

Safe Routes to School Task Force to the Secretary of Transportation

Summary of Meeting

September 25 and 26, 2007

The third meeting of the National Safe Routes to School Task Force was held on September 25 and 26, 2007 at the Warwick Denver Hotel, located at 1776 Grant Street in Denver, CO 80203. The meeting was called to order on September 25th 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)

Ms. Kristen Bennett (filling in for Mr. Michael King)

City of Colorado Springs, CO
(Representing Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals)

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

Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Fairfax, CA

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. Donna Smallwood, Chair of Task Force
Operations Manager, MassRIDES
Boston, MA

Ms. Leslie Meehan (Formerly 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:

Mr. Tim Arnade
Safe Routes to School Program Manager
Office of Safety
Federal Highway Administration

Support Staff:

Mr. John Dewar
State and Local Program Team Leader
Office of Safety
Federal Highway Administration

Ms. Jennifer Toole, Toole Design Group

Ms. Jennifer Hefferan, Toole Design Group

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

Kendra Holmes, SafeRoads Coalition/Bicycle Colorado

Tuesday, September 25th

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 19, 2007 MEETING

Donna Smallwood asked Task Force (TF) members if there was consensus that the minutes from the last meeting should be approved. Members indicated that there was consensus, although Deb Hubsmith pointed out that the minutes from the last meeting indicated that consensus had not been reached on whether to provide a large-scale education program, but that discussion from the first meeting had indicated that consensus on that item had been reached.

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Donna Smallwood indicated that the purpose of this meeting is to make progress on the content of the TF report. She gave an overview of the meeting format and explained that there would be small working groups, with an opportunity for each group to bring their ideas to the entire group for discussion.

She then reviewed the ground rules for the meeting, which are the same as those used at previous meetings.

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

She also suggested one addition to the ground rules:

- It is important for everything to be said, but it isn't necessarily important for everyone to say it.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT REPORT

Jennifer Toole gave a brief overview of the draft report. She stressed that this is a working draft and that some sections of the draft are more complete than others. The TF ended the last meeting with a very long list of strategies. In reviewing these, the Consultant realized that some of the strategies were more comprehensive, while others were sub-strategies. This draft report attempts to organize the list into a more logical order and hierarchy. Chapter 6 (National Strategy) is still in skeletal form. Jennifer explained that the purpose of this meeting is to determine if the structure and content of the strategies is on target, to add and subtract as necessary, and to further develop the details of the strategies.

Jennifer also explained that this report is purposely brief. This draft reflects an understanding that members of Congress (the audience) may have a limited amount of time to spend reading this report. Jennifer explained that the Final TF Report would be a glossy, graphic-designed document, with numerous sidebars, quotations, and photographs of children walking and biking to school.

INITIAL TASK FORCE MEMBER REACTIONS TO THE DRAFT REPORT

Each member of the TF was asked to highlight one area in which the draft report is on target. The following are the TF members' responses:

- This draft brings all of the different players to table.
- Impressed with the job the Consultant did on the report. The draft is good and focused.
- The collection of comments and input from the field (state coordinators) was very helpful.
- The tone and energy of the document made the draft readable.

- Like page 7 of the draft as well as chapters 3 and 4. Especially like the overview of data on emissions, etc and the paragraph on the diversity of stakeholders involved in SRTS programs.
- Like that the draft focuses in on the “trees” but also the “forest.” Also thankful that the draft took the TF members’ thoughts and formed them into a vision and goals.
- This is a good outline, looking forward to adding more to this report.
- The draft is a good overview and it is helpful to read what the state coordinators said.
- Looking forward to incorporating the international data into this report.
- Really like the draft, especially sections 3 and 4.
- Particularly like that there were options for potential vision statements.
- Overall the structure is great. The draft is a great start, and the program challenges section is particularly good.
- Like the beginning of the draft, especially the section on the beginnings of SRTS in Denmark. It was also striking to find out that \$1 million (the minimum yearly apportionment for states with smaller enrollment figures) is often only enough to fund one mile of sidewalk.
- The program challenges piece was very good, it was matter of fact, but non-accusatory.
- Particularly appreciated the broad view that the report took.

Each TF member was also asked to identify one area in which the draft report needs more work. The following were the TF members’ responses:

- Would like the section on the need for the program to be strengthened, such as the health benefits of walking and bicycling. For example, there is a need to clarify that the report is referring specifically to Type II diabetes. There is also a need to make sure that the data are particularly related to children. Also, the research on the association between walking and academic performance is not yet conclusive.
- Move these elements of Strategy 4 to Strategy 3: fund research on health of kids who walk as opposed to take the bus, and fund definitive research on walking and academic performance.
- The “Need for the Program” section is powerful but data can back-fire. This section should be reorganized. It would be better to start with how many children used to walk and bike to school, then to cover safety. Bring health and obesity closer to the top of the list. There are also other specific data points that can be added.
- The report recommends diversifying support for SRTS among other funding sources but it should also state clearly that the bulk of the money will always be through transportation funds.
- Like the structure of the goals but this is an area that can be improved to leave a legacy. Where it relates to funding, the tone in the “Program Challenges” section may need work.
- There is a need to better explain the context of data that are presented in the report. Quality of life is also a very important component and a good selling point of SRTS programs.
- Recommend revising Vision statement language. Environmental justice and the costs of school transportation are negatively impacting the ability of school districts to fund school education. There may be other data demonstrating improved mental health/socialization related to walking to school.

- This program should be expanded to K-12, not just K-8. The report should include more about equity and how to reach low income communities. The report should also address evaluation and reporting, and make it a requirement of the next round of SRTS legislation. The report should also recommend providing liability immunity for SRTS programs.
- Appreciate the previous comment about needing context for the data in the report. For example, on page 4, there is a need to look at the context of the data on child injuries related to school walking trips. Chapter 4 has great potential if it can highlight what has gone right.
- The Vision for SRTS is to create safe, walkable communities. The report should not focus just on creating walkable school environments, but should create safe, walkable communities. The report should also address developmental aspects of children related to walking and bicycling. For example, SRTS programs should not encourage Kindergartners to walk to school alone. The report should also incorporate children with disabilities. Strategy 4 should be called “Challenges and Opportunities” instead of “Overcoming Barriers.” It may be impossible to prove that SRTS reduces obesity, therefore strategy 4 may need to be broadened or reframed.
- There some missing elements in this draft. Sense of community should be addressed since children may not feel civic ownership. The report should mention that SRTS programs may result in violence prevention, and that getting more kids walking may result in increased safety for everyone.
- The term “mode shift” may be too divisive to include in this report. If mode shift is included in the report, it should be less prominent. Since 34% of parents cite traffic-related danger as preventing them from allowing their children to walk to school, perhaps the report can include a section on addressing parental concerns such as crime. This draft includes a citation about traffic congestion and school-related trips. The citation is from England where the modal mix is different than in the U.S. and therefore this research may not be transferable. The report could also include standards for walkable communities and include standards for retrofits as well as for new communities.
- The report should expand on stranger danger because parents are very concerned about this issue. The report should also talk generally about the children’s sedentary lifestyles.
- The report should create a realistic portrayal of the dangers related to SRTS and should dispel perceptions that are not accurate. The report should also consider schools and communities that cannot afford to spend money on projects up front and wait for reimbursement. Related to page 5 and the section about reduction of fuel consumption, idling vehicles are a big problem, especially when parents arrive early to pick up their children.
- The report should strengthen Strategy 4.

Tim Arnade noted that all citations listed in the report need to be very carefully vetted. For example, in fact checking the data on Odense, Denmark in the current draft it was found that the data is inaccurate. This will be corrected for the next draft.

One of the TF members asked a question: given that Title 23 makes it difficult for some communities to use SRTS funding, will this report be timely enough to address that? How much emphasis should the report put on this issue? Tim Arnade responded that this report can and

should address the challenges resulting from the Federal-aid requirements placed on the funding. He cautioned that it is unlikely that this aspect of the legislation will change. The report might suggest strategies for overcoming the challenges Federal-aid requirements present for communities. For example, states can issue statewide contracts for infrastructure. In these cases, communities can apply for grants. A statewide contractor installs the infrastructure improvements at schools throughout the state and does all the work necessary to fulfill Federal-aid requirements.

A TF member added a further comment on children with disabilities. Many of these children will never have an opportunity to drive a car. SRTS can be sold as a way to help them acquire skills they will use for the rest of their lives.

REPORT CONTEXT

Tim Arnade gave an overview of the context of the draft report considering the current discussions about transportation spending priorities among Congress and the USDOT. He directed TF members to recent press articles on this topic, and provided an overview of the debate concerning the future of the Highway Trust Fund. This is particularly relevant because the report will be submitted to the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary will submit the report to Congress, and therefore it is important for the TF to understand these issues.

SMALL WORKING GROUPS

The TF members were divided into three small working groups to discuss major portions of the draft report in more detail. After these “break-out sessions,” each working group reported back to the TF with their input on the topic, and the TF had the opportunity to discuss these issues as a whole. The working groups were assigned to discuss the following portions of the draft report:

Group 1: Report Vision, Goals, and Title

Group 2: Strategies 1 and 2

Group 3: Strategies 3, 4 and 5

A summary of the discussion is provided below.

Group 1: Report Vision, Goals, and Title

The following is the vision statement created by the group:

Safe Routes to School will result in increasing numbers of school children safely walking and bicycling to school, thereby resulting in a healthier school-age population, an improved environment, and an enhanced quality of life in our communities.

Goals:

- 1) Safety:
 - a. No child pedestrian/bicycle deaths or injuries on the journey to and from school.
 - b. Every school child and parent in the U.S. will be provided with walking and bicycling safety training.

- c. Public infrastructure will provide a safe walking and biking environment.
- 2) Health:
 - a. Enable children to get the recommended daily allowance of physical activity
 - b. Reduce childhood obesity and related health conditions
 - c. Mitigate childhood health conditions (i.e., asthma) through improved air quality
 - d. (Park idea of Strategic Highway Safety Plan)
- 3) Quality of Life:
 - a. Socialization
 - b. Independence
 - c. Self-reliance
 - d. Fun
 - e. Sense of Community (knowing your neighborhood physically and socially)
- 4) Environment:
 - a. Reduce congestion and improve air quality
 - b. Reduce fuel consumption and minimize carbon footprint
- 5) Travel Choice:
 - a. Improve public infrastructure so that parents and children can choose alternate means of travel such as walking, bicycling, skating, skate boarding, or scootering.
 - b. Establish school siting criteria and other policies that reduce travel distances and enable walking and bicycling to school
 - c. Opportunities for walking and bicycling to school should be key criteria in selecting sites for charter and magnet schools.

Title: Safe Routes to School: A National Strategy for Dramatic Improvement in the Health and Safety of American School Children

Note: Include Congressman Oberstar's quote about converting America from a hydrocarbon economy to a carbohydrate economy as a sidebar/quote in the front of the report.

Task Force Member Discussion on Group 1's Work

Title

One TF member commented that they liked the new title, but asked whether the working group looked at the title through the lens of this being a USDOT program. Another TF member liked the energy in the title. Regarding one suggested title (National Strategy for Saving Childrens' Lives) – the TF felt that this was far too broad.

Vision

The vision has all the right elements, but does not stress safety enough – which is key for transportation agencies. One of the highest goals in USDOT transportation policy is congestion relief. The report should make sure that SRTS programs are seen as part of the solution to traffic congestion. This is something that is currently not measured well. A TF member asked whether some sort of legacy statement should be included. It was discussed that there is a need to tie the vision to effects that are directly measurable, such as physical activity, rather than obesity. Also, increasing physical activity speaks to recommendations from the Surgeon General and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In writing the next draft of the report, the Consultant will attempt to include all of these elements in the Vision statement while working to make the statement as brief and powerful as possible.

Goals

It was noted that the draft specifies that training should be age-appropriate but that Group One's work took that part out. A member of Group One explained that the goal doesn't say "age-appropriate" because it is a detail that will be explained in the strategy about training. There was a concern that training should be age-appropriate because currently there is a lot of very age-inappropriate training.

Regarding the goal of no child pedestrian/bicycle deaths, some members of the TF don't think this is feasible because there will always be a death. It was suggested that the goal read "working toward zero deaths". A TF member explained that this goal is based on a trend that started in Sweden, called Vision Zero which has now been picked up by a number of state DOTs. The DOTs acknowledge that they will never reach zero. The reasoning behind this goal is that some states aren't spending their safety money because they have already made reductions in pedestrian/bicyclist deaths. There was discussion that it is acceptable to have a lofty goal, and that not all goals need to be measurable. It was suggested that the goal might be reversed to say "100% safety around schools." This might make the goal compelling and positive.

It was suggested that law enforcement should be mentioned in one of the goals. For example, "public infrastructure and enforcement will provide a safe walking and bicycling environment." Task Force members agreed that there should be a sub-goal around law enforcement.

A TF member recommended adding personal safety as another goal under the quality of life category. This goal would address bullying, vacant lots, crime prevention, gangs, etc. It was also suggested that the goals should mention the need for a complete network of safe infrastructure. The reasoning behind this suggestion is that just because one new sidewalk is built at a school, there might still be nine other routes traveled by students that don't have sidewalks or otherwise are hazardous.

It was suggested that "carbon footprint" might be a term that doesn't have meaning to the general public, or that the report's audience might not want to hear. It was recommended that universal accessibility should be included in the vision of goals, for example, "alternate and accessible means of travel."

Group 2: Strategies 1 and 2 from the Draft Report

This group was happy with how Strategy 1 from the draft report was framed, "Ensure that the current Federal-aid SRTS program is implemented to its full potential." Regarding the first bullet under this strategy, "continue to provide assistance to States to ensure that the full \$612 million is used effectively to support SRTS programs nationwide," the group recommended changing "continue to provide assistance" to "continue to identify and disseminate data, case studies, and promising practices."

The group liked the second bullet under Strategy 1, “Track progress and provide recognition to States that have achieved gains.” Regarding the third bullet, “Provide methods of streamlining States’ implementation and evaluation of the program (one example is the national data entry program that is under development by the National Center for Safe Routes to School and expected to be operational in late September),” the group recommended dividing it in half. One bullet would read, “Share creative operational strategies to reduce state-level implementation challenges.” Another bullet would read “make evaluation a core component of SRTS programs. The group recommended keeping the last bullet under Strategy 1, “Provide national standards/guidance on SRTS programs.”

The group suggested several new bullets under Strategy 1:

- 1) Review and assess common practices that need to be evaluated.
- 2) Create a menu of evidence-based practices for small-scale projects
- 3) Continue very broad-based multi-disciplinary stakeholder involvement at the state and local levels.

Strategy 2 is to “continue and strengthen Federal support for SRTS in forthcoming transportation legislation.” The group liked how this strategy was framed. Regarding which aspects of the Legislation that should remain the same, the group suggested the following:

- 1) Retain the infrastructure/non-infrastructure split
- 2) Continue the Task Force (call it a national advisory committee)
- 3) Retain full-time state SRTS coordinators
- 4) Maintain the SRTS program goals

Regarding which aspects of the Legislations should change, the group liked the suggestions in the draft report to increase the funding, to allow planning grants, and to lighten Federal Aid requirements. The group also discussed the following:

- 1) Matching funds: the group didn’t agree on this topic but some members wanted to allow matching funds while others did not because they did not want matching funds to become a requirement of SRTS projects . One idea the group had was to say, “projects may be funded up to 100%” but also have a required minimum percentage of Federal funding per project.
- 2) Expand eligibility to high schools
- 3) Ask US DOT to develop standardized evaluation data collection tools. These would be required for federal funding and made available for all projects
- 4) Expand eligibility to tribes.
- 5) Identify solutions to liability concerns of schools and/or volunteers.
- 6) Task the national advisory committee to identify issues that require further study and to study them.
- 7) Expand eligibility to include safe routes to bus stops, but provide a cap on the amount of infrastructure spending that can be spent on that (don’t spend non-infrastructure money on safe routes to bus stops)

Task Force Member Discussion on Group 2’s Work

A TF member suggested expanding the role of the SRTS Clearinghouse. It was suggested that the report should recommend a significant public relations campaign targeted at parents and kids, that could be conducted by the Clearinghouse or another entity. One approach to a successful campaign would be for characters that kids know, such as Big Bird, to promote walking and bicycling. Task Force members discussed where a public relations campaign would best fit. Strategy 4 “Overcome barriers to SRTS programs” was suggested, as was Strategy 2, “continue and strengthen Federal support for SRTS in forthcoming transportation legislation.” It was noted that it should fit under Strategy 2 if the intent is to include it in the next round of legislation. It was also noted that there is a need to differentiate between the PR campaign and safety education.

It was suggested that the term mode shift may be a red flag to the report audience and that the term should be avoided. A possible substitute for the term is “travel choices.”

The group discussed recurring costs for program managers and crossing guards. It may be desirable to offer seed money to get such programs started. States or localities might be required to continue to maintain these programs on an ongoing basis. The Federal Guidance strongly discourages funding recurring costs such as crossing guards because of a concern that when the Federal money runs out, and crossing guards are no longer available, it may create an unsafe environment. A TF member commented that if communities are allowed to try it, they may see that it is a viable idea and be more willing to fund it.

The TF discussed whether or not it would be a good idea for the legislation to allow matching funds, for example by changing the federal law to “may fund *up to* 100%,” rather than “shall be 100%.” There was concern that state DOTs might require matching funds and then low income communities would be unable to participate in SRTS programs. Some higher income communities have the same concerns because the communities don’t want to levy new taxes. It was noted that with the Transportation Enhancements program, soft matches (such as time) are easier for communities to provide.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

At 2:45 pm, a break was taken to hear public comments. No members of the public were present and so the TF returned to discussion on Group 2’s work.

CONTINUATION OF SMALL WORKING GROUPS

After returning from the break, members of the TF continued the discussion where it left off, on the topic of whether the legislation should allow matches. It was suggested that one approach would be to say that matches shall be required and lay out conditions for when they would not be required. For example, the legislation could require a 20% match except that when the median income for a community/school is less than a certain threshold, a school is eligible for 100% funding. It was discussed that the free and reduced lunch guidelines are an existing mechanism to identify schools with greater need, and the guidelines could be used to identify schools that should be exempted from providing matches.

Members of the TF agreed that regardless of the decision on whether to allow matches, disadvantaged communities and communities where children are already walking in areas with unsafe traffic conditions should be protected. Discussion then moved to whether there should be a distinction between infrastructure and non-infrastructure regarding matches. Non-infrastructure projects have traditionally been funded at 100% (i.e. the 402 program).

Although members of the TF had not achieved consensus on the topic of matching funds, it was agreed to move on to another topic.

Discussion moved to whether high schools should be eligible for SRTS funding. California found that it made sense to include high schools in SRTS programs. Education and encouragement programs are important on a high-school level. The group agreed that high schools should be included.

Task Force members agreed with Group 2 that SRTS funding should be increased. There was a lengthy discussion of whether the TF report should make suggestions for how much the funding level should be increased. There was discussion about whether recommending a specific funding level would be an asset or a liability in the TF report. Since TF members were of differing opinions about whether the TF should make a general recommendation to increase SRTS funding, or recommend increasing funding by a specific amount, it was decided to revisit this topic tomorrow.

It was suggested that “Get the highest and best use of SRTS funds” be added to the first strategy.

Group 3: Strategies 3, 4, and 5 from the Draft Report

Group 3 presented their work, starting with Strategy 3. The draft report contained four bullets under this strategy and Group 3 agreed with and suggested reorganizing the first three bullets under the Federal, State and local levels. The group wants to see more partners involved in SRTS (and performance measures should reflect this) but didn’t think it was a right to suggest a specific list of stakeholders. This section should address incentives to get other partners involved and should also address how they should be involved and why. The group suggested that a case study could be used to highlight innovative partnerships.

The group wants to be sure that the report does not imply that other funding sources will fund the bulk of SRTS programs. The group suggested that the TF should become a Federal SRTS Advisory Committee. The group also discussed a strategy for sustainability of SRTS programs using a phasing-out approach and creating incentives for communities to find their own funding. The group also discussed the final bullet point under Strategy 3, “Develop different performance measures for different types of SRTS programs that effectively reflect program diversity.” The group suggested that this bullet point may need to be rewritten to clarify that the performance measures address the types of incentive that other (non-transportation) partners will recognize.

The group then gave an overview of their discussion about Strategy 4, “Overcome barriers to SRTS programs.” They recommended changing the title to challenges and opportunities (not barriers – when the word barrier is used, perception becomes reality).

One of the sub strategies under Strategy 4 is to “Address concerns of Education Departments and School Districts.” One of the sub-bullets under this was to fund U.S. research on speed and severity. The group believed that there may already be existing studies on this topic that could be used and that in general, funding specific, individual research projects should not be included in these strategies.

The group liked the draft report’s recommendation to develop resources that address liability. The group discussed that pedestrian-safety education teaches skills that reduce liability risks. It was also noted that in most districts the school accepts liability for students traveling between home and school (which is why some schools have policies against walking and biking).

Regarding the recommendation to, “fund definitive, scientific research on the link between walking and bicycling to school and test scores, and behavioral problems,” the group suggested that data on academic performance should not focus on test scores. The group thought that research on walking and bicycling in relation to behavioral problems would not be scientific.

The group agreed that this strategy should address personal safety in a broader context (strength in numbers), and that the term “stranger danger” should be avoided. Data suggests that stranger abduction is extremely rare. The report should address this issue head on and come up with comparison numbers that are referenced in this report, such as crime rate reduction in the U.S. Stranger danger doesn’t represent the types of fears that parents have in urban areas where they are more concerned with assault, gang violence, dog bites, etc. It was pointed out that when attempting to dispel myths, it is important not to reinforce the same myths. Data-based strategies are preferred.

Regarding the final bullet under Strategy 4, “address policy issues that affect SRTS programs,” the group wanted to highlight that this should be done collaboratively. Since school siting is part of larger issue, it was recommended that it be in its own section in the report. This section should address policies related to school siting, the school environment, community-based schools, etc. As part of this section, a recommendation should be made to provide education for decision makers.

The group suggested that the report should be very cognizant of socio-economic, racial, cultural and literacy issues as well as language barriers, skills and ability levels.

Regarding Strategy 5, “Develop new and compelling programs that support and advance SRTS efforts.” The group agreed with the bullet points in the draft report but desired that this section be very high-level and conceptual in order to leave it open for creativity and development. The group suggested that a national safety curriculum could be drawn from other curriculums that already exist. The group also discussed that children should be empowered to become involved in SRTS programs.

Task Force Member Discussion on Group 3’s Work

A TF member suggested adding municipalities to the sub-bullet under Strategy 4, “Address concerns of Education Departments and School Districts.” Another TF member thought that it

may be presumptuous to assume that the TF can know what issues are of greatest concern to education departments and school districts.

A TF member suggested funding research on conflicts between vehicles/buses and children in school zones. Another TF member suggested that designated school zones (per the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, MUTCD*) tend to be places that already have good engineering measures for pedestrian/bicycle safety and that areas outside the school zone but within the walk zone might need study. Since SRTS funds are applicable for a 2-mile radius around school, maybe that is good suggestion for a study area. Some TF members were not sure whether or not there is existing data available on the severity of car / children crashes. Existing data may all be specific to adults.

It was noted that the Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina, NHTSA, and other organizations are already doing research that will help the SRTS program. For example, a Pedestrian Safety Index is under development. This will be a tool to evaluate which engineering needs are of the highest priority. This tool will provide some liability shield because it gives rationale for why one safety issue was addressed before another.

Task Force members discussed the sub strategy under Strategy 5, “Explore the use of technology to assist with enforcement and encouragement programs.” There was concern that a lot of low technology solutions are very effective, for example, raised rumble strips ahead of crosswalks. Another TF member thought that raised rumble strips would be considered a technology and that maybe the term “technology” should be changed to something else, e.g., “device”, to make that more clear. This particular sub-strategy also includes speed cameras, which are extremely controversial. It was suggested that maybe this section should be broadened to include flashing beacons, speed feedback signs, moveable speed trailers, and other devices.

A TF member made a comment on the sub-strategy, “Address policy issues that affect SRTS programs,” under Strategy 4. It was suggested that the term “policy issues” was too broad and not specific enough. Perhaps the sub-strategy could be “Address land use policy issues.” Land use issues that affect SRTS include school siting, deteriorating urban cores, sprawl, etc. This section should make the points that SRTS is part of a greater societal movement to community-based schools that provide outstanding equal education closer to home and that local school boards currently make decisions without enough knowledge about the true costs of siting schools outside of town, etc.

It was mentioned that the report could make an economic case for neighborhood schools. Tim Torma from the Environmental Protection Agency may be able to provide the TF with some data. The report should recommend that data be gathered on the long and short term impacts of siting schools far from where students live. The impacts should include long term costs and educational effects (for example, money spent on transportation is not spent on education).

A TF member made a general comment that the vision and goals from Group 1 were not linking well to the Strategies developed by Groups 2 and 3. It was mentioned that there are different approaches for how to frame a report Vision/Goals. One strategy creates a hierarchy where every strategy rests underneath a goal. Another approach is to create an over-arching vision and goals

and create free-standing strategies. Each strategy may address one or more goals. It was agreed that in drafting the next version of the report this will be carefully considered.

CONCLUSION OF DAY ONE

Donna Smallwood thanked TF members for their hard work, discussed the agenda for the second day of the meeting, and adjourned the meeting for the day.

Wednesday, September 26th

Donna Smallwood called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

PROPOSED AGENDA

Donna Smallwood gave an overview of the proposed agenda for day 2 of the meeting:

1. Address unresolved issues from Tuesday
 - a. Vision
 - b. Title
 - c. Match
 - d. Liability
 - e. Funding Increase
2. Comments on other sections of draft report
3. Discuss timing for completion of the report
4. Discuss future meeting dates

ADDRESSING UNRESOLVED ISSUES FROM TUESDAY

Vision Statement

Jennifer Toole described some areas where the TF did not reach resolution during the first day of the meeting. She started with the report vision statement. Task Force members had commented that the proposed vision statement was not strong enough with regard to issues of importance to the US DOT such as safety and congestion relief. Task Force members also felt there was a need to tie the vision to outcomes that are measurable.

Jennifer Toole proposed a new potential vision statement, which was then discussed and reworded by TF members into the following statement:

Safe Routes to School programs will provide a safer environment for American youth to walk and bicycle to school, thereby resulting in more children walking and bicycling to school, higher levels of physical activity, less traffic congestion, a cleaner environment, and an enhanced quality of life in our communities.

There was discussion of whether the vision statement should be in the present tense or the future tense. Most thought that since the TF is asking for increased funding, the Vision should be in the future tense.

Report Title

Discussion then moved to the report title. During the first day of the meeting Group 1 recommended the following: Safe Routes to School: A National Strategy for Dramatic Improvement in the Health and Safety of American School Children.

Jennifer Toole presented a few new ideas for report titles, in order to address concerns that TF members had about the suggested title:

- 1) SRTS: A National Strategy to Increase Safety and Physical Activity among American School Children
- 2) SRTS: A National Strategy to Reduce Congestion and Increase Safety around American Schools—Shifting Toward School Trips Fueled by Carbohydrates
- 3) SRTS: A National Strategy to Move Children Safely and Efficiently

Task Force members preferred Title 1. It was suggested that the title might be, “A National Strategy to Increase Safety (or Safe School Travel) and Physical Activity among American School Children.

Task Force members discussed the need to keep the title short and punchy. It was also discussed that it might be better for the title to refer to “American Youth” instead of “American School Children.” In this case, the title would read: A National Strategy to Increase Safety (or Safe School Travel) and Physical Activity among American Youth.

Task Force members agreed that the Consultants should take the group’s comments on Title 1 and make edits to develop the most powerful title.

Matches

During the first day of the meeting, TF members had differing opinions about whether the legislation should allow local matches. There was concern that disadvantaged communities and communities where children are in great danger when walking/bicycling to school need to be protected.

Jennifer Toole presented a possible solution, which was discussed by the TF and was subsequently honed into the following approach:

Allow up to 20% in matching funds for infrastructure projects to stimulate State and local spending (non-infrastructure programs would continue to be funded at 100%). However, provide 100% funding for infrastructure projects serving disadvantaged schools (for example following established guidelines for free and reduced lunch programs) or locations where child pedestrians are at a higher risk of deaths and injuries.

It was suggested that maybe this could be flipped, for example, “funding shall be 100% Federal. Matches may be instituted in areas with 150% of the median income.” Ultimately, TF members felt this solution would not work.

A TF member asked why matches would only be allowed for infrastructure programs and it was explained that typically non-infrastructure programs don’t currently require matches.

It was mentioned that some states only fund programs that institute all five E's (Engineering, Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, and Evaluation) and that other states fund infrastructure projects separately from non-infrastructure projects. Any suggested language recommended for matches should work for states that fund projects either way.

A TF member noted discomfort with trying to measure which communities are disadvantaged and which are not. Some communities don't have money even though the people who live there have high incomes. It was agreed that by focusing in on schools with free and reduced lunch programs, this problem is addressed.

Liability

Task Force members then discussed liability. Jennifer Toole asked the TF to consider whether they thought it realistic to include language in the legislation that would grant immunity to schools participating in SRTS programs. Members were asked to consider whether this really would be desirable in every instance. For example, case law is full of examples where parents notified their school of a safety problem and the school didn't fix it and then a student was killed. In some cases a school will be negligent and it may not be desirable for them to have blanket liability protection.

A TF member indicated that SRTS practitioners are concerned about liability, not just schools. It was suggested that there could be some standards for approved SRTS practices. If a school or practitioner meets the standards they would be immune from lawsuits. An example was given that gun manufacturers were given liability immunity.

Task Force members indicated that this is an issue that many have struggled with. Volunteers, in particular, are at risk for lawsuits. If they knew they were taking a risk, they would likely no longer volunteer. It was asked whether there would be a way to get liability insurance that would cover volunteers. It was mentioned that bicycling events often purchase inexpensive insurance coverage. It was also mentioned that Canada might serve as a model as their national insurance company sponsors their walk and bicycle to school day.

Another TF member noted that this is not a new issue. Hold harmless insurance policies already exist. Safe Kids World Wide might be able to help. It is possible that there may not be a legislative fix. An example was given about playgrounds in California where very good language was crafted but attorneys get around it all the time.

It was mentioned that cities and states accept that even that if they did nothing wrong that they will be sued. Often, the wrongdoer has no money but cities and states do. They accept that because they do have money that they will get sued.

It was mentioned that when a school works with all five E's to address Safe Routes to School that the school limits their liability. It was also mentioned that sometimes when a volunteer signs in at a school, he or she is covered by the school's liability insurance. One of the TF members who works as an insurance agent mentioned that typically an individual's homeowner's insurance will cover them when they volunteer.

Another suggestion was made to tie liability to a national pedestrian/bicycle safety curriculum. For example, if someone is a League of American Bicyclists certified instructor, she is covered by their insurance.

Some TF members felt that the liability issue should not be addressed legislatively, but should rather be moved to the “concerns” chapter. There was no consensus on this issue, one TF member was very concerned that the TF continue to consider whether this should be part of the upcoming legislation.

Jennifer Toole mentioned that her office is working on a “tip sheet” about liability issues as part of their work for the National Center for SRTS that will answer some of the questions raised today. This will be shared with the TF when it is ready.

Funding Amount

Discussion moved to whether the TF report should make a specific suggestion about how much SRTS funding should be provided. If so, what is a logical way to determine the funding amount?

One idea was to use the ratio of funding requested versus funding available (referred to as application ratio) as way to arrive at a number. Another idea was that if the average infrastructure project at a school is \$X, and the goal was to provide one project in each school district within the United States, then \$X would be necessary. Task Force members did not like this approach for a variety of reasons.

It was noted that if the report is going to ask for certain amount of funding, it should somehow tie into the vision statement. If the report requests a set amount of money, it needs to be clarified. If a set amount of money is not presented, then the report should provide some information on latent demand, etc.

It was noted that the SRTS National Partnership has already developed a goal to increase SRTS funding by five fold.

It was suggested that using two measures to create a range might be the most appropriate. For example, the application ratio might be one number in the range. The other number in the range might be the amount of funding necessary to have SRTS programs at a certain percentage of the schools in the country.

Another idea was presented for how to come up with an amount related to costs related to safety problems. For example, X children are killed walking and bicycling to school at \$X cost and every child pedestrian or bicyclist that ends up in the hospital costs \$X.

Another idea is to talk about costs related to lack of physical activity. For example, the report could look at the number of kids walking and bicycling to school in the 60s versus today and discuss the health costs of the decline in that number.

A TF member asked if it is dangerous to use the application ratio since every Transportation program has unmet needs. It was also mentioned that it would be a good idea to ask Congressman Oberstar about his thoughts about what the report should recommend on this topic. For now, the draft report might include a placeholder for the amount of SRTS funding that the TF is requesting. This issue will likely become more clear in the future.

COMMENTS ON OTHER SECTIONS OF THE DRAFT REPORT

Task Force members were provided the opportunity to present any remaining comments they had on the draft report. A TF member suggested removing the requests for research from under Strategy 4. Another TF member suggested that some organizations may be encouraged to do research if the Report recommends it. It was suggested that this recommendation be rephrased to say that research is necessary and should be done by the appropriate agencies. The report should be clear that SRTS funding should not be used for the research. The report may even go so far as to name the agencies that should do the research. It was also suggested that a database of SRTS research could be created.

A TF member mentioned evaluation and that it would be desirable for existing transportation data sources, such as the U.S. Census and the National Household Travel Survey, etc. to be funded and to include data on trips to school and barriers/safety. The TF report could indicate this need. Another TF member mentioned the CDC's Behavior Risk Factors Surveillance Study. This yearly study examines behavior and includes risk factors for physical inactivity. The study can be very helpful for SRTS programs.

A TF member indicated the desire to find a way to link goals with strategies. Another TF member mentioned that the comments from the state SRTS coordinators on the legislation were very helpful and that it might be a good idea to include them in the report.

A suggestion was made for Strategy 5: consider adding a new bullet to address finding low cost solutions. A separate suggestion was made regarding Strategy 3. It was noted that the strategies don't emphasize law enforcement and that this could be added under Strategies 3 and 5. Another suggestion was made in relation to Strategy 3. The strategy names some partners at the Federal, state, and local levels, but the list is not comprehensive. It was suggested that an appendix be created that lists partners and their roles, so that they don't have to be listed here.

Another suggestion was made to vigorously promote the benefits of SRTS as part of the national strategy. It was suggested that partners could help with this so that the funding does not come from SRTS dollars exclusively.

Task Force members felt very strongly that the report should be inclusive of children with disabilities. The document should also include footnotes. It was suggested that the report should be read by someone who is not familiar with SRTS in order to make sure that the report will make sense to members of Congress.

Discussion moved back to Strategy 5. Any national safety education curriculum should defer to existing resources, such as those developed by AAA, NHTSA, Safe Kids, etc. The Strategy

might provide resources for schools to look at the existing curricula and decide which to use. It was noted that many of the existing curricula are not very accessible and that some are costly. Some curricula are currently being evaluated and are showing some real improvements. Any national curriculum should undergo evaluation to ensure effectiveness. A TF member mentioned a study in Miami of a curriculum that was taught in schools and resulted in a significant reduction in children injured/killed. This could be a very compelling argument.

A TF member referred to the section of the draft report on the Need for the Program. The section includes a lot of facts and it was noted that someone who is not knowledgeable about these facts might have difficulty understanding how having more children walking will decrease the number of fatalities/injuries. The layperson may not understand that reducing congestion and conflicts will in fact reduce deaths and injuries. This needs to be explained. Peter Jacobson's "Safety in Numbers Study" should be referenced.

A TF member suggested that the language in the report should be changed throughout the document to reflect the TF's suggestions. For example, the focus of the report should be on increasing physical activity rather than health. It was also suggested that somewhere near the beginning of the report there should be a definition of walking/bicycling that includes scootering, etc. and a definition of schools that specifies grade levels, public/private, etc.

One TF member recommended that the report should not shy away from making some observations even if a full data set is not available. Example: if children are moving from a high-risk mode (auto) to a mode that is lower risk (walking) than safety is increasing. This observation is possible without citing a percentage reduction.

Under Strategy 2, it is important to designate what the Clearinghouse does and strengthen this strategy.

An observation was made that Chapter 2 had a lot of detail about the SRTS program in Odense, Denmark. It would be desirable to see the same detail for US programs. Another recommendation was made that Chapter 3 should talk about livability and sense of community. Bruce Appleyard conducted a study on kids feeling disconnected from their neighborhood. This study should be included.

A TF member suggested that regarding carbon footprints for schools, there should be a way for kids to measure before and after. Additionally, discussion of school siting should also consider the cost of parents' trips (car, maintenance, fuel, etc.). It was suggested that the SRTS Clearinghouse should continue but that the report should provide more guidance on the Clearinghouse's role.

It was suggested that school siting and land use policies are among the most important factors to make or break a SRTS program. This section needs to be very strong and very tactful. The EPA/Smart Growth America/Complete Streets Coalition may be able to help with wording for School Siting section.

The section on personal safety/stranger-danger also needs to be very strong. The section needs to address both perceptions and realities because both affect behavior.

Task Force members discussed whether to put more emphasis on carbon footprinting/ global warming. The example of reductions in driving related to the Atlanta Olympics and the correlating reduction of asthma attacks is a good one. One suggestion was to take the entire number of kids in United States and calculate carbon emissions.

TIMING OF THE REPORT/CONCLUSION

Task Force members discussed the timing for when this report should be received by Congress. Reauthorization hearings will likely begin soon. SAFETEA-LU expires on September 30, 2009 although it is likely that the debate over the next bill will be a long one and that the legislation may be extended.

The group expressed a desire to have the report completed and submitted to USDOT by June 2008. The goal would be to have a complete draft by the November TF meeting, and an even more complete draft (with graphic formatting) by the January TF meeting.

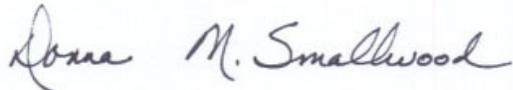
Task Force members were asked to keep holding the following dates for future meetings: November 15 and 16, 2007, January 23 and 24, 2008, and March 4, and 5, 2008. The November meeting has been confirmed and will be held in Washington, DC. The January and March meetings will be confirmed later and it is possible that one of the meetings will be shortened or held as a teleconference instead of an in-person meeting. Task Force members had previously been asked to hold December 11 and 12, 2007 as possible meeting dates, but there will not be a meeting in December.

There was discussion about the fact that the 2008 National Bike Summit will be held Mach 5-7 and that this presents a conflict for some TF members. The TF meeting dates were set several months ago and it was very difficult to find dates when everyone could attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.

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



NOV - 8 2007

Donna Smallwood
Chair, National Safe Routes to School Task Force



NOV - 8 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.