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Tip Sheet #5

Advancing Nonprofit Organizations and Safe Routes to School Simultaneously



Why Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a growing movement to get kids walking and bicycling again to school and in daily life. In 1969, 48 percent of children were walking and bicycling to school but now only 13 percent do so.¹ Within a mile of school, more than 85 percent of children used to walk and bike², and now that number is down to 38 percent³. Safe Routes to School is changing that! By creating safe travel environments and educating and encouraging students and families to walk and bicycle more often, Safe Routes to School is creating the next generation of pedestrians and bicyclists, and awareness of how travel choices affect public health, traffic congestion and the environment.

Safe Routes to School campaigns and programs are not only fun and engaging but can also be used to grow your nonprofit organization into a more powerful advocacy group by tapping into an audience that has historically been left out: parents and children. By focusing on children, you are building the next generation of bicyclists. By focusing on Safe Routes to School efforts, parents, kids and community members can become members of your organization and provide important networking opportunities to guide and support future advocacy efforts.

Through Safe Routes to School, a child bicyclist will develop an understanding of bicycling that will increase the odds that they will ride as adults, and/or support bicycling as adult voters, community members and policy makers. A child bicyclist will be a better adult car or truck driver, especially when approaching bicyclists on the roadway, since they will have learned traffic safety skills at an early age, and gained an understanding of the bicycling experience. At the same time, most adults remember riding

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Bicycle Colorado's Winning Campaign

In 2003, Bicycle Colorado was an organization of 1,000 individual members and 45 business and organizational members. Their staff attended the Winning Campaigns training and developed a blueprint for starting a Safe Routes to School program at the Colorado Department of Transportation. The goal was to pass state legislation that would mandate a Safe Routes to School public selection committee, create multiple funding sources and make bicycle safety education an eligible activity. These goals ran in tandem with the organizational goals of building membership, identifying new funders and displaying their effectiveness as an advocacy organization. By using their Winning Campaigns strategy blueprint, they power mapped, found the right decision makers and began their strategy to influence them.

In 2004, with the support of their bill sponsors, House Bill 1309 passed creating the Colorado Safe Routes to School program. Bicycle Colorado has successfully applied for this funding to implement Safe Routes to School programs across the state of Colorado and they have since grown their individual memberships to 7,000 and quadrupled their business and organizational memberships to 200. They've seen a substantial increase in publicity and have been able highlight their Safe Routes to School educational successes to build additional momentum with new campaigns.

bicycles around the neighborhood when they were kids and since most walked or bicycled to school, their fond memories of this activity can help you motivate them to participate in recreating that experience for future generations.

Safe Routes to School is a targeted, nonpartisan approach to improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and education. Investing in Safe Routes to School as a campaign or program for your nonprofit will build capacity internally and give your organization a positive foundation to build upon for future campaigns. Safe Routes to School has many positive attributes that make centralizing a winning campaign around Safe Routes to School a win-win for your organization and the whole community.

Safe Routes to School programs and related policies reduce congestion around schools, improve air quality, increase physical activity which can help to prevent childhood obesity, give children opportunities for fun, outdoor play, protect schools as the center of communities, save lives through reduced traffic crashes and improved infrastructure, increase driver awareness and enforcement, improve children's knowledge of traffic safety, calm and reduce traffic in neighborhoods, build community cohesiveness and help bring neighbors together, increase parental involvement in schools and more! For detailed evidence about the benefits of getting kids walking and bicycling, go to the Safe Route to School National Partnership (National Partnership) website research section: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/mediacenter/research>

Creating a Winning Campaign

The following steps are adapted from **the Alliance for Biking and Walking's** Winning Campaigns Training and aligned for how to organize around Safe Routes to School.

