Safe Routes to School: 2007 State of the States Report

SAFE ROUTES to School
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

National Progress on Increasing Safe Bicycling and Walking to and from Schools

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The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a fast-growing network of more than 300 organizations and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices, secure funding and inform agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership's mission is to serve a diverse national community of organizations that advocates for and promotes the practice of safe bicycling and walking to and from schools throughout the United States. The Partnership is hosted by Bikes Belong Foundation, a 501C3 sister-organization to Bikes Belong Coalition.

For more information visit *www.bikesbelong.org* and *www.saferoutespartnership.org.*

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Executive Summary

About Safe Routes to Schools

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national program that creates safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from their schools. The program seeks to increase the number of children walking and bicycling to schools, and to improve traffic safety and mobility. SRTS also aims to play a critical role in helping children be more active on a daily basis. Ultimately, we hope that national SRTS efforts help reverse the alarming nationwide epidemic of childhood obesity.

The 2007 State of the States Report on Safe Routes to School provides an update on the implementation of the federal SRTS program in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The report includes a description of the health, safety and community concerns that the SRTS program helps address, an outline of the enabling legislation, an overview of the progress made in all the states, early success stories, observations and available resources.

What's Wrong, and What Can be Done?

Very few children walk or bike to school today. But this wasn't always the case. In 1969, according to the National Household Travel Survey, approximately 50 percent of children in the U.S. got to school by walking or bicycling.[1] By 2001, only about 15 percent of students traveled to school by walking or bicycling.[2] As a result, kids today are less active and less independent. Over the past 40 years, rates of obesity have soared among children of all ages in the United States, and approximately 25 million children and adolescents are now either overweight or obese.[3]

The increasing trend of driving kids to school also has other serious implications for health and safety. As much as 20 to 30 percent of morning traffic can be generated by parents driving their children to schools,[4] and in the United States, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 3 to 14.[5]

In 2005, the U.S. Congress—in an effort to help remedy these problems—approved $612 million in funding over five years to implement SRTS programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The funding, part of the $286.5-billion SAFETEA-LU transportation bill approved that year, is distributed to State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), which in turn work with local jurisdictions to construct new facilities such as sidewalks, trails and bike lanes. Local communities and states also have launched SRTS education, promotion and enforcement campaigns in elementary and middle schools. Evaluation also is a key component of the SRTS program and consistent national resources are available for this purpose.

SRTS programs are built on partnerships among stakeholders, such as educators, parents, students, elected officials, city planners and engineers, business and community leaders, health officials, and bicycle and pedestrian advocates.

Early results show that the new federal SRTS program has been quickly embraced by the vast majority of state DOTs, and local communities throughout the United States are actively competing to secure grant funding to implement projects. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have appointed staff to manage their SRTS programs, and each state has a program at some level of development. Forty-two states have released application guidelines for cities and schools to apply for funding, and in many states, the number of applications vastly exceeds the available funding resources.

In addition, SRTS programs that have been in operation for several years (pre-SAFETEA-LU) are showing success. Safety is increasing, and the number of students who are walking and bicycling to school is on the rise. States that had pre-existing programs were able to launch their federally-funded programs more quickly, and these programs have become models for other states.

Photo Courtesy of Bikes Belong

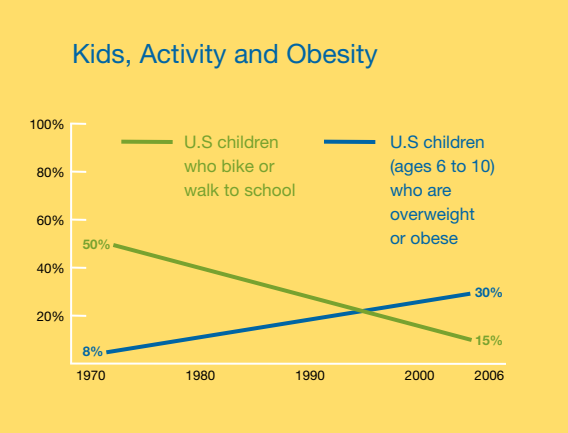
Safe Routes to School: Addressing a Vital Need

