Safe Routes to School and Policy 101: Why and How to Develop Policies that Support Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes PARTNERSHIP

Colorado Safe Routes to School Program
Kori Johnson and Michelle Lieberman, Safe Routes Partnership
Lisa Diaz, Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure
June 23, 2020

MISSION

The mission of the Safe Routes Partnership is to advance safe walking and rolling to and from schools and in everyday life, improving the health and well-being of people of all races, income levels, and abilities, and building healthy, thriving communities for everyone.

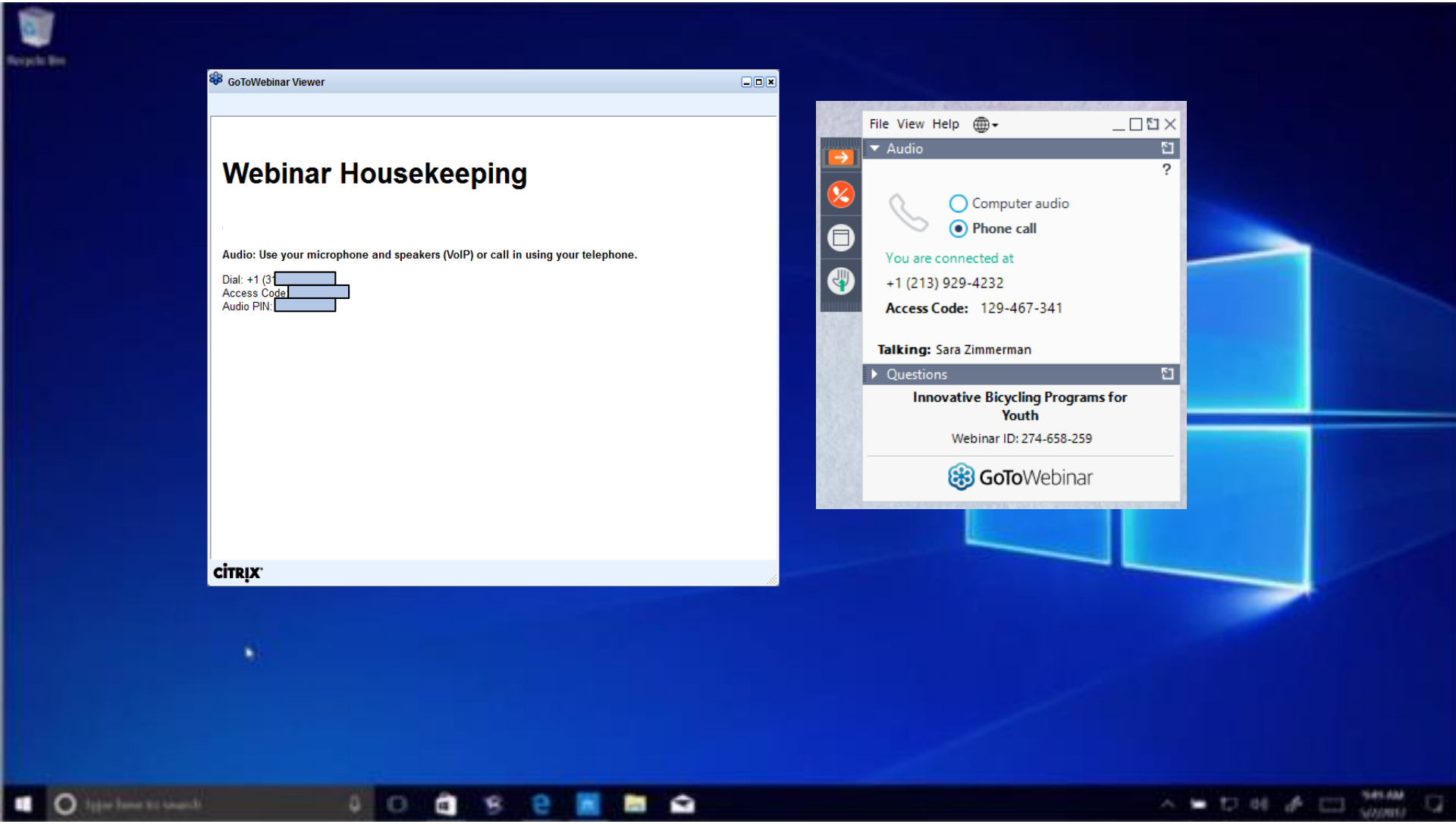
Safe Routes
PARTNERSHIP
Active Paths for Equity & Health

TODAY'S PRESENTERS

LISA

MICHELLE

KORI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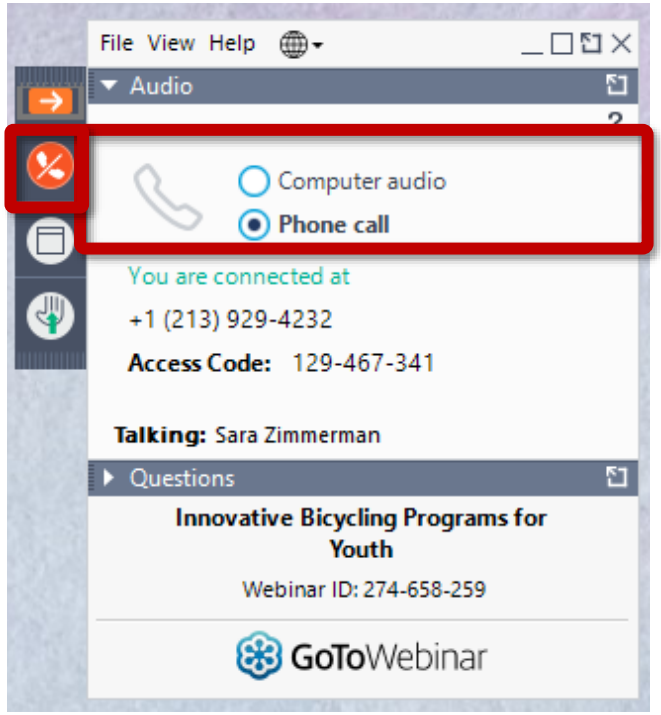

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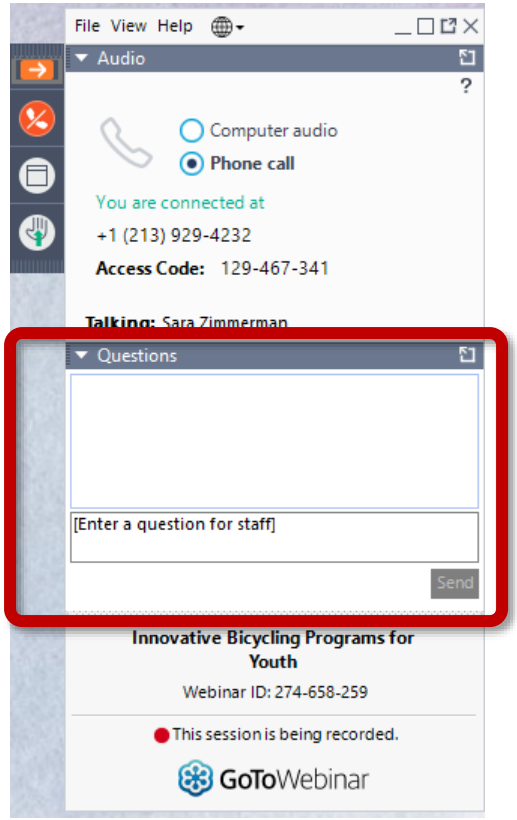
HAVE A QUESTION?



