

Safe Routes to School

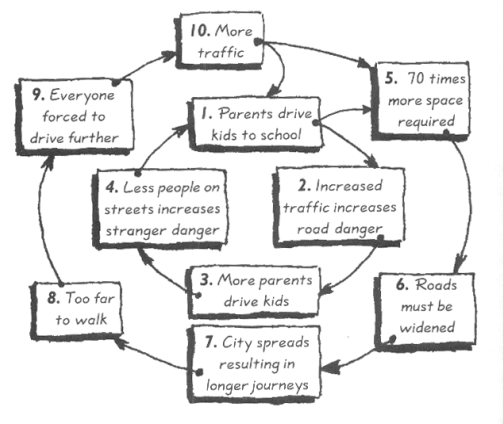
What is Safe Routes?

Safe Routes to School is both a planning and educational program designed to make the neighborhoods around schools safer for walking and cycling. This goal is accomplished in two ways: First by promoting awareness of hazards on local roads, and second by making improvements to roadways and sidewalks through the use of: traffic calming elements, signage and roadway marking improvements, and the installation or improvement of sidewalks and crosswalks.

Why Safe Routes?

Numerous Pedestrians Are Killed Each Year by Automobiles

- Approximately 59 pedestrians die every year in Connecticut after being hit by cars.
- For every pedestrian who is killed by an automobile, more than 20 are injured, meaning that approximately 1,200 pedestrians are injured by automobiles each year in Connecticut.



Driving to school increases pollution

- Auto emissions are the largest source of air pollution in Connecticut (55%).
- More than 75% of all Connecticut residents live in areas with unhealthy levels of air pollution.
- Children's respiratory systems are especially at risk.

Children are less active and losing their independence

- One out of three children report inadequate levels of physical activity (2 hours or less per week).
- One in six children are now overweight, a 300% percent increase from 1970.
- Children are less familiar with their neighborhoods, less skilled in navigating through traffic and therefore more dependant upon parents for transportation.
- While crossing guards and school buses assist children in safely getting home, most students who participate in after-school programs must get home without these resources.

Safe Routes = Safe Neighborhoods

- Safe Routes allow all residents of a neighborhood to safely walk or ride. Residents who walk in their neighborhoods are more likely to know their neighbors. Neighborhoods where people know one another are safer places for children to walk, ride, and play.

Is anyone else doing Safe Routes?

Safe Routes to School in Connecticut has been inspired by several other successful models in other states and other countries. These include programs in California, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Texas, Washington, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia.



Have there been any successes here in Connecticut?

Francisco Gomes has worked with several communities in Connecticut including: Greenwich, Manchester, New Britain, Norwich, and Stamford. In each community, significant measures were taken to improve the roads and sidewalks around schools. These changes took effect within one to two years of the Safe Routes plan, with some improvements being made as soon as issues were identified during the Safe Routes process.

Is there Federal funding?

In 2004 the US Senate authorized Senate bill 1072 called "SAFETEA" which is the next generation of ISTEA federal transportation funding. The proposed senate bill includes a Safe Routes provision that would provide \$250 million per year for Safe Routes to School projects. Of this amount, Connecticut would receive approximately \$670,000 per year for six years. The SAFETEA legislation has yet to be signed into law.

***Congressman James Oberstar joins us to promote new
funding for Safe Routes to Schools***
Minneapolis Star Tribune

Congressman James Oberstar visited St. Mark's school in St. Paul to kick off bike/walk to school week on October 6. He was in town to support our Safe Routes program and to promote the Pedestrian and Cyclist Equity (PACE) Act. PACE authorizes \$250 million a year in community grants for Safe Routes to School programs. The grants will allow local governments to build or improve sidewalks, bike paths and other infrastructure to help children walk or ride to school safely. The funds can also be used for non-infrastructure expenses, such as hiring crossing guards or to fund traffic safety programs.

How does Safe Routes work?

