



SAN MATEO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS TRAVEL KIT

AUGUST 2018



San Mateo County
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Healthy Kids • Green Communities • Safe Journeys



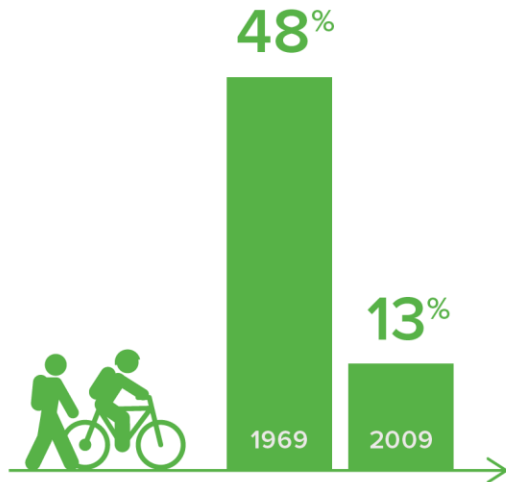
This Handbook was developed with Active Transportation Program grant funding from the State of California.

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THE PROBLEM:



The percentage of children walking or biking to school has dropped steeply within one generation



Most students are not getting enough physical activity



Roads near schools can be congested, decreasing safety and air quality for children

KIDS WHO WALK OR BIKE TO SCHOOL:



Are more likely to arrive alert and able to focus on school



Are more likely to have a healthy body weight



Are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety



Achieve most, if not all, of the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity during the trip to and from school



Demonstrate improved test scores and better school performance*

THE SAFETY CONCERNS FEEDBACK LOOP

illustrates a reactive cycle that occurs when more parents drive their children to school instead of using active modes. Parents and schools working together can reverse this cycle.



Fewer students walking and biking to school

More parents driving children to school

Rising concern about safety of walking and biking

Increased traffic at and around school

*More information, including primary sources, can be found at <http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org>

INTRODUCTION

Safe Routes to School (also called SRTS) programs help make school communities safer, healthier, and more fun. These programs encourage students to walk and roll (bike, skate, scoot, travel by wheelchair) to school. SRTS programs combine education and encouragement into activities to make learning about and participating in walking or rolling to school both fun and safe.

San Mateo County has been working on Safe Routes to School since 2011; all 23 of the school districts have been involved in SRTS programming at some point. The program has been successful in encouraging more students to walk and roll to school. Between 2012 and 2014, the county saw an increase of 27% more students walking to school, and 142% more students bicycling to school.

The Role of the District and Schools in SRTS

School Board members, district staff, and principals advance student academic achievement while supporting their intellectual, social, and physical well-being and growth. It can feel like there are a lot of competing priorities for district and school staff. That's why the San Mateo County SRTS program offers staff, financial, and collateral resources to support school and district staff in starting up a right-sized program. A Safe Routes to School culture in schools can bolster existing district-wide goals.

Schools benefit in a multitude of ways when fostering a Safe Routes to School Program, including:

- ✓ Students who are more active come to school ready to learn and boost attendance.
- ✓ An engaged parent community can support fun, community building activities.
- ✓ The community can come together to address the safety and health impacts of traffic around the school.

This guide lays out how school and district staff can benefit from Safe Routes to School programs - and how they can do so easily! See the [San Mateo County SRTS website](#) for more information and resources.



The Six E's of SRTS

SRTS makes school communities safer by combining improvements to walking and rolling routes with enforcement and education about safety and activities encourage students to walk and roll to school.



Equity: Incorporating equity considerations to ensure overall efforts are reaching all populations by including communities of color, addressing the needs of children of different genders, and reaching low-income communities



Engineering: Street infrastructure improvements (signage, crosswalks, signals, etc.) designed to improve the safety of people walking, bicycling, and driving along school routes



Education: Classes and activities that provide students and families with bicycle, pedestrian and traffic safety skills, and information about the benefits of bicycling and walking and the positive impacts these activities have on personal health and the environment



Enforcement: Strategies to deter unsafe behavior of drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians and encourage all road users to obey traffic laws and share the road safely around schools and on school routes



Encouragement: Events and activities that spark families' interest in walking and biking to school, with programs that reward participation



Evaluation: Evaluating the projects and programs of each of the other "E's" helps to track progress and determine which programs and projects are most effective

Safe Routes to Schools in the Classroom

The San Mateo County Office of Education provides countywide support for SRTS, to encourage and enable school children to walk and roll to school by implementing projects and activities that improve children's health, well-being, and safety while reducing traffic congestion and emissions caused by school-related travel.

