

Ideas for Implementing Safe Routes to Parks Improvements

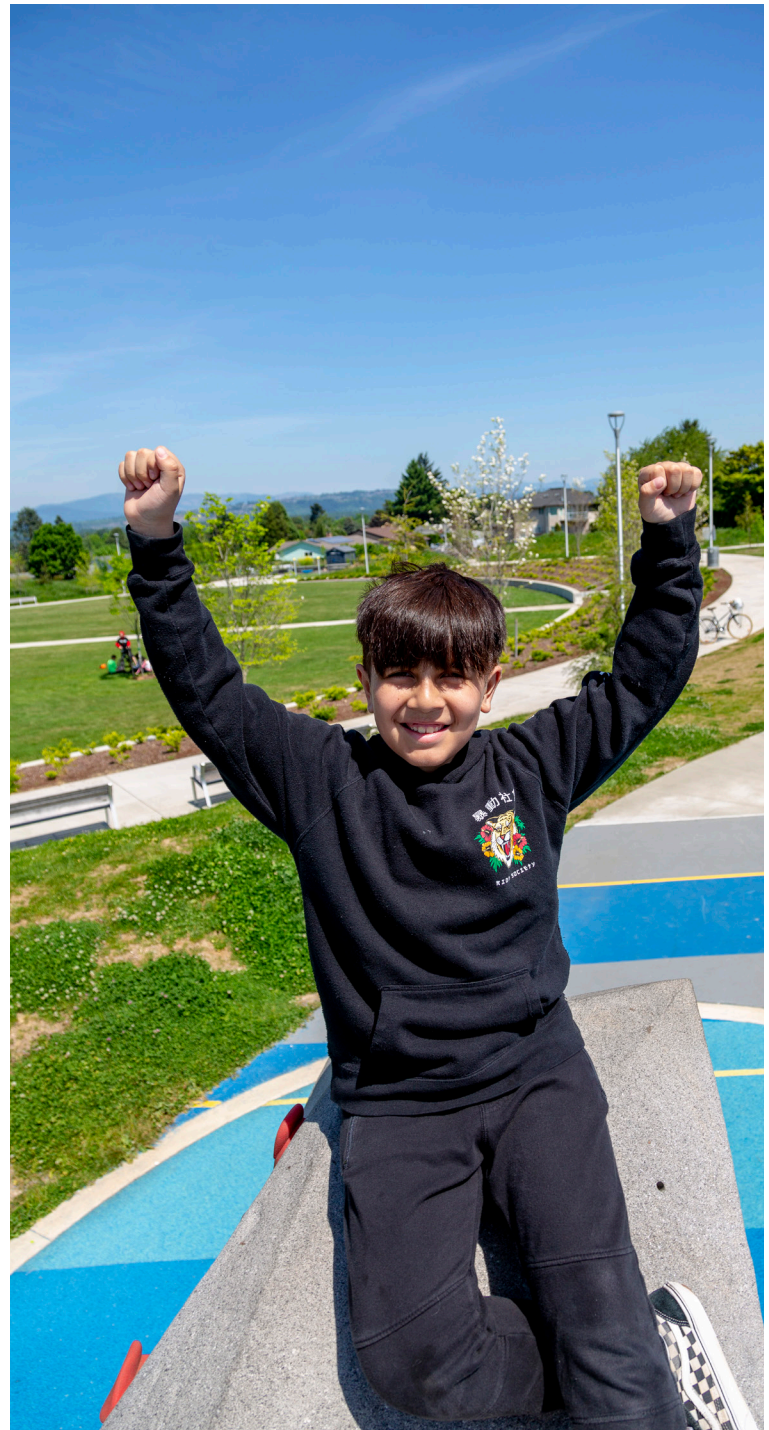
Once you embark on efforts to improve safe, convenient park access in your community, it is natural to want to see change immediately. While some improvements can be made relatively quickly and inexpensively, others take considerable time and money before on the ground change can be seen. This fact sheet offers ideas of Safe Routes to Parks improvements that can be implemented in the short, medium, and long term. These examples are informed by three years of Safe Routes to Parks pilot sites and grantees as well as examples from Safe Routes to School and active transportation advocacy efforts.

What is Safe Routes to Parks?

Safe Routes to Parks aims to make parks more accessible for people walking, bicycling, and taking public transportation. This occurs by creating routes that are safe from traffic and personal danger for people of all ages and abilities, and ensuring that well-maintained and well-programmed parks are conveniently located within a 10-minute walk (approximately one half mile) from where people live.¹ Safe Routes to Parks provides advocates with the tools to champion safe and equitable access during consideration of park siting, community engagement, allocation of funds, planning, and implementation of traffic and public safety initiatives, as well as park improvements. Over the long term, with increased safety and accessibility, Safe Routes to Parks seeks to increase park usage and improve health and wellbeing for people of all ages, races, abilities, and income levels. To learn more, visit SafeRoutesToParks.org.

What Do We Mean by Implementation?

In the context of Safe Routes to Parks, implementation means putting plans into action. As part of Safe Routes to Park implementation, we want to ensure that those actions are based on best practices in engineering, design, and programming.



Examples of Short-, Medium-, and Long-term Safe Routes to Parks Implementation Strategies

<i>Implementation Strategy Area: Engineering and Construction</i>	
Short-term Activities (0-6 months)	• Removing sidewalk obstructions • Landscaping/maintenance • Repainting or enhancing crosswalks • Adjusting traffic signal timing • Replacing street signs
Medium-term Activities (6 months-2 years)	• Reconstructing walking surfaces; adding curb ramps • Installing wayfinding signage • Upgrading street crossings; installing in-street pedestrian signs; upgrading pedestrian signals • Moving utilities that block sidewalk access (when right-of-way already exists) • Painting buffers or curb extensions • Installing benches; Planting street trees • Upgrading lighting • Traffic calming using paint • Improve bus shelters close to park entrance • Remove unnecessary fencing around park
Long-term Activities (2+ years)	• Constructing new sidewalks or paths • Installing mid-block crossings (median island refuge) • Installing permanent bulb-outs/curb extensions • Installing speed control devices • Installing pedestrian-activated signals • Narrowing or eliminating travel lanes • Formalize social trails
<i>Implementation Strategy Area: Programming</i>	
Short-term Activities (0-6 months)	• Hosting 311 information sessions where residents can share their requests for improvements with local government staff • Leading an ongoing walk or bike to or at a park program • Organizing community events (e.g., Walk-to-Park experiences) to promote awareness of recent infrastructure changes • Organize community clean-up/maintenance/beautification days • Traffic education and targeted enforcement • Forming a neighborhood watch group • Hosting beautification /maintenance days • Installing signs displaying things that cannot take place in the park
Medium-term Activities (6 months-2 years)	• Establishing a Safe Passage Program that helps to get children safely to a park, school, and their home
Long-term Activities (2+ years)	• Developing comprehensive programming offerings including both one-time events and recurring classes or groups that are tailored for different age groups or other demographic groups

Implementation Strategy: Personal Safety	
Short-term Activities (0-6 months)	• Forming a neighborhood watch group • Hosting beautification /maintenance days • Installing signs displaying things that cannot take place in the park
Medium-term Activities (6 months-2 years)	• Coordinating a forum between community residents and law enforcement to build trust and collaborate on safety measures in and around the park • Installing or upgrading lighting • Develop campaigns to address street harassment issues and other relevant concerns • Addressing vacant or abandoned properties
Long-term Activities (2+ years)	• Working with law enforcement to develop a community policing policy or program

Conclusion

Putting ideas into action can bring your community one step closer to improving safe and equitable access to parks. As the ideas above show, there are numerous opportunities to start making it easier, safer, and more convenient for people to walk, bike, and roll to local parks!

References

1. “Safe Routes to Parks.” National Recreation and Parks Association. 2016. Accessed June 22, 2018. <https://www.nrpa.org/Safe-Routes-To-Parks/>.

