

# **A Tool Kit For Developing Safe Routes To School For The Bi-State Metropolitan Area**

**Prepared By  
The Bi-State Metropolitan Planning Organization**



*Picture Source: The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals Website*



**Arkansas' Frontier MPO**

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Bi-State Metropolitan Planning Organization

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## **Safe Routes to School Is.....**

A national and international movement to create safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools. The program has been designed to reverse the decline in children walking and bicycling to schools. Safe Routes to School can also play an important role in reversing the nationwide trend toward childhood obesity and inactivity.

In 1969, approximately 50% of children walked or biked to school, with approximately 87% of children living within one mile of school walking or bicycling. Today, fewer than 15% of school children walk or bike to school.

As a result, kids today are less active, less independent, and less healthy. As much as 20% to 30% of morning traffic can be generated by parents driving their children to schools, and traffic-related crashes are the top cause of death and major injury for children in the U.S. ages 1 to 17.

Concerned by the long-term health and traffic consequences of this trend, in 2005, the U.S. Congress approved \$612 million in funding for five years of state implementation of SRTS programs in all 50 states including the District of Columbia. Communities are using this funding to construct new bike lanes, pathways, and sidewalks, as well as to launch Safe Routes to School education, promotion and enforcement campaigns in elementary and middle schools.

Safe Routes to School programs are built on collaborative partnerships among many stakeholders that should include educators, parents, students, elected officials, engineers, city planners, business and community leaders, health officials, and bicycle and pedestrian advocates. For Safe Routes to School resources developed by other agencies and organizations, please search the SRTS Online Library on the internet at ([http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/online\\_library/](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/online_library/)).

The most successful SRTS programs incorporate the five E's consisting of evaluation, education, encouragement, engineering, and enforcement. The goal of Safe Routes to School is to get more children bicycling and walking to schools safely on an everyday basis.

## **5 Es: Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement and Enforcement.....**

### **Evaluation.....**

Long term Safe Routes to School programs generally start with a thorough evaluation of the situation at the school or for the school district. Surveys of parents help to reveal why parents are driving their children to school, and what changes might result in a shift in their behavior. Student surveys elicit the attitudes of the youth, and help to show how to craft a

program that will be appealing to the younger generation.

It is also important to know, before Safe Routes to School interventions begin, what percentages of students are walking, biking, taking the bus, being driven alone, and carpooling to school. Travel surveys including a record of the weather and time of year, should be taken throughout several days in September and May of each school year to gauge the affects of the program on commute behavior. Another important component of evaluation is reviewing “crash data” to map where the collisions are occurring.

Evaluation data is key to determining the scope and the success of a Safe Routes to School program. In addition, most funding that is provided to run programs requires methods for evaluation. Overall, evaluating existing programs can become a very helpful way to enhance and improve existing programs.

### **Engineering.....**

Changes to the built environment through engineering improvements are a critical component of Safe Routes to School. The most successful programs begin with a thorough community assessment of the barriers for children walking and bicycling to school.

Safe Routes to School programs often organize “Walk-a-bouts or walking audits” so that parents can join city engineers, planners and police officers in walking the routes to school and identifying everyday problems that children encounter, including complaints such as: it’s impossible to cross the street, the sidewalk ends, there is no bike trail, the cars go too fast, etc. “Walk-a-bouts” can also identify opportunities such as short-cuts and preferred routes that children could take to schools.

Through a community-wide approach to engineering, a wish list of capital improvements can be generated and separated into two categories: short-term improvements and long-term improvements. Short-term improvements such as landscaping maintenance, altering the timing of traffic lights, painting crosswalks, or installing stop signs are immediate fixes which can be done on a small budget within a short time frame, often through the use of a city’s general fund. Long-term needs such as installing sidewalks, pathways, bridges, and reconstructing intersections should be prioritized as part of the capital improvement plan for the city.

### **Education.....**

A focus on education is always an important component for programs that seek to alter cultural norms. As Safe Routes to School is multi-disciplinary in nature, there are vast opportunities for educational outreach. Within the safe routes to school literature, there are numerous examples and teaching material curriculum that can be added to almost any class activity. The safe routes to school library is a good resource for such examples of curriculum.

