Safe Routes to School

10 Points

Updated January 2016

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federal, state, and local effort to make walking and bicycling to school safe and appealing and to encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. Safe Routes to School programs not only teach children safe pedestrian and bicycle behaviors, but also promote the health and environmental benefits of active transportation. The New Jersey Department of Transportation is supporting the Safe Routes to School Resource Center (NJSRTSRC) and regional Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) around New Jersey to provide Safe Routes to School programs to students and to assist municipalities in completing the Safe Routes to School action to earn points toward Sustainable Jersey certification. For more information on the Safe Routes to Schools' partnership with Sustainable Jersey, visit saferoutesnj.org (NJSRTS Resource Center website).

In addition to earning points toward Sustainable Jersey certification, municipalities and schools participating in Safe Routes to School activities are eligible for the NJ SRTS Recognition Program. Participants can nominate themselves or be nominated to one of four Program Recognition Levels, and municipalities and schools have separate requirements for achieving each of the four levels.

Municipalities can also earn points for progress they have made toward Complete Streets, the concept that all roadways should be designed, built and maintained for all travelers (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users of all ages and abilities).

Schools participating in Safe Routes to School can also earn points toward the Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification. The actions are listed under the Student Safety category and include Safe Routes to School District Policy, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Promotion Initiatives and School Travel Plan for Walking and Bicycling.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Both municipal governments and school administrations should be informed and involved with Safe Routes to School (SRTS), particularly so that they can tailor information to local circumstances and serve as helpful resources for residents.

The leadership for a SRTS initiative can originate from a variety of places, but your SRTS team should include municipal engineers, planners and law enforcement. School administrators providing leadership can include superintendents, principals, district transportation supervisors, school nurses and teachers. Elected officials can include mayors, council members, and Board of Education members. To achieve well-rounded community involvement, leaders should also reach out to parents (parent-teacher organizations), crossing guards, neighborhood associations, environmental and community groups, etc. At a minimum, the SRTS team should include representation from the municipality, school district, and police traffic safety officer(s). Regional SRTS Coordinators or other representatives from Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) are valuable resources to assist with SRTS efforts. They can provide free technical assistance, help with contacting the necessary parties, and other resources. Municipalities and schools should reach out to their regional SRTS coordinator as a first step in exploring SRTS programs. Click here to find your Regional SRTS Coordinator.

Timeframe
Municipalities that have earned Silver Level SRTS Recognition through the NJ SRTS Program meet the requirements for this action. With free technical assistance available from the municipality’s local SRTS Coordinator, completion of the steps necessary to achieve Silver Level SRTS Recognition and to qualify for points under this action can take between three and twelve months.

Project Costs and Resource Needs

The cost to implement Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs that focus on education and outreach is low and may only include printing costs, in addition to volunteer time and staff salaries for existing positions. Educational activities include teaching pedestrian, bicyclist and traffic safety and creating awareness of the benefits and goals of SRTS. Outreach strategies focus on generating excitement and interest in walking and bicycling. Special events, clubs, contests and ongoing activities all provide ways for parents and children to discover, or re-discover, that walking and bicycling to school can be safe, easy and fun.

Municipal staff time may be necessary to accomplish the following:
- Develop a SRTS Team (town-wide or individual by school).
- Obtain a Memorandum of Understanding or resolution from municipal government in support of SRTS.
- Plan and implement walk and/or bike to school events.
- Provide annual training of all Crossing Guards, including re-training of returning crossing guards and evaluations of crossing guard posts.

In addition, there may be photocopying costs involved when promoting walk/bike to school events and when performing surveys/assessments for evaluation. Giveaways and incentives like reflective stickers, zipper pulls, t-shirts, bike gear, etc., to reward students who walk or bike are not necessary, but are recommended. Providing free bicycle helmets to low-income residents is recommended, when possible. Regional SRTS Coordinators may be able to provide some materials to support these events.

