



New Jersey Safe Routes to School Urban Demonstration Program Grace A. Dunn Middle School Trenton, NJ

School Travel Plan Brief

During the spring of 2008, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) reached out to the City of Trenton to invite them to participate in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Urban Demonstration Program. As one of the top ten cities in New Jersey for pedestrian fatalities, Trenton was an ideal location to target SRTS. The City had been working to improve conditions for students through its “Safe Corridors” Program and had already exhibited an interest in SRTS through its application for NJDOT SRTS grant funding. Unfortunately, their NJDOT SRTS grant application did not score high enough to receive funding. To address this short-coming, the City was invited to choose two pilot schools to be a part of NJDOT’s Urban Demonstration Program with the intent that they would be able to develop a sustainable SRTS program and strengthen their SRTS application for the next funding cycle.

The City agreed to participate in the program and chose Grace A. Dunn Middle School and Joyce Kilmer Elementary School as the two pilot schools to receive assistance in developing a SRTS program.

NJDOT with technical assistance from The RBA Group, the National Center for Bicycling and Walking and the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University provided planning assistance to Grace A. Dunn Middle School to develop a SRTS School Travel Plan.

A School Travel Plan “maps out” how to improve pedestrian and bike travel to and from school. A School Travel Plan identifies:

- Where students currently walk and/or bike
- Where students would walk or bike if they could
- What changes need to be made so that students can and will walk and bike safely to school

The Grace A. Dunn Middle School Travel Plan is a working document intended to set priorities for increasing the number and safety of students walking and bicycling to and from school. The School Travel Plan serves as a basis for the organizing and funding of those priorities and as a model that can be replicated across Trenton and in other areas of New Jersey. In order for a School Travel Plan to be complete, it must contain six elements:

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| 1 School Description | 4 Maps of the School Neighborhood |
| 2 SRTS Task Force and Partnerships | 5 Action Plan |
| 3 Barriers & Opportunities to Walking and Bicycling | 6 Program Evaluation and Monitoring |

This School Travel Plan Brief is a summary of these six elements as identified in the Grace A. Dunn Middle School Travel Plan.

One of the objectives of the Safe Routes to School program is to make the program accessible to diverse participants, especially schools and communities with limited resources and staffing to spearhead new initiatives. This is particularly important, as schools in low income areas often have higher than average child pedestrian crash rates and a greater need for a SRTS program, yet may not be able to successfully access these funds.



The purpose of the New Jersey Department of Transportation Urban Demonstration Program was to ensure that all children, regardless of where they live, can benefit from SRTS programs. The goals of the program are to:

- Assist urban areas that have shown interest in SRTS programs but may not have the resources to succeed on their own, and
- Develop a model for use in urban areas across the state.

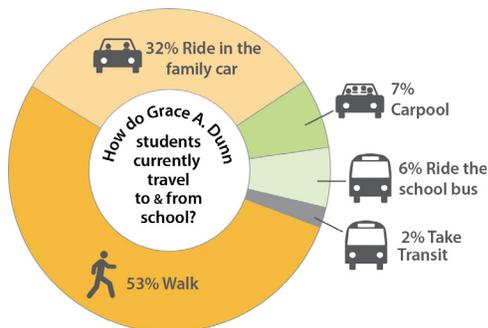
The Urban Demonstration Program focused on schools in Camden, Trenton and Newark. It was modeled after an earlier demonstration program completed in 2006 which consisted of pilot testing the New Jersey SRTS program in three communities - urban, suburban and rural. Both programs resulted in the development of School Travel Plans for each of the pilot schools.



1. School Description

Grace A. Dunn Middle School is located at 401 Dayton Street in the Franklin Park section of Trenton's South Ward. It is the only middle school within the school district that has a bilingual education program. Therefore, they receive students from all areas of the city.

Student Population:	686
Grade Levels:	6 th -8 th grades
School District:	Trenton City
Student Demographics:	59% Hispanic
	34% Black
	6% White
	1% Asian
Home Language:	48% English
	36% Spanish
	16% Other languages



2. SRTS Task Force and Partnerships

A key element in the process was to conduct outreach efforts to the city and school community to establish a Task Force. The aim was to engage active community groups and local organizers who will support and sustain the SRTS program over time.

Task force members attended a program awareness meeting to receive an overview of SRTS and the Urban Demonstration Program while helping the project team gather insight to specific issues/concerns within the school community. In Trenton, the Task Force was comprised of:

- Grace A. Dunn Middle School
- Trenton Public School District
- Trenton Division of Planning
- Community Liaison
- Trenton Public Works Department
- Trenton Police Department
- Greater Mercer Transportation Management Agency



3. Barriers & Opportunities to Walking and Bicycling

Information gathered from stakeholder interviews, student travel surveys, a community workshop, a field investigation, and crime data and crash analysis was used to assess existing conditions and identify opportunities to improve conditions for students on their way to and from school.

Key Issues/Concerns

The following were identified as concerns around the school neighborhood by students, school officials and city representatives:



Faded crosswalks



Drainage issues force students out of crosswalk at intersection

- Speeding
- Loitering
- Bullying
- Traffic
- Crime
- Drivers not stopping at stop signs
- Cars crossing sidewalk to access parking lots
- Illegally parked cars
- Difficulty crossing 4-lane roads

Classroom Session

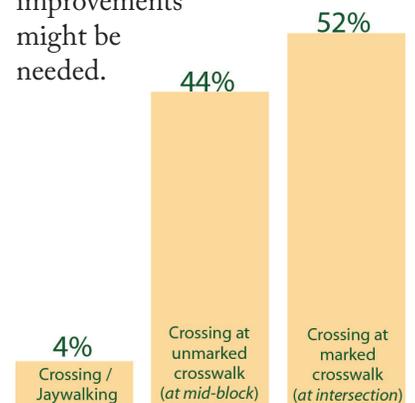
Two classes of 6th graders were asked how to improve the journey to school. These are their recommendations:

- Flowers & trees to make the street a better place to walk
- Crossing guards at all corners
- More parks/places to play
- Widen & repair the sidewalks
- More trash cans
- Bike racks, locks & helmets
- Better crosswalks
- Better enforcement at stop signs
- Better lighting to feel safe at night
- Better bus shelters with windows & benches



Pedestrian/Bicyclist Crash Analysis

Between 2004-2006, thirty-six accidents occurred within a 2-mile radius surrounding the school. 35 of the 36 accidents involved an injured pedestrian, none of which were fatal. This information was useful in determining where infrastructure improvements might be needed.

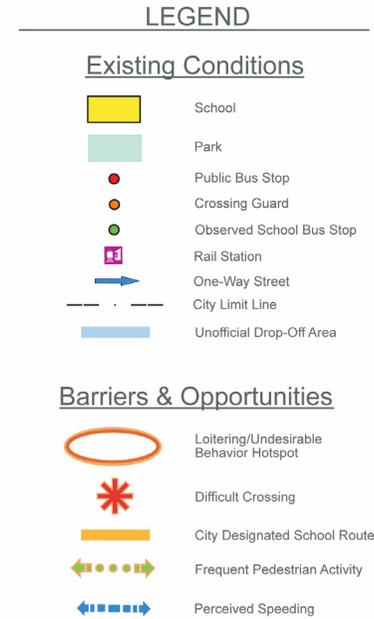
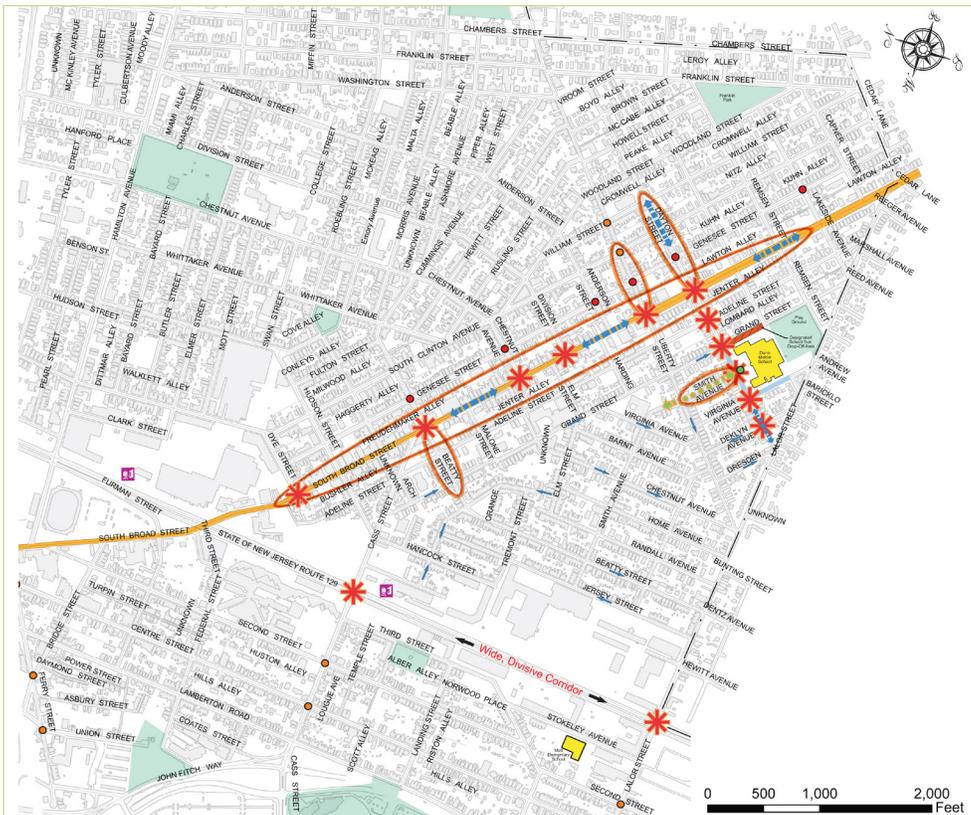


Pedestrian/Bicyclist Pre-Crash Action

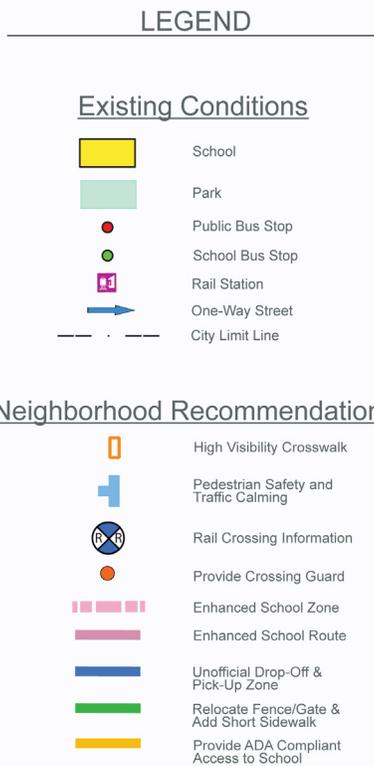
4. Maps of the School Neighborhood

These maps illustrate the existing conditions in the neighborhood of the Grace A. Dunn Middle School, the Barriers and Opportunities for students walking to and from school, and some Neighborhood Recommendations to improving facilities so their trips are safer.

Barriers & Opportunities



Neighborhood Recommendations



5. Action Plan

The plan of action for implementing the Grace A. Dunn Middle School SRTS program is intended to increase safety for students on their walk to and from school and when appropriate, encourage more students to walk. In addition to the actions, the School Travel Plan identifies a responsible party for implementing them, a time frame and a level of cost. Listed below are 5E action items from the School Travel Plan.

Engineering

- Clearly define and enhance school zones
- Enhance/designate school routes with signs, pavement markings or in-ground medallions/wayfinding markers
- Provide ADA compliant access to the school
- Define a bus zone and designate a drop-off/pick-up area
- Install new or enhance existing high visibility crosswalks along school zone and designated school routes
- Relocate the gate to the auditorium entrance closer to Grand Street along Dayton Street to reduce mid-block crossings.
- Provide pedestrian safety and traffic calming (horizontal and/or vertical) along Dayton Street and South Broad Street

Enforcement

- Assign a crossing guard at the intersection of Dayton Street and Grand Street
- Post clear parking regulation signs at all drop-off and pick-up locations
- Include education materials about the dangers of speeding or other violations when issuing warnings or citations
- Conduct a series of pedestrian stings
- Maintain police presence at major pedestrian crossing locations such as Dayton Street and South Broad Street
- Police should work within the school to educate students on bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Prioritize/enhance police presence in areas of loitering, undesirable behavior and vacant properties/buildings

Evaluation

- Conduct a survey to define mode choice so there is a baseline to assess future efforts
- Conduct school commute time parking studies
- Conduct a preference survey to determine what families would like to see and have available
- Conduct tracking exercises for distances students walk

6. Program Evaluation and Monitoring

Utilizing the NJDOT SRTS Toolbox Fact Sheet, “*Evaluating your SRTS Program*” as a guide, Grace A. Dunn Middle School will conduct classroom/student hands-up travel pattern surveys and parent/caregiver take-home attitudinal surveys to evaluate its SRTS Program over time.

Definitions

En·gin·eer·ing: creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safe and accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

En·force·ment: partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws (i.e. speeding, idling, cell phone, yield-to-pedestrian) are obeyed in the vicinity of schools and initiating community enforcement, such as crossing guard programs.

Ed·u·ca·tion: teaching children and parents about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.

En·cour·age·ment: using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling to school on a regular basis.

E·valu·a·tion: monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention.

Education

- Conduct community wide outreach on benefits of SRTS programs
- Inform neighborhood of any designated routes
- Include health benefits of SRTS in teacher training programs and in student curriculum
- Educate parents and students about the established drop-off and pick-up procedures
- Distribute walking school bus options to school families
- Circulate school walking event information with municipal utility or tax bills
- Work with NJ TRANSIT to provide Operation Life Saver information for at-grade rail crossings

Encouragement

- Define recommended walking routes by providing maps and installing pavement markings and/or signs
- Establish a SRTS Committee to lead the effort
- Prepare for and participate in International Walk to School Days
- Start a “Frequent Walker Card” system or a “Golden Sneaker” award for classrooms
- The City should consider taking on snow removal responsibility along identified routes to school
- Hold a bicycle rodeo

