

24-1279  
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## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, Goal 2.4 of the City of El Paso 2024 Strategic Plan is to improve motorist safety and traffic management solutions;

**WHEREAS**, Strategy 3 of the City of El Paso Vision Zero Action Plan, adopted on June 6, 2023, is to expand the Safe Routes to School Program through actions such as developing a Safe Routes to School Plan; identifying schools with high crash rates within their school zones; and developing long-term improvements;

**WHEREAS**, Safe Routes to School Programs have been shown to reduce the rate of pedestrian injury by forty-four percent (44%);

**WHEREAS**, increasing the number of children safely walking and biking to school can reduce traffic congestion and reduce traffic pollution that is linked to asthma, permanent lung deficits, and a higher risk of heart and lung problems in adults;

**WHEREAS**, Capital Improvement Department staff conducted a public outreach and engagement campaign consisting of stakeholder input sessions, a community open house, online surveys, and a month-long public review period; and

**WHEREAS**, at its Regular Meeting on September 12, 2023, the El Paso City Council requested the development of a school zone safety strategy; and

**WHEREAS**, at its Work Session on July 1, 2024, the El Paso City Council reviewed a draft of the "Safe Routes to School Action Plan" and provided input to be included in the final draft of the Plan.

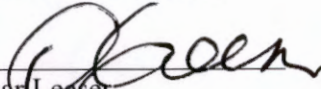
### **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:**

1. That the attached "Safe Routes to School Action Plan" be adopted as the City of El Paso's official plan for school zone safety;
2. That the City Manager be authorized to implement the "Safe Routes to School Action Plan" in a manner generally consistent with the recommended strategies and policies contained in the Plan and the recommended implementation matrix.
3. That the adoption of the "Safe Routes to School Action Plan" shall not commit the City of El Paso to specific funding levels or implementation strategies but shall provide guidance for the City's vision for school zone safety.


(Signatures on the following page)

APPROVED this 24<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2024

CITY OF EL PASO:

  
Oscar Loeser  
Mayor

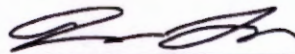
ATTEST:

  
Laura D. Prine  
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
Roberta Brito  
Senior Assistant City Attorney

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

  
Joaquin Rodriguez  
Director of Grant Funded Programs





# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

## ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2024



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Capital Improvement

Joaquin Rodriguez, AICP, *Director of Grant Funded Programs*  
 Anna Mesa-Zendt, AICP, *Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager*  
 Adam Gorski, *Data Scientist*

This action plan would not be possible without the contributions, collaboration, and commitment of the following city departments and external organizations.

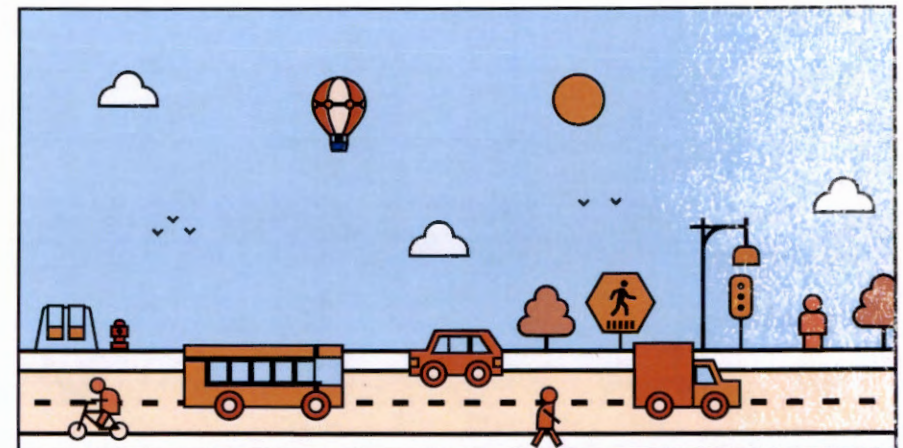
## City Departments

Planning and Inspections  
 Capital Improvement  
 Streets and Maintenance  
 Sun Metro  
 International Bridges  
 Public Health  
 Community and Human Development  
 Parks and Recreation  
 Police and Fire

## Entities Involved in Planning

City of El Paso Mobility Advisory Committee  
 El Paso Independent School District  
 Socorro Independent School District  
 Ysleta Independent School District  
 Action for Healthy Kids  
 Velo El Paso  
 Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority  
 El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization  
 Vision Zero Texas  
 University of Texas El Paso  
 Centro San Vicente  
 University Medical Center  
 Downtown Management District  
 Texas Department of Transportation  
 Paso Del Norte Health Foundation  
 Safe Kids El Paso  
 Fort Bliss

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# WHAT IS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

## Executive Summary

This Safe Routes to School Action Plan is a long-range strategy to promote walking and biking to school and engage the community in creating a healthier environment for City of El Paso students.

The ultimate goal of this plan is to encourage walking and biking to school in El Paso through infrastructure improvements, safety education, expanded law enforcement, and community collaboration. Walking and biking to school increases children's sense of independent mobility<sup>1</sup> and pedestrian safety skills, reduces traffic congestion and car emissions, and provides various health benefits to students.

The methodology of this plan emphasizes the role of infrastructure and design in transportation safety. By designing school zones to be safer and consequently more comfortable, we aim to reduce traffic-related incidents and safety concerns. This plan uses data and community input to make recommendations for the construction of sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes, and other traffic-calming measures near school zones. This plan also advocates for policy changes at the City and State level to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety in transportation planning.

An indispensable element of this action plan is safety education and community partnerships. This action plan explores bicycle and pedestrian safety programs for students, parents, teachers, and motorists. Expanding education will instill safe behaviors children can carry with them to adulthood and foster a friendlier active transportation culture. To execute this plan successfully, we will seek partnerships with local agencies, non-profit organizations, and local businesses. These collaborations will not only help secure funding and resources but also provide valuable expertise in the fields of transportation safety, local needs, and community engagement. As we progress with the implementation of the Safe Routes to School Action Plan, we will closely monitor several metrics to measure success.

By focusing on infrastructure improvements, education, community engagement, and policy changes, we aim to create a safe, vibrant, and healthy community where students can confidently walk or bike to school. This plan is not just about making our streets safer; it's about enhancing the overall quality of life in El Paso. *Together, we can build a future where our children can thrive in a secure and active environment.*

<sup>1</sup> Independent mobility here refers to the ability of students to get around our city safely without direct supervision or cars.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

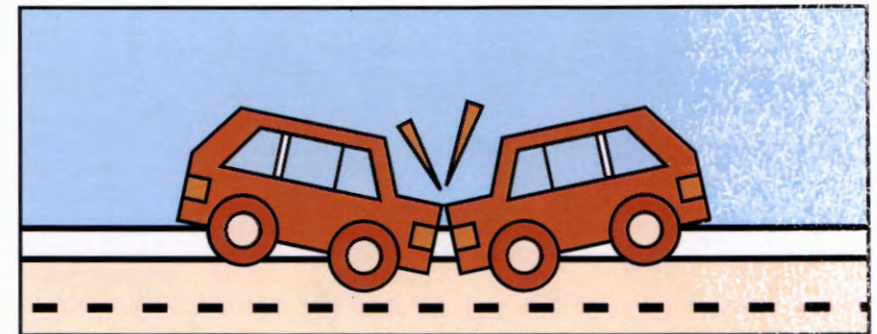
### Why Safe Routes to School?

#### Crash Data & Transportation Culture in El Paso

El Paso residents express a reluctance to allow their children to walk and bike independently. This concern can be attributed to the transportation culture and corresponding crash data in the City. In 2023, there were 3,476 car collisions in El Paso totaling 83 deaths. Last year, 5,996 children under the age of 18 were involved in car collisions, and 18 children were killed as a result. In 2023, 17 of the 83 total deaths were pedestrians, approximately 20%.

Between 2017-2022, 16% of killed or seriously injured bicycle and pedestrian crashes occurred near schools. Additionally, people aged 10-19 were overrepresented in bicycle and pedestrian crashes.

When streets and schools are built for cars and not pedestrians, children are generally unable to safely transport themselves without a personal vehicle and therefore an adult. This car dependency negatively impacts environmental health, public health, public safety, economic growth, and fiscally disadvantaged populations citywide. El Paso students deserve to feel safe and comfortable getting around our city. To continue a transportation culture that denies our students the numerous benefits of safe active transportation is not a sustainable future for the City of El Paso.





## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

### Benefits of Safe Routes to School

#### Health & Improved Academic Performance

Walking, biking, or rolling<sup>1</sup> to school offers numerous health and academic benefits for students. Daily exercise reduces the risk of chronic disease, mental health problems, diabetes, and obesity<sup>2</sup>. It also is an opportunity to instill healthy habits at a young age. Walking just one mile to and from school each day would fulfill two-thirds of the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) recommended daily sixty minutes of physical activity.

Student health has been linked to academic performance by neurologists nationwide, and grade school students specifically are at an important age for cognitive development. Learning, memory, focus, content retention, and energy are all found to be positively correlated with physical activity. According to the Safe Routes to School Partnership Association, physically fit children have larger hippocampal volume and basal ganglia, brain components both connected with learning. Walking and biking to school can help ensure students arrive ready to learn.

Safe Routes to School is one of the most effective evidence-based children's health strategies in the chronic disease realm. Safe Routes to School is one of only fourteen approaches that the CDC has selected as an evidence-based strategy that has a positive health impact and is cost-effective within five years (known as HI-5 interventions).

#### Traffic Congestion and Air Quality

The City of El Paso is designated an area of non-attainment<sup>3</sup> by the Environmental Protection Agency. Safe Routes to School programs can improve air quality by reducing overall automobile trips and emissions. Exposure to traffic pollution can be linked to asthma, permanent lung deficits, and a higher risk of heart and lung problems in adults<sup>4</sup>. The reduction of motor trips to school will also reduce overall traffic congestion during peak hours.

<sup>1</sup> "Rolling" refers to scooters, wheelchairs, and roller blades.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Center for Disease Control

<sup>3</sup> An area of non-attainment is an area that exceeds limits for one or more pollutants identified by The EPA.

<sup>4</sup> Totiu AI, Novakova P, Nedeva D, Chong-Neta HJ, Novakova S, Steirapoulos P, Kowal K. Impact of Air Pollution on Asthma Outcomes. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2020 Aug 27;17(17):6212. doi:

### Cost and Savings

Transportation is the second highest household expense in the United States<sup>5</sup>. When students walk, bike, and roll to school every day it reduces gas consumption and car mileage, overall reducing transportation expenses. Safe Routes to School is an evidence-based strategy that has been proven cost-effective within five years by the CDC.

These expense savings extend to school district resources. Improving walking conditions near schools could reduce the cost of transportation substantially, by decreasing the need for school bus service for students who live close enough to walk, bike, and roll to and from school.

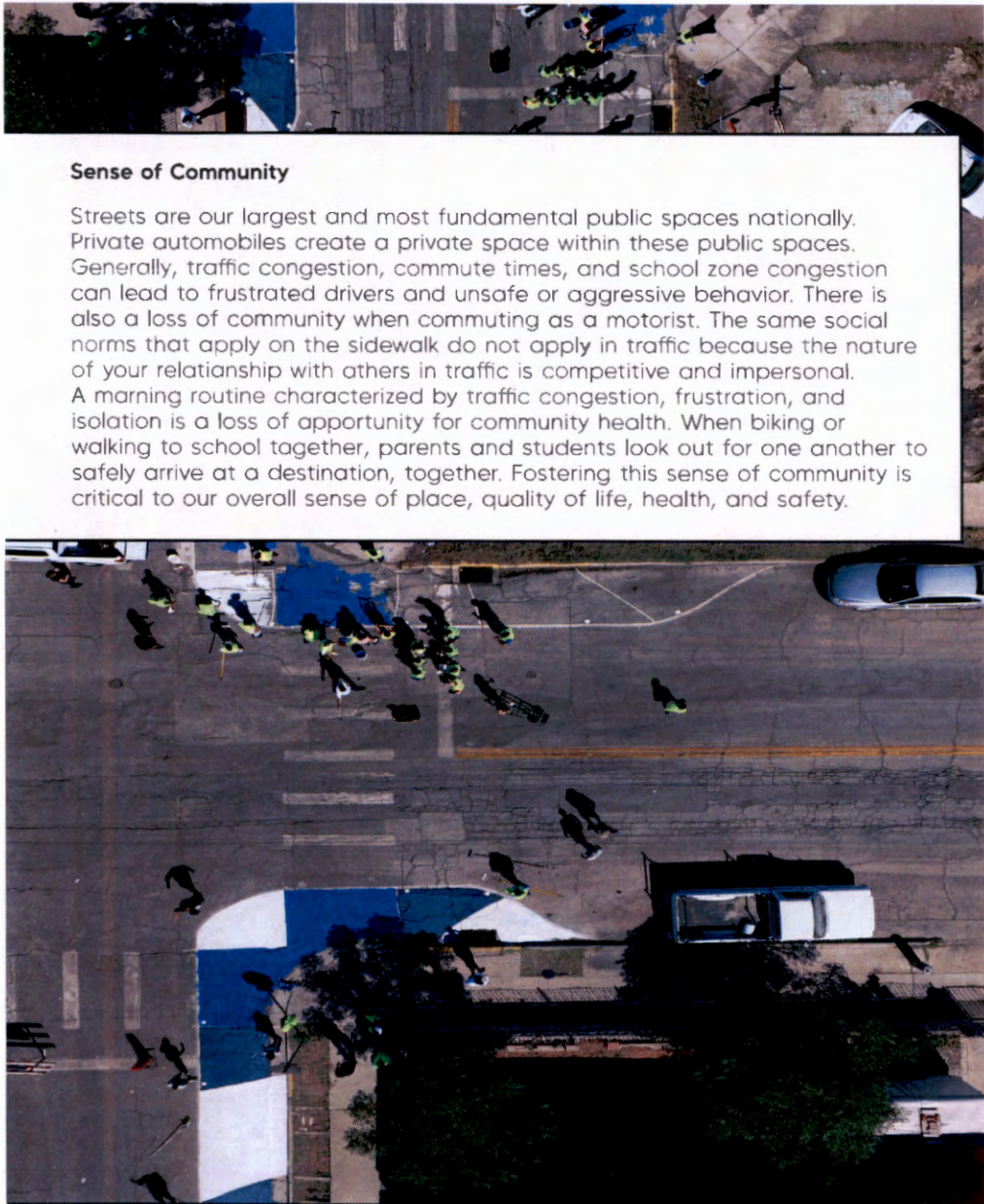
Recent studies show \$230 million in national savings from long-term care costs due to injury prevention and 800 million- 1.2 billion savings in busing and driving costs nationwide. New York City's current program costs \$10 million annually with an estimated reduction in health costs for injury, disability, and death of \$221 million.

Since the adoption of Safe Routes to School, the City of Austin has allocated \$2.75 million of its Mobility Bond to Safe Routes to School improvements to be evenly distributed between the City's ten Council Districts. In Austin's project selection, they evaluate cost-benefit and select alternative approaches that may prove more feasible or cost-effective.



<sup>5</sup> Source: Safe Routes to School Partnership



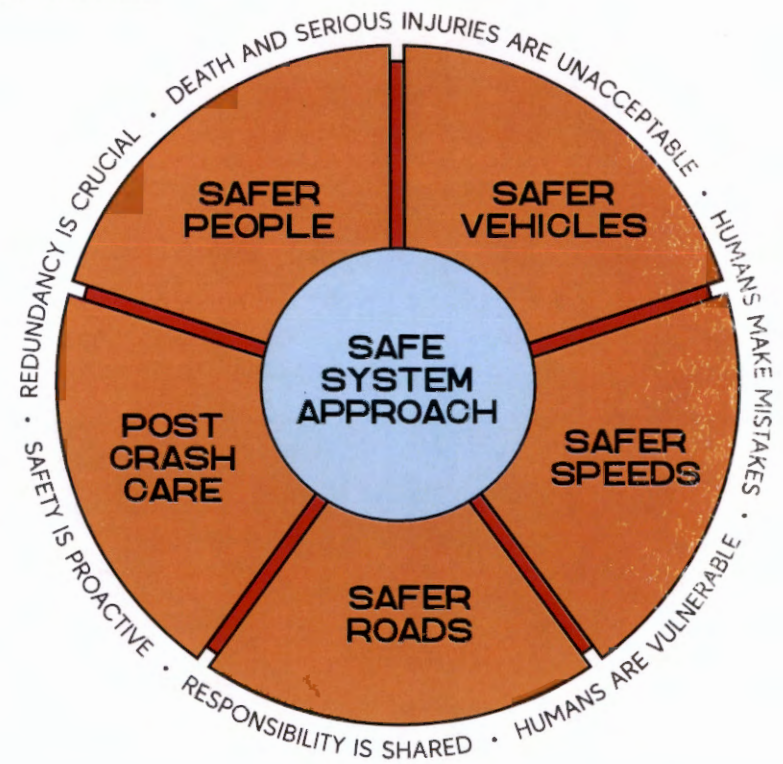


### Sense of Community

Streets are our largest and most fundamental public spaces nationally. Private automobiles create a private space within these public spaces. Generally, traffic congestion, commute times, and school zone congestion can lead to frustrated drivers and unsafe or aggressive behavior. There is also a loss of community when commuting as a motorist. The same social norms that apply on the sidewalk do not apply in traffic because the nature of your relationship with others in traffic is competitive and impersonal. A morning routine characterized by traffic congestion, frustration, and isolation is a loss of opportunity for community health. When biking or walking to school together, parents and students look out for one another to safely arrive at a destination, together. Fostering this sense of community is critical to our overall sense of place, quality of life, health, and safety.

### SETTING THE STAGE: ACTION PLAN PROCESS AND TIMELINE

In June of 2023, the City of El Paso adopted the Vision Zero Action Plan with the goal of reducing traffic deaths to zero through a Safe Systems Approach. The Safe System Approach is a framework developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), both to prevent crashes from happening in the first place and to minimize the harm to those involved when crashes do occur. The Safe Systems Approach is built upon the idea that roadway fatalities and serious injuries are not inevitable but are preventable.





Action Item	Timeline Short, Mid, Long	Lead Agency	Supporting Partners	Performance Target	Implementation Needs				Rationale for Recommendations				
					Funding	Staff Capacity	Relationship Building	Legislation	Crash Profiles	Systemic Analysis Finding	HIN	Policy Assessment	Public Feedback
A-3b. Develop a Safe Routes to School Plan, including an audit of the schools that have the highest crash rates within their school zone. Develop safety recommendations including both quick build opportunities and long-term improvements.	 Short	City of El Paso - Capital Improvement Department	El Paso, Ysleta, and Socorro Independent School Districts	Identify the schools located within disadvantaged communities that have the highest crash rates and the highest number of existing students who walk or bike to school. Conduct a safety audit of each school zone and implement improvements.	  								
A-3c. Expand the Love Your Block grant program's geographic reach and increase awareness of the program to implement pop-up safety and placemaking initiatives, particularly near schools.	 Short	City of El Paso - Community and Human Development		Increased awareness of the Love Your Block grant program and number of grants awarded.	 								
A-3d. Using the results of school zone road safety audits, apply for Transportation Alternatives funding through the El Paso MPO to implement safety improvements at high priority schools.	 Mid	City of El Paso - Streets and Maintenance		Apply for TA funding to support implementation of high priority school zones improvements.						  			
A-3e. Develop suggested route maps for each school to identify preferred walking and biking routes; these maps will support communication with school communities and can guide prioritization of capital investment.	 Mid	City of El Paso	El Paso Independent School District	Develop suggested route maps in coordination with school zone road safety audits; prioritize schools with the highest crash rates to be completed first.	  					 			
A-3f. Develop and implement safe walking and biking curriculum for elementary and middle school students.	 Long	El Paso Heart Association	City of El Paso - Public Health	Identify SRTS curriculum best practices and work with partners to integrate SRTS principles into curriculum.	 							 	

**The Vision Zero Action Plan** included strategy recommendations and several corresponding action items to provide specific direction and identify key steps to achieving Vision Zero. Strategy 3 listed in the plan is to expand the Safe Routes to School Program, which includes related action items A-3a-A-3g.



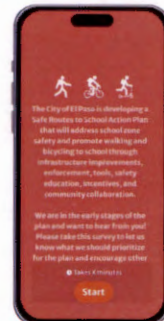
## ACTION PLAN PROCESS AND TIMELINE

**In October of 2023**, the City Council directed the Capital Improvement and Streets and Maintenance Departments to begin outreach and formalize a Safe Routes to School Action Plan.

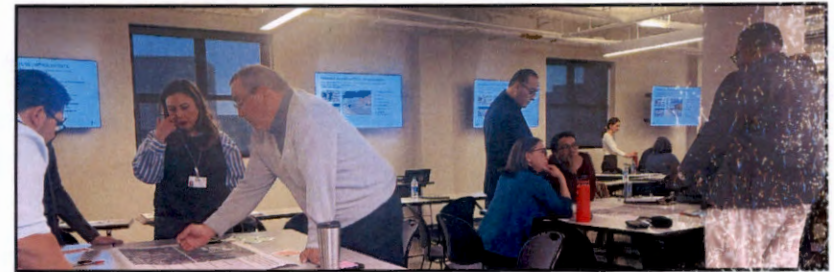
**In December of 2023**, The Capital Improvement Department held joint focused input sessions with the Mobility Advisory Committee and the Vision Zero Task Force. During these sessions, Capital Improvement presented proposed goals, prioritization concepts, and strategies.



**In December of 2023**, The Department of Transportation awarded the City of El Paso funds to launch a Safe Routes to School Program as part of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant. During this time, the City launched a "Safe Routes to School Survey" in English and Spanish soliciting input from the public on priorities, goals, and solutions.



**In January of 2024**, The Capital Improvement Department held a joint focused input session with representatives from local school districts, internal stakeholder departments, the Mobility Advisory Committee, and the Complete Streets Technical Review Committee.



**In April of 2024**, The Capital Improvement Department presented a draft to the Mobility Advisory Committee and all aforementioned stakeholders.

**In June of 2024** The Capital Improvement Department and Streets and Maintenance Department held a public open house where members were invited to view the plan, ask questions, and give feedback. From June 5th to July 5th the draft action plan remained online with a commenting tool where the public could review the action plan and give feedback to be incorporated in the final draft. All comments were addressed and are included in the index of this plan.





## WHAT WE HEARD: COMMUNITY OUTREACH RESULTS

### Introduction

Public outreach is the most indispensable element of any planning process. El Paso residents are experts on local issues, and their opinions, input, and buy-in are crucial for effective implementation and community collaboration. The Capital Improvement Transportation team led a public outreach process over the course of 5 months to ensure the plan was guided by the unique values and needs of our community. This action plan is a culmination of an extensive and transparent community planning process that reflects many points of view. Thank you to the residents, businesses, and stakeholders who participated in this process and guided the creation of the plan. **We heard you.**

### Outreach Sessions Feedback

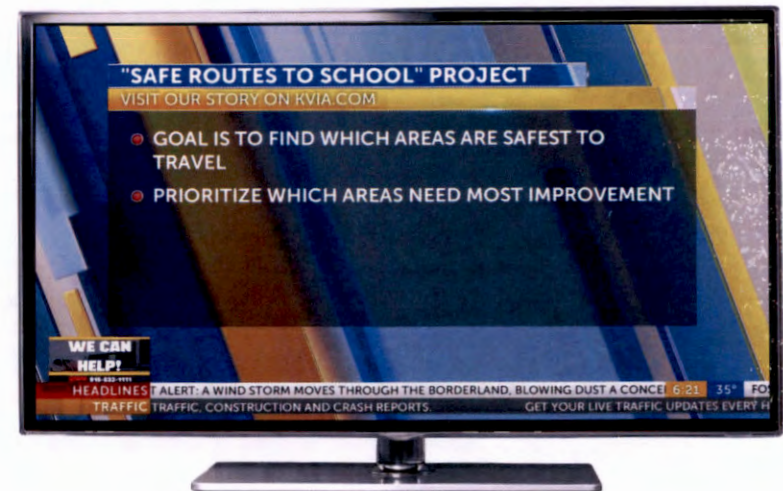
Outreach session participants expressed a desire to emphasize community engagement and education as a main goal and element of this Action Plan. Another large takeaway from the focus groups was the strong need for context-sensitive solutions. Meaning solutions, strategies, education, and outreach will not be "one size fits all" and should address the specific needs, concerns, and desires of each school and audience.

Prioritization was a large topic of discussion for these groups. When presented with equity analysis data, the consensus was that there needed to be a balance in prioritization between high-risk schools and schools with a strong desire to participate. While schools with high participation should be considered, high-risk schools will experience higher participation barriers and should receive support from City Staff with the process.

Collaboration between schools, organizations, and the City is essential. Recommendations, solutions, and strategies should not be burdensome amongst any external stakeholders but rather enable a partnership amongst organizations and provide support to expand existing efforts.

### Survey Feedback

City Staff recognized a need to make participation comfortable and available to all residents and therefore launched a series of online feedback opportunities. The City conducted a 12-question survey for feedback on desired improvements, existing conditions, and proposed goals and strategies for the Action Plan. The survey was advertised on local news outlets, social media, and city websites. The survey was also distributed by City Staff and council members, school district representatives, the Mobility Advisory Committee, Action for Healthy Kids, and the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation. To ensure fair results, City Staff tracked responses geographically throughout the process and reached out to local stakeholders for assistance in targeting areas and schools lacking representation. All survey results are included in this document's index.





## Goals

Capital Improvement worked with the community to identify a set of goals for the Safe Routes to School Action Plan. These goals embody the desired outcomes for the Safe Routes to School Action Plan, expressed by our community and for our community.

- Prioritize areas that are at risk, underrepresented, and highly utilized.
- Create a connected and comfortable infrastructure network for children to walk, bike, and roll safely to school.
- Provide a clear and implementable pathway for future improvements.
- Effectively reduce vehicle speeds through design and compliance.
- Engage in local partnerships to expand safety education and community participation.



## SECTION 2: INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS



## Schools

There are approximately 160 schools and 3 school districts in El Paso city limits. El Paso ISD (EPISD) alone contains 50k students and 8k employees. Of these schools in 2024, there were 10 high schools, 10 middle schools, and 43 elementary schools. In 2024, 69% of students attending EPISD schools are considered economically disadvantaged.

Ysleta Independent School District (YISD) is comprised of 26 elementary schools, 7 middle schools, and 11 high schools. In 2024, 53 % of students attending YISD are considered economically disadvantaged.

Socorro Independent School District (SISD) has 51 total campuses including 11 middle schools, 25 elementary schools, and 6 high schools. In 2024, 74.4% of students attending SISD were considered economically disadvantaged in 2024.

## Crosswalks & Signage

To date, there are approximately 4,200 crosswalks and 6,500 crosswalk signs in El Paso School Zones in 2024. Crosswalks are installed using thermoplastic or street paint and often due to extreme temperatures fade quickly. School crosswalks are currently re-stripped on a 36-month cycle- depending on the material used.

Currently, signage is replaced when signs become damaged, vandalized, or stolen.

## Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons

Marked crosswalks and pedestrian signage greatly improve safety and visibility for students. Safety and visibility can be improved even further with the usage of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs). RRFBs consist of two, rectangular-shaped yellow indicators that emit light. These signs flash with an alternating high frequency when activated to enhance the conspicuity of pedestrians at the crossing to drivers. The City recently installed its first and only RRFB at El Paso High.

## HAWK Systems and School Zone Flashers

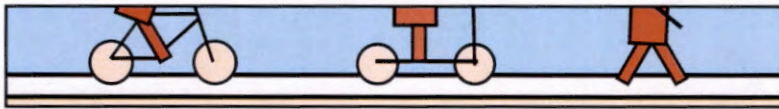
High-intensity Activated Crosswalks (HAWK) systems are pedestrian-activated lights similar to RRFBs. However, HAWK systems are mounted above the crosswalk similar to an intersection traffic light, increasing visibility drastically. The City currently has 21 HAWK systems and 469 School Zone Flashers.



## SECTION 3: SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

### Infrastructure

The following infrastructure improvements have been identified through outreach and research as appropriate and effective measures for traffic calming and improved safety in school zones. Recommendations will be catered to the unique conditions of each school. All infrastructure improvements should be paired with education and engagement to ensure students have all the necessary tools to safely walk, bike, and roll to school.



### School Zone Maintenance Program

The City of El Paso Streets and Maintenance Department handles repairs, maintenance, and installation of crosswalks and signage within school zones. The maintenance program outlined below aims to ensure the safety and functionality of pedestrian infrastructure, particularly around schools. This proposed program encompasses scheduled maintenance cycles, technological upgrades, new and missing signage, and additional resource allocation. The Streets and Maintenance Department will expand its personnel to include additional teams dedicated to this school zone maintenance program.

### Maintenance Cycles

All schools will run on a scheduled 18-month maintenance cycle for evaluation, refurbishment, and/or replacement of all traffic control devices and roadway lighting within school zones. Crosswalks specifically will run a 12-month maintenance cycle for streets that contain heavy traffic, poor roadway geometric design conditions, on or abutting the High Injury Network. Signage will go on a 5-year replacement schedule to ensure retro-reflectivity compliance. Additionally, the City will evaluate and update its GIS inventory monthly for school zone traffic control devices to ensure detailed accuracy.

### Technology Upgrades

The following technology upgrades will be implemented by the school zone maintenance team

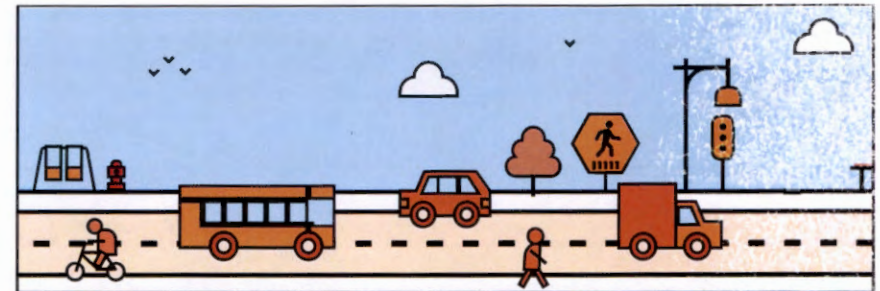
- Wireless connectivity on all existing HAWK pedestrian and school zone flashers to facilitate remote monitoring and adjustment of operating schedules to enhance responsiveness and efficiency
- Identification of locations to install Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons and other Intelligent traffic control systems

### Additional Personnel Required

The Streets and Maintenance Department will expand their personnel to include an additional team dedicated to school zone maintenance. This expansion includes 4 additional crews containing 3 employees each dedicated to marking and striping, 2 employees dedicated to signage, and 2 additional technicians to oversee the installation, site selection, and maintenance of Intelligent Traffic Control Systems.

### Project Request Program

The Streets and Maintenance Department and Capital Improvement will collaborate to develop a formal Safe Routes to School Project Request Program. This program will allow schools and parents to request improvements and maintenance for their schools. The program will provide clear guidance on eligible requests and project selection.







**Celebrating our Success:  
Guillen Middle & Hart Elementary Curb Extensions**

In September of 2023, the American Heart Association collaborated with the City of El Paso to host a community painting event for quick-build curb extensions in the Segundo Barrio. These curb extensions increase the pedestrian space and visibility, narrow the vehicular space, and force motorists to reduce speed through design. Later, a local artist enhanced these asphalt paintings with designs of pastries from the Segundo Barrios Bowties Bakery.



### Case Study: Pedestrian Safety Park, Knoxville TN

The City of Knoxville, Tennessee built a 12-acre park, which is a child sized replica of their own city, to educate school age children on pedestrian, vehicle, bicycle, and fire safety through play. The park is complete with buildings, paved streets and sidewalks, working traffic signals and traffic signs. The site is commonly utilized for school field trips region wide.

These "Safety Town" parks are not unique to Knoxville. They have gained popularity nationwide and notably exist in Frisco and Coppell, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico. A Safety Town Park in El Paso is an opportunity to both foster a safer transportation culture and to become a state leader in parks innovation and children transportation safety.







### Quick Builds & Asphalt Art

Quick builds are infrastructure improvements that are typically done with paint, vertical delineators, planters, cones, and other low-cost semi-permanent materials. Quick-Build improvements are affordable solutions that can be implemented city-wide and used to measure the effectiveness of infrastructure improvements and ensure thoughtful permanent investments. Quick-Build projects are not meant to be permanent, but are intended to be analyzed pre and post-implementation, adjusted accordingly, and evaluated to inform long-term design and modifications.

Using paint, infrastructure quick builds can double as local art canvases. In 2022, consulting firm Sam Schwartz released a Historical Crash Analysis and Observational Behavior Assessment of Asphalt Art Sites. The study thoroughly analyzed intersection murals, crosswalk art, painted plazas, and painted sidewalk extensions and found significant improvement in safety performance across a variety of measures during periods when asphalt art was installed, including a 50% reduction in crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists and a 27% increase in drivers yielding to pedestrians with the right of way.



## Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

In July of 2022, the City of El Paso adopted the Complete Street Policy committing to incorporating multi-modal transportation facilities city-wide in all future projects. The complete streets project selection criteria include prioritizing facilities on streets near schools, parks, and libraries. To ensure active transportation options are accessible to all students, the City should continue its dedication to prioritize connecting active transportation facilities and school campuses.

The 2016 El Paso Bike Plan included recommendations for different bicycle facilities City-wide. Because biking is faster than walking, bicycle facilities allow students to commute longer distances to school. Updates to the 2016 Bike Plan should reflect the complete street methodology, prioritize school connections, and identify specific construction projects.

### Traffic Calming

The following additional traffic calming devices have been identified through outreach and research as appropriate and effective measures.

#### Speed Tables & Cushions



#### Curb Extensions & Chicanes



#### Interactive Signage



#### Bike Lanes



## Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Bel Air and Eastwood High School

The City of El Paso was recently awarded \$9 million from the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant. A total of \$5.8 million of the funds are designated to improvements on Yarbrough Drive, the region's corridor with the second-highest number of vehicle collisions involving a bicycle or pedestrians. This signature project was identified in Vision Zero and includes repainting pavement markings, replacing cross arms, installing signal heads, lane control signs, speed limit signs, landscaping, and improved signage. The Yarbrough reconstruction will improve access to Bel Air High school, which is located on Esther Dr by redesigning and improving a midblock crossing with a pedestrian median refuge and curb extensions. These improvements will be paired with a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon that is being installed by the school district at Bel Air High School and at Eastwood High School.

### Pick up and Drop Off

The following strategies may be used to create efficient and safe school zone pick up and drop off. Appropriate strategies may be determined on a case-by-case basis in collaboration with school administrations, capital improvement, and streets and maintenance.

- Adding an off-site queuing lane
- Temporary street closures
- Partial street closures
- Designating an area off of school grounds as a drop-off and pick-up zone ("Park a block and Walk a Block" Program)
- Formalized and expanded crossing guard program

### Expanding our Crossing Guard Program: Senior Volunteers

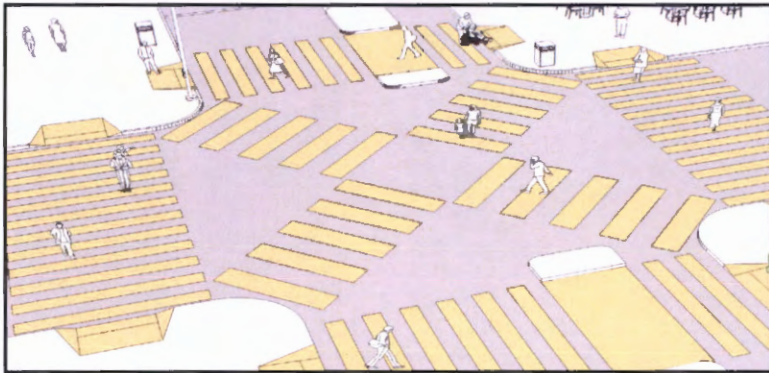
The City of El Paso Community & Human Development Department manages retired & senior volunteer programs. Involving senior volunteers in both crossing guard programs and organized walks to school is a mutually beneficial opportunity to engage all ages of our community in active transportation.





### Case Study: Diagonal Crosswalks

States such as California, Illinois, and New York have installed diagonal crosswalks, also known as “pedestrian scrambles” or “Barnes dances,” for Henry Barnes, a traffic engineer who promoted their use in Denver 70 years ago. These crosswalks require all vehicles at an intersection to stop so all pedestrians can move freely from corner to corner, including in the intersection. These crosswalks prioritize pedestrian movement over automobile and studies show they are safer for pedestrians than traditional intersections. Existing versions of the diagonal crosswalks are located in dense urban areas, where they are most appropriate.



### Education & Engagement

#### Education and Event Toolbox & Safe Routes to School Designation

The City of El Paso hereby commits to creating a “toolbox” of educational resources, curriculum, outreach events, and other resources to maximize engagement for schools<sup>1</sup>. Schools that use four or more of these toolbox items will be granted an official “Safe Routes to School” designation, plaque, and optional ceremonial tree planting from the City. The following are events, education, and incentives that should be included in the toolbox for schools to utilize at no cost. Specifics for the program should be maintained on the City’s webpage.

<sup>1</sup> This accomplishes Vision Zero Action Item A-3f “Develop and implement safe walking and biking curriculum for elementary and middle school students.”





## CASE STUDY: KIRKLAND WASHINGTON

The City of Kirkland Washington provides program guides, multi-language pedestrian safety materials and handouts, and incentive materials that schools can download for free and utilize as part of their Safe Routes to School Program.



### Targeted Education

Education centered around biking and pedestrian safety skills for parents, teachers, bus riders, drivers, and students will all require materials tailored to each audience's unique needs and perspective<sup>1</sup>. Education can occur on several levels such as printed materials, digital media, presentations, activities, and events.

### Walk Audits

Community walk audits are a tool that can be used to identify barriers to active transportation and missing or incomplete infrastructure. The Toolbox the City provides should include a walk audit checklist that administrators, teachers, and students can download and complete individually or together. Results from walk-audits may be shared with Capital Improvement and Streets and Maintenance to guide future improvements and repairs.

### Route Mapping & Wayfinding

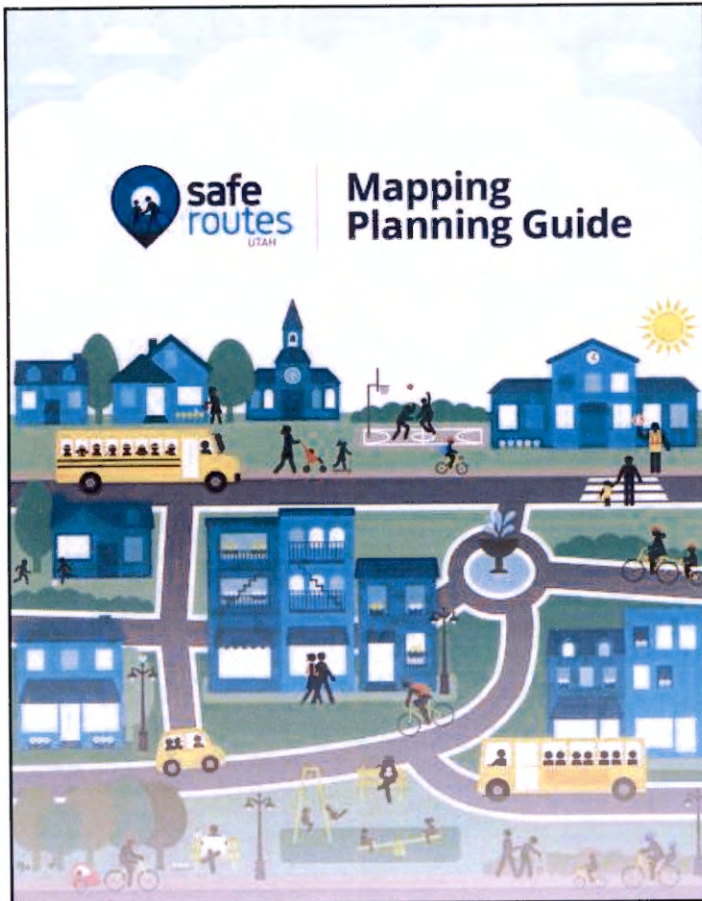
In collaboration with the City, schools and parents can work to identify and publish safe routes for children to walk, bike, and roll to school together<sup>2</sup>. In states like Utah, Oregon, and Washington schools are required to identify, update, and publish suggested and safe routes for school. These states offer guides online on how to identify, improve, and update routes. Wayfinding along routes allows students and drivers to identify and navigate designated paths safely. The City shall include route mapping in the Safe Routes toolbox and maintain a database and website of identified safe routes. The State of Utah has public materials on how to do route mapping.



<sup>1</sup> This accomplishes Vision Zero Action Item Vision Zero A-3g. Develop targeted engagement for middle and high school students and families in traffic safety through the Safe Routes to School program, with a focus on empowering youth leadership to promote safe transportation in their own school communities, prioritizing Communities of Concern.

<sup>2</sup> This accomplishes Vision Zero Action Item Vision Zero A-3e. Develop suggested route maps for each school to identify preferred walking and biking routes; these maps will support communication with school.



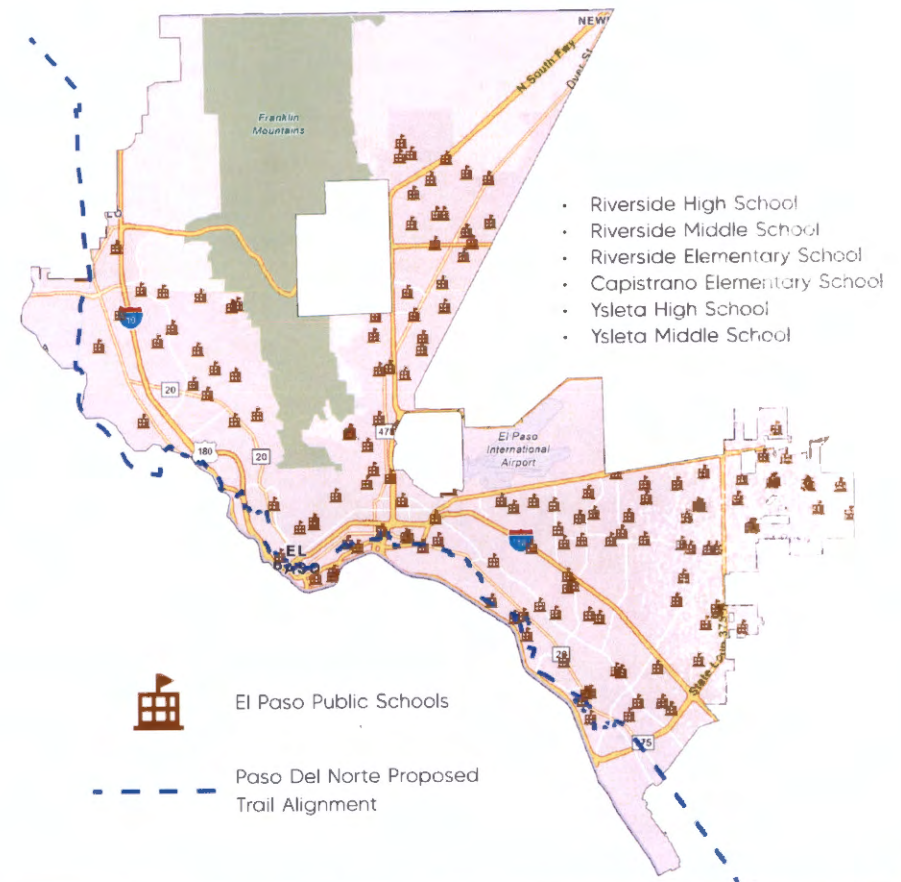


### Existing Resources


Under Utah law, every elementary, middle, and junior high school is required to create a Safe Routes Plan including suggested routes and identified areas of improvement. It is reviewed annually to see if there have been changes to the school attendance boundary. Many resources exist to guide Safe Routes to School initiatives!

### Paso Del Norte Trail

Trails are separate facilities dedicated to pedestrian and bicycle activity, and the City of El Paso is fortunate to have many city-wide. The Paso del Norte trail is in-progress 68-mile county-wide trail that promotes active transportation, preserves the history and culture of our region, highlights the Rio Grande River, supports economic development and ecotourism, and provides educational and volunteer opportunities. The following schools are located on the Paso Del Norte trails and should consider incorporating the trail in their safe route mapping.








### Celebrating our Success: UMC Walk to School Day

El Paso is incredibly fortunate to have many schools, organizations, and parents dedicated to active transportation and students' health. The University Medical Center (UMC) walk to school events are an exceptional context-sensitive program that should be celebrated, supported, and expanded.

Starting in 2012, The UMC Trauma Department has partnered with the City of El Paso, El Paso County Sheriff's Office, EPISD, YISD, SISD, SunCycle, Velo Paso, and The American Heart Association to coordinate walk and bike to school events. These events are intended to cultivate pedestrian and biking safety skills, energize and connect the community, and foster a healthy and safe environment for students. The main activity is always partnered with safety education and includes parents, teachers, and representatives meeting students at a location and walking and/or biking along a safe designated route that students can feel comfortable walking or biking post-event.

For these events, safety education and tools are tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the school participating, and UMC often donates safety lights, helmets, and other safety gear. They implement evidence-based educational resources for physical education teachers to incorporate into their curriculum and reinforce safe behaviors throughout the school year. At a recent event in 2023 on National Bike to School Day, UMC arranged a walk and bike to school, bicycle rodeo, and bicycle safety poster contest. The bicycle rodeo was complete with a bicycle skills course, helmet fitting, safety stations, and concussion awareness materials. Afterward, El Paso Police Officers were judges for the student bicycle safety poster contest.





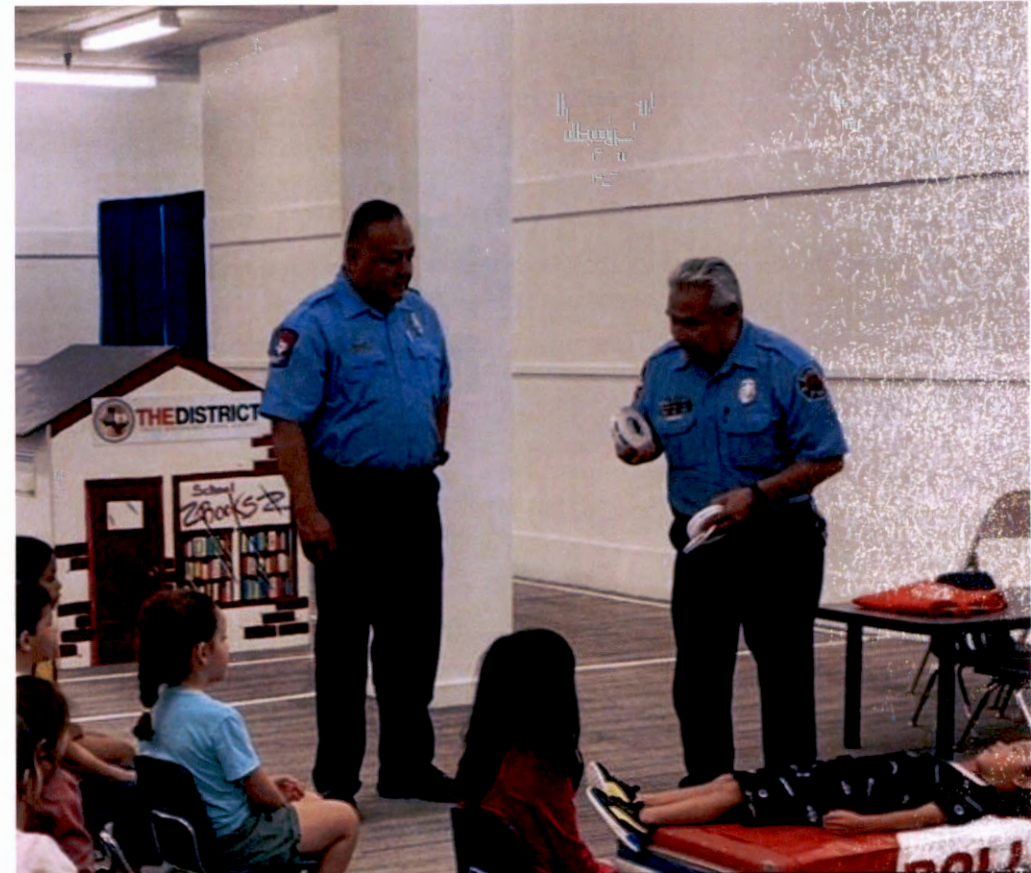
## Bike Rodeos

Bicycle Rodeos are bicycle safety clinics where participants can learn about bicycle safety, complete safety inspections, and practice safety skills on courses.



## Walking School Bus

Walking school buses are organized groups of students walking to school with one or more adults. This can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, scheduled time frames, and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.



## Celebrating our Success: Safety Town

Safety Town is a free children's event that occurs in July and June at Bassett Place Mall. During Safety Town, students learn about various safety topics, participate in hands-on related activities, and enjoy exciting presentations by guest speakers, including the City of El Paso Police and Fire Department. Bicycle and pedestrian safety are an included topic, complete with a mini town for children to practice their skills. This program offers an amazing indoor activity during a season when children aren't in school, and heat can be limiting.



## Case Study: Bike Bus

A bike bus is a variation of a walking school bus, where students bike to school with one or more adults. This can also be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, scheduled time frames, and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

A bike bus started in Portland Oregon by a local PE teacher has gained national attention and popularity for its high turnout of 100+ students every Wednesday, rendering the actual school bus empty once a week. The regularity, volunteers, and music of the Portland Oregon bike bus makes it an exciting social event for students, some students even say it feels like a weekly parade.



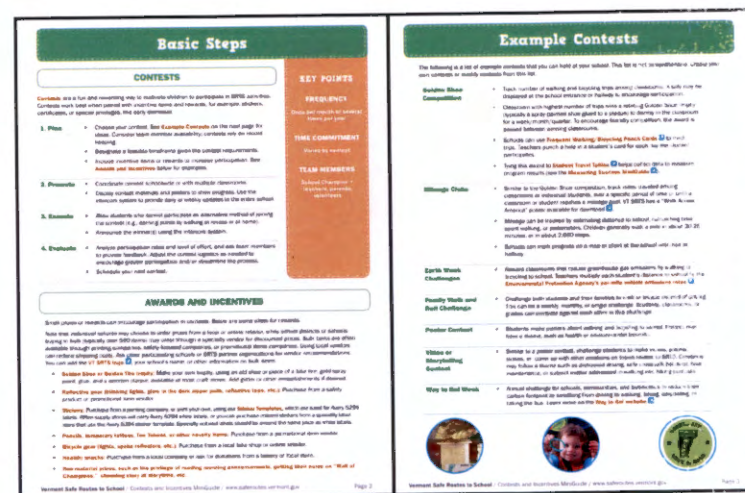
## INCENTIVES

### Continued Education and Safe Routes to School Designation Maintenance

It can be inferred, due to the legal driving age and parents' concern for younger children, that students most likely to walk to school in El Paso are those between 6-8th grade. However, students between K-5 on average live closer to their respective schools, and therefore have a greater opportunity to walk to school with an adult present. To foster a continued culture of active transportation that follows our students from the beginning to end of their education in our city, education will need to be widespread in all elementary schools and updated bi-annually. To incentivize the permanent commitment to pedestrian education, once a school obtains a safe route to school designation, they must commit to annually incorporating pedestrian and bicycle safety education into the curriculum, distribution materials, or events. The City of El Paso should provide updated materials to ensure low barriers to education and offer support to priority schools.

### Case Study: Contests, Awards, and Incentives

Vermont Safe Routes to School provides a guide of creative and low-cost contests, incentives, and awards schools can implement.





### Safe Routes to School Designation Tree Planting Incentive

Those achieving the safe routes to school designation may apply to be acknowledged with a tree dedication and ceremonial planting from the City and Eco-El Paso. Three to six trees appropriate to the site will be selected and donated from the City's approved tree and plant list. The trees will provide aesthetic enhancements to the school while also providing shade for students. A planting event partnered with a plaque is an opportunity to involve students and increase awareness while also facilitating a sense of school pride.

### Enforcement

Due to finite resources, the City of El Paso Police Department currently monitors select school zones daily based on demand and driver behavior. Their presence and enforcement have proven effective in reducing unsafe driver behavior in the zones they monitor. To ensure thoughtful and efficient use of resources, El Paso Police will continue to follow demand and areas of need and should consider utilizing the equity-based prioritization data to target areas of high risk.

Enforcement was identified as an area of priority for parents in survey results and contributes greatly to perceived safety inside school zones. The City of El Paso advocates for automatic traffic camera enforcement inside school zones in Section 5 of this document - Legislative Priorities.



### Case Study: Deferred Disposition for School Zone Citations, Austin, Texas

The Safe Routes to School Program in Austin offers deferred disposition for speeding and distracted driving citations in school zones. When deferral is offered, the defendant has the option to participate in safe routes to school programs which upon completion keeps the offense from the defendant's record or reporting to their insurance provider.

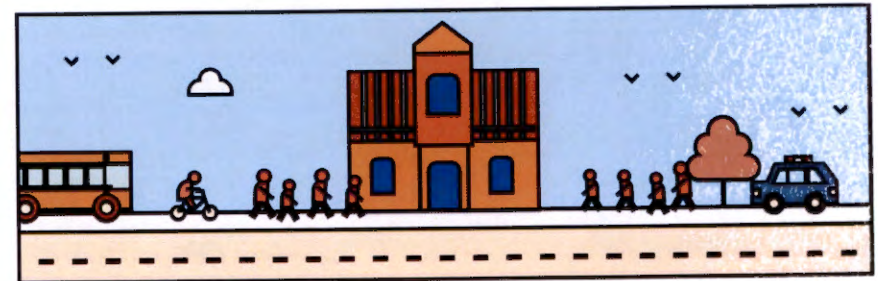
The Safe Routes Deferred Disposition program requires the defendant to assist a crossing guard during two shifts. During the first shift, the defendant counts people walking, in the second shift the defendant counts cars. Austin reports a 99+ percent positive feedback rating and has only one repeat offender.

### Increased Fines in School Zones

The City of El Paso Capital Improvement Department will explore increasing fines in school zones. Further research is necessary to determine the possibility and effectiveness of increased fines.

### School District and City Police Collaboration

In the past, congestion surrounding local high schools has initiated interlocal agreements between school district police departments and the City allowing School PD to enforce City ordinances. The City will explore future interlocal agreements to ensure enforcement coverage on all school zones.





## SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Strategy	Description	Time Frame	Involved Parties	Performance Measure	Performance Measure Timeline
Maintenance & Special Project Installations	Hire additional required personnel to begin the routine maintenance plan outlined in Section Three.	Short	City of El Paso Capital Improvement & Streets and Maintenance.	This strategy will be measured by percent completed from schedule and number of projects installed	Annually
Infrastructure Improvement Priority Projects	Priority infrastructure improvement projects as identified in Section Six.	Short	City of El Paso Streets & Maintenance Sun Metro, Capital Improvement	This strategy should be assessed on a case-by case basis. All project conditions should be well documented before and after improvements.	This strategy should be assessed on a case-by case basis. All project conditions should be well documented before and after improvements.
Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities	Improvements Identified in Section Three.	Long	City of El Paso Streets and Maintenance & Capital Improvement	This strategy will be measured by number of projects completed, speed and collision data, and community satisfaction.	This strategy should be assessed on a case-by case basis. All improvement conditions should be well documented before and after improvements
Traffic Calming	Quick Builds, asphalt art, and other traffic calming measures are identified in Section Four.	Medium	City of El Paso Streets and Maintenance & Capital Improvement	This strategy will be measured by number of projects completed, speed and collision data, and community satisfaction	This strategy should be assessed on a case-by case basis. All improvement conditions should be well documented before and after improvements.
Educational & Outreach Toolbox & Safe Routes School Designation	The Safe Routes to School Designation Program is outlined in Section Four.	Short	City of El Paso Capital Improvement, Paso Del Norte Health Foundation	This strategy will be measured by participation and community satisfaction.	This strategy should be annually re-assessed.
National Walk & Bike to School Day	Adopt a resolution for the first Wednesday of October and encourage schools to participate	Short	City of El Paso City Council, Public Health Department, YISD, SISD, SUSD, UMC, Action for Healthy Kids, American Heart Association	This strategy will be measured by participation	This strategy should be annually re-assessed
Continue to Seek Funding	Vision Zero A-3d. Using the results of school zone road safety audits, apply for Transportation Alternatives funding through the El Paso MPO to implement safety improvements at high-priority schools.	Ongoing	City of El Paso Capital Improvement Department	This strategy will be measured by the funding received	N/A
Formalized & Expanded paid Crossing Guard Program	Seek funding to create a paid crossing guard program. Partner retired and senior volunteers into safe routes to school programs.	Medium	City of El Paso Capital Improvement, EPISD, YISD, SISD	This strategy will be completed when the program is funded, and guards are hired.	N/A
Hire a full time Safe Routes to School Coordinator	Vision Zero A-3a Identify and expand SRTS policies and coordination and hire a dedicated El Paso SRTS coordinator.	Medium	City of El Paso Capital Improvement, EPISD, YISD, SISD	This strategy will be completed when the position is funded and filled.	N/A
Encourage & Expand Safety Town Program	Encourage the enrollment, advertisement, and expansion of Safety Town.	Short	City of El Paso (Capital Improvement Parks & rec, Police Department), Bassett Place Mall	N/A	N/A
Route Mapping and Wayfinding	Identify and publish routes for students to walk, bike, and roll to school.	Short	City of El Paso Capital Improvement, EPISD, YISD, SISD.	This strategy will be measured by participation and community satisfaction.	This strategy should be bi-annually re-assessed.
Deferred Disposition for School Zone Citations	Develop a formalized program for school zone citations	Medium	City of El Paso Police Department & EPISD, SISD, YISD, El Paso Municipal Court	This strategy will be measured by participation and community satisfaction.	This strategy should be bi-annually re-assessed.



### Community Partners

The City will seek partnerships and collaborate with the following organizations.

- EPISD, SISD, & YISD
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Moms on Board
- Vision Zero Texas
- UTEP
- Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
- Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority
- TxDOT
- American Heart Association
- Centro San Vicente
- University Medical Center (UMC)
- Velo Paso
- The Neighborhood Associations
- Downtown Management District
- Project Vida
- Action for Healthy Kids
- Eco El Paso
- Fort Bliss

### Performance and Implementation Transparency

To ensure transparency and accountability, The City of El Paso shall maintain a webpage of completed projects, programmed projects, performance measures, and updates. Performance measures include traffic incidents, the number of students walking or biking to school, community satisfaction with the program, and the completion and impact of infrastructure projects.



### Automated Traffic Enforcement within School Zones

In the Safe Routes to School public survey, many residents expressed enforcement as a main priority for school zone safety. City of El Paso Law Enforcement is a bounded and high-demand resource that is unable to cover all schools at all times. Automated enforcement acts as a neutral and effective alternative to police stops and includes both red light cameras and speed cameras. Effectively reducing speed reduces the risk of high injury when collisions do occur. Automated enforcement has proven effective in reducing both speed and crashes and are often implemented in school zones nationwide to ensure mindful driving, and accountability for children's safety. Reducing speeds is critical to the safety of child pedestrians who are more vulnerable due to their size and visibility.

**A pedestrian is twice as likely to be killed in a collision when a car is traveling at 30 MPH compared to 20 MPH, and over five times more likely when the car is traveling 40 MPH, according to data from the AAA Foundation.**

Red light and speed cameras allow local law enforcement agencies to enforce traffic laws remotely and make efficient use of limited personnel. State laws regarding automated enforcement establish the guidelines for municipal governments. In Texas, both red-light and speed cameras are currently illegal.

Communities in at least 17 states—Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington—and the District of Columbia currently have speed camera programs in place. Currently, city and local governments in 22 states—Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington—and the District of Columbia use red-light cameras. This plan advocates for our state legislators to legalize red-light cameras and pledges to implement them if ever allowed.



### City of El Paso Civic Building Ordinance

The City of El Paso Civic Building Ordinance regulates minimum standards for newly constructed educational facilities. The ordinance currently requires robust public outreach, detailed site plans, traffic circulation, and parking.

School siting policies that encourage schools to be placed along walkable streets can increase the number of students that walk bike or roll to school and reduce traffic congestion in school zones. The City's Civic Building Ordinance should be updated to reflect current best practices for school siting and pedestrian-oriented design elements.

## SECTION 6: EQUITY BASED PRIORITIZATION

### Health and Equity

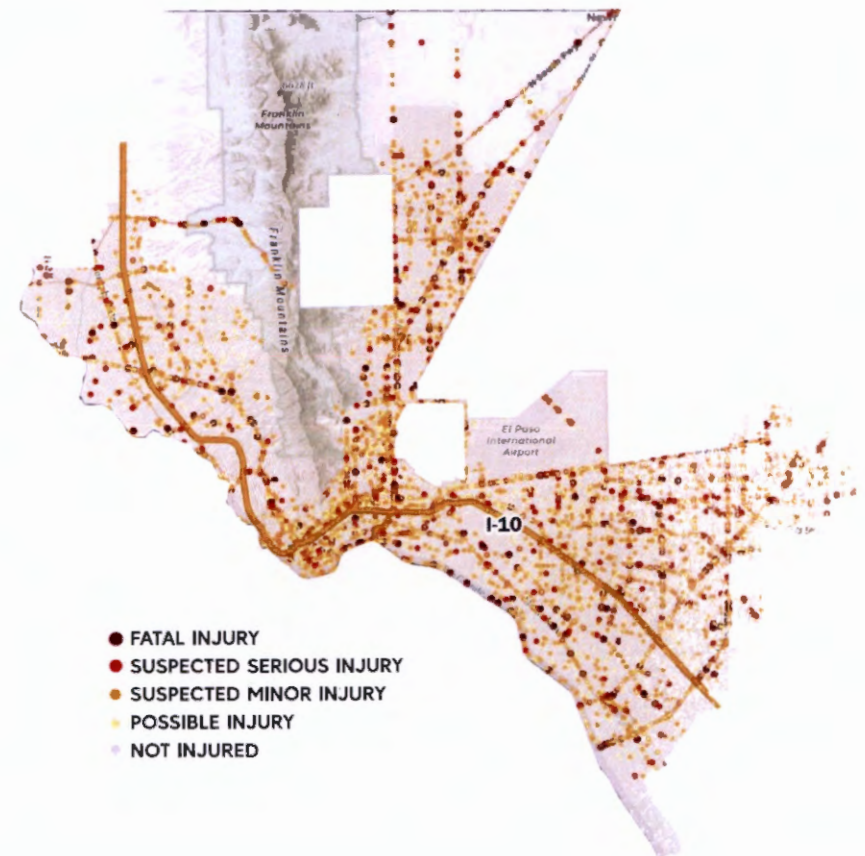
The built environment influences where and how our children exercise, eat, and play. Many studies nationally have identified a disproportional distribution of recreational, health, and transportation facilities amongst socioeconomic groups putting areas of lower socioeconomic status at risk for health-related issues and automobile-related collisions. The Vision Zero Action Plan identifies that 52% of all killed or seriously injured crashes in El Paso occur in disadvantaged areas, as identified by USDOT. The City of El Paso is dedicated to providing safe multimodal transportation facilities and opportunities for health to all people, regardless of socioeconomic status. To ensure fair prioritization of our vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, the City has completed a high-level data analysis that identifies students who are most at risk.

