



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

LEARNWELL TOOLKIT



ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE

CHICAGO
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

CPS

 **LEARNWELL**

— AN INITIATIVE OF HEALTHY CPS —

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: An Introduction **3**

Information on the Safe Routes to School movement.

Chapter 2: Planning for Safe Routes **6**

Information to identify strategies to increase the number of students walking and biking to school.

Chapter 3: Education **12**

Strategies to help students and adults make the safest choices for commuting.

Chapter 4: Encouragement **16**

Strategies to provide inspiration for children to walk and bike to school, and to see walking and biking as feasible and fun options for transportation.

Chapter 5: Enforcement **20**

Strategies to enforce safe behaviors within a community to ensure both traffic safety and personal safety.

Chapter 6: Engineering **24**

Strategies to improve pedestrian and biking safety, and to enable more transportation options.

Chapter 7: Evaluation **34**

Strategies to measure progress and success, and to identify areas for improvement.

Appendix **37**



CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

In October 2012, the Chicago Board of Education adopted two new policies: the Local School Wellness Policy and the Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy. In June 2013, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Student Health and Wellness launched LearnWELL, an initiative to support schools in aligning with the CPS wellness policies, which promote improved health and academic performance of all students as well as healthier school environments. LearnWELL is one component of the Healthy CPS initiative, a comprehensive platform aimed at improving the health and well-being of Chicago's students.

LearnWELL advocates active transportation—walking and biking—as a way to promote student wellness, with the CPS Local School Wellness Policy specifically stating that, “Schools shall encourage students to walk or bike to school when feasible.”¹ The policy also advises creating and implementing programming and processes that facilitate safe walking and biking and improve safety conditions as students enter and leave school grounds.

The Safe Routes to School LearnWELL toolkit is designed to support school administrators and other stakeholders in creating a safe, encouraging environment that enables students to walk and bike to school. It also provides guidance on how to select and apply appropriate strategies to increase active transportation.

Why walk or bike to school?

Walking and bicycling is a fun and inexpensive way for students to travel to and from school. It is also a great way for students to incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives. Less-active children are more likely to be overweight or obese, which can lead to a variety of health risks.^{2,3} Approximately 43% of Chicago Public Schools students are overweight or obese,⁴ and walking or biking to school creates the opportunity for students to engage in physical activity on a daily basis.

Many parents may welcome the opportunity to join in active commuting with their students. Parents will appreciate spending the additional time with their children, and will benefit from the physical activity as well. It is important for a school to support those who want to walk and bike, and to encourage those who might be hesitant but are open to the possibility of active transportation.

As the number of students walking or biking to school increases, there likely will be a noticeable reduction in street congestion, traffic density, and the number of crashes in and near school zones. Fewer cars may help to create a safer environment for all students as they travel to and from school. Air quality is measurably better around schools with more walkers and bicyclists.⁵ This can help reduce the number of students experiencing health-related incidents associated with poor air quality.⁶

The benefits of an active lifestyle are not limited to student health; increased physical activity has been shown to benefit student academic achievement as well.⁷ At least one study has directly linked actively commuting to school with increased cognitive performance.⁸ Students who walk or bike to school are more likely to come to school alert, energized and ready to learn.

¹ Local School Wellness Policy for Students.” *Chicago Public School Policy Manual, Section 704.7, Board Report 12-1024-PO1.*

² American Academy of Pediatrics. “Policy statement on the Prevention of Pediatric Overweight and Obesity.” Accessed August 29, 2013. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/112/2/424.full>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Obesity and Overweight for Professionals: Childhood: Basics - DNPAO - CDC.” Accessed August 29, 2013. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/basics.html>.

⁴ City of Chicago. “Overweight and Obesity Among Chicago Public School Students, 2010-2011.” Last modified February, 2013. <http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/CDPH/OverweightObesityReportFeb272013.pdf>.

⁵ The National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education. “Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting.” Last modified 2003. <http://www.smartgrowth.umd.edu/pdf/SchoolLocationReport.pdf>.

⁶ Friedman, Michael S., et al. “Impact of Changes in Transportation and Commuting Behaviors During the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta on Air Quality and Childhood Asthma.” *JAMA* 285 (2001): 897-905.

⁷ Singh, A., L. Uijtdeuwilgen, et al. “Physical Activity and Performance at School: A Systematic Review of the Literature Including a Methodological Quality Assessment.” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 166, no. 1 (2012): 49-55.

⁸ Martinez-Gomez, D., J.R. Ruiz, et al. “Active Commuting to School and Cognitive Performance in Adolescents: The AVENA Study.” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 165, no. 4 (2011): 300-305.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an international movement to increase the number of students who bike and walk to school by making it safer and easier to do so.

The Safe Routes to School movement uses the “Five E’s” to help categorize the various strategies that should comprise a school’s program. A comprehensive approach should incorporate strategies from each of the Five E’s:

Education

Providing programs and initiatives, such as presentations, curricula, and newsletters that inform students, parents, and community members around SRTS issues

Encouragement

Creating events, programs, or initiatives to encourage walking and biking

Enforcement

Using strategies to more forcefully foster compliance with established transportation rules and regulations

Engineering

Changing the built environment—including streets, sidewalks, signs—to foster safety and compliance with established transportation rules and regulations

Evaluation

Examining the current situation related to walking and biking and the impact, if any, of implemented strategies

Schools should implement strategies from each category to cast a stronger reach across the community. Using only one strategy or type of strategy may limit the effect of an active transportation campaign.

The City of Chicago has supported this mission for many years by conducting projects and programs that support walking and bicycling to school and active transportation safety.

The Chicago Department of Transportation maintains programs such as the Safe Routes Ambassadors and Bicycling Ambassadors, which provide countless opportunities for students to learn and practice walking and bicycling safety skills.

The Chicago Public Schools’ Safe Passages program works to alleviate personal safety concerns for students traveling to and from school.



CHAPTER 2

PLANNING FOR SAFE ROUTES

IDENTIFY STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE
NUMBER OF STUDENTS WALKING AND
BIKING TO SCHOOL

CREATING A SCHOOL-LEVEL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Every school is unique, with different needs and considerations to address. For this reason, it is important that schools create school-specific programming and initiatives to increase the number of their students walking and biking to school.



Belding Elementary sits in a residential neighborhood near the Kennedy Expressway. Speeding traffic and high traffic volumes became a concern for parents and neighborhood residents. A group of parents, connecting with school administration, came together to form a team to look into possible ways to make the community safer for students and others walking in the community. Outcomes thus far have included a traffic study and the creation of a parent patrol program.

1. Create a Safe Routes to School team

Increasing the number of students walking and biking to school requires multiple strategies. While some strategies could be implemented by one person, to coordinate a truly successful school-level program, it is important to have a group that leads and guides Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programming at your school.

This group should include an administration representative, the School Wellness Champion, Community Resource Coordinator, Parent/Teacher Liaison, teachers and school staff, parents, and, if applicable, students.

It may be useful for this group to be associated with another group that already exists, such as the School Wellness Team, a Parent Teacher Association, or the Local School Council. Creating a group will help to build a sustainable program that will not be dependent on the availability of one or two people within the school.

While the school-based team will drive a school's efforts, it should be noted that a successful Safe Routes to School program will connect with a variety of groups and people. These connections will be both within the school and outside of the school, in the district, community, and city, including: school administrators, teachers and school staff, parents, students, community members, local organizations, CPS staff, the Chicago Police Department, the Alderman and Alderman's office, and the Chicago Department of Transportation. The school-level team will help to engage these various stakeholders in appropriate ways. Having a diverse membership will help the team better access decision makers.



