

How Community Partnerships Support Active Transportation and Increase Physical Activity Levels in an Elementary School

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Overview

- ✧ Introductions
- ✧ Why and how
- ✧ Timeline of events

Why Active Transportation?

- ✧ Only **9%** of 5 – to 17-year olds attain the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day
 - ✧ ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 2015
- ✧ Active transportation to school (walking or biking) may be a way to increase youth's physical activity (PA) levels and achieve health related benefits
 - ✧ Gray et al., 2014
- ✧ Nearly 60% of parents walked to school when they were kids, yet less than 30% of children today walk to school
 - ✧ Stone, et al., 2012



Why does active transportation to school matter?

✧ Children who walk or bike to school typically have:

- higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness
- lower waist circumference and cholesterol levels
- better grip strength

✧ Lubans et al., 2011; Larouche et al., 2014

✧ Sustained active transportation can help children maintain a healthy weight across their elementary-school years

✧ Pabayo et al., 2010



What do we know about ATS in Northern regions?

- ✧ Rates of PA are lower among northern & rural youth compared to urban youth
 - ✧ Comte, M., et al. 2013
- ✧ ATS can be a conduit for increasing PA among youth
 - ✧ Faulkner, G., et al. 2009
- ✧ Rural children are presumed to face unique challenges and barriers to ATS
 - ✧ Yousefian et al., 2009
- ✧ **BUT** there is limited research exploring barriers to ATS and experiences of various travel modes in rural environments

