



## **Safe Routes to School National Partnership Annual Meeting Notes**

*Monday, September 13, 1-5pm*

*Pro Walk Pro Bike Conference, Chattanooga, TN*

### **Icebreaker networking activity**

**Welcome and update on the Partnership** (Risa Wilkerson, Chair and Deb Hubsmith, Director of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership)

Risa welcomed everyone. We had approximately 100 people in attendance. Risa also introduced [staff](#) and [steering committee members](#), and thanked Wendi Kallins for serving as Chair of the Committee that organized this meeting.

Deb gave an update on the Partnership and shared highlights of the Partnership's work and accomplishments over the last year.

### **Skit on the Partnership's strategic plan mission and vision**

**Presentation of the Partnership's strategic plan** (Wendy Landman, Strategic Plan Committee Chair and Deb Hubsmith, Director)

Deb and Wendy gave a presentation on the Partnership's 2011-2015 draft strategic plan. View the PowerPoint presentation [here](#).

**Town Hall discussion of the Partnership's strategic plan** (Facilitated by Wendy Landman):

We had a rich town hall discussion that captured feedback from the attendees on the five strategic focus areas of the Partnership's 2011-2015 draft strategic plan. Thanks to everyone who provided feedback and ideas.

You can still provide feedback on [the 2011-2015 strategic plan](#) up until October 11, 2011 via an [online survey](#).

We will adopt the final plan in November.

**Legislative update** (Margo Pedroso, Deputy Director of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership):

Margo provided an update on what is going on legislatively at the federal level with transportation, health and climate bills. View her PowerPoint presentation [here](#).

### **Breakout groups**

Below are the main points that came out of each of the 10 breakout groups.

#### **Challenges in Rural Areas**

- The main challenges in rural areas are: weather; busing due to distance and school consolidation; poor infrastructure; main highway is main street usually with no sidewalks; consolidation of schools; school siting; liability (no sidewalk – no walking/biking allowed);
- too small to compete for grants; rural communities cannot compete for grants because schools do not have enough minorities (many rural areas are white and poor);

- rural people are less healthy and more obese; and often rural communities do not want to build sidewalks as then they will not look “rural” anymore.

### **Challenges in Urban Areas**

- The main challenges in urban areas are: crime; traffic safety; students with disabilities; capacity limitations (volunteer vs. paid staff); and communicating/outreach with multiple cultures and ethnic groups.
- Some ideas to address crime, traffic safety and volunteering include the following:
  - Crime: The Safe Passage Program is a community policing unit that focuses on crime safety.
  - Traffic Safety: The NYC DOT traffic safety study started with inexpensive measures (signs and pavement markings) and targeted the top 10% crash incident schools.
  - Volunteering: It can be difficult to get consistent participation from volunteers, thus engaging a paid staff with activities would be helpful. Examples of potential volunteer groups include: local bicycle advocacy organizations; official parent liaisons; neighborhood or community-oriented nonprofit organization; teachers; retired volunteers (AARP); college students; and after-school programs. The SRTS Ambassadors program in Chicago has a staff of 5 to 6 staff contractors that give free presentations on safety at public schools, and advocacy training for adults is included.

### **Developing a National Media Campaign**

- Partner affiliates should incorporate SRTS messages into their organizations’ PR budgets.
- The Partnership could help coordinate/convene organizations that are interested in advocating walking/bicycling.
- We need to break out specific target audiences, ideally with select spokespeople, because child marketing is different from parent marketing.
- The Partnership could localize the national media campaign by developing a kit that can be adaptable for diverse communities.
- Media campaigns should have an “ASK” and not just a message.
- Campaign should link with other social networking strategies that highlight sports, cultures, age groups, being “cool” and having freedom.
- Potential messages should be tested in the field before finalized and disseminated.

### **Developing and Institutionalizing Curriculum**

- The key players and decision makers to getting curriculum institutionalized are administrative people (top) and grassroots people (bottom): parents, principals, PE teachers, district administrators, police and fire departments, school boards and service clubs.
- There are mini-grants to provide incentives. (i.e. PEP grants)

### **Engaging Youth**

- We should help develop youth leaders and youth led campaigns in order to have sustained youth engagement. (Youth defined as 6-12<sup>th</sup> grades.)
- We should identify strategies for drawing youth in and motivating them. One way is simply to listen to and learn from them via informal gatherings or surveys.
- We should consider peer modeling to draw youth into bicycling as youth consider cost and their peers behaviors when making decisions.
- States could consider including a youth engagement requirement in their SRTS grant applications.

### **Evaluation & Research**

- We need to understand what works so that future decisions regarding the built environment and behavioral change can be more effectively addressed.
- Evaluation can help in determining how to sustain behavior change.
- It is important to measure SRTS’s impacts on numbers of walkers/bicyclists and on physical activity/obesity/air quality/asthma/academic and behavioral benefits/safety.

### **Influencing State Implementation and Policies**

- There should be a complete streets discussion to get linked in with AASHTO and to get into committees that are making transportation decisions and expressing how we would like to tie in SRTS to complete streets.
- Elected officials should get involved in advocating with state DOTs.
- Safety funding is limited and there should be some money set aside for bike/ped.
- There have been successes with the road safety audit reviews.
- Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) can help advocate with SRTS by showing the impacts in transportation models at MPO levels.
- Implementation can be challenging, therefore working with law enforcement could help.

### **School Siting**

- We need to help school districts and municipalities understand that it is more than about adding schools and roads. Discussions about walking/bicycling are already influencing some school districts to carry out their building plans differently.
- We should help publicize or make guidelines that promote walking/bicycling by developing a checklist to help decision makers try and include walking/bicycling earlier in the discussion. The more organizations involved, the more likely to have a better outcome.
- We must keep raising awareness of walking/bicycling *before* a site is planned and built.
- Key people to include in these discussions are elected and non-elected local officials, school board and design professionals (engineers, architects, planners).

### **Social Networking**

- We should utilize Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Social media can make walking/bicycling a social experience and not just an event. Via social media, they can talk about walking/riding every day.
- Youth should be given opportunities to create content as ways to bring in parents and families because getting buy in from families is the most important thing.
- Youth have a desire for independence, and making social networking part of their SRTS experience (e.g., reporting on Facebook how fun it is), we can establish influential youth leaders, which can create a wave of enthusiasm.
- In the future, we could combine the social networking and youth engagement breakout groups.
- We should share videos of kids or videos made by kids for a strong impact on elected officials.

### **Working with Partners – Existing and New**

- There are 31 potential partners that SRTS can/should reach out to: Universities, faith communities, Rotary clubs, AmeriCorps, American Automobile Association (AAA), Better World club, YMCA/YWCA, Girl/Boys Scouts of America, Boys/Girls Clubs of America, pediatricians and EMTs, driving schools, National Association of Community Health, sororities and fraternities, Junior League, Moms Rising, Cool Moms, National Organization of School Principals, Organization of School Nurses, National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (ACHIEVE Projects), Coalition to Increase Physical Activity, Future Wise, Habitat for Humanity, American Public Transit Association, Environmental Educators, USAA, National Association of Regional Planners, Children in Nature Network, National School Transportation Association, and school operations officials.

### **Closing remarks (Risa Wilkerson):**

Risa asked everyone, before leaving, to please show the Partnership which of the five strategic plan categories are most important to them by placing three sticky dots provided to them on the large charts. She thanked everyone for their attendance, participation and for their support of the Safe Routes to School movement.