



Engaging Stakeholders in the Safe Routes to School Planning Process

A Guide for Minnesota SRTS Partners



a people-centered, asset-based approach to sustainable mobility and place
community design group

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Phase 1. Building and Engaging an SRTS Team	2
Phase 2. Gathering Information	7
Phase 3. Maximizing Outreach and Community Involvement	11
Phase 4. The Draft Plan	15
Phase 5. From Final Plan to Implementation	18
Tools and Resources	21

Introduction

The long-term success of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs depends on local support and participation, as well as community ownership of the plan and its recommendations.

This document is intended to serve as a guide to SRTS Planners and Partners for engaging stakeholders throughout the SRTS planning process, from first steps in establishing a team through conducting recurring community engagement. In addition, it includes specific guidance on involving students and parents in the process. Involving the public at various stages in the planning process, and incorporating community-sourced ideas into the plan, ensures that final recommendations respond to the wants, needs, priorities and resources in the community.

This document includes a summary of techniques to engage diverse stakeholders at different stages in the SRTS planning process and provides guidance to help partners:

- Build a team of diverse stakeholders including parents and students;
- Maximize outreach and community guidance for the draft plan at in-person events and online;
- Present a draft plan to the community for feedback and asking “Did we get this right?”; and
- Transition from planning to implementation by empowering community members to take leadership roles after a final plan is approved.



Students brainstorm ideas to use school resources to support Safe Routes to School goals.

Phase 1. Building and Engaging an SRTS Team

Local SRTS programs typically have only a handful of champions who initiate and manage the planning process. To increase levels of participation and ownership, it is important to invite a wide range of community representatives during the planning process, which will produce an SRTS plan that responds to a more complete understanding of existing conditions and community resources.

Identifying Team Members

SRTS planning is strengthened by including a wide range of stakeholders. The health, safety, environmental, economic, academic, and community benefits of SRTS can invite participation from a wide range of stakeholders including district leaders, city employees, teachers, community members and students.

Stakeholders	What they bring to SRTS	What they gain from SRTS
School District Level		
Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages district-wide support for SRTS programming Understands how to integrate SRTS with long-range goals for district Knowledge about infrastructure projects and transportation systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased safety and health for students Well-rounded transportation program Positive leadership image for the district SRTS policy that can bring positive change to an entire school district
District Transportation Planner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands the transportation program at a district level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to save money by reducing pressure on bus service
School Siting Decision Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage new school development projects to consider walkability and bikeability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deeper understanding of intended and unintended school siting consequences Improved communication with community
Local School Team		
School Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands big picture with school policies, engineering and infrastructure projects Integrate SRTS program into overall school goals and curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased safety, health, and academic performance for students Well-rounded transportation program Positive image of the school
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in identifying barriers to walking and bicycling along school routes Provide insight on parent concerns Provide peer-to-peer communication to other parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthier, more attentive students Improved safety for walking and biking to school, and in the community Save travel time and gas money if children can independently travel to school Increased community involvement
Community Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support for program Serve as liaisons to community partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safer streets, and healthy and informed children Opportunity to provide assistance to the community

Stakeholders	What they bring to SRTS	What they gain from SRTS
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate SRTS lessons into curriculum • Encourage other faculty to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attention and academic performance from students
Parent Teacher Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged community of parents and teachers • Provide peer-to-peer communication with other parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low barrier to entry by participating as part of an existing PTO • Safer environments for students, parents, and teachers • Increased community involvement
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify everyday barriers to bicycling and walking • Act as role models to encourage other students to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved physical fitness • Independent mobility / autonomy • Improved academic performance • Community involvement / leadership
Crossing Guards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-hand experience with transportation issues near school crossings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for role as crossing guards • Opportunity to improve comfort and safety of crossings through infrastructure improvements and driver education
City Support		
Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on traffic safety / statistics in the community • Enforce traffic laws near school campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for positive interactions with young people in the community • Improved behavior from drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists
Traffic Engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the physical infrastructure in a community • Can bring about changes to surrounding transportation system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-rounded transportation system that addresses all modes of travel
Local Planner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of land-use issues impacting schools • Involved in developing master plans and school siting decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for planning efforts that support walkable and bicycle-friendly communities
Public Works Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of city projects impacting schools • Involved in developing master plans and school siting decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed about school and community goals around bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
City Council Member / Elected Official	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide political support for SRTS programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active, healthy young people who understand how to safely walk and bike in the community
Pedestrian and Bike Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about bicycle and walking plans and future improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporters for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the future

