



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Transport**

Empowering a
thriving community

Boosting walking and riding to schools in Perth:

Lessons from the TREK2School study

This paper highlights key findings of the TREK2School study
and their implications for promoting active travel to schools in Perth.



Project partners for the TREK2School study



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



The issue

Rates of active travel to school in Perth is among the lowest of all capital cities in Australia and internationally. Over the past 40 years the national rate of active travel to school has declined from 75 to 25 per cent and in Perth, the rate is as low as 20 per cent. More students being driven to school has concerning impacts on children's health and development and adds to traffic and car parking issues in neighbourhoods.

About the study

The TREK2School study (TREK stands for TRansport, Environment and Kids) by The Kids Research Institute Australia (formerly Telethon Kids Institute) aimed to provide an evidence base for interventions for more walking and riding to Perth schools.

The Department of Transport (DoT) was a study partner and part funded the research. DoT coordinates the proposed the TREK2School study and convened the study steering committee. DoT coordinates the State Government's Active Travel to School Roadmap 2023-2030 delivers the Your Move Schools program so will be an important user of the study findings.

TREK2School built on the original TREK study, undertaken in 2005-07 by the University of WA, led by Professor Billie Giles-Corti to understand the influence of the built environment on student travel to and from primary schools in Perth. TREK2School ran over 2021-23 and involved:

- A review of literature on interventions to support active student travel to schools
- An assessment of the walkability of the 2km catchment around every primary and secondary school in metropolitan Perth
- A survey of students and parents at 23 government primary schools and nine government secondary schools in metropolitan Perth
- A comparison of results of the 2007 and 2023 primary school student and parent surveys, to provide a longitudinal view of behaviours and attitudes.



What did we learn from the study?

Built environment

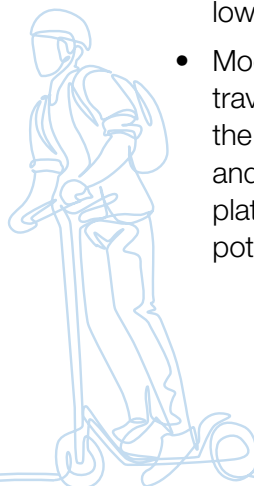
The TREK2School study assessed the walkability of 651 schools in the Perth metropolitan area considering factors of neighbourhood connectivity and traffic exposure.

Key findings:

- The majority of Perth schools are situated in neighbourhoods with disconnected street networks. Increasing the connectivity of streets surrounding schools is important to maximise the number of children with the potential to use more active travel to school.

74 per cent of Perth schools do not meet the WA Planning Commission (WAPC) target for pedestrian connectivity, limiting student potential to walk, wheel or ride to school.

- Primary schools in low socio-economic status (SES) areas are the most poorly connected, with only 9.6 per cent meeting the WAPC target. Neighbourhoods surrounding higher SES schools were significantly more walkable than low or medium SES schools.
- Modifying the built environment to support active travel (safe crossings; paths on both sides of the road; pedestrian cut-throughs; modal filters) and reduce traffic speed (speed humps; raised platforms; narrow lanes; chicanes) increases potential for walking, riding and scooting.





Parent and student behaviour and perceptions

The TREK2School study surveyed 771 year 5 and 6 students, 450 secondary school students and 877 of their parents about their behaviours and perceptions around travel to school. The survey included questions about how students usually travel to and from school and their preferred mode as well as exploring barriers and what could enable more walking and riding.

Key findings:

More than half of all primary school students are driven to school most days of the week, even though 65 per cent live within 2km of their school.

- Despite most students stating they would prefer to walk, ride or scoot to school, a concerning finding is the large increase in primary school students preferring to be driven to school (from 1 in 10 in 2007 to 1 in 4 in 2023).
- Half of primary school students reported they must cross a busy road if they walk or ride a bike to school, and a third would not feel safe crossing the road near their school.
- About two in five high school students said they would not feel safe crossing the road near their school.
- Parental concerns about aspects of road safety have increased since 2007:
 - Children have to cross busy roads (up 44 per cent)
 - Lack of safe crossings (up 41 per cent)
 - Amount of traffic around schools (up 30 per cent).
- Both students and parents reported that active travel infrastructure would help them/their child walk or ride to school more often. The actions they rated most highly to support walking and riding to school were:
 - More safe crossings
 - Paths on both sides of the road
 - Separated/protected bike paths.
- Both parents and students supported school-based actions to encourage walking and riding, such as:
 - Bike education
 - Regular active travel days
 - Incentives for students who walk or ride.



Five opportunities for boosting walking, riding and scooting to school

Insights from TREK2School and other research completed in recent years has informed the development of five key opportunities for action:

1. Prioritise connectivity and built environment improvements such as safe crossings and path infrastructure upgrades, with a focus on low socio-economic areas with severe connectivity issues.
2. Support infrastructure improvements with complimentary behaviour change initiatives, such as the Your Move Schools program, that increase community capacity and enthusiasm for walking, riding and scooting to school.
3. Support local governments to identify connectivity issues for schools in their communities by providing guidance on auditing walkability and determining infrastructure solutions.
4. Create and deliver communication campaigns to normalise and motivate walking, riding and scooting to school, addressing both students and parents.
5. Work with government and community stakeholders to trial 'big ideas' that help shift public perception and norms around active travel, such as:
 - 'School Open Streets' to reimagine streets next to schools and encourage a rethink around the trip to school
 - Hands-on programs to get parents and students to give active travel a go
 - Reduce parking and manage traffic to address congestion and create safer streets near schools.



Contact us

This paper provides a summary of some results from the TREK2School study.

For further information please email the Active Transport branch at Department of Transport: activetransport@transport.wa.gov.au

