



To: Transport Planners
From: Adrian Davis
Date: 11/2018
Subject: School Travel Toolbox: No 8 Effectiveness of School Crossing Patrols

Top line: School crossing patrols appear to be a necessary condition to improve elementary school pupil crossing behaviour and safety through use of the patrol facility. They appear insufficient on their own, however, to persuade the carers of those pupils who don't travel actively to allow them to do so.

School crossing patrols (or 'guards') have been part of the safety 'infrastructure' for generations of children and their carers. Their effectiveness has received perhaps less academic research attention than might be thought albeit that they can reduce the number of child pedestrian injuries.¹ Given budgetary constraints there have been concerns that crossing patrols could be cut entirely or at least in part, with risks of increased pedestrian injury. US research has reported that while relatively few states have laws requiring crossing guards or traffic calming around schools, when they do, they can help to reduce barriers to and/or facilitate active school travel. Researchers specifically found that state laws requiring crossing guards appear to be effective at reducing barriers to walking/biking to school, increasing the likelihood of allowing all students to bike to school, & reducing the likelihood of no students walking/ biking to school.²

In a Canadian study in Toronto, there was a strong positive association found between walking and school crossing guards and the evidence was of crossing guards improving the perceived safety of the environment for walking. Moreover, unlike physical changes to the road environment which are often highly political, the process to install crossing guards is much simpler in Toronto, and involves a reported need by the community to the Toronto Police, followed by an assessment of the location.³

Most recently a US study sought to evaluate the impact of increased crossing guard presence on the likelihood children using safe active transportation.⁴ This was conducted during the simultaneous hiring of multiple crossing guards. The primary study aim was to determine if increased crossing guard presence was associated with: an increased number of children walking/biking to school; diminished parental safety concerns; an increased likelihood of parents allowing their child to walk/bike to school, and an increased number of children utilising supervised routes. After placement of new crossing guards and the application of an awareness campaign, the study results revealed no change in the numbers of children walking or biking to and from school, but an increase in the number of children (already participating in active transport) utilising supervised routes. The findings demonstrate that increased crossing guard presence is most likely to influence safe behaviour as indicated by the increased numbers of children engaging in predictable pedestrian behaviours through their use of supervised routes. Crossing guard presence had no effect on adult's rate of active transportation or use of supervised routes.

¹ Boxall, J. 1988 School crossing patrols: how effective are they? *Traffic Engineering and Control*, November: 586.

² Criqui, F. et al, 2012 The impact of state safe routes to school-related laws on active travel to school policies and practices in U.S. elementary schools, *Health & Place* 18: 8–15.

³ Rothman, L. et al, 2014 Influence of social and built environment features on children walking to school: An observational study, *Preventive Medicine* 60: 10–15.

⁴ Gutierrez, C. et al 2014 Crossing guard presence: Impact on active transportation and injury prevention, *Journal of Transport and Health*, 1: 116-123.