If current routes to school are fundamentally unsafe due to lack of sidewalks, lighting, traffic calming measures, or other concerns, then the costs of SRTS projects can be significant and will vary considerably. For this reason, programs that involve infrastructure expenses (sidewalk and road improvements, for example) will require more substantial resources.

Click below for a fact sheet on SRTS implementation costs:
http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/srts/pdf/srts_costs.pdf

The New Jersey Department of Transportation periodically offers Safe Routes to School and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants to fund infrastructure projects to improve walking and bicycling. For information on current funding opportunities visit the New Jersey Safe Routes to School website.

Why is it Important?

While we do not know the exact number of New Jersey children who walk and bike to school today, what we do know is that fewer children walk or bike to school now than a generation ago. In 2001, less than 16% of students in the U.S. between the ages of five and 15 walked or biked to or from school. In 1969, 42% of students walked or biked to school. In New Jersey 30% of all children, including 20% of preschool children, are obese. New Jersey also has the highest incidence of obesity among low-income children aged 2-5 (2008 Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System (PedNSS)). Safe Routes to School programs not only teach safe pedestrian and bicycle behaviors in children, but they also help kids develop skills they can use throughout life.

Walking and biking to school incorporates physical activity into a child’s normal daily routine and provides a sense of responsibility and independence. Walking and biking allows children to enjoy being outside; and provides a time to socialize with their parents and friends while getting to know their neighborhoods.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs examine conditions around schools and conduct projects and activities that work to improve safety and reduce traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. As a result, these programs help make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing transportation choices.

The effects of SRTS can be far-reaching. Safe Routes programs can improve safety not just for children, but for a
community of pedestrians and bicyclists. They provide opportunities for people to become more physically active and to rely less on cars. Programs benefit the environment and a community’s quality of life by reducing traffic congestion and motor vehicle emissions.

**What to do and how to do it (“How to”)**

In order to earn points, a municipality must meet the requirements of the statewide SRTS Recognition Program at the Silver Level. Sustainable Jersey recommends that the municipality apply to the [NJ SRTS Recognition Program](#) first. **Regional SRTS Coordinators** can assist municipalities in submitting their Safe Routes to School Program application materials. Nominations for SRTS Recognition Levels are due by January 31 each year. Municipalities that achieve SRTS Silver Level Recognition will only need to upload a copy of their certificate as documentation for this action.

To earn SRTS Silver Level Recognition, a municipality must meet the following SRTS Bronze Level requirements:

1) **Build a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Team**

A community’s SRTS Team will be a core group of individuals who make a commitment to improving travel to and from school by generating excitement now and maintaining momentum later. The SRTS Team must have champions – one to four people who will be dedicated to leading and coordinating the team’s efforts in building an effective SRTS Program. The champions will lead the efforts to develop and evaluate SRTS goals for the community and will help to monitor the program’s effectiveness in the future. Champions often include: PTA/PTO representatives, principals, teachers, local bicycle/pedestrian advocates, school district or Board of Education representatives, communications/marketing representatives (school district, municipality, etc.), Traffic Safety Officers (police), and engaged community members.

Tasks include:
- Identifying team champions to lead and coordinate your SRTS efforts.
- Making a commitment to build and maintain an SRTS Program.
- Holding coordination meetings.
- Forming an official Task Force and identifying roles and duties.
- Identifying SRTS goals.
- Developing initial target dates.

2) **Obtain a Resolution/Letter of Support or Memorandum of Understanding** from the municipal government in support of Safe Routes to School. The most successful programs have an endorsement MOU or resolution from both the municipal and school governments; however, only a resolution or MOU from the municipality is required to earn points for this action. You can work with your **Regional SRTS Coordinator** from your Transportation Management Association (TMA) and/or use the sample documents available at saferoutesnj.org.

