



New Jersey Safe Routes to School Urban Demonstration Program Camden's Promise Charter School Camden, NJ

School Travel Plan Brief

During the spring of 2008, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) reached out to the City of Camden to invite them to participate in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Urban Demonstration Program. As one of the top ten cities in New Jersey for pedestrian fatalities, Camden was an ideal location to target SRTS. The City had been working to create safer environments around schools through its "Safe Corridors/Safe Haven" Program, designating school routes and safe havens throughout the City and had already exhibited an interest in SRTS through its application for NJDOT SRTS grant funding. Unfortunately, their NJDOT SRTS grant application did not score high enough to receive funding. To address this short-coming, the City was invited to choose two pilot schools to be a part of NJDOT's Urban Demonstration Program with the intent that they would be able to develop a sustainable SRTS program and strengthen their SRTS application for the next funding cycle.

The City agreed to participate in the program and chose Harry C. Sharp Elementary School and Camden's Promise Charter Schools as the two pilot schools to receive assistance in developing a SRTS program.

NJDOT with technical assistance from The RBA Group, the National Center for Bicycling and Walking and the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University provided planning assistance to Camden's Promise Charter School to develop a SRTS School Travel Plan.

A School Travel Plan "maps out" how to improve pedestrian and bike travel to and from school. A School Travel Plan identifies:

- Where students currently walk and/or bike
- Where students would walk or bike if they could
- What changes need to be made so that students can and will walk and bike safely to school

Camden's Promise Charter School Travel Plan is a working document intended to set priorities for increasing the number and safety of students walking and bicycling to and from school. The School Travel Plan serves as a basis for the organizing and funding of those priorities and as a model that can be replicated across Camden and in other areas of New Jersey. In order for a School Travel Plan to be complete, it must contain six elements:

- 1 School Description
- 2 SRTS Task Force and Partnerships
- 3 Barriers & Opportunities to Walking and Bicycling
- 4 Maps of the School Neighborhood
- 5 Action Plan
- 6 Program Evaluation and Monitoring

This School Travel Plan Brief is a summary of these six elements as identified in Camden's Promise School Travel Plan.

One of the objectives of the Safe Routes to School program is to make the program accessible to diverse participants, especially schools and communities with limited resources and staffing to spearhead new initiatives. This is particularly important, as schools in low income areas often have higher than average child pedestrian crash rates and a greater need for a SRTS program, yet may not be able to successfully access these funds.



The purpose of the New Jersey Department of Transportation Urban Demonstration Program was to ensure that all children, regardless of where they live, can benefit from SRTS programs. The goals of the program are to:

- Assist urban areas that have shown interest in SRTS programs but may not have the resources to succeed on their own, and
- Develop a model for use in urban areas across the state.

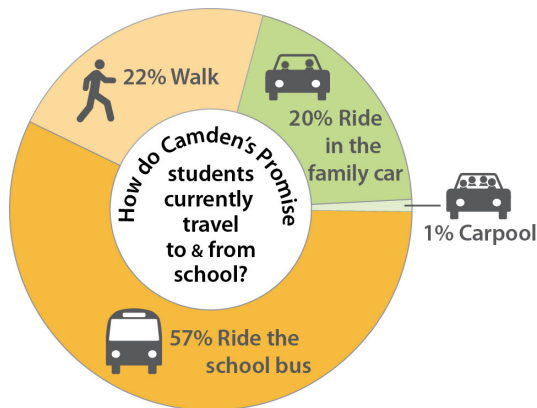
The Urban Demonstration Program focused on schools in Camden, Trenton and Newark. It was modeled after an earlier demonstration program completed in 2006 which consisted of pilot testing the New Jersey SRTS program in three communities - urban, suburban and rural. Both programs resulted in the development of School Travel Plans for each of the pilot schools.



1. School Description

Camden's Promise Charter School was established in 1998 by a group of concerned parents, teachers and community members. Students who attend Camden's Promise enroll by choice and busing is available for all eligible students. Camden's Promise Charter School is located in the Cramer Hill neighborhood of Camden.

Student Population:	391
Grade Levels:	5th-8th
Setting:	Dense, Urban
School District:	Camden City
Address:	879 Beideman Avenue
Home Language:	68% English 33% Other languages



2. SRTS Task Force and Partnerships

A key element in the process was to conduct outreach efforts to the city and school communities and establish a Task Force. Generally each school would have its own Task Force. However, since two of Camden's Urban Demonstration schools, Camden's Promise Charter School and Harry C. Sharp Elementary School, are located two blocks apart, the Task Force was combined. The aim was to engage active community groups and local organizers who will support and sustain the SRTS program over time.

