

TRAVEL TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

A STUDY OF ACTIVE TRAVEL INTERVENTIONS AND INFLUENCES ON TRAVEL CHOICE TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND



ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY:

This study reviews the background and data trends in secondary travel, considering successful methods of engagement and retention; presenting a summary of current and ongoing projects from across the UK and a more detailed look at two projects in Scotland.



BACKGROUND AND DATA TRENDS

Active travel to school has been targeted for action by the Government in Scotland across health, transport and environmental policy for several decades now.

Despite considerable improvements in active travel rates at some primary schools, where there are a range of initiatives available to highlight and address falling rates of walking, cycling and sustainable transport, levels of active travel at Secondary schools have remained largely static throughout.

Data from the Hands Up Scotland, Sustrans' annual travel survey¹ illustrates falling walking rates in primary schools and a comparable rise in other active modes², resulting in very little change in the overall driven rate.

In Secondary schools the walking rate has remained stable, but other sustainable modes, notably cycling and bus have fallen, resulting in an overall increase in the driven rate.

Three very clear patterns can be seen from the secondary school travel data:

First, an imposed change in travel behaviour due to greater distances: active travel drops dramatically over the primary / secondary transition, due to increased distances to learning establishments and increased use of school transport

Second, interest in cycling drops markedly while walking increases, this is possibly due to the social benefits the latter brings over the more individual nature of cycling.

Finally, teenage girls are less likely to travel actively (and to be overall less active generally), than their male counterparts³.

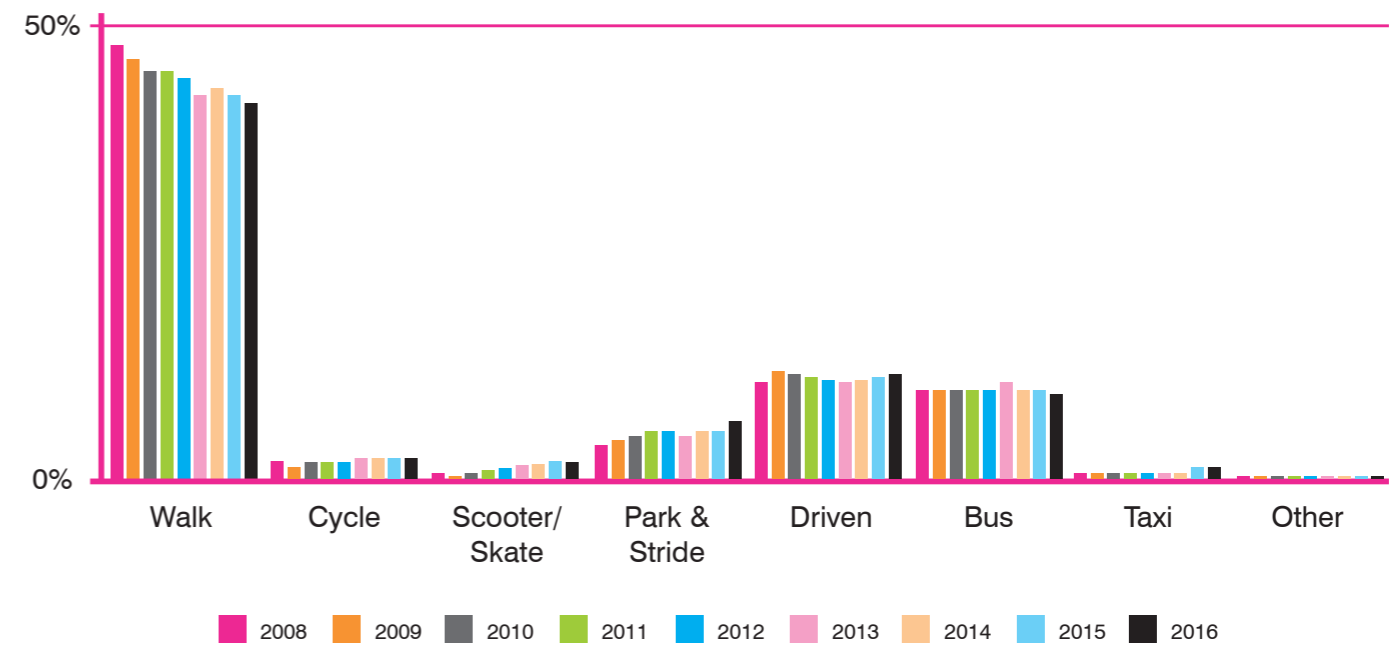
During the last 20 years or so efforts to address falling active travel rates have been mostly concentrated on primary schools, for which travel planning and active travel work has straightforward affinities with existing initiatives such as Eco Schools, Health Promoting Schools and SportScotland's Active Schools programme.

