

Minneapolis Safe Routes to School



Helping Minneapolis youth be lean & green



**Safe Routes Strategic Plan
City of Minneapolis
Minneapolis Public Schools**

Executive Summary

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national initiative under way in both the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). It provides strategic planning, funding, and other support to increase opportunities for students to walk and bicycle to school.

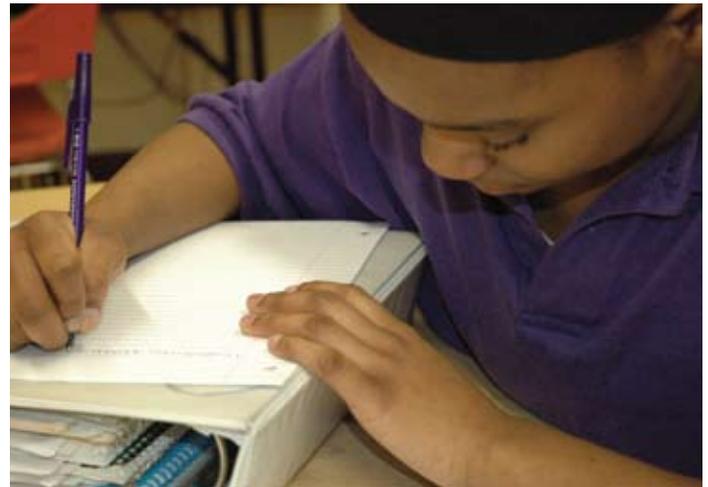
SRTS is part of an international movement to support, promote and fund walking and bicycling to school. It grew primarily out of concerns about increasing rates of childhood obesity and the need to create opportunities for children to be physically active each day. On a local level, SRTS benefits are tangible; programs operating around the country point to these additional benefits:

- Improved academic achievement and student attendance¹
- Stronger communities and more active parent involvement
- Safer neighborhoods and healthier families
- Fewer parents driving and less traffic congestion around schools
- Reduced school transportation costs

When SRTS is well understood, it receives enthusiastic support. It is seen as a high quality program with long-term goals. It has high standards for rigorous planning, collaboration and evaluation. And it requires investment and staffing for success. It is not a volunteer program.

SRTS could help “brand” Minneapolis schools as community centers and social anchors across the city. It also:

- aligns with MPS strategic goals
- collaborates with the City
- leverages opportunities and funding
- re-establishes community relationships
- improves safety



Students who are more physically active tend to perform better academically.



Why Safe Routes matters in Minneapolis

SRTS fits with strategic goals for schools and the city
Students are already walking and biking to school
There is potential for many more students to do so
Healthier students are ready to learn
Attendance could improve

Major Recommendations

The SRTS Task Force sees short- and long-term opportunities to create an efficient, sustainable, safe and healthy way for children to travel to school. SRTS encourages equity in funding and safety training for all children, whether they bus, bike or walk to school. The plan will succeed when these three goals are met. Under each goal are specific recommendations that are discussed in detail in the report.

1. Biking and walking are safe modes of transportation, as safe as busing or driving to school. To reach this goal, SRTS must:

- Address crime and perceptions of danger
- Address traffic concerns
- Build community through walking and biking
- Revise state laws to improve safety

2. SRTS is integrated into messaging, policy and initiatives in both the City of Minneapolis and MPS. To reach this goal, SRTS must:

- Promote walking and biking as good for the community and for learning
- Provide incentives for students who walk and bike to school
- Embrace sustainability in that the current system of driving school buses 35,000 miles per day within the city of Minneapolis cannot be sustained, either from an environmental or budget perspective. By having children walk just five to ten minutes to a bus stop (or up to four long blocks), the district could save \$2 million to \$4 million per year.²

3. SRTS has adequate staff and resources within both the City and MPS to influence policy, support schools, facilitate community involvement, and advocate for additional funding. To reach this goal, SRTS must:

- Dedicate a full-time, shared SRTS position housed at MPS, but working closely with City staff
- Work through a citywide SRTS advisory committee
- Support training for SRTS champions at local schools
- Expand school transportation coordinators' duties to include biking and walking responsibilities



Safe Routes to School

- Improve walking and bicycling conditions
- Where it is safe, get children biking and walking
- Where it is not safe, make changes
- Increase physical activity
- Decrease air pollution

History and Reality

Decades of school choice have had unintended consequences. Busing is expensive and often inefficient because so many buses are sent into each neighborhood to carry students to all the options: community, magnet, inter-district, non-public and charter schools. Generally, students are asked to walk only one quarter mile to their bus stop, resulting in frequent bus stops and higher transportation costs.

Parents who don't want their children to take the bus often drive them to school, creating more congestion and air pollution. This widespread dependence on busing and driving has created an environment that says walking and biking are not possible or supported.

Many MPS students are already walking and biking to school. An average of 18 percent of MPS students live within the MPS defined "walk zone" – that is within a distance considered easily walkable. For example, at Nellie Stone Johnson in north Minneapolis, 19 percent of students live within the walk zone. However, according to the school's principal, almost one-half of all the students were walking to school during the fall of 2007. At Bancroft in south Minneapolis, 24 percent of students live within the walk zone. At Armatage school in southwest Minneapolis, 21 percent live within the walk zone.³

In addition, 48 percent of students in grades 7 through 12 live within a 20-minute bike ride of their current school. The schools with the highest number of bicyclists are South High, Lake Harriet upper campus, and Anthony Middle School. Participation in bicycling usually increases with new bike racks. At South High, for example, the number of cyclists went from 30 per day to 150 per day when new racks were installed and students were taught how to properly lock their bikes.

The needs of children who walk or bike to school could be better served by the district and the City of Minneapolis. There is great opportunity to provide support in safety, route selection, skills training and supervision. Because the school patrol monitors only the perimeter of the school, children who walk or bike from home would benefit from more safety support on their trip to the school zone.



What are walk zones?

Walk zones are within four long blocks for elementary students unless they have to cross busy streets. Walk zones are within one mile for middle school and one to two miles for high schools. Potential bike zones are within a 20-minute ride for seventh-graders to 12th-graders.

The Opportunity for National Leadership

With this plan, Minneapolis and MPS become the first collaboration of a large city and school district in the nation. This could lead to greater influence in promoting funding priorities at the state and federal level. A successful partnership would also position Minneapolis as a leader in the growing movement to increase non-motorized transportation. This partnership has several “first” opportunities, including:

- First large city-school district collaboration
- First partnership between a city and school district to develop consistent SRTS messages for city residents and families
- First plan to study how school choice and transportation policies influence SRTS
- First partnership that could evaluate the barriers to walking and biking to school for low-income and minority students

In other cities, SRTS is run by nonprofits with limited access to experts in the school district. The Minneapolis plan, however, uses current MPS data and staff perspectives to make recommendations. This plan also examines many policy-level issues that are critical to success, including hazard elimination busing (which transports students across busy streets), school choice, parent engagement, and efficiencies in busing.

In addition, few cities and school districts are working together to consider how to address low-income students’ mobility and safety in urban areas. This is a priority funding area for the national SRTS program. Advisors to the funding process see a lack of investment in this area.⁴ This collaboration provides opportunities to position the City and MPS for additional funding from the national SRTS program.

This is an ideal time for MPS and the City to collaborate and create new partnerships and opportunities for funding. Both are in a position to build a SRTS program unlike any other in the country. This is a result of three factors:

1. In Minneapolis: a new \$25 million investment in bicycling and walking improvements
2. In MPS: completion of the SRTS plan and five demonstration projects in schools
3. In Minnesota: an investment in a 2008 market research and public relations campaign to promote SRTS in Minneapolis and three other communities

Support from Minneapolis

Minneapolis has been a leader for decades in integrating biking and walking into city living. In just the past few years, the City has invested new grant dollars in improvements to help build a SRTS program. This includes upgrading infrastructure safety around schools and new bicycle parking.

