Walk, Ride, and Roll Webinar Series
Back to Basics: An Introduction to Safe Routes to School
Kori Johnson, Safe Routes Partnership
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The mission of the Safe Routes Partnership is to advance safe walking and rolling to and from schools and in everyday life, improving the health and well-being of people of all races, income levels, and abilities, and building healthy, thriving communities for everyone.
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Say hello in the chat!
What is Safe Routes to School?
Safe Routes to School is a movement and a program to make school travel – including walking, biking, and scooting – safe, convenient, and fun for children of all genders, races, and abilities.
In 1969, nearly 50% of all children walked or bicycled to school. Today, just 13% walk or bicycle.
Family car trips to school make up 10-14% of morning congestion (National Center for Safe Routes to School, 2011)

Injuries and fatalities are especially high in low income neighborhoods (Governor, August 2014)
The Evidence is In: Safe Routes to School Works

• Safe Routes to School programs lead to a **35-45% increase in walking and bicycling** to school

• Safe Routes to School programs result in a **45-75% decrease in pedestrian injuries** near schools

• Kids who walk and bike are **more physically active**
Benefits of Safe Routes to School

**COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS**
- Stronger student friendships & relationships through walking & biking together
- Positive social connections for families & neighbors

**CLIMATE BENEFITS AND CLEANER AIR**
- Fewer student asthma attacks due to less driving & reduced air pollution results
- Cleaner air & reduced greenhouse gas emissions

**BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**
- Better focus, improved concentration & less distraction for students who are active before school
- Fewer absences and less tardiness when students walk or bike in groups

**TRAFFIC SAFETY**
- Reduced traffic injuries & dangers for students and community members at arrival & dismissal through street improvements near schools
- More chances to learn & practice road safety for students

**SAFETY FROM CRIME**
- Increased safety from crime & violence due to more people on the streets, good lighting & better street design
- Less harassment, bullying, or violence when students walk or bike together or with adults

**SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FIXES**
- Solutions to reduced or non-existent bus service through Safe Routes to School
- Reduced traffic congestion at pick-up/drop-off times

**COST SAVINGS**
- Household savings from reduced gas & car use
- Education budget savings through reduced student busing costs

**HEALTHIER STUDENTS**
- Better health & stronger bones, muscles & joints through more walking & biking
- Reduced risk of chronic disease, diabetes, & obesity
At the local level, Safe Routes to School programs are organized by cities, counties, schools, school districts, or community organizations. These programs can serve one school or many schools throughout a community.

At the state level, Safe Routes to School programs are usually administered by the state department of transportation (DOT). The program provides resources to help support local programs.
The 6 E's of Safe Routes to School

**Engagement**
All Safe Routes to School initiatives should begin by listening to students, families, teachers, and school leaders and working with existing community organizations, and build intentional, ongoing engagement opportunities into the program structure.

**Equity**
Ensuring that Safe Routes to School initiatives are benefiting all demographic groups, with particular attention to ensuring safe, healthy, and fair outcomes for low-income students, students of color, students of all genders, students with disabilities, and others.

**Encouragement**
Generating enthusiasm and increased walking and bicycling for students through events, activities, & programs.

**Engineering**
Creating physical improvements to streets and neighborhoods that make walking and bicycling safer, more comfortable, and more convenient.

**Education**
Providing students and the community with the skills to walk and bicycle safely, educating them about the benefits of walking and bicycling, and teaching them about the broad range of transportation choices.

**Evaluation**
Assessing which approaches are more or less successful, ensuring that programs and initiatives are supporting equitable outcomes, and identifying unintended consequences or opportunities to improve the effectiveness of each approach.
ENCOURAGEMENT
How are Safe Routes to School Programs Organized?

