



Campaign Nitty Gritty

# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL EQUITY



## CORE IDEA

Safe Routes to School initiatives should benefit 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.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE EQUITY IN SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

By prioritizing schools and communities with the highest need for safe walking and biking conditions, education programs, and enforcement solutions, equitable Safe Routes to School programs address inequities that stem from investment decisions that funneled funds to other uses, either within or outside of these communities. The inequities that have been created by those funding decisions can span generations, often emerging along lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability.

### COMMUNITIES WITH SIDEWALKS<sup>1</sup>

Low-Income



49%

High-Income



89%

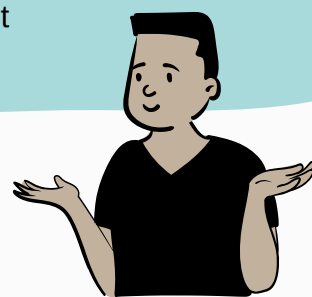


Why does equity in  
Safe Routes to School  
policy matter?



The way we have designed streets, sidewalks, highways, and housing systemically places certain people and communities at higher risk for inconvenience, injury, and even fatality when getting around where they live.

We must use funding, policy, and programming decisions to support communities that have been made vulnerable by decades of transportation planning that did not consider their needs.



## HOW CAN WE WORK TOWARD EQUITY IN SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL POLICY?

**S** State **L** Local

- S** • Provide application assistance to historically underserved communities.
- L** **S** • Prioritize funding (state) and programming (local) so that the highest need communities are getting what is necessary to address community needs.
- L** **S** • Dedicate a percentage of available funding (state) or staff time (local) specifically for high-need communities.
- S** • Prioritize underserved communities in project/program selection. Research from Harvard School of Public Health shows that point prioritization is effective at directing funding and resources to priority communities.
- L** **S** • Establish plans and goals to ensure successful implementation in historically underserved communities.
- L** **S** • Track and report the percent of projects/programs funded in underserved communities.
- L** **S** • Develop Safe Routes to School equity action plans that guide programming and infrastructure investments to communities in most need.



## HOW DO I JUSTIFY THIS?

- **Share challenges to accessing federal funds:** There are barriers for small, rural, and lower-income communities to access federal Safe Routes to School funds, making the need for state and local funds even more essential.
  - Federal funds for Safe Routes to School require a 20% local match and are reimbursable, which means local governments must have matching funds and have the money up front, both of which can be significant barriers to accessing these funds.
  - Smaller, more rural, and lower-income communities may not have the staff capacity to apply for or administer federal funds.
  - Rural and small communities may be systematically disadvantaged by state DOTs that prioritize large projects due to the staff time needed to administer each project.
- **Explain the reliance on and risk of walking and biking:** Low-income communities and communities with low vehicle access rely heavily on walking, bicycling, and public transportation, yet often have the least connected transit routes and fewer facilities to support safe walking and biking, like sidewalks and bike lanes. Low-income communities – both rural and urban – often have high-speed roads bisecting their communities.
- **Show that need is greatest in particular communities or neighborhoods:** Use data to demonstrate population groups and neighborhoods that bear disproportionate burdens of overweight, obesity, diabetes, and other weight-related chronic diseases. Use maps to show where crashes, injuries, and fatalities occur in your city/state.

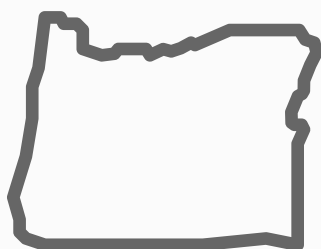


## HOW DO I DO THIS?



### LOCAL LEVEL

- Seattle, WA: [Seattle Safe Routes to School Racial Equity Workplan](#)
- Tacoma, WA: [Equity and Safety Needs Analysis](#) (pg. 12)
- Portland, OR: [Portland Bureau of Transportation Equity Matrix](#)
- Madison, WI: [Equity Based Tier System](#) (pg. 9)



### STATE LEVEL

In Oregon's [Safe Routes to School Project Identification Scoring Matrix \(Appendix C\)](#), the state awards points based upon Equity Risk Factors (free and reduced lunch rate, as well as English as a second language, non-white students, and chronic absenteeism rates above the state average. Of the three priority areas in the scoring matrix (equity risk factors, safety, and capacity for Safe Routes to School planning), the equity risk factors section has the most potential points.

### MORE INFO

1. Gibbs K, Slater SJ, Nicholson N, Barker DC, and Chaloupka FJ. [Income Disparities in Street Features that Encourage Walking –A BTG Research Brief](#). Chicago, IL: [Bridging the Gap Program, Health Policy Center, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago](#), 2012. [www.bridgingthegapresearch.org](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org).
- Cradock AL, Barrett JL, Wei E, Otis B, Pipito A. [Examining Practices that Promote Access to Safe Routes to School Programs in Vulnerable Communities](#). Harvard Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA; January 2017.