Non-Motorized Transportation Plan

WSDOT Design Standards

Appendix C

JULY 2007

Prepared by: The Transpo Group
School Administrator’s Guide to
School Walk Routes and
Student Pedestrian Safety
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Acknowledgments

The School Administrator’s Guide to School Walk Routes was developed with the support of the Committee on School Walk Routes comprised of representatives from local, county, and state agencies committed to student pedestrian safety. It is their sincere hope that this guidebook will prove a useful tool for school administrators throughout the state.

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This Guidebook (1) explains the laws and liabilities associated with school walk routes; (2) provides an background on student pedestrian safety education; (3) identifies potential partnerships and responsibilities for improving school pedestrian safety; (4) suggests processes for developing and maintaining school walk routes; (5) presents guidelines for identifying when pedestrian enhancements should be considered; and (6) recommends procedures school administrators can use to work with their local public works agencies to implement needed improvements.

This Guidebook does not address school siting, public transit, or school bus safety considerations. Site master planning, transit, and school bus route planning efforts are well documented in other references. In addition, the procedures and recommendations in this guidebook may not be applicable to bicycle transportation.

This Guidebook is not intended as a comprehensive reference for all aspects of student pedestrian safety, developing school walk routes, or improving school trip safety. While it discusses student pedestrian safety education, it is not a curriculum. It highlights and briefly discusses key steps in the walk route development process and provides guidelines for decision-making wherever possible. However, it cannot replace professional judgement, nor can it fully educate school administrators or other professionals on all aspects of this subject. Therefore, professional traffic engineers should be consulted as appropriate throughout the process.
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Chapter One Overview

The safety, health, and well being of children are a major concern of parents, schools, public works, public health, and law enforcement agencies. Walking to school is beneficial to the health and well being of our children. Poor health outcomes related to a lack of physical activity, such as walking, are becoming a serious problem in Washington State and across the nation. The number of overweight children is on the rise. The 1999 Washington Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 7.4% of Washington adolescents in grades nine through 12 were overweight. Today, many of these overweight children are being diagnosed with type II diabetes and high blood pressure—illness previously thought of as “adult diseases.” In addition, physical activity in combination with adequate nutrition has been positively linked with increased academic achievement and a reduction in behavior problems at school. It is the intent of this document, School Administrator’s Guide to School Walk Routes and Student Pedestrian Safety, to provide resources to help develop, maintain, and improve school walk routes that will encourage the children of Washington State to be safe, healthy, and productive learners.

What is a School Walk Route Plan?

A school walk route plan recommends a walking route to school based on considerations of traffic patterns and existing traffic controls such as cross walks, traffic lights, or school safety patrol posts. The chosen route should seek to limit the number of school zone crossings in a way that encourages students to cross streets in groups, allowing only one

School walk routes seeks to form children into groups. This makes them more visible to drivers and helps reduce traffic conflicts when they cross the street together.
entrance-exit from each block to and from school. A walk route should cover a one-mile radius from the school. In addition, it should seek those routes that provide the greatest physical separation between walking children and traffic, expose children to the lowest speeds and volumes of moving vehicles, and have the fewest number of road or rail crossings.

Once a school walk route plan is developed and distributed to all students and their parents, plans must be routinely updated as conditions change. When safety concerns arise, a walk route plan can help document problems and aid in seeking solutions.

This document addresses each of the functions involved in school walk routes. It is intended to provide background, guidelines, and a systematic approach to this subject. It is written for individuals who are directly responsible for preparing, evaluating, and improving school walk route plans and overseeing student pedestrian safety.

**What are the legal requirements for school walk routes?**

School districts are required by Washington State regulations to have suggested walk route plans for every elementary school where children walk to school. The plan must cover a one-mile radius from the school and the suggested route to school map must be distributed to all elementary school students and their parents.

In addition, the state also regulates school zone safety issues, crosswalks, and pedestrian actions. The state regulates local government’s specific responsibilities to ensure that new development provides adequate facilities for school pedestrian safety, ensuring that new subdivisions and short plats provide safe walking conditions for students who walk to and from school.