**Infrastructure Projects**
- Sidewalk construction
- Bike lanes
- Speed reduction
- Curb extensions

**Non-Infrastructure Activities**
- Walk and Roll to School Day
- Walking School Bus
- Bike Train
- Walking Wednesdays
SRTS Infrastructure Projects
Why Engineering Matters

- Increases safety and comfort with walking and biking
- Encourages parents and caregivers to let kids walk and bike to school
- Gives road users different travel options
- Reduces school traffic congestion
- Lowers transportation costs
- Helps kids get ready to learn
- Improves social connectedness
- It’s an equity issue
Speed Table

Speed Hump

Speed Lump

Mini Traffic Circle
High Visibility Crosswalks
Raised Median + Crossing Island
Pedestrian Activated Signals

Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (HAWK Signal)
Toolkit: Engineering Solutions Guide for Safe Routes to School

- Engineering strategies that work to keep kids safe
  - Reduce vehicle speeds
  - Pedestrian crossings
  - Bike connectivity
  - Intersection Safety

- 17 fact sheets on engineering solutions
  - Estimated costs
  - Safety considerations
  - Safety outcomes
  - Public art opportunities

- Safe Routes to School engineering case studies
Why Encouragement & Education Matters

• Builds momentum

• Motivates and inspires people to keep going, even if something is new or challenging

• Celebrates successful, no matter how big or small

• Increases program participation

• Builds bike and pedestrian safety skills

• Raises community awareness about traffic safety

• It’s fun!
Safe Routes to School Encouragement and Engagement Activities

- **Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day**
  - October and May

- Walking School Bus

- Bike Trains

- Bike Rodeos

- Walk Audits

- Remote Drop-off/Pick Up

- *Customize activities to fit your community!*
Building Blocks Toolkit

- Step by step guide for how to start a Safe Routes to School program
- Background information
- Safe Routes to School Activities
- Safe Routes to School Task Forces
- Action Planning
- Customizable templates and resources
Creating a Strong Structure: Stages to Success

Starting Your Seedling

Growing Strong Branches

Becoming a Healthy Tree

Reaching Maturity
Starting Your Seedling: Giving Your Program a Good Start

- Set goals
- Make initial plans
- Kick off education and encouragement activities
- Begin developing relationships with key partners
- Make opportunistic infrastructure improvements
- Keep moving!
Growing Strong Branches: Developing Supportive Structures

- Engage more community members
- Create a task force or committee
- Develop an action plan
- **Some communities start at this stage, often with a grant program**
Becoming a Healthy Tree: Institutionalizing Your Program

- Sustain and expand activities
- Identify permanent staffing
- Secure long and short term funding
- Plan for infrastructure changes
- Address district and municipal policies
Reaching Maturity: Becoming a Comprehensive Program

- Create comprehensive programming
- Implement a comprehensive equity approach
- Larger infrastructure changes
- Evaluate and improve
Essential Components of a Safe Routes to School Program

• Safe Routes to School Coordinator
• Safe Routes to School Task Force
• Program Structure
• Funding
• Safe Routes to School Policies
Manages overall program
Leads Safe Routes to School task force
Coordinates between district, municipality, other stakeholders
Recruits & trains volunteers
Coordinates city/district/multi-school events & activities
Strategically expands program
Seeks funding opportunities
Evaluates what is working & not with program
Benefits of Volunteers:

• **Cost:** More affordable

• **Logistics/Bureaucracy:** Can be easier to get going

• **Commitment:** Personal passion & investment can create enormous change

Benefits of Paid Coordinators:

• **Stay in job longer:** Most volunteers are parents/family members of students

• **Time to do the job:** Volunteers average 4-10 hours/month

• **Skills and Experience:** More likely to have necessary skills
Safe Routes to School Task Force

- Core goal: coordinate essential stakeholders to get work done
- Meets monthly, quarterly, etc.
- Usually: district or city level
Task Force Core Responsibilities

- Communicating & informing stakeholders
- Getting input from different perspectives
- Making informed joint decisions
- Determining community goals and needs
- Dividing up work
- Ensuring that equity is built in
- Determining needs for new policies or policy changes
Safe Routes to School programs can be housed in...

- Local/regional transportation agency
- Planning department
- Non-profit
- School district
- PTA
- Health department
- Community members
Deciding Where to House Your Program

- Often practical – who is willing?
- Funding and staff
- Focus area
- Likely to influence emphasis of work
Structure may not be simple and will likely change.

- Based on funding, formality, and growth
- Different parts may live different places
  - Planning department manages overall effort
  - Nonprofit has contract for programming
Funding Your Program

• Staff Salaries
• Infrastructure Improvements
• Incentives
• Expenses for Activities
• General operations
Common Funding Sources

• Volunteer time!

