



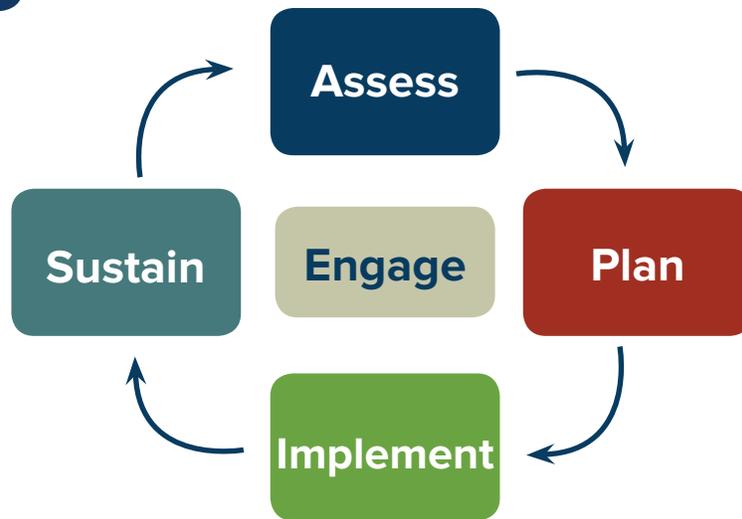
**SAFE**  
ROUTES TO  
**PARKS**

# **ACTION FRAMEWORK**





The Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework is intended to provide local governments (park and recreation, planning, transportation and public health) with critical evidence- and practice-based guidance on Safe Routes to Parks best practices that are backed by research and supported by national organizations. This framework is intended to be used as a guide that will engage leaders and community members in an ongoing process to ensure that community policies and practices support safe and equitable access to parks. The framework will be supported by case studies, sample policy language and fact sheets that help agencies implement these best practices.



## Engage

**Partner with community organizations and community members during all stages of the process.**

### Partner Coalition

Develop a coalition or engage with an existing coalition of community partners to support Safe Routes to Parks efforts. The coalition should include other government agencies, community based organizations, hospitals, elected officials, neighborhood groups and businesses. Organizations should represent or include those from under-represented or high-need populations or groups.

### Community Collaboration

Engage community members that live within the neighborhood(s) of focus throughout the entire process. Ensure that those community members are representative of the neighborhood and include people from under-represented or high-need populations or groups.

Develop a marketing and communications plan to promote efforts, build community advocates and increase community participation in engagement activities.

# Assess: Understand community priorities based on data and community input.<sup>1</sup>

- Identify a park(s) or neighborhood(s) of focus** for Safe Routes to Parks efforts based on data identifying community need. The park itself may define the neighborhood of focus but should be about a ½ mile walking radius from the park.
- Complete a data and mapping **analysis of the park and surrounding neighborhood** and identify assets and barriers to park access. Also include analysis of current financial, staffing and other resources.
- Conduct an in person **walkability, accessibility and park audit** with the community and community partners at the park and surrounding neighborhood to identify assets and barriers in park access and safety.

## Engage

- Partner Coalition:** Work with the coalition and individual partners to analyze data, conduct audits, collect community surveys and lead community meetings/event.
- Community Engagement:** Hold a meeting or community event and conduct a community-wide survey to gather input and data from community members on resident perceived gaps, barriers and assets to park access. These should serve as evaluation data to measure community-wide progress.



<sup>1</sup>Data will depend on your community but may include:

- Demographic information: race/ethnicity, age, income, population
- Traffic/Road information: level of stress, fatalities, pedestrian facilities, public transportation, ADA accessibility etc.
- Health Data: obesity, chronic disease, asthma, crime and violence, drug overdoses
- Current park locations

# Plan: Develop priority areas, set goals and specific actions, identify policy improvements, and integrate into agency and jurisdiction plans and policies.<sup>2</sup>

- Define Safe Routes to Parks priority areas and create an **action plan with specific goals and actions** based on data and community feedback gathered in the assess phase that prioritizes communities most at need. Include implementation strategies and funding mechanisms.
- Incorporate** Safe Routes to Parks priorities **into other plans** that would enhance efforts such as including in capital improvement plans, park master plans, neighborhood and comprehensive planning, Safe Routes to School initiatives, and transportation, health, and food access plans.
- Identify policy changes** to promote Safe Routes to Parks through amendments to design guidelines, street standards, zoning and subdivision standards, policing, maintenance and other policy opportunities.

