

SCHOOL STREETS PROGRAM REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2025



CITY OF
VANCOUVER



Walk Bike Roll



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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



About School Streets

Introduction

The City of Vancouver’s School Streets Program began in 2021. The program aims to:

-  **Improve safety for students arriving and leaving school.**
-  **Increase active travel and transit for school trips.**
-  **Foster community connections within the neighbourhood and school community.**

These objectives align with broader City initiatives such as the [Climate Emergency Action Plan’s](#) goal of having two-thirds of daily trips made using active transportation and transit by 2030.

How it Works

On school days, during drop-off and pick-up times, one street next to each participating school is transformed into a car-free zone for 30 to 75 minutes, allowing families to safely walk, bike, and roll to and from school. School volunteers or paid staff set up road barriers in the morning and afternoon, preventing motor vehicles from entering or exiting the School Street (except for emergency services). This program is delivered in partnership with the Vancouver School Board as part of our [School Active Travel Program](#).



A **School Street** is a car-free block beside a school, open to walking, biking, and rolling during drop-off and pick-up times. Motor vehicles are not permitted to enter or exit a School Street.

The five participating schools included:

 **Lord Selkirk Elementary**

Every Friday from November to June
May 12 – June 6, 2025, all school days

 **Gordon Elementary**

May 12 – June 13, 2025

 **Lord Strathcona Elementary**

Paid model school
May 20 – June 6, 2025

 **L'Ecole Bilingue Elementary**

May 26 – June 6, 2025

 **Edith Cavell Elementary**

New participating school
May 26 – June 6, 2025

Gordon Elementary School Street



STRATHCONA ELEMENTARY PILOTS SCHOOL STREETS WITH PAID LEADERS

This spring, the City of Vancouver partnered with the Society for Children and Youth of BC to pilot our first School Street with paid staff. For three weeks, hired leaders ran the daily program while parent volunteers focused on activating the School Street. The school hosted various community organizations that led a variety of activities in the space. Highlights include:

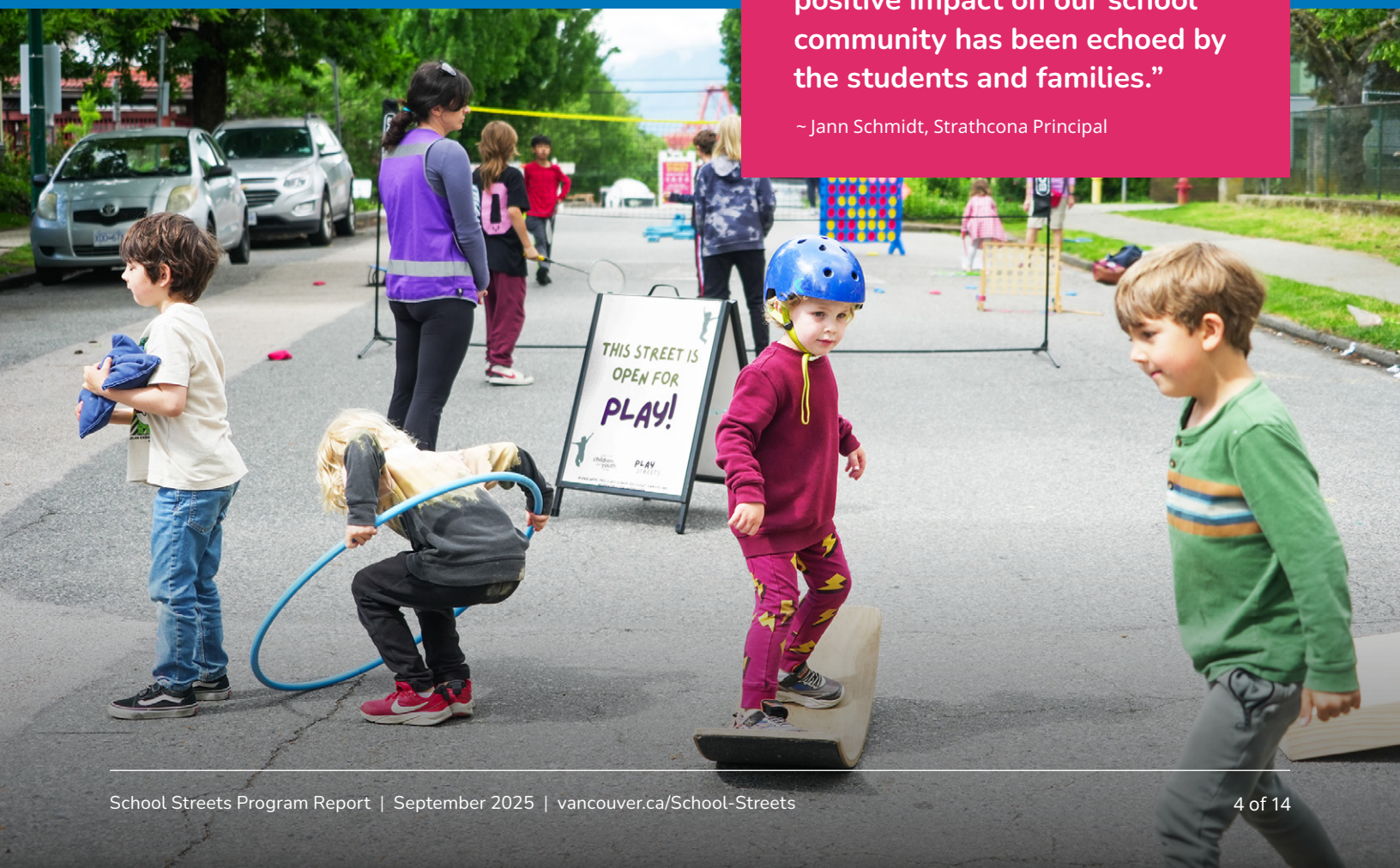
- Crafts and creative dancing with Makemobile
- Bike registration with community policing
- A visit from Vancouver Public Library's BiblioBike
- Pedalheads' obstacle course for bikes and scooters

