

STRATEGY 14	Safe Routes to School
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“Snapshot”

Description:

The goal is for a school and the community to develop or expand an existing Safe Routes to School program that focuses on the 5 E’s: Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement and Evaluation. As a result students and parents will perceive few to no barriers to walk or bike to school, and there will be an increase in the percentage of students walking/biking to school.

Resources Needed:

Funding	Staff Time	Prep Time/Materials	Training
Varies widely. Reengineered roads are very expensive. A professional assessment of walkability and rideability with recommendations may cost five thousand dollars. Encouragement and education activities can be done at a low cost.	Varies	Varies with season and promotion	Train staff on the route

Facilities and Equipment Needed:

Facilities	Equipment	Set up / take down time	Transportation	Custodial
Well defined, safe routes for students and the rest of the community.	None	Not applicable.	None	None

Evaluation:

Count participation by students before finalization and promotion of the route and then again after a period of time of implementation.

Description and Rationale:

A Safe Routes to School program encourages children ages K-8 to walk and bike to school, by creating safer walking and biking routes. The result is the incorporation of a daily dose of physical activity into a child’s routine. This is important because the number of children walking to school has dropped dramatically in the past 40 years. In 1969, 42 percent of children either walked or biked to school; by 2001, only 16 percent still did, according to data from the National Household Travel Survey.

The benefits of walking and biking to school are important to the entire community for many reasons. Perhaps the top three reasons are:

- Safer routes
- Healthier children

- Cleaner environment

Other desired outcomes of Safe Routes to School would include:

- Reduced fuel consumption
- Increased community security
- Enhanced community accessibility
- Increased community involvement
- Improved partnerships among schools, local municipalities, parents, and other community groups.

A Safe Routes to School program can help students meet NASPE Standard 3: Participates regularly in physical activity; Standard 4: Achieves and maintains a health enhancing level of physical fitness, and Standard 6: Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

Action Steps:

1. Establish a Safe Routes to School steering committee and a Safe Routes program.
2. Assess current routes for safety of children to walk and bike to school.
3. Work with local authorities to make sure traffic laws are enforced in school zones and surrounding neighborhoods.
4. Establish crossing guards, if appropriate, at key intersections.
5. Identify and correct any hazards impeding walking and biking.
6. Create a campaign to encourage walking and biking.
7. Create and distribute maps of walking and biking routes.

Examples:

Example 1: In Madison, on Walk Our Children to School Day, school mascots, stilt walkers, bagpipers, police officers, fire fighters, parents and even the city mayor walked with children to school. The Madison schools also hold classroom competitions where the class with the most students walking or biking to school on a certain day receives a giant shoe as a reward.

Example 2: Milwaukee implemented a number of programs to educate drivers and students on safety. In 2004, Milwaukee employed a billboard campaign to raise awareness of safe driving around pedestrians and bikers. They also surveyed parents to determine the barriers preventing walking and biking to school. With the information obtained through the surveys, Milwaukee developed a comprehensive and effective bicycle and pedestrian education program that was taught at six pilot schools, affecting more than 1,400 students. The results of the education program demonstrated a 37% average increase in bike safety knowledge, as well as an increase in bike travel to school.

Example 3: In 2006 the DC Everest Junior High in Weston, WI, began working on creating a Safe Routes to School plan in cooperation between the school district and the municipality. As a result of studying the conditions for bicycling and walking, and getting input from parents and students, the school and community decided to undertake some changes that would allow them to make it safer for kids to walk and bike to school. This would then allow the school to begin promoting walking and biking and helping increase students' physical activity.

After being awarded Safe Routes to School funds by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the school was able to install sidewalk on the street in front of the school, add a sidewalk from the school entrance to the new sidewalk at the front of the school, and change the traffic flow into the front of the

school to one-way. Prior to these improvements, the area in front was a safety concern as missing sidewalks and poor layout of the street and parking lot in front of the school led to cars, buses, and pedestrians all mixed together without organization.

Now that these infrastructure improvements have been made, the school is implementing pedestrian safety lessons in physical education classes, promoting bike safety, and promoting safety to the community. With help from the Marathon County Health Department, over 400 students received pedestrian safety lessons. In addition, a Walk to School event was held for all the junior high students. Students walked $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Kennedy Park to the school during our "Walktober" event week. Three walk to school dates were organized and each time a student participated they received a ticket for prizes. Although two of the days were rainy, 43 students participated each day along with teachers and administrators.

To further support students bicycling to school, two new bike racks were added at DC Everest Junior High. A count in October showed over 50 students rode their bikes to school and used the bike racks provided. The school intends to continue to add more racks as needed.

Contact:

Aaron Nelson
Supervisor of Administrative Services
D.C. Everest Administration Building
6300 Alderson Street
Weston, WI 54476
ANelson@dce.k12.wi.us

Example 4: In 2007, the City of Appleton was awarded a Safe Routes To School (SRTS) Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Due to the larger size of the Appleton Area School District (AASD), the planning process focused on three "pilot" elementary schools – Franklin, Lincoln, and Richmond – that would serve as a template for development of SRTS Plans for other schools within the district. Representatives from these three schools, the AASD, and the City of Appleton worked together to create a plan that best reflected SRTS interests community-wide. The final plan included both improvements to existing infrastructure and encouragement programming at each of the three schools, along with citywide outreach/education.

