

Bike to School Day Organizer's Guide

for Schools and Organizations



A partnership of:



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Photos that follow are courtesy of HRM.

About the Ecology Action Centre

The Ecology Action Centre (EAC) is one of Nova Scotia's most established and active environmental organizations. Our mission is to encourage a society that respects and protects nature and provides environmentally and economically sustainable livelihoods. We work in seven active issue areas including Wilderness, Forestry, Marine, Coastal & Water, Energy, Built Environment and Transportation. The Transportation Issue Area aims to improve sustainable transportation options in Nova Scotia.

EAC is committed to finding ways for children, youth and their families in Nova Scotia to use active transportation - such as walking and cycling - for the environment, physical activity and traffic safety. We achieve this through several programs. Learn more about our programs at www.saferoutesns.ca. EAC offers these programs in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness as part of the Active Kids Healthy Kids Initiative.



About Bike to School Day

Cycling is just one form of active transportation. Active transportation means any non-motorized mode such as cycling, walking, in-line skating, skateboarding, scootering, wheel chairing, cross-country skiing, canoeing, etc.

Cycling to school is an easy way to add more physical activity to the daily lives of students, reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and fight climate change. Bike to School Day is a terrific opportunity to learn safe routes to school, learn cycling safety skills, make friends, help out the environment and increase safety in and around schools zones – plus it's tons of fun!

Bike to School Day can happen any time of year, but it usually happens during Bike Week in Nova Scotia, which starts on the first Friday of June and continues for ten days. Bike to School Day often happens on a Wednesday during Bike Week.

Bike Week and Bike to School Day are all about encouraging a culture of cycling, raising awareness of issues that affect cycling and celebrating the benefits of cycling and active living. Cycling is for the young, old, beginners and experts!

Why Cycle?

- ✓ It rocks
- ✓ It's fun!
- ✓ It's healthy!
- ✓ It reduces stress and increases attentiveness!
- ✓ It's non-polluting!
- ✓ It's social!
- ✓ It teaches safe cycling skills!
- ✓ It's educational!
- ✓ It's economical!
- ✓ It takes back the streets!

Who's Doing it?

ALL schools as well as youth-serving groups and organizations can participate in Bike to School Day! Urban, suburban, rural – everyone can join in! Distance or infrastructure may be an obstacle for some schools, so all we need is a little imagination. What really counts is that students start cycling! Bussed students can participate too! Involve them in cycling activities at school.



How to include bussing students:

- ✓ Involve your bussing population at lunch time for 20 minutes.
- ✓ Cycle around the school (bicycles, skateboards and roller blades welcome if facility permits).
- ✓ Have a group cycle in the local community.
- ✓ Take a trek on a nearby trail.
- ✓ Cycle around the gymnasium.

Remember school bus safety at all times. See www.schoolbussafety.ca for details.

Steps for organizing a Bike to School Day event

This guide covers six easy steps to “cycle” you through organizing your Bike to School Day event. Join schools around the province as they celebrate cycling. Make the event your own by encouraging physical activity, safe transportation, environmental stewardship and cycle safe communities in a unique way. Pick a day, a week, and one day per week or the entire month to celebrate. Get ready to be creative, healthy and have fun. This event will knock your socks off!

Actively promoting Bike to School Day could also transition smoothly into the launch of a year-round program. For more on how to do this throughout the year, see www.saferoutesns.ca or contact the Ecology Action Centre at (902) 442-5055 or asrts@ecologyaction.ca.



Step 1: Partners

Connect with your municipality:

- ✓ Tell your municipality of your event and coordinate it with its Bike Week Events. Some municipalities coordinate Bike to School Day locally where you can register and receive support or qualify for prize draws

Recruit parent and staff volunteers:

- ✓ Make a call for volunteers at Parent Council meetings, through newsletters and through any form of communication to parents.
- ✓ Invite a teacher or two to help in organizing the event.
- ✓ Sign them up to cycle to school with the students.
- ✓ Enlist their help to coordinate the event by delegating tasks.

Invite public authorities to join in to cycle with the students to school:

- ✓ Invite the mayor, municipal councilors, police officers, firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), Members of Parliament (MP), Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA), professional athletes and local celebrities.
- ✓ Invite guest speakers to address safety, health and/or environmental issues at your event (police officers, public health nurses, bike safety groups, etc.).

Find Community Partners:

- ✓ Approach local businesses for donations of prizes or incentives.
- ✓ Approach local businesses for juice and snack donations for the event.
- ✓ Recruit community groups like Rotary Clubs, Block Parents or other community volunteers to help organize and promote the event.



Step 2: Path

Establish a safe route to school:

- ✓ Outline the safest route to school and notify participants and their parents.
- ✓ Be sure to mark Block Parent houses and other safe havens on your route map.

- ✓ Determine a meeting place or different pick-up zones so that everyone can cycle together.
- ✓ Invite community police officers to provide extra road safety during the event.
- ✓ Ask volunteers to form a cross cycle patrol or act as crossing guards for the event, and continue the patrol throughout the year.



Step 3: Promotion

Spread the word:

- ✓ Put up Bike to School Day posters wherever possible.
- ✓ Have students create colourful posters with the date of the event and post them in public and school libraries, in groceries stores, in community centres, in sports centres, etc.
- ✓ Send out Public Service Announcements (PSA) and news releases (see the Appendices for examples).
- ✓ Be sure to let your municipality know of your event and try to connect to its Bike Week events

Invite Local Media:

- ✓ Media often have special sections or segments for community events. Have local newspaper, TV stations and radio stations cover the event by calling them up or sending them a news release.