Stakeholders	What they bring to SRTS	What they gain from SRTS
Public Health Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage physical activities for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better health outcomes for students • Improved air quality for everyone around the school
Parks and Recreation Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about how to integrate trails and parks into bicycling and walking routes for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better wayfinding, more users, and increased connections to parks and trails
Community Support		
Pedestrian and Bike Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on strategies on how to work with the community on bicycle and pedestrian issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who understand how to safely bicycle and walk in the community • New advocates for walking and biking
Neighborhood / Community Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner in communicating SRTS policies and program information with the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer streets for the community • Better relationships with other community stakeholders
General Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for the program • Serve as liaisons to other community partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer streets, and healthy and informed children • Opportunity to assist in the community
Local Business Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives to students / families who participate in program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive marketing of business • Safer community for everyone
Disabilities Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide insight into physical infrastructure and program needs of all users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs and infrastructure that addresses all users' needs

Establish a Communication and Meeting Framework

The SRTS team should formally meet multiple times over the course of the project at key decision points to guide and respond to project progress and materials. Between meetings, the team should stay in regular contact. It may be appropriate for individuals or groups of stakeholders to take responsibility for particular projects including communication, research, or organizing an event. It is natural for stakeholders to have varying levels of participation during the planning process. Once a final plan is approved, it is essential that the SRTS team continue to meet to support implementation of programming and infrastructure recommendations, and to evaluate progress. The SRTS team that carries a plan into implementation may include a different collection of stakeholders than the one that participates in the initial kick-off meeting.

Kick-Off Meeting

The project kick-off meeting will set the stage for the remainder of the project. It is the first time that the SRTS team comes together; it provides an opportunity for people to introduce themselves, share goals and ideas, and begin the natural development as a team.

To maximize participation and usefulness, a kick-off meeting may include the following agenda items:

Have an Ice Breaker

Invite team members to introduce themselves and connect around walking and biking by sharing a story about a time that they enjoyed walking or biking as a young child. In addition to breaking the ice, it helps to remind the team about how elementary-aged students may value or experience activities like walking and bicycling.

Introduce SRTS and the 5 E's

Stakeholders will join the team with varying levels of knowledge about SRTS. Introduce SRTS and the 5 E's to ensure that everyone on the team has the same basic understanding of the goals, benefits, and implementation possibilities of SRTS planning.

Brainstorm Resources

Work as a group to brainstorm about existing community resources and identify additional stakeholders who are not present at the kick-off meeting. These stakeholders may be invited to be part of the SRTS team, or be brought in at later stages of the project to support implementation or help organize people around SRTS. When brainstorming resources, think about ways to address anticipated challenges.

Develop a Vision

Work as a group to brainstorm and begin development of a vision for the goals, benefits and outcomes of SRTS at the specific school (or district, if working at a larger scale) where you are meeting. This does not need to be formatted into a formal vision statement until later in the process. Encourage people to think creatively about a short-term vision, as well as a long-term vision. A collection of words or phrases will help to shape the team's approach and help to identify long-term goals for the project.

Create a Schedule and Communication System

Agree to a meeting schedule over the course of the project. At this stage, meeting schedules may be general (such as reserving the third Thursday of each month). It may also be useful to coordinate with the calendar of important school events for the year. Decide on exact timing of upcoming meetings and events shortly after the kick-off meeting. Explore setting up an email distribution list to ensure that all team members are included in all messages related to the project so they can stay up-to-date on project steps and progress.



A kick-off meeting allows the team to meet each other, learn more about SRTS, brainstorm resources, and make a plan for next steps.



Plan ahead to conduct a walking audit during the kick-off meeting, and then come back to the table to discuss observations. This provides an opportunity for place-based discussion and helps to start the dialogue about problems and priorities.

Five Phases of Planning

Overall, the process of planning for Safe Routes to School implementation and success can be described to take place over 5 phases:

Phase 1. Building and Engaging an SRTS Team

Phase 2. Gathering Information

Phase 3. Maximizing Outreach and Community Involvement

Phase 4. The Draft Plan

Phase 5. From Final Plan to Implementation

When to involve whom? Please see chart on next page.

Stakeholder Involvement from Phase 1 to Phase 5

Every SRTS team will include different combinations of stakeholders. The chart below can be used as a guide to illustrate when the participation of specific stakeholders is critical to the success of a specific phase and the overall planning process. If possible, the widest range of stakeholders should be involved from Phase 1 through implementation. Planning Phases are listed in a callout box in the previous page.

Potential Stakeholders	Critical Phases of Involvement				
	1	2	3	4	5
School District Level					
Superintendent	X	X		X	X
District Transportation Planner	X	X		X	X
School Siting Decision Maker	X			X	X
Local School Team					
School Principal	X	X	X	X	X
Parents			X		X
Community Volunteers					X
Teachers		X	X		X
Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)			X	X	
Students		X	X		
Crossing Guards		X			
City Support					
Law Enforcement	X	X			X
Traffic Engineer / Public Works	X	X		X	X
Local Planner	X	X		X	X
City Council Member / Elected Official				X	X
Pedestrian and Bike Coordinator		X		X	X
Public Health Professional			X		X
Parks and Recreation Department		X		X	
Community Support					
Pedestrian and Bike Advocate			X		
Neighborhood / Community Association			X		
General Community Members					
Local Business Representative					
Disability Community Representative	X		X	X	

Phase 2. Gathering Information

The second phase of developing an SRTS plan is gathering information about existing conditions, including infrastructure conditions, school programming, and community resources. A useful way to think about existing conditions is to identify challenges/barriers and assets/opportunities related to walking and biking to the school where you are working. All communities have challenges for walking and bicycling; however, they also all have assets in place. By first identifying the assets and then discussing challenges in terms of opportunities, the conversation keeps moving forward and team members stay in a positive, action-oriented role.

