Safe Routes to School in the Suburbs
A Presentation to Action Committee for Transit

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Regional Policy Manager
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
December 9, 2014
OVERVIEW

• About the Safe Routes to School National Partnership
• Safe Routes to School Basics
• National Success Stories
• The State Of SRTS in the DC Region
• Policy Recommendations
About the National Partnership

We are a nonprofit organization that improves the quality of life for kids and communities by promoting active, healthy lifestyles and safe infrastructure that supports bicycling and walking.
WHAT WE DO

• Improve quality of life for kids, families, and communities

• Advance policy change

• Catalyze support for safe, healthy, active communities

• Share our deep expertise
In 1969, nearly 50% of all children walked or bicycled to school. Today, just 13% walk or bicycle.

All kids and communities deserve access to safe, healthy streets and opportunities for physical activity.
National Partnership
• 28 staff
• 13 states

Regional & State Policy
• Washington, DC region
• Virginia
• New England
• Ohio
• Southern States (NC, TN, AL, GA)
• Florida
• Oregon/SW Washington
• California (LA, SF and statewide)
SHARING OUR DEEP EXPERTISE

http://saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter

A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region

Individualized Technical Assistance

Each community is unique. Through our network of professional, region-specific content and program and policy experts, Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance provides customized technical assistance to support communities and help them achieve their goals.

Workshops

We provide training and technical assistance workshops that are designed to help communities develop, implement, and sustain programs that support walking and bicycling.

Who We Are:

Our team has expertise in program and school district partnerships, community-based programs, and school health initiatives. We provide support to communities across the country to create safe and healthy environments for students.

Contact: Maggie Cooper, Technical Assistance Manager, maggie@saferoutespartnership.org or 303.521.1562

Case Study: Bicycling and Walking to School as a Community: Takoma Park, MD

The City of Takoma Park Safe Routes to School program won special recognition from the National Center forSafe Routes to School. The program was featured in a case study provided by Safe Routes to School National Partnership.

Technical Assistance to Get Kids Walking and Bicycling Through Community Scale Policy Strategies

For more than a decade Safe Routes to School programs have flourished across the country using the power of community leadership and local partnerships. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership can help your community or school district to build local leadership, partnerships and programs that advance healthy, active zones, and sustainable environments.

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Schools to request Safe Routes to School activities and ideas that work in regular contact with the schools. Regular communication establishes the relationship and allows the district to learn how best to support Safe Routes to School programming in existing school contexts.

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), the safety training is offered free of cost. The workshops feature a safety

Schools in Takoma Park School District outreach every year to help students as a kick-off for walking and

The City of Takoma Park Safe Routes to School program offers a schoolyard that supports local

By the numbers, 100 percent of students and faculty refer to the walk and bike to school program.

In Takoma Park, the number of students and faculty refer to the walk and bike to school program.
WHAT IS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

• Goal is to make it safer for more kids to walk and bicycle to and from school—and ultimately in daily life

• More than $1 billion in federal funding available from FY2005-12 through state Departments of Transportation

• 15,000 schools have benefited—but that’s approximately 15% of schools, and only for a portion of their needs

• Has helped elevate the trip to school in transportation planning and get local governments and schools to partner

• Comprehensive “Five E’s” approach is critical (engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement, evaluation)
THE BIG PICTURE: WHY FOCUS ON SCHOOLS?

• Focuses limited dollars where kids are concentrated
• Kids spend a great deal of time each day at schools
• Schools are the hub for many other activities
• Schools may be located within neighborhoods, near kids and families—so improvements affect neighborhoods
• Improvements in neighborhoods around schools benefit all residents—seniors, students, families, etc.
• **Focusing on kids and schools can give you a foot in the door to overcome opposition on built environment changes**
IS IT DIFFERENT IN THE SUBURBS?

- Safe Routes to School movement started in the suburbs: Marin County, CA

- Most programs target suburban schools because of the land use and transportation challenges, but willingness of some parents to make a shift if conditions are safer

- The decrease in walking and bicycling to school is partially attributed to changes in school siting

- Urban schools often have the right infrastructure but other safety and equity challenges
BY THE NUMBERS: PEDESTRIAN INJURIES

Traffic injuries are the leading cause of death ages 5-33 years

Motor vehicles are responsible for one of every five deaths in children 1-14

(SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics)

Child pedestrian injury more common if:

- High traffic volumes
- Lower income
- Younger age

12% / 16% / 1.5%
Biking and walking is 12% of trips, 16% of fatalities and 1.5% of federal funding

38% vs 88%
Percentage of children living within a mile of school who walk/bike in 2009 vs. 1969

10-14%
of morning traffic congestion is school-related

$21 billion + $5 billion
Cost of busing and parents driving kids to school

36% & 24
The increase in walking/biking to school due to Safe Routes to School in four states & the number of minutes of physical activity a child gets each day they walk/bike to school
BY THE NUMBERS: SAFETY

25%-30% of children’s traffic deaths are bicycling/walking

$839 million Annual medical costs to treat children’s bike/ped injuries and fatalities

33% The decrease in the rate of pedestrian injury for kids in NYC neighborhoods with Safe Routes to School interventions as compared with neighborhoods without
RECENT STUDIES: SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL WORKS!

