



**Safe Routes to School National Partnership  
2008 Annual Meeting  
Held September 2, 2008 in Seattle, WA**

**Introductions (Risa Wilkerson)**

Risa thanked everyone for coming to the 2008 Annual Meeting, and thanked Suzan Pinsof, the Annual Meeting Committee and staff for putting the meeting together.

She introduced the topics for the Annual Meeting, beginning with where the Partnership is and where we are going. We will then accept ideas about what the Partnership could be and might be working on in the future. During the meeting, the topic of the rise of gas prices and Safe Routes to School is on the schedule too, specifically thinking about what this means and how the Partnership can play a key role. Breakout groups were identified by partner affiliates, and we will share what is discussed with working groups. The break out groups may help inform the Partnership on legislative platforms and on messages that are disseminated. The format of the afternoon is very interactive and is about getting involved with the reauthorization process and meeting with members of Congress.

**Summary of Partnership's Activities (Deb Hubsmith)**

Deb reported that the Partnership is developing the 2009 Strategic Plan so the Annual Meeting comes at a good time, so we can look at the last 12 months and then towards what we see for the year ahead. We are looking for gaps that may be addressed by the Partnership, the National Center for Safe Routes to School, or the FHWA.

The last year has been amazing. We have been framing our issues, and everyone has been hearing a lot about childhood obesity. We have been talking with Congressional Members and others, and everyone seems to get it. Some of the issues at hand are gas prices rising, school buses being cut, and parents are having a hard time being able to afford driving kids to school. There is also the climate issue, and studies show that up to 30% of morning traffic can be attributed to parents driving their children to school. This amounts to the perfect storm for SRTS. The National Partnership has more than 350 partners, made up of local, statewide, and national organizations. We are approaching new national

organizations each month and new groups have joined such as the Institute for Transportation Engineers, the American Cancer Society, YMCA and the American Diabetes Association. When we have an action alert, we send it out to all 350 groups, with a point person who hopefully gets our message out to the contacts within their group. Deb urged the people to invite other organizations to join the partnership, as it is free. Margo Pedroso, Policy Manager, is in Washington, DC, and can meet with staff there to bring on more national organizations. Brooke Driesse and Margo Pedroso are both new staff members in the last year. The first SRTS hearing before Congress took place on October 2, 2007. Deb Hubsmith, Scott Bricker (Bicycle Transportation Alliance), Lauren Marchetti (National Center for SRTS), and Lisa Koch (Former Kansas SRTS DOT Coordinator) testified. 20 lawmakers attended, a good turnout, and many of them spoke about how they came to school when they were young and how kids today don't have those opportunities. Republicans and Democrats alike talked about childhood obesity. The Partnership also distributed the State of the States report, which outlined that 51 SRTS DOT Coordinators are all in place, and that all states but Georgia have released application guidelines. Considerable progress has been made. We gave the report to every Senator through Congresswoman Boxer's office, and Congressman Oberstar, Blumenauer and Petri co-signed a dear colleague letters, sending the report to House offices. Robert Ping is working on the Safe Routes to School State Network Project, which is making sure federal funds get spent on good projects, and to encourage states to work on policy issues like school siting and complete streets. There are 10 SRTS State Networks and each has an action plan and is building partnerships statewide to share best practices nationwide. The Michigan Fitness Foundation held the first National SRTS Conference in November 2007. It was a sell out show with 400 people, and was co-presented by the SRTSNP and NCSRTS. The Partnership recently produced report for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on how SRTS is leveraging resources. SRTS doesn't require matching funds, but communities are matching with volunteer energy and this shows how we are adding value to the federal program. Staff from the Partnership (and Sharon Roerty) served on National SRTS Task Force. The Task Force recommends an increase in funding for the next SRTS bill. The Government Accountability Office did an audit right after the program was authorized, and many of advocates were interviewed. The GAO published report was good, and called for the need for a national evaluation strategy, which is what the Partnership has been requesting for three years, and are working to get included in the reauthorization bill. The climate bill didn't pass the Senate this year, but we joined a Climate change group and included language for bicycle/pedestrian funding in that bill. Congressman Blumenauer's gas relief bill included language to expand SRTS to K-12. Deb reported that more than 300 people participate on our listserv, where you can share news from your community, ideas, questions, and strategies. The Partnership responded quickly to school bus cuts and came out with talking points. We have given many interviews with numerous papers throughout the year – NY Times, USA Today, and local newspapers and radio stations. We send our brochures to national and local conferences to reach wider audiences. The Partnership was asked to join the Steering Committee for the