As a result of this long history, Minneapolis was chosen as one of only four entities nationwide to receive \$25 million in new federal grants to increase the number of trips by walking and bicycling. The Non-motorized Transportation Project (NTP) puts Minneapolis at the forefront of a national campaign to make it easier and safer for people of all ages to travel by bicycling and walking. With these funds and strong leadership from the Mayor, City Council, and the Department of Public Works, Minneapolis is integrating the needs of young people and schools in its planning for new bike routes and pedestrian improvements. Plus, it is investing in safety training and education, for both the community and the schools. As a result of both the NTP and SRTS initiatives, Minneapolis is viewed as a national model for innovative ways to integrate biking and walking into schools and the community.

Support from MPS

District staff, principals and parents have participated in the SRTS initiative. They have provided expertise, data, recommendations and guidance throughout the six-month planning process. In addition, the SRTS process has operated in the same timeframe as the district's strategic plan, making it possible to integrate SRTS elements into the district's new vision.

The SRTS plan will evolve with five MPS schools that are implementing bike/walk safety curriculum in the fall of 2008. They are Nellie Stone Johnson, Lucy Laney, Hale, Hiawatha and Bancroft. They were selected based on safety concerns and interest from the school staff and community. Each school will receive new traffic signals, more visible crosswalk treatments and new bike parking from the City.

Support from Mn/DOT

Based on the work done by the SRTS Task Force, Minneapolis is one of three communities selected to benefit from a \$167,000 grant to do market research and public relations to launch SRTS. Research began during winter 2007 and launched spring 2008. Funding is provided by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) to ASI Communications. Northside schools have been selected for research, implementation and evaluation.



Who is investing in safer walking and biking?

City of Minneapolis

- \$6 million: bike lanes and sidewalks
- \$200,000: bike racks
- \$198,000: safety upgrades at six schools
- \$900,000: bike/walk ambassadors program
- \$20,000 in Safe Routes micro grants to school
- Funding for half time Safe Routes Coordinator

Minnesota

- \$614 million federal funds for nationwide program
- \$8 million in federal funds to Minnesota

Minneapolis Public Schools

- \$10,000 in five schools
- Safety curriculum
- Healthy Travelers survey
- School patrol
- Staff support

The Process

The process to create a SRTS plan builds on the success and experience of thousands of advocates, public agencies and schools in other cities, states and countries. With new federal and private funding, the program is gaining attention and momentum.

The Minneapolis initiative is led by the Department of Health and Family Support in partnership with Steps to a Healthier Minneapolis. A consultant was hired in April 2007 to create a Task Force to write a strategic plan. The goals were to:

- Build a collaborative City/MPS program
- Produce a model education and outreach plan
- Position the City and MPS as strong candidates for funding

Background

Participants in the SRTS Task Force include City and MPS staff, parents, principals and members of advisory boards from both MPS and the City. A full list of members is in Appendix 2. Based on SRTS successes in other states, the Task Force focused on policy and system-wide changes. For example, although infrastructure improvements are often necessary, the Task Force found that encouragement, incentives, events and consistent policies are also needed to build success.

The Task Force also reviewed the most successful SRTS programs across the U.S. These grew out of community activism and then evolved to include larger institutions, such as city, county and state departments of transportation and public works and school districts. Successful programs are designed at the local level with support, staff and funding from a larger institution. The toolbox in Appendix 3 is provided to guide schools in this process.

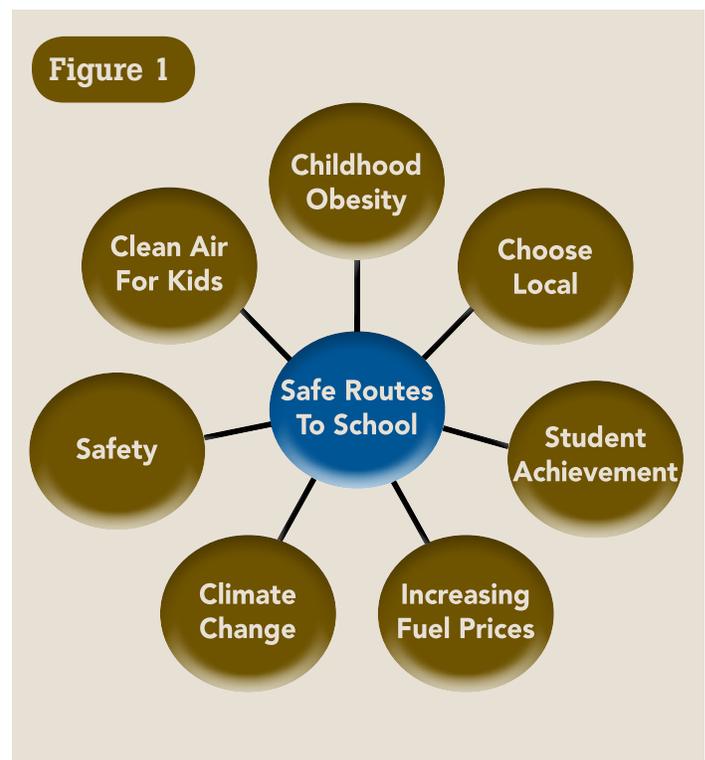
Between July and November 2007, the Task Force covered four major topics:

- MPS transportation policies and school choice
- Crime and traffic safety
- Environment, air quality and livability
- Curriculum, skills building and models of success

The Task Force developed four themes when making its recommendations:

1. Connecting strong schools to vibrant neighborhoods
2. Building children's health, wellness, and school performance
3. Embracing sustainability
4. Viewing transportation options as an opportunity

Figure 1 shows the many related trends that influence SRTS.



What do Parents Think?

Throughout this process, Task Force participants understood the need to address parent's concerns about letting their children walk and bike to school. A parents' image of a Safe Routes program

is often quite different than what a well organized program could provide. The images here deal with common perceptions versus the reality of a safe, well managed program.



Poor street design and infrequent usage influence how safe people feel when they bike and walk.



Well designed bike parking reduces theft and increases the number of kids who bike to school.



Children won't wait or walk on their own.



Children have walked to school in Minnesota for years. In fact, the school patrol was started in Minnesota.



They will be with an organized group.



Children usually enjoy being outside, even in winter. Plus, children walking to school will be no colder than children waiting for a bus.

Conclusion

Now is the right time for SRTS. Forty years ago, the vast majority of children walked to school. In 1969, more than 50 percent of students walked to school.⁵ Children were leaner and healthier. Schools had strong community support and were the anchors of the neighborhood. Children grew up assuming they would continue in school with the same friends they started with. Kids looked out for each other. Parents watched their neighbor's children. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children in grades K-8 walk or bike to school and nearly 50 percent of school-aged children are regularly driven to school by their parents.⁶ SRTS is a valuable tool to reintroduce common practices from the past that fit the needs of today.



Safe Routes to School: Helping Minneapolis youth be lean and green. The consensus on the Task Force is that choosing schools far from home and widespread busing and parent driving are not sustainable, either from a budget or an environmental perspective. The SRTS committee has addressed how community concerns about air quality, childhood obesity, safety, and the desire to “choose local” have the potential to create a strong customer base, reestablish neighborhood schools as anchors of a community’s social network, and save the district money. It could also reduce truancy caused by a lack of transportation by providing more options for children to get to school. To these ends, a well-established Safe Routes to School program will be an asset to the Minneapolis Public Schools, to the city, and to neighborhoods. By implementing the SRTS recommendations, the City and the district will be prepared to respond to changes into the next several decades.



