

Top Lessons from Recent School Travel Safety Reviews

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Abstract Summary (up to 250 words)

In 2025, many students continue to be driven to school by private vehicles that create significant traffic congestion and safety issues on the road network, and in streets at and close to the school. Furthermore, many parents do not allow their children to travel independently to school via walking, cycling, scooting or on public transport because they are concerned about the real and perceived safety risks. These risks can be mitigated by conducting a formal review of school travel safety. Based on recent school planning for government and private schools, the following framework was developed to:

- Obtain evidence to understand student travel behaviour with the analysis of depersonalised enrolment data, student travel mode surveys and conducting observations of the travel activity during the school peak periods.
- Engage with staff from the school, local Council and State Government departments to confirm the issues and identify the opportunities.
- Prepare an action plan tailored for the school with initiatives that include changes to the school infrastructure, operations and student and parent behaviour.

The key lessons learnt from conducting school travel safety reviews are:

- Every school is different and requires different types of initiatives, based on the age ranges of the students, the location and size of the school and operations.
- Changing the views of parents is important to promote more independent travel because many students may prefer to travel without them.
- Promotion, communication and regular monitoring is needed to achieve changes in school travel behaviour.

Abstract

In 2025, many students continue to be driven to school by private vehicles that create significant traffic congestion and safety issues on the road network, and in streets at and close to the school. Furthermore, many parents do not allow their children to travel independently to school via walking, cycling, scooting or on public transport because they are concerned about the real and perceived safety risks. These risks can be mitigated by conducting a formal review of school travel safety. Based on recent school planning for government and private schools with different sizes from Reception to Year 12, the following framework was developed to:

- Obtain evidence to understand student travel behaviour with the analysis of depersonalised enrolment data, student travel mode surveys and conducting observations of the travel activity during the school peak periods.
- Engage with staff from the school, local Council and State Government departments to confirm the issues and identify the opportunities.
- Prepare an action plan tailored for the school with initiatives that include changes to the school infrastructure, operations and student and parent behaviour.

Three detailed case studies are provided from schools in Adelaide, Sydney and Edmonton, Canada.

Adelaide Botanic High School is a six-storey building in the Adelaide Park Lands that opened in 2019 and had an expansion that was opened in 2023 has the following initiatives to encourage non-car transport modes:

- Secure basement bicycle parking in the underground level for about 250 bicycles.
- Bicycle repair and maintenance training provided to all students who are cyclists.
- Variable school hours to avoid peak traffic demand the high school has a start time of 9:20 AM when the public transport services are less busy and bicycle paths are less congested with CBD commuters. The school day ends at 4 PM, which allows students to travel home before peak hour. The late start is also supported by research on adolescent sleep and learning patterns. The late start also provides an opportunity for staff to collaborate and plan for the day's learning when they arrive for 8:25 AM to prepare for the students' learning.

In Adelaide, a private school with two campuses at a Junior School (Reception to Year 6) in Norwood and a Senior campus (Years 7 to 12) in Athelstone have introduced a campus shuttle bus services to reduce the traffic congestion at each campus for Kiss and Drop activity. The initial bus service was modified and extended in 2024 to increase the patronage with routes operating for a larger catchment area.

Meadowbank Public School and Marden High School in the inner north-west of Sydney is part of the Meadowbank Education and Employment Precinct. The public and high school that opened in the new facility in April 2022 are collocated on the same site are next to Meadowbank TAFE. To promote safe student travel to the two schools, the following measures were introduced with the school opening:

- Travel access guide that includes maps, instructions for parents and students about safety at Kiss and Drop zones, walk and cycling routes to the school, public transport services with timetable information.
- Consistency in the governance requirements with reporting to the Department of Education and liaison role for Transport for NSW on setting sustainable mode share targets. Transport mode surveys are conducted throughout the year to measure the results.
- School travel coordinator to measure and monitor travel behaviour for a school.

The City of Edmonton in Canada has implemented several initiatives to enhance the safety for students and to encourage a high mode share for non-car usage for travel to school. With the support from the Province of Alberta, 30 km/h school zones are consistently applied for all schools between 8 AM and 4:30 PM on school days. School zone signs are posted around primary and junior high schools. Drivers are not allowed to pass other vehicles in the same direction.

Another initiative with organised by the schools, Edmonton Transit Service and the bus contractors is the annual First Riders program that offers a training class before start of the school year. The event gives students and their parents a chance to get comfortable riding the bus before the first day of school and includes a ride on a bus. This free event is open for:

- Pre-Kindergarten children and Kindergarten students.
- Other students who are taking the yellow bus for the first time, and
- Year 7 students transitioning to use an Edmonton Transit Service.

The key lessons learnt from conducting school travel safety reviews are:

- Every school requires a tailored solution with different types of initiatives, based on the school location, the age ranges of the students, size of the school and enrolment catchment area and the school operations and governance.
- Changing the views of parents is important to promote more independent travel because many students may prefer to travel without them.
- Promotion, communication and regular monitoring is needed to achieve changes in school travel behaviour.