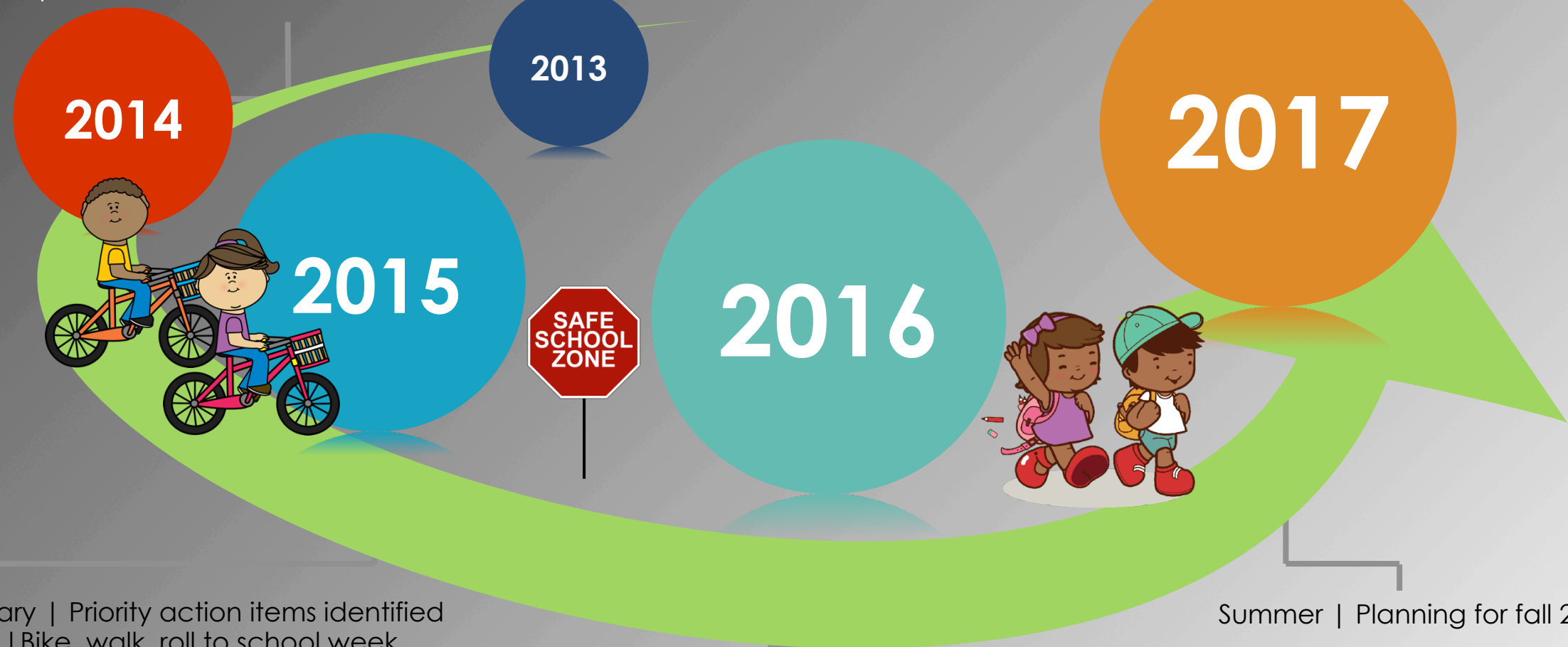
School Travel Planning

- ✧ School Travel Planning (STP) works to address school and neighbourhood barriers to active transportation
- ✧ Evaluation of 106 schools participating in a STP process reported a measurable increase in active school travel over a 2 year period in nearly half of participating schools
 - ✧ Mammen, et al., 2014
- ✧ A large majority of STP and Active Transportation research comes from larger urban centres, and often overlooks the challenges smaller and Northern communities face



April | School Travel Planning Surveys
May | School Walk about at Alliance
June | Cycling Week at Alliance
October | Walk to school week activities

September | Health Unit approached School of
Physical and Health Education to assist with evaluation

