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**To: General Committee**

**Date of Meeting: October 6, 2015**

**Prepared by: Matthew Sweet,  
Transportation Demand Management  
Coordinator**

<b>Subject: School Travel Planning Policy</b>
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**Approved by: George Elliott, City Engineer  
Department: Development & Infrastructure**

**Date to Sr. Mgmt. Team: September 30, 2015**

**File No.:**

**Ward No.: ALL**

**Recommendation:**

THAT Report 15-041(TPW), regarding a School Travel Planning Policy, be received;

AND THAT Council approve the School Travel Planning Policy as outlined in Appendix A of Report 15-041(TPW).

**Background:**

What is School Travel Planning? Why is it important?

School Travel Planning is a comprehensive process designed to increase local ownership of Active & Safe Routes to School by engaging stakeholders that include school boards, municipal transportation planners and engineers, public health, police, parents, students and school staff. School Travel Planning undertakes research to assess the barriers to active school travel and uses this knowledge to develop and implement action plans. The involvement of local stakeholders is an important step to ensuring the sustainability of active school travel activities. Benefits include increased physical activity, reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, enhanced neighbourhood safety and a greater sense of community.

(Source, SafeRoutestoSchool.ca)

In 2014/15 the City of Cambridge Transportation Section in partnership with Region of Waterloo Public Health and the Waterloo Region District School Board, was involved in

a School Travel Planning (STP) project funded by a Healthy Community Partnerships Grant. The partnership was an extension of the Active and Safe Routes to School Committee. ASRTS has been in existence since 2002 as an ongoing collaboration and has worked to increase active travel to school through a variety of initiatives.

Two Cambridge schools, namely, Manchester and Silverheights Public Schools were among the four schools in Waterloo Region to undergo an accelerated STP exercise facilitated by Sustainable Waterloo Region (SWR). Further funding from the Automotive Recyclers of Canada in 2015 will allow SWR to continue to work with these schools and pilot test their TravelWise@School program aimed at implementing school travel action plans. Their goal is to see a 5% average reduction in driving across all four schools in one year.

Transportation staff responds to numerous school-related traffic concerns every year. School-based traffic accounts for a significant proportion of peak period automobile travel on Cambridge roadways. As such, school travel planning represents an important TDM (Transportation Demand Management) measure. Reducing school-based auto trips can significantly reduce local congestion. At the school site itself, traffic can be managed as long as volumes remain at acceptable levels. Generally, more students are able to walk to school than currently do, based on distance to school and available infrastructure. The fact that rates of walking are at historic lows necessitates a holistic, long-term approach to change travel behaviours.

**Existing Policy/By-Law:**

N/A

**Financial Impact:**

School Travel Planning is a decision making model, rather than an additional program requiring extensive resources. The goal of School Travel Planning is to bring together stakeholders to focus on school-based traffic and travel efforts cohesively.

The day-to-day work involved in the School Travel Planning policy will be absorbed as part of the regular traffic investigations work of the Transportation group. The TDM Coordinator will ultimately assume responsibility for investigating school-based traffic concerns and recommend a standard traffic engineering response or a School Travel Planning response. Facilitation of any School Travel Plan action planning processes will be incorporated into the work plan of the TDM Coordinator.

Note that a grant from the Cambridge North Dumfries Community Foundation has already been received to support / subsidize cycling education as an option for applicable STP schools in 2015/16.

## **Public Input:**

N/A

## **Internal/External Consultation:**

Region of Waterloo Public Health will provide direct support to the program by assisting with data collection and will provide ethics review with the Public and Catholic School Boards, which will allow the City to utilize the data collected and share it with the participating schools.

The Waterloo Region District School Board and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board will offer support by providing school-specific information, by providing advice and guidance with respect to each school, and by facilitating communications between schools and City staff.

The other lower tier municipalities in Waterloo Region will provide advice and best practices gathered over several years of work in Active and Safe Routes to School and in previous iterations of School Travel Planning work.

## **Comments/Analysis:**

Currently, upon receipt of a traffic concern, the Transportation group initiates a traffic investigation, which reviews signage, sightlines, collision history, speed data, etc. At school sites, the results of the investigations are typically either no changes, or more restrictions on traffic (e.g., No Parking signage and enforcement) without corresponding improvements / encouragements for active travel. As such, it is recommended that School Travel Planning be the preferred approach for schools requesting resolution to traffic issues.

The existing City policies and established warrants will continue to be followed to address traffic and safety concerns if these concerns are not related to School Travel Planning.

