



2017 School Travel Planning Information Survey Summary Report

Thunder Bay District Health Unit
Healthy Living Team

TBDHU.COM





CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
RESULTS	2
WHOLE SAMPLE	
Figure 1: Does your child commute actively (by walking or by cycling) everyday?	2
Figure 2: How does your child usually get to/from school? Choose one answer only. If he/she uses two, e.g. walking and bus, choose the one he/she spends the most time doing.	2
Figure 3: What enables your child to commute actively everyday?	3
Figure 4: What prevents your child from commuting actively?	3
Figure 5: What would encourage your child to commute actively?	4
TARGET SAMPLE: GRADES 4 TO 8	
Figure 6: Does your child commute actively (by walking or by cycling) everyday?	4
Figure 7: How does your child usually get to/from school?	5
Figure 8: What enables your child to commute actively everyday?	5
Figure 9: What prevents your child from commuting actively?	6
Figure 10: What would encourage your child to commute actively?	6
TARGET SAMPLE: JK TO GRADE 3	
Figure 11: Does your child commute actively (by walking or by cycling) everyday?	7
Figure 12: How does your child usually get to/from school?	7
Figure 13: What enables your child to commute actively everyday?	8
Figure 14: What prevents your child from commuting actively?	8
Figure 15: What would encourage your child to commute actively?	9
DISCUSSION	10
Figure 16: Comparison of reported facilitators between sample age groups	10
Figure 17: Comparison of reported barriers between sample age groups	11
Figure 18: Comparison of what would encourage parents to have their children commute actively between sample age groups	11
REFERENCES	12

Active School Travel (AST) is one possible way to increase levels of daily physical activity (DPA) among Canadian youth. It is reported that youth who actively commute accumulate an average of 45 minutes more MVPA daily when compared to youth who take passive forms of transport (ParticipACTION, 2016). As such, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) is working on a project with several community partners that will help students be more active by walking or biking to school as frequently as possible.

Previous attempts at implementing AST initiatives found that parents were a significant barrier to having more children participate in AST. As such, it was recommended that future initiatives understand the motivation of parents with respect to their child's AST and should attempt to obtain their support prior to moving forward.

In June of 2017, TBDHU distributed a survey with the intending to understand the reasons why parents in Thunder Bay may be supportive of AST, the barriers they face when encouraging children to actively commute, and the concerns parents may have allowing their children to engage in AST daily.

The nine question survey was developed by TBDHU staff and distributed using SurveyMonkey®. The link to the online survey was distributed via email, Facebook®, or sent home as part of a school newsletter. Between June and October of 2017, the TBDHU received a total of 184 responses to its STP Information Survey. Eleven partially completed surveys were removed from the final dataset due to missing data. Three cases were removed as they were related to high school aged youth.

A total of 170 responses were received and analyzed. While this is a desirable response rate, the original target sample was parents of elementary students in grades 4 through grade 8. Only 78 completed surveys met this inclusion criterion and as a result were analyzed separately. Three separate analyses were conducted, the whole sample, the target sample, and valid responses excluding the target sample.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

WHOLE SAMPLE:

- Average student age 8.42 (N=170; SD \pm 2.69)
- Respondents from 38 schools within the City of Thunder Bay (JK-Grade 8), one respondent's child was not yet in school.

TARGET SAMPLE:

- Average age of eldest child in elementary school (grades 4 to 8) was 10.95 (N=78; SD \pm 1.35).
- Respondents from 29 schools within the City of Thunder Bay (Ages 9-14).

OTHER SAMPLE:

- Average age of eldest child was 6.27 (N=92; SD \pm 1.33) other sample.
- Respondents from 30 schools within the City of Thunder Bay (Grades JK-Gr 3).

RESULTS

Whole Sample: Only 32% parents reported that their eldest child actively commuted daily.

Figure 1 - Does your child commute actively (by walking or by cycling) everyday?

Does Your Child Actively Commute?