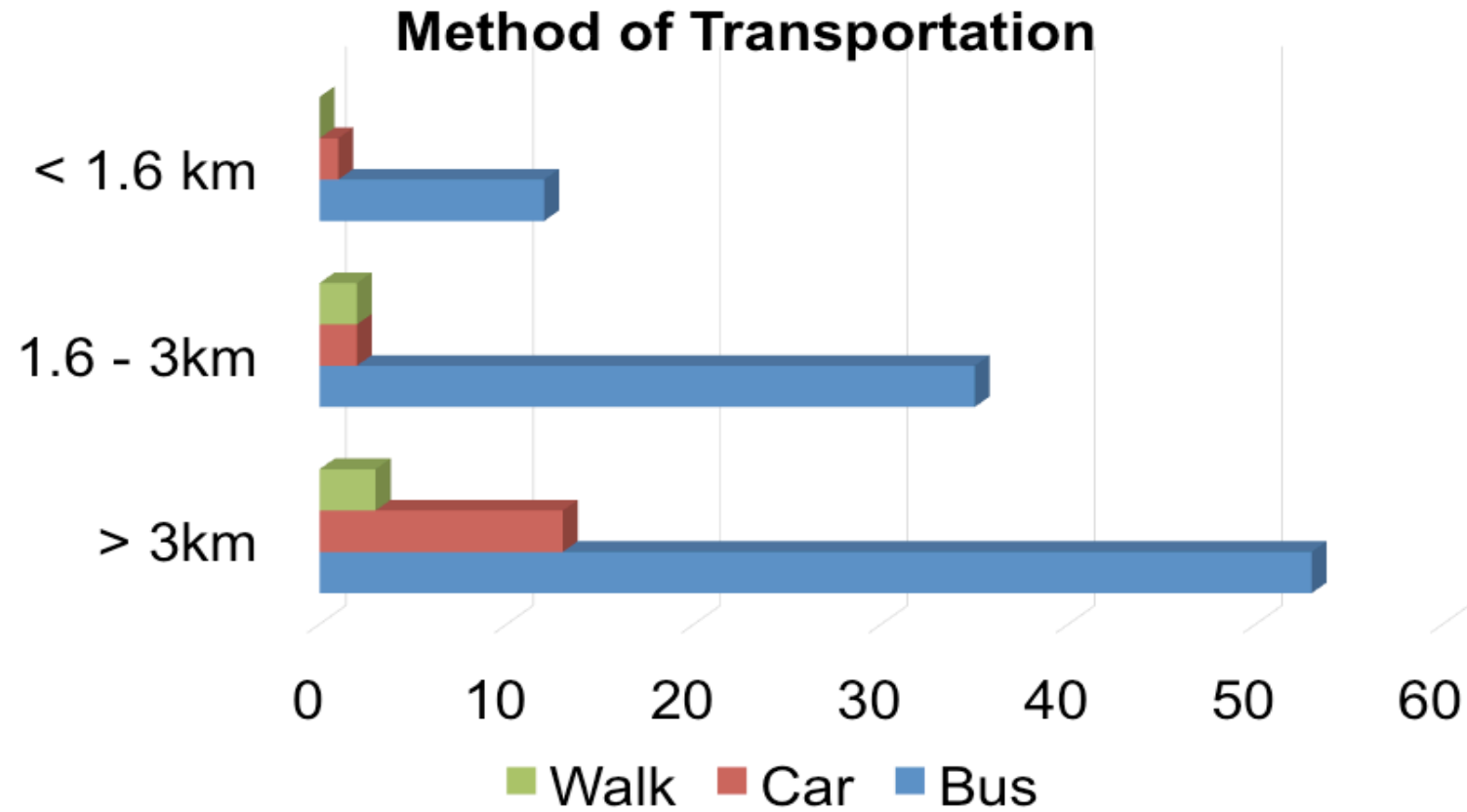


January | Priority action items identified
June | Bike, walk, roll to school week
October | Presentation to members of NNDSB
Health Unit sends School Safety zone letter
Bike, walk, roll to school week
November | Community Safety Zone signs recommended

February | Bylaw on Community Safety zones passed
STP meeting planning Walking School Bus
June | Bike week and Rodeo
October–November | Pilot Walking School Bus

