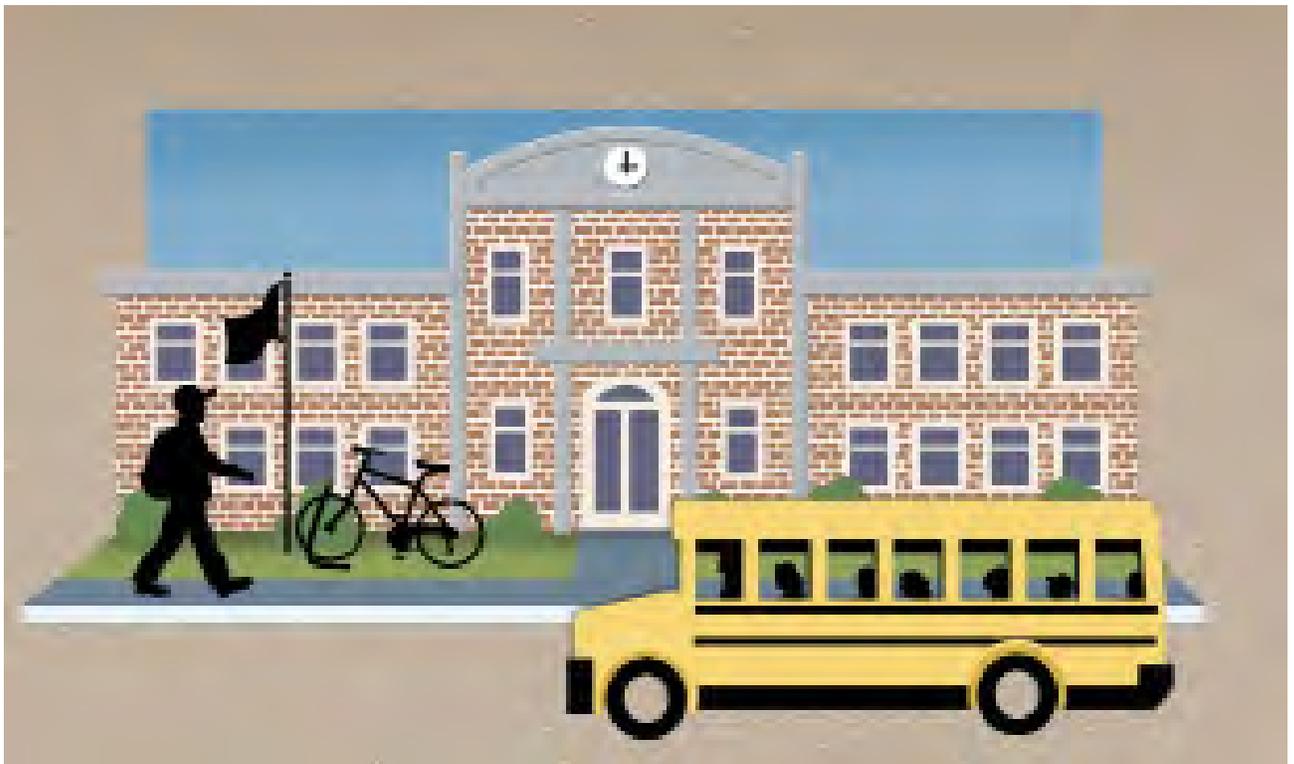




The Sustainable Thurston project is an opportunity to shape this region's future as well as the actions and responsibilities to achieve it.

South County Schools and Transportation Panel



October 3, 2011

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE THURSTON PROJECT

This community conversation comes at a time when the issues of economic resilience and efficiency are foremost in our minds. Our region – its households, governments, nonprofits and business are making the most of resources in order to maintain quality of life and build toward a more resilient economy, society and environment.

This region and its 29 public and private sector partners successfully competed for a Sustainable Community Regional Planning Grant from Federal Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Their interest in making these grants possible is to encourage regions to incorporate livability principles into sustainability plan discussions since these are proving to be essential to the creation of resilient communities.

The Sustainable Thurston Plan will build upon:

- 1) **Thurston Region Population Projections estimated to add 120,000 additional residents between 2010 and 2035**
- 2) **Existing state, regional and local plans** as the base scenario for plan discussion and analysis
- 3) **Livability Principles**
 - Provide more transportation choices
 - Promote equitable affordable housing
 - Enhance economic competitiveness
 - Support existing communities
 - Coordinate policies and leverage investment
 - Value communities and neighborhoods

About Sustainable Thurston Panels

The Sustainable Thurston Plan process begins with information development through a series of “white papers” produced by panels and work groups and reviewed by the Sustainable Thurston Task Force. This work will inform the three phase public process about a variety of elements that support our community and work together to enhance quality of life. These include:

- economic development
- housing
- water infrastructure, storm water, sewer
- solid waste
- emergency services
- schools and transportation
- health and human services
- local food systems
- land use, transportation, climate change
- energy
- public outreach and education

PUBLIC PROCESS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS – 2011 - 2013

PHASE 1 - Initial Visioning and Engagement of Stakeholders - 2011

Description: Develop a regional vision by engaging residents and stakeholders in an interactive Sustainable Community game at a series of public meetings - informed by panel, work group and Task Force information.

Goal: Achieve an understanding of the major vision of the residents and stakeholders regarding the future of the Thurston County region.

PHASE 2 - Develop Growth Scenarios - 2012

Description: Involve residents and stakeholders in order to gain a data-based understanding of the implications of current growth patterns, and develop a range of growth alternatives.

Goal: Describe the most likely future for the region given “business as usual,” and community-based alternatives reflecting the Phase 1 vision.

PHASE 3 - Develop a Preferred Growth Vision and Regional Plan for Sustainable Development - 2013

Description: Involve residents and stakeholders in review of a preferred growth alternative, the Regional Vision and Plan for Sustainable Development, a Regional Housing Plan, a Regional Economic Strategy, Implementation Steps, and a List of Projects of Regional Priority.

Goal: To develop a community based series of Regional Plans, Strategies, Implementations Steps, and Projects of Regional Priority that articulate a community defined sustainable future, and the actions and responsibilities to achieve it.

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Executive Summary

Schools have traditionally been important community activity centers. This is still true in the South Thurston County school districts and towns. The school districts of Yelm, Rainier, Tenino and Rochester serve families living in these towns as well as many students who live in the surrounding Thurston County areas. The Yelm Community School buses drive 3000 miles per day transporting students to and from school. The increased cost of transporting students - as well as other responsibilities that more rural school district take on - has become increasingly more challenging.

The South County Schools and Transportation Panel discussions quickly turned to some core issues such as household, school district and town economics. The major long term issue was acknowledged to be land use and the lack of focused growth that has increased costs for public services – including school bus service. Add to this costs to households that have become more and more dependent on vehicles due in part to the lack of close by jobs and services. School district superintendents talked about the “responsibility creep” that has occurred. Schools become social service providers as families become more economically distressed.

Consequently, rebuilding the local economy was seen as a priority to achieve the resilient and vital cities and towns envisioned. The goal is to retain and re-circulate as many local dollars as possible in the local economy. This was seen as key to strengthening households, contributing to vibrant communities and supporting the school community – allowing schools to focus on their core mission – educating students.

Other priorities include:

- **Ongoing communication and coordination** among stakeholders (school districts, jurisdictions, WSDOT) to track issues and opportunities, problem solve, collaborate on solutions, and integrate long and short term plans – including capital facility plans;
- **Increasing opportunities for safe travel for all** by building sidewalks and bike lanes especially within walking or biking distance to schools, to close by services, and other destinations including recreation facilities like parks and trails;
- **Acknowledging the ongoing cost for school bus transport**, making these services as efficient as possible and encouraging use by students, rather than adding the burden of extra trips on the roads by parent drop-off and pick-up – increasing traffic to and around schools;
- **Efficient use of existing road and school facilities, leveraging any new investments** in school and transportation networks to maximize return to the local community and region. It is through focused growth, communication and cooperation that south county quality of life can be preserved and grown.



Did you know... the Healthy Kids - Safe Streets Action Plan is the result of community discussions that asked the question “Why can’t kids walk and bike to school”? The Plan goal is to: Build a generation of healthy and safe walkers, bicycle and bus riders.

South County Schools and Transportation Panel Process

Panel Discussion, Process and Panel Members

The South Thurston County Schools and Transportation Panel met to articulate issues related to transportation but also to address the issue of school siting and how the location and design of access to schools affects our community. The panel held four discussion sessions where panel members were able to share their knowledge of the issue from the standpoint of the school districts, the jurisdictions, parents, students and Washington State Department of Transportation. The scope of the discussion included a wide array of subjects including land use, school siting, communication, safety, infrastructure improvements around schools, health of families and students, and need for education and encouragement programs for students, parents, and the community.

Who was involved?

