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5. SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

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1. PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The Safe Route To School Program is designed to assist children in the development of safe walking habits, the identification of safe routes and to make them more aware of the potential dangers they face in walking to and from school. The same principles apply to travelling to and from school bus stops.

The program fosters coordination and cooperation between parents, school officials, police and the local road authority in working toward the common goal of protecting the lives of children.

The Safe Route To School Program includes field trip activities, development of individual maps, traffic safety education activities and parent participation.

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2. GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER

There is no magic formula for selecting safe routes since conditions differ between and within communities. Local conditions should be considered before adopting the safe route to school model or a modified version of this model.

The following guidelines should be considered in planning a safe route in order to minimize the exposure to hazards as much as possible.

Directness

1. Children should be encouraged to take the most direct and safe route to and from school.
2. Often, several routes of equal distance are available, so the route that appears to be the safest when all factors are considered should be selected.

Minimize Street Crossings

3. Routes that involve the minimum number of streets to cross should be selected.

Complicated Intersections

4. Complicated intersections should be avoided unless adult crossing guards are assigned to assist school children.

Guarded Intersections

5. Intersections that are guarded by police, adult crossing guard or school patrols are preferable.

Traffic Signals

6. Signals with separate pedestrian intervals or WALK/DON'T WALK indicators are preferable.

NOTE: Traffic signals offer protection to pedestrians but they are not a guarantee of safety.



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Merging Routes

7. Routes should be selected so that as many children as possible will merge at one place when crossing a hazardous street.

NOTE: Such gathering of children may permit a wider and more effective use of police, adult crossing guards and school patrols.

School Crossings

8. Where possible and appropriate, school crossings should be provided adjacent to school grounds.

NOTE: Motorists are generally warned of these crossings by school crossing signs, signals, markings and/or designated speed restrictions.

Vehicular Volume And Speed

9. Compare and analyze vehicular volumes at all intersections before routes are finalized.
10. The three factors to consider are:
 - the number of vehicles,
 - the number of vehicles completing right hand turns and
 - the number of vehicles completing left hand turns.
11. Higher speed and lower speed areas should be compared.

Traffic Composition

12. Special consideration should be given to a high proportion of large trucks in the traffic stream.

One-Way Streets

13. Generally, intersections on one-way streets are safer to cross than intersections on two-way streets.
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Stop Signs

14. Signs and pavement markings directing motorists to stop must be legible and in easily observed positions to be of maximum value to pedestrians.

NOTE: Pedestrians crossing at a stop sign are protected to some degree since the law requires a vehicle to come to a complete stop.

Pedestrian Accident Exposure

15. The number and type of pedestrian accidents that have occurred at intersections in the area should be determined.

Sidewalks

16. Improved sidewalks and pathways should be used at every opportunity since they provide buffer zones from traffic flow.

17. If the roadway must be used, stress:

- walking on the left side facing traffic and
- staying as far away from the travelled roadway as possible.

Silhouette

18. Where there is a need for a school patrol or adult crossing guard at the school crosswalk, the use of a silhouette depicting the profile of a pedestrian should **not** be considered an equal substitute.

NOTE: In addition to assuring safe crossing, school patrol and crossing guards are capable of encouraging and promoting safe crossing behaviours and helping the young school children to develop sound judgement and safe behaviour regarding crossing.

19. The use of a silhouette on the roadway, as a substitute for guarding, is not recommended.

NOTE: The silhouette on the roadway may divert the attention of the drivers from the pedestrians. The presence of the silhouette may unnecessarily generate a false sense of security to the young school children.



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Child's View Obscured

20. Conditions that obscure a child's view of oncoming traffic should be avoided or removed (e.g., bus stops, sharp grades or curves, blind corners, congested streets and intersections with parking near the crosswalks).

Rural/Northern Areas

21. For rural/northern areas, factors such as gravel roads, road surface conditions, fog, snowbanks and short winter days should be considered.

Other Factors

22. Other factors which may compromise the safety of the children travelling to or from school should be scrutinized (e.g., speeding traffic, rough street surfaces at crossings, hazardous sidewalks in inclement weather, mid-block crossings, poorly located safety zones or islands, lighting and land use).
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3. ROLES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Parental Involvement

1. The child's safety as a pedestrian should be a coordinated/cooperative effort between home and school.
2. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the planning of the safe route to school then walk the route with their child, discussing hazards, obstacles and crossing behaviours.

Teacher Involvement

3. Teachers can help children to be aware of, adopt and practise the correct traffic behaviours that will assist them in arriving at school safely (**See Section 5.7**).
4. Safe crossing behaviour and related activities should become an integral part of the children's safety education curriculum.

Police Involvement

5. Police coordination and cooperation promotes acceptance of the Safe Route To School Program in the minds of children, drivers and teachers.
6. Police may also assist in the following, where they are part of the local program:
 - the development of the program,
 - the training of school crossing guards and patrollers,
 - the development and undertaking of enforcement campaigns at the school crossing location and
 - the monitoring and evaluation of the school crossing programs.

Road Authority Involvement

7. The local road authority, either provincial or municipal, should be consulted in determining:
 - the appropriateness of the crossing location and
 - the adequacy of traffic control devices.
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4. SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Membership Of Committee

1. A Safe Route To School Committee should be formed consisting of representatives from the school and parents, as a minimum (**Figure 5.4**).

NOTE: The police and the road authority may be involved as a part of committee or, alternatively, they may be invited on an as needed basis.

Purpose

2. The Safe Route To School Committee would:
 - review the current and future walking patterns of the students,
 - prepare a master map showing the school location and the catchment area, the road network, possible crossing locations and the traffic control inventory.
 - identify preferred crossing locations and safety considerations,
 - facilitate the evaluation of the need for, and installation of, suitable traffic control devices,
 - evaluate the need for school patrols and/or adult crossing guards,
 - implement the Safe Route To School Program,
 - develop and implement the guarding programs, if necessary and
 - monitor, evaluate and provide direction to the programs.
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5. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Master Map

1. Based on the crossing demand data, and with input from the road authority and the police, the Safe Route To School Committee would:
 - finalize the selection and consolidation of crossing locations and
 - prepare a master map (Figure 5.5).

Traffic Control Device Requirements

2. The road authority should then:
 - assess the traffic control device requirements along the safe route to school and
 - undertake any improvements that may be necessary.

Crossing Programs

3. The school and the Safe Route To School Committee would then have to assess the need for school patrol and/or adult crossing guard programs at each of the identified crosswalks (See **SCHOOL PATROL PROGRAM** and **ADULT CROSSING GUARD PROGRAM**).

Safe Route To School Exercise

4. In the classroom, teachers and students will use the master map as a platform for the safe route to school exercise.
 5. The exercise will include the preparation of a personal map with a safe route to school for each student who walks to school.
 6. The parent and the student will:
 - examine the personal map with the safe route to school,
 - walk the safe route as an exercise and
 - provide feedback to the Safe Route To School Committee.
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7. The feedback from the walking exercise will be used by the Safe Route To School Committee to update the route selection and crossing demand for each crosswalk location.

Monitoring Routes and Crossing Locations

8. All routes and crossing locations should be monitored for safety performance and operational patterns.
9. This monitoring should include:
 - a review of the traffic and school pedestrian patterns to assess the need to add or delete routes or crossing locations and
 - a review of the crossing locations to determine the need to update the traffic control devices and/or school crossing programs.

Program Review

10. The safe route to school, and the crossing locations, should be regularly reviewed in consideration of:
 - constantly changing traffic patterns which make a constant review of the safe route essential and
 - new developments, increased vehicle traffic and changing traffic patterns which may change the operational environment of the crossing locations dramatically.
 11. The committee structure, the roles and working relationship amongst all stakeholders, and the effectiveness of the programs to enhance school children safety should be monitored and reviewed periodically.
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6. SELECTION OF TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

1. When a safe route to school is identified, the appropriate traffic control devices (TCDs) should be assessed by the road authority.
 2. The traffic control devices that are selected by the road authorities should take into consideration several engineering factors (**See APPLICATIONS AND INSTALLATION and WARRANTS**), including:
 - traffic volume and flow pattern,
 - pedestrian volume,
 - pedestrian age and ability,
 - width of roadway,
 - roadway geometry
 - speed of traffic,
 - classification of the roadway
 - accident history
 - community size.
 3. Corridor consistency is important to traffic safety and traffic operations, therefore consideration should be given to providing traffic control that varies according to the complexity of roads, from local, collector, to arterial facilities.
 4. As part of the Safe Route To School Program, the road authority may consider the installation of school crossing traffic control devices where there is a concentration of school children below the thresholds described in the **WARRANTS** section of this manual.
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7. CLASSROOM TRAINING

1. Traffic Signs and Signals

Concept

1. Children are road users, as pedestrians, and must follow the same rules as other road users.

Learning Outcomes

1. After completing the activities in this topic, students should be able to:
 - identify the traffic signs and signals that occur most frequently at intersections,
 - describe and demonstrate the correct behaviour for each of the given traffic signs and signals and
 - state the reasons for having traffic signs and signals.

Activities

Traffic Signs Discussion

1. Show and explain each of the traffic signs and signals contained in **Figure 5.7**
2. Discuss the meaning of the signs and signals.
3. Discuss the need for the signs and signals.

Traffic Signs and Signals Field Trip

4. Take a field trip around the neighbourhood to hunt for traffic signs and signals.
 5. At the location, discuss each sign or signal regarding shape, colour, size, location, meaning and importance.
 6. At the location, practise doing what each sign and signal indicates.
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Traffic Signs and Signals Role Play

7. Create life size versions of each traffic sign and signal.
8. Position the signs in the classroom and have the children dramatize the correct behaviour for each sign or signal.

2. Crossing the Road

Concept

1. Crossing the road is dangerous.
2. Even marked and signalized intersection crossings are not automatically safe.
3. Children can learn safe crossing skills to protect themselves in crossing situations.

Learning Outcomes

1. After completing the activities in this topic, students should be able to:
 - state the reasons for using safe crossing rules and
 - demonstrate the safe way to cross the road.

Activities

Learning The Crossing Rules

1. Teach the students safe crossing rules:

How To Cross The Road

- always stop at the curb or the edge of the road,
 - if a car is parked at the corner, stop at the outside edge of the parked car,
 - always look left, right and left again to see if a car is coming, even when the walk signal is on or when the crossing guard says to cross,
 - listen for approaching traffic,
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- if a car is coming, let it pass, then look left, right and left again,
- listen and watch again for approaching traffic,
- walk smartly across the road,
- keep looking for traffic as you cross the road,

Helpful Hints

- traffic signals and crossing guards are helpers; however, you should always check for approaching traffic,
- always cross a busy intersection with an adult or older child,
- walk, do not run when crossing (if you run a driver might not see you or you might trip and fall),
- never go between parked cars onto the road,
- a car cannot see, only the driver can see, and sometimes the driver does not see you,
- drivers need time and distance to stop.

Simulated Crossing Exercise

2. Reinforce the safe crossing rules by setting up a simulated pedestrian crossing in the classroom or in the gym.
3. Have the students take on various roles in the simulated crossing such as crossing guards, traffic light signals, traffic signs, cars or pedestrians.
4. After the exercise, ask students why they think safe crossing rules are important.

Pedestrian Crossing Field Trip

5. Using a pedestrian crossing near the school, show the class the correct way to cross the road.
 6. Have the students practise the safe crossing procedures.
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3. Safe Route to School

Concept

1. The shortest or easiest route to school may not always be the safest.

Learning Outcomes

1. After completing the activities in this topic, students should be able to:
 - state the reasons for walking safely on the sidewalk or facing traffic,
 - state the reasons for crossing the road at corners or marked crosswalks,
 - identify a safe route between home and school.

Activities

Learning Background Information

1. Teach the students background information including:
 - always walk on a sidewalk if one is available,
 - walk single file on the left side of the road facing traffic if there is no sidewalk,
 - if you must cross a highway or road that has no crosswalk, ask your parents or teacher the safest place to cross,
 - walk with an adult or older child, whenever possible.

“Getting To School” Discussion And Drawing

2. Ask students to describe how they get to school each day.
 3. Mark on the board the following:
 - the number of students who walk all the way to school,
 - the number who walk part way,
 - the number who are driven and
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- the number who take a bus.
4. Have a discussion on getting to school which includes the following:
 - “How many of you walk part or all of the way to school?”
 - “Is there a sidewalk to walk on? Where do you walk if there is no sidewalk?” (Walk on the left, facing traffic).
 - “Why is it a good idea to walk facing traffic if there is no sidewalk?” (Reinforce the idea that the driver and the child can more easily see each other when they are facing each other).
 - “What different kinds of road crossings do you use on the way to school?” (Answers may include: traffic lights, walk signal, railway crossing, school safety patrolled crosswalk, four-way stop intersection).
 - “Why is it best to cross at corners or marked crosswalks?” (Drivers should be watching for pedestrians at corners and crosswalks and should stop when they see pedestrians waiting to cross. Drivers should already be stopped at light controlled intersections when the pedestrian sees the WALK light).
 - “Why should you always look for cars, even in a crosswalk?” (A driver may not see you and may not stop).
 5. Have students draw a picture of themselves on the way to school.

Police Officer Class Visit

6. Invite a local police officer to your school to talk to the students about ways to make themselves safe in traffic on the way to and from school.

Field Trip And Story Telling

7. Take the class on a field trip around the neighbourhood pointing out safe and unsafe places to walk, cross roads and wait for buses.
 8. If there are no sidewalks, ensure that the children understand that they should walk on the left side of the road, facing traffic.
 9. After the field trip, have students tell or write a story describing the safest route between home and school.
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Locate A Safe Route To School On A Map

10. Make a simple pictorial map of your area.
11. Send a copy home so that, together, parents and students can fill in the safest route between home and school (copies of formal street maps may be available from your local road authority).

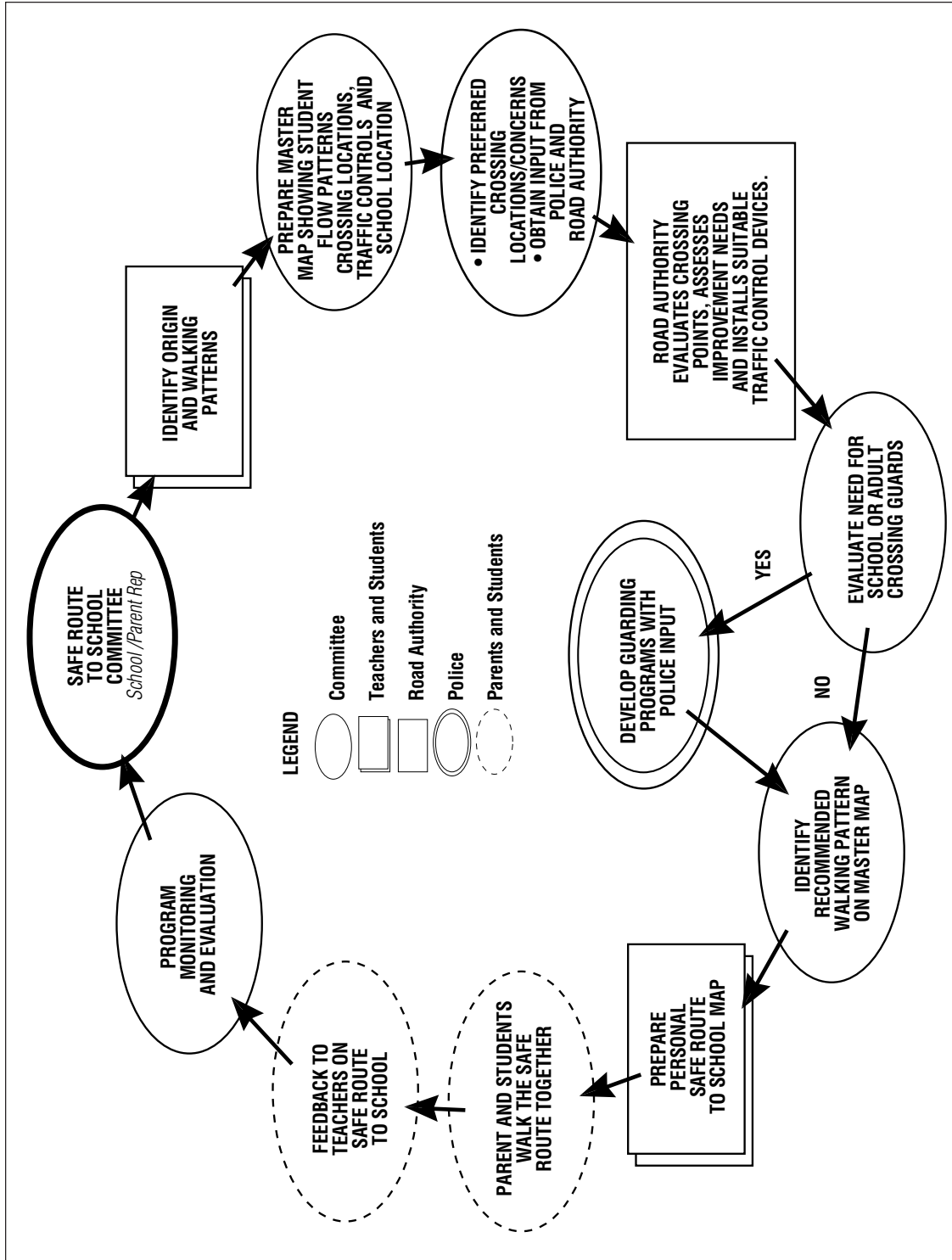
OR

12. Send a letter home requesting parents to assist their child in drawing a map of a safe route to school.
 13. Display the safe route to school maps and discuss them with the class.
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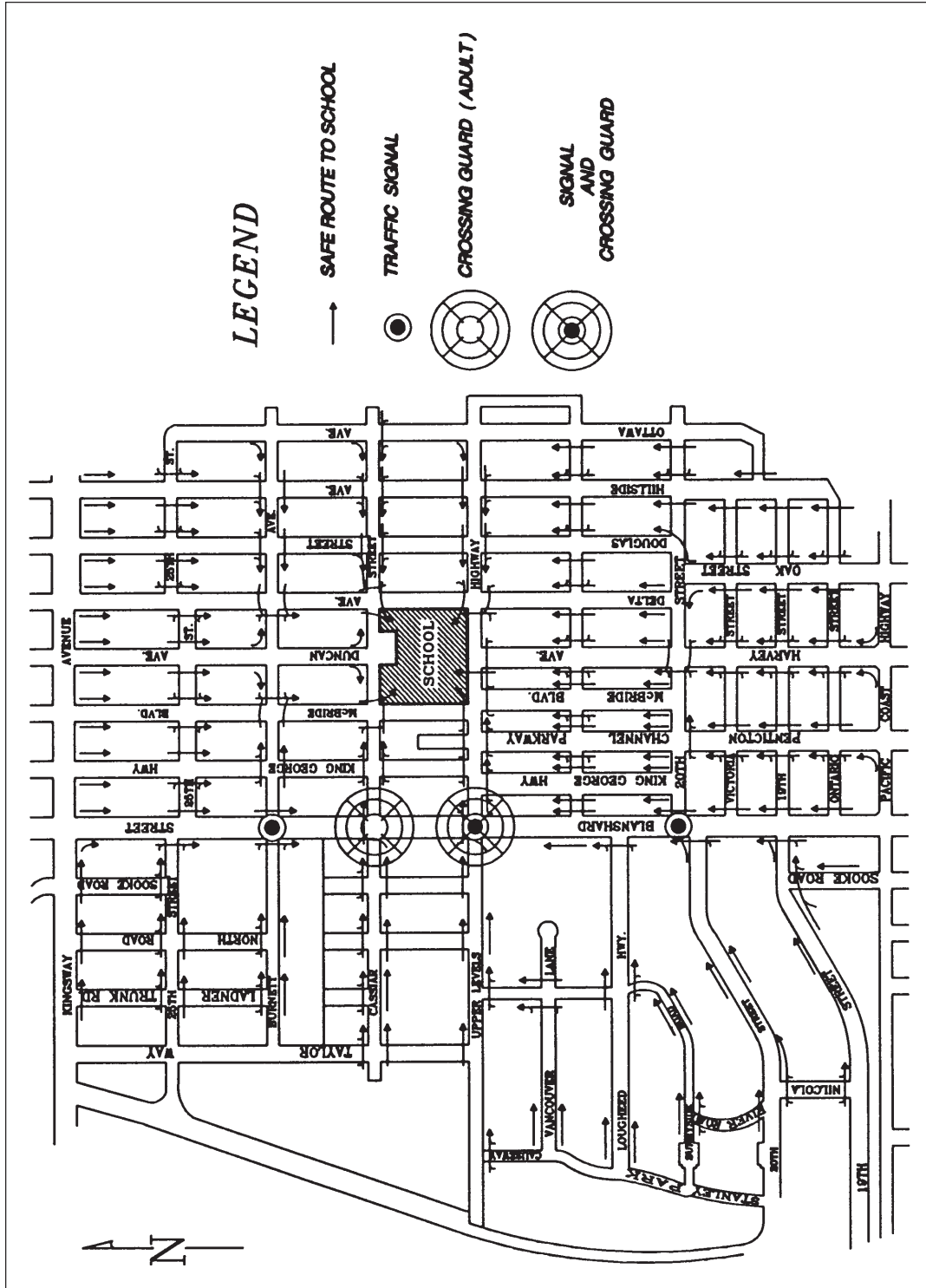
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5.4 A Safe Route to School Program Flow Chart

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5.5 Safe Route to School Map



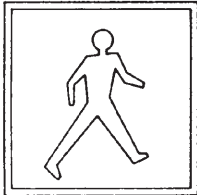
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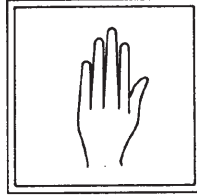
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Figure: 5.7

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WALK Signal



DON'T WALK Signal



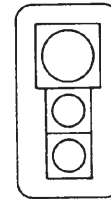
Pedestrian Crossing Sign



School Crossing Sign



Stop Sign



Traffic Light

5.7 Traffic Signs and Signals