

**WALK IT
BIKE IT**



Safe Routes
Connecticut Safe Routes to School

FAQs

What is the Connecticut's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program?

The Connecticut Department of Transportation wants to improve the ability of elementary school students, middle school students and high school students to walk, roll and bicycle safely to school. Levels of physical activity in children (as well as adults) has declined in the past several decades as a result of advances in technology. Childhood obesity is a growing concern. Walking or biking to school could play a valuable part in keeping children physically active. The goal of the program is to substantially improve the ability of all students to walk, roll and bicycle to school safely. Specifically, the purposes of the program are:

1. To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk, roll and bicycle to school
2. To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
3. To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (approximately 2 miles) of primary and secondary schools (grades K-12).

What are Non-Infrastructure Activities?

Non-infrastructure activities include public awareness and outreach campaigns, traffic and enforcement education, law enforcement in the vicinity of schools, and training for local SRTS activities. The following are examples of non-infrastructure activities:

- **Education:** Teaching children and community about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
- **Enforcement:** Partnering with local law enforcement agencies to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (including enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors and practices).
- **Encouragement:** Events, contests, and activities to promote walking and bicycling (bike rodeos, walk and roll to school days, etc).

- Evaluation: Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data both before and after the intervention and measuring project activities to assure that project remain on time, on target, and in demand.

What are Infrastructure Activities?

Infrastructure-related activities are those projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including side walk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bike parking, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

How Do We Get Started with Our Own SRTS Program?

The following steps are meant to provide guidance by providing a framework for establishing a SRTS Program based on what has worked in other communities. Some communities may find that a different approach or a reordering of these steps works better for them.

1. Bring the right people together: Identify people who want to make walking and bicycling to school safe and appealing for children. Sharing concerns, interests, and knowledge among a variety of community members with diverse expertise can enable groups to tackle many issues.
2. Hold a kick-off meeting and set a vision: A goal of the first meeting is to create a common vision and generate next steps for the group members.
3. To Gather information and identify issues: Collecting information can help to identify needed program elements and provide means to measure the impact of the program later.
4. Identify solutions: Solutions to identified issues will include a combination of education, encouragement, engineering, and enforcement strategies. Safety is the first consideration.
5. Make a plan: It doesn't need to be lengthy. Include encouragement, enforcement, education, and engineering strategies. Create a time schedule for the plan.

6. Get the plan and people moving: Hold a kick-off event starting with a fun activity. Participate in International Walk/Roll to School Day for example.

7. Evaluate, adjust, and keep moving: To sustain the program, consider building additional program champions and letting people know about your successes.

What is a Walking School Bus?

A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It works like this: an adult or group of adults begin walking along a set route to school. As they walk, they make “bus stops” and “pick up” other children along the way.

What is a Bike Train?

Essentially, a bike train is a walking school bus for bicycles. This is a good alternative for those that live beyond walking distance (generally ½ mile to 2 miles from school).

What is Walk to School Day and how is it different from Safe Routes to School?

Walk/Roll to School Day (like Safe Routes to School) is a school-based initiative to encourage physical activity among children and youth. Walk/Roll to School Day has become the kick-off event for Safe Routes to School and is usually held the first week in October. It is a way for parents, students, school personnel, and other community members to directly experience walking or biking to school with students on the day of the event. It often generates wider teaching about the importance of physical activity, awareness of the fun of walking and biking, and early identification of safety concerns.

Could you provide a brief overview of the steps we take to complete our action plan?

The steps you take in completing your action plan fall under three broad categories:

- Form your Safe Routes to School Team (identify team members and then hold a kick-off meeting).

- Gather Information (collect school data, get input from parents and students, identify other planned projects, prepare base maps, and assess walking and biking conditions).

- Develop and Write the Action Plan (review and organize your data, develop goals and strategies, assign tasks, identify potential funding sources, define evaluation process, and compile the plan).

What Makes for a Successful SRTS Program?

SRTS uses a comprehensive approach for finding ways to improve the walking and bicycling environment around schools for children. A successful program includes schools, community leaders, parents, and other state and local agencies who all work together to address the 6 E's:

- **Engineering:** Re-engineering walking and biking routes by addressing neighborhood-to-school connections (sidewalks, bike lanes, pathways, crosswalks, etc) and traffic control measures near schools.
- **Enforcement:** Law enforcement that addresses driver behavior is an important partner in successful Safe Routes to School Programs. Increasing traffic enforcement near schools also improves driver awareness.
- **Encouragement:** Encouraging students and parents to participate in walking and biking to school by promoting activities such as walking school buses (adult-supervised walks to school), organizing Walk to School Days, participation in contests.
- **Education:** Teaching students how to walk and bike safely. Educating drivers on their responsibility to drive safely near schools and within neighborhoods. Increasing everyone's awareness of the health and community benefits of walking and biking to school.
- **Evaluation:** After the program begins, careful monitoring will identify which strategies are working well.
- **Equity:** Ensuring that Safe Routes to School initiative are benefiting all demographic groups, with particular attention to ensuring safe, healthy and fair outcomes for low-income students, students of color, students of all genders, students with disabilities and others.