Andy Wolf – Yelm Community Schools, Superintendent
Grant Beck – Yelm Community Planning and Development, Director
Tim Garchow – Rainier School District No. 307, Superintendent
Dennis McVey – Rainier City Council
Russell Pickett – Tenino School District No. 402, Superintendent
Bret Brodersen – Tenino City Council
Connor Stakelin – Tenino High School Student, Leadership Program
Kim Fry – Rochester School District No. 401, Superintendent
Steve Bennett and TJ Nedrow – WA State Department of Transportation

Staff: Kathy McCormick, TRPC staff
Fred Evander, TRPC (contract staff to Tenino, Rainier and Bucoda)
Paul Brewster, TRPC staff

South County Schools and Transportation Panel Task

- A. **Prepare a “South County Schools and Transportation White Paper” that will include:**
1. Identified goals and current actions/steps taken
 2. Challenges/barriers to achieving identified goals
 3. Some opportunities to overcome identified challenges/barriers
- B. **Why does this matter? What are some key costs/benefits of opportunities identified related to:**
1. Economic
 2. Social
 3. Environmental
 4. Energy Efficiency



South County Schools and Transportation Discussion

The following reflects the panel discussion regarding what is occurring now, issues related to schools and transportation, as well as some opportunities to overcome these issues. During the discussion, panel members also identified the goals for schools and transportation and the implications for the economy, society, environment, and energy efficiency.

South County School and Transportation Issues/Problems/Challenges AND Some Opportunities To Overcome These

ISSUE: Land use patterns are the overriding reason that rural schools have problems with trip reduction to and around schools.

Many areas are characterized by low density within walking/biking distance to school and very low density in county areas with few transportation options. Growth in rural areas has increased the burden for rural school districts who have the responsibility to transport students to school safely.

Some Opportunities to Overcome – Issues/Problems/Challenges

1. Focus growth to increase opportunity for students and others to live closer to schools (which can serve as both school and community activity centers). Additional benefits of infill:
 - Creates demand for readily accessible goods and services within walking – or short driving distance of more housing, supporting the local economy, adding jobs and re-circulating local dollars;
 - Increases local tax base – possibly lowering current property taxes;
 - Offers additional revenue to build needed infrastructure to support an active – less auto dependent activity center and community (more people live within walking/biking distance and those who drive and park in the town center can access a variety of services on foot)
 - Reduces household transportation costs if day to day needs can be satisfied locally
2. Accommodate future students at existing school sites as much as possible

Note: *Re-investment in existing schools can serve to revitalize existing neighborhoods and communities and attract added investment to the area.*
3. Plan and design new school sites within more dense neighborhoods to allow as much active travel (walking and biking) to school as possible (as well as decrease need for additional school buses)

ISSUE: State highways are major road connections passing through central areas of Yelm, Rainier, Tenino and Rochester.

WSDOT regulations/processes control changes along State highway corridors. Even where students live close to a school, crossing busy State highway routes is a problem for both school districts and parents concerned with safety. In addition, the lack of some street or path connections can make for a circuitous trip from home to school.

Some Opportunities to Overcome – Issues/Problems/Challenges

1. Build frontage roads as part of development when locating schools adjacent to State highways, to accommodate safe access to school sites.

Did You Know... Yelm School District buses travel 3000 miles/day. (Source: Yelm School District)

...Sprawl patterns and larger school site development has increased the percentage of students living farther from school. (Source: Federal Highway Administration, National Travel Survey)

Did You Know... The average cost for car ownership, maintenance and use is about \$9000/year. (Source: AAA)

...The average household in Thurston County spends 52% of its income on housing and transportation costs alone. A household is considered financially stressed when it spends more than 45% of income on housing and transportation. For low income households the percentage is even higher. (Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology and Thurston Regional Planning Council)

...Parents driving students to school rather than having students walk, bike or ride the bus are paying twice to transport students to school since school bus transport is support by the State with the remainder from local tax levy'. Average State support for school transportation is 68% of the total cost. (Source: OSPI)

2. Retrofit existing school site areas and plan for new schools with good access including sidewalk and path connections from student residences to the school.
3. Review the Capital Facility Plan and implement mitigation or impact fees to help cover the cost of infrastructure needs resulting from growth.
4. Make safe access improvements – especially around schools – a transportation funding priority.
5. Include infrastructure improvements in close proximity to schools in bond measures.

Note: *Although these may add costs, some in the community could view these improvements as benefits to the entire community – which could generate support.*

6. Review development regulations with the goal of making development as cost effective as possible while meeting safety and quality standards.

Examples of development regulations to review: *Building setback requirements that decrease the amount of land available for development; parking standards that could add unnecessarily to cost; and density limits that prevent walkable neighborhoods from emerging (low density separates uses from one another and discourages walking from one place to another).*

7. Coordinate and cooperate (WSDOT, school districts and jurisdictions) to resolve issues of safe walk/bike routes when planning or retrofitting school access.
8. Support and encourage safe walking/biking by resolving safety issues with:

- Infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, crossings, signs and pedestrian activated – or other – traffic signal systems offering the best solution for the situation)
- Priority safety improvement identification through a walk route map development process. These are required by the State for all elementary schools. TRPC is working with school districts and jurisdictions from the region to efficiently develop a map that can identify the best walk routes and safety improvements, as well as educate students and parents about safe walking, biking and driving..

- Crossing guard programs

Note: *Tenino, Rainier and Rochester currently use crossing guards. The Rainier program will have one more year with paid adult guards and then will transition to a middle school student crossing guard program. While adult paid crossing guards can cost \$2300 - \$6000/year this is minimal compared to the cost of traffic signals which can cost \$300,000. However, traffic signals add safety throughout the day – while crossing guard programs provide safety during student morning and afternoon travel periods 180 days/year.*

- Design of entries to schools that separate walk and bike arrivals from those arriving by buses or cars to increase safety.
- Slow speeds on portions of State highways adjacent to school crossing areas

Note: *While the beginning and end of the school day is the key period of time – school facilities will be used all day (making safety in these areas a priority throughout the day)*

Did you know... Students are three times more likely to start walking or bicycling on routes that include improvements than they were before these improvements were made. (Source: UC Berkeley Traffic Center)

ISSUE: Conflicting Missions of Stakeholders.

1. **School District interest** – to educate, provide facilities and resources to support student learning, and protect student safety;
2. **WSDOT interest** – to keep traffic moving safely along interstate highway systems:
Issue: Decreasing revenue to maintain or improve conditions and support programs.
 - Gas tax revenue does not keep up with demand - results in less money for safety infrastructure improvements and maintenance
 - Possibility of fewer funds for safe routes to school programs and other Commute Trip Reduction programs in the future
3. **City and County interest** – Provide a safe transportation network that meets the needs of all modes of travel; get a handle on the growth of peak hour trips by offering viable options for travelers; and maximize the use of streets and trails for a variety of modes of travel.
4. **Parent interest** - Student safety especially where there is no sidewalk, or safe crossings; health and readiness to learn; safety of students from sex offenders or other “stranger danger” fear.

Issues: All south county areas have school crossings across State highways (H510 Yelm; H507 Yelm, Rainier, Tenino; H512 Rochester).

- Rural school bus routes sometimes make for a very long student ride (must serve far flung areas and make frequent stops dropping students at their driveways).
- Winter darkness and rain. Students may benefit from active travel to school but if they arrive wet and cold they may not be ready to learn.
- Parent work pattern/household pattern or convenience.

Note: *Students dropped off at school on parents work schedule. Some students are dropped at school long before school begins which creates an increased burden for schools especially as parents travel longer distances for work (result of South County becoming more of a “bedroom community” to Puget Sound region job centers).*

- Student health
- “Stranger danger” fear – The availability of information about sex offender residences increases fears about student safety.

Note: *Local housing experts note that there are several different levels of sex offenders and despite the circumstances these criminal records follow them for many years – making it difficult to find housing or employment and limiting opportunities to re-enter society.*

5. **No existing forum for coordination/cooperation** and the practical issue of the current responsibility of city and town councils, as well as school districts and the lack of staff to convene stakeholders.



Did you know... As much as 20% - 30% of morning traffic is generated by parents driving their children to schools. (Source: US Environmental Protection Agency)

...That 20% of ALL Thurston County residents (students and staff) go to a K-12 facility each day of the school year. (Source: Thurston Regional Planning Council)

Did you know... Children have become more sedentary increasing risk for diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease at a young age. (Source: American Academy of Pediatrics)

...In WA State obesity rates have more than doubled since 1990. In 2005 11% of 10th graders were obese and 14% were overweight. Overweight children and adults are at risk for developing chronic disease. (Source: Thurston County Health Department)

... In a national poll parents ranked obesity as the number one potential threat to their children's health – topping drugs, alcohol and tobacco use. (Source: University of Michigan)

ISSUE: Lack of ongoing coordination and relationship building between school district, jurisdictions and WSDOT regarding safety and facility needs as changes occur in school and area populations, programs such as Walk & Roll are proposed, or as capital facility planning occurs.

Some Opportunities to Overcome – Issues/Problems/Challenges

1. Establish an opportunity for ongoing communication that can track issues and opportunities and develop relationships that can enhance problem solving, and cooperation toward finding and collaborating on solutions.

Note: *Some communication already occurring in South County but not formalized or consistent. Increased coordination could occur with periodic meetings (such as twice/year) unless opportunities arose to respond to an impending opportunity. The purpose would be: to work cooperatively on grants, track growth and coordinate capital facility planning, and share ideas for problem resolution. TRPC could facilitate these meetings as part of the base transportation program.*

2. Improve safety with infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, marked crossing, traffic lights/beacons), crossing guards, slower speeds.
3. Maintain traffic law enforcement and add safety education and encouragement programs around school areas including:
 - Incentives to break patterns and habits – i.e. parents walk to school with students once/week,
 - Form “walking school buses” with parents walking with a group of students to and from school,
 - Have students ride the school bus.
4. Use education and encouragement programs in schools and communities aimed at vehicle trip reduction and student safety
 - Walk & Roll type education and encouragement programs at elementary and middle schools
 - Safety and trip reduction programs at high schools such as “Target Zero” which is aimed at distracted driving awareness as well as encouragement to reduce trips
 - “Safety Without Fear” programs with child development specialists and others that give parents tools to deal with both founded and unfounded fears. (See K. below)
5. Use Walk & Roll “Pace Car” pledge program to raise awareness throughout the community to drive within the speed limit and limit vehicle idling to decrease air pollution.

