



## **School-Related Transportation Needs Assessment**

Douglas County  
Comprehensive Transportation Plan

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## INTRODUCTION

The identification of school-related transportation needs is an enhanced element of the Douglas County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). Defining transportation needs at and around schools within Douglas County is important because schools are major traffic generators, particularly during the morning peak period, when school traffic and commuter traffic use the transportation system during the same time, often with undesired consequences, such as congestion and perception of decreased safety for students traveling to school.

The school-related transportation needs assessment has focused on screening Douglas County schools to determine if the transportation and development characteristics around the school can support safe walking or bicycling to school. Nationally, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) federally funded program supports transportation alternatives for the school trip. The SRTS supports efforts to enable students in kindergarten through eighth grade to walk or bicycle to school. This effort is intended to assist Douglas County in implementing existing programs and garnering available resources to support walking and bicycling to school.

This report begins with an overview of the SRTS program and its potential application for Douglas County in Section 2. Section 3 provides the findings of a school-related transportation needs assessment. Section 4 discusses potential strategies for Douglas County to consider related to alternative transportation needs at schools. Section 5 provides a listing of resources at the national, state, and local level for SRTS initiatives.

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

### OVERVIEW

In recent history, the tendency to walk or bicycle to school has decreased dramatically. Most children now are transported to schools in school buses or private cars. Nationwide, educators, public officials, and community health experts have identified an increasing risk for childhood obesity with the lack of physical activity as one contributing factor. In examining why children no longer walk or bicycle to school, communities have identified a number of causal factors, from lack of safe facilities to parental concerns for safety. The SRTS program is a concerted effort to change the trend of driving to school, thereby reducing vehicular trips to school, reducing pollutants generated by those trips, and increasing the activity level of school-aged children.

The SRTS program is unique in that it began at the local level, and was adopted nationally, a true bottom-up policy initiative. As part of the most recently adopted federal transportation legislation and regulations, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), a national SRTS program complete with authorized funding over five years was established. The legislation provides funding to states for program implementation, and a full-time SRTS coordinator. The federal SRTS fact sheet from the Federal Highway Administration is included in Appendix A.

## APPROACH FOR CTP

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has developed a *SRTS Guidebook for Schools and Communities* to help schools and school districts begin to implement SRTS programs. The SRTS program is comprised of five areas—the five E’s—which are critical to the program’s success:

- Engineering
- Enforcement
- Education
- Encouragement
- Evaluation

The school-related transportation needs assessment for Douglas County provides a foundation for identifying improvements around Douglas County schools so that walking and bicycling to school are safe and viable transportation options for Douglas County students and their families. Existing data was used to conduct a qualitative examination at each elementary and middle school to determine how well the school is currently suited for implementing a SRTS initiative. The Engineering Area of the five E’s is the only element of the SRTS program used for this level of analysis. Engineering factors include the infrastructure of the existing transportation system as well as characteristics of the system such as travel patterns and traffic volumes.

A critical factor in the success of a SRTS program is involvement and interest of the community, and particularly each individual school in adopting a SRTS program. As much as the county may want to invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure around each school, it is the parents who decide whether it is safe for their children to walk or bicycle to school. If parents are not supportive, then facilities may be underutilized.

## DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The focus of the needs assessment was to identify which elementary and middle schools are more likely to have conditions favorable for implementing SRTS programs, including improvements for facilitating non-motorized transportation.

Trip length and travel mode data from the *2001 National Household Travel Survey* summarized in the *Atlanta Regional Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan* indicate a high probability for persons to walk or bicycle to school if the trip is one-half mile or less. The probability of walking drops off significantly for trips over one-half mile. The probability of persons bicycling to school shows persons are willing to bicycle further, up to one and one-half miles. Consideration of trip lengths from residential areas to adjacent schools weighed heavily in the assessment.

## METHODOLOGY

Geographic information system (GIS) spatial analysis was used to review traffic, demographic, and development characteristics. Specific GIS datasets collected from

Douglas County, GDOT, and the U.S. Census Bureau and used in the analysis included:

- Existing and planned schools
- Sidewalk inventory
- Roadway and traffic characteristics (posted speed limit, traffic volumes, number of lanes, and functional classification)
- Population and housing data

An overlay approach was used to identify and compare the characteristics around each school. The following criteria were used for the screening:

- Characteristics of the roadway in front of the school
  - Functional classification
  - Number of through lanes
  - Roadway width
  - Posted speed
  - Proximity of nearest traffic signal to school
  - Number of traffic signals within one-half mile of the school
  - Average annual daily traffic (AADT)
- Total length of sidewalks located within one-half mile of the school
- Total population
- Total housing units
- Housing unit density

In addition to the GIS analysis, the development patterns around the schools were reviewed by examining the density and connectivity of the street network to the school grounds. In addition, existing and future land uses were examined. No new primary data was collected for the assessment, and no field verification of data was conducted. Assessment results are based on attributes associated with each GIS dataset, review of the Douglas County Future Land Use Map, and existing roadway network contained in the Douglas County Aero Atlas. Finally, the ranking of schools was based on a qualitative assessment of the factors. A detailed field review and inventory of transportation characteristics is required to verify assessment findings.

## NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

According to the Douglas County School System, approximately 24,700 students were enrolled in the system for the 2007-2008 school year. Elementary schools within the county serve kindergarten through fifth grade, and middle schools serve the sixth through eighth grades. A majority of the students were enrolled in the elementary and middle schools, 16,689 students or 68 percent. High school enrollment accounted for 30 percent of total enrollment (7,372 students), and the remaining two percent were enrolled in other educational programs. Since the SRTS Program focuses on grades kindergarten through eighth, the assessment focused on the 19 elementary schools and seven middle schools in Douglas County.

Table 1 provides the school enrollment, population, and housing unit characteristics for the 26 elementary and middle schools in the county, while Table 2 shows the transportation characteristics identified in the vicinity of the schools. In general, conditions that are more favorable for supporting walking or bicycling to school include:

- Close proximity of school to residential populations (for schools whose catchment areas include the area immediately around the school).
- School sited with primary access on a local road that has fewer lanes, lower traffic speeds, and lower daily traffic volumes.
- Direct connections to pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure.

**Table 1: School Population and Area Characteristics**

School Name	School Address	Student Enrollment (2007-2008)	Grades Served	Area around School (Acres)	Total Population (2000)	Total Housing Units (200)	Housing Units Per Acre (2000)
Annette Winn Elementary	3536 Bankhead Highway	467	K-5	253	295	126	0.50
Arbor Station Elementary	9999 Parkway South	611	K-5	63	95	36	0.58
Beulah Elementary	1150 Burnt Hickory Road	412	K-5	475	466	179	0.38
Bill Arp Elementary	6550 Alexander Parkway	817	K-5	369	677	121	0.33
Bright Star Elementary	6300 John West Road	480	K-5	110	7	4	0.04
Burnett Elementary	8277 Connally Drive	403	K-5	67	86	34	0.51
Chapel Hill Elementary	4433 Coursey Lake Road	772	K-5	395	118	41	0.10
Chapel Hill Middle	3989 Chapel Hill Road	1,010	6-8	1,084	1,059	369	0.34
Chestnut Log Middle	2544 Pope Road	796	6-8	605	1,086	417	0.69
Dorsett Shoals Elementary	5866 Dorsett Shoals Road	483	K-5	537	909	305	0.57
Eastside Elementary	8266 Connally Drive	575	K-5	58	27	10	0.17
Factory Shoals Elementary	2300 Shoals School Road	532	K-5	358	220	76	0.21
Factory Shoals Middle	3301 Shoals School Road	816	6-8	1,621	109	39	0.02
Fairplay Middle	8311 Highway 166	921	6-8	1,178	433	160	0.14
Holly Springs Elementary	4909 West Chapel Hill Road	512	K-5	2,837	759	279	0.10
Lithia Springs Elementary	6946 Florence Drive	479	K-5	60	101	34	0.56
Mirror Lake Elementary	2613 Tyson Road	663	K-5	209	2	2	0.01
Mount Carmel Elementary	2356 Fairburn Road	486	K-5	423	633	206	0.49
New Manchester Elementary	2242 Old Lower River Road	917	K-5	534	307	116	0.22
North Douglas Elementary	1630 Dorris Road	568	K-5	863	176	58	0.07
South Douglas Elementary	8299 Highway 166	536	K-5	1,178	433	160	0.14
Stewart Middle	8138 Malone Street	541	6-8	74	135	47	0.64
Sweetwater Elementary	2505 East County Line Road	692	K-5	487	1,208	403	0.83
Turner Middle	7101 Junior High Drive	708	6-8	60	101	34	0.56
Winston Elementary	7465 Highway 78	610	K-5	469	173	63	0.13
Yeager Middle	4000 Kings Highway	882	6-8	665	1,281	422	0.63

**Table 2: Transportation Characteristics within School Vicinity**

School Name	Functional Classification	Total Number of Lanes	Roadway Width (Feet)	Posted Speed	Nearest Signal Distance (Feet)	Number of Traffic Signals within X	Daily Traffic (AADT, Year)	Total Sidewalks within X (Feet)
Annette Winn Elementary	Minor arterial (urban)	2	26	45	622	6	14,200	988
Arbor Station Elementary	Local (urban)	2	20	30	2,305	10	2,010	10,628
Beulah Elementary	Local (urban)	2	27	25	1,519	2	2,010	8,240
Bill Arp Elementary	Local (urban)	2	25	25	2,913	3	2,010	3,591
Bright Star Elementary	Local	2	n.a.	n.a.	2,531	3	n.a.	0
Burnett Elementary	Local (urban)	2	27	30	1,551	13	2,010	46,801
Chapel Hill Elementary	Local (urban)	2	23	35	6,527	0	2,010	1,386
Chapel Hill Middle	Minor arterial (urban)	2	22	45	424	5	13,750	52,993
Chestnut Log Middle	Local (urban)	2	22	45	3,287	3	2,010	30,153
Dorsett Shoals Elementary	Local (urban)	2	22	35	2,933	1	2,010	5,760
Eastside Elementary	Local	2	n.a.	n.a.	810	13	n.a.	43,086
Factory Shoals Elementary	Local		n.a.	n.a.	4,681	2	n.a.	18,967
Factory Shoals Middle	Local		n.a.	n.a.	5,623	1	n.a.	14,482
Fairplay Middle	Minor arterial (rural)	2	24	55	443	3	6,230	0
Holly Springs Elementary	Local (urban)	2	21	35	6,572	1	2,010	32,159
Lithia Springs Elementary	Local (urban)	2	24	25	1,231	8	2,010	988
Mirror Lake Elementary	Local (rural)	2	21	35	6,944	0	630	0
Mount Carmel Elementary	Local (urban)	2	21	35	616	6	2,010	12,119
New Manchester Elementary	Local (urban)	2	20	25	2,521	3	2,010	11,070
North Douglas Elementary	Collector (urban)	2	21	45	707	1	4,320	2,587
South Douglas Elementary	Minor arterial (rural)	2	24	55	569	3	6,230	0
Stewart Middle	Local (urban)	2	23	35	490	9	2,010	56,636
Sweetwater Elementary	Local (urban)	4	48	45	1,315	1	2,010	3,147
Turner Middle	Local (urban)	2	21	25	1,932	6	420	988
Winston Elementary	Minor arterial (urban)	2	28	55	629	3	9,560	0
Yeager Middle	Local (urban)	2	22	35	2,588	3	2,010	4,408

