

This School Year Leave Little Environmental Footprints Instead of One Big One

(Burnaby, BC) – Driving your kids to and from school every day leaves a very large footprint on the environment. This school year the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation is encouraging children and families to leave little green footprints on their way by walking or riding a bike instead of always taking the car.

Driving kids to and from school every day can 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.

When in school zones many parents 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.

David Dunne, director of road safety programs for the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation hopes that parents will make this year the year that they start to reduce the risk around their school during high commute times. "A lot of these dangerous behaviours could be due to stress, time pressure, not being aware of the risks they pose, or simply not caring. Parents are usually on their way to work and in a hurry, and inevitably someone is going to get hurt." Parents should consider dropping their children off a block or two away from the school zone.

The high cost of gas is good motivation for more families to look for alternative ways to get to school. Dunne adds that, "if you live within walking distance to your child's school, there is no need to be driving them all of the time or all of the way. When people get back into a routine and can see the real cost of their commutes, we hope that they will consider cutting back this part of it." Research indicates that one-hour of idling uses approximately one litre of gasoline. The average drop-off / pick-up is 10 min. Doing the math that's about a litre of gas every three days wasted on idling in a school zone.

There are many safe alternatives to driving kids to and from school. Dunne suggests walking or cycling with buddies. Parents or older siblings can rotate turns taking a group of kids to and from school. He reminds families to make sure that their kids use a safe route that everyone is familiar with. Parents can set a good example and use this opportunity to teach their children safe pedestrian, cycling and traffic practices and attitudes.

The Traffic Safety Foundation is impressed that so many schools in BC have implemented environmental initiatives, traffic reduction programs and other strategies that reduce congestion, pollution, risk of injury, and encourage a more active lifestyle.

Signage, speed humps, and patrolled intersections are all part of this strategy. Many schools have trained student patrollers to stand at the curbside rather than walking into the middle of the street to help their schoolmates cross safely.

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

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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Available for Interview:

David Dunne, Director of Road Safety Programs, BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation

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.

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- 30 -

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