

Active Routes to Schools

Introduction for Families

School zones are busy spots. Together, we can lessen congestion and make a positive impact for our children!

In partnership with the District of Sooke, École Poirier Elementary is pleased to be launching an Active School Routes program.

Walking or wheeling to school, where there are safe routes to do so, or making use of School Route Meeting Spots that are connected to trails and sidewalks reduces the number of cars in school zones. This action leads to safer streets and healthier children.

Fewer cars also means fewer greenhouse gas emissions and less air pollution. Fewer cars also means less traffic which can save you time – especially on busy mornings!

Walking or wheeling, whether to and from your home or taking advantage of a meeting spot with friends, is a great way to get kids moving. So, why not walk or wheel?

Fewer children are walking/cycling/scooting for school route travel and vehicle traffic around schools is a big challenge!

Many of today's parents and caregivers walked or cycled to school when they were young. However, times are different and car culture is taking over. Now, fewer kids are using active modes of transportation (i.e., walking, cycling, rollerblading, scooting) for their school journey and losing out on the physical and mental health benefits it can offer.

We also recognize many areas in Sooke don't (yet) have great sidewalks and trails. But, things are changing!

The Active Routes to École Poirier School Map shows you available sidewalks and trails, along with meeting spots you may wish to consider for your child's journey to/from school.

WORKING TOGETHER ON A SOLUTION!

Where safe routes exist, we encourage you to use them and enjoy the many benefits of doing so!



BENEFITS

- > **Healthier Children:** Active school travel helps school-aged children meet the recommendation to accumulate at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity, which is associated with improved physical and mental health.
- > **Less traffic and pollution:** Reducing the number of children being driven to school reduces greenhouse gas emissions and particulate air pollution around the school, improving air quality.
- > **Safer school zones:** Reducing traffic volumes creates safer school zones. Improving walking and cycling routes to school also enhances the safety, connectivity, and quality of life for the community as a whole.
- > **Improved Academic Performance:** Increased physical activity specifically associated with the school journey increases alertness and attention during the school day. Physical activity supports healthy brain development, which can lead to improved learning and academic outcomes.
- > **Time savings:** Less congestion around schools can help save everyone time, especially during busy mornings! Using meeting spots also provides locations that may be on your commute instead of navigating directly to the school property.
- > **Enhanced community and social connections:** If we create a culture of more students walking and cycling to school, students can enjoy more time with friends – and meet new friends – on the school journey.

HOW PARENTS CAN BE INVOLVED

Parents have a critical role in creating a culture of walking and cycling at schools. Get involved:

- > **Enable your children to walk or cycle to and from school** - you may travel with them and enjoy the opportunity to get some fresh air and exercise along the way, or you may allow them to walk or cycle on their own or with siblings/friends, if they are old enough to do so, or neighbours and other trusted adults.
- > **Respond to community surveys** - your input is needed as we partner with the District in the launch of the Active School Routes program. This is a collaboration between District staff, and school administration, the École Poirier Parent Advisory Committee and families. Let's work together to make a difference!

SOOKE SCHOOL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION

- > **As The School Act does not require school districts to provide school bus transportation services**, it is the responsibility of each family to determine the best transportation option to and from school to meet their needs. We encourage use of Active Routes to Schools as one transportation option.
- > **Please note** that where safe routes to a school are identified, bus transportation services will not be offered by the Sooke School District.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

- > **Reflective tags, umbrellas and lanyard lights** are available from your child's teacher or Sooke Municipal Hall at no cost (while supplies last).

Learn more: sooke.ca/activeschoolroutes

