

# Addressing Attendance through Safe Routes to School



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What is Safe Routes to School?

# What Is Safe Routes to School?

A movement that

- Encourages kids to walk and bicycle to school
- Addresses barriers that make it hard or unsafe to walk or bicycle to school





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In 1969, nearly **50%** of  
all children walked or  
bicycled to school.

Today, just **13%** walk or  
bicycle.



# Problems



- **1/3** of children are overweight or obese – triple the rate of a generation ago
- Family car trips to school make up **10-14%** of morning congestion
- Motor vehicle injuries are the **biggest** source of fatalities for children, whether as passengers, on foot or bicycle.
- Injuries and fatalities are **especially high** in low income neighborhoods

# Benefits of Safe Routes to School

Addresses **many** problems

- Children's health and obesity
- Climate change
- Air pollution
- Reducing traffic injuries when walking, biking, and using public transportation
- Avoiding street crime and violence
- Improved academic achievement
- Improved attendance



# Two Main Categories of SRTS

- **Programs:** such as walking school buses, walk and roll to school days, bike rodeos, or walking Wednesdays
- **Infrastructure:** building and fixing sidewalks, crosswalks, paths, bicycle lanes

## The Six E's

- Education
- Encouragement
- Engineering
- Enforcement
- Evaluation
- Equity

# How Is the Safe Routes to School World Structured?

- **Federal Transportation Bill:**  
Through the Transportation Alternatives Program, provides funding for Safe Routes to School programs and infrastructure
- **State and Regional Initiatives:**  
Many states and regions have their own initiatives & funding
- **Local:** Programs generally run at local level

Upshot: Diverse programs and approaches



# Who runs Safe Routes to School programs?

- School officials
- Parents
- Nonprofits
- Health departments
- Police departments



# Research shows that Safe Routes to School works:

- SRTS reduced injuries of kids walking to and from school by 44%
- Infrastructure improvements increased walking & bicycling by students by 18%
- For each year of Safe Routes to School programs, walking and bicycling increased by 5%

Charles DiMaggio and Guohua Li, 'Effectiveness Of A Safe Routes To School Program In Preventing School-Aged Pedestrian Injury', *Pediatrics* 131, iss 2 (2013): 290-296; Noreen McDonald, Ruth Steiner, Chanam Lee, Tori Rhoulac Smith, Xuemei Zhu and Yizhao Yang (2014). "Impact of the Safe Routes to School Program on Walking and Bicycling." *Journal of the American Planning Association*. Vol 80, Iss 2, p 153-167.

# Safe Routes to School and Absenteeism

# Transportation and Attendance

Transportation is one of the key barriers to attendance that contributes to chronic absenteeism and tardiness



# We need a better transportation system



- Big picture focus on a transportation system that works for all & supports community health and well being
- Policy and design that supports safe and convenient walking, bicycling, and public transit
- By creating alternatives to vehicle transportation, ensures back up systems & redundancy

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- Safety from injury from vehicles
  - Safety from crime, violence, and bullying

## Walking School Buses

# Walking School Buses

- Group of children walking together
- Usually, accompanied by parent or volunteer
- Pick up others at home or corners along the way
- Can be daily, weekly, or every now and then
- Improves safety, increases physical activity, gets kids to school on time

## Benefits for Attendance:

- With or without an adult, groups of children are safer from crime, bullying, and vehicles
- Help families juggle morning routines
- Overcome barrier of sick family members
- Daily walking school buses make the trip to school an expectation and a habit





## To Sum Up

- Walking school buses can help overcome many of the transportation hurdles that prevent attendance
- Infrastructure improvements reduce injuries to kids and make it easier and safer to walk and bicycle
- Creating healthy transportation options give families alternatives and back up for getting kids to school



# Our Role



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# What We Do



- On the ground in specific states and communities to create long term benefits for kids and families
- Federal advocacy
- Resources and assistance for communities across the nation



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# Sharing Our Deep Expertise



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## Shared Use

Increasing Access to Physical Activity Opportunities

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in children and adolescents in the past 30 years.<sup>1</sup> Low-income communities and communities of color tend to be adversely affected by obesity and have fewer adequate places for children and families to be physically active.<sup>2</sup> In many communities, schools are centrally located and have gymnasiums, playgrounds, athletic fields,



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## Using Safe Routes to School to Combat the Threat of Violence



In some communities, the danger of violence and crime discourages children from walking to school and keeps people off the street, limiting physical activity and restricting errands and trips. Violent crime and conflict can cause death, pain, and trauma, both for those directly affected and for those who witness or learn of events. Preventing violence goes hand in hand with community betterment, public engagement, street scale enhancements, physical activity and improved economic opportunities.

In underserved communities, walking and bicycling are often major ways that people get around – a necessary part of getting to school, work, the grocery store, or to other key destinations. In addition, walking and bicycling may be a particularly affordable and accessible means to get physical activity.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there is often more danger from traffic, and from violence on the street in underserved communities.<sup>4</sup> Violence within a community inhibits business, job access, healthy nutritional choices, and physical activity. Addressing violence within underserved communities is critical to economic renewal and health.

