

Safe Routes to School National Partnership Strategic Plan 2011-2015

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Foreword

Mission Statement: *The Safe Routes to School National Partnership advocates for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.*

Vision Statement: *Safe Routes to School is a catalyst for the creation of safe, healthy and livable communities—urban, suburban and rural—throughout the United States. Schools are sited near the children they serve and are safe for children to walk and bicycle. Parents, school districts, local governments, police and community partners work together to ensure the safety of children on the trip to and from school. Children of all abilities, income levels and cultures have traffic safety skills and regularly choose to walk and bicycle. These shifts result in communities with less traffic congestion and air pollution as well as more physically active children and families.*

In 1969, the average child in the United States walked or bicycled to and from school and spent many afternoons exploring the neighborhood and getting physical activity. Today, only 13 percent of students in the United States walk or bicycle to schools. At the same time, school buses are being eliminated due to budget cuts, parents driving children to schools can comprise 20-30 percent of traffic congestion and childhood obesity has quadrupled for children aged 6-11 over the past 40 years.

Many factors have influenced the decline in children walking and bicycling to school. Communities are increasingly designed for the accommodation of motorized vehicles, often lacking a comprehensive approach to providing safe and separate infrastructure such as sidewalks, pathways, bike lanes and crosswalks. Schools are more frequently located on the outskirts of communities instead of the heart of the neighborhood, and surveys show parents are concerned about traffic and personal safety.

Concerned by the long-term health and traffic consequences of the decline in walking and bicycling to school, Congress created the federal Safe Routes to School program in 2005 as part of the SAFETEA-LU transportation bill. Since then, \$800 million has been allocated for State Departments of Transportation to award Safe Routes to School grants to communities and schools to build improved infrastructure and to support safety education, law enforcement and promotional events that support safe bicycling and walking.

Currently, there are Safe Routes to School programs operating in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with each State Department of Transportation maintaining a Safe Routes to School Coordinator to manage the program. Demand for the program is very high, exceeding the resources available.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership (the Partnership) was three years in the making before it was officially launched at the same time that Congress announced the funding in the federal transportation bill in 2005. The Partnership is hosted by the non-profit Bikes Belong Foundation and is comprised of more than 500 partner organizations, agencies, professional groups and schools which signed a consensus statement and memorandum of understanding for advancing the Safe Routes to School movement.

The Partnership is an advocacy organization that works to advance legislation, policies, best practices, research, resources and publicity to support Safe Routes to School programs and policies throughout the United States. We also work closely with the Federal Highway Administration (which administers the program), State Departments of Transportation and the National Center for Safe Routes to School, which is the federal government's contractor that provides technical assistance and collects data for the program. The Partnership serves as a catalyst to leverage funding and policies that result in healthy, sustainable communities.

Over the past five years, we have had many successes with advancing Safe Routes to School including:

- The creation of the federal Safe Routes to School program, dedicating \$800 million to initiatives around the country, and advocating for new legislation that would further increase funding for the program;
- Safe Routes to School state networks in 20 states that are advancing policy changes such as school siting, complete streets and curriculum;
- A compilation of evidence-based research studies on the effectiveness of Safe Routes to School;
- A detailed website with specifics on how to access funds in all 50 states and how to advance policy priorities and leverage additional funds at state and local levels;
- The creation of numerous resources to help policy makers and practitioners including a report on how Safe Routes to School can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, an educator's guide, policy reports and the compilation of numerous promising practices; and
- Resources for advancing Safe Routes to School in low-income communities.

It is exciting to see the increased interest throughout the United States in designing communities that create opportunities for healthy physical activity, which will in turn reduce pollution while increasing safety, livability and sustainability. There is much attention in the news to the childhood obesity epidemic, climate change, the need to reduce oil consumption and the desire to advance sustainability. All of these elements and goals are supported and advanced by Safe Routes to School. And, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership can help policy makers better understand smart growth and the impact of the built environment on human health, the environment and quality of life through Safe Routes to School.

It is with great enthusiasm that we present this *2011-2015 Strategic Plan* as an ambitious framework for the Partnership's short- and long-term work to advance the Safe Routes to School national movement.

Sincerely,

Deb Hubsmith, Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Executive Summary

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a network of more than 500 partners and is the advocacy organization which leads the Safe Routes to School national movement. Initially, our role was focused on ensuring strong implementation of the federal Safe Routes to School program by the states. Over the five years since, we branched out to focus on federal legislation, state policy, distillation of research and dissemination of best practices. The common purpose for every initiative we have undertaken is that it advances Safe Routes to School among partners, policymakers and individuals.

However, the movement for Safe Routes to School is much bigger than any one organization: it includes everyone who is working toward the goals of making streets and schools safer for everyday bicycling and walking – students, parents, educators, engineers, elected and government officials, police officers, environmentalists, health professionals, smart growth advocates and more. The Partnership provides leadership focused on drawing together these diverse constituencies to make the movement more cohesive, effective and collaborative.

