

# Benteen Elementary

## Safe Routes to School Plan



Created by: PEDS and Benteen Elementary  
Submitted by: City of Atlanta Department of Public Works  
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## Introduction

Benteen Elementary is located in Fulton County at 200 Cassanova Rd. SE. The school has approximately 400 students enrolled and currently serves Benteen Park and surrounding area. Benteen is located in the heart of a residential neighborhood just off of Boulevard. The majority of students walk to school or catch the public transit. Benteen sought help from the PEDS organization in 2002 because of the number of students walking in unsafe conditions, which included the lack of proper infrastructure and law enforcement.

PEDS, a pedestrian advocacy organization for the metro Atlanta region, assisted Benteen with improving conditions in the area of the school and by raising pedestrian awareness through its KidsWalk program. With the help of the acting principal and its Community in Schools Coordinator, Benteen has been able to increase pedestrian awareness in its community and advocate for several minor changes, including the installation of a no right on red sign on Boulevard Ave. at Custer and a protected pedestrian signal phase crossing Boulevard from west to east. Several children walk to school on a daily basis, and more than half of the students participate in walk-to-school-day events.



# SRTS Team and Community Involvement

Figure 1.

Name	Title	Role
Dr. Quisenberry	Principal	Oversees SRTS activities at the school
Dr. James Walker	Interim Principal	Supervised SRTS activities at the school
Dr. Christina Otowa	Former Principal	Supervised SRTS activities at the school
Damon Carter	School Board	Assists with encouraging school board members to support SRTS activities at various levels
Christina Smith-Galloway	Communities in Schools Coordinator	Implemented SRTS activities within the school
Henry Coleman	Communities in Schools Coordinator	Implements SRTS activities within the school; serves as a liaison between school principal and entire SRTS team
Andrea Hill	Communities in Schools Director	Supervises progress of all Communities in Schools Coordinators
Bea Lyde	Community Study Hall Director	Assists with the implementation of SRTS activities during after school hours
Jackie Perez	Parent	Assists principal and Community in Schools liaison with the implementation of SRTS activities and major walk-to-school day events
Letha Carter	Crossing Guard	Helps kids to cross safely on their route to school
Lorn Whittacker	Atlanta Public Works--Engineer	Identifies infrastructure improvements necessary for creating safer routes to school
Michael Fleming	City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning	Oversees planning requirements for proposed infrastructure improvements
Jeffrey Williams	City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning	Assists in researching planning requirements for proposed infrastructure improvements

## Maps

Figure 2.

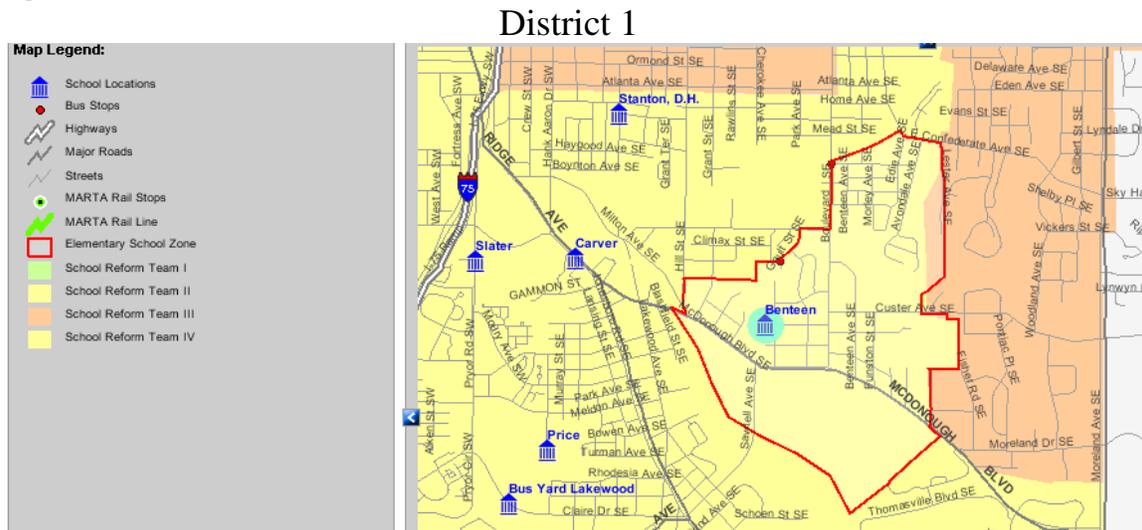


Figure 3.