National Complete Streets Coalition, and helped on the bill that is working its way through the House and Senate. We provided comments for the Transportation 4 America platform to include SRTS in it. Additionally, we are keeping the website up to date – Brooke updates each state’s webpage every four months- and we are always putting up resources.

In the year ahead the federal transportation bill is a big priority. We are also looking at the Climate bill and are building more champions and allies with other organizations, like cities, MPOs and school organizations, so we have a whole group of people saying we need SRTS in the transportation bill. We will release two new reports within two weeks -- one on SRTS being institutionalized into health in schools, and the other on policy changes in the ten states where we are operating our state network project. 2009 is our last year of initial funding for ten Network states, and we are looking at the possibility of expanding it to all 50 states. We will be producing three more reports in December - one on what SRTS is doing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our report will include examples quantifying how we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and we will be asking for mode-shift numbers from communities so that we can use an EPA calculator to do calculations. We did a similar exercise in California for the AB32 Climate Bill (which 13 other states have modeled laws after). We plan to continue our work to push for better SRTS evaluation in 2009. We need numbers since Congress is moving towards an performance-based evaluative process of choosing what to fund in transportation. We are also starting two new workgroups in the next month, one on implementation issues (Title 23 and federal requirements) and specific legislative language for the bill to make it easier for locals to implement projects/paperwork, and a second workgroup on school bus cuts. The local school project kicked off in the ten Network states, where the Networks are following schools and helping them implement SRTS programs. We contracted with UC Berkeley on evaluation in those schools, and we will have our own data come out of that. We will also be producing a 2008 State Network annual report and a 2009 Policy report. We are continuing to work with the media, and have formed a partnership with Kaiser Permanente where they are having doctors walk to school and write op ed letters on why SRTS and walking to school is important.

### **Questions or Ideas on What Is Needed (Group)**

Shannon Hornsby liked the idea of working with the doctors and connecting them with a local partner or with a local pedestrian/bicycle advocacy group.

Molly O’Reilly brought up how SRTS infrastructure money is now being spent to undo poorly designed transportation projects. We need to work to get that overall transportation money spent on what doesn’t make our task impossible. Deb Hubsmith said the National Complete Streets Coalition is working on legislation in the House and Senate that would require the consideration of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in all projects; we want this rolled into the transportation bill. SRTSNP also has a provision for complete streets in our legislative platform. Phil Caruso commented that ITE is working closely to look

at Complete Streets and their goal is to try to integrate SRTS into the overall transportation planning and engineering spectrum. John Robitscher from NACDD suggested adding SRTS to checklists to educate developers before they start building. Cynthia Hoyle, a transportation planner and member of ITE, commented that engineers are good at doing what they are asked to do, so we need to give them this as part of what they look at when they build new streets since they don't think about it. Deb Hubsmith said it is important for us to serve on selection committee at the local level where design details are solidified, and ask questions like "how can people walk here or bike here?" Sue Newberry brought up performance measures like level of service and how they shouldn't get credit until they are serving bikes/pedestrians.

John Ciccarelli talked about complete land use to put in grid developments instead of conventional suburbs, and how if we seize the opportunity when the plotting is done that this is a huge win. He wondered if with the housing crash if we have opportunities to do what Davis, California did to buy big plots. LEED-Neighborhood Development has gone through a pilot stage if neighborhoods are in walking/cycling needs. Small cities don't even have a traffic engineer or a planning department. The person with the most expertise is the developer, since the local level people don't know how to check for these sorts of things. We need to identify solutions across a range of cities. Deb Hubsmith said this points to a need for best practices to show how it has been done.