Safe Routes to School Full Report

This SRTS plan acknowledges that students are already walking and biking to school and that there is potential for many more to do so. It accepts the data showing that healthier students are ready to learn and that with more children attending closer schools, attendance could improve. By embracing SRTS, MPS could both fulfill its strategic goals and save money.

In writing this plan, the SRTS Task Force was realistic about the diversity in income, race and nationality found in both the City and MPS. It looked for common themes to build on the successes of programs in extremely diverse areas, such as the Bronx; Chicago; East Cleveland; Saint Paul and Marin County, California. Programs range from neighborhood-based efforts started in the mid-1990s to new, broad-based programs run by state agencies.

The Task Force used four themes when making its recommendations:

1. Connecting strong schools to vibrant neighborhoods
2. Building children's health, wellness and school performance
3. Embracing sustainability
4. Viewing transportation options as an opportunity

1. Connecting strong schools to vibrant neighborhoods

The best way to achieve this goal is to enhance every family's ability to choose a school close to home. Survey data from the MPS strategic planning process shows that the number 2 reason any family stays at MPS is because its school is near home.⁷ Parents and teachers spoke strongly about this issue through the SRTS process. To build enthusiasm for community schools, these advisors suggest that the district:

- Support and fund educational innovation at neighborhood schools
- Involve local businesses in helping to build community around nearby schools

SRTS builds connections between school and community. Families with children in a nearby school can more easily participate in school functions and after-school activities. They are more likely to build a network of supporters to help their children walk and bike to school. SRTS could even help the transition from school to home, creating more supervision on the street and reducing crime and truancy.



Successful SRTS programs are designed at the local level and build connections between school and community.

2. Building children's health, wellness, and school performance

This topic has three parts:

- Reduce asthma in MPS students
- Get kids moving to reduce risks of childhood obesity
- Integrate SRTS into initiatives that support healthy, active students

Childhood health and wellness are of concern to both the district and the city. Asthma rates are relatively high and obesity rates are climbing. Both the city, through its Sustainability Plan, and MPS through its Wellness Plan, have examined these issues and set goals for improvements. SRTS aligns with both of these efforts, along with national campaigns to increase physical activity. The seriousness of this problem is clear. The American Health Association has listed lack of physical activity as the fourth major risk factor associated with chronic disease.⁸

Reduce asthma in MPS students

MPS serves many children who have asthma, and school staff members say they can track weather events that trigger asthma by the poor attendance on those days.

- 12.5 percent of MPS students have asthma (Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, 2005-2006 School Year)
- Asthma is the leading serious chronic illness among children in the United States and among the top 10 emergency department diagnoses for children in the Twin Cities (Source: Minnesota Department of Health, 2004)
- Urban children living in poverty have more exposure to asthma triggers⁹



There are clear links between childhood asthma and particulate pollution, which is emitted by diesel buses and to a smaller degree, by cars. For example, during the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, the city banned single-car use downtown. The result of the ban:¹⁰

- Morning traffic was down 23 percent
- Peak ozone was down 28 percent
- Asthma-related events for kids were down 42 percent

Improving air quality and health is also the impetus behind the 2008 City of Minneapolis anti-idling ordinance which limits most vehicle idling to three minutes, except in traffic.

Climate change also brings higher pollution levels, with greater incidents of cardio-respiratory diseases.¹¹ Parents driving their children to school create a large amount of this pollution since 25 percent of morning traffic is linked to parents driving their kids to school.¹² The SRTS Task Force recommends using this health message to reduce parent driving, increase busing efficiency and encourage more biking and walking.

Get kids moving to reduce risks of childhood obesity

Obese means being at least 30 percent overweight for one's height. Obesity in both adults and children has increased dramatically in the past 20 years. In Minnesota, the prevalence of overall obesity has increased 142 percent since 1990.¹³ And the prevalence of overweight children and adolescents almost doubled between 1976 and 1994. Up to 13 percent of children and up to 27 percent of adults are obese.¹⁴

Overweight children have an increased risk of:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Low self-esteem
- Decreased physical functioning
- Obesity in adulthood¹⁵

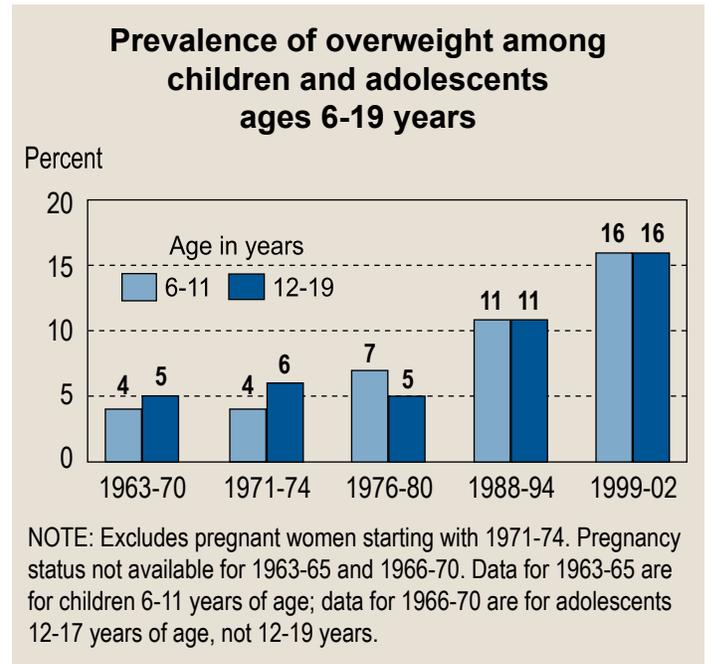
SRTS is a tool to make students healthier and more alert. The opportunity to influence lifelong behaviors is greatest during the ages of 8 to 14.¹⁶ Increasing walking and biking as part of daily life can help reduce obesity and instill lifelong, healthier habits.¹⁷ In fact, many public health experts say that regular walking and bicycling are the only realistic ways that the population as a whole can get the daily minimum amount of exercise needed to keep fit.¹⁸

Integrate SRTS into existing initiatives that support healthy, active students

The school district has a strong Wellness Plan that addresses the need for students to be more active and to eat healthier. Although it was not included when the plan was written, SRTS is a natural fit and could easily be integrated into the plan. The Healthy Travelers Committee, made up of MPS staff, is studying how to accomplish this.

The Healthy Travelers Committee will have survey results in 2008 summarizing the attitudes of parents, teachers and students about biking and walking to school. Results from the survey will inform the creation and maintenance of an effective SRTS program throughout the district.

These links to the MPS Wellness Plan are important. Messaging and opportunities in transportation, communications and family engagement should also be part of this effort.



3. Embracing sustainability

Concerns about air quality, climate change and sustainability are widespread in Minneapolis and throughout the U.S. These issues are changing expectations and creating a new understanding of limits. For example, the current system of driving school buses 35,000 miles per day within the City of Minneapolis cannot be sustained, either from an environmental or budget perspective.

The increasing cost of fuel, which is projected to climb dramatically over the next five years, will increase MPS costs and influence how students move within the district. New state laws to reduce emissions will influence transportation costs and policies. The state's Next Generation Energy Act of 2007 includes aggressive goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This law will certainly affect MPS busing costs and policies. The law's CO2 emission reduction goals are:

- 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2015
- 30 percent by 2025
- 80 percent by 2050

Transportation fleets will likely be asked to meet these reductions. Green technology is one answer, but it is expensive to retrofit buses and there are limited funds to meet this need. Less expensive solutions include: encouraging choosing a school close to home, making school busing more efficient by reducing stops, and letting children walk farther. By having children walk just five to ten more minutes to a bus stop (or up to four long blocks), the district could save \$2 million to \$4 million per year.