2. Gather data and identify issues and barriers

In order to see an increase in student active transportation, it is important to identify and examine what is currently standing in the way of students walking and biking.

- Assess the current transportation landscape at and around the school. Use the “Assessing Existing Conditions” questionnaire found in the Appendix to examine transportation-related issues. It may be useful to look at a map, with school boundaries for neighborhood schools, to indicate trouble areas or locations that might need specific attention.
- Gather information about existing active transportation efforts that may already be implemented in the school or community. Such efforts may be conducted through the school, park district, police department, or other community partner. The SRTS team should coordinate with these groups in order to examine what is already happening and to make sure these efforts form part of the holistic approach the team will use to meet its goals.
- Collect information from parents, guardians, and students to determine possible strategies. Parents and guardians often determine how a student travels to and from school, so it is important to understand their concerns and interests. Students, especially older students who may walk and bike to school alone, often have knowledge of the neighborhood that others might not know. A copy of one type of parent survey can be found at <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-parent-survey> and in the Appendix.
- Get a baseline understanding of active transportation use by conducting a student travel tally. Travel information will help to identify the ways students commute pre- and post-implementation of the active transportation program, and can help determine degree of success for the program as well. A copy of a student travel tally can be found in the Appendix.

The National Center for Safe Routes to Schools collects parent survey and student travel tally data for a national database. Visit <http://www.saferoutesdata.org/> or contact Active Transportation Alliance for assistance: education@activetrans.org.

3. Identify solutions and develop a plan

This Safe Routes to School LearnWELL Toolkit contains many possible solutions and approaches that can be used to counteract issues and barriers identified and to increase the number of students walking and biking to and from school.

- The Solutions Matrix, found on the following pages, matches concerns with strategies that may be used to counteract the relevant issues. Detailed descriptions of each solution are found starting on page 13.
- A “walkability checklist” is another useful strategy to determine existing safe routes and what improvements are needed to increase walking and biking in a community. Checklists can help groups determine specific issues to focus on. One example of a walkability assessment is available through the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children: www.clocc.net.

Once the group identifies the key barriers and solutions, they should decide on which strategies to use and formulate a plan for implementation. Remember, a successful approach will use strategies that include education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering, and evaluation.

All plans should make use of outside partners for assistance and support, and some strategies, such as engineering or enforcement, may require working with professional groups such as the Chicago Police Department, Chicago Public Schools, or the Chicago Department of Transportation.



SOLUTIONS MATRIX

Use this chart to help you identify solutions to common barriers to walking and biking to school

BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS																
	Bike and Pedestrian Safety Education	Adult Education Around Pick-up and Drop-off Procedures	Safe Driving Education for Parents and Neighbors	Active transportation education for parents	Walk and Bike to School Day Events	Student Competitions and Incentives	Walking School Bus/Bike Train	Park and walk/remote drop-off program	Walking/Biking Route Maps	Crossing Guards	Parent Patrols	Speed Feedback Signs	Targeted Enforcement Efforts	Safe Havens	CPS Safe Passages program	“Blue Light” Cameras	Arrival/Dismissal Changes
Bullying, stranger danger, gang activity, or other personal safety concerns	X		X				X		X	X	X			X	X	X	
Cars parked illegally		X	X					X		X	X		X				X
Convenience	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X
Dangerous or high-volume pedestrian intersection	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X				X
Distracted driving		X	X		X						X		X				X
Drivers don't stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk	X	X	X				X	X		X	X		X				X
High-speed and/or high-volume road or intersection	X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X				X
Need to increase driver awareness in school zones		X	X								X		X				X
No clear route to school				X			X		X		X				X		
No data to support program				X													
No documentation of successes				X													
No place to bike on streets or sidewalks																	
Perceptions vs. reality of safety							X		X	X	X			X	X	X	
Poor pedestrian visibility	X						X			X							
Speeding on local roads		X	X		X		X					X	X				X
Students with disabilities	X				X	X	X		X								
Unsafe conditions at pick-up and drop-off		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X				X
Unsafe student ped/bike behavior	X						X	X		X	X						X
Unsignalized crosswalk	X		X		X		X			X	X						
Weather				X	X	X	X		X					X			
Wide intersection																	

BARRIERS

SOLUTIONS

	Children's Safety Zone	Lighting	High Visibility Crosswalks	In-road "State Law Stop for Pedestrians" Sign	Speed Hump/Speed Bump	Bump-out	Pedestrian Countdown Timer	Leading Pedestrian Interval	Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB)	Neighborhood Traffic Circle	Pedestrian Refuge Island in Crosswalks	Raised Crosswalks	Stop Sign or Traffic Signal	Road Diet	Collect Student Travel Information	Administer Parent Surveys	Request Local Crash Data	Request Local Crime Data
Bullying, stranger danger, gang activity, or other personal safety concerns		X																X
Cars parked illegally																		
Convenience															X	X		
Dangerous or high-volume pedestrian intersection	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
Distracted driving			X	X														
Drivers don't stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk	X		X	X		X		X	X	X		X	X					
High-speed and/or high-volume road or intersection	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X			X	
Need to increase driver awareness in school zones	X								X							X	X	
No clear route to school				X														X
No data to support program															X	X	X	X
No documentation of successes															X	X	X	
No place to bike on streets or sidewalks														X				
Perceptions vs. reality of safety		X																X
Poor pedestrian visibility	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Speeding on local roads	X			X	X	X			X	X		X		X				
Students with disabilities																		
Unsafe conditions at pick-up and drop-off	X		X		X				X	X		X						
Unsafe student ped/bike behavior																		
Unsignalized crosswalk	X		X	X		X			X	X			X					
Weather																		
Wide intersection	X					X		X			X							

4. Implement the plan and advocate for change

Once a plan and strategies have been decided upon, the team should begin work on implementation. Different solutions will require different lengths of time to implement. For example, it may be easy to begin a walking group, but it may take a year or more to install new sidewalks or crosswalks. A timeline will help the group understand and prioritize tasks required to implement each solution. Easy-to-implement and short-term strategies will help the group feel successful and help to sustain momentum for long-term goals.

It is likely that the team will need to engage others to implement its strategies. School staff and administrators may need to approve strategies related to education and enforcement. Outside organizations may need to be contacted to provide training and technical support, such as guidance for a walking school bus program.

Continuous engagement of parents will be important; parents often dictate how students travel to and from school, and their support will be key throughout program development. Engagement may include reaching out through e-mails and newsletters or during parent meetings.

Some strategies, specifically those to the built environment, such as installing new crosswalks or bike lanes, may require the group to build widespread community support. This may entail holding informational meetings, sharing information via school newsletters, and gathering support with petitions. Advocating for change may include writing letters to or meeting with public officials, attending Ward or police beat meetings, or holding events. Telephone calls, petitions, e-mails and letters from parents, students, school staff, and others in the community will reinforce support for the active transportation platform.

5. Evaluate your efforts and continue the process

After some of the strategies have been implemented, it is important to measure growth in number of students walking and biking to determine which strategies have been successful in increasing active transportation. The group should regularly collect data and monitor changes that occur using a variety of data gathering tools, including those described in this toolkit. Data, both of successful results and continued need for changes, may also help decision makers agree to implement other programs.

The group should celebrate positive results and milestones, but will need to maintain dedicated support for education, encouragement, and enforcement strategies, and manage any new concerns that develop. As children age and staff members transition roles, the group will need to create a sustainable, long-term program for successful active transportation at the school.



