

BELLEVUE Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan

2025–2030



Sustainable. Accessible. Community-Led.

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An introduction to Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a nation-wide initiative that promotes walking, biking and rolling to school as safe, healthy and accessible transportation choices. The City of Bellevue has established its own SRTS program to provide dedicated resources towards school-specific traffic safety and engagement, and accomplish the active transportation and environmental sustainability policies of the city's Comprehensive Plan.

The Bellevue SRTS Strategic Plan aims to improve the experience of traveling to and from school through innovative programming, improved infrastructure and community collaboration. By addressing safety concerns and fostering active transportation habits, this plan seeks to establish Bellevue as a city where every child has the freedom and confidence to travel to school actively and safely.

The benefits of a Safe Routes to School Program include:

- Improved safety for students—and by extension, all community members—walking, biking and rolling
- Improved education on safe biking, infrastructure literacy and safe driving habits
- Improved public health through increased exercise and reduced vehicle emissions
- Improved civic leadership skills through involving students and families in city programs and empowering them to lead community initiatives

Where we've been: our history

Bellevue's commitment to student safety began decades before the creation of a dedicated SRTS plan and program. Key milestones include:

- 1923** Bellevue High School opens as an accredited four-year high school.
- 1953** The City of Bellevue is incorporated. Now nicknamed "A City in a Park", Bellevue prides itself in the quantity, quality and diversity of parks and trails that stitch the city and region together.
- 1985** The Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program was formed, leading the nation with initiatives to reduce vehicle speeds on local roads in residential neighborhoods.
- 1993** Pedbee was born as a traffic safety mascot and youth educational program. Pedbee is going strong today, buzzing around handing out reflective wearables and educational materials to convey the importance of safe walking and biking in Bellevue neighborhoods.
- 2009** City of Bellevue adopts the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, which identifies the long-term priority corridors to install new infrastructure.
- 2014** Bellevue installs its first automated school zone speed camera. As of 2025, there are three school zone speed cameras active in the city with additional locations being considered.
- 2015** The City Council passed a resolution providing a framework to pursue Vision Zero, cementing the commitment to eliminate traffic deaths and serious-injury collisions on city streets by 2030.
- 2017** Bellevue SchoolPool Program is established to encourage modes of travel other than driving alone and directly incentivize schools to participate in Walk to School and Bike to School weeks.

The 20-year Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity and Congestion Levy is passed by voters, and delivers infrastructure improvements near schools including crosswalks, sidewalks and bike lanes.
- 2021-23** Bellevue conducts Road Safety Assessments in school zones, developing a comprehensive list of recommended improvements guided by community input.
- 2024** Council adopts a resolution to lower speed limits to 20 mph on local streets.

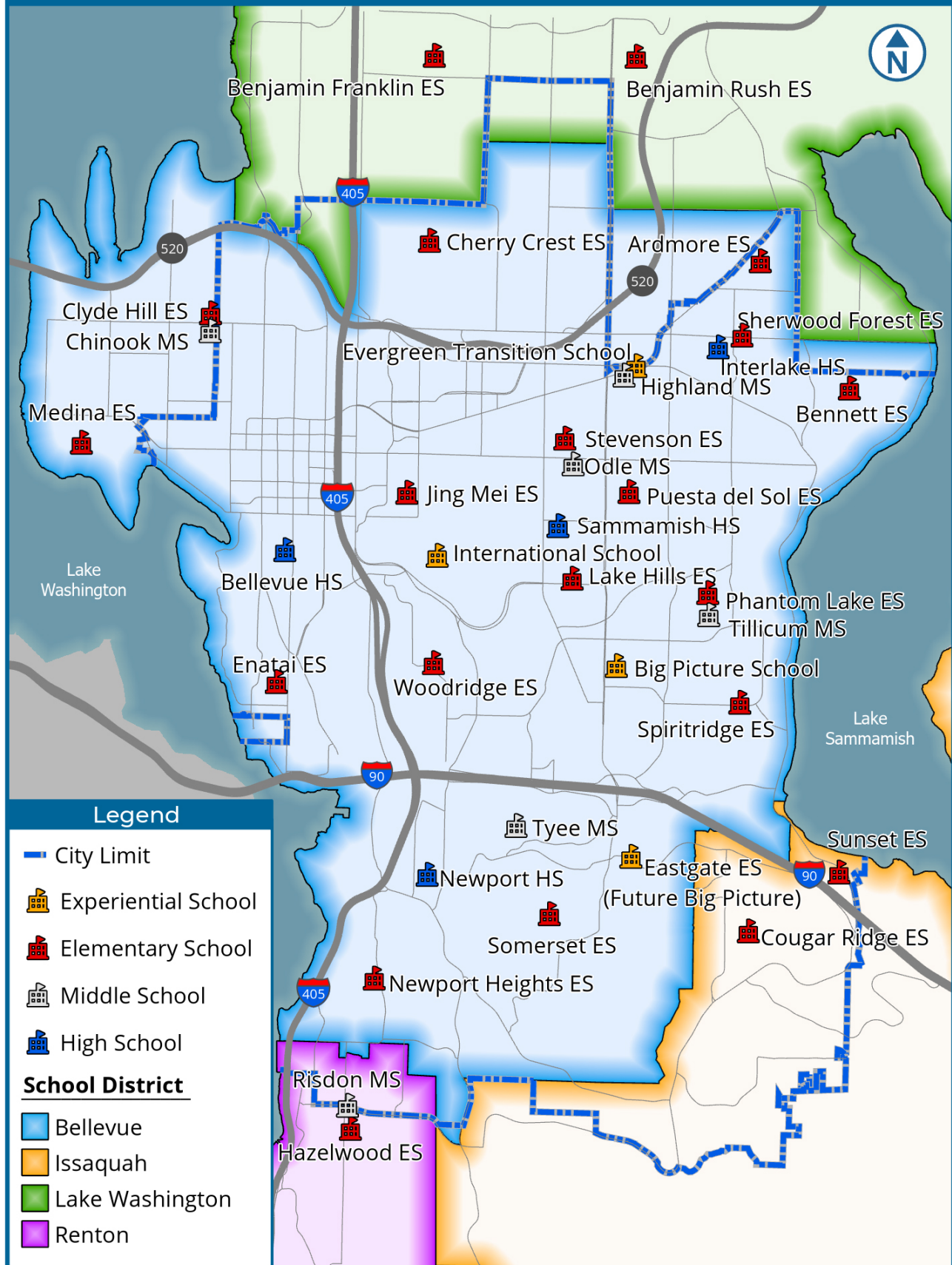
Where we are: the current landscape of schools and districts

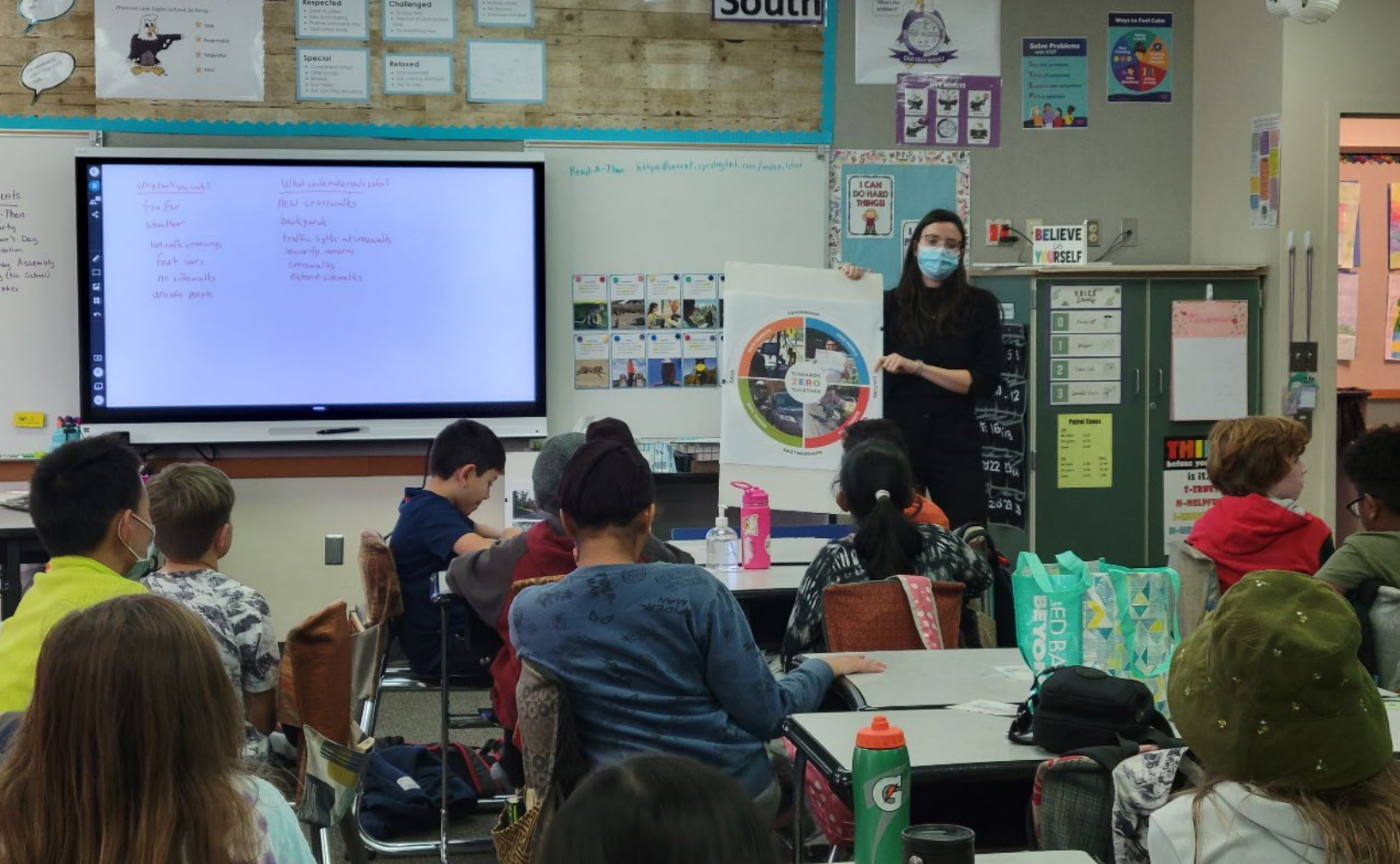
Bellevue is home to four school districts and 26 public schools. The city limits largely overlap with the Bellevue School District (BSD), but parts of BSD extend into neighboring cities. There are two Issaquah School District elementary schools and parts of the enrollment areas of Lake Washington School District and Renton School District in Bellevue. The city also hosts 41 Approved Private Schools per the Washington State Board of Education (2025). The City of Bellevue will strive to provide each of the goals in this Strategic Plan to *all* students who reside and travel in Bellevue, whether they attend public school or private school, or if their school is not in the city.

Although Bellevue can be characterized as a large suburban city, no city-owned roads have a speed limit greater than 40 mph, and most local roads have a speed limit of 20 or 25 mph. Many schools are embedded within their neighborhood and doubly serve as community centers when school is not in session. As such, many school children already enjoy the privilege of their route to school being on quiet neighborhood streets or arterial roads with sidewalks. However, a Safe Routes to School program is instrumental in comprehensively identifying infrastructure gaps and perpetuating better habits and safety culture.



Map of Bellevue Area Public Schools





Vision and Strategic Priorities

The vision of the Safe Routes to School Plan is:

Every child and family in Bellevue can enjoy safe, convenient and sustainable transportation for their daily commute to school.

The statement captures the multi-disciplinary intention of SRTS, making this promise to all schoolchildren in Bellevue, while also emphasizing the joy and community that active transportation can provide. This vision will be accomplished by focusing on the following four Strategic Priorities:

- **S1. Vision Zero for Schools**
- **S2. Mode Shift and Public Health**
- **S3. Community Ownership**
- **S4. Adaptability and Communication**

Strategic Priorities:

S1. Vision Zero for Schools

What: Support the city's Vision Zero commitment of zero fatal and serious-injury traffic crashes on city streets by 2030, with the SRTS Program honing in on school areas and contexts. This priority focuses on making all students' routes to school safer through comprehensive infrastructure improvements, education programs and the distribution of safety materials.

Why: Traffic crashes in school zones pose significantly higher risks to children, making it essential to eliminate these dangers. Ensuring safe travel routes encourages active transportation, improves student well-being and aligns with Bellevue's Vision Zero commitment.

How:

- Identify and implement school zone improvements near schools.
- Collaborate with the city's Vision Zero program to accomplish shared action plan items and coordinate evaluation.
- Identify more ways to improve the safety of children as they walk, bike or roll to school.



S2. Mode Shift and Public Health

What: Promote active transportation and reduce vehicle emissions. Aim to increase the percentage of students walking, biking or rolling to school by 25% by 2030, supporting the Sustainable Bellevue Plan's goal of reducing drive-alone trips to below 45% citywide by 2050.

Why: Reducing vehicle traffic near schools decreases carbon emissions, enhances air quality and supports a healthier community. Active transportation provides physical activity for students, improving their physical and mental health.

How:

- Continue and expand the SchoolPool program which promotes and incentivizes Walk and Roll Week/ Bike to School Week annually in all Bellevue schools.
- Work with public and private schools to compile and implement successful strategies which reduce traffic congestion and optimize circulation patterns.
- Collaborate with Bellevue's sustainability team to coordinate on shared goals and actions.

