# MY SCHOOL IN MOTION





LOWER MERION SCHOOL DISTRICT

MENTI CORPORI MORIBUS VE RI TAS

NORRISTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

# FY 24-26 Concluding Report

GVF

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# My School in Motion

Created in 1990, GVF, a not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to inspiring mobility choices for ALL. Through our 35+ years of expertise, GVF develops programs and initiatives that help educate and provide alternatives to driving alone, ultimately improving the quality of life for all.

Through PennDOT's Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Grant, GVF developed the "My School in Motion" program. In the FY 2024-2026 grant cycle, GVF partnered with both the Norristown Area School District and Lower Merion School District.

The My School in Motion program was developed to promote safety in walking and biking to school and educate the next generation of commuters on the benefits of walking and biking as an alternate mode of travel.

Biking and walking allow students to travel safely, emitting minimal C02 emissions while enhancing physical and mental well-being. Schools provide the best opportunity to reach the most vulnerable adolescent population. It is our responsibility to encourage behavioral changes and protect the future safety and health of our children. The My School in Motion program not only improves physical and mental health, but students had an opportunity to participate in a biking/walking audit to look at the streets, sidewalks, and connections within their neighborhood to assess safety. This program is an opportunity for students to have fun, get energized, and build a sense of community.

Components of the program included:

- Parental/Guardian survey
- Events
- Walkability and bikeability audits
- Outreach and education





# Norristown Area School District

The My School in Motion program was implemented at Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy (ESTLA) and Blockson Middle School during the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years.

GVF developed a partnership with each school and worked in collaboration with the school district, local government, and elected officials to provide educational resources, hold events, and suggest infrastructure improvements to make biking and walking to school and throughout the community safer.

”

“I’m incredibly grateful that GVF is investing time and resources into our Norristown Area School District community through the My School in Motion Program.

This program has been highly successful in educating students, teachers, and parents alike on the benefits of active transportation. It has also helped us reduce traffic congestion in our area, and identify ways we can improve safety measures for walkers and bikers.

Our neighbors deserve safe, walkable communities. I’m proud to support GVF’s mission to bring that vision to life in my Senate district and beyond.”

**–Senator Amanda M. Cappelletti (D-17, Delaware/Montgomery), GVF Board Member**





# Partnerships

Through the My School in Motion program, GVF helps to form partnerships between school districts, townships, and counties to prioritize needed infrastructure improvements.

GVF has a long-standing partnership with the Municipality of Norristown and has worked closely with the municpality to improve transportation options throughout the community.

GVF worked with several strategic partners throughout the My School in Motion Program:

- **Montgomery County Planning Commission** provided insight into infrastructure and transportation projects within the area and participated in a walking/biking audit of the area around Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy and Blockson Middle School.

- **Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services** provided bike racks, helmets, and bike locks to students in NASD to help facilitate biking to school.

- **The Municipality of Norristown** provided information on priorities for multi-modal transportation projects, reviewed grant documents, and provided insight into the walking and biking audit completed by GVF.

- **PA State Senator Amanda Cappelletti** helped GVF connect with the Municipality of Norristown and Norristown Area School District to implement components of the My School in Motion Program, as well as continuing to serve on GVF's Board of Directors.

- **PA State Representative Greg Scott** provided advisement on infrastructure within the Municipality of Norristown.

- **Norristown Area School District**, particularly Superintendent Christopher Dormer, Dr. Casey Molitor, Kathy DiMaio, Dr. Christina Taylor, Dr. David Lugo, Elizabeth Trostle, and Peter Odagis.

- **Pennoni**, as the Municipality of Norristown's traffic engineer, provided additional insight into infrastructure improvements around the schools.

GVF looks forward to continuing to work with our partners to implement the My School in Motion Program within additional school districts and continue to improve and strengthen our transportation systems.

# Partnerships

GVF's partnership with the Norristown Area School District on the My School in Motion Program is part of a larger effort to study current traffic safety conditions within the Municpality of Norristown. Throughout the two-year grant cycle, GVF participated in events hosted by both Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services and DVRPC.

## Community Conversations: Traffic Safety in Norristown

The Montgomery County Department held two in-person events during the grant cycle, where stakeholders from elected officials' offices, Montgomery County, PennDOT, the Municipality of Norristown, and community leaders gathered to discuss local crash data, discuss behavioral traffic safety, and explore partnership opportunities. Through these events, GVF strengthed relationships with the County, the School District, and gathered ideas for implementation of the My School in Motion Program.




## DVRPC-Norristown Traffic Safety Study

The DVRPC-Norristown Traffic Safety Study also focuses on addressing traffic safety in Norristown. The project began in early 2026 and involves a municipality-wide analysis in the first year, followed by a deep dive into a specific corridor or intersection in the second year. Key focus areas include the need for pedestrian safety, traffic calming, and data collection on existing conditions.

Participants in this study include DVRPC, PennDOT, Norristown Planning, Streets, and Police Departments, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, SEPTA, and the Greater Philadelphia Bike Coalition.

This project is ongoing, and GVF is providing input using the knowledge gained from the My School in Motion program and work with the School District and Municipality.

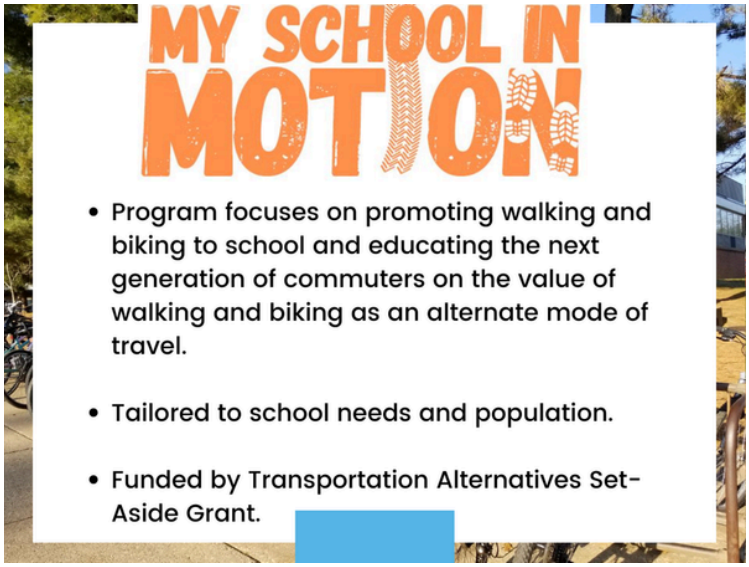
# Program Kick-Off

GVF kicked off My School in Motion with the Norristown Area School District in the Summer of 2024. Superintendent Chris Dormer arranged the meeting with the following principals:

- Dr. David Lugo, Blockson Middle School
- Dr. Christina Taylor, Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy
- Ms. Jeanette Fernandez, Davenport Elementary School
- Mrs. Brooke Vaught, Hancock Elementary School

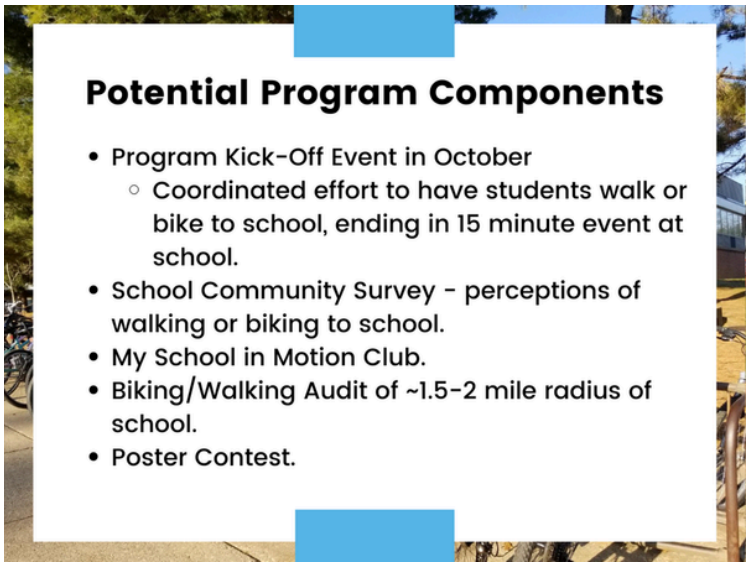
The meeting focused on potential components of the MSIM program, more about GVF and Transportation Demand Management, why the program is important, as well as a discussion around the needs of each individual school, which included educational components, improvements to bicycle infrastructure, and general safety of students as they move about the community.

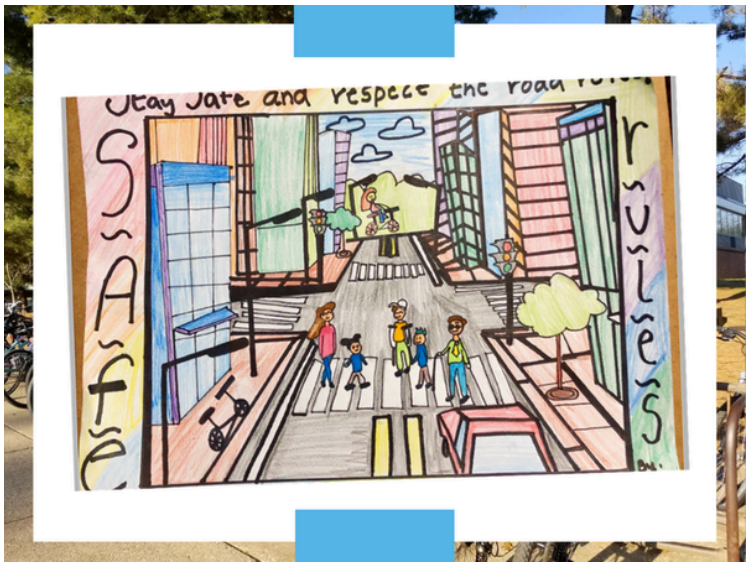
## Presentation Highlights:









# Bike Infrastructure Improvements

## Bike Racks

In the kick-off meeting, GVF learned that Davenport Elementary did not have any bike racks for students to use, but that there were an average of 10 students biking to school each day. The Principal was storing the bikes in the building, near the office.



Bike Rack Delivery

Through discussions with Montgomery County Health and Human Services, GVF learned that the County had funds to purchase both bike racks and bike locks to provide to Norristown Area School District for safer bike storage.

Four bike racks were purchased and delivered to the following schools:

- Davenport Elementary
- Blockson Middle School
- Cole Manor Elementary
- East Norriton Middle School



Blockson Middle School



East Norriton Middle School

## Bike Locks

Montgomery County HHS also purchased bike locks for students to use to safely store their bikes during the school day. These locks were provided to students at Blockson Middle School and distributed through the Leadership classes.



# Helmet Distributions



In partnership with Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, GVF attended back-to-school community events at both Blockson Middle School and Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy.

At these events, over 150 students and community members were properly fitted for a helmet, free of charge. During the events, GVF and Montco HHS also provided educational materials on safe biking, walking, and scooter use.