The Brighton Park Neighborhood Council works with six local elementary schools to form a network of local Parent Patrols. Each school has a paid parent coordinator for the program and specific strategies for implementation, such as walking school buses and neighborhood safe routes. Each month, school groups meet to discuss progress and new issues that have arisen, such as graffiti or specific streets of concern, and if it is necessary to contact any outside groups or persons.



CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION

HELP STUDENTS AND ADULTS MAKE THE
SAFEST CHOICES FOR COMMUTING

EDUCATION

Education strategies help students and adults make the safest choices for commuting. They also provide an opportunity to foster lifelong habits of safe walking, biking, and driving, and can be used to help current drivers around schools zones practice safe behaviors. Everyone using the roads and streets—bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers—should be targeted for education efforts so they will follow laws and behave in safe and predictable ways.

A comprehensive approach to education will target both adults and children. Education strategies for youth should be geared toward students based on age or grade.

YOUTH EDUCATION



Bike and pedestrian safety lessons

Lesson plans that focus on or incorporate walking and biking safety education are available for teachers to implement in their classrooms. Lessons exist for classroom use, for after school programs, and for integration with physical education. Depending on program structure, the plans may include one-time-use lessons, short activities, or long-term programs. Lessons are often based on Common Core Learning Standards and other required educational criteria.

Benefits

Safety education provides students with the tools to walk and bike to school with security and awareness. Lessons are a good way to integrate active transportation education into the existing programming and curricula.

Implementation

View resources provided by Active Transportation Alliance at <http://www.activetrans.org/education/teachers>. Options are available for all ages and are flexible to meet the needs of any program specification. Materials are also available from the Federal Highway Administration at <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pedsaferjourney/>



Bike and pedestrian safety presentations

Presentations exist for all ages and in a variety of topics related to bike and pedestrian safety, including safely crossing a street, safe bicycling practices, proper bike helmet fitting, and how parents can help children learn safe active transportation practices. Presentations are usually provided by outside organizations, who might bring an expert in for a one-time event to teach students.

Benefits

Presentations help to focus and prioritize education on issues important to walking and biking safety.

Implementation

Contact Chicago's Safe Routes Ambassadors to set up free presentations for second grade (walking) and fifth grade (biking) students: <http://www.chicagocompletestreets.org/ambassadors>. Active Transportation Alliance and the Chicago Police Department's Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) officers may also be available to provide active transportation presentations.

For the past five years, administrators at Dore Elementary have brought in the City of Chicago's Safe Routes Ambassadors to teach students bike and pedestrian safety skills. During an initial visit, Ambassadors teach second grade students about crosswalks and how to cross the street safely, and on a return visit take students outside to practice their skills on local streets. Fifth grade students receive education on bike safety and participate in an experiment to explore traffic speeds on nearby roads.

Experiential bike and pedestrian safety education

Taking students on a group walk to practice street-crossing and other walking safety skills is a great way to reinforce knowledge learned through presentations or lessons.

In a Bike Rodeo, students are able to ride their bikes while practicing safety skills and guidelines. Before riding, a safety clinic often features instruction on making sure a bike is safe to ride, proper helmet fitting, and the use of hand signals and other rules of the road. Students are then able to ride a bike on a "chalk street" course set up in a parking lot or gym to practice safety skills.

Benefits

Student learning will be most successful if they are able to practice their skills in real-life settings or scenarios approximating real-life situations. These opportunities provide a fun way to build students' confidence and help them get excited about biking and walking.

Implementation

School staff, local police, community organizations, after school program providers, or parent and community volunteers are good resources to conduct trainings. Consult Active Transportation Alliance for information on performing bike rodeos or other experiential walking and biking programming at your school (education@activetrans.org). Contact Chicago's Safe Routes Ambassadors to set up on-foot training for second grade students. <http://www.saferoutesambassadors.org>.

ADULT EDUCATION

Safe driving education for parents and neighbors

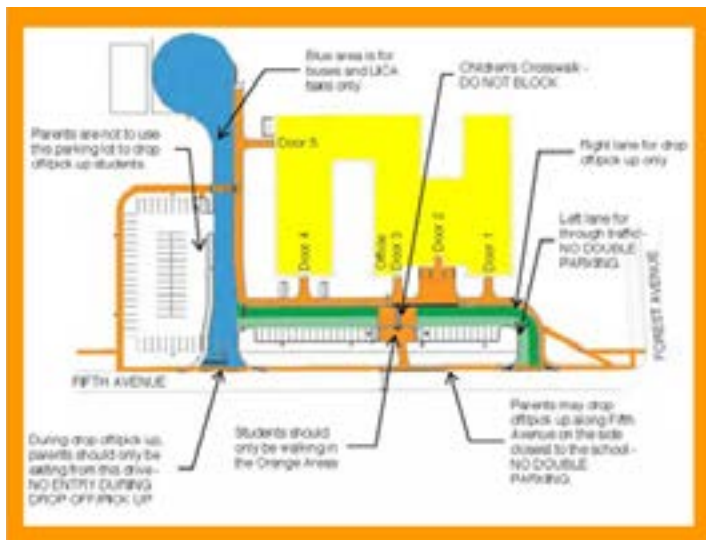
Neighbors living in the vicinity of the school also need to be educated on how to create a safe environment for children walking and biking. Communicate with neighbors through neighborhood meetings, flyers, websites, and yard sign campaigns.

Benefits

Increasing awareness of safety for students walking and biking will help create a welcoming atmosphere that promotes and encourages active transportation in the community.

Implementation

Create educational materials to distribute or share. An example of such materials can be found in the Appendix. Contact Active Transportation Alliance for further information.



Education around drop-off and pick-up procedures

Driver behavior dramatically impacts safety around schools for children walking or biking. Parents should be provided maps and written instructions that reinforce the procedures set by the school.

Benefits

Having parents and other drivers understand and follow the designated drop-off and pick-up traffic flow at and around a school can help improve safety for students walking and biking.

Implementation

Make sure parents are aware of proper drop-off and pick-up procedures through announcements, flyers, newsletters, and maps. Staff or volunteers may also meet and engage with parents during drop-off and pick-up times to share materials. Examples of such materials can be seen in the image. Consult Active Transportation for further information.



Active transportation education for parents

In most cases, a parent or guardian is the decision maker for how a child travels to and from school. Parents should be offered education about alternatives to using cars for transportation and the benefits of walking and biking.

Benefits

Parents who actively walk and bike are more likely to have students who walk and bike to school. For those who regularly drive, they may discover that with a few alterations to their schedules and habits, it is possible to choose biking or walking to many destinations.

Implementation

An example of such materials can be found in the Appendix. Contact Active Transportation Alliance for further information.



CHAPTER 4

ENCOURAGEMENT

PROVIDE INSPIRATION FOR CHILDREN TO
WALK AND BIKE TO SCHOOL, AND TO SEE
WALKING AND BIKING AS FEASIBLE AND FUN
OPTIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION

ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouragement strategies provide inspiration for children to walk or bike to school, helping students and parents recognize walking and biking as feasible and fun options for transportation. They also provide the opportunity for students to practice safe bicycling and walking skills. Increasing the number of students walking and biking may also create a safer environment by reducing traffic congestion and increasing student visibility.



Every October, Ray Elementary School in Hyde Park celebrates Walk to School Day by organizing walking school buses. Parents and students meet at two different locations where adults can park their cars and the group assembled can walk to school together. The day may include other educational and informative activities for students and parents promoting and encouraging walking and biking.

