

Quick Take

What:

Community Schools and Transportation Program

Significance:

Through interagency coordination and the promotion of best practices, the program aims to improve planning for community-centered schools and multimodal transportation options to schools.

Program History:

The program was initiated in 2015 with funding from a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant. It builds upon several past initiatives and the Regional Transportation Council's Policy Supporting School Districts, adopted in 2013.

By the Numbers:

1.3 million

The region's population that were school-age children (5 to 17 years) as of 2014 (20% of the total population).

30%

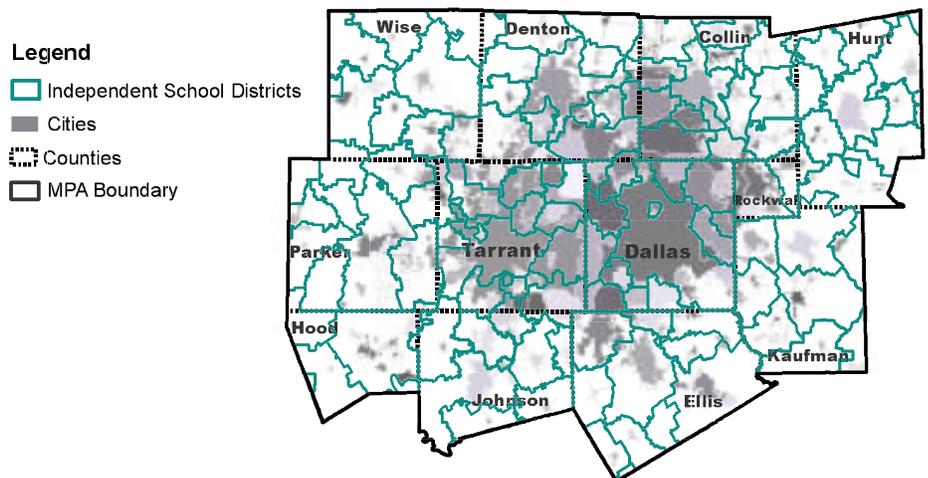
The increase in the number of cars on the road between 7:15 and 8:15 a.m. during the school year.

Improving Travel to School

Dallas-Fort Worth is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country, putting tremendous strain on infrastructure—including its transportation and school systems.

The population of the Dallas-Fort Worth region is projected to increase from 7.2 million in 2017 to 10.7 million in 2040. During that time the number of school-age children (5 to 17 years) is estimated to increase by more than 750,000. The region's transportation system will need to serve 50 percent more trips to and from schools to accommodate this growth. Hundreds of schools will need to be built or renovated. The continued boom in school construction, and the planning decisions around that construction and renovation, will have important implications for education, travel, health, and the environment.

By addressing current school siting issues and promoting safe routes to walk and bicycle to school, the Community Schools and Transportation Program is intended to be a holistic approach to mitigating traffic congestion, and improving air quality and safety around our region's most vulnerable population group.



The program encourages collaboration and coordination among the region's 127 school districts, 209 local governments, and multiple transportation agencies.

Goals of the Community Schools and Transportation Program



Encourage **interagency coordination**



Advance long-term planning for **school siting**



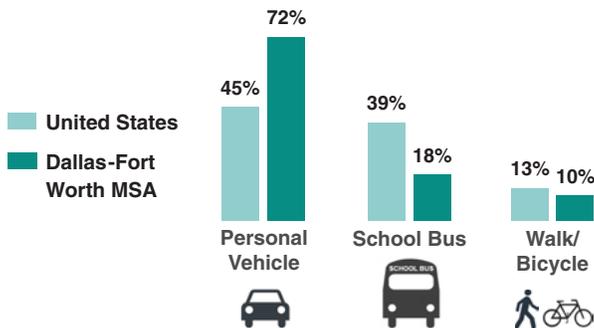
Improve **transportation safety** near schools



Promote **multimodal transportation** options to schools

FACTSheet

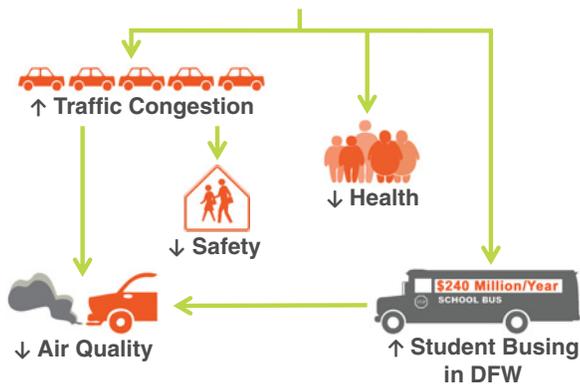
Transportation Mode to School



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2009 National Household Travel Survey.

In the Dallas-Fort Worth region, fewer children walk and bicycle to school, and more children arrive in private vehicles when compared to the national average. Consequences of less walking and biking include increased traffic congestion and safety conflicts, diminished air quality, less physical activity, and more education funds spent on student busing.

Less Walking and Biking to School



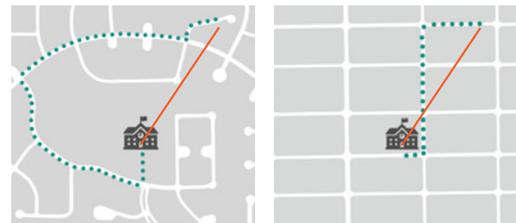
Since the late 1960s, the percentage of children who walk or bicycle to school has declined from a national average of 48 percent in 1969 to 13 percent in 2009. In the Dallas-Fort Worth region, only 10 percent of children arrived at school by walking or biking in 2009.

While there are many barriers to increasing the number of children who walk or bicycle to school, the two critical factors are traffic safety and the distance between schools and homes.

School Siting

For the majority of students to be able to walk or ride their bikes, schools should be located in close proximity to the majority of students they serve. Additionally, both natural and human-made barriers should be taken into account when determining a school's location and attendance boundaries.

As demonstrated by the graphic below, poor connectivity to residential areas can increase the travel distance between homes and a school, and result in greater demand for busing and parent transportation.



Planning for community-centered schools with safe bicycle and pedestrian access can improve traffic circulation, safety, air quality, and the health of students and the overall community.

What You Can Do

Local Governments

- Ensure municipal planning addresses school facilities
- Work with the local school district to develop Safe Routes to School travel plans for every elementary and middle school
- Construct safe sidewalks and bike-ways around new and existing schools to provide alternative transportation choices
- Conduct regular meetings with school district staff

School Districts

- Plan for new school campuses to have safe transportation in all modes
- Integrate new and renovated schools into the surrounding community
- Implement bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum in elementary and middle school PE classes
- Conduct regular meetings with local government staff

Parents and General Public

- Start a Walking School Bus at your school (NCTCOG.org/walking_school_bus)
- Teach your kids about bicycle and pedestrian safety at home (LookOutTexans.org)
- Encourage local government to improve sidewalks and crosswalks around schools
- Map out safe routes with children from home to school

Local Governments and School Districts

Attend NCTCOG's Regional School Coordination Task Force meetings