According to statistics from the National Household Travel Survey, in 1969 approximately half of all students in the United States walked or bicycled to school, and 87 percent of children who lived within one mile of school traveled to or from school on foot or by bicycle. But by 2001, the situation had changed dramatically, with only about 15 percent of U.S. students making the trip to school by walking or bicycling.[2] Today, the habit of driving kids to school is so pervasive that, in some communities, parents driving their children to school represents between 20 and 30 percent of peak-hour morning traffic.[4]

Traffic congestion is not the only byproduct of this shift. Due to a combination of factors, physical activity among U.S. children and adults has plummeted. For example, nearly 23 percent of children and nearly 40 percent of adults get no free-time physical activity at all.[6]

A third of our nation's young people are obese or overweight, and the rates are climbing fast. In the past four decades, the obesity rate for children ages 6 to 11 has jumped almost fivefold (from 4 to 19 percent) and has more than tripled for adolescents ages 12 to 19 (from 5 to 17 percent).[7,8,9] For the first time, significant numbers of U.S. children are developing obesity-related diseases that previously were considered "adult" illnesses, such as type II diabetes and high blood pressure.

Studies have shown that physical activity during youth plays a critical role in the development of strong bones, cardiovascular health and overall physical development. But today, sedentary lifestyles for both children and adults are, unfortunately, the cultural norm. In fact, on average, the majority of U.S. children now spend more time each day watching television and playing video games than they do in school.[10]



Despite the potential benefits of walking or bicycling to school every day, many parents drive their children because they are concerned about safety. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, from 1992 to 2001 there were 6,679 pedestrian fatalities among children under the age of 15. This number represents 12.6 percent of all pedestrian fatalities for that 10-year time period.[11] In 2002, nearly 288,900 children under the age of 14 were treated in hospital emergency rooms for bicycle-related injuries. Nearly half (47 percent) of children ages 14 and under who are hospitalized for bicycle-related injuries are diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury.[12]

In order to address these health, safety and traffic concerns, SRTS has been designed to provide a variety of important benefits to children, their families and U.S. communities. These include:

- **increasing safe, convenient physical activity for children;**
- **decreasing traffic congestion; and**
- **improving air quality for communities.**

Safe Routes to School: Legislative Details

Safe Routes to School is a $612-million provision in section 1404 of the $268.5-billion federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109–59). The purposes of the program, as stated in section 1404 of the bill (see appendix 1 on page 17 for full text) are:

1. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
2. to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
3. to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Funding is provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to state DOTs on a formula basis, calculated based on school enrollment, with each state receiving a minimum of $1,000,000 per fiscal year for five years of program implementation. In addition, each state is required to appoint a full-time SRTS coordinator.

State DOTs make grants to state, local and regional agencies, including nonprofit organizations, to implement SRTS programs. The federal share for grants is 100 percent and no matching funds are required from the local applicant. Eligible activities for funding under SRTS include both infrastructure projects (planning, design and construction within two miles of a participating school) and noninfrastructure-related activities (education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation). Between 10 percent and 30 percent of the amount apportioned to each state must be used on noninfrastructure-related activities.

Photo Courtesy of Bikes Belong

FHWA recommends that SRTS efforts in the United States incorporate—directly or indirectly—five components, often referred to as the Five E's,[13] outlined below:

1. Engineering—Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

2. Education—Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.

3. Enforcement—Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.

4. Encouragement—Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.

5. Evaluation—Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

State-level Implementation: Off to a Strong Start

The State of the States chart (page 7) shows that, in its first two years, Safe Routes to School is off to a strong start. The milestones documented in the chart represent accomplishments achieved as of August 28, 2007.

State Coordinators Hired:

DOTs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia have appointed a full-time SRTS coordinator. The SRTS coordinator serves as the point person within the state for the development of application guidelines, program outreach, training, selection of projects, reporting requirements and collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders. Forty-six states have hired SRTS coordinators, and five states currently have interim coordinators. Two of the locations with interim coordinators, Virginia and the District of Columbia, currently are seeking applicants to fill the permanent position.

Application Guidelines Released:

Forty-two of the 51 state agencies have released application guidelines so that local communities can apply for funding for infrastructure and/or noninfrastructure projects. Although the SRTS program was authorized only two years ago, more than 80 percent of states were able to hire a DOT Coordinator and develop application guidelines for release within a relatively short timeframe, which represents a major programmatic accomplishment.