Safe Routes to School impacts many large-scale issues, such as reducing social and economic disparities, decreasing pollution, improving safety, increasing physical activity and improving the design of communities to support health, active transportation and sustainability. Safe Routes to School can be a catalyst for policy makers to understand smart growth, livability and sustainability, since everyone can relate to kids and the innate desire for it to be safe for children to be able to walk and bicycle to school.

Before developing our five-year Strategic Plan for the years 2011 through 2015, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership surveyed our partners, held focus groups and conducted interviews with key stakeholders to find out: 1) what people felt was needed to advance the Safe Routes to School national movement, and 2) what should be the role of the Partnership, the movement's advocate.

The Strategic Plan for the Safe Routes to School National Partnership was crafted after careful analysis of our unique niche in supporting and leading the overall movement. Our *2011-2015 Strategic Plan* prioritizes five strategic focus areas, which are briefly summarized below and detailed on pages 8-17.

1. Opening Minds through Research and Communications: To further advance Safe Routes to School funding, policies and outcomes, we plan to elevate the role of research within the field and conduct a strong media campaign on the successes of the movement. This will help open people's minds about the advantage of walking and bicycling to school, and make Safe Routes to School a household name.
2. Changing Policies and Infrastructure: The key to getting more children safely walking and bicycling lies in creating improvements to the built environment that foster equitable community-centered schools, complete streets and safe access to schools. To achieve this, we will work with our partners to advocate for improved policies and more funds for pathways, sidewalks, bike lanes and street crossings at the federal, state and local levels.
3. Building Capacity for Leadership: We intend to activate thousands more knowledgeable policy makers, professionals, parents and student champions for Safe Routes to School to work at every level of government and within schools. These champions will be most effective if equipped with tools on navigating government processes and advocating for Safe Routes to School policies and funding.
4. Advancing Social Equity: Many low income communities—whether urban or rural—lack the resources to apply for Safe Routes to School grants to make improvements. Yet children in

these communities are more likely to walk to school and often face greater traffic and personal safety challenges on the trip to school. We plan to increase outreach, provide resources and work with government agencies and organizations at all levels to develop more policies, trainings, and funding that ensure Safe Routes to School reaches those most in need.

5. Assuring Sustainability: The long-term viability of Safe Routes to School is dependent on the movement's ability to leverage additional funds, ensure collaboration among leaders in the field, and integrate Safe Routes to School within the plans and goals of a wide range of partners. In addition, it is also important that the Safe Routes to School National Partnership has the funding, capacity and infrastructure in place to respond to the growing demand for Safe Routes to School.

Goals and indicators are provided for each of the five strategic focus areas. We believe that progress in each of these areas will collectively lead to an overall increase in walking and bicycling to school by 50% by 2015, stabilization in distance to school and improved safety for children. We look forward to working with numerous partners to advance these ambitious goals.

Accountability

The following sections establish five strategic focus areas that will take the Safe Routes to School movement and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership to the next level. Each section includes an ambitious long-term goal with measurable objectives during the 2011-2015 strategic plan timeframe plus a series of tactics that we plan to accomplish to meet those objectives.

Measuring Progress on Objectives

It is important to consistently measure our progress and stay accountable to the vision outlined in this strategic plan. While there are a total of 16 measurable objectives in all five strategic focus areas (which are captured in one table on page 18), they fall into five categories of information we will track over the next five years, including:

- **Partners:** To determine the breadth of the movement, we will track the overall number of partners, as well as the types of partners. We will also develop a system to capture the level of engagement of partners in advancing Safe Routes to School.
- **Individuals:** To assess the public's awareness and involvement with Safe Routes to School, we will develop a system to track individuals' familiarity with Safe Routes to School and their level of engagement in advancing Safe Routes to School.
- **Funding:** To assess government funding leveraged for Safe Routes to School infrastructure and programs, we will collect the annual funding levels for federal, state and local contributions, the Partnership's annual budget, and each state's obligation rates for federal funds.
- **Policies:** To ascertain the changes in key state policies affecting the ability of children to safely walk and bicycle to schools, we will track the size, reach and achievements of the State Network Project. We will specifically inventory state policies on low-income communities and community-centered schools.
- **Research:** To capture progress in filling any gaps in the research base for Safe Routes to School, we will track progress on setting and implementing national standard evaluation measures and the publication of studies that include evidence-based outcomes.

Measuring the Impact on Cross-Cutting Goals

Our overall mission is to make it safer for more children to walk and bicycle to school. The collective result of the specific tactics and measurable objectives outlined in this strategic plan will advance us towards that mission. There are three key cross-cutting goals that will demonstrate we are making progress on our mission:

- **Increasing rates of walking and bicycling to school:** The rates of walking and bicycling to school for children in grades K-8 declined from 48% in 1969 to 13% in 2009. The rates mostly held steady from 2001 to 2009, showing a reversal of the decline and an opportunity to increase walking and bicycling. The rates of walking and bicycling to school are measured by the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), which is conducted every five to seven years. We anticipate that the next NHTS will be conducted around the years 2015-2017. Our goal is that this NHTS show a 50% increase in walking and bicycling for children in grades K-8, which would mean approximately 20% of children walking and bicycling to school throughout the United States.

