



2014 Annual Meeting Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Wednesday , September 10th 11:45am-1:00pm
Pro Walk Pro Bike Pro Place National Conference
David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Room 315

Welcome and Opening Remarks (Risa Wilkerson, Board Chair)

Welcome, everyone, to this year's annual meeting. Thank you for attending. We've got a pretty packed agenda today with a much shorter time period than we normally do for our annual meeting, so we appreciate your patience today as we try to pack a lot in. Today I want to focus on how Safe Routes to School has flourished over the past year, even with the changes Congress made to the federal Safe Routes to School program. What this tells me is that Safe Routes to School truly has become a movement, more than just one program.

I've got some stories to talk about today from what we've seen at the national level – but we also want you to tell us your stories. Each of you have at your table a “share your story” card. If you have a great local story about Safe Routes to School, fill it out and leave it for us – we'd love to highlight your work and successes on our blog, e-news and publications.

I would be greatly remiss in heading straight into my remarks today without acknowledging Deb Hubsmith, the founding director of the National Partnership. This is the first annual meeting without her as she recovers from leukemia. The great news is she is recovering well. However, as you may have seen in our announcement earlier this week, Deb will be only working part-time once she is able to resume work in January. So she will be stepping down as director. She will continue to be involved as a board member and as a strategic consultant for the organization. We will soon be starting the search process for a new executive director – so please let me know if you have suggestions. Today, I wanted to take a moment for us to celebrate Deb's tireless commitment and leadership for Safe Routes to School and the National Partnership – we look forward to having her back in her new role next year. Each table has colored index cards – if you want to write a note to Deb, we'll collect those at the end of the meeting and get those to her.

Now that we've honored Deb's commitment, I wanted to turn to what we've seen happen in the past year or so that has helped continue to grow Safe Routes to School. First – research continues to document how Safe Routes to School is making it safer for more kids to walk and bicycle:

- Bridging the Gap: schools with Safe Routes to School have 32% of kids walking/ biking, compared with 20% for non-SRTS schools
- NYC study: Safety impacts of Safe Routes to School investments yield net of \$230M / 50 years
- Study in 5 states: Safe Routes to School projects increase walking/bicycling by 37%

While Congress seemingly dealt a blow to Safe Routes to School in the 2012 transportation law, we see Safe Routes to School continuing, and building healthy communities. We have worked with advocates to shape the implementation of the new Transportation Alternatives program to ensure that Safe Routes to School continues to have access to funds. Nine states have committed state resources to make up

the newly required matching dollars for SRTS projects, helping ensure that lower-income communities can attend. We're working with advocates around the country to ensure that all transportation projects are inclusive of bicyclists and pedestrians through Complete Streets policies and making sure to open up play-spaces to families through shared use agreements:

- Our technical assistance team helped 22 low-income communities around the country advance Complete Streets and shared use policies.
- Our staff worked with partners and advocates in key states to advance policies in Chattanooga, TN; Jackson, MS; Toledo, OH, to name a few.

We have key new partners joining the Safe Routes to School movement. The National Partnership is working with Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to increase access to parks, playgrounds, walking paths, bike lanes, school gyms and other safe places to be active. The NAACP co-chairs our Active Transportation Diversity Task Force, and recently passed a resolution committing to advancing shared use, Complete Streets, and transportation funding to create a safer built environment in communities of color.

We recently assessed implementation of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) in 10 states. We looked at things like their staffing, funding levels, application processes and more. And what we found is hopeful:

- Across these 10 states, under the old Safe Routes to School program, they received \$30.9M.
- Congress cut the new TAP program by 30%, so applying that cut to Safe Routes to School, we'd expect to receive about \$22.9M in awards.
- What we've seen so far in these 10 states, is that averaged for one year, those 10 states have awarded \$21.3 M to projects, plus MPOs have awarded another \$2.6M in projects. And there are a number of MPOs that haven't yet released their projects and so it's likely more.

So, what we see is that Safe Routes to School projects are holding their own under TAP, though funds are still down due to TAP cuts. Some states are keeping standalone Safe Routes to School competitions, and in others, SRTS projects are competing against other kinds of projects—but we are still seeing good representation to SRTS projects. This could change as more states award projects so it bears watching, but is hopeful.