Many U.S. programs offer bicycle and pedestrian safety training in the classroom and “in the field” (through obstacle courses set up on school black-tops) to teach children the

basics associated with walking and bicycling with traffic. Young elementary school children (6-8 years old) are taught skills such as how to cross the street, not to dart in front of cars, and how to look for cars when walking past driveways. When children reach the fourth and fifth grades, they are often taught the basics of bicycling, including balancing, signaling, following traffic rules, and how to properly wear a helmet. Police officers can be brought into schools to instruct children what to do when approached by a stranger, and many police officers will also help with traffic safety training.

Through educational programs, parents and community members are asked to follow the rules of the road when they are driving, walking and bicycling, and they are encouraged to practice walking and bicycling with their children, as traffic safety is learned behavior that can only be acquired through hands-on experiences. Driver safety campaigns can extend to high school students and to the entire community, so that everyone becomes aware of the fact that children are walking and bicycling and that sharing the road can be a matter of life or death.

### **Encouragement....**

Families are busy and it's often hard to make a change in daily routines; however, many parents are willing to let their children participate in special events such as a "Walk and Bike to School Day". Special events are one form of encouragement program and provide a way for families to break their routines and try something new. When a majority of the school participates in a special event, it can create a snapshot of what life could look like if every day was a "Walk and Bike to School Day."

Contests, which can foster individual and classroom competition, also help to get kids out of cars and onto feet and bikes. Some schools run contests such as the "Frequent Rider Miles Award Program" where kids track how they come to school and receive points for "pollution free" miles. Other contests such as Walk and Bike Across America games encourage classrooms to track the overall number of miles the children have covered by walking and bicycling, and then to plot the distances consecutively on a map. The exercise results in a math lesson, and can become a history lesson as student can virtually "visit" the locations on the map that they visit.

Special events and contests have been proven effective in inspiring students, parents, elected officials, and school leaders to try something new, which often results in the development of ongoing programs to encourage walking and bicycling. Other successful encouragement programs facilitate ways for parents to walk and bicycle with groups of children who live together in a neighborhood. Through the formation of "walking school buses" and or a "bike train," parents can take turns transporting groups of children, ensuring a supervised commute and creating strong community cooperation.

### **Enforcement....**

The fifth E, enforcement, is also vitally important for creating safe routes for children. Enforcement programs can combine partnerships with law enforcement along with community programs, such as stationing crossing guards at busy street corners to help

children cross the street.

Enforcement programs target unsafe driving behaviors, such as speeding. In a British study, the risk of pedestrian deaths from collisions with automobiles rose from five percent at 20 miles per hour to 45 percent at 30 miles per hour, to 85 percent at 40 miles per hour.

Police presence can also serve to reinforce safe bicycling and walking behaviors with students. A child who is stopped by a police officer for not wearing a helmet or for riding through a red light can learn a valuable lesson through a conversation or warning from a law enforcement officer. The presence of more “eyes on the street” helps make everyone feel safer, and drivers and cyclists alike are on their best behavior when a police officer is parked in front of a school.

### **International History of SRTS....**

The term “Safe Routes to School” was first coined in Denmark in the 1970s. Since that time, Safe Routes to School has spread internationally. There are active programs throughout Europe, in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

The first Safe Routes to School program in the USA took place in the Bronx in 1997. In the year 2000, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued \$50,000 each for Safe Routes to School pilot programs in Marin County, California and Arlington, Massachusetts. Within a year after the launch of the pilot programs, grassroots Safe Routes to School efforts were started throughout the United States. The following ad is referred from the International Walk to School Web page (<http://www.iwalktoschool.org/october.htm>). Currently, October has been designated as the International Walk to School month, promoting many types of activities to increase walking and biking to school.

## Walk to School in October During International Walk to School Month

[www.iwalktoschool.org/october.htm](http://www.iwalktoschool.org/october.htm)

Walking to school promotes health, physical activity, concern for the environment and safe and walkable communities. This year, join schools around the world as they celebrate walking during the month of October. Communities are encouraged to pick a day, a week, once a week or the entire month to celebrate. Actively promoting Walk to School for a month could also transition smoothly into the launch of a year-round program.

See examples of Walk to School activities below. More examples are available on the International Walk to School Website.

