

Active School Travel (AST) Stakeholder Roundtable Series

Building a Collaborative Agenda for Collective Action on AST

HRM Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)
July 20, 2023

Natalia Diaz-Insense
Active Transportation Advocate & Consultant



Goals

- Mobilize **collective action** on Active School Travel (AST)
- Make the case for investing in a **collaborative** and **effective evidence-based** approach to promoting and supporting school communities in their AST efforts, and
- Set the stage for working together on a **common agenda** in order to reverse current AST trends in HRM and achieve long-term population and systems-level change



Who was at the table?



HRM Councillors

Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA)

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

IWK-Child Safety Link

Halifax Regional Police (HRP)

**Dalhousie University
St Mary's University**

Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE)

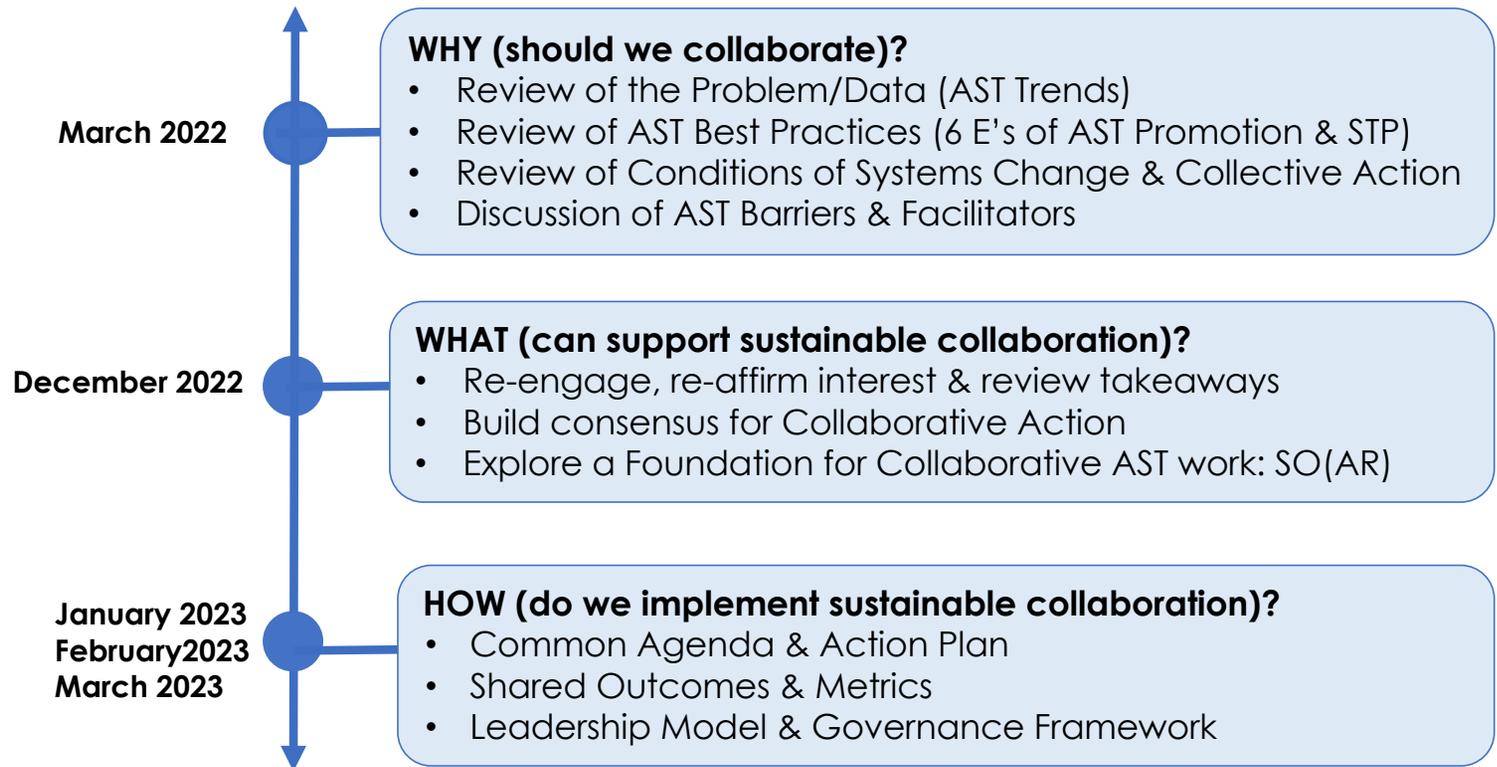
**Crosswalk Society of NS
Halifax Cycling Coalition
Walk'n Roll Halifax
Recreation NS
Hike NS**

School Staff & SAC Reps

School Parent Volunteers

**N.S. Dept. of Public Works (PW)
N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources & Renewables (NRR)
N.S. Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
N.S. Dept. of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH)**

AST Roundtable Series





Active School Travel Landscape & Learnings

AST Trends

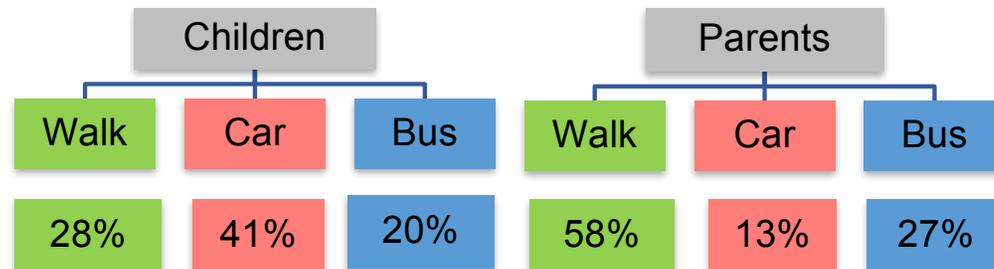
- Data not collected on a regular basis, but numbers are not good...

