



OCTOBER 2013 UPDATE

Ohio Safe Routes to School State Network Action Plan

The [Safe Routes to School National Partnership](#) (National Partnership) is a fast growing network of more than 600 organizations, government agencies and professional groups. Our mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's students and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.

The Ohio network supports the National Partnership's work and is tasked with:

1. Changing policy and built environment infrastructure investments to support increases in physical activity for children, especially on the route to school,
2. Implementing complete streets/street-scale improvements,
3. Fostering joint use policies,
4. Increasing the capacity for data collection and evaluation,
5. Building the capacity for leadership,
6. Advancing social equity, and
7. Assuring sustainability.

Funding for the Ohio network comes primarily from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (statewide work through 2014). We are grateful for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's generous support. The Ohio team is comprised of:

- [Kate Moening](#), Ohio Advocacy Organizer
- [Ryan Day](#), State Network Manager
- [Kristine Kessel](#), Network Director

The Plan

The Ohio network has been in existence since spring 2012 when the full time Ohio advocacy organizer staff position was added, thereby significantly expanding the National Partnership's reach throughout Ohio. This Ohio Safe Routes to School State Network Action Plan (Ohio Action Plan) is intended to guide the National Partnership's Ohio advocacy organizer, to share our goals and objectives with external partners, and to facilitate collaboration and mutual support of our partners' efforts to support the creation of walkable and bikeable communities and access to schools in Ohio.

Partners

Implementation of the Ohio Action Plan requires the coordination of partners at local, county, regional and state levels to ensure the coordinated implementation of our policy goals. The state network is grateful for the leadership and efforts of many individuals and organizations who participate in scheduled meetings, action teams and more. The success of the network rests on successful collaborative efforts.

National Partnership's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan

[The National Partnership's Strategic Plan](#) was crafted after much public outreach and careful analysis of supporting the overall Safe Routes to School movement. The five-year plan prioritizes five strategic focus areas, these are:

1. Opening Minds through Research and Communication
2. Changing Policies and Infrastructure
3. Building Capacity for Leadership
4. Advancing Social Equity
5. Assuring Sustainability

These five national strategic focus areas guide and shape the Ohio advocacy organizer's efforts in order to create a comprehensive strategy infused at all staffing levels - these are the goals of all National Partnership staff.

For work in Ohio, essential tasks for each of the five focus areas comprise our Ohio Action Plan.

1. Opening Minds through Research and Communications

The Ohio network seeks to continuously educate our partners and the public about the need for and the benefits of Safe Routes to School. This is done by highlighting cutting edge research and best practices from around the country. We seek to share the stories of our partners and Safe Routes to School practitioners with a wide variety of stakeholders through social media, conference calls, journal and newspaper articles, presentations and meetings. The Ohio network will focus on these priorities:

A. Research

Using research to educate our partners allows the National Partnership to build solid empirical argument for the need and benefit of Safe Routes to School. Research augments our communications efforts by providing key facts to support our goals. In Ohio we will:

- i. Identify additional research/fact needs for policy advancement and work with partners to implement research.
- ii. Share information and research via email, e-news, websites and other appropriate communication forums. Research e-news templates (state and regional). Learn how statewide and regional research projects are funded and

partner with ODOT, health departments, non-profit organizations, universities, community groups and others to explore opportunities for research and data collection.

B. Communications

The Ohio network uses a wide variety of media to connect with our partners. Media is key to sharing best practices, educating partners of strategic opportunities, and creating consensus. Our communications efforts also serve as a medium to bring to stories of inequity and opportunities for transportation investments to improve conditions for underserved communities. In Ohio we will:

- i. Routinely update the National Partnership's Ohio [state page](#) with current information.
- ii. Maintain the [Ohio Safe Routes Network](#) state site (microsite) with blogs, calendar listings, best practices, and more.
- iii. Connect the [National Partnership's website](#), National Partnership's Ohio [state page](#) and the National Partnership's Ohio state site.
- iv. Create and update current statewide media list.
- v. Cultivate partnerships with statewide and regional media contacts to advance news and research coverage.
- vi. Capitalize on opportunities for media coverage and op-eds through these expanded relationships with media contacts and by continuing to build leadership capacity with partners. This will be done through focused messages on funding and call for project opportunities as well as why Safe Routes to School efforts and investments matter and the benefits they bring throughout Ohio communities.
- vii. Foster peer exchange /learning network/speakers cadre to educate and inform about issues, best practices, research and programs to facilitate Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets and shared use in Ohio..
- viii. Incorporate rural/urban/suburban/disadvantaged community models into communications.
- ix. Work with state, regional and local health departments and other entities involved with reducing childhood obesity rates to increase awareness about the benefits of incorporating walking and cycling activity into the everyday lifestyle of youth and their families.