*(For technical assistance in developing a Winning Campaign, please consider attending the Alliance's three-day **Winning Campaigns Training** workshop.)*

Choose the Right Approach

Safe Routes to School can range from implementing a small volunteer pilot program in one school in your neighborhood, to conducting a promotional campaign to build support for Safe Routes to School in your local community, or working on a school board policy change, to a diverse, multi-sector stakeholder coalition that works to change policies, build infrastructure and leverage additional funds for Safe Routes to School for the entire state. Your organization should consider what approach is the best based on your goals, mission and organizational capacity.

Put Together a Team

Get started with your team by working to gather support, energize the bicycling community and your members. Engage school personnel, the PTA, parents, students, elected officials, engineers, police officers, city and county planners, health officials, non-profit organizations as well as business and community leaders in addressing walking and bicycling to school in your school, community or state. Once you have zeroed in on the issues, provide opportunities for those outside of your organization to move the campaign forward through volunteering and political support.

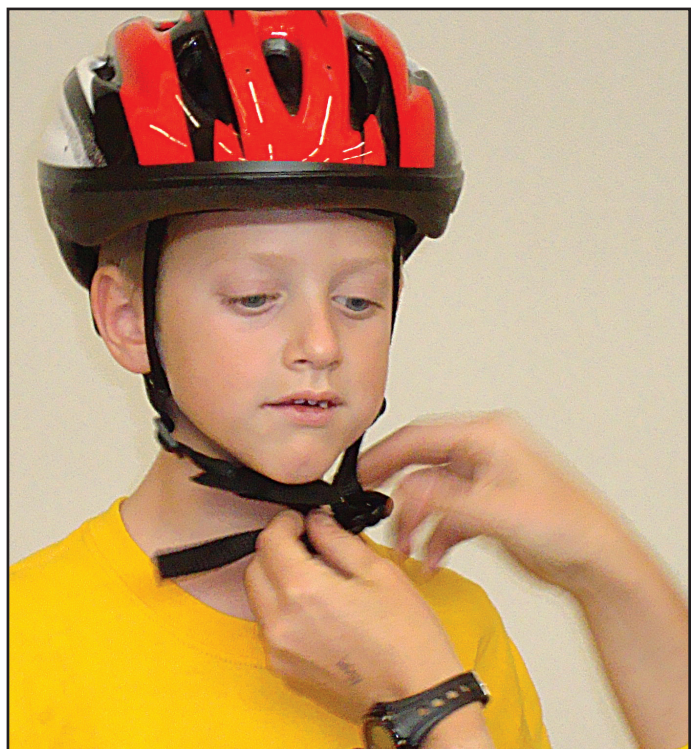


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State Network

If you will be working at the state level, put together a network of stakeholders, including agencies such as the departments of transportation and health, advocates and elected officials. This group can develop policy priorities, look for Safe Routes to School funding, and even inspire legislation. For more about how to build a state Safe Routes to School network, read the National Partnership's **Establishing a Safe Routes to School network: a 10-Step Guide**, and for more about the Safe Routes to School state network project: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/network>

Community Task Force

If you will be working at the community level, put together a group of power brokers, agencies, advocates, and community groups. This group should meet at least quarterly or monthly, and will help to leverage resources, reduce policy barriers, find funding, and help to promote Safe Routes to School. Members can include the Mayor's office, City Council, representatives from the department of transportation, school district(s), public works, traffic planning and engineering, health, neighborhood associations, advocacy organizations, community groups and parent leaders from the schools being served.

School Team

If you are starting a Safe Routes to School program at a school or schools, put together a team – at each school - that will work on issues that affect that school's neighborhood environment and students. This group will develop the actual program at the school, and should include the principal and/or other school staff such as teachers, city engineer, bicycle advocates, parents, students and local business and/or community groups. The team should be an official part of a school committee and have leadership from school staff and parents.

Set Realistic but Visionary Goals

Winning campaigns have goals that are clear and measurable for both the issue and the organization. Using the task force that you initiated early in the campaign, work with the stakeholders to set realistic goals for the campaign and for the organization. Remember, even if you lose a campaign, the act of going through the steps of a winning campaign has built your base and given you something to continue working toward.

Assess Your Resources

Once you have identified the campaign issue and set goals for the campaign and your organization, assess your resources. What are the strengths of your campaign? What are its weaknesses? What opportunities does this make available? Determine the values of your community, analyze the current economic, political and social sentiments and try to estimate who or what will be the opposition to getting kids walking and bicycling to school. Inevitably, no matter what campaign you choose, you will have allies and opponents. Take time to do a SWOT analysis where you list your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as this information will be useful as you move forward with the steps that follow.

Strategy and Power Mapping

Use power mapping to analyze the power structure in the community. Who has the power to make the change you seek? For building infrastructure, the power generally lies at the city, county, and/or state level. For policies that affect issues on school grounds, the power brokers will be within school districts. Once you have identified those in power, find those that are connected to your power brokers. Now is the time to tap into your allies. Start with health, smart growth, and alternative transportation leaders and activists. Consider environment, educational reform, social justice, and community revitalization leaders and activists, and especially parents at the schools. Leverage the support of your allies to influence the decision-maker(s) both directly and indirectly.



BikeWalkKC's Winning Campaign

BikeWalkKC is a relatively new advocacy organization in Kansas City that is 150 members strong and growing. Staffed by three part time employees, all who have attended the Winning Campaigns Training, one of BikeWalkKC's campaigns is to create several Bicycle Friendly Communities throughout the region. BikeWalkKC envisions at least five metro communities covering at least half of the metro population and creating a swath of bicycle-friendly communities.

There were many ways to approach this campaign, but perhaps the most potent issue was Safe Routes to School. BikeWalkKC used International Walk to School Day to motivate their base of support, build membership and advocate for bike lanes and sidewalks at local city halls. In addition, they used the Car Free Challenge website to motivate older children and teachers to use the on-line tool for classroom use. Finally, they used their "Paint on the Pavement" postcard and social media campaign to show local elected officials that there is a community need and desire for crosswalks, bike lanes and more robust pedestrian markings.

This campaign, though aimed at the entire metro population, was especially effective when promoted at Safe Routes to School events where there was an opportunity to talk with parents and caregivers one on one. Currently, these three tactics, and the communication efforts behind them, are successfully motivating elected officials to support BikeWalkKC's Safe Routes to School campaign throughout the region and in turn BikeWalkKC, its members and its mission.

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Communications

Put together a plan to communicate to the public, agencies and policy makers the benefits of children walking and bicycling to school. (There are resources at the end of this document that can provide you with key messaging.) Get the message out in any way your organization can best – blogs, websites, fact sheets, earned media and letters to the editor, working with partners to have them help you advertise, and meetings with important stakeholders.

All great campaigns communicate effectively, reaching the right audience with the right message through the right media. Safe Routes to School has many benefits – find the values that resonate with your community and decision makers. Use the 'fun factor', childhood obesity epidemic, safety concerns, or other 'calling cards' and always include a personal story from a family that has benefitted from physical activity, safety improvements, etc. Take time to develop and rehearse your talking points - should you ever have only two minutes to make your pitch, you should be able to do so effectively. When possible, develop a slogan, something that will stick with the audience long after the conversation or speech. Use earned media attention to attract new members, build your organization's political power and gain momentum through your chosen issue.

Tactics and Timelines

You have chosen your issue, set goals, assessed resources, fully developed your campaign strategy and established a communications plan. Now and only now, you can begin to cultivate your campaign's tactics. Smart organizations understand that the journey toward a specific objective is rarely a straight line. With your high level, long-term strategy in place you can begin thinking of the actionable and much more microscopic level of deliverables and messages that will help you achieve your strategy. Part of creating a winning campaign is understanding how your tactics affect your strategy and creating a timeline that indicates when those tactics will be utilized.

Develop an action plan. A detailed, step-by-step plan that lays out the policy, communications or program priorities



and actions that your organization and team will focus on will help your state network, community task force or school team to stay focused and effective. The plan should include clearly defined goals, objectives and timelines that have been vetted through your partners.

