



FINAL September 2012

Florida Safe Routes to School State Network Action Plan

The [Safe Routes to School National Partnership](#) (National Partnership) is a fast growing network of more than 500 organizations, government agencies and professional groups. Our mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's students and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.

The Florida state network supports the National Partnership's work and is tasked with:

1. Changing policy and built environment infrastructure investments to support increases in physical activity for children, especially on the route to school,
2. Implementing Complete Streets/street-scale improvements,
3. Fostering joint use policies,
4. Increasing the capacity for data collection and evaluation,
5. Building the capacity for leadership,
6. Advancing social equity,
7. Assuring sustainability.

We are grateful of the Robert Wood Johnson's generous funding of the Florida Team. The Florida state network team is comprised of:

- [Carol Pulley](#), Florida Advocacy Organizer
- [Kristine Kessel](#), Network Director

The Plan

The Florida Safe Routes to School State Network Action Plan (Florida Action Plan) was first written June 30, 2011, as a "living" document to be modified regularly to address new opportunities. This Florida Action Plan is intended to guide the National Partnership's Florida advocacy organizer, to share our goals and objectives with partners, and to facilitate collaboration and mutual support of our agreed upon targeted efforts to develop equitable walkable and bikeable communities and access to schools in Florida.

This update is being done by the National Partnership's Florida advocacy organizer with the assistance of National Partnership staff, and the Florida Safe Routes to School network (Florida network).

Partners

Implementation of the Florida Action Plan requires the coordination of partners at local, county, regional and state levels to ensure the coordinated implementation of our policy goals. The Florida advocacy organizer and the National Partnership are grateful for the leadership and efforts of many

individuals and organizations who participate in scheduled meetings, action teams and more. The success of the Florida network rests on successful collaborative efforts.

National Partnership's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan

[The National Partnership's Strategic Plan](#) was crafted after much public outreach and careful analysis of supporting the overall Safe Routes to School movement. The five-year plan prioritizes five strategic focus areas, these are:

1. Opening Minds through Research and Communication
2. Changing Policies and Infrastructure
3. Building Capacity for Leadership
4. Advancing Social Equity
5. Assuring Sustainability

These five national strategic focus areas guide and shape the Florida advocacy organizer's efforts in order to create a comprehensive strategy infused at all staffing levels - These are the goals of all National Partnership staff.

For work in Florida, essential state network tasks for each of the five focus areas comprise the Florida Action Plan.

1. Opening Minds through Research and Communications

The National Partnership seeks to continuously educate our partners and the public about the need for and the benefits of Safe Routes to School. This is done by highlighting cutting edge research and best practices from around the country. We seek to share the stories of our partners through social media, conference calls, journal and newspaper articles, presentations and meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders. The Florida network will focus on these priorities:

A. Research

Using research to educate our partners allows the National Partnership to build a solid empirical argument for the need and benefit of Safe Routes to School. Research augments our communication efforts by providing key facts to support our goals. In Florida we will:

- i. Identify additional research/fact needs for policy advancement and work with partners to implement research.
- ii. Share information and research via email, e-news, websites and other appropriate forums.
- iii. Identify possible research partners to work with (such as, Florida Department of Transportation [FDOT], CUTR Center for Urban Research, University of South Florida, Tampa - www.cutr.usf.edu/, UF Center of Health and the Built Environment, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Florida, Ruth L. Steiner, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director-rsteiner@dcp.ufl.edu, FSU, U of Miami, Sprinkle Consulting - Tampa, West Palm Beach info@sprinkleconsulting.com, Florida Department of Health Division of Disease Control & Health Protection, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, M.R. Street, MPH (MR_Street@doh.state.fl.us) and Sandra Whitehead, (Sandra_Whitehead

@doh.state.fl.us), Hoke Design, regional planning councils and MPOs explore opportunities for research and data collection.

- iv. Survey policies in the state of Florida for Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets, Joint Use Agreements and equity for lower-income communities to create a baseline to work from in changing policy in the state.