801 schools in DC, FL, OR & TX
• Studied school travel data for five years (2007-2012)
• Control group without SRTS
• Walking & bicycling rates increased:
  • 18% due to engineering improvements
  • 25% due to education and encouragement programs
  • 43% total increase over five years

Crash data in NYC
• 168,806 pedestrian injuries between 2001-2010
• In census tracts with SRTS programs, pedestrian injury rate decrease 44% between 2009-2010
• No decrease in census tracts without SRTS programs
SUCCESS STORIES IN SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES

Red Pine Elementary, Eagan, MN

- Parents mostly drive, resulting in quarter-mile traffic backups at school and onto nearby highway
- With $10,000, the school produced safe walking maps, walking school buses, and drop zones
- Number of kids walking/bicycling has grown from 75 to 200
- Vehicle drop-offs down from 100 to 40; traffic backups evaporated

Roosevelt Middle School, Eugene, OR

- Invested $600,000 from Safe Routes to School in a walking path, crosswalks, school zone signage and programming.
- In three years, walking and bicycling rates grew from 27% to 42% of kids.
- There are 53 fewer cars picking up children each day, a 24% reduction, easing congestion on streets near school.
SUCCESS STORIES IN SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES

Austin, TX – Zavala Elementary

• Low-income school with no busing; drug and gang-related crime and violence created hazard for kids walking
• Set up walking school bus routes, corner captains and buddy program
• More students arriving on time for school breakfast
• School recently added an after-school bicycle club and is integrating SRTS into wellness and parent involvement campaigns

Auburn, WA

• Citizens committee developed safe walking maps for all 22 schools and fun activities
• City uses municipal funds for signage, traffic calming, sidewalks and paths and applies for SRTS grants for larger-scale upgrades
• All developers required to install sidewalks
• 20% of students now live in safe walking areas and no longer need to be bussed—saving $240,000/year in fuel and personnel
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION

Coordinators in many school districts and departments of transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Safe Routes to School Coordinator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arlington County Public Schools</td>
<td>Full-time, school district</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexandria City Public Schools</td>
<td>Contracted coordinator with school district 2008-2013, current designated point person for continuation of activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>District of Columbia Public Schools</td>
<td>Full-time, District Department of Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairfax County</td>
<td>Full-time, school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick County</td>
<td>2010-2011, full-time, school district</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loudoun County</td>
<td>Full-time, school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery County Public Schools</td>
<td>One full-time position, Montgomery County Department of Transportation and one part-time position, City of Takoma Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George’s County Public Schools</td>
<td>Grant application pending, full-time, Prince George’s County Department of Public Works and Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince William County Public Schools</td>
<td>Full-time, school district</td>
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SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION

Walk to School Day: Number of Participating Schools by County, 2013-2014

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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arlington</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Fairfax</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
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<td>Loudoun</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince George's</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince William</td>
<td>16</td>
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SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION

Walk to School Day: Number of Participating Schools by State, 2013-2014

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>126</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION

Alexandria City Schools, VA Safe Routes to School program: This program is a partnership between the school system and TrailsforYouth.org, a local non-profit.

The City of Alexandria, VA school safety project: After requests for pedestrian safety around Charles Barrett Elementary School, the City of Alexandria utilized all Five E’s to make the walk to school safer for students.

District of Columbia Safe Routes to School program: The full-time coordinator has a defined process in which she works with committees at individual schools to craft a Safe Routes to School plan. The plan is then implemented by the school.

Montgomery County, MD Safe Routes to School program: Staffed with a full-time coordinator, the program has recently partner with the County’s pedestrian safety division to educate high school students on safe walking.

Montgomery County, MD prioritizes pedestrian safety: With an emphasis on data, evaluation and Engineering, Education and Enforcement, the county is making the streets safer. The Safe Routes to School program closely coordinates with the pedestrian safety program.
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION

**Prince George’s County shared-use agreement:** A long standing shared-use agreement allows the Parks and Recreation Department to offer evening and weekend programming at the schools. The unique park/school model shares land, space and resources. Utilizing a community asset such as schools increases the opportunity to walk, bike or transit for all participants.

**Prince William County Public Schools, VA bicycle education:** Physical education teachers are implementing the Bike Smart Virginia curriculum which includes on-bike instruction and bicycle safety. Questions of liability, safety and teacher training were addressed.

**Takoma Park, MD Safe Routes to School program:** In the summer of 2012, this program won recognition from the James L. Oberstar Safe Routes to School committee. A video of the crosswalk simulation activity is an example of how to teach pedestrian education to elementary school students.

