

# 061 COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL PLANNING FOR SAFE AND EFFICIENT MULTIMODAL ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

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## Study Purpose

The purpose of the Regional Schools Multimodal Transportation Access Study is to establish a toolbox of policies, guidelines, and strategies for developing schools that are accessible to residents and children via all modes of transportation including motorized, bicycle, and walking.

## Vision

Early in a Study the Technical Advisory Committee envisioned a world they would like their children and grandchildren to live in, and created a vision statement based on that. This statement was used throughout the study as a guidepost for what the policies and strategies aspire to accomplish.

## Study Framework and Policy Guidelines

After assessing local deficiencies and needs, and researching national and local best practices, several meetings and workshops were held with the Technical Advisory Committee for this project to craft policies that will support the shared vision that, "...students, parents, and employees are able to access schools safely and conveniently through a variety of modes." Two sets of policies were developed —land use and engineering—to create efficient multimodal access to school sites in the CCSD system.

Each policy is presented separately, noting the policy itself (bold text), as well as any background related to the purpose for the policy; and toolbox options for consideration (not all required for implementation) that demonstrate application of specific toolbox techniques.

## Policy 1 – Integrate Land Use and Transportation Planning for Schools

### Policy 1.1

**Ensure that land use planning and new residential developments facilitate safe and convenient access to planned or existing schools.**

Subdivision walls are barriers to safe and convenient walking and bicycling, and require circuitous routes and longer distances to reach schools.

### Policy 1.2

**Where parks, libraries, community centers, and open space are adjacent to schools, create safe access to schools through joint planning of infrastructure such as sidewalks, multi-use pathways, and bicycle facilities.**

### Vision Statement

Students, parents, and employees can safely and conveniently walk and bicycle to school; thus, reducing the need for children to be bused or driven. Schools are strategically designed and are integrated with the surrounding transportation network, resulting in safe and smooth traffic operations when children are bused or driven. Long-term results are beneficial to communities because students, parents, and employees are able to access schools safely and conveniently through a variety of modes.

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities and access points are sometimes not coordinated effectively across school district, city, and county boundaries. Some designs may not consider shared use and connections between different facilities. For instance, where parks are located directly across from schools, pedestrian facilities (such as mid-block crossing points) are sometimes not coordinated, encouraging jaywalking to the school. Further, access points should be located with natural surveillance opportunities (that is, not in isolated locations).

### Policy 1.3

**In a master planned community, locate schools central to the student population for convenient walking and bicycling, and parent and bus access.**

Schools located on fringes of development make it more difficult for students to walk or bicycle to school.

### Policy 1.4

**Maximize the shared use of existing utility corridors, shared infrastructure, and/or public services for increased pedestrian and bicycle access (infrastructure could include, for example, existing and planned roads, utility easements, parks, and flood control systems).**

Utility corridors and easements (such as flood control facilities) that could provide more direct connections are sometimes closed off to pedestrian access.

### Policy 1.5

**Provide access to schools via multiple, low-volume and low-speed streets.**

High-volume, high-speed (45 miles per hour), four- to six-lane streets are not ideal for students to travel on and cross.

### Policy 1.6

**Maintain a street network on multiple sides (all sides, if possible) of school property to allow maximum access between the school and the surrounding roadway network.**

When a school can be accessed only from one street, the street becomes congested and creates potential conflict between vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

### Policy 1.7

**Develop interim infrastructure routes for enhanced mobility in undeveloped areas to provide safety and access to schools.**

Schools are sometimes constructed in undeveloped areas in anticipation of planned development. However, the surrounding new communities may take many years to build out, delaying construction of multimodal transportation facilities needed for school access.

### Policy 1.8

**Incorporate school access policies into master plans for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.**

Some pedestrian and bicycle master plans do not include direct connections to schools from planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities. As important modes of transportation for school access, emphasis should be placed on acknowledging these connections.

## Policy 2 – Maximize Multimodal Transportation Access to Schools by Impact Zones

This group of policies considers engineering design solutions applicable to school access that are characterized by distance from the school site. Multimodal integration and potential conflict intensify by proximity to the school site, including:

- **School Onsite Zone:** Transportation access and circulation considerations on the school grounds, including access points to the school property (roadway, driveway, sidewalk, trails, etc.), drop-off/pick-up locations for school buses and parents, and onsite end-of-trip amenities.
- **Critical Shared Access Zone:** Transportation access and circulation considerations in immediate proximity to the school (approximate 0.25-mile buffer around school site) where school transportation types merge with neighborhood traffic (at intersections, along streets and offsite drop-off/pick-up locations).
- **Potential Walk and Bike Zone:** Transportation access and circulation considerations within the zone where students may be walking or biking from home to school (approximate 2-mile buffer surrounding school site).
- **Attendance Zone:** The remainder of the school attendance threshold area. Because school boundaries change and can be irregular, this zone may surround all others, or occasionally be within the potential walk and bike zone.

## School Impact Zone: 2.1 School Onsite

### Policy 2.1.1

**Reduce conflicts at school sites by providing multiple access points for various purposes and modes; such purposes may include school buses, student drop-off and pick-up areas, and pedestrians and bicyclists.**

An inherent conflict zone exists where school buses, private vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists simultaneously converge in the same area at the same time – at the beginning and end of the school day. Lack of coordination between onsite and offsite pedestrian and bicycle facilities can lead to potential conflicts.

### Policy 2.1.2

**Provide end of trip facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. Locate efficient bicycle, skateboard, and scooter parking facilities in locations that are convenient, and safe and that minimize multimodal conflicts. Provide shade for those waiting for children to emerge from school.**

Bicycle parking is sometimes not sufficiently visible or strategically located for convenient access. Bicycle parking should also include locking rack facilities for scooters and skateboards. Lockers and showers are often lacking for staff who walk or bicycle to work. Minor bicycle maintenance needs are common for staff and especially younger students. In addition, there is a lack of shade for those waiting to walk children home after school.

## School Impact Zone: 2.2 Critical Shared Access

### Policy 2.2.1

**Provide design solutions to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, and school buses along streets in proximity to schools.**

All modes converge near schools and require special planning and infrastructure considerations to facilitate shared use, walking, and bicycling and to reduce conflicts within the limited roadway width available.

### Policy 2.2.2

**Develop a strategy to manage peak crossing demand to provide pedestrian and bicycle street crossings at all access points that are safe, convenient, and clearly designated, and that allow predictable vehicular flow.**

Students continuously crossing a street, even at designated crosswalks, don't allow for gaps that vehicles can pass through. Drivers can get impatient waiting and foolishly and unsafely enter the crosswalk close to children. Enhance intersections to encourage bicyclists and pedestrians to cross at appropriate locations, and discourage random and unsafe crossings.

### Policy 2.2.3

**Provide amenities to improve the bicycle and pedestrian experience along school pedestrian routes and include staging areas at major high-volume street crossings and transit and school bus waiting areas.**

Encourage walking by providing safe and comfortable amenities. Unplanned waiting areas inhibit school egress.

### Policy 2.2.4

**Plan for and adequately design student drop-off and pick-up areas.**

Heavy traffic during drop-off/pick-up in one location causes safety and congestion issues.

### Policy 2.2.5

**Implement traffic calming and traffic volume reduction measures within and in proximity to schools.**

Streets near schools require special planning and infrastructure considerations that discourage driver misbehavior and reduce the need for enforcement. All streets within the critical shared-access area should be pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. This policy presents a range of traffic calming measures.

## School Impact Zone: 2.3 Potential Walking and Bicycling

### Policy 2.3.1

**Develop and implement Complete Streets Design practices that encourage safe walking and bicycling to schools.**

Many streets have not been designed for all transportation modes. The previous policy emphasizes strategies to reduce conflicts in the school-adjacent zone, but it is important to maintain pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to neighborhoods to allow students to walk and/or bike from their homes.

### Policy 2.3.2

**Include enhanced safety crossing measures in areas with four or more vehicular lanes where students will cross streets.**

All pedestrians—from the very young to the very old, from able-bodied to disabled—have varied challenges (such as speed, sight, hearing, and safety knowledge) when crossing intersections. These needs must all be addressed through enhanced safety crossing measures designed for specific conditions.

### Policy 2.3.3

**For the development of subdivisions, consider how children may walk, bicycle, or queue up to ride the school bus to school.**

Developers should design and implement pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly access to schools as part of their site plans for developments of all size, ranging from a large master plan development, small development, or apartment complex. Consider pedestrian and bicycle access to local schools through open and safe access to sidewalks, pathways, or regional trails. Develop school bus waiting areas, central to clusters of dwellings where school bus stops could be located, with adequate space for students to wait without spilling out onto roadways, private property, or sensitive landscaping.