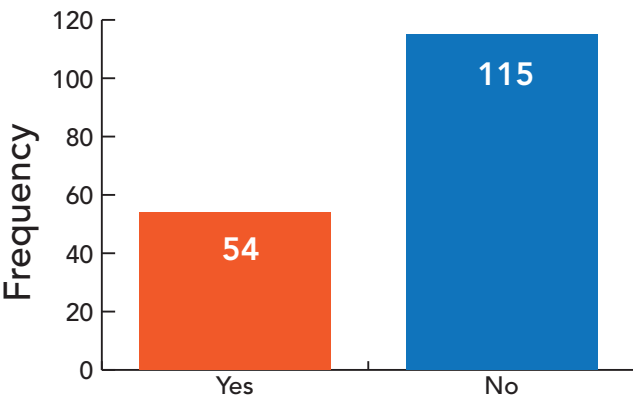
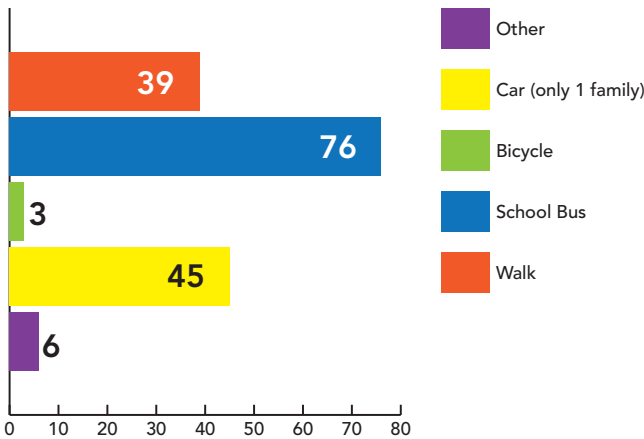


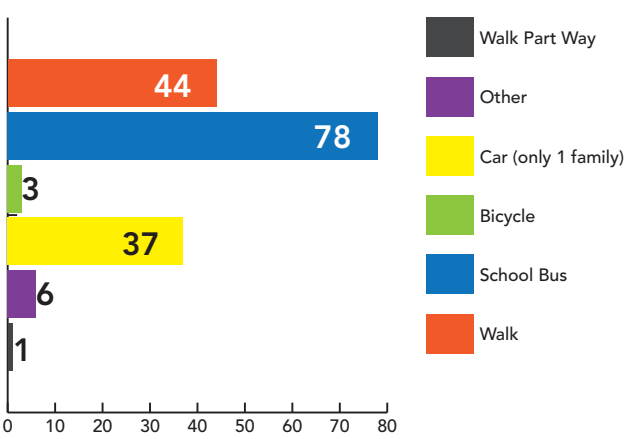
Figure 2 - How does your child usually get to/from school? Choose one answer only. If he/she uses two, e.g. walking and bus, choose the one he/she spends the most time doing.

Method of Transport To School (JK to Grade 8)



Most students, 45% (N=76) arrive at school via the school bus, while 27% (N = 45) reported that they travel by car with only one family, and 23% (N=39) reported that they walk to school. Other responses indicated that their mode of travel was weather dependent, either bicycle or school bus, via wheelchair or wheelchair van, or by taxi.

Method of Transport From School (JK to Grade 8)



Most students, 46% (N=78), go home via the school bus, while 22% (N = 37) reported that they travel home by car with only one family, and 26% (N=44) reported that they walk home from school. Other responses indicated that their child's mode of travel was weather dependent, either bicycle or school bus, via wheelchair or wheelchair van, or by taxi.

Figure 3 - What enables your child to commute actively everyday? (Choose all that apply)**Facilitators (JK-Grade 8)**

Top three reported facilitators were: living in close proximity to the school, the perception that the community was safe, and that their child was old enough to actively commute. Other responses included: parents/grandparents accompanying the child (most frequent other response), teaching children about the hazards and trusting children to manage the hazards, and having a parent that stays home.

Figure 4 - What prevents your child from commuting actively? (Choose up to 3 only)**Barriers (JK-Grade 8)**

Top three reported barriers were: distance, traffic concerns, and personal safety concerns. Other responses included: the eldest accompanying younger siblings, age, having to go to daycare/after school care, lack of rural sidewalks, medical reasons, and concern that the speed limit is too high.