¹ www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/hands-up-scotland-survey

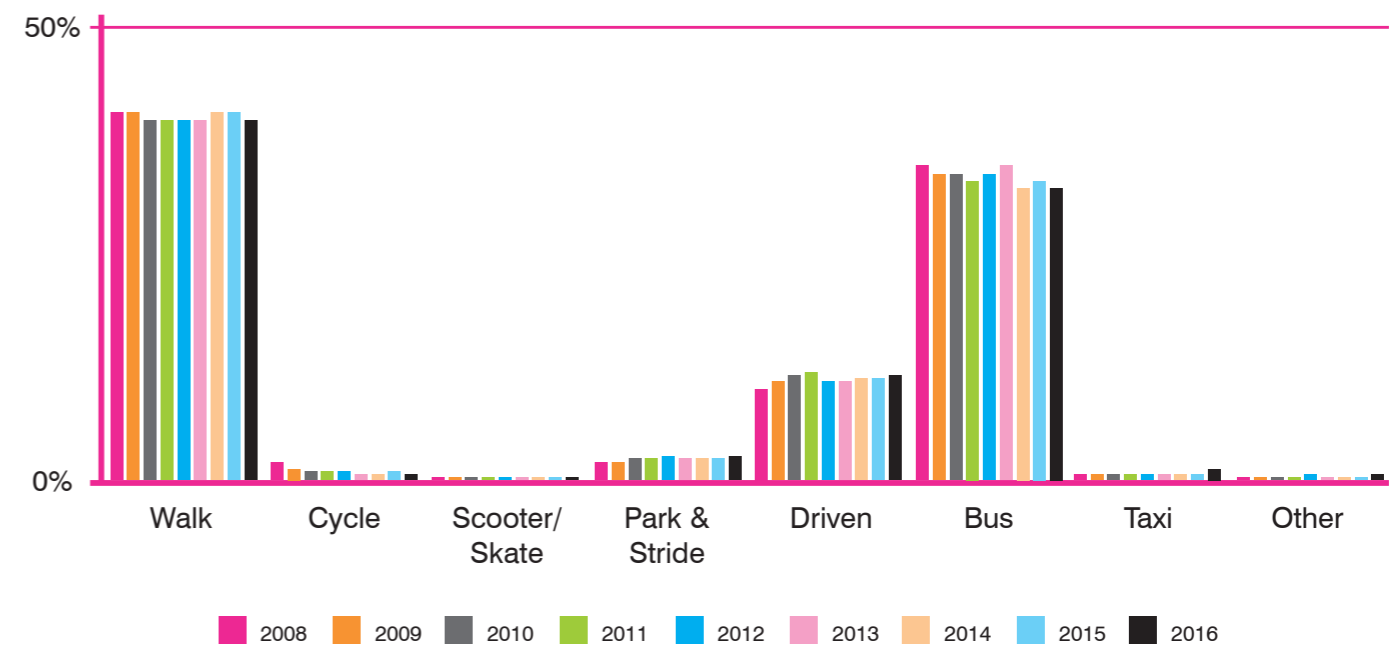
² Includes a significant rise in reported rates of Park and Stride

³ Learning From Success: Active Travel in Schools, Glasgow Centre for Population Health www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/3774/BP36_April_2013.pdf

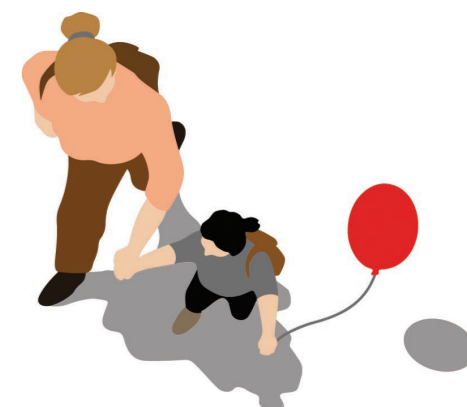
SCOTLAND - ALL PRIMARIES & SECONDARIES



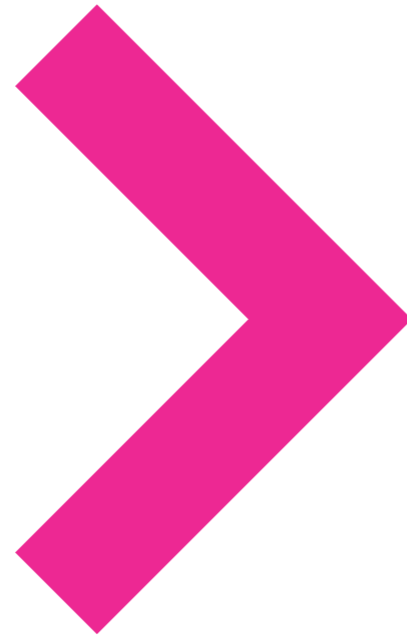
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Credit - HUSS Sustrans Scotland