Based on the above discussion, a policy has been created to address School Travel Planning requests, which have been defined as any requests related to active transportation to/from school or requests to manage congestion in front of school properties. Staff can use these requests to justify the School Travel Planning approach and implementation of traffic signs (e.g., stop signs, No Parking signs), crossing guards and infrastructure improvements (i.e. sidewalks) to encourage safe, healthy, and active travel to and from school. The policy is attached as Appendix "A". The standard School Travel Planning process is attached as Appendix "B".

## **2014/15 pilot School Travel Planning program**

In 2014/15 Public Health launched a pilot School Travel Planning program at four schools across the Region, including two schools in Cambridge, through a grant from the Healthy Communities Partnership. The program contract was awarded to Sustainable Waterloo Region who is also responsible for the Regional TravelWise Transportation Management Association program. Partners involved in the program included the School Boards and representatives from the three cities. Municipal involvement was available but not utilized to its greatest extent.

In Cambridge, Silverheights and Manchester Public Schools were engaged in the program and by the end of the school year draft action plans were developed. The intent for 2015/16 is for these two schools to continue working with Sustainable Waterloo Region to finalize, implement and monitor their action plans.

Through the pilot program, several lessons were learned. First and foremost, local leadership at the municipal level is required to grow the program in other schools. To expand School Travel Planning through grants and hiring third parties to administer programs would be time consuming and result in a lengthy timeframe for full implementation. The local TDM Coordinator should take the lead on contacting schools that raise traffic issues and facilitate meetings to make School Travel Planning the default option for addressing those issues. The TDM Coordinator should also maintain contact with the schools in order to guide schools through the process.

## **Appendix A**

### **School Travel Planning Policy**

Purpose: To establish a policy to address traffic issues resulting from school-based trips through a comprehensive program aimed at increasing the use of active transportation modes and effective management of vehicular traffic.

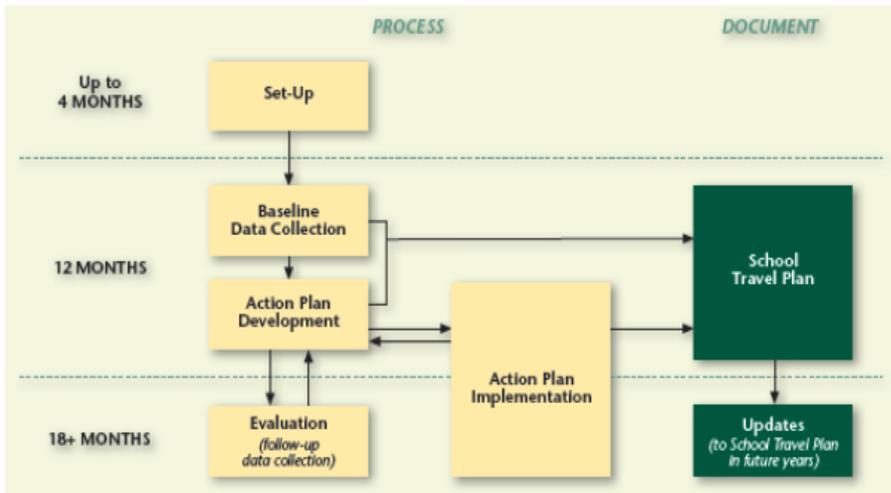
The policy is intent on assisting the City and engaged stakeholders to implement and monitor school travel plans at schools in Cambridge.

Policy: Upon receipt of traffic concerns related to schools and school-based trips, the Transportation Engineering group will propose to implement School Travel Planning as the default process for addressing the concern.

All requests for assistance / facilitation of School Travel Planning from schools or other stakeholders will be considered.

The School Travel Planning process, as developed by Green Communities Canada, will be followed with local modifications and program offerings included based on guidance from the Regional Active and Safe Routes to School Committee.

Appendix B  
 School Travel Planning Process  
 Source – Safe Routes to School



**AT A GLANCE**

*Components in each phase of the School Travel Planning process*

**Set-up**

- Municipal Stakeholder Committee
- Schools chosen and approved
- School STP Committees

**Baseline Data Collection**

- School Travel Plan started
- School profile
- Classroom and family surveys
- Walkabout
- Traffic observation and optional traffic count
- Summary of findings

**Action Plan Development**

- Education, active travel strategies and infrastructure planning

**Action Plan Implementation**

- Education
- Minor infrastructure
- Active travel strategies
- Walking/biking best routes
- Major infrastructure

**Evaluation**

- Classroom Survey repeated each year
- Follow-up Family Survey after significant progress made on Action Plan implementation
- Policy development
- School Travel Plan updates