### Benteen Elementary School 1-Mile Radius Map

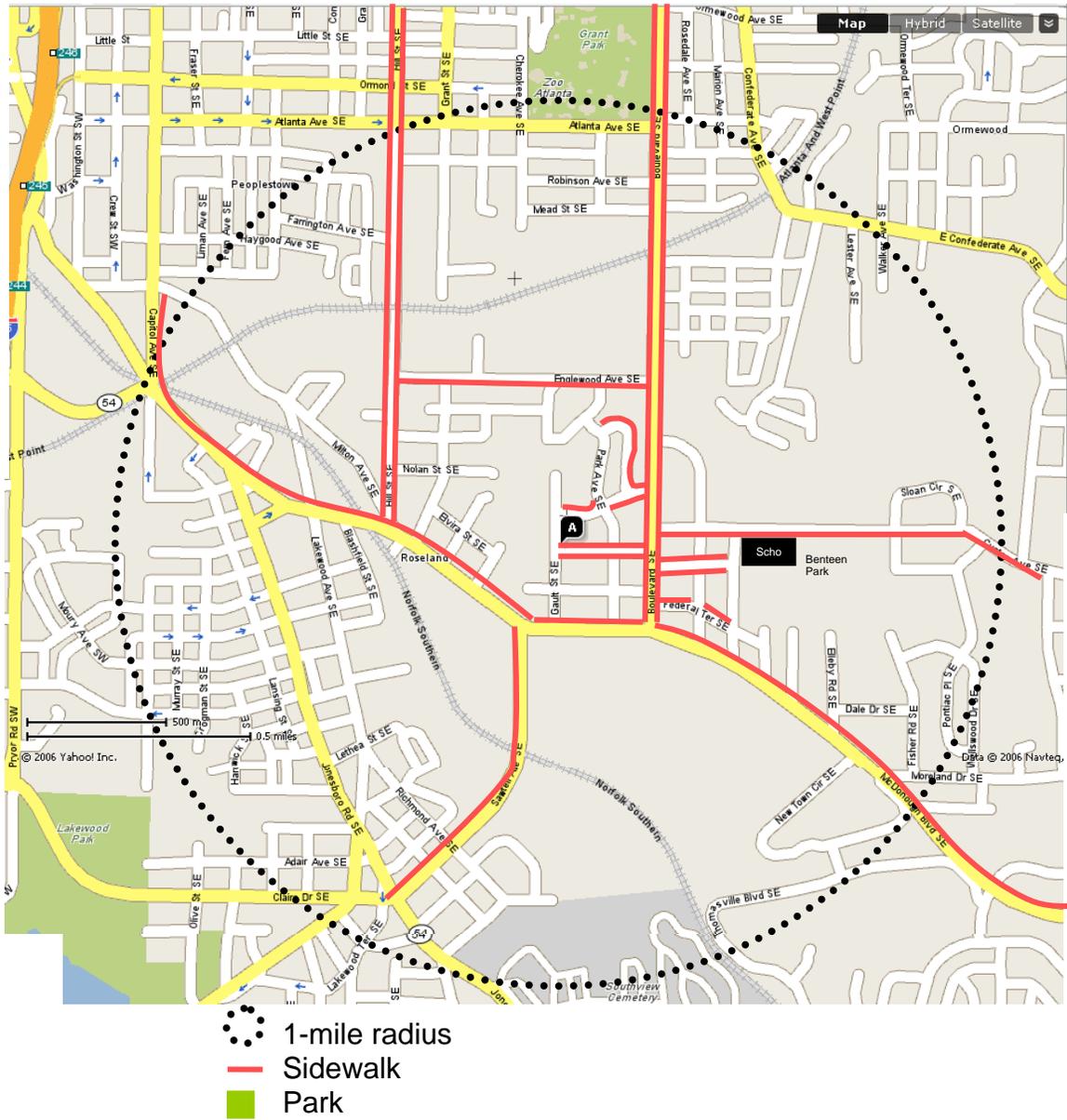


Figure 4.