Walk and Bike to School Day events

A school may want to select specific days to promote walking and biking, and feature special activities like walking school buses, educational sessions, and class competitions. Events should encourage participation for children who cannot walk or bike to school by integrating components that are done on the school campus. Special education teachers should be consulted to ensure participation by students with special needs. These events may also engage the community around issues of walking and biking.

Benefits

A special event provides the opportunity for students and parents to join their community and together try walking or biking to school. This may be the impetus some students need to walk and bike on a regular basis in the future. It also generates engagement for students who might not be able to commute by walking or biking.

Implementation

Across the country, International Walk to School Day is celebrated each year on the second Wednesday of October. National Bike to School Day happens on the Wednesday of the first full week of May. One-time events alone are unlikely to change long-term behavior, though they may serve as a catalyst for future programming. For best results, schedule follow up events to occur throughout the year. One possibility would be to designate one day each month or week as a walk and bike to school day, such as "Walking Wednesdays."

For more resources and info on how to organize a Walk or Bike to School Day, visit the National Center for Safe Routes to School's event day website www.walkbiketoschool.org or contact Active Transportation Alliance at education@activetrans.org.



Student competitions and incentives

A school may create individual or classroom competitions tracking and comparing students who walk and bike to school. A “golden sneaker” trophy, using a shoe spray-painted gold, could move weekly from class to class to recognize the leaders in active commuting. Mileage clubs can provide students with prizes after meeting certain goals or could reward a raffle entry each day they arrive by active transportation. To include students who can’t walk or bike to school, the club could allow students to gain miles on the weekend or during school recess. Local businesses can provide donations for prizes, and law enforcement agencies can play a role by developing programs that reward safe walking and bicycling behavior in children.

Benefits

Competitions and incentives are useful strategies to encourage children to try a new activity.

Implementation

Work with school staff to develop a program that will work for your student population. Have staff or parents solicit prize donations from the community. Incentives may also include healthy benefits, such as five minutes extra recess or physical activity time, or school-specific prizes, such as the chance to read daily announcements over the PA system.

Walking school bus/bike trains

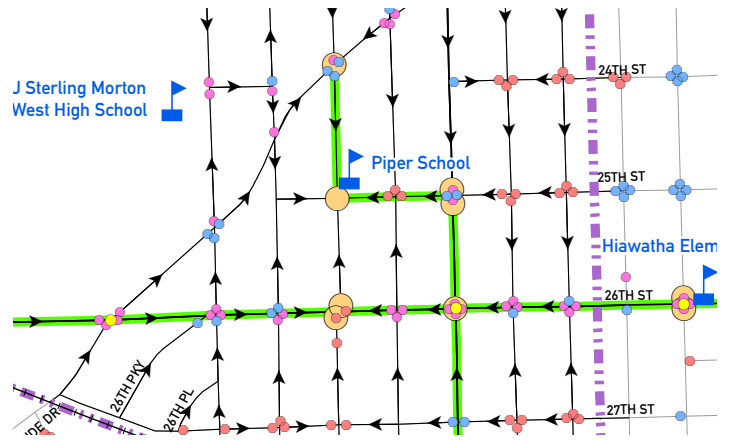
A walking school bus or bike train consists of adult volunteers accompanying children on foot or bike along a specific route to school. One or more adult captains start at a certain location where students meet and walk to school. More students may join along the way. Parents are welcome to walk or bike with the group. Organized routes may contain a schedule of arrival times along the route. Walking school buses and bike trains can operate every day or on certain days of the week or month. They often occur before school but may also occur after school.

Benefits

Walking or biking as a group is a good way to address concerns about personal security along the route to school, while also providing a chance for children (and adults) to socialize. Parents who do not have time to walk or bike with their students may feel more comfortable allowing them to join a group instead of having them commute alone or driving them to school.

Implementation

The school, parents, or a community organization can organize a walking school bus or bike train program. The program can be informal or formal but should at least have a pre-established meeting place and time and basic guidelines. See the Appendix for more information, visit http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/walking_school_bus/ or contact Active Transportation Alliance for assistance and training in setting up a walking school bus program.



Park and walk/remote drop-off program

To ease long commuting distances and/or to decrease congestion around the school, a remote location can be designated where adults drop off students for a shorter walk to school, usually in a group. The same location may also be a designated location for adults to park after school, allowing students to walk as a group to be picked up.

Benefits

A park and walk program reduces congestion of cars and traffic around the school, creating a safer environment for all people. It also affords the opportunity for students to walk to school if they may otherwise not have the opportunity because of distance or safety concerns.

Implementation

The school, parents, or a community organization can initiate and organize a park and walk program with a pre-established meeting place and time. A parking lot a few blocks from the school works best, often at a local business or church where parking is not needed during arrival and dismissal hours. See the Appendix for more information, or contact Active Transportation Alliance for assistance and training in setting up a program.

Walking/biking route map

Not all routes to school are equal: Some routes may be safer, or perceived to be safer, than others because of community or traffic safety concerns. Maps can be produced that indicate preferred walking and biking routes to and from school. Maps can share key information, such as location of crossing guards or traffic signals where it is safer for children to cross streets. These maps can be handed out to students and parents to encourage use of the desired safe routes to and from school.

Benefits

Maps can encourage walking and biking by providing parents and guardians with greater confidence when traveling together or when allowing their students to walk to and from school.

Implementation

Maps should be created to identify the best routes for the school. Maps should be distributed regularly and posted on the school website if possible. An example of a preferred walking route map is provided above.



CHAPTER 5

ENFORCEMENT

ENFORCE SAFE BEHAVIORS WITHIN A
COMMUNITY TO ENSURE BOTH
TRAFFIC AND PERSONAL SAFETY

ENFORCEMENT

Sometimes it is necessary to enforce safe behaviors within a community to ensure both traffic and personal safety. Schools should encourage all members of the community to play a positive role in safety enforcement: students, parents, teachers, school administrators, crossing guards, law enforcement officers, and the public. Enforcement activities alone are likely to only have a temporary effect, so they should be part of a consistent strategy targeting overall safety.



Parent patrol

A parent patrol is an organized group of parent volunteers who provide additional support and supervision during arrival and dismissal near the school grounds.

Benefits

A parent patrol can help create a safer school environment near the school, increasing the safety of students walking or biking to school.

Implementation

Contact your local Chicago Police Department's Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) program or Active Transportation Alliance for assistance and training in setting up a parent patrol.



Crossing guard

In Chicago, crossing guards are Chicago Police Department-trained adults at selected pedestrian crossings, usually on streets with a high volume of traffic. Selection of these intersections is data-driven and managed by the Chicago Police Department Bureau of Patrol.

Benefits

Well-trained adult crossing guards at key locations increase student safety when they are walking and biking, and may result in more parents allowing their children to walk to school.

Implementation

Contact the Bureau of Patrol through your local Police District or your Alderman to request school crossing guards.



Tarkington Elementary school is located on the north side of 71st Street, a very busy arterial road. The school attendance boundary falls south of 71st, requiring most students to cross the street when traveling to and from school. During the 2011-2012 school year, a team of adults partnered with a crossing guard directly in front of the school to help students cross busy 71st Street and direct traffic. This allowed students to safely cross while also allowing rush hour traffic to flow through the intersection.



Speed feedback sign

Speed feedback signs display the speed of passing vehicles and are used to monitor and discourage speeding. Signs may be permanent or temporary but should be placed at locations where speeding is known to occur on a regular basis. They also increase driver awareness when entering a school speed zone and alert drivers to slow down.