2. Changing Policy and Infrastructure

The Ohio network will focus its efforts on three main policy areas and associated data collection and evaluation, specifically:

- (A) leveraging funds for Safe Routes to School, pedestrian and cycling projects and programs;
- (B) promoting Complete Streets/street-scale improvements;
- (C) capitalizing and promoting shared (or joint) use for community-based schools; and

(D) data/evaluation for these three main policy areas.

Addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities shall be infused in each of these policy areas. The specific aspects of the National Partnership's work and related plans in Ohio are as follows:

A. Leveraging Funds

- i. Background: Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety programs have historically been underfunded across the United States and in Ohio. As a result, many communities lack safe bicycle networks and connected sidewalks, and children often do not receive the safety education they need. The National Partnership seeks to increase government funding for bicycling and walking and works to ensure that these funds are spent efficiently and in a timely manner. A key focus area for the National Partnership is the obligation of state and federal Safe Routes to School grants through Transportation Alternative dollars which provide funding for infrastructure improvements and educational programs.
- ii. Goals: It is the National Partnership's number one priority to work with ODOT and Ohio MPOs to ensure Transportation Alternative funds are allocated to Safe Routes to School, pedestrian and cycling planning, infrastructure and non-infrastructure programs, and towards vastly improving award, obligation and encumbrance rates of federal Safe Routes to School and other pedestrian and cycling funded programs using Transportation Alternative funds. It is critical to see Safe Routes to School and other bike/ped funds, once awarded, are obligated in a timely manner. It is also imperative that disadvantaged communities and schools are served through Safe Routes to School, pedestrian and cycling funding, and that this progress is measured.

In addition to ensuring that Safe Routes to School projects are obligated, the National Partnership works to increase overall funding levels for bicycling and walking by working with ODOT, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and other transportation authorities to ensure that cities and counties have the policy, infrastructure and funding necessary to implement complete street/street-scale improvement projects.

- iii. Tactics (Obligation): To ensure Safe Routes to School grants are awarded, obligated and implemented in a timely manner, the National Partnership State Advocacy Organizer will work closely with the [Ohio Department of Transportation \(ODOT\)](#) and other network members to:
 - a. Convene Action Team network meetings as necessary to discuss status and challenges with current status of obligation and implementation of state and federal funds.
 - b. Work to get the existing Safe Routes to School and Transportation Alternative funding spent (if funds from SAFETEA-LU and MAP-21 are available).
 - c. Work with ODOT, MPOs and others increase obligation rates.

- d. Partner with local schools, cities and counties that have grants to help them move through the process.
 - e. Determine roadblocks to successful implementation, work with appropriate entities to address the roadblocks and highlight success stories.
 - f. Engage nontraditional partners to encourage the success of non-infrastructure grants (School Districts, health departments, MPOs, etc.).
 - g. Work with state network and equity partners on outreach to lower-income communities to help them to apply for Safe Routes to School grants, to ensure that help is provided to implement grants, and to measure how the state is serving our most vulnerable populations.
 - h. The Ohio advocacy organizer will be available to assist with implementing the Safe Routes to School funding process at the state level as a reviewer/commenter or in another capacity for Infrastructure, Non-Infrastructure and School Travel Plan project awards. Additionally, the Ohio advocacy organizer will encourage ODOT to focus grants to enhance disadvantaged communities and equity issues.
 - i. The Ohio advocacy organizer will be available to assist local jurisdictions and ODOT with implementing infrastructure, non-infrastructure and school travel plans funded with remaining and new awards to spend down their obligations.
- vii. Tactics (Leveraging Funding): To ensure that equitable funding levels are provided for bicycling and walking, the National Partnership will work with state and regional partners to influence policy change and implement existing policies as follows:
- a. In the context of *the federal transportation bill - Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)* - work with partners to maximize bicycling, walking and Safe Routes to School investments, both under MAP-21's Transportation Alternatives program and the larger core transportation and safety funds. Specifically, work with state partners to:
 - Fully fund: Do not transfer any funds away from Transportation Alternatives or opt-out of the Recreational Trails program.
 - Fully staff: Preserve or increase staff support for Transportation Alternatives by maintaining state Safe Routes to School coordinators and bike/ped coordinators.
 - Fully implement: Promptly award Transportation Alternatives grants with participation of relevant stakeholders.
 - b. Work with network members to fully maximize the state's investments in safe, accessible streets: utilize all MAP-21 funding programs to include biking and walking in all transportation projects.