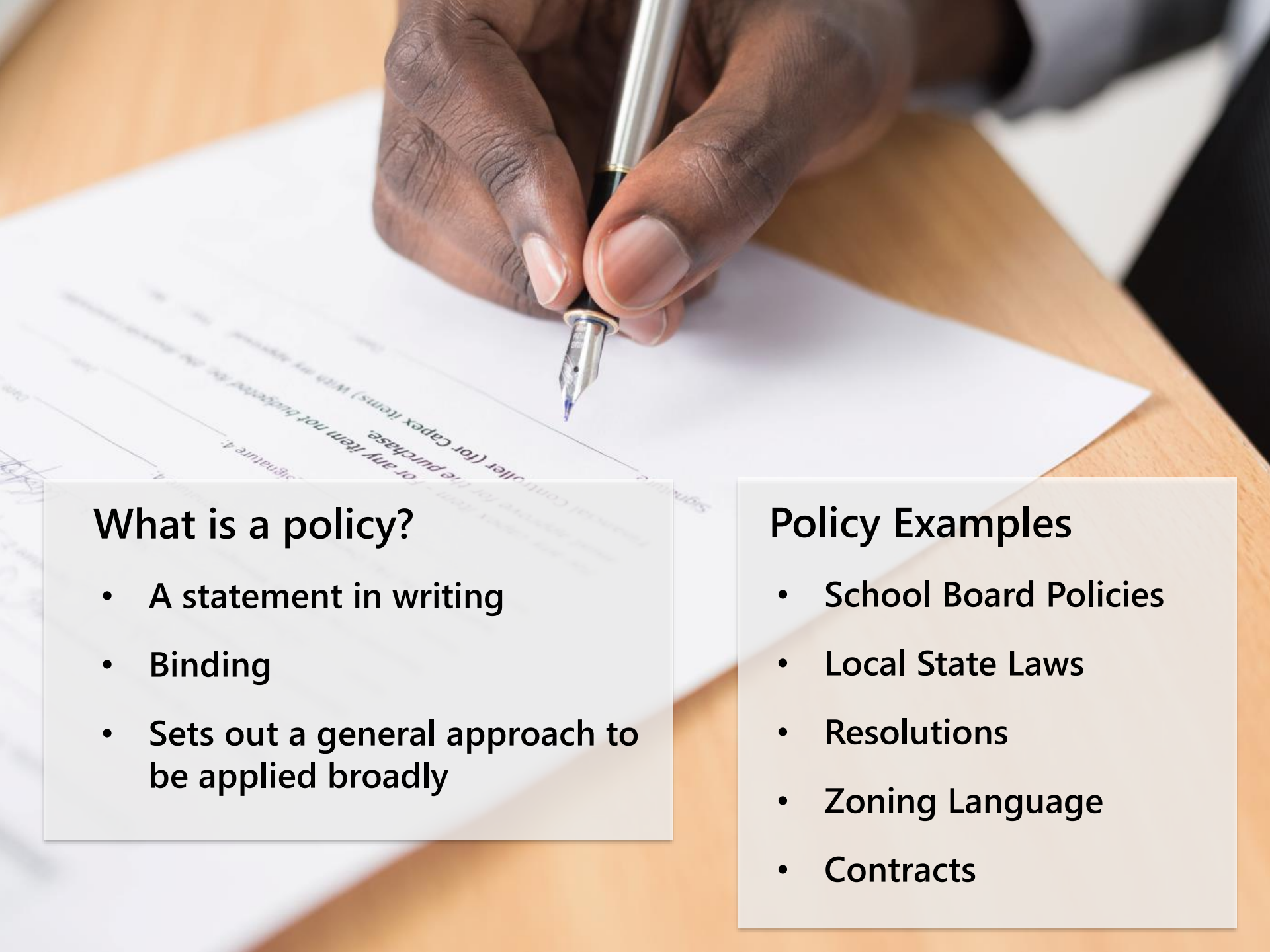
QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Submit your text questions and comments using the Questions Panel

Today's Agenda

1. Why Policy?
2. City and County Policies
3. Policy Highlight - Denver
4. School District Policies
5. Q&A

WHY POLICY?



What is a policy?

- A statement in writing
- Binding
- Sets out a general approach to be applied broadly

Policy Examples

- School Board Policies
- Local State Laws
- Resolutions
- Zoning Language
- Contracts

Who is in the room?

- State
- District
- City
- County
- Nonprofit
- Community Member
- Planners
- Transportation Personnel
- Public Health
- Lawyers
- Parents
- Students

What Are the Benefits of Policy Change?

Policy can:

- Institutionalize good ideas
- Reach more people
- Lead to more consistent implementation
- Create accountability
- Establish relationships and responsibilities

Policy and Programs

Programs, like walking school buses, can lead to policies that support walking and rolling.

Safe Routes to School Policy Levels

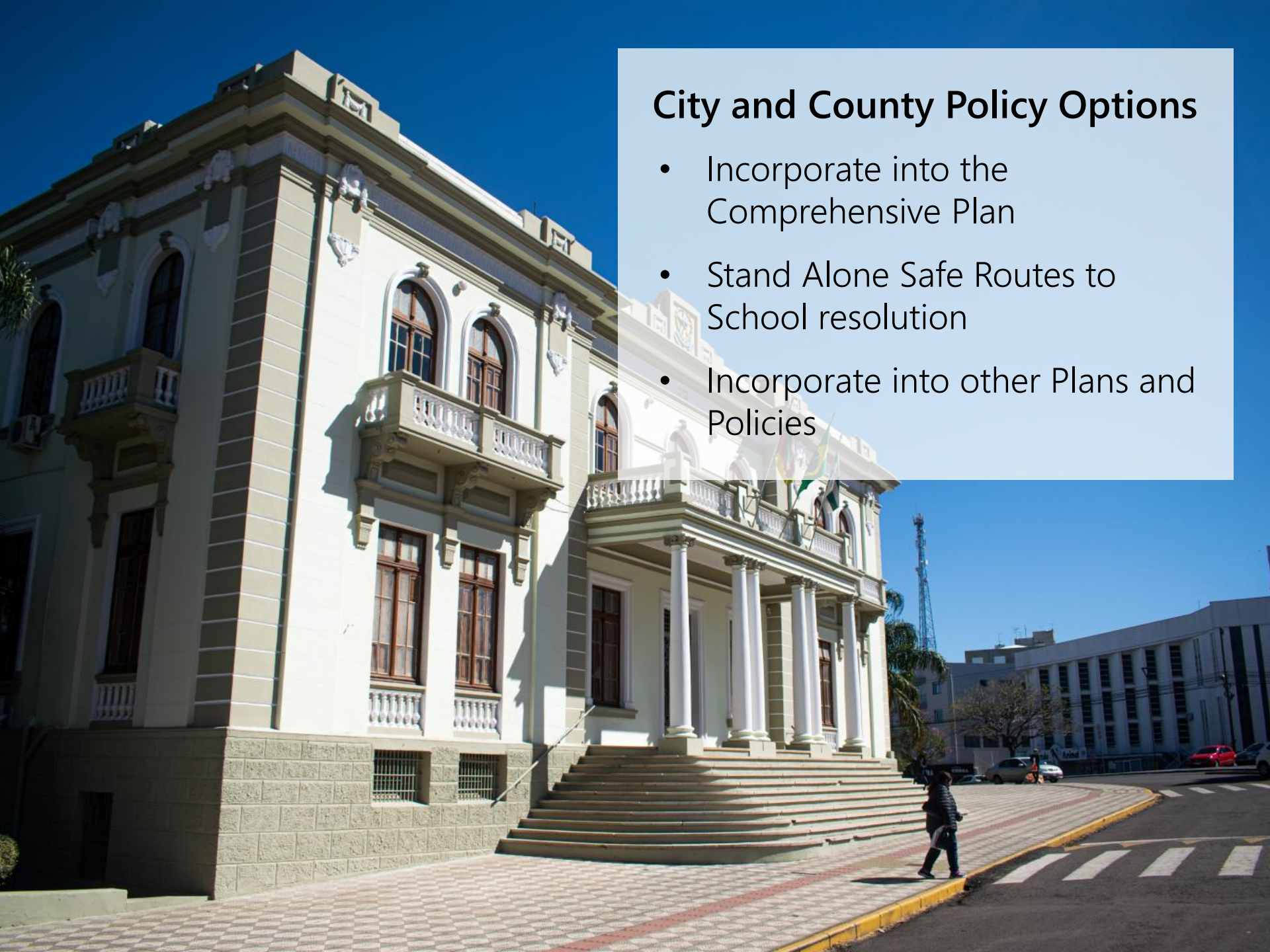
- Federal
- State
- Region
- Town/City/County
- School District
- School

CITY AND COUNTY POLICIES

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School initiatives require support from school districts and local jurisdictions.