Did you know... Safe Routes to School pedestrian and bicycle programs decreased accident rates around schools by up to 49%. (Source: *Safe Routes to School Safety and Mobility Analysis, UC Berkeley Traffic Center*)

ISSUE: School bus funding lacking as demand and fuel costs increase. State pays a state-wide average of 68% of school bus costs.

Efficiencies will continue to be needed. School bus funding will continue to be a challenge to school district budgets. Loss of school buses will increase trips to and around schools (one less option for those living far from schools) decreasing safety for all.

Some Opportunities to Overcome – Issues/Problems/Challenges

1. Implement route and equipment efficiency wherever possible.

Example: *Yelm School District has increased efficiency by using a transfer hub for some students. Yelm serves a large area. Its buses travel 3000 miles per day*

2. Increase opportunities for more families to live in town – especially close to existing schools by encouraging increased density in school neighborhoods

ISSUE: Parent fears/concern about student safety (both founded and unfounded).

Difficulty overcoming parent traffic safety fear (for walking and bike riding), bullying on bus fear, and “stranger danger” fear.

Some Opportunities to Overcome – Issues/Problems/Challenges

1. State, cities and school districts work together to identify options and work cooperatively to resolve safety issues.
2. School and school bus driver anti-bullying programs
3. “Safety Without Fear” presentations and discussion at schools with parents. This can be done as part of a Walk & Roll type education and encouragement program or as stand-alone program offered within the community. A child development specialist from South Puget Sound Community College facilitates these information/discussion sessions.

Note: The following is an excerpt from a Candyce Lund Bollinger Safety Without Fear Presentation and Discussion as part of a Walk & Roll education and encouragement program.

Overprotection has a cost

It is costing our kids their health. The lack of exercise that they get from staying inside four walls at home results in poor health, obesity, diabetes, and lifelong health risks. There is a cost to the community. The ties of our community are severed as we all turn inward and fear each other too much to interact. Part of kids’ safety is having a large circle of caring. The climate of fear results in a shrinking circle of caring. Kids are less safe because they don’t know their neighbors.

Adults and children live with a constant low level of fear that makes it impossible for them to distinguish actual signs of danger and respond appropriately. We should teach our children that the world is a good place, and then when they see something that is truly unsafe, they will be able to recognize it as strange and take action to become safer.

If your kids are told that strangers are not safe, then they have no one to go to for help. Kids need to be taught to be aware of “signs of strangeness” not strangers.

Did you know... As much as 20% - 30% of morning traffic is generated by parents driving children to school. (Source: US Environmental Protection Agency)

...Being driven to school is by far the most dangerous way to get there. Seventy-five percent of fatalities and 84% of injuries occur in passenger vehicles. (Source: American Academy of Pediatrics)

...Half of children struck by cars near schools are hit by parents driving other children to school. (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

...Schools with safe routes to school education and encouragement programs reduce the incidence of accidents around schools by 49% (Source: UC Berkeley Traffic Center)



What are some “threats” – Issues outside of local government’s ability to resolve within the region? ***(i.e. would need action at State or Federal level, or with decision makers outside the Thurston region.)***

Federal and State law “responsibility creep” for school districts for:

1. Transporting students safely to and from school

Note: *The State pays about 68% of the cost of school busing. Changes at the State level have shifted more costs to school districts. Increased State share of transportation costs for school districts is unlikely. Even if increases in education occur over time (or because of the pending Washington State Supreme Court case) transportation is not likely to be a priority.*

2. Increased focus on academic skills testing leaves little or no time for additional programs such as safety education

Note: *Schools have students for 6.5 hours/day - not a lot of time to accomplish mandates as well as additional program opportunities like travel safety skills*

3. Federal and State unfunded mandates – Example: Requirement that a homeless student be transported to the last address school service area

Did you know... The State spent \$262 million on student transportation while school districts around the State spent \$389 million to fill the student transportation funding gap.

JBLM noise creation affecting South County residents

1. Joint Base Lewis McCord night-time artillery and air exercises that create noise issues disrupting sleep including student sleep

Note: *Superintendents noted that the week that students were taking State mandated tests was the same week that JBLM chose to perform noise producing night-time exercises.*

Some Opportunities to Overcome – Issues/Problems/Challenges

1. TRPC and Thurston County are partners in the South Sound Military and Community Partnership agreement. There may be possibilities to address this issue so that testing and military exercise schedules can be better coordinated.
2. Information and education programs that increase awareness of “responsibility creep” for school districts. Community-wide advocacy and support for relief for school districts



South County Schools and Transportation Panel Over-riding Problems, Goals and Implications

Over-riding Problems

1. Too few students walk, bike or take the bus to school
2. Too many parents drive students to school adding peak hour traffic to and around schools, decreasing safety and contributing to increased vehicle miles traveled and increase in air pollution
3. Too few students get enough daily physical activity – increasing health risks (diabetes, hypertension, heart disease at a young age)
4. Students who don't exercise have been shown to exhibit less readiness to learn
5. Students not allowed to walk or bike to school or take the bus don't get an opportunity to learn and practice safety and independence skills – including developing good instincts about people

Goals

1. Increase communication between school districts and state, regional, city and county government (planning/public works/law enforcement/WSDOT, and TRPC) for: 1) early and ongoing communication and coordination of facility improvements or capital projects to identify the best solutions to problems, and 2) collaboration on grants or other opportunities – such as co-location of facilities - parks and schools, or libraries or community centers and schools.
2. Build a new generation of safe and healthy walkers, bike riders and bus riders,
3. Promote regular physical activity so students stay strong, healthy and ready to learn,
4. Reinforce good traffic safety skills

Implications of the South County issues/challenges identified (to region, south county, schools, jurisdictions, households)

Economic Implications

1. Increase in fuel costs add to stressed household incomes as travel to jobs and services becomes more costly.
2. Most money spent on fuel is not re-circulated in the community, the region, the state or even the country.
3. Poor citizen health stresses household as well as community resources
4. Increasing poverty levels in south county households (as indicated by increase in free and reduced lunch eligibility)
5. Depressed household economics affects town economy and the ability of area residents to satisfy day to day service needs close by.
6. Few rental housing choices (current defaults on loans has left households with few rental options in the area). New housing costly due to infrastructure needs, increase cost of materials, and other requirements that must be met for new construction (Example given: ADA requirements)
7. Land use decisions that focus growth and increase density will offer fewer infrastructure costs to the city and more tax base return as growth supports more locally accessible business.

Did you know... that 50% of students living within ½ mile of school are being driven to school (Source: *National Safe Routes to School and Thurston Regional Planning Council - Walk & Roll school surveys*)

Did you know... the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 60 minutes of activity a day. (2009)

Did you know...Walking to school is associated with higher physical activity throughout the day and better academic performance.

...Students who exercise especially in the morning – tend to get more exercise throughout the day (Source: *American Journal of Preventative Medicine and CA Dept of Education*)

Did you know... Households in compact development consume 20% to 50% less water than in typical suburban neighborhoods – primarily as a result of less irrigation for landscaping. (Source: US EPA –2006)

...Compared to a 2400 sq.ft. single family house, a 2000 sq.ft. apartment produces 30% less greenhouse gas emissions from energy use. (Source: Transportation Research Board, 2009)

...Guidelines, recommendations, and standards that encourage or require building large schools on new campuses or discourage renovation are embedded in a variety of state and local regulations, laws and funding formulas. School siting and design decision can affect choices of walking, biking or driving. In turn, these changes in travel choices could affect traffic congestion, air pollution and school transportation budgets. (Source: US Environmental Protection Agency)

Social Implications

1. Lack of affordable housing opportunities stresses families, schools, and community support networks
2. Cost of health care and/or catastrophic illness is the number one reason for bankruptcy filings (i.e. someone in household gets sick – a family with little or no health insurance can quickly become overwhelmed with medical bills)

Note: School districts and jurisdictions discussed an apparent lack of rental opportunity in Rainier, Tenino and Rochester – exacerbated when families lose their homes to foreclosure. Data shows that south county towns have the lowest percentage of rentals in the region.

3. Lack of economic opportunity leads to social malaise and makes it difficult to move from reaction to the current economic downturn to action and the planning that could occur to improve future local economics

Environmental Implications

1. Increase in vehicle miles traveled and less efficient use of existing land unless future growth is focused as much as possible.
2. Continued development at low density separates residences from one another and from services increasing auto dependence negatively affecting the environment (air, water). By developing within already developed areas or within urban growth areas at densities high enough to support some services within walking, biking or short driving distance of residences the effects of growth on the environment can be reduced.