### Map of Existing Routes

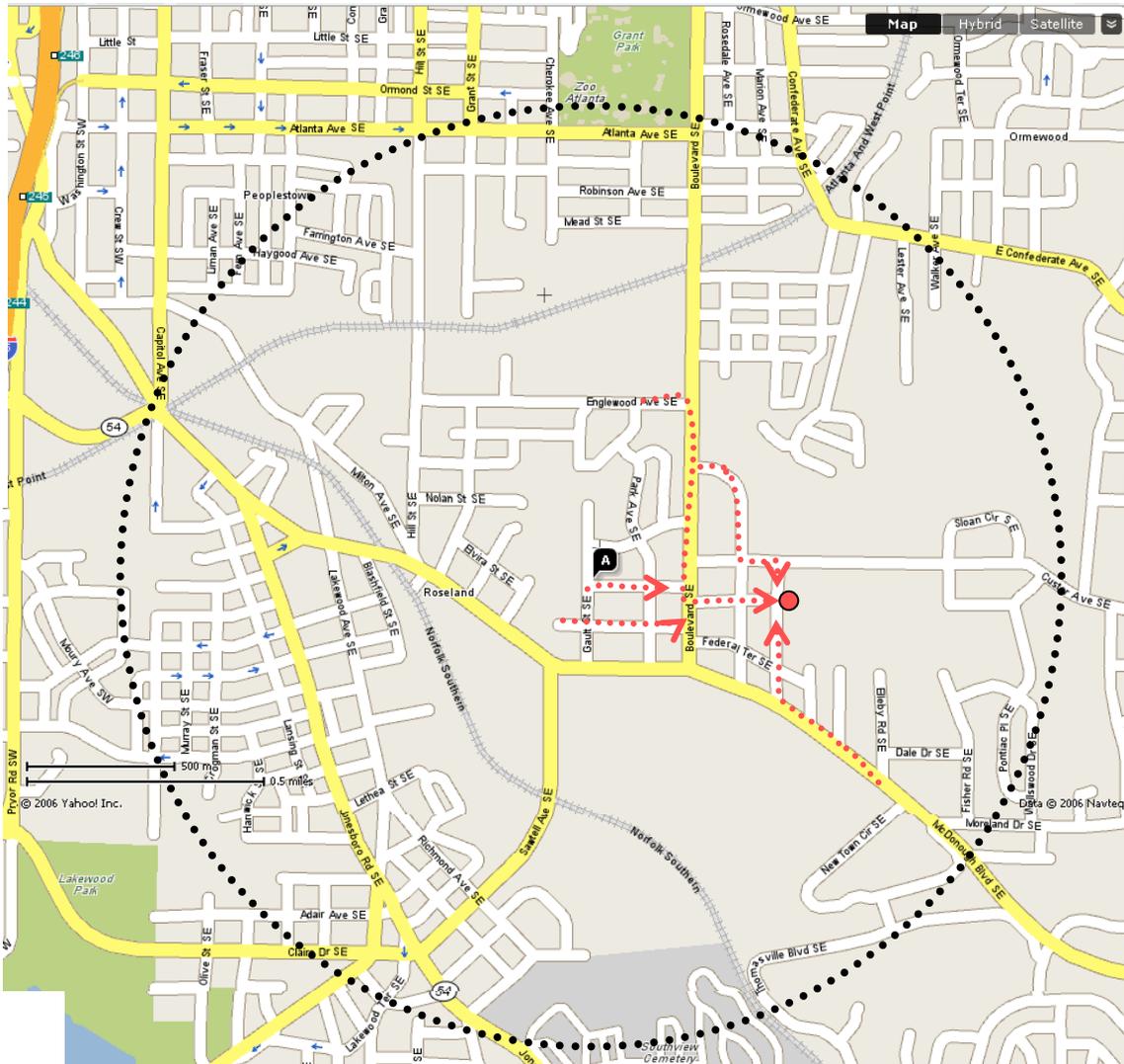