Examples of Walk to School activities:

- Designate “Walking Wednesdays” to encourage walking one day a week and potentially extend the event to a month or a year-long activity
- Develop walking themes for each day of the week: bright, highly visible colors day, “walking hat” day, bring a healthy lunch day, etc.
- Set up a competition with awards for the classes with the most walkers
- Offer an option to students who ride the bus or carpool to walk once they arrive at school.
- Organize a walking school bus from nearby neighborhoods. For information on how, visit [www.walkingschoolbus.org](http://www.walkingschoolbus.org)
- Plan a school-wide event to recognize the day such as a picnic, an assembly, an awards ceremony or a pizza party for the class with the most walkers
- Fill the month with activities throughout the day that pertain to staying physically fit, eating healthy and caring for the environment.

***“Choose to celebrate a day, week, or the entire month and bring visibility to the importance of safe walking and bicycling to school”***

## Eligible Arkansas Safe Routes To School Projects and Grant Application Guidelines.....

There are three types of grants that can be applied for. These are outlined below. The Bi-State MPO staff can assist with the process of filling out applications provided through the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department or AHTD. A one page map of the proposed project showing the two mile radius around the project can be produced by the Bi-State MPO staff. Access to right-of-way for Safe Routes To School infrastructure projects must be obtained by the applicant without the use of Safe Routes To School funding. This can be in the form of fee-simple ownership or a long-term, 25-year or greater, easement or lease. In some cases along Arkansas highways, right-of-way owned and managed by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department may be available for these projects. If so, a permit to use this property must be obtained from your local Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department District Office.

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department is scheduled to receive approximately \$1 million per year from Fiscal Year 2005 through Fiscal Year 2009 for Safe Routes To School projects. This estimate may vary due to constraints Congress places on Federal budgets. There is approximately \$1.99 million currently available for this program. No ceiling has been placed on the maximum amount any one applicant can request.

Applications are accepted from January 2 through March 7 and awards are notified around October of the same year. Safe Routes to School grants are 100% reimbursable for approved projects. As a rule of thumb, these projects are for grades K-8 within a two mile radius of the school. The following link is to the current year AHTD Safe Routes To School website. This link is interactive and can be filled out on line, saved and printed for submittal.

**<http://www.arkansashighways.com/planning/Safe%20Routes/index.htm>**

## **1. Infrastructure improvements that AHTD lists as eligible projects**

- sidewalks
- sidewalk widening
- sidewalk gap closures
- sidewalk repairs
- curbs
- gutters
- curb ramps
- traffic calming
- speed reduction improvements
- roundabouts
- bulbouts
- speed humps
- raised crossings
- raised intersections
- median refuges
- narrowed traffic lanes
- lane reductions
- full or half street closures
- automated speed enforcement
- variable speed limits
- pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, traffic control devices (including new or upgraded traffic signals, pavement markings, traffic stripes, in-roadway crossing lights, flashing beacons, bicycle-sensitive signal actuation devices, pedestrian countdown signals, vehicle speed feedback signs, and pedestrian-activated signal upgrades), and sight distance improvements

- on-street bicycle facilities; new or upgraded bicycle lanes, widened outside lanes or roadway shoulders, geometric improvements, turning lanes, channelization and roadway realignment, traffic signs, and pavement markings
- off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails and pathways that are separated from a roadway
- secure bicycle parking facilities: bicycle parking racks, bicycle lockers, designed areas with safety lighting, and covered bicycle shelters
- traffic diversion improvements: separation of pedestrians and bicycles from vehicular traffic adjacent to school facilities, and traffic diversion away from school zones or designed routes to a school