Figure 5 – What would encourage your child to commute actively? (Choose up to 3 only)

**What Would Encourage You to Allow Your Child to Actively Commute?
(JK-Grade 8)**



Overall, the top three factors that would encourage parents to allow their children to actively commute were: age, distance, and not travelling alone. Other responses included having a group to walk with from a defined drop off location, infrastructure improvements in the form of a defined cycling/walking path, while some parents indicated that nothing could encourage them to allow their child to actively commute.

Target Sample (Grades 4 - 8): 37% parents reported that their eldest child actively commuted daily.

Figure 6 – Does your child commute actively (by walking or by cycling) everyday?

Does Your Child Actively Commute?

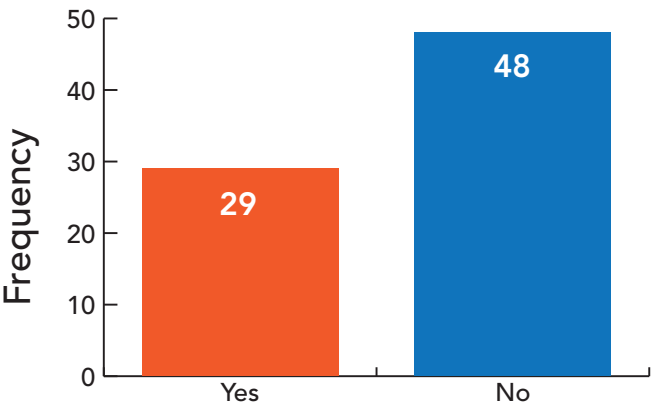
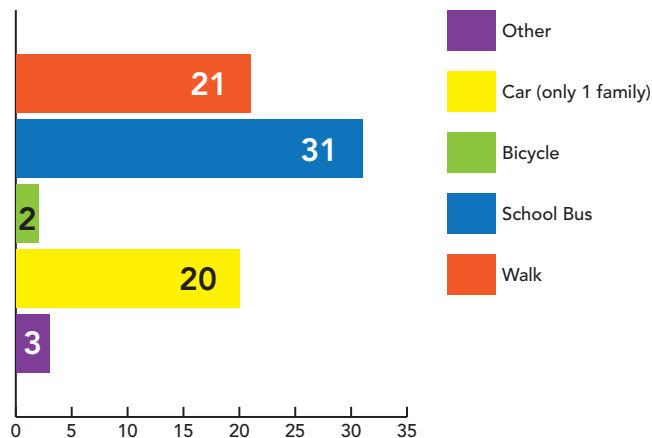


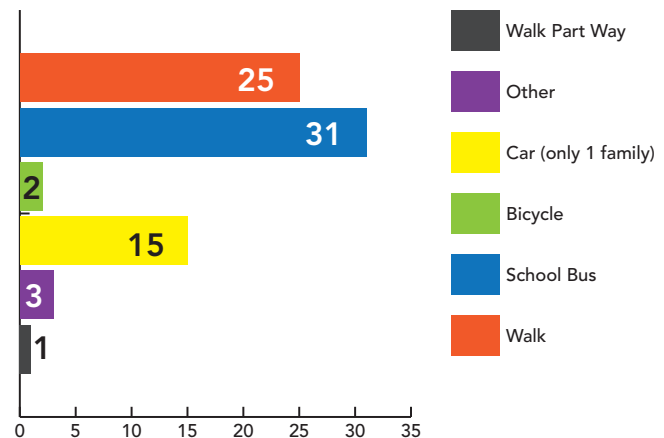
Figure 7 - How does your child usually get to/from school? Choose one answer only. If he/she uses two, e.g. walking and bus, choose the one he/she spends the most time doing.

Method of Transport To School (Grades 4 to 8)



Most students, 40% (N=31), arrive at school via the school bus, while 26% (N = 20) reported that they travel by car with only one family, and 27% (N=21) reported that they walk to school. Other responses indicated that their mode of travel was weather dependent, either bicycle or school bus.

Method of Transport From School (Grades 4 to 8)



Most students, 40% (N=31), go home via the school bus, while 20% (N = 15) reported that they travel home by car with only one family, and 32% (N=25) reported that they walk home from school. Other responses indicated that their child's mode of travel was weather dependent, either bicycle or school bus.

