



SAFE
ROUTES TO
PARKS



saferoutespartnership.org

Five Actions to Get Started on Safe Routes to Parks

The Safe Routes to Parks is a research-backed intervention to boost rates of physical activity that can have positive health benefits. In a systematic review, the [Community Preventive Services Task Force](#) found a significant increase in physical activity related to parks, greenways, and trails when they are paired with at least one other intervention – community engagement, structured programs, public awareness, and/or access enhancements. Safe Routes to Parks is a programmatic way to apply that research to boost physical activity in your community. This factsheet outlines five actions champions can take to get started.

WHAT IS SAFE ROUTES TO PARKS?

Safe Routes to Parks is a movement to make access to great parks by walking, bicycling, and taking public transportation safer, more convenient, and more equitable for people, especially in low-income communities and communities of color, where less investment has gone into the routes to and the facilities in parks. To learn more, visit [Safe Routes to Parks](#).

1 Assess what is already happening:

The easiest way to make progress on Safe Routes to Parks is by tying it to work that already exists in your community. Review existing plans and programs to understand what is already happening and then find ways to connect and build on those efforts. For example, connect with the local Safe Routes to School program to see how they currently use park space (many use parks as part of the route to school or meeting places for remote drop-off). Check out this [policy scan template](#) to keep track of what you find.

2 Do a walk and roll audit:

A walk audit is a low-budget activity that provides the dual benefit of gathering data and engaging community members of all ages to think and talk about the infrastructure around them. Walk audits can highlight needs and opportunities to improve park spaces as well as routes connecting them to everyday destinations like schools, libraries, and grocery stores. Check out the [Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit toolkit](#) for planning and facilitation tips as well as printable materials (available in [Spanish](#), too). **Bonus:** Invite decision-makers like council members, school principals, or public works staff in your community to participate so they can experience the assets and needs first hand as well.



Community members giving feedback through a sticky note activity. Photo Credit: Cultiva La Salud in Merced County, CA

For more detail on the Community Preventative Services Task Force recommendations and how they connect to Safe Routes to parks, check out [Actionable Public Health Strategies to Boost Community Well-Being with Safe Routes to Parks](#).





Families biked to city council to advocate for safer walking and biking. Photo Credit: Shawnee Family YMCA in Shawnee, OK

3 Figure out your headline:

Before you start anything, you need to know where you are going. Think about yourself a year from now. What is the headline you want to see published in the local paper about your Safe Routes to Parks work? Fully engage in this thinking—what are the pictures? What are the statistics or quotes you include to make the story more tangible? This will help you identify the problem you want to solve, what your goal is, and how you will tell that story through data, photos, and/or anecdotes. Get inspired by these case studies and how the stories are framed:

- ▶ [Innovative Library and Parks Department Partnership Demonstrates Safer Connections for People and Parks Via Highway Bridge](#)
- ▶ [Bringing Flashing Stop Signs and a Community Park Celebration to Wenatchee, Washington](#)
- ▶ [Community-Led Art Installation Encourages Safer Streets Near Old Stadium Park and Serves as a Model for Oahu](#)
- ▶ [Sustaining Success: Former Crime Magnet is Transformed into a Community Recreational and Green Space](#)

4 Use early actions to build interest and buy-in:

Find tangible things to do early on in order to build momentum. This may be an event like a bike rodeo or a temporary, pop-up project to help people experience and imagine possibilities for parks and the routes to them. Ideally, you draw people in so you can share about your work and learn about their vision for park access in their community.

Bonus: Team up with partners for these programs (per the recommendation above) for example, demonstration projects that take place on Walk/Bike to School day, or a community trick-or-treating event can take advantage of temporary infrastructure.

EARLY ACTION RESOURCES

- ▶ [Ideas for Implementing Safe Routes to Parks Improvements](#)
- ▶ [Ideas to Integrate Safe Routes to Parks into Walk to School Day Events](#)

5 Think about sustaining this work:

While it may seem odd to think about how to keep work going when you have just begun, it can be an effective strategy to plan your Safe Routes to Parks efforts. Thinking about long-term plans when you first begin a project is an important way to ensure that your processes are organized and create positive community change. For ideas, check out [Keep Up the Momentum! Sustaining Safe Routes to Parks Efforts](#) or the “Financing Safe Routes to Parks” section of [our website](#).

With these five tips in mind and our [library of resources](#) you will be well equipped to begin your Safe Routes to Parks work. Taking any of these initial steps can help build momentum for bigger changes in your community!

