

MAPPING ACTIVITIES

Planning a Safer Route to School

Grades 3-8

Adapted from "Blazing Trails through the Urban Jungle," by Transportation Options

This exercise helps students locate their neighborhood, and their "trails" within it. It also helps students think about the safety of their neighborhood and fosters civic responsibility, as they are encouraged to inform local government about improvements needed to create a safer route to school.

Map Your Neighborhood - With a map of your school's neighborhood, locate and color your school. Locate and color in the parks on the map. Draw in and label any other places that you think are important in your neighborhood (such as a public library, a community center, a store, etc.) Where does each student live? Have the students locate their residences and color them in. If you live "off the map," mark your residence at the edge of the page.

Map Your Route to School - How did you get to school today? Did you walk, bike, ride a city bus, school bus, or a car? Did you walk with other kids, with an adult, or by yourself? As a class, brainstorm what symbol on a map legend should stand for each mode of transportation. (Opportunity to talk about multi-modal transportation as well as map legends and symbols.) Draw in your route to school using the agreed upon symbol (solid line, dotted line, etc.).

Find the Safe Places - With the help of your teacher or a family member, identify safe and unsafe traffic areas in your neighborhood. Then locate and mark these places on the map. Use GREEN to mark places that are relatively safe such as Crossing Guards, Traffic Lights, Quiet or Slow Streets, and Stop Signs. You may put numbers on the map in those places and put them in a legend to explain. Use RED to mark areas that seem risky for walking and biking, such as busy streets with lots of cars, wide streets with fast cars, busy intersections, big parking lots, school drop-off and pick-up areas, crowded sidewalks, and other scary places. Remember to mark them in the legend too.

Plan a Safer Route to School - Use a BLUE marker to draw a route that will allow students to walk or bike to school safely. Avoid areas you have marked red, and use green places as much as possible. Put a blue line on your map legend to indicate this safe route. If there are areas that students are concerned about, you could take the project another step and contact the MTA to ask for improvements.