Next, the SRTS Plan recommendations were used to apply for a 2008 SRTS Implementation Grant. The successful application included funding for both infrastructure improvements and non-infrastructure programming. For the infrastructure component, funding was awarded for sidewalk installations, improvements at two of the schools, striping of 47 ladder-style crosswalks throughout the three school zones, purchase and installation of one solar-powered driver feedback, and school zone signs at each school. For the non-infrastructure component, funding was awarded for encouragement programs at the three schools, as well as creation of a part-time SRTS Coordinator position to facilitate citywide outreach.

The Department of Public Works took on sidewalk improvements, striping of the crosswalks, and installation of driver feedback signs, which have both been extremely well-received. Many other schools are currently exploring opportunities to place similar signs within their school zones. Concurrently, pilot school principals took the lead on implementing various SRTS incentive programming at their schools. All three schools utilized a walking/biking punch card program where students could earn prizes for their non-motorized trips to and from school. Two of the more unique program ideas included:

- At Lincoln, a parent incentive program was also implemented to encourage parents to walk/bike to school with their child and/or other children from the neighborhood. Parents also had a punch card and could enter their filled card for prizes, such as coffee shop gift certificates.

- At Richmond, students could win an opportunity to walk to school with a local celebrity on “Walk to School Day.” Celebrities included the local minor league baseball team mascot, high school cheerleaders/football players, the superintendent of schools, and the Richmond School principal.

Lastly, the citywide outreach component involved the creation of an Appleton SRTS logo, poster, two public service announcements (PSA’s), and an Open House event. The logo, poster, and PSA’s – one video and one audio – were created by high school students at Appleton’s Renaissance School for the Arts. These students were central in the outreach process, as they utilized their superb artistic ability in order to communicate an important social message. The next outreach strategy involved an SRTS Open House. Each of the three pilot schools, in addition to the Appleton Department of Public Works, East Central WI Regional Planning Commission, and the Renaissance School, hosted a table at the event. Furthermore, the event included a children’s area where students could enjoy popcorn, receive an Appleton SRTS temporary tattoo, and color their journey to school with crayons. Finally, the Appleton SRTS Team held a poster contest in conjunction with the open house; about 25 award-winning posters were displayed, providing a nice splash of color at the event.

Now that the SRTS mission has been well-dispersed in Appleton, the city and school district are looking at unique ways to assist in implementing programs at many interested schools. Currently, a second open house event is being planned to help gauge willingness of parents, teachers, and staff to participate in SRTS.

Contact:

Sarah Higgins, Grants Administrator
City of Appleton
(920) 832-5924
sarah.higgins@appleton.org

Other examples can be found in the Wisconsin Safe Routes to School Toolkit.

Resources:

Most of the resources you will need for a Safe Routes program can be found in the Wisconsin Safe Routes to School Toolkit: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/saferoutes-toolkit.htm>. The toolkit contains everything your community needs to move forward with a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program and increase the number of children walking and biking to school and find solutions to traffic problems near your schools.

Section 1: Introduction to SRTS - This section gives an overview of SRTS including what it is, why it is important, and a general discussion of how to implement a program in your community.

Section 2: SRTS Planning - Developing a SRTS plan helps communities identify problems, recommend solutions, and plan for a comprehensive SRTS program.

Section 3: Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Encouragement - Successful Safe Routes to School programs address each of these elements to make it safer for children to walk and bike to school, and to increase the number of children doing so. Each school is unique, so the activities undertaken will differ for each school depending on the issues identified during the SRTS planning process.

Section 4: Walk to School Day - Walk to School Day can be a first step to creating a comprehensive encouragement program and can build interest for SRTS programs.

Section 5: Evaluation - After a SRTS plan is created, communities must be aware of how important collecting data before and after the program is to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability.

Section 6: Additional Funding and Related Programs - As soon as communities have created a timeline for implementing their SRTS plan, they will want to look at the many funding options. This section outlines numerous funding options available to communities for SRTS projects as well as a list of related programs that can work concurrently with SRTS.

Supplemental CD: This CD includes customizable templates as well as other information to assist communities with outreach, promotion, and networking. These templates are intended to make implementing SRTS in your community easier.

