



Starting and Growing a Strong Safe Routes to School Program



Houston Health Department and the Safe Routes Partnership
Kori Johnson, Safe Routes Partnership
October 28, 2021

MISSION

The mission of the Safe Routes Partnership is to advance safe walking and rolling to and from schools and in everyday life, improving the health and well-being of people of all races, income levels, and abilities, and building healthy, thriving communities for everyone.



Safe Routes
PARTNERSHIP
Active Paths for Equity & Health



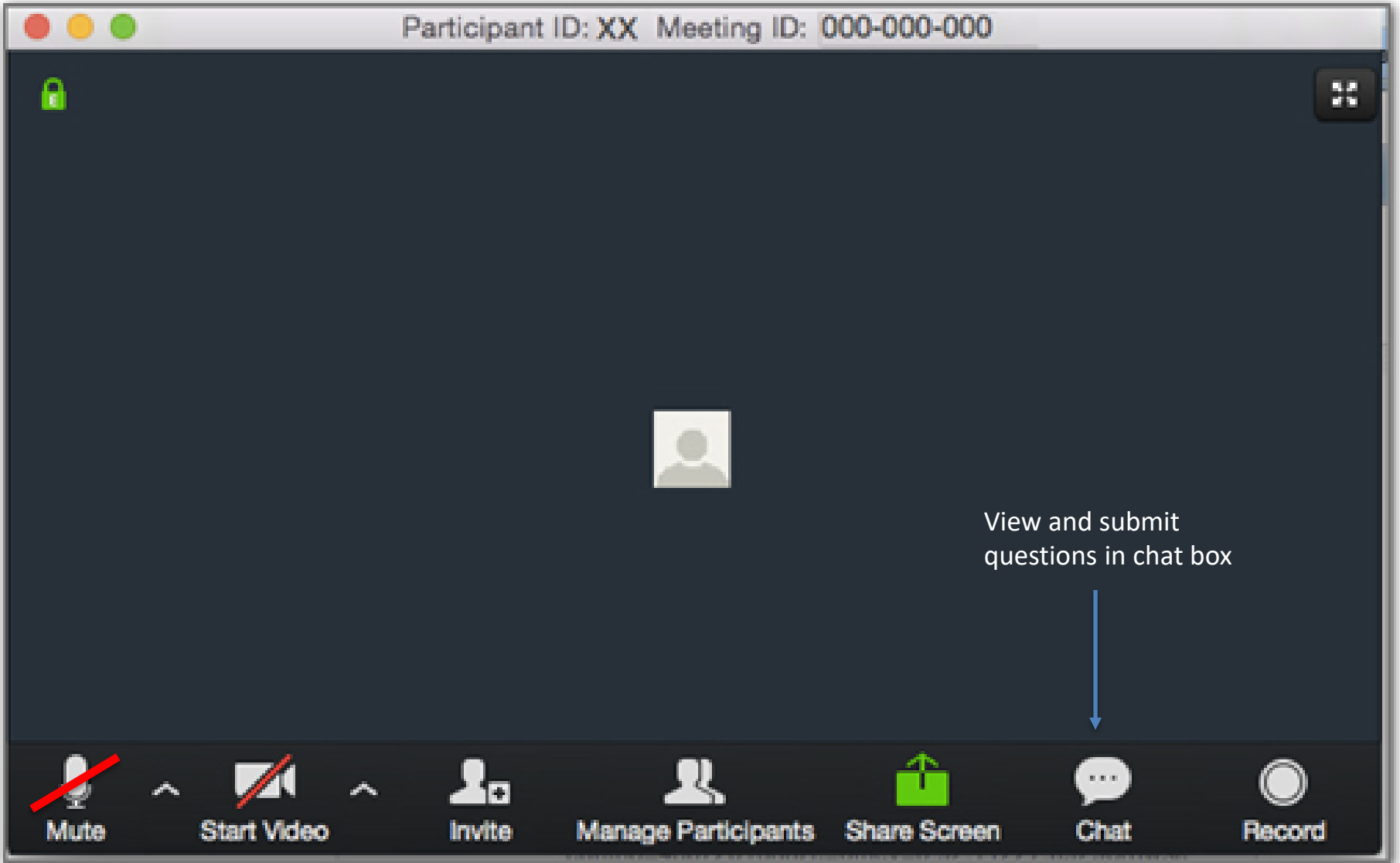


**Safe
Routes**
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VISION

We know that our bodies were designed to move, yet many of our communities were created with intentional inequities that limit mobility. We believe change is necessary to achieve a vision of safe, active, equitable, and healthy communities – urban, suburban, and rural – for everyone.



