



How to Get Started

DEVELOP A BASIC TRAVEL PLAN FOR YOUR SCHOOL

What Is a School Travel Plan?

A Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Travel Plan “maps out” how to improve pedestrian and bike travel to and from school for the purpose of increasing the number of students and parents who bike or walk to school and/or improving safety. A School Travel Plan will help you to identify:

- Where students currently walk and/or bike
- Where students would walk or bike if they could
- What changes need to be made so that students can and will walk and bike safely to school

After completing a basic School Travel Plan, you will have pinpointed the issues and potential solutions associated with your specific SRTS program. This basic plan will enable you to take action in implementing some short-term solutions and identifying some long term ones. It demonstrates your commitment to SRTS and provides a blueprint from which you can develop a more comprehensive Travel Plan later.

Why Have a Travel Plan?

Some benefits of developing a School Travel Plan are:

- Creates partnerships between the school and surrounding community
- Generates ideas and actions for making walking and bicycling safer and a more desirable option of transportation
- Builds community excitement that can achieve a successful SRTS program

A comprehensive School Travel Plan will provide a strategic approach to incorporate the **5 Es** of an SRTS program: Encouragement, Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation.

Who Gets Things Started?

You can! Whether you are a member of a school, government body or other community organization, you can follow these easy steps to develop a Travel Plan for your school. You should not try to do it alone. The first step involves forming a working group consisting of people who are either interested in enabling schoolchildren to walk and bike or who currently enjoy walking and biking themselves. The group can work on pieces together or separately

CHECKLIST: **Develop an SRTS Travel Plan**

- Establish a Working Group.
- Identify existing Rules and Regulations
- Outline and Execute Immediate (short-term) Encouragement Efforts
- Map of your school neighborhood and identify how it functions.
 - Evaluate where people currently walk or bike, where they don't and why.
 - Identify optimal “routes” to school and key issues associated with each.
- Brainstorm Solutions that represent the 5E approach.
- Prepare a List of Actions including a timeline and responsibilities.



depending on what is most practical or convenient. Some of the best input you'll get is from the students; so don't forget to include them in the SRTS planning process. Students' ideas can be collected in many ways, such as surveys, classroom exercises and/or art projects.

Six Steps to Develop Your Travel Plan

1. Establish a Working Group
2. Review existing Rules and Regulations
3. Outline Education and Encouragement efforts (short-term and long-term)
4. Develop a map of proposed Walking and Biking Routes to School (identify problems)
5. Conduct a Brainstorming Session (identify potential solutions)
6. Prepare 5E Action Items

1) *Establish a Working Group*

The working group might consist of principals, teachers, school board members, parents or PTA members, students, crossing guards, the mayor, the town administrator, the municipal engineer, police officers and/or other local groups. Bring together the people who are likely to have insight into school travel routes and conditions. The primary goal of the working group is to spearhead the program by advancing and delegating improvements and programs (see the *Building Your Team Fact Sheet*). It is possible that the working group may produce a Draft Travel Plan after only a few meetings.

2) *Review existing Rules and Regulation* (Working Group Meeting #1)

During the first Working Group Meeting a representative should be designated to request information from the school and conduct a search to determine what if any rules and/or regulations are currently guiding the transportation of students in your school and district. The results should be reported back to the group during Meeting #2.

It will be particularly important to identify any walking or bicycling routes that are currently designated as "Hazardous Routes". These would have been established under the Safety Busing Policy (NJSA 18A:39-1), and this only applies to schools or districts that provide courtesy busing. If Hazardous Routes have been designated, they should be included as potential walking or biking routes in your Travel Plan along **with measures outlined to mitigate the existing deficiencies**. It should be noted that the school's official list of "Hazardous Routes" may need to be updated to include additional routes identified during the development of your Travel Plan.

3) *Outline Education and Encouragement Efforts* (Working Group Meeting #1)

During the first Working Group Meeting you might identify immediate steps that will raise the community's awareness of the SRTS Program, simply by announcing its existence and primary goals. This can be done with announcements and informative/promotional flyers.

Consideration should be given to long-term education and encouragement efforts that might be needed and would fit your community, such as the Walking School Bus. Efforts like this will require much more organization beyond the working group's first meeting. Remember that establishing early contact with stakeholders (Parents/Students/Local Officials and Professionals) will increase your SRTS Program chances for success.

4) *Develop a Map of the proposed Routes* (Working Group Meeting #1)

During the first Working Group Meeting you may be able to develop a map of school travel routes and a list of issues that need to be addressed.

- **Show Existing Conditions:** A map of the school and surrounding community are usually available at the local municipal building. Each municipality in New Jersey should have an official street map that works well as a base map. Have the working group identify what the school neighborhood looks like now (you can use photograph images to document conditions). This should include:
 - The area immediately surrounding the school – up to a two-mile radius
 - School parking and pick-up/drop-off areas
 - Sidewalks, paths, parks or other bicycle and pedestrian facilities
 - Circulation patterns for bicyclists and pedestrians (where people walk or bike now) and crossing guard locations
 - Circulation patterns for cars, trucks and buses, including major through routes, any one-way streets, bus stops, etc.
- **Evaluate:** Identify the routes that work well already and note where problems or conflicts currently exist. This step will help you when you begin to identify which routes to include in your Travel Plan (see the *Conduct a Needs Assessment Fact Sheet*). Characteristics to note include:
 - Condition of sidewalks or shoulders
 - Existence and/or condition of crosswalks and curb ramps
 - Traffic problems – speeding, congestion, etc.
 - Local attitude towards pedestrians and cyclists (Are they well respected?)
 - Crash data review and summary (identify locations with high crash rates, taking special note of crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians)
- **Identify Potential Travel Routes:** This is when your working group members should begin to roll up their sleeves and consider which areas to target for improvements and what connections to make in determining your “Safe Routes” to School. The decisions should be guided by where children and parents would most likely walk or bicycle if the right facilities were available. Choices should also be based on the level of effort needed to mitigate existing deficiencies and hazards.

After you have selected the best potential walking and bicycling routes for your Travel Plan, identify the *key issues* associated with each one. For example, one proposed route may be appropriate in terms of distance and connectivity but the sidewalks may be in poor condition (engineering issue). Another route might have sidewalks and shoulders but drivers on the adjacent roads may be speeding (engineering/traffic calming *and* enforcement issue). Be sure to mark potential walking or cycling routes that you’ve identified on the location map.

5) *Conduct a Brainstorming Session on Potential Solutions* (Working Group Meeting #2)

Now that you’ve identified your potential routes and the key issues associated with each one, you can begin to brainstorm about solutions. Some examples may include:



- Changes to the roadway that reduce speeding and/or other problems (engineering)
- Installation of safe crossings, walkways and bikeways (engineering)
- Partnerships with police to make sure that traffic laws are obeyed (enforcement)
- Community enforcement efforts, such as crossing guard programs (enforcement)
- Safety campaigns to raise awareness of bicycle and pedestrian issues (education)
- Bicycling and walking safety instruction in the classroom (education)
- Walking School Bus program (encouragement)

6) Prepare 5E Action Items (Working Group Meeting #2)

Once you’ve established a preliminary list of solutions, you are ready to turn your ideas into specific action steps. You need to prepare a list of actions required to implement your SRTS Travel Plan, an estimated schedule in which to complete each action, and the person or group responsible for each action. Working group members should try to make sure that tasks can be completed within the time allotted. Note that the “solutions” you develop in Step 5 become the “actions” in Step 6. Use the table below as an example.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR THE FIVE E’s			
Education Actions	Responsibility	Time Frame	Cost
• Bike/Walk Safety instruction	School	Fall 2006	Low
Encouragement Actions	Responsibility	Time Frame	Cost
• Walking School Bus	School	Fall 2006	Low
Engineering Actions	Responsibility	Time Frame	Cost
• Stripe x-walks at intersections near school	Municipality	Summer 2006	Medium
• Fix sidewalks on Main Street	Municipality	Spring 2007	High
Evaluation Actions	Responsibility	Time Frame	Cost
• Survey, Mode Choice of Students	School	Annually	Low
• Crash data Review	Police	Annually	?
Enforcement Actions	Responsibility	Time Frame	Cost
• Yield to Peds at Xwalks	Police	Ongoing	Medium

Next Step: Funding Application

The SRTS Travel Plan is a blueprint for action that can be used by members of the Working Group to apply for funding. (Note: Applications for funding may require more detailed descriptions and cost estimates, especially for improvements to the physical infrastructure.) The organization in charge of submitting the funding application will depend on what types of improvements are to be funded, and who will be carrying them out. For example, the municipality should be in charge of submitting applications if proposed improvements are primarily infrastructure improvements located along streets, while the school district should be the applicant if proposed improvements are located on school property.

For funding options, see www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/srts/funding.shtm.

