



# Safe Routes to School in the Suburbs

## A Presentation to Action Committee for Transit

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# OVERVIEW

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- About the Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- Safe Routes to School Basics
- National Success Stories
- The State Of SRTS in the DC Region
- Policy Recommendations





Safe Routes  
to School  
**National  
Partnership**

## About the National Partnership

We are a nonprofit organization that improves the quality of life for kids and communities by promoting **active, healthy lifestyles** and safe infrastructure that **supports bicycling and walking.**





# WHAT WE DO



- Improve quality of life for kids, families, and communities
- Advance policy change
- Catalyze support for safe, healthy, active communities
- Share our deep expertise



Safe Routes  
to School  
National  
Partnership

In 1969, nearly **50%**  
of all children walked or  
bicycled to school.

Today, just **13%** walk  
or bicycle.

**All** kids and  
communities deserve  
access to **safe, healthy  
streets** and  
opportunities for  
**physical activity.**







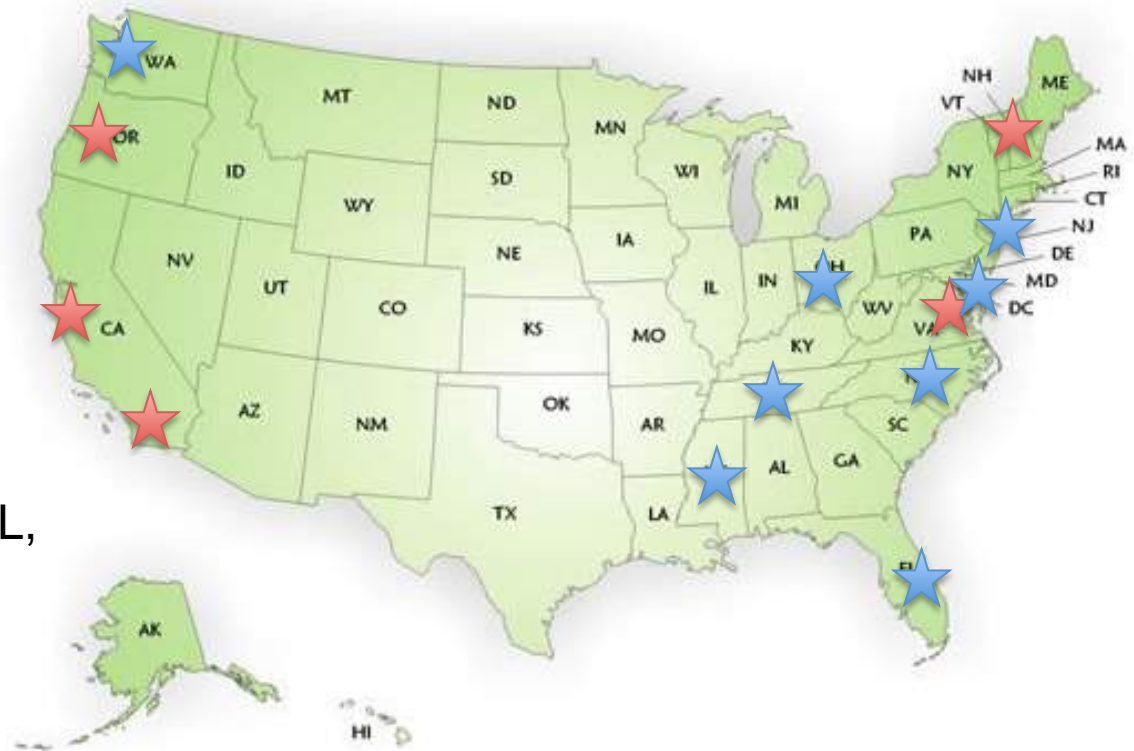
# OUR STAFF

## National Partnership

- 28 staff
- 13 states

## Regional & State Policy

- Washington, DC region
- Virginia
- New England
- Ohio
- Southern States (NC, TN, AL, GA)
- Florida
- Oregon/SW Washington
- California (LA, SF and statewide)





# SHARING OUR DEEP EXPERTISE

<http://saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter>



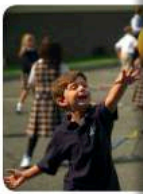
**Shared Use**  
Increasing Access to Physical Activity Opportunities