4. Viewing new transportation options as an opportunity

From interviews with staff and parents and presentations at area parent councils, it is clear that the community is paying attention to these concerns; childhood health, climate change, increasing fuel costs, and poor air quality. Reframing the way MPS talks about transportation offers the district a chance to educate its community and talk about new positive and healthy opportunities. Here are some ways to look at today's opportunities:

Be ready for success.

Yesterday: Biking and walking are not safe. Put kids in a vehicle.

Today: Make it safe. Get them outside and active.

Be prepared for big changes.

Yesterday: School choice shaped transportation needs.

Today: Community and environmental priorities help shape school choice.

Be transparent about costs.

Yesterday: Parents didn't see the costs of school choice and transportation.

Today: Parents want to understand the trade-offs and how transportation costs influence budgets for classrooms.

Embrace the seasons.

Yesterday: It is too cold to walk.

Today: Children have warm clothes and enjoy being outside in winter.



Playing outside in winter is a Minnesota tradition.

Major Recommendations

1. SRTS is safe transportation, as safe as busing or driving to school.
2. SRTS is integrated into messaging, policy and initiatives in both the City of Minneapolis and MPS.
3. SRTS has adequate staff and resources within both the City and MPS to influence policy, support schools, facilitate community involvement and advocate for additional funding.

This section's recommendations are based on topics covered in Task Force meetings. Because so many of these issues overlap and interconnect, some topics are combined into broader areas.

Recommendation 1. SRTS is safe transportation, as safe as busing or driving to school.

This recommendation has seven parts:

- Make it safe: address crime and perceptions of danger
- Provide perspectives on risk
- Design for safety
- Create the routes and make them visible
- Boost police presence and enforcement
- Address bullying
- Partner with programs at city parks

Make it safe: address crime and perceptions of danger

Crime, both real and perceived, is a challenge to SRTS in some areas of Minneapolis. As a result, the Task Force put more emphasis on this topic than any other. National surveys show that crime is less of a factor to parents than distance and dangers from traffic (see figure 1).¹⁹ That is not to say that Safe Routes organizers, when working with community, police, and schools, should minimize or ignore real safety concerns. Major challenges exist in many areas of the city, and addressing them through a

Figure 1 The most common barriers to walking and biking to school:

Long distances 62%

Traffic danger 30%

Weather 19%

Fear of crime 12%

Sum is more than 100% since more than one factor listed as a barrier

transparent process will lead to greater chances of collaboration and success. In the end, the most challenging communities may also have the greatest motivation to build and maintain successful Safe Routes programs.

SRTS has a long history in some of the country's most urban environments. The best documented program has operated since 1997 in the Bronx in New York City where 80 percent of children walk to school. It is a terrific model of success, showing how improving safety for kids improves it for everyone. The Bronx SRTS program was started by an advocacy organization, Transportation Alternatives. Its goal was to reduce traffic crashes involving children. It was the first SRTS program in the nation and has since expanded to include safe routes for senior citizens. In 2001, New York City's Department of Transportation took it over and allocated \$2.5 million per year to fund improvements at all schools in all parts of the city. (www.transalt.org/press/magazine/042Spring/10timeline.html)

Perceptions of crime are almost always worse than the realities of crime, according to Minneapolis Police Department representatives on the SRTS Task Force. They told the committee that using only crime statistics to educate the public on crime is ineffective because it fails to provide a context for risk and/or who is most affected by the crimes.

They also stressed that media coverage offers a skewed perspective of risk and often creates more fear than is justified by events. This perspective may also reduce a community's sense of optimism as residents strive to create a safer neighborhood.

The challenge for SRTS organizers is to acknowledge both perceptions and realities. The police advise more effort to:

- build community
- get more people out on the street
- focus less on crime statistics and more about positive efforts

Provide perspectives on risk

Perceptions about safety are based on what people hear from their neighbors and school staff, plus what they see in the media. Greater effort to share the successes and positive improvements in Minneapolis and the schools would build confidence in both. "I am always asked about crime at Lucy Laney school," says Jackie Starr, a parent and MPS outreach worker. "Parent assumptions are based on what they hear. So, let's tell them about all the positive things going on in our community. And let's make that good news message twice as loud as the small number of bad news things that happen."

SRTS is an appropriate tool to discuss the most effective ways to keep children safe, to build trust, engage the community and address the greatest risks to children. The SRTS Task Force advocates for well-organized programs that include a trusted adult leader. This program can bring families together with police and others to provide perspectives on risk. Building community will do more to keep children safe than focusing attention on unlikely events. This has been a strong message from the police on the SRTS Task Force, and this approach is supported by the data on childhood risks.



McGruff, the Crime Fighting Dog and McGruff safe houses in neighborhoods are good partners for successful Safe Routes programs.

City and MPS should:

- Provide perspective when crimes or accidents occur.
- Tell positive stories about community and safe streets.
- Use community policing strategies to promote SRTS through block clubs, National Night Out, McGruff safe houses and citizen patrols.
- Continuously commit to and promote safety initiatives.

Design for safety

Urban design is critical to safety and perceptions of safety. Reducing crime must be tied to redesign of communities, specifically, increasing windows on the street, enhancing safe public spaces, adding more way-finding signs and creating a culture of community in neighborhoods.²⁰ In addition, creating attractive walking areas with amenities, such as clean sidewalks, trees, public art, benches and water fountains, is linked to a willingness among urban residents to be more active.²¹



Reducing crime must be tied to redesign of communities by:

- increasing windows on the street
- enhancing safe public spaces
- adding more way-finding signs
- creating a culture of community

Create and mark the routes

This is a joint process between schools, neighbors and the City to choose the routes that work best for safety and supervision. The routes can be made colorful and visual with banners, street markings or signage. One innovative idea is to paint the pavement to build community, reduce traffic speeds and build enthusiasm about SRTS. Families and neighbors work together to design and paint an intersection. It helps make the routes highly visible and encourages people to have an “all eyes on the route” attitude. As a result, everyone knows where the routes are and where to watch for children. This project was done at two intersections in Saint Paul as a way to slow traffic. www.paintthepavement.org

Boost safety, police presence and enforcement on routes

Police in the SRTS Task Force suggest driving the routes when they are on patrol. Because the routes will be well-marked and obvious, it will be easy for police and school security staff to determine appropriate routes as they drive around the city. Increasing the number of children on those routes will make it easier to keep track of and supervise them. A visible police presence teamed with strong community engagement remains the anchor of a vibrant SRTS program.



Bicycle patrols are one way to build mentoring relationships between youth and police officers.

Reduce bullying

Teachers, principals and parents have all commented that bullying on the bus can be a persistent problem that stresses kids and can affect their behavior at school. The bus driver cannot drive and supervise at the same time. In contrast, the SRTS plan provides adult supervision when needed. It also encourages groups of kids to walk or bike together and facilitates partnerships with community agencies. These criteria, combined with a partnership between the “Youth Are Here” youth activity circulator bus and the Youth Violence Prevention Initiative will help make walking and biking to school safer for all children.

Partner with programs in city parks

Creating more connections between schools and parks may encourage more parents to use parks for walking and engaging in community activities. There is a perception that crime occurs in parks, but City data shows that only 3 percent of citywide crime happens in city parks.²² The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is working on ways to improve the park environment to encourage more adults to use parks in the evening. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is also discussing its own safe routes plan to make it easier for children to access its services.