Benefits

Signs have been shown to increase speed limit compliance by drivers.

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to request a speed feedback sign.

Targeted enforcement events

Because no police department can aggressively enforce all laws in all locations at all times, targeted enforcement events can be used to regulate specific behaviors. Police departments can use existing crash data to identify the most dangerous locations and target enforcement at those sites. Efforts should begin with a warning or education campaign before police hand out violations.

Benefits

The creation of a safer environment should help students and parents be more comfortable walking and biking to school. Events should take place on school days to have the strongest impact for students.

Implementation

Contact your local Chicago Police Department District or Alderman's office to request a crosswalk or speed enforcement event.



Safe Haven

Safe Havens are identified community locations, such as stores or community organizations, where students and parents traveling to and from school can go for help.

Benefits

Safe Havens address student security in the community, helping parents feel more comfortable allowing their students to walk and bike to and from school.

Implementation

Contact the CAPS Implementation office at 312-745-5900 or the CAPS Project Office at 312-745-5907 for assistance in initiating or expanding a Safe Havens program.

Blue light camera

Portable blue light camera units are mounted on light poles and other fixtures, and can be equipped with a variety of technologies, including video. Selection of locations for the cameras is data-driven and managed by the Chicago Police Department, but may target specific intersections or streets with known gang or crime activity.

Benefits

The goal is to create a visible crime deterrent and allow for possible information gathering of local crime activity.

Implementation

Contact your local Chicago Police District Office for more information, or contact your Alderman to request a blue light camera.



CPS Safe Passages program

The CPS Safe Passages program partners with community organizations to hire adults to be stationed at street corners along specific routes leading to schools.

Benefits

The goal is for adults to provide support for students as they travel to and from school. A staffed Safe Passages route could also be leveraged for a walking school bus program.

Implementation

To request more information about a possible CPS Safe Passages program at your school, contact CPS School Safety and Security at 773.553.3030.



CHAPTER 6

ENGINEERING

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND BIKING SAFETY,
AND ENABLE MORE TRANSPORTATION
OPTIONS

ENGINEERING

The goal of Safe Routes to School related engineering changes is to improve pedestrian and biking safety near the school and in the community and to allow for more transportation options for all community members. Some options are low-cost and easy to implement while others are larger projects that require reconstruction work or an engineering study. Transportation planners should be consulted to help advocates determine feasible changes based on specific road and traffic situations.

Most strategies reviewed in this section indicate a general cost of implementation. Cost for built environment changes would not be paid for by the school, and more expensive projects are generally more difficult to fund and implement.

Arrival/dismissal changes

Redesigning the flow of traffic around a school during arrival and dismissal times is a way to make walking and biking safer. Methods include blocking off one or more streets, changing a two-way street into a one-way street, or creating specific locations for cars to stop and drop students off a few blocks from the school building. Permanent changes outside of school arrival and dismissal times, such as permanent street closures or the creation of a one way street, may also be warranted.

Benefits

Poor traffic flow at and around a school can create an unsafe environment for students walking and biking. It can also deter parents from allowing children to walk or bike. Changing poor traffic routes should lead to increased safety and number of students walking and biking. Reduction in the number of cars idling and driving can also reduce emissions and benefit the air quality near the school.

Implementation

Work with the Alderman to gain approval for closing or blocking off streets at specific times. The Alderman's office may also be able to assist with obtaining "traffic horses" that school staff can move into place to divert traffic. Consult your Alderman if the group believes permanent changes may be appropriate.



Children's Safety Zone Program

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) is working to increase student safety around schools by adding pedestrian safety elements through their Children's Safety Zone Program. These include a "Safety Zone" road marking when approaching a school, and may include many of the other engineering strategies listed in this document.

Benefits

A holistic approach to safety around a school is extremely important in creating a culture conducive to walking and biking. Increasing visibility of children in these locations creates a safer environment for students walking and biking to school.

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about implementing Children's Safety Zone Program road markings and other strategies at your school. For more information, visit: http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdot/supp_info/children_s_safetyzoneprogramautomaticspeedenforcement.html

Lighting

Street lights illuminate otherwise dark streets near schools and on community streets.

Benefits

Proper lighting makes pedestrians more visible to cars at intersections and helps to increase personal safety for students walking home during evening or early morning hours. Effective lighting has been demonstrated to reduce pedestrian crashes by 50 percent.⁹

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing lighting in your community (low to medium cost).

⁹ Polus, A., and A. Katz. "An Analysis of Nighttime Pedestrian Accidents at Specially Illuminated Crosswalks." *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 10, no. 3 (1978): 223-228.



Bike racks/parking

Bike racks are metal structures erected specifically to provide a location to lock bicycles. Racks vary in size, shape, and the number of bicycles they may accommodate. Racks are typically black and shaped like an upside down U, though some stylized designs provide a similar level of security.

In addition to outdoor racks, school administrators could also dedicate a space within the school where students may leave their bikes during the school day.

Benefits

U-shaped bike racks provide a secure structure to safely and securely lock bicycles. They also indicate that bikes are welcome and expected in a specific location.

Implementation

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) runs a Bicycle Parking Program that can provide free bike racks at schools in most situations. School administrators should contact CDOT directly to request racks. Visit www.chicagobikes.org/bikeparking for more information, or contact the program at cdotbikes@cityofchicago.org or 312.742.2453.

For indoor bike parking, schools should develop a system to make sure bikes are secure throughout the day.

In-road “State Law Stop for Pedestrians” sign

These signs can be placed in the middle of a two-lane road at a marked crosswalk without stop signs or traffic lights regulating traffic.

Benefits

These signs provide a visible reminder to drivers that the law requires drivers to stop for pedestrians crossing or attempting to cross a street in any crosswalk.

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a “State Law Stop for Pedestrians” sign (low cost).



High-visibility crosswalk marking

Continental crosswalks are designed to be more visible by striping wide, white lines over the crossing paths.

Benefits

Studies have shown that high visibility or continental striped crosswalks encourage pedestrians to cross at safe locations and result in more drivers yielding to pedestrians.¹⁰

Implementation

After determining crosswalks that would benefit from improved or new crosswalk markings, contact your Alderman or call 311 to inquire about installing high-visibility crosswalks (low cost).

Speed hump/speed bump

Speed humps and speed bumps are short, raised surfaces that require vehicles to slow down to travel over them. Speed humps are longer and placed on residential streets, whereas speed bumps are placed away from residential areas in locations with very low traffic volume, such as alleys or parking areas.

Benefits

Useful in reducing speeds on roadways near and around schools.

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing speed humps (medium cost) or speed bumps (low cost).

At Dodge Elementary School, parents and crossing guards complained about fast moving traffic not stopping for pedestrians on Warren Boulevard, just south of the school. Using a process to garner community support, a group was able to convince the city to install new crosswalk markings with brick pavers. The pavers provide added visibility and also create a rumbling sound as cars travel over the bricks, audibly indicating to vehicles that they should slow down and be alert.

¹⁰ SRTS Guide: Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. "SRTS Guide: Marking and Signing Crosswalks." Accessed December 4, 2013. http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/engineering/marked_crosswalks.cfm.



Bump-out

Bump-outs, also called curb extensions or bulb-outs, are used to extend a sidewalk further out into the roadway at an intersection or crosswalk.

Benefits

Bump-outs reduce the crossing distance and give drivers and pedestrians greater visibility to see one another. When used effectively, curb extensions have been shown to increase drivers stopping for pedestrians by over 40 percent.¹¹

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a bump-out (low to high cost, depending on location).

