

Coming Soon- Louisville Safe Routes to School Study

One of the applications for this year's Community Transportation Planning Studies program proposed a *School Travel Plan* for Louisville City Schools. Schools identified as a high priority for the study are the Louisville Elementary School located on Nickel Plate St. NE and the Louisville Middle School on S. Chapel Street. Although roads in the immediate vicinity of the schools have relatively low traffic counts (fewer than 2,000 vehicles per day), streets likely to be encountered by students traveling by bicycle or walking relatively short distances are much busier. For example, N. Chapel Street has areas with more than 14,000 vehicles per day, S. Chapel Street, north of the middle school, has more than 8,500 vehicles per day, and portions of Main Street have in excess of 10,000 vehicle per day.

Rather than engage a consultant to complete a study, the SCATS Policy Committee approved the use of staff resources to perform the work at its August 30, 2021 meeting. This will broaden the experience of SCATS staff and provide them an opportunity to be of direct service to a local community.

Once completed, a *School Travel Plan* will provide Louisville Schools with an idea of physical improvements as well as actions that can be taken to encourage children to walk and bike to school. A study will also qualify the school district to apply for The Safe Routes to School funding program by ODOT.

The study development process provided by ODOT stresses the Six "E"s of Safe Routes to School:

1. **E**ngagement- Planning for Safe Routes to Schools begins with listening to students, families, teachers, school leaders and working with existing community organizations. Building an intentional and ongoing engagement with the community ensures a successful community-based plan;
2. **E**quity- Ensuring that the School Travel Plan benefits all demographic groups, with particular attention to ensuring safe, healthy, and fair outcomes for low-income students, students of color, students of all genders, students with disabilities and others ensures that the plan represents the community as a whole;
3. **E**ngineering that can create safer environments for walking and bicycling to school including cross walk improvements, extending sidewalks and trails, better markings/signage and reduced vehicle speeds;
4. **E**ducational programs for children, parents, and others, teaching how to walk and bicycle safely and securely and drivers how to drive more safely around pedestrians and bicyclists;



5. **E**ncourage bicycling to community School Day”, Walker/Bicyclist Challenge”, or on-going programs such as a “Walking School Bus” or “Bicycle Train” can promote and encourage walking and bicycling as a popular way to get to school; and
6. **E**valuation of information collected before and after program activities and projects provides data that allows adjustments to strategies to ensure a successful program.



While writing the plan, SCATS staff will consider a number of existing conditions and possible recommendations, having to do with both infrastructure (i.e. crosswalk locations, striping, signage, connections and access points, etc) as well as non-infrastructure items and opportunities (i.e. policies and process of arrival/dismissal, active programs, education, etc).



In order to develop a successful school travel plan, public engagement is essential in helping to identify existing routes traveled by students, parents and school personnel, as well as future routes for these individuals. The input received by the public, city officials and administration and additional findings from staff will help to determine the final recommendations for the plan.



School Travel Plans often lead to Safe Routes to School projects, which in turn often result in more walkable and bikeable communities. Stark County Regional Planning Commission looks forward to

working directly with Louisville city planners and resident families in coming together to help plan an improved future for their community’s children being able to walk and bike to school safely and efficiently.