Make it safe: address traffic concerns

According to national surveys, traffic is the number one concern parents have about their children walking and biking to school.²³ One of the best ways to improve safety is to get more people outside biking and walking. In communities where more people bike and walk, fewer collisions occur with motorists than in communities with less bikers and walkers. Apparently, when there are more people



Adult supervision is essential for young children crossing busy streets.

biking and walking, drivers adjust their behaviors to be more cautious, making the environment safer for everyone.²⁴

Childhood pedestrian accidents are rare in Minneapolis, but parents’ perceptions are that most streets and crossings are dangerous. Parents who don’t walk or bike themselves are less likely to judge the danger of streets and crossings accurately. But parents who are enthusiastic about physical activity are more likely to see their children’s walk to school as safe.²⁵ Additionally, parents that walk or bike with their children, can teach them the skills needed to safely navigate the streets.

Current obstacles that SRTS can address:

- Many schools are located on very busy streets, which do require extra attention and help to keep students safe.
- Parents driving their kids to school are a large percentage of the traffic.
- Special safety accommodations must be made for children when they walk.

Children younger than fifth-grade need constant supervision. They are vulnerable because:

- Their smaller size makes them difficult for drivers to see, especially if they are standing between parked cars on the side of the road.
- Young children are often unable to judge distances and vehicle speeds accurately, so they can easily misjudge whether it is safe to cross a street.
- Many younger children don't understand traffic signals or how to anticipate a driver's actions.
- Drivers and child pedestrians each assume (incorrectly) that the other will yield the right-of-way.

These issues can be resolved with a combination of safety training, greater awareness of children in the area, improved infrastructure, stronger enforcement of speed limits, and adult supervision of young children.

SRTS Recommendations

This section provides recommendations on how to make it easier and more appealing for parents and their children to walk and bike more often.

- Make visible changes and promote them
- Improve safety with more supervision, training and parent involvement
- Build community through walking and biking
- Revise state laws to improve safety

Make it safe: Make visible changes and promote them.

Installing innovative traffic controls, such as delayed left turn signals that give pedestrians the right of way at busy stop lights, could improve pedestrian safety. The city is installing these on a limited basis around schools. A campaign informing parents and schools when these improvements are made will build confidence in SRTS.

Run pedestrian safety stings to improve compliance and awareness of crosswalk laws.

The data shows that 40 percent to 60 percent of the time, a driver fails to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk.²⁶ Stings combine enforcement with public education through coverage in the news media. The sting involves having pedestrians cross at key intersections with a police officer nearby ticketing drivers who do not stop at the crosswalk. Similar programs are in use around the country and receive enthusiastic support from both police and safety advocates.

Create car-free zones around schools.

At many schools, parents driving their children create the greatest safety hazards. Eliminating the option to drop children in the school zone reduces air pollution, improves safety and allows children to get more exercise. The toolbox section at the end of this document includes models for keeping cars farther from school, providing escorts from those locations, providing incentives to reduce driving and encouraging parents to choose the bus, biking, walking or carpooling.



Parent driving causes congestion and dangerous conditions for children. Car free zones are one solution.

Improve safety with more supervision, training and parent involvement

Expand the school patrol and provide adult leaders. The Minneapolis school patrol is provided by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. It has two staff members at-large, and most schools have coordinators. Patrol coordinators at schools are paid a small stipend. The Minneapolis school patrol provides support at the school perimeter. A SRTS program, linked to an expanded school patrol, could provide supervision by adults and older children along a designated route. Models in other cities, such as Saint Paul, provide a walking patrol all the way from children's homes to school. In other communities, Walking School Buses and Bike Trains are options – these involve trained adults or older children walking or biking with the students. These rely partly on volunteers but to be sustainable, they require stipends for coordinators.

Provide equal safety training. SRTS recommends MPS expand and provide safety education to students who bike and walk to school, just as it does for children who take the bus. Specifically, the Bus Safety Education and testing week for children who ride the bus could be expanded to include safety about biking and walking. There are many opportunities within MPS to integrate bike/walk safety into physical education, after-school programs and new City programs. In addition, several MPS teachers run innovative bicycling programs that, with adequate support, could be replicated at other schools. For example, the Lake Harriet Upper Campus, a school for third- to eighth-graders, includes a week-long physical education course that teaches rules of the road and bike-handling skills. About 20 percent of the student body bikes to school.



Build community through walking and biking

Encourage students to walk. Minor changes in transportation policies would allow more children to walk and bike to school, save money, improve safety and reduce air pollution. Busy streets create barriers for students because they have no supervision to cross these streets. Instead of running a bus across these streets, the district could pay adult crossing guards, increase the walk zone, reduce the number of bus stops and keep buses on-time. At a few schools that are surrounded by busy streets, extending the walk zone would reduce busing costs enough to pay for adult crossing guards.²⁷ MPS could also review its hazardous crossing standards, which designate crossings as hazardous at lower average traffic counts than similar cities use. This would allow for more flexibility in building a SRTS program.

Create community bus stops. These stops could be located at parks, libraries and other public spaces. They provide a central location where children meet and then walk the rest of the way together. Or, they are used by children walking to a central stop to catch their bus. Parents who can't walk their students all the way to school could link them up with older children or adults at these stops to finish the trip. These stops could be as simple as a sign or as elaborate as a creative shelter. Students at local art schools have expressed interest in helping to design these shelters which could build community and enthusiasm for SRTS. Community bus stops should also link to the existing stops for the "Youth Are Here" bus, which provides after-school busing for youth programs. See the toolbox in Appendix 4 for links to community bus stop ideas.



More than one-half of Americans say they would like to walk more throughout the day, either for exercise or to get places.²⁹



Community bus stops could reduce the number of bus stops and save \$2 million to \$4 million per year, just by having students walk up to four blocks to a bus stop. In one year at one school, this would also save 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 22,000 pounds of CO₂ emissions.²⁸

Partner with the Bike/Walk Ambassadors

Program. Many of the suggestions in this report could be part of this new City program. The three-year campaign will employ up to four year round ambassadors and youth intern ambassadors to help execute the SRTS program and other safety and educational initiatives about biking and walking throughout the city.

Revise state laws to improve safety

Make Safe Routes part of the school zone. This means fines for all offenses are higher in that area. Oregon has adopted a similar law which generates steady funding each year to support the SRTS program in Portland. This strategy was suggested by city police to encourage greater coverage and enforcement along routes.

Lower residential speed limits. Vehicle speed has a dramatic impact on the likelihood that a pedestrian will die in a crash. When a car is traveling at 20 mph, a pedestrian who is struck has a 95 percent chance of survival. When a car is traveling at 30 mph, a pedestrian has only a 60 percent chance of survival. Lower speed limits could make all neighborhoods safer and can improve parents' willingness to let their children walk or bike. There are numerous campaigns to drive 25 mph that include advocacy for improving safety among young drivers. <http://www.keepkidsalivedrive25.org/> Several cities in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area have supported this legislation the past two sessions. The City can also post lower speeds on streets with bike lanes per current state law. Speeds can be posted as low as 25 mph at the City's discretion.

Lobby for more public safety funds to support biking and walking. These federal funds are managed through the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, but funds go almost entirely to seat-belt and drunken-driving enforcement. Other states have used more than \$1 million in 402 Federal Safety funds for bike/walk education. Texas, for example, received a \$1.5 million grant to teach physical education teachers to teach bicycle safety. This is also an excellent model for teaching bicycle safety to children in schools. The program is called Supercyclists, Texas Bicycle Coalition, <http://www.biketexas.org/content/view/36/49/>

Recommendation 2. SRTS is integrated into messaging, policy and initiatives for both the City of Minneapolis and MPS.