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in children and adolescents in the past 30 years.<sup>1</sup> Low-income communities and communities of color tend to be adversely affected by obesity and have fewer adequate places for children and families to be physically active.<sup>2</sup> In many communities, schools are centrally located and have gymnasiums, playgrounds, athletic fields,



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

## A Primer for Safe Routes to School and Active Transportation Advocacy in the Denver Region



KAISER PERMANENTE thrive



**Case Study**  
Bicycling and Walking to School as a Community: Takoma Park, MD

The City of Takoma Park Safe Routes to School program won special recognition from the National Center Safe Routes to School James L. Oberstar

schools to request Safe Routes to School activities and keeps in regular contact with the schools. Regular communication establishes the relationship and allows Lucy to learn how best to fit Safe Routes to School programming into existing school



**Technical Assistance**  
To Get Kids Walking and Bicycling Through Community Scale Policy Strategies

**Utilize Our Expertise!**  
The Safe Routes to School National Partnership provides Technical Assistance based upon the specific needs of each city, county and/or school district seeking assistance.

For more than a decade Safe Routes to School programs have flourished across the country using the power of quality programming to raise awareness and change habits. Now, communities are boosting walking and bicycling to school and in daily life through sustainable, long-term policy change. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership can help your community or school district to build local leadership, partnerships and community support, establish walking and bicycling policies and programs that advance healthy, active lifestyles, and institutionalize ongoing funding and policy changes that support active transportation as a permanent part of your community's healthy future.



**Individualized Technical Assistance**  
Each community is unique. Through our individualized technical assistance we provide strategic support to local program and policy leaders via telephone calls and email correspondence on an as needed basis. We will listen to your needs, and our expert staff can help guide your policy change efforts. We can conduct webinars and conference presentations, provide best practices and case studies from around the country and the world, create model policies, assist with developing materials and action plans for grant applications, and help your community leverage additional funding for programs and infrastructure.

**Workshops**  
We can help you to produce and lead inspiring and effective Safe Routes to School and active transportation policy workshops, designed to get critical stakeholders thinking about and invested in the big policy picture and community-wide Safe Routes to School efforts. These workshops can be combined with local site visits, customized presentations, participating in and/or leading stakeholder meetings, and/or conducting walkabouts at schools to assess infrastructure needs. We can also follow up with you by phone and email via individualized technical assistance to build upon the meetings with stakeholders, and to develop materials and action plans.

**Keynote Addresses**  
Sometimes community leaders need to be inspired by national experts. Our prominent and inspiring speakers bring best practices from around the country and the world, and an energy and charisma that will inspire positive change. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership can help turbo charge your community into action.

**Who We Are:**  
Our team has helped communities and school districts throughout the country to develop community-scale Safe Routes to School programs, partnerships and action plans that have resulted in new policies that support healthy and active communities.

Contact: Maggie Cooper, Technical Assistance Manager, [maggie@saferoutespartnership.org](mailto:maggie@saferoutespartnership.org) or (703) 521-1561

[www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org) | Facebook.com/saferoutespartnership | Twitter @SafeRoutesNow

Safe Routes to School program offers encouragement safe walking and bicy-

**Day:** All schools in Takoma Park outreach every year to help serves as a kick-off for walking and

with the Washington Area Bicycle safety rodeos are offered free of bolts. The workshop features a safety ing followed by a bicycle course safe practices. Bike to School Day May, 2012. Over 160 students and day. New bike racks will be in-growing number of students biking

ordinator will help organize Walk- neighborhoods. Parents can rotate the th the students and designated be set for each Walking School Bus- vice, SchoolPool, has been intro- finding nearby students to join a Pool is a project of Metropolitan of Governments **Communit**

**Day:** Developed by the Takoma Park in safety program reinforces safe it includes a mock crosswalk, cars, dents play the role of a pedestrian ng that reminds them to "walk in the

# WHAT IS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?



- **Goal is to make it safer for more kids to walk and bicycle to and from school—and ultimately in daily life**
- **More than \$1 billion in federal funding available from FY2005-12 through state Departments of Transportation**
- **15,000 schools have benefited—but that’s approximately 15% of schools, and only for a portion of their needs**
- **Has helped elevate the trip to school in transportation planning and get local governments and schools to partner**
- **Comprehensive “Five E’s” approach is critical (engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement, evaluation)**





