



N E W J E R S E Y
SAFE ROUTES
 to **SCHOOL**
 Rand Elementary/Montclair Township

A C T I O N P L A N B R I E F

Collaborating for

School and Township Launch Safe Routes to School Program

During the spring of 2005, The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) selected Rand Elementary School in Montclair to participate in the “Safe Routes to School” (SRTS) demonstration program. SRTS programs involve developing and implementing strategies that promote walking and biking to school to achieve a wide range of benefits for students, school and community. These benefits include improved pedestrian/bicycle access and safety, increased physical activity among students and reduced traffic in the vicinity of schools. SRTS programs are taking place worldwide, and New Jersey is actively supporting SRTS programs in our schools and communities.

NJDOT, along with The RBA Group and The National Center for Bicycling and Walking, worked to demonstrate how communities can collaborate on SRTS improvements through partnerships between municipalities and schools. To launch the program, representatives from NJDOT, Meadowlink TMA and the consultant team held a coordination meeting with the Rand School and Montclair Township representatives in August 2005. This meeting established the SRTS team and outlined the responsibilities of each party in holding a daylong workshop. In October, 23 interested teachers, parents, community members and local government representatives, participated in the workshop training to identify issues and actions that promote children walking to school. This brainstorming session included on-site observations of students’ arrival and departure, along with discussion of local issues.

Drawing on the results of both the initial coordination meeting and daylong workshop, the consultant team prepared an **Action Plan** for Rand School, highlighting recommendations for a variety of engineering improvements and programmatic activities. The recommendations will guide the school and municipality in supporting an ongoing SRTS program aimed at improving the quality of life for students throughout the township. One of the most important outcomes of the program is establishing a local SRTS Task Force to oversee implementation of the **Action Plan**.



Vision

Rand School and Montclair Township envision a Safe Routes to School Program that enables children to walk to school safely; increases the amount of physical activity the children perform daily; encourages adult residents to help children become familiar and comfortable with their community in the form of Safe Havens and Neighborhood Watch Groups; urges motorists to respect non-motorized forms of transportation; and contributes to a more environmentally sustainable community, including a reduction in diesel bus emissions.



The NJ Safe Routes to School Demonstration Program was sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, Bicycle and Pedestrian Unit with technical assistance from The RBA Group and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking. The program seeks to explore effective ways for New Jersey public schools and municipalities to collaborate in launching SRTS activities. The three selected school/municipal teams were Ashbrook Elementary School in Lumberton, John F. Kennedy Elementary School in Jamesburg, and Rand Elementary School in Montclair.



New Jersey Steps Up Safe Routes Initiatives

After the recent passage of SAFETEA-LU, the federal transportation bill, \$612 million in Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding will be divided among the 50 states based upon student enrollment as determined by the United States Department of Education. Of the allotted monies, \$15 million will come to New Jersey over the next five years. As outlined in the bill, 70-90 percent of SRTS funds can be used for infrastructure-related projects (engineering), while the remaining 10-30 percent can be used for programmatic projects (education, encouragement and enforcement). In addition, the bill requires each state to hire a full time SRTS Coordinator in order to become eligible for federal SRTS funding. Elise Bremer-Nei will serve as New Jersey's SRTS Coordinator out of the NJDOT Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs. She can be reached at (609) 530-2765 or elise.bremer-nei@dot.state.nj.us.



Local Task Force Oversees Ongoing SRTS Program

Implementing **Action Plan** recommendations requires pro-active interest of people in the community – the SRTS Task Force – including parents, teachers, school board members, municipal officials, advocates and others who understand the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian access to schools. The Task Force should meet periodically to advance the recommendations made in the **Action Plan** and gauge the progress of the program as a whole. Although this gauging of the process may seem a tedious task, it can actually be quite simple. Key indicators of a successful SRTS program include: an increase in the number of children walking/biking to school; a decrease in the number of vehicles (cars and/or buses) present at drop-off and pick-up time; a lower travel speed and/or speed limit near the school; a higher number and/or quality of sidewalks and bike lanes/paths; and a decrease in levels of air pollution.

