Where the Duct Tape Meets the Road
How To Create Pop-Up Safe Routes to School Projects

This fact sheet provides a simple overview of how you can go about conducting a pop-up Safe Routes to School project in your community. This fact sheet lays out the basic steps for successful pop-up projects, and specifies when and how the process differs because schools are involved.

Note that there are several guides on how to successfully plan and implement tactical urbanism and pop-up traffic calming projects. This fact sheet is intended to complement, rather than replicate, those guides. At the end of the fact sheet there is a list of several in-depth guides on how to execute tactical urbanism and pop-up projects, including information on permitting, site plan development, materials, cost estimates, and community and media outreach. We recommend that you use this fact sheet as a starting point for adapting the pop-up and tactical urbanism process to a school environment.

Distilled, the basic process for conducting a pop-up (or tactical urbanism) is:

1. Identify Partners
2. Present Concept to Decision-makers
3. Select Your Location
4. Identify Your Approach
5. Implement The Pop-Up
6. Evaluate
7. Advocate for Permanent Change

Using Tactical Urbanism to Jump Start Safe Routes to School Programs

This fact sheet is the second part in a series on using temporary installations, or pop-up projects, to advance Safe Routes to School. To learn more about pop-up projects and how they can be used to promote Safe Routes to School, check out our companion fact sheet, Pop-Ups for Safe Routes to School: Using Tactical Urbanism to Promote Safe Routes to School Projects.

This "parklet" narrows the street in order to slow traffic and extends the sidewalk to provide more usable space for people to walk and spend time. Photo: Trailnet

1. Identify Partners

There are several essential partners that should be involved in a Safe Routes to School pop-up project:

a. **School district administrators.** Involve school district administrators early on in the process, before site selection. The transportation director may be a particularly important partner, though in some districts transportation directors are very narrowly focused upon busing, and may not be interested if bus stops and routes are not affected.

b. **School leadership.** Including the principal of the school where the project will be located is essential for a successful Safe Routes to School tactical urbanism project. Having support of school leadership will assist with encouraging students to walk and bike on the dates of the demonstration, disseminating information about the project to families and neighbors through school communication channels, and could even help connect student participation in the project with classroom subject matter.

c. **Elected officials.** The mayor and city council should be notified, especially if the project takes place in their district. This is an opportunity to help build political will for investing in traffic safety, especially for children. Elected officials may want to participate in a photo opportunity when the pop-up occurs, which will help further build their support.

d. **City agencies.** City staff are critical partners to secure permission for the project and safe development of plans. Potential city agencies to involve include public works, traffic safety, and public safety (fire/police).

e. **Parent teacher associations (PTAs).** Organizations of parents, like PTAs, can help in a number of ways, including participating in the selection of locations and countermeasures, and volunteering with implementation and evaluation of the project. Finally, PTAs can be critical advocates for turning these pop-up projects into more permanent traffic safety solutions.

f. **Bicycle/pedestrian advocacy groups.** Like PTAs, bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations may be able to provide volunteers, raise awareness about the project, and assist with advocacy after the pop-up. Additionally, staff at these types of organizations may have technical expertise relevant to site and countermeasure selection.

g. **Students.** With a school-based volunteer to coordinate participation, students can play an active role in identifying the challenges to walking and bicycling to school as well as in designing and decorating the pop-up installation. Students often have inside information about the real challenges on a route, which may not be readily apparent. With advance planning, this can be a way to teach engineering to students or be an art project they work on in class.

h. **Other community groups.** Community involvement is essential throughout each stage of a tactical urbanism project. Potential organizations to involve include community-based organizations, businesses, the faith community and other neighborhood anchor institutions, block captains, and neighborhood development corporations.

2. Present Concept to Decision-Makers

While some tactical urbanists prefer a rogue "ask for forgiveness, not permission" approach, Safe Routes to School advocates agree that permission and approval is of utmost importance, especially if a permanent project is the end goal. Drawing upon outreach to key partners, seek permission from the school district and from the city. City agencies you may wish to consult are the streets department, traffic safety, and/or public works. It may be necessary to obtain a permit or approved site plan for your pop-up project.

This pop-up crosswalk draws attention to where people will be crossing the street. The traffic cones and colorfully painted tires are arranged as a curb extension, which narrows the road in order to slow traffic and shortens the crossing distance for people walking. Photo: TrailNet

3. Select Location

There are a number of ways to choose a site for a pop-up project. In many communities, parents, students, and school administrators know where traffic safety concerns exist, and the need for immediate modification can inspire a push to host a pop-up traffic calming event. Other communities and schools may view the pop-up process as a mechanism for community engagement, and be more flexible regarding the site. In the latter, site selection can be a strategy to engage the community or deepen relationships with school administrators and city staff.

A few ideas for how to select a location for a Safe Routes to School tactical urbanism project include:

• Conduct walk audit around a school, gathering input from students, families, and school staff

• Solicit feedback from school administrators and transportation directors about the challenges to children safely walking and bicycling to school

• Work with city agencies, health departments, or school district transportation departments to use a data-driven approach to site selection, choosing sites based on the highest rates of crashes near schools

• Host a community meeting in a neighborhood around a school to get input from residents who aren't able to participate in a walk audit.

Often, sites that need a safer street improvement can be readily identified by people who walk and bike along them, and tactical urbanism projects spring up without a rigorous data-driven process, relying instead on more organic, anecdotal recommendations.

4. Identify your Approach

What will make it safer and more attractive for kids to walk and bike to school? When selecting the type of pop-up project you will use, it's important to consider what type of traffic safety improvement will make roads safer and more appealing for kids walking and bicycling to school. Potential traffic safety improvements include sidewalks, roundabouts, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, and protected bike lanes, among many more. As with selecting sites, you may already know the traffic safety measure needed to improve safety for kids walking or bicycling to school – perhaps it's the glaring lack of a crosswalk; however, Safe Routes to School advocates agree on the importance of coordinating with a traffic engineer, city planner, and relevant city agencies before making the final selection. Drawing upon the conversations about site selection will inform the selection of the appropriate traffic safety measure. There are also a number of resources available to understand potential traffic safety measures, listed below in the Resources section.

5. Implementation

The specifics of implementation will depend on the type and scope of your tactical urbanism project. Key considerations include:

- Obtaining necessary permissions for the project. Coordinate with city agencies to obtain permits, block off parking, and close the street during setup and take down if needed. If this affects the flow of school buses, ensure that you are working closely with the district transportation director.

- Identify volunteers to assist with setup, counting people walking and bicycling, spreading the word about the project, getting feedback from parents, students, and passersby, and taking down the demonstration. Engage community organizations and stakeholders to raise awareness about the project. Post signs and flyers that the project will be happening, both to draw in potential volunteers and interested parties and to make people aware of upcoming changes to traffic flow.

- Select materials. The Trailnet Step-by-Step guide provides a list of ideas for materials for different projects.

- Execute the project. Depending on your community and the permitting required by your city, this can be done either with volunteers or by a city agency, like the streets or public works department. Throughout the planning process, you'll have to determine the length of time for the demonstration project. Pop-ups can be in place for time periods ranging from a few hours to several months long.

6. Evaluate

Evaluation is important for both tactical urbanism and Safe Routes to School. Plan to collect both qualitative and quantitative data during the tactical urbanism project. Qualitative data can be collected using a survey asking participants for feedback. Ask participants what they liked and what could be improved. Quantitative data can be collected during the demonstration, with volunteers counting the number of people walking and bicycling, then comparing it to a normal day's counts, as well as tallying up the number of people who say they would like to see this become a permanent change. Partnering with your city's traffic safety or streets department can enable you to gather data on how the pop-up project affected vehicle speeds. All of these data will prove useful when advocating to a city or school to work toward lasting change.

7. Advocate for Permanent Change

Applying principles of tactical urbanism to Safe Routes to School shows promise for many reasons, including the ability to catalyze lasting change. And yet, a pop-up installation alone is often not enough. It is essential to draw upon the community that has been engaged in support of this project – families, students, school administrators, and staff – to make the case to decision-makers for permanent support. Lasting change will require active participation from parents and students at school board and city council meetings and by writing letters to communicate the need for safer streets and the value of the temporary installation. Draw upon the data that was collected to help make the case for permanent change.

Striping this temporary bike lane green helps draw extra attention to the new street feature. Photo: Street Plans Collaborative

Resources for Planning and Implementing Pop-Up and Tactical Urbanism Projects

a. Slow Your Street How-To Guide: This guide walks you through each step of how to implement pop-up traffic safety demonstrations.

b. Project for Public Spaces: Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper: This document provides step by step guidance, with a strong section on involving the community in tactical urbanism projects, especially in low-resource communities.

c. Tactical Urbanism 2: Short-term Action, Long-term Change: This guide explains the spectrum of tactical urbanism, from projects that are legally sanctioned to those that are not, and provides examples of many different types of tactical urbanism installations.

d. Community-Led Demonstration Project Policy and Guide: This guide was developed specifically for the City of Burlington, Vermont to conduct pop-up traffic safety installations and highlights the importance of city agency participation in the process.

e. Quick Builds for Better Streets: This step-by-step guide emphasizes the need for a public agency to lead the effort.

f. The Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials: This guide describes materials that can be used for tactical urbanism projects and provides case studies from across the country of where and how projects have been implemented.

g. Active Transportation Alliance Pop-Up Project Videos: These short videos depict Complete Streets pop-up projects, and can provide inspiration for pop-ups in your community.

h. Low-Cost Ideas for Safe Routes to School Mini-Grant: Developed by Seattle Greenways, this document shares 6 ideas for improving Safe Routes to School that can be completed for under $1,000. Versions of this document are also available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Oromo, Chinese, Swahili, and Somali here.