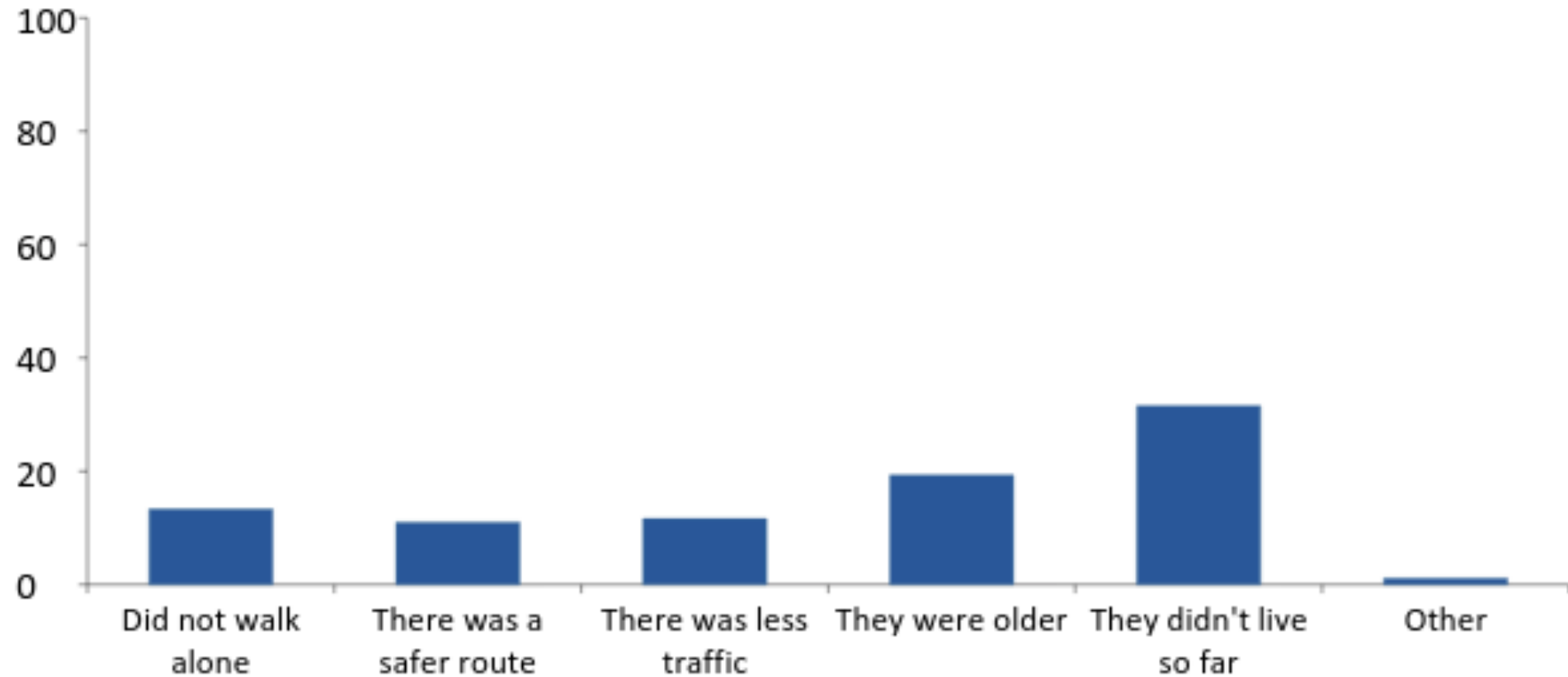
Summer | Planning for fall 2017

STP FAMILY SURVEY DATA



STP FAMILY SURVEY DATA

Facilitators to allow child to walk to school (%)



Parental Influences on Active Transportation to School



- ✧ *“I believe kids may be taken from any neighbourhood - very unfortunate situation that this is even on survey.” (P39)*
- ✧ *“There are far too few sidewalks in residential areas in North Bay. Snowbanks leave shoulders unavailable to walk on for much of the school year.” (P3)*
- ✧ *“If we lived closer I would still be reluctant to allow my son to walk or bike because of the high traffic levels on High & Stones Street.”(P105)*

Neighbourhood Walkabout Observations

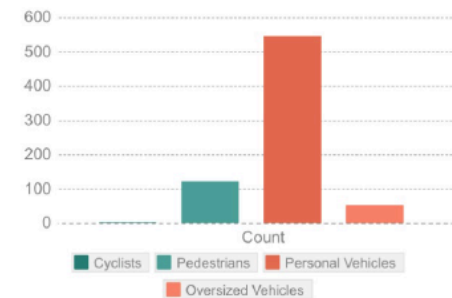


Legend

-  Major pothole
-  Inconsistent crossing guard presence
-  Snow banks at street corners impede view of crossing walkers and oncoming traffic
-  Gridlock
-  Dirt path / potential connection for a 'Park and Walk' location

Traffic Audit Results at High St & Stones St

> Feb 6th, 2015
2:45pm - 3:45pm



Knowing the benefits, how did we make it happen?

- ✧ Paying careful attention to risk management, policy, and documentation are necessary for a safe and positive WSB experience.**
- ✧ Communication and partnership is key!**