Information gathering may include: meeting with the project team to gain an understanding of local policies that impact walking, bicycling, and bussing; conducting a walking audit; and gathering information about existing travel habits and opinions with a parent survey and student travel hand tally. These tools and approaches are briefly described below. For additional information, you can visit the National Center for Safe Routes to School at www.saferoutesinfo.org.

Programming

What is happening already?

Speak with school administrators about existing programs that encourage students to walk and bike to school and practice active living. Examples of existing programs may include a student safety patrol service, participation in walk or bike to school days, and after school bike clubs.

When working with multiple schools within the same district, encourage school administrators to communicate with each other to share best practices for inspiring student, faculty, and parent participation in existing programming.

Where are there opportunities?

Investigate previous but discontinued programming to learn from past experiences and whether the programs could be modified and reinstated. This can be used as a



Some communities may already have walk or bike events, for example a bicycle rodeo.



Collect information about existing infrastructure by conducting a walking audit during school arrival and dismissal, and around the community.



Older students often share the same campus as younger students and can serve as role models.

preliminary opportunity to investigate ways to build walking and biking education and encouragement into school culture, such as by integrating related subjects into class curriculum or extracurricular activities.

Infrastructure

Conducting a Walking Audit

Walking audits and community audits are common and useful ways to methodically collect information about existing infrastructure conditions for walking and bicycling to school and around the community. Some items to look for include:

- Gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network;
- Conditions at crossings, including potential improvements;
- Circulation (for all modes) around the school campus;
- Student routes to and from school; and
- Driver behavior.

Take notes about the overall experience and consider the varying perspectives of different users, including small children or people with mobility impairments. Taking digital photographs is also a very helpful method for quickly capturing experiences or observations. A GPS-enabled camera (including a mobile phone's camera) can be a useful tool for automatically recording location information for each image.

Turning a Walking Audit into a Stakeholder Dialogue

Invite all stakeholders, including school administrators, faculty, parents, students, local law enforcement, city planners, and city engineers, to participate in the audit and to carefully document their experiences and observations with notes and photographs. When conducting a walking audit with stakeholders, provide a time to reconvene and discuss observations together (preferably right after the audit). This will help to establish a shared understanding of where challenges exist and where there are opportunities to improve conditions. It will also give stakeholders an opportunity to share their perspectives, priorities, and immediate insights about how to best address barriers to walking and bicycling.



If possible, conduct a walking audit with the entire SRTS Team.



Observe the arrival and dismissal process. Useful materials include audit forms that allow participants to quickly note observations, and cameras with GPS capabilities.



A student-lead walking audit may reveal routes that adults are not aware of, like this shortcut across a set of active railroad tracks.

Engaging Students & Parents for Successful SRTS Plans

SRTS success is based largely on changing travel habits and perceptions of walking and bicycling among parents and students. Direct involvement by both students and parents in the planning and implementation process is incredibly valuable for success, but it can also be challenging.

Tips for Engaging Students

One of the best things a SRTS team can do to get a realistic understanding of the barriers and opportunities that students face is to ask them. Invite students to the table and encourage them to identify the barriers they experience, the destinations that are important to them, and the routes they take. Engaging students may reveal unknown barriers, routes, and destinations.

Methods for engaging students include:

- Invite students to identify barriers, destinations, routes, and other features on a map;
- Integrate walking and biking into course curriculum by discussing it in terms of mathematics, economics, environmental science, art, shop class, or physical education;
- Ask student crossing patrols about what they see during arrival and dismissal;
- Empower middle or high school students to educate younger students about walking and biking by leading a class or organizing a promotional event; and
- Invite students to work on the plan directly by participating in a walking audit (or walking field trip), taking photographs, and helping to identify and prioritize infrastructure and programmatic recommendations.

Tips for Engaging Parents

It can be difficult to find individual parents who are available to commit to being part of a formal SRTS team. One strategy is to work closely with a PTO.

Methods for involving a PTO include:

- Targeted Outreach During a PTO Meeting: Coordinate with the PTO to host a tabling session or workshop before, during, or following a PTO meeting. An event may occur during Phases 3 and/or 4.
- PTO Liaisons / PTO as Informal Subcommittee: Allow one or two PTO parents to act as liaisons between the SRTS team and the PTO. They serve on the SRTS team and bring issues back to the PTO for discussion during meetings. In this way, the PTO may act loosely as a subcommittee by reviewing updates and providing guidance intermittently throughout the process.