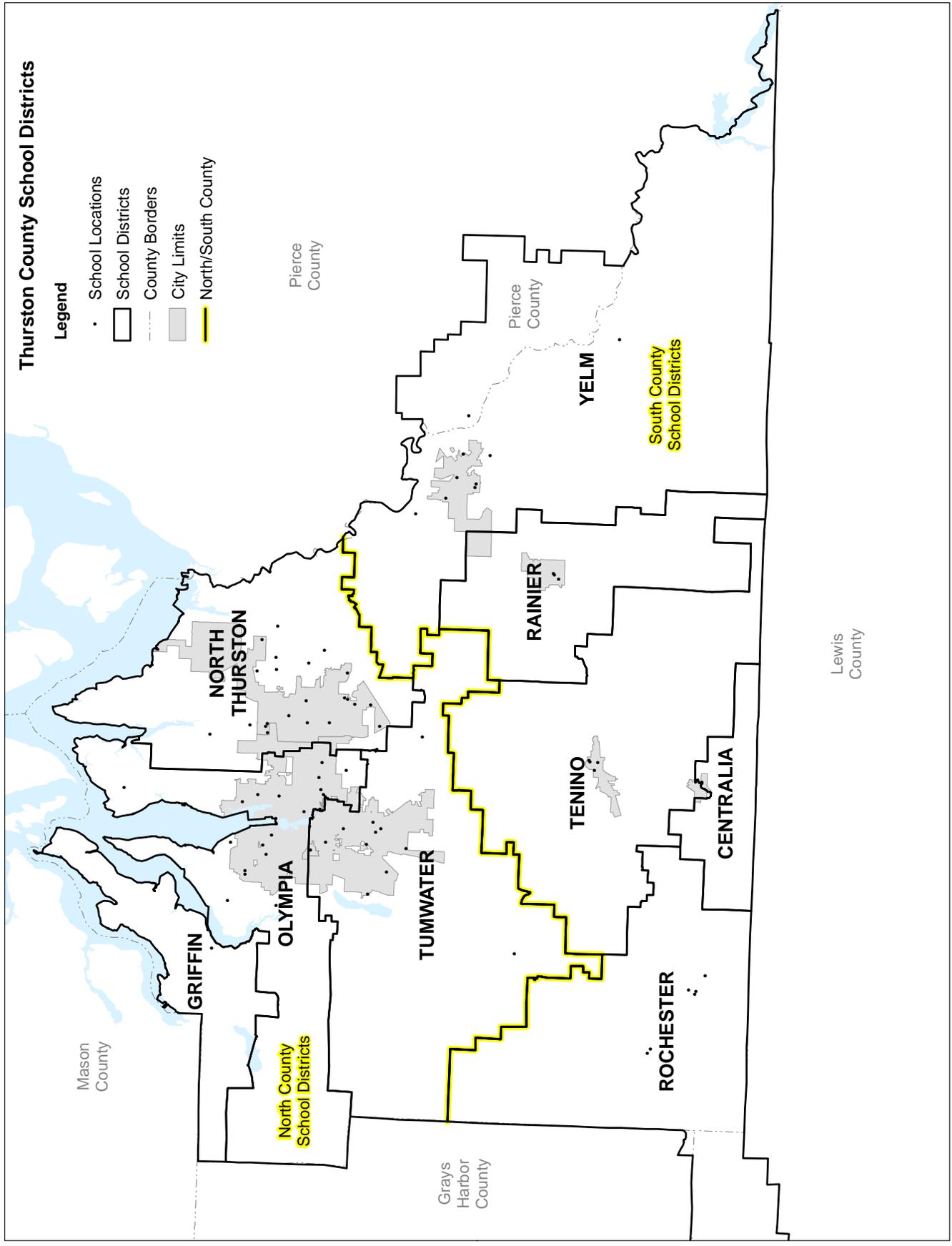
Energy Efficiency Implications

1. Focused growth will lead to less auto dependence and less use of fossil fuels. Multifamily and smaller houses on smaller lots are also more energy and natural resource efficient than large lot, low density development.



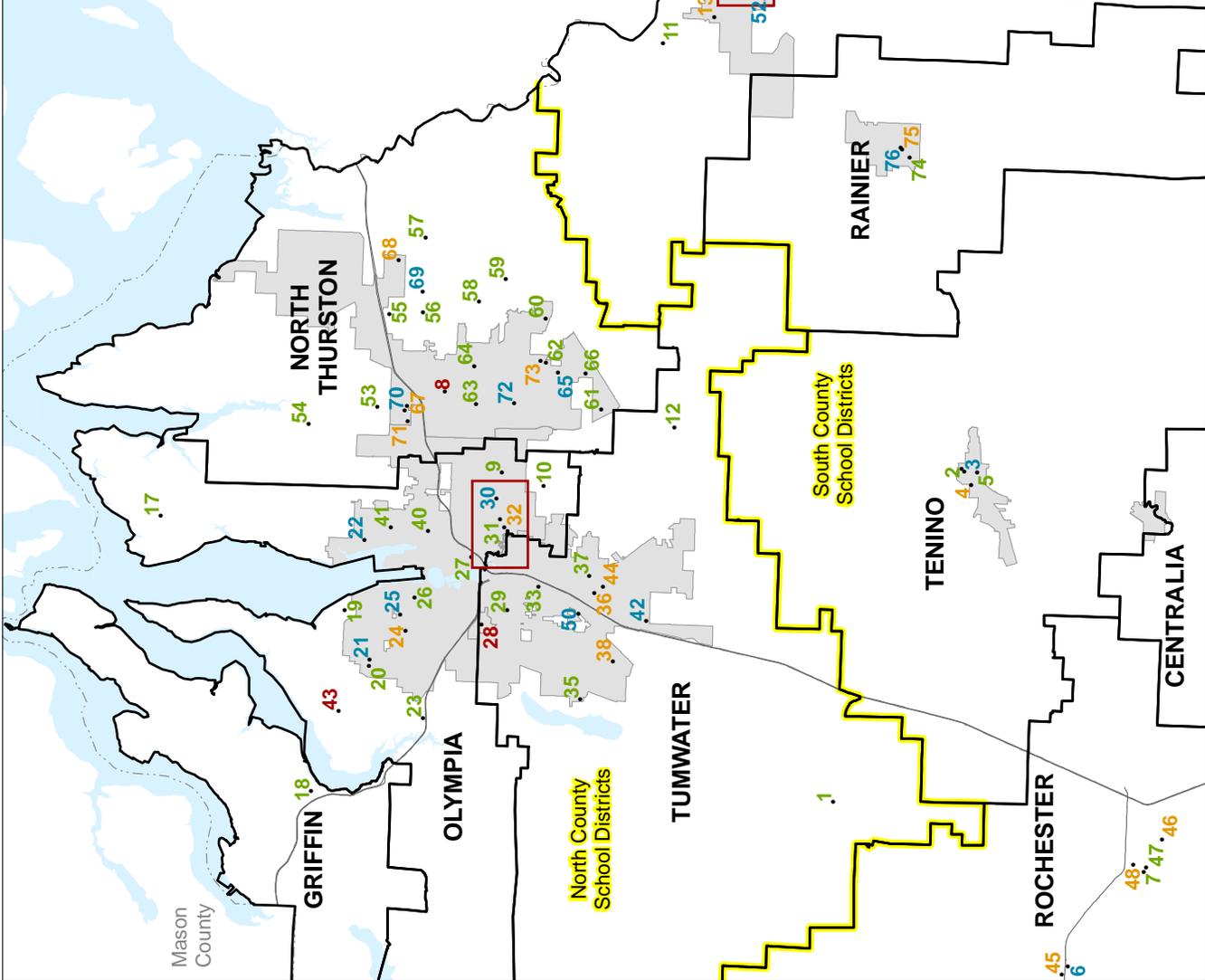
Thurston County School Districts

- Legend**
- School Locations
 - ▭ School Districts
 - - - County Borders
 - ▭ City Limits
 - ▬ North/South County