Step 4: Participation

Have fun stuff for the students:

- ✓ Create an intra-school competition by awarding a Golden Pedal Award (spray paint or decorate an old pedal) to the class or grade level with the highest participation – make sure that teachers keep track of who participates!
- ✓ Dress up the school mascot and cheerleaders in fun outfits, and make sure they are in attendance for the event.
- ✓ Obtain prizes and giveaways from local businesses and organizations such as reflective leg bands, helmets, bike bells, bike lights and similar items

Get Students Involved:

- ✓ Have students make poems, songs, skits, stories or paragraphs about active transportation to present as a Public Address announcement or at an assembly.
- ✓ Hold an assembly or set aside class time with an active transportation theme to teach students the benefits of cycling and walking to school – clean air, increased physical activity, better health, a sense of community, increased cycling and pedestrian safety, and more!
- ✓ Have students create a Bike to School Day banner to display outside of the school.
- ✓ Encourage students to make signs, buttons, hats, scarves, sashes, etc., to wear and hold while cycling to school.
- ✓ Hold a “Cycle to Breakfast” event and have healthy food for students when they arrive at school.

Step 5: Put on the Event

Here are some ideas of things you can do during your Bike to School Day event:

- ✓ Adopt the WOW (We Often Walk or Wheel) program and designate weekly cycling days to encourage cycling one day a week for a month or all year long. Register at www.saferoutesns.ca.
- ✓ Develop cycling themes for each day of the week: bright, highly visible colors day, “cycling hat” day, bring a healthy lunch day, etc.
- ✓ Fill the month with activities throughout each day or week that pertain to staying physically fit, eating healthy and caring for the environment.
- ✓ Offer an option to those who ride the bus or carpool to cycle once they arrive at school.
- ✓ Organize a cycling school bus from nearby neighborhoods. For information or to register go to www.saferoutesns.ca.
- ✓ Organize cycling, pedestrian, in-line skating or skateboarding safety skills workshops – contact the Ecology Action Centre about Making Tracks safety training at (902) 442-0209 or mt@ecologyaction.ca. Learn more at www.saferoutesns.ca.
- ✓ Tackle speeding in your neighbourhood by launching the Pace Car anti-speeding program during your event. Learn more at www.pacecar.ca.
- ✓ Use Ecology Action Centre program resources to teach students about healthy living, transportation safety and the environment (see www.saferoutesns.ca).
- ✓ Have games outside...make it a play day!

- ✓ Plan a school-wide event to recognize the day such as a picnic, an assembly, an awards ceremony or a pizza party for the class with the most cyclers.
- ✓ Have a cycle-a-thon.
- ✓ Supply healthy snacks.
- ✓ Host safety and activity booths.
- ✓ Set up a competition with awards for the classes with the most cyclers - make it an inter-class or inter-grade friendly competition. Consider challenging another school.
- ✓ Have a bicycle fashion show.
- ✓ Carry signs. Wear hats.
- ✓ Have a special assembly with bicycling-themed songs, special presentations and guest speakers.
- ✓ Use your imagination! See the next page for even more ideas.

Step 6: Pat on the Back

- ✓ Share your experience! Send us artwork, photos, articles, your highlights and memories of the event. Be sure to include permission and send them to asrts@ecologyaction.ca. Send these to your municipality too and share over social media where appropriate.
- ✓ Continue taking active transportation to school! Start a cycling club and use WOW to promote it. Start a Cycling School Bus.
- ✓ Begin School Travel Planning at your school to ensure students can use active school travel all year long. Learn more at www.saferoutesns.ca.



Appendix A: Public Service Announcement Sample

Attention all parents and caregivers! If you have children in school, get out your bicycle, helmet and favorite cycling shoes! On _____ [date], students at [insert your school's name] and across Nova Scotia will be asking you to participate in Bike to School Day. This special event is being held to demonstrate support for the increase of physical activity, improved safety, less air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and less traffic congestion around schools. So join us and cycle your kids to school. [Insert date, time, meeting place, contact information, etc. for your event.]

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[Insert name, phone and email of a school contact for the media here]

Appendix B: News Release Sample

[Insert name of your school] Participates in Bike to School Day:

Students and parents cycle for safety, health and a cleaner environment

On [insert date], [Insert name of your school] will join schools across Nova Scotia as they participate in Bike to School Day. The special event will see parents and students leave the family vehicle at home in favour of getting to class on their bikes. Bike to School Day is designed to make streets and communities safer, increase physical activity levels of students and improve our environment.

[Insert other details of your event here: date, time, meeting place, contact information, etc.]

It is hoped that the campaign will begin to reverse the habit of driving to school – a habit that has clearly become ingrained. In Canada, neighbourhood schools report more than 50% of the student body is frequently chauffeured to school.

Active Healthy Kids Canada gives Canadian kids a low grade in its annual report card on physical activity levels. They give kids a D for use of active transportation – walking and cycling. Some of the health risks of inactivity include earlier onset of heart disease, osteoporosis, Type II Diabetes and high blood pressure.

Improved health is not the only benefit of cycling. Additional advantages include a healthier environment and safer communities. When we choose non-motorized transportation we reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Traffic congestion around schools is also reduced, and neighbourhood life is revitalized by the increased presence of people on the streets.

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[Insert name, phone and email of a school contact for the media here]