**Partnership successes
along the way to support
active travel to school**





Discovery Routes

There's no end to our trails

North Bay Parry Sound District

Health Unit



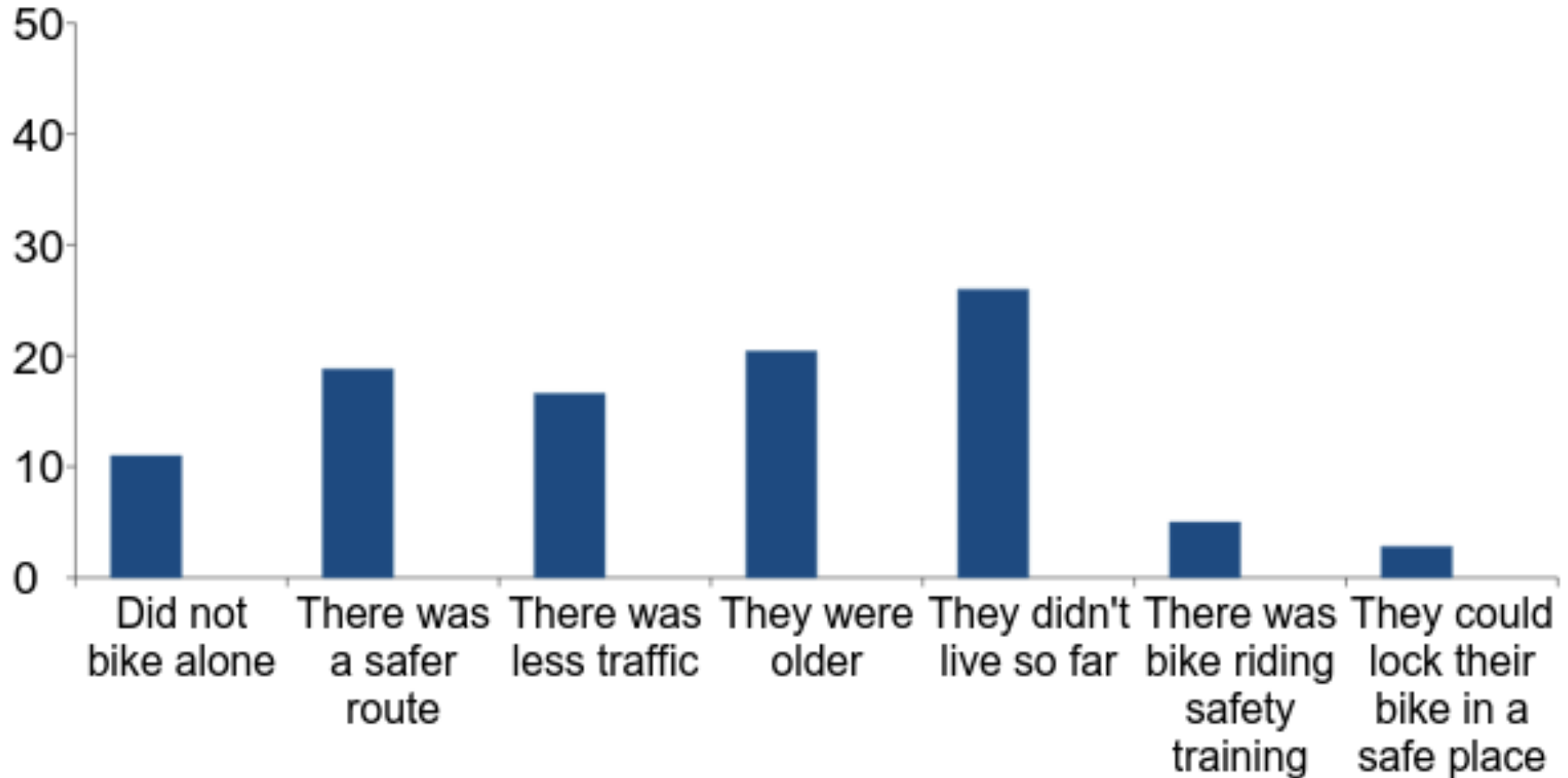
Bureau de santé

du district de North Bay-Parry Sound



STP FAMILY SURVEY DATA

Facilitators to allow child to cycle to school (%)



