

**St. Thomas, Elgin, London, Middlesex, & Oxford**  
**Active & Safe Routes to School Steering Committee**  
**2023-2026 Strategic Plan**

Created by Healthy Way Consulting  
in consultation with the ELMO ASRTS Steering Committee

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## Authors

This report was primarily written by staff at Healthy Way Consulting as an in-kind contribution to the St. Thomas, Elgin, London Middlesex, & Oxford Active & Safe Routes to School Steering Committee.

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- Maureen Cosyn-Heath, Southwestern Student Transportation Services



## Introduction

In January 2023, the St. Thomas Elgin London Middlesex & Oxford Active & Safe Routes to School Steering Committee (furthermore referred to ELMO ASRTS or the Committee) initiated a Strategic Planning process. The purpose of this process was to provide strategic direction and a work plan that the Steering Committee can use to guide their activities from September 2023 to August 2026.

## Who is ELMO ASRTS?

ELMO ASRTS consists of community partners from organizations throughout the Counties of Elgin, Middlesex, & Oxford, and the cities of London and St. Thomas working together to promote and sustain ELMO ASRTS programs that encourage children and families to choose active school travel.

### Partners

ELMO ASRTS [partners](#) include the following organizations:

CanBike London

City of London

City of St Thomas

Elgin County

Fanshawe College

Green Communities Canada

Human Environments  
Analysis Laboratory

LDCSB Parent Involvement  
Committee

London Cycle Link

London District Catholic  
School Board

London Health Sciences  
Centre

London's Child & Youth  
Network

Middlesex County

Middlesex London Health  
Unit

Ministry of Transportation  
Ontario

Oxford County

Southwestern Ontario  
Student Transportation  
Services

Southwestern Public Health

Thames Valley Council of  
Home & Schools Associations

Thames Valley District School  
Board

TVDSB Parent Involvement  
Committee

Western University





## Active School Travel

**Active school travel** is any form of human powered travel to and from school and the school bus stop, including walking, biking, and scootering. Participating in active school travel provides many benefits to children, including:

- Improve physical and mental health
- Reduce traffic around schools
- Improve air quality and the environment
- Have students arrive at school alert and ready to learn
- Have students feel more connected to their community

## Organizational Statements

The Committee Vision and Mission express our intentions and are used to guide the work required to meet the Committee Goals and Objectives.

### Vision

Children and youth confidently use active, safe, and sustainable school travel in the counties of Elgin, Middlesex, & Oxford, and the cities of London and St. Thomas.

### Mission

To work in partnership for the improvement of children's health, well-being, and environment by encouraging the safe use of active school travel and working to remove barriers to active school travel through comprehensive health promotion strategies.

### Committee Goals

The Committee believes equity, diversity, and inclusion principles are vital to creating programming that encourages and supports active school travel by all children. Through education, advocacy, and research, the Committee seeks to influence:

- Decision makers to adopt public policies that support active and sustainable school travel.
- Families to have increased comfort and confidence in choosing active and sustainable school travel for their children.



- Built environments in school neighborhoods that support active and sustainable modes of travel.

### Committee Objectives

1. Increase number of children using active school travel.
2. Decrease school-based vehicular traffic congestion around schools.
3. Promote programs and resources to increase students' knowledge and skills in pedestrian, cycling, and road safety.
4. Increase the capacity and sustainability of the partnership.
5. Ensure equitable access to programs and resources.
6. Collaborate with other agencies to inform public policies.

### Planning Process

Dr. Andrew Clark led a series of workshops focusing on creating a strategic plan and work plan for ELMO ASRTS along with Co-Chair Kristy Kastelic. The workshops included four key meetings:

- January 23, 2023: High level discussion of the Strategic Planning Process was established. The committee also discussed the following items: (1) Terms of Reference; (2) Committee priorities; and (3) Possible Steering Committee projects.
- March 21, 2023: Strategic planning meeting that included small group discussion about key topics of interest for the committee, including (1) short-term and long-term planning, (2) communications, (3) working groups, and (4) membership.
- May 23, 2023: Strategic planning of the School Travel Planning Program, where our committee discussed the past, present, and future of the flagship program.
- June 19, 2023: Present the Strategic Plan for the ELMO ASRTS Steering Committee to the Committee and receive feedback prior to finalizing the document.

The methodology used to create this strategic plan included focus group workshops, where small groups were asked to discuss various topics and take notes. The resulting notes were organized and summarized by Healthy Way Consulting, with an overarching strategic plan and connected work plan created from the results.



## Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities are overarching ideas that will help ELMO ASRTS complete our work over the next three years. The priorities developed are broad to allow the committee to be flexible and adjust to the ever-changing situations present in the areas in which our partners work. Each of these Strategic Priorities has specific strategic goals and objectives that tie directly to the 2023-26 Workplan: Equity; Sustainability; and Awareness.

### Equity

#### *Definition*

The Committee defines equity as ensuring that all schools receive what they need to be successful. In the ELMO ASRTS region, the school boards and health units categorize schools based on priority levels to ensure that schools with the highest need receive more direct support than schools with lower need. From a programming perspective, equity means that all programming should be developed for universal delivery, so that low priority schools can implement programs successfully with minimal support and high priority schools can successfully deliver the program with support of the Committee.

#### *Justification*

The Committee is dedicated to incorporating equity-based practices in all programs and opportunities delivered to schools. This priority stems from the desire to support families who are most at risk due to underlying social determinants of health. Children living in low-income neighbourhoods are more likely to participate in active school travel (source) but may be more at risk due to higher rates of air pollution, less supportive infrastructure, and lower parent engagement (sources). These trends make it imperative that we implement programming that provide education, encouragement, and engineering changes to the environment to make active school travel safer for children in higher priority school communities.

#### *Strategic Goal*

Increase equity in ELMO ASRTS programs by providing additional support to communities and schools identified as high priority by school boards and health units, while ensuring all schools have access to high quality and accessible program resources.

#### *Strategic Objectives*

- Provide additional support to schools in high priority neighbourhoods.





- Develop resources that allow all schools to participate in ELMO ASRTS programming with minimal Committee support.
- Provide a revised School Travel Planning Manual that can be used independently of ELMO ASRTS so that fewer resources need to be provided to low priority schools.
- Develop a menu-based approach to School Travel Planning, that allows schools to identify an active school travel barrier and be presented with a list of options that address the barrier.
- All pilot programs and projects should be conducted in high priority schools.
- The Committee shall monitor all programming to determine how successful the Committee has been at meeting the needs of high priority schools and equity-seeking populations within the region.

## Sustainability

### Definition

The Committee defines sustainability as a method to ensure that ELMO ASRTS and related active school travel programs can thrive in the present with concrete planning to ensure that they continue thriving in the future. To become more sustainable, the Committee will strive to increase capacity by engaging new members and distributing work more equally across the partnership. Programs can become more sustainable by creating universal implementation models that provide the resources and instruction needed to be run by any school with minimal support by the Committee.

### Justification

The Committee has a long history of developing and implementing programs that support schools in encouraging and promoting active school travel. Most of these programs, such as school travel planning, have required extensive leadership and support from ELMO ASRTS partners. We have also been blessed to have full-time staff from the Middlesex London Health Unit, Southwestern Public Health, Human Environments Analysis Laboratory, and Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services being provided in-kind to lead ELMO ASRTS programming and evaluations over the years. While this model worked very successfully for years, the changing priority of the organizations has meant that organizations do not have the same capacity as they have in the past requiring the Committee to connect with new members, build additional capacity among current members, and adapt programs to allow schools to implement independently with much less ELMO ASRTS leadership and support.



### **Strategic Goal**

Increase the sustainability of ELMO ASRTS programs by building partner capacity and streamlining programs to require less oversight.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Develop new partnerships with organizations that are aligned to the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of ELMO ASRTS.
- Provide a revised School Travel Planning Manual that can be used independently so that fewer resources need to be provided to low need schools. (From Equity)
- Use results of pilot programs to create implementation guides with a sustainability plan.
- Create a mechanism for schools and partners to be better connected to create a community of active school travel practices.
- Develop evidence to support the implementation of successful active school travel programming.
- Secure funding for ELMO ASRTS activities, such as wayfinding signs, bike racks, promotional items, through partner contributions and grants.
- Develop a partnership with school board ethics to collect population level data on the status of active school travel in the ELMO Region to understand the impact of ELMO ASRTS work.

### **Awareness**

#### **Definition**

The Committee defines awareness as improving the communication of ELMO ASRTS internally within the Committee and externally to all connected partners. There are three key elements of awareness:

1. Increasing awareness of what is happening within the Committee;
2. Increasing awareness of the Committee and program resources in the community; and
3. Increasing awareness of ELMO ASRTS programs to schools who will implement the programs.

#### **Justification**

Ever since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ELMO ASRTS has been unable to deliver many of the programs that have made an impact on the community. As a result, many in the community have





forgotten and need to be reminded about the Committee’s work. To better engage partners, schools, parents, and children, increased awareness is needed to highlight the work of the Committee and ELMO ASRTS programs through promotion, improved internal communication, and regular external communication between ELMO ASRTS and school partners.

**Strategic Goal**

Increase the awareness the community, schools, and parents have about ELMO ASRTS and our programs throughout the counties of Elgin, Oxford, & Middlesex, and the Cities of London & St. Thomas.

**Strategic Objectives**

- Develop more extensive internal ELMO ASRTS communication plan to ensure that partners are aware of all committee activities, working groups, and processes.
- Create online training webinars for ELMO ASRTS resources to help onboard new partner staff that will be responsible for delivering programs.
- Develop an awareness campaign about ELMO ASRTS to promote the committee and the work we do for the general community.
- Develop a communication strategy to build closer relationships with schools through partner school boards to regularly share resources and activities that promote active school travel.
- Develop a communication strategy to allow principals and teachers to easily implement active school travel messaging within their school through social media, school newsletters, bulletin board material, and school announcements.
- Develop an active school travel charter to be signed by school boards and municipalities that makes encouraging children to actively travel to and from school and the bus stop a priority.

**Work Plan**

**ACTIVITY**

**Estimated Timeline**

**School Travel Planning**

- |                                                         |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| • Create Universal School Travel Planning Model         | Summer 2023 |
| • Build relationship with School Board Ethics           | 2023 – 2024 |
| • Create introduction to School Travel Planning Webinar | 2023 – 2024 |



- Pilot new School Travel Planning Manual 2023 – 2024
- Develop new menu-based action plan resources 2024 – 2025
- Expand pilot to new schools 2024 – 2025
- Launch Universal School Travel Planning with school portals 2025 – 2026

### New Project Ideas / Resource Development

- Support Ride to Thrive Program (Cycle Link) Ongoing
- Improve & create curriculum connected education resources Ongoing
- Support for neighbourhood connectivity plans (London + other Munis) Ongoing
- Enhance & promote Drive to Five Program 2023 – 2024
- Safety Patrol Program in TVDSB / LDCSB 2023 – 2024
- School Streets Program Pilot 2024 – 2026
- Walking School Bus + Bike Train Pilot 2024 – 2025

### Advocacy

- Wayfinding Signs (research + Universal approach) 2023 – 2024
- School Bike Parking Resources (policy + funding) 2024 – 2025
- Active School Travel Charter 2025 – 2026

### Communications

- Launch new ELMO ASRTS Website with Partner Orientation Summer 2023
- Create ELMO ASRTS internal communication plan 2023 – 2024
- Create ELMO ASRTS external communication plan 2023 – 2024
  - Community Engagement
  - School Engagement
  - Parent Engagement
- Improve Partnerships & Relationships to increase awareness Ongoing



- Develop new relationships:
  - French School Boards
  - Before / After School Service Providers
  - Other Municipalities
  - Environmental Groups
  - Child Advocacy Groups (e.g., Investing in Children)
  - Recreation Providers (e.g., BGCL, YMCA)
- Presentations at School & Child-related Events (e.g., School Boards' Board of Trustee Meeting, Council of H&S Association, Parent Involvement Councils, School Councils)
- Create and deliver annual ELMO ASRTS School Orientation 2024 – 2025







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This report was created by Healthy Way Consulting.

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