

Ridgeway School Zone Safety Review Engagement Summary

December 18, 2019

In November 2019, the City of North Vancouver (CNV) in collaboration with the North Vancouver School District (SD44) launched the first public engagement phase of the Ridgeway School Zone Safety Review.

The CNV collected feedback through an online survey, interactive online mapping tool, in-class student questionnaire, and an in-class student workshop. The primary purpose of these engagement activities were:

- To learn about the community's safety concerns
- To pinpoint specific locations of concern
- To learn about the community's transportation priorities in the Ridgeway area
- To better understand school travel behaviour

Approximately 200 students and 115 parents and community members participated in this phase of engagement for a total of 315 participants.

This report outlines the key findings from this phase of public engagement.

1. Online Survey and Interactive Mapping

a) Transportation Priorities

The top three transportation priorities in the Ridgeway Elementary area are safety related. Options related to parking and vehicle access (e.g. maintain ease of parking near Ridgeway) were ranked lowest.

Ranking of Top Transportation Priorities
1. Make crossings safer
2. Reduce speeds
3. Address poor driver behaviour

b) Travel Challenges and Safety Concerns

Respondents were asked about factors that make their journey to Ridgeway challenging. The primary themes that emerged were:

- Residents identified school pick-up and drop-off times as the primary transportation challenge in the area. Many associated this activity with speeding and poor driver behaviour.
- Parents who typically drive their children were concerned with traffic congestion and parking challenges in the school area.
- Parents who typically walk or roll with their children were most concerned about crossing safety, speeding, and driver behaviour. Some mentioned logistical challenges related to topography and distance.
- Concern for student safety over convenience – most respondents prioritized the safety of children walking in their comments about safety concerns.

Overall, respondents rated walking or cycling journeys to be easier than driving in the Ridgeway area.

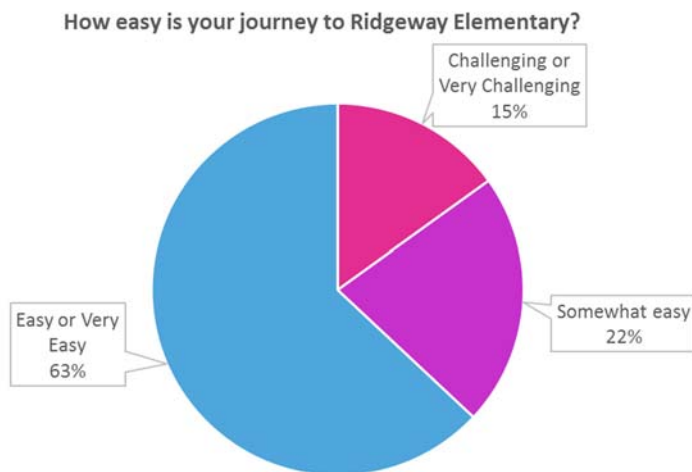
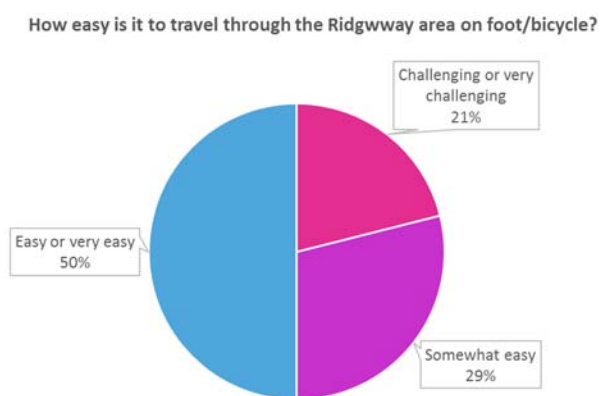
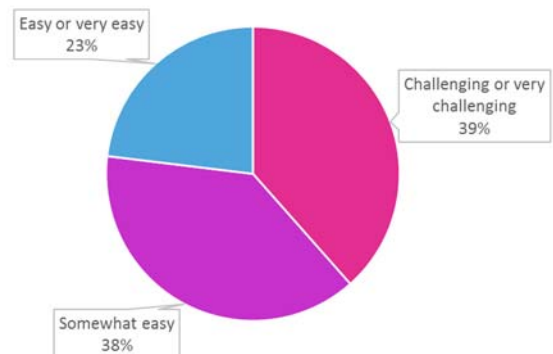


Fig. 1 – All responses from parents/guardians



How easy is it to travel through the Ridgeway area by vehicle?