Recommendations for City:

- Improve online access for young people
- Make bike routes more visible
- Launch citywide competitions to change behavior

Improve online access for information about bike/walk programs, especially for young people. A one-stop web site for biking and walking could combine information from the City and the schools into one site. It can provide online maps with recommended routes for getting around a neighborhood and to nearby schools. Fort Collins, CO, has this system on its city SRTS web site at <http://fcgov.com/saferoutes/index.php>. Parents in Minneapolis have suggested that each school have a site that allows for more local feedback and suggestions to improve routes and the SRTS program. The web site can also promote connections between SRTS, the Youth Are Here bus and other youth programming.

Make bike routes more visible. To encourage more bicycling, routes have to be easy to find and well promoted. Improving way-finding signage will show children and parents there are accessible routes for both bicycling and walking. Great models exist in other cities, particularly in Chicago, where signage includes mileage to destinations.

Create citywide competitions to change behavior. A strong SRTS partnership would help promote the city's impressive pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure to MPS staff and students. Competitions would effectively promote bicycling and walking options to both students and staff. Partners such as the Transportation Management Organizations could organize programs for staff at schools or even launch contests for schools in the Commuter Challenge, a metrowide program promoting walking and biking while decreasing single car use. More competitions can come from local school-linked programs such as Bike-On www.bike-on.com, which promotes more bicycling to school by sponsoring competitions between schools.

Recommendations for MPS

- Promote walking and biking as beneficial for the school, community and learning
- Show families the benefits of choosing local schools
- Embrace sustainability

Promote walking and biking as beneficial for the MPS community and good for learning and student attendance

When MPS promotes the benefits of walking and biking to school, over time more families will see these modes as an equal or preferred choice. The preference could be reinforced when the message is combined with encouraging families to consider a school close to home. Not all families will make this choice, but it could be offered as an option with benefits. These benefits include:

- Families with children in a nearby school can more easily participate in school functions and after-school activities.
- They are more likely to build a network of supporters to help their children get to school.
- Children who get exercise on the way to school have higher academic achievement.³⁰
- A well-supported SRTS program can help younger children depend less on family members to get to school especially when a parent or older sibling is ill.³¹
- Cleaner air will reduce the number of children who miss school because of asthma.³²



Show families the benefits of choosing local and joining SRTS

Give families “actual transportation cost” information so they know what their school location choice costs them and what their choice costs the school district. Depending on how far a student is bused, transportation costs for elementary students range from \$319 per student to \$1,127 per student. For middle school, the range is \$658 to \$1,752 and for high school the range is \$552 to \$824.³³

The school district might consider pooling some of the captured savings into an incentive fund for families that both choose their community school and let their children bike or walk to school. Families might use incentives toward after-school activities, sports or academic programs. Some community school principals on the Task Force suggested establishing college scholarship funds.

MPS fuel costs

- MPS buses travel 35,000 miles per day using 758,000 gallons of fuel per year
- 2007 fuel cost: \$2.1 million (\$2.83/gal)
- 2008 costs: \$3.4 million (estimated \$4.50/gal)³⁴

Embrace sustainability

Parents on the Task Force are concerned that the current system is not sustainable and that increasing fuel prices could influence funds for the classroom. The following strategies are drawn from successful sustainability campaigns in international businesses (www.bsr.org) and from input from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Office of Environmental Assistance.

- Make messages for change consistent and system-wide; encourage them from both the top and from the grassroots.
- Design entire "systems" rather than segmented programs.
- Understand the trend toward more locally-based lifestyles.
- Provide excellent customer service so families' options for safe transportation are addressed. Think differently about what they want; it may not be what they have wanted in the past.
- Offer incentives for new behaviors.



If all Americans walked 30 minutes a day instead of driving³⁵

Gallons of gas saved per year: 6.5 billion
Tons of CO₂ emissions cut per year: 64 million
Pounds of weight lost per year: 3 billion

Recommendation 3. SRTS has adequate staff and resources from both the City and MPS to influence policy, support schools, facilitate community involvement, evaluate programs and advocate for additional funding.

The City has been building a foundation for SRTS for years. With \$25 million in new federal bike/walk funds plus new funds for SRTS, now is the time to invest in getting more children walking and biking to school. The City is committing resources and staff time to this effort. The school district should commit as well. SRTS is the perfect platform for MPS to reach many of its goals, including rebuilding community engagement, improving safety and encouraging wellness.

MPS and the City have a chance to emulate the very best SRTS programs. For success, this plan recommends following models in which the two partners work together to:

- Dedicate a full-time shared SRTS position between MPS and the City
- Collaborate on a citywide SRTS committee
- Support training for SRTS champions at the local school level
- Expand school transportation coordinators' duties to include bus, bike and walk responsibilities

The Michigan statewide SRTS model is an excellent one to emulate, and it won the James L. Oberstar award for innovation at the SRTS national conference in November 2007.

The Michigan SRTS Program is based in the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and provides services statewide. It demonstrates a number of key program elements that allowed them to lay the groundwork for effective program development.

MDOT first developed a SRTS Handbook, providing tools and guidance to schools planning SRTS strategies. MDOT is also creating a number of specialized educational modules for specific program participants such as urban and disabled children, who may face special challenges surrounding walking and bicycling to school. Recognizing the need for program support, MDOT also established training and technical assistance programs for schools completing the planning process.

Jackson, MI provides an example of a successful city and school district partnership. Jackson is a community of 20,000 with eight elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. They have a city-district Task Force and teams working at each school. After almost three years of work, their results reflect national data that shows:

- Students prefer to walk and bike to school
- Before SRTS, parents consider routes unsafe
- If routes were improved, 60 percent to 90 percent of parents would permit their children to walk or bike.

The schools have seen an increase in walking and biking since 2004. At one school, rates doubled, from 15 percent walkers to 30 percent walkers. The long-term goal is creating a new generation of young people who embrace alternatives to the car for meeting daily transportation needs.



SRTS is the perfect platform for MPS to reach many of its goals, including rebuilding community engagement, improving safety and encouraging wellness.

Conclusion

Now is the right time for SRTS. Forty years ago, the vast majority of children walked to school. In 1969, more than 50 percent of students walked to school. Children were leaner and healthier. Schools had strong community support and were the anchors of the neighborhood. Children grew up assuming they would continue in school with the same friends they started with. Kids looked out for each other. Parents watched their neighbor's children. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children in grades K-8 walk or bike to school and nearly 50 percent of school-aged children are regularly driven to school by their parents. SRTS is a valuable tool to reintroduce common practices from the past that fit the needs of today.

Safe Routes to School: Helping Minneapolis youth be lean and green. The consensus on the Task Force is that choosing schools far from home and widespread busing and parent driving are not sustainable, either from a budget or an environmental perspective. The SRTS committee has addressed how community concerns about air quality, childhood obesity, safety, and the desire to “choose local” have the potential to create a strong customer base, reestablish neighborhood schools as anchors of a community's social network, and save the district money. It could also reduce truancy caused by a lack of transportation by providing more options for children to get to school. To these ends, a well-established Safe Routes to School program will be an asset to the Minneapolis Public Schools, to the city, and to neighborhoods. By implementing the three SRTS recommendations, the City and the district will be prepared to respond to changes into the next several decades.

About the author:

Alice Tibbetts is a strategic planning and communications consultant. She organized the first SRTS program in the Midwest in 2000 in Saint Paul. She has worked with elected officials at the local, state and national levels on SRTS and active living campaigns, and she has advised agencies and elected officials locally and nationally on these issues. She also directed a communications program promoting science and policy research for 15 years at the University of Minnesota. She spent three years as owner of a nationally known personal safety training business in the Twin Cities. She is the parent of two boys who attended private, public and charter schools. They walked during six of their 12 years in school.



