



Physical Activity Policy Research Network & America Walks  
**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**  
**SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SITE ASSESSMENT**



This assessment tool is for parents, school administration, faculty, community members, or others who want to assess the supports and challenges for walking and bicycling to school. It is developed in the context of U.S. public elementary schools, though it may have value elsewhere or for secondary schools or private schools with an interest in increasing walking and bicycling.

We will guide you in assessing three aspects of a school environment that can either encourage or discourage children and families from walking or bicycling to school.

1. Part ONE helps you assess the foundations for Safe Routes to School by gathering background information on **planning, policies, and programs** that are in place. This will require telephone calls to the school's administration and transportation offices.
2. Part TWO is conducted through an audit of the **physical environment**. This fieldwork can be done at any daylight hour.
3. Part THREE is conducted before and after school to observe actual **behavior** of adults, children, and drivers.

Results from the audit can identify areas that need more work. Ideally, the audit team will include family members, school staff or faculty, and city agency representatives who are able to respond to any deficiencies.

School Name:	_____
School District:	_____
Address:	_____
City, State, ZIP:	_____
Phone Number:	_____
Web Site URL:	_____
School Principal:	_____
School Contact & Position:	_____
School Transportation Mgr:	_____

*\* The Physical Activity Policy Research Network is funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is a consortium of researchers at five universities: Saint Louis University (lead site), Harvard University, University of North Carolina, University of South Carolina, and University of Washington.*

**GLOSSARY:**

*Arterial – An arterial street is a street that accommodates larger volumes of through traffic, not just destination-focused traffic.*

*School Safety Patrol – A group of children who participate in school safety activities such as enforcing rules in the school drop off and pick up process and at crosswalks adjacent to the school.*

*School Zone – Some states have authorized legislations that specify special speed limit zones. Within those zones, speeds may be reduced (e.g., to 15 mph, 20 mph or 25 mph) and the fines may be doubled and special conditions applied (such as prohibiting the reduction of the fine). Zones can be authorized for adjacent streets or may be put in place in relation to designated school crosswalks, even when those crosswalks are away from the school. Some cities put policies in place to establish where school zones are permitted.*

*Targeted Traffic Enforcement – A dedicated campaign by the police department focusing on enforcing particular laws, such as school zone speed limits, rather than general enforcement of laws by officers.*

*Walk Boundary – A “Walk Boundary” is an imaginary line that encircles a school. All students who live beyond the walk boundary are provided transportation. Within that line, students are expected to walk to school. Nevertheless, we find that many students within the walk boundary are driven to school by their parents.*

*Walk Route Map – A “Walk Route Map” is a map of the area surrounding the school that identifies areas and routes from which it has been deemed appropriate for children to walk to school. These maps depict barriers, such as high capacity streets without traffic signals, that represent boundaries across which elementary school children would not be expected to cross*

*Walking School Bus – A organized effort in which adults walk with a group of children to school. Parents serve as “drivers” of the walking bus of children.*

**PART ONE – FOUNDATIONS ASSESSMENT  
PLANNING, POLICIES, & PROGRAMS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

In preparation for this section of the assessment, you will need to gather materials and information through telephone calls. Some items may need to be mailed or emailed to you or may be available at the school office.

Item	Question	Response
<b>Section 1 – Background</b>		
A	How many children attend the school?	_____
B	What is the grade level of the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (K-5/6) <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School/Jr High <input type="checkbox"/> K-8 <input type="checkbox"/> K-12 <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
C	Does the school also include a Head Start or Preschool?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
D	Administration of the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
E	What best describes the geographic area that the school attendance draws from?	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> All-city draw <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
F	How many school bus routes serve this school?	____ Yellow Buses ____ Special ed. or smaller vehicles <input type="checkbox"/> Some children are provided public transit passes
<b>Section 2 – Walk Route Map</b>		
First ask the school office for the Walk Route Map. If unavailable there, contact the district transportation office to obtain a map from them.		
A	Is there a “school walk route” map?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (If no, skip section)
B	Where were you able to obtain a copy of the school walk route map? <i>Attach a copy of the map to this assessment.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> From school <input type="checkbox"/> From district transportation office <input type="checkbox"/> Not able to obtain a copy
C	How are the walk route maps distributed to students or their caretakers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Not distributed <input type="checkbox"/> In new student packet <input type="checkbox"/> To all families at start of year <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Item	Question	Response
<i>Ask the district transportation office for the following information. In most districts, this will not be readily available and will require some investigation or computation.</i>		
D	What number of the students live:	<input type="text"/> Within the walk boundary <input type="text"/> Within 1 mile of the school <input type="text"/> Within 1.5 miles of the school
E	Does the map designate walking routes to the school from the surrounding area?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (If no, skip to G)
F	If so, count lines leading to school at a one-block radius away from the school.	<input type="text"/> walk routes at 1-block radius
G	How far is the farthest distance routes extend away from the school grounds?	<input type="text"/> (circle: miles feet meters)
H	What is the shortest distance to the walk boundary?	<input type="text"/> (circle: miles feet meters)
I	If the walk boundary is less than one mile in any direction, what defines the boundary? (e.g., natural barrier such as river or lake; built barrier such as divided highway or train tracks; hazard such as busy street)	North <input type="text"/> East <input type="text"/> South <input type="text"/> West <input type="text"/>

### Section 3 – Programs

A	Is there a walk to school program at this school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, staffed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, PTA or parent volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> No
B	Is pedestrian safety education incorporated into the school curriculum (by teachers) or provided by third party (e.g., police, public health, non-profit)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party <input type="checkbox"/> No
C	Is bicycle safety education incorporated into the school curriculum? (e.g., in PE class, after school programs, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
D	Does the police department conduct a program of targeted traffic enforcement around the school? (related to speeding, motorists violating the crosswalk law, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
E	Does the school have an program that encourages families or children to walk to school (e.g., Walking School Bus, parents stationed along the walk routes)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
F	Is there a school safety patrol program?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
G	Are there paid school crossing guards at any crossings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
H	Are there unpaid/volunteer school crossing guards at any crossings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

### Section 4 – Policy & Planning

A	Is there a plan for drop off and pick up that separates cars and buses from arriving foot traffic?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
B	Does the school discourage parents from driving their children to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
C	Does the school have any policies to minimize driving to school among parents and/or staff?	<input type="checkbox"/> No idling campaign <input type="checkbox"/> Limits parking <input type="checkbox"/> Air quality promotion <input type="checkbox"/> Assists with arranging carpools <input type="checkbox"/> Does not provide free parking <input type="checkbox"/> Requires parents to park a block away from school Other (please describe)

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Item	Question	Response
D	How does the school encourage walking/bicycling?	<input type="checkbox"/> Celebrates walking with International Walk to School Day events (how many years has this been taking place? _____ years) <input type="checkbox"/> Teaches a bicycle curriculum in physical education classes <input type="checkbox"/> Establishes regular walk days (e.g., Walking Wednesdays, Two Feet Tuesdays) <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Walking School Bus routes or Bike Train Routes <input type="checkbox"/> Incentives program <input type="checkbox"/> Posters & Bulletin Boards Other promotions and programs (Please describe) _____ _____
E	Is there a <i>District-wide</i> committee that addresses issues of safety for children walking to school? If so, who serves on this committee?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> School Transportation Manager <input type="checkbox"/> District Risk Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Public Works/DOT <input type="checkbox"/> Police <input type="checkbox"/> Health Department <input type="checkbox"/> Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
F	Are there School District or Administration policies that promote walking to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
G	Is there a <i>School-based</i> committee that addresses issues of safety for children walking to school? If so, who serves on this committee?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> Principal <input type="checkbox"/> Vice-principal <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers <input type="checkbox"/> Staff: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Students <input type="checkbox"/> Family volunteers <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
G	What elected officials are involved in Safe Routes to Schools committees or promotional activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Mayor <input type="checkbox"/> City/County Council Members <input type="checkbox"/> School Board <input type="checkbox"/> State Representative <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional Representative <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

## PART TWO – PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** For Part TWO, you will need to get out and examine the physical conditions in the area around the school. Most of these observations should be done on foot or on a bicycle to make sure that you have the proper perspective. Read through this prior to leaving for the observation, and obtain a map of the area if a Walk Route Map is not available for the school.