Notes: Some of the local roadway network was not included in the GDOT roadway characteristics file. Missing data is marked n.a. for not available.

The schools have been divided into four tiers. The top tier schools appear to have conditions favorable to support SRTS initiatives. Bottom tier schools are not as favorable based primarily on proximity to school populations or location on busy, high traffic volume, or higher speed roads.

Table 3 lists the schools by tier and identifies future land use, site characteristics of each school, potential on-street pedestrian connections, and potential bicycle route connections. The future land use field lists designations from the Douglas County Future Land Use Map, adopted May 25, 2006. The notes field lists the qualitative information about the school site and the surrounding area. The potential on-street pedestrian connections list those streets which appear to provide connectivity between adjacent development and each school site. Roadways listed are generally within one-half mile of the school site and could provide needed pedestrian connections. Potential bicycle routes are streets which provide a longer connectivity, up to a mile to one and one-half miles from the school site. Most of the roadways identified for bicycle routes serve as collectors or arterials. All of the facilities listed would require a thorough engineering assessment as to their suitability and safety for use by pedestrians or bicyclists. The list of facilities is not comprehensive; other facilities may be also suitable for bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure based on specific school needs or request.

Four schools are included in Tier 1 that exhibit development and transportation characteristics which could support SRTS initiatives. The schools are located in more urban residential, higher density developments. In most cases the street network is fairly well connected. The roadways that connect to each school are posted with lower speeds, exhibit lower daily traffic volumes, and are relatively narrow. Some sidewalk network is already in place at each of these schools. Tier 1 schools include:

- Burnett Elementary
- Eastside Elementary
- Arbor Station Elementary
- Stewart Middle

Ten schools are included in Tier 2. Most of these schools appear to have favorable conditions for supporting SRTS initiatives. One reason for placing a school into Tier 2 is that the school is located a greater distance from adjacent residential development. In addition, the development and street patterns around many of the schools in Tier 2 indicate dispersed residential developments that have street configurations favoring cul-de-sac streets. Cul-de-sac streets do not provide optimal connectivity for pedestrians or bicyclists. In most cases, if a pedestrian or bicyclist must follow the same path as a vehicle, the travel distance is greater and longer distances discourage walking or bicycling. Tier 2 schools include:

- Factory Shoals Elementary
- Factory Shoals Middle
- Beulah Elementary

- 
- Yeager Middle
  - Dorsett Shoals Elementary
  - Lithia Springs Elementary
  - Turner Middle
  - Chapel Hill Elementary
  - Holly Springs Elementary
  - Chestnut Log Middle

Seven schools are included in Tier 3. Although these schools have some favorable conditions for supporting SRTS initiatives, there are characteristics around the school sites which could discourage using alternative modes. In some cases, the school is sited on a busy arterial; in other cases the school location is too distant from residential development. Tier 3 schools include:

- Annette Winn Elementary
- New Manchester Elementary
- Chapel Hill Middle
- Mount Carmel Elementary
- Bill Arp Elementary
- Sweetwater Elementary
- Mirror Lake Elementary

Five schools are included in Tier 4. Most of the schools are located in rural, low-density residential areas, or the school is not well-connected to adjacent development. These schools may have some favorable conditions for supporting SRTS initiatives and should not be discouraged from improving access for pedestrians or bicyclists. Tier 4 schools include:

- Bright Star Elementary
- North Douglas Elementary
- Fairplay Middle
- South Douglas Elementary
- Winston Elementary