For those of you interested in more on the federal legislative front, Margo Pedroso will be co-presenting with Caron Whitaker from the League of American Bicyclists at a presentation at 1:15pm on the federal landscape down the hall.

Over the past year, we've issued many new fact sheets, local success stories and [publications](#) to keep advancing the Safe Routes to School movement across the country. Our webinar series continues to be very popular with more than 6,000 of you taking part in the webinars we offered in 2013. This shows the continued demand for communities all across the country to get involved with Safe Routes to School.

In 2013, we also launched the Fire Up Your Feet initiative in partnership with First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Active Schools initiative. Schools and families around the country can use Fire Up Your Feet to track minutes of physical activity, compete for cash awards and do fundraising based of healthy behaviors. We now have nearly 1,000 schools across the country registered for Fire Up your Feet, and 19,000 users have tracked more than 22.7 million minutes of physical activity. Seventy-six

percent of surveyed participants report that their children increased physical activity during the campaign.

The program continues to evolve to serve its users; for the Spring 2014 campaign, we added materials and physical activity tracking in Spanish, as well as a school coordinator function so that school staff can log activity for families lacking internet access, which is particularly valuable for lower-income schools. Right now, Kaiser Permanente and PeopleForBikes have sponsored cash awards for schools in a few key regions around the country; we're working with other markets around the country to find sponsors to provide awards in more locations. We hope to see more of your communities joining in at fireupyourfeet.org.

With our limited time today, we've only been able to touch on a few highlights from the past year. We are enthusiastic about what 2015 brings for Safe Routes to School and hope you are too. Don't forget to share your stories with us so we can help publicize the great work going on around the country. Next we are going to move into the breakout groups that have always been such a great way for annual meeting participants to brainstorm together and share successes. Hopefully you are already seated in the group you want to participate in; if not you have a very short period to change seats. You have 35 minutes in your group to talk about your topic, challenges and solutions and how the National Partnership can help you move forward on this issue. Then, we'll be doing a town hall style report back where I will ask anyone for their key takeaway or eureka moment from the group you participated in.

Breakout Group Notes and Town Hall Report Back

Meeting participants broke up into small groups to discuss various topics, and then reported back to the full group their key takeaways from the discussions.

Engaging Partners in Safe Routes to School, Christine Green

Partner with national or state organizations that work with schools. That way, they hear the message about Safe Routes to School from a trusted source and people working the field can get in easier. Start to involve high schools. Examples: National Association of School Nurses, National Education Association, State School Board, AAPHRD. U.S. DOT needs to allow health and physical activity data to be included as a performance measure. Under ACA, nonprofit hospitals are collecting lots of data. Currently federal transportation grants do not allow this data to be reported. The CDC should be working with the U.S. DOT to foster this data collection. Greenway/trail groups are interested in Safe Routes to School but do not know where to start or how to get involved. Other ideas: Judges need to learn about bicycle and pedestrian accidents; Rural partners are needed in Congress, reach out to Chamber of Commerce and rural partners; if cross guards are municipal employees, insurance companies will have an interest in keeping them safe.

Overcoming Local Opposition, Matthew Colvin

The group agreed that opposition can come from many angles: whether it is school officials, engineers, local residents, or the state itself. Success had been found by Erin Reed, state coordinator for Massachusetts, by identifying a strong leader. She urged groups to "shout their successes from the rooftop". Massachusetts will often promote the same success story over and over again, until it snowballs and becomes a movement. She suggested that, even if you only have 5 people participating in a walking school bus, tout it, because it is still a success. She also suggested that sometimes you just need to let certain people move on before pushing again.

