



School to create travel plan to cut cars

By **GERALD FORD**

MASTERTON schoolchildren will join teachers and officials next week in creating the region's first school "Travel Plan", to reduce the number of cars at the gate.

Douglas Park School has signed up for the initiative with three councils – Greater Wellington, Masterton district and the Wairarapa Road Safety Council – and will be working on the plan next Tuesday and Wednesday.

Children will use Monopoly houses on a map to show where they live, and stickers to show the way they travel to school.

"Issue cards" will identify problems like distance, road safety and traffic congestion on the journey.

This exercise, called "planning for real" will be added to the results of a completed survey of the school community.

All the information is gathered by a working party, including school representatives and road safety officers, who will look at ways of increasing the number of students walking or cycling to school.

Solutions can include "walking school buses", carpooling, or cycling.

Simon Vincent, school travel plan

co-ordinator with Greater Wellington Regional Council, said there are many benefits to reducing the number of cars coming to school.

The school can reduce congestion at the school gate, improving child safety, and parents get to build better relationships with the school.

Children can improve their fitness, gain road and personal safety skills, improve their knowledge of their environment, and develop confidence and independence.

Exercise also means students arrive at school ready to learn.

Mr Vincent said the community benefits by a reduction in air and noise pollution from fewer cars on the road, and improvements in walking, cycling and bus routes.

Douglas Park already has a high number of children cycling to school, Mr Vincent said, and so a travel plan could include training from police in cycle safety, and if needed there could be an increase in bike storage area at the school.

Travel plans are now being pioneered in five or six schools around the greater Wellington region.

Mr Vincent said a school travel plan is not reinventing the wheel but reintroducing the feet.