SESSION IS BEING RECORDED



HELLO
MY NAME IS

Kori Johnson

She/her
Program Support Manager
Washington, DC

*Tell me something about
Houston in the chat! Fun fact,
unique feature, something you
love about the area – anything!*



Today's Agenda

1. Introduction – Houston Health Department
2. What is Safe Routes to School?
3. The Six E's: Strategies for a Comprehensive Approach
4. Helping Your Program Grow & Develop
5. Ideas for Initial Activities
6. Q&A
7. Reminders & Next Steps



WHAT IS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?





Safe Routes to School is a movement and a program to make school travel – including walking, biking, and scooting – safe, convenient, and fun for children of all genders, races, and abilities.

Poll

How did you get to school growing up?



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

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





At the same time...

- **1/3** of children are overweight or obese – triple the rate of a generation ago (Fryar, et al, 2014 and Ogden, et al, 2016)
- Family car trips to school make up **10-14%** of morning congestion (National Center for Safe Routes to School, 2011)
- Motor vehicle injuries are the **biggest** source of fatalities for children, whether as passengers, on foot or bicycle (CDC, 2016)
- Injuries and fatalities are **especially high** in low income neighborhoods (Governing, August 2014)



The Evidence is In: Safe Routes to School Works

- Safe Routes to School programs lead to a **35-45% increase in walking and bicycling** to school
- Safe Routes to School programs result in a **45-75% decrease in pedestrian injuries** near school
- Kids who walk and bike are **more physically active, fitter and have lower BMIs** than kids who don't

Benefits of Safe Routes to School

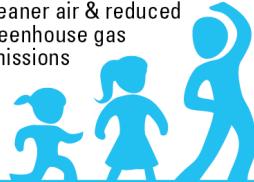
COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

- Stronger student friendships & relationships through walking & biking together
- Positive social connections for families & neighbors



CLIMATE BENEFITS AND CLEANER AIR

- Fewer student asthma attacks due to less driving & reduced air pollution results
- Cleaner air & reduced greenhouse gas emissions



BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Better focus, improved concentration & less distraction for students who are active before school
- Fewer absences and less tardiness when students walk or bike in groups



TRAFFIC SAFETY

- Reduced traffic injuries & dangers for students and community members at arrival & dismissal through street improvements near schools
- More chances to learn & practice road safety for students



SAFETY FROM CRIME

- Increased safety from crime & violence due to more people on the streets, good lighting & better street design
- Less harassment, bullying, or violence when students walk or bike together or with adults



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FIXES

- Solutions to reduced or non-existent bus service through Safe Routes to School
- Reduced traffic congestion at pick-up/drop-off times



COST SAVINGS

- Household savings from reduced gas & car use
- Education budget savings through reduced student busing costs



HEALTHIER STUDENTS

- Better health & stronger bones, muscles & joints through more walking & biking
- Reduced risk of chronic disease, diabetes, & obesity





How are Safe Routes to School Programs Organized?

At the local level, Safe Routes to School programs are organized by cities, counties, schools, school districts, or community organizations. These programs can serve one school or many schools throughout a community.

At the state level, Safe Routes to School programs are usually administered by the state department of transportation (TxDOT). The program provides resources to help support local programs.

Houston Safe Routes to School Resources

- [Bike Texas Safe Routes to School handbook](#)
- [Bike Texas SafeCyclist Curriculum](#)
- *Add others to the chat!*





Questions?



THE 6 E'S: STRATEGIES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The 6 E's of Safe Routes to School



ENGAGEMENT

All Safe Routes to School initiatives should begin by listening to students, families, teachers, and school leaders and working with existing community organizations, and build intentional, ongoing engagement opportunities into the program structure.



EQUITY

Ensuring that Safe Routes to School initiatives are benefiting all demographic groups, with particular attention to ensuring safe, healthy, and fair outcomes for low-income students, students of color, students of all genders, students with disabilities, and others



ENCOURAGEMENT

Generating enthusiasm and increased walking and bicycling for students through events, activities, & programs



ENGINEERING

Creating physical improvements to streets and neighborhoods that make walking and bicycling safer, more comfortable, and more convenient.



EDUCATION

Providing students and the community with the skills to walk and bicycle safely, educating them about the benefits of walking and bicycling, and teaching them about the broad range of transportation choices



EVALUATION

Assessing which approaches are more or less successful, ensuring that programs and initiatives are supporting equitable outcomes, and identifying unintended consequences or opportunities to improve the effectiveness of each approach



ENGAGEMENT



EQUITY

ENGINEERING





ENCOURAGEMENT



EDUCATION

EVALUATION





Questions?



