



Bikeabout Instructions

Bikeabout description & purpose

A Bikeabout allows stakeholders to experience first-hand what it is like to cycle on the routes to school. This optional data collection tool can cover areas further away from the school compared to walkabouts. It provides insights into cycling-specific problem areas and informs the cycling portion of the Action Plan. Bikeabouts can be especially useful at schools where most students live 2-3 km away from the school.

The Bikeabout process includes both a group bike ride around the neighbourhood and a debriefing session indoors immediately following the ride. The debriefing session will include brainstorming of solutions that may become part of the Action Plan. It will take approximately 2 hours for the whole process, depending on the length of the route and the number of stops.

Bikeabout timing

A Bikeabout would be conducted as part of the baseline data collection so that its results can be considered during the development of the Action Plan. Additional Bikeabouts may be conducted later in the STP process to review progress/changes to the routes over time or to examine new cycling routes that have been identified through the STP work since the first Bikeabout.

How to organize a Bikeabout

The STP Facilitator will take the lead to organize the Bikeabout.

Well in advance of the Bikeabout:

- Set the date and time. Municipal politicians have very busy schedules, so approach them first and choose a date/time based on their availability—experience shows that a better response is likely if the invitation comes directly from the school. (Getting a municipal politician to attend the Bikeabout is important as his/her presence increases the profile of the STP project and builds political support at the beginning of the process.) Be mindful of participants' ability and comfort level to ride in different types of weather. Unless the group is very experienced, you'll want to plan for a day in relatively warm, dry weather. Identifying a back-up/rain date is always a good idea. Although participants without a bike cannot participate in the group ride, they can participate in the debrief meeting after.
- Arrange meeting space for the debrief session (e.g., school library or meeting room).



Bikeabout Instructions and Checklist

●—Circulate an invitation to all stakeholders. (See page 9 for a sample email invitation.) Ideally the following people should participate:

- o Municipal transportation engineering/planning (preferably municipal staff who work on cycling infrastructure)
 - o Police or bylaw services
 - o Municipal council, i.e. councillor
 - o Public Health professionals
 - o Cycling advocacy groups
 - o School board/district
 - o Parents
 - o School staff
- Be sure to invite some students as well, to provide a child’s perspective of the route.
 - Track RSVPs.
 - Identify the route and key areas to highlight based on input from the school, as they know the neighbourhood well and will identify ‘hot spots.’ Baseline Family Survey input is helpful too; as is input from the transportation department, police or bylaw officers and the local municipal councillor.
 - Coordinate the creation of a map to use during the Bikeabout, showing the route you will take with key issues highlighted.

The week before the Bikeabout:

- Prepare the materials that will be used during the Bikeabout: (1) a few copies of the map and the Bikeabout Checklist on pages 6-7 to hand out to the designated note-takers and (2) one copy of the Brainstorming Actions page (on page 8).
- Coach the Principal and any other stakeholders that will be sharing introductory information at the beginning of the Bikeabout, e.g., help them summarize issues and traffic/injury data.
- Arrange for someone to bring a bicycle toolkit on the day of the Bikeabout (see right).

On the day of the Bikeabout:

- Bring a camera and take photos at each stop. A bike-mounted camera would be ideal.
- Bring the printed materials and some pencils/pens.

Sample Bicycle Toolkit Items

- Pump
- Allen keys
- Torx keys
- Screwdriver heads
- Chain tool
- Extra inner tube and lever
- Adjustable wrench
- Lubricant
- Sturdy pliers
- Patch kit
- Walkie talkies (for larger groups)
- Reflective vests
- Whistle
- First aid kit



How to Lead a Bikeabout

Before the group ride:

1. Ask participants to inspect their bicycles and to make sure they are safe to ride.
2. Start by having the Principal or parent representative give the group an overview of the traffic and safety issues they have while biking. Have municipal staff update the group on any relevant historical data, e.g., recent traffic counts, what has been tried in the past, etc.
3. Have stakeholders introduce themselves very briefly and mention how often they bike and their years of cycling experience.
4. Explain the route and the stop areas.
5. Remind participants to follow all road rules and use signals for turning and stopping. Ask if anyone has any questions about the rules and signals; provide answers as needed.

