



Parents & Safe Routes to School

Talking Points

Parents are important stakeholders to engage early on as part of a community's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) effort. Ultimately a group of parents or parent teacher organization (PTO) may run an individual school's program. Some parents may not be familiar with SRTS or have safety concerns about their children walking or bicycling to school. It's important to explain the purpose of Safe Routes to School, how parents can get involved, and what they will gain by participating. Here are some brief talking points to guide for initial outreach and 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 parents bring to the program?

- Knowledge of the local neighborhood, walking/bicycling routes, and current barriers
- Volunteer time to help develop a SRTS plan and coordinate activities
- Connection to other parents and the broader community

What can parents gain from the program?

- Potential physical improvements to the school campus and adjacent streets, crossings and sidewalks
- Health and safety benefits for children, school and neighborhood
- Community-building

Resources

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

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