The PTO and its parents can also be an invaluable resource when seeking champions for Phase 5. Use outreach sessions as brainstorming opportunities to identify parents who can assist with implementation. Maybe one parent has grant writing experience, or owns a local business and could contribute incentives.

Understanding Current Habits

Parent Survey

Conduct the SRTS Parent Survey near the beginning of the planning process in order to gain an understanding of parent attitudes and concerns related to walking and biking. A hard copy of the

SRTS Parent Survey may be sent home with students, distributed at school events, or mailed to parents. It may also be appropriate to provide an alternative (but identical) electronic version of the survey. More information about Parent Surveys, including sample surveys, can be found at www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-parent-survey.

Student Hand Tally

A Student Hand Tally should be conducted on consecutive midweek days to measure how students travel to and from school. Student Hand Tallies are important for establishing a baseline modal split in order to gauge progress and measure effectiveness of various programs and approaches over time. Communicate closely with school administration and teachers to make sure that selected weeks are representative (not correlated with a walk/bike event or school event that would significantly impact travel behavior) and do not conflict with testing weeks. Student tallies are often completed with a raise of hands, but teachers may have other creative ideas to build this task into the day. An example hand tally sheet can be found at www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/resources/SRTS_Two_Day_Tally.pdf.

Student Survey

Currently, there is not a standard SRTS Student Survey. However, understanding student perspectives on walking and biking can help to make informed programming recommendations. A Student Survey may be more appropriate for projects involving middle or high school students, though a simple questionnaire could be developed for elementary-aged students as well. Questions may ask students questions about how fun or healthy they think walking and biking are, if they have a desire to walk or bike to school, and what kinds of programs or improvements would make walking or biking to school easier or more attractive to them. Surveys targeting older students may also include information about carpooling and student drivers.

Parent Survey About Walking and Biking to School

Dear Parent or Caregiver,
Your child's school wants to learn your thoughts about children walking and biking to school. This survey will take about 5 - 10 minutes to complete. We ask that each family complete only one survey per school year for each child they attend. If more than one child from a school brings a survey home, please fill out the survey for the child with the next birthday from today's date.
After you have completed this survey, send it back to the school with your child or give it to the teacher. Your responses will be kept confidential and neither your name nor your child's name will be associated with any results.
Thank you for participating in this survey!

+ CAPITAL LETTERS ONLY - BLUE OR BLACK INK ONLY +

School Name: _____

1. What is the grade of the child who brought home this survey? Grade (PK,K,1,2,3...)

2. Is the child who brought home this survey male or female? Male Female

3. How many children do you have in Kindergarten through 8th grade?

4. What is the street intersection nearest your home? (Provide the names of two intersecting streets)
_____ and _____

Place a clear "X" inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box.

5. How far does your child live from school?
 Less than 1/4 mile 1/4 mile up to 1 mile More than 2 miles
 1/4 mile up to 1/2 mile 1 mile up to 2 miles Don't know

Place a clear "X" inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box.

6. On most days, how does your child arrive and leave for school? (Select one choice per column, mark box with X)

Arrive at school	Leaves from school
<input type="checkbox"/> Walk	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk
<input type="checkbox"/> Bike	<input type="checkbox"/> Bike
<input type="checkbox"/> School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/> School Bus
<input type="checkbox"/> Family vehicle (only children in your family)	<input type="checkbox"/> Family vehicle (only children in your family)
<input type="checkbox"/> Carpool (Children from other families)	<input type="checkbox"/> Carpool (Children from other families)
<input type="checkbox"/> Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)

Place a clear "X" inside box. If you make a mistake, fill the entire box, and then mark the correct box.

7. How long does it normally take your child to get to/from school? (Select one choice per column, mark box with X)

Travel time to school	Travel time from school
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 10 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 - 10 minutes

The parent survey collects information about student travel habits and attitudes towards walking and biking to school.

Start Date	Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday	
	To	From	To	From	To	From
School Bus Plus						
Walk						
Bike						
Skateboard						
School Bus Only						
Family Vehicle						
Carpool						
Public Trans.						
Other						
Worksheet (SRTS)	S, R, O, W, SN, CO					

Collect student travel information over two to three consecutive midweek days using a student hand tally. Invite teachers to develop creative, convenient, and engaging ways to collect student travel information. Image courtesy of iowawalktoschool.org.

Phase 3. Maximizing Outreach and Community Involvement

Intensive community engagement should take place after an initial walking audit and in preparation for developing a draft plan. Community members are the best resource for identifying important destinations, routes, assets, barriers, and long-term goals. During engagement, it is important to get an understanding of the community's values and the resources it can dedicate to support implementation of SRTS recommendations down the road.

Techniques for Outreach

Publicizing events, coordinating with existing community events, and providing meaningful, fun and engaging exercises both in person and online will improve both the quantity and quality of community engagement.

