

Making the Case for High School TDM

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Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is recognized as an important and valuable approach to promote active and sustainable transportation in elementary schools and in workplaces. There is no evidence to suggest that similar (*adapted*) measures shouldn't be used in high schools: *case made*.

More important than *making the case* for High School TDM, it is worth understanding some of the factors that have caused this target audience to be virtually ignored over the past decade. Recent research has¹ identified four broad categories that help explain the relative inattention to high schools;

1. nomenclature - don't underestimate the power of Word

School Travel Planning, Active & Safe Routes to School - when we use a single identifier - "school" without specifying if/when implementation focuses only on elementary-aged students - then non-practitioners can be led to *inaccurate* conclusions that STP successes spread across the full K-12 "school" system.

If you *only* work with **Elementary Schools** - aim to use both words when appropriate.

2. a holistic approach is missing

The majority of transportation initiatives in high schools take a narrow focus; most are aimed at cycling, or as health-driven projects they include both walking & cycling. Fewer focus specifically on public transit.

The diversity & large catchment of high schools suggest a holistic approach across the full range of TDM initiatives (...except telework - *students have to show up at school.*)

3. elementary delivery methods do not logically flow into high schools

The high input of volunteer hours from parents, teachers and the principal in elementary schools cannot be counted on in high schools. Also, the adult "ownership" of elementary programs fails to encourage students from seeing themselves as leaders in this work as they mature and graduate into high school.

Cultivate elementary school student leaders who will take that leadership into high school.

4. cost & organizational challenges

The **social imperative** of TDM promotion in high schools generates huge variations in the focus, direction and qualitative output of student-led campaigns. This poses a difficulty for TDM professionals to evaluate and compare results of events and activities between schools. It can also require a broader network of local delivery agents in support (or advance knowledge) of initiatives.

A student-led approach requires a time commitment from a local adult facilitator to recruit, train and support student leaders across several schools.

¹ **Secondary School TDM Issue Paper** under review by Transport Canada, for an advance copy, please [email the author](#)