- Decreasing distance to school: Distance to school has been increasing over the years as schools are consolidated and are built on the outskirts of communities. In 1969, 41% of children lived within one mile of school; in 2009 that declined to only 31%. This data is also measured by NHTS. Because schools are built to last for decades, it will take a long time to make significant progress on distance to school. As measured by NHTS, it is our goal that the percentage of children living within a mile of school will stabilize at 31% by 2015, as the trend of siting schools far from neighborhoods starts to reverse.
- Improving safety for young pedestrians and bicyclists: A major barrier to increasing walking and bicycling to school is the risks to pedestrians and bicyclists. We must improve safety for children on the trip to school. Unfortunately, determining a benchmark and goal for safety is nearly impossible given the limitations and inconsistencies of the data that is currently collected by federal and state governments on bicycle and pedestrian crashes and injuries. We will work with leading researchers during this strategic plan to identify an appropriate benchmark and means of collecting the data to measure progress on safety. This will also require working with state and local law enforcement agencies to develop best practices for recording bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities. In addition to actual safety incidents, another important limitation on rates of walking and bicycling to school are parent perceptions about safety. We will also work to develop a means of tracking parent perceptions of safety that affect the trip to school.

Five Strategic Focus Areas with Tactics, Goals and Objectives

The Safe Routes to School national movement has grown quickly in the United States since the first programs began in New York, Chicago and California in 1997. A major milestone for the movement was the passage of the 2005 federal transportation bill which allocated \$800 million for Safe Routes to School from fiscal year 2005 through 2010. An additional boost came in 2010 with First Lady Michelle Obama's initiation of a *Let's Move* campaign to end childhood obesity. One reason for the growth of the Safe Routes to school movement is that it is a simple concept—make it safer for more children to walk and bicycle to school—but it has an impact on larger issues like physical activity, traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions and safety.

During the development of this strategic plan, we heard from hundreds of partners and individuals that Safe Routes to School is making a difference in communities across the country—but that much remains to be done. After analyzing the input from across the country and considering the role of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, we selected the following five Strategic Focus Areas for the years 2011 through 2015. These strategies are the crucial next steps in creating a strong and mature movement that provides opportunities for children of all ages, income levels and geographies to safely walk and bicycle to and from school.

In the pages that follow, we outline the five Strategic Focus Areas for 2011-2015, accompanied by the following information:

- Background: summarizing the situation and opportunity
- Tactics: detailing our proposed initiatives for achieving the goal and objectives
- Long-Term Goal: noting what we want to ultimately achieve beyond 2015
- Measurable Objectives: summarizing what can be accomplished by 2013 and 2015

Strategic Focus #1: Opening Minds through Research and Communications

Background:

In order to advance Safe Routes to School policies and the associated benefits to public health and the environment, we plan to continue to demonstrate the successes of Safe Routes to School and to grow awareness of the movement. This will require going beyond the core people and groups that already support Safe Routes to School and building new partners. We will develop a proactive and coordinated communications strategy with key messages and media strategies that will be used by the Partnership, plus our partners at the national, state and local levels. We will reach out to elected officials, researchers, parents, students and additional organizational partners as part of this strategy. And, we will provide all of these potential supporters with data and results from Safe Routes to School initiatives.

While many academic studies and evaluations of Safe Routes to School already exist, the field would greatly benefit from additional coordination among researchers across sectors. We will convene researchers to document the positive impacts of walking and bicycling to school, including emerging areas like the impact on air quality, academic achievement, and behavior. These researchers can also help identify gaps in knowledge about the impact of Safe Routes to School in specific contexts and with different populations and make recommendations for nationwide evaluation measurement techniques and future research.

The most effective communications strategies showcase compelling stories, based on sound research and results. Potential supporters are most likely to be convinced of the value of Safe Routes to School if the messaging clearly explains the benefits of Safe Routes to School for reversing childhood obesity, improving safety and decreasing pollution and shows how Safe Routes to School is safe, enjoyable and community-changing. We will identify clear and effective stories and communications tools, and work with the media, partners and local stories to get the word out about Safe Routes to School.

Tactics:

1.1 Research Council: A key aspect of the sustainability of Safe Routes to School is its ability to demonstrate strong national results—which will drive policy, funding and practice. We must also be able to understand what works best in specific circumstances and for specific populations—and this research must be accessible to practitioners. We will convene researchers in the fields of Safe Routes to School, physical activity and the built environment to create greater collaboration on research.

Long-Term Goal:

Safe Routes to School will be a household name. The average person will know what Safe Routes to School is and how it benefits them, even if they don't have school aged children.

Measureable Objectives:

- ✓ By 2013, we will form a Research Council including the foremost Safe Routes to School researchers in the United States. The Research Council will make recommendations for needed research and by 2015, several studies will be underway to fill identified gaps in Safe Routes to School research.
- ✓ By the year 2013, the Partnership and the Research Council will work with the federal government to create evaluation standards for Safe Routes to School for use by all states and local communities.
- ✓ We will increase our number of partners from 500 in 2010 to 750 by 2013 and to 1000 by the year 2015.
- ✓ By the year 2013, we will have baseline data on the public's familiarity with Safe Routes to School. By the year 2015, this awareness will grow by at least 25%.

Together, Council members will highlight the strongest case studies and findings, identify research gaps, set research goals, discuss funding sources, and strategize about how to achieve the goals and fill gaps in the research. The Partnership will coordinate with the Council to identify funding sources for needed research and with the federal government and the National Center for Safe Routes to School to create evaluation standards.

1.2 Awareness campaign: First, we will work with partners to inventory existing awareness tools, compelling stories and initiatives and identify what is most effective and what needs to be supplemented. We will utilize media and marketing strategies to create a stronger awareness of Safe Routes to School, its benefits and the ease with which people can participate. We will also develop messaging to help address parent concerns about personal safety. The Partnership will develop relationships with reporters and national publications to generate earned media, op-ed pieces and editorials, and will actively seek to link national and regional stories to Safe Routes to School. In conjunction with our partners, we will create and train a network of spokespersons. Through media partners, public service announcements and other vehicles, we will seek to raise awareness of Safe Routes to School, engage new partner organization and encourage more families and leaders to take action. We will also develop more marketing tools and materials, tied into the national campaign, which local supporters can use to advance policy goals and outcomes.

1.3 Partnership branding: We will develop a distinct brand identity for the Safe Routes to School National Partnership as the advocacy leader for the movement. We will ensure that our brand is appealing to new partners in key disciplines such as environmental protection, transportation, smart growth, health and equity. This brand will be conveyed through effective messaging statements, a more interactive website, and refined and expanded social media strategies. By deepening relationships with our partners, we will be able to further advance communications and branding for the Partnership.

Strategic Focus #2: Changing Policies and Infrastructure

Background:

Post-World War II, cities in the United States were designed to move the automobile more quickly and to more locations. This spawned urban sprawl and largely engineered walking and bicycling out of American life. Since 1991, however, Congress has recognized the benefits of bicycling and walking and has included funding and programs in federal transportation bills to support active transportation. We have led the way in looking beyond the federal funding stream to secure policy changes and state and local funding that increases safe and active transportation for everyday activities, including walking and bicycling to school.

With leadership from the Partnership, Safe Routes to School advocates are already making advances on policies like complete streets, community-centered schools, inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian curricula in physical education, the alignment of goals among transportation, education and health leaders, and more. An important component of this advocacy is the Partnership's State Network Project, in which Organizers collaborate with state and local partners to leverage funds and secure policy change supportive of Safe Routes to School. The State Network Project is currently active in 19 states and the District of Columbia. We will increase our advocacy at all levels of government through federal lobbying and agency outreach, an expansion of our state and regional networks, and the creation of local policy champions. Through these efforts, we will continue to make progress in creating supportive policies and funding for active transportation.

Tactics:

2.1 Federal lobbying: As the advocacy leader for Safe Routes to School, we will maintain a presence in Washington, DC to lobby for strengthening and expanding the federal Safe Routes to School program through the federal transportation bill and other pieces of legislation. We will educate Members of Congress about how Safe Routes to School benefits their constituents and facilitate Congressional site visits to local Safe Routes to School programs. Grassroots advocates and partners at all levels will also be called upon to garner support from Members of Congress and to participate in lobbying days like the annual National Bike Summit.

Long-Term Goal:

Every school in America has safe walking and bicycling routes and there are supportive policies for Safe Routes to School at the school district, local, state and federal government levels.

Measureable Objectives:

- ✓ By the year 2013, federal funding for Safe Routes to School will be at least three times more than the 2009 amount of \$183 million/year.
- ✓ By 2013 we will have a system to inventory state and local funding for Safe Routes to School, and the initial benchmark will show state and local funding is equal to at least half of the annual federal investment. By the year 2015 that amount of funding will have increased, to be equal to the annual level of federal spending.
- ✓ By 2013, all 20 network states will have policies in place more supportive of community-centered schools. By 2015, 10 additional states will have these policies in place.
- ✓ By year 2013, our State Network Project will have full-time Organizers in all 20 states and half-time Organizers in 10 additional states. By the year 2015, the State Network Project will serve all 50 states, with full-time Organizers in at least half the states.
- ✓ By 2011, we will have a system to define and take the baseline for how many state Departments of Transportation make Safe Routes to School an integral part of their operations. By 2013, at least 20 states will have Safe Routes to School as an integral part of DOT operations. By 2015, at least 40 states will meet that standard.