S3. Community Ownership

What: Empower students and families to take leadership roles in transportation safety through student-led extracurricular groups, advocacy efforts and workshops.

Why: Engaging students and families fosters a sense of responsibility and advocacy for safer streets. Community-led initiatives ensure that programs are responsive to local needs and encourage long-term participation.

How:

- Engage Bellevue's YouthLink Board, PTSAs, students and other relevant groups in schools to garner feedback and ideas for programs.
- Facilitate student-led initiatives by providing funding and staff resources.
- Intake community input on specific infrastructure gaps and potential improvements through activities such as Road Safety Assessments.

S4. Adaptability and Communication

What: Enhance relationships with school communities both in-person and digitally, ensuring that SRTS actions and activities are equitable and adaptable to meet the unique needs of each school.

Why: Each school community in Bellevue has distinct challenges and needs. Flexible and clear communication ensures that all families can access and benefit from SRTS resources, regardless of language, ability or socioeconomic factors.

How:

- Support equitable access to SRTS infrastructure, programs and materials.
- Develop and maintain relationships with school district staff, school community partners and non-profit organizations.
- Tailor activities to different needs of specific communities.



Activities through the lens of the 6 Es

Safe Routes to School plans use the **6 Es approach**—Education, Encouragement, Engagement, Engineering, Evaluation and Equity—because it provides a comprehensive framework to create safer and more accessible routes for students. Each “E” addresses a critical aspect of active transportation:

- ✓ **Education** ensures students and families have the knowledge to travel safely;
- ✓ **Encouragement** builds motivation through events and programs;
- ✓ **Engagement** fosters collaboration between schools, families and local agencies;
- ✓ **Engineering** improves infrastructure in ways which reduce the risk and severity of collisions and pedestrian/bicycle level of traffic stress;
- ✓ **Evaluation** helps track progress, identify gaps and refine strategies for continuous improvement; and
- ✓ **Equity** ensures that all communities, especially underserved ones, receive the necessary support.

By integrating these six elements, SRTS programs create lasting cultural and physical changes that promote safe, healthy and sustainable transportation for all students. The following tables depict how Bellevue’s current and potential SRTS activities interplay with each of the Es in the 6 Es Approach. The purpose of these tables is to help us ensure that each Strategic Priority at a high-level incorporates every element of a holistic Safe Routes to School Program.

Bellevue's current activities in the 6 Es Framework

Actions / Es	Education	Encouragement	Engagement	Engineering	Evaluation	Equity
Bellevue SchoolPool	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Pedbee	✓	✓	✓			
School Zones and Flashing Beacons	✓	✓		✓		✓
Routes to School Maps & Online StoryMap	✓	✓				
School Zone Road Safety Assessments			✓	✓	✓	✓
NTSS, Levy, and other infrastructure programs				✓	✓	✓
School Zone Automated Speed Cameras	✓	✓		✓		✓

Strategic Priorities and their implementation in the 6 Es Framework

Future	Education	Encouragement	Engagement	Engineering	Evaluation	Equity
S1 – Vision Zero for Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Analyze & install school zone Improvements				✓	✓	✓
Identify more programs to improve safety	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Integrate with the Vision Zero program			✓	✓	✓	✓
S2 – Mode Share and Public Health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expand SchoolPool	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Improve traffic congestion		✓	✓	✓		✓
Collaborate with Environmental Stewardship Program	✓		✓			✓
S3 – Community Ownership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engage students	✓	✓	✓			✓
Facilitate student-led initiatives		✓	✓			✓
Receive input on infrastructure needs and gaps			✓	✓	✓	
S4 – Adaptability and Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure equitable access	✓	✓		✓		✓
Develop relationships with community partners		✓	✓			
Tailor activities to communities	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Where we're going: conclusion and next steps

With this Strategic Plan in place, the city will begin, continue and expand activities that fulfill the vision of this plan and the city's Comprehensive Plan. One of the first activities will be to conduct an infrastructure inventory and gap analysis, while many other programmatic activities will be developed and implemented through input from students and school communities.

This plan's implementation will be evaluated every year through an SRTS Annual Report. This Strategic Plan will be updated at least every two years or as fundamental program elements change.

Bellevue has a solid foundation of low-traffic neighborhood roads, sidewalks, trails and crossings, a healthy relationship with innovative traffic technology and a breadth of current activities such as Vision Zero, Pedbee and SchoolPool. However, there is more to be done to ensure every household has a safer route to their school or bus stop. There will always be new cohorts of students to be taught safer behaviors and skills when walking, biking, driving or taking the school bus or transit – Bellevue's SRTS program positions the city to create safe, convenient and sustainable transportation options for students and families now and for future generations.





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