



Tennessee 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee Team.

The Tennessee state network team is comprised of:

- [Christy Smith](#) Tennessee Advocacy Organizer
- [Kristine Kessel](#) Network Director

The Plan

The Tennessee state network has been in existence since 2010. The network project's goal is to advance state-level policy reform, resulting in the award and obligation of federal transportation funds, street-scale improvements and joint-use agreements. The Tennessee Safe Routes to School State Network Action Plan (Tennessee Action Plan) is intended to guide the National Partnership's Tennessee advocacy organizer, to share our goals and objectives with external partners, and to facilitate collaboration and mutual support of our partners' efforts to support the creation of walkable and bikeable communities and access to schools in Tennessee.

Partners

Implementation of the Tennessee Action Plan requires the coordination of partners at local, county, regional and state levels to ensure the coordinated implementation of our policy goals. The Tennessee state network is grateful for the leadership and efforts of many individuals and organizations who participate in monthly meetings, action teams and more. The success of the 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee, essential state and regional network tasks for each of the five focus areas comprise our Tennessee Action Plan.

1. Opening Minds through Research and Communications

The Tennessee state network 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 stories of our partners and Safe Routes to School practitioners with a wide variety of stakeholders through the media, conference calls, journal and newspaper articles, presentations and meetings. The Tennessee 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 Tennessee we will:

- i. Identify additional research/fact needs for policy advancement and work with partners to implement research.
- ii. Identify current benchmarks, best practices and/or innovative programs.
- iii. Identify and partner with agencies (such as Universities, Health Departments, County and City Governments) to collect data and implement research on Safe Routes to School projects.

B. Communications

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

- i. Routinely update the [Tennessee State](#) page with current information.
- ii. Develop the Tennessee state site (microsite) with blogs, calendar listings, best practices and more.
- iii. Connect the [National Partnerships website](#), [Tennessee state](#) page and the Tennessee state site (when developed).
- iv. Cultivate partnerships with statewide and regional media contacts to advance news and research coverage.
- v. Capitalize on opportunities for media coverage and OpEds through these expanded relationships with media contacts and by continuing to build leadership capacity with partners with focused 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 Tennessee communities.
- vi. Foster peer exchange /learning.
- vii. Incorporate rural/urban/suburban models into communications.

2. Changing Policy and Infrastructure

The Tennessee 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 joint use for community-based schools; and (D) data/evaluation for these three main policy areas. 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee. As a result, most communities lack safe bicycle networks and connected sidewalks and 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 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 to work towards vastly improving award, obligation and encumbrance rates of the state and federal Safe Routes to School grants. It is critical to see Safe Routes to School funds, once awarded, 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 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) and Departments of Transportation (DOTs) 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 the Tennessee DOT (TDOT) and the/MPOs, and Tennessee network members to:

1. Work to get the existing Safe Routes to School and Transportation Enhancements funding spent (funds from SAFETEA-LU are still available).

- a. Convene Action Team meetings as needed to discuss status and challenges with current status of obligation and implementation of state and federal funds.
- b. Work with TDOT to determine obligation rates.
- c. Partner with local cities and counties that have grants to help them move through the process.
- d. Determine roadblocks to successful implementation, work with appropriate entities to address the roadblocks and highlight success stories.
- e. Engage nontraditional partners to encourage the success of non-infrastructure grants (School Districts, etc.).
- f. Work on outreach to lower-income communities to help them to apply for Safe Routes to School grants, to ensure that help is provided to implement grants, and to measure how the state is serving our most vulnerable populations.
- g. Local jurisdictions with remaining grants and obligations will be provided assistance to spend down their obligations.