2.2 Federal agency outreach: We will cultivate relationships with federal agencies and seek to embed Safe Routes to School policies and concepts into wide-ranging federal programs and initiatives. Federal agencies to be targeted include the Departments of Transportation, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency. We will also publicize federal grant opportunities that could support local Safe Routes to School initiatives and develop resources to help local Safe Routes to School supporters develop high-quality applications.

2.3 State and regional policy networks: Using our existing state and regional network model, we will create policy changes that advance Safe Routes to School projects, including complete streets, new funding sources, community-centered schools, climate change reduction goals, educational curricula, and more. We will seek to expand the number of states and regions we serve from 20 to the entire country by 2015, and increase the time commitment our state and regional organizers can dedicate to the networks. These organizers will develop and implement a comprehensive plan for action and strong partnerships with transportation, health, education, equity and environmental organizations, government agencies and policy makers. The organizers will also work collaboratively with state Safe Routes to School coordinators to make Safe Routes to School an integral part of state Department of Transportation operations, leadership and policies. The Partnership will elevate the networks and their capacity to succeed through peer learning opportunities, technical assistance and documentation of best practices and successes.

2.4 Local policy change: An important area of growth for Safe Routes to School is the creation of local policies supportive of active transportation, funding for Safe Routes to School, and supportive school wellness policies. However, currently available technical assistance on Safe Routes to School focuses primarily on the practical aspects of running a program. Little technical assistance and training is available on the policy change aspects of Safe Routes to School. These policies are critical to leveraging additional funds and sustaining the local initiative over time, through approaches such as integration with comprehensive plans, annual budgets, public works, planning and law enforcement work plans and policies, and more. We will close that gap by developing a national training on Safe Routes to School policy and by providing webinars, individual coaching, training sessions at national conferences and community leadership summits. Local policy champions will also be able to share their successes and inspire each other through Partnership forums. Our goal is to equip local citizens and champions with the knowledge necessary to advocate for policy change through city hall, school boards, or local government.

2.5 School siting: Because distance to school is a major factor limiting growth of walking and bicycling to school, it is essential to focus specifically on the issue of school siting and land use. We will work with our state and regional networks and local champions to advance recommendations on school siting and joint-use of school facilities included in national reports issued by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Environmental Protection Agency and to create incentives and policies supportive of community-centered schools. Tying school siting to climate change and school transportation expenditures will help make the case for locating and renovating schools closer to the student population. The Partnership will also work within the education sector, with government partners at all levels, and with architects and the school construction industry to encourage closer collaboration for decisions on school siting, housing and land use. As discussed in tactic 4.4, school siting can also have racial and economic implications. We will ensure that any recommendations developed from the forum on equitable community-centered schools, discussed in tactic 4.4, are included in our school siting recommendations and policies.

Strategic Focus #3: Building Capacity for Leadership

Background:

Resources and policies that support Safe Routes to School are created by and allocated through federal, state and local funding streams. In order to access that money, individuals and organizations must be trained on how to work through the system to address their local needs. We will train individual and partner organization champions and develop the capacity of more leaders for the movement and enable them to support, motivate and inspire each other. We will also develop a deeper understanding of the assets of our existing partners and develop a plan for deploying those assets to address our mutual goals.

It is also important to focus specifically on three key sectors that play a critical role within Safe Routes to School: transportation, education and health. The transportation and education fields have a great deal of control over built environment funds and practices and access to students. Many in the health sector have already engaged in Safe Routes to School, and there is potential to do even more. We plan to increase our engagement of leading individuals and organizations in these fields and convert them into champions for Safe Routes to School. Concentrating our efforts on people, partners and key sectors will help build capacity for leadership within Safe Routes to School so that the goal of increasing walking and bicycling to school by 50% is achieved by 2015.

Tactics:

3.1 Partner engagement: The Safe Routes to School National Partnership currently has more than 500 partners. We will expand and deepen these relationships and equip partners to share information, take action and achieve successes. We will inventory the strengths and assets of our national partners, and create and carry out action plans with 20 priority organizations that will advance our mutual goals. We will also engage the bicycle industry, including dealers and retailers, in advancing Safe Routes to School efforts. Both existing partners and new partners will be provided with more concrete opportunities for how to engage in advancing the Safe Routes to School movement.

3.2 Individual engagement: Parents and young people are the beneficiaries of Safe Routes to School and potentially the strongest advocates. We will develop resources and forums to motivate, equip and engage students and parents as leaders for Safe Routes to School programs, policies and built environment changes. This will include the creation of best practice guides about how parents and young people can engage with school boards and local governments, as well as online discussion forums to allow parent and student champions to connect with and inspire each other. While the federal Safe Routes

Long-Term Goal:

People and organizations that champion Safe Routes to School exist and are active at every level of government. They are engaged, effective and equipped with resources to advance policy change and built environment improvements that support Safe Routes to School.

Measureable Objectives:

- ✓ We will track the engagement of partners in advancing policy change and raising awareness about SRTS:
 - By 2011 – a system in place to track partner engagement with baseline numbers
 - By 2013 – a 50% increase in “engaged partners” over the 2011 baseline
 - By 2015 – a 100% increase in “engaged partners” over the 2011 baseline
- ✓ We will measure individual participation in training forums, website downloads of resources and action alert click-throughs:
 - By 2011 – a system in place to measure individual engagement with baseline numbers
 - By 2013 – a 50% increase in “engaged individuals” over the 2011 baseline
 - By 2015 – a 100% increase in “engaged individuals” over the 2011 baseline

to School program focuses on elementary and middle school, our materials will also address high school students and parents. Our goal is to convert parents and students from participants in Safe Routes to School to champions and leaders for the movement.

3.3 Transportation sector engagement: Traditionally, the transportation industry has focused primarily on the movement of goods and people and has seen programs like Safe Routes to School as peripheral to their mission. It is important that the Partnership lead the way in strengthening relationships with transportation professionals and the industry to create greater buy-in for Safe Routes to School as a tool for reducing traffic congestion and improving safety. We will work to develop deeper connections with state Department of Transportation employees, including the state Safe Routes to School coordinators, and get a better understanding of the strengths, challenges and opportunities in each of the 50 states. We will also collaborate with transportation professional organizations and universities to ensure that built environment policies and engineering standards are inclusive of Safe Routes to School. Finally, we will engage school transportation officials and organizations to broaden their scope beyond school busing to also include Safe Routes to School and to work collaboratively with their state and local Departments of Transportation.

3.4 Education sector engagement: School systems and education policymakers are charged with providing all students the opportunity to learn. More and more school systems are also taking on the role of influencing student wellness and health behaviors. We will better position Safe Routes to School as a strategy that contributes to academic achievement, student behavior and student safety as part of a comprehensive school approach on student wellness and health. We will start to go beyond the traditional K-8 focus of Safe Routes to School to build a constituency for Safe Routes to School within high schools as well. We will develop stronger relationships with the US Department of Education, state Departments of Education, and education sector associations and organizations. In partnership with the education sector, particularly working with school nurses and physical education teachers, we will work to include the teaching of bicycle and pedestrian safety skills within national and state curriculum standards.

3.5 Health sector engagement: Many organizations and foundations in the health sector have already embraced Safe Routes to School as part of comprehensive efforts to increase physical activity and improve air quality, thereby reducing obesity and asthma. While strong relationships exist with many of these national organizations, there is great potential to expand further at the state and local level. State and local health departments, pediatricians, community health foundations and health organizations can all be champions for Safe Routes to School and for healthy community design. We will develop training materials to help health professionals understand transportation funding streams and decision-making and how they can play a role in creating healthier communities, including Safe Routes to School.

3.6 International collaboration: The Safe Routes to School movement in the United States first began in 1997, and was modeled after European best practices from programs that began in the 1970s. Many European countries already have policies related to bicycle and pedestrian education curricula, traffic safety laws, transportation design and land use which could benefit the United States. Other countries are also interested in how we developed federal funding for Safe Routes to School in the United States. To help advance to the next level of Safe Routes to School, we will work to foster a learning network with other countries to share information about policies, funding streams, evaluation methods and best practices for Safe Routes to School.

Strategic Focus #4: Advancing Social Equity

Background:

All students and families throughout the United States should have the opportunity to safely engage in walking and bicycling to school. Children from low-income families are twice as likely to walk to school, but often face greater traffic and personal safety challenges on the trip to school. Residents in low-income urban areas are more likely to report higher numbers of busy streets, poor pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and challenges with crime and violence. And many low-income rural communities are faced with challenges such as distance to school, a lack of sidewalks and high-speed state highways bisecting communities. Childhood obesity rates are also higher among low-income children, children of color and children with disabilities. Unfortunately, many low-income communities—whether urban or rural—lack the resources and personnel at the local government or school level to apply for and manage Safe Routes to School grants that would improve safety.

Looking at all of these challenges, it is evident that there is a real need to focus on social equity to ensure that low-income communities and schools are able to access Safe Routes to School funds. It is also important to focus on serving children of color, recent immigrants and children with disabilities. The Partnership has already taken a number of initial steps in this area, including advocacy for the inclusion of equity language in federal legislation and state policies and the compilation of promising practices. To take these initial efforts to the next level, we will engage social equity organizations across the country to develop a plan of action, collaboratively advocate for policy changes, identify champions and disseminate best practices. Our leadership in this area will help ensure that the low-income children that are most in need of safe and low-cost ways of getting to school benefit from the program.

Tactics:

4.1 Federal and state policy change: Currently, few states are tracking the economic and geographic distribution of applications and awards for their Safe Routes to School programs. Without this analysis, it is impossible for states to know whether they are adequately serving low-income schools and communities in urban and rural areas. We will seek federal policy changes requiring state Departments of Transportation to perform this assessment with each application and award cycle and to ensure that they are adequately serving low-income schools. In conjunction with our state networks, we will work to ensure that all states adopt policies and practices to provide planning assistance, outreach and grant-writing assistance to low-income schools and communities.