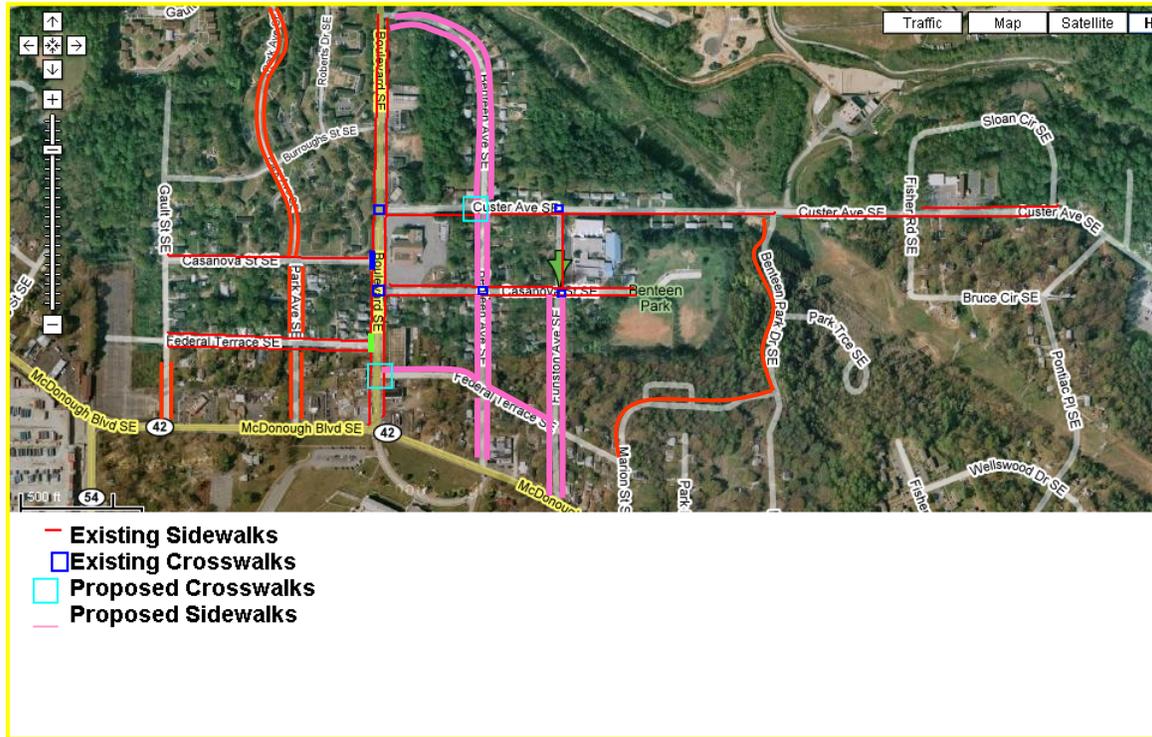


