

National Center for Safe Routes to School

ANNUAL REPORT

2006-2007



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School





Dear Safe Routes to School Champion,

In our first year of operation, the National Center for Safe Routes to School immediately recognized the need for a fast startup. With Safe Routes to School State Coordinators in place and funding already on the ground, the U.S. DOT Federal Highway Administration charged us with setting an ambitious agenda to build capacity for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and supported us along the way.

One of the first things we did was change our name — from the Federal Safe Routes to School National Clearinghouse to the National Center for Safe Routes to School. We did this to not only expand our mission beyond that of an information clearinghouse, but to position ourselves as a supporter of all Safe Routes to School programs.

Our commitment to Safe Routes to School extends beyond the availability of Federal funding. Our vision for success includes three scenarios. One — available funding is spent and programs are equipped with knowledge and expertise to use the funding wisely. Two — successful programs and strategies are identified and shared so that all schools can benefit. Three — the Safe Routes to School Program expands beyond the Federal funding such that safe walking and bicycling are priorities for all schools.

The Safe Routes to School Program is off to a great start because of the parents and schools who want better for their children, the advocates who are dedicating their time to where their hearts are, and the State Coordinators for whom this is not just a job but a way to improve the lives of schoolchildren. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you in our collective quest to further the ability for children to safely walk and bicycle to school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Marchetti". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Marchetti
Director





About the Federal Safe Routes to School Program

Through the 2005 passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Congress designated a total of \$612 million toward developing the National Safe Routes to School Program. The Program provides funds to the States to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely.

Each State administers its own program and develops its own procedures to solicit and select projects for funding. The program establishes two distinct types of funding opportunities: infrastructure projects, such as engineering improvements, and non-infrastructure related activities, such as education, enforcement and encouragement programs.

Key Milestones of the Federal Program

All 50 States name an interim or full-time SRTS coordinator

Each State is responsible for hiring a full-time Safe Routes to School State Coordinator to implement a SRTS statewide program. In April 2007, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had an interim or full-time Coordinator in place.

National SRTS Task Force established

The Task Force, which will study and develop a strategy for advancing Safe Routes to School programs nationwide, includes an impressive representation of the many disciplines within Safe Routes to School.

\$94.5 million committed for SRTS programs

As of June 2007, 29 States had announced funding for local or statewide SRTS activities and 686 schools are participating in state-funded SRTS programs. All 50 States and the District of Columbia have SRTS programs in various stages of progress.

“One of the biggest thrills I get is planting the seed of an idea in a community; being the catalyst for their change.”

– Safe Routes to School State Coordinator

Snapshots from Across the Country

With the existence of Federal Safe Routes to School funding, there are SRTS programs springing up across the country. All 50 States and the District of Columbia have Safe Routes to School programs at some stage of readiness, whether it's through programs active on the ground or progress on establishing an application to distribute the funds. As of June 2007, 29 States had announced funding for local or statewide SRTS activities. Here are just a few snapshots of the types of Safe Routes to School activities taking place as a result of the Federal funding.

“Walking Wednesdays” encourage increased participation

Several elementary and middle schools in Waltham, Massachusetts are using weekly walking events to spur more walking to school. One school experienced an increase from 21% to 53% of students walking to school on those days.

Engineering connections within a rural community

Safe Routes to School Federal funds paved the way for the first-ever sidewalk in Joyce, Washington. The sidewalk provided much needed connectivity between Crescent School, the community and surrounding neighborhoods.

Increasing education and encouragement

The City of Alexandria in Virginia will distribute Federal funds to one middle school and four elementary schools for various education and encouragement activities. Each school must participate in the annual Walk to School Day and conduct before and after evaluation to measure the success of the various program aspects.

Working with community organizations to promote SRTS

The South Carolina Safe Routes to School Program partnered with the Palmetto Cycling Coalition and local FOX affiliate WACH-TV to produce a series of television public service announcements.

Improving infrastructure surrounding schools

With Federal funds awarded to the City of Chula Vista in California, two elementary schools will receive improvements including curb extensions, setback limit lines, prominent crosswalk zebra striping, ADA-complaint pedestrian ramps and non-slip sidewalk grating.



Bridging the Data Gap

In its effort to support communities in developing successful SRTS strategies, the National Center for Safe Routes to School works to equip programs with the tools to evaluate their SRTS activities.

Evaluation is a critical component to the success of Safe Routes to School at all levels. The Center understands the importance of determining SRTS strategies that are both realistic and effective. Programs must monitor which strategies are increasing the number of children safely walking and bicycling to school.

In an effort to collect national-level data on the number of children walking and bicycling to school, the Center developed standardized forms for the collection of student travel data and parental attitudes about students traveling to and from school.

The Center also began development of a Web-based data entry system to collect the Safe Routes to School-related data being collected by programs. Using this information, the Center will be able to establish baseline information from which program elements will be evaluated.



• Read each answer and record the number c
 • Follow the same procedure for the question
 • Please conduct this count regardless of w

Step 1. Fill in the weather conditions and number of students in class each day

	Weather S= sunny R= rainy C= cloudy S= snow	Number of Students (in class when count made)	Step 2. Ask student plan to leave for h (answer)	
			Walk	Bike
Mon AM				
Mon PM				
Tues AM				
Tues PM				
Wed AM				
Wed PM				

Student In-Class Travel Tally

c. 11 - 20 minutes
 d. More than 20 minutes
 if sure e. Don't know / Not sure

walk or bike to/from school YES NO
 walk or bike without an adult to/from school?
 I would not feel comfortable at any grade)

11. Would you probably let your child walk or bike to/from school if this problem were changed or improved?
 (circle one per line)
 My child already walks or bikes to/from school)

	YES	NO	Not Sure

Parent Survey

To access the forms, which are also available in Spanish, please visit the NCSRTS Resources Section at www.saferoutesinfo.org/resources.

Surfing the Safe Routes Web

With the launch of the Center's Web site, SRTS program leaders gained access to a comprehensive resource containing expert content, timely resources, SRTS contacts, recent news and technical assistance tools.

Since the launch of the National Center for Safe Routes to School Web site in September 2006:

The Web site has received nearly 60,000 visits and over 275,000 pages of SRTS-related content have been viewed.

Over 550 other Web sites/pages have linked to the Center's Web site.

The most viewed sections of the Web site are the SRTS Guide, the State SRTS Contacts Section, the Resources Section and the Getting Started page.

Approximately 60 percent of users are new to the site and 40 percent are returning users.



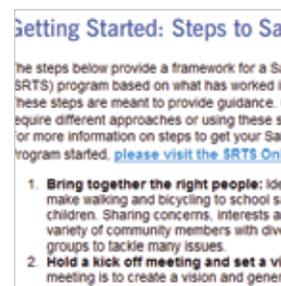
SRTS Guide



State SRTS Contacts



NCSRTS Resources

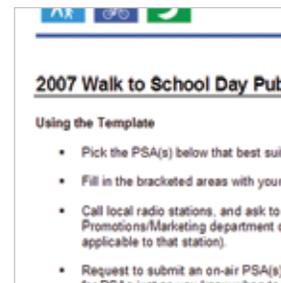
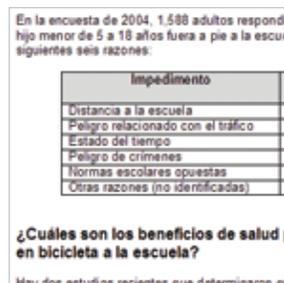


Getting Started

Building a Body of Knowledge

The Center set an ambitious agenda in its first year of operation to build and compile an extensive body of SRTS knowledge. Since its launch, the Center has disseminated the following resources in its continued effort to build the capacity of Safe Routes to School:

- > Web-based Safe Routes to School Library with over 150 entries from SRTS programs across the country
- > Searchable database of over 145 SRTS-related technical questions and answers
- > Series of pedestrian safety educational tip sheets
- > Comprehensive Web-based and print SRTS Guide
- > Template news releases for local and state-level programs
- > Talking points about Safe Routes to School issues
- > Informational flier to give a general overview of program
- > Promotional video on “Why Safe Routes to School Matter”
- > Downloadable Safe Routes to School PowerPoint
- > Customized SRTS program logos for States
- > Tip Sheet series on topics such as working with the media and promoting a SRTS program
- > Standardized national tools for collecting school trip data and parent attitudes
- > Walk to School public service announcements
- > Updated Walkability and Bikeability checklist
- > Training on Safe Routes to School





Making Headlines

With the rise in funding and program movement, news media coverage surrounding Safe Routes to School has seen an increase in the past several years. In an analysis conducted by the Center, the number of U.S. news stories directly relating to Safe Routes to School jumped from 37 in 2000 to 462 in 2006.

NCSRTS worked at all levels to engage the news media and increase coverage for Safe Routes to School. At the local level, the Center provided state and local programs with template media materials. The Center also engaged national media by conducting interviews with media outlets such as *USA Today* and National Public Radio as well as distributing several national news releases.

Promoting SRTS

Recognizing SRTS greatness

The Center established an annual award in the name of Congressman James L. Oberstar, chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and sponsor of SAFETEA-LU. The award will be presented each year to an outstanding Safe Routes to School Program.

Forming promotional partnerships

The Center extended its promotional reach through the development of co-promotional partnerships with for-profit organizations. Working with Lands' End, the Center secured 2000 high visibility backpacks to use as promotional giveaways. The Center continued an existing partnership with Walk4Life pedometers to secure pedometer giveaways for Walk to School events.

Equipping local programs

The Center equipped local and State programs with guidance and tools on how to promote their SRTS programs. The Center developed several resources including tips sheets, template news releases, talking points, an informational video and PowerPoint presentation.



Expanding Walk to School Day

Celebrating its 10th year in the United States, 2006 International Walk to School Day was recognized by schools and communities in all 50 states. More schools than ever before — a total of 2,044 — registered their International Walk to School events on the USA Walk to School Web site (www.walktoschool.org). The Center serves as the coordinating agency for Walk to School activities in the U.S.

Walk to School events extend beyond a single day of celebration. More than 50 percent of 2006 event organizers reported that their Walk to School events resulted in policy or engineering changes that would improve safety for walkers and bicyclists, such as the addition of sidewalks, paths, crosswalks or crossing guards or required safety education.

Additional Highlights of 2006 International Walk to School Day

More than 50% of registered schools conduct walking and/or bicycling promotional activities throughout the year.

Nearly 50% of registered events are part of a Safe Routes to School program.

More than 50% of events included children traveling to school by bicycle.

Media coverage doubled from the 2005 event, with nearly 600 news stories covering Walk to School events.



Countries participating in 2006 International Walk to School Month

- > Argentina
- > Australia
- > Belgium
- > Brazil
- > Canada
- > Chile
- > China
- > Colombia
- > Croatia
- > Cuba
- > Cyprus
- > Czech Republic
- > Fiji
- > France
- > Germany
- > Greece
- > India
- > Ireland
- > Israel
- > Italy
- > Kenya
- > Liechtenstein
- > Malta
- > Mexico
- > Namibia
- > Nepal
- > New Zealand
- > Nigeria
- > Norway
- > Philippines
- > South Africa
- > South Korea
- > Spain
- > Sweden
- > Switzerland
- > Taiwan
- > Turkey
- > United Kingdom
- > United States



"The excitement of seeing the students and their parents walk was breathtaking. We had a student that has braces on her legs walk with her father. Her father drove his car to an adjoining neighborhood so they could walk together. Her smile and his was worth every minute it took to plan the event."

– Walk to School event organizer

Helping Build Capacity through Training

To support capacity building efforts by State SRTS Coordinators, NCSRTS committed to providing a free training or promotional service to every state. As of June 2007, 18 States had been served in this capacity. Some States received the SRTS National Course, either for State-level stakeholders or for communities that have received State program funds.

Other States have opted to build a team of instructors to teach the course in their states. These teams of instructors participated in a multi-day National Course Instructor Training. Since established, the Center has held three such multi-day National Course Instructor Trainings.

Since the first course deliveries in 2005, the SRTS National Course has been widely taught and used. A recent NCSRTS survey of all Course instructors revealed that instructors are reaching key audiences. For example, over one-half were addressing traditionally underserved communities and over three-quarters worked with those concerned with unsafe conditions where children are presently walking.



“When talking with communities about SRTS and setting up a program, the course materials — and the teaching of it — is extremely helpful...Thanks for a course well done!”

– SRTS National Course Instructor Training Participant



Offering Technical Assistance

Safe Routes to School Library

The Center maintains a Web-based collection of Safe Routes to School-related materials and documents compiled by practitioners and program leaders.

Question and Answer Database

The Center hosts a searchable database on its Web site with over 180 technical questions and answers relating to Safe Routes to School.

Toll-free line and email

Communities can call 1-866-610-SRTS or email info@saferoutesinfo.org to receive technical advice and guidance for their Safe Routes to School programs.

Supporting a Network of State Coordinators

To support capacity for Safe Routes to School within the United States, NCSRTS works to support the network of Safe Routes to School State Coordinators, the individuals responsible for the coordination and distribution of Federal SRTS funds within their State. To support the Coordinators, the Center assigned a staff liaison to each State and developed an email listserv to facilitate communication. The Center also participates in bi-monthly conference calls with the State Coordinators to field questions, solicit feedback and provide updates on Center activities.

The Center also hosted two meetings to bring together the coordinators, allowing them the opportunity to meet one another and share information about programs in their states. The first meeting was held in August 2006 in Washington, DC and included remarks from Chairman James L. Oberstar. The group continued this networking during the second meeting, held in May 2007 in Denver, Colorado. The Denver meeting was officially kicked off with opening remarks from Colorado Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien and also included a field visit to a Boulder, CO school.



NCSRTS recently conducted a survey of the SRTS State Coordinators to solicit feedback about the Center's performance in its first year. Highlights from the survey, which included responses from 37 Coordinators (73%), include:

In a list of resources and services provided by NCSRTS, the Center's Web site was the most frequently deemed "helpful." The second most "helpful" resource was the SRTS Guide.

On a scale of 1 (does not meet expectations) to 5 (far exceeds expectations), State Coordinators on average rated:

- 4.3 the expertise of NCSRTS staff
- 4.4 the creation of professional-looking, relevant resources
- 4.4 the speed of starting up the Center

Moving Forward

"I am impressed with the amount of information that has been compiled and organized through NCSRTS. I'm sure it has been challenging to try to stay one step ahead of the needs from the states, but keep up the great work!"

– SRTS State Coordinator

Supporting Safe Routes to School at the national level

The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership will be the presenting sponsors of the 1st Safe Routes to School National Conference: Creating, Building and Sustaining Momentum. The conference will be held November 5–7, 2007, in Dearborn, Michigan and will be hosted by the Michigan Fitness Foundation.

Recognizing Safe Routes to School programs

The Center will be selecting the first James L. Oberstar Safe Routes to School Award, which will be presented by Chairman Oberstar in the fall 2007. The first award will recognize a State Department of Transportation that has done an exceptional job of moving forward the Federal Safe Routes to School Program.

Expanding specialized training opportunities

The Center recognizes the need to expand its training to best fit the needs of individual State and local programs. NCSRTS is currently expanding its menu of training options to include "Media Training for SRTS Programs" and "Skills for Local SRTS Program Development." In addition, partnerships are expanding the breadth and reach of training, such as work with the Institute of Transportation Engineers to offer a series of web-based presentations on engineering countermeasures for SRTS.

Building on the foundation of SRTS content

Based on direct feedback from State Coordinators and program leaders in the field, the Center is developing new materials and resources including case studies and tip sheets covering a variety of topics.





About the National Center for Safe Routes to School

The National Center for Safe Routes to School assists communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bike to school. The NCSRTS is maintained by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.



Partners

The National Center for Safe Routes to School is developed in collaboration with a network of national organizations and experts from across the country. Partners in this effort include:

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

America Walks

Governor's Highway Safety Association

Institute of Transportation Engineers

Toole Design Group

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