



Safe Routes to School State Network Project: Final Report, 2007–2009

Making Change Through Partners and Policies



Changing the Habits of
an Entire Generation

November 2009

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The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a fast-growing network of more than 400 organizations and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices, secure funding and inform agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership's mission is to serve a diverse national community of organizations that advocates for and promotes the practice of safe bicycling and walking to and from schools throughout the United States. The Partnership is hosted by the Bikes Belong Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, which is a sister organization to the Bikes Belong Coalition.

For more information visit www.saferoutespartnership.org.

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BACKGROUND ON SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

In 1969, the average American child walked or bicycled to and from school and spent many afternoons exploring the neighborhood and getting lots of physical activity. In fact, in 1969, approximately 42 percent of U.S. children walked or bicycled to school, and 87 percent of those that lived within one mile of the school walked or bicycled.¹ By 2001, however, these percentages plummeted to 16 percent² and 48 percent,³ respectively.

Many factors have influenced the decline in children walking and bicycling to school. Communities are increasingly designed for moving higher volumes of cars more quickly, often lacking safe and separate infrastructure, such as sidewalks, pathways and crosswalks for bicyclists and pedestrians. Schools are more frequently located on the outskirts of communities instead of the heart of a neighborhood, increasing the distance to school. Many parents are concerned about traffic dangers and personal safety, leading them to limit unsupervised outside play and walking and bicycling to school. With less physical activity on the trip to school and during free time, it is no wonder that overweight and obesity rates for children and teens have been on the rise for decades.⁴

Concerned by the long-term health and traffic consequences of the decline in walking and bicycling to school, Congress created the federal Safe Routes to School program as part of the \$286.5 billion SAFETEA-LU transportation bill in August 2005. The federal Safe Routes to School program provides \$612 million from fiscal years 2005 through 2009 that is awarded to state Departments of Transportation (DOTs). The bulk of these funds allow schools and communities to build sidewalks, bicycle lanes, safe crossings and pathways that enable children to walk and bicycle to school more safely. A smaller portion of the funding supports non-infrastructure activities, including

walking and bicycling safety education, driver awareness campaigns, more robust enforcement of speed limits and traffic safety rules, promotional events to encourage more children to walk and bicycle and more frequently.

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The goal of the federal Safe Routes to School program is to make it safer and more common for children to walk and bicycle to school, so the program gives health, education and transportation professionals an unprecedented opportunity to connect schools and communities in order to get America's children moving again.



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL AND REDUCING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Over the past four decades, childhood obesity rates have increased dramatically for all age groups, and nearly one in three young people are either obese or overweight. A significant contributor is the fact that just one-third of children are getting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' recommended level of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day. Overweight children and adolescents are at an increased risk for developing serious health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer and hypertension.

Efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic must be multi-faceted, and Safe Routes to School is a critical piece of the puzzle. Evidence shows that Safe Routes to School programs make the trip to and from school safer, increase the number of children who get to school by walking and bicycling, and promote the health of children and their communities. Using Safe Routes to School as a way to create environment, policy and behavioral changes is one way to increase physical activity and promote the health of both children and adults. The evidence for Safe Routes to School as a strategy to address childhood obesity is based on the body of research that links physical activity, the built environment and obesity. Some relevant findings are cited below:

- Safe Routes to School programs can increase walking and bicycling in the range of 20 percent to 200 percent.⁷
- Children traveling through pedestrian-friendly environments are more likely to walk or bicycle to and from school.⁸
- Children who walk to school are significantly more physically active throughout the day as compared to children who travel to school by car.⁹

- Children who walk or bicycle to school have better cardiovascular fitness compared with children who do not actively commute to school.¹⁰
- In a study of adolescents, 100 percent of the children who walked both to and from school averaged at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on weekdays.¹¹
- A 5 percent increase in neighborhood walkability—which looks at the completeness of the sidewalk network, safety of street crossings, directness of the route and other measures—was associated with 32.1 percent more minutes devoted to physically active travel.¹²

Despite the significant benefits of Safe Routes to School programs, only an estimated 7 percent of schools in the United States will be served by the \$612 million allotted over five years for Safe Routes to School.¹³ In addition, distance is a significant barrier to increasing walking and bicycling to school. Today, only about 40 percent of American elementary- and middle-school students live within two miles from their school.¹⁴ These issues can only be overcome by leveraging additional dollars for Safe Routes to School programs and improvements, and changing policies that influence where schools are located.



INFLUENCING SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership launched in August 2005, simultaneous with the announcement of the new \$612 million federal Safe Routes to School program. As a fast-growing network of more than 400 organizations, schools, government agencies and professional groups, the Partnership's mission is to serve a diverse national community of organizations that advocate for and promote the practice of safe bicycling and walking to and from schools throughout the United States. The Partnership's activities are focused around several key priorities:

- Ensuring effective implementation of the federal Safe Routes to School program by state DOTs and local jurisdictions through monitoring state implementation and issuing best practices and technical assistance resources.
- Advocating for the expansion and strengthening of the federal Safe Routes to School law.
- Influencing policy changes at federal, state and local levels that support Safe Routes to School.
- Building partnerships with a wide range of transportation, health, safety, equity and environmental organizations to bring diverse expertise and greater attention to the Safe Routes to School movement.
- Advancing the knowledge base of Safe Routes to School through publications and research.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is governed by a steering committee comprised of organizations and agencies that develop and support Safe Routes to School programs and initiatives at local, state and national levels. Partner affiliates, which include organizations like the AARP, the American Heart Association, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the Institute of Transportation Engineers and *Active Living by Design*, utilize their communication channels to spread the word about Safe Routes to School opportunities, news, challenges, advocacy efforts and collaborations.

It is critical that the \$612 million in federal funds are utilized by state DOTs as effectively as possible, and in a timely manner. High-quality execution at the state level enables local communities to operate Safe Routes to School programs with the greatest possible impact on children's physical activity and the design and safety of neighborhoods. Successful state and local programs also provide the kinds of results Congress needs to continue and potentially expand federal Safe Routes to School funding.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership launched the State Network Project in May 2007 to influence state-level Safe Routes to School implementation, leverage additional resources and build a supportive environment for Safe Routes to School through other state-level policies. To better understand how state-level implementation decisions affected local Safe Routes to School programs, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership also provided technical assistance and support to ten schools implementing Safe Routes to School through the Local School Project.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) provided primary support for the three-year State Network Project and Local School Project in ten jurisdictions. The Bikes Belong Coalition, Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also contributed funds.

This *2007–2009 Final Report* describes the approach and structure of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's State Network and Local School Projects. It highlights the progress achieved at state and local levels over three years, including major accomplishments, lessons learned and next steps.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STATE NETWORK AND LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECTS

	LEAD ENTITY/INDIVIDUAL	ROLE	RESULTS
NATIONAL	Safe Routes to School National Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide overall project leadership and management • Offer individualized training, technical assistance and support to state and local leads • Provide a learning network for state and local leads • Oversee evaluation • Identify crosscutting challenges and issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong state networks • Successful local school projects • Better understanding of state and local implementation challenges and opportunities • Lessons learned are used in the networks and nationwide
STATE	Network Organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit and engage a diverse array of partners statewide • Develop and implement action plans to change policies • Convey state implementation and policy challenges to the Safe Routes to School National Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved state implementation of federal Safe Routes to School funds • Policy change that creates a supportive environment for Safe Routes to School • More children walking and bicycling to and from school • Lessons learned translated into national best practices
LOCAL	Volunteer Champion or Paid Technical Service Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and carry out a Safe Routes to School program at a local school • Apply for federal Safe Routes to School funds • Track data • Convey local implementation challenges to the state network and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved environment at and around the school for walking and bicycling • More children walking and bicycling to and from school • Lessons learned translated into national best practices



STATE NETWORK PROJECT

OVERVIEW

By making changes in state-level policies, securing additional funds to improve the built environment and enhancing the quality of state Safe Routes to School programs, state networks augment the impact of the federal Safe Routes to School funds and create a more supportive environment for local Safe Routes to School efforts. The ultimate impact of these efforts provides more children with safe places to be physically active, which will help reverse childhood obesity.

The goals of the State Network Project include:

- increasing physical activity in children grades K–8 by increasing the number of children walking and bicycling to schools;
- helping to ensure the success of the federal Safe Routes to School program; and
- institutionalizing state-level Safe Routes to School programs so that they are not dependent on (and do not end after) one short burst of funding.

Successes in these three areas are giving children a much better chance at getting out of the house to be active. It also is providing states with an opportunity to contribute toward reversing the childhood obesity epidemic.

SELECTION PROCESS

In the winter of 2007, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership assessed states based on their need for the State Network Project and their capacity to support the program. Factors considered included the number and percentage of overweight and obese children in the state; the number and percentage of minority children in the state; the number of families living in poverty; the capacity of the state to leverage critical partnerships and make a national impact; and the amount of federal Safe Routes to School funding available

in the state. Ultimately, the Partnership selected 10 jurisdictions for the state networks: California, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia and the District of Columbia. These 10 jurisdictions account for over a third of federal Safe Routes to School funding—more than \$226 million.

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In each location, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership contracted with an existing organization to run the network. Partnering with existing organizations ensured that the State Network Project benefited from already-established relationships, expertise and knowledge. Each lead organization provides a part-time network organizer, working at least 10 hours a week, to recruit partners and manage the network's creation and implementation of an action plan.

10 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL STATE NETWORK STATES AND LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT SITES

LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT SITES:

- 1 Santa Rosa, Calif.
- 2 Stillwater, Okla.
- 3 Bryan, Texas
- 4 New Orleans, La.
- 5 Urbana, Ill.
- 6 Lebanon, Ky.
- 7 Decatur, Ga.
- 8 Buffalo, N.Y.
- 9 Alexandria, Va.
- 10 Washington, D.C.



The Safe Routes to School National Partnership supplies support to the network organizers through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- regular individual meetings with network organizers;
- monthly learning network conference calls for all network organizers to share successes and challenges;
- monthly training sessions for all network organizers and interested partners to learn from nationally-recognized policy experts and experienced local professionals;
- a Web-based calendar and resources for network organizers; and
- an annual in-person training and networking session for all network organizers.

BUILDING THE NETWORK

Before the network could effect change, the network organizer had to recruit partner organizations and leaders. Network partners represent a variety of disciplines, including health, transportation, bicycle and pedestrian advocacy, youth engagement, equity, education and smart growth.

Each network includes 10 to 30 partners that collectively work to help the federal program succeed, leverage additional resources for Safe Routes to School and remove barriers to walking and bicycling to schools. Network partners assist with outreach and promotion, education, research, policy implementation and convening stakeholders within their field. Each of the networks



STATE NETWORK PROJECT OVERVIEW

State	California	District of Columbia	Georgia	Illinois	Kentucky	Louisiana	New York	Oklahoma	Texas	Virginia
State ranking for rate of childhood obesity and overweight ¹	28	9	3	10	4	7	18	33	20	23
Total federal SRTS funding, 2005–2009 ²	\$67,518,011	\$4,990,000	\$17,196,167	\$23,267,399	\$7,880,752	\$8,963,736	\$31,611,547	\$7,104,216	\$44,751,640	\$13,404,038
Total federal SRTS funding awarded ³	\$90,921,826	\$2,814,745	\$4,982,979	\$22,039,071*	\$9,526,165*	\$6,702,343	\$27,499,133	\$3,349,658	\$25,618,783	\$5,903,626
Number of partners	32	19	17	24	9	16	18	25	33	16
Policies Addressed During 2007–2009										
State SRTS Implementation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Neighborhood Schools	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x
School Wellness Policies	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
Traffic Safety Curriculum and Training	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x
SRTS-Related Legislation	x	x		x			x	x		
Complete Streets	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
Fine-Based Funding Mechanisms	x	x	x	x						
State Highway Safety Plans	x	x	x		x		x	x		
Profile Page Number	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50

1 Levi J, Vinter S, Richardson L, et al. "F as in Fat: 2009. How Obesity Policies are Failing in America." Trust for America's Health, July 2009.

2 Federal Highway Administration. "Safe Routes to School Funding." Available at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/funding/>.

3 Safe Routes to School National Partnership. "Safe Routes to School Federal Program—State of the States, July 2009." Available at www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/State_of_the_States_July_2009_FINAL.pdf. The total awarded for states marked with an asterisk were updated to reflect additional awarded funds between July 1 and August 31.

also partners with their state DOTs and other state agencies to help fully commit available Safe Routes to School funds and to provide guidance on state implementation, applicant selection and outreach. Since each state DOT has a coordinator assigned to manage the state's Safe Routes to School program, nurturing a collaborative relationship with the individual and the DOT was a priority in each state.

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING POLICY PRIORITIES TO REVERSE CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Each network was charged with researching eight specific policy strategies that affect the state Safe Routes to School program and childhood obesity. Each issue was analyzed to identify the current practices and policies in the state and to assess upcoming opportunities to impact policies and the potential to strengthen Safe Routes to School and physical activity. Based on that research, each network created an action plan with a prioritized set of policy goals; a list of objectives and tasks for each policy goal; and the assigned leaders and action teams for each policy goal.