Figs. 2 & 3 – All responses from neighbourhood residents

c) Safety Concerns by Location

Through comments and an interactive online mapping activity, parents and residents identified the specific locations of safety concerns. Overall, crossing safety was the most commonly raised issues. The top five locations (ranked by number of comments) are listed below:

Rank	Location	Top Issue(s)
1	Entire school perimeter	driver behaviour, speeding, crossing safety
2	300 Block E 9th	speeding
3	Ridgeway Ave and E 9th	crossing safety
4	400 block E 9th	street width
4	E Keith Rd and Ridgeway Ave	crossing safety

We also heard many comments about speeding and sidewalk network gaps on Ridgeway Ave. near the school, concerns about the width of E 8th Street, and about crossing E Keith Ave. at Ridgeway Ave, Moody Ave, and St. Andrews Ave.

Respondents raised similar concerns at many of the other locations of concern, as well as a number of other issues that came up frequently. These include:

- Visibility/driver awareness of the 30 km/h zone
- Need for more enforcement around the school
- Gaps in the sidewalk network
- Sightline and visibility issues

We also received a number of suggestions for specific infrastructure interventions at particular locations of concern. We will consider these suggestions as we develop potential options for the area. The most frequent suggestions were for the following:

- Four-way stops
- Crosswalks
- One-way streets
- Pedestrian controlled lights

d) School Travel Patterns

The online survey provided new insights on the school travel habits of Ridgeway families. The majority of parent respondents report walking their children to school.

- On a typical rainy day, 32% of respondents report driving their children to school and 57% report walking.
- On a typical sunny day, 21% of respondents report driving their children to school and 68% report walking.
- Most families (76%) do not change their travel mode with the weather (see fig. 4)

