

“YOU CAN CLEAR THE AIR” – GRADE THREE CURRICULUM SUPPLEMENT

The project to prepare a Grade Three Curriculum Supplement, titled “*You can Clear the Air*” was initiated by the Region of Waterloo as a way to educate the community about the issues related to the use of automobiles for an ever-increasing number of trips and help them to make a shift to appropriate choices. Since travel behaviours are often well established by the time children reach driving age (16 in the Province of Ontario), the intent is to raise a community that is much more aware of the impacts of their travel choices.

The *You Can Clear the Air* grade 3 curriculum supplement is innovative for the transportation field by its approach to project development. The working group consisted of Program Coordinators from each of the School Boards (Waterloo Region District School Board and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board), Regional transportation planning staff, Grand River Transit (GRT) staff (owned and operated by the Region), and an environmental educational consultant – most of who would not consider themselves “working in the transportation field”.

The project does not stop at simply educating about the reasons “why” walking, cycling and taking transit are wise, it includes tools to foster behaviour change. Materials are provided that allow students and their parents to identify their current travel choices, discover ways to reduce their impact on the air and the community, and encourages them to make a change. Finally, the project had a much greater impact than just educating the students and has created an environment dramatically different from the typical educational process. In this case, the students educate their parents about the benefits of wise travel choices and the impacts of high automobile usage and single occupant vehicles – an approach used in water conservation and waste management, but not witnessed in the transportation field.

The interest that the project has generated to date among TDM professionals suggests the project fills a need identified in other communities across Canada and will have a broader impact on these common problems. The program can be easily transferred to other communities with a smaller subset of individuals but by establishing similar partnerships.