Building on the pilot's success, exploring the use of a paid School Street leader model at select equity-seeking schools may be considered in the future.

"The School Streets initiative at Strathcona Elementary transformed our community. By piloting paid leaders for our School Street, we alleviated the burden on parents to volunteer, allowing us to focus our efforts on creating a lively and engaging space for our students."

This initiative has fostered a sense of joy and togetherness, making the street space in front of our school a vibrant hub of activity and connection. The positive impact on our school community has been echoed by the students and families."

~ Jann Schmidt, Strathcona Principal



Accessibility

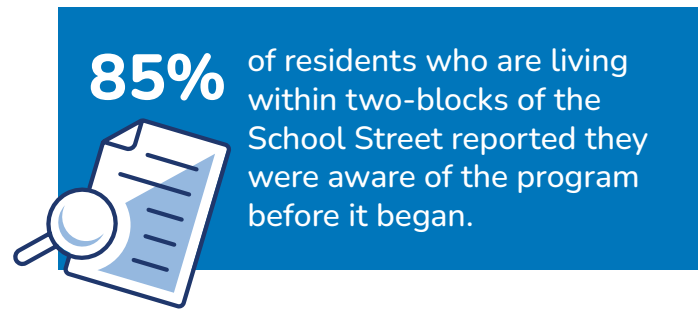
To reduce the impact on residents, we choose streets without driveways and where residents have alternative access to their homes through alleyways. All surrounding streets, except the designated School Street, remain open to motor vehicles, providing access to the school. A key priority is ensuring accessible drop-off and pick-up areas in front of the school, and we aim to select streets that do not interfere with accessible parking. Although not requested by a school this year, we have previously set up additional designated areas for parents and students with disabilities.

We also encouraged a “drive-to-five” approach to further help reduce congestion and enhance safety in front of schools. Drive-to-five encourages families, especially those with older children, to drop their children off and pick them up at safe locations within a five-minute walk (or a few blocks) from the school.

Engagement

City staff actively engaged with each school through presentations to principals, teachers, and Parent Advisory Councils. To support planning efforts, a School Streets Working Group, comprising members from all spring program schools, was also established.

To inform the community, the City sent notification letters one month before the program’s start date to all residents within two blocks of participating schools. Additional communication efforts included on-street signage, banners, and online promotion to ensure widespread awareness.