ENGAGEMENT



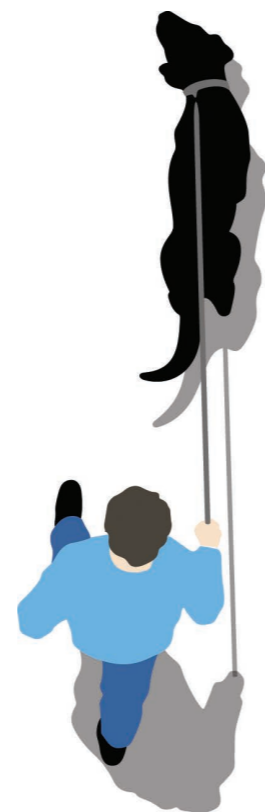
Secondary Schools can be harder to engage with for the delivery of active travel initiatives. A number of possible reasons for this include learning being more clearly defined into subject matter at secondary level, the impact of peer pressure rather than parental choice on travel modes as well as timetable and staffing limitations. The effects of work done in primaries are often relied on to maintain acceptable levels of active travel throughout the secondary years¹.

At primary level, the cross-curricular nature of active travel projects appeals to teachers; linking many areas across the curriculum, fitting in with health & well-being (getting fitter, positive effects of moving more in the fresh air), environment (reduction of pollution), social studies & human geography (mobility, trip generators, transport route planning, desire lines and walkability), road safety (reduced traffic, increased perceived and real safety, increased skills). For example, data collected for monitoring travel patterns can be used in numeracy classes in a way that can be adapted from simple bar graphs at P1 through to complex data handling in P7.

While at primary level, this is a boon that allows schools to work in a cross curricular manner with active travel initiatives, it would seem that secondary schools can find it hard to pinpoint where to slot active travel projects into their timetables. This perceived difficulty does, however, have a positive side: active travel can slot in anywhere there is the enthusiasm for it, and different secondaries can each play to their strengths by creating and running activities that suit their specific needs and talents. Replication across establishments can be difficult, but there are a number of examples of best practice from across the country and further afield.

¹ www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/01/8442/337437

Gaining interest from Secondaries to engage with active travel projects appears to be less in delivering cross-curricular content and more in offering novel, sometimes less purely academic, ways for young people to acquire valuable and transferable skills such as project management, budgeting and public speaking. An area to exploit for this could be increased vocational aspects of travel planning and active travel work, as well as stimulating young people to take their place in their communities with skill development in knowledge of active-travel friendly infrastructure design and lobbying local authorities for action in this area.



CURRENT PROJECTS



Across the UK, a number of programmes targeting secondaries are now emerging from their pilot phases and being rolled out to schools. The Scottish Government's Tackling the School Run report, written in 2017, highlighted the main efforts being made in Scotland up to this date:

Sustrans Scotland's ibike¹, a project focussed mainly on cycling but with benefits for walking and scooting too, is reported to carry over a sizeable positive impact across the primary-secondary transition in its school clusters. This also seems to apply to active travel transition projects with feeder primaries such as led rides / walks to secondary school sites and award schemes like Cycling Scotland's Cycle Friendly Schools, that transitions from the simpler, staff champion-led primary section into a more complex, pupil-led secondary award; opening the way to opportunities and funding of up to £3000².

Cycling Scotland has also run School Camps, targeting S4 to S6 pupils to encourage them to become local cycle champions and implement cycling action plans in their schools. There are further opportunities offered to these pupils to link with feeder primaries and develop their leadership skills by delivering Bikeability to P5-7 pupils. Access to this programme is competitive: 10-15 selected schools attend a residential camp in the October holidays, where pupils develop their school project ideas, gain the required Cycle Training Assistant (SVQ) qualification, train as first aiders and in bike maintenance. School projects are then funded through grants and pupils encouraged to develop a cycling hub at their secondary school.