**Table 3: Safe Routes to School Evaluation**

School Name	School Address	Future Land Use Around School (County)	Notes	Potential On-Street Pedestrian Connections	Potential Bicycle Routes
<b>Tier 1</b>					
Burnett Elementary	8277 Connally Drive	Within city boundaries	Burnett Elementary and Eastside Elementary are co-located in the City of Douglasville. It appears there is a fairly well-connected street network around the schools. One concern is proximity to SR 92/Fairburn Road, a high volume roadway.	Connally Drive Hospital Drive Village Drive Dorris Road Durelee Lane SR 92/Fairburn Road Big B Road Dorsett Street Copper Street	Connally Drive Hospital Drive Dorris Road Durelee Lane SR 92/Fairburn Road Cherokee Boulevard Big B Road Dorsett Street Copper Street
Eastside Elementary	8266 Connally Drive		See Burnett Elementary		
Arbor Station Elementary	9999 Parkway South	Suburban Living Urban Residential Neighborhood Village Center	Arbor Station Elementary is located within residential development. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the school.	Parkway South Circle West Stewarts Mill Road Knollwood Circle Live Oak Lane Laurel Drive Stewart Mill Landing Stewarts Mill Road Stewart Woods Drive	Parkway South Circle West Stewarts Mill Road Stewarts Mill Road
Stewart Middle	8138 Malone Street	Within city boundaries	Stewart Middle School is located within Douglasville. It appears there is a fairly well-connected street network around the school. One concern is proximity to SR 92/Fairburn Road.	Malone Road SR 92/Fairburn Road Upshaw Mill Road Brown Street	Malone Road SR 92/Fairburn Road Brown Street
<b>Tier 2</b>					
Factory Shoals Elementary	2300 Shoals School Road	Transitional Corridor Suburban Living	Factory Shoals Elementary and Middle Schools are co-located on Shoals School Road. An opportunity to connect to residential areas south and west of the schools is promising. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools.	Shoals School Road Cherry Tree Walk Washington Drive Del Ridge Drive SR 92/Fairburn Road Oakridge Lane	Shoals School Road SR 92/Fairburn Road Washington Drive
Factory Shoals Middle	3301 Shoals School Road		See Factory Shoals Elementary		
Beulah Elementary	1150 Burnt Hickory Road	Urban Residential Suburban Living	Beulah Elementary School appears to be well positioned for bicycle and pedestrian connections. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the school.	Spivey Drive South Burnt Hickory Road Newman Ellis Road US 78/Bankhead Highway McKown Road	Spivey Drive South Burnt Hickory Road US 78/Bankhead Highway McKown Road Riley Road
Yeager Middle	4000 Kings Highway	Suburban Living Community Village Center	Yeager Middle School is located within a residential area, and much of the roadway network ends in cul-de-sacs. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the school.	Kings Highway Yeager Road Ridge Way Rocky Creek Drive King Arthur Drive Quail Drive	Kings Highway Yeager Road Ridge Way Central Church Road
Dorsett Shoals Elementary	5866 Dorsett Shoals Road	Suburban Living	Dorsett Shoals Elementary is located within a residential area, but the development appears dispersed, and much of the roadway network ends in cul-de-sacs. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools.	Dorsett Shoals Road	Dorsett Shoals Road Yeager Road Kings Highway

School Name	School Address	Future Land Use Around School (County)	Notes	Potential On-Street Pedestrian Connections	Potential Bicycle Routes
Lithia Springs Elementary	6946 Florence Drive	Urban Residential Mixed Use Corridor	Lithia Springs Elementary and Turner Middle School are co-located at this site. Providing bicycle and pedestrian connections around the school are promising. It appears few sidewalks currently exist.	Florence Drive Turner Drive South Sweetwater Turner Drive Miller Street Brookwood Drive Lithia Way	Florence Drive Turner Drive South Sweetwater Turner Drive Miller Street Lithia Way
Turner Middle	7101 Junior High Drive		See Lithia Springs Elementary		
Chapel Hill Elementary	4433 Coursey Lake Road	Suburban Residential	Chapel Hill Elementary is located in a residential area, but the development appears dispersed. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing.	Coursey Lake Road Coursey Lake Trail Dorsett Shoals Road Planters Walk Willmington Drive	Coursey Lake Road Dorsett Shoals Road
Holly Springs Elementary	4909 West Chapel Hill Road	Suburban Living Rural Places	Holly Springs Elementary is co-located with Chapel Hill High School. The schools are adjacent to residential developments, but the developments are dispersed, and much of the roadway network ends in cul-de-sacs. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools.	Chapel Hill Road Chapel Hill Farms Drive West Chapel Hill Road Ashford Place Sterling Pointe Drive Chapel Creek Drive Forest View Trail Holly Springs Drive	Chapel Hill Road Chapel Hill Farms Drive West Chapel Hill Road Holly Springs Drive
Chestnut Log Middle	2544 Pope Road	Urban Residential Public/Institutional	Chestnut Log Middle school is surrounded by residential development. The site is co-located with the Chestnut Log Soccer Complex. Much of the roadway network ends in cul-de-sacs. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools.	Pope Road Meadows Drive Midway Road Paul Street Cindy Drive Slater Mill Road	Pope Road Midway Road Slater Mill Road
<b>Tier 3</b>					
Annette Winn Elementary	3536 Bankhead Highway	Urban Residential Mixed Use Corridor	Annette Winn Elementary is located on a busy arterial and is somewhat cut off from nearby residential development.	US 78/Bankhead Highway Boyd Street Maxwell Drive Marion Beaver Drive Winn Drive Lucille Avenue Sweetwater Road Arthur Drive	US 78/Bankhead Highway Sweetwater Road Temple Street
New Manchester Elementary	2242 Old Lower River Road	Suburban Living Community Village Center	New Manchester Elementary is adjacent to some residential development, but the development is dispersed. Much of the roadway network ends in cul-de-sacs. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools	Old Lower River Road Riverside Parkway West River Commons	Old Lower River Road Riverside Parkway King Drive SR 92/Fairburn Road/Campbellton Road
Chapel Hill Middle	3989 Chapel Hill Road	Community Village Center Suburban Living	Chapel Hill Middle School is located on busy arterial. Residential development is nearby, but the land use across from the school is commercial.	Chapel Hill Road Willow Ridge Road Fielding Drive Treeline Way Sunflower Drive Stratford Drive Central Church Road Bomar Road	Chapel Hill Road Willow Ridge Road Central Church Road Bomar Road