4.2 Social equity partner affiliates: Many organizations already exist that focus on geographic, racial and economic

Long-Term Goal:

The share of recipients of federal Safe Routes to School grants in low-income communities will exceed the share of low-income schools in the country. There will be systems in place to support successful implementation of the Safe Routes to School program in these communities.

Measureable Objectives:

- ✓ By 2013, half of the states in the U.S. will have policies in place to support low-income communities and schools. By 2015, every state in the nation will have policies in place to support serving low income communities and schools.
- ✓ In 2011, we will create a baseline for the number of our social equity partner affiliates at the state and national level. By 2013, that number will increase by 50%. By 2015, the number of social equity partners will be 100% more than in 2011.
- ✓ In 2011, we will create a baseline for both the number of rural partners and urban partner affiliates working with our organization. By 2013, both of those numbers will increase by 50%. By 2015, both of those numbers will be 100% more than in 2011.

equity—but they may not necessarily be engaged in transportation or Safe Routes to School. As part of efforts to advance social equity within Safe Routes to School, we will reach out to national, state and local grassroots social equity organizations and ask them to partner with us. We will seek to engage their expertise and experience in identifying needs in low-income urban and rural communities, to identify and equip grassroots champions, and to disseminate policies and promising practices about implementing Safe Routes to School in low-income communities.

4.3 Best practices and technical assistance: In 2010, the Partnership issued a best practices guide for implementing Safe Routes to School in low-income schools and communities. While it did include a few rural examples, it was more heavily focused on urban settings. Moving forward, we will develop a best practices guide focused specifically on promising approaches for implementing Safe Routes to School in rural areas. We will also continue to gather success stories and promising practices in low-income communities in all geographic settings and distribute those through our networks and partners. We will also make sure that technical assistance resources and success stories address how to best serve children of color, recent immigrants and children with disabilities. We will also work with equity partners and state Departments of Transportation to ensure that low-income communities and schools have access to technical assistance, webinars and other forums.

4.4 Equitable community-centered schools: As discussed in tactic 2.5, community-centered schools are an important part of Safe Routes to School, since they have shorter distances between homes and school. While there are many benefits to community-centered schools, there are also racial and economic concerns about this approach that must be addressed. We will work with social equity partners to research the challenges, document the sensitive issues and concerns, and convene a forum to bring together stakeholders in equity, education, housing, school siting and Safe Routes to School for an honest and open discussion. The goal of the forum will be to collectively develop a plan of action for equitable community-centered schools, and to activate national, state and local partners to disseminate proposed solutions and seek policy change.

Strategic Focus #5: Assuring Sustainability

Background:

The first federal funding for Safe Routes to School was created in 2005 through the federal transportation bill. As of 2010, \$800 million in federal funds have been allocated to Safe Routes to School, and a new transportation bill is pending within Congress that is likely to provide continued and increased funding for an additional five years. There is huge demand for Safe Routes to School funding, with only about one-third of application requests able to receive funding from state departments of transportation.

Given the considerable benefits to children and communities outlined throughout this strategic plan, we expect that the Safe Routes to School movement will continue to grow and place additional demands on the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. We must ensure that both the movement and the Partnership are sustainable. Sustainability of the movement includes leadership, effective use of federal funds, productive collaboration and leveraging additional funds and partners. Sustainability of the Partnership depends on diversified funding, knowledgeable staff, an effective steering committee, strong leaders and efficient infrastructure. This sustainability will allow the Partnership to carefully and proactively plan for the future, direct our course of action and have the resources to react to new challenges and opportunities that arise based on politics, the media or partners.

Tactics:

5.1 Sustainability of the movement: A viable movement is one with real results, strong leaders, broad support, and multiple diverse funding sources. To achieve these goals, we will work with local and state leaders to ensure that federal Safe Routes to School funds are spent and translate into completed, successful Safe Routes to School programs and infrastructure. We will also collaborate with the Federal Highway Administration and the National Center for Safe Routes to School to lead the movement by disseminating successes, shaping evaluation plans and holding the bi-annual national conference. A number of the tactics outlined in prior sections also ensure that more organizations and partners include Safe Routes to School in their plans and promotional efforts. Finally, through the state and local policy change tactics outlined in strategic focus area #2, more states and local communities will provide additional funding to Safe Routes to School.

5.2 Sustainability of the Partnership: The Partnership has already transitioned from a start-up organization to an established organization. To continue that transition and ensure sustainability, we plan to diversify our funding sources. We will also further grow our budget to enable us to achieve the ambitious goals and objectives outlined in this strategic plan. We will enhance our

Long-Term Goal:

Both the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and the Safe Routes to School movement are sustainable beyond 2015 with strong leadership, effective infrastructure, measurable results and diversified, stable funding sources.