Volunteers



Gordon Volunteer Coordinators

More than 100 parent volunteers from four schools enthusiastically supported the program in 2025. They set up temporary barriers and monitored the School Streets, ensuring the safety of students and their families.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of volunteers rating their experience as positive and 85% expressing their willingness to volunteer again if the program continues.

“The program was wonderful, and volunteering was a great way to connect with others. The kids loved it, that’s for sure!”

~ Gordon volunteer

Encouraging Active Travel

“Having Bike To School Week coincide with School Streets was great. The kids loved using the block to safely ride.”

~ Edith Cavell volunteer

This year, School Streets aligned with HUB Cycling’s annual Bike to School Week from June 2 to 6, 2025. Four participating schools joined both initiatives, and several parent organizers highlighted the overlap as a great way to boost enthusiasm and engagement.

We partnered once again with the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY) and VeloLifestyle to offer free bike safety checks during Play Streets.

Local mechanics provided basic tune-ups for students, including lowering seats, tightening brakes, and greasing chains. Over 80 bikes were serviced, with many students commenting on how much smoother their rides felt as they practiced on Play Street’s bike-scooter course.

To further encourage walking, biking, and rolling during School Streets, eligible schools received City-funded Active Travel Education for grade 6 and 7 students, delivered by HUB Cycling. This program includes four lessons that teach students walking and cycling safety and on-bike skills through school ground training and group rides around the neighbourhood.

Additionally, each school was provided program funding to support promotional activities of their choice. Schools used these funds to purchase additional play equipment, invite local organizations to attend, and distribute prizes for students using active travel.



DID YOU KNOW?

The School Active Travel Program offers a variety of initiatives to improve safety around schools, educate students, and encourage active travel to and from Vancouver schools.

Learn more at: vancouver.ca/SchoolActiveTravel



Play Streets

Since 2022, we have partnered with the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY) to bring Play Streets to participating schools once a week. During a Play Street, the afternoon School Street time is extended to provide 75 minutes of safe, active, outdoor play and community connection.

In total, SCY hosted 19 Play Streets at the five participating schools. The program offered a variety of play areas that featured low- to high-energy activities, including balance boards, Imagination Playground Blocks, badminton, and a scooter/bike course with ramps. In addition, schools brought out their own play equipment, such as hockey nets and Connect Four, to amplify the fun. Participating students and families often cite Play Streets as the highlight of the week.



A **Play Street** is a co-designed initiative with children that temporarily transforms streets into safe and active public play spaces.

Play Streets support the City's goals of promoting active travel and building community connections. The "bike and scooter" course is a student favourite, offering a fun and safe way to build active travel skills. Even with existing play areas on school grounds, Play Streets help families and neighbourhoods see streets as shared public spaces—not just for cars, but for everyone to enjoy.



FRIDAY SCHOOL STREETS AT SELKIRK ELEMENTARY

This school year, Lord Selkirk Elementary ran School Streets every Friday from November 8, 2024, to June 20, 2025, in addition to running the four-week spring program. The school also continued its Friday Bike Bus, ending the ride to school on a School Street each week. Congratulations to all the dedicated volunteers and enthusiastic participants who made this achievement possible!

Looking ahead, Selkirk will participate in the National Active School Streets Initiative, starting in September 2025. This Canada-wide program supports schools across the country to deliver School Streets. Through this program, Lord Selkirk will operate daily School Streets for the full 2025-26 school year, with the support of paid School Street leaders. We are excited to watch this program continue to grow and thrive!

“Selkirk Elementary was thrilled to test out a new School Streets model this year, running every Friday throughout the school year plus four weeks in the spring. We saw high engagement from students regardless of the weather.

They love the chance to play soccer, blow bubbles, complete an obstacle course, and have unstructured play time with friends.”

~ Selkirk Volunteer Coordinator



School Streets Program Impacts

Evaluation Methods

To understand the impacts of the Spring 2025 School Streets Program, we used a variety of tools. We gathered feedback from schools and local communities to monitor and evaluate the program at four participating schools, Gordon, Lord Strathcona, L'École Bilingue, and Edith Cavell.*

We collected information from:



164 parent/guardian surveys



29 school staff surveys



20 volunteer surveys



191 students participated in pop-up engagement sessions at elementary schools



1 school conducted hands-up surveys before and during the program



19 staff site visits before and during the program



16 emails received in our inbox

What We Heard

Improved Safety

Most participants felt safer during drop-off and pick-up times compared to before the Spring School Streets program began.