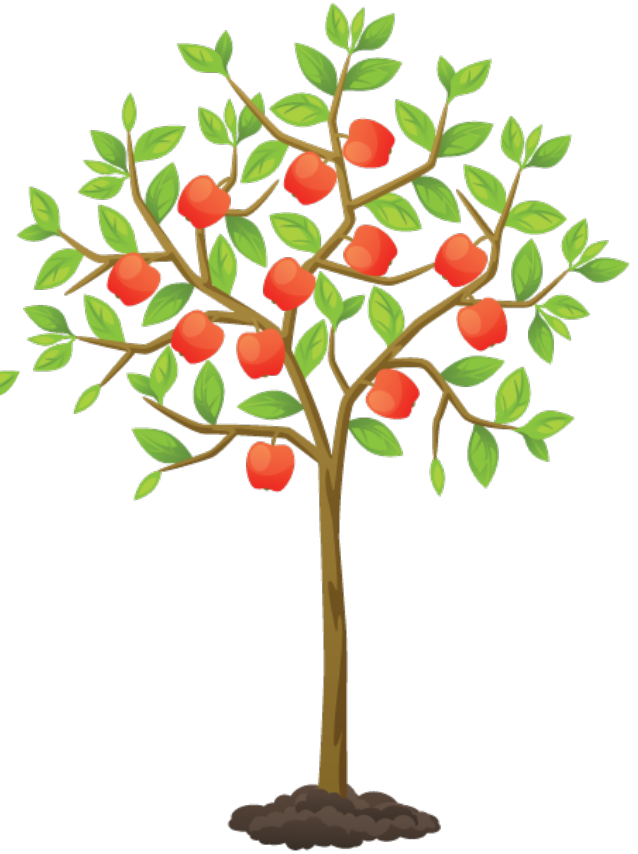
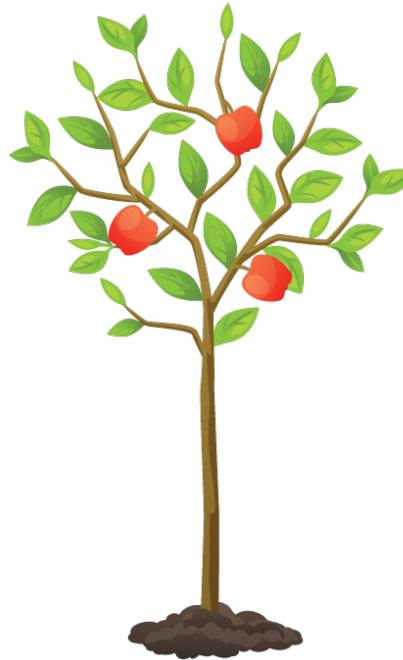
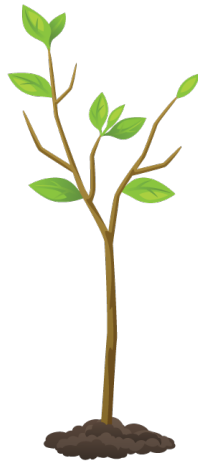
HELPING YOUR PROGRAM GROW & DEVELOP





**Safe
Routes**
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Creating a Strong Structure: Stages to Success



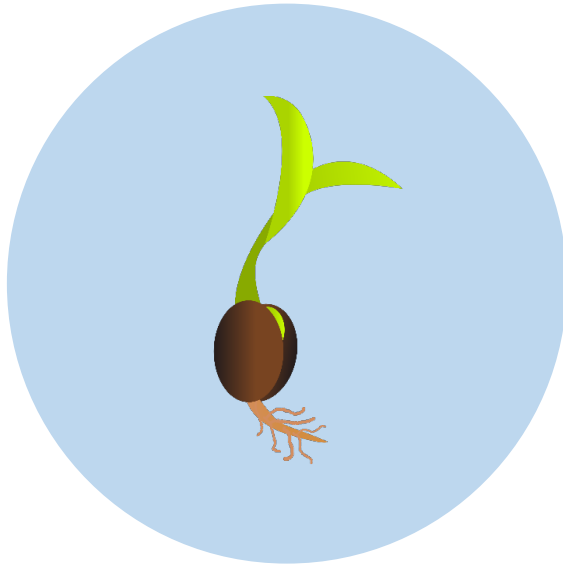
Starting
Your
Seedling

Growing
Strong
Branches

Becoming a
Healthy
Tree

Reaching
Maturity

Starting Your Seedling: Giving Your Program a Good Start



- Set goals
- Make initial plans
- Kick off education and encouragement activities
- Begin developing relationships with key partners
- Make opportunistic infrastructure improvements
- Keep moving!

Growing Strong Branches: Developing Supportive Structures



- Engage more community members
- Create a task force
- Develop an action plan
- *Some communities start at this stage, often with a grant program*



Becoming a Healthy Tree: Institutionalizing Your Program



- Sustain and expand activities
- Identify permanent staffing
- Secure long and short term funding
- Plan for infrastructure changes
- Address district and municipal policies



Reaching Maturity: Becoming a Comprehensive Program



- Create comprehensive programming
- Implement a comprehensive equity approach
- Larger infrastructure changes
- Evaluate and improve



Essential Components of a Safe Routes to School Program

- Safe Routes to School Coordinator
- Safe Routes to School Task Force
- Program Structure
- Funding
- Safe Routes to School Policies



**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
COORDINATOR**



What does a SRTS Coordinator do?

- Manages overall program
- Leads Safe Routes to School task force
- Coordinates between district, municipality, other stakeholders
- Recruits & trains volunteers
- Coordinates city/district/multi-school events & activities
- Strategically expands program
- Seeks funding opportunities
- Evaluates what is working & not with program



Paid vs. Volunteer Coordinators

Benefits of Volunteers:

- **Cost:** More affordable
- **Logistics/Bureaucracy:** Can be easier to get going
- **Commitment:** Personal passion & investment can create enormous change

Benefits of Paid Coordinators:

- **Stay in job longer:** Most volunteers are parents/family members of students
- **Time to do the job:** Volunteers average 4-10 hours/month
- **Skills and Experience:** More likely to have necessary skills



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL TASK FORCE





Why and Who?

- Core goal: coordinate essential stakeholders to get work done
- Meets monthly, quarterly, etc.
- Usually: district or city level





Task Force Core Responsibilities

- Communicating & informing stakeholders
- Getting input from different perspectives
- Making informed joint decisions
- Determining community goals and needs
- Dividing up work
- Ensuring that equity is built in
- Determining needs for new policies or policy changes



STRUCTURE

Where should your program live?

- Local/regional transportation agency
- Planning department
- Non-profit
- School district
- PTA
- Health department
- Other



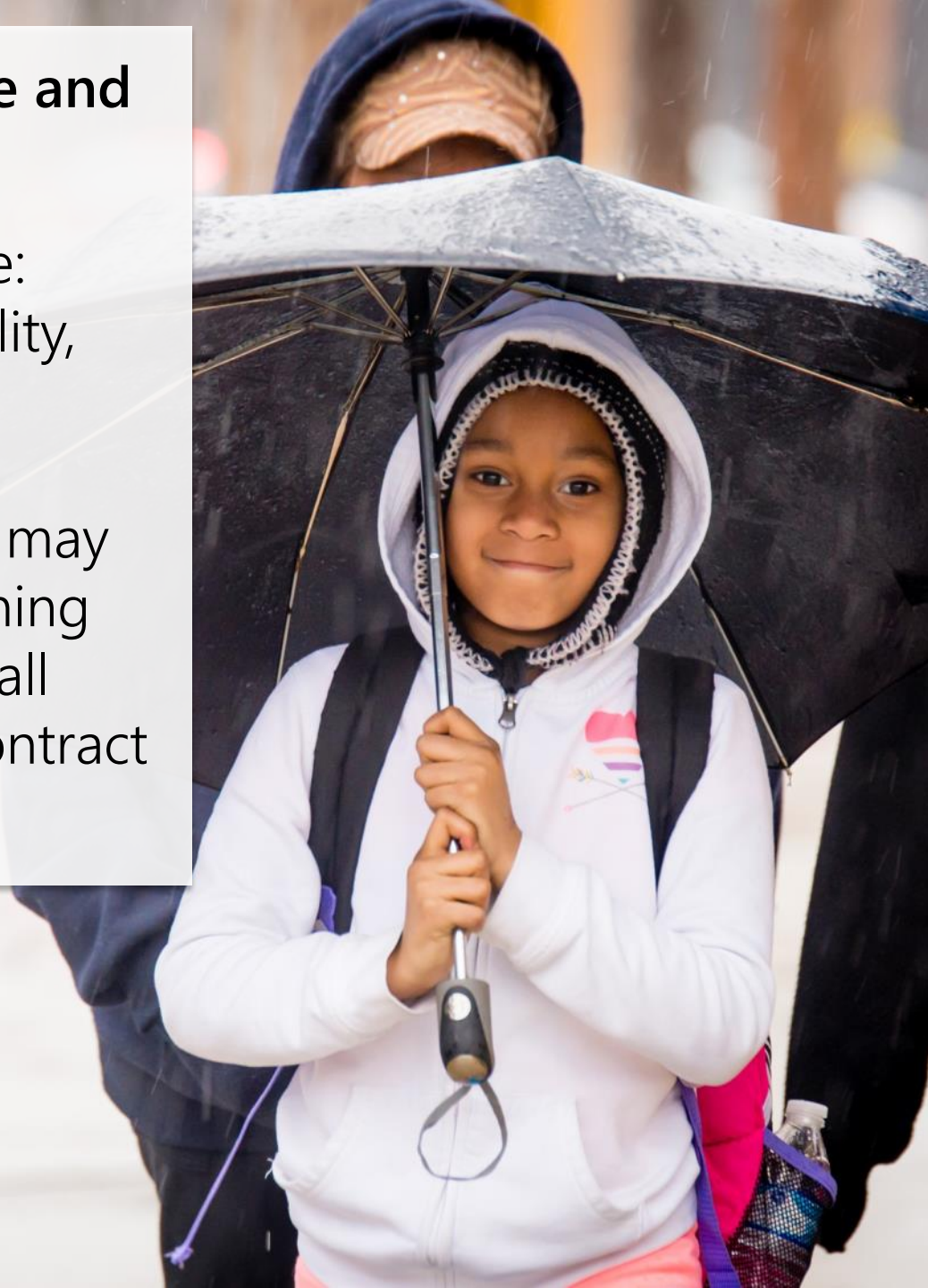
How do you decide where to locate your program?