Interested in learning about how SRTS can be implemented by teachers in your school or district? San Mateo County has developed a "Resilient Neighborhoods" curriculum for grades 2 and 4 that is being piloted in the 2018-19 school year.

Making the Academic Case for Safe Routes to School

Studies have shown that students who walk and roll to school do better in school. Because schools have in-depth contact with children, districts and schools are in a prime position to influence the health and behavior of their students.

Here are a number of talking points that focus on the correlation between physical activity/active commuting and increased concentration and academic performance:

- With children leading more sedentary lifestyles, studies have shown that physical activity is related to improved cognitive performance, regardless of socioeconomic status and prior achievement ([Stevens et al 2008](#); [Nelson and Gordon-Larsen 2006](#))
- A 2012 Danish study of 20,000 students showed that children who bike or walk to school perform measurably better on tasks demanding concentration than children who do not actively commute to school. These effects were shown to last up to four hours after they got to school ([CityLab](#))
- After 20 minutes of walking, students completed learning tasks more quickly and accurately and performed better on tests of reading comprehension ([Hillman et al., 2009](#))

CREATING A CULTURE OF ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs and policies can help schools and school district staff in different departments achieve existing goals.

Using SRTS to Achieve your Goals

Goal: Increased Student Academic Achievement

Schools and districts seek to advance the academic achievement of their pupils. SRTS efforts help students gain physical activity on the way to and from school, helping them arrive focused and ready to learn.

SRTS Tools:

- Schools can promote **Walk and Roll Event Days** to encourage students to try out walking or rolling as part of their morning routine.
- Walking and rolling can be formalized by the creation of **Walking School Buses/ Bike Trains**, organized groups that walk and bike together on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.
- Schools can designate **Park and Walk Locations** to enable families who live too far to walk or bike to use active modes.



Goal: Improved Safety Around the School Site

It's a common sight to see principals and school staff outside making sure kids safely arrive and depart from schools. Poorly marked crossings and intersections can make walking or biking a stressful experience. SRTS provides best practices to improve walking and biking infrastructure, as well as automobile circulation, around schools.

SRTS Tools:

- **School Site Assessments** bring together school, city, and district stakeholders to plan for physical improvements around the school. Schools that improved infrastructure through a SRTS program yielded 20 to 200% increases in walking and bicycling (Orenstein et al 2007).
- Schools can organize **School Safety Patrols** that engage older students in reminding everyone traveling in the school area to respect the rules of the road.
- Schools may also want to address **Personal Safety Concerns**, such as bullying, that may deter students from walking and rolling, or using transit, to get to school.

School Goal: Reduce Traffic Congestion around School Site

Twice each day, schools struggle with how to safely help students get to and from school during pick-up and drop-off times. Parents driving their children to school generate as much as 14% of all morning traffic. This traffic is inconvenient for families and school neighbors, leads to safety concerns, and degrades the air quality around the school. SRTS activities and policies encourage families to travel by “green” modes and recommends other strategies.

SRTS Tools:

- Schools can designate **Park and Walk Locations** that reduce vehicle traffic around schools.
- **Bus Stop and Walk** locations allow students arriving via the school bus to participate and walk the last couple of blocks to school.

School Goal: Build and Sustain an Engaged Parent Community

Active and engaged parents can support schools when resources are tight and teachers’ time is stretched thin. Parents often find that participating in SRTS activities is meaningful, fun, and a good way to interact with other caregivers at the school. Schools and districts can promote SRTS messaging as part of regular communications with parents and staff. Resources like the San Mateo County Office of Education’s [*Parent and Community Member Toolkit*](#) can give parents easy and specific ways to plug into SRTS programming.

SRTS Tools:

- **SRTS Messaging for Parents and Families** suggests transportation information, traffic safety tips, and encouragement language that schools can use in regular communications with the school community.
- **Transit Education** information can help families easily use the bus.
- **Walking and Biking Route Maps** inform families about the best ways to get to school.