92% of students



59% of parents/guardians

72% of school staff

“When the School Streets Program is in effect, it feels much safer entering the school’s bike parking. There aren’t any cars stopping or blocking the entrance which makes it safer for young cyclists to enter.”

~ L'Ecole Bilingue parent



** The Lord Selkirk Elementary community was evaluated separately as part of the National Active School Streets Initiative (NASSI), with research being led by Dr. Mariana Brussoni at the University of British Columbia. The program impacts below do not include data from this school community.*

Mode Share

“We walk almost every day but sometimes drive in yucky weather – this made us more committed to 100% walk or bike and made us try biking more often.”

~ Gordon parent

The Spring School Streets Program successfully encouraged more families to embrace active travel to and from school:



39% of families reported biking more



22% of families reported walking more



9% of families reported rolling more (wheelchair, skateboard, or scooter)



27% of families reported driving less

Ninety-one families reported that School Streets encouraged their child to walk, bike, or roll to school for the first time alone or with others.



27% of parents/guardians reported they give their child more freedom to travel to and from school on their own or with their peers because of the School Street Program.

90% of staff noted the program improved the sense of community at their school.

The program also inspired changes in travel behaviour among school staff:

- 28% reported walking more
- 34% reported biking more
- 17% reported taking transit more
- 14% reported driving less

Community Connections



School Streets create a space for community connection before and after school, and survey respondents reported taking the time to socialize on the street (44% of parents/guardians, 14% of residents) and meeting new people in the space (35% of parents/guardians). Students, parents and guardians reported feeling a stronger connection to their school community because of School Streets (70% of students, 51% of parents).

“Each afternoon it’s a real pleasure to see the kids having fun and parents hanging out with them after school. It’s a very special and wonderful community event. Thank you for offering this opportunity for the neighbourhood.”