ParticipAction Report Card (2020)



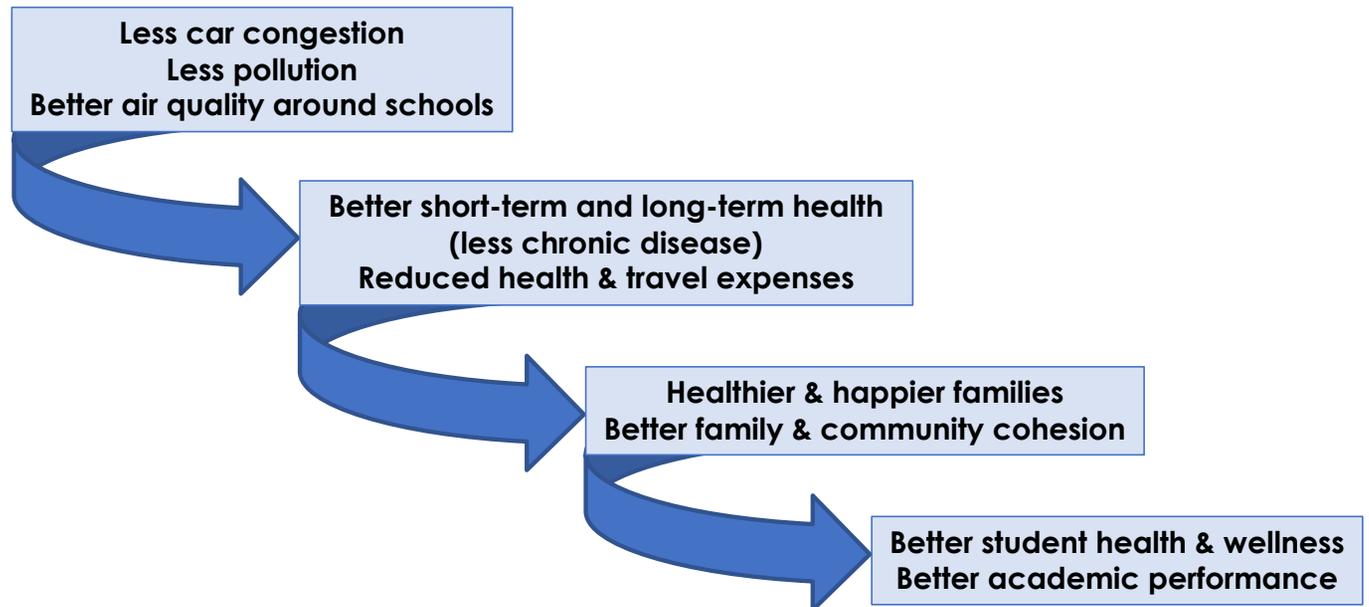
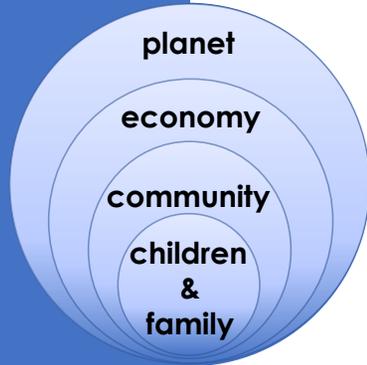
- It was a bit better 10 years ago, and a lot better just generation ago, as **driving to school has increased by 28%** and **walking has dropped 30%**

Children's Mobility Health & Happiness Study (2012)



AST Benefits

Active School Travel is good
not only for your **children and your family**,
but also the **community at large**, the **economy**, and the **planet**



AST Challenges

Main reasons for driving to school



40% Convenience / time pressure

31% Weather/distance

13% Traffic safety

Source: School Travel Planning (STP) Family Survey Data (Westmount Elementary School, 2009-2015)

