

Dear Councillor/Mayoral Candidates,

Thank you very much to those who have taken the time to read the Safe Street Survival Guide installments, and write back to express thanks.

This is the fifth and penultimate installment, covering school zones and journeys, tactical urbanism and the Crosswalk flag programme.

I hope you find something here of interest and to inspire you for your campaign.

3. School Zones and safe active transport journeys to school

Parents and schools in Halifax are deeply concerned about unsafe active transport journeys to and from school, particularly right outside schools which are often chaotic and tightly packed with cars due to parents dropping off and collecting children, and parking.

Parents who walk with their children to and from school in Halifax understand that close calls and danger is normal, due to infrastructure which favours vehicular traffic flow over vulnerable road user safety.

Parents and crosswalk guards have raised ongoing issues which could be inexpensively resolved given the right policies and action, including:

1. Speeding traffic, especially arterial and collector roads.
2. Dangerous crosswalks, particularly signalized intersections and four/five lane mid block crosswalks.
3. Parking in school zones and next to school crosswalks.
4. Lack of safe cycling routes resulting in children cycling to school sharing sidewalks with children walking to school.
5. Vehicles entering school grounds during times when children are in the yard.
6. No sidewalks on roads around schools.



A recent [survey by Parachute Canada](#) found that the majority of parents (75%) prevent their kids from walking or cycling to school due to fears over speeding cars and traffic.

This results in parents driving their children to school, making roads more congested and dangerous at peak times and worsening issues for both commuters and children walking or cycling to school.

The only way to reverse this disturbing trend is to make routes to school and school zones safe for children. This requires Councillors to speak out for our children's [right to safe school journeys](#), and propose policy that ensures safe travel to and from school can become a reality.

This should be part of a developed Vision Zero Safety Action Plan, [as it is in Toronto](#). Earlier in the Safe Streets Survival Guide, it was explained why Halifax's current Road Safety Framework is inadequate, and why Council should take the lead to develop a **genuine Vision Zero action plan** that involves all relevant staff, Council and the Community continuously as both decision-makers and active participants.

There is nothing that should prevent this from happening. [Council has full control over streets](#) - see section 317(2) of the Municipal Charter. Traffic staff and the traffic authority are employees of Council (the traffic authority is also appointed by Council) and therefore may have Vision Zero objectives mandated as part of their employment requirements.

An active transport **safe routes to school** and **safe school zone** project developed as part of Halifax's Vision Zero strategy could deliver:

- The assessment and adaptation of key active transport routes to school (pedestrian refuge islands, simple protected bike lanes, simple bump outs using posts, etc)
- No parking zones outside schools and next to school crosswalks provided using simple posts, poles or bollards - see example in photograph below.
- Where speeding and multiple traffic lanes prevent safety on wider roads in school zones, prioritize simple road diets (see section on [traffic calming](#)).
- [School gates](#) that prevent vehicles from entering into the school during pick up and collection times, also during recess and lunch.
- [Low traffic neighbourhood adaptations](#) on streets within school zones.
- Prioritize installing sidewalks on all roads in school zones - [anything effective will do](#).
- Combining the above physical changes to reinforce safer behaviour with a campaign to promote the safety of children walking and cycling to school, and asking residents to respect the new safety measures in place.



4. Tactical Urbanism

[Tactical urbanism](#) is about low cost temporary changes to the built environment to effect quick and inexpensive safety improvements for vulnerable road users, to enable commerce, or to allow streets to be used by people.

Tactical Urbanism often involves community/grassroots intervention outside of any formal policy, much like the [interesting adaptations developed by local street artist Doug Carelton](#). But it can also be integrated as part of a Vision Zero or Traffic Calming policy, enabling resident (or school and community group) led efforts. This can result in quicker and cheaper changes that meet residents direct needs.

Examples include simple bike lanes, road diets, pop-up cafes, street markets and resident led traffic calming.

Changes like [this one](#) outside a school in Baltimore demonstrate what is possible with simple interventions. This would significantly slow traffic passing through the intersection and enable the safety of vulnerable road users to become the priority and focus.



Recent examples of councillor-driven tactical urbanism in Canada:

- Guelph converted several downtown streets and a signalized intersection into a [hugely popular Open Street Dining District](#).
- Montreal implemented [simple bike lanes](#).
- St Johns, NFL [pedestrianized their main commercial street](#).

- Wolfville closed a traffic lane on Main Street to traffic to create a [“Stay Healthy” pedestrian shopping street](#).
- Waterloo, Ontario, created a temporary bike network which included dedicating [two lanes of a four lane arterial route](#) for active transport only.

5. Crosswalk flags

Voluntary efforts from Norm Collins and the [Crosswalk Safety Society of Nova Scotia](#) (CSSNS) have been hugely beneficial, providing rapid-fix yielding improvements for pedestrians using crosswalks which are not safe for use by all ages and abilities due to inadequate crosswalk design and control features. See [this link](#) for crosswalk specifications that ensure safety for all.

187 sets of crosswalk flags have been [installed in HRM](#); another 116 in 26 other communities in Nova Scotia and 33 in four other provinces.

Crosswalk flags are shown to be effective through both local incident data analysed [by the CSSNS](#) and a significant [research project](#) undertaken by the US Department of Transport.

The flags are in particular appreciated by parents and also senior pedestrians, who have tragically comprised [all of our recent pedestrian fatality victims](#).

In addition to the flags, Norm Collins and the CSSNS have provided valuable, long term advocacy for much needed safety improvements on crosswalks. We cannot thank them enough for their dedicated voluntary work on behalf of the community.

The next email really will be the last one!

There has been much to say about safe streets - thank you for reading this far and for your interest in this topic. Time permitting, the final installment will cover **sidewalks, provincial roads, enforcement and lower speed limits**.

We will also ask you what your safe street priorities are for both HRM and your district. Answers will be kindly published in the NS Advocate.