Engaging Young People in Your Program and Teaching Kids Safe Behaviors, Michelle Lieberman and Nora Shepard

This group identified the challenges of sustainability, particularly when a strong advocate moves on to a different school or neighborhood. They believed integrating Safe Routes to School, pedestrian safety, and student engagement into a policy, whether it be student wellness or a separate policy, and having the state or local school board enact it to give a little more clout in talking to schools would be helpful. Involving youth in the planning and decision making process can be more effective in getting them excited to be a part of the movement than having them implement ideas that have already been decided on by adults. High turnover of principals, parent champions, and school board members can cause SRTS programs to stall or flounder. A potential solution is to have a school district policy supporting SRTS programs to ensure they have a life even if the individual champions move on. When schools aren't able to integrate walking/bicycling education in the classroom or the school day, looking to community organizations and after-school programs may be a good alternative

Creating Effective Walking School Buses, Ian Thomas

There was a lot of discussion about the fact that walking school buses can be highly formalized, top-down programs with funded coordinators, volunteers with background checks, official sign-up by kids, policies for weather, etc., or they can be grass-roots driven by groups of motivated parents in a particular neighborhood who know/trust each other, etc. The second model only works in middle/high-income neighborhoods, so it doesn't serve the kids who need it most. Under the formalized model, background checks for volunteers is an enormous financial burden - often \$20/volunteer per year, which is an enormous burden on a non-profit; however, school districts sometimes take ownership of the program and background-check the volunteers as part of the same system they use for volunteer classroom assistants, playground monitors, etc. Suggestion was made that the National Partnership or the National Center for Safe Routes to School negotiate some kind of national or state-by-state arrangement with the relevant law enforcement agency to provide this service at a volume discount for local groups. Staging post walking school buses - where parents' cars and/or school buses drop kids at "staging post" location one mile or less from school on a safe route to school - were discussed. A request was made for the National Partnership to produce some case studies or best-practice resources for this model.

Implementing Safe Routes to School in Rural Areas, Melissa Kraemer Badtke

The group believes that children who have or want to walk to school are going to walk regardless of whether or not it's safe. One way they had found success in project implementation in rural areas was by working with local nursing students to run and administer their walking school busses as a part of their education curriculum. The group noted that, even though they are in small, rural communities that may not have many resources, they have many partnerships that they can work with, and it is important to build those relationships. Students will be walking no matter what, so how do we ensure there are facilities, include students that are bused too, work with universities for creative thinking and implementation.

City or Region-wide Safe Routes to School Programs (2 tables), Kate Moening and Jeanie Ward-Waller

One of the "aha moments" for this group was in talking about how the National Partnership can participate with local groups to find, create, or invest in data that assists in connecting Safe Routes to School with better education outcomes, rather than health or safety. This could be particularly with schools that are resistant to adding another process or program, and see Safe Routes to School as transportation and health related, but not academic. Data, research, and case studies would be a relevant assistance for these areas. Additionally, the idea of a tiered program was suggested to get schools engaged and excited about participating. Both New Jersey and South Carolina have created

regional competitions that have proven successful in motivating schools to undertake SRTS projects, and award bronze, silver, and gold levels to participating schools.

Other examples of large school districts working on Safe Routes to School were shared. Boston is working on a district-wide SRTS plan in a smaller district. Clark County (Las Vegas) is also thinking about how to do this on a much larger scale - over 300 schools. Some other good examples of large districts that are working on regional SRTS planning are Los Angeles Unified School District, San Francisco Unified School District and Miami Unified School District. Juneau is struggling to do comprehensive planning for a small district that is spread out over a very large region - the size of Rhode Island. The group requested some good examples of regional SRTS planning in mostly rural areas. San Diego is working on a plan to get seniors involved as volunteers for crossing guards and walking school buses and there seemed to be lots of potential in this strategy.

Identifying Sustainable Funding, Meg Thomas Ackerman

The group was interested in identifying ways that traffic citations could be used for revenue funding, using the current model in Hawaii. Portland, OR reported several ways they find funding: traffic enforcement revenue, state DOT, regional MPO. Minnesota suggested looking for local partners and foundations with a variety of interests (e.g. crime prevention), or using fines in school zones to support SRTS.

Addressing Equity and Diversity in Safe Routes to School, Sara Zimmerman

The equity table primarily discussed equity in hiring – importance of bringing people of color into this work in a paid capacity. People agreed that individuals in existing organizations needed to use their access to power to advocate for changes. The group discussed the importance for programs and community engagement in having people who come from community, but also acknowledgment that communities are often internally very diverse. The importance of language access was also discussed.