Melody Geraci said with "drive till you qualify" that families are most at risk. Fuel costs are a nightmare so we should not try and convey that this is an opportunity in poorer communities. This is pretty low on their list of needs. We need messaging tools to provide to at-risk folks related to the bus cuts.

Lee Kokinakis from Michigan brought up bringing schools into SRTS and how it is a performance issue (outcomes/evaluations measures). We have lots of experience with education and encouragement programs and what schools need when they implement but are they picking the right non-infrastructure projects and infrastructure, and what more can we do to shift focus for encouragement?

Wendi Kallins has high interest in health at a certain schools and switched education gears to reach their audience. We need to educate both parents and kids so parents can reinforce what kids are being taught.

Ellen Aagaard asked what the Partnership is doing to reach out to school organizers/PTA organizers that are not associated with a federal grant or looking to become one, but could benefit from the resources. Deb said the Partnership's website has tools on how to put together a program with "how to's" and best practices. The National PTA is a partner and sends out our emails on how to get involved. Brooke spoke to the California State PTA on how to get involved, and in California their PTA passed a resolution supporting SRTS that is working its way to the national level. NCSRTS has the contract from the FHWA on answering day-to-day questions from school teachers/PTA, and we don't want to duplicate

that. We are able to lobby and want to advocate, distill best practices on setting up statewide programs (for infrastructure and non-infrastructure) and on other policies like school siting and complete streets with a major policy and networking angle while spreading the word.

Patty Olsen suggested partnering with SafeKids and finding groups to work with.

### **Rising Fuel Costs (Margo Pedroso)**

In July, the American Association of School Administrators conducted a “Fuel and Energy Snapshot Survey,” in which 99% of school superintendents reported that rising fuel costs were impacting their budgets. The Partnership has been collecting media stories on this issue from across the country – Detroit, MI; Goldsboro, NC; Dallas, TX; Modesto, CA; and Buffalo, NY are a few examples. There are reports of schools eliminating late buses, combining sports teams onto one bus for away games, eliminating field trips, implementing no idling policies, and increasing the walking radius. The walking radius has gone up to as much as three miles in some communities. Other schools are reducing bus stops, and reducing school weeks to four days. Congress authored a bill about creating emergency grants for schools struggling with bus cuts. Parents are upset, and we are concerned that schools aren’t necessarily thinking about safety as they increase the walking radius and decrease bus stops. Parents will just start driving, which doesn’t address the issue at hand. Only 15% of kids walk today instead of the 60% who did in the 1960’s. We’d like your help on how we can turn these headlines into positive stories on how SRTS can help address these challenges, so that kids don’t just move from the bus to their parents’ cars. We need long-term solutions for schools, and the solutions need to include schools, city and county governments, and parents. Also, this reinforces our call for an increase in SRTS funding. We are pulling together a working group to develop a refined version of our messaging document to use with media, and a resource document and fact sheet for communities dealing with this. Contact Margo about joining via email at [margo@saferoutespartnership.org](mailto:margo@saferoutespartnership.org).

The question was asked if there is SRTS infrastructure money available for bus routes feeding into schools. Safe routes to bus stops is not eligible under SAFETEA-LU, but we are looking to add it to the next round of legislation for bus stops located outside of the two mile radius, with only 10% or less of the infrastructure money being spent on safe routes to bus stops.

A second question was asked regarding what it costs to run a school bus for the entire year. A few people answered that it costs at least \$37,000/year, but this will be something that we verify through our new working group.

Someone stated that new school siting needs to be added to this discussion, and that no idling has a lot of potential. No idling is easy to implement and the advantages are enormous.

Someone stated that school bus manufacturers have been attempting to get legislation to disallow mass transit for children to school.