Neighborhood traffic circle

Traffic circles are circular islands typically found at the intersection of two residential streets and will usually be accompanied by stop signs.

Benefits

Traffic circles help to reduce the speed of traffic moving through an intersection in neighborhoods where children may be present. They also reduce the number of cars who will use residential roads to cut through neighborhoods.

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a neighborhood traffic circle (low to medium cost).

¹¹ Johnson, R. "Pedestrian Safety Impacts of Curb Extensions: A Case Study." State of Oregon: State of Oregon. Last modified 2005. http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP_RES/docs/Reports/PedestrianSafetyCurbExt.pdf.



Pedestrian countdown timer

Pedestrian countdown timers provide the length of time remaining to cross the street, displayed on the walk/don't walk signals.

Benefits

The countdown timer allows pedestrians to make a more informed decision about crossing the street, reducing the likelihood they will still be in the crosswalk when the light turns red. Drivers may also use the timers to anticipate a light turning red, helping to slow down traffic as well.

Implementation

For intersections that already contain crossing signals, contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a countdown timer (low cost).

Leading pedestrian interval

A leading pedestrian interval (LPI) is where the pedestrian "walk" symbol begins approximately three seconds before a light turns green, giving pedestrians a head start to cross the street before cars have a chance to start turning.

Benefits

The LPI moves pedestrians into a crosswalk before vehicle movement begins, giving the pedestrians greater visibility.

Implementation

In Chicago, LPIs are being prioritized at intersections within 200 feet of a school and intersections with significant conflicts or a history of crashes between pedestrians and vehicles turning. Contact your Alderman to inquire about implementing an LPI (low to medium cost).



Rectangular rapid flash beacon (RRFB)

An RRFB is a pedestrian crosswalk sign that also includes lights that can indicate pedestrians are crossing. Pedestrians push a button to make LED lights flash to alert drivers to stop. These typically are used at midblock locations or intersections where a stop sign or traffic signal is not warranted.

Benefits

A flashing indicator better informs vehicles that pedestrians are crossing the street, increasing traffic law compliance.

Implementation

Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a RRFB (medium cost).

Pedestrian refuge island in a crosswalk

Pedestrian refuge islands are raised sections in the middle of roads, between traffic lanes, where pedestrians are protected from moving traffic.

Benefits

Refuge islands allow pedestrians to more easily cross where a road is too wide for slower pedestrians to cross the entire road in a light cycle, or at mid-block crossings along roads that do not have traffic signals or stop signs.

Implementation

For wide roads where crossing can be difficult, contact your Alderman to inquire about installing refuge islands (medium cost).



Raised crosswalk

Raised crosswalks are just that: raising a crosswalk to increase visibility and to act as a speed hump. In effect, they extend the sidewalks through the roadway to help prioritize pedestrians over vehicular traffic.

Benefits

Raised crosswalks increase pedestrian visibility and the likelihood of vehicles stopping to allow pedestrians to cross.

Implementation

Raised crosswalks should be used on streets with low traffic volume or with regular pedestrian traffic. They may be used on or at the entrance to residential streets. Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a raised crosswalk (medium cost).

Stop sign or traffic signal

Stop signs and traffic signals require vehicles to stop at intersections or crosswalks.

Benefits

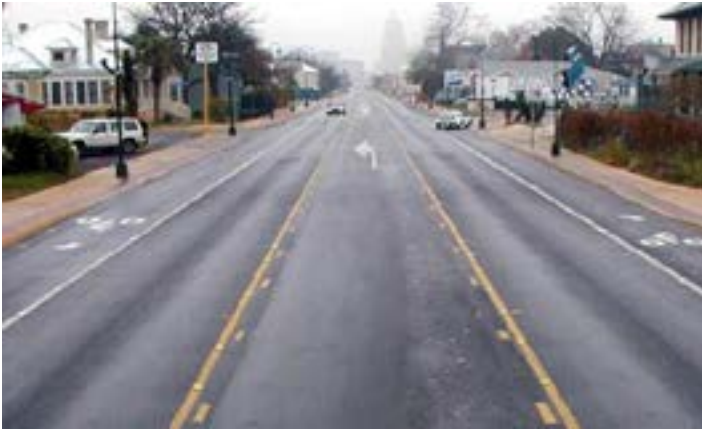
Although not appropriate for every intersection, stop signs and traffic signals are among the most effective regulator of driver behavior. They can greatly improve pedestrian safety by providing a clearly defined location and opportunity to cross a street.

Implementation

Before installing a new stop sign or traffic signal, it is necessary to conduct a traffic study to determine if the sign or signal is warranted. Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a stop sign (low cost) or traffic signal (high cost).

A group of parents from Eli Whitney Elementary took a leadership training facilitated by Enlace, Erie Neighborhood House and the Telpochcalli Community Education Project during the summer of 2007. Members of this group chose to support the development of a stop sign on 27th and Pulaski, near the Toman Branch Library, in order to increase safety at a dangerous and busy intersection. They collected signatures from local residents, held community meetings and repeatedly met with the alderman until, in 2012, a stoplight was installed on that corner.





Road diet

A road diet involves reallocating space from one mode of travel to another. This may include removing traffic lanes and using the space for sidewalks, bicycle lanes, turn lanes, on-street parking, landscaping, or other amenities. See the images above for an example of a street before and after a road diet.

Benefits

Road diets, by reducing lane width or the number of travel lanes, have been shown to decrease driver speed, reduce crashes, and improve pedestrian safety.¹²

Implementation

An engineering study is often required to determine the effect of such a change. Contact your Alderman to inquire about installing a road diet (medium to high cost).

¹² Mead, J., C. Zegeer, and M. Bushell. "Evaluation of Pedestrian-Related Roadway Measures: A Summary of Available Research." Last modified 2013. http://katana.hsrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/PedestrianLitReview_April2013.pdf.




CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION

MEASURE PROGRESS AND SUCCESS, AND
IDENTIFY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

EVALUATION

Schools should regularly evaluate their active transportation program to track progress and consider the most useful ways to improve active commuting to and from school. Data can help Safe Routes to School teams build support for their programs and initiatives. Community members, elected officials, and governmental organizations may be interested in or require knowledge of the impact of the program on student health, academic achievement, and public safety.



In order to best facilitate their Safe Routes Action Plan program, school staff at Prieto Academy collected student travel tallies during a three-day period in September 2013. Approximately 75% of classrooms were surveyed, showing that significantly more students arrived by family vehicle than school administrators had estimated. Additionally, over 50 parents submitted surveys, indicating top barriers to walking and biking. The school plans to continue implementing student travel tallies twice a year and parent surveys as relevant for future planning.

Collect student travel information

A student travel tally is used to gain a general understanding of how students travel to and from school. Teachers survey students about how they got to and from school and plan to get home on at least two days during one week. For best results, a school should find one time during the day, such as homeroom or breakfast in the classroom, where tallies can be collected simultaneously across the school.

Benefits

Having accurate, historical, and updated information can help a school evaluate how much impact the strategies are having and whether to make any changes. The data can also support outreach with outside organizations for new or continued strategies.

Implementation

A copy of a student travel tally can be found in the Appendix. Travel Tallies should be collected at least once a year at the same time during the spring and/or fall. Data can be stored and tallied by the National Center for Safe Routes to School. Visit <http://www.saferoutesdata.org> or contact Active Transportation Alliance for assistance.

