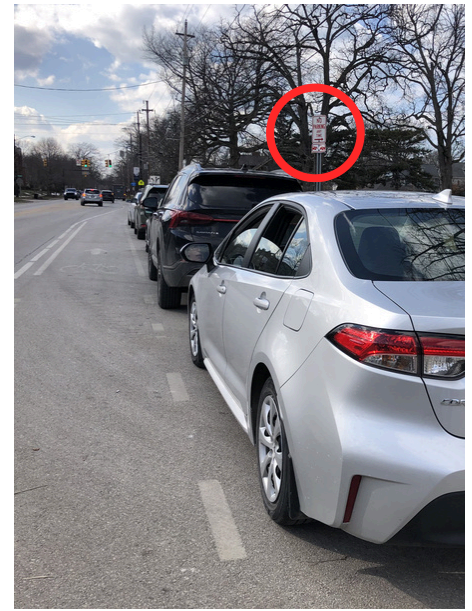


Safe Routes to School Communications Toolkit



Messaging Guidance for Schools and Community Partners

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Who This Toolkit Is For & Why Communication Matters

This toolkit is designed for anyone responsible for communicating with families or the broader community about school transportation, arrival and dismissal procedures, student safety, school-related events, infrastructure near schools, or traffic patterns related to typical student travel times.

Primary audiences include:

- Public and private school principals and assistant principals for all grade levels
- District communications and marketing staff and superintendents
- School office staff and family coordinators
- PTA/PTO leaders and event organizers
- City staff communicating about school-area infrastructure, traffic changes, or construction projects

Because family and student travel behavior is shaped in part by repeated messaging, every communication related to school transportation is an opportunity to:

- reinforce safe behaviors,
- reduce traffic congestion,
- support student independence and health,
- and normalize walking, biking, rolling, carpooling, and transit use as expected ways students travel to school.

This toolkit is intended to provide practical, easy-to-use language and communication strategies that support Safe Routes to School goals while helping schools operate safely and efficiently.

Core Messaging Principals

School transportation communications shape family expectations, travel behavior, and the overall culture around arrival and dismissal. The following principles should guide all school transportation messaging.

Do Not Assume Driving Is the Default

Communications should acknowledge and support all ways students travel to school, including walking, biking, rolling, carpooling, transit, and driving. Avoid language that assumes all families arrive by car or frames driving as the “normal” way students get to school.

Frame Transportation Through a Safety Lens

Arrival and dismissal communications should prioritize the safety of students walking, biking, rolling, and accessing transit because students traveling outside of vehicles are vulnerable road users and are more directly impacted by:

- blocked sidewalks and crosswalks,
- illegal parking,
- unsafe turning movements,
- speeding,
- idling vehicles,
- and traffic congestion around schools.

When communicating with drivers, explain how specific behaviors help protect student safety and accessibility for all families.

Reinforce Shared Responsibility

Safe school travel depends on cooperation from everyone using the school environment. Communications should reinforce that:

- sidewalks and crosswalks must remain clear,
- school traffic rules exist to protect students,
- accessibility routes must remain accessible,
- and reducing unnecessary vehicle trips improves safety and traffic flow for everyone.

Normalize Active Transportation Year-Round

Walking and biking should be presented as normal, supported, everyday transportation choices – not only as part of special events like Hike & Bike Week.

Consistent messaging throughout the school year helps families view active transportation as a practical and expected option not only for daily arrival and dismissal, but also for events such as open houses, concerts, and parent/teacher conferences.

Sample Transportation Messaging For Schools (Continued)

The following examples are intended to provide ready-to-use language that schools and organizations can adapt for newsletters, emails, websites, social media, and arrival/dismissal communications.

Accessibility

- “Do not use driveways designated for school transportation vehicles unless explicitly authorized to do so.”
- “Do not stop or park in accessible parking spaces unless authorized to do so.”
- “Do not block curb ramps or accessible routes while waiting in the car line.”
- “Do not park in restricted no-parking areas adjacent to school property. These spaces improve visibility of students walking and biking for other vehicles.”

Air Quality & Idling

- “Walking, biking, using transit, and carpooling help improve air quality around schools.”
- “Please turn off your engine while waiting in parking lots or car lines.”
- “Reducing vehicle idling helps create a healthier environment for students.”

Congestion, Speed Reduction, and Obeying Traffic Laws

- “Walking, biking, using transit, and carpooling help reduce congestion and improve safety around the school.”
- “Please observe all posted speed limits and drive slowly near schools. It is better for a student to arrive late than to be involved in a crash.”
- “Observe all ‘no turn on red’ signs.”
- “Remember, drivers are not permitted to turn left into the school parking lot. This is for the safety of students walking and biking to school.”
- “If you see someone driving recklessly on your way to or from school, please report the incident to the Lakewood Police Department.”



Sample Transportation Messaging For Schools

The following examples are intended to provide ready-to-use language that schools and organizations can adapt for newsletters, emails, websites, social media, and arrival/dismissal communications.

Car Line Safety

- “Watch for students walking and biking when entering and exiting school property.”
- “Students should only be dropped off or picked up in designated loading areas unless parked in a legal parking space.”
- “Please pull forward as far as possible in the car line to help reduce congestion.”

Encouraging Walking & Biking

- “Walking and biking help students start the day alert and ready to learn.”
- “Walking and biking help foster student independence.”

Event & Seasonal Messaging

- “Parking for the winter concert will be limited. Families are encouraged to walk, bike, carpool, or use transit if possible.”
- “Special events can increase traffic congestion around schools. Please use extra caution and watch for students and families walking and biking.”

Sidewalks & Crosswalks

- “Please do not block sidewalks or crosswalks while waiting in the car line.”
- “Please help keep sidewalks and crossings accessible for students, families, and community members.”
- “Remind students walking to school to put phones away while crossing streets.”
- “Students biking on sidewalks must yield to pedestrians and give an audible signal before passing.”
- “Students biking on sidewalks should dismount and walk their bike when sidewalks are crowded with pedestrians.”



Sample Public Infrastructure & Traffic Messaging

The following examples are intended to provide ready-to-use language that the city or schools can adapt for newsletters, emails, websites, social media, and arrival/dismissal communications that will reach a wider community in addition to parents.

Construction & Road Closures

- “During the next phase of the Bunts Road project, traffic will be northbound only between Athens and Madison. Both sidewalks will remain open during construction.”
- “Pedestrian access to schools and nearby intersections will be maintained throughout construction whenever possible.”

Traffic Operations & Road Rules

- “Help keep students safe by slowing down. Speed limits are maximums, not minimums.”
- “Motorists may not use bike lanes to maneuver around left-turning vehicles.”
- “Ohio law requires motorists to give cyclists at least three feet of space when passing, including when cyclists are riding in adjacent bike lanes.”
- “Never drive, stop, or park in a bike lane – even temporarily.”
- “Drivers should expect increased pedestrian and bicycle activity near schools during arrival and dismissal times.”
- “Use extra caution when turning at intersections and driveways near schools. Students walking and biking may be less visible than motor vehicles.”
- “Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and watch carefully for students approaching intersections.”

School-Year & Seasonal Safety Reminders

- “School resumes on August 24, 2026. Expect increased numbers of children walking and biking during morning and afternoon travel times.”
- “School-day traffic restrictions and ‘No Turn on Red—School Days’ signage are in effect when school is in session.”
- “As daylight hours decrease, drivers should use extra caution and watch for students walking and biking in low-light conditions.”