Leigh Ann Von Hagen said they have been tracking articles on who wants to eliminate courtesy busing in New Jersey. The school board will eliminate courtesy busing in June, but this comes out in September before school starts and isn't handled properly.

Sally Flocks suggested national legislation to authorize speed cameras in school zones throughout the country with a strong financial incentive so all states would do it. The biggest risk in walking is the speed of cars, and this could be a tremendous source of funding for SRTS.

Wendi Kallins brought up the fact that funding comes in separate pots (ie, school buses comes from school money, city buses from city money) and asked if there is there anyway to bridge the money so we aren't always in this dilemma.

Robert Ping said that putting people at the table makes a difference, and that checking in helps since they normally work in silos.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> National SRTS Conference (Scott Bricker)**

Bicycle Transportation Alliance is the host of the next SRTS Conference in Portland, Oregon scheduled for August 18-21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 with the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and the National Center for Safe Routes to School as presenting cosponsors. Portland is an exemplary community and a great example of leadership. The Sunday before the conference is Sunday Parkways, where they close down ten miles of street, as a community activity. They are hoping to have a health and research day with Kaiser Permanente as the headline sponsor. There will be two full days of conference events and lots of bike riding and walking through downtown. The conference will be held at the Hilton Portland and Executive Tower.

### **Report-backs from Breakout Groups**

#### **Barriers to SRTS**

The main barriers to SRTS are the perception of physical safety, school official's concerns with liability, the validity of the program, and coordination of efforts with city staff and engineers. Some solutions are to focus on real solutions to real problems, get data, and to work on congestion/parking issues at schools with school officials.

#### *Ideas from breakout group:*

- Issues are physical barriers, funding barriers, safety barriers, liability concerns, and coordination with city/town staff and engineers (getting all the groups involved from the beginning).
- Change bus drivers from driving buses to walking neighborhoods.

- Make sure walking school buses utilize parents (incentive-based instead of cash).
- Work with mass transit providers to develop neighborhood/group 'walk and ride' programs.
- Create district-wide safety programs.
- Work with law enforcement agencies.
- Compare existing situation with proposed solutions.
- Involve school officials in walking audits with students and city staff.
- Get neighborhood champions to get the rest of the neighborhood on board.
- Use congestion and parking problems at schools to sell solutions.
- Help grassroots efforts take responsibility away from school officials.

### **Big Picture**

We need to figure out how to incorporate our message into global warming and childhood obesity, and how to integrate youth into global warming curriculum and programs that mayors are involved in (active transportation). There is a need for data to drive home the issue for policy change and funding, and we can talk about health and SRTS from all these angles.

*Ideas from breakout group:*

- Good examples: Minigrants from Walmart and Aetna in NJ came about because having state agencies like the DOT and the DOH on board encouraged coordination.
- Work with developers of science curriculum who educate on global climate change to insert messages about what individuals can do (including using walking and bicycling as transportation).
- We need new data for today's young parents.
- Use local, negative incidents as opportunities to bring in new partners and to promote new messages.
- Be comfortable with different messages, which are encompassed in SRTS – environment, health, safety, obesity, social environment, and socialization with kids and parents.
- When looking to influence behavior change, consider the different groups we are dealing with – mandatory walkers (no choice), always drivers, and swing groups who will walk or drive according to majority.
- We also need non-traditional partners and curriculum.

### **Building Coalitions**

Every community is different and we need to understand the differences. Some solutions were: hosting SRTS workshops in communities and countywide to understand where opportunities are, and looking at the state and national level needs. We can also look at energy in the community.

*Ideas from breakout group:*

- Use the SRTS Workshop to hash out issues, develop plans that solve issues, and bring the right stakeholders together.
- Some key stakeholders are parents, PTA, principals, superintendents, board members, students, transportation, planners, police, city council, local bike organizations, and neighborhood associations.
- Money really needs to be involved to get local community members to the table. Let the community know that they can receive money for non-infrastructure improvements.
- Bring the workshop to the communities.
- Engage youth.
- Recognize who the stakeholders are.
- Look at the obesity prevention program through CDC, and try to get more public health people, NACCD, and YMCA involved.