# Kick-Off Event at ESTLA

GVF partnered with Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy (ESTLA) to host an educational kick-off event at the nearby Elmwood Park. Over 120 students walked and biked to the park and participated in six activities to learn about safe walking and biking behaviors. Staff from ESTLA, lead by Elizabeth Trostle, helped to ensure that students walked safely from the school and engaged with the activities.

PA State Senator Amanda Cappelletti, NASD Superintendent Dr. Christopher Dormer, and the Norristown Police came to support the event and the partnership between NASD and GVF.











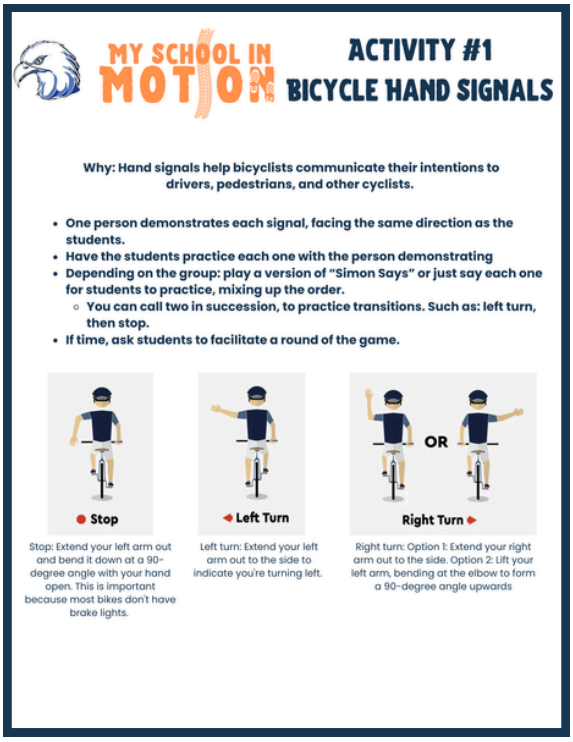





# Kick-Off Event at ESTLA

## Activities

Staff from ESTLA facilitated six activities that groups of students rotated through in groups. Each activity highlighted a different aspect of safely walking or biking throughout the community.



MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

**ACTIVITY #1**
**BICYCLE HAND SIGNALS**

**Why: Hand signals help bicyclists communicate their intentions to drivers, pedestrians, and other cyclists.**

- One person demonstrates each signal, facing the same direction as the students.
- Have the students practice each one with the person demonstrating
- Depending on the group: play a version of "Simon Says" or just say each one for students to practice, mixing up the order.
  - You can call two in succession, to practice transitions. Such as: left turn, then stop.
- If time, ask students to facilitate a round of the game.



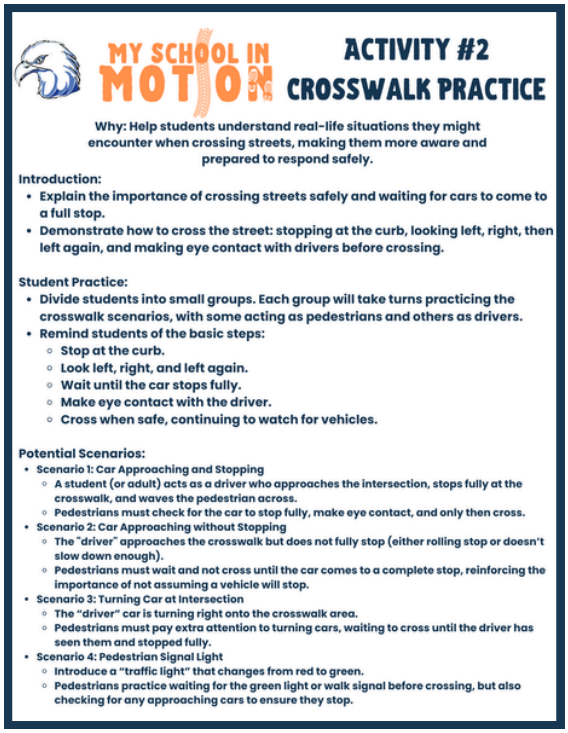
Stop: Extend your left arm out and bend it down at a 90-degree angle with your hand open. This is important because most bikes don't have brake lights.

Left turn: Extend your left arm out to the side to indicate you're turning left.

Right turn: Option 1: Extend your right arm out to the side. Option 2: Lift your left arm, bending at the elbow to form a 90-degree angle upwards

At station 1, students learned and practiced bicycle hand signals, led by an ESTLA teacher.





MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

**ACTIVITY #2**
**CROSSWALK PRACTICE**

**Why: Help students understand real-life situations they might encounter when crossing streets, making them more aware and prepared to respond safely.**

**Introduction:**
- Explain the importance of crossing streets safely and waiting for cars to come to a full stop.
- Demonstrate how to cross the street: stopping at the curb, looking left, right, then left again, and making eye contact with drivers before crossing.

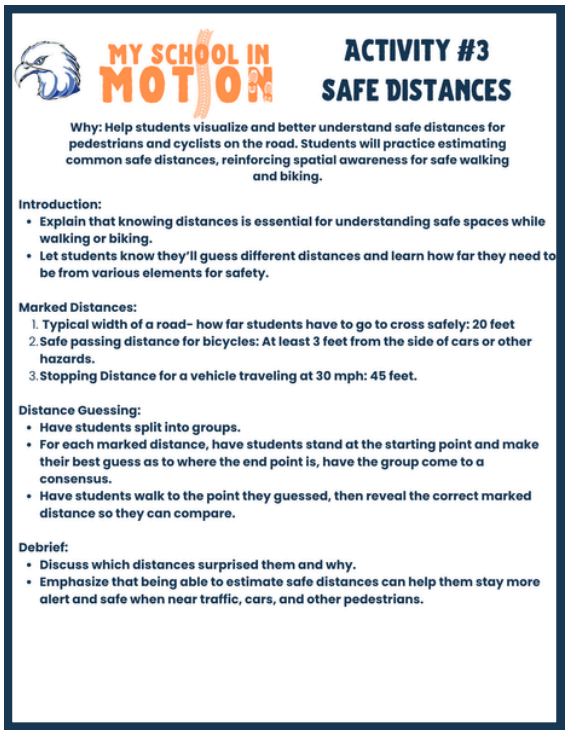
**Student Practice:**
- Divide students into small groups. Each group will take turns practicing the crosswalk scenarios, with some acting as pedestrians and others as drivers.
- Remind students of the basic steps:
  - Stop at the curb.
  - Look left, right, and left again.
  - Wait until the car stops fully.
  - Make eye contact with the driver.
  - Cross when safe, continuing to watch for vehicles.

**Potential Scenarios:**
- Scenario 1: Car Approaching and Stopping
  - A student (or adult) acts as a driver who approaches the intersection, stops fully at the crosswalk, and waves the pedestrian across.
  - Pedestrians must check for the car to stop fully, make eye contact, and only then cross.
- Scenario 2: Car Approaching without Stopping
  - The "driver" approaches the crosswalk but does not fully stop (either rolling stop or doesn't slow down enough).
  - Pedestrians must wait and not cross until the car comes to a complete stop, reinforcing the importance of not assuming a vehicle will stop.
- Scenario 3: Turning Car at Intersection
  - The "driver" car is turning right onto the crosswalk area.
  - Pedestrians must pay extra attention to turning cars, waiting to cross until the driver has seen them and stopped fully.
- Scenario 4: Pedestrian Signal Light
  - Introduce a "traffic light" that changes from red to green.
  - Pedestrians practice waiting for the green light or walk signal before crossing, but also checking for any approaching cars to ensure they stop.

At station 2, students practiced safely crossing the street at a crosswalk, using a concrete slab in the park marked like a crosswalk.



# Kick-Off Event at ESTLA



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**ACTIVITY #3**
**SAFE DISTANCES**

**Why:** Help students visualize and better understand safe distances for pedestrians and cyclists on the road. Students will practice estimating common safe distances, reinforcing spatial awareness for safe walking and biking.

**Introduction:**
- Explain that knowing distances is essential for understanding safe spaces while walking or biking.
- Let students know they'll guess different distances and learn how far they need to be from various elements for safety.

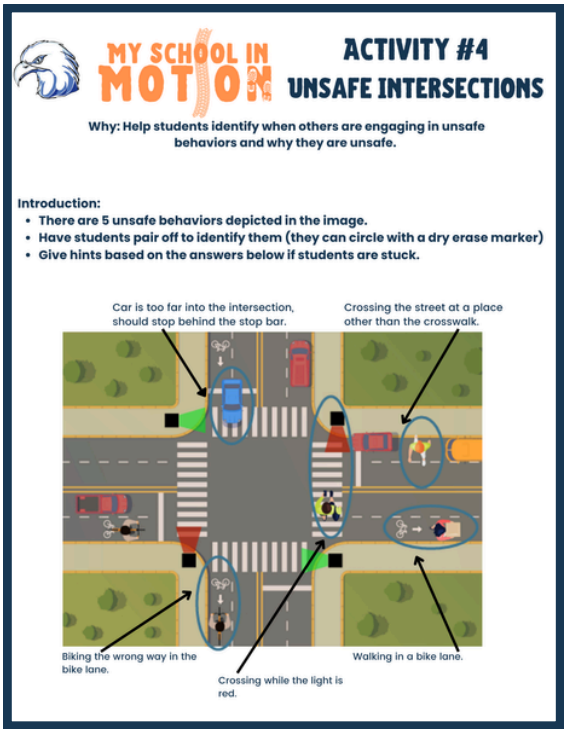
**Marked Distances:**
1. Typical width of a road- how far students have to go to cross safely: 20 feet
2. Safe passing distance for bicycles: At least 3 feet from the side of cars or other hazards.
3. Stopping Distance for a vehicle traveling at 30 mph: 45 feet.

**Distance Guessing:**
- Have students split into groups.
- For each marked distance, have students stand at the starting point and make their best guess as to where the end point is, have the group come to a consensus.
- Have students walk to the point they guessed, then reveal the correct marked distance so they can compare.

**Debrief:**
- Discuss which distances surprised them and why.
- Emphasize that being able to estimate safe distances can help them stay more alert and safe when near traffic, cars, and other pedestrians.

At station 3, there were three distances marked with cones – the typical width of a road (20 feet), safe passing distance for a bicycle (3 feet), and the stopping distance for a car travelling at 30 mph (45 feet). Students estimated each distance and teacher facilitators revealed the correct answers.





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**ACTIVITY #4**
**UNSAFE INTERSECTIONS**

**Why:** Help students identify when others are engaging in unsafe behaviors and why they are unsafe.

**Introduction:**
- There are 5 unsafe behaviors depicted in the image.
- Have students pair off to identify them (they can circle with a dry erase marker)
- Give hints based on the answers below if students are stuck.



At station 4, students broke into groups to find and describe unsafe behaviors on the map.