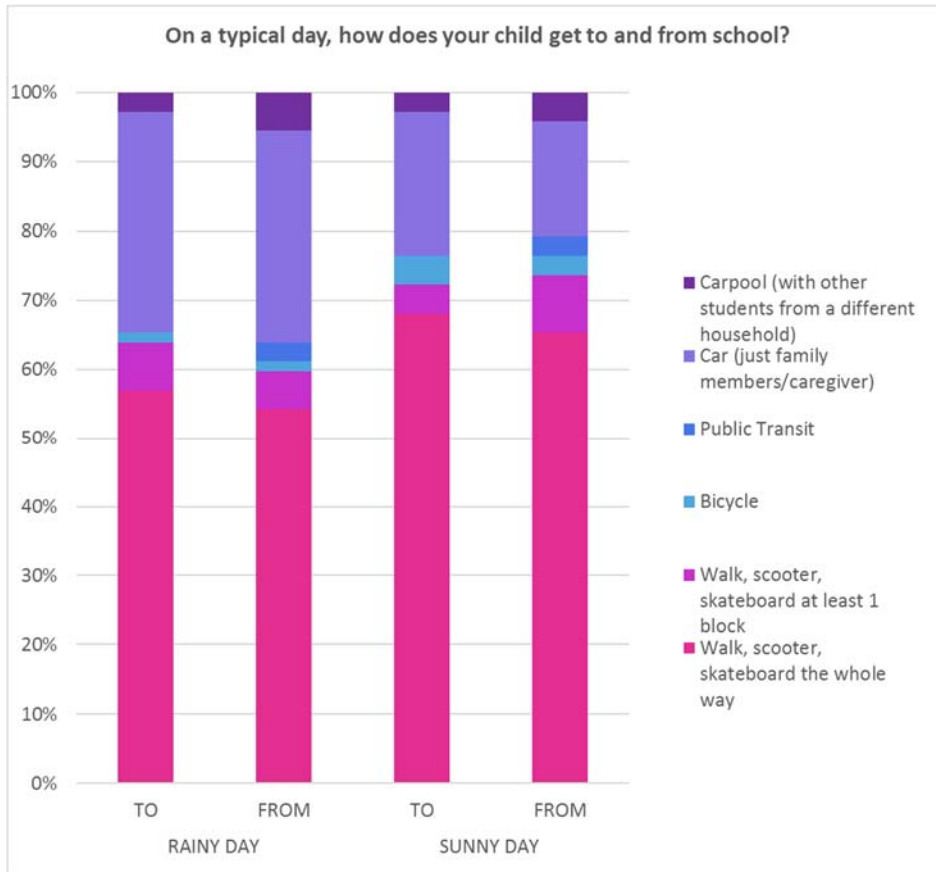


Fig. 4

Families mostly choose their travel mode based on convenience and distance:

Top 3 Reasons parents DRIVE their children to school:
1. On my way to work
2. Too far to walk/cycle
3. Weather

Top 3 Reasons parents take ACTIVE modes to take their children to school:
1. It's convenient
2. Spend time with my child
3. To get exercise

Most parents report accompanying their child all the way to the school door (81%). Their reasons for doing so are varied (see Fig. 5). These responses may reflect the fact that approximately 60% of respondents have children in a primary grade. Among those who answered “other,” the most common reason given was concern for their safety.

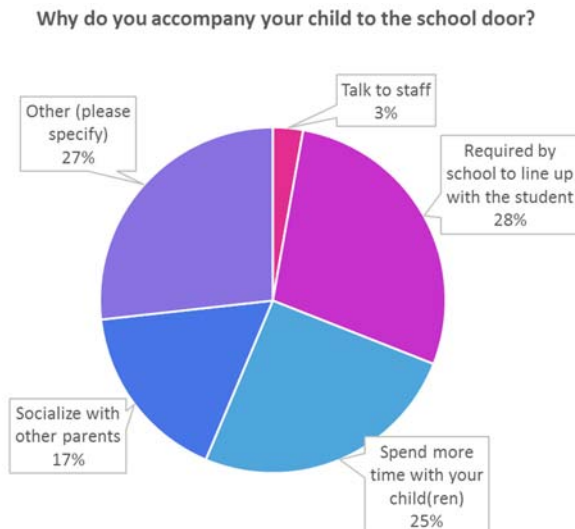


Fig. 5

e) Sample Comments

Through the online survey and interactive map, the City received well over 200 written comments, which is too large a number to reproduce in full. A small selection of comments reflecting a variety of frequently mentioned topics is included below.

“Although we no longer drop off our kids at school, those with younger kids who are required to line up and be signed out at the end of the day by a parent need to have close vehicular access. It’s a different situation to have a no travel, parking zone around a school (like Argyle does) with older kids. Also, speed awareness around Queen Mary and enforcement on Keith near St. Thomas Aquinas is effective in reinforcing school zone behaviour.”

“Solution is not to ban drop off or short term parking around school perimeter. The safest place to drop children off is around the school perimeter as they don’t need to cross a cross walk.”

“Our home backs onto 8th between Ridgeway and Moody, directly opposite the paved pedestrian access to the school. Aside from the start and finish of the school day, I do not feel there are any significant issues with traffic flow or safety around Ridgeway. In my opinion continuing to educate people who drop off their kids in vehicles is the only area that constantly needs attention. The map you’ve created is fantastic. Hand it out monthly to every driver who pulls up with simple and clear suggestions. In the end, it is the responsibility of drivers to take actions themselves to help ease congestion and ensure safety of others. Your role should be to help educate them. The one question I do have though; should the 3 intersections without a traffic circle cornering the school property have 4 way stops?”

“Poor driver behaviour is the biggest safety problem. Most either don’t clearly understand the rules/laws/signage or are too self absorbed to care about others safety. This is the biggest challenge is to educate these people to change their behaviour. The rules and laws for traffic around the school are adequate if they were followed by all. Encouraging parking close-by is a good idea and some people are starting to do it.”