School Name	School Address	Future Land Use Around School (County)	Notes	Potential On-Street Pedestrian Connections	Potential Bicycle Routes
Mount Carmel Elementary	2356 Fairburn Road	Urban residential Transitional Corridor	Mount Carmel Elementary is located near residential development, but the development is dispersed and the roadway network does is lacking connectivity. One concern is proximity to SR 92/Fairburn Road. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools.	Bomar Road Mack Road SR 92/Fairburn Road Stenger Road James Road Whisper Trail	Bomar Road Mack Road SR 92/Fairburn Road Stenger Road
Bill Arp Elementary	6550 Alexander Parkway	Suburban Living	Bill Arp Elementary is co-located with Alexander High School. It is surrounded by residential development, but the developments are dispersed, and much of the roadway network ends in cul-de-sacs. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing to the schools.	Alexander Parkway Queens Road Cougar Trail	Alexander Parkway Queens Road Cougar Trail Mason Creek Road Bill Arp Road Kings Highway
Sweetwater Elementary	2505 East County Line Road	Urban Residential Neighborhood Village Center	Sweetwater Elementary is located on East County Line Road; Lithia Springs High School is located across the street. East County Line Road is relatively high speed, and it is 4 lanes, which make it a more challenging environment for providing a safe pedestrian and bicyclist environment. Opportunities to connect nearby residential developments with off-street paths could provide more direct routing.	East County Line Road Lee Road Trail Creek Drive Sweetbriar Circle Ambassador Drive Cedar Terrace Road	Lee Road East County Line Road Chestnut Log Loop Cedar Terrace Road
Mirror Lake Elementary	2613 Tyson Road	Within city boundaries	Mirror Lake Elementary is located within the City of Villa Rica. Providing bicycle and pedestrian connections around the school are promising. It appears some sidewalks currently exist.	Tyson Road Balsamwood Road Conners Road Summer Breeze Drive Mirror Lake Parkway Grayton Loop	Tyson Road Conners Road Mirror Lake Parkway Grayton Loop
<b>Tier 4</b>					
Bright Star Elementary	6300 John West Road	Suburban Living Mixed Use Corridor	Bright Star Elementary is located north of I-20, west of Bright Star Road, and south of a quarry. It does not appear very well connected to adjacent residential areas and the data show no existing sidewalks.	John West Road Bright Star Road	John West Road Bright Star Road
North Douglas Elementary	1630 Dorris Road	Rural places Neighborhood Village Center	North Douglas Elementary is not located very close to existing residential development. Sidewalks or bicycle facilities may be needed as development occurs around the school. More intensive development is found east of the school.	Cedar Mountain Road South Flat Rock Road Dorris Road Dawson Lane North Flat Rock Road	Cedar Mountain Road South Flat Rock Road Dorris Road Cave Springs Road
Fairplay Middle	8311 Highway 166	Rural places Parks/recreation/ conservation	South Douglas Elementary and Fairplay Middle School are co-located. Due to their location in the rural, southwest corner of the county, there is little residential development in close proximity of the school. Sidewalks or bicycle facilities may be needed as development occurs around the school.	SR 166 Williams Drive Deer Run Trail Autumn Hills Drive	SR 166 Bill Arp Road
South Douglas Elementary	8299 Highway 166		See Fairplay Middle School		
Winston Elementary	7465 Highway 78	Mixed Use Corridor Parks/recreation/ conservation	Winston Elementary is located on a high speed arterial. The immediate land use surrounding the school is park land (Winston Park) and industrial land, and there is little residential development in close proximity of the school. Sidewalks or bicycle facilities may be needed as development occurs around the school.	US 78/Bankhead Highway Post Road Campground Road	US 78/Bankhead Highway Post Road Campground Road Mann Road

## REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

The *Douglas County Code of Ordinances* provides some regulatory support for promoting safe travel and developing pedestrian facilities around schools. *Chapter 14: Roads, Streets, and Sidewalks* identifies school zones and speed limits for schools located on county roadways. Sidewalk requirements for new subdivisions are found in the *Code of Ordinances, Appendix B: Subdivision Regulations*.

### School Zones

Identification of school zones and speed limits for school zones is found in the Douglas County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 14: Roads, Streets, and Sidewalks, Article V: Traffic Regulations, Sections 14-73 and 14-74. In adopting school zones and speed limits for identified school zones, the County has authorized the use of speed detection devices by the sheriff's department in order for speed limit enforcement. The purpose of the speed limit zones is to promote safe vehicle operation during school operating hours. The school zone hours are in effect in the morning from 30 minutes prior to school commencement to 15 minutes after school commencement. In the afternoon, the school zone is in effect from 15 minutes prior to dismissal to 30 minutes after dismissal. Table 4 lists the identified schools for which school zone hours and speed zone limits have been identified in the ordinance.