### **Building State Networks**

There is a need for diversity to bring lots of partners to the table, and we should be asking who we need on the state networks. NACDD and other folks from health departments should be brought to the table. The focus is on the SRTS program at the state level. DOTs are challenged by the need for health/education and grassroots. We need to get elected officials on board (can do a lot in one phone call), connect the state with a local perspective, and need grassroots stories as our selling point to make it upstairs.

#### *Ideas from breakout group:*

- Make sure the right people are invited to the table. Ask everyone at the table to invite others, and create an email list for the Network.
- Tap into National Association of Cities and Counties local offices.
- Make sure we are connecting DOTs with Health.
- Get traffic engineers and planners on board.
- Provide education, outreach and trainings.
- A technical consultant for the state is necessary for success.
- Make sure Traffic Safety Committees have SRTS language.
- Make non-infrastructure best practices options available.
- Networks can help when State Coordinators run into road blocks.
- The Partnership could help promote the necessity of a technical consultant for states.
- Coordinate to promote what other states are doing and their successes.
- Assist with grant-writing, resources, and foundations.

### **Intersections**

A lot has happened in regards to improving intersections and making them safer, and we really need a uniform approach for how they are delineated as you are approaching a school zone. We also need a process for data collection for effectiveness in performance measures, and a concentric approach to dealing



with this. The school is center and going out and identifying tools available to traffic engineers to use.

*Ideas from breakout group:*

- It is a challenge for engineers to take all perspectives into consideration.
- We need good case studies of school districts working closely with municipal organizations.
- We need public officials as champions of programs and establishing a bond between engineers and staff to work with the community.
- Have SRTS Coordinators look at the ¼ mile perimeter of schools – beacons, flashers – to make a uniform commitment to consolidating crosswalks. A school zone area should be adopted nationally by State Coordinators.
- Create a hierarchy of things to look at.
- Consistency in practice creates measurable outcomes and helps create a unified approach. Survey of practices for signage and making of schools on a website.
- Some measurable outcomes would include: injury reduction, operations characteristics, and speed trailer data.
- Show engineers how to save money proactively and not retroactively, and how to create a safer environment for safe routes using SRTS money.
- Need SRTS Coordinators to encourage uniformity of standards so Coordinators can filter information into communities and provide a concentric approach.
- Need for data regarding pictures and posting engineering improvements and relevant survey information.

**Liability**

Some communities don't have an issue with liability, so don't make it an issue. We don't want it to suddenly become a hurdle so have a plan b. One idea is removing the school as the sponsor of SRTS activities, and stressing the importance of being consistent for citywide concerns that all schools are treated the same way, and the value of mapping.

*Ideas from breakout group:*

- Ask a risk manager, DA or AG to address the issue.
- Compare SRTS to field trips.
- Point out successful communities. (if they can do it, why can't we?)
- Don't make it an issue unless it comes up.
- If it is an issue, it may be feasible to remove the school as the sponsor.
- The Partnership can help by collecting and distributing success stories and developing information so that if the liability issue arises, program personnel have guidelines available.
- Key stakeholders are PTA, YMCA, Attorney General and legal associations, local police, civic organizations, anyone taking on a SRTS program, and ITE or other local engineers.

### **Making the Case for SRTS**

One thought was “more children more often”. Another was reaching out to the different constituencies in the school and school district. We need to make data-driven cases around health, academic progress, parental involvement, congestion mitigation and air quality, and facilities cost. Security is a solution-driven issue. Liability is also solution-driven, which can be helped through training.

Ideas from breakout group:

- We need to offer real life examples.
- Consider air quality improvement.
- Look at congestion reduction measures based on behavioral change.
- Consider different cultural points of view.
- Address the concerns of child abduction and stranger danger.
- Point out that more eyes mean a safer community.
- Tap into teachers.
- Need more strong evaluation data.
- Show parents how much they save on gas.
- Sell the concept to parents for the first and last ten weeks of the school year.

### **School Bus Cuts and Gas Prices**

There is very little, if any, incentive for school districts to stop busing, or to only provide it for kids who live far away. In addition, it is politically unpopular to stop busing, and there are the issues of desegregation busing and consolidated community school districts. The number one need is tons of research, as there is not much known surrounding funding formulas in the states. There is also a need to increase incentives in order to get school districts to buy in. The Partnership is forming a working group on this topic to do further research.

### **School District Based Planning and Evaluation**

The district is where policies take place and get made (like school choice, start times, and wellness policies). The real work of SRTS happens on the ground at the grassroots level and we need a bridge between the two. Some ideas were taskforces for non-traditional partners, and an outside entity for the district. A good example is in Eugene, Oregon to integrate buses and SRTS together. Arkansas is doing incredible evaluation work on the statewide level for us all to use.

*Ideas from breakout group:*

- Districts might have resources that individual schools might not have.
- There are federal wellness mandates so fold SRTS into it.
- Create district-wide travel plans with the DOT at the table.

- Tie physical activity to academic performance. England does this already. You can do this through a survey by adding BMI, academic performance, process.
- School based choice brings a clash with social justice. How to make it equal and still create more walking and bicycling opportunities?
- Place parking lot limits, and only allow car poolers.
- Partner with bus transportation, and make it “active transportation”.
- Be flexible with community needs by dropping off away from school, cleaning up areas around school and increasing physical activity that way, and acknowledge carpooling.
- Create a national model for school transportation officials.
- Provide workshops that answer questions like “how does the district work? How do you deal with the change of an administration?”

### **School Siting**

Full cost analysis’ are not done, although some states are starting to. Additionally, the incentives are either not there or in the other direction. We need to expose the myth surrounding land use assumptions for large sprawling schools and show joint use approaches. Parents are making the push for schools/developers. We need to challenge assumptions, talk with players (Home Builders Association), collect existing reports and research summaries. We also need to compile nationwide state level examples (suburban, rural, and urban).

#### *Ideas from breakout group:*

- Conduct outreach to big developers that are still doing suburban developments.
- Some of the players we need to reach are the Homebuilder’s Association of America, developers, parents, PTAs, students, and the American Association of School Administrators.
- Collect existing reports and research summaries.
- Create a video covering suburban, urban, and rural success examples.
- Need national and statewide examples.
- Charge for parking at schools.
- Figure out a way to make this attractive to developers.

### **SRTS Grant Implementation**

The challenge in SRTS grant implementation is in getting the money out the door. Grantees are bogged down by paperwork requirements from the federal level, overhead is high, and there are delays in projects. States are not getting money out the door as quickly as they should be. We need to develop best practices as resources for the states to show them states that are doing a good job to work through these issues. We also need statewide contracts to get funds out the door more quickly and to waive federal requirements for non-infrastructure projects. Other ideas were sample contracts (showing how to score and rank) and getting the right people on advisory committees. The Partnership is forming

a working group on this topic to do further research about current best practices and to proposed language for the reauthorization.

*Ideas from breakout group:*

- Refer to this as “reducing overhead” and not streamlining.
- MPOs need to have a bigger role, but have to be careful to do so without favoring urban areas over rural.
- Potentially use “public embarrassment” at not spending available funds as a solution.
- There is a need for best practices, like MA statewide infrastructure contract, and OK getting a letter requesting a non-infrastructure waiver.
- Look into a funding mechanism to convert federal money to state money, which is more flexible. This may not be allowed by the FHWA though.
- Send non-infrastructure through state highway offices.
- Get it on the record at the federal level that these are problems for the program.
- Encourage states to separate infrastructure and non-infrastructure.
- Clarify roles for SRTS Coordinators to try and give them more decision-making power.
- Beef up language on who is on committees and their roles, timelines, and meetings.

