

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

Who should be involved?

The whole school community

Remember that it is the students, parents and staff who will need to ultimately make changes if a plan is to be successful! So it is essential that everyone understands what is possible from the very beginning, and that they can be involved in shaping the plan and making a difference.

Committees and groups in the school

Existing committees and groups in the school need to be fully aware of the school travel planning process from the outset. School council, parents and friends group, student representative committee, curriculum committee and other groups in the school all need to understand the contributions they can make.

Others

Consider other organisations that may have an interest in school travel or already have an established relationship with the school. This could be, for instance, the local environmental group, groups with an interest in encouraging walking or cycling, school bus operators, local Police or the community RoadSafe Group (www.roadsafe.org.au).

Who should lead the process?

Share the responsibility

Even though local government may be leading the process it is important that a TravelSmart School Travel Planning Action Committee is established. This may be an existing representative group or committee within the school, or one that is set up specifically for the purpose. This group needs to:

- be very task oriented and ensure that meetings focus on identifying what needs to be done, when and by whom
- ideally have representatives from key relevant committees, staff, parent/carers, students, and a member of the school leadership team
- not only take responsibility for developing the plan but also monitor ongoing implementation.

Where possible it should include local government representatives and others from any relevant key interest groups.

Identify a coordinator

It is best if a coordinator is identified to manage the school travel planning process. This could be one or two people drawn from the school leadership team, teachers, parents/carers or students. Their role would be to monitor progress between meetings of the group responsible for the TravelSmart School Travel Plan and ensure that any concerns or issues are dealt with appropriately. Whoever is selected will need good organisational and communication skills, and sufficient time to fulfil the role. In many schools this works best if it is a teacher with a position of responsibility for the task and appropriate time release.

It is important that the coordinator should coordinate, not be loaded down carrying out the actual tasks and actions. Tasks involved in the development and eventual implementation of the TravelSmart School Travel Plan need to be shared out across the school. If the school travel planning process is conducted solely by only one or two individuals, the ability of the plan to have any real impact on school travel may be limited. The more people actively involved in the planning process, the more likely there will be a greater commitment to implementing the plan and bringing about change!

Communication with school communities

Ongoing communication with all members of a school community throughout the school planning process is essential. Because it is important that the whole school community have a sense of ownership of the planning process, it is critical that they are aware of what is happening, when and why. Therefore a key initial task for the group leading the school travel planning process should be to involve the school community and keep them informed of progress. The starting point for this communication strategy should be introducing the concept to the school community.

The communication strategy should target all members of the school community and could include:

- **Parents/carers** - presentations at meetings and newsletter items to introduce school travel planning; regular updates in newsletters on progress and feedback on results from data collection; forums to both inform and seek input on proposed actions.
- **Students** - class presentations to introduce school travel planning; regular bulletins to classes and updates at school assemblies; a display board with updated relevant information; a poster competition to promote key messages.
- **Staff** - presentations at staff meetings to introduce school travel planning; regular updates at meetings and in staff bulletins.

It is important that two-way communication is encouraged and that opportunities to ask questions and raise issues are provided. Your communication strategy should also take into account the wider community, and include local media, the council and relevant community interest groups.

What will assist the process?

- Invest time in initially informing the school community about the benefits of developing a TravelSmart School Travel Plan.
- Seek support and endorsement for the planning process from the school community and allow opportunities for discussion and questions.
- Set a realistic timeline for developing the plan, but don't let it drag on for too long as people will lose interest.
- Be aware of what other priorities or initiatives may compete with the school travel planning process over the next 6-12 months.
- Be ready for parents/carers raising concerns about alternatives to driving children to and from school. Acknowledge concerns and assure them that part of the planning process is to investigate these further and look at ways of addressing them in the final TravelSmart School Travel Plan.
- In order to undertake effective school travel planning, it is important that there are already some established links between the majority of parents/carers and the school. If there are serious communication issues or very limited parent/carer interest in the school, it may be that these issues should be tackled before beginning the planning process.