The action plan in each state formed the basis for network priorities. The network organizer held in-person or telephone meetings for partners at least monthly to stay on task and track progress. This also helped keep network partners engaged and focused on accomplishing the policy goals. Depending on the nature of the policy goal, network actions included research, developing materials and model policies, conducting outreach and/or advocating for specific changes.

Below is an overview of the eight policy strategies each state network researched and prioritized to develop and update their action plans, along with a brief summary of how state networks secured policy changes over the past three years.

1. Ensuring Success of the Safe Routes to School Program

The federal funds for Safe Routes to School flow from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to the state DOTs. How the state departments administer the millions of dollars of federal funding has a profound impact on the quality of local programs and whether the funding reaches underserved communities. This is critical because of its potential to increase physical activity among children, especially those most affected by or at the greatest risk for childhood obesity.

Networks provided guidance on application guidelines, outreach and implementation processes and raised awareness of the program among potential applicants.

2. Protecting and Promoting the Neighborhood School

About 40 percent of elementary- and middle-school students in the United States live within two miles of their school. Statewide policies on school siting, campus acreage requirements, joint use of facilities and funding formulas on renovation versus new construction can significantly impact the percentage of students who live within walking or bicycling distance of their school.

Networks educated decision-makers and state agencies about the benefits of neighborhood schools, facilitated cross-agency collaboration and dialog and worked to change policies to protect and encourage community-centered schools and joint-use policies.



3. Adding Safe Routes to School into School Wellness Policies

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 required school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program or other child nutrition programs to adopt and implement a wellness policy. One requirement is that the wellness policies must include goals for increasing physical activity levels of students. Some states have developed model wellness policies, which provide an important avenue for linking Safe Routes to School to increasing student physical activity levels. Local school wellness policies also can be a means of institutionalizing Safe Routes to School within schools.

Networks worked to insert Safe Routes to School language into state model policies and promoted Safe Routes to School to school district wellness committees.

4. Developing and Funding Traffic Safety Curriculum and Training Programs

Statewide bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum and skills training programs can facilitate the integration of Safe Routes to School into school physical education classes and other local activities, inspiring daily physical activity and improving safety.

Networks researched bicycle and pedestrian curricula, and advised state DOTs and Departments of Education about opportunities for quality statewide implementation.

5. Implementing Safe Routes to School-Related Legislation

Some state legislatures passed legislation that specifically addresses Safe Routes to School, provides additional state funding for Safe Routes to School activities or detracts from or enhances a supportive environment for Safe

Routes to School programs. How legislation is implemented can determine the ultimate impact on increasing physical activity and improving the built environment.

Networks educated legislators about existing policies, worked with state agencies to develop and implement policy guidance and tracked and promoted newly passed legislation relevant to Safe Routes to School.

6. Assuring Complete Streets for All Users

Complete streets policies require or encourage local and/or state jurisdictions to consider and address the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of all roadway and transit facilities. These policies ensure that bicycle and pedestrian safety is considered at the inception of a transportation project, rather than something to be added later through more expensive retrofitting projects. The end result is more facilities for safe and healthy physical activity in neighborhoods and on routes to school.

Networks worked to get complete streets policies into state and regional transportation agency policies and procedures, and to ensure implementation.

7. Creating Fine-Based Mechanisms to Improve Safety and Generate Revenue

Some states and cities have produced additional revenue for state and local Safe Routes to School programs through fine-based mechanisms that increase fines for driver infractions in school zones and direct additional revenue to Safe Routes to School projects.

Networks influenced decision-makers to create new funding sources for traffic safety projects and programs near schools.

8. Including Bicycling and Walking in State Strategic Highway Safety Plans

In 2005, the federal government established a new Highway Safety Improvement Program requirement to significantly reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. Some of this funding can be spent on bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements near schools, but most state DOTs prioritize highway and auto safety spending instead of projects that facilitate safe bicycling or walking.

Networks got bicycling and walking language inserted into Strategic Highway Safety Plans, and secured dedicated funding for these types of safety improvements.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Collectively, the 10 state networks engaged more than 200 partners as active participants. The networks set different priorities in their action plans based on the unique opportunities and challenges each state faced, and chose approaches suitable to the state's situation. Networks built productive relationships with state Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coordinators and assisted state DOTs in creating and running efficient Safe Routes to School programs through outreach to stakeholders, technical assistance, advice and the creation and distribution of supportive resources. In the policy realm, networks were in many cases the first group to research, advocate and create a vision for how to address particular policy issues within the states. Networks advanced policy issues and opportunities affecting transportation policies and funding, safety, land use, the environment and public health.

Below are selected accomplishments of the 10 networks during the first three years of the program:

Improving State DOT Safe Routes to School Programs

The most dramatic examples of state network policy successes are within the state DOTs. All 10 networks placed the implementation of the federal



Safe Routes to School program as a top priority. In some states, the network helped the Safe Routes to School program to be administered effectively, by advocating for diverse advisory committees, well-developed application processes, prioritization of applicants from lower-income communities, robust training opportunities and wide outreach to local communities. In some states, the network even served as the DOT's SRTS advisory committee (Illinois, the District of Columbia, Oklahoma and New York) or the SRTS application selection committee (the District of Columbia and Oklahoma)

But in other states the Safe Routes to School program was not a top priority within the DOT. For example, because the federal Safe Routes to School funds do not have an expiration date, there was no incentive within some DOTs to move forward on the program. As a result, these Safe Routes to School programs were typically delayed in launching application cycles, developed without stakeholder input and lacking in effective support for and outreach to local communities. In these cases, networks focused on assisting the state DOT in getting the program up and running, harnessing public opinion to advocate for application cycles and helping ensure effective operations once launched. This reactive approach was necessary for several of our networks (the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois and New York), and was invaluable in ensuring that these important federal Safe Routes to School program dollars were utilized successfully and in a relatively timely manner.

Leveraging Funds

Networks influenced agencies, elected officials and even local municipalities to make changes to their policies and spending priorities, affecting the usage of public funds. Networks leveraged millions of dollars that address traffic safety, education, public health and infrastructure in the 10 jurisdictions. For example, the California network influenced the programming of \$91 million in federal Safe Routes to School program funds, \$100 million in additional state Safe Routes to School funds and leveraged

additional funding for an improved built environment through the state's Highway Safety Improvement Program funding.

Networks inspired new funding streams, such as the District of Columbia's pedestrian safety fund (\$1.5 million per year). The networks also worked to influence the inclusion of bicycling and walking priorities in the spending of other non-Safe Routes to School federal, state and local funds, such as:

- Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funds (tens of millions of dollars in every state);
- stimulus funds (for example, the District of Columbia dedicated \$4 million of stimulus funding to Safe Routes to School);
- Virginia's road maintenance funds (tens of millions of dollars per year);
- green building and school siting funds in Illinois (hundreds of millions of dollars per year); and
- nearly \$200 million in hurricane relief roadway repair funds in Louisiana.

Creating National Influence

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership and the 10 networks have spread the word about the process of establishing a network and their accomplishments far beyond the 10 participating jurisdictions. Thousands of policy-makers, government agency staff, program practitioners and coalitions around the country have become familiar with what it takes to build effective networks around Safe Routes to School and physical activity. Approaches and tools used include:

- national conference presentations;
- reports on the progress of the networks, available in print and online;
- tools to assist organizations interested in starting networks, such as the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's *Establishing a Safe Routes to School State Network: A 10-Step Guide*;
- a Web site, www.saferoutespartnership.org, that features pages and information on every state in the United States;

- meetings with national groups and elected officials to familiarize them with the network approach;
- regular e-newsletter updates on the network project, which are distributed to more than 2,000 individuals and organizations (which often pass the news along to their members as well); and
- earned media coverage of the network.

Anecdotal evidence from the field has shown that the State Network Project has inspired activists from other states to begin working to change policies at the state level and to organize formal networks or informal collaborations focused on strengthening state Safe Routes to School implementation. For example, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership worked with informal coalitions in Pennsylvania and Hawaii to expedite the awarding of Safe Routes to School grants and to improve implementation. Networks also have focused existing coalitions towards Safe Routes to School policy work, such as the Be Active New York State coalition, which became the host of the New York network.

Engaging Policy-Makers to Effect Change

In many states, networks engaged policy-makers as network partners or chairs, lending legitimacy to the network. Networks with powerful legislators as chairs found it easier to generate media attention and spur action by state agencies. Policy-makers also were very valuable allies in expediting action on network priorities, particularly in cases where a state DOT was delaying the launch of the Safe Routes to School program. In the District of Columbia, New York and Georgia, policy-makers focused on the childhood obesity benefits of Safe Routes to School when talking with agency officials, bringing powerful attention to the need to get the state Safe Routes to School program off the ground. In Illinois, then-Lt. Governor Pat Quinn served as the chair of the state network and spearheaded successful school siting, complete streets and fine-based funding efforts.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the course of the three-year project, the networks and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership learned from experience the most effective ways to build partnerships that impact Safe Routes to School implementation, funding for the built environment and policy changes. Network organizers participated in regular meetings over the course of the project to share successes and challenges and brainstorm solutions to common problems. The following are the top five lessons learned from the State Network Project:

1. Build an effective network comprised of diverse people and organizations

In its first three years, the State Network Project demonstrated the importance of convening a range of government agencies, individuals and organizations to discuss and advocate for statewide policy changes that affect the ability of children to walk and bicycle to school safely. These multidisciplinary partnerships led to in-kind donations of staff time, as well as diverse expertise and resources. Network partners also helped to build relationships between various state agencies that could benefit from the critical perspective of other disciplines, such as a public health perspective for transportation policies and expenditures.

Networks brought together state agencies that included the departments of transportation, education and health, plus representatives of regional and local agencies, such as metropolitan planning organizations and local transportation, health and education departments. These cross-governmental partnerships contributed to an understanding of how state policies were implemented at the local level and how they affected the ability of children to walk and bicycle to school and partake in healthy physical activity.





Other key partners included state and local nonprofit groups and state chapters of national organizations—many of whom are partner affiliates of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. Examples include law enforcement officials, bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups, the state chapter of the PTA, universities, medical associations, teachers’ groups, SafeKids and other safety coalitions, environmental groups, equity organizations and state representatives from national advocacy groups, such as the American Heart Association and AARP. These partners were instrumental in leading policy initiatives and action teams on issues most closely related to their missions.

Networks also found elected officials to be powerful allies and leaders. Policy-makers often provided accurate information about the history of a policy, upcoming decision-making time frames and issues and helped the network communicate more effectively with an agency. A single phone call from a state-level legislator to a DOT agency official was often more powerful than an intensive and time-consuming letter-writing or media campaign by multiple organizations.

2. Continue to enrich the network with new perspectives

The first phase of the network was to recruit and engage partners. A lesson learned is that recruitment must continue throughout the life of the network. Even when it seems that the right people are at the table, staff turnover at an agency or organization can remove a key partner, often at a critical time. For policy-makers, election cycles also can impact their availability and power. There are always others within the state that can bring new perspectives and value to the network. Sometimes new partners were recruited for limited time commitments to serve on an action team for a specific policy priority, rather than attending every network meeting.

Networks also enriched their actions by finding others within the state or across state lines who had been working on similar efforts. Reaching out to interests from outside the core network to share best practices, experiences and examples of successful campaigns often helped renew enthusiasm, generate new ideas and amplify the pressure on achieving policy goals. It also was useful when networks engaged people and organizations with opposing viewpoints to better understand their concerns and values, and assess potential barriers to getting a policy changed.

The media likes to cover “feel-good” stories, so events like International Walk to School Day, Safe Routes to School award announcements and ribbon-cuttings for new Safe Routes to School projects like sidewalks and pathways were able to generate a great deal of positive public exposure for Safe Routes to School through earned media, using only the investment of staff time.

Another important focus was seeking out new partners that had the ability to support increased capacity for the network. Volunteer programs or universities often contributed assistance with research and specific tasks. Some networks secured grants and donations to support additional time for the network organizer—allowing the network to tackle multiple complex policies simultaneously. Other partners or businesses were able to contribute in-kind donations like Web site services, printing and office space.

3. Be strategic about engaging the media to promote progress or overcome a challenge

General media interest in Safe Routes to School activities has been very strong, especially given the connection to reversing childhood obesity. Networks found that a well-developed press release or press event helped generate media attention and focus public attention. The media likes to cover “feel-good” stories, so events like International Walk to School Day, Safe Routes to School award announcements and ribbon-cuttings for new Safe Routes to School projects like sidewalks and pathways were able to generate a great deal of positive public exposure for Safe Routes to School through earned media, using only the investment of staff time.

When appropriate and needed, networks also engaged the media to highlight the downside of a policy or to call attention to concerns with a state’s delay on Safe Routes to School implementation. This tactic was always used as the last resort, as it generally led to friction between the implementing agency and the network. However, media pressure due to editorials, blogs or news reports was effective in creating policy change due to public outcry. Networks found that the best follow-up to a negative media story was to meet with the agency to clarify goals, identify next steps and offer assistance in moving forward.