- Often practical – who is willing?
- May depend on funding and staff
- May depend on focus area
- Likely to influence emphasis of work



Structure may not be simple and will likely change.

- Will likely change over time: affected by funding, formality, and growth
- Different parts of the work may live different places – planning department manages overall effort, but nonprofit has contract for programming





FUNDING YOUR PROGRAM



What do we need money for?

- Staff Salaries
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Incentives
- Expenses for Activities
- General operations



Common Funding Sources

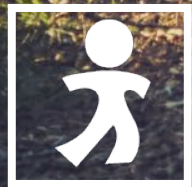
- Volunteer time!
- Health funds
 - State or federal (CDC) grants
 - Local healthcare foundation grants/community benefits funding
- Foundation grants
- Business sponsorships
- General funds
- Transportation funds
 - State SRTS grants
 - Local transportation measures



Leverage Your Partnerships

- Pool resources or apply for joint funding opportunities
- Potential Partners
 - Safe Kids coalitions
 - Parks and Recreation
 - PTAs and parent/caregiver groups
 - Local biking and walking organizations
 - Youth organizations
 - Sports teams
 - Arts organizations

Add other potential partnerships to the chat!



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL POLICIES



Policy change is essential to long-term change

A policy is a written law, rule, or procedure that is binding and applies broadly.

Safe Routes to School policies include:

- School Board Policies
- Safe Routes to School Resolutions
- Complete Streets Policy
- Comprehensive Plan



Safe Routes
to School
National
Partnership

Building

Blocks



A Guide to Starting and Growing a
Strong Safe Routes to School Program

Available on Our Website
saferoutespartnership.org



Questions?

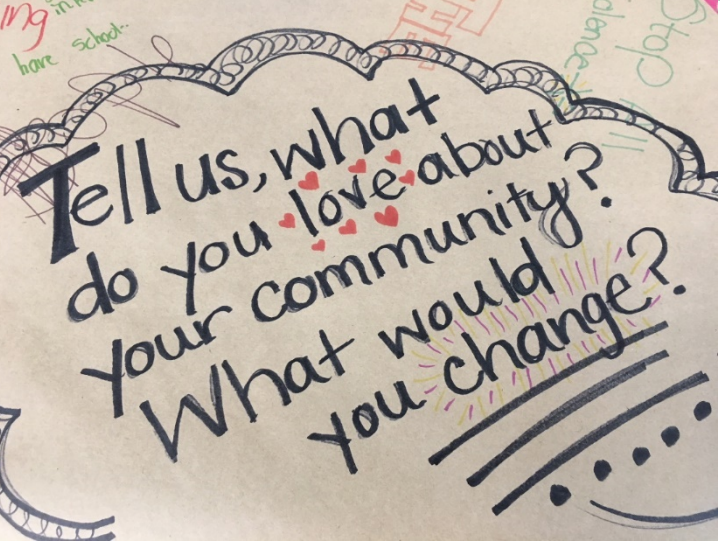


IDEAS FOR INITIAL ACTIVITIES





**Initial activities can
inform and evolve into
programs.**



BUTCHER PAPER GRAFFITI WALL

- Build awareness, brainstorm ideas, identify barriers to walking , biking, scooting
- Next steps: Get ideas from students and families, recruit volunteers and plan initial activities



WALK TO
SCHOOL DAY
Wed.