Important considerations

Throughout engagement efforts, remember to be mindful of your target audience and any barriers that may make it challenging for them to share their experiences and provide feedback. Barriers may include language competency and internet access / computer literacy. Solutions may include hiring local translators, developing materials in more than one language, or distributing paper copies of surveys that can be mailed in or dropped off at easily accessible community destinations. There may also be cultural or religious barriers to the idea of walking and biking. Be sure to speak with the SRTS team regarding community barriers before planning and conducting outreach so that materials can be prepared and distributed appropriately.

Get the word out

There are a variety of potential outlets for publicizing an SRTS outreach event. Some potential outlets include:

- Local news media including television and local newspapers;
- School newsletter;
- School website / e-mail;
- A public project website;
- Mailings; and
- Promotional videos.



Use a school newsletter to introduce the public to SRTS and invite them to share ideas at an event.

HOW DO YOU get to Breck?

We need your input!

We are collecting student travel data to better learn how sustainable transportation options including walking, biking, carpooling, and transit can be incorporated at Breck.

SCAN THIS CODE

to take our student survey and visit the interactive map

Complete the student survey for a chance to win a gift card!

You can also visit the website at:
brecksaferoutes.weebly.com

Use flyers to invite students, faculty, and parents to visit online resources.

Meet people where they're at

A useful technique for increasing attendance and overall community participation at in-person events is to coordinate outreach with existing school / community events. For individual school plans, appropriate events may include school sporting events, PTO meetings, and seasonal school picnics or festivals. District-wide plans may benefit from outreach at broader community events including farmers markets, fairs and festivals, and existing SRTS related events (including Bicycle Rodeos). Although stand-alone SRTS events may also be arranged, they typically will require more extensive outreach and communications.

Potential In-Person Exercises

Parent Survey

Provide paper copies of the Parent Survey at in-person events for parents who have not already completed it.

Engage Students

Work with teachers to integrate SRTS-related subjects into the class curriculum. Activities may help collect student comments about routes, barriers, and possible improvements. Lessons may also focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety, or the environmental, health, and economic impacts of walking, bicycling, and driving. Either way, the integration of SRTS into the curriculum can help educate students about walking and biking and encourage them to participate in future programs. The Minnesota Bike! Walk! Fun! Curriculum includes a variety of lessons designed to meet Minnesota education requirements for elementary-aged children.

Identifying barriers to walking and bicycling in the community

Develop a list of barriers for walking and bicycling to school (and in the general community) based on general team input, walking audit observations, and brainstorming around common barriers to walking and bicycling. Invite participants to select the three (or more) barriers that they feel are the greatest challenge for walking and bicycling. This activity could also be formatted for online outreach.



Ask students directly about solutions that would make it easier for them to walk or bike to school.



Participants can identify routes, destinations, barriers, and make other notes on large format maps.

Identifying and prioritizing programming improvements

Develop a list of potential programming opportunities based on existing resources/programs and best practices, and invite participants to identify the three (or more) programs that they feel would have the greatest impact on increasing walking and bicycling rates in their community. Invite participants to offer their own “other” ideas as well, as community members may have additional knowledge about independent efforts and programming/partnership opportunities. This activity could also be formatted for online outreach.

Mapping routes, barriers, and destinations

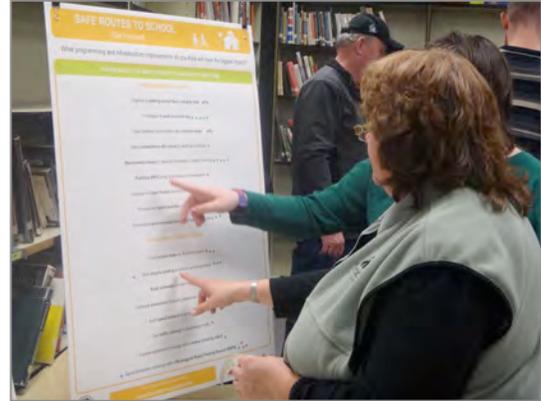
Bring large format maps to in-person events that show the school campus, walksheds/bikesheds, and important infrastructure information including existing sidewalks, bicycle facilities, bike parking locations (on campus), crossing guard locations, and enhanced crosswalk facilities. Invite participants to identify important destinations, assets/barriers to walking/biking, and existing and desired walking and biking routes to/from school.

