



NEW JERSEY SAFE ROUTES to SCHOOL

Ashbrook Elementary/Lumberton Township

ACTION PLAN BRIEF

Collaborating for

School and Township Launch Safe Routes to School Program

During the spring of 2005, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) selected Ashbrook Elementary School in Lumberton 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, Cross County Connection TMA and the consultant team held a coordination meeting with the Ashbrook School and Lumberton 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, 22 interested teachers, parents, community members and both county 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 Ashbrook School, highlighting recommendations for a variety of engineering and programmatic activities. The recommendations will guide the school and municipality in supporting an on-going 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

Ashbrook School & Lumberton Township envision a Safe Routes to School Program that enables children to walk to school safely; increases the amount of physical activity the children engage in daily; reduces economic and environmental costs of busing; and spurs more walking and bicycling throughout Lumberton.

Healthy

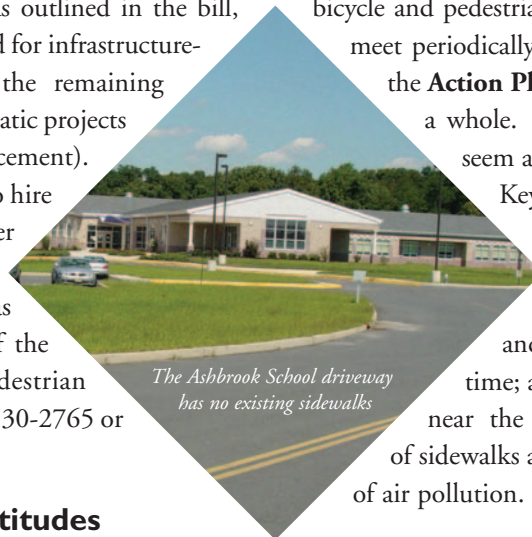
Kids

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 (engineering) projects, 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. This 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 speed 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.

Survey Gauges Attitudes

Lack of adequate infrastructure for walking and bicycling, as well as a lack of exposure to strategies for creating safe pedestrian environments were likely influences on parents whom the survey suggested were unwilling to allow their children to walk and bicycle. Furthermore, children may have shown low interest for walking and bicycling to school because they are simply unfamiliar with the concept. Worth noting is that the surveys were only distributed to 60 students and 60 sets of parents; this small sample size may not be representative of the school community.

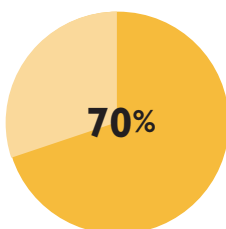
Key Issues

- Limited Access
 - No sidewalks/crosswalks exist on Municipal Drive
 - No sidewalks/crosswalks exist on the Ashbrook campus
- Ashbrook School employs a “no walk or bike” policy, which states that no student shall walk or bike to school under any circumstance.
- Traffic problems, such as high travel speeds, congestion and idling buses.

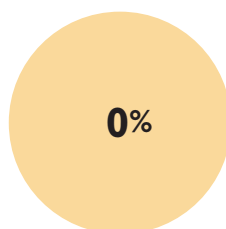
School & Community Profile

School Name: Ashbrook Elementary
 Enrollment: 400
 Grades: 2-3
 Setting: Rural (but quickly developing)
 Municipality: Lumberton Township
 Population: 10,461

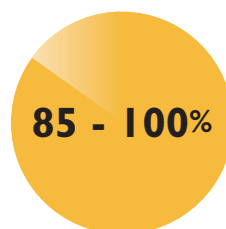
Students living within two miles:



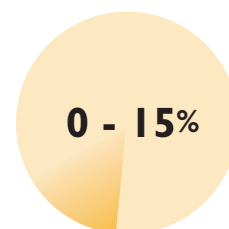
Students walking/biking:



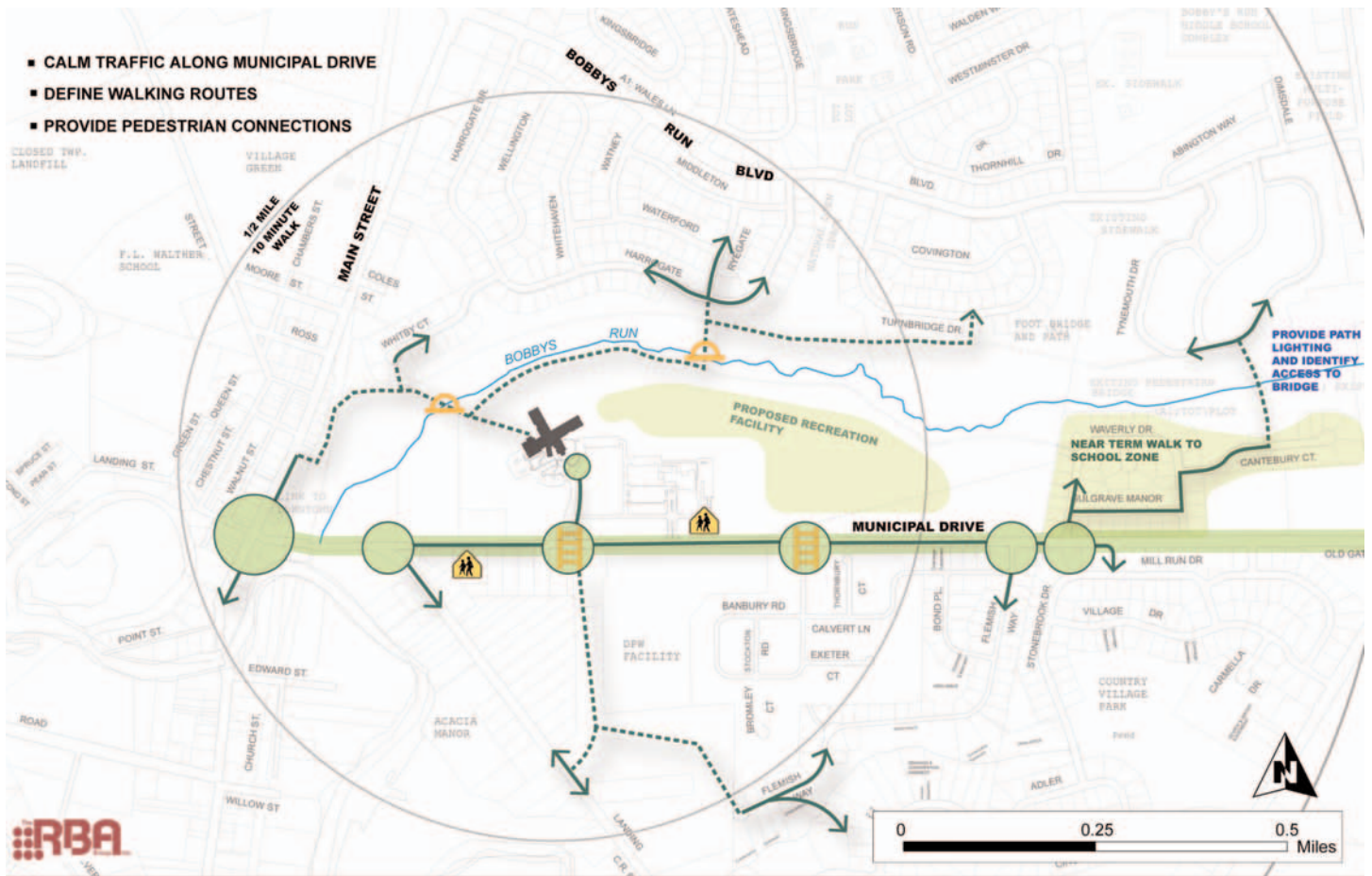
Students * being bused:



Students * being driven:



*The Lumberton School District mandates that a bus seat be provided for every child in the district. Thus, 100 percent of children are technically bused. However, about 15 percent of parents drive their children to/from school on a given day.



Ashbrook Elementary School, Lumberton, NJ Area - Wide Recommendations and Walking routes

Dec, 2005

- SCHOOL ZONE / GATEWAY TREATMENT
- HIGH VISIBILITY CROSSWALK
- WALKING ROUTES ON SIDEWALK
- WALKING ROUTES - TRAIL OR PATH
- PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- TRAFFIC CALMING ALONG MUNICIPAL DRIVE WITH FOCUS TREATMENT LOCATIONS

Engineering Recommendations

Improving the walking and biking environment

- Install high-visibility crosswalks across the driveway
- Implement a new drop-off/pick-up circulation plan
- Install sidewalks, crosswalks and paths
- Install gateway treatments/school zone along Municipal Drive
- Implement traffic calming treatments along Municipal Drive
- Implement intersection reconfigurations or stripe high-visibility crosswalks
- Provide lighting and identify access to current pedestrian bridge

Education Recommendations

Building understanding that supports change

- Create Walkability Checklists
- Develop Neighborhood Working Groups
- Implement Classroom Activities:
 - Walk or Bike Across America
 - Walking Math
 - Guest Speakers
 - Campus Walks

Enforcement Recommendations

Raising driver awareness

- Demarcate a School Zone
- Perform Pedestrian Sting Operations
- Utilize Speed Trailers
- Uphold Sidewalk, Building and Property Maintenance Laws