Item	Question	Response
<b>Section 1 – Street Design &amp; Signage</b>		
A	<p><b>Presence of High Speed Streets</b> Within three blocks of the school, are there any of the following: <i>(check all that apply)</i></p> <p><b>Speed Limit on Adjacent Streets</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 lane and wider streets (Including left turn lane)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Speed limits of 30 mph or higher (excluding limited access roads)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Speed limits of 40 mph or higher (excluding limited access roads)</p>
B	What is the normal speed limit for the highest-speed street directly adjacent to the school?	_____ mph <input type="checkbox"/> check box if this is posted with a speed limit sign
C	Is there a posted <i>school zone</i> speed limit on any streets near the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No speed limit: _____ mph
D	If a school zone is posted, when is the school zone speed limit in effect? <i>(check only those conditions posted on the sign)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> when children present <input type="checkbox"/> specific hours <input type="checkbox"/> when school in session <input type="checkbox"/> when lights are flashing <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
E	If posted, where is the school zone? <i>(check all that apply)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> at marked school crosswalk(s) <input type="checkbox"/> on block(s) adjacent to school <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
<b>Crossings</b>		
F	Are there marked crosswalks for every designated arterial street crossing on the routes that children walk?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
G	Are the marked crosswalks signalized with a stop light? (flashing yellow lights do not apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, w/ walk signals <input type="checkbox"/> No
H	Are there other treatments added to enhance crosswalks? (e.g., pedestrian flags, curb bulbs, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> curb extensions <input type="checkbox"/> overhead flashing beacons <input type="checkbox"/> pedestrian flags <input type="checkbox"/> in-pavement crosswalk lights <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
<b>Traffic Calming &amp; Control</b>		
I	Pavement markings on roadways warning of school (e.g., the word school painted on street)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
J	Traffic/speed control measures present?	<input type="checkbox"/> speed humps <input type="checkbox"/> raised crosswalks <input type="checkbox"/> automatic photo radar speed enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Item	Question	Response
K	Are school routes designated in some way other than on a map (e.g., signage, marking with children's footprints on sidewalk, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Section 2 – Walkways &amp; Bikeways</b>		
A	Are there sidewalks for routes children walk?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
B	How wide are the sidewalks?	____ Feet (record the minimum width)
C	Are there trees, grass, or other buffers between the sidewalk and the street?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
D	Is there on-street parking between the walkways and the street?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
E	Are driveways along routes that children walk raised to the level of the sidewalk to slow vehicles down as they enter the driveway, or do sidewalks drop to the street level as they cross driveways?	<input type="checkbox"/> Raised <input type="checkbox"/> Dropped <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed
F	Are children walking to school on arterial streets without sidewalks, but with roadway shoulders? If so, how wide are the roadway shoulders?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A ____ Feet (record the minimum width)
G	Are bicycle lanes marked on streets to the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
H	Is there a dedicated walking or bicycling path that could be used to get to the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-use trail <input type="checkbox"/> Walking path <input type="checkbox"/> None
I	Are there curb ramps at crosswalks leading into school grounds to allow cyclists easy access without dismounting in crosswalk?	<input type="checkbox"/> At each entrance <input type="checkbox"/> Some Missing <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Driveways offer safe route
J	Is there good lighting of the routes to the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<b>Section 3 – Perceived Hazards</b>		
A	What conditions are present that might be perceived as significant hazards to the safety of children in the school's surrounding environment? (consider the area for which children are expected or desired to be walking to school)	<input type="checkbox"/> speeding vehicles <input type="checkbox"/> unsignalized street crossings <input type="checkbox"/> wide intersections <input type="checkbox"/> truck traffic <input type="checkbox"/> train tracks <input type="checkbox"/> crime & loitering in the neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> vacant or undeveloped lots <input type="checkbox"/> construction <input type="checkbox"/> steep hills or stairways <input type="checkbox"/> blind curves on streets <input type="checkbox"/> wooded areas or unkept open spaces <input type="checkbox"/> lack of sidewalks <input type="checkbox"/> poorly maintained walkways <input type="checkbox"/> vehicles parked blocking walkways <input type="checkbox"/> lack of other children walking <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
<b>Section 4 – Transit &amp; Land Use</b>		
A	Is there a public transit route that runs within two blocks of the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>Within three blocks of the school, how much of the following land uses can be found (total area)?</i>		
B	Single Family Homes	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
C	Multi-Family Homes (duplexes, apartments, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
D	Parks	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
E	Retail Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
F	Industrial Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
G	Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly

Item	Question	Response
H	Which of the following child-oriented walking destinations are within 3-4 blocks of the school? (Safe Routes to School efforts should recognize the other trips children take in proximity to school.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Playground <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center <input type="checkbox"/> Youth center/after school programs <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Convenience store/bakery/cafe <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

### Section 5 – School Site Checklist

#### Drop-off & Pick-up Areas

- A Do walkers have direct access from the street to the school without having to walk through driveways or parking lots?  Yes  No
- B Do they have a continuous raised curb separating vehicles from pedestrians?  Yes  No
- C Are they designed so that the students walking are protected from vehicles on school grounds?  Yes  No
- D Do any fences, walls, dumpsters or the location of parking areas for service vehicles create hazards for pedestrians?  Yes  Yes, but mitigation measures have been installed  No
- E Is bicycle parking provided? (e.g., bike racks on school grounds or sidewalk)  Yes, covered  Yes, uncovered  
 Improvements needed  No



**PART THREE – BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATIONS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

Item	Question	Response
A	Are the arrival areas on school grounds supervised by adults? <i>(check all that apply)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Before school <input type="checkbox"/> After school <input type="checkbox"/> Not supervised
B	Are the arrival areas on school grounds attended by youth school safety patrol? <i>(check all that apply)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Before school <input type="checkbox"/> After school <input type="checkbox"/> No school safety patrol
C	Are adult crossing guards present at designated crossings? <i>(check all that apply)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Before school <input type="checkbox"/> After school <input type="checkbox"/> Not present
D	Are parked or waiting drivers blocking the vision of other motorists, bicyclists or pedestrians?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
E	Are school buses idling?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
F	Are private vehicles idling on school grounds?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
G	Are there high volumes of automobile traffic?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
H	Are there high volumes of pedestrian traffic?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
I	Are there high volumes of bicycle traffic?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
J	Are children observed to display safe pedestrian behavior?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
K	Are children observed to display safe cycling behavior?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
L	Are young children walking or cycling with adult supervision?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Most <input type="checkbox"/> All <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
M	Is the existing parking/load and unload area able to accommodate the daily volume of school-related traffic?	Before school: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

During morning observations, were any walking/bicycling hazards noted?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

During afternoon observations, were any walking/bicycling hazards noted?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Note driver behaviors that indicate a demand for education or enforcement:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you want your child to walk to this school?     Yes     No

Record any other general observations?