



Safe Routes to School Frequently Asked Questions



What is Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an approach that promotes walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement tools, safety education, and incentives.¹

The number of students walking and biking to school has declined significantly in recent years. There are many related factors contributing to this, including distance from school, weather, and concerns about traffic and personal safety. As a result, fewer children are meeting the daily recommended amounts of physical activity.² In response to these challenges, Congress approved standalone funding for implementation of Safe Routes to School programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. From 2005 to 2012 this program provided more than \$1 billion in funding in all states to support infrastructure improvements and programming to make it safer for children to walk and bicycle to and from school.³ Since 2012, funding for SRTS has been combined with other programs at the federal level.

In 1969, 48 percent of children 5 to 14 years of age usually walked or bicycled to school.

In 2009, 13 percent of children 5 to 14 years of age usually walked or bicycled to school.

Source: National Center for Safe Routes to School (2011).

Related Resources:
[Pedestrian Infrastructure FAQ](#)
[Bicycle Infrastructure FAQ](#)
[Active Transportation Planning FAQ](#)

SRTS programs are part of the solution to increase physical activity and improve unsafe walking and bicycling conditions while reducing the number of cars on the road. The school setting provides a unique opportunity to encourage children to try walking and bicycling as a means of transportation, increasing their physical activity today and helping form good habits for the future.

Is Safe Routes to School in Ohio?

Ohio has a successful and robust SRTS program, with a presence in 77 of Ohio's 88 counties. Ohio's program is funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). The Ohio SRTS Program funds two types of projects:

1 US Department of Transportation. (2015). Safe Routes to School Programs. Retrieved from: <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/Safe-Routes-to-School-Programs>

2 US Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition. Retrieved from: https://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf

3 Safe Routes to School National Partnership. (n.d.). History of Safe Routes to School. Retrieved from: <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school/101/history>

1. Infrastructure or engineering projects include operational and physical improvements that establish safer and fully accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, such as crossings, walkways, trails, and bikeways. All infrastructure projects must improve conditions for students walking or bicycling within two miles of the target school.
2. Non-infrastructure projects include education, encouragement, and enforcement activities intended to affect student or driver behavior, and evaluation activities to monitor impacts of the SRTS program.

What are the 6 Es?

SRTS programs are most successful when they include each of the 5 Es (Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation) and include Equity as a prioritizing factor throughout. Of these, all but Engineering – the design and construction of improvements to the built environment that improve safety and accessibility for people walking and biking – involve activities and programs.

**For more on the 6 Es, see
Active Transportation Planning FAQ**

How can Safe Routes to School improve community health?

- » **Traffic safety** – Reduces fatalities and injuries⁴ by calming traffic, providing separated facilities, encouraging helmet use, and/or educating students and motorists about traffic safety.
- » **Community safety** – Encourages street-level activity, which reduces crime and blight, promotes physical activity, and improves community ties.

- » **Physical activity** – Results in health benefits of increased physical activity among children.
- » **Air quality** – Measurably improves air quality around schools with more walkers and cyclists;⁵ reduces incidents of asthma.⁶
- » **Mental health** – Increases student fitness, which is associated with better behavior ratings from parents and teachers⁷ and improved academic performance and cognition.

Walking a mile to and from school each day equals 2/3 of daily recommended physical activity for children and teens.

How can I bring Safe Routes to School to my community?

Start Small

- » **Distribute educational materials to schools** – A quick internet search will return many companies that develop bicycle and pedestrian safety resources for children. Two sample curricula are provided below:
 - *Pedestrian Safer Journey*: Pedestrian safety education videos, safety curricula and lesson plans for three age groups: 5-9, 10-14, and 15-18. <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pedsaferjourney/>
 - *Bicycle Safer Journey*: Bicycle safety education videos, safety curricula and lesson plans for three age groups: 5-9, 10-14, and 15-18. <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/bicyclesaferjourney/>
- » **Plan a Walk or Bike to School Day event** – Planning can be as simple as making announcements leading up to the day and

4 Jones, S.J., Lyons, R.A., John, A. & Palmer, S.R. (2005). Traffic Calming Policy Can Reduce Inequalities in Child Pedestrian Injuries: Database Study. *Injury Prevention* 11, no. 3: 152–56, and others.