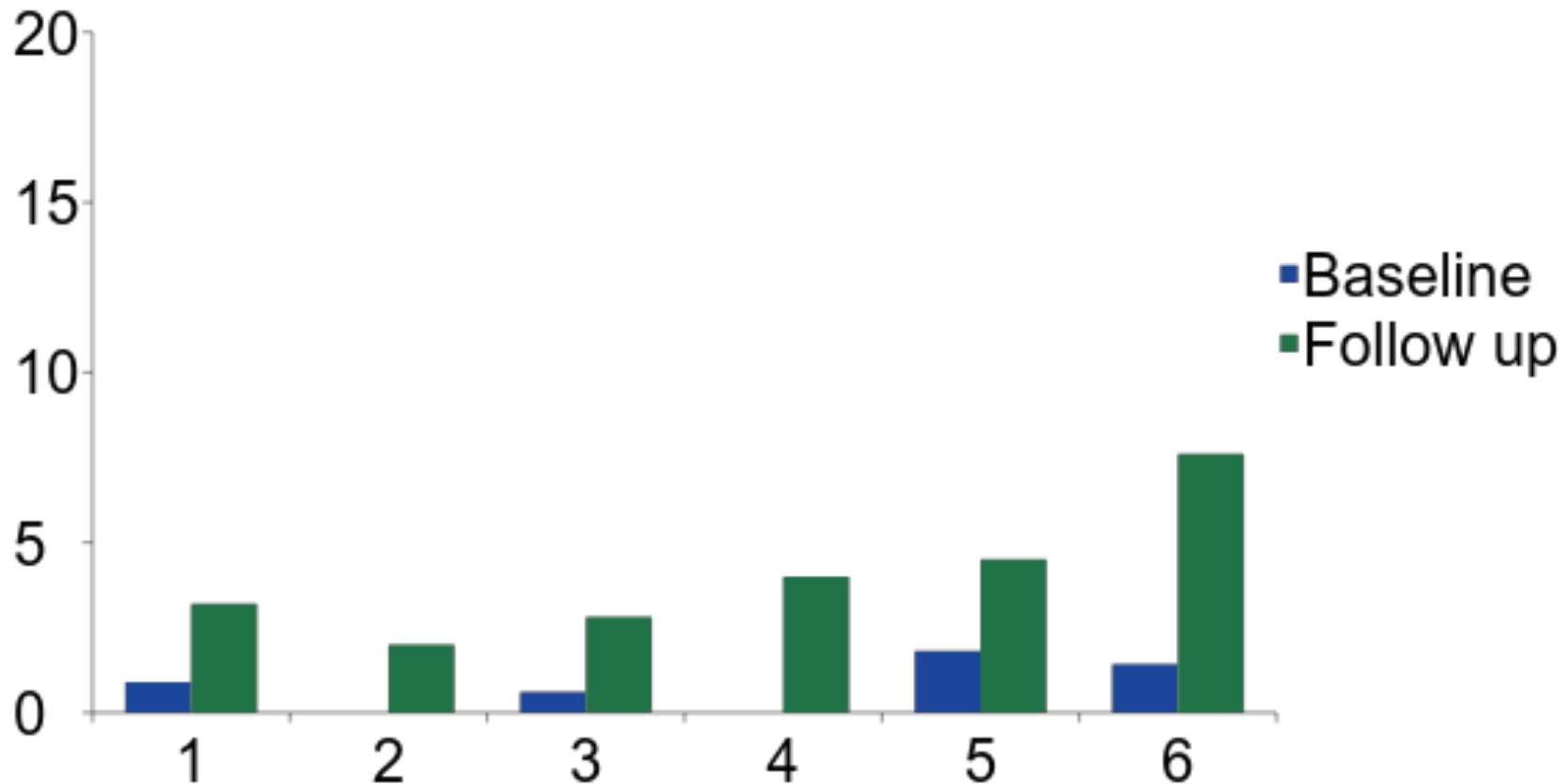
Bike Club Cycling Education



Educating and Encouraging Cycling at Alliance

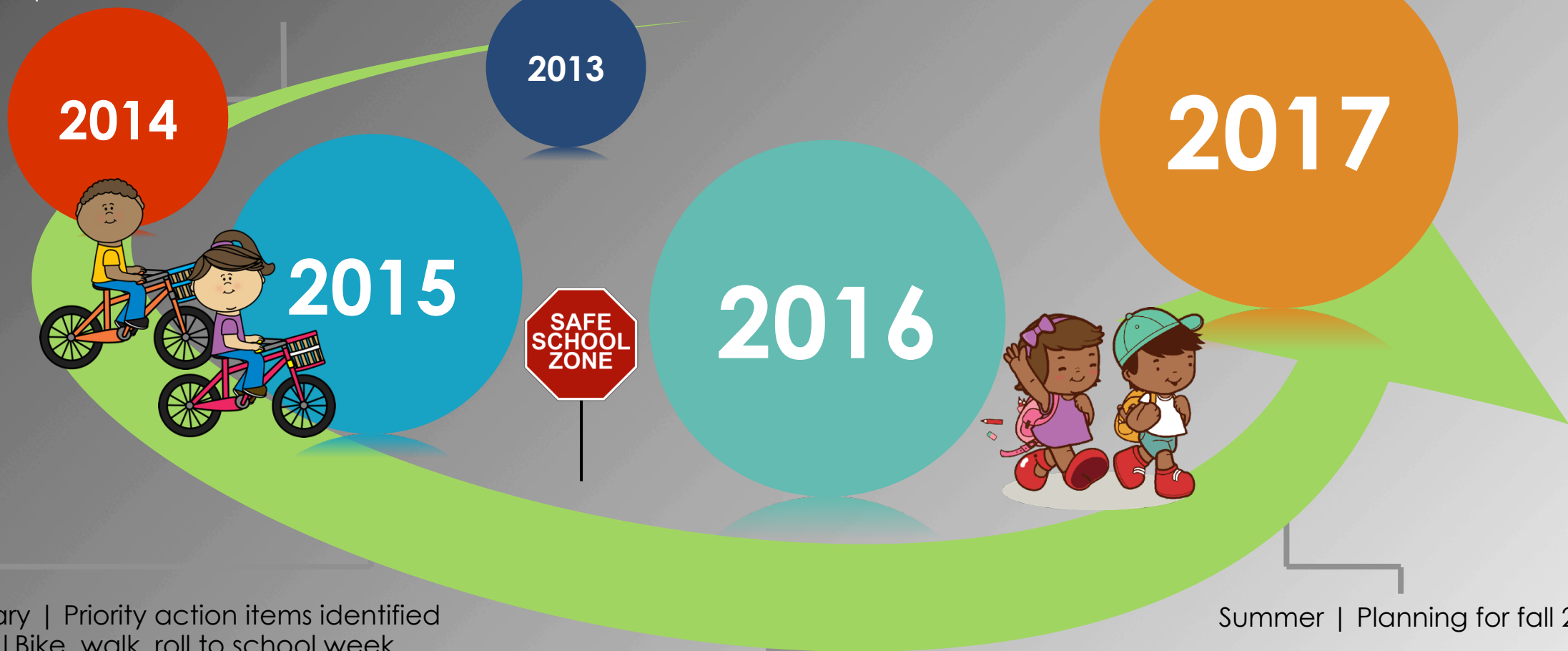


Percent students cycling to school before and after cycle week



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Engaging Parents in the Development of a Walking School Bus Initiative

- ✧ Parent information nights hosted to highlight the concern and describe the concept of a WSB
- ✧ Interviews with parents
 - ✓ Parent's who had a child in grade JK to grade 6
 - ✓ Parent's residing < 1.6km and > 1.6km from their child's school
 - ✓ The decision maker on how the child travel's to school





Société
canadienne
du cancer



Lessons learned from evaluating a pilot Walking School Bus Program

Health and Social Benefits

- ✧ *“...the second thing we really noticed was like his mental – like I don’t know if mental health is the right word, but overall like um, general well-being and positivity about going to school, like he was really excited about the walking school bus program.” (P3)*
- ✧ *“I felt more involved in the community...getting to know people who lived in the area and just, getting to know more of [the city].” (C)*
- ✧ *“And, I liked that um, it was kids of all ages too so he, he kind of walked with kids that he might not otherwise interact with during the school day. So like some you know, primary age kids that he might not see. So I thought that was a nice that it was a real mix of kids.” (P2)*



Lessons learned from evaluating a pilot Walking School Bus Program

Learning Safety Skills

- ✧ *“When my kids get to grade 4 they are going to have to walk...one of the most important benefits is learning the safe route to school and learning walking street safety....” (P3)*
