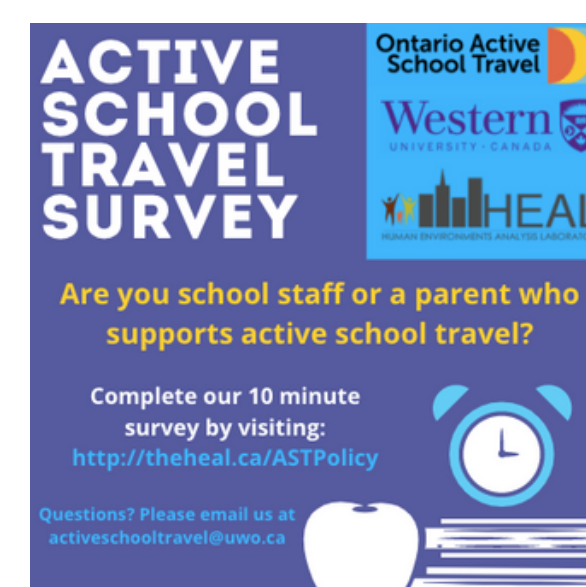
## TWITTER

Social Media was used as the primary means of communication about the study as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The HEALab's twitter account was used to distribute the link and target the different demographics that we were hoping would participate.



## POSTERS

Multiple promotional posters were created in order to bring attention to the survey. When creating these digital posters to be distributed on social media, it was important to take into account using the appropriate colours, fonts and graphics to ensure representation and easy comprehension of the material for all.



Three of the OAST Survey promotional posters that were used (created by me).

## SURVEY

In total, there were 455 survey responses submitted, and 265 of these were not complete. The survey consisted of 4 main questions to identify how they are involved with AST, what organization they are involved with and to understand how important it is to improve existing policies to create a more supportive policy environment for AST in a variety of policy areas. Later sections asked for participants to elaborate on their concerns for the areas they indicated were of high priority.

## TAGUETTE

Using the qualitative research tool Taguette, the completed survey responses were coded using a series of predetermined categories per each question. Sorting the responses into these categories helped to clean the data and make clear what types of policy each participant was addressing and their comments.

Some of these categories included:

- Pick up/drop off times and points
- Inclement weather conditions and school cancellation policies
- Accessibility of sidewalks
- Planning for sustainability

## NEXT STEPS...

The next steps for this project include publishing our findings and going forward with the stakeholder interviews. Although planned to take place this summer, these interviews will now happen in the fall. The information collected from this research project will be very helpful in identifying changes that can be made to make AST an option for more Ontario school aged children. This is important because using AST is linked to increased health and wellbeing (Wilson et. al, 2018). Active school travel is also a form of clean transportation that helps to limit pollution that contributes to climate change (Gilliland et al., 2019)..

## REFERENCES

Wilson, Katherine & Clark, Andrew & Gilliland, Jason. (2018). Understanding child and parent perceptions of barriers influencing children's active school travel. BMC Public Health. 18. 10.1186/s12889-018-5874-y.

Gilliland J, Maltby M, Xu X, Luginaah I, Loebach J, Shah T. (2019) Is active travel a breath of fresh air? Examining children's exposure to air pollution during the school commute. Spat Spatiotemporal Epidemiol. 10.1016/j.sste.2019.02.004.