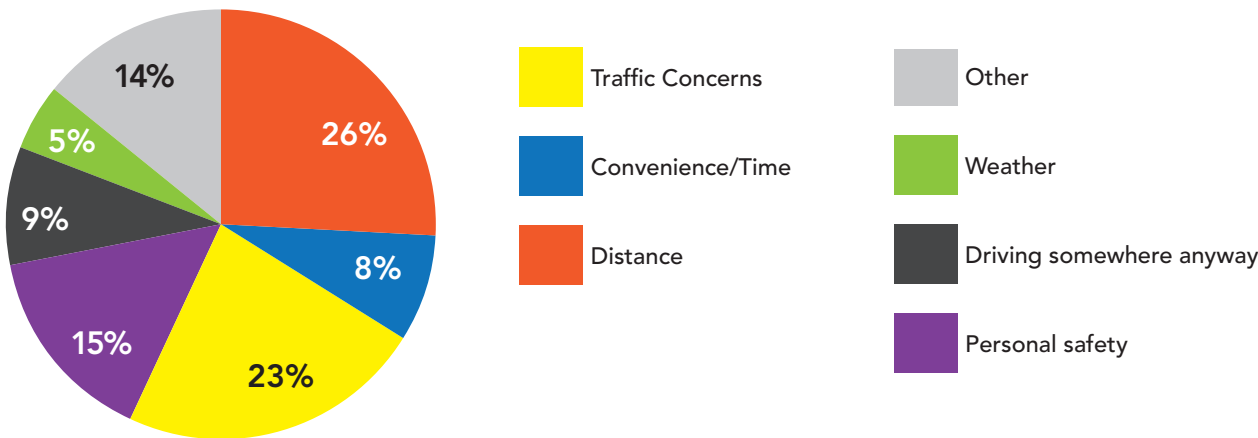
Figure 8 - What enables your child to commute actively everyday? (Choose all that apply)

Facilitators (Grades 4 to 8)



Top three facilitators were: age, distance from school, and the safety of the community. Other responses included: being accompanied by a parent, and teaching children about the hazards and trusting them to manage the hazards.

Figure 9 - What prevents your child from commuting actively? (Choose all that apply)
Barriers (Grades 4 to 8)



Top three barriers were: distance, traffic concerns, and personal safety concerns. Other responses suggested that afterschool care/activities, the eldest accompanying younger siblings and infrastructure deficits are other barriers to engaging in AST.

Figure 10 - What would encourage your child to commute actively? (Choose up to 3 only)
What Would Encourage You to Allow Your Child to Actively Commute?
(Grades 4 to 8)



Top three factors that would encourage parents to allow their children to actively commute were: distance, traffic, and not travelling alone. Other factors that might encourage parents to have their children engage in AST are: having other children to walk/cycle with, infrastructure improvements in the form of a defined cycling/walking path, while some parents indicated that nothing could encourage them to allow their child to actively commute.

Other Sample (JK-Grade 3): 27% parents reported that their child actively commuted daily.

Figure 11 - Does your child commute actively (by walking or by cycling) everyday?

Facilitators (JK to Grade 3)

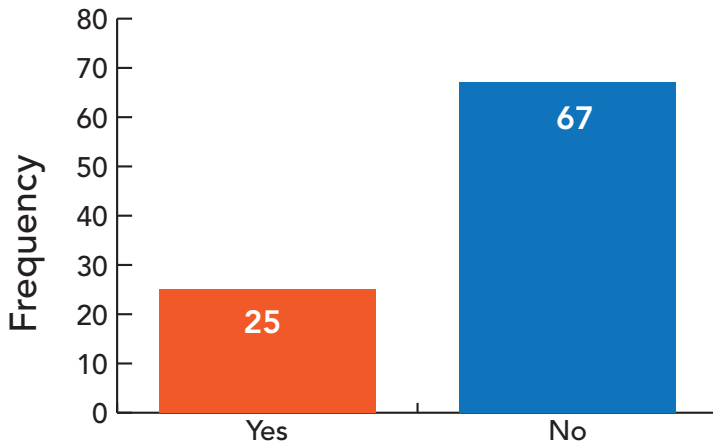
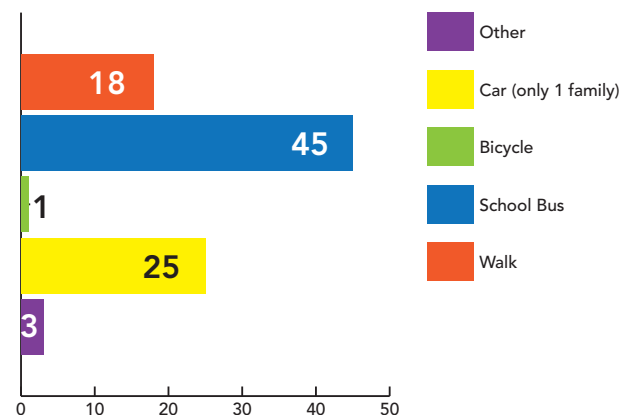