- ✧ *“They learn their road rules at an early age too. So, the little ones might not have known before we had started this, and now they’re more aware of the rules of walking.” (C)*
- ✧ *“Oh, I also learned about like safety when you’re walking” (S2)*



Lessons learned from evaluating a pilot Walking School Bus Program

Implementation Challenges

- ✧ *“We had kids that didn’t show... and we weren’t sure with the communication with the [school] office and stuff like that too.” (C)*
- ✧ *“...we had registered in the spring and then we weren’t really sure when it was starting...there’s probably room for improvement in terms of timing of communication.” (P2)*
- ✧ *“I think they had a hard time at first. I think they had a hard time carrying their backpacks. But I think it was great for them. I think my daughter preferred the walking school bus over her regular school bus.” (P5)*
- ✧ *“We need more volunteers. That part I don’t know how to solve that.” (P7)*

Lessons learned from evaluating a pilot Walking School Bus Program

Moving Forward

- ✧ *“I think the future program, we just need more routes” (P7)*
- ✧ ***“I cannot imagine having that offloaded to either the school or like a volunteer parent or something.....Having [him] as the public health, as the overall coordinator is huge....., I think that, that should really be prioritized and something that should remain in [his] portfolio because the potential for impact is amazing.” (P3)***
- ✧ *“Maybe we would bring this like wagon, and we could put someone to carry it each day, and we could put all our bags in it.” (S2)*

Thank you