- Geographical Authority – Each needs to act on those areas in their own jurisdiction
- Data – Each use data to inform program and policy needs (new developments, new schools, hazardous conditions)
- Different Perspectives – Elementary/middle/high school, school release times, needs of residents
- Access to Different Resources – Money, volunteers, community partners, expertise, etc.



City and County Policy Options

- Incorporate into the Comprehensive Plan
- Stand Alone Safe Routes to School resolution
- Incorporate into other Plans and Policies

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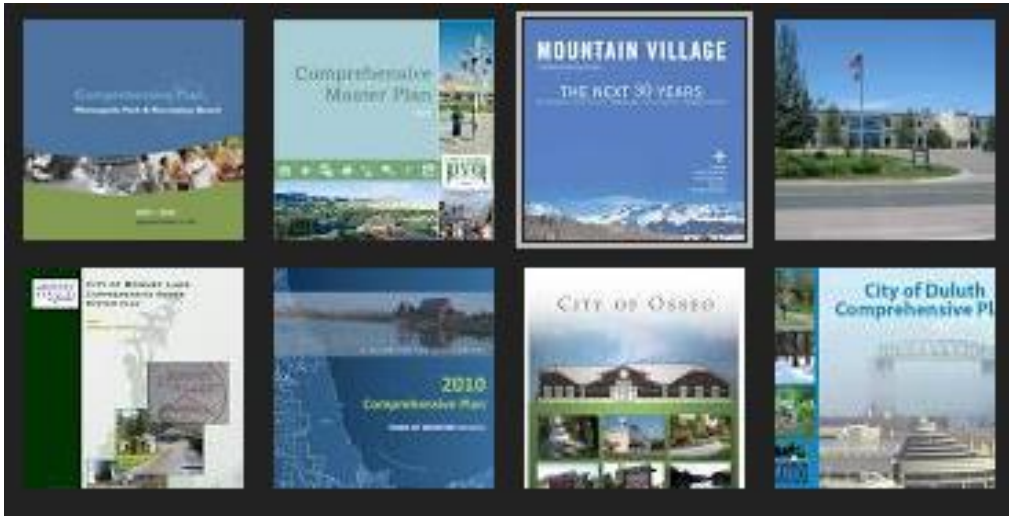
Comprehensive Plan

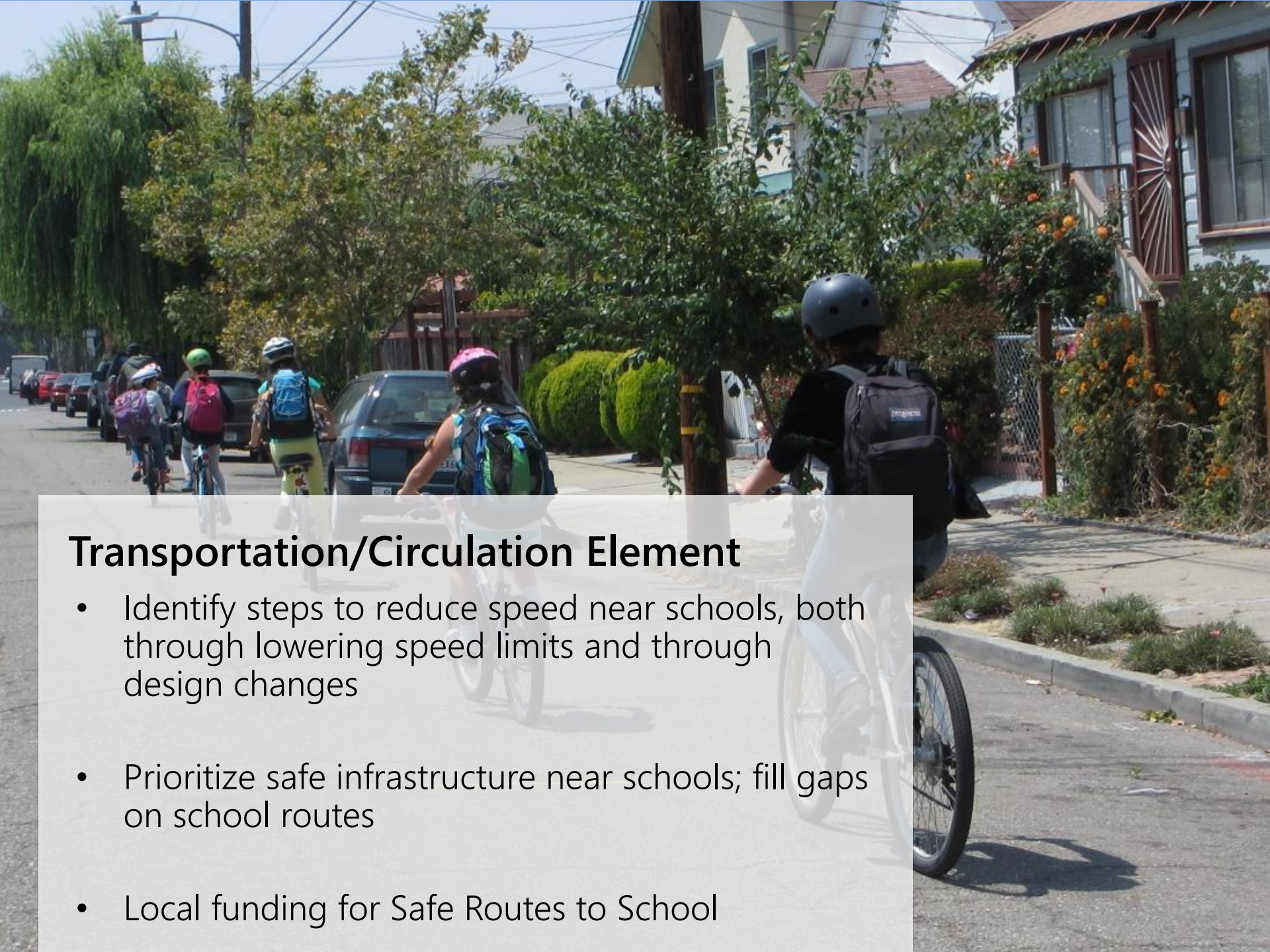


- Blueprint for future development in a community
- Opportunity for residents and leaders to think about what they value about their community and what changes they'd like to see, and create a plan to accomplish that
- Guides future policy decisions and investments
- Long term vision

Incorporating Safe Routes to School in a Comprehensive Plan

Vision

- How community residents want to see their community evolve
- Can include walking and rolling generally as well as safe walking and rolling to school
- **Core Elements**
  - Transportation/Circulation
  - Public Facilities
- **Additional Elements**
  - Land Use, Housing
  - Recreation and Tourism
  - Health