# Kick-Off Event at ESTLA

MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

**ACTIVITY #5**
**SURVEY**

**Why: We would like to collect data to help us decide how else to incorporate MSIM at ESTLA**

**Please ask the questions below and then tally the yes responses. Use a second sheet if you need more room.**

| | |
|---|---|
| On most days.... do you walk to school? | |
| On most days.... do you ride a bike/scooter to school? | |
| On most days.... do you take the bus to school? | |
| On most days... does someone drive you to school in a car? | |
| Do you know how to ride a bike? | |
| If you don't know how to ride a bike or never tried, would you like to learn? | |
| Do you own a bike? | |
| When you ride a bike, do you wear a helmet? | |
| Do you bike or walk around your neighborhood or to a friend's house? | |
| Have you ever fixed a bike or put air in a bike's tires? | |

At station 5, teachers took a brief “show of hands” survey to learn about students' travel behaviors and access to a bike and helmet.



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**ACTIVITY #6**
**SAFE WALKING/BIKING BEHAVIORS**

**Why: Start a conversation about safe vs. unsafe behaviors while walking and biking.**

**For each statement, students hold up the green dot if it is safe and the red dot if it is unsafe. For each one, you can ask a student to give their reasoning or reveal the answer with a brief explanation. *Please add additional behaviors that have been observed (positive and negative) if needed.**

**SAFE**

- **When crossing the street, you should cross at a crosswalk or at the intersection if a crosswalk is not available.**
- **Wearing light-colored clothes or reflective materials when walking or biking in the dark.**
- **Always watching for traffic while crossing the street**
- **Wearing a helmet while biking.**
- **Stopping and watching for cars at driveways.**
- **Staying off private property.**
- **Biking with traffic.**

**UNSAFE**

- **Crossing the street in the middle of a block.**
- **Disturbing private property or decorations on people's lawns.**
- **Looking at your phone and/or listening to music while walking or biking.**
- **Fighting or pushing others around.**
- **Biking on a sidewalk.**
- **Assuming cars can stop in time if they see you walking on the street.**

At station 6, students used green and red circles to indicate if each stated behavior was safe or unsafe, followed by discussion on each.



# Bike Road-eo

NASD, led by Dr. Casey Molitor, Chief Student Services Officer, held a Bike Road-eo at Whitehall Elementary. The location was chosen due to the large drop-off circle, which allowed for biking practice.

Montco HHS and GVF, along with Village Velo of Bridgeport, were on hand to provide helmet fittings, bike safety checks, and biking and walking safety materials.













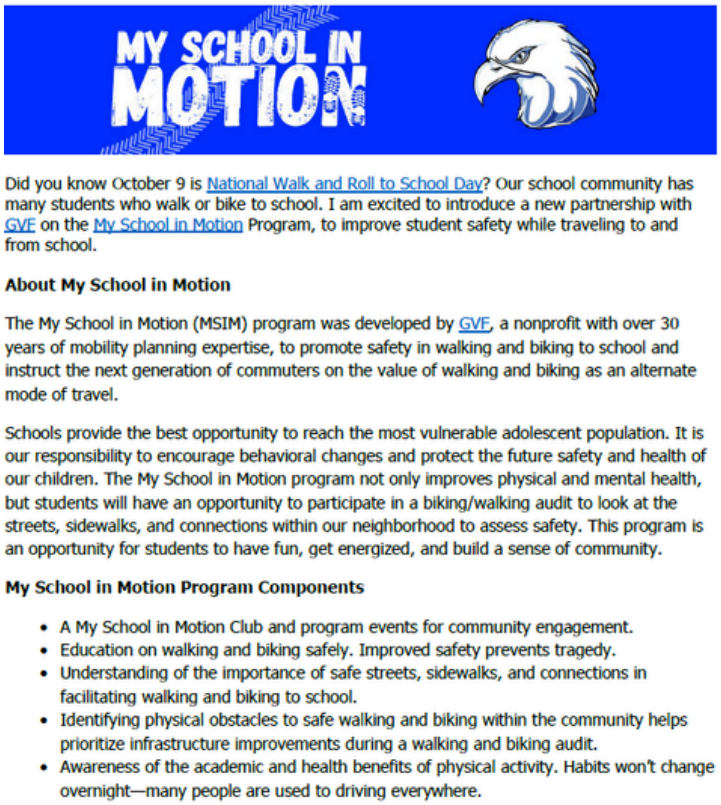



# Education

## Kick-Off Email

In the Fall of 2024, GVF kicked off the partnership with Eisenhower Science and Technology and Blockson Middle School with a school-wide email introducing the program, detailing program components, and benefits of biking and walking to school.

All communications, including this initial email, were sent in both English and Spanish to reach more of the Norristown Area School District Community.



MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

Did you know October 9 is National Walk and Roll to School Day? Our school community has many students who walk or bike to school. I am excited to introduce a new partnership with GVF on the My School in Motion Program, to improve student safety while traveling to and from school.

**About My School in Motion**

The My School in Motion (MSIM) program was developed by GVF, a nonprofit with over 30 years of mobility planning expertise, to promote safety in walking and biking to school and instruct the next generation of commuters on the value of walking and biking as an alternate mode of travel.

Schools provide the best opportunity to reach the most vulnerable adolescent population. It is our responsibility to encourage behavioral changes and protect the future safety and health of our children. The My School in Motion program not only improves physical and mental health, but students will have an opportunity to participate in a biking/walking audit to look at the streets, sidewalks, and connections within our neighborhood to assess safety. This program is an opportunity for students to have fun, get energized, and build a sense of community.

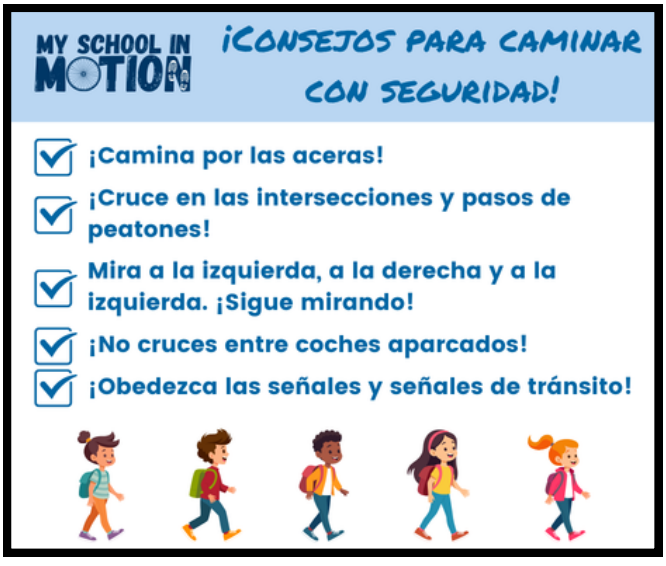
**My School in Motion Program Components**

- A My School in Motion Club and program events for community engagement.
- Education on walking and biking safely. Improved safety prevents tragedy.
- Understanding of the importance of safe streets, sidewalks, and connections in facilitating walking and biking to school.
- Identifying physical obstacles to safe walking and biking within the community helps prioritize infrastructure improvements during a walking and biking audit.
- Awareness of the academic and health benefits of physical activity. Habits won't change overnight—many people are used to driving everywhere.

## Targeted Education to Students

GVF worked with Elizabeth Trostle at ESTLA to develop safety tips that could be sent directly to students in response to behaviors that staff observed. These were sent out through Class Dojo, the communication app used by the school.



# Education

## In-School Lessons

GVF developed a series of lessons in both English and Spanish that were provided to ESTLA and Blockson Middle School. Blockson Middle School incorporated the lessons into their Leadership class, which is a class that all students in the school take in a 9-week session. ESTLA used the lessons in a club setting for their Student Council and Environmental clubs. The lessons featured education around safe walking and biking to school and around the community, conducting a walking and biking audit, and education around types of transportation and careers in the transportation sector, with a focus on active transportation. All lessons included teacher notes and student materials.

## Sample lessons:



MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

**WHAT IS COMMUNITY PLANNING?**

By Cynthia Bowen, FAICP

**WHAT IS PLANNING?**

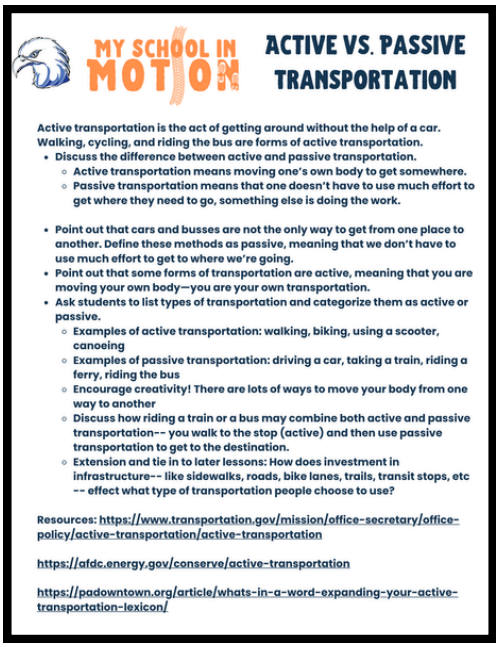
Take a moment to wonder about your community. Why are homes located in a specific area? Why are businesses or factories located in another? How did someone decide where the roads would go — and how many lanes each road would have? How much park or open space is available to play in? Can you easily walk to a bus or train to get to your destination?
These questions are what planners think about and are at the heart of planning as a profession. The goal of planning is to maximize the health, safety, and economic well-being of residents in ways that reflect the unique needs, desires, and culture of those who live and work within the community.

**PLANNING CONSIDERS THE BIG PICTURE**

While architects often focus on a single building, a planner's job is to work with residents and elected officials to guide the layout of an entire community or region. Planners take a broad viewpoint and look at how the pieces of a community — buildings, roads, and parks — fit together like pieces of a puzzle. And, like Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett did with the 1909 Plan of Chicago, planners also work to imagine what can and should happen to a community: how it should grow and change, and what it should offer residents 10, 15, or even 20 years into the future.



Box City teaches children about the process of urban development and the principles that make for sound architecture, design, and planning. Photo by Ryan Dravitz.



MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

**ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Active transportation is the act of getting around without the help of a car. Walking, cycling, and riding the bus are forms of active transportation.

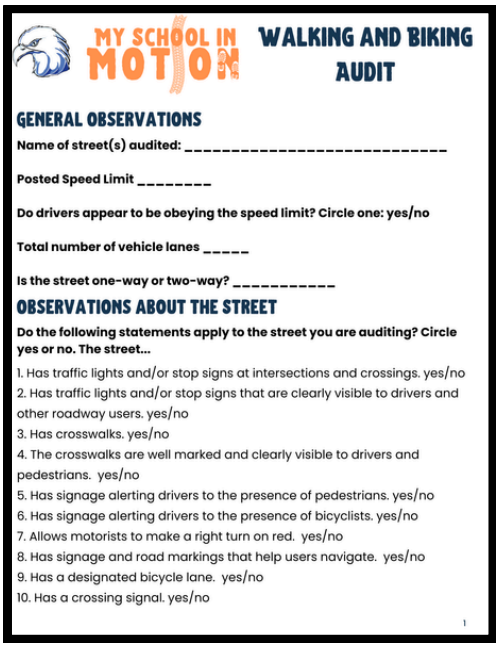
- Discuss the difference between active and passive transportation.
  - Active transportation means moving one's own body to get somewhere.
  - Passive transportation means that one doesn't have to use much effort to get where they need to go, something else is doing the work.

- Point out that cars and busses are not the only way to get from one place to another. Define these methods as passive, meaning that we don't have to use much effort to get to where we're going.
- Point out that some forms of transportation are active, meaning that you are moving your own body—you are your own transportation.
- Ask students to list types of transportation and categorize them as active or passive.
  - Examples of active transportation: walking, biking, using a scooter, canoeing
  - Examples of passive transportation: driving a car, taking a train, riding a ferry, riding the bus
  - Encourage creativity! There are lots of ways to move your body from one way to another
  - Discuss how riding a train or a bus may combine both active and passive transportation-- you walk to the stop (active) and then use passive transportation to get to the destination.
  - Extension and tie in to later lessons: How does investment in infrastructure-- like sidewalks, roads, bike lanes, trails, transit stops, etc -- effect what type of transportation people choose to use?

Resources: https://www.transportation.gov/mission/office-secretary/office-policy/active-transportation/active-transportation

https://afdc.energy.gov/conserve/active-transportation

https://padowntown.org/article/whats-in-a-word-expanding-your-active-transportation-lexicon/



MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

**WALKING AND BIKING AUDIT**

**GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

Name of street(s) audited: _____

Posted Speed Limit _____

Do drivers appear to be obeying the speed limit? Circle one: yes/no

Total number of vehicle lanes _____

Is the street one-way or two-way? _____

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE STREET**

Do the following statements apply to the street you are auditing? Circle yes or no. The street...

1. Has traffic lights and/or stop signs at intersections and crossings. yes/no
2. Has traffic lights and/or stop signs that are clearly visible to drivers and other roadway users. yes/no
3. Has crosswalks. yes/no
4. The crosswalks are well marked and clearly visible to drivers and pedestrians. yes/no
5. Has signage alerting drivers to the presence of pedestrians. yes/no
6. Has signage alerting drivers to the presence of bicyclists. yes/no
7. Allows motorists to make a right turn on red. yes/no
8. Has signage and road markings that help users navigate. yes/no
9. Has a designated bicycle lane. yes/no
10. Has a crossing signal. yes/no



**Problemas de transporte en Tinseltown**

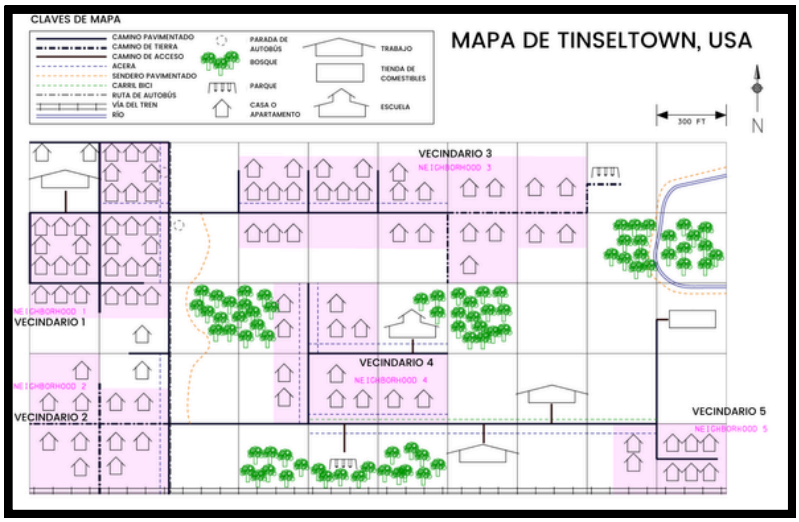
1. Los habitantes de la ciudad están muy preocupados porque los niños de los barrios 1 y 2 tienen problemas para caminar y andar en bicicleta de manera segura a la escuela local.

2. Muchas personas del barrio 1 no tienen automóvil y necesitan poder caminar, andar en bicicleta o tomar el autobús para ir al trabajo, la escuela y la tienda de comestibles.

3. Las personas del barrio 3 quieren una ruta de manejo más directa para llegar a la tienda de comestibles y a la escuela local.

4. Las personas de los barrios 4 y 5 están molestas porque solo hay una calle para llegar a la tienda de comestibles porque esto significa que hay mucho tráfico.

5. Las personas quieren poder caminar hasta sus parques locales.



## Website Updates - Safety Tips

With input from the schools on areas of need, GVF compiled safety tips and additional resources that are housed on the schoolinmotion.com website. Focus areas included safe street crossing and scooter safety, as schools have seen a large increase in the number of students who are using e-scooters to ride to school and around the community.



# Bicycle Friendly Business Application

In the Spring of 2026, GVF worked with Norristown Area School District to apply for recognition as a Bicycle Friendly Business, focusing on the strength of NASD's bicycle education programs and community outreach.

The Bike League's Bicycle Friendly America℠ program provides advocates and change makers with a roadmap and hands-on assistance to build places more welcoming to people who bike. The BFA℠ program is a tool for states, communities, businesses, and universities to make bicycling a real transportation and recreation option for all people and it recognizes those doing it well.

THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS since 1880

GVF coordinated the application process with NASD, and the following individuals provided input into the application:

- Elizabeth Trostle, Teacher, Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy
- Dr. Casey Molitor, Chief Student Services Officer
- Kathy DiMaio, Office Secretary, Office of the Superintendent

In addition to the My School in Motion Program, NASD has partnered with other community organizations to provide students with bicycles, helmets, and the knowledge to ride safely throughout the community. In the Summer of 2026, NASD was recognized as a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Business.



# Walking and Biking Audits

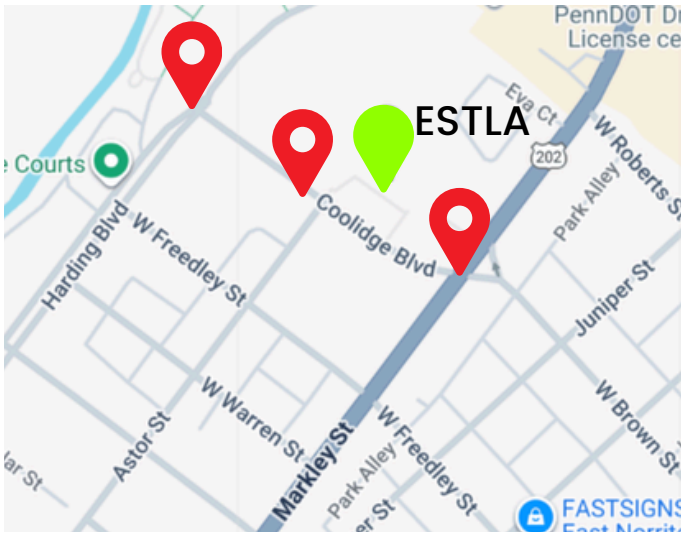
## Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy

GVF coordinated with Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy, the Norristown Area School District, Montgomery County Planning Commission, the Municipality of Norristown, and Representative Greg Scott's office to observe dismissal and conduct a walking audit of the area around ESTLA.



In attendance:

- Elizabeth Trostle, Teacher, Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy
- Dr. Casey Molitor, Chief Student Services Officer, Norristown Area School District
- Matt Popek, Transportation Planning Manager, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Laureen Sendel-Grant, Principal Transportation Planner II, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Russel Livolsi, Planner I, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Jayne Musoyne, Director of Planning, Municipality of Norristown
- Ngoc Gaiser, Senior Planner and Grants Coordinator, Municipality of Norristown
- Buck Jones, District Office Director, Representative Greg Scott's Office




Prior to the audit, three main areas of concern were identified:

- The intersection of Astor Street and Coolidge Boulevard
- The intersection of Markley Street and Coolidge Boulevard
- The intersection of Harding Boulevard and Coolidge Boulevard

# Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy

## Dismissal Observations

ESTLA has approximately 800 students, and approximately 600 walk or bike to school. Two yellow school buses transport approximately 50 total students. In addition, 20 vans and shuttles transport an average of 4-5 students per vehicle. ESTLA houses all of the 5th through 8th grade special education students in the district with medium to high support needs, and they are transported by these vehicles.

The large number of vehicles are double- and triple-parked on Coolidge Boulevard, which blocks a portion of the lane and reduces visibility for students crossing.

The approximately 600 students who walk and bike to school are released by grade level. ESTLA staff members go outside to monitor students in various ways:

- Stationed at exits and crosswalks
- Walking through the neighborhood to monitor high-traffic areas
- Monitoring busy intersections
-

There are no crossing guards, but there is sometimes a school resource officer stationed at Coolidge Boulevard and Astor Street. Students are generally well behaved during dismissal

All students must cross Coolidge Boulevard upon dismissal, and the street is crowded, particularly at the crosswalk at Astor Street. (See more information and recommendations on page ___).

In general, the sidewalks and crossings in the blocks around the school could benefit from general updates and maintenance. Many ADA ramps are missing, crosswalks are faded, and portions of the sidewalks are in poor condition.

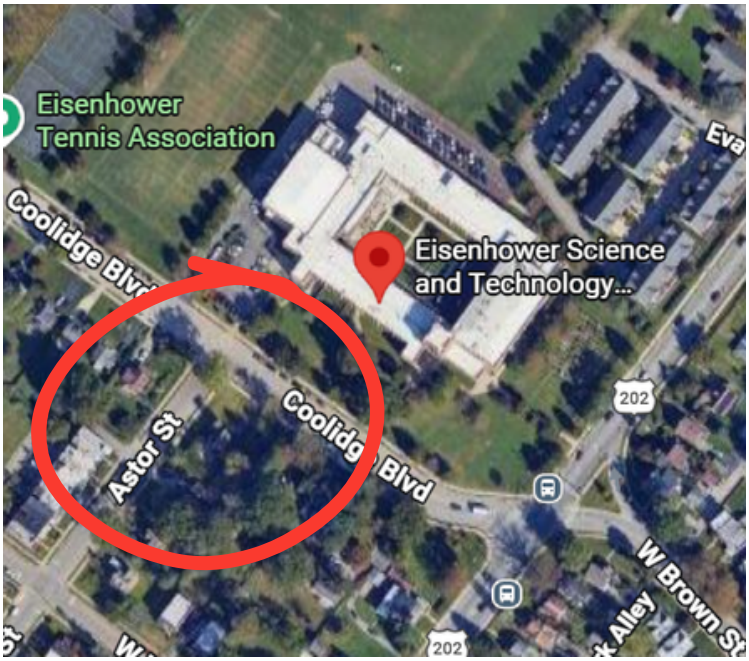




From L to R: Vans and shuttles parked along Coolidge Bvld prior to dismissal; a staff member facilitates students crossing at Coolidge BVLD and Astor Street; faded pavement markings in the neighboorhood surrounding the school

# Coolidge Boulevard and Astor Street

The intersection of Coolidge Boulevard and Astor Street is closest to the most-used exits of ESTLA. All students must cross Coolidge Boulevard upon dismissal, and the majority cross at Astor Street (see photos below).




**Sidewalks and Crosswalks**

- There are sidewalks on both sides of Coolidge Boulevard and Astor Street.
- There is one crosswalk from the ESTLA side of Coolidge Boulevard to the northern side of Astor Street.