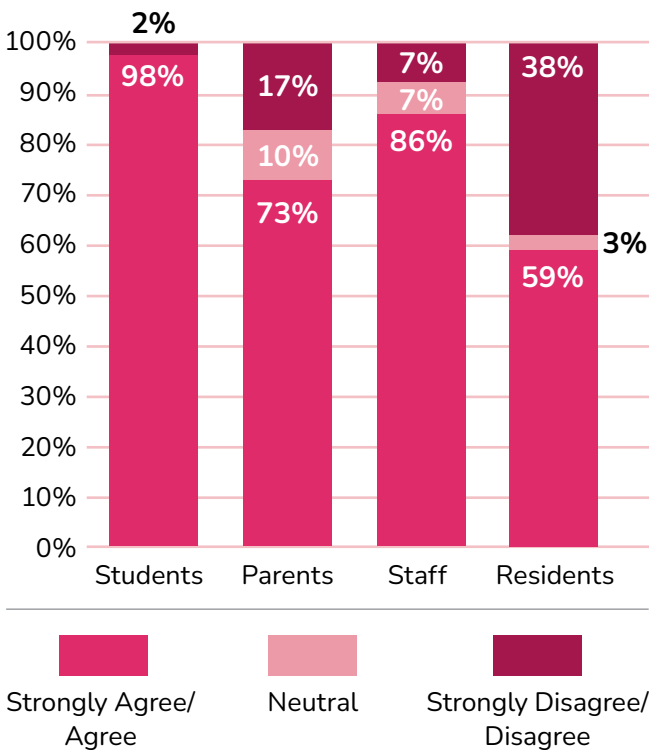
~ Strathcona resident

General Program Feedback

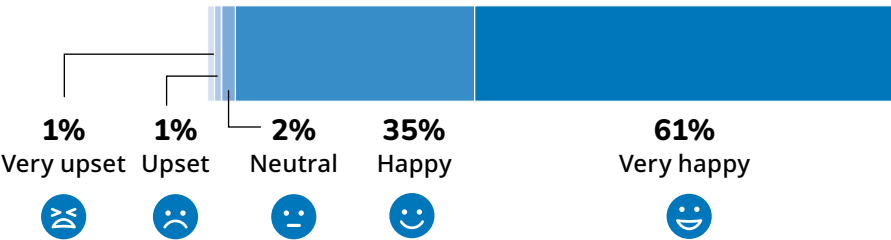
Program Support

Overall, the school communities are highly supportive of continuing the School Streets Program. Students are the biggest champions, with 98% reporting that they would like to see School Streets return in the future and 96% reporting that they feel happy or very happy about the program. A majority of school staff (86%) and parents/guardians (73%) are also supportive of the program continuing. Local residents have mixed views on the program, but many show strong support for the program continuing in their neighbourhood. Those in support mention the promotion of play, physical activity and active travel as key areas of success.

Support for the School Street Continuing in the Future



How Students Feel about School Streets



Support for the program increased across all groups after its implementation, suggesting that experiencing School Streets firsthand helped some people recognize its benefits.

Students shared their thoughts on sticky notes during our pop-up engagements, with a total of 190 comments and ideas collected. Of these, 162 were positive, and 28 included dislikes or suggestions for improvement.

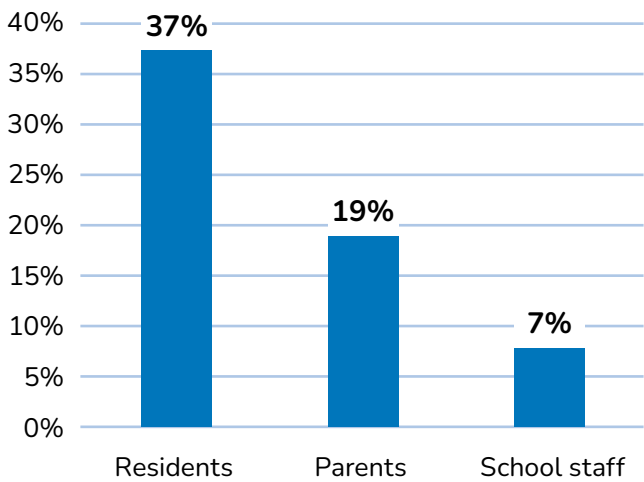
Key themes that highlight what students enjoyed about the program include:

Key themes	Number of student mentions
Activities, outdoor play and fun	85
Walking, biking and rolling	29
General support	19
Snacks and prizes	18
Open streets, playing in the street	13
Improved safety	9
Community and friends	4

Program Concerns

Parents, guardians, school staff, and residents were asked whether they faced any challenges travelling to or from the school or their homes because of the School Street.

People who Reported Challenges Due to School Streets



Residents and families shared valuable feedback about the program. Some noted challenges with congestion on nearby streets and parking, as well as concerns about detours and access to homes on the affected block. Families who rely on driving to school mentioned the program sometimes made their trips less convenient.

“Blocking the street was inconvenient on days I was in a rush and needed to use my car for drop-off. Working families are busy!”

~ Gordon parent

“It’s a little hard to find parking but worth it for the wonderful energy and sense of community the project produces.”

~ Gordon resident

A few survey respondents expressed interest in learning more about the program’s goals, while others felt that schools already have adequate play spaces and had questions about playing on the streets.

At one school, parents shared thoughtful concerns about the School Street’s location on a bikeway. While a temporary bike lane was installed, they highlighted the importance of ensuring safety for both children playing nearby and cyclists using the route. This feedback helps guide us in improving the program.

During our pop-up engagement, students also shared suggestions, with key themes including:

Key themes	Number of student mentions
Requests for new activities or games	10
Requests for longer or more frequent street closures	6
A need for more space	4
Other concerns	7

We will continue to work closely with residents, families, and students at School Street sites to address these suggestions and further enhance the program in the years ahead.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU!

The City of Vancouver would like to thank the school communities and families that participated in the program, the dedicated parent volunteers, our School Streets Working Group members, the Society for Children and Youth of BC, the Vancouver School Board, and all the local organizations that generously donated their time.

This collaborative effort contributed to a successful 2025 Spring School Streets Program!

“It was really great seeing kids be kids outside on the street. In an age where tech dominates, having them out and about with their friends was really encouraging to see.”

~ Edith Cavell staff





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vancouver.ca/School-Streets

Updated: September 2025