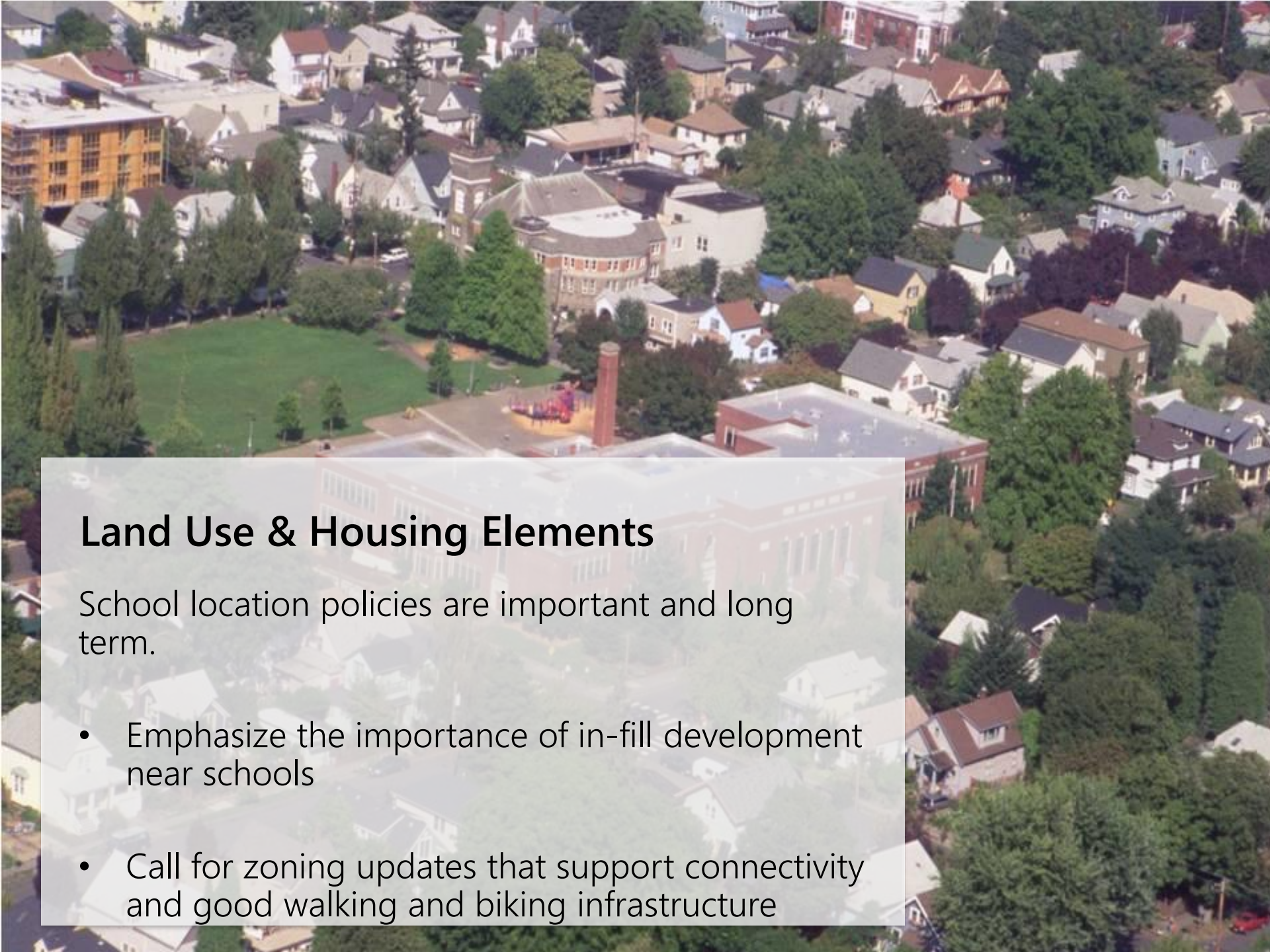
Transportation/Circulation Element

- Identify steps to reduce speed near schools, both through lowering speed limits and through design changes
- Prioritize safe infrastructure near schools; fill gaps on school routes
- Local funding for Safe Routes to School

Public Facilities Element

How local jurisdiction works with school district:

- Walking and bicycling events
- Crossing guard program
- Location of development in context of services



Land Use & Housing Elements

School location policies are important and long term.

- Emphasize the importance of in-fill development near schools
- Call for zoning updates that support connectivity and good walking and biking infrastructure

Recreation and Tourism Element

- Routes to school through parks and trails
- Locate schools and parks next to each other

Example: Fort Collins City Plan

Principle T 6: Support bicycling as a safe, easy and convenient travel option for all ages and abilities by building a connected network of facilities.

POLICY T 6.1 - CONNECTED BICYCLE FACILITIES
Build and maintain bicycle facilities that form a continuous and dense low-stress bicycle network with seamless connections to public transit, bike-share and other shared-mobility vehicles, schools, neighborhoods, community destinations and the regional bicycle network.

POLICY T 6.2 - BICYCLE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS
Implement appropriate, well-designed bicycle facilities, education and enforcement programs.

POLICY T 6.3 - BICYCLING FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES
Increase bicycle ridership by creating a welcoming environment for people of all bicycling levels in all parts of the city.

POLICY T 6.4 - BICYCLING TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Increase access to bicycling as essential to an active and environmentally healthy community.

POLICY T 6.5 - FACILITY MAINTENANCE
Identify opportunities for additional year-round maintenance of bicycle facilities to provide safe bicycling in winter months.

POLICY T 6.6 - ADAPTIVE BICYCLING
Increase programming and infrastructure focus on adaptive bicycling to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

Principle T 7: Support walking as a safe, easy and convenient travel option for all ages and abilities by building a connected network of sidewalks, paths and trails.

POLICY T 7.1 - PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES
Implement ADA-accessible pedestrian facilities as detailed in the Pedestrian Plan and Sidewalk Prioritization Program.

POLICY T 7.2 - SAFE PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES
Develop safe and secure pedestrian settings by developing and maintaining an appropriately lit pedestrian network, enforcing snow removal on sidewalks adjacent to residential properties and mitigating the impacts of vehicles. Connections will be clearly visible and accessible, incorporating markings, signage, lighting and paving materials.

POLICY T 7.3 - NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS FOR WALKING
Provide an attractive, safe environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers on neighborhood streets with well-designed streetscapes, including detached sidewalks, parkways and well-defined crosswalks.

POLICY T 7.4 - PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
Provide direct and visible pedestrian connections between cul-de-sacs, transit stops, schools, activity areas, public facilities, recreational trails and other key pedestrian destinations.

POLICY T 7.5 - INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DISABLED COMMUNITY
Increase programming and infrastructure focused on providing the best environment to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

Safe Routes to School class

Principle T 10: Support and enhance safety for all modes.

POLICY T 10.1 - TOWARD VISION ZERO
Develop a safety-enhancement action plan for all modes based on the City's commitment to Vision Zero.

POLICY T 10.2 - EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT
Promote the development of educational programs and ensure the appropriate utilization of traffic enforcement.

POLICY T 10.3 - SAFETY AND RESPECT
Develop and support education and enforcement programs that promote safety and encourage respect for traffic laws among drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, long boarders and e-scooters.

POLICY T 10.4 - PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC LAWS
Partner with community stakeholders to develop educational and enforcement programs that promote safety, encourage respect for pedestrians and encourage pedestrians to respect traffic laws.

POLICY T 10.5 - STREET CROSSINGS
Design street crossings at intersections consistent with the Fort Collins Traffic Code, the Land Use Code, the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), ADA and the Larimer County Urban Area Street Standards (LUCASS) with regard to crosswalks, lighting, median refuges, bike boxes, corner sidewalk widening, ramps, signs, signals and landscaping.

POLICY T 10.6 - SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM
Continue the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, which focuses on educating all children, teachers, parents and schools about safe walking and bicycling as a mode of travel to get to school. Ensure that SRTS materials and activities are inclusive of people with disabilities.

POLICY T 10.7 - PERSONAL SAFETY
Design infrastructure and programs to promote personal safety through lighting, the activation of public space and police presence.

POLICY T 10.8 - DATA DRIVEN APPROACH
Utilize an annual, data-driven, citywide safety review that helps inform all projects.

POLICY T 10.9 - SAFETY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
Focus improvement efforts on projects that enhance transportation safety.

POLICY T 10.10 - UNDERRESOURCED COMMUNITIES
Consider prioritizing safety improvements in marginalized and underresourced communities, including the disability community.

Bike to Work Day

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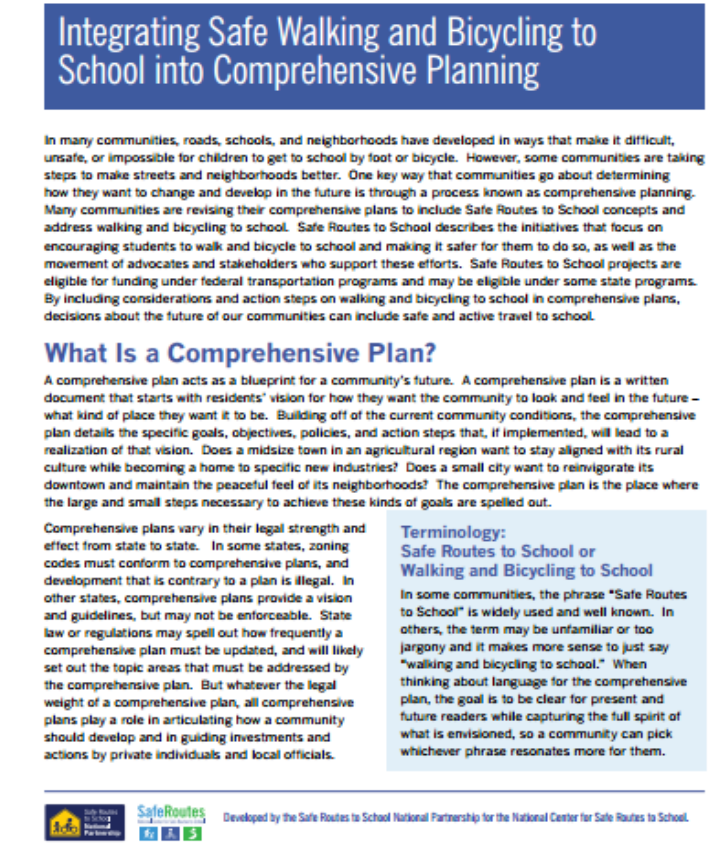
Key Resources



Integrating Safe Walking and Bicycling to School into Comprehensive Planning

In many communities, roads, schools, and neighborhoods have developed in ways that make it difficult, unsafe, or impossible for children to get to school by foot or bicycle. However, some communities are taking steps to make streets and neighborhoods better. One key way that communities go about determining how they want to change and develop in the future is through a process known as comprehensive planning. Many communities are revising their comprehensive plans to include Safe Routes to School concepts and address walking and bicycling to school. Safe Routes to School describes the initiatives that focus on encouraging students to walk and bicycle to school and making it safer for them to do so, as well as the movement of advocates and stakeholders who support these efforts. Safe Routes to School projects are eligible for funding under federal transportation programs and may be eligible under some state programs. By including considerations and action steps on walking and bicycling to school in comprehensive plans, decisions about the future of our communities can include safe and active travel to school.

What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan acts as a blueprint for a community's future. A comprehensive plan is a written document that starts with residents' vision for how they want the community to look and feel in the future – what kind of place they want it to be. Building off of the current community conditions, the comprehensive plan details the specific goals, objectives, policies, and action steps that, if implemented, will lead to a realization of that vision. Does a midsize town in an agricultural region want to stay aligned with its rural culture while becoming a home to specific new industries? Does a small city want to reinvigorate its downtown and maintain the peaceful feel of its neighborhoods? The comprehensive plan is the place where the large and small steps necessary to achieve these kinds of goals are spelled out.

Comprehensive plans vary in their legal strength and effect from state to state. In some states, zoning codes must conform to comprehensive plans, and development that is contrary to a plan is illegal. In other states, comprehensive plans provide a vision and guidelines, but may not be enforceable. State law or regulations may spell out how frequently a comprehensive plan must be updated, and will likely set out the topic areas that must be addressed by the comprehensive plan. But whatever the legal weight of a comprehensive plan, all comprehensive plans play a role in articulating how a community should develop and in guiding investments and actions by private individuals and local officials.

Terminology: Safe Routes to School or Walking and Bicycling to School

In some communities, the phrase "Safe Routes to School" is widely used and well known. In others, the term may be unfamiliar or too jargony and it makes more sense to just say "walking and bicycling to school." When thinking about language for the comprehensive plan, the goal is to be clear for present and future readers while capturing the full spirit of what is envisioned, so a community can pick whichever phrase resonates more for them.

SafeRoutes

Developed by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership for the National Center for Safe Routes to School.

Integrating Safe Walking and Bicycling to School into Comprehensive Planning, Safe Routes Partnership

Model Safe Routes to School Language for Comprehensive Plans, ChangeLab Solutions

Multimodal Transportation Best Practices and Model Element, National Center for Transit Research

Stand Alone Safe Routes to School Resolution

- Could include support for Safe Routes to School events, actions that can be taken by local agencies, and a commitment to revise existing policies to improve their support for Safe Routes to School

- Strong policy sets out specific actions the city or county will implement

Additional City and County Policies

- Safe School Zone Policy
- Complete Streets
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Plans
- Vision Zero
- Zoning and Subdivision Codes

Safe School Zone Policy

- Reduce speed
- Prioritize new walking and biking infrastructure near schools

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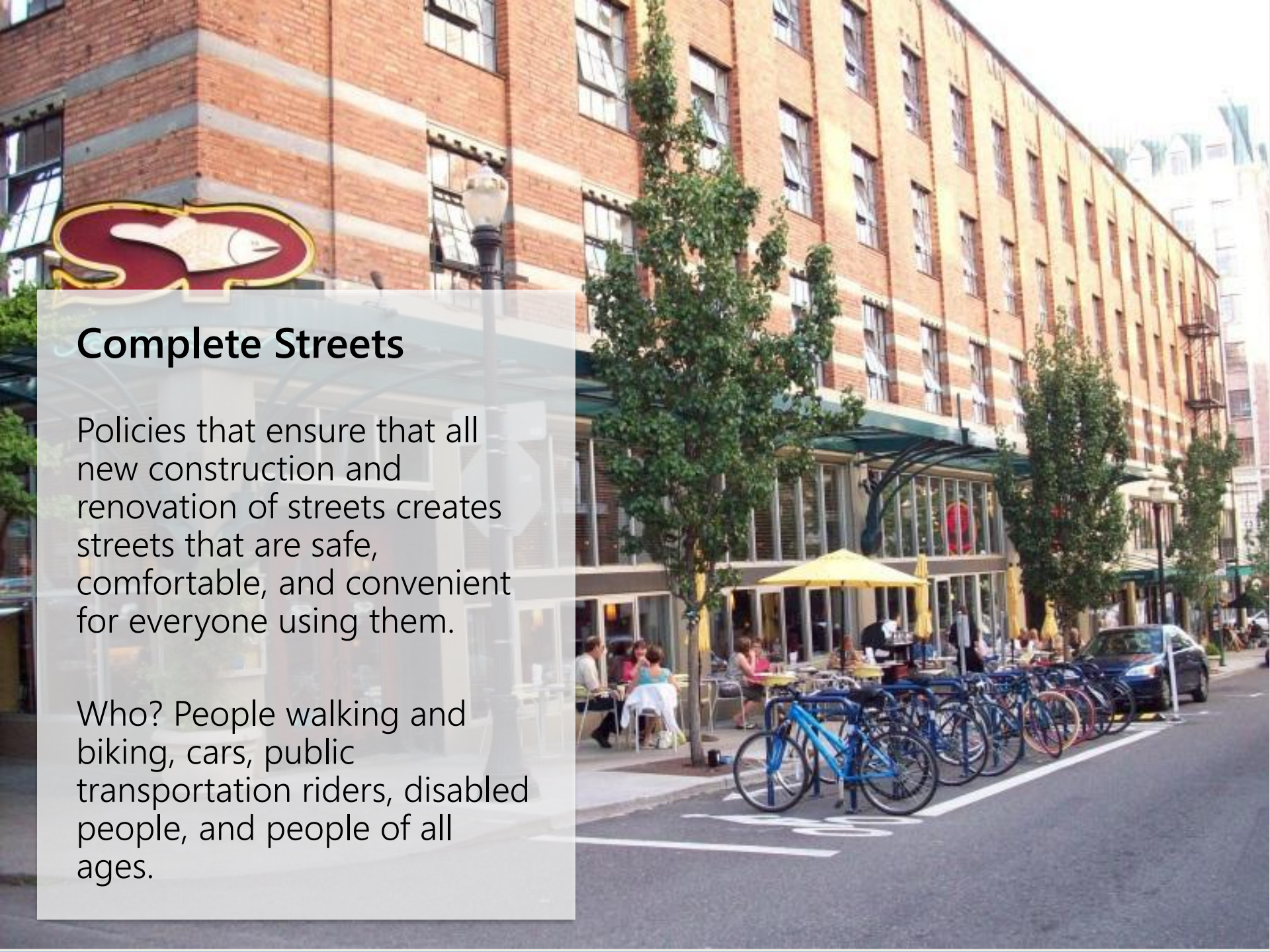