A community initiates the Safe Routes process by identifying a potential funding source for the Safe Routes Plan. This funding typically comes from school or public works budgets and/or private donations. Once financing is in place, the Safe Routes planning process is initiated.

Round Table Meeting (Week 1)

A round table meeting is held with key stakeholders. Participants include the school principal and local representatives from:

- PTA/PTO
- Public Safety
- Public Works
- Planning/Engineering

The discussion is an introduction to the Safe Routes process. In this meeting, key issues within the Safe Routes area are briefly identified and discussed. Past efforts to resolve problems are discussed. Data acquisition is coordinated (Maps, GIS and CAD data, relevant reports, studies, traffic/accident data)

Preliminary Survey (Week 1-4)

Walking survey and site photo log is compiled. Features documented include:




- Sidewalk location/condition
- Marked crosswalks
- School and pedestrian signage
- On-site circulation at school
- Location of signalized and stop controlled intersections
- Location of pedestrian actuated signals
- Roadway characteristics, ie: lane striping, curb returns, pavement and shoulder width.
- Existing traffic calming elements
- General observations regarding driver and pedestrian behavior

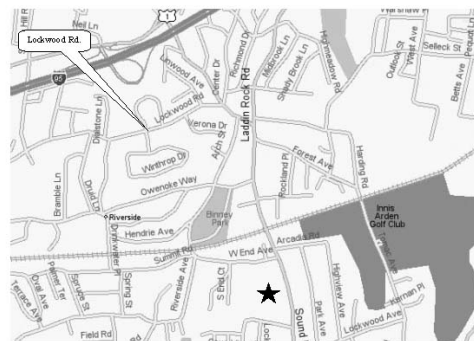
Walk to School Survey (Week 4-6)

A walk to school day is conducted in order to identify critical walking routes and problem areas within the study area. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to school.

- School Staff and PTA/PTO coordinate the event with instruction from Francisco Gomes.
- Parents and children are instructed to map their route to school and identify walking hazards.

Student Walking Survey

 Draw a line that marks the route you would take to get to school.
 Circle and number area(s) considered dangerous for walking.
 Write an explanation of the dangerous area in the space below, next to the number it corresponds to, for example: "cars speeding," or "no crosswalk."



1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____

The Workshop (Week 6-8)

A workshop is conducted upon the completion of the preliminary survey and walk to school surveys. Initial findings are presented and feedback is received and incorporated into the Safe Routes plan. Participants of the workshop include but are not limited to: school and municipal officials, the general public, teachers, parents, and local media.

The workshop includes:

- An introduction of the Safe Routes to School Program
- Pedestrian Safety Toolbox Presentation
- Preliminary Findings of walking survey and walk to school surveys are presented.
- Feedback is received from attendees.

Plan Production (Weeks 8-12)

The final plan includes information gathered from Round Table Discussion, Preliminary Survey, Walk to School Surveys, and The Safe Routes Workshop. The final plan contains:

- Summary of Walk to School Survey Responses
- Analysis of Existing Conditions including maps of:
 - Study area
 - Walking routes of children
 - Arterial, collector, and high volume local streets and signalization
 - Existing sidewalks and crosswalks
 - Existing pedestrian signage
 - Summary and illustrations of:
 - Typical problems throughout focus area
 - School Zone problems and recommendations
 - Location specific problems
 - Cost estimate of improvements and recommended phasing of improvements
 - Pedestrian Safety Toolbox including design specifications

*Final Presentation (Week 12-14)*

The final presentation includes a summary of the existing conditions, problems, recommendations, phasing, and cost estimates. Like the workshop, the final presentation is open to the public. Comments are received and incorporated into the final plan.

Plan Delivery (Week 14-16)

A final copy of the plan is provided to key stakeholders including the school, town, and community liaison. The plan is provided in both hard copy and digital forms. Submission of the plan concludes the planning process.

Implementation

The Safe Routes plan is used by the municipality to guide maintenance and construction programs and budgets within the Safe Routes study area. The Safe Routes Plan is also used by the municipality in the acquisition of grant funding for the implementation of the Safe Routes plan.