WALK
TO SCHOOL DAY

WALK
TO SCHOOL DAY

Caution:
Children
Walking

Safe Routes
DC Routes to School Program

Caution:
Children
Walking

SCHOOL
ZONE
SAFE
KIDS
FedEx

Ketcham
ROCKS
the Walk!
Walk to School Day October 2, 2018

Walk to School Day
Observed in October
www.walkbiketoschool.org



Walk to School Day Observed in October

www.walkbiketoschool.org



Walk to School Day Observed in October

www.walkbiketoschool.org



**Bike to School Day
Observed in May**

Walking School Bus

- Group walk along designated “bus” route
- Led by adults – volunteers or staff
- Helps take the burden off of individual parents
- Reduces tardiness
- Can incorporate safety education



Walking Wednesdays

High School students lead a walking school bus in Pryor Creek, Oklahoma. Students received training from local experts, city staff, the school district, and Cherokee nation.





Bike Rodeos

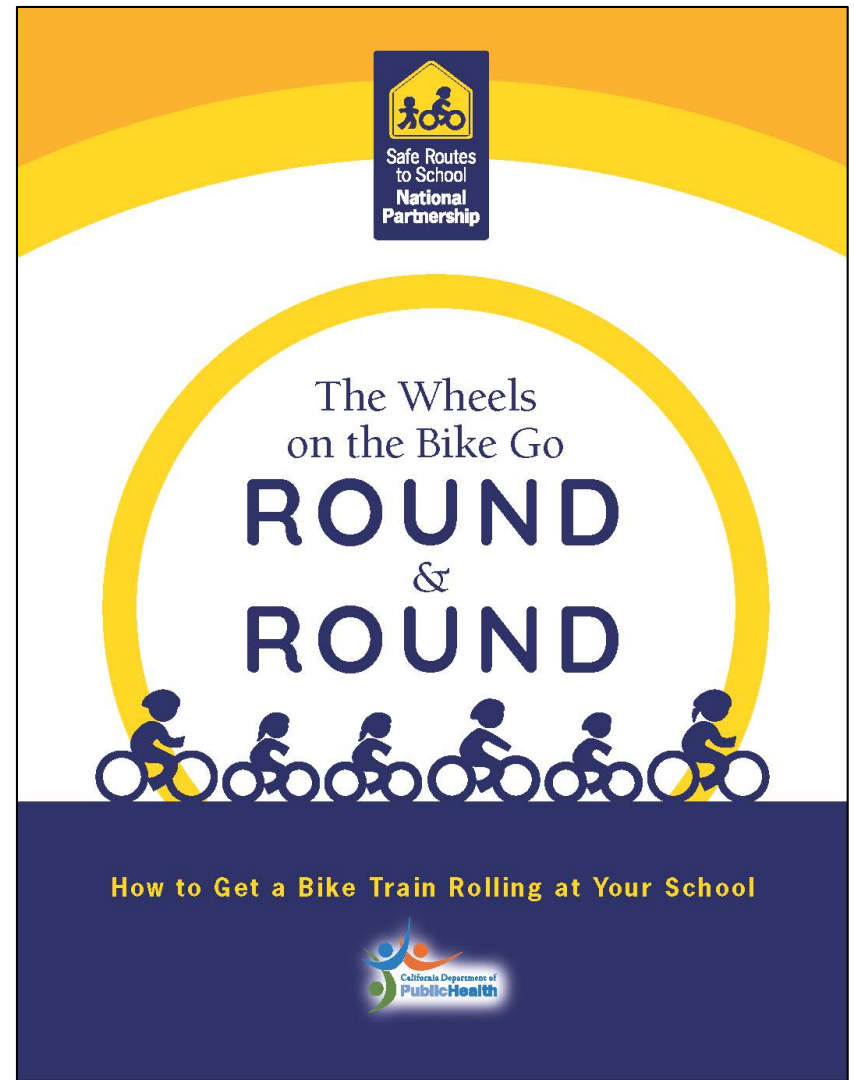
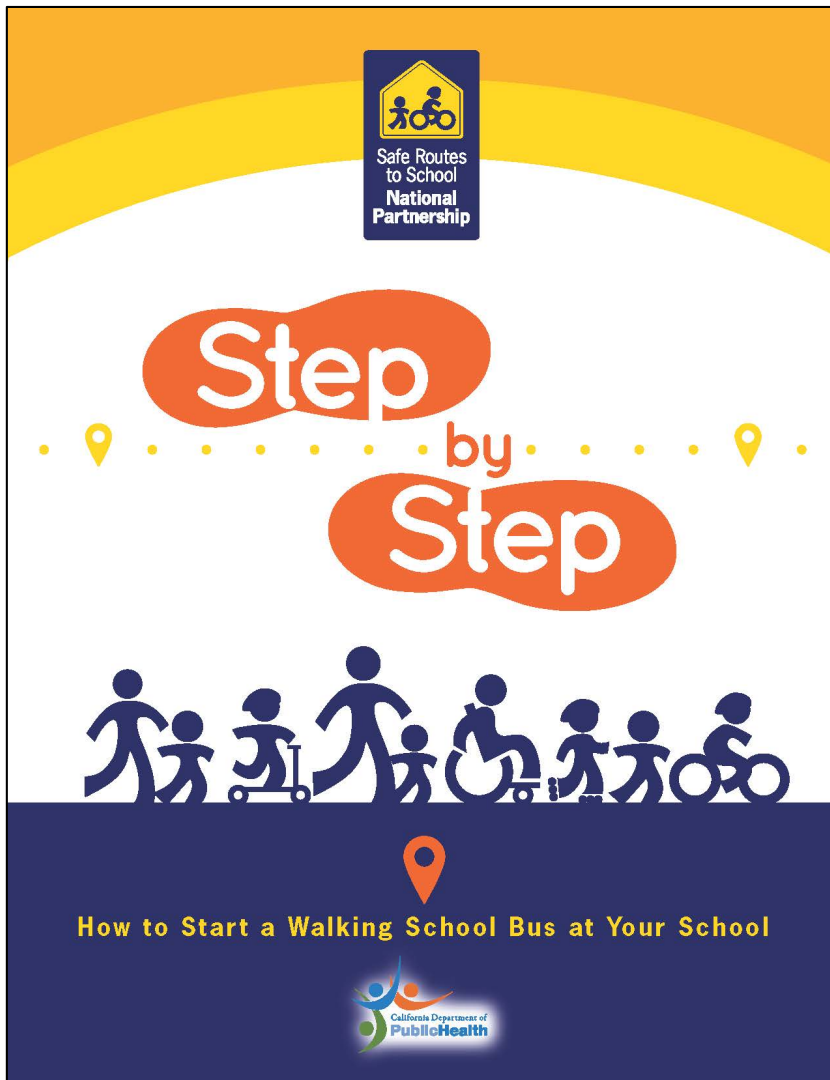


Safety Awareness Demonstration









Additional Resources Available on Our Website

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL MESSAGING FOR PROS



A Communications Toolkit for Schools and School Districts



Safe Routes to School and Student Leaders: Facilitator's Guide to Engaging Middle School Youth

The Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC) is a program of California Active Communities, a joint Unit of the University of California San Francisco and the California Department of Public Health, and is funded through a statewide non-infrastructure Safe Routes to School (SRTS) award from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).



Additional Resources Available on Our Website

Let's Go For A Walk: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit



Photo Credit: Orange County Health Care Agency



Where the Duct Tape Meets the Road How To Create Pop-Up Safe Routes to School Projects

This fact sheet provides a simple overview of how you can go about conducting a pop-up Safe Routes to School project in your community. This fact sheet lays out the basic steps for successful pop-up projects, and specifies when and how the process differs because schools are involved.

Note that there are several guides on how to successfully plan and implement tactical urbanism and pop-up traffic calming projects. This fact sheet is intended to complement, rather than replicate, those guides. At the end of the fact sheet there is a list of several in-depth guides on how to execute tactical urbanism and pop-up projects, including information on permitting, site plan development, materials, cost estimates, and community and media outreach. We recommend that you use this fact sheet as a starting point for adapting the pop-up and tactical urbanism process to a school environment.