1 www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/i-bike

2 www.cycling.scot/our-programmes/cycle-friendly/secondary-school

The Scottish Government's Air Quality in Scotland portal runs "Clear the Air"³, aimed at 12 to 15 year-olds; while this presents a distinct environmental slant, it encourages personal reflection & behaviour change by making pupils calculate emissions associated with their own "school run" journey.

Road Safety activities such as those carried out by Road Safety Scotland⁴ help focus young people's responsibility towards their own safety. Such activities are critical in gaining parents' backing to let their children travel independently to school.

In more recent development, and with reference to specifically gender-based differences in active travel, Living Streets has been piloting a new initiative in partnership with Youth Scotland. Glasgow's Smithycroft Secondary School has hosted a girls' leadership project that was specifically set up to redress the activity and gender balances. See case study 1

Sustrans, the walking and cycling charity, runs a number of nationwide activities and provides resources as well as funding for secondary projects. While the Big Pedal mostly attracts primary schools, secondaries take part too, with around 80 secondaries

3 cleartheair.scottishairquality.co.uk

4 roadsafety.scot/parents-and-educators/secondary-school/

nation-wide registered in spring 2018⁵. The Big Street Survey⁶ has specific resources for secondary schools and, while this is currently in a re-design phase, the resources are still available for schools to use.

In England, Transport For London's Youth Travel Ambassadors⁷, piloted from 2011, works with secondary schools across Greater London to develop relatively low-cost but very successful active travel campaigns, culminating in Dragon's Den-style presentation bids to further develop their projects. TFL and Modeshift also each run their STARS accreditation schemes⁸ that motivate schools, from nurseries to colleges, to improve sustainability on the school run.

Eco Schools promotes more sustainable travel choices for schools working towards their international Green Flag accreditation scheme. Transport is one of the current 10 topics on offer for schools to work on, with a few external links given on the Eco Schools website to suitable activities for secondary pupils⁹.

5 bigpedal.org.uk/schools

6 www.sustrans.org.uk/our-services/who-we-work/teachers/big-street-survey

7 tfl.gov.uk/info-for/schools-and-young-people/teaching-resources/youth-travel-ambassadors

8 stars.tfl.gov.uk and www.modeshiftstars.org

9 www.eco-schools.org.uk/topics/transport



CASE STUDY

YOUTH SCOTLAND AND SMITHYCROFT SECONDARY SCHOOL (GLASGOW), 2017-18.

The aim of this project is to engage with groups of secondary school girls who are not finding other forms of physical activity appealing. It is hoped that, through offering an achievable and rewarding programme that is guaranteed no-sweat, these girls will be encouraged to move more and help replicate the programme to an increasing number of girls in future years.

The project, a partnership between Living Streets Scotland, Youth Scotland and Smithycroft Secondary School in Glasgow, initiated by Living Streets Scotland to develop an appealing active travel project for secondaries, and with the desires of Smithycroft's Depute Head, Katie Anderson, to create an initiative for disengaged girls to exercise without feeling pressurised to do so – developing a healthy mind in a healthy body for these young people who were perhaps not finding the appeal in what our education system had to offer them.

The project was divided into a number of parts, of which preparation, active sessions and debrief / follow-up.

The first part (4 sessions) included activities to encourage the group to bond and discuss barriers to activity such as potential body image issues, embarrassment, fear of being sweaty at school, lack of fitness, dislike of exercise, low self-confidence & self-esteem and peer pressure; to define the project aims and objectives, which were the setting of walking challenges by the girls, both individually and as a team; to prepare for the project through walking, street and route audits in the vicinity of the school; and to undertake some Youth Scotland leadership skills training to facilitate the project delivery. In Spring 2018, the actual project delivery started.



**“WALK CHAMPIONS...
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Expected outcomes were that the girls, in becoming Walk Champions for their school, would increase their own physical activity and self-confidence, gaining qualifications for their own personal career development in the form of a Youth Achievement Award, as well as encouraging others to follow in their footsteps.

Monitoring of the project was carried out via pre-course questionnaires and formal final evaluations, the Youth Achievement Award requiring candidates to collect evidence themselves and self-assess with a tailored tool. Travel patterns themselves were not specifically monitored due to the lack of appropriate software for secondary schools – but in a further iteration of the project, this could be carried out using mobile phone apps or activity trackers.



