CASE STUDY SERIES

Profiles of *Active & Safe Routes to School* initiatives in Canada involving one or more schools at the local, regional or provincial/territorial level.

4: TOWN OF TRURO

Pilot Project of
Go for Green

# of schools	*Setting(s)*	*City/Town OR Region*	*Province/Territory*
5	Urban	Truro	Nova Scotia

KEY WORDS

Language(s): English

Problems/Solutions: heavy traffic, poor sidewalk conditions, dogs, blocked visibility

Partners: department of town planning and development, school board, computer software company

Tools: map, computer application to analyze survey results

Events:

Curriculum resources: take home mapping exercise and activity sheet

Case study version: September 1999

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(Detailed report on this unique A&SRTS planning project available.)

Partners

Town of Truro
Planning & Development Department
Go for Green
Chignecto Central Regional School Board
ESRI Canada

Participants

Kerry Geddes
(Family of Schools Supervisor)
Truro Elementary Schools & Principals:
St. Mary's School (Brian Langille)
Willow Street School (Jan Michaud)
Princess Margaret Rose School (Jan Michaud)
Alice Street School (Heather Douglas)
Douglas Street School (Gail Smith)

Goals

- To develop a computer application that will help community residents, town planners and school boards improve pedestrian routes to existing elementary schools
- To incorporate new and existing information into the application
- Results of the pilot to be used to influence municipal policies and procedures pertaining to safe routes to school
- Application to be transportable to other communities

Program Components (& Players)

- Information gathering (students and teachers)
- Development of a computer application (Planning)
- Analysis, conclusion and recommendations (Planning)
- Development of administrative policies (Planning)

Background

In order to address the traffic and safety concerns of Truro area elementary schools, the Planning Department recognized the need to create an interactive computer application that would document the current status of pedestrian routes to the schools. The application would provide the municipality and school board with a useful tool for planning and policy changes to ensure safer routes to schools. Students, teachers and parents at participating schools were encouraged to be actively involved throughout the project.

Implementation

Students were provided with a “take home” map and activity sheet. Parents were asked to work with their children to complete the maps, paying particular attention to shortcuts, dangerous areas and other things that they encounter on the journey to and from school. Town planners then input the information from the completed activity sheets and maps into the computer. The Planning Department then analyzed the information and produced reports on the results. The reports were taken back to the schools for discussion by students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Some important safety concerns were brought to light such as: most heavily traveled routes, sidewalk conditions, shortcuts and scary conditions (dogs, blocked visibility, etc). The **application (‘ArcView’) is transferable to other communities** and can provide an interesting initial project in the quest for safe pedestrian routes to school. It was provided by ESRI Canada (Environmental Systems Research Institute), a company that offers geographic information systems in the form of software packages for spatial mapping.

Promotion & Communication

The Planning Department approached the school board about this project and it was decided that elementary school children were the most important group to focus on. There are five elementary schools within the town and all five agreed to participate. There was no media coverage.

Lessons Learned

The "take home" map and activity sheet proved to be an ineffective method of collecting data. Whether this was due to a lack of concern of parents, a misunderstanding of what was involved or a reflection of a driving population that couldn't relate to pedestrian dangers, is not known. For future projects, we recommend that students complete the maps and activity sheets in the classroom with teacher supervision.

Building on the Experience

A database of school pedestrian routes, with safe and unsafe areas identified, has been created for the Truro area. This database can be used by the schools and the school boards, as well as town planners and decision-makers. Student input into the process was key as children see the world through very different eyes than adults and their insights are invaluable.