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Intergovernmental Coordination and School Siting

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Outline

- Integrating school facility planning with land use planning – importance for active living
- Case study of Lee County, Florida
- Findings/lessons learned
- Relevance to policymakers and active living



Intergovernmental Framework



School
Districts

Enrollment projections, school
facility plan, school construction

Municipalities

Population projections,
comprehensive plan, CIP,
subdivision approval

Counties

Population projections,
comprehensive plan, CIP,
parks & rec facilities, capital
costs for schools (some states)



School Site Selection

Typical criteria:

- Size: is parcel large enough?
- Cost: is the parcel affordable?
- Infrastructure: is water and sewer available?
Is road access and capacity sufficient?
- Topography: is extensive grading necessary?
- Location: is the site near future growth area?
- Safety: is the site free of chemical contamination?

Isolated Schools



Decline in Walking/Biking to School

In 1969, about half of students between the ages of five and 15 walked or biked to school (FHA, 1972)

In 2001, less than 15% walked and only 1% rode bikes (NHTS, 2001)



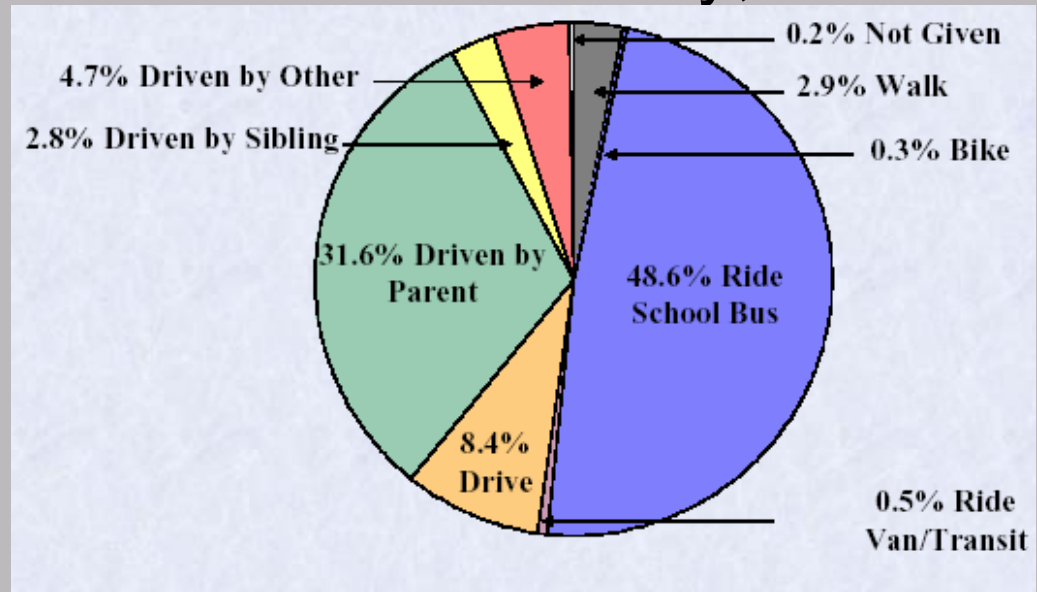
Travel to School

National survey (800 adults) in 2002:

- 53% driven by parents
- 38% ride school bus
- 17% walk
- 5% bike

(STPP, 2003)

Wake County, NC





Obstacles to Walking

Reasons for not walking to school:

- Too far (66%)
- No safe route (17%)
- Fear of abduction (16%)
- Not convenient (15%)

Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2003







Florida Mandate (in 2002)

Schools and local governments must adopt agreement that addresses:

- Student enrollment and population projections
- Information-sharing on growth and planned school facilities
- Local government participation in school facility planning (site selection)
- School board participation in plan amendments
- Availability of school capacity for growth
- Dispute resolution



Research Question

Has Florida's mandate (SB1906) for inter-local agreements led to greater coordination between school districts and local governments?



Methodology

- Case study to examine impact of Florida's mandated inter-local agreement
- Interviews with key informants, e.g., elected officials, planners, health department, parks and recreation, bike/ped coordinators, FL Department of Education, ...
 - 11 interviews with 17 people
- Interviews taped, transcribed and coded

Lee County at a Glance

Population: 475,000

Population increase: 20%
over last 5 years

Enrollment: 71,000 students

Enrollment growth: 5,000 students/year

Total Number of schools: 82

School construction plan: 35 schools in 10
years





Findings

1. Little or no compliance with the ILA
 - Some coordination at staff level
 - No teeth in legislation
 - Waiting for school concurrency (12/08)

“We only got together once, and that was to sign the [inter-local] agreement.”



Findings

2. Collaboration is personality-driven

Collaboration is dependent on factors such as personal relationships, turnover among key staff, and the commitment of the parties

“What we discovered was that ... the level of coordination that did occur really was personality-dependent.”



Findings

3. Effectiveness of ILA depends on who you talk to:

- State government optimistic:
 - *“The ILA has systematized coordination.”*
- *Local government more circumspect:*
 - “The ILA has been on the shelf since we achieved statutory compliance.”



Findings

4. Land use patterns limit walking/biking to school
 - Low-density, single-use, auto-dominated development plus lack of infrastructure (sidewalks) limit walking and biking

“The suburban model that we’ve developed in this county does not lend itself real well to us being able to promote more compact, pedestrian-friendly development.”



Findings

5. Many obstacles to collaboration

- Trust
- Time
- Concerns about loss of control
- No history of working together



Lessons Learned

For policymakers

- Importance of:
 - Monitoring and enforcement (teeth)
 - Mechanisms for collaboration
 - Technical assistance and training



Lessons Learned

For active living

- Intergovernmental coordination may help, but other issues must be addressed:
 - Land use patterns, infrastructure, safety, convenience, school siting practices, school policies, school segregation, ...



Some Final Thoughts

- A single case study. Results may differ in other counties.
 - Volusia County, FL began collaborating before the state mandate was adopted
 - Collaboration can occur without a state mandate (e.g., in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Lincoln, Nebraska)



A Collaborative Community

What a collaborative community look like?

- New development closely linked with school capacity
- Representative on each other's board
- Impact assessments
- Joint use institutionalized
- Buildout analysis conducted to identify location of future school sites
- School facility plans coordinated with capital improvement plans (water, sewer, other facs)
- Joint issuance of bonds for schools and county facilities



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Thank You

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