### Equity Analysis

The Capital Improvement Department has developed a multi-factor index (here referred to as the 'school selection index') to guide the decision-making process of which El Paso schools should be prioritized for future studies and infrastructure investments. The school selection index is based on three categories of factors: safety, non-automotive trip volume, and socioeconomic status. For each school, the data for all factors is collected within the school's catchment area. All public elementary, middle, and high schools within El Paso city limits were included for consideration in this analysis. A total of 164 schools were examined, from EPISD, YISD, and SISD.

### Safety

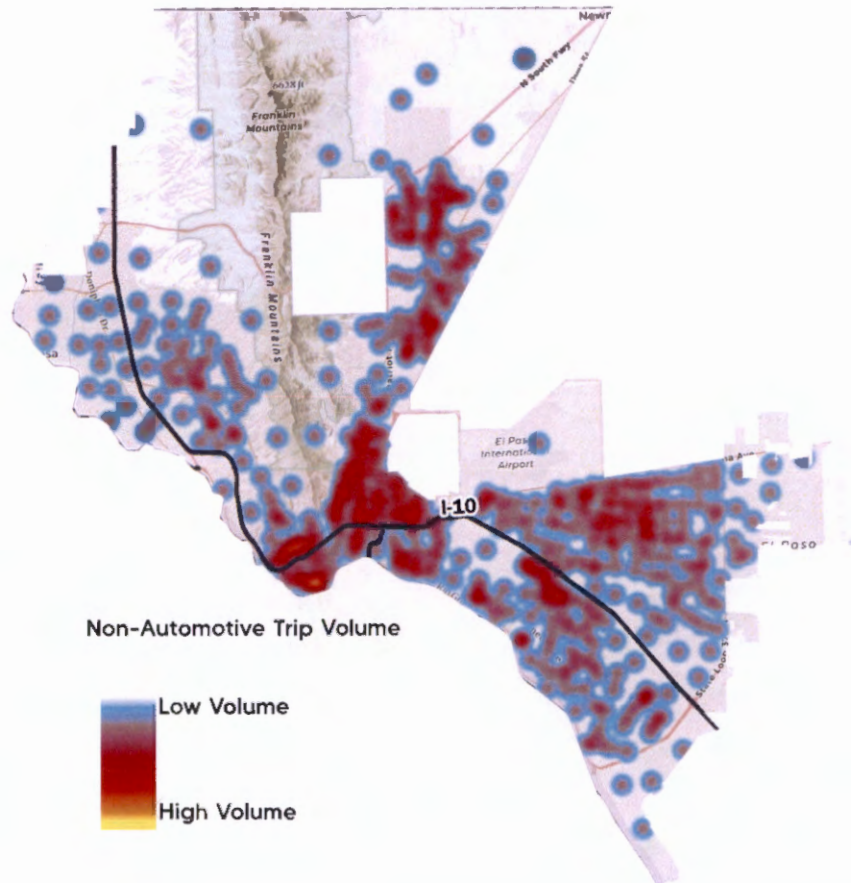
Safety was measured by analyzing traffic accidents that occurred between 2018 and 2022 within each school's catchment area. Accident severity is distinguished and weighed by observed injury type. Where relevant, crashes that occurred on freeways or interstates were excluded, given that highway safety is outside the scope of this project.





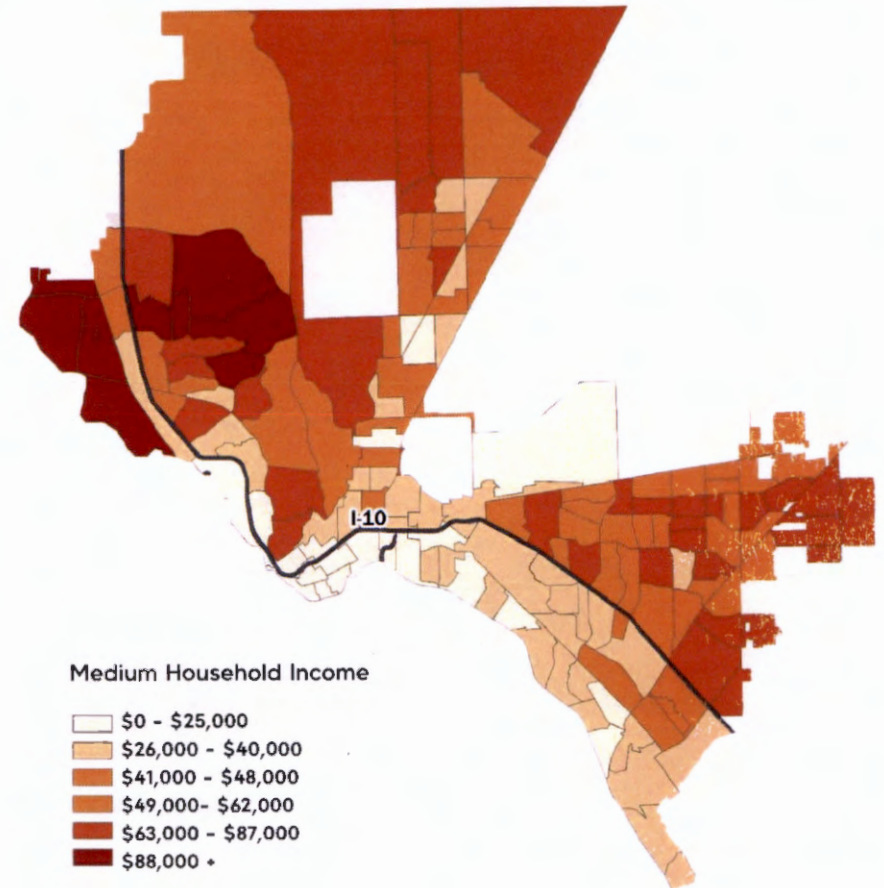
### Non-Automotive Trip Volume

Non-automotive trip volume includes an estimate of the number of pedestrians, bicycles, and other non-automotive trips within a school's catchment area.



### Socio Economic Status

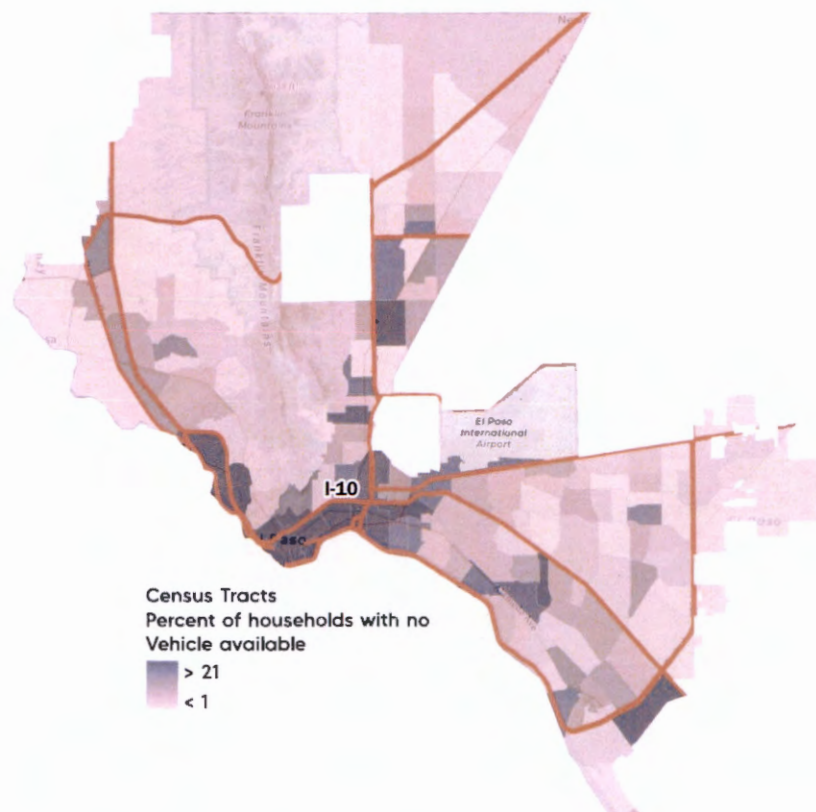
Socioeconomic status was evaluated using median household income and accessibility to automobiles.





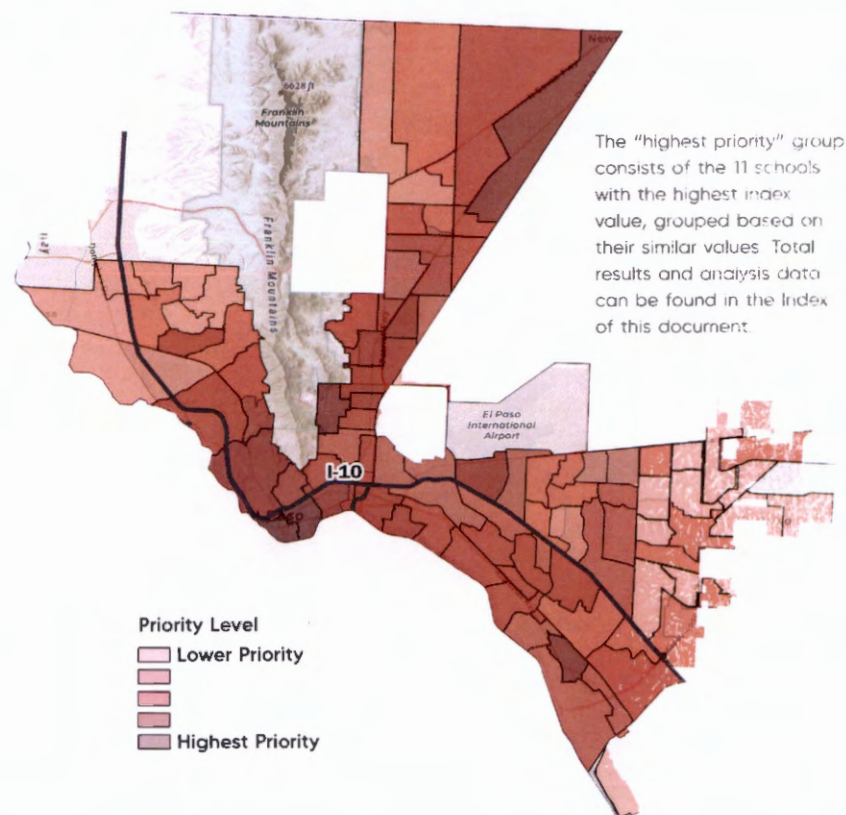
## SocioEconomic Status

Socioeconomic status was evaluated using median household income and accessibility to automobiles.