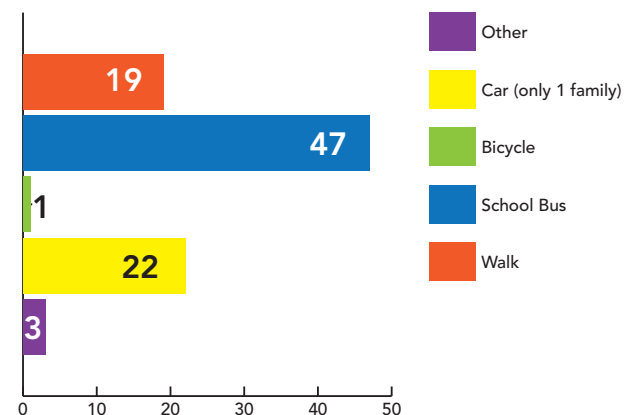
Figure 12 - How does your child usually get to/from school? Choose one answer only. If he/she uses two, e.g. walking and bus, choose the one he/she spends the most time doing.

Method of Transport To School (JK to Grade 3)



Most students, 49% (N=45), arrive at school via the school bus, while 27% (N = 25) reported that they travel by car with only one family, and 20% (N=18) reported that they walk to school. Other responses indicated that students arrived by taxi, or by wheelchair/accessible van.

Method of Transport From School (JK to Grade 3)



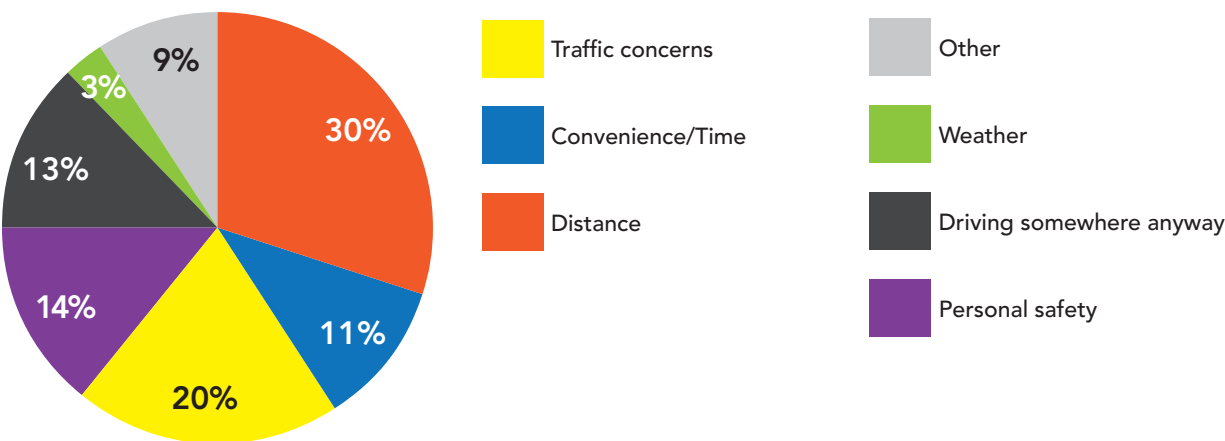
The majority, 51% (N=47) of students go home via the school bus, while 24% (N = 22) reported that they travel home by car with only one family, and 21% (N=19) reported that they walk home from school. Other responses indicated that students walk to an afterschool program and are subsequently picked up by a parent, travel by taxi, or wheelchair/accessible van.

