USING INNOVATIVE FUNDING RESOURCES FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF A LOCAL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

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Learning Objectives

- Benefits of a Safe Routes To School program
- Better access current walkable and bikable condition facilities
- Incorporate community involvement and school support
- Incorporate best practices: Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Encouragement (4-E's)
- Leverage available funding for improvements

Need for SRTS

- Decline in students who walk or bike to school
- Parents driving their children to school has increased dramatically.

1969	2009
48% walked or biked	13% walked or biked
12% driven	44% driven

(U.S. DOT, 2009)

Need for SRTS

- More buses
  - Ten Years Ago in Clarke County

100 busses; today 120

Need for SRTS

- School properties and surrounding road networks are not being designed to handle either vehicles or pedestrians well.

Need for SRTS

- Why do parents drive their children to school?
  - Its too far for children to walk
  - The weather is bad
  - Danger of increased traffic on pedestrians
  - Lack of sidewalks connecting neighborhoods to schools
  - There are too many “bad” people out there
  - Busy lifestyle, after school / extra curricular activities.
  - The perception is that it is just safer to drive than it is to walk.

Need for SRTS

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Need for SRTS

- Concern for pedestrian safety near schools has increased due to traffic and insufficient facilities.

History of Safe Routes to School

- First SRTS Program Denmark in 1970's
- Locally adopted in the U.S. in the 1990's
- National SRTS Program established in 2005:
  - Provided funding assistance
  - Established consistent standards & features
  - Combined 4 E's components for successful programs
    - Engineering
    - Education
    - Enforcement
    - Encouragement

Purpose of SRTS Program

- Improve pedestrian safety.
- Implement traffic calming measures.
- Reduce traffic and air pollution in vicinity of schools.

Athens-Clarke County SRTS History

- **SRTS Task Force** was formed in 2009 and made up of representatives from:
  - Athens-Clarke County Government
  - Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
  - Clarke County School District
- **Focused on five school areas as pilot study**
  - Identified infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements to encourage walking and biking
  - Successfully created a $1.1 million sales tax program to fund these and other SRTS projects

Athens-Clarke County SRTS History

- SRTS Task Force concentrated on first "E" Best Practices – Engineering
  - Design (consistency)
  - Construction
  - Traffic control devices and features
    - Colored, stamped crosswalks
    - Solar Powered Radar Speed Signs
    - Solar-powered Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs)
    - Pedestrian countdown signals

Athens-Clarke County SRTS History

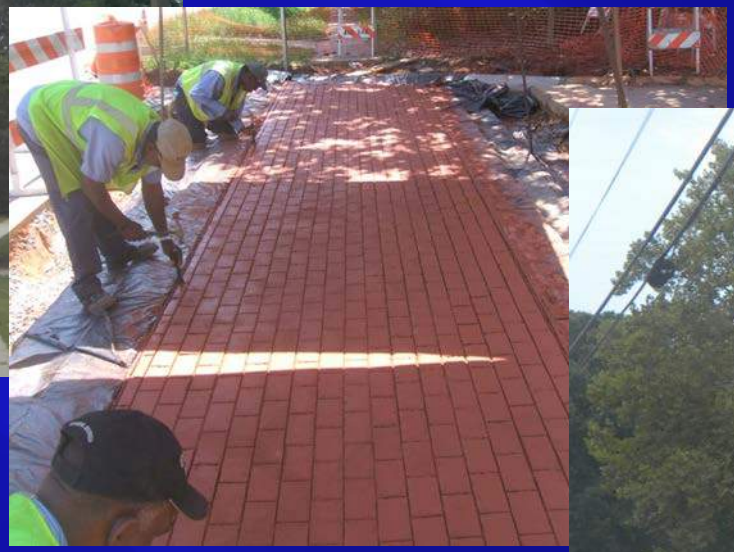
- A **Safe Communities Team**, a grass roots endeavor, formed in 2011to address improving safety in the school zones through education.
  - Athens-Clarke County Government
  - Clarke County School District
  - City of Winterville Government
  - University of Georgia
- Focused on reducing speeding in school zones

Funding Sources

- Georgia Department of Transportation Funding (GDOT)
- SPLOST 2011 Pedestrian Safety and Safe Routes to School Program
- Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County (ACCUG) General Fund Budget
- Federal Energy Grant
- Governor's Office of Highway Safety Grant

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

- $500,000 for three school areas
  - Install countdown pedestrian timers and stamped crosswalks at key signalized intersections.
  - Install combination radar/school zone signs at the edges of the school zones.
  - Upgrade the school zone and crossing signage to current MUTCD standards.



Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) 2011

- The first $1.1 million designated to construct pedestrian infrastructure improvements throughout A-CC
  - Sidewalks
  - Colored/raised crosswalks

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) 2011

- Pedestrian infrastructure improvements
  - Solar Powered Radar Speed units mounted with the school advanced signs
  - Solar Powered Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at school's crosswalks.

Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County (ACCUG) General Fund Budget

- Traffic Engineering Division FY12 Operating Budget ($8,600)
  - Purchased signs, post, and pavement markings to upgrade 22 school zones to be consistent with MUTCD
    - 12 "Yield to Pedestrian" signs
    - 45 state law signs
    - 42 advanced school zone signs w/arrows on side streets
    - 52 "School" signs

Advanced School Zone

Yield to Pedestrian

State Law Sign

Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County (ACCUG) General Fund Budget

- Public Information Office ($1,000)
  - PSA video, "No Kidding! Pay Attention in a School Zone"
  - Shown on local Charter Television since 2011, at A-CC government offices, and on the A-CC website.

Federal Energy Grant

- Awarded $114,600 for energy reduction improvements
- Funded Solar-Powered Flashers at 22 schools.
- Reduced annual power usage by $4,800.

Solar Powered School Flasher

Governor's Office of Highway Safety Grant

- $5,000 Awarded for :
- Purchased LED Flashing Stop Paddles and assigned to 20 crossing guards.
- Provides higher visibility of guards both in dark and sunny conditions.
- Provided advanced training to crossing guards.

Planning and Implementation

- School Work Teams were established at each school and were partnership between the Clarke County School District and A-CC Unified Government:
  - Transportation & Public Works Director
  - Representative from the School District
  - Senior traffic officer of the Police Department
  - School Principal
  - School's SRTS Coordinator or Parent

Planning and Implementation

- Purpose of School Work Teams
  - Evaluate walking routes
  - Identify infrastructure or enforcement needs
  - Utilize Federal, State, and local funding for implementation of identified improvements
  - Monitor the effectiveness of improvements in increasing the number of children who bike or walk
  - Work with local support groups to achieve the above objectives

Planning and Implementation

- Projects identified by School Work Teams:
  - Developed during summer and with construction in the spring. Open for use by start of school.
  - Phased to allow for separate elements to be constructed as budget allows.
  - Designed with a consistent "look"
    - Uniform signs, marking, crosswalks, flashers

