



News & Notes



August-September 2006

Message from Terry...

It is that time again...time for children to return to school. And with that we see and hear school buses everyday in our neighborhoods as they transport students and watch as lines of cars form outside local school buildings. Yet, what we don't see are increasing numbers of students walking or bicycling to and from school. This decline in walking and bicycling has had an adverse effect on traffic congestion and air quality around schools, not to mention our children's health. This is where the *Safe Routes to School* (SRTS) program can help. You will learn more about the program and where North Carolina is in its development as you read this newsletter.

Just a little about me. Before I was appointed to be the SRTS Coordinator in March 2006, I served as the Assistant Highway Administrator in N.C. Department of Transportation for three years. My background includes a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Buffalo and many jobs within the New York Department of Transportation and NCDOT in such areas as highway construction, design, traffic and operations. I am a registered professional engineer in New York and North Carolina. Keeping it in the family, my husband Roberto is also a NCDOT employee, and I am a mom to a bubbly 5-year-old who just started first grade this year and will be seeing more walking in her future.

The full time SRTS Coordinator position was required under the federal law SAFETEA-LU in order for the state to receive an apportionment of the \$612 million that will be given out for SRTS programs over five federal fiscal years (FY 2005-2009). As it stands right now, North Carolina is programmed to receive a total of \$15 million for its SRTS program.

Since my appointment, and prior to, there has been great interest in the program and I am trying to get out across the state as much as possible to present the program to such agencies as rural and metropolitan planning organizations. I am also making presentations in conferences to different agencies including the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health and Human Services. A state SRTS kick-off event will take place on September 13th. (See article page 2.)

I look forward to working with you and making North Carolina's children safe and healthy.

Terry Canales, NC SRTS Coordinator

September Workshops to Train N.C. Facilitators

In preparation for presenting *Safe Routes to School* workshops across North Carolina, the N.C. Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the National Center for Safe Routes to School, will be training 18 new facilitators during September workshops in Winston-Salem. The trainees will observe a full-day workshop at Latham Elementary School conducted by nationally certified SRTS facilitators and will receive additional instruction in leading workshops. On the 3rd day, the trainees will be put to the test as they plan and carry out their own presentations at four additional elementary schools in Winston-Salem: Kimberly Park, Sherwood Forest, Speas and Whitaker. These elementary schools were selected for workshops because of the commitment and support of their principals, their proximity to the training site, and some existing infrastructure to support walking and biking. Upon completion of the training, North Carolina will have the capacity to support requests for SRTS workshops.

Welcome to the fourth issue of SRTS **News & Notes** to keep people up to date on the progress of *Safe Routes to School* programs in North Carolina and beyond. This complimentary newsletter comes courtesy of the **North Carolina Safe Routes to School** Program.



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How to Apply for an SRTS Workshop

Safe Routes to School Workshops are an important mechanism to generate interest and enthusiasm for a SRTS program in your area. This one-day workshop helps individual school communities develop action plans, based on their unique situations, to overcome barriers and reinforce beneficial behaviors. The workshop brings together the right people as potential partners who can provide resources, help build community support, and/or influence policies that will make it safer for more children to bike and walk to school.

Workshops may be requested through NCDOT for any school instructing any grade from kindergarten through 8th grade. Each workshop is co-taught by instructors trained to teach the **Safe Routes to School** National Course and recognized as preferred instructors through the NCDOT training program.

Requests for workshops should be made by completing the request form found under the "What's New" section at www.ncdot.org and returning it to Terry Canales, PE, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, 1552 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1552 or by email to tcanales@dot.state.nc.us.

Safe Routes to School N.C. Kick-Off Celebration

The N.C. Department of Transportation will be having a kick-off celebration of the **Safe Routes to School** program on September 13, 2006 at 10:00 am. The location is the Mary Scroggs Elementary School in Southern Village, Chapel Hill. We invite you to join us as remarks are given by Mayor Pro Tem Bill Strom, a local principal, a parent, and keynote speaker, N.C. Secretary of Transportation Lyndo Tippett.

National Center for Safe Routes to School

Through the Federal Highway Administration, a centralized resource of information on successful **Safe Routes to School** programs and strategies was awarded to the Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) in Chapel Hill. The group over **Safe Routes to School** in HSRC is called the National Center for Safe Routes to School and their web site is www.saferoutesinfo.org.

SRTS Funding in N.C.

In North Carolina, elementary and middle schools who are interested in **Safe Routes to School** must hold a SRTS workshop in order to apply for funds to implement their action plans. The SRTS program is aimed at grades K-8, with funds apportioned to the states based on enrollments in elementary and middle schools. The SRTS program requires that 70-90% of funds be used for infrastructure improvements for planning, design, and construction within 2 miles of an elementary or middle school. The remaining 10-30% of the funds must be used for non-infrastructure purposes such as encouragement (publicity), education, enforcement and evaluation activities. What is different about this funding is that nonprofit organizations may apply for funds along with state, local and regional governmental agencies, and there is no local match to the funding received through the grant process. Stay tuned for more information as application criteria and processes develop.



How to Start SRTS in Your Community

You don't need special skills to start **Safe Routes to School** in your community. You just need concern for children's health and the enthusiasm to pull together the right people to make things happen. It helps to find a knowledgeable advocate in the school system or local government who can identify the people to be invited and serve as the coordinator. The most effective groups include representatives from schools, parents, planning, engineering, parks/recreation, health, law enforcement, neighbors and local advocacy groups such as bicycle clubs, walking groups or bike shops. If you have questions or want more information, email judiwallace@triad.rr.com or call 336.768.3339.