School Goal: Build a Culture of Equity and Inclusion

Schools and Districts are grappling with how to provide resources so that each student can be successful, especially in context of larger systemic barriers some students and families face. Staff must examine how all students, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability level, disability and social and economic status have access to and can participate in SRTS events and programs – and this can be a model for equity and inclusion that can be replicated throughout the school community.

SRTS Tools:

- **SRTS Equity and Inclusion** tips provide guidance on building a diverse team, communicating effectively, and promoting inclusive events.

School and District Activities and Policies

School and district staff play a pivotal role in creating a welcoming atmosphere for Safe Routes to School culture to thrive. This section outlines potential events, activities, and policies that you can best lead and support, guided by your role and department.

See [Caltrans' Safe Routes to School Basics](#) for more resources to help you plan, create, and sustain a Safe Routes program in your community.

Communications and Outreach

SRTS Messaging for Parents and Families

School Districts and schools can include information through handouts, newsletters, emails, and social media to encourage families to try walking and rolling to school, and to let parents know how to drive, carpool, walk, and roll to and from school safely. For example, the beginning of the school year is a great time to send information home explaining parents' different transportation options. There's lots of information in this guide that can be used for messaging:

- Look to **Safe Routes to School Throughout the Year** for ideas of Event Days and corresponding safety messages and resources to distribute to parents.
- Include information about transportation options in school choice materials – so parents have more information as they decide between neighborhood and charter schools.

Transit Education

Taking public transit to school can be a good option for students who live too far to walk or bicycle, or who don't have the option of riding a yellow school bus. School district and school staff can promote student use of public transit by providing information about relevant bus routes for your school, and communicating that:

- [511.org](#) allows you to enter your origin and destination in [the transit planner](#) and discover useful trip information for 22 systems in the Bay Area. Use it to obtain multimodal travel all over the Bay Area.
- Spare the Air Youth's [Riding the Bus Etiquette](#) and [Taking Your Bike on the Bus Etiquette](#) provide helpful tips for a smooth ride.

Did you know?

- SamTrans has 34 school-related routes, which are scheduled to align with bell schedules and the academic calendar.
- Youth age 18 and under are eligible for reduced daily and monthly fares, a youth Clipper card, and Summer Youth Passes – find out details on SamTrans' Youth webpage.
- Students in grades 1-6 can win a chance to have their artwork displayed on the side of a SamTrans bus for a year! Check out the [Art Takes a Bus Ride](#) contest.

Facilities

School Site Assessments

School Site Assessments (SSAs) bring together school district, school, and city staff, along with parents and other community stakeholders, to observe commute patterns and behaviors around school during a morning or afternoon commute. Challenges and problems are identified, and potential solutions developed. SSAs help build relationships with city staff and can identify SRTS projects that can be incorporated into citywide planning efforts.

- SMCOE has funding to provide schools with SSAs led by transportation planning and engineering professionals.

Walking and Biking Route Maps

Walking and Biking Route maps can alert families to safer and more comfortable walking and biking routes near their homes, including the locations of sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals, and crossing guards. Route maps can include travel time information, so families understand how long it will take to drop off their students at school.

- SMCOE has funding to provide schools with walking and biking route maps designed by transportation planning and engineering professionals.

Install Active Transportation Parking

Districts can install secure bicycle parking, and they can support the storage of other forms of active transportation such as skateboards and scooters. Students will feel more comfortable biking, scooting, and skating to school if they know there is a place to securely store their mobility devices. Currently, active transportation storage is often overlooked, or when it is provided it is substandard or places in low visibility areas that increase risk of theft.

- Not all bike racks provide secure bike parking; the New Jersey SRTS [School Bike Parking Guide](#) outlines the pros and cons of installing different types of bike racks and shelters.
- The Bay Area Air Quality Management District periodically opens their application cycle for the Bicycle Rack Voucher Program. Sign up to receive [email notifications](#) about the next application cycle.



Transportation

Bus Stop and Walk

A Bus Stop & Walk program allows students who live far from school to enjoy the experience of walking to school, and helps reduce traffic congestion around school areas. Transportation departments can help designate locations for school buses to unload students away from school. Then, students walk along a designated route to school, joined by classmates, staff and parent volunteers.

- Minneapolis, Minnesota has a [Bus Stop & Walk Guide](#) that outlines how school buses can be part of park and walk programs.