Invite people to make a video

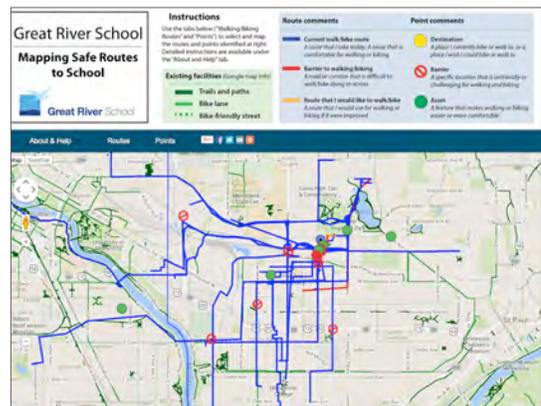
Invite participants to share their experiences of walking, bicycling, and traveling to and from school on video. This could take the form of an “I wish” / “I love” exercise where students, parents, and other community members can identify destinations, assets, and barriers along their walking and bicycling trips. Encourage teachers, students, and parents to develop their own videos about their trips to and from school, including routes they enjoy, streets that are difficult to cross, and other relevant experiences. In addition to directly informing the SRTS plan, videos can also be used as promotional materials that educate and encourage other people about walking and biking in the community. No specialized equipment is necessary, as even the digital cameras built into smartphones will provide a high-enough quality for this purpose.

Potential Online Exercises

Most in-person activities can be modified for an online format. Ideally, online and in-person exercises should follow the same format to allow everyone to share ideas on the same subjects. This also simplifies analysis.



Participants select their top choices from a long list of potential programming improvements.



Reach a broader audience by utilizing online tools including project websites, interactive mapping, and electronic surveys.

Project Website

Project websites can be used to communicate important updates, house engagement materials (including surveys and interactive maps), and publicly distribute materials including draft plans, posters, and other important documents. Convenient platforms include Weebly (www.weebly.com) and Google Sites (www.sites.google.com).

Parent Survey

Consider developing an online version of the Parent Survey. Distribute it through a parent e-mail newsletter, and/or feature it on the school website. If a public project website has been developed, link or embed the survey there as well. An online version of the survey may be more convenient for some parents than a paper survey. In addition, delivery is guaranteed upon completion. Online surveys can be useful throughout the project to collect initial information about travel habits and evaluate the success of specific programs. The National Center for SRTS has a web version of the Parent Survey (www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-parent-survey-online-surveying-option). Other useful tools for build-your-own surveys include Google Forms (www.forms.google.com) and Survey Gizmo (www.surveygizmo.com).

Online Mapping

Use one of the many interactive mapping tools on the market to develop an online version of the in-person mapping activity. Invite users to plot routes, identify destinations and barriers, submit photos, and request location-specific improvements. Typical online maps allow community members to visit multiple times and add or edit comments (and respond to other users' comments) as long as the map is live. Students may also enjoy adding information about their experiences as part of a class project or with their parents. Online maps have an additional benefit of allowing data exports for easy GIS integration. A suggested platform is WikiMapping (www.wikimapping.com).

Engaging Groups with Smart Board Technology

Smart Boards are available in schools throughout Minnesota and provide an opportunity to utilize interactive online tools in classrooms and at events.

Set up a Smart Board at school and/or community events to introduce people to SRTS and online tools. Project an interactive map and invite people to add their comments, or see what other people are saying about the community's walking and biking network—all in real time.

In addition, provide hard copies of information for people in a hurry. Distribute flyers with important information written clearly—including website URLs and questions about walking/biking in the community—to get people thinking about their experiences and allow them to access online tools at their convenience.



Smart boards are easy-to-use platforms that facilitate online learning and engagement for people of all ages.

Phase 4. The Draft Plan

The recommendations in the draft plan should reflect an understanding of existing conditions and the experiences, ideas, and priorities collected during the initial information-gathering and community outreach phases. Once a draft is developed, it is important to take the draft plan back to the community to allow community stakeholders to review recommendations and provide comments.

Checking In: Did we get this right?

When finalizing the draft plan, it is important to sift through the wealth of observations, notes, photos, and comments collected in order to identify trends and present a precise set of programmatic and infrastructure recommendations. Checking in and asking “Did we get this right?” empowers community members to support or challenge choices, and provide comments or additional information that may augment recommendations.

Reconnect with the Community

Techniques for organizing an event following the draft plan are similar to those identified in Phase 2. Utilizing local media and school resources for publicity, and coordinating with existing school and community events, will help to increase turnout and overall participation. The key difference is that at this stage in the process, participants are being invited to respond to an existing draft that responds to previous engagement.

Potential Exercises

Posters are an easy and eye-catching way to quickly present recommendations. At this stage, exercises will focus less on collecting a wealth of community feedback. Nonetheless, participants should feel invited to interact with the materials. Supply markers, pens, and Post-It notes for people to add comments, identify gaps, and/or provide support for ideas. Encourage people to mark directly on poster boards, and consider bringing additional blank posters to which people can add additional ideas or comments.



Tabling is a useful way to coordinate SRTS outreach with an existing school event like a picnic or book fair.



Organize an open house event before a PTO meeting to reach active parents.



Participants can respond to the first set of draft recommendations before a complete written document is developed.

Examples of posters to include include:

An Introduction to SRTS and the 5 E's

It is always useful to provide a poster that quickly summarizes the purpose and process of SRTS for people who are new to the program.