## Engage

- Partner Coalition:** Decide on top priority areas with the coalition and ensure plans are incorporated within partner organization plans and policies.
- Community Engagement:** Gather community feedback through a meeting, event or community outreach to help decide on top priority areas.



<sup>2</sup> Plans may focus on specific parks, neighborhoods, and/or the system of parks. These actions should take into consideration differences between neighborhood vs. regional parks and the ways in which users travel to different types of parks.

# Implement: Put plans into action and ensure that those actions are based on best practices in engineering, design and programming.

## Engineering and Design

- Implement improvements to the park and streets **within the park** based on the following elements:



### Park Design

Plant or maintain trees, plants and other natural features to provide shade and aesthetics. Design entrances and borders to increase perceptions of accessibility. Provide places for people to sit to enjoy nature, rest and socialize with others.



### Street Design

Upgrade streets to promote safety for all users (people walking, biking, driving, etc.) through marked crossings, traffic calming, sidewalks and bike lanes, and signs or signals. Emphasize slow speeds and separate people walking and biking from cars within or abutting the park.



### Park Amenities

Build, maintain and replace park amenities that are desired by the community and promote increased physical activity such as trails, drinking fountains and bike parking.



### ADA Compliance

Build, maintain and replace park facilities to be compliant with ADA standards, including sidewalks, trails and road crossings into and through the park.



### Signage and Wayfinding

Place signs or other wayfinding systems in and around the park to help users navigate and to provide safety and clarity for all users.



### Maintenance

Develop maintenance practices to keep the park safe from hazards and free from graffiti, trash and overgrown plants.

- Work with partners to implement improvements to routes **leading to the park** based on the following elements:



### Maintenance

Develop maintenance practices with the transportation and public works departments to promote well maintained infrastructure for people walking and biking.



### Street Design

Design and upgrade streets to promote safety for all users (people walking, biking, driving, etc.) through marked crossings, traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes and signs or signals.



### Signage and Wayfinding

Place signs or other wayfinding systems for all types of users in the neighborhood to guide and attract people to the park.



### Connectivity

Identify opportunities to increase connections to, from and through the park to the neighborhood and other community destinations.

## Programming

- Support and design programs at the park (including those run by other organizations) to encourage residents to **walk or bike to the park and engage in physical activity** at the park.
- Promote and design programs (including those run by other organizations) that are **tailored to the needs of the community** and reach under-represented or high-need populations or groups.

## Personal Safety

- Cultivate **relationships with law enforcement** to improve personal safety measures within or near the park. Through these interactions, create policies and programs that build trust and increase safety while cultivating and nurturing relationships.
- Make physical improvements to the **built environment that discourage violence** and increase street safety using techniques of “crime prevention through environmental design” (CPTED).
- Address street harassment issues in parks and streets through public relations campaigns and other avenues.

## Engage

- Partner Coalition:** Engage partners to assist in all aspects of implementation including installing and constructing new features, maintaining the park and surrounding streets, and activating the park space.
- Community Engagement:** Empower community residents to assist in implementing strategies such as adopt-a-park maintenance groups, community park watches and community led physical activity groups.

