

North Carolina Safe Routes to School Program

Welcome to the North Carolina Safe Routes to School Program page! Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a program that enables and encourages children to walk and bicycle to school; makes walking and bicycling to school a safe and more appealing transportation option, and facilitates the planning, development and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of school.



Click here to find out how your school can participate in International Walk to School Day on October 5, 2011

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What is Safe Routes to School (SRTS)?

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Safe Routes to School is a national and international movement to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. SRTS programs are comprehensive efforts that look at ways to make walking and bicycling to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.

The NCDOT Safe Routes to School Program is a federally funded program that was initiated by the passing of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005, which establishes a national SRTS program to distribute funding and institutional support to implement SRTS programs in states and communities across the country. (See [Program Legislation](#) for more details)

SRTS programs facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. SRTS programs consider infrastructure enhancements to provide a safe physical environment for bicycling and walking. These programs also emphasize non-infrastructure approaches to educate and encourage communities on how to safely take advantage of walking and bicycling opportunities in their neighborhoods.

Reasons for the SRTS Program

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There are several reasons a community may have for starting a SRTS program. Traffic safety, roadway congestion, physical health issues such as obesity and asthma, and environmental health issues like air quality are all concerns that may be addressed through implementation of a SRTS program.

Most SRTS Programs want to reverse the decline in the numbers of children walking and biking to school and the correlating rise in obesity and physical inactivity. In 1969, approximately 50% of children walked or biked to school, and 87% of the children living within one mile of their school arrived under their own power. Today, fewer than 15% of school children walk or bike to school. As much as 26% of morning rush hour traffic can be attributed to parents driving their children to school.

Communities are struggling with congested roadways, motor vehicle emissions polluting the air, and children engaging in less physical activity. Many schools no longer provide daily physical education classes, and physical activity is no longer built in to our daily routines. Children who are less active are more likely to be overweight, which can lead to a whole host of other health problems. The Safe Routes to School Program

provides an avenue to increase the activity levels of children as well as to create stronger communities that have good bicycle and pedestrian environments, with less traffic and less air pollution.

SRTS Program Outcomes

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According to the guidance provided by the Federal Highway Administration, there are many possible outcomes of successfully implementing projects and activities through a SRTS program including:

Transportation Improvements

- Increased bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety
- More children walking and bicycling to and from schools
- Increased interest in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout a community
- Improvements to the physical environment that increase the walkability and bikeability of a community
- Enhanced community accessibility

Community and Environmental Improvements

- Improved community safety and increased community security
- Decreased traffic congestion
- Reduced fuel consumption
- Improved air quality
- Increased community involvement
- Improved partnerships among schools, local municipalities, parents, and other community groups, including non-profit organizations

Health Improvements

- Improved childhood health
- Reduced childhood obesity
- Encouragement of healthy and active lifestyles

Initiating the SRTS Program

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The SRTS program is unique in its comprehensive, cross-cutting approach. Community participation in the development and implementation of projects and activities is vital for the sustained success of this initiative. By involving the public, schools, local agencies, community leaders, key professionals, parents, teachers, and others in developing local SRTS programs, comprehensive and integrated solutions that improve conditions is likely to result and last beyond the life of any individual project.

While every community is unique, and each school will have different circumstances and barriers to overcome, there are some basic steps to follow when starting a local SRTS program.

1. **Bring the right people together.** Identify people who want to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and appealing transportation alternative. Provide a mechanism for a variety of community members to share concerns, interests, and knowledge, which will enable the group to tackle many different issues.
2. **Hold a kick-off meeting.** The kick-off has two goals: to create a vision for the SRTS program and to generate the next steps to take.
3. **Gather information and identify issues.** Specific barriers to address through the program will be identified by collecting useful information at the outset. This baseline data also provides a means by which the group can measure its success.
4. **Identify solutions.** Each issue identified will have a unique solution to address it. Comprehensive solutions will include a combination of engineering, education, encouragement, and enforcement strategies.
5. **Make a plan.** Every SRTS action plan should include the strategies and solutions identified through step 4 as well as a time schedule to implement them. Plans also should include a map of the area it covers and a process for evaluating and fine-tuning the program.
6. **Get the plan and people moving.** Some parts of the SRTS action plan can be implemented right away, with little to no funding – take advantage of these opportunities while waiting for other parts, and keep the big picture in mind.
7. **Evaluate, adjust, and keep going.** As the program is implemented, monitor the impact it is making and gauge the effectiveness of each strategy. Continue ones that are working well, and modify or redirect strategies that are not providing satisfactory outcomes.

Through the use of the "5 Es", engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation, programs and projects can be developed to create a safe, appealing environment for walking and biking to school that will encourage a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. More information about initiating a SRTS program can be found at the National Center for Safe Routes to School.

[Program Legislation](#)

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SAFETEA-LU is a federal transportation bill that became law on August 10, 2005. It includes a \$612 million appropriation for a national Safe Routes to School program that continues to provide benefits in all 50 states. Through an application process, communities may use this funding to construct new bike lanes, pathways, and sidewalks, as well as to launch Safe Routes education and promotion campaigns in elementary and middle schools.

[Summary Points of the SRTS Grant Program](#)

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An outline of the North Carolina grant program and funding information is shown below.

- Federal-aid funds have been provided to State DOTs over five Federal fiscal years (FY 05-09). Projected North Carolina funds: \$1.00M (FY05), \$2.33M (FY06), \$3.13M (FY07), \$3.88M (FY08), \$4.85M (FY09)
- State usage: 70 to 90 percent for infrastructure projects, and 10 to 30 percent for non-infrastructure programs and activities
- No local funding match required: 100% federally funded
- Eligible recipients include state, local and regional agencies, and non-profit organizations
- Jurisdictional levels for the grant are school level, school system or region-wide, and state-wide
- Primary beneficiaries must be K-8th grade students
- Infrastructure projects must be within two miles of a school and on public property or private land with legal public-access easements
- Funding is through a reimbursable grant process - not a "cash up front" process
- This is a grant program administered by North Carolina Department of Transportation; grant application and selection details are coming soon
- Award recipients must comply with federal and state funding requirements

[For additional information regarding Safe Routes to School, search:](#)

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- National Center for Safe Routes to School
- Federal Highway Administration
 - Safe Routes to School
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
 - Safe Routes to School Practice and Promise
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - Kids Walk
- International Walk to School Day/Week/Month
 - Starting a Walking School Bus
- North Carolina Department of Transportation
 - Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

- North Carolina Department of Transportation
 - Municipal and School Transportation Assistance
- Institute for Transportation Research and Education
- National Center for Bicycling and Walking
- Bikes Belong Coalition
 - Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- League of American Bicyclists