B. Communications

The Florida state network uses a wide variety of media sources to connect with our partners. Media utilization is key to sharing best practices, educating partners of strategic opportunities, and creating consensus. Our communication efforts also serve as a medium to bring to stories of inequity and opportunities for transportation investments to improve conditions for underserved communities. In Florida we will:

- i. Routinely update the [Florida state page](#) with current information.
- ii. Develop the Florida state site (microsite) with blogs, calendar listings, best practices, and more.
- iii. Connect the [National Partnership's website](#), [Florida state page](#) and the Florida state site (when developed) as well as provide links to local, state and national examples of best practices and model language.
- iv. Review and update current statewide media list.
- v. Cultivate partnerships with statewide and regional media contacts to advance news and research coverage.
- vi. Capitalize on opportunities for media coverage and OpEds through these expanded relationships with media contacts and by continuing to build leadership capacity with partners, focusing messages on funding and call for project opportunities as well as why Safe Routes to School efforts and investments matter and the benefits they bring throughout Florida communities.
- vii. Foster peer exchange (learning (state, regional, national)).
- viii. Utilize social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

2. Changing Policy and Infrastructure

The Florida state network will focus its efforts on three main policy areas and associated data collection and evaluation, specifically: (A) leveraging funds for Safe Routes to School; (B) promoting Complete Streets/street-scale improvements; (C) capitalizing and promoting shared (or joint) use for community-based schools; and (D) data/evaluation for these three main policy areas, including the usage of health impact assessments at the local and regional level, supported by the Florida Department of Health. Addressing the needs of lower-income communities shall be infused in each of these policy areas. The specific aspects of the National Partnership's work and related plans in Florida are as follows:

A. Leveraging Funds

- i. **Background:** Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety programs have historically been underfunded across the United States and in Florida. As a result, many communities lack safe bicycle networks and connected sidewalks and some children do not receive the safety education they need. The National Partnership seeks to increase

government funding for bicycling and walking and works to ensure that these funds are spent efficiently and in a timely manner. A key focus area for the National Partnership is to advocate for the obligation of federal Safe Routes to School grants which provide funding for infrastructure improvements and educational programs.

- ii. Goals: It is the National Partnership's number one priority is to continue working with the FDOT toward continuing award, obligation and encumbrance rates of federal Safe Routes to School grants. It is critical to ensure Safe Routes to School funds, once awarded are implemented in a timely manner (obligation rates). It is also imperative that lower-income communities and schools are served through Safe Routes to School grants, and that this progress is measured.

In addition to ensuring that the Safe Routes to School projects are obligated, the National Partnership works to increase overall funding levels for bicycling and walking by working with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) Regional Planning Councils (RPCs) and District Departments of Transportation to ensure that cities and counties have the funding necessary to implement complete street/street-scale improvement projects.

- iii. Tactics: (Obligation): To ensure Safe Routes to School grants are awarded, obligated and implemented in a timely manner, the National Partnership will work closely with FDOT/MPOs/RPCs and other Florida network members to:
 - a. Convene Action Team meetings as needed to discuss status and challenges with current status of obligation and implementation of federal funds. These teams will work together to generate opportunities to overcome these challenges through sharing their own experiences with other team members.
 - b. Work with FDOT and district staff to determine obligation rates and to encourage the expenditure of existing Safe Routes to School and Transportation Enhancements funds (resources from SAFETEA-LU are still available).
 - c. Partner with Florida cities and counties which have grants to provide assistance with the implementation of their programs.
 - d. Determine roadblocks to successful implementation, work with appropriate entities to address the roadblocks and highlight success stories.
 - e. Engage non-traditional partners to encourage the success of non-infrastructure grants (School Districts, non-profit advocacy groups, parent teacher organizations, etc.).
 - f. Work with State Network and equity partners to provide outreach and assistance to lower-income communities to help them to apply for Safe Routes to School grants, ensuring that help is provided to implement grants and to measure how the state is serving our most vulnerable populations. Universities may also be used to help local communities apply.
 - g. Provide assistance to local jurisdictions with remaining grants to spend down their obligations.
- iv. Tactics: (Leveraging Funding): To ensure equity in funding levels for bicycling and walking, the National Partnership will work with state partners to influence policy change and implement existing policies as follows:

- a. In the context of the new federal transportation bill - *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century* (MAP-21) - work with partners to maximize bicycling, walking and Safe Routes to School investments, both under MAP-21's new Transportation Alternatives program and the larger core transportation and safety funds. Specifically, work with state partners to:
 - Fully fund: Do not transfer any funds away from Transportation Alternatives or opt-out of the Recreational Trails program.
 - Fully staff: Preserve or increase staff support for Transportation Alternatives by maintaining state Safe Routes to School coordinators and bike/ped coordinators.
 - Fully implement: Promptly award Transportation Alternatives grants with participation of relevant stakeholders.
 - b. Work with state partners to fully maximize the state's investments in safe, accessible streets: utilize all MAP-21 funding programs to include biking and walking in all transportation projects.
 - c. Work with state partners to fully spend remaining funds from the Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational Trails programs. Collaborate with state partners and stakeholders to set recommended performance criteria that favor bicycle and pedestrian projects and ensure that localities are well- positioned to propose viable projects, working with MPOs and all key decision makers.
 - d. Work with partners to identify existing and future funding sources that can be used for bicycle and pedestrian projects.
 - e. Develop messaging to current and new partners on the need for more active transportation dollars.
 - f. Through the use of data-driven analysis, provide elected leaders, transportation planners, and other partners compelling arguments and examples that illustrate the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - g. Support the adoption and implementation of Complete Street/street-scale improvement policies that use highway dollars to create Complete Streets when road repairs, reconstruction and new construction is undertaken.
- v. Leads: National Focus: SRTS National Partnership
 - vi. Leads: State Focus: Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Florida Department of Health (FDOH), Florida Bicycle Association (FBA), Florida Trails Association (FTA), Florida Department of Environmental Regulation (Trails Program and Parks Program), the Florida chapter of the American Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Dance and Sports (FAAHPERDS), American Heart Association (AHA), Safe Kids Coalitions and Chapters and other statewide health, safety and other issue-related organizations.
 - vii. Leads: Regional Focus: Regional Planning Councils (RPCs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), statewide Commuter Services organizations, Young Men's' Christian Association (YMCA), local health departments, local parks and recreation

programs, school districts local bike/ped organizations and regional and other local implementing agencies and partners across the state.

A. Complete Streets/Street-Scale Improvements

- i. Background: Complete Streets policies seek to ensure that all transportation projects are safe for all users. Throughout Florida, many RPCs, MPOs, counties and local jurisdictions have, or are in the process of implementing, Complete Streets policies.
- ii. Goals: To support an increase in Complete Streets policies statewide and improvements to design guidelines. There is widespread need for technical assistance, expertise and collaboration with regards to the drafting and implementation of Complete Streets policies. The National Partnership will support implementation of Complete Streets efforts across Florida and draw the link between Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School. This is achieved by expanding conversations and practices of transportation planning to include the needs of all users regardless of age, income and/or abilities for children, families and community members in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of transportation projects.
- iii. Tactics: The State network uses multiple strategies for the implementation of Complete Streets policies.
 - a. Survey Complete Streets policies in the state of Florida, including copies of those policies, to develop a baseline list of what jurisdictions have Complete Streets policies. A survey will also be conducted of implementation in lower income communities.
 - b. Convene regular statewide Action Team meetings to discuss the status and challenges of current Complete Streets policies, and to develop and implement a plan to expand Complete Streets policies throughout the state.
 - c. Work with FDOT and other issue-related organizations and agencies to fully maximize the state's investment in safe, accessible streets by utilizing all MAP-21 funding programs, to include biking and walking in all transportation projects.
 - d. Encourage the implementation of new Complete Streets policies by educating partners and transportation agencies about the benefits of Complete Streets.
 - e. Identify the challenges faced by jurisdictions currently implementing policies to determine successful strategies and systemic policy obstacles.
 - f. Share best practices at the city, county, MPO and RPC levels.
 - g. Track the implementation and increase of Complete Streets policies across the state.
 - h. Analyze how Complete Streets is being implemented in lower-income communities and what types of technical assistance are needed to achieve improved infrastructure. Work with partners to prioritize implementation on Complete Streets in lower income communities.
- iv. Leads: National Partnership, FDOH , and state and regional groups as listed below:

- a. State Focus: Florida Bicycle Association (FBA), Bike Florida (BF), American Heart Association, and American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- b. Regional Focus: RPCs, MPOs, District FDOT engineers, local health departments, parks and recreation, school districts, parent-teacher organizations and local bike/ped organizations.