## Results

The three indicators that make up the index – safety hazards, non-automotive trip volume, and socioeconomic status – were combined agnostically, with each category comprising a third of the index's final value. All final index values were then grouped into priority levels using a Jenks classification method. In natural breaks classification (Jenks), classes are based on natural groupings inherent in the data. Class breaks are then created in a way that best groups similar values together and maximizes the differences between classes. Because all values in a class must be similar, this grouping method allows for fair prioritization.





## PRIORITY SCHOOL PROJECTS

The City of El Paso has prepared priority projects corresponding with the schools ranking highest in the equity-based analysis. During the Public Review Process, the City will begin conversations at each school seeking input on these projects.

These priority projects accomplish **Vision Zero Action Item A-3B** Develop a Safe Routes to School Plan, including an audit of the schools that have the highest crash rates within their school zone. Develop safety recommendations including both quick build opportunities and long-term improvements.

### Transit and International Students

Sun Metro, El Paso's public transportation service, experiences its highest ridership on downtown routes. Downtown and Central is where non-automotive trip volume, households without vehicles, and high-injury collisions are concentrated. Public transportation may be utilized by students in these areas attending after-school activities or jobs. Additionally, students and teachers walk over the Downtown International Bridge every day to attend school in El Paso. Because the downtown border area is experiencing a high volume of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, downtown sidewalk and bicycle facilities maintenance, improvements, and repairs for Safe Routes to School should be prioritized moving forward.

### Context

Four of the eleven highest priority schools are located in South El Paso's Segundo Barrio. These priority schools' catchment areas overlap, and they are all within 1.5 miles of each other. The schools are connected by the **Motor Vehicle High Injury Network, Bike and Pedestrian High Injury Network**, and the El Paso High-Risk Roadway Network. Because of the proximity, risk, programmed improvements, and social connections, this area will be evaluated semi-holistically. There is dense residential development in the Segundo Barrio and a semi-complete sidewalk network.

**The High Injury Network** consists of consist of City-maintained local streets with the highest concentrations of injury crashes. The High Injury Network identifies areas where investment can have the highest impact in reducing serious crashes.

### #1 Desertaire Elementary School (YISD)



Desertaire Elementary School ranked highest in the equity analysis likely because of the concentration of high Injury car collisions in the school enrollment boundary and the campus's proximity to Dyer St, the roadway with the highest frequency of severe crashes citywide.

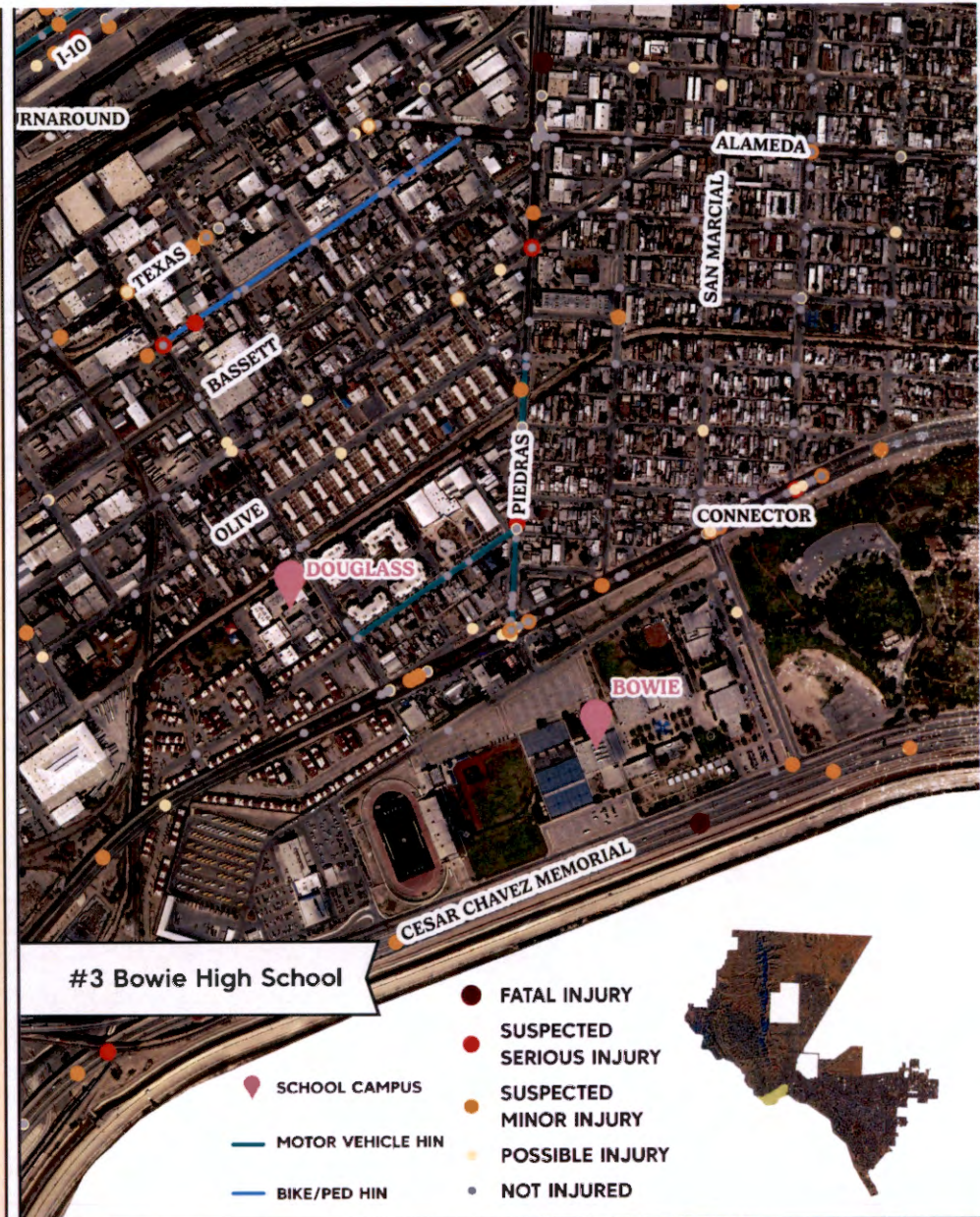
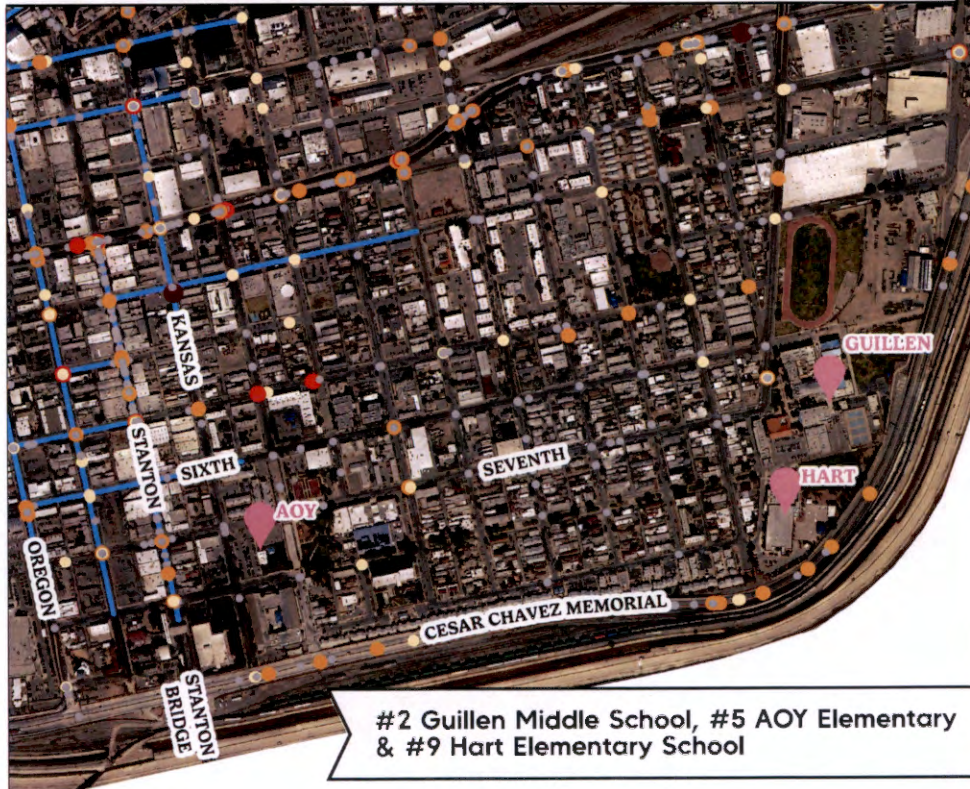




## #2,3,5,9 Segundo Barrio

### History & Community Input

The Segundo Barrio neighborhood is one of the oldest and most historic in El Paso. Comprised of the lowest income census blocks citywide, the neighborhood has been subject to unwanted government involvement and lack of community input in the past. This context is important to understand while implementing the priority projects for the neighborhood. Meaningful community engagement, transparency, and thoughtful collaboration are mandatory. **No project shall move into the design phase without extensive community outreach and input.**







### Paisano Corridor Study

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) El Paso District is conducting a study to propose improvements along Paisano Drive and Montana Avenue from Sunland Park Drive to Montana Avenue and from Paisano Drive to Loop 375. The study will propose short-, mid, and long-term improvements for multi-modal safety, connectivity, drainage, and transportation operations along Paisano Drive. In coordination with the City of El Paso 2016 Bike Plan, the corridor study will also analyze the most imperative bicycle and pedestrian updates needed for the community.

Paisano is a six-lane TxDOT roadway with minimal pedestrian facilities that separate the residential population from Bowie High School. According to census data, approximately 37.5% of households north of Bowie High School do not have access to a personal vehicle, which is much higher than the El Paso County average of 6.5%. The City of El Paso advocates for permanent, well-designed, safe, and accessible bicycle and pedestrian facilities that mitigate the disconnect and danger Paisano creates for residential populations walking to Bowie High School and Chazimal Park.



### #10 Wiggs & #11 El Paso High

- FATAL INJURY
- SUSPECTED SERIOUS INJURY
- SUSPECTED MINOR INJURY
- POSSIBLE INJURY
- NOT INJURED
- BIKE/PED HIN
- SCHOOL CAMPUS
- MOTOR VEHICLE HIN

