



# What is a TravelSmart School?



The increasing popularity of the 'parent taxi' means that schools often experience severe vehicle congestion at start and finish times. This congestion creates a hazardous environment for small pedestrians. Frequently schools contact Local Governments asking them to build a solution that will fix their parking problems. Unfortunately, it is often not possible to build a way out of this problem.

A TravelSmart school realises that the best way to relieve congestion is by encouraging children to use active transport for their school commute. This includes walking, cycling, scooting and using public transport. These transport methods help children to get the 60 minutes of daily physical activity they require, increase safety and relieve congestion.

## What are the benefits?

Encouraging children and families to use active transport to get to and from school has many benefits for the whole community. TravelSmart schools help to:

- Reduce congestion – school-generated traffic is a big contributor to urban congestion especially during the morning peak period;
- Increase safety – when using active transport children are learning to make 'RoadWise' decisions; also decreasing the number of cars around a school makes it safer for children to walk and cycle;
- Increase physical activity – encouraging children to cycle to school or walk to the bus stop is an easy way to incorporate physical activity into their day; habitual physical activity provides many health benefits and plays an important role in weight management;
- Create closer communities – using active transport provides students with an opportunity to expand friendships and develop an awareness of their neighbours and local streets;
- Develop children's independence – walking, cycling and using public transport to get to school develops children's road-skills and decision making ability; and
- Save money – less money spent on costly road infrastructure means more money spent on other community programs and facilities.

60% of all primary school students live within 2km (a 20 minute walk) of their school and over half of these are driven.<sup>1</sup>

1. Department for Planning and Infrastructure (2005). "Better ways to get to school", a TravelSmart brochure.



## How can Local Governments support TravelSmart Schools?

There are many ways Local Governments can help local schools to be more TravelSmart. Three popular programs that can be sponsored by Local Governments are:

- *TravelSmart to School Program* – runs in selected primary schools over a four-week period. This program encourages children to use active transport for their school commute. Schools and classes compete against each other for prizes to save the most greenhouse gas. Over 5,000 students from 100 schools have already participated in this program, achieving a typical 20 percent reduction in car trips over a one-week period. The program is coordinated by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) and delivered by Millennium Kids, a youth based environmental organisation. Local Governments are encouraged to promote the program to local primary schools and can sponsor their

In Western Australia, the prevalence of overweight and obesity in 7 to 15 year olds doubled in males and tripled in females between 1985 and 2003.<sup>2</sup>

participation in the program. Further information about the program is available from the Millennium Kids website (see below).

- *Walking School Bus Program* – helps young children to walk safely to school. Two or more trained parent volunteers, or other responsible adults, escort a group of children to or from school. Walking School Buses operate as frequently as the volunteers are able to commit their time. The DPI coordinates this program and can train Local Government officers to help local schools to establish Walking School Bus routes.
- *RoadWise Safe Routes to School Program* – locates and maps out the safest and easiest street routes for children to follow on the way to and from school. Local Governments can assist schools to evaluate the safest route. This program is managed by RoadWise.

## Where do I find out more?

The DPI's Travel Behaviour Strategies Unit is a good first point of contact:

Email: [travelsmart@dpi.wa.gov.au](mailto:travelsmart@dpi.wa.gov.au)  
 Phone: (08) 9216 8000 (ask for TravelSmart)  
 Website: [www.dpi.wa.gov.au/travelsmart](http://www.dpi.wa.gov.au/travelsmart)

The following websites also provide further information on:

**TravelSmart to School**  
[www.millenniumkids.com.au](http://www.millenniumkids.com.au)

**Safe Routes to School**  
[www.roadwise.asn.au/schools](http://www.roadwise.asn.au/schools)



2. Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce (2005). Child and Adolescent Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey.