

Executive Summary

Streets are public spaces, yet they remain the domain of motorists. Contrary to this, people continue to challenge the narrative. One strategy has been through street reclamation efforts, referring to how streets can be reclaimed psychologically and physically from motorists to improve health, social connections, and community well-being.

One type of street reclamation effort is called a School Street, a street experiment restricting vehicles on the street in front of a school at the start and end of the school day to create a car-free environment. School Streets have been organized globally in the past decade, with at least five implemented in Ontario since 2019 (8-80 Cities, 2022).

This report investigated the implementation of Schools Streets in Ontario to reveal the implications for broader street reclamation efforts. To reach this goal, those who led every known School Street in Ontario and other relevant interest groups were interviewed to investigate the barriers faced and potential scaling solutions. The experience of the author of this report, as a School Street implementer in Kingston, Ontario, was also captured, ensuring the information was grounded by first-hand experience.

Based on the findings, this report has documented barriers that hinder School Streets' establishment, scale, and sustainability; proposed recommendations for municipalities to establish, scale, and sustain School Streets in Ontario; and names long-term implications for contemporary street reclamation efforts - summarized below.

School Streets face...

- Municipal skepticism
- Conflicting perceptions of leadership roles
- Divergent assessments of risk
- School site selection limits
- Road permit requirements and costs
- Legislative uncertainty
- Requirements for barriers and volunteers

To start a School Street, municipalities should...

1. Seek delegated authority
2. Form an advisory group
3. Gather relevant school data
4. Establish a list of schools
5. Manage perceived risks
6. Demonstrate School Streets as proof of concept
7. Evaluate and propose a long-term role
8. Expand labour roles
9. Create a streamlined application system
10. Use a variety of forms and strategies

If we want to support street reclamation in Ontario...

- We need to change legislation
- We need bollards
- We need new stories
- We need strong evidence
- We need women's experiences
- We need a movement