**What are the elements of a good student pedestrian safety educational program?**

Pedestrian safety education should be a district priority for all elementary students. A program is needed that recognizes childhood developmental
limitations and how they affect a child’s skill as a pedestrian. Chapter Three, “Student Pedestrian Safety Educational Programs,” provides an overview of childhood development issues to consider when choosing pedestrian safety educational programs and when designing walk routes. It also presents elements of a good student pedestrian safety program.

Support for student pedestrian safety programs abounds in our communities and our state. Appendix A, “Ideas and Resources for Student Pedestrian Safety,” lists organizations schools can turn to for help.

Who is responsible for developing school walk routes?

In Washington State, school districts are responsible for developing a walking route for each elementary school in their district where children walk to and from school. Walk routes are often developed as part of a comprehensive student pedestrian safety plan and are best addressed by building community partnerships between school administrators and local public works agencies, local law enforcement agencies, legislative representatives, school-parent organizations, parents, and students. Working collaboratively with community partners ensures that any pedestrian safety concern can be addressed by a variety of solutions.

Chapter Four, “The Partnership Approach to Student Pedestrian Safety,” is designed to help school districts identify community partners. It outlines responsibilities and suggests ways to work together.

How is a school walk route developed?

Once responsibility for developing walk routes has been assigned, there is a step-by-step process that can guide walk route development. A walk route plan starts with a detailed base map defining a one mile radius of the attendance areas near each school. Next, existing walking conditions and traffic characteristics are inventoried. Then a walking route is designed
keeping in mind guidelines designed to provide the greatest physical separation between walking children and traffic, expose children to the lowest speeds and volumes of moving vehicles, and have the fewest number of road or rail crossings. Since the objective is to minimize roadside and roadway crossing conflicts to the extent practical, this may mean in some cases that a child may need to walk a little farther in order to follow the planned school walk route. Once the best possible route has been determined, a walk route map—one that is easily understood and conveys the essential information of the walk route—is developed and distributed to parents and students. Evaluating the route is an essential final step in the process. Once developed, walk routes need to be updated and distributed each year.

The steps for developing a walk route and the guidelines for choosing the best route are discussed in Chapter Five, “Ten Steps for Developing and Maintaining School Walk Routes.”

How are potential pedestrian safety concerns identified?

No school walk route is ever completely free from pedestrian safety concerns. However, recognizing and evaluating a concern is the first step in solving it. While no universal definition can be applied to determine if a walk route is “safe,” a variety of factors can be examined to gain an overall picture of the route’s walkability.

Chapter Six, “Identifying Pedestrian Safety Concerns,” contains a walking condition evaluation form. By rating conditions on a sliding scale, school administrators will have a starting point for working with traffic engineers and other community partners to categorize and prioritize safety concerns along the walk routes. Recognizing and evaluating a concern is the first step in solving it.
What is the process for improving safety on the school walk route?

By using the three Es—education, enforcement, and engineering tools—many walk route safety concerns can be successfully addressed. School administrators can work with community partners to discuss concerns, identify possible solutions, and reach consensus on project priority.

Chapter Seven, “Implementing Improvements to School Walk Routes,” provides a plan to use a combination of all three E’s to improve driving behaviors along the walk route, and gives an example of how the three Es were successfully applied to Bellevue’s School Crosswalk Enhancement Project. It also describes the five steps school administrators can take to work with their community partners to develop and implement pedestrian improvements.

Isn’t it easier just to bus all the students?

In the past, the state has spent millions of education dollars to fund bus transportation for students whose walk routes had “hazardous walking conditions” as identified under specific criteria. In 1996, the State Legislature change the allocation formula for student transportation funding, basing it on the number of students in kindergarten through fifth grade living within a one-mile radius of the school. These funds allocated to school districts can be used for improvements such as warning signs, sidewalks, overpasses, adult crossing guards, and bus transportation.

Indeed, some schools do elect to bus the entire student population, and sometimes walk route conditions call for this. However, there are many benefits to identifying and funding school walk route safety improvements:

- Overtime, such improvements can save tax dollars.

- Improvements provide a safer environment for the public—24 hours a day, not just before and after school.