Walking and Biking Audit Checklist (see page 15 of the Wisconsin Safe Routes to School Toolkit)

Sample parent survey about walking and biking to school (see pages 42-44 WI Kit)

Sample safe routes to school student arrival and departure tally sheet (see page 45 WI Kit)

The Wisconsin Safe Routes to School Toolkit also has a supplementary CD (or downloads) with all the materials you might need for your program. Included are:

- [How to get press and promote SRTS in your community](#)
- SRTS Plan Development Materials
 - Surveys
 - [Brief instructions for surveys](#)
 - [Parent survey](#)
 - [Student survey](#)
 - Walking and bicycling audit materials
 - [Bike and walk audit sample letter](#)
 - [Bike and walk audit sample press release](#)
 - [Volunteer checklist](#)
 - [Kick off meeting sample letter](#)
 - [Sample presentation for SRTS](#)
 - [Talking points](#)
- Walk to School Day Materials
 - Poster contest materials
 - [Poster contest rules](#)
 - [Poster contest template](#)
 - [Walk to School Day poster](#)
 - [Walk to School Day proclamation](#)
 - [Walk to School Day sample invitation](#)
 - [Walk to School Day sample news release](#)
 - [Walking school bus and bike train information](#)

WI Safe Routes website: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/saferoutes-information.htm>

Included are:

- Local Safe Routes programs from several Wisconsin cities
- Web site links to national sites
- A Safe Routes to School brochure
- Safe Routes newsletters
- PowerPoint presentations

Information on funding is available at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/saferoutes.htm>

STRATEGY 15	Active Transportation To School
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“Snapshot”				
Description:				
The goal is to have an organized and sustained effort to provide adult supervision as children walk or bike to school so parents perceive few to no barriers to allow their child to do so.				
Resources Needed:				
Funding	Staff Time	Prep Time/Materials	Training	
None	None	Varied with season and activity.	Train staff and community on the concept of active transportation to and from school.	
Facilities and Equipment Needed:				
Facilities	Equipment	Set up / take down time	Transportation	Custodial
Bike racks.	None	None	None	None
Evaluation:				
Count participation of students in the strategy and survey impact on parents and students.				

Description and Rationale:

Active transportation to and from school involves organized efforts for students to walk or bike to school with adult supervision. This includes a walking school bus, with a group of children walking to or from school with one or more adults, and similar efforts on bikes. If that sounds simple, it is, and that is part of the beauty of active transportation. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking or biking their children to school, to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable, and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers. The flexibility of active transportation to school makes it appealing to communities of all sizes with varying needs.

Parents often cite safety issues as one of the primary reasons they are reluctant to allow their children to walk to school. Providing adult supervision may help reduce those worries for families who live within walking or bicycling distance to school.

Active transportation to school will help students meet NASPE Standard 3: Participates regularly in physical activity; Standard 4: Achieves and maintains a health enhancing level of physical fitness; and Standard 6: Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

If the thought of setting up a Safe Routes to School program (Strategy 14) seems a little overwhelming, starting with a simpler Walking School Bus program might be a good alternative. Studies show that fewer

children are walking and biking to school. Changing behaviors of children and parents requires creative solutions that are safe and fun. Implementing a walking school bus or group bike effort can be both.

Action Steps:

When beginning a walking school bus or bike effort, remember that it can always grow. It often makes sense to start with a small group and see how it works. Pick a single neighborhood that has a group of parents and children who are interested. It is like a carpool—without the car—with the added benefits of exercise and visits with friends and neighbors. For an informal bus:

- Invite families who live nearby to walk.
- Pick a route and take a test walk.
- Decide how often the group will walk together.
- Have fun!

How Do I Start A More Formal Walking School Bus Program?

Here is how:

1. **Form a Walking School Bus Working Group**
These are the people who will get the bus rolling. Members might include parents, students, the school principal, teachers and local block club members. Recruit Walking School Bus Drivers. Get the word out among your friends and neighbors, particularly those with school children, that you are forming a Walking School Bus and need their help escorting groups of children to school.
2. **Place Maps**
Neighborhood maps will be placed at the school or other neighborhood place. Interested adults place a dot and sign their names next to where they live on street maps. Clusters of households are then identified and linked with one another.
3. **Designate Walking School Bus Routes**
Identify routes. Appropriate and enjoyable routes are mapped out. Many parents already know how best to get around their neighborhood on foot, but in some instances routes may need to be mapped out.
4. **Organize the Walking School Bus Drivers**
Work out a schedule among the drivers; determine who can walk with the students and when, both in the morning and afternoon.
5. **Promote the Walking School Bus Locally**
Once you have drivers and routes available, let everyone in the neighborhood know what you are doing. The more participation, the better.

Examples:

Indiana Area School District, Pennsylvania. <http://www.iasd.cc/Walking%20School%20Bus.htm>

Resources:

Walking School Bus – Guidelines for Organizers <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/organizers.pdf>

Walking School Bus: Guidelines for talking to children about pedestrian safety
<http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/safety.pdf>

KidsWalk-to-School Tools from the *DHHS/CDC Kids Walk to School Guide*

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/pdf/kidswalk.pdf>

- KidsWalk-to-School Introduction Letter (page 53)
- Walk-to-School Survey (page 54)
- Walkable Routes to School Survey (page 57)
- Parental Consent Form (page 59)
- Press Release (page 60)
- KidsWalk-to-School Participant Evaluation (page 61)

Safe Routes to School Guide – Resources Section

http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking_school_bus/index.cfm

Google Bike Maps (Google it!)