

Safe Routes to School Task Force to the Secretary of Transportation

Summary of Meeting

April 19, 2007

The second meeting of the National Safe Routes to School Task Force was held on April 19, 2007 at the Holiday Inn Capitol at 550 C Street SC in Washington, D.C. 20024. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am by Donna Smallwood, the Task Force Chair.

In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463), the meeting was open to the public.

Task Force Members Present:

Phyllis Agran, MD, MPH

University of California, Irvine, CA
(Representing American Academy of Pediatrics)

Ms. Barbara Alberson

Chief, State and Local Injury Control Section, CA Department of Health
Sacramento, CA
(Representing State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association)

Mr. Philip Caruso (filling in for Mr. Thomas Brahms)

Institute of Transportation Engineers
Washington, DC

Ms. Sabrina Cruz

Principal, Brichta Elementary School
Tucson, AZ
(Representing Pima County - Tucson Safe Routes to School Program)

Mr. Richard Deal, PE, TE, PTOE

City Traffic Engineer, Monterey, CA
(Representing American Public Works Association)

Ms. Sue Frank

Former Mayor, Raytown, MO
(Representing National Association of Regional Councils)

Ms. Deborah Hubsmith

Coordinator, Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Fairfax, CA

Mr. Michael King

Nelson and Nygaard Consulting Associates
New York, NY
(Representing Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals)

Ms. Lauren Marchetti

Director, National Center for Safe Routes to School
UNC Highway Safety Research Center
Chapel Hill, NC

Ms. Refilwe Moeti

Public Health Advisor, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services
Atlanta, GA

Scott Osberg, PhD

Director of Research, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
Washington, DC

Mr. Robert Ping

SRTS Program Director, Oregon Bicycle Transportation Alliance and Willamette
Pedestrian Coalition
Portland, OR

Ms. Sharon Roerty

Director of Community Programs, National Center for Bicycling and Walking
Maplewood, NJ

Ms. Donna Smallwood, Chair of Task Force

Operations Manager, MassRIDES
Boston, MA

Ms. Leslie Thompson

Planner, Nashville Area MPO
Nashville, TN

(Representing Tennessee's Safer Routes to School Advisory Council)

Mr. Roger Wentz

Executive Director, American Traffic Safety Services Association
Fredericksburg, VA

Ms. Dale Ann Wright

Officer, West Valley City Police Department
West Valley City, UT

Designated Federal Official:

Tim Arnade

Safe Routes to School Program Manager
Office of Safety
Federal Highway Administration

Support Staff:

Chris DeWitt, Meeting Facilitator, Vanasse Hangen Bruslin, Inc. (VHB)

Jennifer Toole, Toole Design Group

Jennifer Hefferan, Toole Design Group

Others present for all or a portion of the meeting were:

Joe Pelaia, Maryland SRTS Coordinator

Leah Preiss, NHTSA

Gabe Rousseau, FHWA

Tim Torma, EPA

Christine Wells, RBA Group

John Z. Wetmore, Perils For Pedestrians

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 11, 2007 MEETING

Ms. Smallwood directed participants' attention to the minutes from the previous task force meeting. The members of the Task Force informally agreed to approve the minutes from the first meeting.

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Ms. Smallwood described the statement of work for the meeting and indicated that it was a "stretch goal." The statement of work for the meeting was as follows:

The purpose of this meeting is to quickly review the outcome from the last meeting and then to finalize/reach consensus on the national strategy for advancing SRTS and the outline for the task force report. At the end of this meeting, the consultants should have sufficient information to develop a draft report.

Ms. Smallwood also reviewed the Task Force meeting ground rules. The rules were the same as those used at the last meeting:

- Focus on issues and not positions
- Stay on topic
- Ask for clarification
- Listen
- Show respect
- Seek consensus

ETHICS REMINDER

Tim Arnade reminded the members of the Task Force about the prohibition on lobbying while conducting government business. If a Task Force member engages in lobbying, it must be on his or her own time and they cannot represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the Task Force. For appearance sake, Task Force members should not lobby Congress on Task Force meeting days (i.e. before the meeting starts or after the meeting ends), even if in an otherwise allowable private capacity. All members were appointed to the Task Force in a "representative" status and serve as representatives of outside entities or groups.

CONTINUATION OF FACILITATED DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIES TO ADVANCE SRTS PROGRAMS NATIONWIDE

Ms. Smallwood and Chris DeWitt facilitated discussion among the Task Force members. Discussion covered the topics below:

- Who is the audience/what is the purpose of the report?
- What is a national strategy?

- Brainstorm potential national strategies
- Refine/develop consensus on potential national strategies

Who is the audience for the Task Force report? / What is the purpose of the report?

After considerable discussion, consensus was reached that Congress is the primary audience for this report. The main purpose of the document is to inform members of Congress and to convince them to continue to fund this program through the transportation bill. The secondary audience for this report consists of other types of stakeholders, such as local and state legislators, State DOT's, national and local advocacy groups, local coordinators, etc. Although the report should be written primarily to inform Congress, it should also educate the secondary audience. The report must be kept simple and concise, and should acknowledge that most members of Congress won't read more than the first few pages. It was agreed that it will be important to provide an executive summary that will work as a stand-alone document. In addition to informing Congress, the purpose of the report is to set a national vision for the future of the program, and to ensure its continuation in the next transportation bill.

What is a national strategy?

A discussion ensued regarding what is a national strategy and the vision/goals for the future of the program. A question was asked about whether SRTS should remain the responsibility of the Federal Highway Administration, or whether the SRTS program should be housed in a different department. The group came to a consensus that this program should remain a transportation (USDOT) program and should continue to maintain the dual, primary goals of safety and mode shift, while also continuing to espouse the many other benefits (health/wellness, air quality, community partnerships, etc) that this program can bring to communities. The report should begin from a position of strength, i.e. recognizing Congress for doing an outstanding job with the original legislation, before we move into the recommendations of the report. Remaining with the USDOT keeps a strong focus on transportation, which is very important if this program is to continue to be funded with transportation dollars.

Mr. Arnade mentioned some logistics regarding the Task Force report. Since it must be transmitted to Congress by the Secretary, it will likely take several months once it's completed for U.S. DOT to review and analyze it and secure the Secretary's signature. The Task Force report is most likely from now more than a year away from being released to Congress.

Following discussion of the Task Force report, there was significant discussion of some of the challenges to SRTS. There are many policies that result in schools where a majority of students do not have the opportunity to walk or bike to school, for example, magnet schools, charter schools, open school enrollment, No Child Left Behind, etc. All of these fall outside of USDOT responsibility and many are local issues. Consensus was reached that these would be addressed in the report only if a way could be found to address these issues without creating unnecessary red flags. One way to say this might be something like, "We believe that neighborhood schools offer the best opportunity for getting more children to safely walk and bike to school. The Task Force observes that a number of forces and trends in the educational marketplace may raise barriers to our stated goals, they include: magnet schools, open school enrollment, No Child Left Behind, charter schools, school busing, etc." Consensus was also reached that the report should not refer to these issues as barriers, but instead should focus on the benefits that neighborhood

schools offer. The report should also note that more attention should be paid to transportation, community, and health aspects in the decision making process for school siting.

Discussion of National Strategies

At the previous meeting, numerous components of a national strategy for advancing SRTS were discussed. The following new potential strategies were briefly discussed, although consensus was not necessarily reached on them:

Create Large Scale Education and Encouragement Programs

Large scale education and encouragement programs should be encouraged at the state and local levels in order to make the most impact with limited funding.

Create New Training Programs

Although numerous training opportunities are currently offered by the National Center for SRTS, the SRTS National Partnership, and others, more training opportunities would help advance SRTS. Training programs are needed for local champions (e.g., a parent, principal or teacher) to educate them on how to start and institutionalize a SRTS program. A learning network would also be useful to help SRTS practitioners, many of whom would benefit from being connected to others facing the same issues. Training would help contribute to the long term sustainability of the SRTS program.

Further Discussion of Strategies Developed during the First Meeting

Develop Effective Methods for Evaluating and Tracking SRTS

After briefly discussing these potential new strategies, the conversation moved to data, which was discussed at the first meeting. After extensive discussion, consensus was reached that we need to use the data we have to support the need to continue the program and that we also need to have a national strategy that recommends collecting more data (safety, exposure, etc) to enable us to measure success in the future. The focus should be on the top two goals from the Federal legislation (safety and mode shift). During this discussion, Deb Hubsmith distributed a copy of a letter she sent to Federal Highway Administrator Richard Capka urging the 2008 Nationwide Household Travel survey to be fully funded and implemented, and requesting the “establishment, by January 1, 2009 of a robust, reliable, consistent, and frequent measure of the use and safety of the non-motorized modes of transportation, including walking and bicycling for school-related travel.”

Require SRTS to be Considered in All State Transportation Plans

(Was: Require SRTS to be a Component in Strategic Highway Safety Plans)

After discussing data, conversation turned to the states’ Strategic Highway Safety Plans. At the last meeting, Task Force members discussed that additional SRTS funding could be acquired as part of each state’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Members concluded that SRTS should remain an independent, free-standing program. At this meeting, the discussion went further. Since SRTS is part of the larger transportation system, Task Force members discussed that it should be integrated into the workings of each agency. Consensus was reached that the Safe Routes to School program should be complemented by each state’s Strategic Highway Safety

Plan, because it is likely that Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds will be spent on SRTS-related projects in many states. Further, task force members agreed that all of the states' plans (Long Range Transportation Plans, Strategic Action Plans, etc.) should consider SRTS, similar to ADA.

DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT OUTLINE FOR THE TASK FORCE REPORT

Task Force members then took a break from discussion of the National Strategies to discuss the Draft Outline for the Task Force Report. Conversation covered the general message that the report should convey as well as specific discussion about the report outline. Task Force members discussed that the fundamental message of the report should be trying to change how children get to school. The report should serve as a catalyst for larger changes by increasing the awareness of how children get to school, and how this affects other issues including health, the environment, traffic, and safety. The report should offer a strong vision statement.

As discussed earlier, there were multiple goals in the legislation for this program. The success of the SRTS program relative to fuel consumption, traffic, air pollution, etc. will be difficult to measure and even more difficult to attribute to a specific program such as SRTS. The potential for not making progress on these goals is high. As a result, the report should focus on finding data, examples, and testimonials to show how this program has successfully increased safety for children walking and bicycling to school and has resulted in increases in the numbers of children walking and bicycling. The report can include information on the sub-goals, but the two main goals should be the focus. The information presented to show program success does not necessarily need to come from scientific research studies. Showing results from walkability checklists before and after program implementation may also be effective. Stories or case studies about the successes at programs around the country will also be beneficial. A variety of stories can convey the success of the program in different areas. For example, one story might describe an overweight student who lost weight through walking to school. Another story might tell of a school that successfully reduced speeding near the school as part of their SRTS program. Each story or case study might mention the partners that worked together to create the success.

There was discussion of the order in which the elements of the report should appear. After discussion of this, it was decided that the report should be framed to answer the following questions: what, why, and how. It will be easy to reorder the elements of the report as we move forward, so right now the focus of Task Force member comments should be on report content, not order.

It was mentioned that the Vision Statement should be the first item readers see. The Vision Statement should be very strong and crafted to capture readers' interest. A possible item for the appendix would be a map showing a quick snapshot of progress in each state. For example, the map might show number of children that participated in Walk to School Day by state.

The draft outline that was discussed is copied below. Comments on specific portions of the outline will follow and will reference the roman numerals, letters and numbers from the outline.

- I. Executive Summary
- II. The Assignment (Context)
 - A. History of SRTS
 - B. SAFETEA-LU and SRTS
 - C. Legislative mandate and scope for the Task Force
- III. Assessing Data
 - A. Data on the numbers of children, including those with disabilities, who walk and bicycle to school
 - B. Data on the safety of walking and bicycling to school
 - C. Data on the health benefits of walking and bicycling to school
 - D. Data on traffic congestion near schools
 - E. Data on reductions in fuel consumption related to walking and bicycling to school
 - F. Data on air pollution in the vicinity of schools
- IV. Program Successes
 - A. Tracking state progress
 - 1. Number of states with full time coordinators
 - 2. Amount of funding that has been awarded
 - B. Demonstrated demand for SRTS programs
 - 1. Document the amount that requests for funding exceed the funding available
 - 2. Document the growth in interest in SRTS programs
 - 3. Document the diversity of stakeholders that have embraced SRTS
 - C. Early success stories (Geographically diverse)
- V. Program Impediments
 - A. Difficulties in establishing programs quickly (Comparison with Transportation Enhancement program)
 - B. Resources still needed
 - C. Limited funding
- VI. Future Vision (Need a concise statement)
- VII. National Strategy for Advancing SRTS
 - A. The two main goals from the SAFETEA-LU legislation remain:
 - 1. Increased safety of children walking and bicycling to school
 - 2. Increased numbers of children walking and bicycling to school
 - B. Related goals:
 - 1. Improved health of school children
 - 2. Improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools
 - 3. Increased community participation
 - C. Components of the National Strategy
 - 1. Ensure that the current SRTS program is implemented to its full potential
 - 2. Continue federal support for SRTS in the upcoming transportation bill
 - 3. Strengthen the SRTS program (all strategies with consensus at the last meeting are listed below)
 - a) Fully engage other key partners at the federal, state, and local levels
 - b) Develop national standards/guidance for SRTS
 - c) Develop effective methods for evaluating and tracking SRTS
 - d) Develop different performance measures for different types of SRTS programs

- e) Develop a strategy for facilitating small projects
- f) Point stakeholders to additional sources of funding
- g) Develop a national marketing/outreach campaign for SRTS
- h) Adopt strategies that were successful in other countries
- i) Address the issue of school siting

I. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be written in such a way that it can serve as a stand-alone document.

III. Assessing Data

This portion of the report will use the data that we currently have to support the need to continue the SRTS program. It will offer a progress report of what has been accomplished. This section should be given a more precise name in order to convey its purpose. Consider calling the section, “Need for the Program.” Statistics and stories will be used, as available, to present what the program has accomplished so far relative to IIIA through IIIF.

IV. Program Successes

This purpose of this section is to go beyond the information presented in the previous section. This section would provide a snapshot of the implementation of the SAFETEA-LU SRTS program. The “early success stories,” should include economic and demographic diversity. This section should also include information on what is taking place in all 50 states and DC, and how the program has led to increased collaboration at the state level and community level by diverse parties including cities and schools.

V. Program Impediments

Consider renaming to “Program Challenges.”

VI. Future Vision

Consider renaming this section “Our Vision” or “Vision Statement” and moving it earlier in the report.

VII. National Strategy for Advancing SRTS

Items A and B should be moved earlier in the report.

CONTINUATION OF TASK FORCE DISCUSSION

Further Discussion of Strategies Developed during the First Meeting

After discussing the draft outline for the Task Force report, the Task Force focused again on National Strategies for advancing SRTS. The Task Force started with the last topic on the list from the previous minutes, and began to move in reverse order through the list of potential national strategies from the previous meeting. The purpose was to have further discussion on each strategy, and to come to some consensus as to whether they should be on the list.

Research Programs in Other Countries

Before the next meeting, the Consultant will compile a “scan” of information on how other countries sustain the SRTS program including funding levels, and how the program has been institutionalized. The research will not be limited strictly to SRTS but will also include other walking/biking initiatives. This will not be exhaustive, time-consuming research, but rather a gathering of information that is easily available. The Consultant will compile more than a list, but less than a narrative report. The Consultant will send the information to the Task Force members about four weeks ahead of the next meeting. Task Force members will then be invited to add any additional information they may have.

Address the issue of school siting

After significant discussion, consensus developed that school siting is important to include in the Task Force report, even though it falls outside of US DOT responsibility. Funding for school construction far outweighs funding for SRTS, so it is vital that school siting be addressed. Task Force members agreed that they would like to see Congress direct someone to develop educational materials on school siting as it relates to transportation costs and SRTS. States should also be directed to address this issue. The US Postal Service may serve as an example for school siting because new US Post Offices are once again being located on Main Streets. Task Force members indicated that it is important that school siting take place in conjunction with land-use planning. Consider funding projects that bring together different partners to talk about school siting.

After discussing school siting, a break was taken for Public Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS TAKEN AT THE MEETING

Public comments were taken at 2:45 pm. John Wetmore gave a statement. He recommended that Task Force members take a look at the National Bicycling and Walking Study because it has similar goals to the SRTS program. The study might have information that would help guide the work of the SRTS Task Force. He also recommended that the report should have pictures with people in them wherever possible. Even better would be to have photos taken by children.

Mr. Wetmore also said that it was important to know how to define success. Even if a program doesn't result in more children walking, it is still successful if the children who are walking have an improved walking experience as a result of the program, for example, walking on new sidewalks rather than in the mud. These success stories are important and might not show up in the data.

Mr. Wetmore also emphasized the importance of school siting. There are good examples of school siting, for example, South Carolina has eliminated minimum acreage requirements. He recommended applying the model of collaboration to school siting as part of the national strategy. His comments closed with a remark that in the U.S. incentives work better than disincentives. SRTS will work best if there is a focus on the benefits of walking and on making walking more attractive.

CONTINUATION OF TASK FORCE DISCUSSION

Performance Measures

After public comments, the task force conversation focused on performance measures. Task Force members discussed whether performance measures should be tied into the SRTS legislation. It was discussed that other transportation programs do not have performance measures tied into their legislation. Rather than including the specific performance measures and goals into the legislation, a US DOT might include them in a policy. Consensus was reached that performance measures should not be separated out as a stand-alone strategy in the Task Force Report. Instead, each strategy in the Report should be accompanied with its own performance measure. This will strengthen the strategies.

NEXT STEPS

The conversation then moved to next steps. Task Force members indicated concerns about meeting planning. Due to difficulties in getting to meetings, some members expressed a preference for a two-day meeting. There would be a full day meeting on the first day and on the second day the meeting would adjourn in the early afternoon. If absolutely necessary (and as a last resort), Task Force member said they would be willing to have the second day of the meeting occur on a Saturday. They hope to avoid meeting and/or traveling on a Sunday. In order to schedule the next several meetings, Task Force members will be asked for the dates they are not available to attend a meeting from June 2007 to March 2008. Numerous meeting dates will be blocked off in order to maintain Task Force member availability, but it is possible that not all of the meeting dates will be necessary.

In the future, it would be possible to have a conference call (in accordance with Federal Advisory Committee Act requirements) to get feedback on some aspects of the draft report. One possibility that was discussed would be to have a conference call to discuss the draft report outline ahead of the next meeting to explain the work that had been done. (Task Force organizational meetings do not trigger the FACA open meeting requirement. However, if the Task Force members plan to debate and discuss content, then it does trigger the opening meeting requirements.) This would serve to remind members of the Task Force of the progress that was made at the previous meetings. Alternatively, the Consultants could distribute the draft report outline (or draft report when it is ready) to the Task Force members and ask for comments. Task Force members would then send comments to the Consultant, who would compile the comments and bring them to the next meeting for discussion. A goal for the next meeting would be to discuss strategies that have not yet been discussed (strategies will be broken out into those that have already been discussed and those that have not). Another goal for the next meeting would be to provide comments on draft materials received.

Draft Outline/Draft Report

Ahead of the next meeting, the Consultant will revise the draft report outline according to the comments received. The outline will be annotated to clearly explain the intent of each section (for example, the annotation will describe whether a section is the “what”, “why”, or “how”).

The Consultant will also begin drafting portions of the report. In drafting portions of the report, the Consultant will leave placeholders for the strategies that have not yet been discussed.

International Research

As mentioned previously, the Consultant will send out information on national strategies to advance SRTS in countries outside the United States. This information will be distributed to the Task Force members about four weeks ahead of the next meeting. Task Force members will then be invited to add any additional information they may have.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

 JUN 21 2007
Donna Smallwood
Chair, National Safe Routes to School Task Force

 JUN 21 2007
Tim Arnade
Designated Federal Official for National Safe Routes to School Task Force
Office of Safety, Federal Highway Administration

These minutes will be formally adopted by the task force at its next meeting.