5 US Environmental Protection Agency. (2003). *Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting*. Report No. 231-R-03-004. Retrieved from: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/travel-and-environmental-implications-school-siting>

6 Friedman, M.S., Powell, K.E., & Hutwagner, L. (2001). Impact of Changes in Transportation and Commuting Behaviors During the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta on Air Quality and Childhood Asthma. *JAMA* 285, 897 - 905.

7 Davis, C. L. & Cooper, S. (2011). Fitness, fatness, cognition, behavior, and academic achievement among overweight children: Do cross-sectional associations correspond to exercise trial outcomes? *Preventive Medicine* 52, Supplement (0): S65-S69.



rewarding the students who already walk and bike, or can involve a district-wide competition to see which school has the most walkers and bicyclists on the appointed day. Find more ideas and resources on www.walkbiketoschool.org

- *Walk to School Day* – usually the first Wednesday in October
- *Bike to School Day* – usually the first Wednesday in May
- » **Form a walking school bus or bike train** – A walking school bus and bicycle train both consist of groups of students accompanied by adults that walk or bicycle a pre-planned route to school. Routes can originate from a particular neighborhood or, in order to include children who live too far to walk or bicycle, begin at a remote dropoff site near the school.
- *Step by Step – How to Start a Walking School Bus at Your School.* <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/toolkit/step-step>
- *Bicycling to School Together: A Bike Train Planning Guide* http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SRTS_BikeTrain_final.pdf

Get Help

- » **Attend an Active Transportation Academy SRTS Course** – The Ohio Active Transportation Academy (ATA) provides training, workshops and implementation programs to communities throughout Ohio. The SRTS Training/Implementation Programs teach skills, processes and techniques to implement SRTS education, encouragement, policy and planning. You can request that a course be brought to your community through the Local Transportation Assistance Program (LTAP): <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/Active+Transportation/resources/05-active-transportation-education>
- » **Listen to webinars, read factsheets, in-depth reports** and more from the Safe Routes Partnership. <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>

Go Big!

Incorporate biking and walking to school into school wellness policies - All public school districts nationwide are required to implement a wellness policy to promote student health. Ensure that biking and walking to school are not only permitted but encouraged by the school district.

- » **Create a school travel plan and apply for funding** – Ohio makes \$4 million available each year to assist communities in improving safety and connectivity for students to walk or bike to school. Projects are competitively selected based on percentage of students expected to benefit, crash rates around the school, students' economic status, and delivery of past projects. Before you apply for SRTS funding, you need to develop a plan. SRTS applications can be developed based on ODOT-approved School Travel Plans (STP), or on Active Transportation Plans (ATP) which focus on active transportation improvements for the community as a whole.



After developing a School Travel Plan, communities can apply for grant funding from ODOT to implement infrastructure and programs.

A School Travel Plan is a written document that outlines a community's intentions for encouraging students to walk or bike to school. A comprehensive STP is created through a team-based approach that involves key community stakeholders and members of the public in both identifying barriers to active transportation and using the 6 Es to address them. Representatives from health organizations are required on steering committee for STPs. Visit the ODOT SRTS website for more information: <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/safe-routes-srts/safe-routes-to-school-srts>



Where can I find out more?

Ohio Resources

- » ODOT Active Transportation Academy. <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/LocalPrograms/LTAP/Pages/Active-Transportation-Academy.aspx>
- » Develop Your SRTS Plan. <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/safe-routes-srts/develop-school-travel-plan/01-develop-your-school-travel-plan>

National Resources

- » Safe Routes Partnership Healthy Communities. <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities>
- » At the Intersection of Active Transportation and Equity. <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/report/intersection-active-transportation-equity>
- » Making Our Communities Healthy Through Biking and Walking. <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/making-communities-healthy>
- » Relations of Neighborhood Environmental Influences, Physical Activity, and Active Transportation to/from School across African American, Latino American, and White Girls in the United States. <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/relations-neighborhood-environmental-influences>
- » Safe Routes to School and Childhood Obesity: A Review of the Research. <http://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resources/SRTS%20and%20obesity%20Research%20fact%20sheet%2010-21-14.pdf>