Advisory Committee Established:

Although the SRTS legislation does not require states to create a program advisory committee task force, the FHWA encourages states to do so, and 36 states have taken this step. Advisory Committees often include other state agencies, such as Departments of Education, Health and Law Enforcement, and schools, cities, counties and nonprofit organizations. Advisory Committees function differently in each state but often help their DOTs with developing or refining application guidelines, creating programmatic structures, conducting outreach to local community applicants and selecting projects for funding.

Projects Selected:

Thirty of the 51 state agencies have announced project awards for funding, and because 11 additional agencies have released application guidelines, more awards soon will be announced. In most states, requests for project funding have far exceeded available resources, a fact that indicates a large demand for SRTS programs. Here are three examples of funding requests:

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department received 67 proposals requesting $8.7 million for their first round of SRTS grants. They were able to award $2.3 million in funding for 37 projects.

The Kentucky SRTS program received 70 grant applications totaling more than $10 million for $2 million that was available to be awarded for their second round of funding in the spring of 2007.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation received a total of 274 proposals for $75 million in the program's first round of SRTS grants. They awarded $4.15 million in SRTS grants to 29 communities across the state in July 2007.

Safe Routes To School: 2007 State of the States

STATE	[DOT SRTS COORDINATOR HIRED]	[ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED]	[APPLICATION GUIDELINES RELEASED]	[PROJECTS SELECTED]
ALABAMA	★	IN PROGRESS		
ALASKA	★			
ARIZONA	★	★	★	★
ARKANSAS	★	★	★	★
CALIFORNIA	★	★	★	★
COLORADO	★	★	★	★
CONNECTICUT	★	IN PROGRESS	★	★
DELAWARE	★		★	★
D.C.	INTERIM			
FLORIDA	★		★	★
GEORGIA	★	★		
HAWAII	INTERIM		★	
IDAHO	★	★	★	★
ILLINOIS	★	★	★	IN PROGRESS
INDIANA	★	★	★	★
IOWA	★	★	★	★
KANSAS	★	★	★	★
KENTUCKY	★	★	★	★
LOUISIANA	★	★	★	★
MAINE	INTERIM		★	★
MARYLAND	★		★	★
MASSACHUSETTS	★		★	★
MICHIGAN	★	★	★	IN PROGRESS
MINNESOTA	★	★	★	★
MISSISSIPPI	★	★	★	★
MISSOURI	★	★	★	★
MONTANA	★	★	★	★
NEBRASKA	★	★	★	★
NEVADA	★	★	★	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	★	IN PROGRESS	★	IN PROGRESS
NEW JERSEY	★	★	★	★
NEW MEXICO	★		★	★
NEW YORK	★		IN PROGRESS	
NORTH CAROLINA	★			
NORTH DAKOTA	★	★	★	★
OHIO	★	★	★	
OKLAHOMA	★	★		
OREGON	★	★	★	IN PROGRESS
PENNSYLVANIA	★	★	IN PROGRESS	
RHODE ISLAND	★	★	★	
SOUTH CAROLINA	★	★	★	IN PROGRESS
SOUTH DAKOTA	INTERIM			
TENNESSEE	★	★	★	IN PROGRESS
TEXAS	★	★	★	IN PROGRESS
UTAH	★	★	★	★
VERMONT	★	★	★	★
VIRGINIA	INTERIM	★	★	★
WASHINGTON	★	★	★	★
WEST VIRGINIA	★	★	★	★
WISCONSIN	★	★	★	★
WYOMING	★	★	★	★

1. ★ indicates that the state met and fulfilled steps according to the guidelines.
2. A blank cell indicates that no action has been taken to date.
3. "IN PROGRESS" denotes that the State (DOT) plans to accomplish this task by December 31, 2007.
4. "INTERIM" COORDINATORS are appointed by the DOT to manage the state program but are not dedicating 100 percent of their time to the SRTS program, which is required by the legislation.

All stats are reported as of August 28, 2007.

Safe Routes to School: Early Success Stories

Photo Courtesy of Bikes Belong

To date, much of the national effort has focused on helping states start their programs. Following are some examples of early success stories collected by the SRTS National Partnership from across the United States.