## 2. Educational

- Creation and reproduction of promotional and educational materials.
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety curricula, materials and trainers.
- Training, including Se routes to school training workshops that target school and community level audiences.
- Modest incentives for SRTS contests, and incentives that encourage more walking and bicycling over time.
- Safety and educational tokens that also advertise the program.
- Photocopying, duplicating, and printing costs, including compact discs, digital video discs, etc.
- Mailing costs.
- Costs for data gathering, analysis, evaluation, and reporting at the local project level.
- Pay for substitute teacher if needed to cover for faculty attending SRTS functions during school hours.
- Costs for additional law enforcement or equipment needed for enforcement activities.
- Equipment and training needed for establishing crossing guard programs.
- Stipends for parent or staff coordinators. The intent here is to be able to reimburse volunteers for materials and expenses needed for coordination efforts. The intent is not to pay volunteers for their time. In some cases, however, a stipend may be paid to permit a "super volunteer" to coordinate its local programs. This is an important possibility to keep open for low income communities. It may be beneficial to set a limit on the maximum value of a stipend, such as \$2,000 school year.
- Costs to employ a SRTS program manager, which is a person that runs a SRTS program for an entire city, county, or some other area-wide division that includes numerous schools. (Program managers may coordinate the efforts of numerous stakeholders and volunteers, may manage the process for implementation at the local or regional level, and may be responsible for reporting to the state SRTS coordinator.
- Costs to engage the services of a consultant (either non profit or for profit) to manage a SRTS program as described above.

### **3. Start-up**

This can be the first step in creating a locally driven comprehensive SRTS plan and could be a start-up program as an opportunity to make walking and bicycling to school safer for children and to increase the number of children who choose to walk and bike.

SRTS programs can enhance children's health and well being, ease traffic congestion near schools, improve air quality and improve community members overall quality of life.

There are many safe routes to school resources that provide information about forming a SRTS coalition and developing a comprehensive SRTS plan. For Arkansas, including any area in Arkansas, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department is the main source. On a broader level, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website ([www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002)) contains information that is helpful in understanding the safe routes to school program.

### **Tips for Success.....**

Involve the children to gain enthusiasm and enhance their independence. Bring it to parents and get their buy in. Without them, nothing really changes.

Find a leader who will keep the effort going and the project focused, someone who has passion and is willing to take the time to make it a success.

Empower the “team” and make sure you have the right players on the team who can help with access to information, funding sources for physical improvements, media contacts, etc.

Work from the bottom up grassroots and top down School Board/City Manager/Mayor simultaneously. Both are needed to make the process successful.

Be persistent. What didn't work last year may have just needed more time for the seeds to germinate.

Have short but frequent meetings and stay focused on small “do-able” tasks.

Celebrate small successes along the way. And I emphasize celebrate. Pizza parties for the class with the largest number of children walking on Wednesdays, PTA programs with certificates or gifts for the “walking school bus” volunteers, school banner and neighborhood signs announcing “Walk a Child to School Day,” a media story on the bicycle safety classes or interviews with the school crossing guards.

Most of all, keep the faith. What you are doing is the right thing, and others long after you will benefit from your efforts.

## **Non-Profit Involvement With Safe Routes To School.....**

A list of Coalitions for Healthy Children is provided below. These organizations can be found on the internet, promoting health and wellness and supporting the goals of the Coalition. There is a Coalition Member Highlights section that can also be accessed through the internet. The SRTS National Partnership began requesting organizational and individual contributions in 2007 and will continue these efforts in the future.

- Action for Healthy Kids
- Alloy Media + Marketing
- American Association of Advertising Agencies
- American Council for Fitness and Nutrition
- American Diabetes Association
- American Dietetic Association Foundation
- American Heart Association Local hospitals
- b.little + Company
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Cartoon Network
- Center for Advancing Nutrition & Activity (Penn State University)
- Coca Cola Company The Fort Smith Coke Bottler
- Creative Consumer Concepts (C3)
- Del Monte Foods
- DreamWorks Animation SKG
- General Mills
- Girl Scouts of the USA
- Hershey Company
- Creative Consumer Concepts (C3)
- International Food Information Council Foundation (IFIC)
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- JMH Education
- Kellogg Company
- Kraft Foods
- McCann Erickson
- McDonald's Corporation K-MAC Enterprises
- Michigan Nutrition Network
- National Confectioners Association
- National Fatherhood Initiative
- National Football League
- National Governors Association Our Governor's Office, Morril Harriman Chief of Staff
- National Recreation and Park Association
- Pennsylvania Department of Health
- PepsiCo, Inc.
- Sesame Workshop

- Shaping America's Health - Association for Weight Management & Obesity Prevention
- Strotzman International, Inc.
- SUBWAY Franchisee Advertising Fund Trust
- The Advertising Council
- The American College of Sports Medicine
- The Magazine Publishers of America
- TIME Magazine
- Univision Communications, Inc.
- UAMS
- YMCA of the USA