Administer parent surveys

Parent surveys ask questions about how students get to and from school. They also gather information about parental concerns and other information useful for creating strategies for increased and safer walking and biking to school.

Benefits

Parents and guardians often determine how a student travels to and from school. Surveys help to understand parental concerns to better determine which strategies should be implemented. Conducting regular surveys can also measure change in attitudes as strategies are implemented.

Implementation

A copy of a standard parent survey can be found in the Appendix. Data can be stored and tallied by the National Center for Safe Routes to School. Visit <http://www.saferoutesdata.org> or contact Active Transportation Alliance for assistance.

Request local crash data

The Illinois and Chicago Departments of Transportation collect information when crashes occur—including those that involve people walking and riding bikes. This data is publicly available, and obtaining this information can assist in planning to improve community safety.

Benefits

Reviewing crash data around a school can help find “hot spots” to target for safety improvements and strategies. Once changes are implemented, continue to track crash data to ensure the effectiveness of strategies.

Implementation

Contact your local Alderman or visit <http://safetydatamart.transportation.illinois.gov> for assistance in obtaining relevant local crash data. Active Transportation Alliance is available to advise on possible strategies based on local crash data.

Request local crime data

The Chicago Police Department collects neighborhood crime data. Obtaining this information can assist in future planning to improve community safety.

Benefits

Knowing crime data around a school can help identify “hot spots” to target for safety improvements and strategies. Strategies might not include enforcement but may include community restorative justice efforts or other ways to create safer streets without additional policing.

Implementation

Contact your local Chicago Police District CAPS program, or visit <http://gis.chicagopolice.org/> for assistance in obtaining relevant local crime data.



APPENDIX

RESOURCES

Use these resources to gain more information or to implement strategies discussed earlier in this document.

Ward locator and Alderman contact information:

<https://webapps3.cityofchicago.org/StickerOnlineWeb/geoWardLookup.do>

<https://chicago.legistar.com/People.aspx>

Find your CAPS/Police District contact info:

<https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/Communities/Districts>

Online crash data finder:

<http://safetydatamart.transportation.illinois.gov>

Online crime data website:

<http://gis.chicagopolice.org/>

Chicago's Safe Routes Ambassadors website:

<http://chicagocompletestreets.org/your-safety/education-encouragement/ambassadors/>

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdot/provdrs/ped/svcs/safe_routes_ambassadors.html

International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day information:

<http://www.walkbiketoschool.org>

Active Transportation Alliance:

<http://www.activetrans.org/education>

Safe Routes to School National Partnership:

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>

National Center for Safe Routes to School:

<http://www.safetroutesinfo.org>

National Center for Safe Routes to School parent survey information:

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-parent-survey>

<http://www.saferoutesdata.org/index.cfm>

National Center for Safe Routes to School travel tally information:

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-student-class-travel-tally>

<http://www.saferoutesdata.org/index.cfm>

Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC):

<http://www.clocc.net/partners/index.html>

ChangeLab Solutions Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook:

<http://changelabsolutions.org/safe-routes/welcome>

ASSESSING EXISTING CONDITIONS

Use the following questions as a guide to gain background information when working to increase the number and the safety of students walking and biking to school.

School population

- How many students attend this school, and what grade levels do they represent?
- Where do most students live with respect to the school?
- Are any students provided busing to this school? If so, why?

Policies and plans

- Are there any school policies associated with walking and biking to school?
- Are students allowed to bicycle to school?
- Are there any streets or locations where students are not allowed to walk or cross the street?
- Are there any activities to encourage students to walk or bike to school?
- Does your school hold a Walk to School Day or Bike to School Day event?

Drop-off and pick-up

- What is the span of time in which children arrive?
- What are the specific arrival procedures, including specific doors and times students enter the building?
- What is the span of time in which children depart?
- What are the specific departure procedures, including specific doors and times students exit?
- Are there any school personnel or parents directly involved with drop-off and/or pick-up procedures? What are their roles?
- Are there any major reconstruction/renovation projects planned in the near future that might change or improve the parking and circulation pattern on the school grounds?

Safety

- Have there been any serious pedestrian injuries or fatalities in recent years?
- Where are crossing guards located? What times are they active? What training do they receive?
- Does the school have a Safe Passages program, or a Parent Patrol along walking routes to school?
- Are there any pedestrian or bicycle safety lessons that are taught to students, either during school or in the community? Who teaches these classes?
- Are there any other additional safety initiatives taking place at the school or in the community?

Implementation

- Use student travel tallies to gain information on how students generally travel to and from school.
- Use parent surveys to gain information on parental perceptions about safety and travel options.
- It may also be useful to discuss transportation issues and concerns with staff and administrators, if they are not already part of the Safe Routes to School team.
- It may also be useful to look at a map, with school boundaries for neighborhood schools, to indicate trouble areas or locations that might need specific attention.

8. Has your child asked you for permission to walk or bike to/from school in the last year? Yes No

9. At what grade would you allow your child to walk or bike to/from school without an adult?
(Select a grade between PK,K,1,2,3...) grade (or) I would not feel comfortable at any grade

+ Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box

10. What of the following issues affected your decision to allow, or not allow, your child to walk or bike to/from school? (Select ALL that apply)

11. Would you probably let your child walk or bike to/from school if this problem were changed or improved? (Select one choice per line, mark box with X)

- Distance..... My child already walks or bikes to/from school
- Convenience of driving..... Yes No Not Sure
- Time..... Yes No Not Sure
- Child's before or after-school activities..... Yes No Not Sure
- Speed of traffic along route..... Yes No Not Sure
- Amount of traffic along route..... Yes No Not Sure
- Adults to walk or bike with..... Yes No Not Sure
- Sidewalks or pathways..... Yes No Not Sure
- Safety of intersections and crossings..... Yes No Not Sure
- Crossing guards..... Yes No Not Sure
- Violence or crime..... Yes No Not Sure
- Weather or climate..... Yes No Not Sure

+ Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box

12. In your opinion, how much does your child's school encourage or discourage walking and biking to/from school?

- Strongly Encourages Encourages Neither Discourages Strongly Discourages

13. How much fun is walking or biking to/from school for your child?

- Very Fun Fun Neutral Boring Very Boring

14. How healthy is walking or biking to/from school for your child?

- Very Healthy Healthy Neutral Unhealthy Very Unhealthy

+ Place a clear 'X' inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box

15. What is the highest grade or year of school you completed?

- Grades 1 through 8 (Elementary) College 1 to 3 years (Some college or technical school)
- Grades 9 through 11 (Some high school) College 4 years or more (College graduate)
- Grade 12 or GED (High school graduate) Prefer not to answer

16. Please provide any additional comments below.

KEEP OUR CHILDREN SAFE!

Safe Driving Information for Parents & Neighbors

The safety of our children is the responsibility of everyone in the community. Do your part to keep children safe as they walk and bike to school and in the community.



Drive slower

Increased vehicle speeds mean less time to stop and increased potential for greater injury. School zones have a 20 MPH speed limit, and the City of Chicago speed limit on all streets is 30 MPH (unless otherwise posted).

Keep an eye out

Community safety is everyone's responsibility. If you are aware of issues in the community that threaten student safety, be they one-time or reoccurring, please do what you can to take steps to address the concern.