B. Shared Use and Community Based Schools

- i. Background: Shared use--or joint use--is a way to increase opportunities for children and adults to be more physically active. It refers to two or more entities (usually a school and a city or private organization) sharing indoor and outdoor spaces like gymnasiums, athletic fields and playgrounds. The concept behind joint use is that shared resources keep costs down and increases access for the health and well-being of communities. Schools in lower-income urban areas may not have space for school fields and may lack urban parks, thus making it important to find ways to create safe places for children to engage in healthy physical activity after and during school hours. School-site selection also becomes critical to ensure school grounds are within walking distance to students, families and public transportation options.
- ii. Goals: To increase the number of joint use policies in the state and the total space available to communities to have safe places to play and engage in physical activity by creating a statewide policy environment that facilitates joint use and community based schools, and encouraging the adoption of local joint use agreements and school policies at the school district level.
- iii. Tactics: The State Network uses multiple strategies for shared use.
 - a. Survey Joint Use policies in the state of Florida, including copies of those policies, to develop a baseline list of which jurisdictions have joint use policies. Include survey of lower-income communities.
 - b. Convene regular statewide Action Team meetings.
 - c. Encourage the implementation of new joint use agreements and policies by sharing best practices, and model tools (such as the Joint Use Cost Calculator developed by the University of California at Berkley for cost to share facilities to recoup costs) and agreements, such as those published by the National Policy and Legal Analysis Network (NPLAN) under ChangeLab Solutions , specifically targeting lower-income schools and communities as the highest priority.
 - d. Work with the Florida Department of Education to publish joint use guidance, either as a stand-alone document, or by including guidance into any updated policy manuals.
 - e. Determine if joint use can be folded into regional planning and sustainable community-based strategies at the regional level.
 - f. Work with state associations and departments to determine opportunities to expand joint use and community based schools.
- iv. Leads: National Partnership, FDOE, AAHPERD, FDOH, Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Divisions of Recreation and Parks and Office of Greenways

and Trails, Florida Recreation and Park Association, YMCAs, state PTA, Florida Association Health Planning Councils,

C. **Data Collection and Evaluation**

- i. **Background:** Our transportation strategies and investments must be data- driven, especially in regard to safety and health for all community members. In addition, many governmental funding decisions are predicated upon evaluation and modeling, which requires valid data and the ability to project outcomes based on improvements in infrastructure. A multi-disciplinary perspective needs to inform this framework – with input from safety, transportation, health, air quality, technology, academic and research and others. As funding becomes increasingly based on performance outcomes, now more than ever it is critical that Florida develop standards to ensure competitiveness and its ability to measure and forecast programmatic success and challenges in the field of walking and bicycling. Addressing the needs of lower-income communities shall be included in each goal and task.
- ii. **Goals:** Foster discussions on how to best engage the state and other key partners in setting frameworks for active transportation and Safe Routes to School data collection, modeling and evaluation, and make changes to create models that facilitate these methods. . Ensure widespread distribution and the standardization of data and tools currently available for use by local jurisdictions.
- iii. **Tactics:** The Florida state network will use multiple strategies for data collection and evaluation.
 - a. Investigate the existence of any statewide travel survey data and work with the FDOT Safety Office, Florida Bicycle Association, the universities and other partners to acquire this information, possibly developing a “State How We Travel Report Card” to include state mode splits, state school trip mode splits. Work with the FDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator for before and after trip data on Safe Routes to School projects.
 - b. Prepare a summary of current state data collection efforts on bicyclists and pedestrians, such as bicycle and pedestrian counts.
 - c. Work with the FDOT Safety Office to acquire Florida bicycle/pedestrian crash data. A comparison of the percentage of bicycle/pedestrian crashes with percentage of money budgeted for bicycle/pedestrian as compared to motor vehicles will be considered.
 - d. Collaborate with the RPCs and MPOs to maximize on opportunities for data collection and evaluation and continue to develop partnerships with health agencies and universities to analyze data and project costs and benefits including those related to overall population health.
- iv. **Leads:** National Partnership, FDOT, FDOH, FDOE, RPCs, MPOs and partners across the state.

3. **Building the Capacity for Leadership**

A. **Background**

The National Partnership's Florida advocacy organizer collaborates with and relies on partners to achieve policy change. By fostering leadership with our partners, we are able to mobilize diverse coalitions that articulate the benefits of Safe Routes to School, an improved built environment, active transportation and equity from a variety of viewpoints. In addition, the development of leadership capacity in our partners expand the reach of our efforts by creating more local champions and ensures the sustainability of our efforts and Safe Routes to School goals.

B. Goals

The National Partnership creates networks of local elected officials, non-profit organizations, health professionals, community members and a wide variety of other stakeholders through education and encouragement and builds the capacity for leaders within these groups to champion the policy efforts listed above.