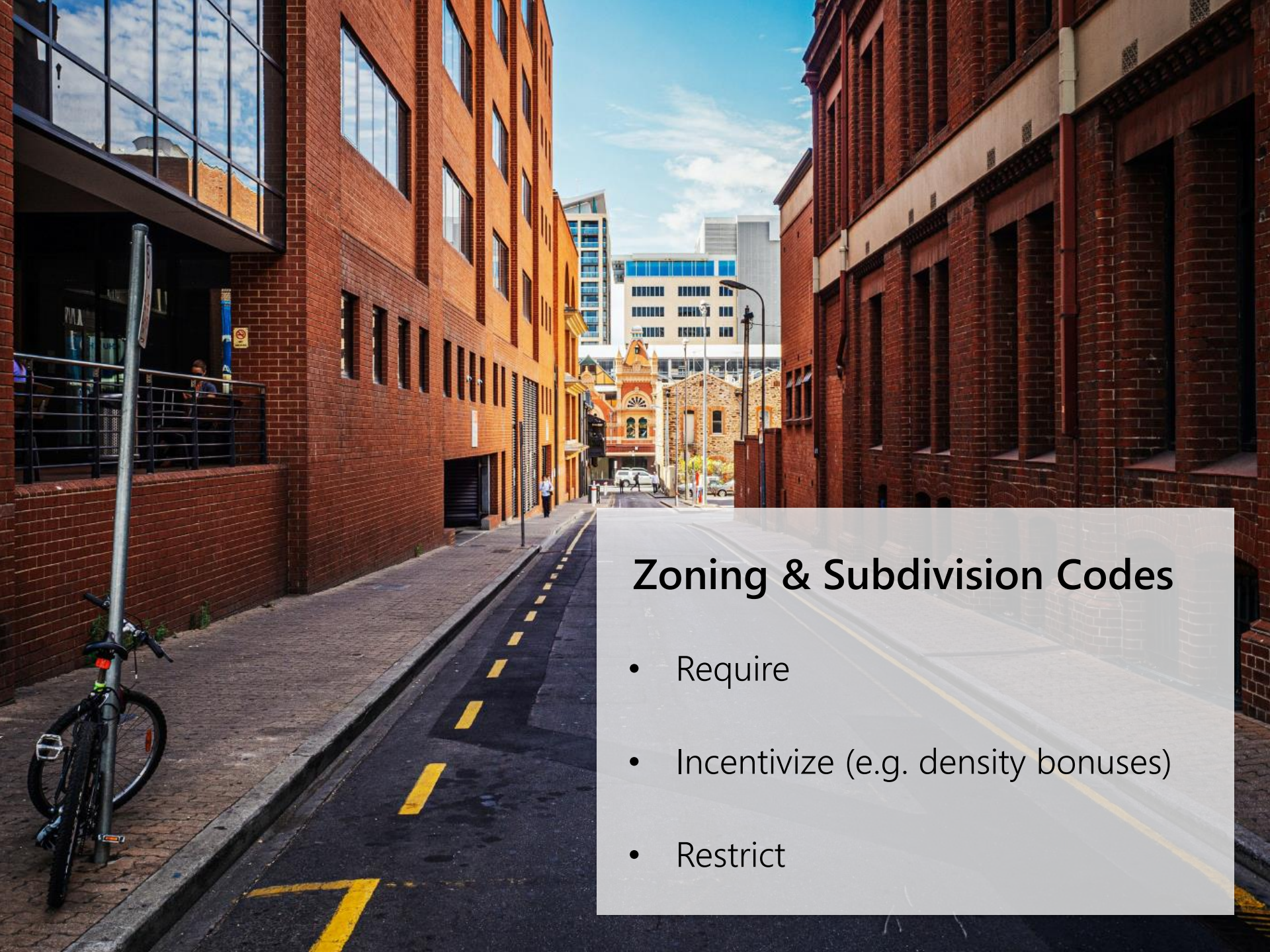
Complete Streets

Policies that ensure that all new construction and renovation of streets creates streets that are safe, comfortable, and convenient for everyone using them.

Who? People walking and biking, cars, public transportation riders, disabled people, and people of all ages.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans

- Can stand alone or be incorporated into transportation plan or comprehensive plan
- Planning process for walking and biking
- Include Safe Routes to School



Zoning & Subdivision Codes

- Require
- Incentivize (e.g. density bonuses)
- Restrict

Vision Zero

- Prioritize children as vulnerable users and schools as key destinations
- Identify Safe Routes to School investments
- Include bicycle and pedestrian safety for children in education component

SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

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School District Policies

How do school districts benefit from Safe Routes to School?

- Physical activity supports academic achievement
- When children are healthier, they learn better
- Physically active kids have better attendance rates
- Safe Routes to School helps children arrive safely at school

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Tips for Working with School Boards

How do you get school board policies adopted?

- **Engage:** Get people excited about their vision for change.
- **Assess:** What's the problem? What solutions are there?
- **Propose:** Draft a strong policy that expresses the vision.
- **Advocate:** Identify and meet with decision makers.
- **Implement:** Stay focused after a policy gets adopted.

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Working with School Boards

- To start: Do some basic research & get the inside scoop on school board members.
- Build relationships with board members by first looking to inform and engage them.
- Figure out what a board member wants. What is important to them? Would they like to serve on your task force? Ask!
- Meet with board members before presenting your ideas at a board meeting.
- Keep your superintendent in the loop.
- Offer your resources & recognition & SRTS photo ops.