California: State SRTS Program is Effective and Popular

In its first call for SAFETEA-LU funded grant proposals, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) received 455 project requests for a total of $178 million. Caltrans was able to award just $45 million in federal grants for 88 projects. The funding distribution for the federal program includes: 70 percent for infrastructure (capital) projects; 10 percent for a single statewide program to develop standardized training, promotional materials and other SRTS statewide resources; and 20 percent for local noninfrastructure (education, encouragement and enforcement) projects. The new federal funds augmented a well-established state SRTS program that Caltrans had been operating since state legislation was first approved in 1999. A January 2007 report from Caltrans evaluating the first six years of the state program shows that it is effective—and popular. Childhood injuries and fatalities are decreasing, and children are walking and bicycling to school more often in locations that received project funding. The increase in walking and bicycling to schools ranged from 10 percent to 200 percent based on the Caltrans report. The demand for SRTS programs in California is great—each call for grant proposals has resulted in approximately five times more requests than the available funding can support.

Florida: Teaching Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Unlike other states, Florida solicited SRTS proposals for all five years' worth of federal SRTS funding (2005–2009). The seven Florida DOT districts received the applications, selected projects and secured approval

from the state SRTS coordinator for each five-year work program. The program already is making progress. For example, the Volusia County School District used federal funding to expand the existing elementary bicycle and pedestrian safety program to include seven elementary schools. The project used the existing Florida Traffic and Bicycle Safety Education program to encourage teachers to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian safety into their curriculum. As a result, four new physical education teachers from Flagler County schools have been trained to teach bicycle and pedestrian safety at their schools.

Idaho: Building Sidewalks for Elementary School Students

In Sandpoint, Idaho, Principal Anne Bagby recalls many close calls between automobiles and students walking to Farmin Stidwell Elementary School. And until recently, the children had no choice but to walk in the street to get to school, because there were no sidewalks. Together, Sandpoint and the school district requested a SRTS federal grant to create a sidewalk on nearby Madison Street. The Idaho Transportation Department approved the application, and the city contributed additional funding to expand the sidewalk project.

Massachusetts: Teaching Second-Graders Pedestrian Safety

In Massachusetts, the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), through its MassRIDES Office, contracted with the nonprofit organization, WalkBoston, to provide pedestrian safety training to second-graders at seven elementary schools. The program was very successful. With a budget of approximately $11,000 for spring 2007, the program recruited 35 parent volunteers and reached 425 students. The EOT has had numerous requests for the safety training program and is expanding the program in fall 2007 and 2008.

Michigan: A Collaborative Effort Reaches More than Half of the State's Counties

In the spring of 2006, the Michigan Department of Transportation awarded a $3.25-million multiyear contract to the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF) to continue its SRTS program work. MFF, in turn, is contracting with a number of groups for assistance: the Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan State University and MSU Extension, Wayne State University, Programs to Educate All Cyclists, League of Michigan Bicyclists, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance and Michigan Association of Planning. This collaborative effort will help build SRTS programs to serve students across the state. To date, 223 schools have registered for SRTS, 17 regional trainings have been held, and 547 people across the state have been trained. These schools represent 100 districts and 57 percent of the counties in Michigan.

Minnesota: Supporting Education and Infrastructure Projects

The Minnesota SRTS program is managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, which awarded $1.55 million in funding in April 2007. More than $1.3 million funded 13 infrastructure projects, including major sidewalk improvements and extensions, trail connections, lighting and safety and driver-feedback signage. The remaining funds supported 10 noninfrastructure projects for safety education programs, SRTS studies and planning projects and the implementation of a bicycle and pedestrian curriculum at Duluth public schools.

Mississippi: Sidewalks and a "Bike Rodeo" for Students

Students of Central and Fifth Street schools in West Point, Mississippi, will be among the state's first to benefit from the SRTS grant program. The problem is serious. Mayor Scott Ross said, “I have personally seen kids poised on Main Street, ready to run out between breaks in traffic to cross the street.” With a grant for $563,064, the city plans to implement sidewalk and bicycle-route

infrastructure projects and will begin informing residents about the coming changes through events, billboards and pamphlets. West Point police officers will conduct safe pedestrian and cycling demonstrations for students and the city plans to host a "bike rodeo" to teach students safe cycling practices. For its first round of funding, the Mississippi Department of Transportation received $8.5 million in grant requests for $3 million in available funding.

Missouri: Students Get Aboard the "Walking School Bus"

Over the last three years, trained volunteers and parents have built a successful Walking School Bus (WSB) program in Columbia, Missouri. Every day, WSB volunteers walk groups of eight to 12 children to school. The program, which was created through a partnership between the PedNet Coalition, Columbia Public Schools and the Columbia/Boone County Health Department, is designed to encourage children to walk to school. According to PedNet, the most common reasons parents give for driving their children to school include fears for the child's safety (if the student walks alone) and time and convenience issues that prevent parents from walking with their children. The WSB program works to remove these barriers. In 2006–2007, more than 160 children from six schools registered for the WSB program and walked to school every day on 14 different routes. In June 2007, the Missouri Department of Transportation awarded 46 SRTS grants that will benefit students attending 96 schools throughout the state. The department plans to sponsor a statewide conference on SRTS featuring a discussion of PedNet's successful WSB program.

New Mexico: Traffic Calming and Increased Cycling

The Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) initiated an SRTS pilot project during 2006–2007 at the Hillrise Elementary School, a rapidly urbanizing area in a semi-rural location. The pilot program was based on following the Five Es for SRTS, including the re-striping of two streets. Surveys conducted at the beginning and end of the school year showed a 7.3 percent reduction in trips to school using the family car and a fourfold increase in the percentage of bicycle trips. In addition, the results of a traffic-calming project on Missouri Avenue showed that drivers were more mindful of the posted speed limit. Specifically, results showed that the percentage of drivers speeding 10 or more miles per hour decreased by two-thirds in each direction, and the percentage of drivers speeding five or more miles per hour decreased by almost half in each direction. The MPO reports that these are highly visible, easily replicated successes that can be applied at a local level, even on a small budget.

Oregon: More than 30,000 Students Learn from Bicycle Education Course

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) manages the state's SRTS program with support from the ODOT SRTS advisory committee, which includes a diverse array of members and liaisons from the transportation, health, education and police departments. In the fall of 2007, the ODOT will announce funding decisions for new applications. The state is also in the process of developing a statewide encouragement program to supplement its existing educational program. One project stands out: since 1998, more than 30,000 Oregon students have received the nationally recognized, 10-hour, in-class and on-the-street bicycle education course, which is funded by ODOT and taught by the nonprofit Bicycle Transportation Alliance.

Texas: Community Organizations Host Safe Kids Week Event

The Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) first call for project proposals ended in May 2007, and projects were awarded four months later. But earlier this year, the SRTS program already was touching the lives of students in Texas. To celebrate the 2007 Safe Kids Week in Amarillo, community organizations hosted an event at Will Rogers Elementary School on May 4, 2007. The event provided entertaining family training to help

Photo Courtesy of Bikes Belong

children avoid bike injuries. More than 500 students rotated through the booths to receive safety advice at the day-long event. The nonprofit Texas Bicycle Coalition SRTS program provided expert safety tips on helmet use, bicycle safety and bicycle maintenance.

Virginia: Strong Training and Evaluation Efforts Build Capacity

Created in September 2006, Virginia's State Advisory Committee includes representatives from BikeWalk Virginia, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Departments of Health, Education, Motor Vehicles, Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals. The Virginia SRTS program provides training upon request and also attempts to provide free training for all applicants. Evaluation of all VDOT-funded projects is required and includes parent and student surveys, crash data when relevant and anecdotal data indicating safety improvements. Virginia's commitment to training and evaluation is already showing promise.

The Harvest Foundation, based in Martinsville/Henry County, provided a three-year $1.56-million grant to support walking and bicycling in the local community. In addition to supporting safer routes to school, these changes will also enhance the county's attractiveness as a business location and destination for environmentally sustainable tourism and development.

West Virginia: Parent Surveys Provide Key Data, Build Support

In August 2007, the Berkeley County Board of Education and the West Virginia Department of Transportation agreed to spend nearly $85,000 in federal SRTS grant money for sidewalks at two area schools. Officials in Berkeley County reviewed routes to school and collected data before submitting the grant application. Superintendent Manny Arvon reported that about 1,200 students reside in the immediate area and hundreds of new housing units have been built, which has resulted in a large number of children walking to and from school. Parents also were surveyed to determine if they would walk their child to school or allow their child to walk to school if sidewalks were installed. Two phases of the Berkeley County SRTS program soon will be under way, adding walkways to existing crosswalks and blinking lights near both North Middle School and Opequon Elementary School. The program will also include a SRTS campaign to educate residents, students, school staff and parents about the benefits of walking and bicycling to school safely.