School Safety Patrol

Elementary and middle school youth volunteers can sign up to become a certified School Safety Patrollers. With support and leadership from school faculty and parents, student patrollers can help fellow students develop a better understanding of pedestrian and vehicular traffic hazards. AAA provides resources for starting a [school safety patrol](#).

Bus Timing Improvements

Transportation staff can work with school staff to understand bus timing needs for students, and communicate that with SamTrans. In many cases, SamTrans can adjust their bus route timing to better match school schedules.

Policies

No Idling Policies

Many areas in San Mateo County have unhealthy levels of particulate pollution, putting students at risk of having asthma and/or reduced lung function. Research shows that there is a strong link between asthma, air quality, and student exposure to exhaust from automobiles. Moreover, air pollution is particularly hazardous to children's developing bodies and brains. School and district staff can improve air quality around schools by promoting comprehensive 'no idling' policies around schools. Replacing diesel bus fleets with buses that use alternative fuels is also helpful.

- Create a No Idling Policy through [ChangeLab Solutions' policy toolkit](#).



School Wellness and Safe Routes to School Policies

School Districts are federally required to develop and implement a local school wellness policy to help create a supportive school nutrition and physical activity environments. This is a good opportunity to incorporate evidenced-based Safe Routes to School goals and metrics.

- ChangeLab Solutions' [Safe Routes to School Policy Workbook](#) can help you create a customized policy that supports active transportation.

School-Wide Activities

Park and Walk Locations

A Park and Walk program encourages families or school buses to park several blocks from school and walk the rest of the way. Schools can help identify an off-site location for students to gather and walk to school with their families, such as parking lots that are typically vacant or unused during school drop-off and pick-up times. Parks, churches, or malls with large parking lots may be willing to share their space. **Walking School Buses/ Bike Trains**, in which a parent, teacher, or community member volunteer provides supervision for a group of students from the parking location, can be fun, safe, and practical additions to a Park and Walk Program. Encourage families to carpool to the parking location.

This program reduces traffic congestion around the school's pick-up and drop-off areas while still accommodating parents who drop their child off at school on their way to work.

- The National Center for SRTS has information on how to start a [Park & Walk program](#).
- The City of Portland, OR has a [Park + Walk How-To Guide](#).

Walking School Buses/ Bike Trains

Many families would like to walk to school, but are concerned about traffic, have personal safety concerns, or may lack the time to walk with their children to school. A Walking School Bus is an organized group of students who walk to and from school with adults; a Bike Train similarly organizes students to bike to school together. They can be formal or informal. Both have a designated route and stops where students gather or get dropped off near their homes. These programs are great way for students to get daily physical activity and travel to school, while having fun with their classmates. Students will learn how to be safe while walking or biking, gain confidence exploring their communities, and protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- The County of San Mateo has compiled [Walking School Bus coordination materials](#).
- The SRTS National Partnership's [Walking School Bus Primer](#) and [Tip Sheet for Organizing Bike Trains](#) are resources for first time organizers.
- The City of Portland has instructions for how to create [walking school bus cut-outs](#) for photos.
- Walk with Us El Monte is a comprehensive [Walking School Bus program](#) with resources to create a formal program and track its effectiveness. (Materials in English and Spanish.)

Walk and Roll Event Days

Promoting specific days for families to walk and bike to school is a great way to celebrate the many benefits of active transportation as part of a school-sponsored event. It may encourage families who cannot walk and roll daily, but may be able to do so one a week or once a month. Event days, especially those with themes, build excitement among students, parents and teachers. Events like International Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day are celebrated all over the country and beyond, which can help the school community feel like they are part of a bigger movement.

- The [Getting Started Guide](#) from Walk & Bike to School breaks down planning encouragement events days into eight simple steps.

International Walk to School Day

In October, San Mateo County celebrates International Walk to School Day (IWTS'D), a global event involving children walking and rolling to school. In 2012, 91 San Mateo County Schools participated in International Walk to School Day. In 2013, 95 San Mateo County schools held International Walk to School Day events.

Golden Sneaker

Golden Sneaker events are a fun way to get children and families walking to school. With this event, students track the number of times they bike, walk, carpool or use transit as a means of getting to school. The classroom with the greatest participation rate earns a coveted Golden Sneaker Award. While events may be held at any time, the formal San Mateo County Golden Sneaker Competition is held during the last week of February and first week of March.

Winter Walk to School Day, Earth Day, and Step into Spring

These events can keep the momentum going throughout the year with timely messages and reminders during the winter and early spring. Join San Mateo County SRTS and RecycleWorks of San Mateo County in Celebrating Earth Day. **Walking School Buses/ Bike Trains** and others can pick up litter along the way to reduce carbon emissions and beautify the school environment.

National Bike to School Day

May is Bike Month, and schools can kick off that celebration by celebrating National Bike to School Day. Join cyclists from around the Nation in celebration of National Bike to School day.

Weekly/Monthly Events

Schools that have had success with special events often expand them into regular activities that occur on a regular basis, such as "Wednesday Walk to School" or "Walk and Roll Friday." Walking school buses, bicycle trains, and park and walk activities are all ongoing encouragement activities. These weekly and monthly events help to institutionalize positive behaviors and multiply the benefits of the activities, enabling walking and biking to become the preferred mode of travel from home to school.



Safe Routes to School Throughout the Year

Promote annual county-wide walking and rolling events, such as Walk to School Day. Use the calendar to share timely safety messages.

Month	Event Days / Seasonal Themes	Safety Messages	Resources
August	Back to School	“Walk and Roll your way back to school! The start of the school year is a great time to reimagine how you get to school.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute Walking and Biking Route Maps
September	Carpool Week	“Let’s get together and carpool! Save time and meet your neighbors by sharing the ride”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute information about Carpooling Apps
October	Halloween	“Help keep your ghosts and goblins safe while walking in the neighborhood by following these simple tips.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share SMCOE Trick-or-Treating Tips
	International Walk to School Day	“Walk with your neighbors for International Walk to School Day – and consider starting or joining a walking school bus!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the SMCOE Safe Walking Tips brochure (English, Spanish, Tagalog) Organize or promote a Walking School Bus route
November	Time Change	“Turning back the clocks means there are different levels of light in the morning and afternoon. Make sure to drive slowly as it may be harder to spot students walking and biking.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the SMCOE Safe Carpool Tips brochure (English, Spanish, Tagalog)
Jan	Safe Driving Awareness	“We take time to brake for our kids. It’s important to drive safely and slowly around schools. Share these safe driving tips with your school.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with parents to create a safe driving lawn sign campaign
Feb - March	Golden Sneaker Events, Winter Walk to School Day, Step into Spring	“The race is on to see which has the most students who walk or bike to school- and win the Golden Sneaker Award. Live too far away? Carpool or park a ¼ mile away and walk the rest of the way.”	
April	Earth Day	“Today is Earth Day, a day to celebrate the environment. Try getting to school using a “green” mode!”	
May	Bike Month	“May is Bike Month! Pump up your tires and get ready to roll to school”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the SMCOE Safe Biking Tips brochure (English, Spanish, Tagalog)
	National Bike to School Day	“Get rolling for Bike to School Day”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute Walking and Biking Route Maps

YOUR ROLE IN SRTS

Each department at your school or district office has an important role in promoting Safe Routes to School. This section suggests how you can best engage with the work.

Roles by Department

Department	What you can do to support Safe Routes to School efforts
Office of Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support SRTS programming, making sure that school or school district policies support safe walking and rolling to school. • Aid other departments in supporting Safe Routes to School efforts. • Identify funding for more staff time and resources for SRTS goals.
Communications and Parent Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share safety and encouragement messaging and spread the word of upcoming events. Use existing communications channels, such as newsletters, emails, and social media.
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to make the school campus and area around the school friendly to people walking and biking. This can include providing sufficient, well-marked, and Install Active Transportation Parking on the school campus. • Help coordinate School Site Assessments to get all stakeholders talking about potential infrastructure changes that will make students walk and roll to school safer.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about busing and Transit Education to families • Include walking and rolling as viable transportation options for students to get to and from school safely.
Health and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help families, staff and students make the connection between active commuting and health. Promote information about the mental, emotional, and physical health benefits of walking and rolling to school – and encourage schools to partake in Walk and Roll Event Days.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share SRTS Messaging for Parents and Families around safe walking and rolling. • Work with students to explore connections of health, active lifestyles, and the environment through the Office of Education’s SRTS Curriculum – which follows the legally mandated California’s Environmental Principles and Concepts.
School Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help organize Walk and Roll Event Days and promote SRTS programs (such as Walking School Buses/ Bike Trains or designate Park and Walk Locations). • Communicate about these events by sharing SRTS Messaging for Parents and Families – and help build a parent volunteer base to implement SRTS activities.

Dealing with Staff and Parent Turnover

Parent and staff turnover is inevitable; children graduate to different schools, staff leave their positions, and volunteers may at some point choose different commitments. Schools and districts need to build programs that are larger than one committed champion. Here are couple of tips to keep volunteers engaged:

- **Find ways to show appreciation for SRTS volunteers.** These can include recognition of volunteers' work through newsletters, hosting a volunteer appreciation lunch or dinner, and involving volunteers in school-wide decision making
- **Use existing guidebooks and manuals as a good way to get new volunteers up to speed.** There's no need to rebuild institutional knowledge each time a new volunteer is added. Guidebooks like SMCOE's Parent and Community Empowerment Toolkit can share Safe Routes to School knowledge and best practices.
- **Look for volunteers beyond staff and parents.** We ask so much of parents and staff already, so it can be a good technique to recruit volunteers from the community. This can include grandparents and retired seniors, and people from the local faith community or neighborhood groups.



How can schools and districts minimize liability?

- In California, school districts and volunteers have significant protections and immunities from many aspects of liability that relate to SRTS.
- Districts and organizers need to act with reasonable care to anticipate and prevent injuries, but they do not need to guarantee safety to avoid liability.
- [The Safe Routes to School National Partnership outlines tips](#) for schools and districts to minimize liability from planning SRTS activities.

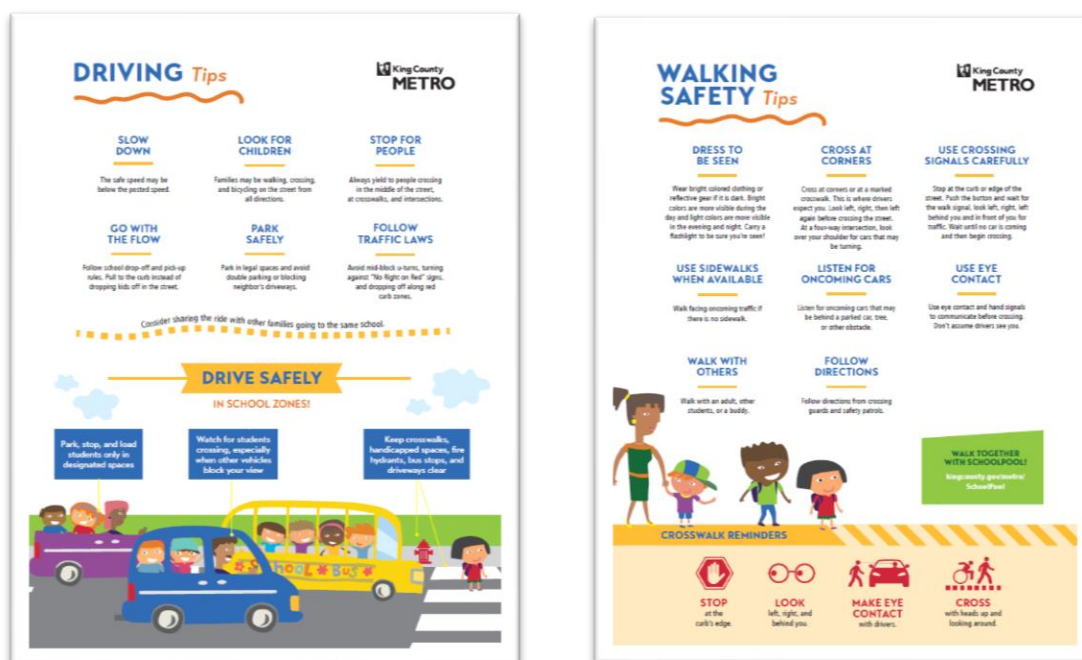
SAFE AND INCLUSIVE TRAVEL FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Perceptions of both physical and personal safety concerns can prevent families from wanting to walk and roll to school. Parents often identify lack of adequate biking and walking infrastructure as a top barrier to active commuting to school yet fears of bullying, deportation, violent crime, and gang activity are some of the personal safety concerns held by parents.

Transportation Safety Tips

Parents, regardless of how they are dropping off or picking up children, can learn more about how to safely interact with other users on the road. Talking about and distributing materials around safe commuting by every mode can make sure that the entire school community is on the same page. If, for example, the principal wants to talk to a parent about driving slower near the school, the principal can point to materials already distributed to families.

Appendix A includes brochures with tips on commuting safely while driving, walking, biking, carpooling and taking transit.



Personal Safety Concerns

Bullying and Harassment

Safe Routes to School programs have a significant role to play in addressing bullying and harassment. We know that in our increasingly isolated communities, kids may feel vulnerable to attack as they walk down the street. Promoting more opportunities for parents to be integrated in Safe Routes to School activities, such as a Walking School Bus route leader, will include adult figures who can respond to potential bullying actions. Training for SRTS volunteers should include training on how to address bullying and harassment in a sensitive and productive manner.

Threat of Deportation

In our current political climate, students who are immigrants, or whose parents are immigrants, may have more on their mind than just doing well in school. Schools should consider:

- Disseminate information about students and families' rights. Distribute "know your rights" materials to students and families. See the [CELA Toolkit](#) for supporting undocumented students and their families.
- San Mateo County has a 24-hour [rapid response hotline](#) to expand the community's capacity to monitor and document ICE operations in real time.
- Incorporate student-centered values in SRTS programming. SRTS activities bring families together, and school staff should emphasize that the school exists to support students and assure families that no child's education will be compromised because of their family's country of origin.

Crime and Violence

In some neighborhoods, perception of nearby crime or gang activity may prevent parents and caregivers from feeling comfortable letting their children walk or bike to school. Other communities have developed best practices in creating innovative and engaging solutions:

- Schools can identify "**Corner Captains**" in neighborhoods and along established routes to school. A corner captain is a parent, teacher, or other volunteer who is stationed outside at designated locations during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal. They can improve personal security by serving as "eyes on the street." Schools across the country are using this model to partner with local community groups to implement [Safe Passage Programs](#).



As part of a Safe Passage program, community volunteers in the Tenderloin district in San Francisco have bright vests and signage to alert students that they are there to help them navigate to and from school.

Equity and Inclusion

Schools should create SRTS programming that is inclusive for everyone to participate. This may include students who have a disability, are homeless, or face cultural or environmental barriers to walking or rolling to school. We know that families in low-income communities face barriers to participating in SRTS programs, and also tend to be in neighborhoods with less infrastructure for safe walking and biking.

Plan for Students with Disabilities

Education and encouragement around safe mobility should include all students, especially students with disabilities. Bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic education in schools must integrate all students, to let students learn unique roadway challenges experienced by classmates with different abilities. In addition, Park and Walk locations can be great opportunities for student with special needs arriving on a bus to walk and roll to school with supervision from parents or school staff. The National Center for Safe Routes to School has a guidebook on how to create inclusive [SRTS programs for students with disabilities](#).

Did you know?

- Studies show that families living in low-income communities are less likely to have access to roads with pedestrian safety features such as sidewalks, street/sidewalk lighting, and marked crosswalks (Bridging the Gap).
- The SRTS National Partnership has developed a guide to Implementing SRTS in Low-Income Schools and Communities.

Include Students who take the Bus

In San Mateo County, students may take the bus for multiple reasons. For example, elementary school districts and the Sequoia Union High School District provide transportation to students through the Tinsley Voluntary Transfer Program. In addition, some schools are well served by SamTrans bus lines, which students rely on to get to and from class. Safe Routes to School can celebrate and include students who take the bus through multiple avenues, including implementing a Bus Stop and Walk Program, or creating a walking route on school grounds during the day.

Build a Diverse SRTS Team

Organize a representative team of volunteers and/or paid staff, so that students can see themselves reflected in program leadership. Provide team training on different types of discrimination, cultural competence, and undoing structural racism.

Communicate with Care

Safe Routes to School programs have been successful when they communicate using pictures or visuals that resonate with the community. Pictures and symbols are often more effective than text. In addition, anyone sending home SRTS communications should remember that students speak many languages at home. Whenever possible, provide translation on flyers and text, and provide interpreters at meetings. Reaching out to people in their primary language helps build trust and understanding of the information being shared. Communicating with care means thinking how to reach families with different languages and communication styles.

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