“Speed of cars in the 300 block of 9th street and in the 30 zones around Sam Walker Park. Sam walker park is a 30 zone but the traffic moves fast and only sometimes stops for pedestrians in the cross walks.”

“It’s not just school days that are a problem. In warmer weather there are people coming to play basketball at the grounds and they drive in and out at high speeds on 9th. Traffic calming measures please!”

“Crossing Keith if the guard is not there is dangerous.”

“I think the school, the neighbourhood, and the City need to consider one-way street access on the North and South streets of the school. Too many cars make it difficult to maneuver. If the streets are one-way direction, driving after dropping off the children does make it a bit easier.”

2. Student Questionnaire and Workshop

Throughout November and December 2019, CNV staff collected feedback from approximately 200 students at Ridgeway Elementary.

- 197 students from grades 2 to 7 responded to a hard-copy questionnaire that was completed in their class
- 22 grade 4/5 students participated in an in-class workshop led by CNV staff

Students were asked about their preferred transportation mode, positive and negative factors of their school trip, how they feel about crossing the street, and ideas for improving their journey to school.

a) Transportation Mode

Given the large number of randomly sampled student respondents (35% of the school population), the mode share data from the student questionnaire is likely to be more representative of the actual school mode share than the online survey. Notably, these data show a higher proportion of students being driven to school (21-32% compared to 42%).

How do you get to school in the morning?

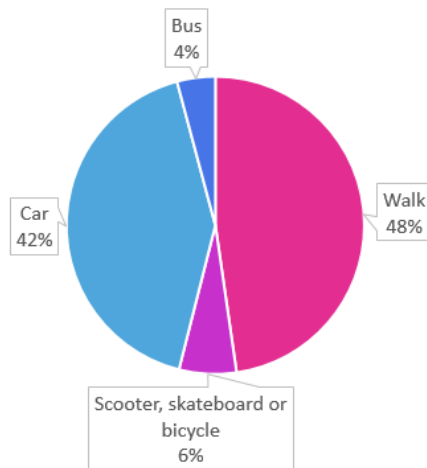


Fig. 6

Despite the fact that over 40% of students are driven to school, most students say they would like to use active modes if given the choice.