# THE BIG PICTURE: WHY FOCUS ON SCHOOLS?



- Focuses limited dollars where kids are concentrated
- Kids spend a great deal of time each day at schools
- Schools are the hub for many other activities
- Schools may be located within neighborhoods, near kids and families—so improvements affect neighborhoods
- Improvements in neighborhoods around schools benefit all residents—seniors, students, families, etc.
- *Focusing on kids and schools can give you a foot in the door to overcome opposition on built environment changes*



# IS IT DIFFERENT IN THE SUBURBS?



- **Safe Routes to School movement started in the suburbs: Marin County, CA**
- **Most programs target suburban schools because of the land use and transportation challenges, but willingness of some parents to make a shift if conditions are safer**
- **The decrease in walking and bicycling to school is partially attributed to changes in school siting**
- **Urban schools often have the right infrastructure but other safety and equity challenges**





# BY THE NUMBERS: PEDESTRIAN INJURIES



**Traffic injuries are the leading cause of death ages 5-33 years**

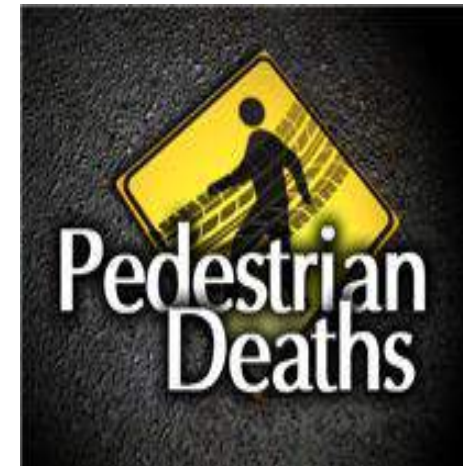
**Motor vehicles are responsible for one of every five deaths in children 1-14**

(SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics)

**Child pedestrian injury more common if:**

- High traffic volumes
- Lower income
- Younger age

(SOURCE: Wazana, Inj Prev 1997;3:295-304)



# BY THE NUMBERS: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



**12% / 16% / 1.5%**

**Biking and walking is 12% of trips, 16% of fatalities and 1.5% of federal funding**

**38% vs 88%**

**Percentage of children living within a mile of school who walk/bike in 2009 vs. 1969**

**10-14%**

**of morning traffic congestion is school-related**

**\$21 billion + \$5 billion**

**Cost of busing and parents driving kids to school**

**36% & 24**

**The increase in walking/biking to school due to Safe Routes to School in four states & the number of minutes of physical activity a child gets each day they walk/bike to school**





# BY THE NUMBERS: SAFETY



**25%-30%**

of children's traffic deaths are bicycling/walking

**\$839 million**

Annual medical costs to treat children's bike/ped injuries and fatalities

**33%**

The decrease in the rate of pedestrian injury for kids in NYC neighborhoods with Safe Routes to School interventions as compared with neighborhoods without

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2012 FOURCO 9



**CAUTION:**  
Walking to school may be hazardous to your health.

Photo credit: Orlando Sentinel, copyright 2012. No endorsement by the Orlando Sentinel is made or implied.

Walking to school is a good thing – when it's safe. For that reason, the American Heart Association supports continued funding for the Safe Routes to School program. It's an important and meaningful way to address the nation's continuing struggle with childhood obesity. Children who are physically active perform better in school and are less likely to have truancy or disciplinary problems.

Tell Congress to preserve funding for the Safe Routes to Schools program. [www.heart.org/healthyschooling](http://www.heart.org/healthyschooling)

American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

Go and Grow

**Give America's kids the right of way to a healthy life.**

# RECENT STUDIES: SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL WORKS!



## 801 schools in DC, FL, OR & TX

- Studied school travel data for five years (2007-2012)
- Control group without SRTS
- Walking & bicycling rates increased:
  - 18% due to engineering improvements
  - 25% due to education and encouragement programs
  - **43% total increase over five years**

## Crash data in NYC

- 168,806 pedestrian injuries between 2001-2010
- In census tracts with SRTS programs, pedestrian injury rate decrease 44% between 2009-2010
- No decrease in census tracts without SRTS programs

## Research Shows Safe Routes to School Programs Work

**A study of 801 schools in DC, Florida, Texas, and Oregon found:**

- Building crosswalks, sidewalks, and other infrastructure near schools increased walking and biking by 18%.
- SRTS education and encouragement programs increased walking and biking by 5% each year leading to increases of 25% after five years.

**Be part of the movement.**

**Successful programs need families, schools, and communities working together.**



### Family

- Walk or bike with your children to school
- Join a SRTS parent group and get your school involved



### School

- Hire crossing guards
- Teach pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Promote walk and bike to school days
- Provide secure bike parking



### Communities

- Prioritize building crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes near schools
- Increase police enforcement in school zones





# SUCCESS STORIES IN SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES



## Red Pine Elementary, Eagan, MN

- Parents mostly drive, resulting in quarter-mile traffic backups at school and onto nearby highway
- With \$10,000, the school produced safe walking maps, walking school buses, and drop zones
- Number of kids walking/bicycling has grown from 75 to 200
- Vehicle drop-offs down from 100 to 40; traffic backups evaporated



## Roosevelt Middle School, Eugene, OR

- Invested \$600,000 from Safe Routes to School in a walking path, crosswalks, school zone signage and programming.
- In three years, walking and bicycling rates grew from 27% to 42% of kids.
- There are 53 fewer cars picking up children each day, a 24% reduction, easing congestion on streets near school.

# SUCCESS STORIES IN SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES



## Austin, TX – Zavala Elementary

- Low-income school with no busing; drug and gang-related crime and violence created hazard for kids walking
- Set up walking school bus routes, corner captains and buddy program
- More students arriving on time for school breakfast
- School recently added an after-school bicycle club and is integrating SRTS into wellness and parent involvement campaigns



## Auburn, WA

- Citizens committee developed safe walking maps for all 22 schools and fun activities
- City uses municipal funds for signage, traffic calming, sidewalks and paths and applies for SRTS grants for larger-scale upgrades
- All developers required to install sidewalks
- 20% of students now live in safe walking areas and no longer need to be bussed—saving \$240,000/year in fuel and personnel

# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION



## Coordinators in many school districts and departments of transportation

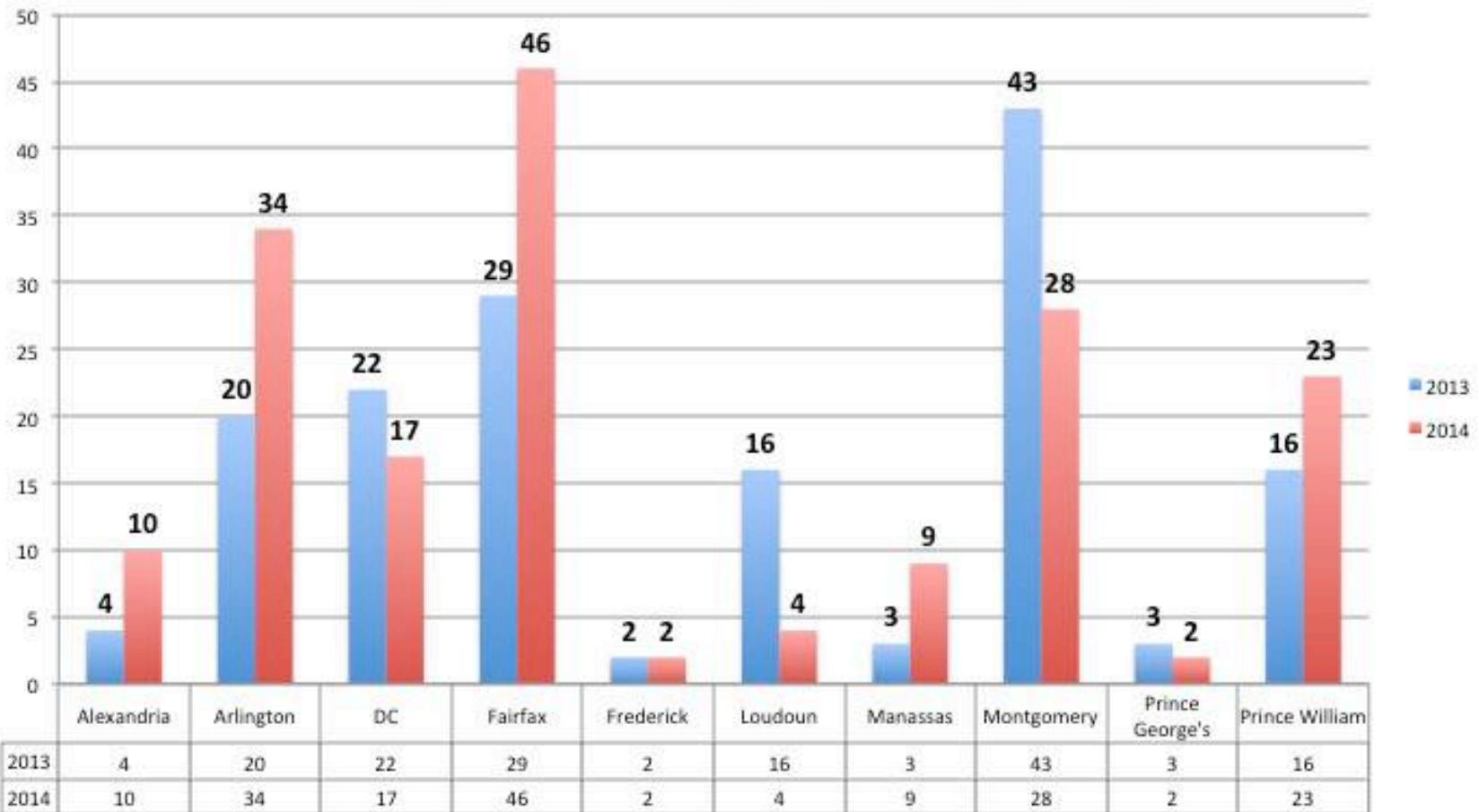
School District	Safe Routes to School Coordinator
Arlington County Public Schools	Full-time, school district
Alexandria City Public Schools	Contracted coordinator with school district 2008-2013, current designated point person for continuation of activities
District of Columbia Public Schools	Full-time, District Department of Transportation
Fairfax County	Full-time, school district
Frederick County	2010-2011, full-time, school district
Loudoun County	Full-time, school district
Montgomery County Public Schools	One full-time position, Montgomery County Department of Transportation and one part-time position, City of Takoma Park
Prince George's County Public Schools	Grant application pending, full-time, Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation
Prince William County Public Schools	Full-time, school district



# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION



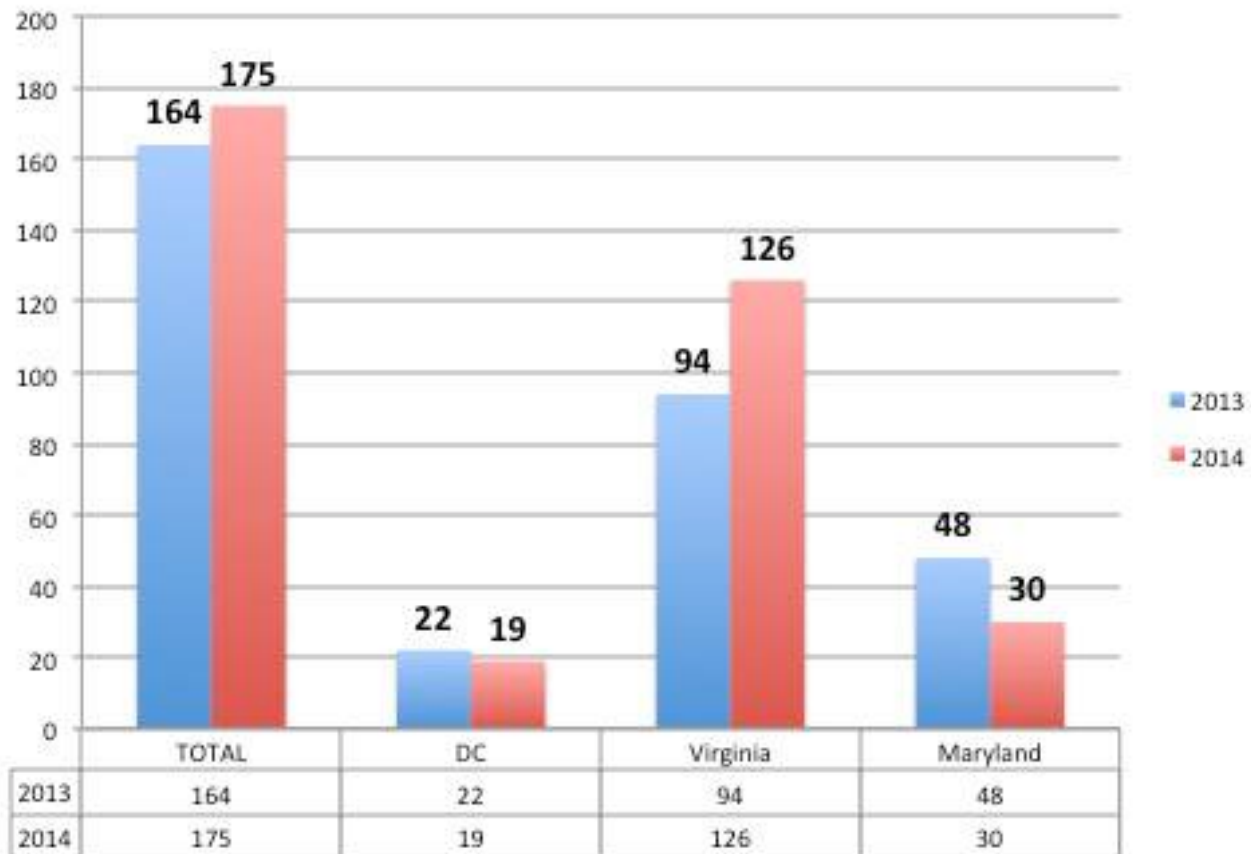
Walk to School Day: Number of Participating Schools by County, 2013-2014



# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION



Walk to School Day: Number of Participating Schools by State, 2013-2014



# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION



**Alexandria City Schools, VA Safe Routes to School program:** This program is a partnership between the school system and TrailsforYouth.org, a local non-profit.

**The City of Alexandria, VA school safety project:** After requests for pedestrian safety around Charles Barrett Elementary School, the City of Alexandria utilized all Five E's to make the walk to school safer for students.

**District of Columbia Safe Routes to School program:** The full-time coordinator has a defined process in which she works with committees at individual schools to craft a Safe Routes to School plan. The plan is then implemented by the school.

**Montgomery County, MD Safe Routes to School program:** Staffed with a full-time coordinator, the program has recently partner with the County's pedestrian safety division to **educate high school students** on safe walking.

**Montgomery County, MD prioritizes pedestrian safety:** With an emphasis on data, evaluation and Engineering, Education and Enforcement, the county is making the streets safer. The Safe Routes to School program closely coordinates with the pedestrian safety program.



# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN THE DC METRO REGION



**Prince George's County shared-use agreement**: A long standing shared-use agreement allows the Parks and Recreation Department to offer evening and weekend programming at the schools. The unique park/school model shares land, space and resources. Utilizing a community asset such as schools increases the opportunity to walk, bike or transit for all participants.

**Prince William County Public Schools, VA bicycle education**: Physical education teachers are implementing the Bike Smart Virginia curriculum which includes on-bike instruction and bicycle safety. Questions of liability, safety and teacher training were addressed.

**Takoma Park, MD Safe Routes to School program**: In the summer of 2012, this program won recognition from the James L. Oberstar Safe Routes to School committee. A **video** of the crosswalk simulation activity is an example of how to teach pedestrian education to elementary school students.

**Vienna, VA Area Safe Routes to School program**: Led by parents, this program has spread to seven schools with Walking Wednesdays and Wolfie's Bike Train. Wolfie's Bike Train was featured on the international Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play. The **video clip** is from the perspective of the students. Their insight is impressive!

# LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: VIENNA, VA



- **Wolftrap Elementary (near Tysons Corner):**
  - Parent advocates started a “Bike Train” in 2009
  - Wolfie’s Bike Train started with 10 kids and now attracts 70-80 bicyclists on monthly rides (they have never missed a month!)
  - Keep Our Kids Safe campaign to reduce parents dropping kids off in no parking zones
- **Vienna Elementary:**
  - Walking Wednesdays every week
- **Bike/Walk Challenge:**
  - Schools compete against each other for most kids walking and bicycling during one week a year



# LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: MONTGOMERY COUNTY



## #YOLO Walksafe Campaign at Blair High School



"Tired Faces" Photoshoot using Montgomery County Teens



# LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: FAIRFAX COUNTY



- Largest school district in Virginia
- Full-time coordinator
- Activities during school hours:
  - Bike rodeos
  - Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety during P.E. classes
- Activities before/after school:
  - Walking school bus
- Policy changes:
  - School travel policy now allows parents to decide how kids get to school, not principals
  - Reduce number of Kiss-N-Rides



# LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



- Oldest program in the DC metro region: providing in-classroom education at DC schools since 2003
- Full-time coordinator in District Department of Transportation
- Prepares SRTS “Action Plans” for 10 schools a year
- Infrastructure improvements through transportation funding programs (including TIP)
- Pedestrian safety for students in K-2
- Bicycle safety for students in 3-8
- Recently added new classes teaching parents and kids how to bike together



# LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: TAKOMA PARK



- Created in 2007
- Part-time coordinator in school district
- Works with four elementary schools and one middle school
- Program won national award in 2012 (James L. Oberstar Award)
- Walking School Bus
- Crosswalk Simulation Activity
- Crossing Guard Appreciation Day
- Community 5K in the spring





# SO HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?



## Leadership and Collaboration Are Key!!!

### Buy-in and involvement of a range of partners is critical:

- Parents and students
- The mayor or city manager
- The local transportation department (city public works/engineering or region's MPO)
- Local health and police departments
- School district transportation officials
- School principal and personnel (school nurse, PE teacher)
- Community organizations and advocates
- Local businesses (including bike shops!)
- Universities



# SO HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?

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## Assess the Current Situation

- Do parent surveys to identify what parents are concerned about.
- Do student tallies to find out how they are coming to school.
- Do a “walkability” audit to identify trouble spots.

## Make needed short-term safety improvements

- Ask the city/county to repaint crosswalks, trim branches, install signage, and prioritize sidewalk repair.
- Consider whether crossing guards are in the best locations.

## Develop safe alternatives to get kids moving now

- Develop “safe walking routes” identifying sidewalks, crosswalks, crossing guards, low-traffic roads.
- Organize “walking school buses” or “bike trains.”

# SO HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL?



## Provide pedestrian/bicycle safety education

- Add pedestrian safety lessons into P.E. classes.
- Hold “bike rodeos” and bicycle safety courses.

## Address issues with driver safety

- Ask law enforcement to step up patrols or add mobile speed trailers.
- Work with the media to ask drivers to drive more safely near schools.

## Build excitement through small promotional contests/activities

- Make it FUN with mileage contests, themed events, punch cards
- See if area businesses can donate small prizes or incentives.

## Keep Evaluating Your Progress

- Redo parent surveys and student tallies at the start and end of each school year to measure impact.





# HIGH-IMPACT POLICY CHANGE



## Ensure school policies support walking/bicycling:

- Include Safe Routes to School programs in school wellness policies
- Overturn any “no bike/walk” policies
- Add safety of walkers/bikers into school transportation policies
- Ensure that PE curriculum district-wide teaches kids how to safely walk and bike

## Make infrastructure improvements that benefit kids and residents:

- Lay groundwork for future improvements with strong plans (school travel plans, bike/ped master plans, general plans)
- Require developers to include sidewalks, crosswalks and bike lanes as part of developments
- Pass complete streets policies/ordinances
- Dedicate city/county funds to make safety improvements at schools



# HIGH-IMPACT POLICY CHANGE



## Implement policies that will improve safety

- Reduce traffic speeds in school zones
- Increase fines in school zones, and use proceeds to create a stable funding stream for SRTS
- Create a policy that law enforcement and traffic safety staff regularly monitor incidents around schools to assess risks
- Ensure that law enforcement policy includes patrol of school areas



## Ensure schools and local governments coordinate on land use, housing and school locations

- Set school siting policies that locate community-centered schools near kids they serve
- Renovate neighborhood schools instead of building a new school on the outskirts of the community
- Provide community access to school grounds (joint use) to increase physical activity and connections to the community



# CONCLUSION

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*Safe Routes to School should be an integral part of our transportation network – creating safe walking and bicycling paths benefits everyone in the community and ensures the health and safety of the most vulnerable residents.*

*Getting buy-in from school officials and transportation departments is key – they are likely already thinking about Safe Routes to School but they need advocates to push them to elevate it as a priority!!*





# CONTACT

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Safe Routes to School National Partnership

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