There are many resources available to help you develop tactics for a Safe Routes to School campaign:

- For more information about working on Safe Routes to School at the state level, go to:

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state>

- For more information about working on Safe Routes to School at the **local level**, go to:

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/local>

Funding Resources

All campaigns require funding, however many campaigns, such as Safe Routes to School, actually provide the opportunity to generate funding. Assess the costs related to your campaign, and have a realistic calculation that you can work towards. Once you have firm numbers to work with, consider the following ideas to help you fund your campaign:

Federal Safe Routes to School Program

Since 2005, approximately \$1 billion in federal Safe Routes to School funding has been allocated to state Departments of Transportation through March 31, 2012. Your organization may be able to apply for federal funds, especially if your organization partners with a city and or school (the eligibility requirements and timing varies state by state). These funds can be used to build infrastructure projects within two miles of an elementary or middle school (K-8 grades) such as sidewalks, street crossings, and bicycle lanes, and for non-infrastructure program expenses such as bicycle safety education classes, encouragement events and programs such as bike trains and walking school buses, crossing guard training and traffic speed enforcement. Non-infrastructure funds can be used community-wide, depending on your states

funding criteria, and in many states this funding can be used to pay for program coordinators in communities and schools, and even for a contracted nonprofit organization to run statewide education, encouragement or technical assistance programs with multiple staff.

A good first step is to learn more about the program in your state. For more information about your state Safe Routes to School program's application process and criteria, contact your state Safe Routes to School coordinator. Find out your coordinator's contact information at: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/statemap>. Each state has a coordinator, usually a DOT employee, who is responsible for opening grant application cycles, usually once a year, selecting candidates, and then working with the awardee to complete federal requirements. Establishing a relationship with this department of transportation (DOT) staffer or contractor is a good second step.

Federal Transportation Enhancements Program

Your organization may also be able to apply for funding for bicycle infrastructure and programs through the federally funded Transportation Enhancements (TE) program. This program, established by Congress in 1991, has made more than \$9 billion in transportation funds available for twelve eligible categories of grant funding, including three that can pay for bicycle-related projects and programs: 1. **Pedestrian and bicycle facilities**, 2. **Pedestrian and bicycle safety and education activities**, and 8. **Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails**. Most states require a 20 percent match from the local applicant.

A good first step is to learn more about the TE program. For more information about TE, go to: <http://www.enhancements.org/Stateprofile.asp>. Each state DOT has a TE program manager responsible for overseeing TE projects. A good second step is to establish a relationship with the TE program manager in your state: http://www.enhancements.org/contacts_search.asp?type=TE.

Winning Campaign Resources

Simple Steps to Get Started with Safe Routes to School Resources and Information for Schools

by Safe Routes to School National Partnership

http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/school_resources--health_and_green_version.pdf

What is Safe Routes to Schools?

by Safe Routes to School National Partnership

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/What-is-SRST-factsheet-REVISED-06-14-11-w-footnotes.pdf>

Safe Routes to School Local Policy Guide

by Safe Routes to School National Partnership

http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/Local_Policy_Guide_2011.pdf

Getting Students Active through Safe Routes to School: Policies and Action Steps for Education Policymakers and Professionals

by Safe Routes to School National Partnership

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/EducatorsGuide.pdf>

Winning Campaigns Training

by Alliance for Biking and Walking

http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/memberservices/winning_campaigns_training

Establishing a Safe Routes to School State Network: A 10 Step Guide

by Safe Routes to School National Partnership

http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/SRTS_10stepguide_State_Network.pdf

Safe Routes to School Guide

by National Center for Safe Routes to School

<http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org>

Bicycling and Walking in the United States: Benchmarking Report 2010

by Alliance for Biking and Walking

<http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/benchmarkingdownload>

Safe Routes to School: Taking Steps to Increase Physical Activity Levels and Create Healthy, Livable Communities

by Safe Routes to School National Partnership

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/SRTSfactsheet.pdf>

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Other Funding Options:

- Raise funding for a Safe Routes to School campaign through membership drives, major donors, and/or annual giving.
- Leverage resources from the community task force or school team. It is possible that police, public works, etc. already have potential funding resources such as staffing at their disposal. For instance, your local police department could conduct safety enforcements to ensure that drivers are not speeding or running red lights or stop signs near schools. Police officers can help with safety events such as bike rodeos, or cycling skills clinics, training crossing guards, and escorting children to school during promotional events. Public works departments, traffic engineers and planners can plan for and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements near schools, using their existing resources.
- Talk to community groups. Get the buy in and financial or volunteer support from your favorite neighborhood community groups and businesses. This could be local bike shops, clubs, churches, racing teams, retail stores or companies, boy scout or girl scout troops, Kiwanis, etc. Community groups are often well-organized sources of volunteers and funding, and could have connections to the power



brokers in your community. A local bike club could sponsor an annual century ride that benefits Safe Routes to School. A local business could sponsor a promotional event, such as a bicycle giveaway or bike rodeo.

- Find local foundations, individuals and others interested in helping children. Since Safe Routes to School can benefit children and communities in so many ways, find out what local funders are interested in and develop talking points that highlight those benefits that fit their mission and goals, and ask for funding.
- Actively search for other funding sources available in your state or community. By having expert partners in your state network, community task force and/or school team, you can leverage their knowledge and connections to learn about funding sources and develop a plan for winning those funds for your Safe Routes to School campaign or program.

Safe Routes to School Winning Campaigns

Safe Routes to School campaigns contribute to an environment that has healthier students, cleaner air, less traffic, stronger communities and higher levels of safety which makes it an ideal issue for any organization seeking a winning campaign. Identify the right Safe Routes to School issue for your campaign with the input of partners as this is essential for success at the state, community or school level. Build a core of Safe Routes to School champions in the community who can advocate for policy change and help find funds from community and other sources. Once you've worked together to set realistic goals, assess your task force's resources as this will aid you as you being to create a strategy for affecting that change. Develop the communications plan for this strategy to ensure that the right audiences will be targeted and reached. Once these steps are completed, your team can look to specific tactics necessary to reach the campaign's goals and identify the timeline during which the tactics

should be deployed. Use your momentum to explore opportunities for additional funding by researching the available resources. All of the steps in a winning campaign are logical but must be completed in the recommended order for maximum effect. Finally, use your Safe Routes to School campaign successes to demonstrate your effect to your membership and potential new members while garnering support for your next Winning Campaign!



Credits This Safe Routes to School and bicycling tip sheet series has been generously sponsored by the SRAM Cycling Fund. The mission of the SRAM Cycling Fund is to support committed national advocacy efforts that enhance cycling infrastructure, safety and access. More information can be found at <http://www.sramcyclingfund.org>.

The mission of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership 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 children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. More information can be found at www.saferoutespartnership.org.

- ¹ The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership (2010). U.S. Travel Data Show Decline In Walking And Bicycling To School Has Stabilized: Safe Routes to School Programs Encourage Active, Safe Trips to School. Chapel Hill, NC & Boulder, CO. [Press release] Available: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/news_room/2010-04-08_2010_nhts_release.cfm. Accessed: March 23, 2011.
- ² U.S. Department of Transportation (1972). Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, Transportation characteristics of School Children. Available: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/1969/q.pdf> Accessed: April 13, 2011.
- ³ The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership (2010). U.S. Travel Data Show Decline In Walking And Bicycling To School Has Stabilized: Safe Routes to School Programs Encourage Active, Safe Trips to School. Chapel Hill, NC & Boulder, CO. [Press release] Available: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/news_room/2010-04-08_2010_nhts_release.cfm. Accessed: March 23, 2011.



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