Most effective interventions

The 6 E's of AST Promotion

Engineering

Improvements to the built environment to ensure **Safe AST**

Enforcement

Efforts to ensure that **traffic laws around schools are obeyed**

Education

AST **instructional materials and training** programs & events

Encouragement

AST **promotional** programs & events to **encourage walking & rolling**

Equity

Efforts to ensure **participation from all, esp. vulnerable underserved groups**

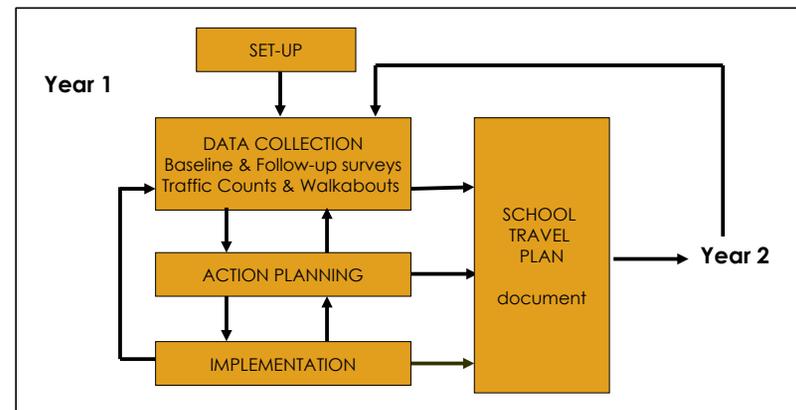
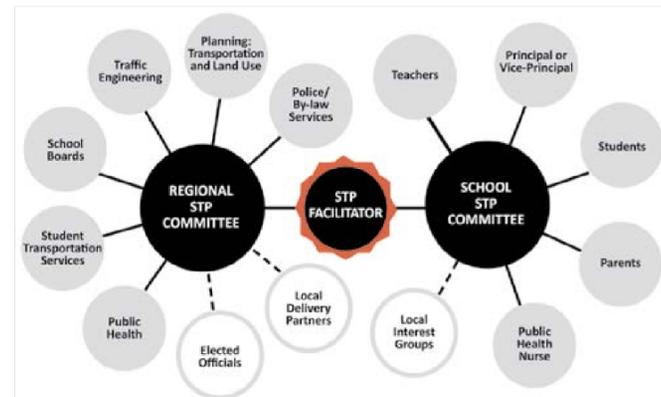
Evaluation

Data collection & monitoring to identify issues, interventions & **evaluate them**

School Travel Planning (STP) Program



A **collaborative** program that aims to **assist schools & community groups** to develop **customized Action Plans** to help children and youth **walk & wheel more often** and **safely** to & from school.

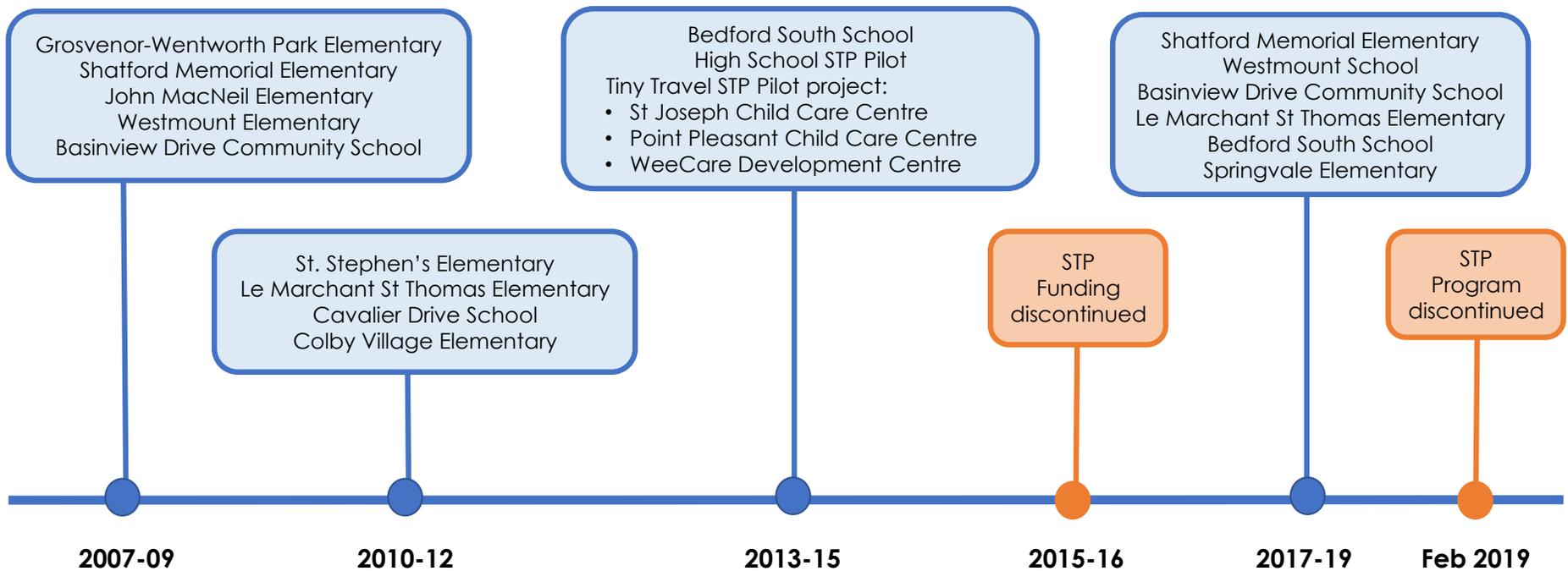


School Travel Planning (STP): Key features



- **Both a document & a process**
- **Evidence-based and community-driven**
- **Customized approach** (one size does not fit all)
- **Collaborative effort: STP school & stakeholder support** including school administration, teachers, parents, children, community members, SAC/PTA members, HRCE staff, local councillors, HRM transportation, traffic engineers, planning staff, health professionals, HRP, local NGOs, etc.
- **Supports local, regional and national priorities, strategies and frameworks, policies and plans:** HRCE Regional Student Success Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, Strategic Road Safety Framework, HalifACT, Physical Activity Framework, Let's Get Moving, National AT Strategy, etc.
- **A cost-effective intervention:** when effectively coordinated and implemented, the benefit-cost ratio is 2.4 (after Y1), 4.5 (in Y3), 6.3 (in Y5)

School Travel Planning in HRM: 2007-2019 at a glance



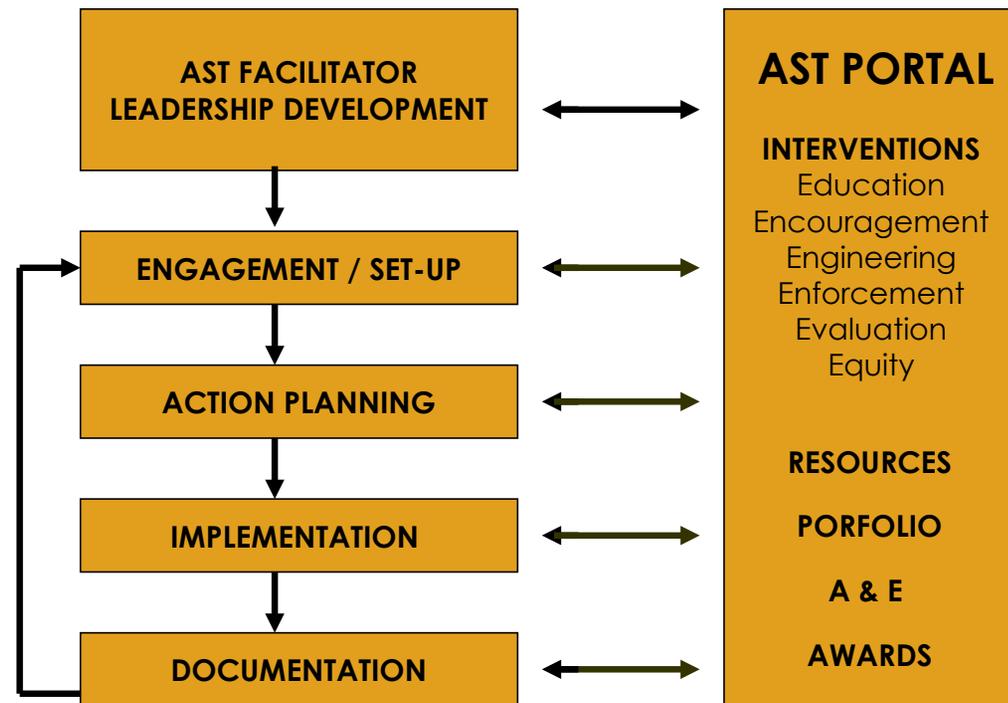
School Travel Planning: Lessons Learned

1. **AST Champions**
School principals, VPs, teachers, parents, students, ...
2. **Integrate with Curriculum & School Success Plan**
Health, Phys. Ed., math, science, art, ...
3. **Survey school community & customize** (one size does not fit all)
4. **Two steps forward, one step back**
[Plan & Implement → Evaluate] → Repeat
5. **Stimulate & recognize individual and school efforts**
Participation challenges, Golden Shoe Awards, Certificates of Accomplishment (students, volunteers, schools)
6. **Start small & build-on success**



School Travel Planning: a new integrated approach

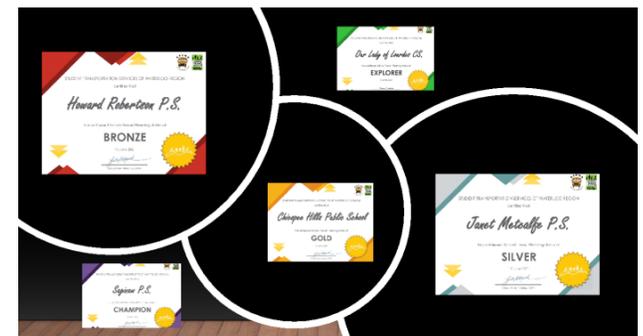
An **achievement** program to **engage & support** school communities in AST promotion, and **document** their on-going work & **celebrate** their successes



School Travel Planning: a recipe for success

Based on numerous STP Program evaluation studies & stakeholder reports, to succeed you need these 5 ingredients:

1. Staff & community involvement and support
2. Commitment from regional school transportation authority and municipal-level stakeholders on Action Plan items
3. Systematic and coordinated efforts in AST data collection, the development of the AST plan and evaluation
4. Continued financial support
5. Schools are engaged and motivated to set & achieve new targets



STP Certification Snapshot June 2021

Activity	Type	Placement	Quadrant	Points	Expiry Period
Initial Assessment	Consultation	1	3	No Expiry	
Parking Lot Upgrade Assessment	Consultation	3	1	No Expiry	
Regular Committee Meetings	Consultation	2	4	Annual	
Walkabout	Consultation	2	4	2 years	
Bike Rodeo	Education	4	2	Annual	
Create Traffic Video	Education	3	1	No Expiry	
Cycling Into The Future	Education	2	4	Annual	
Distribute Traffic Flow Map To Community	Education	2	4	Annual	
Letters To Council Or City Staff	Education	2	4	No Expiry	
Parent Delegate At City Council	Education	2	4	No Expiry	
School Council STP Presentation	Education	1	3	No Expiry	
Share Traffic Video	Education	1	3	Annual	

Point Calculator		
Quadrant Selector		
Low Effort	High Effort	
High Impact	1	2
Low Impact	3	4

Point Selector		
Low Effort	High Effort	
High Impact	3	4
Low Impact	1	2

Conditions for Systems Change

Structural Change



Policies

Government, institutional and organizational rules, regulations, and priorities that guide the entity's own and other's actions

+

Practices

Espoused activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, and other entities targeted to improving social and environmental progress. Also, within the entity, the procedures, guidelines or informal shared habits that comprise their work.

+

Resource Flows

How the money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets such as infrastructure are allocated and distributed

Relationships & Connections

Quality of connections and communication occurring among actors in the system, especially among those with differing stories and viewpoints.