- c. Work with network members to fully spend remaining funds from the SAFETEA-LU Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational Trails programs.
 - d. Work in collaboration with network members and stakeholders to set recommended performance criteria that favor bicycle and pedestrian projects, and ensure that locals are well poised to propose good projects and work with MPOs and all key decision makers.
 - e. Work with network members to identify existing and future funding sources that can be used for bicycle and pedestrian projects.
 - f. Develop messaging to current and new network members on the need for more Ohio active transportation dollars.
 - g. Through the use of data-driven analysis, provide elected leaders, transportation planners, and other partners compelling arguments and examples that illustrate the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- viii. Leads: National Partnership, ODOT, ODE, ODH, local/regional health departments/agencies, MPOs, and implementing agencies and partners across the state.
- a. State Focus: Work with ODOT, ODE, ODH, state and regional bike/ped advocacy groups.
 - b. Regional Focus: Work with ODOT District staff, MPOs, local/regional health departments/agencies, regional/local bike/ped advocacy groups and county transportation authorities.

B. Complete Streets/Street-Scale Improvements

- i. Background: Complete Streets policies seek to ensure that the safety of all users is considered in transportation projects. Throughout Ohio, many regions' MPOs and local jurisdictions have, or are in the process of implementing, Complete Streets policies. At the state level ODOT, in its role as stewards of the transportation infrastructure, is committed to:
 - a. providing an efficient multi-modal transportation network;
 - b. caring for the built environments and recognizing transportation improvements' contribution to quality of life and economic development objectives; and
 - c. working in partnership to plan, fund, design, construct, and manage Complete Street networks that sustain mobility while safely accommodating walking, biking, and transit opportunities.
- ii. Goals: To support an increase in Complete Streets policies statewide, and improvements to design guidelines. The National Partnership will support implementation of Complete Streets efforts across Ohio and draw the link between Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School. This is achieved by

expanding conversations and practices of transportation planning to include the needs of all users regardless of age, income and/or abilities for children, families and community members in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of transportation projects.

- iii. **Tactics:** The State Network will use multiple strategies to facilitate adoption and implementation of Complete Streets policies.
 - a. Develop a baseline list of Complete Street policies and work to increase the number of policies, resolutions and/or legislation that favors complete street policy and planning efforts throughout Ohio.
 - b. Convene regular Action Team meetings as necessary to discuss the status and challenges of current of Complete Streets policies, and to develop and implement a plan to expand Complete Streets policies throughout the state.
 - c. Encourage the implementation of new Complete Streets policies by educating partners and transportation agencies about the benefits of Complete Streets.
 - d. Share best practices at the city, county, and MPO levels.
 - e. Identify the challenges faced by jurisdictions currently implementing policies to determine systemic policy obstacles and successful strategies.
 - f. Track the implementation of Complete Streets policies across the state.
 - g. Analyze how Complete Streets is being implemented in disadvantaged communities and what types of technical assistance is needed to achieve improved infrastructure. Work with partners to prioritize implementation on Complete Streets in disadvantaged communities.
 - h. Support the adoption and implementation of Complete Street/street-scale improvement policies that use highway maintenance dollars to create Complete Streets when road repairs and reconstruction is undertaken.
 - i. Support standard engineering guidelines as defined by the Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (OMUTCD) and the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guides for pedestrian and bicycle facilities when appropriate.
- iv. **Leads:** National Partnership, Ohio Alliance of YMCAs, advocacy groups, planners, engineers and partners across the state.

C. **Joint (Shared) Use and Community Based Schools**

- i. **Background:** Shared use—also called community or joint use- is a way to increase opportunities for children and adults to be more physically active. It refers to two or more entities — usually a school and a city or private organization — sharing indoor and outdoor spaces like gymnasiums, athletic fields and playgrounds. The concept behind shared use is that shared resources keep costs down and increases access for the health and well-being of communities. Schools in disadvantaged urban areas may not have space for school fields and may lack urban parks, thus making it important to find ways to

create safe places for children to engage in healthy physical activity after and during school hours.

- ii. Goals: To increase the number of shared use policies in the state and the total space available to communities to have safe places to play and engage in physical activity by creating a statewide policy environment that facilitates shared use and community based schools, and encouraging the adoption of local shared use agreements and school policies at the school district level.
- iii. Tactics: The State Network will use multiple strategies to facilitate implementation of shared use policies:
 - a. Reference “Beyond Boundaries: a Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments” (June, 2012) and the Skinny Ohio website as fiscal strategies for encouraging implementation of shared used agreements related to physical activity in Ohio.
 - a. Develop a baseline list of example shared use agreements from Ohio. Encourage the implementation of new shared use agreements and policies by sharing best practices, and model tools and agreements, such as Beyond Boundaries and those published by ChangeLab Solutions, specifically targeting disadvantaged schools and communities as the highest priority.
 - b. Work with the Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Department of Education, Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) Ohio Parks & Recreation Association (OPRA) and others to publish shared use guidance, either as a stand-alone document, or by including guidance into any updated policy manuals.
 - c. Determine if shared use can be folded into regional planning and sustainable community’s strategies at the regional level.
 - d. Work with officials and partners to determine opportunities to expand shared use and community based schools.
- iv. Leads: National Partnership, Ohio Department of Health, Health Policy Institute of Ohio, ChangeLab Solutions Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Parks & Recreation Association.

D. Data Collection and Evaluation

- i. Background: Our transportation strategies and investments must be data driven, especially in regard to safety and health for all community members. In addition, many decisions on government funding are predicated upon evaluation and modeling, which requires good data and the ability to project outcomes based on improvements in infrastructure. A multi-disciplinary perspective needs to inform this framework – with input from safety, transportation, health, air quality, technology, academic and research and more. As funding becomes increasingly based on performance outcomes, now more than ever it is critical that Ohio develop standards to ensure competitiveness and its ability to measure and forecast programmatic success

and challenges in the field of walking and bicycling. Addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities shall be infused in each goal and task.

- ii. Goals: Foster discussions on how to best engage the state and other key partners in setting frameworks for active transportation and Safe Routes to School data collection, modeling and evaluation, and make changes to create models for data collection, modeling and evaluation. Ensure widespread distribution and the standardization of data and tools currently available for use by local jurisdictions and MPOs.
- iii. Tactics: The Ohio state network uses multiple strategies for data collection and evaluation.
 - a. Partner with ODOT, MPOs, universities, health departments/agencies, school-based health and wellness groups/organizations, and other key entities and capitalize on existing and future studies on Safe Routes to School program and policy impacts.
 - b. Track and create a summary of shared use policies, Complete Street/street scale improvement policies and infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalk, multi-use paths, and bike lanes.
 - c. Collaborate with the ODOT and MPOs to maximize opportunities for data collection and evaluation, and seek ways to partner with health agencies and universities to analyze data and project cost /benefits.
- iv. Leads: National Partnership, ODOT, departments of public health, MPOs, universities, county transportation authorities and partners across the state.

3. Building the Capacity for Leadership

A. Background

The National Partnership's Ohio advocacy organizer collaborates with and relies on partners to achieve policy change. By fostering leadership with our partners, we are able to mobilize diverse coalitions that articulate the benefits of Safe Routes to School, an improved built environment, active transportation and equity from a variety of viewpoints. In addition, the development of leadership capacity in our partners expands the reach of our efforts by creating more local champions and ensures the sustainability of our efforts and Safe Routes to School goals.

B. Goals

The National Partnership Ohio advocacy organizer creates networks of local elected officials, non-profit organizations, health professionals, community members and a wide variety of stakeholders through education and encouragement, and builds the capacity for leaders within these groups to champion the policy efforts listed above.

C. Tactics

By educating our partners on the importance of walking and bicycling as tools for community change, we encourage them to bring their own personal experiences and expertise to the table regarding the types of policy goals and infrastructure investments

necessary for creating equitable, walkable and bikeable communities. The following tactics are used to grow our network and increase the capacity for leadership amongst our partners, both at the state and regional levels:

- i. Track our partners by maintaining an online database of contacts and affiliates for each region.
- ii. Educate our partners through workshops, network calls and individual communications, building expertise and allowing stakeholders to better understand the transportation planning process. Key topic areas may include:
 - a. Award and obligation (leveraging funding) and associated state and national processes
 - b. Complete Streets/street-scale improvements
 - c. Safe Routes to School programs
 - d. Health impact assessments
 - e. Shared use policies/community based schools
 - f. Data collection
 - g. Serving disadvantaged communities
- iii. Develop local leaders, particularly in the MPOs and transportation jurisdictions, in each of the following areas:
 - a. Elected officials
 - b. Agency staff leadership
 - c. Health
 - d. Transportation
 - e. School districts
 - f. Equity groups
 - g. Youth engagement
 - h. Nonprofit/advocacy groups
 - i. Cycling/pedestrian safety education organizations
 - j. Planning, development and engineering
 - k. Public safety officers/agencies

D. Leads

National Partnership, local jurisdictions tasks forces and action teams, Departments of Public Health, Transportation, Safety, Education, Public Works, Planning and Recreation Departments, city staff/MPO/County Transportation Commission/Transportation Authority staff and positions dedicated to healthy communities or active transportation programming.

4. Advancing Social Equity

A. Background

Quality transportation options are a lifeline to opportunity. Transportation gets people to work, to school, to the grocery store, and to the doctor's office. And while billions of public dollars are invested in our nation's transportation system each year, studies are showing that a disproportionate amount of burden and injury from these investment choices are falling on people living in disadvantaged communities.

B. Goals

Recognizing serious hurdles in addressing not only transportation-related concerns, but personal safety concerns, the Ohio network supports efforts that address the disparity between population groups.

C. Tactics

- i. Establish strong working relationships with city and community-based organizations and collaborate with state and national equity groups in Ohio.
- ii. Inventory the barriers and obstacles for disadvantaged and rural communities and schools implementing Safe Routes to School programs, Complete Streets and shared use agreements, and develop strategies and partners to overcome these hurdles.
- iii. Encourage communities to implement crime prevention strategies by design landscaping techniques. These techniques contend that law enforcement officers, architects, city planners, landscape and interior designers, and resident volunteers can create a climate of safety in a community right from the start by striving to design a physical environment that positively influences human behavior.
- iv. Work to ensure that health and environmental justice metrics are included into transportation planning and investment allocations, and ensure that grants to disadvantaged communities and schools are tracked for all Safe Routes to School awards.
- v. Work to ensure that engineering assistance is available for disadvantaged communities by strengthening partnerships with ODOT and equity groups at the state and regional levels. Focus outreach and technical assistance activities at disadvantaged communities in the regions.

D. Leads

National Partnership, non-profit health organizations such as American Lung Association, American Heart Association, Departments of Public Health, Hospitals and Community Clinics, Community Health Organizers.

5. Assuring Sustainability

A. Background

The long-term viability of Safe Routes to School is dependent on the movement's ability to leverage additional funds, build capacity, ensure collaboration among leaders in the field and integrate Safe Routes to School within the plans and goals of a wide range of partners and government agencies.

B. Goals

Continue to grow support for Safe Routes to School so that funding diversifies beyond federal and state resources and strengthens and supports public agencies and community based organizations throughout the state who are implementing Safe Routes to School efforts. Another goal is to sustain our Ohio Safe Routes to School advocacy efforts after current grants expire.

C. Tactics

- i. Update funders and elected officials on the progress, the benefits, and the needs to continue to support Safe Routes to School.
- ii. Publicize successes to continue to expand the network of support and partners for Safe Routes to School beyond the traditional partners.
- iii. Publicize the successes and best practices of Safe Routes to School efforts throughout the state in order to continue to foster peer to peer learning and also to continue to demonstrate and champion the added value of all Safe Routes to School efforts and leaders in order to support future funds for efforts.
- iv. Continue to work to foster and strengthen relationships between transportation agencies and health partners.
- v. Market National Partnership technical assistance services as a strategy to help communities develop a successful Safe Routes to School program and situate themselves for leveraging additional funds.
- vi. Identify new sources of grant funds.
- vii. Work with the media to publicize successes and how Safe Routes to School touches many policy goals.

D. Leads

National Partnership, partners across the state, relevant state/city staff such as Departments of Health, City and County Public Works, City and County Traffic Engineers, and City Manager's Offices.

APPENDIX — see "Ohio Network Members APPENDIX" document