A Summary of Feedback Received

This poster may include results from the Parent Survey, Student Hand Tally, and other exercises that were conducted before the creation of the draft plan, including mapping and identification of priority barriers and opportunities. This helps to illustrate the community basis for the recommendations included within the plan.

Infrastructure Recommendations

Provide a large-format school vicinity map illustrating infrastructure recommendations including such features as sidewalk installation, crossing enhancements, safety patrol locations, on-site circulation improvements, signage, and bicycle parking. It may be helpful to also include existing infrastructure such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, signage, crossing guard locations, and current bike parking locations.

Programming Recommendations

Summarize programming recommendations including example photographs, a brief description of the program purpose, and potential leaders. Identifying stakeholders who can lead and/or support recommended programs invites participants to think about how they might be involved with implementation.

Invite People to be Champions

Provide sign-up sheets for general project updates and to help identify potential community champions. Invite participants who are interested in particular programs to sign up as a potential committee member or project leader. At this stage in the planning process, recommendations are starting to feel tangible. This is an ideal time to begin identifying individuals with the interest and initiative to lead implementation for one or more of the recommended programs.

Encourage After-The-Fact Feedback

Sometimes it takes time for people to reflect on what they have seen before providing feedback. Bring project contact information and website URL/QR codes (if there is a site)

Different Approaches for Engaging Students around Walking & Biking

Student opinions about walking may differ from perspectives on biking, and may be context sensitive. For example, students may like the idea of a walking field trip with the classroom. However, walking to school alone or with students they don't know well may not be embraced in the same way. Biking, on the other hand, is usually considered fun by students who have access to a bike. Understanding student perceptions about both modes and what makes them more or less attractive will help the SRTS team select targeted programming recommendations that are fun and motivating to students.



Young students may be interested in learning about how their trip to school might be improved. Ask students directly about solutions that would make it easier for them to walk or bike to school.

on postcards or slips of paper to distribute to people who are interested in learning more, or who prefer to review materials and provide feedback on their own time. Be sure to provide electronic

versions of posters and draft plans online for people to review and respond. Provide a deadline for feedback so that people's comments can be integrated into the final plan.

Conducting SRTS Outreach as a Piece of a Larger Plan

On occasion, SRTS is incorporated as a subsection within a much larger planning document. Community outreach and stakeholder involvement is an important and helpful stage of any planning process. Any of the methods identified in this guide can be adapted to serve community engagement purposes for other plans.

Building SRTS into the Outreach Process

- Make sure that SRTS interests are at the table when developing Project Steering Committees, Internal Working Groups, and Community Engagement Plans;
- Provide survey questions that ask about walking/biking habits of students;
- Identify schools on interactive maps to remind participants to consider school locations when they share comments about routes, barriers, and other important destinations;
- Include students and/or families with children as a focus population and conduct outreach accordingly; and
- Target children and families when distributing educational/promotional materials.

As part of an Active Living Plan:

- Promote pedestrian/bicycle friendly design that is comfortable for all users, including children;
- Launch education/promotional campaigns to increase safety and awareness around pedestrian/bicycle issues at and near schools;
- Build and expand Active Living partnerships including schools and community destinations; and
- Increase supply of low-stress pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure.

As part of a Comprehensive Plan:

- Emphasize land use, zoning, and transportation regulations that prioritize walkable and bikeable trips, especially in areas where students may be present;
- Provide zoning and design regulations that guide school siting and school site design to make it easier for more students to walk and bike to school, and to improve safety of on-site circulation; and
- Identify school zones and walksheds/bikesheds when determining priority areas for walk/bike improvements.

Phase 5. From Final Plan to Implementation

The Final Plan

The Final Plan should incorporate the overall process of the plan's development, including program and infrastructure recommendations and a five-year implementation strategy. Stakeholder involvement should be recognized at a celebration introducing the basic elements of the SRTS program. It's also a great time to remind the group that a useful plan must have implementable recommendations. The final plan is more a byproduct of the process—it's the relationships that have been formed during the process that are invaluable. This stage is really just the beginning.

Celebrating

Celebrating your final plan is a great way to bring stakeholders together and give recognition to their contributions. Techniques for organizing an event are similar to holding other events in the process. Utilizing local media and school resources for publicity, and coordinating with existing school and community events, will help to increase turnout and overall participation. The key difference from previous phases is that at this stage in the process, participants are being invited to be a part of implementing the plan.

Implementation

The final plan should include a five-year Implementation Strategy and an Action Plan based on a one-year forecast of attainable goals. The Implementation Strategy should be updated periodically with new goals as the previous goals are met or new opportunities arise. While the overall SRTS plan may support action for five years, the Action Plan provides specific recommendations for the first year of implementation and can set the stage for successful ongoing engagement.