+

Power Dynamics

The distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations

Transformational Change

Mental States

Habits of thought – deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk

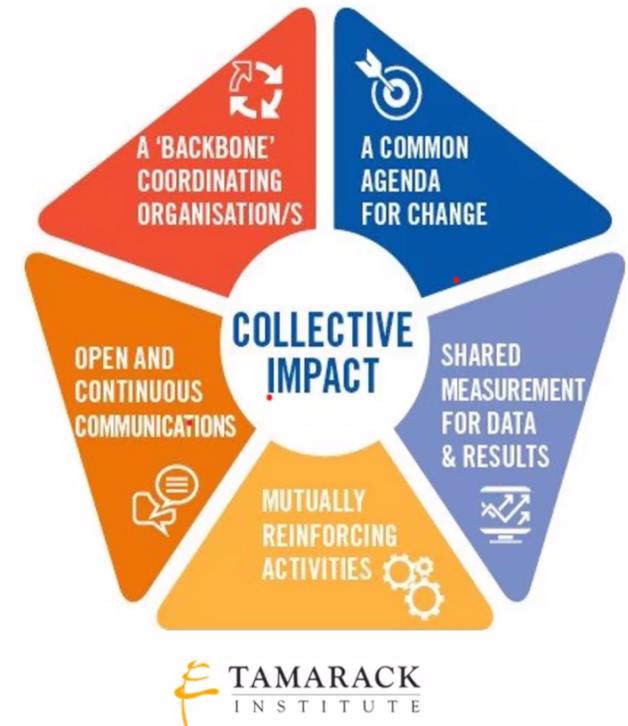
The Water of Systems Change (2018), by John Kania, Mark Kramer and Peter Senge.

Collective Impact (2011 – 2021)

A **network** of community members, organizations and institutions that advance equity by **learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions** to achieve population and systems-level change.

Key strategies for success:

1. Ground the work in **data & context**, and **target solutions**
2. Focus on **systems change**, in addition to programs and services
3. Shift **power** within the collaborative
4. Listen to and act with **community**
5. Build **equity** leadership and accountability



[Celebrating the evolution and Future of Collective Impact](#) (2022), by Jennifer Splansky Juster, Junious Williams & Sylvia Cheuy.