Topics for Safe Routes to School Policies

- Support
- Guidance and Authorization
- Logistics
- Planning and Design

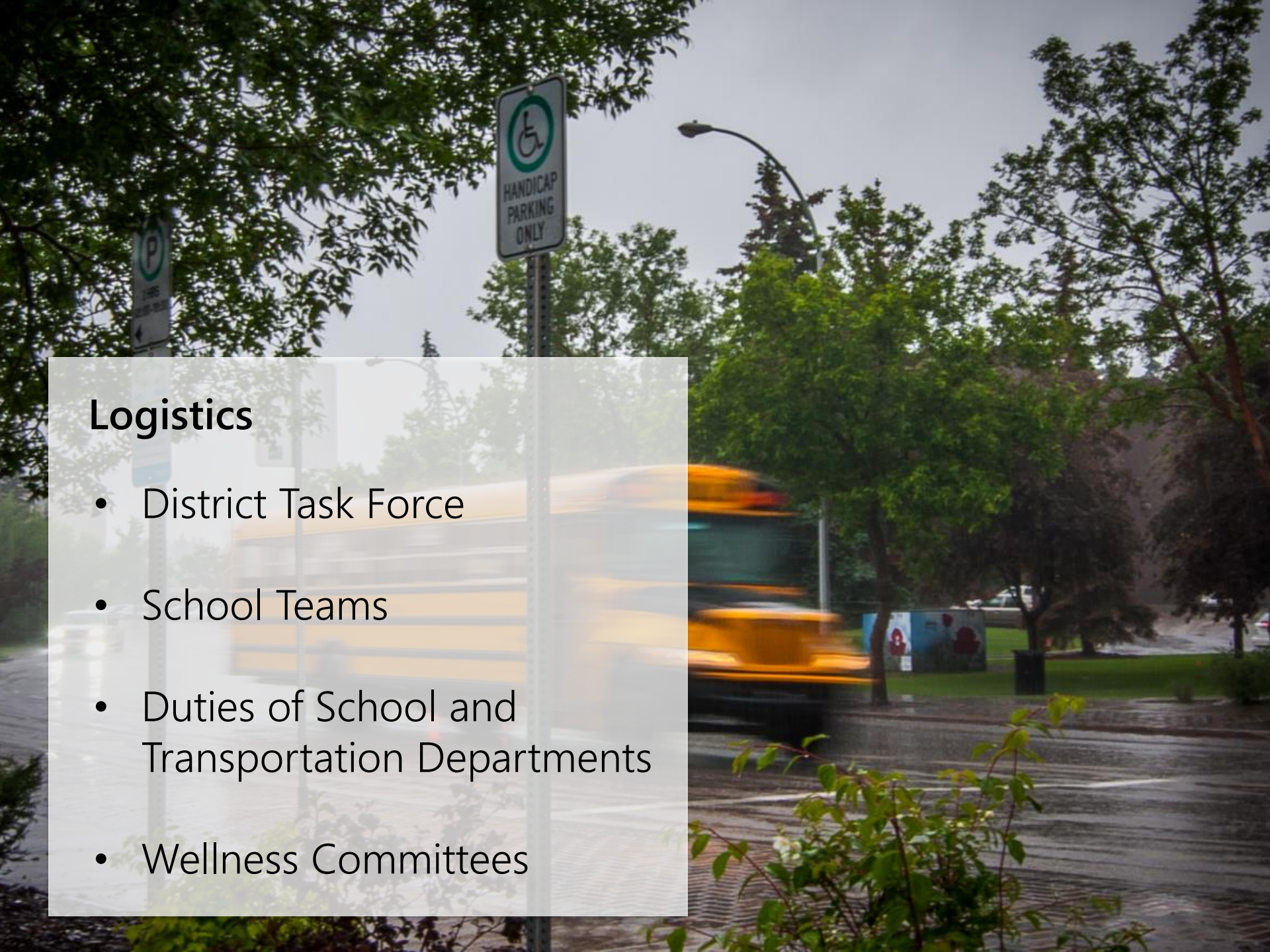
Support Statements

- Support for Safe Routes to School
- Policies that Limit School Restrictions
- Student/Parent Handbook

Pedbikeimages library. Dan Burden

Guidance and Authorization for Safe Routes to School Components

- Walking School Buses
- Bike Trains
- Walk and Bike to School Day Events
- Recommended Routes
- Traffic Education
- Shared Use



Logistics

- District Task Force
- School Teams
- Duties of School and Transportation Departments
- Wellness Committees

Planning and Design

- School Travel Plans
- Site Design
- Bike Parking
- School Siting

School District Policy Opportunities

- Wellness Policies
- Board Policies
- Administrative Regulations

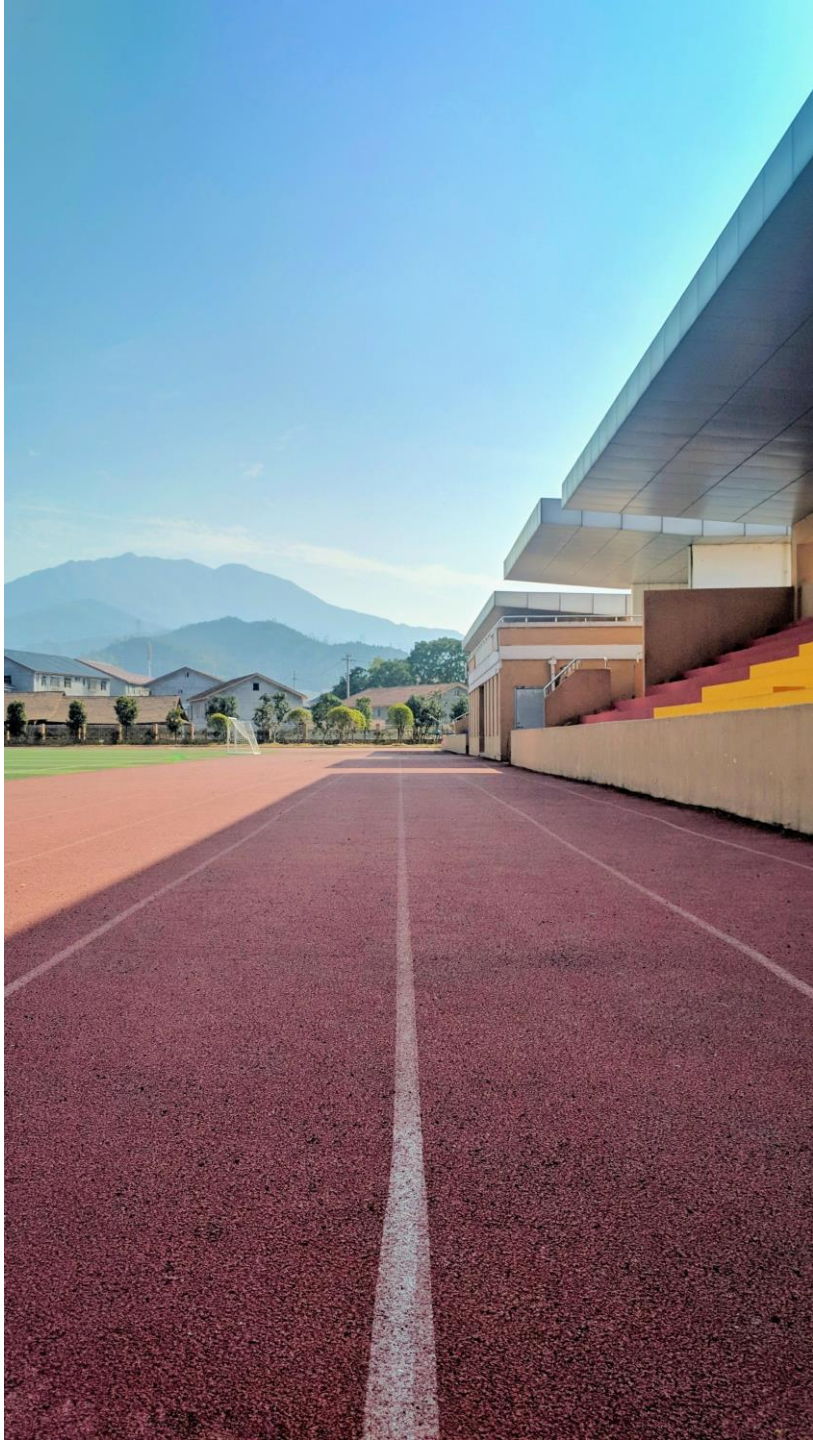
District Wellness Policies

- Required by federal law for schools participating in federal student nutrition programs
- Widely present
- Historically weak on physical activity
- Good opportunity to incorporate language about kids walking and biking
- Wellness policies or traditional board policies both effective.

Informal School Policy Opportunities

Less formal school policies can be key:

- Families and student handbooks
- Webpages
- Transportation department policies
- Curricula (e.g. health and PE)
- Other plans or policies required by state law (safety plans, etc.)
- Remember to actively include students and give them decision-making power



The Policy Workbook

- Free online tool that lets you review different possible policy provisions
- Allows creation of very own policy tailored to your local needs
- Educational resource & national tool
- Joint project between Safe Routes Partnership and ChangeLab Solutions

Policy Workbook Background

How did the policy workbook come about?

- Need was seen by policy people & lawyers at ChangeLab Solutions and by issue experts at Safe Routes Partnership.
- Developed in 2012-2013 with funding from CDC.
- Reviewed every district Safe Routes to School policy we could find.
- Input from over 25 advocates, district administrators, school board members, and other experts.
- Breaks down policies into beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

Beginner Policies

- Support for Active Transportation
- Support for Safe Routes to School
- Roles of Districts, Schools, Students, Parents/Guardians
- Minimizing Driving
- Following the Law
- District Task Force
- School Teams
- Traffic Safety Education
- Walking School Bus and Bike Trains
- Walk/Bike to School Day
- Student/Parent Handbook
- School Wellness Policy