The programs identified for the first year of implementation will require the lead organization to take some immediate actions to make progress and follow a timeline. Initial projects should be chosen based on



Peer to peer communication including skits at school assemblies can help increase interest in walking and biking among students.



Open Streets events are exciting ways to garner community interest and support for walking and bicycling improvements.

existing capacity and interest as identified during the planning process. Many education, encouragement and enforcement programs are ongoing and can be easily maintained once their initial implementation is complete. While some recommendations may not be implemented during the first year, it is still important to plan and prepare for future programmatic and infrastructure projects.

Integrating Curriculum

Building SRTS programming into the school curriculum will be ongoing and require involvement of the teachers' teams. This could be a topic during curriculum discussion in the spring and summer in preparation for the upcoming school year.

Build Leadership

Bring local high school students, school clubs and middle school students into the implementation process to invigorate stakeholders and provide important leadership opportunities to students. Students often have service learning or community service requirements to fulfill, and SRTS educational and encouragement programming can be a perfect fit for older students. Explore developing an ongoing program that would allow older students to educate younger students about walking and biking safety by developing a curriculum, leading a class or assembly, or organizing a walk/bike event.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of any SRTS effort. Not only does evaluation measure a program's reach and impact on a school community, it can also ensure continued funding and provide a path forward for future efforts. Evaluation may measure participation and accomplishments, shifts in travel behavior, changes in attitudes toward walking and biking, awareness of the SRTS program, and/or the effectiveness of processes or programs.

At a minimum, SRTS evaluation should include standard classroom hand tallies and parent surveys consistent with the national SRTS program. Evaluating the success of programs can be as simple as record-keeping (who, what, when, where and how, cost, lessons learned), and counting or estimating the number of students who participated or



Student safety patrols facilitate safe crossings at intersections near the school.



Walking school buses turn a trip to school into a social experience, and alleviate parents' concerns for safety.

were reached. Recording planning efforts and taking photos is also helpful for the legacy of the program. Information from the student hand tally and trip tracking programs can be used to estimate environmental and health impacts of modal shifts. Students may enjoy measuring their own progress by making these calculations as part of a math or science course.

Keeping the Momentum

Future Meetings

Stakeholders should know when and how their continued involvement is needed. A schedule of future meetings should be established based on capacity and the first year's goals. A minimum biannual review of accomplishments and future goals will be necessary to keep the momentum growing well into the future.

A Final Plan is Just the Beginning

Schools and communities that demonstrate successful programmatic implementation over time are more likely to receive funding for infrastructure improvements. A written plan is only the first step in addressing barriers and implementing solutions to increase walking and biking to school. Measurable increases in walking and biking rates, changing perspectives on active transportation, and overall long-term success of SRTS plans are based largely on community support and programmatic solutions.

Tools and Resources

The tables below include consolidated lists of resources identified within the body of this document, as well as additional SRTS resources and educational materials.

Materials and Tools Identified in this Guide

Resource	Link
Data Collection Materials	
National Center for SRTS	www.saferoutesinfo.org
Parent Survey	www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-parent-survey
Online Parent Survey	www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/evaluation-parent-survey-online-surveying-option
Student Travel Tally Sheet	www.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/resources/SRTS_Two_Day_Tally.pdf
Engagement Tools	
Weebly	www.weebly.com
Google Sites	www.sites.google.com
Google Forms	www.forms.google.com
Survey Gizmo	www.surveygizmo.com
Wikimapping	www.wikimapping.com

Additional Tools and Educational Materials

Resource	Link
General Resources	
National Center for Safe Routes to School	www.saferoutesinfo.org
National Center for SRTS Data System: View and organize data collected from the Student Hand Tally and Parent Survey	www.saferoutesdata.org
Minnesota Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum: Classroom materials for ped/bike lessons	www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/pdf/toolkit/walk-bike-fun-curriculum.pdf
Webinars	
Travel Tallies and Parent Surveys: Introducing changes to the SRTS data collection system	www.saferoutesinfo.org/events-and-training/srts-webinars/travel-tallies-and-parent-surveys-%E2%80%93-introducing-changes-srts-data-
Handing Over the Keys: Building leadership and excitement for walking and bicycling among high school students	www.saferoutesinfo.org/events-and-training/srts-webinars/march_2013_walking_bicycling_high_school_students

Resource	Link
SRTS Middle School Curriculum: Why it is important and how to make an impact	www.saferoutesinfo.org/events-and-training/srts-webinars/srts-middle-school-curriculum-why-it-important-and-how-make-impact
Integrating Safe Routes to School into the Fabric of Your Community: The role of the Comprehensive Plan	www.saferoutesinfo.org/events-and-training/srts-webinars/integrating-safe-routes-school-fabric-your-community-role-comprehe
Fresh Ideas from the 2012 Oberstar SRTS Award Program: Surprising partners and program approaches	www.saferoutesinfo.org/events-and-training/srts-webinars/fresh-ideas-from-2012-oberstar-award-winners

