



Safe Routes to School Idea Book

Contents

Introduction	2
Contact Us	2
Active Travel Programs.....	3
School Pool Carpool Program	3
Buddy-up Program	3
Stop and Walk Program (Drive to 5, Park and Stride, Walk-a-Block)	3
Attendance Radar	3
Active Education	4
Traffic gardens	4
Walking Field Trip.....	4
Bike rodeos.....	4
Family Biking and Transit Workshops.....	4
Event Ideas.....	5
Active Routes Treasure Hunt	5
Assemblies and Speakers.....	5
Chalk and Walk	5
Student/Parent Training Day.....	5
Kidical Mass.....	5
Walking Tours	5
Walk, Bike, and Transit Field Trips.....	6
Book Clubs.....	6
Monthly or Weekly Walk & Roll Days.....	6
Activities and Encouragement.....	7
Transportation Safety Storytime (Safe Routes Library).....	7
Punch Cards & Mileage Clubs	7
Public Art and Placemaking	7
Art Contests	7
Essay Contests	7
Student Clubs.....	8
Exhibit Development	8
Walking Storybook	8
Postcards from the Future	8
Urban Planning and Engineering Games	9
Board and Poster Engagement.....	10
Anti-Idling Campaigns	10
Neighborhood Exploration Games.....	10
Mapping, Route Planning & Wayfinding.....	11
Wayfinding Activities	11
Student Travel Plans.....	11
Safe Routes Mapping	11
Student Led Walk Audits.....	11
Student Leadership.....	12
Student Government Engagement.....	12
Volunteer Programs	12
Dot-to-Dot Program	12



Crossing Guard Volunteer programs 12

Teacher Committees and Parent Groups 12

Infrastructure, Street Design & Placemaking 13

 Street Murals and Asphalt Art 13

 School streets 13

 Tactical urbanism projects 13

 Sidewalk play stations 13

 Art and Activation 13

 Yard Signs 13

 Poster Contests 13

Educational and Activity Ideas 14

Introduction

The City of Bloomington's Safe Routes to School program offers a strong foundation, this idea book builds on it with additional tools and strategies for schools, caregivers, and students. Schools, caregivers, and students may review this idea book and work to implement ideas or request support from the City of Bloomington to help implement them.

Contact Us

Safe Routes to School is an initiative through the City of Bloomington Planning and Transportation Department. You can email the department at planning@bloomington.in.gov or call at 812-349-3423.

To stay informed about the City's planning work, visit the City's website at Bloomington.in.gov/planning



Active Travel Programs

School Pool Carpool Program

A program that matches families interested in carpooling to school based on location, schedules, and grade levels. Schoolpool matching can be facilitated through online sign-ups and platforms such as [GoKid](#) and [My School Carpool](#).

“If you drop off and pick up your kids every day, there are thousands of other parents out there just like you. Pairing up with just one other family would mean half as many trips to school. Imagine what else you could do with all that extra time! Start or join a Kid Carpool near you.”

Buddy-up Program

A program that pairs students who live near each other to walk or bike to school together. Having a “buddy” can make both parents and students feel more comfortable. Most buddy-up programs are managed informally, though the program can be scaled up through a matching signup sheet with interested students’ nearest intersection and grade level. All matching should be coordinated by schools or caregivers in accordance with district policies

Stop and Walk Program (Drive to 5, Park and Stride, Walk-a-Block)

Many parents and caregivers must drive their children to school because of far distances, mobility challenges, and/or other barriers. For these families, a stop and walk program can still give parents, students, and schools many of the same benefits as active transportation.

In a stop and walk program, families drop students off several blocks away from school at designated locations, allowing students to walk the final portion of the trip. This reduces congestion and air pollution near school entrances while providing students with daily physical activity. The goal is to park about a five-minute walk away from the school. Some programs are more formal (official agreements with parking locations, signage at parking locations, maps, etc.) and others are more informal (notice and encouragement).

Attendance Radar

Many parents are concerned that having students walk and bike does not confirm when the student arrives. Options for addressing this include attendance tracking tools such as [ClassDojo](#) and [Attendance Radar](#).



Active Education

Traffic gardens

Traffic gardens are miniature road environments with signs, intersections, and crosswalks for students to navigate. They allow students to learn traffic rules, signage, and decision making in a safe environment or practice biking, scooter, or skateboard skills.

Walking Field Trip

A short supervised neighborhood walk where students practice crossings, signals, awareness, and group travel behavior in a real environment.

Bike rodeos

Skills courses designed to teach students fundamental bike handling techniques in a safe, controlled environment. Students typically practice balance, braking, turning, signaling, and obstacle avoidance around cones in a paved area such as a parking lot but students can also be led on practice trips on real trails and low-traffic streets. The City of Bloomington Parks and Rec Department typically hosts bike rodeos with third grade students. For more information contact us at: ...

Family Biking and Transit Workshops

Active Routes to School is focused on building children's transportation skills as they grow. Parents play the most important role in teaching children these skills but many parents themselves are unfamiliar with biking, transit, and other transportation opportunities. Family biking and transit workshops can help caretakers learn or re-learn these skills.



Event Ideas

Active Routes Treasure Hunt

A school-wide or classroom-based activity where students follow designated walking or biking routes to find clues to a puzzle, landmarks, or temporary markers like sidewalk games or educational content. This encourages exploration of routes to school while making active travel fun for students.

Assemblies and Speakers

Invite guest speakers to present age-appropriate topics related to transportation and mobility. Topics can range from pedestrian and bike safety to distracted driving, lessons from first responders, or stories from people in the field such as planners and engineers.

Chalk and Walk

Students use chalk to create artwork or games, along popular routes to school.

Student/Parent Training Day

A hands-on event where students and parents meet at a designated location and practice walking or biking to school together. Training days can include route walk-throughs, safety tips, crossing practice, and discussions about expectations. This helps families feel comfortable supporting active travel.

Kidical Mass

Based on the adult "Critical Mass", Kidical Mass is a movement organizing safe, family-friendly bicycle rides for children to promote independent mobility and advocate for better cycling infrastructure, often under the motto "Space for the next generation". These rides are typically short, held on public roads, and open to all ages.

Walking Tours

Guided walking tours of a neighborhood or attraction. Along the way, students can learn pedestrian safety skills, how to navigate intersections, and how to be aware of their surroundings. Walking tours combine physical activity, place-based learning, and safety education in one experience.



Walk, Bike, and Transit Field Trips

Field trips that incorporate walking, biking, or transit as part of the journey to the destination. These trips teach real-world travel skills students use to reach school and other destinations. Walk and bike field trips can include route planning, safety discussions, and reflection activities afterward. The City of Bloomington can help lead bike field trips in conjunction with a classroom lesson.

Book Clubs

Develop a book club around urbanism topics that could be relevant to students wanting to learn more about transportation topics, environmental topics, and careers in civil engineering, urban planning, and real estate. For recommended titles, see the Safe Routes to School library book list.

Monthly or Weekly Walk & Roll Days

Beyond major walk and bike events, some schools may want to introduce weekly or monthly events to encourage students to walk and bike to school.

Weekly

- Move It Mondays
- Travel Together Tuesdays
- Walk and Roll Wednesdays
- Trailblazer Thursdays
- Footpower Fridays

Monthly

- January: New Year New Routes
- February: Love Your Route
- March: March Into School
- April: Bloom & Zoom
- May: Move It May
- June: Sunshine Strides
- July: Stars & Strides
- August: Back-to-School Boots
- September: Step Into School
- October: Walktober
- November: Gobble & Go
- December: Jingle Bell Walk



Activities and Encouragement

Transportation Safety Storytime (Safe Routes Library)

The City of Bloomington Safe Routes to School Library offers several books to borrow for classroom reading and instruction. Many of these books come with additional materials for instruction and encouragement.

Punch Cards & Mileage Clubs

Programs where students track walking, biking, or transit trips using [punch cards](#) or mileage logs. Programs can be designed for individual students or entire classrooms. Students often earn rewards for themselves or their classroom after hitting certain milestones.

Public Art and Placemaking

Placemaking is a mix of art and urban planning to build a sense of place and sense of community. One method of placemaking is the use of art (i.e. murals, sidewalk art, signage as art) and practical items (lighting, benches, etc) into functional art. This can improve neighborhood identity and create more joyful, engaging experiences for students.

Art Contests

Art contests give students the opportunity to create safety-themed artwork and word-art while learning about transportation safety. Designs can be displayed as banners, posters, yard signs, or street installations as part of a community-wide safety campaign. In Hertfordshire, England, student artwork was transformed into “gateway” signs that alert drivers when entering school zones, reinforcing student voice and visibility.

Essay Contests

Essay and creative writing contests give students an opportunity to address how transportation affects their lives and their community.



Student Clubs

Clubs focused on urbanism, transportation, or active travel provide a space for students interested in future careers in planning, engineering, architecture, or real estate. Activities could include:

- Guest speakers
- Design challenges
- Field trips via different transportation methods (walk, bus, bike)
- Peer education on transportation safety
- Attendance at public meetings to represent youth perspectives
- Career pathway spotlights
- [Better Block](#) quick build construction projects
- Curriculum completion (ULI Urban Plan, bike repair course, etc.)

Exhibit Development

Create (or have students create) an exhibit or mini-museum focused on transportation history, transportation safety, planning history, active routes to school programs, or other topics. Exhibits can be built for students or by students. Exhibits could be housed at city hall or potentially other locations.

Walking Storybook

A Storybook Trail is an active and educational activity that places the pages from a children's story along a walking path or trail. This project can be either created through technology (linking QR codes to a website), informally (often laminated pages from regularly purchased books on stakes in the ground) or created more permanently through metal exhibit panels/kiosks. Storybooks can also be in audio-format through QR codes to a website or push-button audio interpretation.

Postcards from the Future

Invite participants to imagine themselves in the space you want to improve, ten years into the future. Using a blank postcard, have them write a brief message to someone of their choice (such as a friend, family member, or City Councilor) describing what it's like to be there. Encourage them to include details about what they see, hear, smell, and feel. When finished, display the postcards so other participants and passersby can read them.



Urban Planning and Engineering Games

Elementary

- Kids' Guide to Building Communities - Activity-based [guide](#) using games and prompts to teach kids how communities, streets, and transportation work.
- Agent Plan-It: Town Planning for Kids - Story-based [digital learning games](#) introducing civic systems and problem-solving.
- Box-City and Walk Around the Block [educational programs](#)

High School

- *ULI UrbanPlan* - A nationally recognized, role-playing simulation where students act as developers, planners, city officials, and community members to redevelop a fictional site. Players balance housing, transportation, open space, and economic goals while negotiating tradeoffs. Requires partnership with the Urban Land Institute.
- *The Cost of Affordable Housing: Does It Pencil Out?* An interactive [digital tool](#) that walks players through the real-world financial challenges of building affordable housing. Participants adjust variables such as land cost, construction, and financing to understand why housing affordability is difficult and what policy or design choices can help make projects feasible.
- Lincoln Institute Housing Choices Game: [Scenario-based game](#) exploring zoning, housing supply, affordability, and transportation impacts.
- Mini-Metro: Transit-network puzzle game available on phones where players design rail lines to move passengers efficiently as cities grow.
- City Motion (Board Game) - A [board game](#) focused on sustainable urban mobility, balancing infrastructure investment and personal travel choices.
- Streetmix learning in which participants redesign a street from different perspectives (i.e. student, business owner, transit rider, person biking). Ends with a consensus street cross-section.
- Trivia: Have students develop trivia questions around walking, biking, rolling, and Bloomington transportation



Board and Poster Engagement

Install interactive boards or posters where students can write, draw, vote, or respond to prompts about transportation and safety. These low-cost tools can engage students in urban planning and engineering topics for the school or the larger community.

Anti-Idling Campaigns

Idling vehicles [contribute to air pollution](#) and emit air toxins, which are pollutants known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects. Monitoring at schools has shown elevated levels of benzene, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde and other air toxics during the afternoon hour coinciding with parents picking up their children. Children's lungs are still developing, and when they are exposed to elevated levels of these pollutants, children have an increased risk of developing asthma, respiratory problems and other adverse health effects. Limiting a vehicle's idling time can dramatically reduce these pollutants and children's exposure to them.

Neighborhood Exploration Games

Ongoing outdoor or neighborhood based exploration games that encourage students to explore their neighborhood and community.

- [RECESS](#)
- [Pokemon Go](#)
- [Geocaching](#)
- [American Planning Association Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt](#)



Mapping, Route Planning & Wayfinding

Wayfinding Activities

Hands-on activities where students learn to read maps, identify landmarks, and understand wayfinding. Lessons can include creating maps, identifying safe crossings, and understanding signage and route choices.

- [PBS: Which Way?](#) (Grades K-3)
- ESRI [GIS with Kids](#) (Grades K-3)
- [National Geographic Map Skills for Students](#) (Grades 4-8)
- [ESRI GeoProjects: Project-Based Learning for Classrooms](#) (Grades 4-12)
 - What is the walkability or pedestrian friendliness of your community?
 - One, Two, Tree: Map your community's trees - even while indoors
 - Mappy Halloween! A frightful exploration of toponymy
- [Esri Basic Map Skills](#) (Grades 5-12)
 - Using scales
 - Measure distance, area, and elevation
 - Managing map layers and data
- [ESRI Classroom activities](#) (Grades 6-12)
 - Includes Mapping Lessons For Computer Science, Earth Science, Environmental Science, Government, Geography, Human Geography, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), US History, and World history)

Student Travel Plans

Students develop personal travel plans that outline how they get to school, identify potential hazards, and explore alternative routes or modes. These plans promote independence, safety awareness, and problem-solving.

Safe Routes Mapping

Create maps that highlight preferred walking and biking routes to school while identifying dangerous intersections or gaps in infrastructure. Deficiency maps can be used to show areas of risk and support planning and advocacy for improvements.

Student Led Walk Audits

Students walk with staff to complete walk audits locating risks along their routes and opportunities that could improve their experience.



Student Leadership

Student Government Engagement

Opportunities for students to participate in real planning or engineering projects, such as reviewing street designs, providing feedback on school-area improvements, or working with student councils on transportation issues. This hands-on civic engagement helps students understand how decisions are made and how they can influence their community.

Engage students in street design using tools like Streetmix or age-appropriate scaled models. Students provide feedback on lane widths, crossings, bike lanes, and public space, ensuring designs reflect the needs of young users.

Volunteer Programs

Dot-to-Dot Program

A volunteer-based program where parents or community members stand at designated corners along school routes during arrival and dismissal times. Volunteers provide supervision, visibility, and assistance, helping students travel safely and confidently.

Crossing Guard Volunteer programs

Programs that recruit and train volunteers to serve as crossing guards. Components may include workshops, a crossing guard handbook, and ongoing support. Volunteer crossing guards increase safety while fostering community involvement.

Teacher Committees and Parent Groups

Committees or working groups that support active routes to school efforts through planning, coordination, and advocacy. These groups can support events, lead bike buses and walking school buses, or recruit for bike bus and walking school buses



Infrastructure, Street Design & Placemaking

Street Murals and Asphalt Art

Asphalt art puts design directly onto streets, intersections, crosswalks. This art can highlight the neighborhood, the school zone, or other community markers and is often made with the help of students, parents, and neighbors. Asphalt art can be combined with other low-cost safety strategies, such as bollards, to increase safety impacts.

School streets

Programs temporarily or permanently restrict through traffic near schools during arrival and dismissal while maintaining access for residents, emergency services, and approved school vehicles

Tactical urbanism projects

Tactical Urbanism is defined as “small-scale, low-cost and temporary demonstration projects” such as bollards, removable speed humps, and painted projects. Students can help in designing and building tactical urbanism projects as a way of learning about street design, safety, and public engagement.

Sidewalk play stations

Install playful elements along sidewalks such as hopscotch, balance beams, or interactive art to make walking routes more fun for children.

Art and Activation

Use art installations, performances, or interactive elements to activate streets and public spaces near schools. Many designs can be made cheaply using stencils.

Yard Signs

Install yard signs along school routes with messages such as “20 is Plenty,” “Safe Routes to School,” or “Bike Bus Route.” Students can design the signs or standard signs can be created.

Poster Contests

Students can design posters, which can be blown up and printed as part of the school’s safe routes to school campaign.



Educational and Activity Ideas

E-Learning:

[Active Transportation Academy | Ohio Department of Transportation](#)

The Active Transportation Academy (ATA) is a resource for building capacity and expertise on active transportation topics; educating practitioners, decision makers, and partners; and helping your community reach its active transportation goals. The ATA provides trainings, workshops, e-Learning courses, and online resources on a variety of topics related to walking and biking.