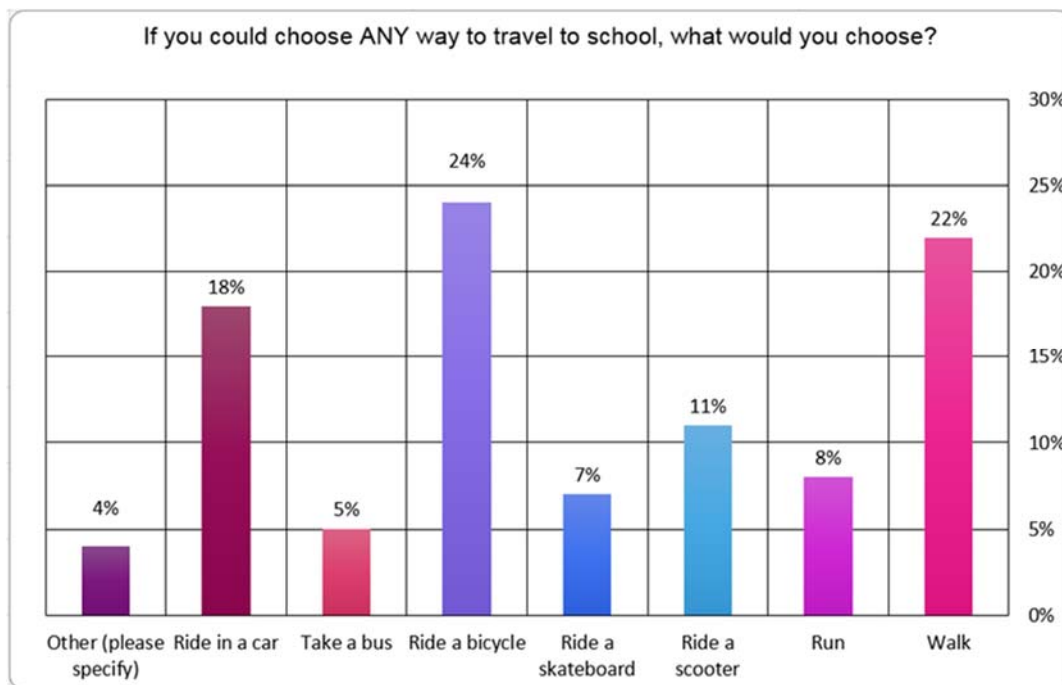


Fig. 7

b) Best and Worst Parts about the Trip to School

When asked about their favourite and least favourite aspects of their trip to school, students largely focused on the quality of the experience. The nature of the responses suggest that many students do enjoy the trip to school, and value the time for socializing, playing, interacting with their environment, or simply listening to music and thinking about the day ahead. Many students also mentioned the natural environment and neighbourhood aesthetics.

Responses to the question “what parts of your trip to school do you like?”

Top 5	# of Comments
Friends	69
Talking to parent	25
Walking	23
Music	22
Nature	21

Other common responses included Roxanne the crossing guard, playing on their way to school, and spending time with siblings.

Example Comments:

“Walking to school and seeing everybody at school. Enjoying the fresh air.”

“Hiding from my mom in the bush and jumping out at her.”

“When I go to school, I like to talk with my mom and when I am lucky, I see my friends and talk to them. When it’s sunny my dog comes along to go to school.”

“Listening to the music on my sister’s phone in the car.”

“Saying hi to Roxanne, and looking at the square of sidewalk that I put my name into when it was wet.”

Stressors that make the trip unpleasant include poor weather, running and feeling rushed, traffic, and conflicts with family members or other students.

Responses to the question “what are your least favourite parts of your trip to school?”

Top 5	# of Comments
Weather	20
Nothing	18
Walking	14
Traffic	12
Family	12

The next most common responses included feeling rushed and running late for school, and just having to get up early and leave the house. Many students related running late to their complaints about traffic congestion and having difficulty finding parking.

Example Comments:

“Having to wake up early and rushing.”

“When I cross the road there are too many cars.”

“Arguing with my siblings, traffic, that’s mostly all.”

“I don’t like walking when it is cold out.”

“My least favourite parts of my trip to school are putting out the carbon emission [sic] (from a car), not being able to find parking/a place to stop and not being able to hang out with friends on the way as well as not enjoying the snow or sunshine.”

c) Crossing the Street

A large majority of students reported feeling positive (51%) or neutral (20%). 19% of students said they felt negatively about crossing the street.

Example positive comments:

“I feel safe and good! I always walk safely.”

“I feel fine with walking across roads.”

Example neutral comments:

“Good. It’s a little bit nervous but it’s good :D”

“Ok. But I like traffic lights. It makes me feel more safe.”

“I don’t know because I always take a car.”

Example negative comment:

“I don’t really feel safe, I feel like I might get hit.”

“Kind of scared if cars don’t stop, I like it more with a crossing guard.”

d) Ideas for Improvements

There was a very wide range of ideas on improving the trip to school. The two main themes were things that would make the trip to school more fun or playful, and transportation safety related suggestions.

Top 4	# of Comments*
Suggestions for fun/play	21
Better driving	8
Less Traffic	6
More enforcement/police	6

*The number of comments reflects the questionnaire responses only, however the discussion of themes overall includes notes from the conversations with students at the in-class workshop

Other common suggestions included:

- Infrastructure improvements (wider sidewalks, better crossings, more lighting, bike parking)
- Ways to make the trip more fun/colourful/playful (decorations, rainbow crossings, art along the way, glass sidewalks with fish underneath, bird houses, bigger playground)

Example Comments:

“Walking with my mom or dad, biking with mom.”

“I want a bigger play-ground which is really colourful, fun and safe. I also want the playground to not break easily.”

“Put a lot of speed limit in the crosswalks. Fix all the bumps in the roads.”

“No gas related vehicles and being able to walk to school again.”

“Riding a scooter and riding a bicycle.”

“The 2 things that would make my trips to school better are: not seeing cars idle and not smelling exhaust.”

“Bouncing jello the whole way to school. Doing triple backflips to school.”