- Improvements that allow children to walk to school instead of riding a bus or being driven, also allow students to receive some daily exercise that can be beneficial to the overall health of these children.

- By promoting walking to school though the development of a good student pedestrian safety program, you’re promoting an activity that is fun, healthy, non-polluting, friendly, educational, and economical—Thanks for your efforts!
Chapter Two
Laws and Liabilities Associated with Student Pedestrian Safety and School Walk Routes

There are many laws and regulations that pertain to student pedestrian safety, in general, and school walk routes, in particular. Laws covering school safety patrols, student transportation funding, pedestrians on the roadway, and the ways that local governments regulate new developments, all can affect school walk routes. This chapter discusses the laws and regulations.

A full text of these laws can be found on the Office of the Code Reviser, Statute Law Committee web site at http://slc.leg.wa.gov/ using the referenced title, chapter, and section numbers that are cited in the descriptions below.

School Patrols and School Walk Routes

The major source of code regarding student pedestrian safety is contained in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 46.61.385, “School Patrol.” This authorizes school districts to set up both student and adult safety patrols, and generally discusses their duties and the duty of drivers to stop for patrols. Taken with the associated regulations, this law encourages the use of school safety patrols to help students safely cross roadways adjacent to the school and at other crossings as identified in the suggested school walk route plans.

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 392-151, Traffic Safety – School Safety Patrols, provides the details of organizing and training safety patrols, and requires school districts to develop school walk routes for each elementary school. The specific regulation is found in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), 392-151-025, “Route Plans,” as listed below.

Safety Patrol programs and school walk routes need to be coordinated. Patrol posts at key locations along the route can improve safety for students who walk.
WAC 392-151-025 Route Plans.
Suggested route plans shall be developed for each elementary school that has students who walk to and from school. It shall recommend school routes based on considerations of traffic patterns, existing traffic controls, and other crossing protection aids such as school patrols. These route plans shall limit the number of school crossings so that students move through the crossings in groups, allowing only one entrance-exit from each block to and from school. The route to school plan shall be distributed to all students with instructions that it be taken home and discussed with the parents.

The above regulation mandates the preparation of “suggested route plans” and the distribution of a recommended school route to all elementary school students. Although this regulation may raise questions concerning responsibility for preparing the plans or the potential liability of the school district, the intent of the WAC is to see that students and their parents have the recommended route identified for them, which can provide the following benefits:

- Because a route plan limits the number of road crossing, the plan will encourage students to cross in groups, providing greater safety and limiting the number of crossing guards or traffic signals needed.

- Developing a recommended route to school allows the school to suggest a route that seeks the greatest physical separation between walking children and traffic, and exposes the children to the lowest speeds and volumes of traffic—considerations that children may not make if left to choose their own route to school.

- The process of developing and maintaining school walk routes allows a community to identify and address any pedestrian safety concerns in an organized manner.

Responsibilities and Partnerships
The issue of responsibility for developing school walk route plans is not directly addressed by state law, except as it pertains to school safety patrols. WAS 392-151-015, “Administration and Support,” places the superintendent or chief administrative officer of the school district in the role of being ultimately responsible for determining policy and operations for the
school patrol. Since placement of school patrol posts and school walk routes are closely intertwined, it would follow that the superintendent’s school patrol policy would include policies regarding school walk routes. The same regulation encourages principals to oversee the individual school’s plan and school administrators, local traffic control agencies, teachers, parents, and students to work together. The text of WAC 392-151-015 is below:

**WAC 392-151-015 Administration and Support.**
The superintendent or chief administrative officer of the school district shall assume the leadership and be ultimately responsible for determining school patrol policy and operations. The principal of each school shall provide leadership in developing good relationships among teachers, student body, and members of the school patrol in matters of selecting, instructing, and giving immediate supervision to school patrol members and carrying out administrative details. Administration of the actual operation of a school patrol may be delegated to a school employee or a safety committee. The approval, understanding, support, and encouragement of school administrators, local traffic control agencies, teachers, parents, and students are essential in providing an effective school safety patrol.