- vii. Tactics (Leveraging Funding): To ensure that equitable funding levels are provided 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. Tennessee has opted in to 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 and Safe Routes to School Programs. Tennessee has obligated all of its Recreational Trail funds for 2011-2012.
 - d. Work in collaboration with state partners and stakeholders to set recommended performance criteria that favor bicycle and pedestrian projects, and ensure that locals are well poised to propose good projects and work with MPOs and all key decision makers.
 - e. Work with partners to identify existing and future funding sources that can be used for bicycle and pedestrian projects.
 - f. Develop messaging to current and new partners on the need for more active transportation dollars.
 - g. 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.
 - h. Support the adoption and implementation of Complete Street/street-scale improvement policies that use highway maintenance dollars to create Complete Streets when road repairs and reconstruction is undertaken.
- viii. Leads: National Partnership, TDOT, MPO's, and implementing agencies and partners across the state.

B .Complete Streets/Street-Scale Improvements

- i. Background: Complete Streets policies seek to ensure that all transportation projects are safe for all users. Throughout Tennessee, many regions' MPOs, counties and local jurisdictions have, or are in the process of implementing, Complete Streets policies. At the state level TDOT has adopted complete streets as policy number 530-10. They apply this policy on road work done on state highways and encourage local municipalities to follow the guideline.
- ii. Goals: To support an increase in Complete Streets policies statewide, and improvements to design guidelines. Given the broad nature of policy 530-10 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 Tennessee 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. Convene regular statewide Action Team meetings as needed to discuss the status and challenges of current of Complete Streets policies, and to develop and implement a plan to expand Complete Streets policies throughout the state.
 - b. Encourage the implementation of new Complete Streets policies by educating partners and transportation agencies about the benefits of Complete Streets.
 - c. Share best practices at the city, county, and MPO levels.
 - d. Identify the challenges faced by jurisdictions currently implementing policies to determine successful strategies and systemic policy obstacles.
 - e. Track the implementation policy 530-10 across the state.
 - f. 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, Bike/Walk Tennessee, Metro Area MPOs, TDOT.

C. Joint (Shared) Use and Community Based Schools

i. Background: 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.

The Tennessee Code Ann. §11-21-101 §11-21-108 authorizes use of school property by the community and provides for joint use establishment or Joint Use of

property/facilities in K-12 schools. Specifically, any board of education may grant the use of any school property to any county conservation board for the purpose of making available public parks, preserves, parkways, playgrounds, recreational centers, and other conservation areas to the inhabitants of the county to promote and preserve the health and general welfare of the people and to provide adequate programs of public recreation.

Similarly, Tenn. Code Ann. §11-24-110 is a statute that authorizes use of school property by the community and provides for joint use establishment or joint use of property/facilities. Any county board of education may grant the use of any buildings, grounds, or equipment to any municipal recreation system.

- 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 Tennessee state network uses multiple strategies for shared use.
 - a. Convene regular statewide Action Team meetings as needed.
 - b. Encourage the implementation of new joint use agreements and policies by sharing best practices, and model tools and agreements, such as those published by the Change Lab Solutions (formerly National Policy and Legal Analysis Network (NPLAN)), specifically targeting lower-income schools and communities as the highest priority.
 - c. Work with the Tennessee Department of Education to publish joint use and school siting guidance, either as stand-alone documents, or by including guidance into any updated policy manuals.
 - d. Determine if joint use can be folded into regional planning and sustainable communities' strategies at the regional level.
 - e. Work with State associations and departments to determine opportunities to expand joint use and community based schools.
- iv. Leads: National Partnership, Department of Education, Vanderbilt University, American Heart Association.

B. Data Collection and Evaluation

- i. Background: Our transportation strategies and investments must be data driven, especially in regards to safety and health for all community members. In addition, many decisions on government funding are predicated upon evaluation and modeling, which requires good 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

more. As funding becomes increasingly based on performance outcomes, now more than ever it is critical that Tennessee 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 infused 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 for data collection, modeling and evaluation. Ensure widespread distribution and the standardization of data and tools currently available for use by local jurisdictions and MPOs.
- iii. Tactics: The Tennessee state network uses multiple strategies for data collection and evaluation.
 - a. Partner with TDOT, MPOs, Regional Planning Associations, universities, public health and other key entities to capitalize on existing studies on Safe Routes to School program and policy impacts.
 - b. Create a summary of joint use policies, Complete Street/street scale improvement policies and infrastructure improvements such as sidewalk, multi-use paths and bike lanes.
 - c. Collaborate with the MPOs in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville to maximize opportunities for data collection and evaluation, and seek ways to partner with health agencies and universities to analyze data and project cost /benefits.
- iv. Leads: National Partnership, TDOT, Departments of Public Health, MPOs and partners across the state.

3. Building the Capacity for Leadership

A. Background

The National Partnership's Tennessee 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 expands 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 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 amongst our partners, at the state level:

- i. Track our partners through Salesforce.
- ii. Educate our partners through workshops, network calls and individual communications builds expertise and allows 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. Safe Routes to School programs
 - d. Health impact assessments
 - e. Joint Use/School Siting policies
 - f. Data collection
 - g. Serving lower-income communities
- iii. Develop county leaders, particularly in the MPO regions in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville, 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

D. Leads

National Partnership, local jurisdictions tasks forces and action teams, Departments of Public Health, Public Works, Planning and Recreation Departments, city staff/MPO/County Transportation Commission/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, to school, to the grocery store, and to the doctor's office. And while billions of

public dollars are invested in our nation's transportation system each year, studies are showing that a disproportionate amount of burden and injury from these investment choices are falling on people living in lower-income communities.

B. Goals

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

C. Tactics

- i. Establish strong working relationships with city and community-based organizations collaborate with state and national equity groups in Tennessee, and work closely with parallel efforts.
- 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 by design landscaping techniques. These techniques contend that law enforcement officers, architects, city planners, landscape and interior designers, and resident volunteers can create a climate of safety in a community right from the start by striving to design a physical environment that positively influences human behavior.
- iv. Work to ensure that health and environmental justice metrics are included into transportation planning and investment allocations, and ensure that grants to lower-income communities and schools are tracked for all Safe Routes to School awards.
- v. Work to ensure that engineering assistance is available for lower-income communities and by strengthening partnerships with TDOT and equity groups at the state level. Focus outreach and technical assistance activities in lower-income communities.
- vi. Request regional, county, cities, and local jurisdictions to develop specific and measurable equity measures at a neighborhood level, including affordable housing, gentrification, and accident and injury data.

D. Leads

National Partnership, non-profit health organizations such as American Lung Association, American Heart Association, Departments of Public Health, Hospitals and Community Clinics, Community Health Organizers, such as Community Health Coalition.

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 and strengthens and supports public agencies and community based organizations throughout the state who are implementing Safe Routes to School efforts. Another goal is to sustain Tennessee Safe Routes to School advocacy efforts after current grants expire.

C. Tactics

- i. Update funders and elected officials on the progress, the benefits, and the needs to continue to support Safe Routes to School.
- 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, partners across the state, relevant city staff, such as Departments of Health, City and County Public Works, City and County Traffic Engineers, and City Manager's Offices.

Partner Affiliates:

Activate Chattanooga

American Heart Association/Tennessee Affiliate

Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization

Huntsville Tennessee Valley AMBUCS Friends

Jeff Roth Cycling Foundation

Kingsport Tomorrow

Knox County Health Department

Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Music City Moves!

Nashville Area Metro Planning Organization

Outdoor Encounter

State of Tennessee

Tennessee Obesity Taskforce

Walk/Bike Nashville

Network Members:

Askew, Hargraves and Harcourt Associates, Inc.

Bike/Walk Tennessee

Clean Air Partnership of Middle Tennessee

Knox Area TPO

Metro Nashville Department of Health

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University

Nashville Community Health and Wellness Team

Outdoor Chattanooga/Bike Chattanooga

Safe Kids Tennessee

Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Coordinated School Health

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

Tennessee Department of Health

Tennessee Department of Transportation

Tennessee Governor's Highway Safety Office

Tennessee Obesity Task Force

TMA Group

University of Memphis

University of Tennessee, Center for Transportation

Vanderbilt University Institute for Obesity and Metabolism

YMCA of Middle Tennessee