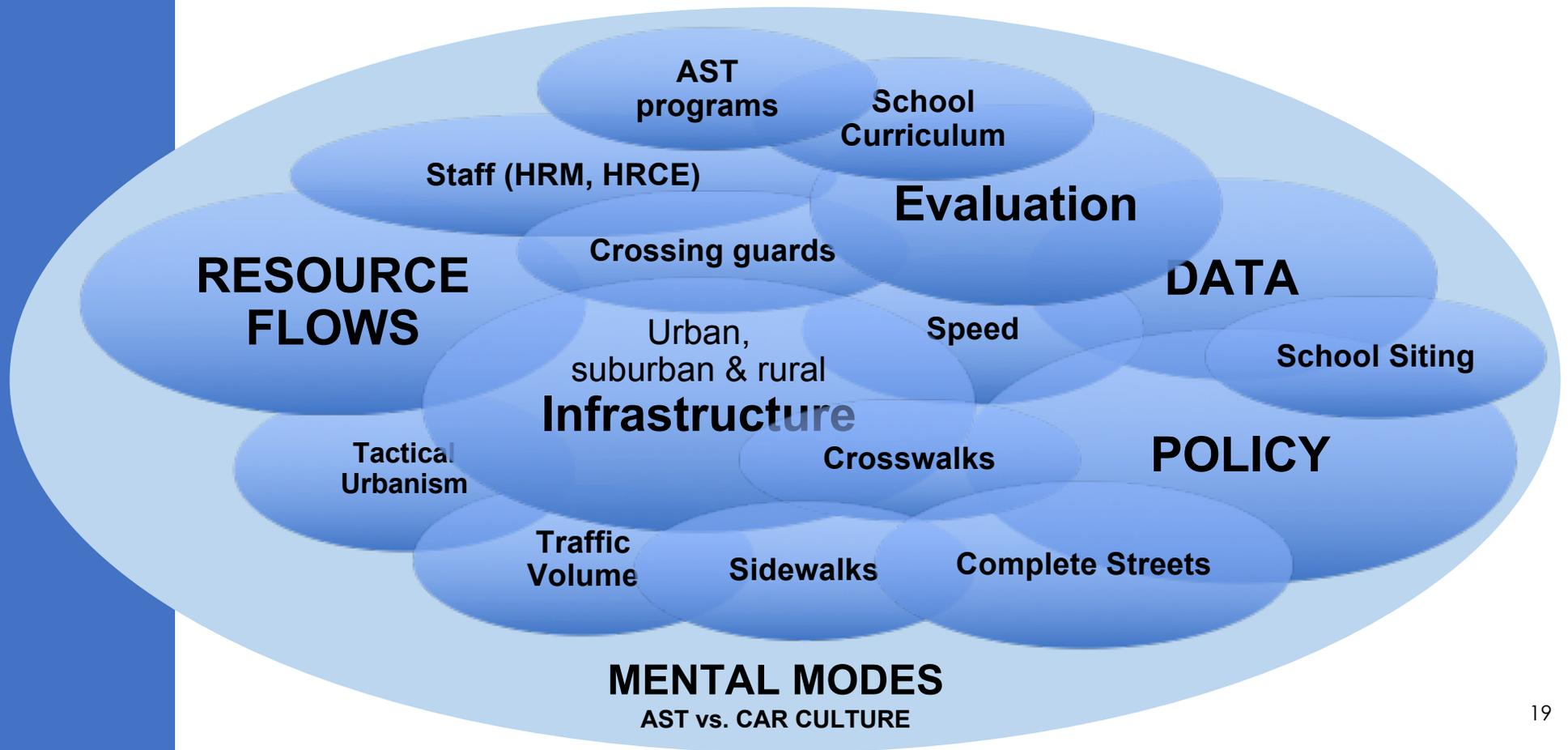
Some Relevant Policies for AST

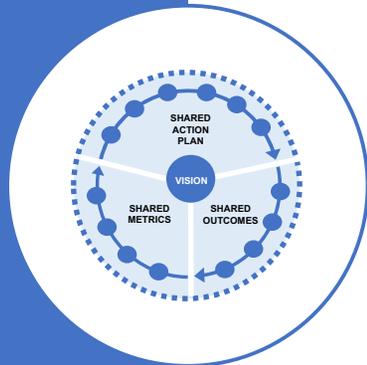
1. **Let's Get Moving** – A Common Vision for Increasing PA & Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada (2018), Government of Canada
2. **National Active Transportation Strategy** (2021), Government of Canada

1. **Regional Student Success Plan** (2019), HRCE
2. **Strategic Plan** (2014) & **Regional Plan** (2014), HRM
3. **AT Priorities Plan** (2014), HRM
4. **Integrated Mobility Plan** (2017), HRM
5. **Strategic Road Safety Framework** (2018-2023), HRM
6. **HalifACT** – Acting on Climate Together (2020), HRM

1. **Thrive!** A policy and environmental approach to healthy eating and physical activity (2014), NSDHW
2. **Shift** – Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population (2017), NSDS
3. **Let's Get Moving Nova Scotia** – An action plan for increasing Physical Activity in NS (2018), NSDCCTH
4. **Student Transportation Policy** (2017), NSDEECD (cf. SSRSB & HRCE Student Transportation Policies)
5. **Inclusive Education Policy** (2020), NSDEECD
6. **Nova Scotia Active Transportation Policy Framework** (in progress), NSDPW
7. **Physical Activity Framework** (in progress), NSDEECD
8. **Traffic Safety Act** (in progress), NSDPW

Some AST Barriers & Facilitators





Developing a Common Agenda Shared Vision, Action Plan, Outcomes & Metrics

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE: Facilitators

What is needed to EFFECTIVELY increase AST rates in our region and why? In other words, **what would facilitate this and lead to long-term population level change?** Please check ALL that apply.



78%

- More (or better) **resource flows** (e.g. more dedicated AST staff, knowledge, infrastructure, etc.)

72%

- More (or better) **connections between actors** (i.e. the schools and stakeholders)

61%

- More (or better) AST **effective programming**

61%

- More (or better) **communication between actors** (i.e. the schools and stakeholders)

56%

- More (or better) AST **policies**

44%

- More (or better) understanding of how our **individual and organizational habits** can influence what we do

22%

- More (or better) **distribution of power** between school communities and those who are there to support them

Strengths

What is your organization's **greatest strength** in advancing supportive environments for healthy living in/around schools?

- **Funding** to support collaborative planning, promotion/education, infrastructure and programming for AST
- **Control & influence** over existing regulatory frameworks, policies, by-laws, and programs that influence municipal/AT infrastructure, school siting, plan planning, trails, and student/community well-being
- Availability of **knowledge & expertise** in research, data collection, tracking, monitoring & surveillance, advocacy, and best-practice related to AT and AST
- **High level of interest and collective readiness** among participants for working across sectors and policy domains to advance new opportunities

Opportunities

Where do you see the **best opportunities** to collaborate with other HRM partners to improve AST in the community (directly & indirectly)?

- **Capitalize** on interest and expressed priority to **establish new working arrangements**, partnerships and alliances, and to **expand existing ones** in order to achieve greatest collective impact
- **Align and leverage** existing/varied **public and stakeholder engagement activities** across sectors for AT and AST, and **work towards new engagement** efforts through collective action
- **Coordinate** around **existing and new potential research efforts, data collection, monitoring, and metrics** to make better, evidence-informed recommendations that can address school-community needs, improve safety, and align policy and program delivery for improved uptake, outcomes and impact.
- **Coordinate** around **'upstream' pre-planning and development of school and municipal infrastructure**, school siting, and neighbourhood design to embed AT and AST shovel ready stage of local planning and development

Aspirations

What does your organization **care most deeply about** with regards to supporting child/community health & well being?

- **Increase Awareness & Knowledge of AT/AST landscape**
 - learn from each other, make connections across roles & responsibilities
 - identify needed capacity for collective action
 - identify known safety issues/challenges and learn ways to help/contribute to collective action
- **Increased understanding of how existing efforts can contribute to informed collective action**
 - Increased clarity of purpose regarding existing AT/AST activities
 - Identify collective opportunities for collective action, new ideas and priorities
 - Establish how to capitalize on existing leadership, resources, investments, current activities and available research/data and concrete actions to advance AST

Results

How will we know if we're succeeding in improving AST opportunities for children and youth in HRM? That is, what measurable **results** should we focus on?