CASE STUDY

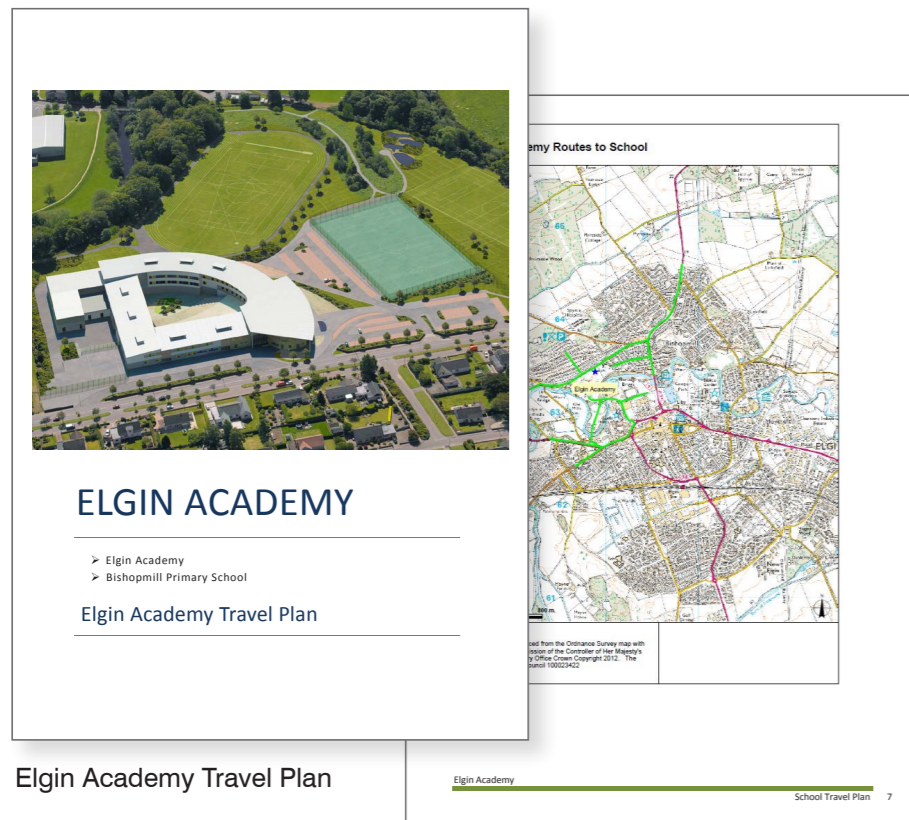
ACTIVE SCHOOLS AND ELGIN ACADEMY 2017-18.

Elgin Academy, in Moray North East Scotland, has been associated with active travel projects for many years.

They were one of the first schools in Scotland to develop an integrated school travel plan and through the work of their school travel group were influential in decisions about local school amalgamations and the design and access to the new Academy building, completed in 2012.

While the new building embodies many qualities of good design for active travel, issues of peak time congestion remain and the school have recently re-engaged with the travel planning process to look at possible solutions.

During 2017-18 academic year focus groups, facilitated by Living Streets Scotland, met to discuss some of the specific and more general issues for secondary schools facing falling levels of active travel and rising levels of traffic.



Elgin Academy Travel Plan

Some of the main challenges identified by the groups included:

- Difficulties defining what 'active travel projects' at secondary schools achieve
- Decreasing levels of fitness and willingness to walk/cycle as a means of transport in general
- Changes in the perception of personal responsibility i.e. getting a lift to secondary school is no longer seen as embarrassing
- Congestion not extreme enough in most Scottish towns and cities that travelling by car is particularly inconvenient
- Distances and routes to school
- Feelings about bus travel being expensive, inconvenient and 'out of date'
- Societal pressures to gain personal mobility (older years) – advertising, peer/parental
- School mergers, catchment changes and out of zone placements

Moving on from these challenges a list of three priority themes developed, that could potentially achieve gains in active and sustainable travel at secondary schools:

- Establish accurate baseline and ongoing data to measure change in travel behaviour alongside interventions. Replicate, evaluate impact and reward good practice
- Target behaviour change and shift perceptions of independent and active travel during early secondary years
- Effectively link public transport and active travel to improve travel choices and decrease car dependency



FIND OUT MORE

Living Streets Scotland runs a range of programmes to help communities improve their walking environment: www.livingstreets.scot

Sustrans Scotland runs the Community Links programme, which provides grant funding for projects to improve walking and cycling infrastructure: www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland

Cycling Scotland has developed a suite of Cycle Friendly programmes to help promote and support cycling locally and make our workplaces, schools, campuses and communities more cycle friendly: www.cycling.scot

PAS (Planning Aid for Scotland) can provide advice, training and information on planning applications and the planning system: www.pas.org.uk

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