



## Elected Officials & Safe Routes to School

### Talking Points

Elected officials are one of the key stakeholder groups to engage as part of a community's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) effort. While many elected officials may be familiar with the program, some may not be. It's important to explain the purpose of Safe Routes to School, how elected officials can be an integral part of the effort, and what they will gain by participating. Here are some brief talking points for an initial conversation as well as some basic resources to share.

### **Introduce Yourself and the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP)**

Whether your first contact is by phone, email or in person, it will be important to introduce yourself and give some background information. SHIP is a Minnesota Department of Health program that works with schools, businesses, faith groups, farmers and many others to create healthier communities across the state by expanding opportunities for active living, healthy eating and tobacco-free living.

### **Give an Overview of the Minnesota Safe Routes to School Program and its Benefits**

Minnesota SRTS is an effort to improve walking and bicycling conditions for our youth and support active living for the whole community. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, SHIP, and many other partners across the state are working together to help schools and communities develop SRTS programs.

SRTS is more than just a program. A comprehensive SRTS strategy is where partners work together on education, engineering, enforcement, evaluation, encouragement and equity. An effective SRTS initiative can help create a healthier community for generations to come by instilling life-long physical activity habits.

Some of the many benefits of the program for participants and the community include:

- Kids and families are more active
- Students arrive ready to learn
- Communities become more connected and safer for all
- Reduced congestion and traffic at schools and on local streets

### **What can elected officials bring to the program?**

- Attention to traffic safety and health issues at the local level
- Political support for funding for physical improvements, crossing guards, and other program elements
- Information about relevant legislation and funding

### **What can elected officials gain from the program?**

- An opportunity to engage with local citizens
- Show support for a proven healthy community strategy

### **Resources**

Program website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/>

Email updates and newsletters: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNDOT/subscriber/new>