More details and links to additional state success stories are available online at: *www.saferoutespartnership.org.*

Observations and Lessons Learned

The federal SRTS program was first authorized two years ago in August 2005. Below are some early observations about the program's achievements and challenges.

Photo Courtesy of PEDS

SRTS Is Popular and It's Working:

SRTS programs are in effect or being developed in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In locations where SRTS programs were in effect prior to SAFETEA-LU, communities have seen improvements in safety, and more children are now walking and bicycling to schools. Early results from the federal SRTS program show that there is a robust demand for grants at the local level for both infrastructure and noninfrastructure projects and that the program is succeeding in bringing cities, schools, parents and students together.

It Takes Time to Start New Programs

Starting a new federal program at the state level takes time, and there have been some delays in getting program applications approved and funds awarded. This has occurred for several reasons, one of which is the fact that state DOTs needed to hire SRTS coordinators and develop new grant application processes before announcing a call for applications. Now that 80 percent of the states have completed this process, there should be a rapid increase in the rate at which funds will be awarded.

In addition, multiyear SRTS programs that were in place before SAFETEA-LU funds became available have shown that success depends on motivating and building relationships with schools, parents, students, community groups and local agencies. Changing parents' and students' travel habits does take time, but momentum increases as more neighbors begin walking and bicycling to schools and as neighborhood travel conditions improve.

Federal Requirements Delay Grant Administration and Can Lead to Frustration

Federal requirements for funding allocations and construction of small SRTS projects mirror those for large state highway projects. This fact, coupled with state-specific policies, means that considerable time and effort are needed to administer small grants. In several cases, state DOTs announced grant awards to project applicants, who in turn expected implementation to take place in the near future. However, due to complicated contract and federal requirements, many programs that were expected to start in the beginning of the school year have been delayed by several months or, in some cases, up to a year. Such delays have frustrated parents and school and city volunteers, sometimes decreasing the local momentum for the SRTS program. Some local communities have not applied for SRTS funding due to the amount of administrative work involved in applying for and implementing small SRTS federal projects.

Local Demand Exceeds Available Funds

In most states where application guidelines have been released, the amount of funding requested for program implementation has vastly exceeded available funds. Several states report that requests have been more than five times greater than the available funding. This confirms the need for improved environments to enable

children—and all people—to walk and bike safely within their communities. It also demonstrates the tremendous amount of local demand for SRTS programs and resources.

Volunteers and Community Resources are Invaluable

Most SRTS programs rely on the resources of volunteers, such as parents, students and advocacy organizations. SRTS builds partnerships among cities, schools and counties as well as other stakeholders. Through SRTS programs, agencies that have not always worked together in the past now join forces to improve the health and safety of school children. Many successful SRTS activities include encouragement and education programs that are largely run by volunteers and are often associated with school groups, including wellness councils or parent-teacher associations. SRTS relies on community resources for program implementation by building partnerships and increasing volunteerism, which adds value to the federal funding.

SRTS Reaches Low-income Communities

The federal SRTS program provides 100 percent funding for grant awards, which means that local matching funds are not required. This ensures the program reaches low-income and vulnerable communities where volunteers are not always readily available and local resources are in short supply. These communities often need more assistance, for example, in applying for grants. The Active Living Resource Center's City SRTS program, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, encourages states to pay special attention and offer adequate resources to disadvantaged communities, including offering technical support to cities and school districts that have a high interest in the SRTS program but lack start-up resources.

School Siting Matters

State and local-level decisions regarding school siting, construction and design have a significant impact on whether homes are located within walking and bicycling distance of schools. According to data from the National Household Travel Survey, in 1969 approximately 50 percent of elementary school students lived within two miles of their school; by 2001, only about 33 percent lived within this distance.[14] To achieve the Safe Routes to School goal of getting more children to walk and bicycle to school safely, school siting policies should be addressed at state and local levels.

State Networks Are Effective

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Bikes Belong Coalition and the Harvest Foundation, the SRTS National Partnership launched its SRTS State Network Project in January 2007. Through the project, networks in nine key states and the District of Columbia were established to bring together leaders associated with state transportation, health, education, land use, youth, and bicycle and pedestrian issues to help move their state SRTS programs forward. The effectiveness of convening these stakeholders is already apparent. In California, for example, the SRTS State Network is helping to advertise the upcoming round of federal project funding and identify experts for project selection committees. Since Georgia's DOT is focused on traffic safety, the SRTS State Network's health members will broadcast SRTS health messages to local communities. And in Virginia, the SRTS State Network is partnering with the Harvest Foundation to fund a comprehensive bicycling and walking initiative in Martinsville/Henry County.

SRTS Clearinghouse and the National SRTS Task Force

Section 1404 for SAFETEA-LU required that the U.S. Department of Transportation establish a National SRTS Clearinghouse and a National SRTS Task Force.

SRTS Clearinghouse:

In May 2006, the FHWA awarded a five-year, $6-million contract to the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center to administer the national SRTS Clearinghouse. With this funding, UNC developed the National Center for Safe Routes to School, which is run in partnership with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, America Walks, the Governor's Highway Safety Association, the Institute of Transportation Engineers and Toole Design Group. The National Center for SRTS maintains a Web site (*www.saferoutesinfo.org*), offers a national course for SRTS training, provides support to the state DOT coordinators and offers resources and a guide for SRTS program implementation.

National SRTS Task Force:

In fall 2006, the U.S. Department of Transportation established a National Safe Routes to School Task Force. The group includes leaders in health, transportation and education, as well as representatives from state government, local agencies and non-profit organizations. The task force is charged with studying and developing a strategy for advancing SRTS programs nationwide. It is responsible for submitting to the U.S. DOT secretary a report detailing the results of the task force's work. The group is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and all task force meetings are open to the public. The task force also accepts written comments. Meeting dates are announced in the Federal Register and posted online at *www.saferoutesinfo.org.*

Photo Courtesy of Bikes Belong

Endnotes

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Appendix 1: SAFETEA-LU Section 1404 Language

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, (Public Law 109-59) SEC.1404. SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM.

(A) Establishment

Subject to the requirements of this section, the Secretary shall establish and carry out a safe routes to school program for the benefit of children in primary and middle schools.

(B) Purposes

The purposes of the program shall be:

(1) to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;

(2) to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and

(3) to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

(C) Apportionment of Funds

(1) In General—Subject to paragraphs (2), (3) and (4), amounts made available to carry out this section for a fiscal year shall be apportioned among the States in the ratio that (A) the total student enrollment in primary and middle schools in each State; bears to (B) the total student enrollment in primary and middle schools in all States.

(2) Minimum Apportionment—No State shall receive an apportionment under this section for a fiscal year of less than $1,000,000.

(3) Set-aside for Administrative Expenses—Before apportioning under this subsection amounts made available to carry out this section for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall set aside not more than $3,000,000 of such amounts for the administrative expenses of the Secretary in carrying out this subsection.

(4) Determination of Student Enrollments—Determinations under this subsection concerning student enrollments shall be made by the Secretary.

(D) Administration of Amounts

Amounts apportioned to a State under this section shall be administered by the State's department of transportation.

(E) Eligible Recipients

Amounts apportioned to a State under this section shall be used by the State to provide financial assistance to State, local, and regional agencies, including nonprofit organizations, that demonstrate an ability to meet the requirements of this section.

(F) Eligible Projects and Activities

(1) Infrastructure-Related Projects

(a) In General—Amounts apportioned to a State under this section may be used for the planning, design and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bicycle parking facilities, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

(b) Location of Projects—Infrastructure-related projects under subparagraph (A) may be carried out on any public road or any bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail in the vicinity of schools.

(2) Noninfrastructure-Related Activities

(a) In General—In addition to projects described in paragraph (1), amounts apportioned to a State under this section may be used for noninfrastructure-related activities to encourage walking and bicycling to school, including public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders, traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools, student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of safe routes to school programs.

(b) Allocation—Not less than 10 percent and not more than 30 percent of the amount apportioned to a State under this section for a fiscal year shall be used for noninfrastructure-related activities under this subparagraph.

(3) Safe Routes to School Coordinator—Each State receiving an apportionment under this section for a fiscal year shall use a sufficient amount of the apportionment to fund a full-time position of coordinator of the State's Safe Routes to School program.

Photo Courtesy of PEDS

(G) Clearinghouse

(1) In General—The Secretary shall make grants to a national nonprofit organization engaged in promoting safe routes to schools to (A) operate a national safe routes to school clearinghouse; (B) develop information and educational programs on safe routes to school; and (C) provide technical assistance and disseminate techniques and strategies used for successful safe routes to school programs.

