

CHAMPION TOOLKIT

Ideas, resources and templates
for your successful
local SRTS Program.

SafeRoutes

Connecticut Safe Routes to School



Rev. 05/2015

PROGRAM MATERIALS

- Getting Started
- Program Checklist
- Partners
- Incentives
- Sample Letter to Gain Support

APPLICATIONS

- Application for Program Assistance and Plan Support
- Application for Engineering Site Assessment (Walk Audit)

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

** Announcements Will Be Added/Revised Accordingly As Information Becomes Available*

OTHER RESOURCES AND EDUCATIONAL ITEMS

- Active Living Research Article (May 2015)—
Impacts of SRTS Programs on Walking and Biking
- SRTS Students Arrival and Departure Tally Sheet
- Survey About Walking and Biking
to School for Parents
- Walkability Checklist
- Bikeability Checklist
- Bike Friendly Community Assessment for Teens
- Ideas to Promote Bicycle Safety
- Tips for Parents
- Hand Signals
- Classroom Activity Ideas
- Certificate of Completion
- The Walking School Bus:
Combining Safety, Fun and the Walk to School

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INCENTIVES

Without spending a lot of money, sometimes a small reward can add value to your program message.

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FUNCTIONAL ITEMS

Consider incentives from the perspective of saying “thank you for working hard” or “great job with that new skill”. So, use them as rewards for hard work performed—incentives need not be bribes. If they are functional, they are value added to the effort of increasing interest and safety awareness for children walking and bicycling to school. Combine your incentive item with function relating to pedestrian and bicycle safety, such as the following:

- reflective shoe laces
- bicycle bells
- bicycle LED lights with flashing option (white for the front, red for the back)
- water bottles (choose wisely for safe materials)
- reflective sling bags
- helmets
- reflective zipper pulls for younger students
- bright colored rain ponchos (not appropriate for bicycling)

Be cautious of purchasing decals that students might place on bicycle helmets, as these hide cracks or other defects.

SAFETY SAYINGS

Promote the program with a message that relates to walking and bicycling safety. Keep messages age appropriate, providing various incentives that respectively appeal to students of different maturity levels. Customize the items and the message to the audience to prevent confusion among the younger students and boredom with the older groups.

- Don't Mess with the Road
- Don't Text; just Sk8
- Don't be a Hero, Just Wear Your Gear Yo
- Helmet with No Regret
- I'm Just Sayin... It's Not Supposed to Hurt
- Just Walk it Out
- Pump It Up
- Right Step, Right Spot
- Rock the Road Rules
- Shred the GNAR Safely
- Sk8 Right, Bike Right, Razor Right Make it RIGHT, Just walk left
- Walk It, Bike It
- Walk Left, Ride Right
- Walk With Me
- When in Doubt, Bike it Out
- You Know the Deal When You're on Your Wheels

Since sayings come and go on the “cool” scale, take a list to your students first. See what they think, consider holding a contest for developing new sayings. This will create buy-in and increase the likelihood that students will use/wear the gear and helps them relate to the program message. Add impact by creating a hashtag (#) with your saying and print the message as a hashtag on your incentives.

For more information on how YOU can make an impact in your community visit www.walkitbikeitct.org

or

Join the conversation on Facebook www.facebook.com/CTSafeRoutesToSchool



PARTNERING

A list of resources to approach
as partners
to move your SRTS Program forward.

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MAKE FRIENDS, EARN PARTNERS

From the beginning of your Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, think partners. This is the most important way to find success with the program. Think inclusive and big, but local. Get the community involved. Do not wait until you need funds for an event, initiative or safety improvement to introduce yourself. Make friends, earn partners. These partners will be valuable resources to help move the program forward and can provide connections for fundraising.

THINK COMMUNITY

Partners should be invited to your SRTS meeting and kept informed of your efforts through notices and newsletters. This should be a diverse, multi-disciplinary group of leaders from your school community. Consider the following partners as they will have information to share on children and youth services, traffic enforcement, infrastructure improvements, capital budgets, and other related programs to coordinate with along the way. These are people that truly know and love your community and will likely be happy to help.

- Mayor/First Selectman
- Superintendent of Schools
- Board of Education Members
- Law Enforcement/Safety Resource Officer (SRO)
- Town Planner
- Public Works Director
- Social Worker
- Youth Services Officer
- School Nurses
- Physical Education Instructors
- Local Business Leaders
- Nearby Employers
- Regional Planning Organization directors and staff
- Successful SRTS Coordinator from a Nearby School/Town
- Bicycling/Walking Advocates in Area
- Others??? – use your imagination!
- Think about who knows your community inside and out

STAY LOCAL FOR EVENTS AND FUNDRAISING

In the Neighborhood

- Social clubs
- Religious clubs
- Cultural clubs
- Military clubs
- Small neighborhood shops and corner markets
- Chamber of Commerce member businesses
- Others??? – use your imagination!
- Think about who keeps your community connected

Sporting or Health Retailers

- Bicycle Shops
- Running Shops
- Nutrition Centers/Markets
- Gyms
- Others??? – use your imagination!
- Think about who keeps your community healthy and fit

Large Corporations

- Car dealerships
- Grocery stores
- Big box retailers
- Distribution centers
- Manufacturers
- Others??? – use your imagination!
- Think about who employs your community

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING

- Municipal General Fund
- Municipal Capital Budget
- Board of Education
- Department of Public Works
- Nearby University, College or Technical School
- Grants/Mini-Grants – national, NPO, etc.
- Regional Planning Organization
- Others??? – use your imagination!
- Think about what resources have been used in the past to get things done in your community

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CHECKLIST TO SUCCESS

A checklist that corresponds to our Getting Started fact sheet to help you with those small “to do’s” necessary for staying on track.

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GET ORGANIZED—HELPFUL “TO-DO” GUIDE FOR STAYING ON TRACK

Where to Begin

- 🏠 Watch the CT Safe Routes to School Introduction Video on WalkItBikeItCT.org or YouTube
 - ❑ Share the video with others to get the conversation started in your community
 - ❑ Link to the video from your organization’s Facebook/website
- 🏠 Attend a Local SRTS Coordinator Training Seminar sponsored by the Department of Transportation
- 🏠 Check out other pages at WalkItBikeItCT.org and the download the Champion Toolkit
 - ❑ At minimum, review the Getting Started Page on WalkItBikeItCT.org or in the Champion Toolkit
 - ❑ Learn about the 5 E’s
- 🏠 Like us on Facebook (CTSafeRoutesToSchool) to receive timely program announcements
- 🏠 Email info@walkitbikeitct.org with questions

Bring Together the Right People— BE INCLUSIVE

- 🏠 Ask for help, complete and submit a SRTS Program Assistance Application form to receive technical assistance from the State’s SRTS Program at the Department of Transportation
- 🏠 Consider whether to start the discussion at a single school or as a district-wide initiative and plan accordingly
- 🏠 Create a list of local contacts—names, telephone numbers and email addresses
 - ❑ School administrators (superintendent, principal, vice principal, etc.)
 - ❑ School faculty (teachers, physical education instructor, nurse, custodians)
 - ❑ Mayor or selectman
 - ❑ Municipal planner, engineer and public works director
 - ❑ Youth services director
 - ❑ Law enforcement or safety resource officer
 - ❑ Bus Company
 - ❑ Other SRTS Champions or potential SRTS leaders from nearby schools
 - ❑ Parents of students at the school(s)
- 🏠 Create a list of existing committees where the program would be a natural fit
 - ❑ Parent Teacher Organization
 - ❑ Other Committee/Sub-Committee _____
- 🏠 Start the conversation about experiences traveling to school
 - ❑ In the classroom
 - ❑ With the parents
 - ❑ With faculty and staff at the school(s)
- 🏠 Consider who from these contacts and committees might be the SRTS Champion—is it you?

Hold a Kickoff Meeting and Set a Vision

- 🏠 Talk to the State's SRTS Coordinator about how to relay the SRTS message at the meeting
- 🏠 Watch the CT SRTS Program Assistance video on WalkItBikeItCT.org or YouTube
- 🏠 Set a date, consider a PTO meeting date or other standing committee with a good fit to start
- 🏠 Reserve a room or library, preferably at one of the schools to be discussed or in the neighborhood
- 🏠 Send invitations to your new contacts
- 🏠 Host meeting with the following agenda items:
 - ❑ Introductions and Overview of an SRTS Program (show video)
 - ❑ Discussion of What is Working
 - ❑ Discussion of What is Not Working
 - ❑ Setting a Vision Together
 - ❑ Designating the SRTS Champion(s)
 - ❑ Next Steps and Action Items (see Gather Information and Identify Issues for ideas)
- 🏠 After meeting, follow up on the next steps and action items

Gather Information and Identify Issues

- 🏠 Map the routes that lead to the school over aerial/satellite image
- 🏠 Collect traffic counts, speed and injury data from the local traffic authority (often the police department or town engineer)
- 🏠 Document official school start and end times as well as typical pre/post school arrivals and dismissals
- 🏠 Review related walking and bicycling policies
 - ❑ Local ordinances (municipal planner or public works director)
 - ❑ School policies on student entrances/exits, bicycle parking, bus maneuvering/passing rules, parent parking, and pick-up/drop-off
- 🏠 Ask around to find out what is working and what is not working (barriers, missing/confusing signage, worn/missing pavement markings, access and conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists)
 - ❑ Watch the Connecticut Safe Routes to School Walk Audit Overview video on WalkItBikeItCT.org or YouTube for guidance and ideas
 - ❑ Complete a Two-Day Arrival/Dismissal Tally Sheet
 - ❑ Do a walk-about during the arrival/dismissal process and document what you see
 - ❑ Complete Walkability/Bikeability Checklist of the school and surrounding neighborhoods to identify barriers—this is great project for involving families in the area and getting other perspectives
 - ❑ Send home and collect Parent Surveys
- 🏠 Submit Walk Audit Assistance Application
 - ❑ Coordinate with the SRTS team to schedule a walk audit at your school
 - ❑ Review the finalized Walk Audit Report with the CT SRTS committee

Document Findings and Identify Solutions

- 🏠 Hold a follow-up meeting to discuss issues and identify solutions:
 - ❑ Short Term Fixes
 - ❑ Mid Term Fixes
 - ❑ Long Term Fixes

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- ⏏ Consider what policy changes are necessary—don't underestimate the value of changing or clarifying the rules
- ⏏ Start your plan right away. Document what you have done, what you know, and what you plan to do, such as:
 - ⏏ the champion, stakeholders, and involved committees or town offices
 - ⏏ a map of the area covered by the plan
 - ⏏ potential opportunities and fitting activities for the program
 - ⏏ summarized findings from surveys and walkability/bikeability checklist
 - ⏏ potential improvements (short/long-term) to address student safety
 - ⏏ schedule that includes year-round safety initiatives and activities, and
 - ⏏ an explanation of how the program will be evaluated.
- ⏏ From here, identify partners who can help assess the most appropriate action, implement and fund the plan. Think of partners based on the subject area as well as the timeframe: short, mid and long-term Use the community network and lists that you previously developed. Collaborate with your school and town board, public works and RPO for assistance.

Get the Plan and People Moving

- ⏏ Talk to the State's SRTS Coordinator about an option that is a good fit for your school community
- ⏏ Inform your partners of the intention to host an event and meet together to get organized
- ⏏ Pick an event from the many ideas at WalkItBikeItCT.org to get started with right away
 - ⏏ Start with safety skills assemblies or clinics
 - ⏏ If safe routes exist, work quickly towards a reoccurring event such as Moving Mondays, Walking Wednesdays, or Footloose Fridays to build routine and keep skills fresh
- ⏏ Distribute information to parents about the event, include handouts for teaching parents safety skills and a form for parents to volunteer to help with the event
- ⏏ Contact the media to get coverage and raise enthusiasm.

Evaluate, Adjust and Keep Moving

- ⏏ Make the SRTS committee permanent and continue regular meetings to follow the progress of the program
- ⏏ Evaluate the program according to the timeline
 - ⏏ redo surveys, walk-about and checklists
 - ⏏ interview community members, such as faculty, staff, parents, custodians, bus drivers and crossing guards
- ⏏ Adjust the plan accordingly to make it sustainable—document what has changed, what more is needed, what is working better and, if necessary:
 - ⏏ identify additional program champions
 - ⏏ add program elements to build on what is working, add dimension and make sure efforts are year-round
 - ⏏ continue initiatives to increase safety and the number of students walking and bicycling
 - ⏏ round out the program if it has become light in areas—include a combination of education, encouragement, engineering and enforcement strategies, and
 - ⏏ continue to encourage policy changes
- ⏏ Shout out to your partners and community and keep them informed about the successes, activities, results, and improvements to the program

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SAMPLE LETTER

Gain support of your school
community leaders.

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SEND A LETTER TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Dear *[PTO, Principal, Parents, Superintendent]*,

As *[parents/PTO Members/faculty]* of the *[school name]* community, we would like to propose *[the implementation of a Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) program / taking our current Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) program to the next level]*. This is a perfect time to bring student safety for walking and bicycling to our school curriculum as a regular piece of our culture and instill these valuable life skills.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) established a Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) pursuant to the federal program in 2005. The goal is to enable and encourage children in grades K-8 to walk and bicycle to school.

During that time many SRTS communities across the state have shown improved student academic and/or physical education performance, improved health, reduced traffic congestion, better air quality, and enhanced neighborhood safety through infrastructure improvements and community support.

We have the opportunity at this time to work in cooperation with the DOT and its consultant team on this effort. The CT SRTS Team offers program assistance at no charge to schools and/or school districts that are interested developing or expanding a SRTS in their community. This assistance is available through a number of different methods including:

- Providing a presentation to faculty or interested parent/teacher organizations either through individual schools or hosting a school district-wide meeting
- Guidance on developing a plan for implementing your program (individual schools or school district)
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety training
- Assistance in planning program events, i.e. Bike to School Day, Bike Trains, Moving Mondays, Footloose Fridays, Walking School Bus, Walk to School Day, Walking Wednesdays

We would love the opportunity to invite the CT SRTS Team to the next meeting of our PTO to start the discussion about this important topic. Please let us know your thoughts.

Sincerely,

[parents/PTO Members/faculty]

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