Distilled, the basic process for conducting a pop-up (or tactical urbanism) is:

1. Identify Partners
2. Present Concept to Decision-makers
3. Select Your Location
4. Identify Your Approach
5. Implement The Pop-Up
6. Evaluate
7. Advocate for Permanent Change

Using Tactical Urbanism to Jump Start Safe Routes to School Programs

This fact sheet is the second part in a series on using temporary installations, or pop-up projects, to advance Safe Routes to School. To learn more about pop-up projects and how they can be used to promote Safe Routes to School, check out our companion fact sheet, [Pop-Ups for Safe Routes to School: Using Tactical Urbanism to Promote Safe Routes to School Projects](#).




This "parklet" narrows the street in order to slow traffic and extends the sidewalk to provide more usable space for people to walk and spend time. Photo: Trailnet

1. Identify Partners

There are several essential partners that should be involved in a Safe Routes to School pop-up project:

- a. **School district administrators.** Involve school district administrators early on in the process, before site selection. The transportation director may be a particularly important partner, though in some districts transportation directors are very narrowly focused upon busing, and may not be interested if bus stops and routes are not affected.
- b. **School leadership.** Including the principal of the school where the project will be located is essential for a successful Safe Routes to School tactical urbanism project. Having support of school leadership will assist with encouraging students to walk and bike on the dates of the demonstration, disseminating information about the project to families and neighbors through school communication channels, and could even help connect student participation in the project with classroom subject matter.
- c. **Elected officials.** The mayor and city council should be notified, especially if the project takes place in their district. This is an opportunity to help build political will for investing in traffic safety, especially for children. Elected officials may want to participate in a photo opportunity when the pop-up occurs, which will help further build their support.
- d. **City agencies.** City staff are critical partners to secure permission for the project and safe development of plans. Potential city agencies to involve include public works, traffic safety, and public safety (fire/police).

Additional Resources Available on Our Website

Safe Routes to School Expert Help  Healthy Communities Resources

Resources

- ▶ BROWSE
- ▶ ADVANCED SEARCH TOOL
- ▶ BLOG
- ▶ OUR PUBLICATIONS
- ▶ **WEBINARS**
- ▶ E-NEWS
- ▶ RESEARCH
- ▶ RECURSOS EN ESPAÑOL
- ▶ SUBMIT A SUCCESS STORY


Webinars

One of the great ways that we love to share resources and expertise is through our regular webinars. Our webinars feature our staff and incredible advocates, Safe Routes to School program staff, government officials, elected leaders, and others from around the country sharing their knowledge and learning on a diverse range of topics.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

There are currently no upcoming webinars scheduled. Scroll down to see archived webinars.

ARCHIVED WEBINARS



October 17, 2019

Transportation Planning Innovations and Health: How MPOs Are Combining Core Skills and Creativity to Advance Health

Interested in learning about the innovative and promising ways that metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are advancing public health in the United States?

Archived Webinars

- ▶ BROWSE
ADVANCED SEARCH TOOL
- ▶ BLOG
- ▶ OUR PUBLICATIONS
WEBINARS
- ▼ E-NEWS
E-News Archives
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RECURSOS EN ESPAÑOL
- ▶ SUBMIT A SUCCESS STORY

Join Our Email Discussion Network

Exchange knowledge with advocates and practitioners working on Safe Routes to School, active transportation and healthy community design. If you have a Google account, [click here](#) to join. Otherwise, email margaux@saferoutespartnership.org to be added.

E-NEWS ARCHIVES

[Read the current issue and browse the archives.](#)

Safe Routes to School E-News

[Safe Routes to School E-News](#) is a monthly e-mail newsletter published by the Safe Routes Partnership, a network of hundreds of local, state and national organizations, non-profits and businesses that are working to advance the Safe Routes to School national movement in the United States.

The Safe Routes to School E-News includes national Safe Routes to School news, state updates, events and Safe Routes Partnership information. We welcome your Safe Routes to School news and story ideas and encourage you to send them to info@saferoutespartnership.org for possible publication.

SIGN UP FOR E-NEWS

All Safe Routes Partnership partner affiliates automatically receive [Safe Routes to School E-News](#). There is no charge to become a partner and we invite your organization to officially [join the National Partnership](#). If your organization or agency is prohibited from joining, or if you are an individual, you are still welcome to sign up to receive our E-News below.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MAILING LIST

* indicates required

Email Address *

First Name *

Last Name *

Organization *

City

State

Email Discussion Network



Q & A



Reminders

Next Webinar – Thursday, November 18th, 3pm CT

- Safe Routes to School Engagement, Education, and Encouragement Programming

Complete our post-webinar survey!





Contact Information

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