Website Resources

- ☑ The National Center for Safe Routes to School is the centralized resource for **Safe Routes to School** nationwide. Just go to www.saferoutesinfo.org
- ☑ The Federal Highway Administration is working constantly to update its website as it releases new memoranda and other guidance to help local areas with creating a **Safe Routes to School** Program. Check out what is available: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/srtsguidance.htm>.



Register Now for Walk to School Day 2006

Free, online registration is now open for 2006 International Walk to School, an international event where communities from over 35 countries join together to walk and bicycle to school. Registration is free and available to individuals or organizations holding a Walk to School event. To register a Walk to School event, please visit www.walktoschool.org/register. By registering, users have access to a variety of downloadable materials, including certificates, templates for printing stickers and a frequent walker punch card. Registrants also receive a weekly e-newsletter with tips and resources on holding a Walk to School event.

October is the month for celebrating International Walk to School events. For more information, please visit www.walktoschool.org. To see which communities have already registered, go to www.walktoschool.org/who. The National Center for Safe Routes to School of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center serves as the national coordinating agency for Walk to School activities in the United States

Fewer kids are biking and walking. More parents are driving.
1969: 42% walked
2001: 16% walked

Many Youths Show Signs of Pre-Diabetes

According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, about 2 million U.S. preteens and teens have a pre-diabetic condition linked to obesity and inactivity. This serious condition puts them at risk for full-blown diabetes and cardiovascular problems. In a nationally representative sample, one in 14 boys and girls had the condition. However, among overweight adolescents, the number was one in six. Average levels of bad cholesterol and blood fats called triglycerides were higher in youngsters who had the pre-diabetic condition.

This study was reported in *Pediatrics* (November, 2005 issue). Of the 20 million Americans with diabetes, most have Type 2, which impairs the body's ability to properly use insulin. This form of the disease is strongly linked to being overweight and inactive. Type 2 diabetes—formerly called adult-onset diabetes—is on the rise among children because of increasing rates of obesity. **Safe Routes to School Programs** are focused on increasing physical activity for children to combat obesity and the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

More N.C. Children Are Overweight or Obese

According to the North Carolina Plan to Prevent Heart Disease & Stroke 2005-2010:

“Overweight and obesity in North Carolina are on the increase for both adults and children. Between 1995 and 2003, the prevalence of overweight increased from 9.0% to 14.4% among 2 to 4 year-olds, 14.7% to 22.8% among 5 to 11 year-olds, and 22.7% to 26.5% among 12 to 18-year olds. It is likely that these troubling rates of obesity in youth will lead to increased rates of chronic diseases as these young people reach adulthood.”

You can find more information at www.startwithyourheart.com.

Air Pollution Can Contribute to Asthma Problems

According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, asthma symptoms can be caused by allergens or irritants such as those found in polluted air, resulting in inflamed, clogged and constricted airways. Symptoms can include difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing and tightness in the chest. In severe cases, asthma can be deadly. Nearly 5 million asthma sufferers are children. Here are some astounding facts:

- Nearly half (44%) of the 500,000 hospitalizations annually for asthma are for children.
- Asthma is the #1 cause of school absenteeism among children, accounting for more than 14 million missed days of school nationally.
- The death rate from asthma for children under age 19 has increased by nearly 80% since 1980.

Reducing air pollution and improving air quality, especially around schools, is one of the goals of **Safe Routes to School**.

What Is *Safe Routes to School*?

Safe Routes to School is a national program that enables and encourages children to walk and bicycle to school while making it a more appealing form of transportation and thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. The program informs and encourages schools, planners, transportation professionals, safety organizations, parents and others to work on improving routes around schools and starting SRTS programs. *Safe Routes to School* covers education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation activities in addition to looking at possible engineering solutions.

The impetus for the SRTS program derives from several health and transportation issues:

1. The increase in childhood obesity and early on-set diabetes, among other health issues.
2. The low levels of physical activity for most children. In N.C. most public school children receive only 30 minutes of physical education a week, yet children need 60 minutes of exercise daily.
3. Increased air pollution around schools because of traffic congestion with so many parents driving their kids to school, not to mention an overall decrease in air quality.



4. Increasing instances of hazard busing, where kids who live within walking distance are bussed because of hazardous road conditions.
5. The decrease in community recognition, safety and involvement in children's lives.

This program originated in Denmark, which was cited in the 1970s as having the highest child pedestrian fatality rate of any country in Europe. Initially begun in the city of Odense, community leaders identified specific road dangers and took steps to create a safer walking environment for children. In 10 years, the country saw an 80% reduction in bicycle and pedestrian casualties among children, leading Denmark to establish the first national SRTS program. In the 1990s the program spread to the United Kingdom and Canada. The first program in the United States was in the Bronx in New York City.

Today's children may be the first generation in 100 years with a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

Please Send Us...

...your thoughts, questions, ideas so that we can all work together to get SRTS under way in our communities. And by all means, let us know what is happening in your community. We would like to include updates in future issues of **News & Notes**.

To remove your name from our mailing list, please email admin765@triad.rr.com with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

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