

## **Overview to Creating a Safe Routes to School Program**

Each school starts from a unique situation and with different circumstances. Some schools have great places for walking and bicycling but few students are taking advantage of it. Other communities have children walking and bicycling to school in unsafe conditions or along poorly maintained routes, while some communities do not have children walking or bicycling to school at all. Successful SRTS programs involve the whole community. Parents, children, neighborhood groups, schools, law enforcement officers, community leaders, and transportation and public health professionals help identify the issues and solutions.

The following are the steps to creating a Safe Routes to School Program:

### **1) Form a Safe Routes to School Task Force that involves:**

- a. Parents
- b. School administrators and teachers
- c. Neighbors and community organizations
- d. City officials and staff members
- e. Students

### **2) Evaluate existing conditions through:**

- a. Parent surveys
- b. Student surveys
- c. Traffic counts
- d. Injury data
- e. Speed checks
- f. Safe Routes Checklists

### **3) Expand your circle by:**

- a. Presenting findings to the community
- b. Holding a design workshop
- c. Having an open house
- d. Convening a strategy meeting

### **4) Develop a project list and accompanying map by:**

- a. Identifying problem areas
- b. Setting priorities
- c. Grouping projects by geographic area
- d. Identifying short term and long term solutions
- e. Costing out your program
- f. Using the whole toolbox of solutions

## **5) Make it official by:**

- a. Going through the regular planning process
- b. Having your plan adopted in the city plan

## **6) Get improvements funded by:**

- a. Developing a funding program
- b. Identifying funding opportunities
- c. Working with your city to apply for grants

SRTS programs use a variety of education, encouragement, engineering, and enforcement strategies that help make routes safer for children to walk and bicycle to school and encouragement strategies to entice more children to walk and bicycle.

### **Education**

Education activities target parents, neighbors and other drivers in the community to remind them to yield to pedestrians, to drive safely and to take other actions to make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Parents serve as role models for their children and play an important part in teaching them pedestrian and bicycle safety. Education activities also teach students how to walk and bicycle safely and the benefits of doing so.

Examples of educational strategies include:

- Providing public traffic safety courses
- Teaching safety programs in the classroom

### **Encouragement**

Encouragement strategies generate excitement about walking and bicycling safely to school. Children, parents, teachers, school administrators and others can all be involved in special events like International Walk to School Day and ongoing activities like walking school buses. Encouragement strategies can often be started relatively easily with little cost and a focus on fun.

Examples of encouragement strategies include:

- Fostering walking school buses and neighborhood watch programs

### **Enforcement**

Enforcement activities can help to change unsafe behaviors of drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. They can increase driver awareness of laws, and they also can improve driver behavior by reducing speeds and increasing yielding to pedestrians. In addition, enforcement activities teach pedestrians and bicyclists to walk and bicycle safely and to pay attention to their environment. Enforcement doesn't just involve law enforcement. Many different community members take part in making sure everyone follows the rules, including students, parents, school personnel and adult school crossing guards. In addition, the role of the law enforcement officers often goes beyond enforcement and can be included in all strategies of the SRTS program.

Examples of enforcement strategies include:

- Posting visible speed limits and school crossing signs
- Aggressively enforcing traffic violations

### **Engineering**

Engineering addresses the built environment with tools that can be used to create safe places to walk or bicycle and can also influence the way people behave. Transportation engineers, city planners and architects use methods to create safer settings for walking and bicycling while recognizing that a roadway needs to safely accommodate all modes of transportation. Such improvements can include maintenance and operational measures as well as construction projects with a range of costs. When such programs are properly implemented, they may not only improve safety for children, but they also may encourage more walking and bicycling by the general public.

Examples of engineering solutions include:

- Designing streets that calm traffic
- Installing walkways and bike paths
- Improving safety where pedestrians cross streets