**Biking**

- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.
- Coolidge Boulevard is very wide, and potentially a good candidate for a parking-protected bike lane.

**Recommendations**

- Shorten the crossing distance using bulb-outs or other traffic calming methods.
- Add rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) to the existing crosswalk.
- Extend the school zone to at least one full block of Astor Street (to W Freedley Street) and replace existing school zone signs, which are in poor conditions.
- Inventory and make necessary improvements to ADA ramps, sidewalks, and crosswalks.



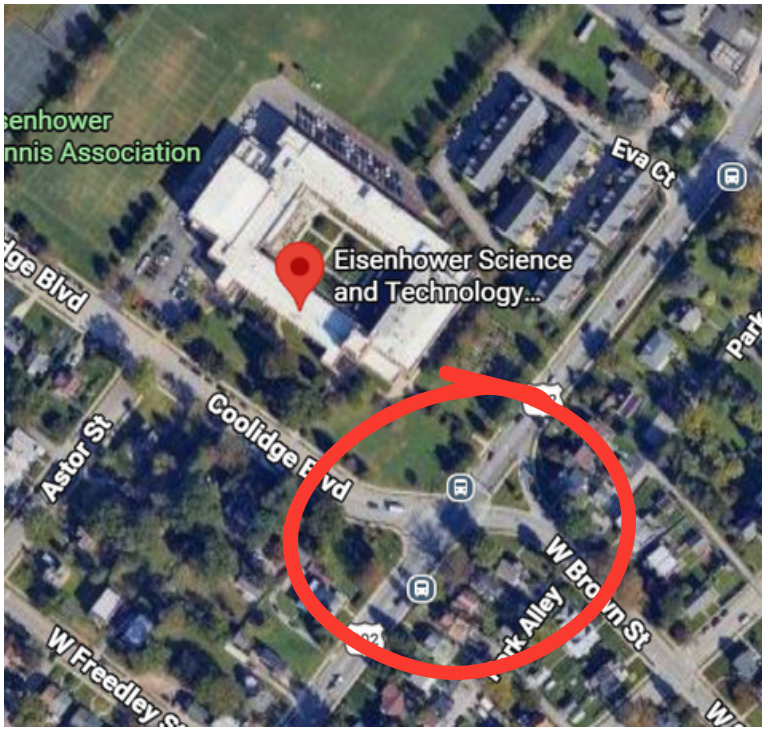




# Coolidge Boulevard and Markley Street

The intersection of Coolidge Boulevard and Markley Street is a high-traffic, signalized intersection. Markley Street (SR 202) is a PennDOT-owned road. The traffic light at this intersection is relatively new, but has no left-turn phase, but does have pedestrian push buttons and a pedestrian phase. In addition, the ability for the school to control the phasing during arrival/dismissal is limited, leading to back-ups on both Markley Street and Coolidge Boulevard.

This intersection becomes very crowded at dismissal, and trash accumulates at the corner pictured below.






The majority of students are either turning right and continuing to walk on Markley Street, or crossing Markley Street and walking straight on W Brown Street.

**Sidewalks and Crosswalks**

- There are sidewalks on both sides of Coolidge Boulevard and Markley Street Street, and continuing down W Brown Street.
- There are four crosswalks connecting each corner of Coolidge Boulevard and Markley Street.

**Biking**

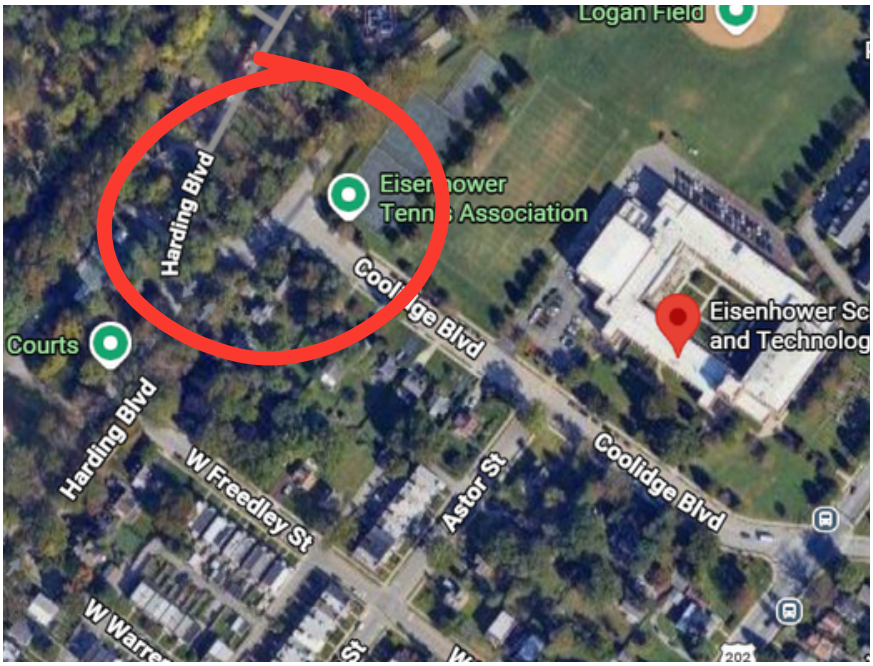
- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.

**Recommendations**

- Add a left turn phase to the traffic signal
- Station a crossing guard at the intersection.
- Add trash can(s) to the corners on the ESTLA side of Markley Street to collect trash.
- Give the school or police force control of the signal during arrival and dismissal to improve traffic flow.

# Coolidge Boulevard and Harding Boulevard

The intersection of Coolidge Boulevard and Harding Boulevard is very wide, and Harding Boulevard runs parallel to the Elmwood Park Zoo and the nearby Elmwood Park. Harding Boulevard is also very wide, the lanes are separated by grassy medians and there is a significant elevation difference from one side of the stree to the other, which makes potential improvements difficult due to stormwater run-off issues.







### Sidewalks and Crosswalks

- There are sidewalks on both sides of Coolidge Boulevard but only one side of Harding Boulevard. There is a path that connects the Elmwood Park into the Elmwood Park Zoo that is not directly next to the road.
- There is a crosswalk that crosses Coolidge Boulevard, running parallel to Harding Boulevard and connecting to the side of Harding Boulevard that has a sidewalk.

### Biking

- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.

### Recommendations

- Add curb bulb-outs to shorten the crossing distance of Coolidge Boulevard parallel to Harding Boulevard.
- Study the feasibility of adding a bike lane to Harding Boulevard based on the stormwater run-off issues

# Walking and Biking Audits

## Blockson Middle School

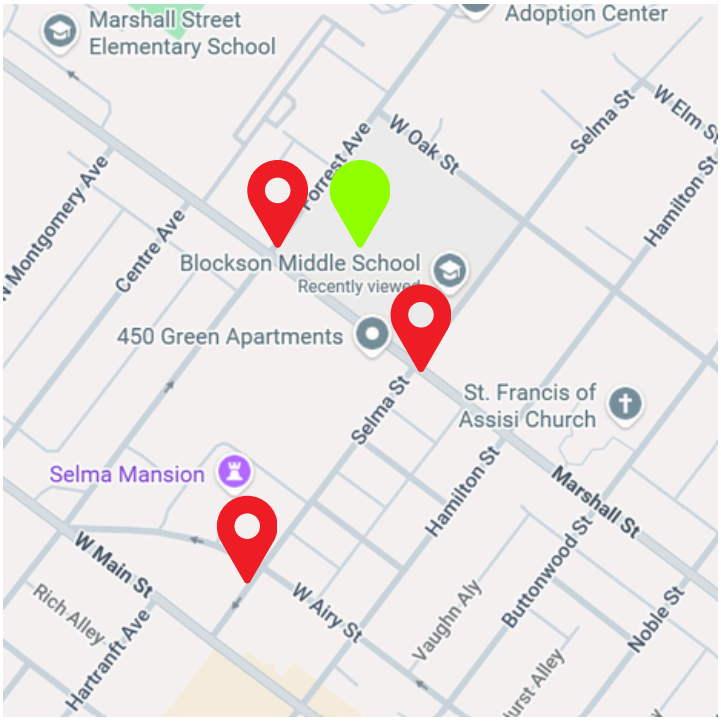
GVF coordinated with Blockson Middle School and the Montgomery County Planning Commission to observe dismissal and conduct a walking audit of the area around Blockson Middle School.



At Blockson Middle School, the group walked around the school and three students discussed their dismissal experiences and safety concerns.

In attendance:

- Peter Odagis, Teacher, Blockson Middle School
- Matt Popek, Transportation Planning Manager, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Laureen Sendel-Grant, Principal Transportation Planner II, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Russel Livolsi, Planner I, Montgomery County Planning Commission




During the audit, three main areas of concern were discussed:

- The intersection of Marshall Street and Selma Street
- The intersection of Marshall Street and Forrest Ave
- The area surrounding the intersections of W Airy Street, W Main Street, and Selma Street

# Blockson Middle School

## Dismissal Observations

Blockson Middle School has approximately 800 students, and approximately 700 walk or bike to school. Two yellow school buses and one van transport approximately 100 total students.

The majority of students exit through the main entrance on Marshall Street, and then either turn left toward Selma Street, or right toward Forrest Ave. Several students walk to Marshall Street Elementary to pick-up siblings and walk home together. There is a school resource officer at the main entrance at dismissal.

Compared to ESTLA, there is not a large staff presence at dismissal. Students are generally well-behaved but the front lawn of the school has trash and many bare spots where students walk on the grass.

## General Concerns

The walking audit group walked perimeter of the block that the Blockson Middle School sits in, from Marshall St to W. Oak St. (Up Selma St.), north on W. Oak St. to Forrest Ave., then down Forrest Ave. to Marshall St, observing the four closest intersections to the school. The following was noted:

- There is no sidewalk along the back of the school property along W Oak Street. However, there is a desire path, indicating that a sidewalk would be useful.
- Forrest Ave is very wide, and cars were driving fast
- Each intersection could use updated pedestrian signage, ADA ramps, and crosswalks.
- The existing sidewalks vary in width and condition



## Crossing Guards

The busiest intersection at dismissal was observed to be Marshall St. and Selma Street. A large number of students were crossing at this spot, and many were crossing diagonally. Despite the presence of a crossing guard further from the school, there was no crossing guard stationed at this intersection. Upon discussion, GVF learned that the guard stationed at this intersection has not been reporting to work. GVF coordinated with the Municipality of Norristown (who supplies the crossing guards) and Blockson Middle School to ensure that the guards are in the most impactful locations.

# Marshall Street and Selma Street

The intersection of Marshall Street and Selma Street is the most-used intersection at Blockson Middle School's dismissal.

Many students crossed the street on a diagonal, and the intersection quickly becomes crowded, with drivers unsure of what to do while students are walking across the road (see photos of dismissal below)




**Sidewalks and Crosswalks**

- There are sidewalks on both sides of Marshall Street and Selma Street.
- There are four crosswalks at the intersection.
-

**Biking**

- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.

**Recommendations**

- Add clear pedestrian signage and RRFB to indicate the highly-used pedestrian crossing
- Restripe crosswalks
- Investigate the possibility of making this intersection a diagonal crosswalk







# Marshall Street and Forrest Ave

The intersection of Marshall Street and Forrest Ave is the boundary between the Municipality of Norristown and West Norriton Township. It is a signalized intersection, and the Municipality applied for upgrades to the signal as part of PennDOT's GreenLight GO program.

Forrest Ave is wide, and cars were observed to be speeding on the road during the audit.




## Sidewalks and Crosswalks

- There are sidewalks on both sides of Marshall Street
- The sidewalk on Forrest Ave runs the entire length of the school property on the school side, but ends after one block on the side opposite the school
- There are four crosswalks at the intersection.

## Biking

- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.

## Recommendations

- Add clear pedestrian signage and a pedestrian phase to the traffic light
- Restripe crosswalks
- Implement traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps or a road diet, on Forrest Ave








# Municipal Priorities and Recommendations

As a follow-up to the walking audits, GVF conducted meetings with the Norristown Planning Department, the Municipal Manager, Leonard Lightner, and Brian Keaveney, Pennoni, the Municipality's traffic engineer to formulate recommendations to improve the infrastructure around Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy and Blockson Middle School.

During the two-year grant cycle, the Municipality experienced several leadership changes, including the Police Chief, Public Works Director, and Municipal Manager.

Overall, recommendations for the Municipality include:

- Inventory the current conditions of intersections in the blocks adjacent to each of the schools and plan for consistent, high-quality sidewalks, crosswalks and ADA ramps
- Extend the school zones and add clear signage indicating the high volume of students who walk and bike throughout the area
- Continue education to the general community on pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Find funding opportunities for future planning studies to enhance safety on roads adjacent to the schools
    - A specific example is a road diet on Coolidge Boulevard
- Study the feasibility of adding bike lanes (ideally protected bike lanes) on major roadways near each school to increase connectivity for bicyclists
    - Manager Leonard Lightner, who has since left the Municipality, was interested in beginning to study the benefits and feasibility of bike lanes on Municipal Roads





# Resources and Next Steps

## Resources

At the end of the grant, GVF provided ESTLA, Blockson Middle School, and the Office of Student Services with resources to continue the program.

The program manual is a zip file with the following files included:

- Editable newsletter and social media content for continued community education
- Student and teacher lesson materials
- Application submitted for The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly America Program
    - Feedback on the 2026 Application to facilitate additional improvements

## Next Steps

GVF has encouraged continued partnership with the Norristown Area School District with the goals of:

- Strengthening the program components developed throughout the two-year grant cycle
- Implementing feedback from the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly America Program to strengthen the school district's application prior to the next application cycle
- Working with the school district, municipality, and county to find funding opportunities to implement infrastructure improvements that enhance student safety





# Lower Merion School District

In the Lower Merion School District, GVF implemented the My School in Motion Program at Bala Cynwyd Middle School (BCMS).

In partnership with the Principal of BCMS, GVF surveyed parents and guardians about current commuting behavior around walking and biking, provided educational materials through a dedicated space in the BCMS school newsletter, and completed a survey of infrastructure around the school.











# Program Kick-Off

GVF kicked-off the My School in Motion program at Bala Cynwyd Middle School with an informational email distributed to parents, introducing the program to the school community, and describing forthcoming communication about MSIM.




I am excited to introduce a new partnership with GVF, who we will be working with to implement the My School in Motion program this school year.

**About My School in Motion**

The My School in Motion (MSIM) program was developed by GVF, a nonprofit with over 35 years of mobility planning expertise, to promote safety in walking and biking to school and instruct the next generation of commuters on the value of walking and biking as an alternate mode of travel.

Schools provide the best opportunity to reach the most vulnerable adolescent population. It is our responsibility to encourage behavioral changes and protect the future safety and health of our children. The My School in Motion program not only improves physical and mental health, but students will have an opportunity to participate in a biking/walking audit to look at the streets, sidewalks, and connections within our neighborhood to assess safety. This program is an opportunity for students to have fun, get energized, and build a sense of community.

More information: https://www.schoolinmotion.com/

**Key Takeaways from the My School in Motion Program**

- Awareness of the academic and health benefits of physical activity.
- Understanding of the importance of safe streets, sidewalks, and connections in facilitating walking and biking to school.
- Small changes make a big difference! You do not have to walk or bike every day to see benefits.
- Habits won't change overnight—many people are used to driving everywhere.

**The first phase of the My School in Motion is a parent/guardian survey:**

While the program's goal is to increase awareness and enthusiasm for walking and biking, the program also lays the groundwork for serious conversations about investing in the infrastructure that will allow for the safety of students as they walk and bike to or from school. The survey will assess current transportation patterns and perspectives on the safety of infrastructure. The findings will be further investigated with a walking/biking audit in the Spring of 2026.

**About the Walking / Biking Audit**

In the Spring, we will be inviting students, parents, and community stakeholders to participate in a walking / biking audit around the school. GVF will lead these efforts, and we will have an opportunity to critically assess the streets, sidewalks, and connections around Bala Cynwyd Middle School. Representatives from Lower Merion Township, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, elected officials and other stakeholders will also be invited to participate to help identify the gaps in connectivity for biking and/or walking to school. Stay tuned for an official date and information on how to sign up to participate!

**Benefits of Walking/Biking to School**

- Kids who are more physically active have better academic performance and concentration throughout the day (Neuroscience and Nordic Science)
- Exposure to nature and free outdoor play can improve mental health, reduce stress, and relieve ADHD symptoms (NIH)
- Air quality around the school improves when there are fewer vehicles idling on campus, relieving asthma symptoms (CDC)

# Partnerships

Through the My School in Motion program, GVF helps to form partnerships between school districts, townships, and counties to prioritize needed infrastructure improvements.

GVF has a long-standing partnership with Lower Merion Township and has worked closely with the township to improve transportation options throughout the community.

GVF worked with several strategic partners throughout the My School in Motion Program:

- **Montgomery County Planning Commission** provided insight into infrastructure and transportation projects within the area and participated in a walking/biking audit of the area around Bala Cynwyd Middle School

- **Lower Merion Township** provided information on priorities for multi-modal transportation projects, the Main Line Greenway, and missing sidewalk connections

- **PA State Senator Amanda Cappelletti** helped GVF connect with the Lower Merion School District and  to implement components of the My School in Motion Program, as well as continuing to serve on GVF's Board of Directors

- **PA State Representative Tim Briggs**

- **Lower Merion School District**, particularly Superintendent Dr. Frank Ranelli and Bala Cynwood Middle School Principal Eugenia Koo

GVF looks forward to continuing to work with our partners to implement the My School in Motion Program within additional school districts and continue to improve and strengthen our transportation systems.

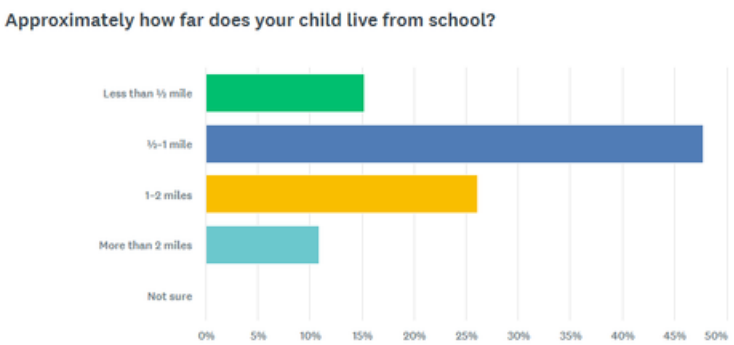
# Parent/Guardian Survey

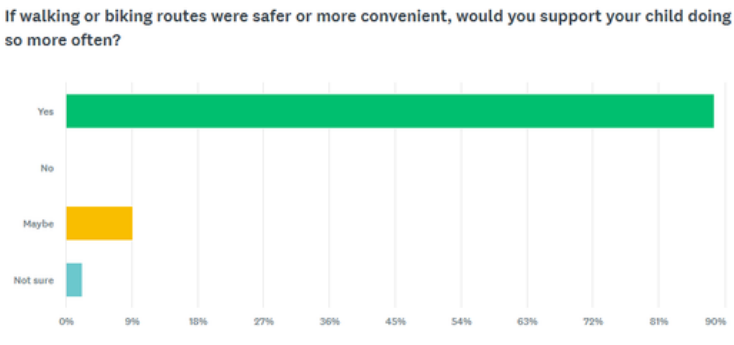
A parent survey was distributed as part of the My School in Motion program administered by GVF in cooperation with Bala Cynwyd Middle School. There were 49 survey responses received.

While the program's goal is to increase awareness and enthusiasm for walking and biking, the program should also lay the groundwork for serious conversations about investing in the infrastructure that will allow for the safety of students as they walk and bike to or from school.

**Key findings of the survey**:

- 89% of respondents live less than 2 miles from the school, this number is significant as it shows there is a large percentage of the student population who could potentially walk or bike to school.
- Over 37% of respondents reported that their child currently walks or bikes to school, and this number increases to over 45% on the way home from school.
- A large percentage of parent responses indicated that they would allow their children in the middle-school age range to walk or bike to or from school without adult supervision if walking and biking routes were safer or more convenient (88.64%).
- When asked to name the issues that affected their decision to allow a child to bike or walk to school, the top two concerns were:
  - Lack of sidewalks and bike paths- 47%
  - No safe way to cross major streets and/or the route does not feel safe - 44%

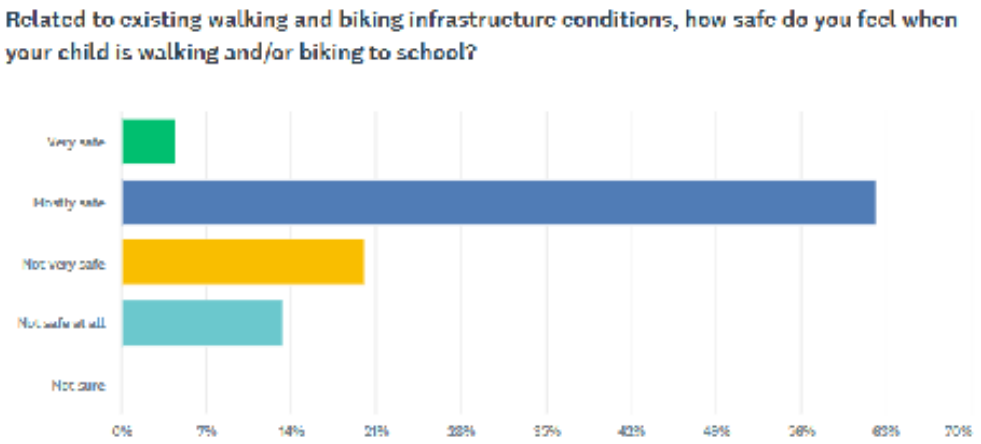


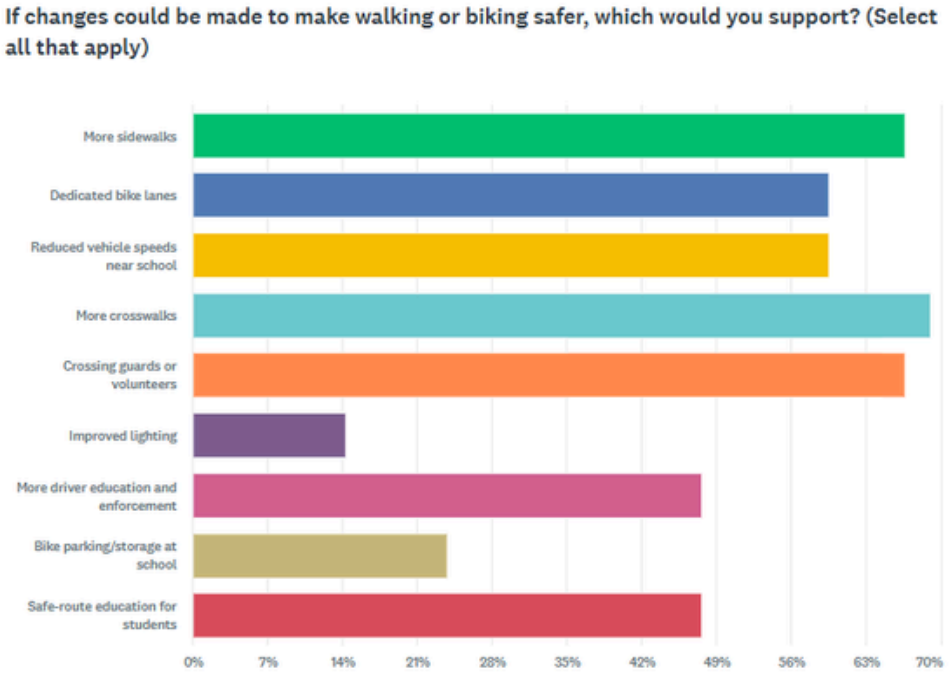
# Parent/Guardian Survey

- 91% of respondents stated that their child owns their own bike, and 93% of respondents stated that they engage in family walks or bike rides within their neighborhood, and 78% of students are allowed to walk and/or bike around their neighborhood independently. This demonstrates that most students have some understanding of safety practices when biking or walking throughout their community.

- Over 66% of respondents said that they feel that the infrastructure on their child's walk or bike to school is 'safe' or 'very safe.'




- When asked to name the issues that affected their decision to allow a child to bike or walk to school, the top two concerns were:
  - Lack of sidewalks and bike paths- 47%
  - No safe way to cross major streets and/or the route does not feel safe - 44%



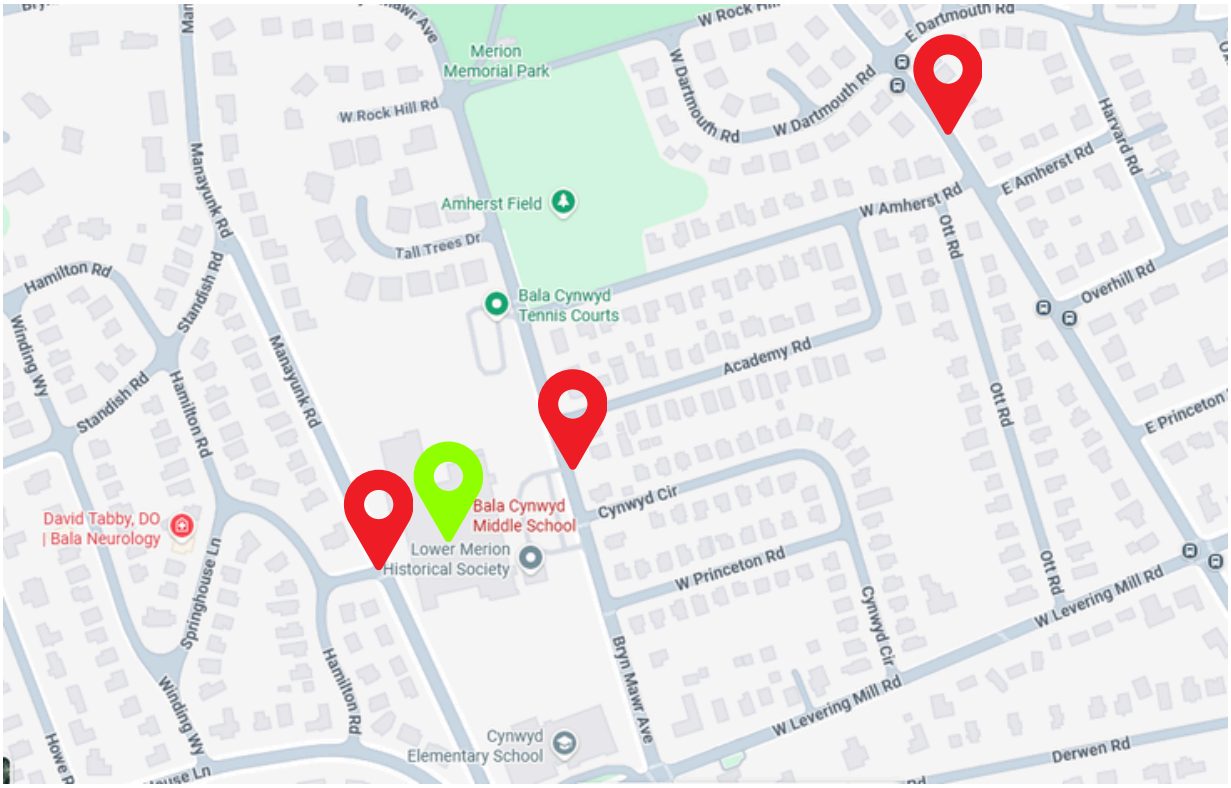
## Bala Cynwyd Middle School

GVF coordinated with BCMS and the Montgomery County Planning Commission to conduct a walking audit of the area around  Bala Cynwyd Middle School. Ann Leavitt-Gruberger, County Planning Manager at the Montgomery County Planning Commission, met Maureen Farrell and Kaitlin Valliere at BCMS to observe dismissal and survey areas of concern that were identified through the Parent/Guardian survey.




Prior to the audit, three main areas of concern were identified:

- Conshohocken State Road, Route 23 (specifically students crossing at W Dartmouth Road and W Amherst Road)
- Manayunk Road and Greenway Lane, the intersection at the rear exit of the school
- Bryn Mawr Ave from W Levering Mill Road to W Amherst Road



# Bala Cynwyd Middle School

## Dismissal Observations

There are approximately 800 students enrolled at Bala Cynwyd Middle School. Per the principal's office, the approximate transportation breakdown is as follows:

- ~60% of students are listed with buses, but the ridership is about 50%
- Bike racks are filled daily with approximately 35 bikes (~5%)
- Car drop-off is weather dependent, averaging about 30%
- The remaining students walk (~5%)

The walking and biking audit took place during dismissal, which was orderly. At least 20 students were observed riding bikes or scooters, and of those, over 95% were wearing helmets.

In general, students exited the school campus in an orderly manner, with the majority of walkers and bikers heading south out of the main entrance towards the intersection of Levering Mill Road and Bryn Mawr Avenue. A smaller group exited from the rear entrance and walked towards the neighborhood off of Manayunk Ave. Dismissal began at 2:35 pm and was complete, with a few lingering students, by 2:45 pm.

## Crossing Guards

Crossing guards are stationed at the following intersections:

- Two guards at the intersection of Bryn Mawr Ave and W Levering Mill Ave (to create an all way crossing)
- One guard at Manyunk Road and W Levering Mill Road
- One guard at Route 23 (Conshohocken State Road) and W Levering Mill Road

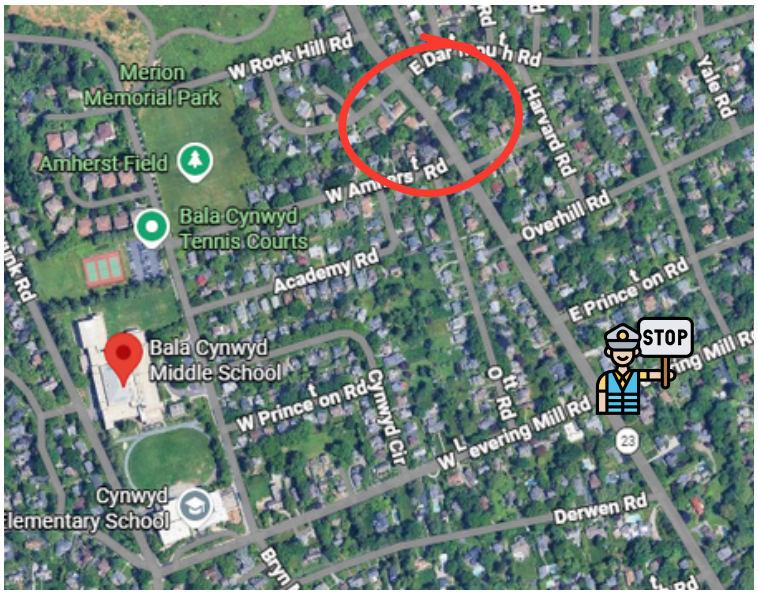



The crossing guards indicated that the intersections of Bryn Mawr Ave and W Levering Mill Road and Manayunk Road and W Levering Mill Road are the busiest school crossings in Lower Merion Township, and that 100-115 students routinely cross at Bryn Mawr Ave and W Levering Mill Road.

While there is a crossing guard stationed at Route 23 and W Levering Mill Road, an area where more support may be needed is further north on Route 23, near the intersection with W Amherst Road and W Dartmouth Road. Students routinely cross Route 23 in that area, and the speed limit on that portion of the road is 35 mph. A crossing guard could also be beneficial at the front entrance of the school, to manage buses, car pick-up, bikers, and walkers.

# Route 23: Conshohocken State Road

Route 23 (Conshohocken State Road) is a PennDOT-owned road that is less than a half mile from BCMS. There is a crossing guard stationed at the corner of W Levering Mill Road and Route 23, but students who live in the neighborhoods to the northeast of this intersection typically cross Route 23 near the cross streets of W Amherst Road and W Dartmouth Road, where no crossing guard is stationed.







## Sidewalks

- From the corner of Route 23 and W Levering Mill Road to W Amherst Road, there is a sidewalk only on the east side of the street (see street view to left of the intersection of Route 23 and W Amherst)
- From W Amherst Road north to Rock Hill Road, there is sidewalk on both sides of the street

## Biking

- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.

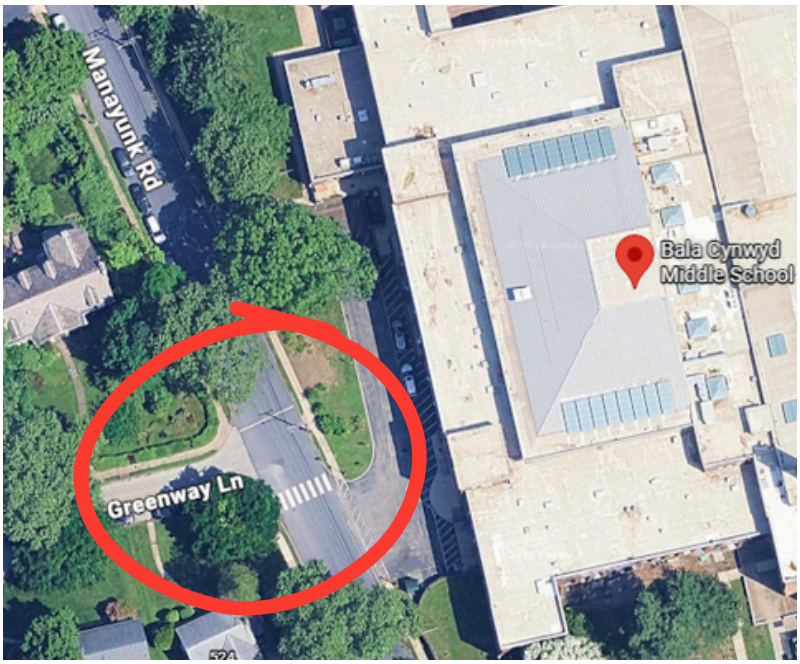
## Recommendations

- Add a pedestrian crossing with a crosswalk and RRFBs, ideally with a crossing guard during school arrival and dismissal, in the vicinity of W Amherst Road and W Dartmouth Road to account for students crossing Route 23 further north
- Add a sidewalk to complete the connection on the west side of Route 23 from W Levering Mill Road to W Amherst Road
- Inventory and make necessary improvements to existing ADA ramps, sidewalks, and crosswalks

# Manayunk Ave and Greenway Lane

Manayunk Ave and Greenway Lane is the Intersection that connects to the rear entrance of BCMS. Manayunk Ave has a speed limit of 25 mph, but according to the parent survey, cars typically drive faster, which reduces visibility of the intersection, particularly because it lies on a hill.

Fewer students exit BCMS at this rear entrance, but students who live in the neighborhood behind the school utilize the sidewalks and crosswalk  on Manyunk Ave to walk home.




**Sidewalks and Crosswalks**

- There are sidewalks on both sides of Manayunk Ave
- There is a crosswalk on one side of the intersection

**Biking**

- There are no protected bike lanes.
- There are no bike lane markings.
- Bikers are expected to bike on the roadway.

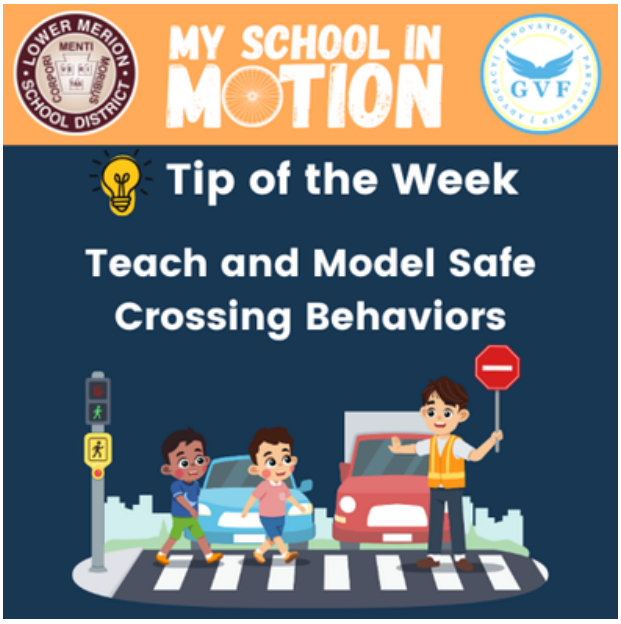


**Recommendations**

- Extend the school zone on Manayunk Ave to the edge of school property in each direction
- Add traffic calming measures on Manayunk Ave to slow cars as they approach the crosswalk

# Educational Campaign

As part of the My School in Motion Program, BCMS included a dedicated space in their email newsletter for safety tips and additional resources. See below for graphics and accompanying text.

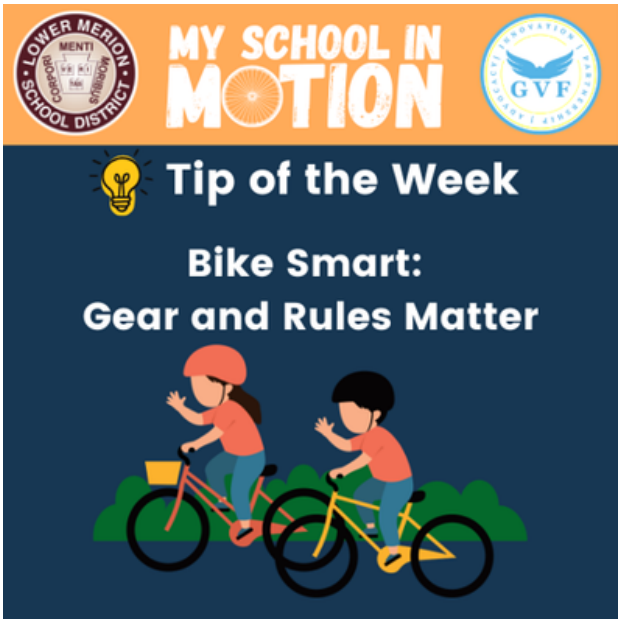



**Teach and Model Safe Crossing Behaviors**

- Most child pedestrian fatalities (~62%) happen mid-block—not at intersections.
- Stick to safe routes: Walking on sidewalks and crossing at designated areas reduces risk significantly.

Key habits:

- Cross at corners or crosswalks
- Look left–right–left
- Make eye contact with drivers




**Bike Smart: Gear and Rules Matter**

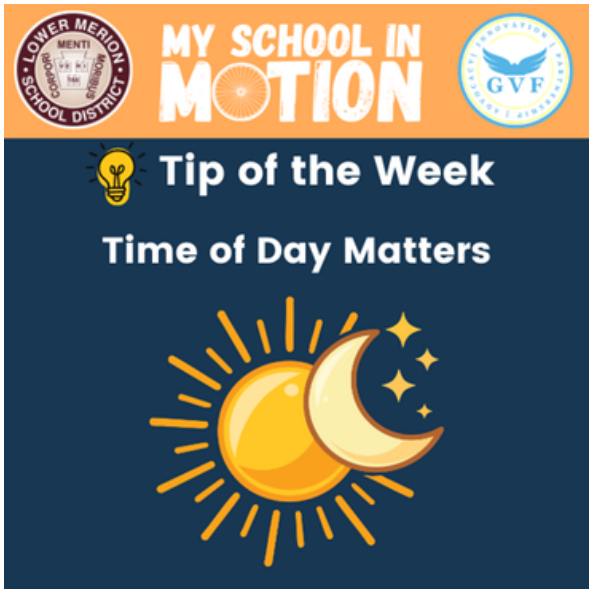
- While biking offers independence, it also requires awareness and equipment.

**Reminders:**

- Always wear a helmet
- Ride with traffic, not against it
- Follow the same rules as cars (stop signs, signals)

**Confidence + predictability = safer riders.**

# Educational Campaign




### Time of Day Matters

- 36% of child pedestrian deaths occur between 3–7 PM—right after school hours.
- Evening/dusk visibility significantly increases risk.

**After-school activities = higher risk window.**

**Encourage:**

- Bright or reflective clothing
- Bike lights and reflectors




### Eliminate Distractions

- Distraction is a growing factor in crashes for both pedestrians and drivers.

**Encourage:**

- "Phones down, heads up" when walking or biking.
- Limiting use of headphones to stay aware.




### Scooter Safety Counts

**Scooters are fun and convenient—but require the same awareness as biking.**

- Wear a helmet every ride
- Ride on sidewalks or bike paths (not in traffic) where permitted
- Slow down at driveways and intersections
- Keep both hands on the handlebars
- Watch for cracks, debris, and uneven pavement

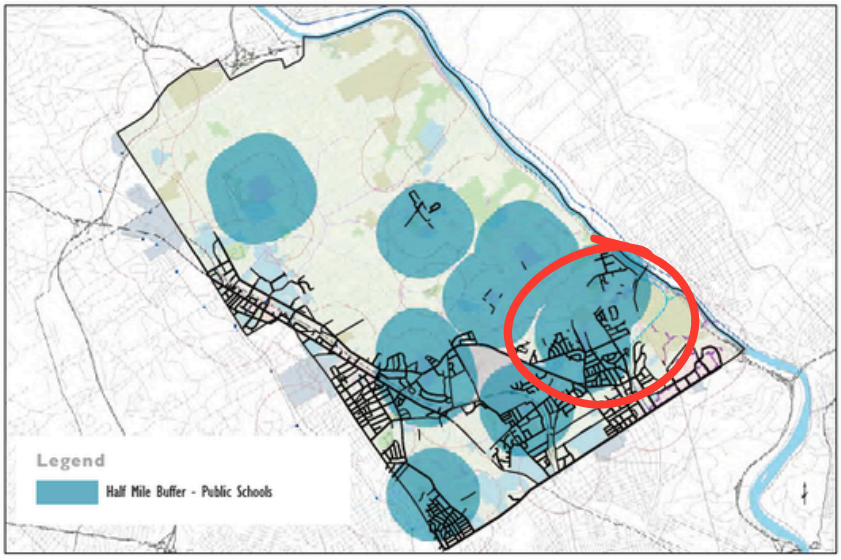
# Township Priorities

## Sidewalks

The circulation element of Lower Merion Township's Comprehensive Plan (2016) includes a Prioritized Pedestrian Improvement Map, with one priority area being the ½ mile radius around public schools to provide pedestrian connectivity by completing residential sidewalk networks.

In alignment with this plan, the Township further developed a list of 91 priority sidewalk segments, one of which is a direct connection to Bala Cynwyd Middle School. On Bryn Mawr Ave, along the front of the school. Bryn Mawr Ave currently only has sidewalks on one side of the road (with a crosswalk connecting the segments) and a priority is to complete the sidewalks on both sides of the road connecting BCMS with W Levering Mill Road tp the south and Merion Memorial Park to the north.

C13 PRIORITIZED PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT MAP PUBLIC SCHOOLS




## Main Line Greenway

The Main Line Greenway was officially adopted as a Township bicycle route in October 2023 and efforts continue to increase awareness of the bicycle route. The Township is working on the connections through the Western portion of Lower Merion Township and is in the planning stages of designing and placing wayfinding signage along the low-stress bicycle route to improve the user experience.




Currently, the Main Line Greenway connects the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to low-stress neighborhood streets south of BCMS, but an opportunity exists to extend the bike route to include the neighborhood roads around BCMS.

# Resources and Next Steps

## Resources

At the end of the grant, GVF provided Bala Cynwyd Middle School with resources to continue the program.

The program manual is a zip file with the following files included:

- Editable newsletter and social media content for continued community education
- Student and teacher lesson materials

## Next Steps

GVF has encouraged continued partnership with the Lower Merion School District with the goals of:

- Strengthening the program components developed throughout the two-year grant cycle
- Working with the school district, township, and county to find funding opportunities to implement infrastructure improvements that enhance student safety







# MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

SCHOOLINMOTION.COM




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