



Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities

Margo Pedroso, Deputy Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership





Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Mission

- Advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life.

Federal-level advocacy

- Actively lobby Congress for the federal SRTS program
- Liaison with federal agencies (DOT, First Lady, HHS)

State-level policy change

- SRTS state networks in 20 states
- Monitor and work to improve state-level implementation
- Leverage network of partners to secure policy change

Resources and support

- Produce best practices, reports, and research
- Technical assistance on SRTS policy and practice
- Join our network of 500+ partners at

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/about/join>





SRTS and Low-Income Communities

The facts

- 41% of children (29.9 million children) are from low-income families
- In 38% of schools, at least half of students are low-income
- Children from low-income families are twice as likely to walk to school as children from higher-income families
- Children from low-income households have a higher risk of being injured or killed as pedestrians—often due to neighborhood barriers





SRTS and Low-Income Communities

Why focus on low-income schools and communities?

- Perception among many funders and policymakers that SRTS is only benefiting middle or higher-income schools and communities
- Lack of national attention on best practices and examples of SRTS interventions in low-income schools and communities
- Not many technical assistance resources focused on the unique challenges facing SRTS implementation in these communities





SRTS and Low-Income Communities



Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities

A Resource Guide for Volunteers and Professionals



Resource guide attempts to fill the knowledge gap

- Called “Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities”
- Guide and 2 webinars available at <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/lowincomeguide>
- Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Public Health Association





Key SRTS Challenges in Low-Income Communities

The guide includes:

- A 'getting started' section with tips on partnerships, champions and SRTS approaches that built on needs / assets
- Six key challenges commonly found in low-income schools and communities, with examples of successful approaches:
 - Personal Safety: Crime and Violence*
 - Community Readiness: Awareness and Attitudes
 - A Shortage of Professional Expertise*
 - Limited Parental Involvement*
 - The Barrier of Distance to School
 - Traffic Safety and the Built Environment

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Addressing Challenges through Promising Practices

This section focuses on the most common barriers to implementing successful Safe Routes to School programs in low-income schools and communities. The following topics are addressed:

Personal Safety: Crime and Violence	16
Community Readiness: Awareness and Attitudes	22
A Shortage of Professional Expertise	32
Limited Parental Involvement	40
The Barrier of Distance to School	48
Traffic Safety and the Built Environment	52

Each section includes a description of the challenge followed by promising practices that communities across the country have used to address the challenge. These local case studies help illustrate real-world solutions that can be adopted by others. Each section also includes links to websites that provide additional resources or information.





Personal Safety: Crime and Violence

The Challenge

- Many children walk and bike to school despite high rates of neighborhood crime and violence
- Children are 5 times more likely to walk and bike to school when safety is not a primary concern

Promising Practices

- Dawes School used the Chicago Area Policing Program to equip parent patrols and walking school bus leaders with walkie talkies to report crime and call for help, and set up “safe havens” with local businesses
- Thomas Elementary in Flagstaff, AZ improved safety at a park kids walked through by locating a police substation near the park, getting local businesses to stop selling “40s”, and implementing a walking school bus
- Zavala Elementary in Austin, TX uses “corner captains” and walking school buses to get more “eyes on the street” and focused on getting more children to walk in groups





A Shortage of Professional Expertise

The Challenge

- Many low-income schools and communities do not have access to planners and engineers needed to apply for and implement SRTS.

Promising Practices

- The Wilmington (DE) Area MPO has an Environmental Justice Initiative that drives their transportation work. They proactively helped the Southbridge neighborhood by conducting a circulation study, convening partners, and applying for SRTS funds.
- Feet First in Seattle, WA employs a bilingual AmeriCorps volunteer at Concord International Elementary to act as a community SRTS organizer—including recruiting volunteers, engaging partners and developing a walking school bus. The AmeriCorps staffer gets the program going and prepares the school and parents to sustain the program beyond 2011.





Limited Parental Involvement

The Challenge

- 51 percent of low-income parents say they have jobs that prevent them from becoming involved in school activities
- Language barriers and immigration status can also be a barrier



Promising Practices

- Nichols Elementary School in Detroit, MI provided parents with monthly stipends to lead walking school buses. When funding ran dry, several parents were unable to continue—so junior high students have stepped up to walk younger children to and from school
- TransForm in Alameda County, CA is combining SRTS with parent leadership development and advocacy training. At Global Family School in Oakland, parents learn how to lead walking school buses, how to participate in neighborhood crime prevention meetings, and how to engage neighbors in making changes that improve safety for kids.





Policy Recommendations

National and State Level:

- Create simple evaluation tools to measure safety improvements—not just mode shift
- Advocate that state DOTs:
 - Track economic and geographic distribution of applications and awards
 - Provide extra help to low-income communities and schools during application and implementation
- Each of the National Partnership's state networks have prioritized improving access and sustainability for low-income communities as a policy priority





Policy Recommendations

Local Level:

- If you have expertise in SRTS or developing travel plans – offer help to a low-income school
- Bike/ped organizations: see if the state DOT will fund you to help low-income communities
- Advocate that city/county governments build solutions for low-income schools and communities into budgets, policies, programs
- Encourage school districts to pass policies supporting walking and bicycling at all schools and ensure that low-income schools have the support and resources necessary to apply for SRTS grants.





For More Information

- Questions or comments? Contact:
Margo Pedroso
Deputy Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
margo@saferoutespartnership.org
301-292-1043
- Go to www.saferoutespartnership.org and sign up for our monthly e-news!

