



# Stepping out for a bright future

We all remember our walk to school, chatting to friends, inventing games, splashing in puddles and discovering the world around us. Walking to school provides children with a host of life skills: self confidence, independence, community awareness, road and personal safety skills, health and fitness and the motivation to learn.



**H**owever, as the car has become more commonplace these opportunities are being lost to a generation of Kiwi kids. Being driven daily to and from school has become the norm for today's students. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of primary school children travelling to school by car nearly doubled. In many schools, the proportion of students travelling by car is now as high as 75%.

Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) is working to halt this trend. In collaboration with local councils and schools, GW is developing School Travel Plans. A travel plan is a series of actions that promotes safe, active and sustainable travel and ensures these options are accessible to all.

The benefits of sustainable travel (less car travel and more walking, cycling, public transport and ride sharing) are felt right across the community...

#### **For the school**

- Improves safety for students on their journey to and from school
- Reduces traffic problems outside the school gates

#### **For the parents**

- Increases parent- child contact
- Builds relationship with school
- Reduces stress and time spent in traffic jams

#### **For the students**

- Improves students' health and fitness
- Increases students' ability and motivation to learn
- Develops confidence and independence
- Increases knowledge and awareness of the local environment

#### **For the community**

- Improves the local environment by reducing air and noise pollution
- Reduces congestion problems
- Improves walking, cycling and bus routes

A School Travel Plan involves the whole school community and their "ownership" ensures the plan is right for their school.

At Titahi Bay School, Porirua, the school wanted the students to have a major role in developing the plan and they have been very successful. Students worked alongside the Police, Porirua City Council and local media to ensure their message got out. Initial surveys showed 65% of students were being driven to the picturesque school. Now, thanks to the students initiatives, 75% regularly walk, cycle or scooter to school.

One of the best known initiatives to encourage walking to school is the Walking School Bus. The WSBs are "driven" by volunteers (usually parents) and collect children from stops on a defined route and ensure they arrive happily at school. AMI Insurance are supporting this initiative and provide volunteer packs including high visibility vests for the "drivers", pedometers and drink bottles. The WSB also helps students to get to know other children from their school and is a great social gathering for parents, many of whom catch up in the school staff room for a coffee after delivering the little ones to school.

With Push Play Month and the International Walk to School Month ([www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org)) both falling in October, there's never been a better time to get active and get walking.

If you are interested in your child's school developing a Travel Plan, and for more information on the support available contact:

Simon Vincent, School Travel Plan Coordinator, Greater Wellington Regional Council on phone 04 382 7952. email, [simon.vincent@gw.govt.nz](mailto:simon.vincent@gw.govt.nz) or visit [www.gw.govt.nz/travelplans](http://www.gw.govt.nz/travelplans)