- **Changing** consumer choices for **modes of transportation**
- **Peer-to-peer influences across sectors**
- **Self-reported influences on mental health** for children and youth from increases in AT opportunities

5 Key conditions for Shared Success



COMMON AGENDA

All participants have a **shared vision for change**, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions

SHARED MEASUREMENT

Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable

MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Participant Activities must be **differentiated while still being coordinated** through a mutually reinforcing plan of action

CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation

BACKBONE SUPPORT

Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to **serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies**

Source: [Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 1](#), Stanford Social Innovation Review

Developing a ‘Shared Vision & Agenda’

SHARED ACTION PLAN — a detailed list of what we intend to do and how

Actions/activities that are essential to achieving our shared outcomes

SHARED ‘OUTCOMES — what we wish to achieve’

Socially meaningful changes for those served by a program, generally defined in terms of **expected changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior, condition, or status**. These changes should be measured, be monitored as part of an organization’s work, link directly to the efforts of the program, and serve as the basis for accountability. *

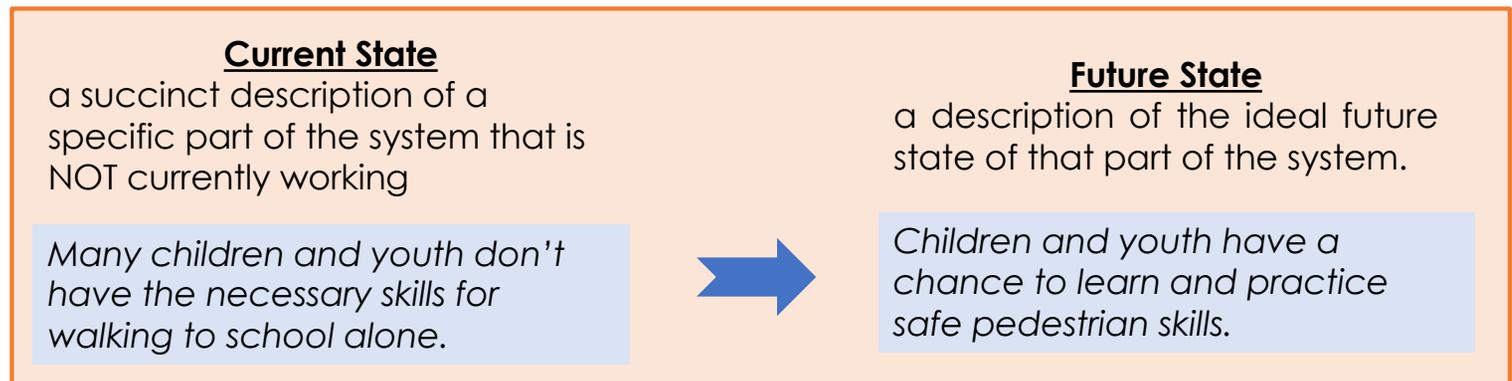
SHARED METRICS & ‘INDICATORS — what we use to stay on course’

Specific, observable, and measurable characteristics, actions, or conditions that demonstrate whether a desired change has happened toward the intended outcome. Also called “outcome indicators” or “predictive indicators.” *

* [*Leap of Reason: Managing Outcomes in an era of scarcity*](#) (2011) by Morino Institute

Identifying AST Critical Shifts for HRM

CRITICAL SHIFTS “**problem or priority actions**” that may enable our group develop a common agenda and build an Action Plan.



Focus on WHAT we intend to do together, not HOW it will be achieved.

Some areas or categories to consider for Critical Shifts:

- **System Changes:** Policy, Practices, Resource Flows, Relationships & Connections, Power Dynamics, and Mental States
- **Supportive physical environments** (school siting, neighbourhood design, land planning, safety) and **Supportive social environments** (community engagement, public awareness, outreach & advocacy, education)

S H I F T S

Prioritizing Critical Shifts to develop a 'Shared Agenda'

1. What critical shift will **advance our common agenda most powerfully**?
2. What critical shift, if we achieved it first, **would enable other shifts** to happen more easily or more powerfully?
3. What critical shift **would NOT happen without a collaborative effort** like ours to move it forward?
4. What critical shift would **generate broad energy, enthusiasm and leadership** with stakeholders and the community?

RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTIONS

1. We have a **model for open communication** between schools and other decision makers [CS1]

RESOURCE FLOWS

2. We have **a designated AT staff person** [at school/HRCE level] – a person who is responsible for AT **and/or a dedicated AT Consultant** to advise schools, HRM transit policies & programs, and support students to W&W to school [CS2 & CS27b]
3. There is **funding from HRM & NS**
 - a. for us to create safe AT infrastructure and supporting Active School Travel [CS3] and
 - b. for schools that currently lack proper infrastructure to upgrade AT facilities (such as bike parking) on school grounds [CS9b]

POLICIES

- 4. **SCHOOL SITING** use selection criteria that is explicit and transparent, and takes into account proximity to residential areas (existing & predicted growth), factors in walkability & complete communities, and our **SCHOOL DESIGN POLICY** includes supportive onsite infrastructure (parking lot design, storage & racks) [CS5 &6]
- 5. **SCHOOL SUPERVISION POLICY** supports AST, student independence and mobility, and supervision of younger children [CS8]
- 6. We have **SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION POLICIES** that thoroughly address AT and transit [CS 27a]
- 7. Testing is required to renew **DRIVER LICENSES** in order to updated knowledge of traffic rules [CS 19]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

8. The Province allows municipalities to **LOWER SPEED LIMITS** in school catchment area to create a safe AST environment and a larger 30km/h SPEED LIMIT area walking area near schools ('pedestrian zone") & traffic calming [CS4a&10]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES

9. There is [better] coordination between HRM & HRCE re **SNOW CLEARING** [CS 17]
10. **HRM PRIORITIZES safe AT infrastructure** near school communities, and works collaboratively with the relevant stakeholders (the Province & HRCE) in order to
 - a. develop a minimum MAINTENANCE STANDARD and build safe AT infrastructure around schools [CS 4 & 9a],
 - b. support the creation of designated safe routes to school and trails [CS11 & 20],
 - c. reduce congestion around schools by restricting vehicular access to front of schools [CS14 & 22], and
 - d. make AST more appealing to kids & parents [CS 14]