**Vienna, VA Area Safe Routes to School program:** Led by parents, this program has spread to seven schools with Walking Wednesdays and Wolfie’s Bike Train. Wolfie’s Bike Train was featured on the international Nickelodeon’s Worldwide Day of Play. The video clip is from the perspective of the students. Their insight is impressive!
LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: VIENNA, VA

• Wolftrap Elementary (near Tysons Corner):
  • Parent advocates started a “Bike Train” in 2009
  • Wolfie’s Bike Train started with 10 kids and now attracts 70-80 bicyclists on monthly rides (they have never missed a month!)
  • Keep Our Kids Safe campaign to reduce parents dropping kids off in no parking zones
• Vienna Elementary:
  • Walking Wednesdays every week
• Bike/Walk Challenge:
  • Schools compete against each other for most kids walking and bicycling during one week a year
LOCAL SUCCESS STORY:
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

#YOLO Walksafe Campaign at Blair High School

“Tired Faces” Photoshoot using Montgomery County Teens
LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: FAIRFAX COUNTY

- Largest school district in Virginia
- Full-time coordinator
- Activities during school hours:
  - Bike rodeos
  - Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety during P.E. classes
- Activities before/after school:
  - Walking school bus
- Policy changes:
  - School travel policy now allows parents to decide how kids get to school, not principals
  - Reduce number of Kiss-N-Rides
LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

• Oldest program in the DC metro region: providing in-classroom education at DC schools since 2003
• Full-time coordinator in District Department of Transportation
• Prepares SRTS “Action Plans” for 10 schools a year
• Infrastructure improvements through transportation funding programs (including TIP)
• Pedestrian safety for students in K-2
• Bicycle safety for students in 3-8
• Recently added new classes teaching parents and kids how to bike together
LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: TAKOMA PARK

- Created in 2007
- Part-time coordinator in school district
- Works with four elementary schools and one middle school
- Program won national award in 2012 (James L. Oberstar Award)
- Walking School Bus
- Crosswalk Simulation Activity
- Crossing Guard Appreciation Day
- Community 5K in the spring
SO HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

*Leadership and Collaboration Are Key!!!*

Buy-in and involvement of a range of partners is critical:
- Parents and students
- The mayor or city manager
- The local transportation department (city public works/engineering or region’s MPO)
- Local health and police departments
- School district transportation officials
- School principal and personnel (school nurse, PE teacher)
- Community organizations and advocates
- Local businesses (including bike shops!)
- Universities
SO HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

Assess the Current Situation

- Do parent surveys to identify what parents are concerned about.
- Do student tallies to find out how they are coming to school.
- Do a “walkability” audit to identify trouble spots.

Make needed short-term safety improvements

- Ask the city/county to repaint crosswalks, trim branches, install signage, and prioritize sidewalk repair.
- Consider whether crossing guards are in the best locations.

Develop safe alternatives to get kids moving now

- Develop “safe walking routes” identifying sidewalks, crosswalks, crossing guards, low-traffic roads.
- Organize “walking school buses” or “bike trains.”
SO HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

Provide pedestrian/bicycle safety education

- Add pedestrian safety lessons into P.E. classes.
- Hold “bike rodeos” and bicycle safety courses.

Address issues with driver safety

- Ask law enforcement to step up patrols or add mobile speed trailers.
- Work with the media to ask drivers to drive more safely near schools.

Build excitement through small promotional contests/activities

- Make it FUN with mileage contests, themed events, punch cards
- See if area businesses can donate small prizes or incentives.

Keep Evaluating Your Progress

- Redo parent surveys and student tallies at the start and end of each school year to measure impact.
HIGH-IMPACT POLICY CHANGE

Ensure school policies support walking/bicycling:

- Include Safe Routes to School programs in school wellness policies
- Overturn any “no bike/walk” policies
- Add safety of walkers/bikers into school transportation policies
- Ensure that PE curriculum district-wide teaches kids how to safely walk and bike

Make infrastructure improvements that benefit kids and residents:

- Lay groundwork for future improvements with strong plans (school travel plans, bike/ped master plans, general plans)
- Require developers to include sidewalks, crosswalks and bike lanes as part of developments
- Pass complete streets policies/ordinances
- Dedicate city/county funds to make safety improvements at schools
HIGH-IMPACT POLICY CHANGE

Implement policies that will improve safety

- Reduce traffic speeds in school zones
- Increase fines in school zones, and use proceeds to create a stable funding stream for SRTS
- Create a policy that law enforcement and traffic safety staff regularly monitor incidents around schools to assess risks
- Ensure that law enforcement policy includes patrol of school areas

Ensure schools and local governments coordinate on land use, housing and school locations

- Set school siting policies that locate community-centered schools near kids they serve
- Renovate neighborhood schools instead of building a new school on the outskirts of the community
- Provide community access to school grounds (joint use) to increase physical activity and connections to the community
Safe Routes to School should be an integral part of our transportation network – creating safe walking and bicycling paths benefits everyone in the community and ensures the health and safety of the most vulnerable residents.

Getting buy-in from school officials and transportation departments is key – they are likely already thinking about Safe Routes to School but they need advocates to push them to elevate it as a priority!!
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