4. Make the best use of partner time and provide leadership opportunities to others

The most effective networks had clear and consistent communication between partners about goals, tasks and progress on the action plans. Effective network organizers kept partners enthusiastic through meetings that were task- or goal-oriented rather than just unfocused discussions and by following agendas with current action items, target completion dates and responsible parties. The best collaboration

happened when partners communicated status updates and completed tasks to the network organizer and provided adequate time for other network members to comment on documents and action items. A good network chair also was critical to inspiring partners, facilitating productive discussions and adding credibility and respect to the network.

Network partners often led action teams on specific issues, spearheaded the writing of a specific document or sample policy or took charge of an outreach campaign—adding a tremendous amount of value through in-kind staff contributions and services.

Networks also found that collaboration and shared leadership built buy-in among the network and prevented burnout among leaders. Network organizers had to be familiar with each partner's interest, mission and capability to identify leadership roles for specific action items or issue areas. Network partners often led action teams on specific issues, spearheaded the writing of a specific document or sample policy or took charge of an outreach campaign—adding a tremendous amount of value through in-kind staff contributions and services.

5. Be creative in how you move forward on issues and flexible in which issues you tackle

Sometimes networks developed a series of tasks and strategies to achieve policy change, but ran into roadblocks. For example, in some instances, the government agency in charge of the issue was resistant to the proposed policy change. In other cases, partners had other priorities and were not motivated to work on the issue. These situations were overcome by rethinking the approach and not losing sight of the final objective. Having an off-the-record conversation with a sympathetic agency staff person can often reveal the real obstacle to change. Engaging new partners can bring new energy and knowledge about how to approach a specific situation. By taking a step back and gathering new information, the path to policy change often becomes clearer.

Networks also sometimes departed from their prioritized action plan to take advantage of an unexpected policy opportunity. For instance, the network may learn that a new but important policy is being reviewed soon, so expert partners on that issue may choose to reach out to the agency and get involved in the review process. Successful networks regularly scanned the horizon for new policy opportunities and challenges, and were then prepared to take action.





LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT

OVERVIEW

The Local School Project was launched in spring 2008 to provide technical assistance and resources to a diverse, lower-income school in each of the 10 network jurisdictions. The goals of the project were to create a strong program model in each of the network jurisdictions, to apply for and secure Safe Routes to School program funds and to report back to the network about the challenges and successes of implementing a program in that jurisdiction and state.

The Local School Project was launched in spring 2008 to provide technical assistance and resources to a diverse, lower-income school in each of the 10 network jurisdictions. The project also served as an opportunity to test Safe Routes to School implementation and outcomes in lower-income schools with volunteer champions versus those with paid staff.

The project also served as an opportunity to test Safe Routes to School implementation and outcomes in lower-income schools with volunteer champions versus those with paid staff. Kaiser Permanente provided supplemental funding to the local schools in California, the District of Columbia, Georgia and Virginia. These funds were used to hire a part-time technical service provider, who worked approximately 10 hours a week to manage the Safe Routes to School program at the local school. In the remaining six states, volunteer champions executed the local Safe Routes to School program. These volunteers received approximately two hours each week of implementation advice and technical

assistance from the network organizer. In all 10 schools, network organizers provided guidance on how to apply for federal Safe Routes to School funds from the state DOT.

SELECTION PROCESS

In each jurisdiction, network organizers, in collaboration with the state network manager and local leaders, identified and selected a local school to implement Safe Routes to School. To be considered for the Local School Project, schools had to meet the following characteristics and requirements:

- Over half of the school's student body had to qualify for free or reduced lunch.
- The school had to demonstrate commitment from a supportive principal.
- The majority of the built environment around the school had to be reasonably safe for walking and bicycling.
- The school had to show support from the city and school district through a signed memorandum of understanding outlining each party's responsibilities during the two-year program.

BUILDING SCHOOL TEAMS

Once a school was selected, the technical service provider or volunteer champion established or joined a Safe Routes to School team at the adopted school. The role of the team was to manage the program. The most effective teams included the school principal, physical education teacher or nurse, two or more parents, a representative from the PTA, city engineer, school resource officer, businesses and local stakeholder groups. In California, the District of Columbia and Georgia, representatives from Kaiser Permanente's Community Health Initiative programs joined the local school teams as partners.



LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT

School Location	Santa Rosa, California	Edgewood, District of Columbia	Belvedere, Georgia	Urbana, Illinois	Lebanon, Kentucky	New Orleans, Louisiana	Buffalo, New York	Stillwater, Oklahoma	Bryan, Texas	Alexandria, Virginia
School enrollment	379	490	300	271	370	552	424	406	400	563
Percent of students eligible for free/reduced lunch	98%	50%	97%	82%	64%	71%	56%	72%	44%	44%
Total funding secured	\$1,111,700	\$345,000	\$8,150	\$171,500	\$163,235	\$412,530	\$550,000	\$20,000	Applying for 2009–2010 funding	\$5,000
Volunteer or Paid Staff Leader	Paid	Paid	Paid	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Paid
Safe Routes to School Implementation Strategies										
Engineering	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Encouragement	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Education	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x
Enforcement	x	x		x			x			
Evaluation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Profile Page Number	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51

As an illustrative example, a list of local school team members from the California Local School Project is provided below:

- School principal
- PTA president and financial secretary
- Two parent volunteers
- Santa Rosa Police Department's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program
- Sonoma County Department of Health Services
- Numerous community organizations and businesses:
 - Community Action Partnership
 - Community Bikes
 - Federal Express
 - Kaiser Permanente's Community Health Initiative
 - NorCal Bike Sport/The Bike Peddler
 - Safe Kids Sonoma County
 - Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition (technical service provider)
 - Target, Santa Rosa store
 - Trek Bicycle Store
 - YMCA's Network for a Healthy California

LAUNCHING THE PROGRAMS

Beginning in winter 2008, the local school teams worked with the school, city and parents to plan for the implementation of a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program in each of the 10 schools. The programs generally launched in the summer/fall of 2008. Local school teams planned out an 18-month program, based on the five "E's" for Safe Routes to School:

- *Engineering*—creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establishing safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

- *Encouragement*—using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.
- *Education*—teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them about important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
- *Enforcement*—partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools and initiating community enforcement, such as crossing guard programs.
- *Evaluation*—monitoring and documenting trends and outcomes through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

The local school teams worked with relevant government agencies to apply for federal Safe Routes to School funds. They sought to make infrastructure improvements to the built environment and to conduct and expand programmatic activities. They leveraged additional funding and donations from local agencies, businesses and other community partners. Local school teams also led policy change efforts when necessary, such as getting a 'no bicycling to school' policy revoked by the school principal. In the fall of 2009, local school teams developed sustainability plans for their Safe Routes to School programs so that they would continue beyond the initial organizing investment.

PLANNING AND EVALUATING THE PROGRAMS

An evaluation of the Safe Routes to School program at all 10 schools was conducted under the guidance of University of California, Berkeley's Traffic Safety Center and PPH Partners, a private consultant specializing in connections between policy and public health. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership charged them with analyzing the quantitative and qualitative health aspects of the 10 local school programs.

A future report funded by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, due out in late 2009, will detail how the 10 local school programs affected levels of walking and bicycling, minutes of physical activity, air quality, safety and community participation in the program.

In order to generate baseline data and to research program needs, all of the schools completed parent surveys and student tallies in fall 2008 and again in spring 2009. These surveys and tallies were designed to measure how children get to school and parent attitudes about walking and bicycling to school. In addition, the four Kaiser Permanente-funded schools completed observational data collection about traffic patterns in fall 2008 and spring 2009. These four schools also held parent focus groups in fall 2008 to get a greater understanding of parental attitudes and concerns.

A future report funded by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, due out in late 2009, will detail how the 10 local school programs affected levels of walking and bicycling, minutes of physical activity, air quality, safety and community participation in the program. The evaluation also will examine the impact of paid and volunteer staff on the outcomes of a program.

LESSONS LEARNED

Because the Local School Project was implemented in 10 different lower-income schools, it provided an interesting opportunity to develop a better understanding of the challenges in implementing local Safe Routes to School programs. Several lessons learned have already been identified by the local volunteer champions and technical service providers.

1. Create a better chance of success by engaging paid local staff

Of the 10 local school programs, six relied on local volunteer champions receiving telephone guidance from network organizers and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. Four schools, supported by Kaiser Permanente funding, were given the advantage of paid local contractors who provided direct, on-site technical assistance and leadership for about 10 hours per week. Of the four Kaiser Permanente-funded local school programs, three were outstanding successes, achieving the majority of their goals during the two-year program period. The fourth school's efforts were cut back due to overwhelmed administrative staff at the school. Of the six local school programs relying on volunteers, all made some advancements for future infrastructure planning and education; however, only one was highly successful during the project time period. Two of the local school programs relying on volunteers were derailed after a change in school administration leadership, and three others have moved slowly due to a lack of strong leadership or capacity within the school team. The most successful local school program had two highly dedicated local school team leaders along with strong support from the city and school district.

2. Don't assume continued support if school leadership changes

All participating schools had to demonstrate support from the school principal before they were selected for the Local School Project. However, leadership changes or changes in circumstance created roadblocks in several schools. In three local schools, the administration or principal raised concerns about staff capacity to continue implementation, leading to delays and, in one case, discontinuation of their Safe Routes to School program. In the school in New Orleans, Louisiana, a new principal was appointed midway through the Local School Project. Given the complexity of the



issues to be dealt with at the school, the principal asked to delay implementation of the Safe Routes to School project for at least a year.

Local school teams must continually work to build support among the school administration, and be willing to target the messages and benefits about the program to best fit local needs. For example, many schools struggle with chaotic drop-off and pick-up areas outside the school, requiring many staff to monitor parent vehicles and school buses. Safe Routes to School can reduce congestion around schools as more children walk and bicycle, instead of being driven by parents—which can make it less stressful for school staff.

In many of the communities, even when there were adequate sidewalks and crosswalks, other neighborhood factors caused parents concern about allowing their children to walk and bicycle to school. Higher levels of crime and gang activities, stray dogs, loitering and neighborhood blight were common issues identified by parents.

3. Be creative in overcoming the additional challenges faced by lower-income schools

It quickly became clear that many of the local school projects, which were purposefully selected to have large numbers of low-income students, faced additional hurdles. In many of the communities, even when there were adequate sidewalks and crosswalks, other neighborhood factors caused parents concern about allowing their children to walk and bicycle to school. Higher levels of crime and gang activities, stray dogs, loitering and neighborhood blight were common issues identified by parents.

Safe Routes to School also relies heavily on participation from parent volunteers. In lower-income schools, parents are often working multiple jobs and have limited time to get involved. The PTAs in many of the local schools were either non-existent or had a limited reach. In addition, the schools and communities had fewer resources, staff and otherwise, to provide to the Safe Routes to School project. Teachers were often already committed to other activities, schools lacked financial resources to contribute to the project and city engineers and law enforcement officials had limited time. The volunteer champions and technical service providers had to get creative in securing volunteers and financial support. Some local schools tapped into community groups like the Boy Scouts and the YMCA, engaging youth and adult volunteers. Others looked to church groups, college students and senior centers. Local businesses were also helpful in donating small incentives and support for the Safe Routes to School program in many of the 10 local schools. Finally, one local school found success in using Safe Routes to School as a means of building connections among families in neighborhoods, billing the walk to school as a time to connect with other neighbors and have conversations.

STATE-BY-STATE SUMMARIES OF THE STATE NETWORKS AND LOCAL SCHOOLS

The following pages provide more detail on each network and local school project. The summaries are grouped by state, with the network profile first, followed by the local school project profile. Each summary provides a look at a selected set of policy and program activities and accomplishments by each of the 10 networks and local schools. They do not represent all of the work that the networks and local schools undertook during the course of the entire project. More information about each jurisdiction can be found on the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's Web site at www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/5043.



California State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Safe Routes to School National Partnership

PARTNERS:

- Active Living Research, San Diego State University Foundation
- California Bicycle Coalition
- California Center for Cities & Schools
- California Department of Public Health:
 - California Center for Physical Activity
 - Injury Prevention & Control
- California League of Cities
- California School Board Association
- California State Parent Teacher Association
- California WALKS
- CalPED, Senior Action Network: SF WALKS
- Caltrans Local Assistance, Safe Routes to School
- Caltrans Tribal Affairs
- Center for Civic Participation & Youth Development
- Chief of Staff, California State Assembly Member Nell Soto
- Cities Counties Schools Partnership
- Cycles of Change
- Kaiser Community Health Initiative
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Local Government Commission
- Office of Traffic Safety
- Operation LifeSaver
- PPH Partners
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
- Riverside County Department of Public Health, Injury Prevention Services
- Safe Routes to Schools Alameda County
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority
- Solano Transportation Authority
- Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
- Transform (Bay Area; formerly Transportation and Land Use Coalition)
- University of California, Berkeley Traffic Safety Center
- WalkSacramento
- WalkSanDiego

State and Federal Safe Routes to School Programs: In 1999, California passed landmark state legislation, which resulted in the establishment of a state Safe Routes to School program. This fund provided approximately \$24.25 million in state funding each year, augmenting the available federal Safe Routes to School funding. The network prioritized the state and federal Safe Routes to School funds—totaling \$191 million between 2007 and 2009—given the potential of funding to improve the built environment and reduce and prevent childhood obesity.

To increase exposure and interest in Safe Routes to School, network partners promoted the availability of the funding to tens of thousands of stakeholder agencies, schools

and organizations across the state. The program was substantially oversubscribed with grant requests totaling nearly four times the available funding for each of the four funding cycles that were announced over the three year time period. The network also assisted the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in revising its Safe Routes to School program application guidelines to create better geographic equity and a stronger local decision-making process. The network successfully recommended that health, education and law enforcement be represented on each of the 12 Caltrans District Selection Committees, so that the decision-making for grant awards was not done solely by internal engineering staff.

Once the first set of federal grants had been awarded, the network fielded complaints from recipients of non-construction funds about how to finalize the contract and meet regulatory requirements. The network helped Caltrans develop a 14-step checklist to demystify the implementation process, and got the contract deadline extended so that recipients were able to take advantage of their funding. To track the effectiveness of the new checklist in expediting the implementation process, the network receives quarterly reports and presentations from Caltrans showing how each grant recipient is progressing on implementation.

Strategic Highway Safety Plan: In California, bicycle and pedestrian deaths represent 20 percent of the total traffic fatalities in the state. To ensure that bicycle and pedestrian projects received a fair share of the federal safety funding, network partners participated on working groups for walking, bicycling and intersections during the creation of the state's Strategic Highway Safety Plan, and succeeded in getting Safe Routes to School listed as the number one priority for the walking area. When funding announcements for the Highway Safety Improvement Program were made, Caltrans indicated that 27 percent of funded projects included bicycle, pedestrian or Safe Routes to School elements, representing a major improvement over the prior use of these funds.

Complete Streets: The state of California has had a complete streets policy (Deputy Directive 64) since 2001, but the policy needed strengthening. The network worked with the California Bicycle Coalition, other partners and Caltrans to provide input on the update to the state's complete streets policy. The revised policy was released in the fall of 2008, and now includes accountability procedures for how complete streets should be handled at each project decision level within Caltrans. In addition, due to the passage of the Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB1358), each city and county will be required, starting in 2011, to include complete streets policies in the updates of the circulation element of general plans. The network provided input to the Office of Planning and Research, the state's implementing agency for the policy, on guidance that will be provided to local jurisdictions to ensure inclusion of Safe Routes to School concepts and clear accountability measures.

Safe Routes to School Local Policies: The network provided input and guidance to the California School Board Association (CSBA) on the development of Safe Routes to School resources targeted to school districts. These documents include a policy brief about how school districts can implement Safe Routes to School to increase physical activity, and a sample policy and administrative regulation

to help school districts indoctrinate Safe Routes to School within the education system's governing policies. CSBA circulated over 2,000 copies to CSBA board presidents and superintendents in September 2009, and it also provided the policies to the National School Board Association for potential use in other states.

California Local School Project: Kawana Elementary School, Santa Rosa



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 379 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–6
- 76% of students are Latino
- 98% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

Kawana Elementary is located in a lower-income neighborhood, and parents have reported that crime is a primary concern, especially when considering whether they will allow their children to walk or bicycle to and from school. Over 90 percent of the students live within a two-mile radius of the school, including nearly 50 percent within a half-mile of the school. The local school team is led by the Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition, which serves as the technical service provider, and the Sonoma County Department of Health. A group of parents are prominent members of the local school team, which also includes members of the PTA, school staff and the school principal. In addition, the YMCA, Kaiser Permanente, Safe Kids of Sonoma County and city officials from law enforcement and public works have supported school team efforts.

Funding: The Sonoma County Department of Health worked with the local school team to successfully apply for a \$500,000 federal Safe Routes to School grant, which will be used to continue to expand Safe Routes to School education, enforcement and encouragement activities at Kawana Elementary and seven other lower-income schools in south Santa Rosa for an additional three years. These funds also will enable the creation of a south Santa Rosa SRTS task force. The city of Santa Rosa also was awarded \$611,700 in federal Safe Routes to School funds to improve the built environment near Kawana Elementary School.

Engineering: The \$611,700 Safe Routes to School award to the Santa Rosa Public Works Department will fix sidewalk gaps around Kawana Elementary, make repairs to a cracked

pathway and create crosswalk improvements at one of the major drop-off points for the school. These engineering improvements are scheduled to be completed in phases between 2010 and 2012. In addition, the local school team conducted a walkability audit during 2008, which included parents, the principal, several city public works officials and an officer from Santa Rosa Police Department. As a result, maintenance was conducted to trim back grass on the overgrown pathway. With the new three-year \$500,000 grant for activities at eight schools in South Santa Rosa, a task force will be analyzing all engineering needs for the region, and working with the city to make policy and environmental changes.

Encouragement: Kawana Elementary engaged their students and parents in many encouragement activities including International Walk to School Day, Walking Wednesday events, ongoing walking school buses, contests and media outreach. Prior to the formation of one walking school bus at the Meadow Way apartment complex, all of the children had been taking the school bus. In December 2008, the Safe Routes to School program received a donation from Kaiser Permanente, which resulted in giving away umbrellas or rain ponchos to more than 200 students to encourage them to continue walking during the rainy winter season.

Education: The Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition and the Santa Rosa Police Department sponsored educational events including a Helmet Safety Day and offered low-cost helmets to students. They also conducted bicycle and pedestrian safety assemblies and age-specific classroom lessons for grades 3–5. In addition, the police distributed safety flyers to parents and the program had a community presence through tabling at school events.

Enforcement: The local school team collaborated with Santa Rosa Police Department's bicycle and pedestrian safety community outreach program to identify areas where enforcement strategies could be implemented. The police department increased patrols in key areas and placed mobile speed trailers to assess problems with drivers speeding near the school.

District of Columbia State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Washington Area Bicyclist Association

PARTNERS:

- Action for Healthy Kids
- ASPIRA
- Charter School Board
- Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Committee on Public Works and the Environment, Office of Councilmember Jim Graham
- DC Bicycle Advisory Council, Ward 1
- DC Council Smart Growth & Transportation Policy Advisor, Ward 6
- DC Department of Health, Nutrition and PE Programs
- DC Department of Health Policy, Planning and Research
- DC Department of Transportation:
 - Pedestrian Coordinator
 - SRTS Coordinator
- DC Metropolitan Police Department
- DC Office of Planning-Neighborhood Planning
- DC Public Schools:
 - Physical Education and Health
 - Special Education, Social Work Services
- Howard University, Department of Civil Engineering
- Muriel Bowser, Councilmember, Ward 3
- SafeKids DC
- Tommy Wells, Councilmember, Ward 6

District Safe Routes to School Pilot Program: Even though FHWA had been providing Safe Routes to School funds to the District of Columbia (DC) since fiscal year 2005, the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) was slow to launch the program. As of February 2008, DDOT was sitting on more than \$3 million in federal Safe Routes to School funds. The network conducted a letter writing and phone campaign to encourage DDOT to expedite development and implementation of the program. In May 2008, DDOT announced that they would test implementation of Safe Routes to School through a pilot program that would serve at least one school in each of the city's eight wards.

The network served as a critical resource for DDOT during the establishment of the program. The network was selected to serve as the DC Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee to advise DDOT on program development, implementation and selection of applicants. In the initial application process, 13 mostly lower-income schools applied for participation in the pilot. The network was able to persuade DDOT to select all 13 schools for participation, rather than the intended 10 schools, by leveraging additional financial support from the DC City Council. The selected

schools were announced in August 2008, after the network convinced Mayor Adrian Fenty that expediting the program launch to the start of the school year would allow for more effective Safe Routes to School implementation.

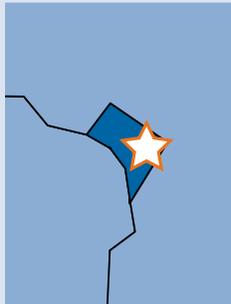
Through the pilot, participating schools are receiving improvements to the built environment, including street crossings and sidewalks plus support from technical consultants to identify Safe Routes to School programming and develop a comprehensive school travel plan. The network has continued to sustain support among city officials for Safe Routes to School through a variety of methods, including by spearheading a DC Safe Routes to School resolution and a Walk to School Day resolution in 2008.

This support from city officials has literally paid off. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided states and DC with millions in transportation funds meant to stimulate the economy. Even though it was not a requirement of the law, DDOT chose to dedicate 3 percent of their highway stimulus funds—a total of \$4 million—to Safe Routes to School infrastructure improvements throughout the city. As the federal Safe Routes to School funding to DC is \$5 million over five years, the stimulus funds provided a significant boost to Safe Routes to School in the city.

Crossing Guard Assessment District: After the launch of the DC Safe Routes to School pilot, there was increasing public demand for crossing guards, which play an important role in encouraging walking and bicycling to school and improving safety. In 2008, the leaders of DC's crossing guard program asked the network to assist them in determining the best placement of crossing guards throughout the city. The network worked closely with DDOT to overhaul DC's crossing guard location placement policy to ensure that crossing guards were placed at busy intersections where larger numbers of children needed assistance safely crossing the street. By revamping the existing city policy, the network contributed to the safety of DC students and addressed parent concerns about traffic safety, setting the DC Safe Routes to School pilot up for greater potential success.

New Source of Safety Funding: After a sharp increase in pedestrian fatalities in 2007, the network prioritized pedestrian safety. Network partners reached out to legislators, pedestrian advocacy groups and the city government to brainstorm solutions and discuss ways to fund pedestrian safety efforts. After learning more about the problem and potential solutions, the DC Council created a safety fund of \$1.5 million per year dedicated to pedestrian and bicycle safety measures, including making infrastructure improvements around schools.

District of Columbia Local School Project: DC Preparatory Academy, Edgewood



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 490 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–6
- 98% of students are black
- 50% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

DC Prep Edgewood is located in Ward 5, one of the poorest wards in DC. The neighborhood is plagued by violence and drug activity. As a public charter school, any student in DC is eligible to attend. Students come from throughout the 64 square mile District, but 62 percent of the students actually live two miles or less from the school. The technical service provider for DC Prep is a traffic engineer with Howard University. Core members of the local school team include representatives from DDOT and their consultants, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), Kaiser Permanente, the metropolitan police department, school principals from DC Prep elementary and middle schools, other school officials and teachers and the PTA.

Funding: DC Prep was selected to participate in DC's Safe Routes to School Pilot program, along with 12 other schools. The infrastructure improvements, engineering support and technical assistance are valued at approximately \$345,000 per school.

Engineering: The local school team worked on several engineering and planning projects:

- Since there is substantial traffic congestion near the school during arrival and departure times, the DC Prep Safe Routes to School team worked with the three other schools and a business that all shared a short dead-end street to reduce the number of cars around the school and to improve traffic flow.
- The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy collaborated with Kaiser Permanente, the network, the local school team and local community members to connect the new Metropolitan Branch Trail, a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trail, to the school.

- DDOT began design work on a pedestrian bridge that will connect nearby Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station to the Metropolitan Branch Trail and adjacent neighborhoods. The bridge will create a safe passageway for children and parents who currently walk over active railroad tracks to get from the metro station to the school.
- DDOT also hired a consultant engineering firm to prepare a street improvement plan for additional infrastructure needs near the school. The plan includes projects like painting crosswalks, widening sidewalks and adding signage and pavement markings. The local school team also recommended a one-way street designation and a permanent street closure near the school to mitigate arrival and dismissal congestion, which are both under consideration by DDOT.

Encouragement: Encouragement activities at DC Prep included participation in International Walk to School Day, contests for students and a Park and Walk program to decrease traffic both before and after school.

Education: Teachers and volunteers distributed information packets to parents about the WABA's pace car program which encourages parents to drive below speed limits on streets near schools to calm traffic during school rush hours. WABA also trained students in pedestrian and bicycle safety through their citywide comprehensive traffic safety education courses.

Enforcement: The Metropolitan Police Department increased patrols during school hours in targeted areas around the school as part of the DC Safe Routes to School Pilot program, and worked with the local school team to have a visible officers' presence at activities like International Walk to School Day and the Park and Walk program.

Georgia State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Georgia Bikes!

PARTNERS:

- Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- American Heart Association
- Federal Highway Administration, Georgia Division
- Georgia Action for Healthy Kids
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Office of Planning and Quality Growth
- Georgia Department of Education, School Nutrition Division
- Georgia Department of Transportation, Office of Planning
- Georgia Parks and Recreation Association
- Georgia Physical Activity Network
- Georgia Rural Health Association
- Georgia Tech Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development
- North Georgia Bicycle Dealers Association
- PEDS
- SafeKids Georgia
- Safe Routes Athens
- Voices for Georgia Children

State Safe Routes to School Program: The Georgia Network's primary challenge was getting the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to launch the Safe Routes to School program. Three years after the inception of the federal Safe Routes to School program, in the summer of 2008, GDOT had not awarded a single grant or even released a call for applications for funding. The network embarked upon an intensive series of activities to bring attention to the serious needs in Georgia communities that could be addressed through the Safe Routes to School program. Network partners wrote letters to the state Commissioner of Transportation and met with a GDOT board member. Network partners also spoke with their U.S. Congressional delegation about the delay. As a result, 10 of Georgia's 13 representatives wrote a joint letter to GDOT asking the agency to implement Safe Routes to School immediately to help address the high rates of obesity among Georgia children.

When the congressional letter still did not result in any movement, the network opted to go public and engage the media. In September 2008, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* published a prominent editorial discussing how at a time

when many school districts were cutting back on busing due to rising fuel prices, GDOT was holding onto \$17 million in federal funds meant to make it safer for children walking and bicycling to school. The GDOT commissioner wrote a same-day response editorial laying out a timeline for the launch of the Safe Routes to School program. Just one month later, in October 2008, GDOT announced a call for applications and Georgia's first Safe Routes to School grants were announced in May 2009. Now that the Safe Routes to School program has made its first awards, the network is shifting focus to implementation to ensure that the remainder of the \$17 million is spent on good projects.

Health Benefits of Safe Routes to School: Even though Safe Routes to School programs are a means of increasing daily physical activity for youth and contributing to the fight to reduce childhood obesity, GDOT initially planned to implement Safe Routes to School without any mention of the health benefits. Concerned that such a policy prohibiting the discussion of health issues would lead to schools missing the connection between Safe Routes to School and student wellness, the network leveraged its media connections. In December 2007, several network partners were interviewed by the *Associated Press* for an article on the health benefits of Safe Routes to School program, which was subsequently picked up by media outlets throughout Georgia and the nation. Three network partners used the article to request a meeting with the GDOT board member who oversees the Safe Routes to School program. As a result, GDOT changed its policy and integrated health messages into Safe Routes to School informational and promotional materials.

Student Wellness Policies: The network quickly realized the opportunity presented by federally mandated school district wellness policies. Network partners worked together to spread the word to school district personnel throughout the state about the role Safe Routes to School can play in student wellness efforts. After receiving information from the network, the Georgia Department of Education added information about Safe Routes to School to their presentations and materials on wellness policies that were used at three education conferences in the summer of 2008. The network also has been asked to present on Safe Routes to School at a statewide school wellness conference to be held in March 2010. Network partners continue to monitor the implementation of wellness policies and provide advice to schools about how to include Safe Routes to School activities.

Georgia Local School Project: Knollwood Elementary School, Belvedere



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 300 students enrolled
- Serves grades Pre-K–5
- 99% of students are black
- 97% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

All of Knollwood's students live within two miles of the school, inside a ring of four busy roadways. The neighborhood has a traditional older suburban street design, including dead-end streets without bicycle and pedestrian access, long blocks, and few sidewalks and paths. The area also is dominated by high crime rates, stray dogs and abandoned houses. Knollwood's technical service provider is an urban planning doctoral candidate from Georgia State University, and prominent members of the local school team include representation from parents, the neighborhood, the county board of health, the county transportation department, Kaiser Permanente and the school principal.

Funding: Knollwood Elementary applied for funding from the Georgia Safe Routes to School program in the spring of 2009, but was not selected. Competition was fierce because 65 schools applied and only 13 were funded. Instead, Knollwood's Safe Routes to School program has relied on alternate funding sources and donations. One lead local school team partner, the DeKalb County Board of Health, donated \$750 to fund minor infrastructure improvements. A local bicycle retail shop, Bicycle South, donated a bicycle rack for the school, the Southern Bicycle League donated a bicycle for a contest and Georgia SafeKids donated five bicycle helmets.

Kaiser Permanente's Healthy Belvedere initiative provided \$7,400 for infrastructure improvements and Safe Routes to School activities and incentives at Knollwood Elementary. A portion of the donation was used to provide stipends for two parents who were active in the Safe Routes to School program as committed program leaders and event volunteers. These parent champions also were able to recruit several other parent volunteers to take leadership positions and to help with encouragement activities and events. Parents currently lead most Safe Routes to School activities at the school.

Engineering: To determine the infrastructure needs around the school, the school team conducted a community walking and bicycling audit in August 2008. To create a safe and supportive environment, the audit identified the following deficiencies that needed to be addressed:

- The school lacked any facilities for student bicycle parking. In response, the school installed bicycle racks on campus in front of the school principal's office in spring 2009.
- Street lights were not working in many spots near the school, creating safety issues in winter months when children were walking to school in the dark. The local school team contacted the power company to report the issue, two parent volunteers marked the dormant lights and the Public Works Department fixed the lights soon thereafter.
- Certain streets around the school were very busy with high-speed traffic. County engineering staff is now using the audit results to plan traffic calming measures. The local school team plans to apply again for Georgia Safe Routes to School funds in 2010 and is researching other potential funding sources to pay for more infrastructure improvements.

Encouragement: In 2008, the local school team worked with the principal to formally revoke Knollwood's policy that prohibited bicycling, and children are now officially allowed to bicycle to school. Knollwood participated in International Walk to School Day, launched monthly classroom competitions to track miles walked and bicycled, sponsored weekly walking school buses and other contests and events.

Education: In fall 2009, Bicycle South sponsored a Back-to-School bicycle rodeo to introduce bicycle safety concepts. The physical education teacher partnered with the local school team to provide monthly in-class education and activities, including showing safety videos, playing a SRTS-themed jeopardy game and conducting map-your-route exercises. The teacher also is working to incorporate a permanent bicycle and pedestrian curriculum into physical education classes.

In 2009, Knollwood Elementary also enrolled in the state's Clean Air School program. The local school team implemented a No Idling campaign to encourage parents to shut off their cars while waiting for children, which also improves air quality for children walking and bicycling to school.

Illinois State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Active Transportation Alliance

PARTNERS:

- American Heart Association
- America Walks
- Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
- Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School Project
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Chicago Public Schools
- Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
- Healthy Schools Campaign
- Illinois Action for Healthy Kids
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association
- League of Illinois Bicyclists
- National Trust for Historic Preservation-Illinois Office of the Governor
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
- TrailNet
- Trail Systems Engineering
- Two Rivers YMCA
- University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital/Injury Free Coalition for Kids
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5

State Safe Routes to School Program: One of the first priorities for the Illinois network was to urge the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to announce the first Safe Routes to School awards. The network began their push in November 2007, which marked nearly two years since IDOT had received its first federal Safe Routes to School funds. At that point, IDOT had more than \$15 million available, but had not awarded any grants. Network partners called and wrote letters to state decision-makers to urge IDOT to release the Safe Routes to School funds expeditiously. The Active Transportation Alliance alerted the media in March 2008. The *Chicago Sun Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* published articles about IDOT's delays in announcing the Safe Routes to School awards. The earned media did the trick, as IDOT announced the first round of awards soon after the articles were published.

The network then shifted focus to the implementation of the state Safe Routes to School program. To help build awareness of Safe Routes to School and increase capacity and knowledge, network members partnered with IDOT to hold an inaugural statewide Safe Routes to School conference in August 2008. The two-day conference drew more than 75 attendees from schools, community organizations and advocacy groups across the state to learn how to manage a local Safe Routes to School program and understand more about how Safe Routes to School can increase physical

activity and safety. The network also solicited comments from Safe Routes to School recipients regarding the paperwork and regulatory process. Awardees receiving non-construction funding were often unfamiliar with federal transportation funding and some found the paperwork burdensome and difficult to understand. In response, the network is collaborating with IDOT and FHWA to develop a guide to help non-infrastructure grantees understand and comply with regulatory requirements.

School Transportation Plans and Hazard Busing: In many communities across Illinois, children are bused short distances to school—even just across the street—because of traffic safety hazards. Starting in the winter of 2008, the network began educating state-level decision-makers about the prevalence of hazard busing and the financial costs to state and to local school districts. In May 2009, state legislators passed House Joint Resolution 6 to require the creation of a School Transportation Task Force to examine multi-modal school transportation plans and to study potential legislative changes. Governor Pat Quinn, who as Lt. Governor was the chair of the network, has the authority to appoint five of the 13 appointments to the task force. The network has submitted a list of recommended task force members to the governor, and decisions should be made within the next few months.

The network also is working on the implementation of related legislation, the School Safety bill (HB 156 and SB 75). The new law allows school districts to use revenue collected from speeding violations committed in school zones to fund Safe Routes to School projects and activities to eliminate school-area traffic and roadway safety hazards. The network is educating school boards throughout the state to ensure widespread usage of the new law. In particular, school districts that use the new funding source wisely could focus improvements on eliminating traffic hazards that currently require students to be bused. These improvements have the potential to save school districts millions of dollars in ongoing busing costs, while also creating more opportunities for children to walk and bicycle safely to school.

School Siting and Neighborhood Schools: The network has prioritized school siting as a key issue for Safe Routes to School, as distance to school is one of the most difficult barriers to overcome in promoting walking and bicycling. In partnership with the Healthy Schools Campaign and the Office of then-Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, the network secured a \$6,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to support the Sustainable Schools in Illinois project. The goal of the grant is to help the network promote community-centered schools as anchors for sustainable development, smart growth and reduced school transportation costs. As Lt. Governor, Quinn convened several groups as part of the project, including a sustainable schools policy working group (fall 2008), a Sustainable Schools Symposium (February

2009) and a public listening and networking session (spring 2009). The network is currently writing a school siting white paper based on the information gained from these working

groups and events. The paper will be complete in fall 2009, and the network will make it available to school districts and school boards throughout the state.

Illinois Local School Project: Martin Luther King Elementary, Urbana



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 271 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–5
- 81% of students are black or Asian-American
- 82% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

King Elementary is located in an urban neighborhood in Urbana, adjacent to the University of Illinois. It is situated within three blocks of two extremely busy streets that do have good sidewalk infrastructure. Primary representatives on the local school team include the school principal, a city police officer, the Active Transportation Alliance, the volunteer co-chair of the Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School project, and a transportation planning consultant from the local transit district who also serves as co-chair.

Funding: The Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District staff and local volunteers lead the community-wide Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School Project, which was awarded \$25,500 in Safe Routes to School funding from IDOT to train school and community audiences about Safe Routes to School. The city of Urbana also received an \$85,000 Safe Routes to School grant from IDOT to update all school zone markings and speed limit signs and to improve sidewalks and crossings throughout the city, including at and around King Elementary. The city of Urbana also has committed \$61,000 to support various Safe Routes to School program activities in town.

Engineering:

- New bicycle racks were installed at King Elementary, which the principal notes has encouraged more students to bicycle to school regularly.
- In summer 2008, the city replaced all school zone signs with modern retro-reflective signs that also display driver speeds. They were located consistently in every school zone, thereby creating a safer environment for students.
- Using the city's general funds, the Public Works Department repainted all crosswalks to make them as visible as possible.
- The local school team and the school administration developed new traffic patterns in the school parking lot,

particularly for parent vehicles, to improve traffic safety during arrival and departure times.

- Urbana Mayor Laurel Prussing is working on a new snow removal policy that recommends that the Public Works Department clear sidewalks near schools to accommodate the increased levels of walking and bicycling even in winter.

Encouragement: The King Elementary principal and local school team worked closely with the Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School Project to bring more attention to Urbana's fourth annual International Walk to School Day on October 8, 2008. The school designated a remote drop-off location for school buses so that all bus riders, including students who lived miles away from school, were able to walk at least a short distance to the school that day. Later in the day, Urbana's The Bike Project sponsored a drawing during an assembly to win one of their 10 refurbished bicycles—each came with a helmet, lock and light. The winning students and their parents attended a special bicycle skills clinic in order to receive their bicycles, and the local media covered the event. The school partnered with the University of Illinois Kinesiology and Community Health Department to create a program to recruit and train university students to escort walking school buses for the 2010–2011 school year. Several teachers have expressed interest in creating a bike train, an escorted group bicycle ride to school.

Education: As part of their community-wide Safe Routes to School education grant, the Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School Project paid for traffic safety education, a bicycle skills clinic and a bicycle giveaway at King Elementary. The project also hosted a weekend event at the Urbana farmer's market featuring a traffic safety game, a bicycle skills clinic and giveaways of bicycle helmets and bicycle maps to students.

Enforcement: One of Urbana's community police officers regularly joined school team meetings and participated in encouragement events to emphasize student safety. The local school team raised concerns about speeding drivers on major streets adjacent to the school. As a result, the city police department increased enforcement and ticketed drivers who were caught speeding in an effort to slow down motor vehicle traffic and increase safety for children walking and bicycling to King Elementary. The local school team also shared information with parents about how to request adult crossing guards at locations around the school.

Kentucky State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Kentucky Rails to Trails Council

PARTNERS:

- Governor's Office of Wellness and Physical Activity
- Injury Free Coalition for Kids-Lexington
- Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeway Commission
- Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center
- Kentucky Transportation Cabinet:
 - Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
 - SRTS Coordinator
- Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana Regional Council of Governments
- Warren County-Bowling Green Greenways

State Safe Routes to School Program: The federal government requires each state DOT to employ a full-time SRTS coordinator. The coordinator, who is paid from the federal Safe Routes to School funds, plays an important role in managing the multi-million dollar program, overseeing the award of funding, and ensuring that local communities have the support and knowledge necessary to run effective Safe Routes to School programs.

In December 2007, a new governor took office. In the ensuing changeover in state administration, the Kentucky SRTS coordinator was laid off. Because this federally funded and federally mandated position is so important to the success of Safe Routes to School, the network closely monitored this situation. Three months passed with no sign of the state hiring a new coordinator. As a result, network partners made a formal request in February 2008 that the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) fill the position. In response, KYTC hired a new coordinator by the end of March 2008.

Highway Safety Funding: The network selected the state's Strategic Highway Safety Plan as an important priority because the plan—which drives the allocation of tens of millions of federal safety dollars each year—did not include any provisions for safety of pedestrians or cyclists. As the plan was scheduled for an update in 2008, it was an opportune time to suggest adjustments. The network approached KYTC and made the case that leaving bicycle and pedestrian safety out of the plan was a critical oversight. After several months of delay, KYTC dropped the effort to update the plan altogether, without further explanation.

The network realized it was time to develop an alternate approach. Several network partners were appointed by the governor to the Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeway Commission in 2009. The role of the commission is to issue an annual report and list of recommendations to the Secretary of KYTC. Based on input from the network, the commission has now agreed to take on the issue of the state's safety plan. As a first step, the commission is preparing a policy paper on the Strategic Highway Safety Plan and how it can improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, and increase children's physical activity levels.

School Wellness Policies: According to the latest *F as in Fat: 2009* report from the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kentucky ranks fourth for the percentage of children who are obese and overweight.¹⁵ These alarming statistics have drawn attention across the state. In response, the network prioritized working with school districts to familiarize them on how Safe Routes to School programs can increase physical activity, help students achieve daily physical activity goals and help address the obesity epidemic. The chair of the network, Lt. Governor Daniel Mongiardo, approached some non-network organizations with broad reach into school systems and ultimately engaged the help of the Kentucky Department of Public Health's Wellness & Health Promotions Branch, the Built Environment Committee of the Partnership for a Fit Kentucky, the Department of Education's Coordinated School Health program and Action for Healthy Kids. Together, the network and these additional partners are advocating that schools throughout Kentucky adopt SRTS-specific language in their wellness policies. The network continues the push on this policy, and presented at three conferences in 2009 targeted to health and education personnel: the Health Coordinators conference, the Action for Healthy Kids conference and the Growing Healthy Kids conference.

Kentucky Local School Project: Lebanon Elementary School, Lebanon



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 370 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–5
- 76% of students are white
- 64% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

Lebanon is a rural town of 5,718 residents. The school is located downtown on a high-volume two-lane state highway (US 68) with no shoulders. Five of the six public housing developments in Lebanon are located within the elementary school boundary, and more than half of the students live less than two miles from Lebanon elementary. Streets emanating from the school lead into neighborhoods with modest homes and apartment complexes. However, there is a high volume of parents driving children to school and a large number of children being transported by bus. Based on the local school team's conversations with families, children at the school want to walk or bicycle to school, but parents are too concerned with safety and traffic issues to allow it. The local school team is led by the school principal, a physical education teacher, the director of the school's family resource center, several city officials including the city administrator, the county school transportation coordinator and the captains of the walking school bus routes.

Funding: In 2006, the city of Lebanon applied for and received \$137,000 in federal Safe Routes to School funds for infrastructure improvements around the school. In August 2009, the program was awarded a second Safe Routes to School grant for \$26,235 to support education, encouragement and enforcement activities.

Engineering: Since the school is located along a high-volume state highway, engineering efforts in 2008 focused on creating safe street crossings, sidewalks and trails. The local school team used the Safe Routes to School grant of \$137,000 to undertake a major sidewalk renovation in front of the school, stripe crosswalks and add new traffic signs. The local school team also installed a bicycle rack on campus in the spring of 2008, allowing students to start bicycling to school. Plans for the 2009–2010 school year include the elimination of a hazard bus route, which had been necessary for dozens of students that lived just a block from the school because of previous safety concerns. With the newly completed sidewalk renovation and improvements to street crossings, the hazards have been abated and these children can now walk or bicycle safely to school.

Encouragement: Now that the engineering project is complete, the local school team is providing three walking school bus routes for the 2009–2010 school year, utilizing the newly improved sidewalks and crossings.

Louisiana State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: University of New Orleans, Department of Planning and Urban Studies

PARTNERS:

- Action for Healthy Kids
- Center for Planning Excellence
- Chair, Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
- Director of Community Relations, Recovery School District
- Louisiana Department of Education:
 - Physical Education Coordinator
 - Coordinated School Health Section Division of School and Community Support
- Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development:
 - State Safe Routes to School Program
 - Section 82, Highway Safety
- Louisiana SAFE KIDS
- Louisiana State University:
 - Agricultural Center
 - Pennington Biomedical Research Center
- New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, Pedestrian & Bicycle Programs
- Steps to a Healthier New Orleans, Louisiana Public Health Institute
- Tulane University:
 - Prevention Research Center
 - School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

State Safe Routes to School Program: Even though the Louisiana Safe Routes to School program launched quickly, the Louisiana SRTS coordinator felt that many of the applications needed improvement. To increase knowledge about how to design and manage an effective Safe Routes to School program, the network paired with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD). The network provided several training opportunities for schools and communities throughout the state, both through local outreach and at statewide Safe Routes to School conferences in October and November 2008. The network hosted policy sessions at these conferences and collaborated with DOTD and the Center for Planning Excellence to conduct a hands-on walkability audit demonstration at a school in Baton Rouge, as part of the 2008 Louisiana Smart Growth Summit.

Alternate Funding Sources: Because of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the federal government provided nearly \$200 million to rebuild roads in the New Orleans area. The Network prioritized work on this funding

stream due to its size; \$200 million is 20 times greater than what is available for Safe Routes to School for the entire state over five years. The network approached the New Orleans Planning Commission to discuss how the funds could be used to improve safety around schools and to provide safe infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians. The commission ultimately assessed schools in New Orleans for necessary physical improvements, such as crosswalks, sidewalk repairs, signage and improvements to bicycle, pedestrian and transit infrastructure. They also established a complete streets policy for the hurricane relief funds to ensure that road repairs included facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. This policy ran into some roadblocks due to FHWA regulations that only allowed federal funds to be used to bring the road back to its previous condition, without new improvements. However, the network was able to negotiate with FHWA and the New Orleans Planning Commission to develop a novel solution: roads were rebuilt and repaired to their previous standard, but were repainted in such a way that the city can easily come back afterwards to paint bicycle lanes and crosswalks on nearly 40 miles of roadways, using non-relief funds.

The relationship that the network developed with the city of New Orleans also paid off in 2009. The network was able to secure \$11 million in federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to paint bicycle lanes, install sidewalks and improve street crossings throughout the city. This funding source alone will double the number of miles of bicycle lanes in New Orleans from 22 to over 40 miles. This was a huge win in Southern Louisiana, especially for typically underserved New Orleans neighborhoods, which were hard hit by Hurricane Katrina.

Complete Streets: Building on the success of New Orleans' usage of hurricane relief funds for complete streets improvements, the Louisiana Senate passed Concurrent Resolution 110 in 2009. The resolution established a complete streets work group in DOTD charged with developing a statewide policy on the design and construction of thoroughfares that maximize the ability of all Louisianans to walk, bicycle, take public transportation or drive. Nine network partners were selected to serve on the work group for implementation, which first convened in fall 2009. While their effort is just beginning, the work group has the potential to influence hundreds of millions of transportation dollars in Louisiana to provide safe transportation options that will improve physical activity and safety of routes to schools.

Louisiana Local School Project: Drew Elementary School, New Orleans



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 552 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–8
- 99% of students are black
- 71% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

Drew Elementary is an inner-city public school located in New Orleans' historic Bywater neighborhood in the Ninth Ward. The school sustained significant damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina flooding in the summer of 2005, and all of the students and staff were displaced. On October 16, 2006, Drew Elementary was able to return to its original location, becoming the first school to re-open in the Bywater neighborhood. Disney and KaBoom! built the school's only playground in May 2007.

The primary partners in the school team include the City of New Orleans Department of Public Works, the Recovery School District and the Partnership for an Active Community Environment at the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The local school team initially made great progress, including raising significant funds for infrastructure improvements and Safe Routes to School education, encouragement and enforcement activities. Then, a new principal was appointed for the school in fall 2008. Given the complexity of the struggles in a school that had experienced major disruption from Hurricane Katrina, the principal was unwilling to continue the program, at least during the 2008–2009 school year. The local school team hopes to revisit the issue with the principal for the 2009–2010 school year, but the future of Drew Elementary's Safe Routes to School program is unclear as of the time of this printing.

Funding: In spring 2008, Drew Elementary was awarded two Safe Routes to School grants from the Louisiana Safe Routes to School program—\$50,000 to support program activities and \$250,000 for infrastructure improvements. The local school team also applied for and received a grant for \$112,530 from New Orleans city funds for additional infrastructure improvements.

Engineering: The local school team worked with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission and DODT to identify funds to support the installation of bicycle lanes and crosswalks and to upgrade curb ramps along the state highway near the school. The project was completed in July 2008 at a cost of approximately \$93,630, funded by FHWA, the state highway maintenance fund and state transportation dollars. In addition, the local school team was able to convince the city to install a bicycle lane in front of the school as part of an already planned repaving project for the state highway. The project was completed in spring 2009 and represented the first bicycle lanes ever striped in the city of New Orleans.

New York State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Be Active New York State

PARTNERS:

- Alta Planning & Design
- American Cancer Society
- Cornell Cooperative Extension—4H Youth Development
- Cornell Local Roads Program
- Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee
- National Association for Health and Fitness
- New York Bicycle Coalition
- New York State Association of Traffic Safety Boards
- New York State Department of Health:
 - Bureau of Injury Prevention
 - Healthy Heart Program
 - Division of Nutrition
- New York State Department of Transportation:
 - Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator
 - SRTS Coordinator
- New York State Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Alliance
- New York State PTA—Health and Wellness Chair
- Parks & Trails New York
- The RBA Group

State Safe Routes to School Program: The New York network’s first order of business was to prompt the New York Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to launch the Safe Routes to School program. In spring 2007, the network began educating key legislative officials about the purpose of the Safe Routes to School program and the fact that NYSDOT had \$27 million in federal funds available that was not being used. As part of the campaign, the network produced a position paper in August 2007 identifying four principles that should guide NYSDOT’s Safe Routes to School program and a sample letter that elected officials could use when contacting NYSDOT. The tactics worked in garnering attention: members of the western New York Congressional delegation and the governor contacted NYSDOT, and State Senator Antoine Thompson held a joint press conference with the network on the matter. NYSDOT then launched the Safe Routes to School program in September 2007, announcing the availability of a competition for the entire \$27 million.

The network then moved on to ensure that a wide range of communities, particularly lower-income schools and underserved communities, were aware of the program and equipped to prepare competitive applications. Network partners teamed up to conduct Safe Routes to School application workshops around the state. The network also developed two resource tools to help communities understand how to develop a successful Safe Routes to School plan and an effective funding application. The Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee provided the network with a grant to allow them to conduct webinars and trainings to increase the number of applicants to the Safe Routes to School program.

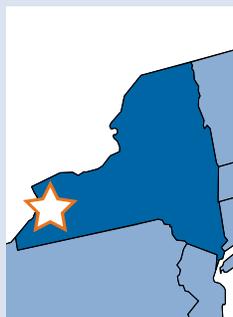
Complete Streets: Because the needs for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety improvements were so great across the state, the network selected complete streets as one of their main priorities. In January 2008, network partners met with the NYSDOT commissioner to encourage the state agency to adopt a statewide complete streets policy that would ensure that the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users are routinely accommodated as part of all roadway projects. Because it was a new concept to the NYSDOT and many in the state, the network strategically chose to start at the local level and then move statewide. Network members educated members of the Buffalo Common Council about how building roads with facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users increases safety and mobility options for residents. In May 2008, the council unanimously amended the city charter to create a complete streets policy for Buffalo. Surrounding Erie County followed suit in late 2008 with its own complete streets policy.

Seizing on the success in Buffalo, the network developed a policy brief on complete streets that highlighted the new policy in Buffalo and distributed it to local transportation planning committees throughout the state. Network partners also made a presentation on the subject at the New York State Metropolitan Planning Organization Association conference in July 2008.

The network’s education campaign and outreach inspired several pieces of state legislation. Two different complete streets bills have been introduced in the state legislature to strong support, but have not yet passed. Assembly member Sam Hoyt sponsored A2343-B, which would allow bicycle and pedestrian projects—including those in the vicinity of schools—to be eligible for funding from an existing \$39 million pot of state highway funding that has historically been used exclusively for road projects. Governor Paterson signed the legislation into law in July 2009.

Bicycle Education Curriculum: Many local Safe Routes to School programs incorporate bicycle safety education. However, New York does not have a statewide education program to develop skills and prepare bicyclists for traffic conditions. This can leave educators without the necessary knowledge and training to know how to teach the most age-appropriate bicycle safety lessons and ability to work with students to practice safe on-bicycle riding behaviors. The network identified this as an important gap that could potentially affect the safety impact of Safe Routes to School programs. The network created a comprehensive white paper, “Best Practices for Bicycle Education,” and distributed it throughout the state in July 2009. The document is intended to familiarize potential bicycle safety educators with the wealth of bicycle safety models, curriculums and training resources available through reputable organizations like Bike New York, the New York Bicycling Coalition and the Cornell Cooperative Extension service.

New York Local School Project: P.S. #74 Hamlin Park Elementary School, Buffalo



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 424 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–5
- 93% of students are black
- 56% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

The Buffalo Public School District and the city of Buffalo consider Safe Routes to School to be an important aspect of building quality of life for students. But, due to a citywide policy to allow parents to choose any school in the system, only 20 percent of Hamlin Park Elementary's students live within a half-mile of the school. Nearly 800 other school-age children live within a half-mile radius of Hamlin Park Elementary, but attend seven other elementary schools throughout Buffalo. The local school team, which is led by Be Active New York State and the Hamlin Park Neighborhood Association, hopes that their Safe Routes to School efforts will ultimately encourage more parents to choose to enroll their children in their neighborhood school. Other primary members of the school team include the president of the Hamlin Park Taxpayers Association, officials from the Buffalo School District, and staff from the city, which includes the department of public works and the department of administration, finance, policy and urban affairs.

Funding: Hamlin Park Elementary's local school team applied for and received \$550,000 in federal Safe Routes to School funding from NYSDOT. This grant will support Safe Routes to School program activities starting in the 2009–2010 school year and infrastructure improvements that will be completed by 2010.

The school, which is in a historic lower-income neighborhood, is also part of a multi-million dollar neighborhood revitalization effort. The city of Buffalo has budgeted \$1 million to make street improvements and to add curbs, sidewalks, signage, benches and greenery in the Hamlin Park area. These improvements are intended to make the space safer and more inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists; improve livability and safety; and attract new residents, homeowners and businesses.

Engineering: The Hamlin Park community has a well-established street grid and sidewalks. The \$550,000 Safe Routes to School grant will support the complete reconstruction of three main intersections along the primary

route to Hamlin Park School that had a high risk of collisions. Improvements, which are being constructed during 2009 and 2010, will include new curb ramps, marked crosswalks with enhanced treatments, pedestrian-scaled lighting, curb extensions, new signage and pedestrian countdown timers.

Encouragement: Because the Safe Routes to School funding for programming was just made available, the local school team will begin implementation in the 2009–2010 school year. In preparation, during 2008, the local school team and other community members attended the Safe Routes to School National Course, offered by the New York State Partnership for Walk Our Children to School, to learn about the key elements of successful Safe Routes to School programs. The local school team has already developed a plan for the upcoming school year that includes organizing a walking school bus and bicycle train program and implementing New York City's award-winning Recycle-A-Bicycle program. The city of Buffalo also will create a Safe Routes to School Buffalo Web page, develop school travel maps for all Buffalo Public Schools, promote walk to school day events and participate in the New York State Partnership for Walk Our Children to School's writing and poster contest. Hamlin Park Elementary will participate in all of these opportunities.

Education: In the 2009–2010 school year, Buffalo police department school resource officers will implement two classroom programs to teach children about pedestrian safety, gang awareness and personal safety. This class is designed to prepare children to participate in the walking school bus program. The local school team also plans to offer bicycle safety education classes and bicycle skills clinics.

Enforcement: During the 2009–2010 school year, school resource officers will be on bicycles to monitor school arrival and dismissal traffic safety issues. These resource officers also will be placed in high-traffic intersections to help safeguard and escort students participating in the walking school bus program.

The police department also has an aggressive plan in place to enforce traffic rules around the school. To be launched at a press conference in fall 2009, the six-week pedestrian safety campaign will include placement of speed trailers around the school to track driver speeds, an awareness campaign to curb aggressive driving behaviors and the issuance of tickets to drivers and pedestrians that disobey the law. The campaign will be repeated in spring 2010.

Oklahoma State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Oklahoma Bicycling Coalition

PARTNERS:

- American Heart Association
- Association of Central Oklahoma Governments
- City of Lawton
- Council of Educational Facility Planners International
- Eagle Ridge Institute
- Edmond Police Department
- Indian Nation Council of Governments
- Norman Bicycle Committee
- Oklahoma Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Oklahoma City Planning Department
- Oklahoma Department of Education
- Oklahoma Department of Health:
 - Injury Prevention
 - Physical Activity and Nutrition Program
- Oklahoma Department of Transportation
- Oklahoma Fit Kids Coalition
- Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy
- Oklahoma Neighborhood Alliance
- Oklahoma Parent Teacher Association
- Oklahoma State University Seretean Wellness Center
- Oklahoma University Health Services Center
- Safe Kids Oklahoma
- Schools for Healthy Lifestyles
- Strong and Healthy Oklahoma
- Tulsa Mayor's Fitness Challenge

State Safe Routes to School Program: By the time the Oklahoma network formed, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) was already moving forward with implementation of the Safe Routes to School program. The network chose to prioritize efforts to increase the number and quality of Safe Routes to School applicants and spread awareness of the program. ODOT selected the network to serve as the state's Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee. In this capacity, ODOT and the network have given joint training presentations throughout the state to equip local communities with the necessary skills to prepare a proposal and to plan, implement and evaluate a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program. The network conducted a series of presentations at the Oklahoma Parent Teacher Association conference (July 2008), the statewide Fit Kids Coalition meeting (September 2008), the Safe and Healthy Schools conference (November 2008) and the Oklahoma Elementary School Principals' conference (January 2009).

The network also has worked collaboratively with ODOT to identify and address implementation challenges with the program, and to encourage more high-quality applications for non-infrastructure funding that supports education, encouragement and enforcement activities.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education: In May 2008, state legislation, SB 1186, doubled the required amount of physical education time for children in grades K–5. The network realized that longer physical education classes were an ideal setting to teach children safe walking and bicycling skills and behaviors. The network developed a bicycle safety education curriculum and a pedestrian safety curriculum, and is now working to have the curricula adopted as part of the state's elementary school physical education programs. The network is partnering with ODOT and the Oklahoma Department of Education to provide funding through the Safe Routes to School grants and a separate mini-grant program targeted to lower-income schools to ensure that physical education teachers have the necessary skills to effectively teach the curricula. Both state agencies have agreed to promote the curricula as a means of encouraging more parents and schools to embrace Safe Routes to School and get children more physically active.

Making Safe Routes to School Sustainable: Nearly one-third of Oklahoma's children are overweight and obese, and many decision-makers feel motivated to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. The network realized that promoting Safe Routes to School as a way to increase physical activity for children and address childhood obesity would be beneficial. The network issued a series of reports, fact sheets and policy briefs on Safe Routes to School and physical activity, and disseminated them to state agency decision-makers, elected officials and nonprofit organizations. As a result of this education campaign, two network partners, the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy and Oklahoma Fit Kids, chose to use their own resources to advocate for legislation to strengthen Safe Routes to School. SB 399 passed the Oklahoma House and Senate unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Henry in July 2009. The law requires ODOT to maintain a Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee, and instructs the state treasurer to establish a revolving fund that can receive outside monies to supplement the federal Safe Routes to School dollars.

Oklahoma Local School Project: Highland Park Elementary School, Stillwater



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 406 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–5
- 85% of students are black
- 72% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

Approximately 75 percent of Highland Park’s students live within two miles of the school, and the majority of these students have relatively easy access to sidewalks. Some of the sidewalks, however, are in need of repair or replacement, and some students must cross streets that are so busy that hazard busing is provided. Due to a 2009 redesign of district boundaries, some of the students live as far as four miles from the school, and some students who live close to the school are now part of another school district. Lead local school team members include the president of the PTA, several school officials (including the assistant superintendent, the principal and the physical education teacher), city officials, and representatives from the Stillwater Police Department and the Stillwater Medical Center.

Funding: The Highland Park local school team developed a school travel plan identifying their Safe Routes to School needs and submitted it to ODOT. The school was awarded an initial \$20,000 to allow them to move forward on Safe Routes to School education and encouragement activities. The local school team also is planning to submit an application for the 2009 Safe Routes to School grant cycle for up to \$200,000 to support infrastructure improvements.

Engineering The city of Stillwater has repainted the crosswalks around the school, using city funds. The principal also is working on a plan to revise the traffic pattern on school grounds that will reduce traffic congestion at arrival and departure times and improve safety for children walking and bicycling.

Encouragement: Over 60 percent of Highland Park’s students walked to school during the October 8, 2008 International Walk and Bike to School Day, with many parents indicating they would like to participate in more regular walking days and events. As a result, the local school team organized regular Walking Wednesdays. The local school team also plans to facilitate daily walking with a new Walking School Bus program for the 2009–2010 school year and through additional encouragement programs.

Education: The League of American Bicyclists conducted its national pilot Cycling Skills Clinic at Highland Park Elementary in late spring 2009 to train adult instructors to provide high-quality bicycle safety instruction to children. As a follow-up, the local school team plans to apply for a Safe Routes to School mini-grant to teach the nationally-recognized *SuperCyclist* and *Getting to School Safely* bicycle and pedestrian curricula at Highland Park. Grants are expected to be made available sometime during the 2009–2010 school year.

Texas State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: Texas Transportation Institute Center for Transportation Safety

PARTNERS:

- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- Austin Cycling Association
- Austin Police Department
- Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services
- City of Austin
- City of Bryan
- City of Dallas
- City of El Paso
- Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities
- League of American Bicyclists
- Michael & Susan Dell Center for Advancement of Healthy Living, University of Texas School of Public Health
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance
- North Texas Family Practices & Internal Associates
- Office of Senator Eliot Shapleigh
- Rivers Systems Institute
- San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- St. David's Community Health Foundation
- Texas Active Living Network
- Texas A&M University School of Rural Public Health
- Texas AgriLIFE Extension—Texas A&M University System
- Texas Citizen Action
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Department of State Health Services
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Municipal Police Association
- Texas Parks & Wildlife
- Texas Parent Teacher Association
- Texas State Senate District 14
- Texas Tech University Health Science Center
- The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture

State Safe Routes to School Program: The Texas network has focused its efforts on the implementation and reach of the state Safe Routes to School program. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) asked the network to review and provide recommendations on a draft guidebook

that walks local communities through how to prepare high-quality Safe Routes to School applications. The publication, *Safe Routes to School Guidebook for the State of Texas*, was released to the public at a press event in the fall of 2009. The network expects that the guidebook will be of particular use to lower-income communities that often lack grant writers and engineering expertise to assist with developing successful grant applications.

Safe Routes to School Evaluation: The network had a unique opportunity to collaborate with Live Smart Texas, a broad statewide coalition of 80 organizations, on a childhood obesity evaluation project. Supported by a \$2 million RWJF grant, Live Smart Texas will evaluate Safe Routes to School and the WIC Food Access and Availability Project to assess their effectiveness at reducing childhood obesity in Texas. The project also includes targeted evaluation approaches for different segments of at-risk populations, which will allow for a greater understanding of how these two programs and obesity policies affect children from different backgrounds and income levels—including the Latino population living along the border between Texas and Mexico. The network is helping Live Smart Texas with the evaluation by providing technical feedback on the project's survey tools and ongoing expertise and support.

Partnerships and Policies: Since its inception in July 2008, the network has partnered with state-level coalitions that have missions and values compatible with Safe Routes to School. There are three coalitions—Texas Active Living Network, Partnership for a Healthy Texas and the Texas Action for Healthy Kids Alliance—that include very similar stakeholders and have a similar focus on getting children active. Network partners have determined that it makes the most sense to incorporate Safe Routes to School into one of these existing coalitions rather than have a free-standing network with major overlap. The network is currently in discussions with the three organizations to determine the best approach—whether it is by formation of a subcommittee within one of the coalitions or as a new element of one of the coalition's mission and goals. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership will continue the evaluation collaboration with Live Smart Texas, as that priority may not be a focus of the organization which becomes the “parent” for the network.

Texas Local School Project: Johnson Elementary School, Bryan



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 400 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–5
- 41% of students are Latino
- 44% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

Johnson Elementary is located in the suburban small town of Bryan, population 65,660. The student population mostly lives in the neighborhood surrounding the school, but there are few sidewalks, except on the busiest roads. The school principal and physical education teacher are strong supporters of the Safe Routes program, and the local school team includes the school resource officer, a city civil engineer and a community police officer who also is one of the four parents on the local school team.

Funding: The city of Bryan will apply for infrastructure funding for sidewalk improvements and traffic calming devices during the forthcoming 2009–2010 call for projects, while the Bryan Independent School District will seek funding for education and encouragement activities. The local school team also plans to use the proposal to seek additional support directly from the city and other potential funders.

Engineering: The local school team conducted an assessment of the bicycle and pedestrian environment around Johnson Elementary during summer 2009. The local school team has identified a number of needed improvements, including new sidewalks, safer street crossings and traffic calming. The local school team is working with city staff to plan solutions for the 2009–2010 school year and to identify funding sources to carry out the improvements.

Encouragement: Students from Johnson Elementary participated in International Walk to School Day on October 8, 2008, as well as a spring Walk to School Day in May 2009. Both events specifically targeted students in the neighborhood immediately adjacent to the school. The local school team is currently developing an action plan for the 2009–2010 school year to encourage more walking and bicycling.

Education: In spring 2009, the local school team educated teachers, administrators and parents about the benefits of walking or bicycling to school and how walking school buses can help address parent concerns about traffic and personal safety. The community police officer who serves on the local school team conducted a bicycle skills clinic for students in spring 2009.

Virginia State Network

NETWORK ORGANIZER: BikeWalk Virginia

PARTNERS:

- Action for Healthier Kids
- Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation
- Chester Community Association
- City of Alexandria
- Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling
- Kubilins Transportation Group
- SafeKids Virginia
- Trips for Kids
- Virginia Department of Education:
 - Health, Physical Education and Drivers Education
 - Pupil Transportation Services
 - School Health Advisory Board
- Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Virginia Department of Health—Commonwealth’s Healthy Approach and Mobilization Plan for Inactivity, Obesity and Nutrition (CHAMPION)
- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Virginia Parent Teacher Association

State Safe Routes to School Program: One of the top priorities for the Virginia network has been to garner broad participation in and demand for Safe Routes to School throughout the state. The network has made presentations about Safe Routes to School at conferences, health fairs and other events including: the Virginia Childhood Obesity conference; the Southwest Virginia Active Communities conference; the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation’s strategic planning session; the PTA Leadership Conference and statewide PTA conference; and the Virginia Health Commissioner’s Workgroup for Obesity Prevention & Control. Utilizing outside grant funding, the network has launched a Safe Routes to School Web site (www.saferoutesva.org) and produces a monthly newsletter to highlight Safe Routes to School activities throughout Virginia.

In the course of its work promoting Safe Routes to School, the network heard from many schools that the Virginia Department of Transportation’s (VDOT) travel plan and application templates were burdensome. To facilitate greater participation by underserved communities, the network submitted recommendations to VDOT on how to streamline and simplify the application process.

Statewide Certification of Crossing Guards: Crossing guards can play an important role in increasing safety and encouraging children to walk to school, but many crossing guards are volunteers and receive minimal training. As crossing guards are a significant element of many local Safe Routes to School programs, the network is working to improve the skills and knowledge of crossing guards throughout the state. Network partners reached out to communities that had crossing guard training in place to assess existing programs. The network is developing a standardized training curriculum, which will be submitted to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services for certification. When this project is complete, crossing guards across Virginia will be able to access high-quality training and be certified as having the appropriate skills to protect children.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure: Because VDOT maintains all roads in the state except for those in cities and two counties, their policies have a significant impact on the availability of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. VDOT already had a policy requiring that highway projects accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians and that other road projects consider the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. But, the network identified two other VDOT policies that limited the effect of this requirement, and focused on changing them.

VDOT’s “Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements” mandate the minimum standards to which new roads must be built before VDOT will accept responsibility to maintain the facility. The network submitted public comment on draft revisions to the policy, recommending that the minimum standards include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. Many of the network’s recommendations were accepted when the updated policy was approved in February 2009—which will increase the number of sidewalks, multi-use paths and bicycle lanes in future road developments.

The network also recommended revisions to VDOT’s formula for allocating road maintenance funds that would remove financial disincentives for installing bicycle lanes. The existing formula does not factor bicycle lanes into the road mileage and area calculations at the basis of the formula, effectively costing jurisdictions that had installed bicycle lanes tens of thousands of dollars in maintenance funds each year, which could not be claimed for reimbursement. Network partners educated decision-makers about the consequences of this policy, and VDOT is currently assessing the recommendations through their decision-making process.

Virginia Local School Project: Mount Vernon Community School, Alexandria



SCHOOL PROFILE:

- 563 students enrolled
- Serves grades K–6
- 70% of students are black or Latino
- 44% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch

All students of Mount Vernon Community School live within two miles, and 47 percent live less than a half-mile from the school. The student population is geographically divided between mostly middle- and upper-income white families living on one side of the school neighborhood and mostly Latino lower-income families living on the other side of the school neighborhood. The technical service provider for Mount Vernon Community School is the executive director of the local chapter of the Trips for Kids non-profit organization. Primary members of the local school team include the school nurse, the PTA president, seven members of the PTA health and wellness sub-committee and a bi-lingual volunteer who serves as a liaison to the school.

Funding: The local school team partnered with the city of Alexandria and the Alexandria County Public School administration to apply for a Safe Routes to School mini grant from VDOT. The grant was approved in June 2009, and Mount Vernon received \$5,000 to support a bicycle skills clinic, promotional giveaways, computer-generated walking route maps and Walk to School Day event supplies.

Engineering: The city of Alexandria has a strong commitment to safe bicycling and walking, and has a citywide pedestrian and bicycle mobility plan that prioritizes improvements around schools that participate in Safe Routes to School. The city allocates nearly \$2 million per year for sidewalks, bicycle lanes, safer street crossings and traffic calming measures, particularly in the vicinity of schools. Recent infrastructure improvements at and around Mount Vernon school include bicycle lanes, pedestrian street crossing signals and a median refuge in the middle of the street to give children a safe place to wait while crossing. The local school team also worked with Alexandria to fund and install several new bicycle racks at the school and a nearby after-care facility that serves over more than 100 Mount Vernon students.

Encouragement: Nearly 75 percent of students participated in Walk to School Day, which was covered by the *Alexandria Gazette* newspaper. As part of the day's festivities, the principal and assistant principals led assemblies focused on healthy eating and active living. The assemblies also served as the launch for a monthly contest, sponsored by the school nurse, in which children get a punch in a wallet-size card each day they walk or bicycle to school. The local school team also launched a Walking Wednesdays program to further increase the number of students walking to school.

The local school team plans to continue these programs for the 2009–2010 school year, but will add the Walk Across America program. Children input the miles they walk or bicycle to and from school into a Web-based interactive game. The game allows students to calculate the distances they have collectively traveled to simulate a virtual walk across the nation—complete with information about national parks and historic sites they have “visited” along the way.

Education: In May 2009, the local school team coordinated a bicycle skills clinic and a Healthy Fun Day. At the bicycle skills clinic, the local school team showed a helmet safety video, shared Safe Routes to School educational information and distributed 200 helmets to students. In September 2009, the local school team will hold a week-long series of walk to school events with a strong safety focus. The week's activities also will include poster contests, an assembly and a helmet giveaway and a traffic safety presentation by the AAA.



NEXT STEPS

STATE NETWORK PROJECT

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership has been awarded nearly \$1.5 million in funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to continue and to expand the State Network Project during 2010 and 2011 to a total of 15 states. While many of the network goals will remain the same, there will be an increased emphasis on addressing the communities at highest risk for childhood obesity and working with law enforcement to reduce the threat of crime. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership also is seeking additional funding for five other states, which could potentially bring the total to 20 states.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is collaborating with RWJF to develop the criteria for inviting states to participate in the program. States that demonstrate high rates of childhood obesity, diversity and high percentages of children living poverty will be prioritized. In addition, selection will include an analysis of key national opportunities that may be addressed through states, synergy with other RWJF state programs and the capacity of the state to execute a successful network project. Network organizers for each state will be selected in the fall, and efforts to engage partners, develop action plans and act on policy priorities within the selected states will begin in early 2010.

LOCAL SCHOOL PROJECT

Each local school, which the Safe Routes to School National Partnership assisted over the past two years, is now developing continuity and sustainability plans to allow the Safe Routes to School programs to continue on their own. The Partnership will shift its efforts to provide technical assistance to other RWJF programs at the local level that are addressing Safe Routes to School including by increasing partnerships with organizations, such as *Healthy Kids*, *Healthy Communities*, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the YMCA. This will

enable broader distribution of best practices and technical expertise, which will deepen childhood obesity-prevention initiatives within communities where RWJF is already investing.

FUTURE FEDERAL FUNDING

The future of the federal Safe Routes to School program is now being considered by Congress as part of the next transportation bill authorization. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership educates members of Congress about the benefits of the program and shares how funds are being used by local schools and communities throughout the country.

In May 2009, Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA), Richard Burr (R-NC), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced S. 1156, the Safe Routes to School Program Reauthorization Act. The legislation proposes increasing funding for Safe Routes to School to \$600 million per year, expanding it to include high schools, strengthening data collection and improving project implementation procedures.

In June 2009, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee released its draft of the transportation bill, called the Surface Transportation Authorization Act. Although the bill is expected to include \$450 billion to \$500 billion over six years, funding levels for specific programs, including Safe Routes to School, are not yet indicated. Instead, the bill is meant to outline the new structure for surface transportation programs and policy changes. The draft bill does include new provisions to improve data collection and reduce implementation burdens in the Safe Routes to School program.

The current transportation bill expires on September 30, 2009. Congress will either have to extend current programs at the FY2009 level, which amounts to \$183 million for Safe Routes to School, or move quickly on a new authorization.

CONCLUSION

The first three years of the Safe Routes to School State Network Project were effective in launching and implementing state-level collaborations in nine states and the District of Columbia. The networks advanced policy work and improvements to the built environment through the framework of the newly-created \$612 million Safe Routes to School federal program. These efforts were ultimately intended to provide greater opportunities for children to be physically active and to address childhood obesity. While the State Network Project only had paid staff for 10 hours per week, the diversity of partners that participated in the networks resulted in focused efforts that leveraged dozens of additional hours in volunteer staff time each month from other agencies and organizations located within the state.



The efforts of the 10 networks resulted in the programming of \$199 million in federal funds to improve opportunities for safe physical activity for children on the route to school. The State Network Project also was effective in leveraging additional funding resources. In California, the state programmed \$100 million in additional state funding for Safe Routes to School, and in the District of Columbia, \$4 million was granted for the program through the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In New Orleans, the network helped to shape policies, which resulted in millions of dollars of post-Katrina emergency relief funding being used so that the reconstruction of roadways supports the design and implementation of more than 40 miles of new bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

One of the hallmarks of the State Network Project was its ability to bring together the state departments of transportation, health and education to facilitate the examination of state-level funding, programs and policies through a health lens. As Safe Routes to School was a new federal program that was much different from the highway projects that state DOTs have primarily focused on in the past, it required a re-examination of many existing DOT policies. The networks were able to improve many of these policies that affect children's health, physical activity and safety—including complete streets, the programming of safety funding, policies for the use of traffic fines and more. Likewise, involvement with educational institutions opened up discussions about policy changes related to school siting, joint-use agreements, traffic safety curriculum and the promotion of Safe Routes to School programs through federally mandated wellness policies. These policy and built environment changes positively affect the school commute and improve opportunities for children to engage in healthy physical activity after school and on weekends.

At the local level, the Local School Project allowed the Safe Routes to School National Partnership to work with lower-income schools and local advocates to build partnerships and develop

lessons learned for implementing comprehensive Safe Routes to School programs. In nearly all of the 10 locations, the local school teams were successful in leveraging funding for improvements to the built environment. An analysis of the program implementation also revealed that paid technical service providers at the local level help to keep a program moving forward. The most successful local schools included a high level of collaboration between the school and the city plus a diverse team that met regularly and incorporated efforts into school and city meetings, procedures and planning to institutionalize the program and leverage additional resources.

The overall success of the State Network Project demonstrates the need for statewide SRTS-oriented policy work in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The networks lay the groundwork for good state and local Safe Routes to School programs, generate partnerships to broaden the reach of the program, break down the barriers to walking and bicycling to school and generate additional funding to supplement the limited federally funded state programs. State policy changes in school siting, complete streets, fines and strategic highway safety plans can proactively create transportation networks that are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists, freeing up valuable Safe Routes to School dollars to make improvements to safety hazards on existing roads.

The future and sustainability of Safe Routes to School has already been strengthened by the groundbreaking work of the Safe Routes to School State Network Project. Research and practice has shown that Safe Routes to School programs have a positive impact on children's physical activity levels and help build partnerships that promote policy change. As the state networks serve as catalysts to construct changes to the built environment and to institutionalize policies that promote healthy and safe physical activity during the trip to and from school, efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by the year 2015 also will be positively impacted.

APPENDIX

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Safe Routes to School authorizing legislation
www.saferoutespartnership.org/national/45980/242473
- List of Safe Routes to School National Partnership affiliates
www.saferoutespartnership.org/about/1733
- Updates on state implementation of the federal Safe Routes to School program, including quarterly state progress reports
www.saferoutespartnership.org/national/45980/242473
- Resources to assist with state-level program implementation and planning
www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/5764
- Best practices for state policies
www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/5638
- Publications and reports of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership
www.saferoutespartnership.org/mediacenter/31472

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