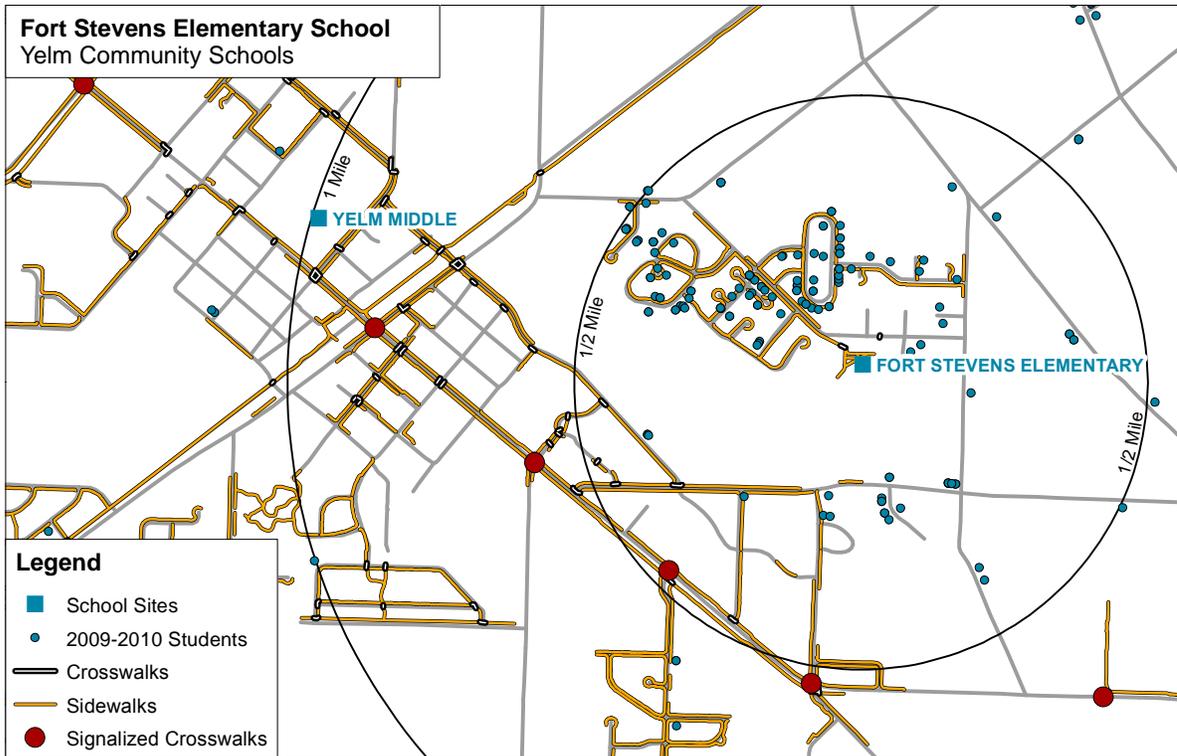
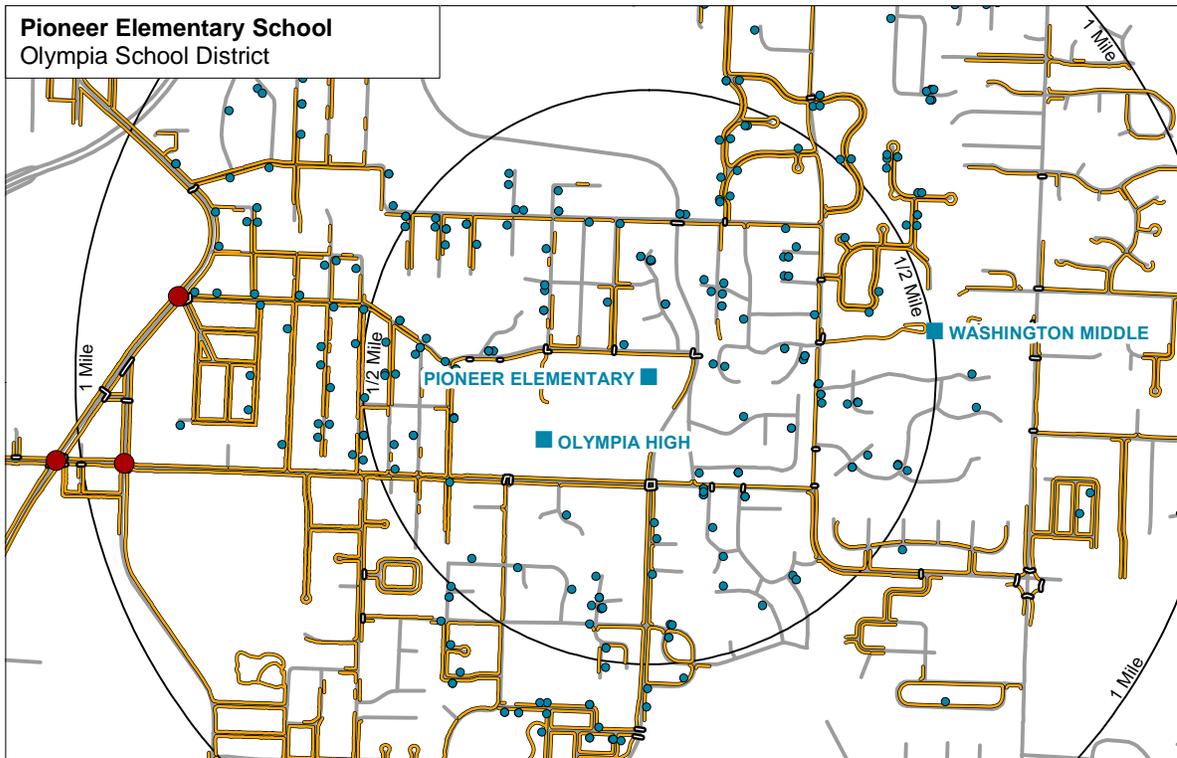
Thurston County Schools

ID	Name	ID	Name
1	LITTLE ROCK ELEMENTARY	24	CAPITAL HIGH
2	TENINO ELEMENTARY	25	JEFFERSON MIDDLE
3	TENINO MIDDLE	26	GARFIELD ELEMENTARY
4	TENINO HIGH	27	LINCOLN ELEMENTARY
5	PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY	28	SOUTH PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY CO
6	ROCHESTER MIDDLE	29	TUMWATER HILL ELEMENTARY
7	GRAND MOUND ELEMENTARY	30	WASHINGTON MIDDLE
8	ST MARTINS UNIVERSITY	31	PIONEER ELEMENTARY
9	MCKENNY ELEMENTARY	32	OLYMPIA HIGH
10	CENTENNIAL ELEMENTARY	33	MT SIMMONS ELEMENTARY
11	SOUTHWORTH ELEMENTARY	35	BLACK LAKE ELEMENTARY
12	EAST OLYMPIA ELEMENTARY	36	TUMWATER HIGH
13	YELM HIGH	37	PETER G SCHMIDT ELEMENTARY
14	YELM MIDDLE	38	BLACK HILLS HIGH
15	FORT STEVENS ELEMENTARY	40	MADISON ELEMENTARY
16	MILL POND ELEMENTARY	41	ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY
17	BOSTON HARBOR ELEMENTARY	42	G W BUSH MIDDLE
18	GRIFFIN ELEMENTARY	43	EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE
19	LP BROWN ELEMENTARY	44	NEW MARKET SKILLS CENTER
20	HANSEN ELEMENTARY	45	H.E.A.R.T HIGH
21	MARSHALL MIDDLE	46	MAPLE LANE
22	REEVES MIDDLE	47	ROCHESTER PRIMARY
23	MCLANE ELEMENTARY	48	ROCHESTER HIGH
		50	TUMWATER MIDDLE
		52	RIDGELINE MIDDLE
		53	PLEASANT GLADE ELEMENTARY
		54	SOUTH BAY ELEMENTARY
		55	OLYMPIC VIEW ELEMENTARY
		56	LYDIA HAWK ELEMENTARY
		57	MEADOWS ELEMENTARY
		58	SEVEN OAKS ELEMENTARY
		59	EVERGREEN FOREST ELEMENTARY
		60	WOODLAND ELEMENTARY
		61	HORIZONS ELEMENTARY
		62	LAKES ELEMENTARY
		63	MT VIEW ELEMENTARY
		64	LACEY ELEMENTARY
		65	ASPIRE MIDDLE
		66	CHAMBERS PRAIRIE ELEMENTARY
		67	SOUTH SOUND HIGH
		68	RIVER RIDGE HIGH
		69	NISQUALLY MIDDLE
		70	CHINOOK MIDDLE
		71	NORTH THURSTON HIGH
		72	KOMACHIN MIDDLE
		73	TIMBERLINE HIGH
		74	RAINIER PRIMARY
		75	RAINIER HIGH
		76	RAINIER ELEM/MIDDLE
		77	YELM PRAIRIE ELEMENTARY
		78	LAKAWAS ELEMENTARY
		79	MCKENNA ELEMENTARY



Text Indicates School Type:

- College
- High School / Alternative
- Middle School
- Elementary School



Percent Distribution of Distances That Students Live Away From School (Fall 2010 Enrollment Data)

Elementary School	Total Students	Students that live within:							
		1/4 mile	%	1/2 mile	%	1 mile	%	> mile	%
Peter G., Tumwater	577	23	4%	127	22%	278	48%	249	52%
Pioneer, Olympia*	360	35	10%	160	44%	319	89%	41	11%
Fort Stevens, Yelm	506	67	13%	142	28%	228	45%	278	55%
Mill Pond, Yelm	528	47	9%	186	35%	312	59%	216	41%

*Fall 2009 Enrollment Data

Appendices

- Appendix A. Draft School District and Local Plan Policy Recommendations
These were compiled for consideration and adoption into local and school district plans.
- Appendix B. Examples of Action Initiatives, Policies and Programs from Other Areas
While not an exhaustive list – it identifies some actions taken by other areas to collaborate and cooperate toward the goal of developing a generation of healthy and safe walkers, bicycle and bus riders.
- Appendix C. Planning for Schools & Liveable Communities – The Oregon School Siting Handbook – Recommendations
These recommendations recognize the challenges involved in siting schools and identify specific actions school districts and cities can take to make better school siting decisions.
- Appendix D. Barriers to Walking and Bicycling to School
National Safe Routes to School Survey and results of March 2010 Walk & Roll Thurston County School Program.

Healthy Kids – Safe Streets Action Plan

Draft School District and Local Plan Policy Recommendations

School District and Local Jurisdiction Plans

- 1. Add policy to school district and local plans** establishing a communication process among stakeholders at the earliest stages of planning for new or retrofit infrastructure (school sites, park sites, bike, pedestrian and bus network)

“Representatives of school districts, local planning, public works, park departments and Intercity Transit should be identified and agree to meet at the very earliest stages of planning for new facilities (i.e. schools, additions to - or maintenance of - the transportation network, or siting of parks) in order to consider benefits of collaboration, connections or co-location of facilities that encourage walking, biking or transit use.”

- 2. Add policy commitment to school district and local plans** to examine long range cost/benefit analysis of school siting decisions. Include long term transportation costs to the community as a whole (school district, households), and the cost/benefit to students able to walk and bike to school.

“School district and local planning representatives will work to identify long term/holistic costs/benefits of various school siting options in order to maximize both short and long term goals for student health, as well as efficient use of land and local resources. Use tools such as Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for evaluating the health effects of a policy, project or program and invite local health officials into the process.”

- 3. Add policy language to school district and local plans** for early coordination between school district and local planning representative for design discussions of school layout, bike, pedestrian and transit linkages and focused infrastructure improvements (that result in safe walking, biking and fewer vehicle miles traveled to school). This should include drop-off and pickup areas that separate vehicles from walk and bike arrival areas; and front entrance overhangs for bike parking protection, with adjacent windows and occupied spaces that can preclude bicycle theft.

- “ School districts, local planning, public works departments, and transit agencies will work collaboratively early in the design stages of new or retrofit school sites to maximize safety and increase health and wellbeing of students and neighborhoods by establishing safe walking and biking networks, connections and safe arrival areas.”*
- “School districts and jurisdiction planners will make improvements around schools a high priority within 1 mile of school – focusing effort within ½ mile whenever possible.”*
- “School districts should enter into agreements to use parking lots with light use - during school drop-off and pick-up times (i.e. church parking lots) - that are within walking*

distance of schools, to assure cleaner air around schools and encourage all students to get some exercise.” Church parking lots located within walking distance of schools are already serving some school districts. Oak Harbor has a walking school bus program from a church parking lot site in action now.

- d. *“Identify where added bike/pedestrian connections – such as linked cul-de-sacs – can encourage walking and biking from the neighborhood to schools and other destinations.”*

Action for policy discussion and agreement of 1-3 above: Convene a discussion group of the school district, jurisdiction and other stakeholders to:

- e. Review draft policy language and get agreement to include policies in plan update processes;
- f. Consider collaboration to identify ways to better fund infrastructure improvements to and around schools;
- g. Consider pulling resources to jointly apply for grants for infrastructure improvements;
- h. Consider smaller school site templates where collaboration can supply some shared facilities instead of requiring large tracts of land (i.e. shared sport facilities rather than large acreage school sites that drive schools to fringe areas where walking and biking by many students is difficult or impossible.)

Examples of Programs, Action Initiatives, and Policies from Other Areas

Programs

Marin County, CA – 10 year old Walk and Bike promotion program – 11% of a transportation tax used for the school program (coordination, information and events, crossing guards and infrastructure improvements)

The Marin program was the prototype for the National Safe Routes To School federally funded program

Full range of bike/ped and transit education/encouragement programs over 10 years

“Green Teen” program (cleans and refurbishes donated bikes for distribution to students who need them)

Portland, OR –

Portland’s Safer Routes to School program launched in the summer of 2005, using funds from an increase in City traffic fin revenues. The comprehensive five-year pilot program involved eight elementary schools the first year, with schools added each year. Safer Routes to School – Portland is designed to increase the number of kids walking and biking to school using elements from the “6 E’s” – Encouragement, Education, Engineering, Enforcement, Equity and Evaluation – and is modeled after the highly successful Marin County national model program.

The program now has on-going funding from the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation’s Community and School Traffic Safety Partnership (CSTSP). The CSTSP is a community-based coalition-led effort to improve traffic safety in Portland.

Clarke County, WA – Battleground School District – Walking School Bus program - Instead of school buses – pay employees to be “walking school bus monitors”

The new Battleground co-located elementary and middle school is in a new large subdivision area with a good sidewalk network

Saved money by using a formal “Walking School Bus” program instead of school buses (school staff are paid to pick up students along a walk route and accompany them to and from school – 100 students per day participate in walking school bus program)

Boulder, Colorado - Freiker (frequent biker) program - Computer scanner at school entrance keeps track of walkers and bike riders - and encourages them

Prototype demonstrations 2010 - Reeves Middle School and Roosevelt Elementary (State SRTS grant awarded to IT)

Computer scanner system tracks bike riders and walkers. Information used to track success and for awards. Program designed by some Dads in Boulder with the goal of using technology to encourage and track walkers and bike riders simply and with little disruption to the school day (no in-class surveys necessary).

Seattle and Bellevue Area Schools – purchase of King County Metro Bus passes for students and supplemental bus service in Bellevue area. Provides service for students no matter where they attend school and grows a generation of public transportation users.

Lane County, OR - Transit - Student Bus Pass Program – Lane County Transit gets reimbursed through the Oregon State Business/Energy Tax Credit program and a bank community reinvestment fund.

Eugene/Springfield – School Carpool Program – Kindergarten – Grade 12 program – Uses Ride-Pro program to match interested carpoolers through school. Advertised via school flyers and questionnaire. Matches can be limited to a specific school – matches approach one another. There is a disclaimer for liability purposes. The 5 year old program has had no incidents.

Action Initiatives - Collaboration

Clarke County “Quality Schools Coalition” – Collaboration and Communication Organization with representatives of the School Districts (superintendent and school board member) with county and city planning departments.

Available for problem solving or collaboration - organization pulls in others as needed (public works departments, realtors, master builder organization)

Track and discuss growth trends and how to serve existing and new populations with quality schools

Deal with issues such as school siting and an impact fee increase plan

Auburn, WA – Regional collaborative approach – pull resources for grants – focus on fixing unsafe walking/biking conditions for students living close to school

Since 1995 Auburn’s regional approach results include:

- 1) \$500,000 in grants for safety improvements,
- 2) 20% more students have a safe walking environment and don’t need to be bused,

3) Save \$240,000/year in transportation costs.

School Siting, Design and Co-location

Did You Know...that only 40% of elementary and middle school students live within 2 miles of school in the U.S. (Source: Safe Routes to School National Partnership)

Bremerton – School Siting Criteria, Analysis and Prototype Project

With state planning grant funds the community identified school siting criteria which were used to analyze 3 sites based on consistence with adopted plans, and benefits to students, neighborhood and community

Identified school form and configuration prototypes using standard and less than standard acreage

Glendale, CA – Built joint facilities combining school/park/community center/library

Glendale figured out a way to combined school, community center and library in one building and a park on one site. The community center and library have a separate entrance and operate from 3:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Beaverton, OR – Built school and park on one site

Pamona, CA – Redeveloped a deteriorated mall and run down grocery store into a vibrant education facility for kindergarten - high school students. The site also houses district administrative offices.

Boise High School – Renovate rather than abandon. Create parking overlay zone that allows students to park on the street with a parking pass (475 passes allowed by lottery). Parking agreement with church to allow 45 parking spaces to be used by school faculty and students. Add more bike racks in convenient and safe place. School district buys bus passes.

Mt. Vernon School District – made a decision not to bus students within one mile of school – to be phased in over two years – with \$120,000 in savings shifted to healthy food fund. Not implemented yet.

Beaverton, OR – Facility plan in 2002 identified the number of schools needed over 20 years. Recommendations included: **1) Decrease the amount of land required** (a Charrette identified a design for a compact elementary school that could be built on 2 acres as part of a Transit Oriented Development); **2) Partner with park and recreation department to decrease the acreage needed** by combining joint use recreation facilities; **3) Intensity use of existing school**

buildings and sites (used a larger existing elementary school – renovated it to a middle school and found a smaller site for the elementary school).

Bend, OR – Bend/LaPine School District study recommended developing a small school prototype (300 capacity instead of 600) “smaller schools should be easier to site”. On a 5 acre site 250 of 300 students can walk to school; eliminated all but one bus; 2 story building design with a combined gym/cafeteria.

Roseburg, OR – Built a 2 story classroom addition rather than build an additional high school at a separate site. Were able to maintain the historic 1924 location

Law and Policy Examples

Oregon law requires collaboration for the largest and fastest growing school districts. Requirements include regular meeting, coordinated ballot measures and district presentations to land use planning policy makers.

Oregon School Siting Handbook Recommendations - 1) Recognize school siting decisions benefit the entire community; 2) School sites should take full advantage of existing resources; 3) School sites should be easily and safely accessed by walking, biking and transit (acknowledge that proximity is key); 4) School site should be a community focal point.

New Jersey policy “Ensure that school construction initiatives promote smart growth, open space and revitalization goals of communities.” Smart growth planning grants are available to help meet goals.

Beaverton, OR – “Take steps to site facilities in a manner that reduces overall demand for land, and makes efficient use of land and facility planning a priority.” Goal is to decrease acreage size criteria for school sites; partner with park and recreation district; and intensity use of existing school building.

Recommendations

Recognizing that there are challenges involved in siting schools, what specific actions can school districts and cities take to facilitate better siting decisions? The recommendations that follow suggest ways to turn challenges into opportunities and select school sites that are consistent with the guiding principles listed in this handbook.



1

School Siting Decisions Benefit the Entire Community

“Get a headstart. Long range planning is the key. Do it before there is pressure to build. This way you can be more systematic about it and make more rational decisions.”

– Steve Barrett
Assistant Superintendent
Springfield School District

Develop a school facilities plan.

State law requires communities with “fast growing” school districts to work with the district to develop facilities plans. Districts, even those with declining enrollments, should create a school facilities plan that anticipates need for the next 10 – 20 years. Plans that involve local governments and the community in the planning process will be more successful. The process of planning helps districts understand municipal policies and regulations; but more importantly, it helps the district communicate a vision to residents (and voters) that has multiple benefits. Periodic plan updates will ensure the plan remains responsive to changing conditions in the community. Districts should make sure that the planning process is well-informed by creative ideas and good information, not simply a review of stale school siting concepts.