Figure 13 - What enables your child to commute actively everyday? (Choose all that apply)
Facilitators (JK to Grade 3)



Top three facilitators for AST were: living in close proximity to the school, living in a safe community, and having a safe walking route. Other responses were dominated by a parent/grandparent accompanying the child to/from school.

Figure 14 - What prevents your child from commuting actively? (Choose all that apply)
Barriers (JK to Grade 3)



Top three barriers to AST for this younger age group were: the distance from home to school, traffic concerns, and personal safety. Other barriers reported were: age, the child's walking speed, and infrastructure deficits.

Figure 15 - What would encourage your child to commute actively? (Choose up to 3 only)

**What Would Encourage You to Allow Your Child to Actively Commute?
(JK to Grade 3)**



Top three factors that would encourage parents to allow their children to actively commute were: age, distance, and not travelling alone. Other factors that might encourage parents to have their child engage in AST were: if the parents trusted that their child would arrive safely and punctually, and if their child was able to walk independently.



DISCUSSION

According to the results of this survey, the percentage of students aged 4 to 16 years old engaging in modes of active school transport (e.g., walking, cycling) in Thunder Bay is 28 percent. This is just slightly higher than the national average of 25 percent of students of a similar age grouping (5 to 17 years old) who report using active modes of transportation when travelling to and from school (ParticipACTION, 2016).

Consistent with previous empirical evidence (Ahern et al., 2017; Henne et al, 2014), distance between home and school is the main barrier to AST cited by parents in Thunder Bay. Traffic concerns are the second highest reported barrier to AST, followed by personal safety concerns. Several facilitators to AST were reported including the child's age (old enough), living in close proximity to the school, and living in a safe community.

Among the older age group (grades 4 to 8), reduced traffic concerns, not living so far from school, a safer/improved walking route, and if their child did not travel alone would encourage parents to have their child(ren) engage in AST.

In contrast among the younger age group (JK to grade 3), having their child be older is the primary factor that would encourage AST, followed by not living so far from school, and if their child did not travel alone.

While distance from school and a child's age are not readily modifiable factors, efforts could be directed among interested stakeholders to identify and improve walking infrastructure along travel routes to facilitate AST in Thunder Bay.

Given the geographic size of the City, interventions to promote AST that include a park and walk model or a walking school bus may address the desire to have students travel in supervised groups rather than alone on their active commute.

Figure 16 - Comparison of reported facilitators between sample age groups

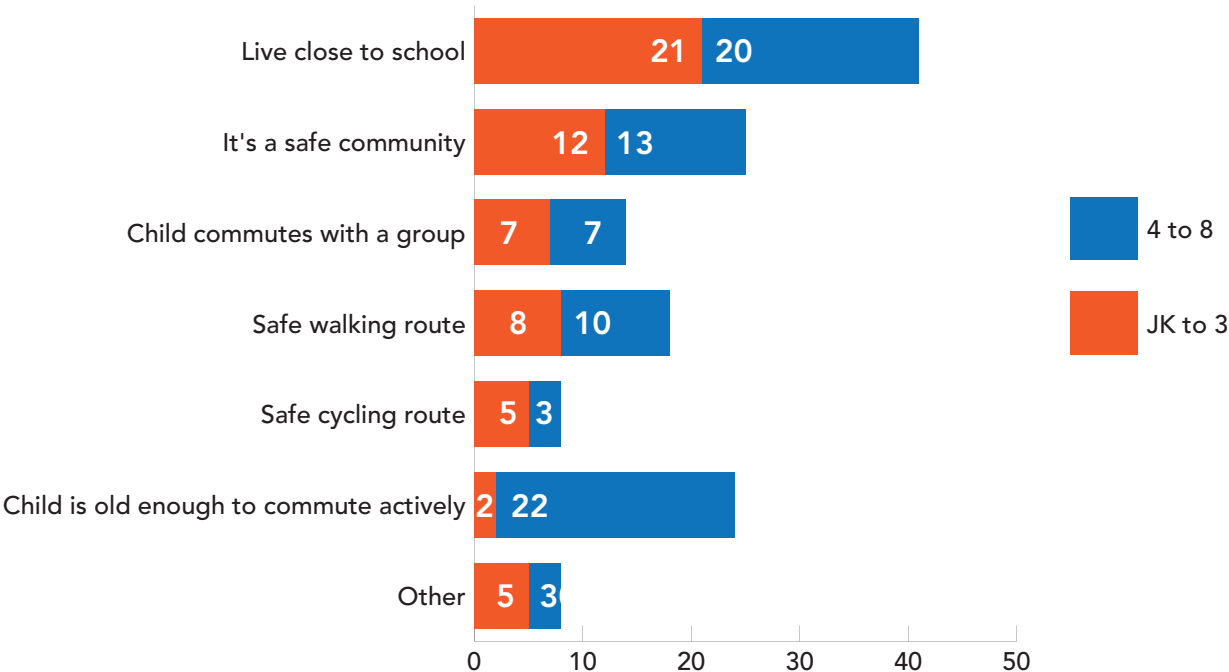
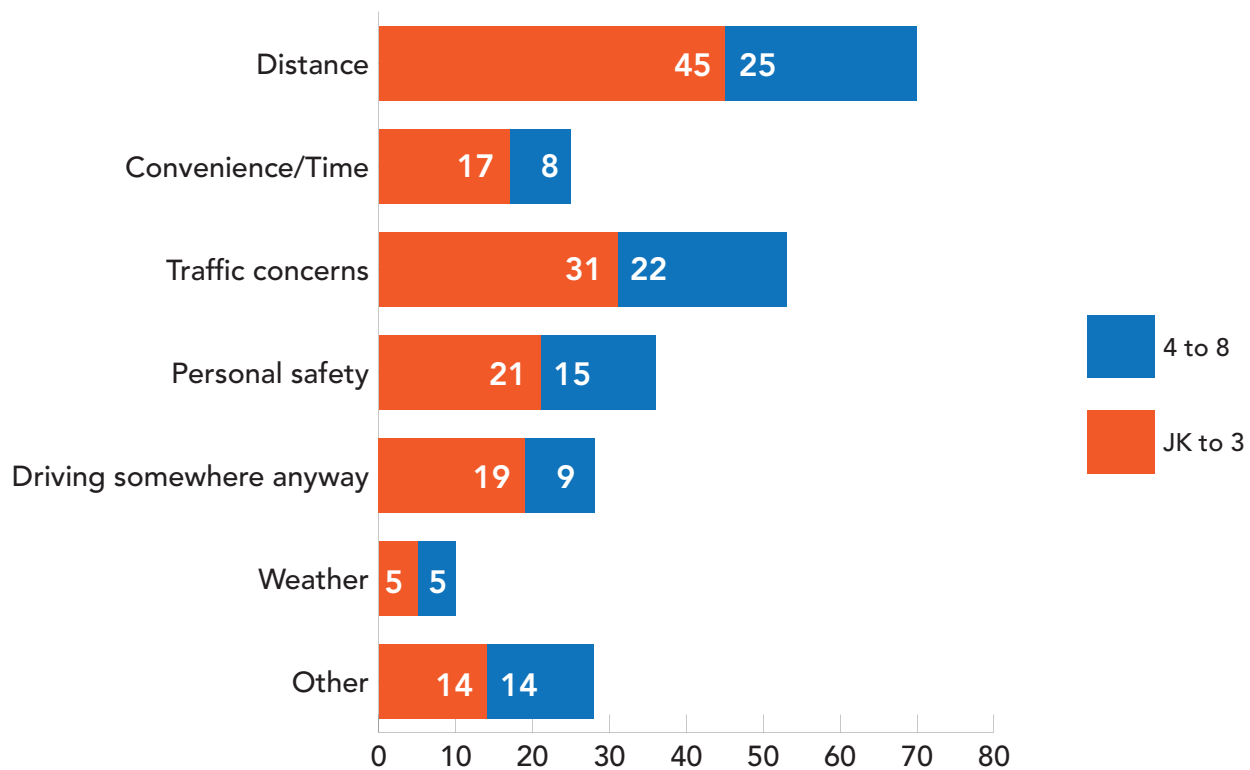
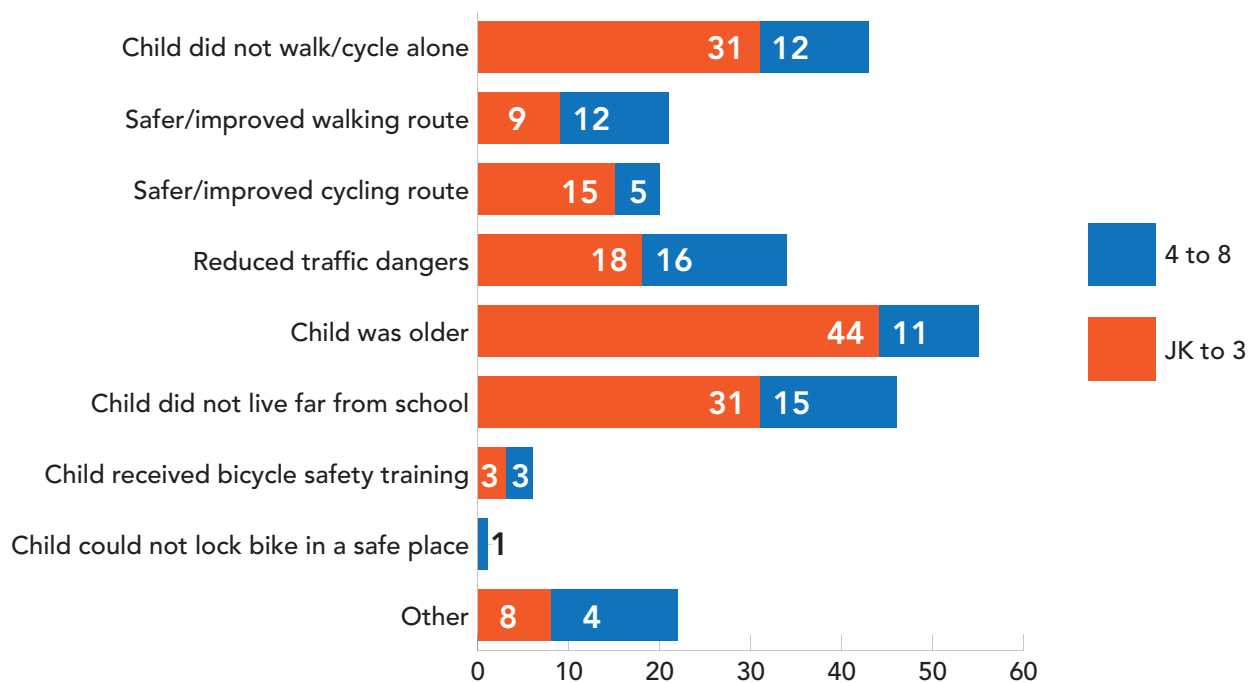


Figure 17 - Comparison of reported barriers between sample age groups**Figure 18** - Comparison of what would encourage parents to have their children commute actively between sample age groups

REFERENCES

Ahern, S. M., Arnott, B., Chatterton, T., de Nazelle, A., Kellar, I., & McEachan, R.R.C. (2017). Understanding parents' school travel choices: A qualitative study using the Theoretical Domains Framework. *Journal of Transport & Health*, 4, 278-293.

Henne, H. M., Tandon, P. S., Frank, L. D., Saelens, B. E. (2014). Parental factors in children's active transport to school. *Public Health*, 128(7), 643-646. doi: 10.1016/j.puhe.2014.05.004

ParticipACTION. (2016). 2016 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Retrieved from: <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/thought-leadership/report-card/2016>

Rothman, L., To, T., Buliung, R., Macarthur, C., & Howard, A. (2014). Influence of social and built environment features on children's walking to school: An observational study. *Preventative Medicine*, 60, 10-15.





Thunder Bay District Health Unit

999 Balmoral St.

Thunder Bay ON P7B 6E7

(807) 625-5900 | 1-888-294-6630

TBDHU.COM