Figure 5.



## Existing Conditions

Kids at Benten Elementary access three main roads on their route to school: Boulevard, Custer, and Benten Way. Many of the walkers reside in the housing project across Boulevard, forcing most of them to cross this dangerous road. Once the kids cross Boulevard, they access either Custer or Cassanova Rd. to get to school. Several kids also walk from the east end of Boulevard, many of which are catching the Marta transit and exiting at Benten Way.

Benten Elementary is surrounded by neighborhood streets, most of which lack sidewalks and lane striping. Custer Avenue, Cassanova Road, and Boulevard Street are the exceptions. Custer and Cassanova connect the school to the neighborhood and have sidewalks on one side of the street. However, there is a 10 ft. disconnect in the sidewalk on Cassanova in front of the school. Boulevard functions as a major thoroughfare and has sidewalks on both sides. It should be noted that Boulevard still lacks other pedestrian amenities such as curb cuts, marked crosswalks, and pavement markings.

## **Boulevard**

Apart from the missing sidewalks in the immediate neighborhood around the school, the main area of concern is Boulevard Street. This is a very busy 4 lane road located about ¼ mile from the school. Students who live in residential developments on the west side of Boulevard are bused to the school for safety's sake. Invariably there are students who miss the bus, who must walk. Designated crossing points on Boulevard are few: an uncontrolled marked crosswalk and a signalized intersection serve the neighborhood. The signalized intersection forbids right-turn-on-red, and has pedestrian signal heads—two safety measures we typically request. But based on reports from the police officers, kids and parents, and our own observations, the intersection needs additional improvement to be safe for pedestrians.

Boulevard is a four-lane, city-maintained street measuring 38 ft. in total width. Sidewalk measures 4 ft. in width on both sides of the street. The majority of the kids who walk to school must cross this busy road to get to Cassanova Rd. Though the speed limit is 35 mph, speeds often times exceed 60 mph. The average speed on this road is 50 mph, despite the flashing school zone sign during school zone hours. Even though there are crosswalks at most intersecting streets, they are not very well marked, nor do they gain any respect from drivers in the area.



The uncontrolled crosswalk at Cassanova and Boulevard is extremely dangerous due to its lack of advance warning, and its low visibility marking. This is also an unsignalized intersection.

A faded, three-legged crosswalk exists at the intersection of Boulevard and Custer where a signal is and lead pedestrian indicator is present. Although a school zone sign exists on the east end of Boulevard, there is no clear indication that the area is a school zone at all. Drivers are unaware that they are in a school zone area until they come upon the school zone sign. Most drivers are traveling too fast to even notice that the school zone sign exists. There is no warning that this area is a school zone until the driver comes upon the sign.

Several curbs on Boulevard are missing ADA accessible curb ramps, including the corner of Boulevard and Cassanova. Here, the crosswalk begins at the corner of Cassanova but dead-ends into a wall on the other side of Boulevard with no ramp whatsoever. Other intersections in need of curb ramps include Boulevard and Burrough St. and Boulevard and Custer, where a utility pole blocks the entrance to the sidewalk.

### **Custer Ave.**

Custer Avenue, adjacent to the school, has a marked school zone, a MARTA stop (some students take this bus), and a crossing guard. The speed limit is 35 mph, and 25mph in the school zone (as designated by a 25 mph sign with flashing yellow beacon). However, the speed on Custer commonly reaches 35 to 40 mph even within the school zone. This two lane road carries a high volume of traffic, most of which is cut-through traffic. The sidewalk on Custer, most of which is in good condition, measures 3 ft. However, some of the sidewalk has gaping holes, a huge safety hazard to the kids. This is especially a problem on Custer along east end of the school.



## Benteen Ave.

Benteen Ave., also known as Benteen Way is located North of Cassanova St. and intersects with both Boulevard and Cassanova St. Benteen Ave. is a two-way street without lane markings that measures 28ft. in width. Crossing Boulevard to access Benteen Ave. is a very dangerous task for kids because of the dangerous speeds and lack of a signal.

To the west of Benteen Ave. is an empty lot with vegetation for about 2 blocks. The remainder of the street is occupied by residential homes on both sides. Several kids who live east of Boulevard use Benteen Ave. as a short cut to the school. Many kids ride the public transit and are let out at Benteen Ave., making it a circumstantial route to school. No sidewalks exist on Benteen Ave., which forces kids to walk in the street on their route to school.

## Data Collection and Analysis

### Travel Modes

Figure 6.