Include schools districts in comprehensive land use plans.

State law requires coordination between governments during land use planning processes. Coordination, as it is currently implemented by most cities, is ineffective in addressing school districts’ issues. School districts should be involved in the comprehensive planning process to ensure that the needs of the districts are articulated in the land use plan and implementing ordinances. This involvement provides opportunities to develop and agree upon criteria for siting new schools on new sites as well as siting new schools in previously developed areas. In short, good comprehensive plans can provide multiple benefits to both the city and the school district.

Streamline the permitting process.

School districts should work proactively with the city to reduce complications in the permitting process. They should acknowledge that certain city codes/regulations (i.e., height, setbacks, parking) may prohibit the school district from designing cutting edge schools. Clear communication can proactively identify issues and lead to creative solutions.

Develop intergovernmental agreements.

Such agreements are common between cities and service providers. Intergovernmental agreements clarify roles and responsibilities regarding land use and school facilities planning—including how to define responsibilities, share information, and resolve disagreements. Beaverton School District uses intergovernmental agreements with the Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District to define maintenance responsibilities and field use (normally the recreation district maintains the fields located at schools in return for after-school use).

Involve the community.

School districts should include the community in school siting decisions. Good community involvement will initiate a sustained, informed dialogue about issues. Moreover, it provides districts a way to communicate to residents and voters that school siting is a necessary element of a good educational program.

“Don’t make assumptions that everyone supports schools. If you do not reach out to everyone, you will not gain support.”

*– Judy Delahunt
Superintendent
Redmond School District*

Oregon School Siting Forum, 2004



The School Site Takes Full Advantage of Existing Resources

2

“With the budget strapped for everyone, it makes sense to get creative.”

*- Rebecca Gershow
Willamalane Parks and
Recreation District*

Renovate and expand existing schools.

Where possible, districts should consider renovating or rebuilding schools on sites that have anchored neighborhoods for decades and to which students already can walk or bike. They should recognize that it is just as important to preserve, maintain, and renovate existing buildings as it is to build well-designed, well-located new ones. Working with architects and engineers who are familiar with school renovation practices is also valuable.

Select sites that can be served by existing infrastructure.

Infrastructure costs can add tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars of cost to the development of a school. Selecting sites near existing infrastructure has an obvious benefit: school districts can share infrastructure costs with nearby development. Districts can accomplish this by consulting the local planning office when identifying appropriate sites. Planning staff can help assess the costs and benefits of different sites—as well as identify key development issues.

Establish mechanisms for cooperative agreements.

Such agreements facilitate the shared use of facilities between schools and the local government. Districts should consider the full range of joint use possibilities including parks, recreation facilities, health clinics, elderly facilities, parking, public transportation, and others. The City of Eugene and Eugene 4J School District have developed a successful parking arrangement in which staff of the city-run pool can park in the lot of the adjacent school during the summer.

3 The School Site Is Easily and Safely Accessible by Walking, Biking, and Transit

Locate schools close to students.

Proximity is key. Schools must be close enough to the neighborhoods they serve for students to walk or bike to school. This is a basic, and yet extremely important concept. Increasing the number of students who live within walking/biking distance will increase the percentage of students who actually walk or bike to school.

Develop pedestrian facilities on the school site.

Even casual observation reveals that many schools have inadequate pedestrian facilities. Districts should use the following strategies to improve pedestrian access:

- Use the expertise of creative urban designers, transportation planners traffic/transportation engineers. Solicit advice from these groups early in the siting process. It is much easier for them to give advice about potential problems than to fix problems once the school is built/renovated.
- Provide for good pedestrian and bicycle access. Design the school site to promote walking and biking to school and reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflicts; place bike racks near entrances; designate pedestrian paths that are separate from automobile pick-up and drop-off zones; provide safety crossings and crossing guards.
- Create a “Safe Routes to Schools” campaign. Work with city staff, school staff, parents, law enforcement officers, and health care professionals to develop a “Safe Routes to School” campaign to address school-related transportation.
- Set up a student escort system. Work with school staff and parents to develop a system for organizing children to walk/bike to and from school in groups. Commuter Solutions in Eugene is working with local schools to develop escort systems in which parents take turns walking a group of students to school.

“If we want more children to walk to school, then it is imperative that we actually build routes to school. Although this sounds intuitive, the current preference for building neighborhoods with cul-de-sacs and collector streets actually creates barriers for kids to get to school.”

*– Marc Schlossberg, Ph.D.
University of Oregon*

For more information:

*Safe Routes to School
www.bikewalk.org/safe_routes_to_school/SR2S_introduction.htm*

*Smart Ways to School Program
www.ltd.org/sws/index.htm*

3

Create a well-connected pedestrian and street network in the area/neighborhood around the school.

“School districts should work more closely with the city or county road authority much earlier in the process.”

– Deborah Hogan
City of Bend

- **Address the transportation infrastructure around schools.** Make sure there are good connections between the school and nearby neighborhoods by creating pedestrian plans to integrate schools with the community. Work with schools to develop traffic calming devices, sidewalks, and pedestrian infrastructure.
- **Develop a well-connected street system around the school.** The school can provide bike racks and crossing guards, but if the area around the school is not conducive to walking, students will be less likely to walk or bike to school. The streets in the neighborhood around the school should connect to each other, allowing students to easily and directly get to school.
- **Locate schools away from hazardous traffic conditions.** Railroads and major streets such as arterials are dangerous to cross. Locating schools away from these impediments makes the schools easier to access by walking and biking.
- **Remove policy barriers.** Review the comprehensive land use plan, zoning ordinance, and functional plans to identify barriers such as excessive parking, setback, and landscaping requirements.
- **Integrate school transportation into the Transportation Systems Plan.** Most Transportation System Plans include detailed analysis of transportation needs and identify projects to meet those needs. Few address school transportation issues. One strategy is to include school transportation in regional transportation planning discussions. Such a discussion will inevitably involve potential school sites. Acknowledge that school transportation systems (i.e., school buses) are an effective form of public transportation that are largely ignored by land use and transportation planners. Work to integrate school busing into the larger discussion of transportation options.

4 The School Site Is a Community Focal Point

Consider small sites and multi-level schools.

Districts should select sites that can be incorporated into the neighborhood instead of sites that isolate the school from the community it serves. An excessively large site may reduce siting options, eliminate transportation choices, and foreclose the possibility of the school serving as a center of community. By using creative design, schools can be multi-level, thereby requiring less land and making it easier to integrate them into the neighborhood.

“Start with schools as a principle planning objective. Cities should think - How can we help schools operate?”

*– Jack Orchard
land use lawyer*

Involve your architect early in the process.

Districts should choose an architect who is familiar with creative school design. He/she may have good solutions for difficult site challenges. If school renovations are an option, be sure to select an architect who is experienced in working with older buildings. Twenty years ago architects were more involved in the entire school siting process, but now, according to an architect specializing in schools, “the norm is for school districts to come to the architect with either one or a few sites.” Involving the architect earlier would allow him or her to work with the site selection committee to identify potential sites.

Integrate schools into the community.

Districts should begin by connecting the school to the surrounding neighborhood. Key strategies include: (1) removing barriers such as fences around school/playing fields. If fences are a security issue, include several gates so that people have free access to the school and associated facilities; (2) using trails, sidewalks, or bike paths to connect neighborhoods to the school; and (3) controlling auto access and parking so it does not create safety conflicts with pedestrian and bicycle access. The Witch Hazel Community Plan (Hillsboro, OR) requires the developer to build walking paths/sidewalks from the surrounding housing development to the school to facilitate better pedestrian connections.

4

Be proactive about identifying sites.

A well-sited school can turn a subdivision into a neighborhood. The fact that the district may not have a pool of capital for site acquisition does not preclude identifying and evaluating potential school sites. Consider the following strategies:

“The City must understand the district’s needs and suggest acquisition opportunities.”

– Wink Brooks
Hillsboro City Planner

- **Land banking.** By acquiring land before it is needed to build schools, districts and cities add certainty to the development process and allow better integration of schools into neighborhood. The Hillsboro School District has tried to get ahead of demand – each bond measure includes money to purchase land and replace land in the land bank.
- **Developer set-asides.** Identify school locations when meeting with developers and encourage school sites that integrate with the design of new developments. Encourage developers to dedicate or sell land for school sites as part of the entitlement process. Make sure that the site supports city planning goals. Be wary of donated sites whose location could undercut community preservation goals and force taxpayers to pay for unnecessarily expensive infrastructure, transportation, and other services.
- **Community education.** Begin by partnering with the city to raise awareness among residents about the importance of planning for schools in the future. Both the Bethel and Redmond School Districts attribute successfully passing bonds to involving the community in the process. Strategies included holding community meetings, producing print and television advertisements, canvassing door to door, and developing a large volunteer base.

Establish design and site standards for schools.

Working in partnership, school districts and cities should establish design and site standards for schools and school sites. Address the following issues:

- Size of sites (large enough to meet educational program needs, but small enough to fit easily and gracefully into the neighborhood served)
- Location of sites within the community
- Connectivity, bicycle and pedestrian standards
- Safety standards (including street design and speed)
- School design (encourage neighborhood pride in the school)

Steps for a Coordinated School Siting Process

Local governments and school districts that coordinate with each other about school location have an easier time in the siting process and make better site decisions. The following three steps serve as a guide for school districts and cities/counties. They are written from the perspective of the school district because districts normally initiate the process and ultimately will make decisions about where to build new schools or renovate existing ones. Each school district will follow a slightly different process for siting schools depending on the size of the district, the political climate of the community, the capacity of the school district and local jurisdiction.



Steps for a Coordinated School Siting Process

Step 1

Determine What You Have & Articulate Need and Vision

How Can the City or County be Involved?

The city/county usually does not have a large role in the school district inventory; however, it plays a role in helping the district determine need by providing information on growth. The city/county should answer the following questions for the school district:

- What are the future growth projections?
- Where should growth occur?
- Where are transportation infrastructure improvements planned?
- What is the land use pattern within the city?
- Are new parks or other public facilities going to be built in the near future?
- What building codes pertain to schools?
- What does the comprehensive plan say about schools?
- Where does the city/county allow schools?
- How does the city/county envision its role in the school siting process?
- Are school planners and city planners using the same demographic and infrastructure data?
- Is the city/county interested in pursuing joint use opportunities such as development and maintenance of park and recreation facilities?

Why?

Determining the number and quality of school district facilities and having a good understanding of city/county growth patterns are important first steps in establishing the district's needs. This "needs statement" provides the rationale for the siting process. (For example, we have enough room for 20 more students and the city is expecting 200 more students in the next 5-7 years. We will need school capacity to accommodate 180 more students by 2010.) Instead of immediately trying to solve the problem, the school district should develop a vision for the siting process. How does it want to the process to run? What does it want the end result to be?

Who?

Many school districts develop an Advisory/Steering/Project Committee for the site selection process that is responsible for making key decisions (see Step 2). The Advisory Committee may decide to hire a consultant to perform many of the tasks or may take on the tasks themselves.

How?

- 1) Complete an inventory of school facilities and district owned sites, documenting maintenance needs and capacity.
- 2) Understand community growth patterns and regulations; ask city/county personnel key questions.
- 3) Develop population projections for school aged children ; make sure that the projections coincide with those used by the city/ county.
- 4) Define the need based on background research (inventory, growth patterns, etc.).
- 5) Develop a vision for the school siting process.

Step 2

Identify Stakeholders and Engage the Community

Why?

Involving the community in the siting process can have short-term and long-term benefits for the school district and local government. If the community is involved and listened to, the school site and design will better meet its needs and be responsive to its desires. Community members/agencies may have ideas that the school district did not originally consider that could maximize resources and better integrate the school into the community. If satisfied with the process and product, residents may be more likely to vote for the next bond measure and stay involved with the school and community.

Who?

Consider involving the following types of people in Advisory Committee or in other public involvement activities:

- School District Personnel (superintendent, school facility planners, school transportation officers)
- City and/or county planners
- Transportation planners
- Architects
- Transportation engineers
- Historic preservation planners
- Park and recreation planners
- Youth organizers
- Parents
- Developers
- Students
- Public health advocates
- Neighborhood association members
- Public relations specialists
- Business Owners
- Nonprofit Personnel (YMCA/YWCA, Boys and Girls Club, Senior Services)

How?

There are a number of ways to involve the public in the siting process. School districts will need to think strategically about the appropriate activities for and duration of their involvement. Examples include:

- Siting Advisory Committee
- Citizen Oversight Committee
- Design workshops
- Open houses
- Newsletters, brochures
- Surveys

How Can the City or County be Involved?

Many communities recommend having a city/county planner participate in the Siting Advisory Committee. This person can help the committee navigate through what can be a challenging labyrinth of city/county ordinances and regulations. City/county representatives should plan on attending design workshops and focus group sessions to contribute to the process and to listen to what the school district and the community values.

Step 3

Identify, Evaluate, and Select Sites

How Can the City or County be Involved?

City/county planning staff can assist in three specific ways:

- **Point out areas of potential population growth and/or decline:** Cities are required to plan for the next 20 years. Discussing the jurisdiction's long-range plans will help school districts know where to secure land for the future.
- **Identify vacant parcels and discuss attributes:** Most communities have an up-to-date computer database of vacant land that describes important parcel characteristics, such as size of site, type of zoning, presence of wetlands or environmentally sensitive areas, and floodplains. Access to this data streamlines and better informs the process.
- **Discuss joint use potentials or important adjacencies:** If asked, the city may jointly purchase land with the school district to co-locate facilities such as a park or community center. City officials should also discuss with the school district the overall vision for the community and identify how schools contribute to that vision through strategic planning.

Why?

Conducting an inventory of viable sites (including renovation/expansion of existing sites) ensures that all options are considered. Some districts may only have one or two sites to choose from; however, when there are several sites, a set of evaluating criteria is helpful in making decisions.

Who?

School Siting Advisory Committee, city/county personnel, if not on advisory committee.

How?

Consider the following criteria when choosing a school site:

Land Use

- Renovation/expansion potential
- Land use compatibility
- Proximity to future development
- Proximity to community facilities
- Site availability
- Size of site
- Proximity to students
- Reuse of infrastructure

Costs

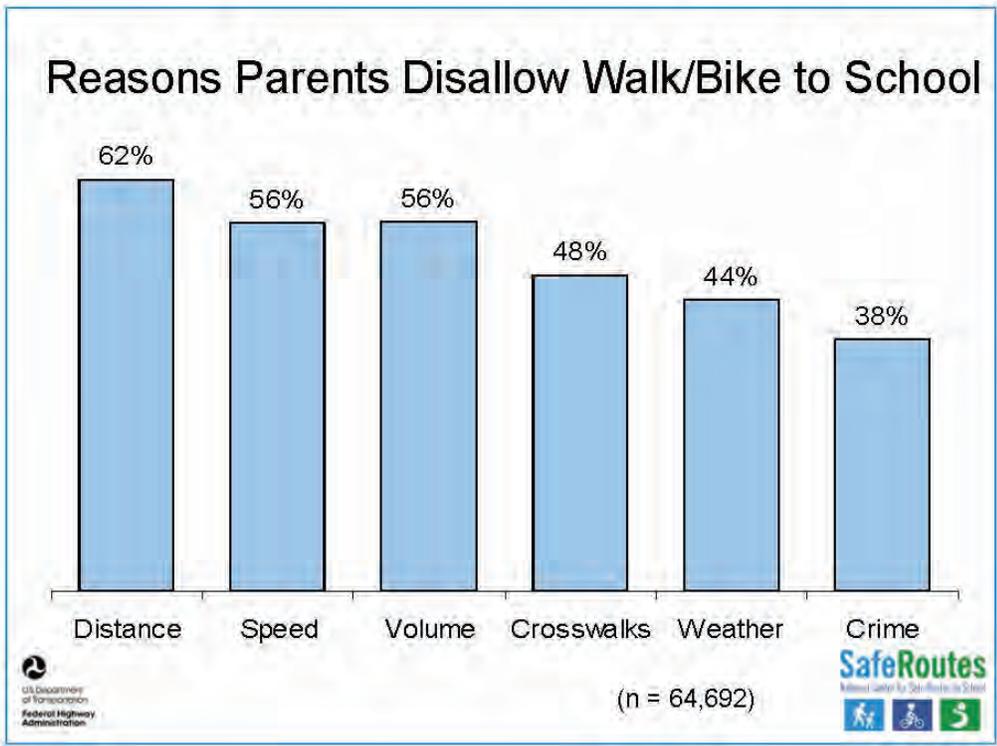
- Land costs
- Construction costs
- Site maintenance costs
- Off-site costs

Transportation/Accessibility

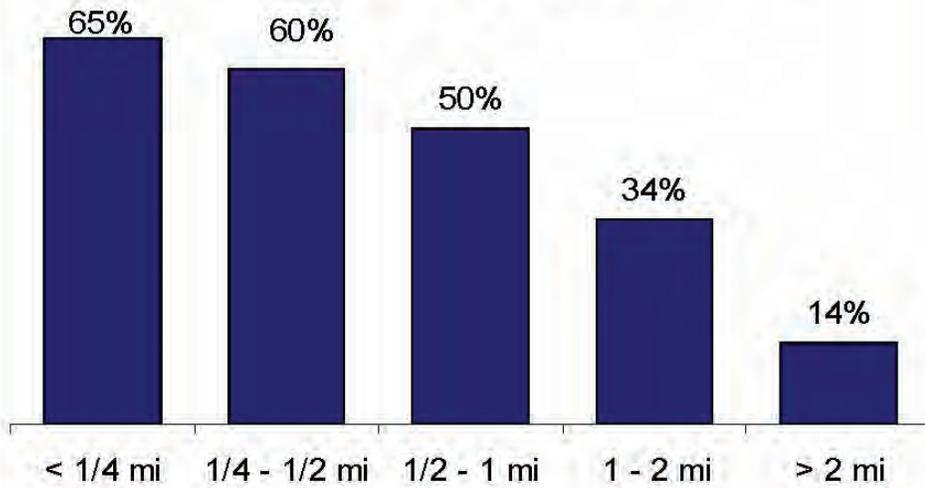
- Pedestrian and bicycle accessibility
- Availability of parking
- Vehicular access to site
- Drop-off and pick-up traffic loads

Environmental

- Presence of wetlands or endangered species
- Suitable soil types
- Vulnerability to natural hazards
- Presence of hazardous substances
- Topography



Child's Interest in Walking/Biking by Distance to School



Influence of Distance on Walking/Biking to/from School