Watch for and yield to pedestrians and cyclists

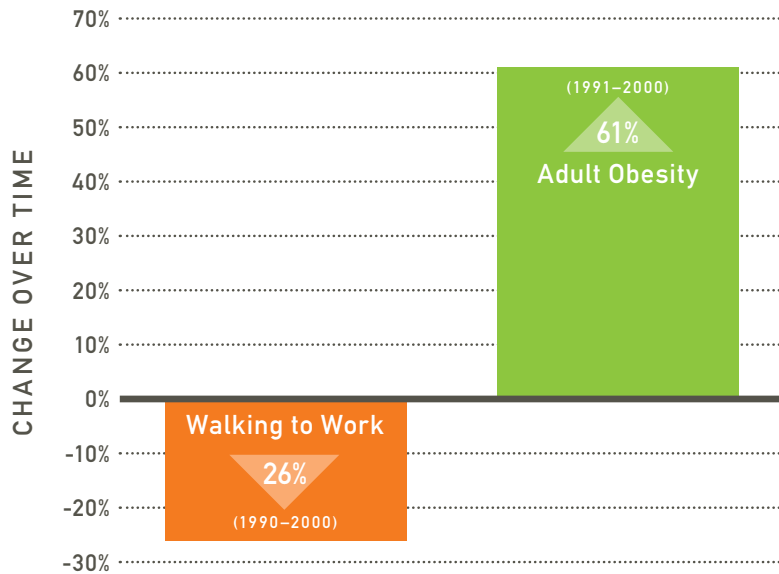
Children (and all pedestrians) have the right of way when crossing a street at crosswalks and intersections. Additionally, be considerate of and provide room to bicyclists riding on streets.

Remove obstacles from sidewalks

Sidewalks provide a safe walking path for children. It is important to make sure they are not obstructed by snow or other items. Also, residents should keep plants trimmed to make sure they do not block sightlines, especially at corners, alleyways, and driveways.

WHY BIKE AND WALK TO SCHOOL?

Overall, children who actively commute to school seem to obtain more daily physical activity than those who ride in a car or bus.



During the 1990's, active commuting to work declined by 26 percent in the U.S. while adult obesity increased by 61 percent.

SOURCE: Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, *Mean Streets 2000*.



A 30-minute round-trip bicycle commute is associated with better mental health in men.

SOURCE: American Public Health Association.
PHOTO: completestreets.org.



Children who walk or bicycle to school are more likely to walk or bicycle to other destinations in their neighborhood than children who are driven to school.

SOURCE: National Center for Safe Routes to School



Women who walk or bike 30 minutes a day have a lower risk of breast cancer.

SOURCE: American Public Health Association.
PHOTO: www.bikepedimages/DanBurden.

National Center for Safe Routes to School. "Safe Routes to School and Health: Understanding the Physical Activity Benefits of Walking and Bicycling to School." <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/benefits-of-walking-and-bicycling>.

APHA: American Public Health Association. "Get the Facts: Active Transportation Benefiting Health, Safety and Equity." Last modified 2010. <http://www.apha.org>.

THE WALKING SCHOOL BUS: A FACT SHEET

WHAT IS A WALKING SCHOOL BUS?

A walking school bus (WSB) is a fun and healthy way for children to safely walk to school in a group, picking up additional kids as they travel along a designated route. Just like a motorized school bus, a WSB has at least one volunteer adult ‘driver’ who leads the bus, making scheduled stops at pre-determined locations. WSB routes are typically no longer than one mile long and run rain or shine.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

Because the benefits are terrific! A WSB program can improve:

Traffic Conditions

Having fewer cars in and around schools and neighborhoods reduces traffic congestion, reduces air pollution and lowers children’s risk of being involved in crashes.

Health

Kids who walk to school get more physical activity and arrive more awake and alert, allowing them to perform better in school. And adult volunteers can benefit by the exercise, too!

Safety

Parents and caregivers feel more secure knowing their children are supervised on their walk to school. Kids also get the opportunity to learn important pedestrian safety lessons.

Independence and Social Skills

Encouraging children to walk to school in a group allows them to make new friends and spend time with old ones. And the opportunity to get to school under their own power builds kids’ sense of independence and self-confidence.

Community Bonding

Both volunteers and neighbors who live along the way are able to get to know one another and work together toward improving life for students and pedestrians in the community. Children also become acquainted with their neighborhood in ways they might not experience from the back seat of a car.

KEY STEPS TO FORMING A WALKING SCHOOL BUS

Establish a Walking School Bus Committee

This may include parents, students, the principal, teachers and community members. A strong committee will maintain WSB organization and support.

Map WSB Routes

Map the neighborhood and identify the routes most commonly used to get to and from school, and which routes seem safest. Parents and caregivers can provide route feedback through a returnable information sheet. Students can do this as a classroom activity. Use this map to help identify where to have the staging areas for walking school buses.

Recruit and Organize WSB Drivers

Sign up adults to meet children at the pre-determined staging areas and walk with them to school. Schedule another group of adults to meet at the school when school ends, and walk the students back to the staging points. WSB drivers should receive an informational packet including the names of students on their route, a map of the route, and times and locations of bus stops. Taking drivers on a ‘test-run’ will help to familiarize them with their route. Each route should have a leader and include back-up plans for substitute drivers. Try to have at least one adult for every 12 children (or more if the children are in kindergarten through second grade). Ask parents to walk with their own children, especially if they’re young.

Promote WSB in the School

Send a letter to all parents and caregivers telling them where to find the staging points. Also provide a neighborhood map showing the routes each walking school bus will follow, so parents will know where their child can jump onto a walking bus.

Promote WSB in the Community

Ask community members to walk or bike with the students. You can reach out to local officials, state representatives or senators, police district commanders, faith community leaders or senior groups. Invite other adults living in the area to be stationed at strategic places along routes to provide extra supervision. Arrange with police to provide additional crossing guards or officers at busy intersections.

Encourage and Celebrate

Having special incentives for students and parents to participate is a great way to keep your WSB program going. Schedule once monthly ‘parade days’ for your WSB, create an award for the grade level with the most walking trips, host a healthy breakfast for WSB riders, or organize a raffle for volunteer WSB drivers. And most importantly—have fun!

WALKING SCHOOL BUS WORKSHEET

For each question, please identify what your programmatic needs are. Be sure to assign each task to someone in your group for follow-up.

Planning considerations

- What is your goal for the walking school bus program?
- How much staff time is available to coordinate the program?
- How much interest is there amongst students and parents at this point in time?
- Who will be responsible for coordinating walking school buses?
- Will volunteers be used? If yes, how many volunteers are available? What organizations around the community can help you find volunteers?
- Who will be responsible for training volunteers? Does the school/district have requirements for screening volunteers?
- What resources are available (if any) to fund the program for items such as recruiting material, safety materials and incentives for students and volunteers? If funding is needed, what funding sources can be sought out to help?

Walking school bus logistics

- How will parents be informed of the walking school bus program? How will interest be generated in the program? Brainstorm ideas for generating parents' interest in the program.
- What rules would you like students to follow on the walking school bus? How will students be notified of the rules of the walking school bus program? Can students participate in the development of rules?
- What is the protocol for a missing walking school bus leader?
- What are the rules for a child who wants to join a walking school bus that does not have permission?
- What is the procedure for a child who is sick or injured along the route?
- What circumstances (cold weather, rain, thunderstorms, etc) would cause you to cancel your walking school bus? What is the process for cancelling?

Educating students

- Where and when will student pedestrian safety education take place?
- How will parents be informed about pedestrian safety training?

Route planning

- Where do students who are likely to participate in the program live?
- Are sidewalks available along the route?
- Where are the safest places to cross?
- Are there potential problems along the route (stray dogs, illegal behavior, poor lighting, etc?)



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