In Camden, the Task Force was comprised of:

- Camden's Division of Special Grant Projects
- Camden City Public Schools
- Police Department
- Camden's Promise Charter School
- LEAP Academy University Charter School
- Environmental Community Opportunity Charter School
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Cross County Connection Transportation Management Agency
- Safe Kids New Jersey Chapter
- Camden Greenways
- Camden County Health Department
- Community Health Outreach Consortium of South Jersey
- Camden City Board of Education

3. Barriers & Opportunities to Walking and Bicycling

Information gathered from stakeholder interviews, student travel surveys, a community workshop, a field investigation, and crime data and crash analysis was used to assess existing conditions and identify opportunities to improve conditions for students on their way to and from school.

Key Issues/Concerns

The following were identified as concerns around the school neighborhood by parents, students and school officials:



Incomplete sidewalk



Bicycle parking conflicts with car parking

- Personal security
- Speeding
- Traffic
- Illegal parking
- Faded crosswalks
- Litter
- Unmarked & undefined school zones
- Uneven pavement
- Limited crossing guards
- Vacant/abandoned buildings
- Stray/loose dogs
- Poor lighting

Classroom Session

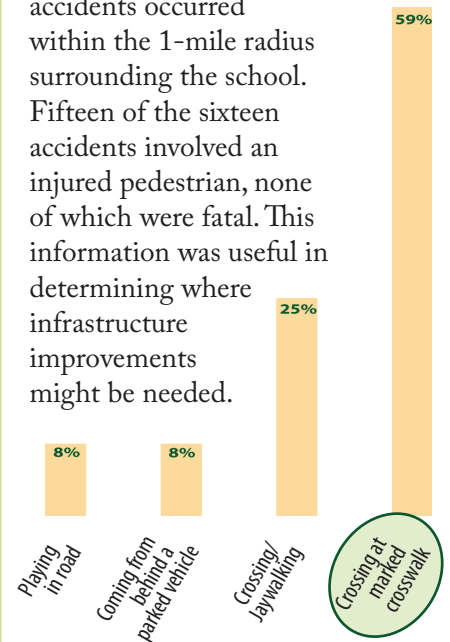
25 students were asked how they would improve their neighborhood if they were Mayor. This is what they said:

- More trees!
- More police!
- More benches!
- More street lights!
- Remove graffiti
- New trashcans
- Add a traffic light by the school
- Hire crossing guards
- Bike lanes
- Eliminate the bad people



Pedestrian/Bicyclist Crash Analysis

Between 2003-2006, sixteen accidents occurred within the 1-mile radius surrounding the school. Fifteen of the sixteen accidents involved an injured pedestrian, none of which were fatal. This information was useful in determining where infrastructure improvements might be needed.

