

Ontario Active School Travel Parent Engagement Tools

Request for Proposal

October 2021



Summary of the Opportunity

Green Communities Canada (GCC) is seeking a marketing and communications provider/professional(s) who will undertake a project to develop, test and evaluate new social marketing messages, tools and tactics targeting parents who drive their children to school. The goal will be to develop a Communications Kit that will be effective in modifying the attitudes and behaviors of these parents in favour of active transportation options for school trips.

About Green Communities Canada

[Green Communities Canada](#) (GCC) is a national association of community-based environmental organizations working together for a vibrant, equitable and sustainable future. GCC's mission is to connect community-based climate action groups through a national network to share resources, inspire innovative programming, and elevate collective impact.

GCC has been a leading organization [promoting active and sustainable school transportation](#) for over two decades. GCC developed and maintains the [Canadian School Travel Planning Toolkit](#) and currently operates [Ontario Active School Travel](#) (OAST), a provincial framework that delivers research, advocacy, training, educational resources, knowledge events, partnerships, and on-the-ground programming. Launched by GCC in 2017, OAST is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education and has established a [deep and wide network of partners in Ontario's school transportation sector](#).

Background

Decline of Active School Travel

Today only 21% of Canadian children and youth, aged 5 to 19, typically walk or wheel to school compared to 48% in 1969¹. As the rate of Active School Travel (AST) has declined there has been a corresponding rise in the number of children and youth being driven to school in private vehicles.

This increase in traffic volumes within school zones has resulted in problems related to children's health and safety including:

- Unsafe school zones due to traffic congestion and unsafe driver behaviours
- Reduced physical activity
- Increased air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions
- A growing burden on school staff

For more background on making the case for Active School Travel visit our [website](#)

School Travel Planning

In response to this problem, Green Communities Canada (GCC) developed [School Travel Planning \(STP\)](#), a community-based model that uses education, encouragement, engineering and enforcement measures to systematically address barriers to, and incentives for, active transportation. Through STP, school and community stakeholders collaborate to create and implement school-level action plans to address ongoing transportation

¹ Davison, Kirsten; Werder, Jessica; Lawson, Catherine. "Children's active commuting to school: current knowledge and future directions". Preventing Chronic Disease Public Health Research, Practice and Policy. Vol. 5 no. 3 July 2008

and traffic safety issues and to increase the number of students using active modes of travel for all or part of the journey to school. Over the last decade, GCC and its municipal, public health, education and non-profit partners have successfully implemented STP at hundreds of schools in more than 50 communities across Ontario.

Notwithstanding the overall effectiveness of STP in strengthening local commitment to AST and generating some increases in rates of walking and cycling, a strong consensus has emerged among key stakeholders that **resistance to change among parents who choose to drive their children to school remains an ongoing and very significant barrier to renormalizing AST**. Moreover, school zone traffic is expected to worsen as a result of COVID-19 related changes to school busing services that are likely to result in more children being driven to school.

The Metrolinx Study

In late 2018 [Metrolinx](#) commissioned [The Strategic Counsel](#) to undertake a qualitative study to better understand the resistance of parents to utilizing AST and the perceived barriers to changing their behaviour (**Appendix A**). It included 13 first-of-their-kind focus groups involving parents/guardians from across the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area who normally drive their elementary-aged children to school. The study revealed several key perceived convenience and safety barriers amongst these parents.

- Drivers believe it is easier, more time efficient, and more convenient to drive than walk or bike.
- While most recognize the health and environmental advantages of AST, the disadvantages of walking to school are more specific, tangible, and compelling and “overpower” the advantages.
- Parents recognize that school zone traffic during drop off times is often chaotic and dangerous; however, they do not see themselves as causing the problem.

One of the key recommendations of this study was to *develop strong and emotionally driven messaging targeting parents to disrupt their current mindset and trigger a parental ‘rethink’ about school traffic congestion*.

Parent Engagement Working Group

Additional research and analysis carried out between 2018-20 by the **Parent Engagement Working Group** of the [Ontario Active School Travel Council](#) concluded that:

- There is a clear gap regarding emotional messaging and related tools in current AST programming in Ontario, including the School Travel Planning toolkit
- There are no strong examples of this type of messaging or approach in other North American jurisdictions
- Messaging would be best developed, tested and refined using a community-based social marketing (CBSM) approach

This research included commissioning a report from Jay Kassirer of Cullbridge Marketing & Communications (**Appendix A**) to review and comment on the Working Group’s research as well as outline the broad parameters of a CBSM pilot project.

Objective

GCC is seeking to build on the research findings to date and take the next step toward developing effective messaging using a CBSM approach.

The objective of the project is to develop a comprehensive and effective **Parent Engagement Communications Kit** that can be used by Public Health Units, School Boards, Municipalities and other regional student transportation stakeholders in Ontario. The Kit will include a suite of social marketing messages, together with graphics, images, tools and tactics that will effectively target and engage parents who drive their children to school, with the goal of disrupting their current mindset and triggering a parental 'rethink' about school traffic congestion.

The **Parent Engagement Communications Kit** should be developed with input from regional student transportation stakeholders and should under-go audience testing e.g. focus groups or interviews with parents prior to being finalised. The finished Kit must be provided in both English and French versions. GCC will make the new Communications Kit available to its active school travel (AST) partners across Ontario and beyond for broader adoption.

Target Audience

Parents of children who live within their school walk zones but drive their children to and/or from school most of the time.

Scope of Work

The following is a list of the proposed activities, deliverables and approximate timelines for the project. These can be further adapted and expanded upon in the proposal from the consultant(s). The overall timeframe for the project is 1 November 2021 – 31 March 2022 (20 Weeks). All tasks and deliverables must be completed and invoiced by 31 March 2022.

Ref.	Activities	Deliverables
1	Formative research and project planning: November 2021 (4 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Validate the qualitative findings of Metrolinx's GTA-based study by testing the relative strength of barriers/motivators through a quantitative survey of GCC's AST partners in communities across Ontario.• Develop SMART objectives, message testing mechanisms, evaluation design.•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brief summary of findings.• Refinements to proposed project work plan based on findings.• Evaluation Plan, based on findings.
2	Develop draft Parent Engagement Communications Kit: December - January (8 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop new marketing messages and tools for target audience, to include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Message content○ Images and graphics to pair with messages○ Guidelines/Tips/Recommendations for use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Parent Engagement Communications Kit

Ref.	Activities	Deliverables
3	Testing and refinement of Kit: February - March (8 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience Testing of draft Communications Kit through surveys, focus groups and other appropriate methods as identified by consultant Updates and adjustments to the kit in response to testing results French Translation of finalised Communications Kit Knowledge transfer: summary presentation as part of a 1hr public webinar hosted by GCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of Audience Testing Results Final copy of Parent Engagement Communications Kit (English and French Versions). To include editable versions of the Kit contents (e.g., word documents for text and vector (.eps, .ai, or .idd) files for graphics). Live public webinar presentation

Budget

Up to \$30,000 is available for this project. This must be inclusive of all graphic design and translation sub-contractors, as well as all costs associated with running focus groups or other workshops. If the consultant is not able to complete all parts of this contract, a reasonable portion of the available budget needs to be reserved for the remaining services (e.g. translation).

Proposal Requirements

The written proposal should not exceed 10 pages total (including references) and must include:

- 1) Proposed Work Plan for the project including activities, timelines and support required from GCC
- 2) Demonstrated understanding of the requirements of the project and rationale for proposed approach
- 3) Budget for the project including consultant fees and expenses
- 4) Description of consultant's relevant experience and expertise
- 5) Short biography for each of the staff who will be involved in the project
- 6) References (2-3) from similar projects

Proposals should be submitted in electronic format to Nicole Roach at nroach@greencommunitiescanada.org by 4pm on Wednesday 3rd November 2021.

Appendix A – Background Materials

- [Qualitative Research: Active and Passive Transportation Barriers](https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Metrolinx-Qualitative-Presentation-Active-and-Passive-Transportation-Barriers-April-172018-FINAL.pdf) (The Strategic Counsel)
<https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Metrolinx-Qualitative-Presentation-Active-and-Passive-Transportation-Barriers-April-172018-FINAL.pdf>
- [Engaging Non-Supportive Parents in Active School Travel](https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Engaging-Non-Supportive-Parents-in-AST-Cullbridge-Marketing-April-2020.pdf) (Cullbridge Marketing & Communications)
<https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Engaging-Non-Supportive-Parents-in-AST-Cullbridge-Marketing-April-2020.pdf>