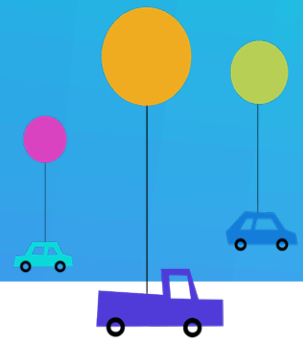


School Streets to shape child-friendly cities



A School Street is a road closure strategy to restrict motorised traffic, where walking and cycling zones are created in front of schools, at least during drop-off and pick-up times. School Streets are emerging as a low-cost, simple intervention to reduce vehicle usage, pollution, improve safety, as well as encourage walking and cycling in an effort to enhance community health and increased comfort among children, and their families. Their rapid adoption, mainly across European cities, can be linked to the need for safe social distancing near schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also as a response to crises of road safety, health, and air quality, the growing child-friendly cities movement, as well

as the acceptance of experimental or ephemeral approaches, such as tactical urbanism, open streets, slow streets and play streets.

The rise of School Streets can also be attributed to their affordability, simplicity of concept, ease of implementation, and successfully captured positive impacts and learnings from past interventions that provide encouragement for replication. Evaluation and monitoring of existing initiatives show measurable, positive impacts in most cases, and demonstrate that School Streets can contribute real solutions to some of our most pressing urban challenges.

Key figures:

School drop-offs represent a significant share of motorised traffic: Transport for London estimated in 2018 that 25% of weekday morning peak car trips are for school drop-offs, a total of 254,000 trips a day.

Both parents and children support school streets: In a UNICEF survey in France, 87% of respondents were in favour of the implementation of a School Street around their child's school, with 59% convinced due to safety issues (safer surroundings) and nearly 40% also convinced by the argument of less pollution. In Toronto, 100% of children surveyed said they preferred their school street car-free, with 77% believing that the street was unsafe before the pilot, and only 3% during the intervention.

Reduction in car travel: A TfL study supported by FIA foundation noted an 18% reduction of car travel to school in London as a result of interventions.

Air quality: near to schools in Brent, Enfield and Lambeth an impressive 23% reduction in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution was found. NO₂ levels in the Flemish Region of Belgium were reduced by 20%.

Active travel: Since the implementation of School Streets within Waltham Forest, there has been a 20% increase in pupils travelling actively at Willow Brook Primary School and a 10% at St Joseph's Catholic Infant School. According to Hackney Council's official information, since the program was launched, the proportion of children cycling to participating schools has increased by over 50%.





Image: Ivan Put for Filter Café Filtré

In a nutshell, School Streets support child-friendly cities in the following ways:

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- ▶ School Streets have a positive effect on traffic reduction from parents and caregivers, as well as general improvements on road safety, without causing disruptions in nearby streets.
- ▶ School Streets have a considerable positive effect on air quality, reducing pollution levels on streets surrounding schools.
- ▶ School Streets are a good starting point towards a modal shift to active travel, and have proven to increase the percentage of pupils travelling actively, adding to their physical activity, mental awareness and stress reduction.
- ▶ School Streets can have a generational impact of active travel at a young age, making them more likely to continue walking and cycling as adults.
- ▶ School Streets have proven to receive enormous positive support not only from children and parents but also from teachers and other community members in the neighbourhood.
- ▶ School Streets recenter public joy and urban play in the planning conversation, and support stronger community bonds and resident wellbeing.

Key considerations:

- ▶ In highly car-centric environments, short pop-up interventions or street parties are an effective starting point for longer School Street implementation. These short experiences can mitigate the potential backlash of taking away space from cars, and rapidly demonstrate the benefits of such interventions.
- ▶ Community interests and engagement are key factors that should guide the preliminary work when choosing the location of a School Street pilot, and continue throughout the process leading up to the implementation.
- ▶ Participatory approaches should be included in School Street expansion. Going from a pop-up, to interim, to permanent stage requires a collaborative and flexible transition process.
- ▶ A highly experiential methodology is advised. Co-creation invites collective imagination about the potentials of a street, allowing members of the community to express their desires and reducing the possibility of conflict.
- ▶ For evaluation and monitoring, ex-ante and ex-post surveys are suggested. Establishing a benchmark measure of the modal share of students, reasons for their mode preference, as well as road safety, air quality and noise levels records are of utmost importance.
- ▶ The presence of a political champion is important in order to legitimise the project, facilitate permitting and other requirements from local authorities, and strengthen community buy-in and trust.