The state regulations recommend forming a Safety Advisory Committee to aid districts in developing school safety patrol policies and walk routes. It suggests that such a committee include various community partners. Working collaboratively to address a comprehensive student pedestrian program is so important, that Chapter Three, “Partnerships and Responsibilities for School Walk Routes,” is dedicated to this issue. The regulation is listed below:

**WAC 392-151-017 Safety Advisory Committee--Selection.**
Selection of a safety advisory committee is important in the development and support of school patrol policy and in the development of safe route to school plans. Members may be selected from the following areas:

1. School administration;
2. Law enforcement;
3. Traffic engineering; and
4. School-parent organization.
Reducing Liability

The question of liability is only addressed in state regulations in regard to the safety patrol program in general, with no specific reference to walk routes. WAC 392-151-020, “Liability” lists “suggested procedures [that] may assist schools and employees or agents reduce the potential liability in connection with operations of a school patrol…” The regulation addresses liability as a result of negligence, or failure to take reasonable precautions to safeguard students in the custody of the school. The procedures suggested to reduce liability in connection with the school patrol also can be applied to reducing liability in connection with walk routes—mainly by establishing policy for walk route development and maintenance, and by conducting periodic reviews of the suggested walk routes.

The guidelines presented in this Guidebook, while not having the force of a regulation, provide suggested procedures which, if properly followed, would result in reasonable rules, regulations, and policies governing school walk routes.

Local Governments Responsibilities for School Pedestrian Safety

The Washington State Legislature has given local governments specific responsibilities to ensure that new construction and development provides adequate facilities for school pedestrian’s safety. Specifically, RCW 58.17.060, “Short plats and short subdivisions,” requires local jurisdictions to adopt regulations that ensure that new subdivisions and short plats are served by adequate facilities that assure safe walking conditions for students who walk to and from school. Specifically, it requires that a proposed subdivision cannot be approved unless “appropriate provisions are made for…sidewalks and other planning features that assure safe walking conditions for students who only walk to and from school.”

Student Transportation Services

Coordinating walk routes and student bus routes is beneficial in planning efforts. Some school districts elect to some bus students living within a one-mile radius of the school as a way to avoid a hazardous walking condition, such as the need for children to cross multiple lanes of fast moving traffic at an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing. Before 1996, additional student transportation funding could be given to schools who could prove “hazardous walking conditions” existed along their walk routes, allowing for busing of these students. However, in 1996, the State Legislature changed the alloc-
tion formula for this additional student transportation funding. Now, all schools receive a portion of funding based on the number of kindergarten through fifth grade students living within a one-mile radius of the school. This additional funding can be spent by the district for additional buses, for crossing guards, or as matching funds for local and state transportation projects intended to improve pedestrian safety. These transportation allocation rules are contained in RCW 28A.160.150-160, “Student Transportation Allocation.”

It is worth noting that when a “hazardous” walking conditions occurs close to the school, many dollars are spent in busing those students who would normally live close enough to school to walk. Therefore, in the long run, correcting walking conditions close to a school can result in a cost savings, as well as providing a good exercise for children who can then walk.

**Pedestrian Laws**

Before the task of planning a walking route, it is a good idea for planners to review the various pedestrian laws. These include rules regarding how pedestrian should travel along roadways, how pedestrians and vehicles interact at crosswalks, and other situations. Washington State’s pedestrian laws are summarized below, each followed by it’s RCW citation:

- Pedestrians must obey traffic-control signals and traffic control devises unless otherwise directed by a traffic or police officer (RCW 46.61.050).

- Drivers and bicyclists must yield to pedestrians on sidewalks and in crosswalks (RCW 46.61.261).

- Pedestrians must use sidewalks when they are available. If sidewalks are not available, pedestrians must walk on the left side of the roadway or its shoulder facing traffic (RCW 46.61.250).

- No pedestrian or bicycle shall suddenly leave a curb and move into traffic so that the driver cannot stop (RCW 46.61.235).

- Every driver of a vehicle shall exercise due care to avoid colliding with any pedestrian upon any roadway and shall give warning by sounding the horn when necessary (RCW 46.61.245).