Intermediate Policies

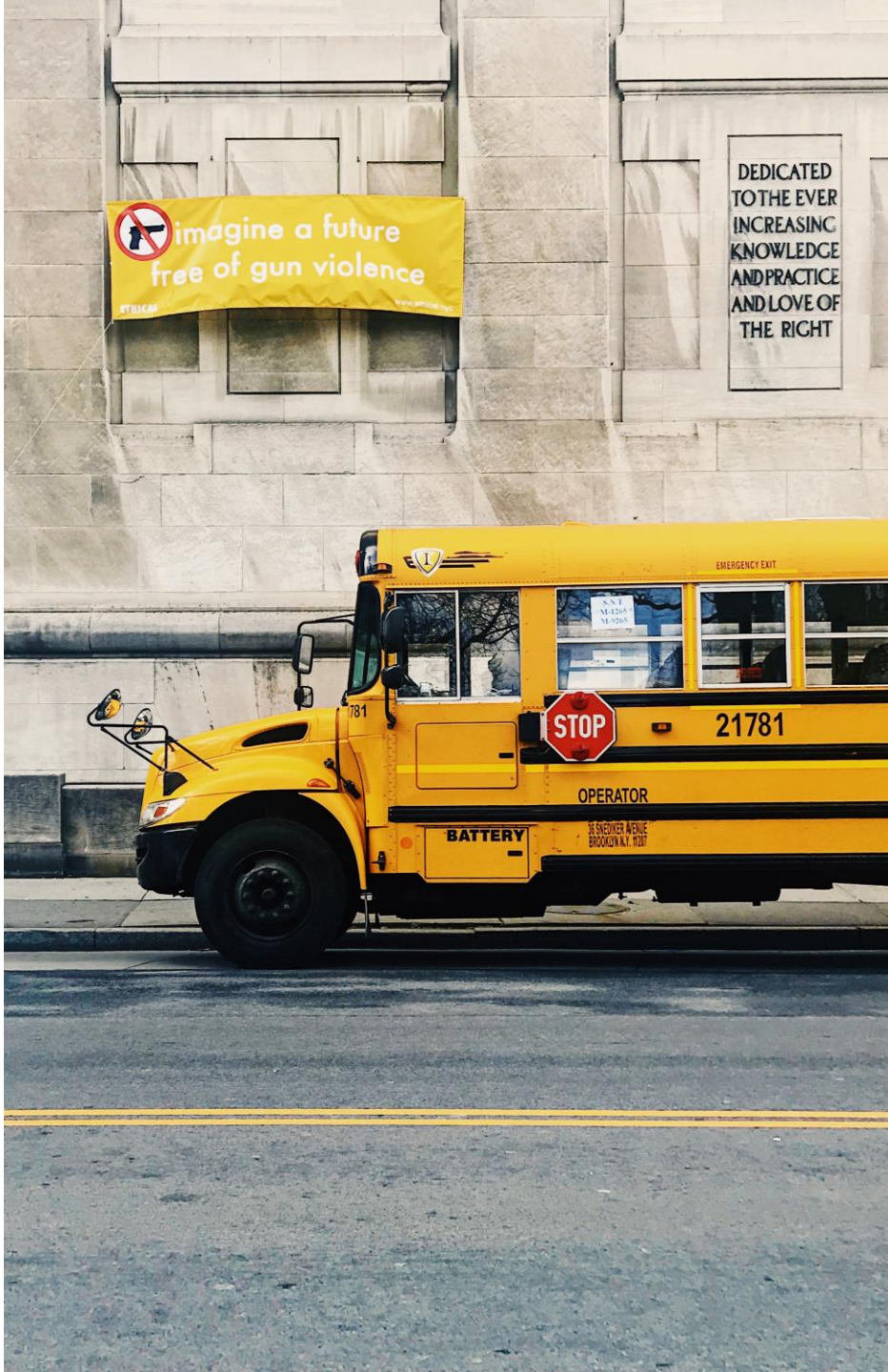
- Limiting Restrictions on Active Transportation
- Assessing Recommended Routes to School
- Crossing Guards
- Student Arrival and Dismissal
- No Idling Policy
- Bicycles, Scooters, and Skateboards on Campus
- Bicycle Parking and Storage Facilities
- Student Transportation Department:
  The Bus Stops Here

Advanced Policies

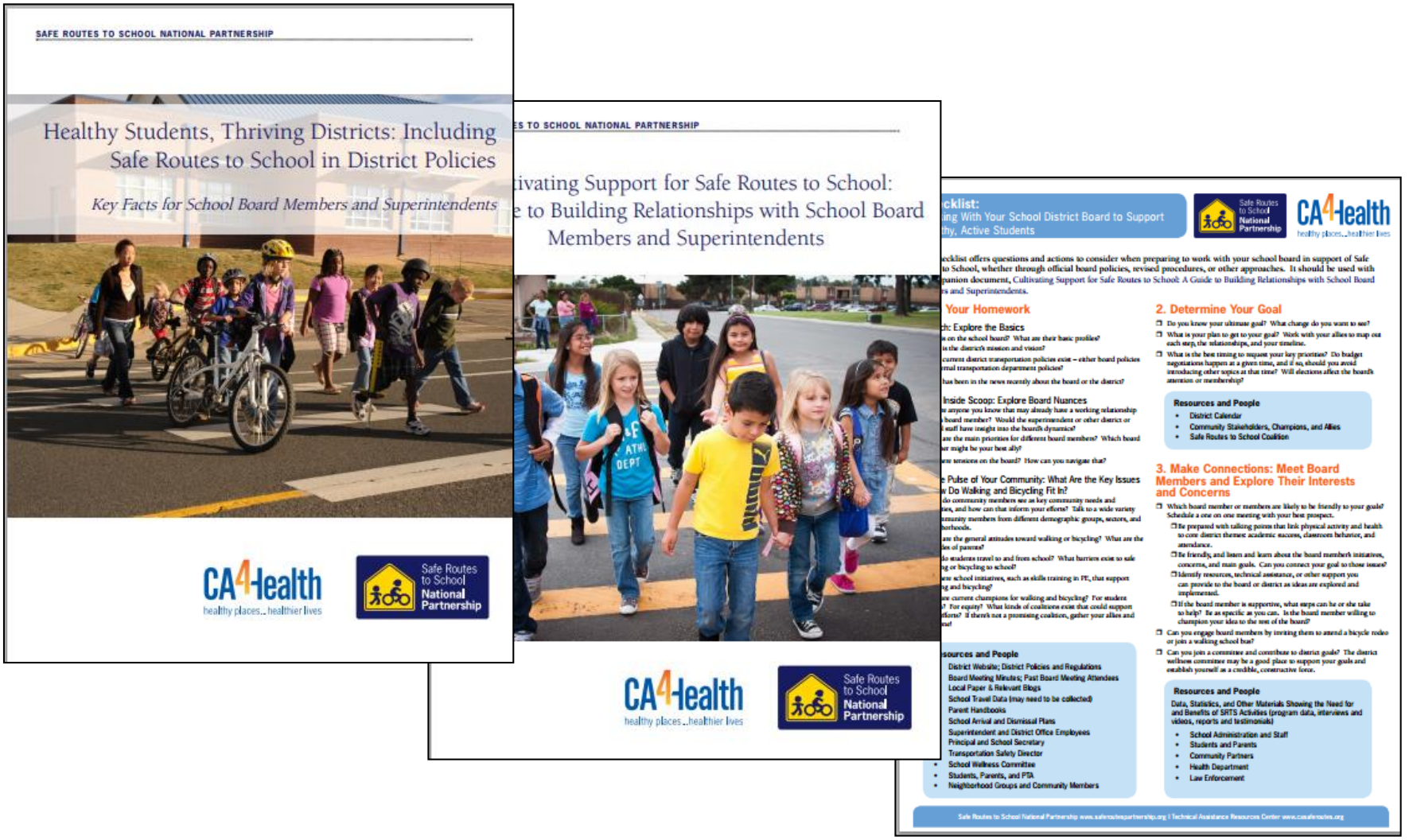
- School Travel Plan: Moving Beyond the Bus
- Busing
- School Design
- School Siting
- Attendance Zones and Assignment Policies

Why use the Policy Workbook?

- Presents a wide array of policy options
- Assists districts in committing to strong policies
- Helps avoid problems and liability concerns by ensuring a well thought-through, vetted approach



Resources on Working with School Districts



Q & A

Reminders

- Sign up for the Colorado Safe Routes to School Newsletter – email Wendy McMillan at wendy.mcmillan@state.co.us
- Upcoming SRTS Grant Cycle
- Next Webinar – Action Planning and Sustainability, July 15, 11am MT
- **Colorado SRTS Contact: Melissa Trecoske Houghton melissa.houghton@state.co.us**

Please take our survey!
SCHOOL BUS

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