Measureable Objectives:

- ✓ By 2013, state obligation rates for Safe Routes to School allocated funding reaches 60%. By 2015, state obligation rates for Safe Routes to School allocated funding reaches 80%.
- ✓ By 2013 the Safe Routes to School National Partnership has further diversified funding sources and has a budget of \$5 million. By 2015, our budget is \$10 million.
- ✓ By 2013 we will have a system to inventory state and local funding for Safe Routes to School, and the initial benchmark will show state and local funding is equal to at least half of the annual federal investment. By the year 2015 that amount of funding will have increased, to be equal to the annual level of federal spending.

organizational capacity to fulfill the movement's needs by diversifying our staff and steering committee and providing greater opportunities for continued learning and growth. Finally, as an organization with staff located around the country, we will create scalable and efficient technology infrastructure, resources, personal development and management systems that work for our dispersed staff.

Strategic Focus Area	Long-Term Goal	Measurable Objectives
#1 Opening Minds through Research and Communications	Safe Routes to School will be a household name. The average person will know what Safe Routes to School is and how it benefits them, even if they don't have school aged children.	By 2013, we will form a Research Council including the foremost Safe Routes to School researchers in the United States. The Research Council will make recommendations for needed research and by 2015, several studies will be underway to fill identified gaps in Safe Routes to School research.
		By the year 2013, the Partnership and the Research Council will work with the federal government to create evaluation standards for Safe Routes to School for use by all states and local communities.
		We will increase our number of partners from 500 in 2010 to 750 by 2013 and to 1000 by the year 2015.
		By the year 2013, we will have baseline data on the public's familiarity with Safe Routes to School. By the year 2015, this awareness will grow by at least 25%.
#2 Changing Policies and Infrastructure	Every school in America has safe walking and bicycling routes and there are supportive policies for Safe Routes to School at the school district, local, state and federal government levels	By the year 2013, federal funding for Safe Routes to School will be at least three times more than the 2009 amount of \$183 million/year.
		By 2013 we will have a system to inventory state and local funding for Safe Routes to School, and the initial benchmark will show state and local funding is equal to at least half of the annual federal investment. By the year 2015 that amount of funding will have increased, to be equal to the annual level of federal spending.
		By 2013, all 20 network states will have policies in place more supportive of community-centered schools. By 2015, 10 additional states will have these policies in place.
		By year 2013, our State Network Project will have full-time Organizers in all 20 states and half-time Organizers in 10 additional states. By the year 2015, the State Network Project will serve all 50 states, with full-time Organizers in at least half the states.
		By 2011, we will have a system to define and take the baseline for how many state Departments of Transportation make Safe Routes to School an integral part of their operations. By 2013, at least 20 states will have Safe Routes to School as an integral part of DOT operations. By 2015, at least 40 states will meet that standard.
#3 Building Capacity for Leadership	People and organizations that champion Safe Routes to School exist and are active at every level of government. They are engaged, effective and equipped with resources to advance policy change and built environment improvements that support Safe Routes to School.	We will track the engagement of partners in advancing policy change and raising awareness about SRTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By 2011 – a system in place to measure partner engagement with baseline numbers ▪ By 2013 – a 50% increase in “engaged partners” over the 2011 baseline ▪ By 2015 – a 100% increase in “engaged partners” over the 2011 baseline
		We will measure individual participation in training forums, website downloads of resources and action alert click-throughs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By 2011 – a system in place to measure individual engagement with baseline numbers ▪ By 2013 – a 50% increase in “engaged individuals” over the 2011 baseline ▪ By 2015 – a 100% increase in “engaged individuals” over the 2011 baseline
#4 Advancing Equity	The share of recipients of federal Safe Routes to School grants in low-income communities will exceed the share of low-income schools in the country. There will be systems in place to support successful implementation of the Safe Routes to School program in these communities.	By 2013, half of the states in the U.S. will have policies in place to support low-income communities and schools. By 2015, every state in the nation will have policies in place to support serving low income communities and schools.
		In 2011, we will create a baseline for the number of our social equity partner affiliates at the state and national level. By 2013, that number will increase by 50%. By 2015, the number of social equity partners will be 100% more than in 2011.
		In 2011, we will create a baseline for both the number of rural partners and urban partner affiliates working with our organization. By 2013, both of those numbers will increase by 50%. By 2015, both of those numbers will be 100% more than in 2011.
#5 Assuring Sustainability	Both the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and the Safe Routes to School movement are sustainable beyond 2015 and have a diversification of stable funding sources.	By 2013, state obligation rates for Safe Routes to School allocated funding reaches 60%. By 2015, state obligation rates for Safe Routes to School allocated funding reaches 80%.
		By 2013 the Safe Routes to School National Partnership has further diversified funding sources and has a budget of \$5 million. By 2015, our budget is \$10 million.
		By 2013 we will have a system to inventory state and local funding for Safe Routes to School, and the initial benchmark will show state and local funding is equal to at least half of the annual federal investment. By the year 2015 that amount of funding will have increased, to be equal to the annual level of federal spending.