

Developing a Safe Routes to School Plan

The creation of a SRTS plan is an important first step in developing a successful SRTS program. A SRTS plan details the methods your community and school intend to use to increase walking and bicycling to school and the actions required to make it safer to bicycle and walk to school.

A SRTS plan helps your community and school to set priorities and publicize findings to create community support. The plan also serves as a road map for the continued implementation of the program throughout administration changes and parent/student body turnover. A successful plan is based on the 5 E's of SRTS: Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement. A plan is required in order to be eligible for funds (Infrastructure and Non-Infrastructure) under the Georgia Safe Routes to School Program, and will enhance your application for any other funding proposals.

Step 1: SRTS Team and Community Involvement

Community involvement is an extremely important component of the SRTS Plan. More people being involved in the planning process, the more likely the community will support the SRTS program.

Form a SRTS Team.

The Team may include, but is not limited to:

Key SRTS Team Members

- Safe Routes to School Project Coordinator or committee chair
- School Principal
- Parents
- Representative from the Parent Teacher Association
- One to two members of the school staff
- School transportation coordinator
- Local transportation or traffic engineer
- Representative from local police department

Other Potential SRTS Team Members

- School Board Member
- Neighborhood association member
- Local bicycle and pedestrian club or advocate group representative
- County commissioner or City council representative
- Staff of local health department
- Representative from local planning department
- Representative from local business
- Students

- The SRTS Team should be consulted throughout the planning process. Members of the team will assist in retrieving data for the project managers, conducting walking and biking assessments, and developing goals, objectives, and recommendations.

Step 2: Evaluate Existing Conditions

In order to understand the needs of the school and develop recommendations, you must first collect and analyze data, study the physical school environment, and evaluate existing practices and policies related to biking and walking to school.

Mapping Requirements (Use GIS if possible)

- Map school district boundaries.
- Map number of school-aged children living within ½ mile, 1 mile, 1.5 miles and 2 miles of the school.
- Map existing and potential walking and biking routes students use to get to and from school.

Walking and Biking Transportation Assessment

Conduct a walking and biking transportation assessment. Take detailed notes and photographs of existing walking and biking facilities, and label on a map the presence of sidewalks, bike lanes/shoulders, trails, hazardous areas and other notable conditions. The walking and biking assessment should be conducted during school rush hours. The following elements, at a minimum, should be evaluated during the assessment:

- Sidewalks, multi-use trails, bike lanes and shoulders. Note their width, where they begin and end, condition (e.g. tree uprooting sidewalk, bushes protruding into walkway, etc).
- Are there any bike racks?
- Inventory curb ramps, identify where they are missing, and where they are substandard (i.e. not accessible to wheelchairs or visually impaired).
- Identify signalized and unsignalized crossings, and locations of stop signs, yield signs, painted crosswalks and other traffic control devices. Are there pedestrian push buttons? How long is the wait to cross? Are there crossing guards? Are people crossing at non-crosswalk locations? If so, where? Are there any other safety enhancements present at the crossings (such as in-street crosswalk signs, flashing lights, speed humps, etc)
- Outline the boundary of the School Zone, and identify existing school zone treatments (i.e. speed limit, signs, flashers, etc).
- Note the speed limits on all roads within 2 miles of the school.
- Document driver behavior (speeding? yielding right-of-way to pedestrians? etc).
- Identify potential paved or unpaved off-road trails or informal footpaths.
- Evaluate the pick-up/drop-off and school bus loading and unloading areas. Identify conflict points where bike riders and walkers interface with the cars and buses. Where are the school entrances related to these areas? Conduct traffic counts of the cars and buses arriving at the school.
- Note the positive. Take photos of “good” examples to use as a model

Data Collection and Analysis

- Projected future enrollment of the school.
- Number of children who currently walk and bike to school, arrive on the bus, carpool, are driven by their parents, and take public transportation (if applicable).
- Conduct school rush hour traffic counts at school and on the roadways adjacent to the school.
- Collect and analyze crash data for a 2 mile radius around the school (data available through GDOT).
- Work with local police departments to determine the average speed of the cars in the vicinity of the school.
- Conduct parent and student surveys to determine needs, desires, and concerns related to students walking and biking to school. Surveys can also be developed and sent to teachers, community and PTA members, police department and transportation professionals.

Policies/Plans

- Are there any changes to the school district boundaries planned?
- Conduct research on existing school and local policies and ordinances that may affect biking and walking to school. For instance:
 - Does the school prohibit biking to school?
 - Does the city require that sidewalks be included in new subdivision projects?
 - Does the school have any physical activity or wellness programs?
 - Does the School Wellness Policy address SRTS?
 - What are the school bussing policies?
- Document projects planned, programmed or funded within 2 miles of the school, including but not limited to:
 - Transportation projects (such as a road widening or sidewalk projects)
 - New subdivisions, and new residential, retail or office developments
 - Are there any new land uses or zoning changes planned for the area that may make the area more or less walk able or bike able?

Step 3: Develop Goals

With the assistance of the SRTS Team, develop the programs goals that will guide the development of your program.

- Sample Goals:
 - Goals:
 - To reduce traffic congestion by 15% per school as measured by the number of car drop-offs/ pickups
 - Increase number of walkers and bike-riders by 50% at each school
 - Build community awareness of and participation in the Safe Routes to School program
 - Conduct “Safe Bike Driving” classes through PE in 3rd and 5th grades

Step 4: Action Steps

Based on the data analysis, survey results, and community input, develop recommended action steps to achieve your goals and objectives.

Action steps must address the Five E's and can also include information on local policies that support walking and bicycling to and from school:

- **Evaluation:** Evaluation should be fully integrated throughout the SRTS program from the onset and should provide periodic monitoring and evaluation of the program. Identify the methodology to be used to evaluate the success of the SRTS program. *Example: Use a "Show of Hands Survey" three times a year to track all 3rd grade students' mode of travel for 3 years (i.e. 3rd, 4th & 5th grades), to measure change in travel habits/measure mode shift.*
- **Engineering:** Engineering includes a variety of design and operational techniques that reduce traffic volumes, decrease speed, and improve safety. Identify specific infrastructure projects at specific locations. *Example: Construct sidewalk on Main Street from 1st Ave to 2nd Ave.*
- **Education:** Education programs teach safety skills to pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. Education efforts may also raise awareness of the benefits of walking and bicycling or increase community awareness of school safety issues. *Example: Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle safety classes into the physical education or health curriculum.*
- **Encouragement:** Encouragement programs provide fun or educational activities that motivate or facilitate walking and bicycling to and from school. *Example: Establish Walking School Bus Program.*
- **Enforcement:** Enforcement focuses on legal enforcement of traffic laws. *Example: Install speed monitor displays in school zones.*

Step 5: Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy should include a timeline for carrying out the recommended action steps, potential additional funding sources and responsible implementing agencies or individuals. It should also include a plan for sustaining the program after the current funding period. This section should also include a schedule for progress reports and for evaluating the performance measures.