C. Tactics

By educating our partners on the importance of walking and bicycling as tools for community change, we encourage them to bring their own personal experiences and expertise to the table regarding the types of policy goals and infrastructure investments are necessary for creating equitable, walkable and bikeable communities. The following tactics are used to grow our network and increase the capacity for leadership among our partners, both at the state and regional levels:

- i. Track our partners through Salesforce.
- ii. Educate our partners through workshops, webinars, network calls and individual communications to build expertise and allow stakeholders to better understand the transportation planning process. Key topic areas include:
 - a. Award and obligation (leveraging funding) and associated SAFETEA-LU and MAP-21 processes
 - b. Complete Streets/Street-scale Improvements
 - c. Health impact assessments
 - d. Joint Use/School Siting policies
 - e. Data collection
 - f. Serving lower-income communities and schools.
- iii. Develop leaders in each of the following areas:
 - a. Elected officials
 - b. Agency staff leadership
 - c. Health
 - d. Transportation
 - e. School districts
 - f. Equity groups
 - g. Youth engagement
 - h. Environmental advocacy groups

- i. Parental organizations
- j. School boards

D. Leads

National Partnership, Florida network, local jurisdictions tasks forces and action teams, FDOH , FDOE , Public Works, Planning and Recreation Departments, city staff, MPOs, County and School Board Transportation decision-makers, state PTA, RPCs, Transportation Authority staff and positions dedicated to healthy communities or active transportation programming.

4. Advancing Social Equity

A. Background

Quality transportation options are a lifeline to opportunity. Transportation gets people to work, school, the grocery store and the doctor's office. Even though billions of public dollars are invested in our nation's transportation system each year, evidence is growing to demonstrate that a disproportionate burden and injury from these investment choices are falling on people living in lower-income communities, thus creating a far-reaching cost to society as a whole.

B. Goals

Recognizing the serious hurdles involved in addressing not only transportation-related concerns, but also personal safety concerns, the Safe Routes to School Florida state network supports efforts that address the disparity between population groups.

C. Tactics

- i. Build capacity by strengthening relationships with community-based organizations, groups working to advance social and economic equity and public health departments working to address health disparities such as the DOH Office of Minority Health, the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE-EH) and the ACHIEVE programs . We can serve to highlight the benefits of active transportation to lower-income communities and explore the unique challenges these communities face in accessing active transportation.
- ii. Inventory the barriers and obstacles for lower-income and rural communities and schools implementing Safe Routes to School programs, Complete Streets and joint-use agreements and develop strategies and partners to overcome these hurdles.
- iii. Encourage communities to implement crime prevention strategies, such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), by using landscaping design techniques. These techniques have been demonstrated to create a climate of safety in a community right from the start by striving to design a physical environment that positively influences human behavior and have been espoused by law enforcement officers, architects, city planners and landscape designers based on research and successes around the state and country.
- iv. Work with partners to include health and environmental justice metrics into transportation planning and investment allocations, tracking grants to lower-income communities and schools for all Safe Routes to School awards. This tracking will include

rates of injury and fatalities averted and health improvements attributed to program implementation.

- v. Ensure that outreach and technical assistance is available for lower-income communities.

D. Leads

National Partnership, non-profit health organizations such as American Lung Association, American Heart Association, Prevention Institute, Latino Healthy Access, Asian and Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance, Departments of Public Health, Hospitals and Community Clinics, and YMCA.

5. Assuring Sustainability

A. Background

The long-term viability of Safe Routes to School is dependent on the movement's ability to leverage additional funds, build capacity, ensure collaboration among leaders in the field and integrate Safe Routes to School within the plans and goals of a wide range of partners and government agencies.

B. Goals

Continue to grow support for Safe Routes to School so that funding diversifies beyond federal and state resources. The Partnership will seek to strengthen and support public agencies and community-based organizations throughout the state which are implementing Safe Routes to School efforts. Another goal is to sustain our Florida Safe Routes to School advocacy efforts after current grant funding expires.

C. Tactics

- i. Update funders and elected officials on the progress, the benefits, and the need to continue to support Safe Routes to School. Possible strategies include the use of research, health impact assessments and census data where possible.
- ii. Publicize successes to continue to expand the network of support and partners for Safe Routes to School beyond the traditional partners.
- iii. Publicize the successes and best practices of Safe Routes to School efforts throughout the state in order to continue to foster peer to peer learning and also to continue to demonstrate and champion the added value of all Safe Routes to School efforts and leaders in order to support future funds for efforts.
- iv. Continue to work to foster and strengthen relationships between transportation agencies and health partners.
- v. Market National Partnership technical assistance services as a strategy to help communities develop a successful Safe Routes to School program and situate themselves for leveraging additional funds.
- vi. Identify new sources of grant funds.
- vii. Work with the media to publicize successes and how Safe Routes to School touches many policy goals.

D. Leads

National Partnership, Florida network partners across the state, such as Florida Departments of Health, Education, and Transportation, RPCs, MPOs, and elected officials.