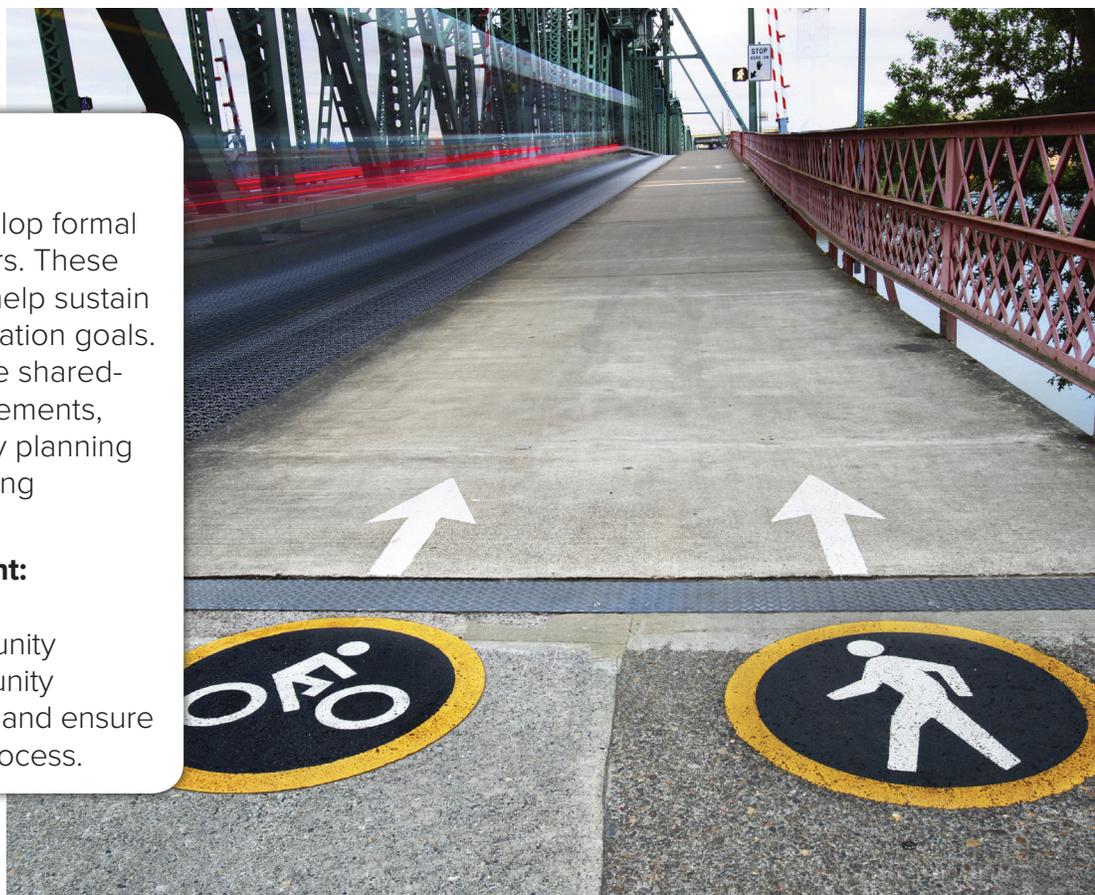


## Sustain: Ensure that efforts are continued, integrated into agency functions and are positively affecting the community.

- Develop a **sustainable financing model** for Safe Routes to Parks related projects by redirecting existing resources or identifying new funding streams. These funding streams may be from the park and recreation budget or from multiple sources and partnerships.
- Incorporate Safe Routes to Parks action items into **park and recreation and partner agency system-wide planning and policy**, including the capital improvement, preventative maintenance, and park and open space plans, and park and street design policies, to increase sustainability of efforts.
- Measure the impact** the changes have on the community. This should be focused on the goals and priority areas chosen in the plan phase, use data collected in the assess phase and have a particular focus on under-represented or high-need populations or groups. Evaluation should include measures such as park usage, crime levels and/or levels of physical activity before and after changes.

### Engage

- Partner Coalition:** Develop formal agreements with partners. These formal agreements will help sustain efforts and align organization goals. Agreements may include shared-use, joint financing agreements, integration of community planning efforts, community policing agreements, etc.
- Community Engagement:** Formalize management responsibilities of community engagement and community engagement processes, and ensure that this is an ongoing process.



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NRPA Health and Wellness Advisory Panel

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## Safe Routes to School National Partnership

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a national nonprofit dedicated to the creation of safe, active, equitable and healthy communities—urban, suburban, and rural—throughout the United States. The National Partnership advances policy change, catalyzes support for healthy communities, fosters a commitment

to equity in active transportation, and shares our deep expertise to improve support for walking and bicycling to school and beyond. We envision communities where kids of all races, income levels and abilities are walking and biking safely, where active transportation is a viable option for everyone, and where health does not depend on your zip code or income level.



## National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading non-profit dedicated to improving the health and sustainability of communities for all people through parks, recreation and conservation. NRPA represents a vast membership network of 12,000 agencies, 105,000 parks, and touches the lives of more than 200 million people in virtually every community. The majority of the membership consists of over 50,000 employees of local

park and recreation agencies across the country. As public agencies, members routinely work and partner with other local agencies including health, planning and transportation departments to advance their missions. Leadership from local park and recreation professionals is essential to increase safe and equitable access to parks. As the trusted leader for parks and recreation, NRPA is at the forefront of the movement to educate and empower professionals across the country to ensure safe access to parks.



**NRPA**

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