Planning and Implementation

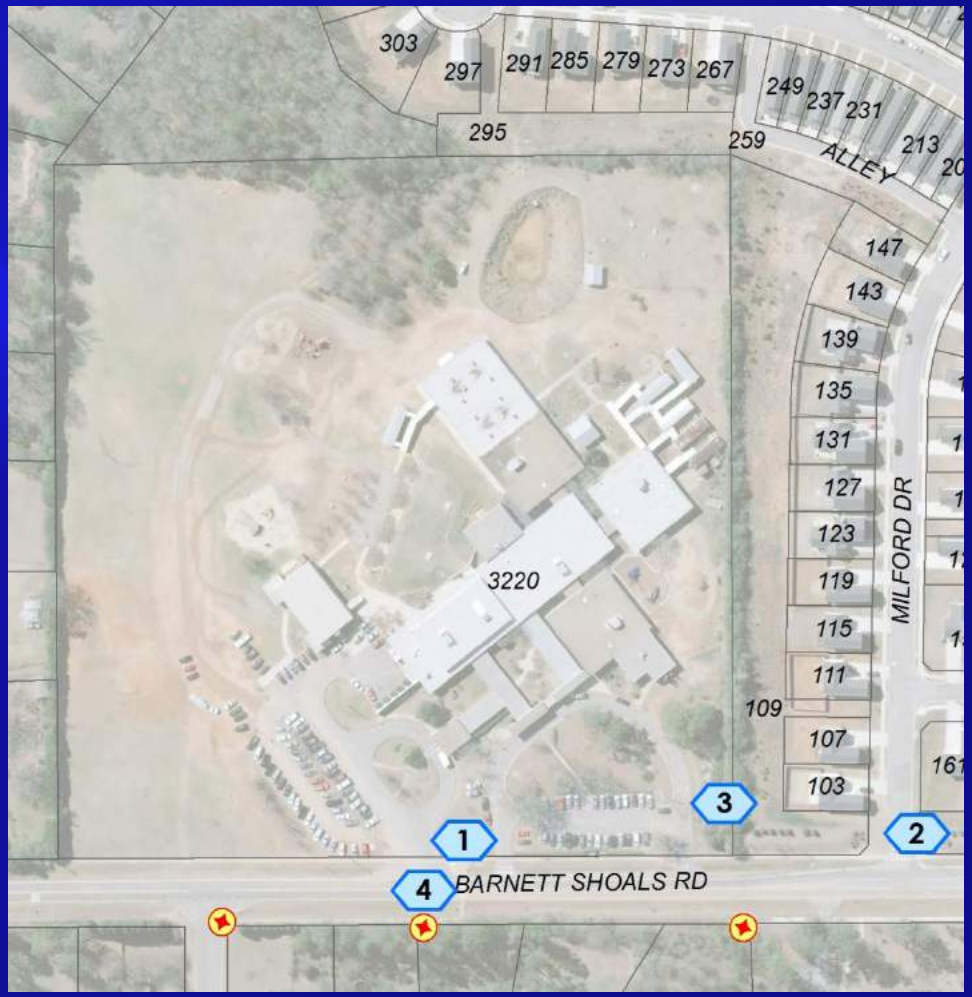
- Best Practices were incorporated to be consistent and on-going
  - Engineering – must be developed, maintained and upgraded
  - Enforcement – ongoing and unrelenting
  - Education – look for new ways to educate public

Planning and Implementation

- Projects were prioritized
  - Schools with recognized SRTS program through GDOT's Resource Center
  - Based on GDOT's level status – Gold, Silver, Bronze
    - Barrow Elementary School (Gold)
    - Timothy Road Elementary School (Gold)
    - Chase Street Elementary School (Bronze)
    - Gaines School Elementary School (Bronze)
    - Whitehead Road Elementary School (Bronze)
    - Winterville Elementary School (Bronze)
    - Barnett Shoals Elementary School (Beginner)

SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

- Barnett Shoals Elementary School - $42,500



SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

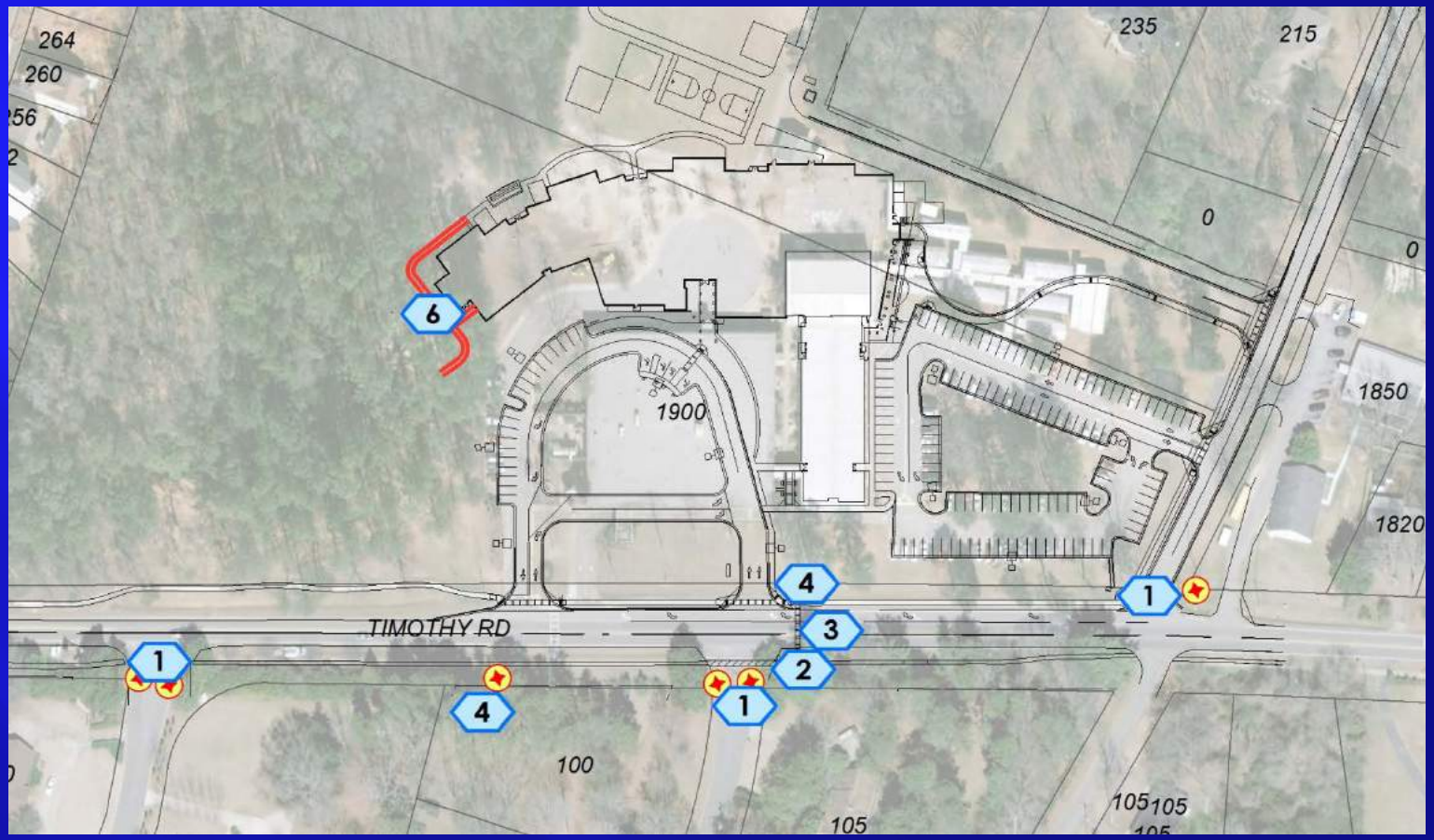
- Barnett Shoals Elementary School
  - Installed new streetlight
  - Installed new sidewalks
  - Corrected drainage problem
  - Replaced existing striped crosswalk with a stamped, colorized asphalt crosswalk, with solar-powered LED Rapid Repeating Flashing Beacons (RRFB)
  - Replaced existing school zone signage with solar-powered speed radar signs and school zone LED flashers, and programmable and statistical software

SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

- Barnett Shoals Elementary School

SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

- Timothy Road Elementary School - $46,400



SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

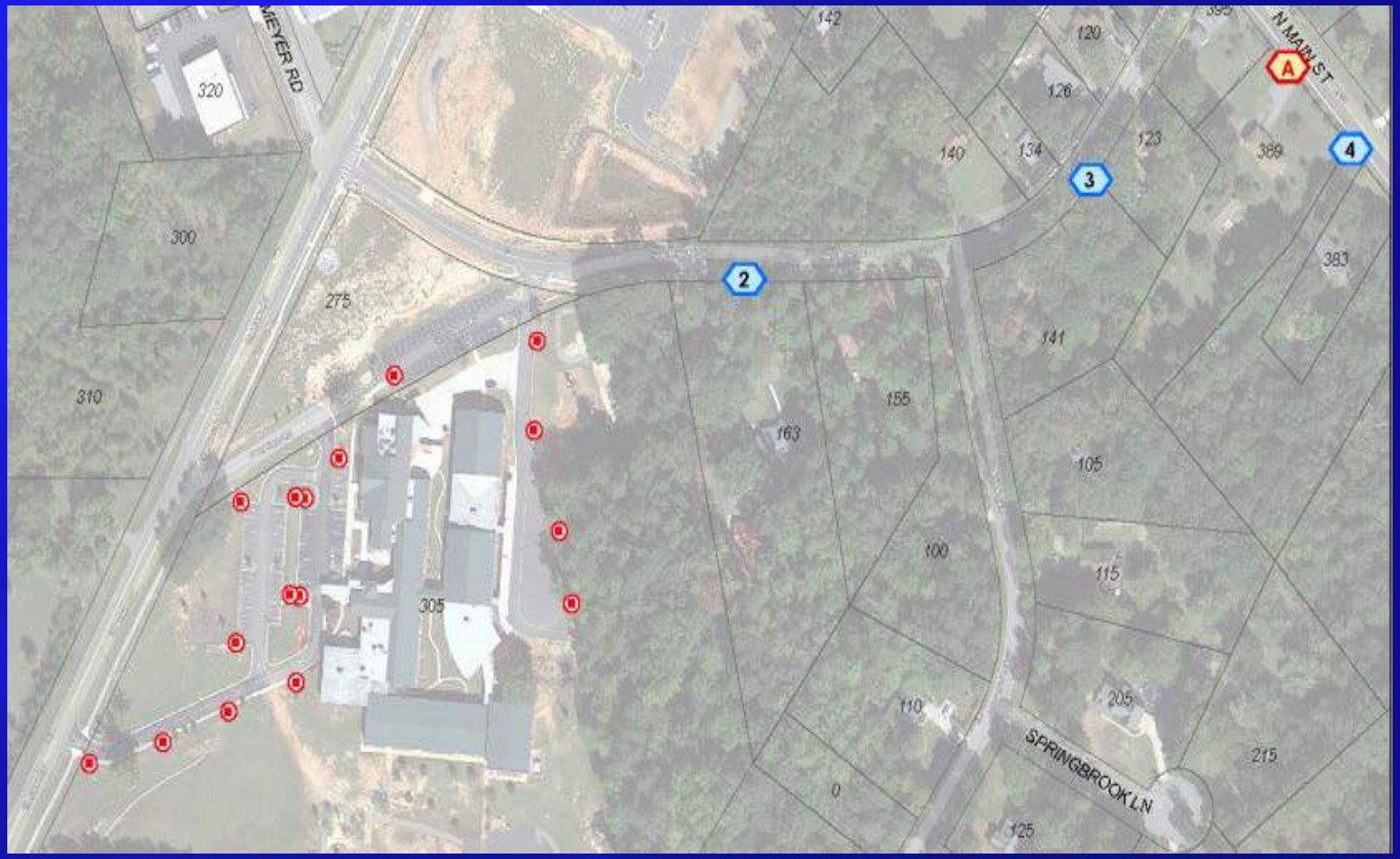
- Timothy Road Elementary School
  - Installed stamped, colorized concrete crosswalks.
  - Replaced existing crosswalk with a stamped, colorized asphalt crosswalk and solar-powered, pedestrian-activated LED RRFBs.
  - Installed an in-street pedestrian crosswalk sign.
  - Relocated an existing streetlight to the new crosswalk.
  - Replaced existing school zone signage with solar-powered speed radar signs and school zone flashers.
  - Installed a sidewalk to connect two playground areas.

SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

- Timothy Road Elementary School

SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

- Winterville Elementary School - $173,100

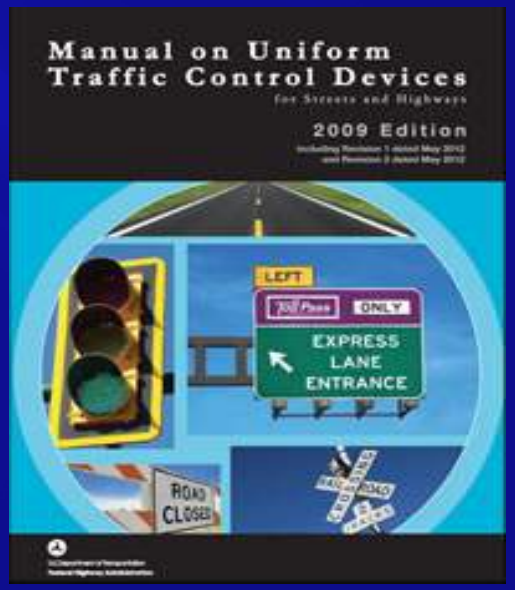


SRTS Pilot Projects 2011-2013

- Winterville Elementary School
  - Replaced existing school zone signage with solar-powered speed radar signs and school zone LED flashers.
  - Replaced existing 4′ wide sidewalks with 5′ wide sidewalks and median.
  - Cleared sidewalks of encroaching trees and underbrush.
  - Replaced existing stormwater inlets to eliminate trip hazards and flooding of existing sidewalks.

SRTS and Safety Campaign Successes

- Best Practices: Engineering
  - Maintaining a standard "look" throughout the jurisdiction has a positive effect on driver behavior and makes it safer for children to walk to school
    - Stamped, colored crosswalks
    - Signs and Markings
    - Speed control devices
  - MUTCD Consistency



SRTS and Safety Campaign Successes

- Best Practices: Enforcement
  - "No Kidding! Pay Attention in a School Zone" Campaign
    - 2009-2010 school year, 3,200 speeding citations issued in 22 school zones
    - The Safe Communities set a goal to achieve an annual 10% reduction in # of speeding vehicles.
    - A consistent enforcement schedule was developed and maintained throughout the 22 school zones
    - Achieved approximately 30% overall reduction.

SRTS and Safety Campaign Successes

- Best Practices: Education
  - "No Kidding! Pay Attention in a School Zone" PSA
    - In 2012, won the first place, SAVVY award, from the national City-County Communications and Marketing Association (3CMA).
    - Awarded "Most Creative Activity with Least Dollars Spent."
    - In January 2013, an audio version of the PSA began airing on a local radio station.
  - View at: www.athensclarkecounty.com/media/ under PSAs

SRTS and Safety Campaign Successes

SRTS and Safety Campaign Successes

- Overall, the success for the 2012-2013 school year was demonstrated by an approximate 30% reduction in the number of vehicles speeding in the 22 school zones.
- This is a result of Engineering, Enforcement, and Education professionals working together to increase safety so students can walk to school.

Observed Trends & Future Steps

- Future of "No Kidding!" campaign
  - Goal of Campaign: Train a Generation
    - Present at PTO meetings
    - Every school will receive a DVD of the PSA
    - PSA will continue to be aired on TV and local radio
  - It is imperative to continue Education and Enforcement part of the campaign

Observed Trends & Future Steps

- Based on 2009 Northeast Georgia Regional Commission planning study, the next schools being considered
  - Whitehead Elementary School
  - Alps Road Elementary School
  - Stroud Elementary School

Conclusions

- Need to get creative with funding sources at times
- School and Community involvement important
- Consistency yields better results for motorists
- Best Practices – Four E's

  For creating a truly safe route to school, combining these approaches are most effective.

  - Engineering,
  - Enforcement
  - Education
  - Encouragement
  - Dedicated resources