### Combating Violence Through Safe Routes to School

Violence and crime affect children in communities across the country. In many communities, the actual risk of harm to children is very low, and Safe Routes to School programs can play a crucial role in helping parents feel comfortable with children's active transportation to school. In other communities, however, children face very real dangers of robbery, harassment, gang intimidation and gang recruitment. Safe Routes to School programs can assist significantly in increasing the safety of children and teens in these communities.

How can Safe Routes to School programs help with these problems? A range of potential steps are provided below. Planning and community engagement can assist in determining which of the steps are most needed and appropriate for a given community.

Using a framework known as the "Six Es," we identify specific kinds of actions that can combat violence and support Safe Routes to School. Safe Routes to School programs often use this framework to describe the steps that ensure that children can walk and bicycle safely to school. The Six Es are engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation, and equity, which sets out the need for fair opportunities for health for all communities.

### How Does the Threat of Violence Affect Safe Routes to School?

- There are 850,000 children living in gang violence "hot zones" all over the country, putting kids at risk on their way to school before they even get to the classroom.<sup>5</sup>
- Parents report violence and crime as one of the five primary factors affecting children's walking or bicycling.<sup>6</sup>
- Five percent of high school students report not going to school at least one day per month because they feel they would be unsafe at or on their way to or from school.<sup>7</sup>
- Almost 25 percent of students ages 12-18 reported that there were gangs in their schools.<sup>8</sup>

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## Case Study

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

The City of Takoma Park Safe Routes to School program won special recognition from the National Center Safe Routes to School James L. Oberstar

schools to request Safe Routes to School activities and keeps in regular contact with the schools. Regular communication establishes the relationship and allows Lucy to learn how best to fit Safe Routes to School programming into existing school routines.



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

### Utilize Our Expertise!

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership provides Technical Assistance based upon the specific needs of each city, county and/or school district seeking assistance.

For more than a decade Safe Routes to School programs have flourished across the country using the power of quality programming to raise awareness and change habits. Now, communities are boosting walking and bicycling to school and in daily life through sustainable, long-term policy change. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership can help your community or school district to build local leadership, partnerships and community support, establish walking and bicycling policies and programs that advance healthy, active lifestyles, and institutionalize ongoing funding and policy changes that support active transportation as a permanent part of your community's healthy future.



### Individualized Technical Assistance

Each community is unique. Through our individualized technical assistance we provide strategic support to local program and policy leaders via telephone calls and email correspondence on an as needed basis. We will listen to your needs, and our expert staff can help guide your policy change efforts. We can conduct webinars and conference presentations, provide best practices and case studies from around the country and the world, create model policies, assist with developing materials and action plans for grant applications, and help your community leverage additional funding for programs and infrastructure.

### Workshops

We can help you to produce and lead inspiring and effective Safe Routes to School and active transportation policy workshops, designed to get critical stakeholders thinking

about and invested in the big policy picture and community-wide Safe Routes to School efforts. These workshops can be combined with local site visits, customized presentations, participating in and/or leading stakeholder meetings, and/or conducting walkabouts at schools to assess infrastructure needs. We can also follow up with you by phone and email via individualized technical assistance to build upon the meetings with stakeholders, and to develop materials and action plans.

### Keynote Addresses

Sometimes community leaders need to be inspired by national experts. Our prominent and inspiring speakers bring best practices from around the country and the world, and an energy and charisma that will inspire positive change. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership can help turbo charge your community into action.

### Who We Are:

Our team has helped communities and school districts throughout the country to develop community-scale Safe Routes to School programs, partnerships and action plans that have resulted in new policies that support healthy and active communities.

Contact: Maggie Cooper, Technical Assistance Manager, [maggie@saferroutespartnership.org](mailto:maggie@saferroutespartnership.org) or (703) 521-1561

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Safe Routes to School program offers encouragement safe walking and bicycling.

**Safe Routes to School Day:** All schools in Takoma Park participate in this event every year to help encourage safe walking and bicycling. It serves as a kick-off for walking and bicycling.

With the Washington Area Bicycle safety rodeos are offered free of charge. The workshop features a safety video followed by a bicycle course and safe practices. Bike to School Day is held on May 12, 2012. Over 160 students and staff will be in-graduating number of students biking.

A coordinator will help organize Walking School Days. Parents can rotate the responsibility for the students and designated routes. SchoolPool, has been introduced. SchoolPool is a project of Metropolitan Council of Governments Commuter Council.

**Safe Routes to School Day:** Developed by the Takoma Park Safe Routes to School program reinforces safe walking and bicycling. Students play the role of a pedestrian and reminds them to "walk in the

# Fire Up Your Feet

## Physical Activity Tracker

- For teachers, staff, and families
- Track miles or minutes of activity during the day
- Compete to win Challenge Awards for your school stay motivated in a fun and friendly environment.

## Free Resources, Toolkits

- Ideas for increasing physical activity in schools
- Fun classroom activities
- Guides for organizing events at schools and/or in community
- Resources to encourage safe walking and bicycling to school and in everyday life

## Healthy Fundraising Platform

- Schools and families can fundraise in a healthy way by accessing a fundraising platform that incorporates healthy activities, like fun runs and walk-a-thons
- Centered on physical activity pledges and events





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