## **Resources.....**

Florida Traffic and Bicycle Safety Education Program

<http://www.dcp.ufl.edu/centers/trafficsafetyed>

National Center For Safe Routes To School

[www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/steps/index.cfm](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/steps/index.cfm)

Safe Kids USA

[www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)

Safe Kids World Wide

[www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)

FedEx Coloring Page

[http://www.safekids.org/about/about\\_sponsors.html](http://www.safekids.org/about/about_sponsors.html)

Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals

[www.apbp.org/website](http://www.apbp.org/website)

NHTSA SRTS Toolkit

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/Safe-Routes-2002/index.html>

Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department Safe Routes to School Program

<http://www.arkansashighways.com/planning/Safe%20Routes/index.htm>

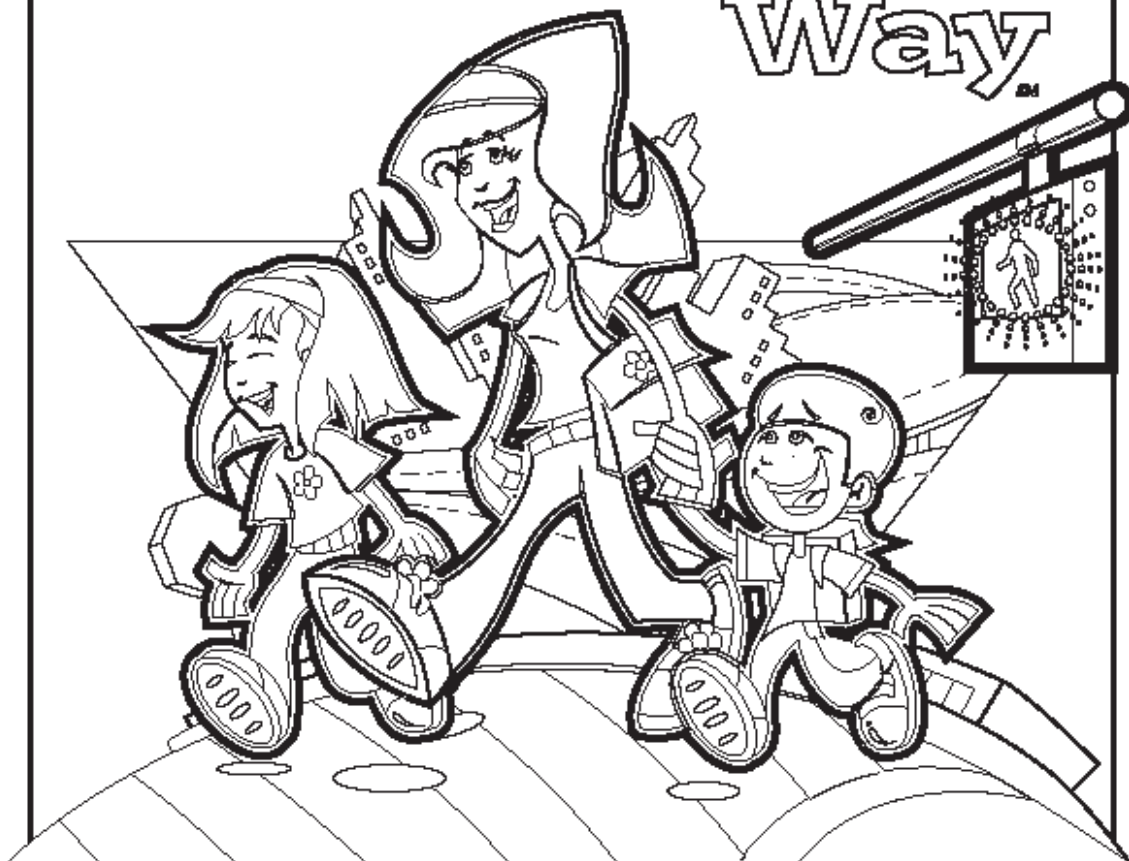
International Walk to School

[www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org)

International Walk to School in the USA

[www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org)

# Safe Kids Walk This Way



Coloring Page Source: [Safe Kids Worldwide](http://SafeKidsWorldwide.com)