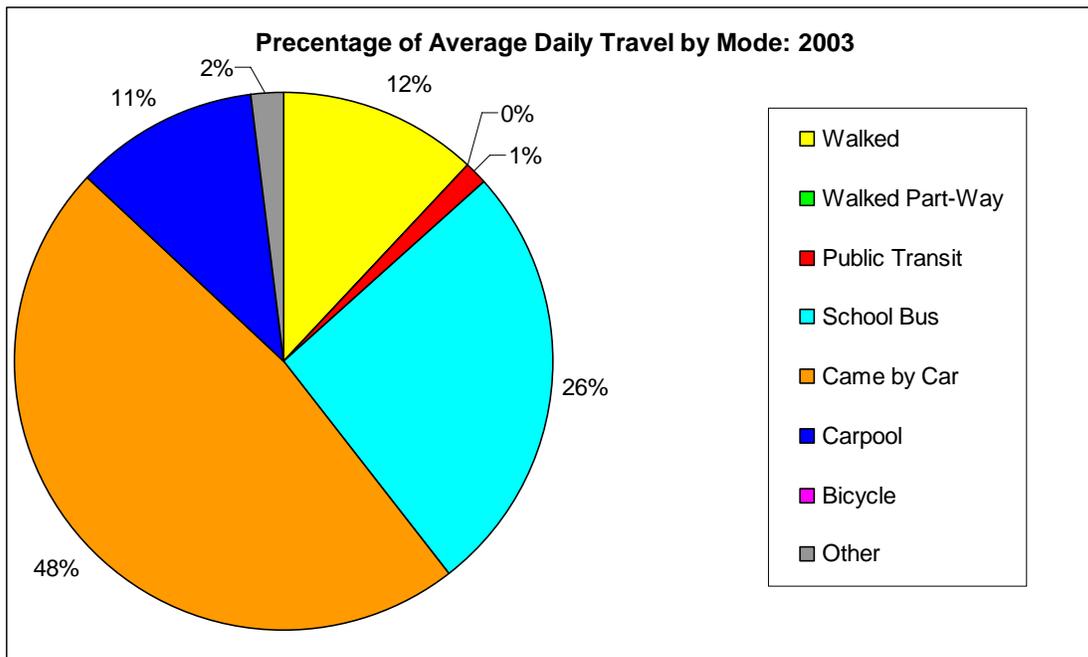


Figure 7.

Percentage of Average Daily Trips by Mode: 2004

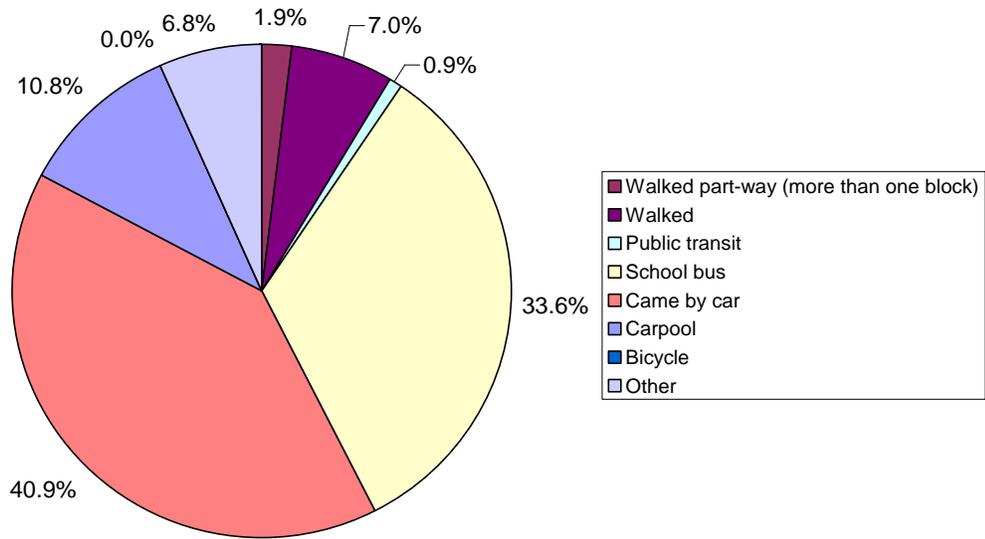
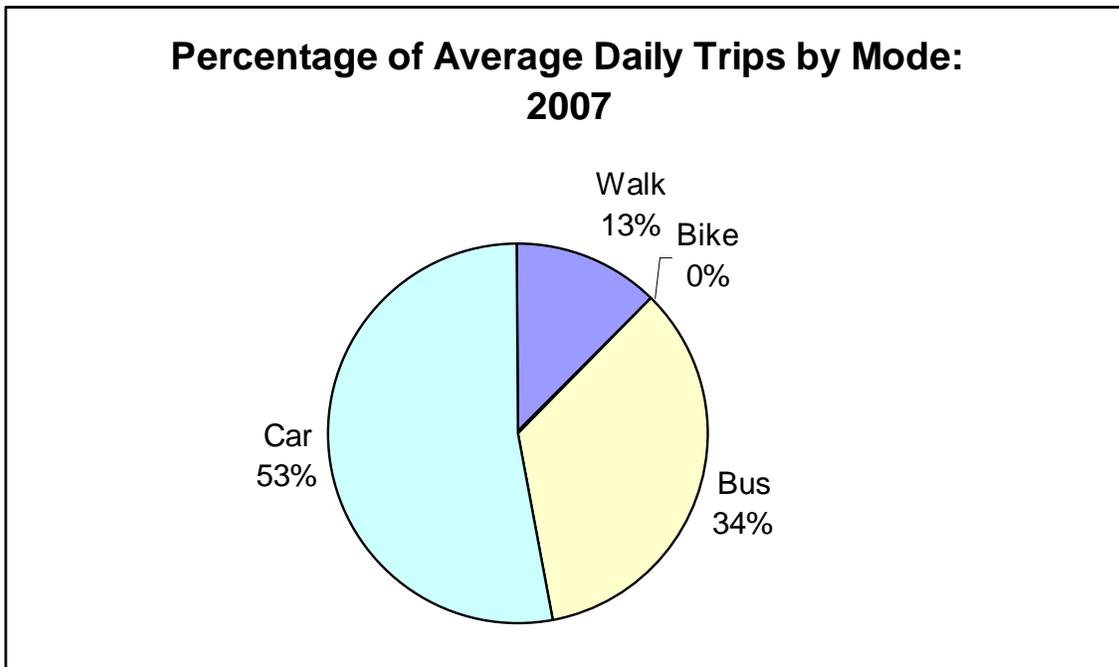


Figure 8.

Percentage of Average Daily Trips by Mode:  
2007



A survey conducted in the fall of 2003 revealed that close to half (48%) of Benteen's students traveled to school by car while 12 percent walked to school. In 2004, the same survey revealed more that while the majority of the students rode in cars, more kids were catching the bus to school than the previous year. Several of the parents felt that the walking conditions were too dangerous to have their kids walk to school; however, close to 10 percent had no choice but to walk in unsafe conditions.

## Policies and Plans

No changes are currently in place for District 1 of Atlanta Public Schools, nor are any transportation projects planned for the immediate area of Benteen. Benteen Elementary does not prohibit biking to school. The city of Atlanta does require that sidewalks be included in new subdivision projects. The installation of sidewalk is required by City of Atlanta code (code section 138).

## Bus Route

Benteen Elementary is serviced by 3 public school buses, all of which have one entrance and one exit.

Figure 9.



## Goals and Objectives

**Goal:** Create a safer environment for students who are walking to school.

Objectives:

- Reduce traffic around the school by 10% within 2 years;
- Create safe streets and sidewalks in the neighborhood through enforcement and engineering;
- Increase the number of students who walk to school in groups by 10% within 1 year;
- Decrease number of car riders by 10% over the within 2 years;
- Increase pedestrian awareness;
- Increase community involvement in Safe Routes to School-related activities.

## Action Steps

### Education

Benteen Elementary has been a participant of KidsWalk, PEDS' Safe Routes to School program for the metro Atlanta region, since 2002. The KidsWalk program has provided a variety of tools and resources in the areas of education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering, and evaluation. Students will continue to participate in KidsWalk's various educational activities throughout the school year, including safety crossword puzzles, creating maps of travel routes, and participating in the Slow Down Campaign to increase pedestrian awareness in the Benteen community and surrounding areas.

Benteen will utilize its physical education program, as well as a variety of activities inside and outside of the classroom to educate its students on bicycle and pedestrian safety. Benteen will distribute educational material related to pedestrian safety (i.e. brochures, fact sheets, crossword puzzles, etc.) at least once a month to its students through teachers, as well as to parents through PTA meetings. Physical education instructors will implement activities that promote safe pedestrian behavior. Benteen will also host a bicycle rodeo at least once every school year to provide students with bicycle safety skills.

## **Encouragement**

Students will participate in walking logs, which enables them to receive various incentives (i.e. reflective wrist bands, reflective vests, watches, and stickers) according to the number of days they walk to school. Benteen will also host at least 2 walk-to-school day events per school year, including International Walk to School. Students will also participate in various contests related to Safe Routes to School throughout the school year, including a Draw Your Route to School poster contest, which encourages to be more attentive to their surroundings when walking and biking to school.

## **Enforcement**

Benteen will rely on speed radar signs to enforce the speed limit within the immediate area of the school. Police officers of zone 4 will strictly enforce speed limits at the school during Walk to School Day events, and will strictly enforce the parking laws throughout the school year. Benteen will also participate in a law enforcement charrette at least once a year during which the school community can address concerns related to enforcement with its local officers. Law enforcement charrettes have been a tremendous help to the Benteen community in the past in that they increase parents' knowledge about the consequences of speeding and parking illegally.

## **Evaluation**

Benteen Elementary will evaluate the success of its Safe Routes to School program by implementing the Student Travel Tally Sheet, a "show of hands survey" developed by the Safe Routes to School National Clearinghouse, at least three times a year. The surveys will be conducted among grades K-6 and will allow the school to assess students' modes of transportation. It will allow the school to compare travel modes according to grade level. It will also enable the school to observe any shifts of behavior.

Walk-to-School Day events will be used to evaluate participation from both students and the greater Morningside community. A head count and/or count of the number of material and props distributed will be taken at each event in order to track the number of participants. Evaluating these events will enable the school to measure changes in student participation, as well as involvement from the Benteen community.

Parent surveys will be conducted at the start of each school year to evaluate changes in attitude regarding children walking to school. Benteen will use the Parent Survey provided by the National Clearinghouse for Safe Routes to School. Survey questions will help identify school proximity, motivators and hindrances to walking to school. These surveys will be sent home with students and collected by the school champion. Surveys will also be distributed at parent meetings. Parent surveys will also help to indicate whether or not the school's approach to enforcement is effective.

## Benteen Elementary: Budget

<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b># of Units</b>	<b>Unit Price</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Alternate Price</b>
Sidewalks on Benteen Ave	1500 feet	\$3.75 per square foot	\$29,000	
OR Re-stripe Benteen Ave to narrow roads	1500 feet	\$5 per linear yard		\$3,000
Paint School Crossing and redefine curb at Casanova and Blvd			\$1,000	
Countdown signal at Blvd and Casanova	2	\$500	\$1,000	
Add pedestrian level lighting to Casanova	6	\$2,000	\$12,000	
Sidewalk on Funston Ave	750 feet	\$3.75 per square foot	\$15,000	
Install/update ADA compaint ramps	14 ramps	\$5,000 per ramp	\$70,000	
Paint crosswalk at Blvd and Borrroughs	1 leg	\$400 leg	\$400	
Install traffic signal at Blvd and Borrroughs	1	\$80,000	\$80,000	
Paint 4-legged crosswalk at Benteen Ave and Custer	4 legs	\$400 leg	\$1,600	
Repair sidewalk at East end of school along Custer	20 feet	\$3.75 per square foot	\$375	
Repair small gap in sidewalk in front of school	9 feet	\$3.75 per square foot	\$170	
Install bikerack at entrance of school	1	\$300	\$300	
Hawk signal at Blvd and Casanova			\$30,000	
Hawk signal at Blvd and Benteen Ave			\$30,000	
Fix entrance to gas station to be ADA accessible			\$25,000	
Move utility box that blocks ramp at intersection of Blvd and Custer			\$10,000	
Bike lanes on Custer	1 mile	\$15 per linear foot	\$79,200	
OR Speed humps on Custer	1 mile	\$3,000 per hump		\$60,000
create trail from East Village Park subdivision to school	.1 mile		\$10,000	
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$395,045</b>	