Encouragement Recommendations

Making it fun to walk and bicycle

- Sponsor Walk-to-School Day Event(s)
- Form a Walking School Bus (WSB)
- Hold a Variety of Programs/Contests:
 - Walk to School Contests
 - Frequent Walker Cards
 - Golden Sneaker Awards
 - Bicycle Rodeos

Definitions

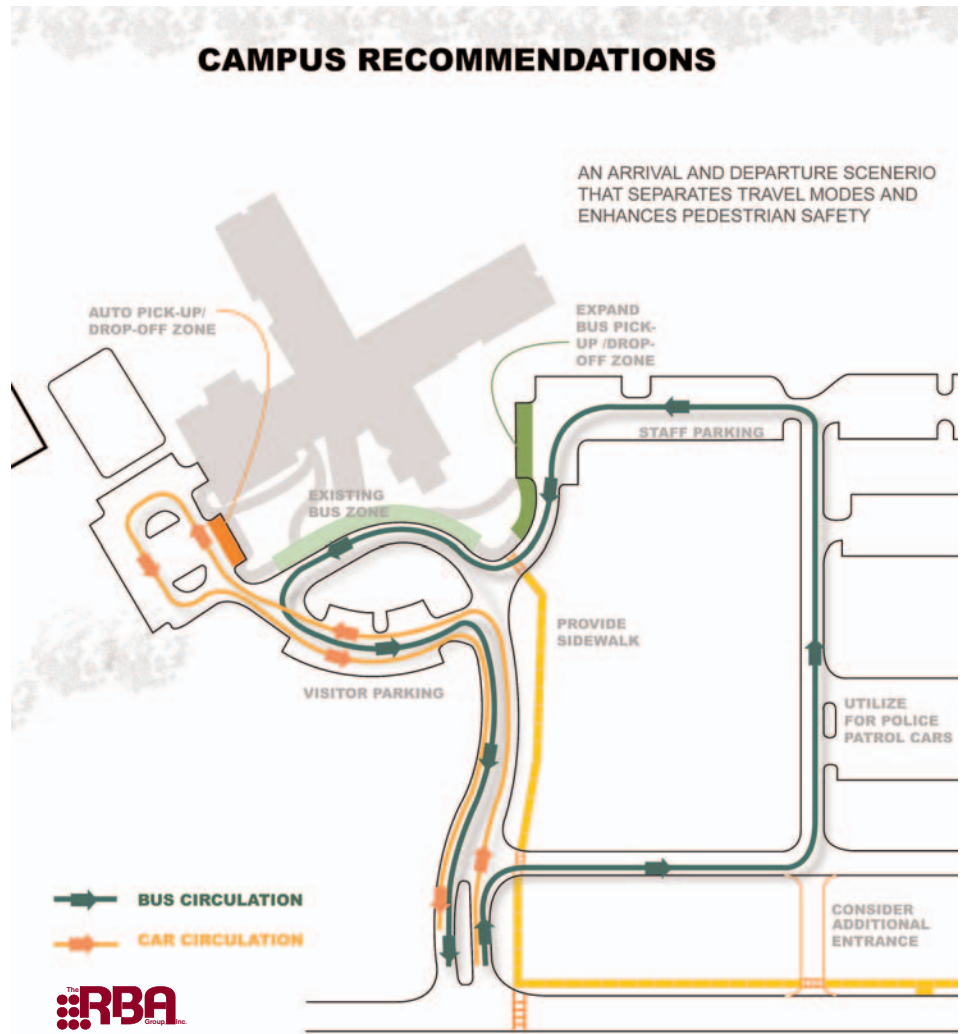
En·gin·eer·ing: creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safe and accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

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

The proposed car and bus circulation pattern would involve the following (see Campus Recommendations Map):

- Buses turn right utilizing the municipal complex driveway network, loop around through the existing east lot, and drop-off/pick-up children at the main door.
- Cars turn left toward the current faculty lot and follow a one-way traffic pattern that involves children being dropped off/picked up at a west side entrance. Because the new drop-off/pick-up zone would require the elimination of approximately five parking spots in west lot, both the west and east parking lots should be available for staff parking.

This pattern will allow for bus and car traffic to be more separated, eliminating a majority of safety hazards for all children. For example, during drop-off, buses would park along the east lot and municipal complex driveway, rather than congesting the main driveway as is the current operation pattern. In the short term this could be established without any construction. In the long term the student drop-off/pick-up zones could be reconstructed to reorganize the existing parking in those immediate areas.

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

Betsy Kapulskey, *Director of Communication* – Lumberton Board of Education

Scott Dailey, *Principal* – Ashbrook Elementary School

Dan Van Pelt, *Township Administrator* – Lumberton Township

Ronda Urkowitz, *Program Director* – Cross Country Connection TMA

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