• Health funds
  • State or federal (CDC) grants
  • Local healthcare foundation grants/community benefits funding

• Foundation grants

• Business sponsorships

• General funds
Common Funding Sources

- Transportation funds
  - State SRTS grants
  - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Funds
  - Local transportation measures

More information in the Safe Routes Partnership Federal Policy Blog!
Leverage Your Partnerships

• Pool resources or apply for joint funding opportunities

• Potential Partners
  • Safe Kids coalitions
  • Parks and Recreation
  • PTAs and parent/caregiver groups
  • Local biking and walking organizations
  • Youth organizations
  • Sports teams
  • Arts organizations
Safe Routes to School Policies

• A written law, rule, or practice that is binding and applies broadly.

• Essential long-term change

• Safe Routes to School policies:
  o School Board Policies
  o Safe Routes to School Resolution
  o Complete Streets Policy
  o Comprehensive Plan
  o School Wellness Policy
Safe Routes to School Activities
Walk and Roll to School Day
Observed in October
www.walkbiketoschool.org
Wheaton Woods Walk to School Day 2022
Bike and Roll to School Day
Observed in May

www.walkbiketoschool.org
Walking School Bus

- Group walk along designated “bus” route
- Led by adults – volunteers or staff
- Helps take the burden off of individual parents
- Reduces tardiness
- Can incorporate safety education
Walking Wednesdays

High School students lead a walking school bus in Pryor Creek, Oklahoma.

Students received training from local experts, city staff, the school district, and Cherokee Nation.
Bike Rodeos
Additional Resources Available on Our Website
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL MESSAGING FOR PROS

A Comunications Toolkit for Schools and School Districts

Additional Resources Available on Our Website
Let's Go For A Walk:
A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit

Where the Duct Tape Meets the Road
How To Create Pop-Up Safe Routes to School Projects

This fact sheet provides a simple overview of how you can go about conducting a pop-up Safe Routes to School project in your community. This fact sheet lays out the basic steps for successful pop-up projects, and specifies when and how the process differs because schools are involved.

This fact sheet is one of several guides on how to successfully plan and implement tactical urbanism and pop-up strategies related to walking. This fact sheet is intended to complement, rather than replace, these guides. At the end of the fact sheet there is a list of several more detailed guides on how to execute tactical urbanism and pop-up projects, including standards on planning, not just development, materials, cost estimates, and community and media outreach. It is likely that you will need an existing plan for executing the pop-up and tactical urbanism project or a school administrator.

Identify Partners
1. Identify Partners
2. Parent, Community, or Student-Leaders
3. School Board (if applicable)
4. Identify Your Approach
5. Identify Your Request
6. Evaluate
7. Advanced for Permissions (change)

Using Tactical Urbanism to Jump Start Safe Routes to School Programs

This fact sheet is the second part in a series on using temporary measures, or pop-up projects, to enhance Safe Routes to School. To learn more about pop-up projects and how they can be used to promote Safe Routes to School, check out our companion fact sheet, Pop-Up for Safe Routes to School: Using Tactical Urbanism to Promote Safe Routes to School Projects.

Additional Resources Available on Our Website
Webinars

One of the great ways that we love to share resources and expertise is through our regular webinars. Our webinars feature our staff and incredible advocates, Safe Routes to School program staff, government officials, elected leaders, and others from around the country sharing their knowledge and learning on a diverse range of topics.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

There are currently no upcoming webinars scheduled. Scroll down to see archived webinars.

ARCHIVED WEBINARS

October 17, 2019
Transportation Planning Innovations and Health: How MPOs Are Combining Core Skills and Creativity to Advance Health

Interested in learning about the innovative and promising ways that metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are advancing public health in the United States?
Email Discussion Network

Join Our Email Discussion Network
Exchange knowledge with advocates and practitioners working on Safe Routes to School, active transportation and healthy community design. If you have a Google account, click here to join. Otherwise, email maria.xu@saferroutespartnership.org to be added.

E-NEWS ARCHIVES
Read the current issue and browse the archives.
Building Blocks Toolkit

- Step by step guide for how to start a Safe Routes to School program
- Background information
- Safe Routes to School Activities
- Safe Routes to School Task Forces
- Action Planning
- Customizable templates and resources
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