(2) Funding—The Secretary shall carry out this subsection using amounts set aside for administrative expenses under subsection (c)(3).

(H) Task Force

(1) In General—The Secretary shall establish a national safe routes to school task force composed of leaders in health, transportation and education, including representatives of appropriate Federal agencies, to study and develop a strategy for advancing Safe Routes to School programs nationwide.

(2) Report—Not later than March 31, 2006, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report containing the results of the study conducted, and a description of the strategy developed, under paragraph (1) and information regarding the use of funds for infrastructure-related and noninfrastructure-related activities under paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (F).

(3) Funding—The Secretary shall carry out this subsection using amounts set aside for administrative expenses under subsection (c)(3).

(I) Applicability of Title 23.

Funds made available to carry out this section shall be available for obligation in the same manner as if such funds were apportioned under chapter 1 of title 23, United States Code; except that such funds shall not be transferable and shall remain available until expended, and the Federal share of the cost of a project or activity under this section shall be 100 percent.

(J) Treatment of Projects

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, projects assisted under this subsection shall be treated as projects on a Federal-aid system under chapter 1 of title 23, United States Code.

(K) Definitions

In this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) In the Vicinity of Schools—The term "in the vicinity of schools" means, with respect to a school, the area within bicycling and walking distance of the school (approximately 2 miles).

(2) Primary and Middle Schools—The term "primary and middle schools" means schools providing education from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Appendix 2: National Web Site Resources

Active Living Resource Center:
www.activelivingresources.org/saferoutestoschool.php
The Active Living Resource Center is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and includes a City SRTS program and other resources.

Bikes Belong Coalition:
www.bikesbelong.org
The Coalition's Web site includes a photo library with SRTS images and other information.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk
CDC's Kids Walk-to-School program aims to increase opportunities for daily physical activity by encouraging children to walk to and from school in groups accompanied by adults.

Federal Highway Administration:
http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes
FHWA is responsible for administering the SRTS program funds to state DOTs. The FHWA's SRTS Web site includes program guidance for state DOTs, funding allocation amounts for five federal fiscal years for each state and other resources.

League of American Bicyclists:
www.bikeleague.org/programs/saferoutes
The League's Web site includes a four-minute video on SRTS, as well as bicycling curricula and other resources.

National Center for Safe Routes to School:
www.saferoutesinfo.org
Funded by the Federal Highway Administration as the national SRTS Clearinghouse, the National Center for SRTS Web site includes contacts for state coordinators, a SRTS guide, training opportunities, program tracking and evaluation resources, and information about International Walk to School Day.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's SRTS Toolkit:
www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002
The NHTSA SRTS Toolkit provides in-depth resources for starting SRTS programs.

Safe Routes to School National Partnership:
www.saferoutespartnership.org
The SRTS National Partnership, which authored this report, is a network of more than 300 organizations, government agencies and professional groups that are working to advance the SRTS national movement. Its Web site includes an interactive U.S. map that allows users to access SRTS information pages for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, a robust search function, updated national SRTS news, in-depth policy pages, event listings, resources, links and a submit-a-story form. The site also will become a source for SRTS case studies, success stories and best practices.

Appendix 3: SRTS National Partnership's Affiliates

More than 300 groups have pledged their support for the SRTS National Partnership by signing our consensus statement and memorandum of understanding. Below is a listing of national non-profit organizations that have joined as partner affiliates as of August 28, 2007. A complete list of our partner affiliates, including state and local groups, is available at: *www.saferoutespartnership.org.*

American Association of Retired Persons

Active Living by Design

Active Living Resource Center

Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center

America Bikes

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of School Administrators

American Heart Association

American Public Health Association

American Society of Landscape Architects

American Trails

America Walks

Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals

Bikes Belong Coalition

Center for Health and Learning

Center for Health Training

Child Safety Solutions

Harvest Foundation

Institute of Transportation Engineers

League of American Bicyclists

Local Government Commission

Mobility Education Foundation

National Association for Health and Fitness

National Association of Regional Councils

National Center for Bicycling and Walking

National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity

National Complete Streets Coalition

National Park Service—Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance

National Recreation and Park Association

PTA

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Ruth Mott Foundation

Smart Growth America

Smart Schools, Smart Growth Initiative

Sprockids

State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association

Surface Transportation Policy Project

Thunderhead Alliance

Traffic Intersection Awareness Foundation


SAFE ROUTES
to School
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP