

‘School Street’ at Bell Times (Timed Car-Free Block)

FOR: City DOT & traffic police • **PARTNERS:** school district, neighbors • **SDGs:** 11 • 3

One-sentence summary. Close the block at the school gate to through-traffic for ~30–45 minutes at arrival and dismissal, paired with a 30 km/h (20 mph) zone—the WHO-endorsed safe speed where children mix with traffic.

Why it matters

WHO’s Streets for Life campaign calls for 30 km/h streets where people and traffic mix, especially around schools. School Street programs in the UK/EU and new U.S. pilots show safer, calmer drop-offs, cleaner air, and more walking/cycling.

Evidence (key points)

- WHO urges 30 km/h (20 mph) limits on streets used by children; lower speeds reduce injury risk and enable active travel.
- School Streets are timed traffic restrictions with exemptions (e.g., residents, emergency vehicles) used widely in UK/EU.
- Design guides (NACTO/GDCI) provide child-first street treatments and operations playbooks.

Options considered

Option	What it looks like	Pros	Cons
Status quo (open street)	Cars queue at the gate; mix with children	No setup	Conflicts, blocked crosswalks, stress, emissions
Timed car-free School Street	Movable bollards; staff/volunteers; exemptions	Cuts conflicts; improves air & walking; quick to pilot	Needs staffing/signage and neighbor coordination
Permanent design upgrades	Modal filters; widened sidewalks; trees; seating	Lasting safety and comfort; air/noise benefits	Capital, design time; traffic plan

Alt text: Table compares open street, timed car-free operations, and permanent upgrades.

Recommendations

- 1) Pilot a School Street for 60 days. Steps: legal order; traffic plan; volunteer marshals; signage; evaluation (counts, speeds, surveys).
- 2) Set 30 km/h (20 mph) on surrounding streets and enforce at bell times (temporary signs or ASE where legal).
- 3) Follow with permanent treatments if targets met: modal filters, raised crossings, trees, seating.

Local data & resources: Philadelphia

- [WHO — Streets for Life: 30 km/h policy page](#)
- [UK DfT — How to set up and manage a School Street \(2024 guidance\)](#)
- [NACTO/GDCI — Designing Streets for Kids \(guide\)](#)
- [Philadelphia pilot news — first School Street](#)

How we'll measure success

- Vehicle volumes on the gate block at bell times: ↓ 80–100%
- Average speeds on adjacent streets: within 30 km/h (20 mph) target
- Mode share walking/biking to school: +10–20 pp
- Parent/student “feels safe at drop-off” survey: ≥ 70%

Credits & sources (clickable)

- [WHO — Streets for Life 30 km/h](#)
- [UK DfT — School Streets guidance \(2024\)](#)
- [SUSR — School Streets & traffic displacement \(practitioner guide\)](#)
- [NACTO/GDCI — Designing Streets for Kids](#)