3) **Complete at least one of the following actions:**

a) **Option #1:** Manage/lead, provide staff (e.g. municipal employee, police officer, committee member, community volunteer), or perform significant outreach (more than just posting on the town’s website) for at least 2 SRTS events within the past 12 months. Walk and bike to school events are planned activities designed to enhance and support SRTS programs by providing a specific occasion to involve students in walking or biking to school. Walk to School Week, established in Great Britain in 1994, has grown into an international phenomenon and is celebrated as International Walk to School Day on the first Wednesday in October. October now marks International Walk and Bike to School Month and is celebrated in over 40 countries by millions of walking and bicycling participants. However, walk and bike to school events can take many forms and can be held at any time throughout the school year.

Tasks Include:
- Picking a date (begin planning 1-5 months prior to event date).
- Deciding on the type of event.
- Emphasizing safety, use all opportunities to teach youth and adults safe pedestrian and cycling skills.
- Inviting the community and media/publicize.
- Registering at the [International Walk to School in the USA Website](#).
- Recording success.
b) Option #2: Complete a Post Observation Report for the top 5 busiest Crossing Guard locations (e.g. high traffic volumes, high pedestrian crossings, intersections of concern, etc.). Crossing guard supervisors should inspect guard posts on an annual or semi-annual basis. Supervisors can use this form to record conditions specific to the post and to record deficiencies at the post that might affect the safety of the crossing guard or child pedestrians. Click here for a PDF of the Post Observation Report from the NJ Safe Routes to School Resource Center.

c) Option #3: Implement an innovative SRTS project.

In addition to the Bronze Level SRTS Recognition requirements above, you must meet the requirements of the Silver Level SRTS Recognition:

4) Complete at least one of the following activities:

a) Option 1: Provide annual training of all Crossing Guards, including re-training of all returning Crossing Guards. Police Traffic Safety Officers who supervise crossing guards are required to train all new crossing guards; however re-training all crossing guards, including returning crossing guards, can reinforce duties so they can perform more effectively and safely. For more information on the NJ Crossing Guard Training Program, go to njcrossingguards.org.

b) Option 2: Plan and Implement a total of 6 Walk and/or Bike to School Events (including the two from Option #1 above, if chosen):

- In order to qualify for points, the municipality must implement or collaborate with the school district on a total of six SRTS events. Collaboration is defined as managing/leading the event, providing staff and/or presenters or performing significant outreach for an event. At least two of the six events must focus on getting students moving (e.g. a walk or bike to school event, bike rodeo). All the events must have been held from within 24 months of the submission deadline. Documentation can include flyers, emails, pictures and news articles about the events.

c) Option 3: Implement an innovative SRTS project and submit documentation of the event.

What to submit to get credit/points

In order to earn points, a municipality must meet the requirements of the NJ SRTS Recognition Program at the Silver Level. The following documentation should be submitted as part of the online certification application in order to verify that the action requirements have been met.

1. Description of Implementation - In the text box provided on the submission page for this action provide a short narrative (300 words or less) of the municipality’s SRTS efforts.

2. Upload a copy of the municipality’s NJ SRTS Recognition Program Silver Level certificate OR a link to the NJ SRTS website where this recognition is noted.

Approved Action Expiration Date

Sustainable Jersey points for this action will be set to expire on the date that the NJ SRTS Program Silver Level Recognition expires as noted on the certificate.

Special Note: If a municipality has completed the requirements of this action, but has not yet achieved NJ SRTS Program Silver Level Recognition due to program timing, alternative documentation can be provided to earn points for this action. In lieu of the NJ SRTS Program Silver Level Recognition certificate, upload the following documentation:

1) A list of the name and affiliations of the SRTS Team members.

2) A Resolution/Letter of Support or Memorandum of Understanding obtained from the municipal government in support of the SRTS program. You can work with your Regional SRTS Coordinator from your Transportation Management Association (TMA) and/or use the sample documents available at saferoutesnj.org.

3) Documentation supporting one of the following 3 options:
Option #1: Provide documentation of at least two Walk and/or Bike to School Events that have taken place from within 12 months of the submission deadline with at least one active event for all participants (e.g. Walk or Bike to School, Bike Rodeo).

Option #2: Provide Post Observation Reports for the top 5 busiest crossing guard locations (e.g. high traffic volumes, high pedestrian crossings, intersections of concern, etc.).

Option #3: Provide documentation of an innovative SRTS project.

4) Documentation supporting at least one of the following actions:

Option 1: Documentation of annual training of all Crossing Guards including re-training of all crossing guards could include an email or flyer reminder of annual training, date and time of the training and sign in sheet of all attendees.

Option 2: Documentation of at least four additional walk/bike to school events (this is in addition to the two events required in item 3 above) from within 24 months of the submission deadline.

Option 3: Implementation of an innovative SRTS project.

Approved Action Expiration Date

Based on this documentation, Sustainable Jersey points for this action will be set to expire twelve months from the date that first/earliest walk/bike to school event was held.

Important Note: You can upload up to six separate documents for each action. Please excerpt relevant information from large documents. Please remember that your submissions will be viewable by the public as part of your certified report.*

Spotlight: What NJ towns are doing

Descriptions of successful SRTS projects and programs can be found in the New Jersey Safe Routes to Schools Scoop Blog.

City of Garfield, NJ

The City of Garfield, New Jersey, is home to approximately 30,000 residents living within a two square-mile area. This densely populated and highly urbanized community has sought to institutionalize walking to school as a way of life by improving local routes to school and encouraging children to get out and travel them. Now operating city-wide, Garfield's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program originally concentrated its resources on two schools; Woodrow Wilson #5 School and Roosevelt #7 School. Both can be classified as neighborhood schools where walking is a sensible choice. Despite the good walking infrastructure, the community discovered that fewer than half of Garfield's students were taking advantage of the opportunity to walk to school. As in so many other towns across the United States, school dismissal time in Garfield produced daily traffic jams. With a 39% foreign-born population, Garfield is truly a community of first-generation immigrants. For some, car ownership is a matter of pride, but even among the non-immigrant population, education and encouragement programs were necessary to create a culture change.

Garfield’s introduction to Safe Routes to School arose through concerns over the prevalence of childhood obesity. Around 25% of Garfield’s children are obese; 20% is the national average. Recognizing this problem, Darleen Reveille of the Garfield Health Department became inspired to create a community task force on childhood obesity in 2005. The task force soon expanded to a wider community health initiative called Garfield FUN (Fitness, Unity, and Nutrition) http://www.garfieldfun.org, which was established through the city’s Health Department and the Ramapo College Nursing Program. FUN builds programs that promote child activity and fitness with support from the city’s Parks and Recreation Department, the Garfield YMCA, and the Garfield Boys and Girls Club.

Garfield’s SRTS efforts began in 2003 when it successfully applied for a New Jersey Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School grant. This grant funded the purchase of school zone radar feedback signs for P.S. 5 and 7. In 2006, Garfield was one of six schools selected to participate in the Active Living Resource Center's (ALRC) City SRTS project. Under this program, a three-day workshop was held in Garfield to bring together local stakeholders to define community issues, identify current assets and resources, match those resources to problems, and gain commitment from workshop
According to the report, “Garfield presents a near textbook example of what can be accomplished with a dynamic local champion who has not only excellent connections to elected officials and city staff, but is fortunate enough to work with professionals who believe that childhood obesity is a serious problem that demands our immediate attention. The same is true of the schools.” The local champion mentioned, Darleen Reveille of the Garfield Health Department, has truly been a guiding force behind the program. To view the current City-SRTS reports, go to: http://www.activelivingresources.org/saferoutestoschool8.php

In addition to the ALRC project, Garfield was one of the original 29 recipients of FY07 federal Safe Routes to School funding in the State of New Jersey, receiving $18,000 to help launch, among other activities, a FUN program called “Get Up and Go.” “Get Up and Go” is a series of curriculum-based SRTS activities that teachers can use in their classrooms to educate students how to safely walk and bike to school. Funded by Garfield with The Record’s “Newspaper in Education (NIE) program,” the eight-part series originally ran in The Record and the Herald News newspapers in fall 2007. The SRTS grant also helped fund Walk to School Day events and contests, walkability audits, a Frequent Walker Club, school assemblies and a Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Quiz Show.

The “Get Up and Go” series featured writing and math activities, as well as puzzles, factoids, and web resources to teach physical fitness, traffic safety, student security issues, and bicycle and pedestrian safety. In “On the Move,” the second set of activities in the series, students are asked to write an “Adventures in Walking to School” story. Students create the plot, setting, and characters to help them write a walking or biking to school story. Students can then use the newspaper to choose locations and people their characters saw along the way. The exercise demonstrates how walking and biking to school can be fun. Each activity includes the “Safety Zone,” in which kids learn important safety tips, such as “always tell an adult where you are going” and “never ride your bike against the flow of traffic.” In the “Calculator Corner,” students complete walking- and biking-related math tasks, such as how much time it takes to walk a mile and how to calculate their carbon footprint.

Content for the series was developed in partnership with the YMCA of Garfield, FUN, Bike New York, the Partnership for Community Health, Inc., and the NJ Department of Transportation. To download the eight-part series of curriculum-based activities, visit: http://www.garfieldfun.org/srts/?page_id=21

“Get Up and Go” not only helped students from Garfield; this special newspaper insert was estimated to have reached more than 30,000 students and 400,000 readers each day in the northern New Jersey circulation area. In addition, Garfield FUN’s in-paper student lesson plans received an award through the national “Newspapers in Education” program. At a recent Newspaper Association of America (NAA) Foundation’s Young Reader Seminar, the Foundation recognized Garfield’s “Get Up and Go” series as an outstanding NIE program. Facing competition from programs sponsored by other newspapers throughout the country, Garfield won third place in the NAA’s annual NIE Content Awards in the category of Special Projects.

Garfield was also chosen by the SRTS National Partnership as one of four communities whose successful SRTS programs were profiled in a report for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). See Safe Routes to School Increases Physical Activity and Improves Health at http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/SafeRoutes_Health_Sept08_lowres.pdf

In addition, Garfield was chosen for a National Center for Safe Routes to School podcast. The Safe Routes podcast is a monthly presentation that highlights ways to get kids up and active on their way to school and features interviews from SRTS programs across the country. Representatives from the National Center said Garfield was chosen because of its excellent job in partnering with NIE to reach a wide audience. They were also impressed by the program’s leadership, which included members from the health department, showing collaboration between local agencies and the schools.

The Garfield SRTS program is a true community effort. Working diligently, Darleen Reveille has seen her ideas grow by engaging a wide range of community groups and officials throughout town. Garfield FUN and its associated projects have brought together Garfield’s health, and parks and recreation departments, the Ramapo College Nursing Program, and the local YMCA and Boys and Girls Club. Through the NIE program, and other Garfield FUN projects, SRTS has brought together educators, community leaders, health professionals, students, and parents. Working together, each of these groups is dedicated to promoting a safer, more active way for children to travel to school.
Resources

Transportation Management Associations
Your local Transportation Management Association (TMA) can provide expertise and guidance regarding your Safe Routes to School program. Visit the TMA Council of New Jersey's website to find out how to contact your town’s local TMA.
http://tmacouncilnj.org/

New Jersey Safe Routes to School Coordinators from your local TMA can provide free technical assistance with walk and bike events. Visit http://www.saferoutesnj.org/about/regional-coordinator-tmas/ to find your SRTS Coordinator.

New Jersey Safe Routes to School Resource Center at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University http://www.saferoutesnj.org/

New Jersey Safe Routes to School Resource Center - Crossing Guards
http://www.njcrossingguards.org

National Center for Bicycling and Walking http://www.bikewalk.org/saferoutestoschool.php

National Center for Safe Routes to Schools http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/

New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center http://www.njbikeped.org/

New Jersey Department of Transportation – Safe Routes to School Program
http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/srts

Safe Routes to School National Partnership http://saferoutespartnership.org/

Events

International Walk to School in the USA
http://www.walktoschool.org/

National Bike to School Day
http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/