**History of Transportation (Andy Clarke)**

Andy Clarke reported on the History of Transportation and how it pertains to SRTS. He made the point that SRTS is a now core program that is a part of the 2005 SAFETEA-LU legislation, not an earmark. It all got started when the League of American Wheelmen created the Good Roads Movement in the 1890’s, which included petitions to Congress for funding to pave the nation’s roads and also established the Office of Road Inquiry and the Bureau of Public Roads in US Department of Agriculture (the forerunner of FHWA). In 1944, the interstate system of 40,000 miles was designated, and the two-year Highway Acts fund was designated. In 1956, the Highway Trust Fund was established to build the National Interstate and Defense Highways System. The gas tax was three cents. In 1959, the gas tax increased to four cents, and in 1964 the UMTA (now FTA) was created and funded from the General Fund. In 1966, the Highway Safety Act was passed to address record high fatalities, and in 1967 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and USDOT were established. In 1968, the interstate increased to 42,500 miles, and in 1970 the NHTSA was established. The 1980’s ushered in a gas tax increase to nine cents, with one cent dedicated to transit. In 1986 the Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act was vetoed because of a speed limit fight, and in 1988 Transportation 2020 was launched for the Post-interstate era. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was signed in 1991, and provided a stronger planning process, flexibility in funding, new bicycle/pedestrian requirements, enhancements, CMAQ, Rec Trails created, and a \$147 billion authorization. In 1993, the gas tax increased to 18 cents, including 4.3 cents for debt relief. In 1998

the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century passed with a \$217 billion authorization. 2005 ushered in the \$286.5 billion Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users, and it was within this bill that the \$612 million Safe Routes to School program was created. 2009 will be the next transportation bill.

### **ASK (Deb Hubsmith)**

Deb reported that in subsequent legislation we want to retain basically the same structure. Our main changes are: increasing the funding, expanding the program to high schools, requiring evaluation, and reducing the overhead through title 23 requirements See

[http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/SRTS\\_reauthorization\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/SRTS_reauthorization_recommendations.pdf) for details on the Partnership's legislative platform.

Deb encouraged attendees to express enthusiasm for Safe Routes to School to show their Congressional members how it is working in their district.

### **Overview of Transportation Bill Process (Jill McKinnie)**

Jill McKinnie from Representative Larsen's (D-WA) district office started off by saying that the highway system is aging, and transit and inner city rail systems need investments with the rising prices of gas. Congressman Rick Larsen is a member of the Committee writing the new transportation bill. Since May he has held five transportation roundtables in their district about the future transportation bill, and what SAFETEA-LU should like. Jill stressed the importance of SRTS and its impact in their district north of Seattle. It is especially critical today with school starting this week, and newspapers full of stories on bus cuts due to rising fuel prices. Last year, fuel costs increased by 27%. This presents an opportunity to increase the number of walking routes to school. She shared about communities in Washington that received SRTS grants, and what they are doing with the grants. These show that SRTS helps make it safe to walk to school, but also how districts can cope with the rising prices of gas. It is important to them to increase funding for SRTS. Congressman Oberstar told Congressman Larsen that he wants to introduce a bill as early as possible in 2009, so now is the time to do the important work we have been doing. Chairman Oberstar has said he wants the bill to be an authorization, not a reauthorization, and a radical departure from previous bills. One opportunity is that the new authorization could mean a significant increase in funding. Chairman Oberstar has talked about a \$500 billion authorization, but there will be a major struggle to find those dollars. One drawback for SRTS could be the recommendation to condense federal programs from 108 to ten areas of federal interest. This is just a recommendation and doesn't mean Congress will follow this, but consolidating programs is on the table. Jill encouraged the group to lobby Congress early and now, and to come armed with data and proof and stories of why it is successful and why it is worthy of being authorized again. Use the impact of gas prices on school buses as a reason to increase funding. Stay informed and active. This is a prime opportunity, and Congressman Larsen looks forward to working with us on this.

### **Q/A (Group)**

Stephanie Potts brought up connecting climate change to the transportation bill and making the case for SRTS as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Make it a carbon neutral bill. Jill said that there should be energy policy included in the transportation bill, but the climate change will be under a different stand-alone bill, which will be addressed sooner than this transportation bill. Andy Clarke compared ISTEA and the Clean Air Act. If Congress passes a cap and trade bill, we need to hope that the transportation bill follows immediately after and doesn't undo what was laid out there.

Suzan Pinsof asked how we will we pay for the increased investment and if there is consideration of any other taxes in addition to gas tax – like VMT, tolling, carbon taxing, and private/public partnerships. She also brought up getting rid of the federal gas tax and letting state and local governments decide individually. The revenue raising piece is a huge unknown.

Ryan Snyder asked when the writing of the bill will take place. Chairman Oberstar will introduce it right away in 2009, and the current bill officially expires September 30, 2009, but the authorization remains as a “continuing resolution” where programs are authorized at current levels while waiting for the new authorization. Jill anticipates the House and Senate will take it up rapidly. Andy Clarke said it is a jobs bill and viewed as an economic stimulus.

Someone asked if the next transportation bill will continue as a paradigm of transportation policy of working towards making incremental gains or if it will be a radical departure. Deb said they haven't fully defined that, but Congressional leadership have asked us for ideas and they are putting feelers out. One thing the Partnership is doing now is a sign on sheet that was created for the Transportation bill addressing health outcomes. As they move to performance-based outcomes, we ask that they include health (the physical activity side and preventing injury) and improving air quality. We are continuing to get our ideas to the Chairman's office, and through working with America Bikes, T4 America, and Smart Growth America. Andy brought up that cities are back and people want to live in urban areas, and there is enormous potential to take advantage of this.

### **How You Can Participate (Margo Pedroso)**

Margo emphasized Jill McKinnie's point that Members of Congress need to see SRTS in action. Please visit <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/national/164969> to view the Partnership's Congressional toolkit and to learn more about how to engage your member of Congress either through inviting them to a site or event or by planning a visit to their office. The toolkit includes step-by-step instructions on how to invite your Member of Congress to an SRTS event, or to request a meeting with the Member to discuss SRTS. Several resources and templates are included like sample press releases, talking points, a template scheduling request letter, and much more. Let us know as you schedule site visits and meetings with

members—we need your help to make the case to Members of Congress that SRTS is important and should be continued!

### **Evaluation of Meeting (Risa Wilkerson)**

#### Liked:

- That it was fast-paced
- A call to action. Lots of meetings don't tell you what you can do. They were inspired, and a good way to end things.
- Lots of opportunity for interaction
- Providing tools to implement things we were talking about (ie – the toolkit)
- Breakout sessions were good
- Useful and entertaining
- Liked all the background
- Good reminder of diversity of supporters for SRTS – a good, valuable set of perspectives
- Basic layman's terms with lobbying
- History of transportation bill. Lots of times it is assumed we already know, so it was good to have the background and helped bring them up to speed.
- Good having engineers at the table and is important to have the face-to-face time
- Loved the 10am start time

#### Recommendations for the future/comments:

- Provide more information up front to get the conversation further along (for breakout groups)
- The timing was difficult, between Thunderhead and Pro Walk/Pro Bike
- Recommend a shorter amount of time
- Think some folks left early because they already went through the Congressional training at the National Bike Summit
- There is value in proven case studies, lessons learned and what can be done (30 minutes to 1 hour)
- Helpful to have role play with a politician who is opposed to SRTS
- Create a PowerPoint to show what we need to know from the toolkit
- Break up into local/state/regional/national groups for big picture in each of the groups (as an organization) for networking
- Two skill sessions in the afternoon – a choice of concurrent sessions
- Incorporate a youth voice – high school or university students for sustainability
- Tie in the Head start program – “I am learning, I am moving” (teaching preschools/parents about 1 hour a day about physical activity)