Appendices:

1. SRTS Task Force advisors and participants
2. Elements of a successful Safe Routes to School program
3. SRTS Tool Box for local schools and district wide training
4. The Safe Routes to School quiz

Endnotes

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Safe Routes logo by Ken Avidor, Avidor Studio, Minneapolis

Photos and graphs from: [Walkable Communities.org](http://WalkableCommunities.org); Minneapolis Public School District (Hale and Pratt Schools), Flickr.com, and the National Safe Routes Partnership; www.pedbikeimages.org/danburden

Appendix 1

Advisors and Participants, Safe Routes to School Task Force

Executive Committee

City of Minneapolis

Patty Bowler, Director, Policy and Community Programs, Department of Health and Family Support

Minneapolis Public School District

Julie Danzl, Coordinator, STEPS to a Healthier Minneapolis

Melanie Sanco, Coordinator of Resource Development

Roy Hallanger, Transportation Analyst

Consultant

Alice Tibbetts

Minneapolis Public School District

Student support services, family and community engagement

Eleanor Coleman, Chief

Melanie Sanco, Coordinator of Resource Development

Julie Danzl, Coordinator, STEPS to a Healthier Minneapolis

Jackie Turner, Director, Student Placement Services

Martha Swanson, Interim Director, New Families Center

Transportation

Roy Hallanger, Transportation Analyst

Steve Crenshaw, Transportation Manager

Harry Bolkcom, Transportation Manager

Scott James, Deputy Director of Plant Operations and Transportation

Frank Zeman, Operations Administrator

Community Education

Jack Tamble, Director

Colleen Sanders, Program Assistant for Grants and Community Education

Parents, Community Liaisons and Outreach Staff

Mary Day, Area A

Jackie Starr, Area A

Kristin Berg Thompson, Area B

Parent councils, Areas A, B, and C

Peggy Clark, Area C

Principals

Rob Brancale, Hale Community School

Judi Golden, Bancroft Community School

Roz Robbins, Hiawatha Community School.

Mark Bonine, Nellie Stone Johnson Community School

Consultant

David Dudycha, Assistant to the Superintendent, retired

City of Minneapolis

Office of the Mayor

Claudia Fuentes, Policy Aide

Department of Health and Family Support

Gretchen Musicant, Commissioner

Patty Bowler, Director, Policy and Community Programs

Public Works

Shaun Murphy, NPT Project Coordinator

Jonette Kuhnau, Safe Routes Coordinator

Police

Wesley Ostlund, Lieutenant, Third Precinct

Shannon McDonough, Crime Prevention Specialist, Fourth Precinct, CCP/SAFE

Kevin Stoll, Special Operations Division

Don Greeley, Crime Prevention Specialist, Third Precinct, CCP/SAFE

City Coordinator's office

Gayle Prest, Sustainability Coordinator

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Park and Recreation Board

Lt. Linda Bergstrom, MPRB Police and School Patrol

Anthony Berryman, School Patrol Officer

Danny Kagol, Officer

Jennifer Ringold, City-Wide Planner

Other organizations

East Side Neighborhood Services, Sheila Biernat, Community organizer; Transit for Livable Communities,

Steve Clark, Walking and Bicycling Program Manager

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Phil Muessig, Coordinator, Sustainable Community Development

Adopt a Stop, Lois Lewis

Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization, Teresa Wernecke, Executive Director and

MacKenzie Turner, Program Specialist

Metro Commuter Services, Teresa Kane, Coordinator, School Pool

Committees that provided input

Minneapolis City Council, Health, Energy and Environment Committee

Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board

City of Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee

City of Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

STEPS to a Healthier Minneapolis Community Consortium

Appendix 2

Elements of a Successful Safe Routes to School Program

These insights are from three sources, the Michigan SRTS program, based in the Michigan Department of Transportation; the National SRTS Clearinghouse; and the National SRTS Partnership.

Change policies that give priority to busing over walking or biking. For example, busing students across busy streets instead of providing crossing guards tells parents that walking is dangerous. Providing institutional support for busing, but not for biking or walking, tells families that busing is the preferred way to get to school.

View biking and walking as transportation. Fund it and support it as transportation. Pay staff and volunteers at the local school level. Make it part of someone's job. Allow bicycling to school for all students with parent supervision or permission.

Provide training, funding and support to SRTS advocates, whether they are parents, teachers or staff.

Encouragement, incentives, events and public relations can be low-cost and very effective. They must change often to stay exciting and compelling.

Infrastructure improvements are necessary. However, they are not sufficient to bring about long-term changes in lifestyle and transportation choices. They must be combined with encouragement campaigns.

Evaluation is critical, both to justify funding needs and to learn what works.

Evidence of change will emerge slowly over an extended period. Sustained effort is more important than a silver bullet – the silver bullet doesn't exist!

Serving children in poverty is a national priority. Few SRTS programs serve these populations.

Appendix 3

Safe Routes to School Toolbox for Local Schools and District wide Training

This list of resources is for individual schools or community groups to build support for Safe Routes to School. Some of these initiatives are long-term and time-consuming. Others are short-term events or campaigns that can help build support for change. Most links are for younger children.

Take the quiz

This is a great tool to help people understand the potential benefits of SRTS is the Safe Routes quiz. See Appendix 4.

Build community

Before creating a program, it is important to build support for Safe Routes. The national SRTS guide site is the best place to start. It provides details on the first steps of building community, creating buy-in and then developing programs. It includes step-by-step guides on how to proceed, along with case studies of successful programs. It also provides ideas on small steps that can be taken to lead to longer-term changes. By reviewing the entire site, you can choose the strategies that work best for your school.

National SRTS guide/toolbox

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/>

Link to existing programs and curriculum

Look for other organizations that already have momentum and commitment to issues related to Safe Routes. Environmental clubs at school, faith communities and neighborhood advocates are great places to organize support. This site provides curriculum and materials to help link Safe Routes to environmental issues.

<http://www.saferoutestoschools.org/lessonplans.html>

Link Safe Routes to saving energy

The Energy Challenge is a Minnesota program that encourages action to reduce energy use. Teachers have used it as part of curriculum, schools compete against each other to reduce energy use, and students groups compete against each other.

<http://www.mnenergychallenge.org/challenge/about/>

The Nature Challenge is a similar program. It has more content about biking and walking and is shorter.

http://www.davidsuzuki.org/NatureChallenge/?utm_source=dsf&utm_medium=txtlink&utm_campaign=nc&utm_content=leftcolumn

Create the routes

For help with creating routes, safety concerns, and expanding your safety patrol, please contact the Minneapolis School District first. Roy Hallanger, MPS transportation analyst, 612-668-2334. See the link below for how to begin.

National SRTS guide/toolbox

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/>

http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/engineering/school_route_maps.cfm

For examples of child-friendly visuals of routes in other cities, see:

<http://www.ci.fort-collins.co.us/transportationplanning/pdf/SRTSpdf/bauder/bauderbike.pdf>

Create a seasonal campaign

Be Seen. Be Safe. Because children are less visible during daylight savings transitions, consider a campaign to offer safety items during these times.

http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/government_democracy/council/documents/news/press_releases/2007/october/151007b.htm

Do weekly, monthly or annual events

October is walk-to-school month. Many sites provide materials. This poster is ready to use.

http://www.cawalktoschool.com/files/2006/ltr_to_parents-eng.pdf

International Walk to School Day is held every year in early October. This site provides step-by-step advice on how to organize and promote an event. <http://www.walktoschool.org/>

Do a weekly "Walking and Wheeling Wednesdays." It is an easy way to get families excited about walking and bicycling to school. In some areas, this weekly event has increased walking and biking every day.

<http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/index.php?page=walkwheelwed>

Make winter walking warm. MPS and other organizations have supplies of warm clothes, hats, boots and mittens available for children in need. At MPS, contact the family engagement staff.

Other sources: www.polarisindustries.com/en-us/VRA/NewsEvents/Coats.htm and

Coats for Kids at the Salvation Army, <http://www.thesalarmy.org/serv/coatsforkids.htm>

Build in incentives and rewards

This site includes model incentive programs for students in K-8.

<http://www.saferoutestoschools.org/forms.html>

See this link for incentives to reduce dropping off kids at school.

http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/dropoff_pickup/student_drop-off_and_pick-up_tools.cfm

Run a Freiker bike program

Freiker, a performance-based nonprofit, encourages kids to ride their bikes to school by giving kids daily feedback and great prizes. The ridership numbers are automatically collected and transmitted to this site by a Freikometer. The Freikometer is one secret to success, and the other are prizes. Every kid can win an iPod. The combination gets more kids on their bikes to school, more of the time.

<http://www.freiker.org/site/wiki/Home>

Organize car pools

For families that need to drive and can't take the bus, Metro Commuter Services (MCS), a program of the Metropolitan Council, runs a ride-matching program specifically for schools. Parents can sign up for the School Pool by calling the MCS. This is a great way to get to know your school community and your neighbors. You can save time and reduce pollution by sharing rides. This Web site explains the program through a community that has used it for some time: <http://fcgov.com/saferoutes/schoolpool.php>

Divide the ride is a similar service, now available online
<https://www.dividetheride.com/Organizers/Login.aspx>

Develop messages

Understanding parents' concerns helps you design a program. These question-and-answer sites provide a good model. Links can be put on your school web site or feature links to community partners web sites. Messages should be positive and work for everyone, whether they bike, walk, bus or drive to school.

Creating posters and messages is time-consuming, but this site does it for you. It even has some content in other languages. <http://www.saferoutestoschools.org/forms.html>

Question-and-answer format shows parents options and provides answers that give a different perspective. The content on asking for help from neighbors and evaluating the time saved (or not saved) driving to school may be useful. <http://www.walktoschool.org.uk/parents-faq.php?show=6#6>

For older students

A range of programs for teens, from bike in the rain days to fashion shows.
<http://www.best.bc.ca/programsAndServices/index.html>

Push for reduced speed limits

"Keep Kids Alive Drive 25" is a national initiative for safer driving. The Minnesota Legislature is the venue for reducing speed limits.
<http://www.keepkidsalivedrive25.org/>

Design your own community bus stop

These can be as simple as a colorful post or as elaborate as a piece of art. Here are two examples of spots where kids could meet up for their walks or bike rides to school:

Stops as public art: http://www.the-bus-stops-here.org/transit_art.html

Stops with metal, such as bike racks: <http://www.dero.com/custom.html>

Be part of a national SRTS movement:

Safe Routes to School National Partnership, a growing network of more than 300 organizations working to advance the Safe Routes to School national movement. <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>

Appendix 4

The Safe Routes to School Quiz



Yes! It is possible for kids to safely bike and walk to school.

Take the quiz and find out how.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national initiative under way in both the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). The goal is to create a more efficient, sustainable and safe way for children to travel to and from school.

Why talk about this now? Safe Routes goals align with goals of the new MPS strategic plan. Its benefits include: engaging families in a positive, healthy program; building community; and reducing costs.

The challenge: to move from assumptions to facts. This T/F quiz is a good start.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. It is possible to make biking and walking to school safe and fun. | T | F |
| 2. Children who get regular physical activity show gains in academic achievement. | T | F |
| 3. 20 percent of Minneapolis students live close enough to walk to school. | T | F |
| 4. Children who walk or bike to school currently get safety training, supervision and support equal to children who take the bus. | T | F |
| 5. Safe Routes to School builds community, engages families and improves safety. | T | F |
| 6. Safe Routes to School has been well-established and successful in core urban areas. | T | F |
| 7. Fear of crime is the smallest barrier parents identify with SRTS. Of greater concern are: distance, risks from traffic and bad weather. | T | F |
| 8. Parents understand the larger costs of driving school buses 35,000 miles per day. | T | F |
| 9. The more people bike and walk, the more drivers adjust their behavior, making communities safer for everyone. | T | F |
| 10. Parents driving their children to school comprise 25 percent of morning rush hour traffic and is a source of air pollution and congestion. | T | F |

To find out more about how your school can start a Safe Routes program: contact Roy Hallanger at Roy.Hallanger@mpls.k12.mn.us or 612-668-2334. The Safe Routes to School strategic plan will be available in April at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs

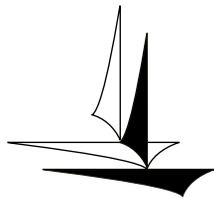
See next page for answers

Background: Creating a SRTS plan builds on the success and experience of thousands of advocates, public agencies and schools in other cities, states and countries. The Minneapolis initiative is led by the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support in partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools. The goals are to:

- Build a collaborative City/school program
- Produce a model education and outreach plan
- Position the City and schools as strong competitors for funding

Answers to the quiz

1. It is possible to make biking and walking to school safe and fun. **True.** Well-supported and well-organized SRTS programs are successful in communities in the United States, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand.
2. Children who get regular physical activity show gains in academic achievement. **True.** Numerous studies show this connection. (Physical education, physical activity, and academic performance, Active Living Research Brief, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Fall 2007. http://www.activelivingresearch.org/alr/alr/files/Active_Ed.pdf)
3. Twenty percent of Minneapolis public school students live close enough to walk to school. **True.** A walk zone is about 4 blocks or a 5 to 10 minute walk. A potential bike zone is about a 20-minute bike ride for students in grades 7-12.
4. Children who walk or bike to school currently get safety training, supervision and support equal to children who take the bus. **False.** Bus safety is integrated into school curriculum. Support and scheduling is funded by the district. There are many opportunities to provide similar training and support to children who walk and bike to school.
5. SRTS builds community, engages families and improves safety. **True.**
6. SRTS is well-established and successful in core urban areas. **True.** For example, the Bronx SRTS program in New York City was started in 1997 by the advocacy organization Transportation Alternatives. Its goal was to reduce traffic crashes involving children. It was the first SRTS program in the nation and has since expanded to include safe routes for senior citizens. It is a terrific model of success on how improving safety for kids in even the most challenging communities builds safety for everyone. www.transalt.org/press/magazine/042Spring/10timeline.html
7. Fear of crime is the smallest barrier parents identify in SRTS. Of greater concern are distance, risks from traffic and bad weather. **True,** according to both local and national surveys of parent attitudes. (Americans' attitudes toward creating better walking communities, April 2003, survey conducted for the Surface Transportation Policy Project and parent surveys, Saint Mark's school SRTS pilot project, Saint Paul, 2002))
8. Parents understand the larger costs of driving MPS school buses 35,000 miles every day. **False.** This information is not typically available. Transportation costs for elementary students range from \$319 to \$1,127 per student. By reducing the number of bus stops and letting children walk five more minutes to their stops, MPS could save \$2 million to \$4 million per year. And, in one year at one school, this change would save 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 222,000 pounds of CO2 emissions. (Roy Hallanger, MPS transportation analyst)
9. The more people bike and walk, the more drivers adjust their behavior, making communities safer for everyone. **True.** (P.L. Jacobsen, Safety in numbers, Injury Prevention 2003, 9:205-209. <http://www.tsc.berkeley.edu/newsletter/Spring04/JacobsenPaper.pdf>)
10. Parents driving their children to school comprises 25 percent of morning rush hour traffic and is a source of air pollution and congestion. **True.** Parent drivers also reduce pedestrian safety around schools.



City of Minneapolis
*Department of Health
and Family Support*

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs

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