- Every pedestrian crossing a roadway at any point other than within a
marked crosswalk or within an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection shall yield the right of way to all vehicles (RCW 46.61.240).

- Vehicles stall stop at intersections to allow pedestrians and bicycles to cross the road within a marked or unmarked crosswalk (RCW 46.61.235). See Figure 1, Washington's Crosswalk Law, for explanation.

**School Zone Speeding Laws**

It's a matter of life or death. A child hit by a vehicle has an eighty percent chance of surviving the collision if the vehicle was traveling slower than 20 m.p.h. However, if the vehicle was traveling faster than 20 m.p.h., a child has an eighty percent chance of dying.

With this in mind, speeding traffic in the school zone is a major concern. Recognizing this, the Washington State Legislature doubled the fine for speeding in school zones. A school or playground zone is defined as including 300 feet on each side of a properly marked crossing, and Washington laws require driver's to slow down to 20 m.p.h. when passing through a marked school zone. Fifty percent of the money collected from violators is used by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to fund projects in local communities to improve school zone safety.

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1. **Vehicle must stop if a pedestrian is in their half of the roadway.**

2. **Vehicles must stop if a pedestrian is within one lane of their half of the roadway.**

3. **Once the pedestrian is beyond one lane of their half of the roadway, the vehicles may go.**
Chapter Three
Elements of Student Pedestrian Safety Education

For those tasked with developing and maintaining school walk routes, a basic understanding of childhood development as it relates to their pedestrian skills is necessary. A student pedestrian safety educational program that recognizes childhood limitations and seeks to teach young students safe and responsible pedestrian behaviors will go a long way towards improving safety along a school walk route. This chapter provides an overview of childhood developmental limitations and a description of the elements that would constitute a good pedestrian safety educational program. For more information, please see Appendix A, “Ideas and Resources for Student Pedestrian Safety.”

Understanding Childhood Pedestrian Behaviors

Young children see and hear differently than adults. At five or six years old, children do not have the developmental skill to safety and consistently cope with traffic. This puts children at increased risk for pedestrian injuries. The following facts illustrate what school walk route planners should consider about childhood behaviors:

• A six-year-old’s eye level is about 36 inches above the ground. Their smaller size makes them difficult for drivers to see, especially if

Did You Know?

• In Washington State from 1984 to 2002, the child traffic death rate, including pedestrian killed in traffic collisions, has decreased from 5.5 deaths per 100,000 to 2.5 deaths per 100,000 children ages 0-14. Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

• Nationwide in 1999-2000, while unintentional injuries was the leading cause of injury for children ages 5-9, pedestrian incidents accounted for only a small percentage (2.9 percent) of those injuries; well behind motor vehicle collisions (52 percent), drowning (13 percent), fire/burns (12 percent), and suffocation (3.5 percent). Source: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

• According to the Center for Disease Control’s Injury Fact Book 2001-2002, in the United States in 1999, nearly 5,000 pedestrians died from traffic-related injuries and another 85,000 sustained nonfatal injuries. Children 15 and younger accounted for 12 percent of all pedestrian fatalities and 32 percent of all nonfatal pedestrian injuries.
they are standing between parked cars on the side of the road.

- Young children have two-thirds of the peripheral vision that adults have and they have difficulty determining the source of a sound.

- Children are still learning to judge distances and speeds. When a car is coming towards them, they cannot judge accurately how fast it is traveling or how long it will take to cover the distance. They can easily misjudge whether it is safe to cross a street.

- Children focus on one thing at a time. If they are playing with friends or riding bikes it is unlikely that they are aware of traffic.

- Children are spontaneous and have trouble stopping an action once started. Children younger than third grade often cannot focus on more than one thing at a time. They have short attention spans and are impulsive and inherently curious.

- Parents can over-estimate their children’s ability to cross the street. Many elementary school-aged children don’t understand traffic signals and don’t know how to anticipate drivers’ actions. Children under six rarely understand the true nature of a dangerous situation.

- Children also tend to overestimate their abilities, thinking that they can run across a street before the flashing light changes or a car approaches. Their thinking is a combination of reality and fantasy, knowledge and miscomprehension.

- Drivers and child pedestrians each assume (incorrectly) that the other will yield the right-of-way.
Elements of a Good Student Pedestrian Safety Education Program

Pedestrian safety education should be a district priority for all elementary students with a strong curriculum for children in kindergarten through third grades and as review program for children in fourth through sixth grades. In schools that allow fifth and sixth grade students to serve as safety patrol members, the training provides a good review of pedestrian safety rules.

Strong, well-designed student pedestrian safety education programs should equip youngsters for independence by helping them create a “safety consciousness” that effectively guides their behaviors throughout many real life traffic situations. Programs should teach children to:

- Identify hazardous situations,
- Assess problems accurately,
- Calculate the risks involved, and
- Respond in an efficient and safe manner.

Children should learn and practice good habits. They should also be prepared to respond to a dynamic situation, such as what to do if a car comes down the street after they’ve already started to cross or if the signal changes while they are in the crosswalk.

Ten Pedestrian Rules to Teach Children: According to the National Safe Kids Campaign, children should know and practice the following ten pedestrian safety rules:

- Do not cross the street alone if you’re younger than 10 years old.
- Stop at the curb before crossing the street.
- Walk, don’t run, across the street.
- Cross at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks whenever possible.
- Look left, right and left again before crossing.
- Walk facing traffic.
- Make sure drivers see you before crossing in front of them.
- Do not play in driveways, streets, parking lots, or unfenced yards by the street.
- Wear white clothing or reflectors when walking at night.
- Cross at least 10 feet in front of a school bus.
Cover In Depth Issues: In addition to the basic safety rules, a good pedestrian safety educational program will teach children to handle an array of possible situations and provide in depth study of proper pedestrian behaviors, such as:

- Always walk on sidewalks, when possible. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing oncoming traffic and stay as far to the left as possible.

- Watch for vehicles turning into or backing out of parking spaces or driveways.

- When stopped at the curb, if a vehicle or other object is blocking the view of oncoming traffic, children should stop at the outside edge of that object before crossing at a crosswalk.

- Never enter the crosswalk from between parked cars or from behind bushes, or dart out into the street. (“Darting out” accounts for more than half of all childhood pedestrian injuries.)

- Make sure that all vehicles have stopped before crossing the street.

- Attempt to make eye contact with drivers of stopped or turning vehicles, but do not assume that the drivers can see them.

- Teach children the meaning of all traffic signs and markers such as pedestrian crossing signals and crosswalks.

- Teach children how to cross at corners when crosswalks are not marked.

- Teach children to cross directly, never diagonally.

Teach children to watch for cars backing out of driveways.
• Teach children to never enter the crosswalk when the “don’t walk” signal is flashing.

• Tell children to be extra careful in rain or snow. Allow extra time and distance for vehicles to stop.

The most effective programs progress from supervision of the child by others to the development of individual responsibility for their safety. Adults, both parents and teachers, must initially furnish a safe environment for young walkers, while simultaneously providing varied, real-life experiences until the young pedestrian can assume responsibility for themselves in a mature and safe manner. At the school level, a continuing program of education on pedestrian safety can establish good walking behaviors that can last a lifetime.

In many districts, pedestrian safety occurs as part of the injury prevention component of the adopted health curriculum. Skills taught for safe walking can be a separate unit or may be included with bus safety or covered during personal safety units.

Support for Student Pedestrian Safety Programs

Extensive resources are available from the community to assist educators and parents establish pedestrian safety programs in their school districts or in their schools, if none currently exits.

Local support for a program can come from parent-teacher organizations, school district health programs, local law enforcement agencies, city public works departments, county traffic departments, emergency medical services, local hospitals, public health officers, and other local, non-profit organizations with a focus on prevention.

State and regional resources are also available. The Washington State Department of Transportation, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program; Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical and Trauma Prevention are just some examples of state agencies with a wealth of information, support, workbooks, and incentive rewards such as reflective bands or pencils that are available at little to no cost.

Appendix A, “Ideas and Resources for Student Pedestrian Safety,” contains a complete listing state, regional and national resources, as well as suggestions on where to find help in your local community.
Chapter Four
The Partnership Approach to Student Pedestrian Safety

Developing and maintaining school walk route maps is only one part of the whole student pedestrian safety process. Walk routes should be part of the whole pedestrian safety plan and are most effective when coordinated with school safety patrols, student pedestrian safety education, parents who practice safe driving habits, law enforcement efforts, best engineering practices, and support of the public and elected officials.

While the following chapters will specifically address school walk routes, this chapter provides an overview to the partnership approach to student pedestrian safety. It discusses the roles and the responsibilities for student pedestrian safety, and suggests possible ways to work together.

Partners and Responsibilities

Pedestrian safety improvements for school walk routes will benefit the entire community, not just school children. The same routes that children take to school are used evenings and weekends by other neighborhood children and by adults to get to school play fields, auditoriums, and community facilities. Improving these walk routes with added sidewalks, widened shoulders, or other improvements creates a safer environment for all pedestrians—24 hours a day.

Another benefit to building community partnerships is that by doing so, school districts invite varied perspectives to solving student pedestrian safety concerns. For example, when developing a walk route, designers will choose a particular crossing for students to use based on site distances, existing crossing controls, traffic
speeds, and the like. However, in many school zones, problems arise when cars consistently park along the side of a road too close to a crosswalk. A car parked this way blocks children’s view of oncoming traffic and presents a concern. A good student pedestrian safety education program may teach children to lean forward and peek out before walking all the way into the crosswalk, but this is hardly a long-term solution! A parent group may determine that parents who drop off or pick up children from school are the most likely to park their cars this way and they may launch a parent education campaign reminding parents to park further away from the crosswalk, or they could develop flyers to place on the windshields of the offending car asking them to park in a different location. The school principal could develop drop off and pick up areas or times to alleviate the congestion that often encourages such driver behaviors. A traffic engineer may suggest creating a no parking zone with signs or paint. If those measures are already in place, a law enforcement officer could ticket drivers parking in “no parking” zones. Engineering improvements, such as a curb extension could provide a physical barrier giving students the space they need around a crosswalk, but finding the budget for physical engineering improvements will require working with city, county, or state traffic engineers, as well as the elected officials who oversee the budgets.

A comprehensive student pedestrian safety plan is best addressed by building community partnerships between school administrators and local public works agencies, local law enforcement agencies, legislative representatives, school-parent organizations, parents, and students. Working collaboratively with community partners ensures that any pedestrian safety concern can be addressed by a variety of solutions.

This section identifies community partners and discusses their role in student pedestrian safety. Community partners include:

- school districts,
- schools,
- local governmental jurisdictions,
- local law enforcement agencies,
- parents/guardians,
- drivers,
- students, and
- other governmental agencies and non-profit organizations.
School Districts

School Districts are responsible for:

- siting and developing school facilities that foster good walking conditions,
- establishing student pedestrian safety policies, and
- fostering community partnerships that pool knowledge and resources to provide a comprehensive approach to student pedestrian safety.

School Facilities: School districts have a great opportunity to influence pedestrian safety when they establish a new school. While evaluating potential site for new school, preference should be given to sites which are easily connected to the existing pedestrian system. During construction, districts should include sidewalks, wide paved shoulders, or even, separated pedestrian pathways along all streets which bound the school site. By working with local public works agencies during the site design process, districts and traffic engineers can mutually identify major school pedestrian crossing and implement the most ideal crossing treatments, including signing and striping for crosswalks and the use of adult and student crossing guards at key locations. For more recommendations on new school considerations, please see Appendix B, “Practical Tips for Opening a New School.”

School districts can influence pedestrian safety at existing school sites, as well. Districts can encourage school administrators to consider innovative approaches to pedestrian safety such as separating bus traffic from parent vehicles, or developing parking lot traffic flow patterns. Districts can encourage individual schools to call upon the services of local law enforcement officers or local traffic engineers when pedestrian safety concerns occur. When needs arise, school districts can help evaluate, prioritize, and seek funding for needed engineering improvements along school walk routes.