Rand Fifth Graders Spread the Word on SRTS

Fifth graders at Rand Elementary School spent the few weeks before the training workshop learning about Safe Routes to School. They formed teams and created SRTS posters with mottos and tips on how to be safe walking/biking to school. They presented the posters to workshop attendees, identifying their routes to school and their perceived obstacles to walking and biking. They called their project “a patriotic stand to make it safer to walk or ride your bike to school.” A few of their safety tips included: don't talk to strangers; wear a helmet; know where you are; and always stay close to an adult.

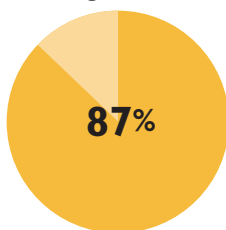
Key Issues

- Abduction and child predators are major fears among parents in Montclair who do not allow their children to walk and/or bike to school.
- Driver behavior is a major concern among parents, as they do not trust motorists to respect the rights of pedestrians/cyclists.
- Montclair crossing guards alone cannot ensure the safety of children walking and biking to school; they need additional support from the school and municipality.

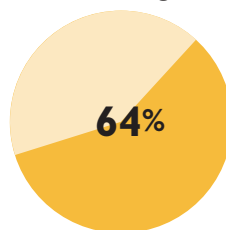
School & Community Profile

School Name: Rand Elementary
Enrollment: 393
Grades: K-5
Setting: Urban
Municipality: Montclair Township
Population: 38,977

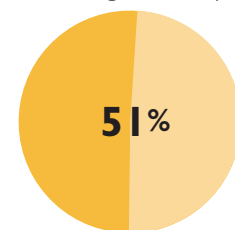
Students living within two miles:

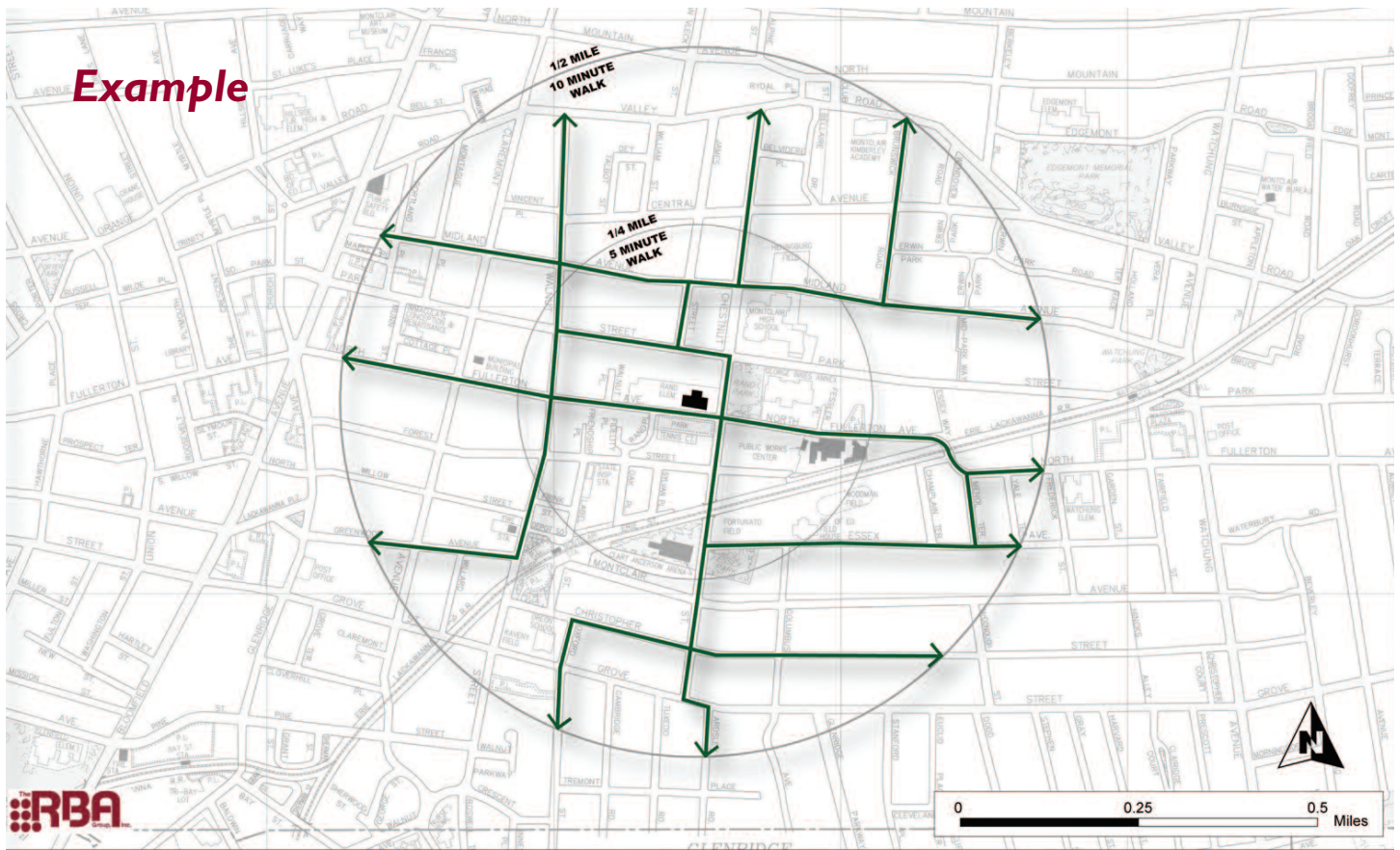


Students being bused:



Students being courtesy-bused





Example

Rand Elementary School, Montclair, NJ
Recommended Walking Routes
 Dec, 2005

← RECOMMENDED WALKING ROUTES

Engineering Recommendations

Improving the walking and biking environment

- Redefine drop-off/pick-up zones
- Create a part time car-free zone on N. Fullerton Avenue
- Enhance bike parking
- Install pedestrian scale lighting around the school
- Define the school zone
- Widen sidewalks along school property
- Install driver speed feedback signs
- Install high visibility crosswalks
- Install traffic calming elements (e.g. speed humps)
- Complete sidewalk on N. Fullerton Avenue, east side

Education Recommendations

Building understanding that supports change

- Offer parent education programs
- Offer student education programs
- Collect student feedback in the form of papers, art projects, etc.
- Integrate biking/walking issues into driver education programs
- Hold media and public information campaign

Enforcement Recommendations

Raising driver awareness

- Enforce traffic safety laws (speeding, cell phones, etc.)
- Establish a neighborhood watch program
- Allow crossing guards to report disobedient drivers
- Conduct a driver ticketing/warning campaign
- Utilize speed trailers throughout the community
- Enforce sidewalk building and property maintenance laws
- Increase presence/visibility of law enforcement

Encouragement Recommendations

Making it fun to walk and bicycle

- Establish a task force to carry out the SRTS mission
- Develop a map of travel routes to school (*see example above*)
- Hold encouragement programs and contests
- Establish a Walking School Bus program
- Establish a Block Parent Program
- Hold a Bike Rodeo, emphasizing the use of bike helmets
- Hold Walking Wednesday events throughout the town
- Hold Walk to School days