**Table 4: Established Speed Zones for Douglas County Schools**

School	Road	From	To	Length (Miles)	Speed Limit
Bill Arp Elementary	SR 5	0.08 miles north of Dorset Shoals Road (mile post 7.93)	0.38 miles north of Dorset Shoals Road (mile post 8.23)	0.30	35
Winston Elementary	SR 8/ US 78	0.13 east of Post Road (mile post 5.48)	0.01 miles west of Strawn Road (mile post 5.86)	0.38	35
Factory Shoals Elementary	SR 92	0.1 miles south of the school driveway (mile post 5.17)	0.1 miles north of the school driveway (mile post 5.37)	0.2	35
Mt. Carmel Elementary	SR 92	0.12 miles north of Old Lee Road (mile post 6.97)	0.01 miles south of Mack Road (mile post 7.3)	0.33	25
South Douglas Elementary and Fairplay Middle	SR 166	0.09 miles west of Deer Run Trail (mile post 3.69)	0.07 miles east of Williams Drive (mile post 4.12)	0.43	35
Chapel Hill Elementary and Chapel Hill Middle	Chapel Hill Road	0.1 miles south of Central Church Road	0.4 miles south of Central Church Road	0.3	25

Dorsett Shoals Elementary	Dorsett Shoals Road	0.3 miles west of Yeager Road	0.6 miles west of Yeager Road	0.3	25
Sweetwater Elementary and Lithia Springs High School	East County Line Road	500 feet north of Lithia Springs High School	500 feet south of Lithia Springs High School	0.19	25

Source: Douglas County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 14, Article V, Section 14-74

Some observations about the identified school zones include the following. The listed school zones and accompanying speed limits are only identified for one street accessing the school. The length of the school zone in most cases is only one-third of mile. Should Safe Routes to School initiatives be undertaken at any of these schools, the existing school zone should be reevaluated to determine whether it is necessary to expand the school zone and post reduced speeds on additional streets for a greater distance from the school. The need for establishing school zones at other county schools should be reviewed.

### Sidewalks

The Douglas County Code of Ordinances, Appendix B: Subdivision Regulations, Article VIII, Section 87 includes a requirement for developers to install sidewalks within a one-mile radius of any public school. The County's Unified Development Code in Article 10: Project Design and Construction Standards, Section 1013, provides additional language about sidewalk installation as shown in the accompanying inset. However, it appears the existing ordinances and regulations do not address the potential gap in sidewalks that could occur between a new subdivision and a school if the subdivision is not adjacent to the school property.

Another ongoing issue related to sidewalks at schools is identifying what entity is responsible for sidewalks abutting school property. School resources are generally limited for which types of capital uses are eligible for funding. Building sidewalks

**DOUGLAS COUNTY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE**

**ARTICLE 10. PROJECT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS**  
**SEC. 1013 SIDEWALKS.**

Sidewalks shall be installed according to County standards by the developer under the following circumstances:

- (1) A sidewalk shall be provided within the right-of-way of any arterial or collector road adjacent to any residential development within a 1-mile radius of any public school. The sidewalks shall be installed at the same time other improvements are installed within the development.
- (2) Within a residential subdivision that is within a 1-mile radius of any public school, a sidewalk shall be provided on both sides of every street within the subdivision. Beyond a 1-mile radius of any public school, a residential subdivision that has lots less than 3 acres in size and contains more than 25 dwelling units shall be provided with a sidewalk on both sides of every street within the subdivision.
- (3) Sidewalks shall meet the following standards:
  - a. The sidewalk must be at least 4 feet wide.

within the county right-of-way may be ineligible for funding. Schools may use capital funds to construct sidewalks on school property, but it cannot leave school property.

### STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Douglas County is faced with many transportation needs, and the increase in overall population and growth in student population has resulted in greater traffic congestion around the county’s schools. The following strategies should be considered to support SRTS initiatives.

#### Identify Interest in SRTS Programs

Douglas County Department of Transportation and the Douglas County School System are independent entities in the county government structure. In order for any SRTS program to be successful, coordination and collaboration between different entities will be necessary. As part of the County’s program, schools should be identified where there are favorable conditions and where there is interest from the administration, staff, parents, and students to support SRTS.

#### Support School-Initiatives for SRTS

Many departments within the County and the School System could play a role in the SRTS program. The Five E’s of SRTS are shown in Table 4 along with County and School System departments, showing how departments could lead or support each area. Each individual school is required to develop a SRTS plan to become eligible for SRTS program implementation funding. Assistance from County and School System staff will be necessary.

**Table 5: County and School System Department Support for the Five E’s**

Lead: ● Support: ○

Five E’s of SRTS	County Departments			School System Departments				
	Department of Transportation	Planning and Zoning	Public Safety	Transportation	Safety	Facilities and Maintenance	Health Services	Community Relations
Engineering	●	○		●		○		
Enforcement			●		●			
Education				●			○	○
Encouragement	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
Evaluation	○	○		○			●	

## **Examine School Transportation Policies**

The Douglas County School System's policy is to provide transportation to school for anyone who requests service. Georgia Department of Education guidelines specify that students living within one and one-half mile of an elementary or middle school are ineligible for school bus subsidies. In many metro-Atlanta counties, school-bus transportation is not provided for students living within one and one-half mile distance from the school. A policy change may be needed to support walking or bicycling to school within Douglas County.

## **Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan for Future Schools**

Two new elementary and one new middle school are currently under development by the County. One of the elementary schools and the middle school are to be co-located at a site east of Post Road, south of I-20, at 3400 Johnston Road and 7777 Mason Creek Road, respectively. The future land use around this site is Rural Places. In continued development of these school site plans, consideration should be given to how the students could either walk or bicycle to the school. Because these two schools are located in a fairly rural area within the county, walking or bicycling may not be feasible in the immediate future, but a plan should be developed to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, because it is more costly to retrofit improvements.

## **Co-Locate Future Schools and Residential Development**

One of the major factors in determining whether it is feasible to walk or bicycle to school is the distance of the school to its student population. For SRTS programs to be successful, students must live close to the school. Every effort should be made to locate schools within walking and bicycling distance of their student populations. As indicated in Section 3.3, Douglas County ordinances require sidewalks within a one-mile distance from a school in new developments.

A transportation plan for each new school should be developed which identifies access for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The transportation plan would address multimodal circulation, mobility and accessibility, not just vehicular traffic. Thoughtful consideration of how prospective employees, staff, students and parents will travel to the school prior to a school's opening can highlight needed transportation improvements to address before problems occur. Ideally, the school system would develop each school site's plan in coordination the County and other stakeholders.

## **Provide Non-Motorized Off-street Connections to Schools from Residential Developments**

For many of the schools reviewed, the street network around the schools is not conducive for walking or bicycling to school because of a lack of connectivity. The lack of connectivity in many cases leads to much longer walking or bicycling distances between homes and schools. More direct connections between neighborhoods and schools with non-motorized paths can provide safe and shorter distance access for walking and bicycling. Off-street paths separate pedestrians

from vehicles and are safer for school-age children due to the reduced exposure to vehicles. Traffic safety concerns remain on off-street paths, particularly at street connections. Pedestrian security may also be a concern, so some paths may need lighting or additional security features such as call-boxes to provide a safer environment.

## **SRTS INFORMATION**

The Atlanta Region has already experienced SRTS program implementation success at individual schools across the region. The Georgia SRTS program has identified 38 schools in 14 counties participating in a SRTS program. An additional 14 public and private schools are participating in the Better Air School Program. Four schools are participating in both programs. A complete list of schools participating in SRTS and Better Air School Program is included in Appendix B.

In most cases, the initiative to begin a program started at the school-level. One of the advantages of the SRTS program is that there are a multitude of resources available for use by Douglas County. Many plans have been developed that could be reformulated to meet the specific needs and goals of Douglas County. The other benefit is that the existing resources are available free-of-cost. There are no fees to participate in any SRTS-related program. The costs lie in the time and effort for developing and implementing SRTS plans for each school. The following provides an overview of state and local resources to support Douglas County in its efforts to implement SRTS.

## **STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAMS**

### **Georgia SRTS Program**

The federal SRTS program is administered at the state level. GDOT manages the Georgia SRTS program through its Division of Transportation Planning, Data, and Intermodal Development. GDOT rolled out the SRTS program through a series of workshops in 2007. The primary role of the Georgia SRTS program is to provide resources to support SRTS, including funding. Program information is available electronically through the Georgia SRTS website: <http://www.dot.state.ga.us/srts>. The Georgia SRTS website includes general information about the program, the *Guidebook for Schools and Communities*, the program application for funding projects, links to other resources, training materials, and other information. The Georgia SRTS provides an umbrella over all SRTS-related programs in the state and currently serves as a clearinghouse for SRTS information.

### **KidsWalk**

The local organization, Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety (PEDS), conducts a program called KidsWalk to promote SRTS-related activities. The primary focus of the program is to provide educational, encouragement and technical assistance to schools interested in increasing walking and bicycling to school. KidsWalk currently has programs in 16 schools in Gwinnett, DeKalb, Fulton and Rockdale counties. PEDS and the KidsWalk program act in partnership to schools, but they do not

initiate the SRTS programs. Schools must contact the program in order to receive assistance. The school administration must be in support of the effort for KidsWalk to partner with a school.

Some activities conducted by PEDS in the KidsWalk program to support SRTS include:

- Providing assistance for developing individual school SRTS plans;
- Conducting activities such as bicycle rodeos to educate students on bicycle safety;
- Developing informational materials and surveys for use in developing a SRTS plan;
- Performing walking audits around schools;
- Issuing a periodic newsletter, *KidsWalk Express*, to share peer school program information; and
- Providing incentives to children at participating schools to encourage walking and bicycling to school.

PEDS KidsWalk program has been supported with funding through the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), and future support is anticipated through the Georgia SRTS program. Information about the KidsWalk program is available electronically through the PEDS website: <http://www.peds.org/kidswalk.shtml>.

### **Better Air Schools Program**

The Better Air Schools Program is an effort by the Clean Air Campaign to provide information and education to local schools about reducing air pollution. The Clean Air Campaign partners with schools to create an air-quality pollution reduction plan that identifies specific activities to reduce air pollution. For the 2007-2008 school year, the Clean Air Campaign has partnered with 18 schools across the region. Some activities conducted by the Clean Air Campaign in the Better Air Schools Program include:

- Providing educational and promotional materials to reduce vehicle idling around schools and raise awareness about smog alert days;
- Conducting an educational show for schools featuring the Better Air Bear (BAIR) to educate students and teachers about air quality and health information and how to reduce air pollution;
- Assisting schools to develop environmental education lesson plans for grades four through eight; and
- Promoting *Walk There! For Cleaner Air*, *Ride There! For Cleaner Air*, and *SchoolPool* programs to facilitate changes in how the school trip is made by encouraging walking, riding the bus, or carpooling to school, respectively.

The Clean Air Campaign also offers other programs to assist schools in reducing air pollution, such as conducting training workshops and sponsoring a “Solution to Pollution Challenge” for elementary and middle school students. Information about

the Better Air Schools Program is available electronically through the Clean Air Campaign website:

[http://www.cleanaircampaign.com/for\\_schools/better\\_air\\_schools\\_program](http://www.cleanaircampaign.com/for_schools/better_air_schools_program).

### **Safe Kids Douglas**

The Cobb and Douglas County Public Health Department is leading a public health campaign called Safe Kids Douglas. Part of the international Safe Kids program, Safe Kids Douglas strives to prevent accidental injury to persons age 14 and under by focusing on four primary areas: child passenger safety, pedestrian and bicycle safety, home safety, and water safety.

To promote pedestrian and bicycle safety in Douglas County, Safe Kids Douglas is at the initial stages of building awareness about improving safety for children when they walk or bicycle to school. The program is initiating walking audits around some Douglas County schools to identify potential safety issues and concerns. The Safe Kids Douglas Program can assist with child education on safe walking and bicycling, grant writing, and information gathering to aid schools with SRTS programs.

The website for the national Safe Kids Program is [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org). The Cobb and Douglas County Health Department website is:

[www.cobbanddouglaspublichealth.org](http://www.cobbanddouglaspublichealth.org).

### **OTHER RESOURCES**

In addition to state and local resources, there are national organizations that support SRTS. This section provides an overview of additional resources.

#### **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Safe Routes to School**

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes>

The FHWA SRTS website provides background information about the SRTS program funded by federal government. The website provides an overview of the SRTS Program, funding information, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) discussion, and links to resources. Information about the National Safe Routes to School Task Force is also available. The Task Force was created to develop strategies for advancing SRTS programs across the country.

#### **National Center for Safe Routes to School**

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

The National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS) is a federally-sponsored program at the University of North Carolina Safety Research Center to serve as the national clearinghouse for SRTS information. The NCSRTS website provides invaluable resources for communities and schools interested in SRTS.

#### **International Walk to School Day - IWalk**

<http://www.walktoschool.org/>

Walk to school day began in 1997 as an effort by an advocacy group, Partnership for a Walkable America, to create awareness about the need for walkable communities. The International Walk to School Day website serves as the information center for the International Walk to School Day and International Walk to School Month. For 2008, the International Walk to School Day will be held on October 8, 2008; October has been designated as the International Walk to School Month. The walk to school organization provides information, resources, and activities for schools interested in participating in the walk-to-school events.



APPENDIX B

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FACT SHEET





APPENDIX A

GEORGIA SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN SRTS AND SRTS RELATED  
PROGRAMS



Schools Participating in SRTS Programs – Compiled by GDOT  
SRTS Program

School Name	County	School District	Program Coordinator
Anderson Elementary School	Clayton	Clayton	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
B.B. Harris Elementary	Gwinnett	Gwinnett	Atlanta Bicycle Campaign
Barrow Elementary School	Clarke	Clarke	Bike Athens
Benteen Elementary School	Fulton	City of Atlanta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Braelinn Elementary School	Fayette	Fayette	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Burress Elementary School	Cobb	City of Marietta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Cary Reynolds Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	
City of Decatur Schools	DeKalb	City of Decatur	
City of Social Circle Schools	Walton	City of Social Circle	
Clairemont Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	Atlanta Bicycle Campaign - GDOT Demonstration Project
D.H. Stanton	Fulton	City of Atlanta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Dresden Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	Atlanta Bicycle Campaign - GDOT Demonstration Project
Elm Street Elementary School	Floyd	City of Rome	Bike Walk Northwest Georgia & Coosa Valley RDC
Esther Jackson Elementary School	Fulton	Fulton	
Fairington Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	
Forrest Road Elementary School	Muscogee	Muscogee	
Fox Elementary School	Muscogee	Muscogee	
Georgetown Elementary School	Chatham	Savannah-Chatham	
Glennwood Academy	DeKalb	City of Decatur	Atlanta Bicycle Campaign - GDOT Demonstration Project



Henderson Mill Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	
Huntley Hills Elementary	DeKalb	DeKalb	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Laurel Ridge Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	
Livsey Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Locust Grove Elementary	Henry	Henry	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Mary Lin Elementary School	Fulton	City of Atlanta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Mason Elementary School	Gwinnett	Gwinnett	Atlanta Bicycle Campaign
Medlock Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	
Midvale Elementary School	DeKalb	DeKalb	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Morningside Elementary School	Fulton	City of Atlanta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Morris Brandon Elementary School	Fulton	City of Atlanta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Northwest Elementary School	Murray	Murray	
Oakhurst Elementary School	DeKalb	City of Decatur	
Pine Street Elementary	Rockdale	Rockdale	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Pooler Elementary School	Chatham	Savannah-Chatham	
Riverside Elementary School	Gwinnett	Gwinnett	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Sarah Smith Elementary School	Fulton	City of Atlanta	PEDS - KidsWalk Program
Whitesburg Elementary School	Carroll	Carroll	
Winnona Park Elementary School	DeKalb	City of Decatur	

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation