Safe Routes to School National Partnership
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

OREGON WALKS

Safe Routes to School & Pedestrian Safety

Today, just 13% of children ages 5 to 14 walk or bicycle to and from school—a dramatic drop from 1969 when nearly 50% of children walked to school. As a result, our children aren't getting the physical activity they need, and as much as 25% of morning traffic can be attributed to children being driven to schools in private vehicles. In addition to the health impacts of inactivity, school districts, cities, counties and families spend billions on transportation, and the volume of vehicles around schools creates traffic congestion, air pollution, and wear and tear on our expensive road infrastructure.

Vision Zero & community call for safety

- Oregon Walks, a local non-profit pedestrian advocacy organization, is leading the charge from the community on what's being called an "ongoing epidemic of unacceptable traffic violence on our streets."

Safe Routes to School

- Historical commitment from Federal government, state, some local jurisdictions
- Community support & participation
- Transportation & health equity

Effectiveness of Safe Routes to School Initiatives

Research has shown that Safe Routes to School initiatives have reduced pedestrian injury by 44%[1]. A 2014 study[2] in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* indicates:

- Completion of an engineering improvement = 18% increase in walking/bicycling rates.
- Each year of Safe Routes to School education and encouragement programming = 5% increase in walking and bicycling rates.
- Results cumulative, adding up to 43% after five years.

Best practice policy examples

Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook[3]
- (B) School Wellness Policy—linked to Federal School Meal Programs
- (B) School District Task Force
- (I) No idling policy
- (I) School Transportation Departments—bus stops here
- (A) School Siting

Washington County
- Safe Routes to School Coordinator

Clackamas County
Language focused on schools included in Comp Plan, Transportation System Plan; Pedestrian Master Plan

- *"create a networked system of pedestrian facilities and bikeways connecting … schools."* {5.K.7}
- *"Support programs that work with schools to identify safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to connect neighborhoods and schools."* {5.E.4}
- *Pedestrian improvements that include access to school are given high points.* {PMP}

Multnomah County
- CIP has criteria that prioritizes bike/ped capital projects near schools.
- SUN Schools & Metropolitan Family Services working in East Multnomah County schools.
- Multnomah Youth Commission

Opportunities

- Incorporate Safe Routes to School in School Wellness Policy
- Update Multi-modal criteria for Road Projects to include "Project is within 1 mile of schools"
- Raise weight of criteria for multi-modal and health on Road Projects.
- Raise weight of criteria for equity and health on Bike/Ped Projects.
- Include criteria in CIP prioritizing schools that have completed a School Action Plan.
- Comprehensive Framework Plan update: opportunity to include policy language on youth, Safe Routes to School, health/wellness.
- Support County RTO grant application to implement Safe Routes to School in all non-Portland schools.
- Support increased funding for Safe Routes to School initiatives in the Metro region.

1 http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3557410/
2 http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01944363.2014.956654
3 http://changelabsolutions.org/safe-routes/welcome

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Safe Routes to School is a burgeoning movement that encourages students to walk, ride bicycles, or use other forms of active transportation to and from school. Active transportation improves health, increase the livability of a community, and helps to protect the environment. Making it easy for students to walk, bike, or roll to school requires action from many community stakeholders, including schools, students, families, municipalities, neighborhood businesses, planners, transportation engineers, and community groups.

Safety:

Safe Routes to School projects focus on infrastructure improvements, student traffic education, and driver enforcement that improve safety for children, many of whom already walk or bicycle in unsafe conditions.

- Pedestrians are more than twice as likely to be struck by a vehicle in locations without sidewalks.
- In 2009, approximately 23,000 children ages 5-15 were injured and more than 250 were killed while walking or bicycling in the United States.
- The medical costs for treating children's bicycle and pedestrian fatalities cost $839 million in 2005 and another $2.2 billion in lifetime lost wage costs.

Traffic Congestion:

Neighborhoods are becoming increasingly clogged by traffic. By boosting the number of children walking and bicycling, Safe Routes to School projects reduce traffic congestion.

- While distance to school is the most commonly reported barrier to walking and bicycling, private vehicles still account for half of school trips between 1/4 and 1/2 mile—a distance easily covered on foot or bike.
- A school that implements a comprehensive Safe Routes to School initiative with engineering improvements plus five years of education and encouragement would result in a 43 percent increase in walking and bicycling rates.

Environment:

Safe Routes to School projects increase the number of children walking and bicycling to school, which also cuts down on the number of cars. As cars emit pollutants for each mile traveled, reducing traffic can improve the quality of air that children breathe in and around their schools.

- Children exposed to traffic pollution are more likely to have asthma and a higher risk of heart and lung problems as adults.
- One-third of schools are in "air pollution danger zones."
- Schools that are designed so children can walk and bicycle have measurably better air quality.
- Returning to 1969 levels of walking and bicycling to school would save 3.2 billion vehicle miles, 1.5 million tons of carbon dioxide and 89,000 tons of other pollutants—equal to keeping more than 250,000 cars off the road for a year.

Health and Obesity:

Children today are simply not getting enough physical activity, contributing to growing rates of obesity and obesity-related health problems, such as diabetes.

- Over the past 40 years, rates of obesity have soared among children of all ages in the United States, and approximately 25 million children and adolescents—more than 33%—are now overweight or obese, and many more at risk of becoming so.
- 23% of children get no free time physical activity at all.
- The prevalence of obesity is so great that today's generation of children may be the first in over 200 years to live less healthy and have a shorter lifespan than their parents.
- Walking one mile to and from school each day is two-thirds of the recommended sixty minutes of physical activity a day. Plus, children who walk to school have higher levels of physical activity throughout the day.
- 70% of 8th graders in the Metro region aren't getting the necessary exercise to be healthy.