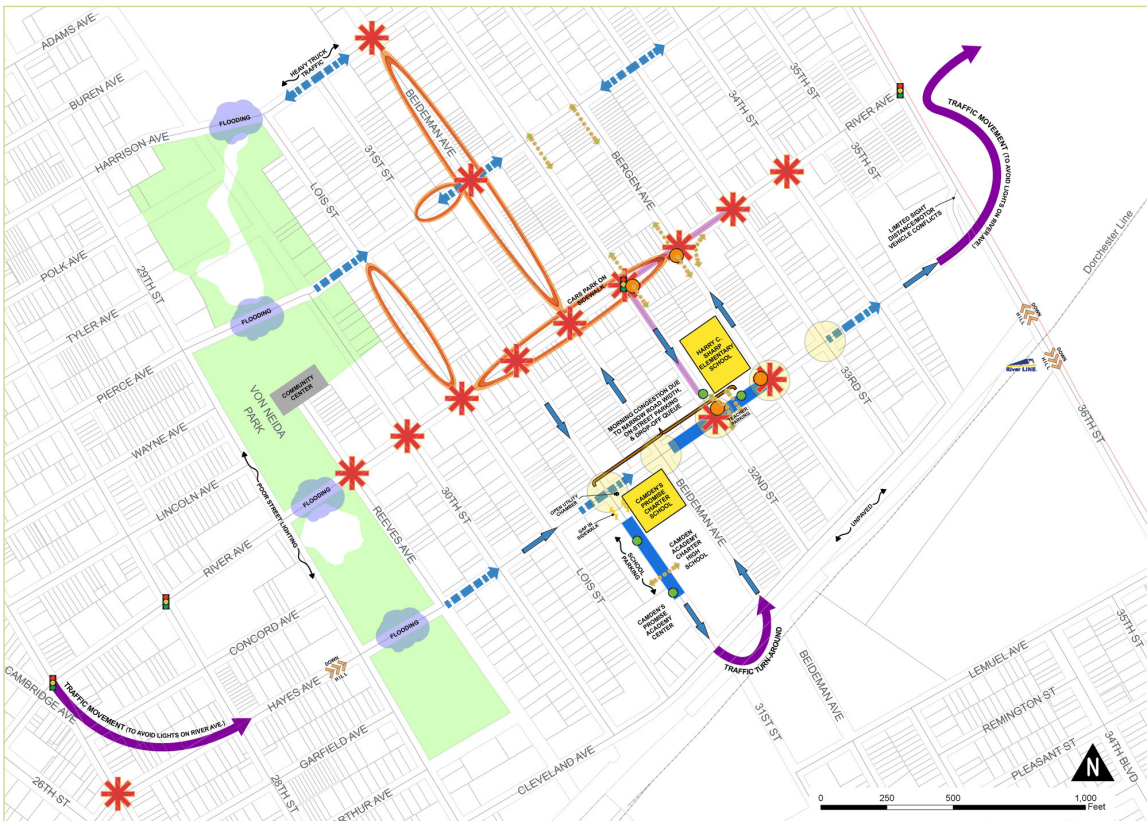


Pedestrian/Bicyclist Pre-Crash Action

4. Maps of the School Neighborhood

These maps illustrate the existing conditions in the neighborhood of the Camden's Promise Charter School, the Barriers and Opportunities for students walking to and from school, and some Neighborhood Recommendations to improving facilities so their trips are safer.

Barriers & Opportunities



Existing Conditions

- School
- Park
- School Bus Stop
- Crossing Guard
- Traffic Light
- One-Way Street
- Existing School Zone
- Unofficial Drop-Off & Pick-Up Zone

Barriers & Opportunities

- Loitering/Undesirable Behavior Hotspot
- Difficult Crossing
- Perceived Speeding
- Frequent Pedestrian Activity
- Non-ADA Compliant Intersections

Neighborhood Recommendations



Existing Conditions

- School
- Park
- School Bus Stop
- Crossing Guard
- Traffic Light
- One-Way Street
- Existing School Zone
- Unofficial Drop-Off & Pick-Up Zone

Neighborhood Recommendations

- High Visibility Crosswalk
- Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Calming
- Provide Crossing Guard
- Enhanced School Zone
- Investigate Stop Signs
- Review Parking Restrictions

5. Action Plan

The plan of action for implementing the Camden's Promise Charter School SRTS program is intended to increase safety for students on their walk to and from school and when appropriate, encourage more students to walk. In addition to the actions, the School Travel Plan identifies a responsible party for implementing them, a time frame and a level of cost. Listed below are 5E action items from the School Travel Plan.

Engineering

- Install high visibility crosswalks
- Provide pedestrian safety, traffic calming & streetscape improvements along Hayes Ave, River Rd, & Pierce Ave
- Clearly define and enhance the school zone
- Review and revise parking restrictions and drop-off and pick-up zones and define bus zone
- Evaluate and possibly repair/install flashing beacons at school crossing zones
- Investigate/consider alternating stop control between Hayes Ave and side streets.
- Improve lighting along Hayes Ave and Sherman Rd
- Construct sidewalk along both sides of N. 31st St
- Provide intersection improvements on Hayes Ave at CR 609 and at CR 611/N. 36th St

Enforcement

- Post clear parking regulation signs at all drop-off and pick-up locations
- Include education materials about the dangers of speeding when issuing citations or warnings
- Conduct a series of pedestrian stings
- Maintain police presence at major pedestrian crossings
- Educate students on bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Consider posting speed monitoring signs on Hayes Ave
- Lower speed limit on Hayes Avenue in school zones
- Prioritize/Enhance police presence in areas of loitering, undesirable behavior and vacant buildings/properties
- Assign crossing guard at Hayes Ave at N. 31st St

Evaluation

- Conduct a survey to define mode choice so there is a baseline to assess future efforts
- Monitor drop off dynamics around the school campus
- Conduct school commute time parking studies
- Conduct a preference survey
- Conduct tracking exercises for distances students walk

6. Program Evaluation and Monitoring

Utilizing the NJDOT SRTS Toolbox Fact Sheet, "*Evaluating your SRTS Program*" as a guide, Camden's Promise Charter School will conduct classroom/student hands-up travel pattern surveys and parent/caregiver take-home attitudinal surveys to evaluate its SRTS Program over time.

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.

Education

- Conduct community wide outreach on benefits of SRTS programs
- Inform neighborhood of any designated routes
- Include health benefits of SRTS programs in teacher training and student curriculum
- Educate parents and students on drop-off and pick-up procedures
- Distribute walking school bus options to school families
- Circulate school walking event information with municipal utility or tax bill

Encouragement

- Define recommended walking routes by providing maps and installing pavement markings and/or signs
- Establish a SRTS Committee to lead the effort
- Prepare for and participate in International Walk to School Days
- Establish walking school buses
- Start a "Frequent Walker Card" system or a "Golden Sneaker" award for classrooms
- Hold a bicycle rodeo
- The City should consider taking on snow removal responsibility along identified routes to and from school

