

### Active and Safe Routes to School

Good evening. My name is Connie Hergott and I am a parent of one child attending Alliance French Immersion Public School. If he continues in the French immersion program at the NNDSB, the plan is to attend Chippewa SS for the 2020/2021 school year. I'm speaking on behalf of myself and a group of concerned parents whose children currently attend school at either Alliance or Vincent Massey. I am also the chair of the Active and Safe Routes to school Committee at Alliance.

### Issue

We have concerns related to traffic, transportation and related safety for the preferred option to amalgamate the 3 English Public High Schools (Chippewa, Widdifield and West Ferris) into a single school located on the Chippewa SS property.

In the last year, we have successfully launched the Walking School Bus project in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, with research initiatives from Nipissing University on the Active and Safe Routes to school program and activity levels of elementary school children. We had 400 active trips to school with over 40 students participating in our first round of this initiative. We will continue again mid April and are expecting to add both routes and children to the program. We have also launched a bicycle education program at Alliance that involves after school bike instruction to students to be successful sharing the roadways with vehicular traffic. The increase of traffic and busses after school is a situation that can impact our continuation of this valuable program.

Research from Nipissing University and the Health Unit on the cycling education program concluded that :

- a school-based single-component cycling education and encouragement initiative can have a positive impact on increasing active transportation to school behaviours among youth.
- Including focused initiatives as part of a broader active transportation to school program, such as School Travel Planning, is likely to yield beneficial results for all modes of active travel to school.

**Bruner, B., Confesor, V., Mayer, A.** Impact of a school-based cycling education and encouragement initiative on active transportation to school. *International Congress of Behavioral Medicine. Melbourne, Australia, December 7-10, 2016.*

We are concerned that the increased traffic congestion will deter families from all of our active and safe routes to school programs because they will feel the routes are no longer safe. There are several families in walking distance to Alliance who can not be convinced to participate in the Walking School Bus program because of barriers (real and perceived) with the current volume of traffic.

**Atrooshi, D., Bruner, B., Parker, N., Lee, R.E., Lévesque, L.** Exploring parental perceptions of a walking school bus in northern Ontario. *International Congress of Behavioral Medicine. Melbourne, Australia, December 7-10, 2016.*

### The Facts – Traffic Congestion

Presently, 2769 students utilize the High Street corridor to get to and from school, whether by bus or private vehicle. Compounding traffic includes employees of these schools as well as those individuals accessing Conseil Scolaire Catholique Franco-Nord, the Barclay House and the Chippewa Armoury.

The merger would lead to even more sedentary kids at a time when only 9% of kids are meeting physical activity guidelines and 40% of schools still aren't meeting the very low DPA requirements outlined in Ministry of Ed's PPM 138 (<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-016-3423-0>).

Looking at the Parry Sound Public School experience, despite pledges to use new school sites to promote active travel, the Board failed in that case to meaningfully invest in a plan to do just that, as was evidence by the unsafe traffic situation there for pedestrians and cyclists in the first few months of opening which was so bad it made headlines, with **one parent describing the traffic situation as 'total mayhem'** <http://www.parrysound.com/news-story/5833442-doors-open-at-parry-sound-public-school/> .

**Question: How will you honour the Board's commitment to an active and safe school travel plan to encourage healthy and active students?**

**We recommend a commitment from the board for an active and safe routes to school transportation program and policy to ensure students still have the opportunity to walk and bike if they want to. We propose the board hire an active travel coordinator to partner with the city, Health Unit and other community resources to draw up means of connecting the schools to active travel infrastructure in the city.**

Your capital plan tells us that Alliance projected enrolment in 2020/2021 is increasing to 635 students. That will mean even more busses/congestion and unsafe travel options in this busy corridor.

The projected enrolment of a single English public high school in 2020-2021 is 2247 students. According to the respective School Information Profiles and the Board's Initial Staff report, Chippewa is projected to see increased enrolment, while the other two secondary schools are projected to decline. Overall, 1357 new intermediate and secondary students are projected to attend school at the new single school if the Board moves forward with the preferred option.

#### **Proposed Alternative**

The following is a proposed alternative to the preferred option presented in the Initial Staff Report.

A single new JK- Grade 6 school and **two (2) Grade 7 - 12 schools**, (one new build, one existing), which would **share** the **2247** intermediate and secondary **students**.

Benefits of two secondary schools:

- Allows parents and students an **English public choice** within their community since **57%** of all secondary school **students are enrolled in the Near North District School Board** schools, while the **other 43%** of secondary students are **spread between the three other school boards** (NPSCDSB - St. Joseph Scollard Hall; CSCFN - Ecole secondaire catholique Algonquin; CSPNE - Odyssee)
- **West Ferris** Secondary School will **remain open**, a critical resource for families in the Ferris area of North Bay and physically accessible with the new elevator

It is our hope that the committee and Trustees will consider the issues raised this evening. Further, we look forward to the members giving serious attention to the alternatives and solutions suggested above.

Thank you.

Connie Hergott