Remind any participating students **riding on the sidewalk** that they must remember to:

- look out for vehicles when passing driveways and parking lots;
- slow down for pedestrians; and
- get off and walk their bikes across any intersections.

If there are any sidewalk closures along the route, students should look, then switch to the road with the rest of the group when it is safe to do so.

6. Remind participants to “look” and “communicate” in order for the group to stay together in a safe manner.
 - Look for oncoming traffic, potholes, construction, parked vehicles, pedestrians and other concerns.
 - Communicate: In addition to giving hand signals, participants can relay messages to the person in front or behind them to notify the group of upcoming stops or issues. Participants who hear the message must repeat it to the person in front or behind them.
7. Explain that you will be riding single file with less-experienced riders near the front of the group. Tell participants that during the ride they need to leave enough space between themselves and the person in front of them that is big enough to fit another cyclist. The STP Facilitator may want to ride at the back of the group to make sure no one is left behind and have a teacher or other keen representative from the school committee take the lead. Or, the Facilitator may choose to go at the front and lead, with police stakeholders at the back.
8. Decide who will be the designated note-taker(s) when you stop, and give them a copy of the Bikeabout Checklist and a pencil/pen.



During the group ride:

1. Ride single file following the planned route, stopping at the predetermined areas of concern. Remember to signal when approaching stop areas and to wait for the rest of the group. Make sure that no one gets left behind as you ride.
2. At each stop, discuss what you see using the Bikeabout Checklist (pages 6 & 7). Ensure the designated note-taker is recording the discussion, and perhaps take additional notes yourself. Take photos to accompany the notes. Capture areas of concern as well as inspiring examples of bicycle-friendly infrastructure and amenities you see. Encourage others to take photos as well if they have their phones with them.
3. Once the route has been completed, return to the school for the debrief discussion. Make sure all bikes are securely stored before you head inside.

How to lead the debrief session

- Collect completed checklists from the note-taker(s). Ask which participants took photos during the ride and make a mental note of who did (in case follow up is necessary). Instruct those who took photos to share them to you immediately after the Bikeabout.
- Go through the main issues identified during the Bikeabout, one by one, brainstorming potential solutions for addressing each, e.g., ideas for infrastructure improvements, identification of best routes. You may want to use the “Brainstorming Actions” page to record what is discussed.

TIP: Trust the Experts. During this task, remind participants that this is strictly a brainstorming exercise at this point. Encourage creativity and don't get 'attached' to your ideas, particularly if the stakeholder who would have expertise in a particular area is not present for the discussion. The brainstormed list from this discussion will be used as the starting point for developing the Action Plan later. Be open to the possibility that an even better solution may be possible, or a compromise might be necessary based on limited resources.

There are some additional questions you may want to discuss during the debriefing; these are important cycling-related topics that should be considered, but may not have come up during the ride itself.

- Families' access to bikes and equipment: Do students have trouble obtaining bikes and/or cycling accessories? Are there affordable bike rentals or bike sharing systems? Is there anywhere nearby where families can get their bikes fixed or maintained? Is there bike storage space at residences or at key places of interest in the community?
- Mobility needs: Are there any facilities suitable for families with strollers attached to their bikes, people who ride tandem bikes (often used by people who are blind), or children with Down syndrome who may ride conventional bikes or adjusted bikes?

Immediately after the debrief session

Optional for the Facilitator only: Do a quick revisit of the route immediately after the discussion to take photos of other observations mentioned.



Tasks for after the Bikeabout

1. Write and distribute a Bikeabout Summary Report (i.e., minutes with photos) in a timely manner. We suggest including the following information in that report:
 - School name
 - Date of Bikeabout
 - Weather during Bikeabout
 - List of participants
 - Description of methodology/procedure
 - Map of route
 - Overview of findings—this might include the “Brainstorming Actions” page as well as photos of key areas of concern
2. Pull out key highlights from the Bikeabout Summary Report and include them in the “Travel Challenges Summary” section of the School Travel Plan. Some schools include the entire summary report as an appendix in their School Travel Plan.



