



MEDIA RELEASE

Changing Your Back to School Commute

Burnaby, BC / August 24, 2009 – For many the back to school commute means stress and congestion around schools. The BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation suggests that parents and caregivers try changing the way children get to and from school this year and reduce some of that stress and congestion.

There are many safer and healthier alternatives to driving kids to and from school. Walking or cycling is probably the easiest and safest when children travel with a buddy and use a safe route that everyone is familiar with.

Parents or older siblings can take turns accompanying a group of kids to and from school. It's an opportunity for parents to set a good example and teach their children safe pedestrian, cycling and traffic practices and attitudes.

Many schools in BC have implemented traffic reduction programs and other strategies that reduce congestion, pollution, risk of injury, and encourage a more active lifestyle. Signage, patrolled intersections and 30 km/h school zone speed limits - in effect weekdays between 8 AM and 5PM - are all examples.

Driving kids to and from school every day can also have a serious environmental impact on children's lives. Not only does the pollution around schools caused by idling vehicles cause health problems but the congestion of cars in school zones creates an environment where children can be seriously injured or even killed.

“The biggest risk to children in school zones is still those parents, and there are many, who continue to make U-turns, stop in no-stopping zones, back up into crosswalks, roll through stop signs, ignore the school safety patrollers, let their children out from the driver's side and into oncoming traffic and speed,” says Linda Lawlor, School Safety Patrol Program Coordinator.

“Most child pedestrian-related injuries occur in September and October, followed by May and June, and children aged 5 to 14 years are at the greatest risk for pedestrian-related fatalities,” says Lawlor adding that children are more likely to be struck by a car in areas with heavy traffic volumes, a high density of parked cars and limited choices for play.

In many B.C. communities, the School Safety Patrol Program is sponsored by the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation. The program operates as a partnership involving the Foundation, police, school districts and schools. The BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation provides equipment, training resources and support to the School Safety Patrol Program. For more information about the School Safety Patrol Program visit www.schoolsafetypatrol.ca or call 604-297-2153.

FINES AND PENALTIES:

Most school zone speed limits are 30 km/h and are in effect weekdays between 8 AM and 5 PM.

Speed	Fine	Penalty Points
31 - 50 km/h	\$196	3
51 - 70 km/h	\$253	3
71 - 90 km/h	\$368	3
Greater than 90 km/h	\$483	3

(Source: British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure)

SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS:

For Drivers:

- **Stop and Slow Down** - In or near school and residential areas, and always be prepared to stop at marked crosswalks.
- **Look for Clues** - Such as School Zone signs, BCAA School Safety patrollers, bicycles, and playgrounds, which indicate children could be in the area.
- **Parked Cars** - Scan between parked cars and other objects for signs that children could dart into the road.
- **Weather** - Practice extra caution in adverse weather conditions.
- **Commute Times** - Pay particular attention near schools during the morning and afternoon hours. Reduce speed to 30 km/h in school zones on weekdays 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.
- **School Buses** - Always stop for school buses when their red lights are flashing for loading and unloading students.
- **Expect the Unexpected** – Kids darting out from between parked cars, other vehicles backing up, rolling through stop signs, pulling away without signaling, and making U-turns.

For Families:

- **Walking** - Walking car pools and buddies are great ways to get to school. Parents can take shifts and walk along a prescribed route picking up and dropping off children at designated stops along the way. Friends can meet up the same way and walk to and from school together, and older students take on the responsibility of walking with younger students on their way to or from school.
- **Safe Routes** – It is important that children travel along the safest routes possible to and from school. Children should walk on sidewalks if possible, cross at light–

controlled or patrolled crosswalks, and avoid wooded areas or places where there is very little activity on the streets.

- **Bike Riding** – Helmets must be worn by law. Bright clothing with reflective strips and equipping bikes with front and rear lights adds to rider safety. All riders should be properly trained to ride a bicycle and understand and obey the rules of the road.
- **Public transportation** - The above strategies can also be modified with students using transit instead of walking or riding to school.
- **Visibility** - Make sure children are visible to other road users - wearing light coloured or reflective clothing if they will be out in low light. Make sure that small children understand that they are sometimes impossible for a driver to see. Make eye contact with drivers before stepping into the intersection.
- **Know the Rules** – Make sure that your kids get proper supervision by an adult that understand the rules and models good practices.

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About BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation

The BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation is a non-profit registered charity working with families, communities and business partners to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes and injuries in B.C. For more information visit www.BCAATSF.ca or call 604-298-5107.

DRIVE TO SAVE LIVES

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URL for this media release is: <http://www.tsfbcaa.com/content/custompages/news.aspx>

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