PRACTICES / SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

11. **We PROVIDE EDUCATION on AST and safety** to students in order to
 - a. reduce parental concerns about safety [CS 5],
 - b. shift beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, and increase Active School Travel [CS 21],
 - c. reach new immigrants [CS 23]

12. We provide **OPPORTUNITIES for families in school communities** to support each other in walking or wheeling to/from school and model safe AST behavior [CS 24 & 28]

13. We provide **CULTURALLY-RELEVANT EDUCATION** opportunities for families in school communities about AST (including signage in multiple languages) to understand its benefits and impact, and increase buy-in [CS 26]

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES

- 14. We have MULTIPLE STRATEGIES to address AST in our school communities depending on the context (urban, suburban and rural) [CS 12]
- 15. We consider LONG-TERM changes, opportunities, and challenges in our AST Action planning [CS13]
- 16. Safety is a PRIORITY FOR ALL, not just for students [CS 18]

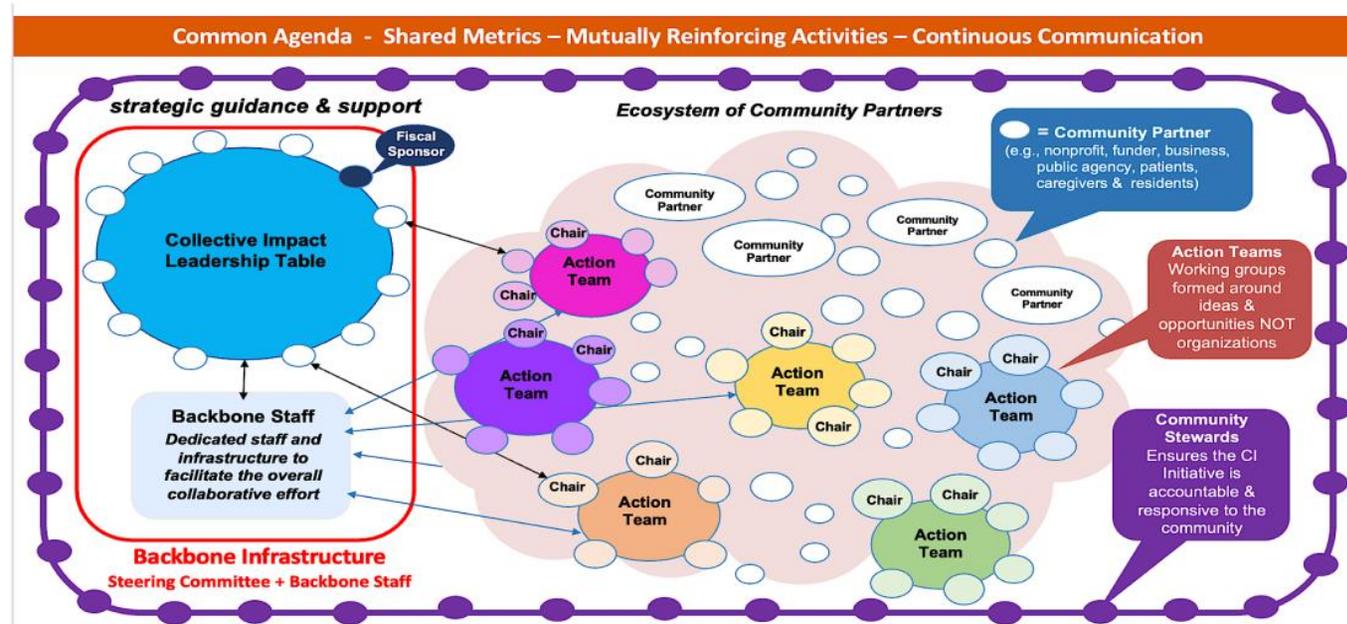
AST GOALS & ASPIRATIONS

- 17. GOAL: The number of people who drive to school is reduced (lower than it is now), and we have lower GHG emissions and better environmental citizens [CS 15 & 25]
- 18. GOAL: We have as much data on AST as vehicular data [CS 16]

An Intersectoral Collaborative Model

A suitable collaborative model to advance our AST goals

A COLLECTIVE IMPACT BACKBONE & GOVERNANCE INFRASTRUCTURE



Source: Tamarack Institute, adapted from *Listening to the Stars: The Constellation Model of Collaborative Social Change* (2008)

PROS & CONS

PROS

1. Provides **clarity of structure & hierarchy** that is known to be effective and is inclusive of all relevant actors
2. Builds upon a shared purpose and vision that promotes the **alignment of actions and learnings for all** participants
3. Allows stakeholder **flexibility** with regards to the amount of engagement based on skills, expertise and availability

CONS

1. Requires **allocating the necessary resources** to lead it and make it work effectively (such as funding for backbone stakeholder's staff and volunteers time, capacity building) as well as **engaging the relevant actors**,
2. Requires **effective communication and decision making** to move actions forward
3. Potential **shifts in government priorities** may undermine the groups' work.

Thank you!



NOVA SCOTIA

HALIFAX



Contact:

Bill Campbell, Director, Walk'n Roll Halifax
walknrollhfx@gmail.com

Natalia Diaz-Insense, AT Advocate & Consultant
ndiazinsense@gmail.com