Bikeabout Checklist

School Name: _____

Location (i.e., stop on the group ride): _____

Note-taker name: _____

At the School Site

Bicycle facilities

- Y N Are there bike racks? How many racks? _____ How many spots per rack approx.? _____
- Y N Are they secure?
- Y N Are they sheltered?
- Y N Is there potential for conflict with vehicles when accessing the bike storage area?

In Areas Surrounding School Site

Share the road

- Y N Is there space on the road for bicycles?
- Y N Are there bike paths or lanes suitable for families?
- Y N Are best cycle routes identified? (either by school or city signs)
If yes, what kind? _____
- Y N Is there heavy and/or fast traffic?
- Y N Are there many trucks and/or buses?
- Y N Is the possibility of dooring a concern?
- Y N Are there many vehicles crossing the bike's space or lane?

Surface (check all that apply)

- Potholes, broken pavement
- Debris (e.g., glass, sand)
- Dangerous drain grates
- Uneven surface
- Slippery when wet



Bikeabout Instructions and Checklist

Intersection

- Y N Is there a crossing guard during school morning and afternoon travel times?
- Y N Is traffic visible, i.e., no obstructions?
- Y N Are there clear sight lines around corners and roundabouts, i.e., no blind corners?
- Y N Is there a crossing signal for pedestrians or cyclists?
- Y N Is there a push button for cyclists to cross, or activation without pushing something?
- Y N Are there pavement markings for crossing?
- Y N Is there a cyclist waiting area?

Drivers (check all that apply)

- Drove too fast
- Passed too close
- Did not signal
- Cut off cyclist
- Ran stop signs

Overall ease of route

Describe any other environmental issues that you observe (e.g., scary dogs, steep hills, streetcar tracks, construction hazards)?

Are there direct routes? Safe off-road trails? People out and about?





Brainstorming Actions

Issues and Possible Solutions: For each stop on your group ride, list the issues you are most concerned about below. Then, brainstorm possible solutions for each and make note of your best ideas in the table. Keep your options open at this stage by listing several potential solutions if you have multiple ideas, or noting a general idea rather than a specific solution.

Location	Issue(s)	Potential Solutions

Sample Email Announcement

The sample email below can be used to notify committee members of the Bikeabout (after the school has confirmed the date/time with the municipal councillor). Have the school send this invitation to the police and elected representatives, as experience shows this to be most effective. STP Facilitators can contact the other stakeholders. (Another option is to extend invitations by phone.) You may wish to send the map and checklist for the Bikeabout along with this invitation, if it is ready in time. Alternatively, the route can be discussed with stakeholders upon arrival for the Bikeabout.

SUBJECT: Invitation to the <insert school name> Bikeabout

Dear <insert committee member name>:

As part of the School Travel Planning process, <insert school name> will be hosting a Bikeabout to identify the challenges and opportunities for biking to school. Participating in this step will provide a critical opportunity for you to learn first-hand about the biking experiences of students and their families. Direct observation of the common/potential bike routes and key areas of concern will help you prepare for participating in the development of the Action Plan.

When?

The Bikeabout for has been scheduled for <insert date and start & approx. end time (allow 2 hrs)>.

What to Expect?

We will meet as a group <insert starting point, e.g. by the main office inside the school> then bike a predetermined route through the neighbourhood around the school that will highlight areas of concern. The cycling tour will be followed by a debriefing session where we will discuss the issues we've just seen and brainstorm some potential short- to long-term solutions to address them. The debriefing session will be held in <insert location, e.g. the library>.

All participants in the group ride must have a bicycle in working order and a bell or horn. Participants must also wear comfortable, close-toed shoes and should dress appropriately for the weather. Participants are strongly encouraged to wear a helmet as well. During the group ride, everyone will need to follow all road rules and use signals for turning and stopping. If you'd like a quick refresher on cycling road rules before the Bikeabout, check out this short video: <https://vimeo.com/73511085>.

If you do not have appropriate gear for the ride or are unable to participate in that part of the Bikeabout for any reason, you are still welcome to join us for the debrief session which will begin at approximately <insert time>.

RSVP



Bikeabout Instructions and Checklist

Please RSVP to <insert STP Facilitator email address> by <insert deadline>. If you are unable to attend personally, please try to arrange for a colleague to participate in your place.