

Dear Educator,

The Schools Changing Transportation Student Guide was developed around ideas of advocacy, citizenship and activism to empower students to create change in their schools and communities. Using active transportation as the central theme, students engage their school environment by identifying a focus issue, collecting data, building momentum and lobbying for change.

We envision this guide to be of particular usefulness to Civics, Government, Urban Studies, Environmental Science or other similar classes; student governments; and student clubs, such as those focused on bicycling, the environment or healthy living. This list is not exclusive, and we encourage you to share this resource with all students and teachers who value active transportation or activism.

Active Transportation Alliance representatives are available to provide resources such as speakers and presentations, assistance with finding or compiling data, or guidance in who to contact for local advocacy efforts. The goal is to help students engage their school community to create an environment where more students and staff bike, walk and use public transportation to get to and from school. Students using this guide may also be eligible for service learning credits.

Feel free to adapt this resource to meet the needs of your classroom or students. This guide was designed to meet various Illinois Learning Standards for middle and high school students. Please see the accompanying list of pertinent standards.

Please contact the staff at Active Transportation Alliance with questions or comments. We would also be excited to hear your stories of success or failure and to support your work through information and resources whenever possible.

Active Transportation Alliance, Education Programs  
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Below find selected Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science, English Language Arts and Social/Emotional Learning. Connections to specific standards will depend on the specific activities and actions undertaken by students. Cross-curricular connections are also available in subjects such as mathematics, environmental science and health and physical education. A complete list of applicable standards available on request:

- 14.D.4: Analyze roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current debates on state and national policies.
- 14.D.5: Interpret a variety of public policies and issues from the perspectives of different individuals and groups.
- 3.B.4a: Produce documents that exhibit a range of writing techniques appropriate to purpose and audience, with clarity of focus, logic of organization, appropriate elaboration and support and overall coherence.
- 3.C.5b: Write for real or potentially real situations in academic, professional and civic contexts.
- 3C.5a: Work cooperatively with others to plan, implement, and evaluate a project to meet an identified school need.

# Schools Changing Transportation: Student Guide

## Service Learning Project

**Primary Content Areas** Social Sciences (Government, Civics, History, Urban Studies)  
English Language Arts (Research, Persuasive Writing)

### Introduction

One goal of service learning projects is to help students work as active citizens, willing and able to create a positive difference in their schools, their communities and society as a whole. Students are equipped with the skills and tools necessary to accomplish their goals throughout their lives.

In this project, students will first identify and select a barrier that deters students and staff from walking, biking or using public transportation to travel to school. Missing sidewalks, dangerous traffic conditions or an unsafe community atmosphere are all examples of potential issues. Students will research the problem and gather data before starting a campaign to make change happen. Students will next call on decision makers and/or transportation officials to enact solutions that benefit all school users. Finally, students evaluate the success of the project and identify skills learned that can be transferred to future projects.

### Project Goals (Unit Objectives)

- Students will learn about the benefits and disadvantages of the myriad of forms of transportation available to them.
- Students will study and experience the steps necessary to document barriers and other problematic issues.
- Students will work with others in the school and community to build awareness of a problem and create a supportive coalition.
- Students will develop persuasive letters or presentations or engage in phone calls or meetings using persuasive speech.
- Students will reflect on the process required to create change.

### Procedure/Project Sequence

1. Students may receive a presentation by a representative of Active Transportation Alliance or a similar organization about the benefits of active and alternate forms of transportation, or gain similar information elsewhere.
2. Students will use the "Schools Changing Transportation Student Guide," provided by Active Transportation Alliance, to identify an issue of concern regarding transportation, collect data, build a coalition and lobby for the change.
3. During the process, students may study specific implications of active transportation on a community related to environmental, financial, personal health and/or other issues.
4. Students will reflect on their efforts to create change by answering specific questions/prompts and/or writing about the process.

# Identify an issue to change

**The first step in creating change is to identify a challenge or an issue that you want to change.**

Why don't you take public transit, walk or bike to school? Do your parents insist on driving you? Are there no buses or trains near you? Do you live in a neighborhood where you don't feel comfortable walking or bicycling? Maybe you already have something in mind, like needing a crossing guard at a certain intersection or more bike racks for your school.

List five things that get in the way of you walking, bicycling or taking transit to and from school:

*(Example) There are never enough bike racks available for my bike by the time I arrive.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, think beyond yourself. List five things that get in the way of your classmates', teachers' or administrators' transportation choices to and from school:

*(Example) My friend lives in a neighborhood that doesn't have any sidewalks.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

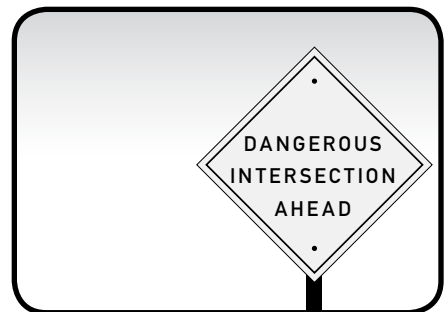
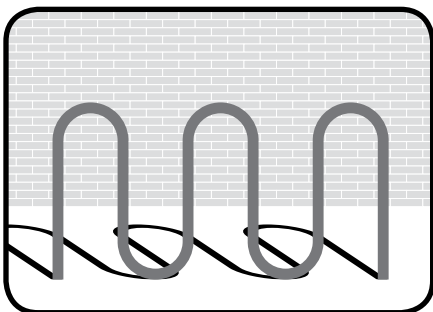
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Is there one thing listed above that, if changed, would help to change your commute? If so, focus on that one issue. If not, focus on one issue you care about.



# Collect Data

Collecting data is an important step in making a case to support the change you desire.

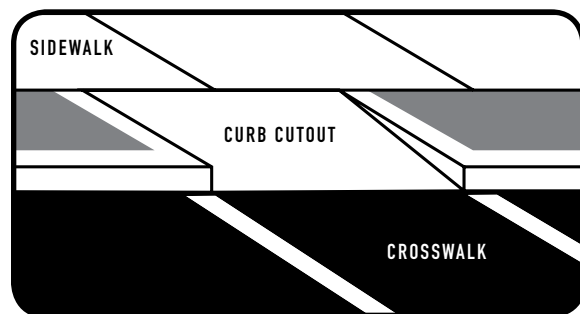
Different kinds of information are useful for different issues. Below are examples of resources that may help you back up your case with evidence, depending on the issue you have chosen.

**Crash Statistics** — **Are students scared to walk to school because of an unsafe intersection?** Every year approximately 150 pedestrians are killed in Illinois. In many cases, had the drivers been going slower or sidewalks been installed along the street, the death could have been prevented.

**Health and overweight statistics** — **Do you need sidewalks in your neighborhood so people can walk to school, therefore get more exercise?** Studies show that people who walk, bicycle and take transit to work or school are less likely to have problems with obesity. In Illinois alone, over 19% of the population is considered overweight. Encourage your school to make changes that encourage walking, bicycling and transit.

**Walkability** — **Can everyone who wants to walk to school do so?** What is walkability? Walkability is how easy it is to get to and from a specific place by walking. A walkability study (sometimes called a walkability audit) helps to identify walking dangers, hazards and obstacles. Conduct a walkability study to find out some of the problems students and teachers might have if they walk to school.

An example of something you may find after doing a walkability study is that your sidewalks don't have curb cutouts. Curb cutouts make it easy for physically challenged persons to cross the street. You could also find that there are simply no sidewalks on some routes students would use to get to school. (See appendix 1 on where to find a walkability study.)



**Bikeability**—**Do your school's bike facilities make it easy to bike to school?** What is bikeability? It is the ease by which a person can get to and from a specific location by bicycling. Similar to a walkability study, determine what obstacles are keeping students and teachers from biking to school. These may include few or no bike racks for parking, busy and dangerous streets, or the schedule of classes and after school activities.

**Hazards—Do neighbors have unruly pets or maybe they don't shovel their sidewalk?** What are some challenges you might encounter walking, bicycling or taking transit to school? Are there corners that you are afraid to cross? Is there a lot of debris in your way along your commute? Are the sidewalks uneven and dangerous? Is there a pet owner who doesn't keep his or her animal on a leash? Is there a dangerous intersection along your way? Do cars travel at too high of a speed for you to feel safe along your commute? All of these may affect a person's transportation choices.

**Surveys—Is there an issue you face where you would like to see if other students or teachers have the same problem?** Ask your friends. Ask your parents and ask your teachers for some of the obstacles they face. Create a survey and distribute it to students, teachers and parents. Evaluate the data.

(Example)

*The issue I want to focus on is that my school does not have enough bicycle racks. I randomly surveyed 400 out of 2000 students at D. Wade H.S. Of the students surveyed, 50 said they enjoy riding their bicycle, but because the school only has one bicycle rack that holds 10 bikes, they are hesitant to ride. (Appendix 2)*

*Based on the surveys I collected, 12.5% of the students indicated that they would be more likely to bicycle if the school had more bicycle racks.*

Have you identified your issue? (See Appendix 1 for some additional resources). As you complete this research, be sure to keep good track of your results and resources used.

Write your issue here. Be clear and concise. Now is NOT the time to start your argument.

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