Definitions

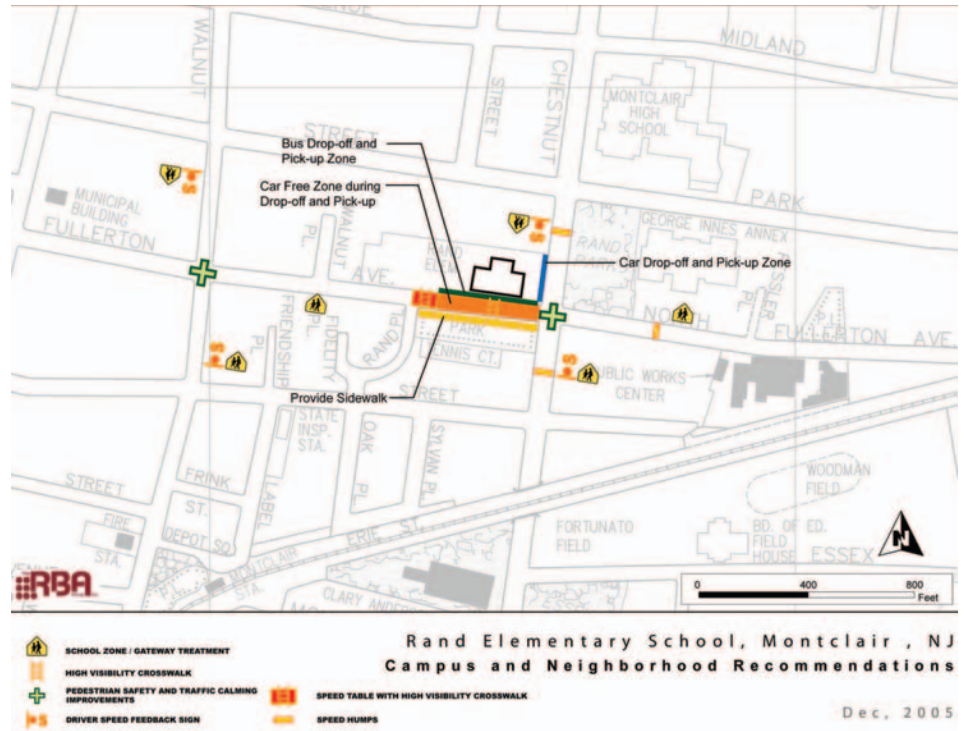
En-gin-eer-ing: creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safe and accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

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

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

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

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



Campus Improvements

Congestion and pedestrian safety issues on Fullerton Avenue during drop-off and pick-up lead to unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. A proposed solution calls for temporary closure of Fullerton Avenue – between Rand Place and Chestnut Street (illustrated above) – to automobile traffic; bus traffic will still be allowed. This would eliminate the conflicts with automobile traffic for students and staff that cross Fullerton Avenue. Students arriving by bus would be dropped off at the Fullerton Avenue entrance, while children arriving by car would be dropped off at the side entrance on Chestnut Street.

In addition, lack of adequate pedestrian crossings/sidewalks and perceived excessive traffic speeds compromise safety. These issues can be remedied with a combination of treatments, including:

- High-visibility crosswalks
- Pedestrian-scale lighting
- New sidewalks
- Sidewalk widening
- School Zone signage
- Enhanced bike parking
- Curb extensions
- Raised intersections
- Speed humps
- Speed Trailers
- Driver feedback signs

Action Plan

The **Action Plan** recommends priority projects and activities that the school, municipality and community can advance to promote safe walking and biking to school. The **Action Plan** describes current attitudes and existing conditions, desired outcomes of the program and strategies for achieving those outcomes. It can include maps, concept sketches and “toolbox” templates that guide implementation of action items. **Action Plan** recommendations reflect the vision and goals discovered through the workshop, survey results and the unique conditions of each school and community. The recommendations range from engineering improvements to programmatic actions (education, enforcement and encouragement).

School & Community Coordination Team

Susan Bartol, *Environmental Magnet Specialist* – Rand School
Jodi Godfrey, *PTA Health and Wellness Initiative* – Rand School

Bob MacLay, *At-Large Health and Wellness Liaison* – Montclair PTA
Rosaria Ippolito, *Marketing Coordinator* – Meadowlink TMA

Consultant Services: The RBA Group with support from the National Center for Bicycling & Walking and Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates