

SafeRoutes

Connecticut Safe Routes to School



Connecticut Safe Routes to School Vision Plan 2015 and Beyond (VP2015B)

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prepared by the
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CONTENTS

Intent of this Vision Plan	3
SRTS Program Fundamentals	4
Program Purpose	4
Desired Outcomes.....	5
Eligible Locations.....	5
Funding Overview	6
MAP-21	6
SAFETEA-LU	6
SPR	6
Consultant Oversight	6
Over-Arching Vision	8
Major Components of the Vision.....	9
Year-Round Efforts.....	9
Summer K-8 Safety Education Initiative Skills Clinic	9
More than Simply Bike/Walk to School Days	9
Community Wide, Model Local Programs	10
Local SRTS Coordinator Training Seminars	10
Kick Off, SRTS Committee and PTO Meetings.....	11
Safety Awareness Training.....	12
5 E’s: Push for Evaluation.....	12
Crossing Guard Curriculum	13
Project Outreach Support	13
Walk Audits	13
Champion Toolkit.....	15
Permission Slips and Waivers	15
Incentives.....	16

Branding and Marketing with a Clear Identity.....	17
Partnering and Communication.....	18
Distribution Lists	18
Program Newsletter.....	19
Email.....	19
Websites	19
Facebook.....	21
YouTube	22
National Listserv.....	22
Eligible Locations.....	23
Infrastructure Program	23
Current and Ongoing Projects.....	23
Past Projects.....	24
Process Flow	25
The Master Plan	26
Set Up the Locals for Success.....	27
Steps: Where to Begin	27
Steps: Bring Together the Right People — BE INCLUSIVE.....	28
Steps: Hold a Kickoff Meeting and Set a Vision	28
Steps: Gather Information and Identify Issues	28
Steps: Document Findings and Identify Solutions	29
Steps: Get the Plan and People Moving.....	29
Steps: Evaluate, Adjust and Keep Moving	29
Action Items Quick Reference.....	30

Connecticut Safe Routes to School Vision Plan 2015 and Beyond (VP2015B)

INTENT OF THIS VISION PLAN

The *Connecticut Safe Routes to School Vision Plan 2015 and Beyond (VP2015B)* has been developed in light of the changing funding structure following enactment of the federal transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141; MAP-21). The *VP2015B* provides the foundation for ensuring that the good work of the program continues despite funding and resource constraints moving forward.

The *VP2015B* creates a legacy for the SRTS Program with the remaining funding and resources by:

1. outlining simple steps for local SRTS Champions to follow, packaging fundamental program information into a toolkit, developing timeless websites and articles, and providing training and
2. by assisting statewide in the expansion and development of local SRTS programs to act as models for other school communities to follow,

with the overall expectation that this will provide Champions with the resources to continue development of local SRTS programs when technical assistance and funding is no longer available.



SRTS PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

The Connecticut SRTS program is sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with the goal of enabling and encouraging children, in grades kindergarten-eighth (K-8) to walk and bicycle to school through community technical assistance and safety education. Initiated in 2006, the Connecticut SRTS Program is designed to empower schools and communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity. The program is also meant to reduce traffic congestion which leads to environmental concerns. SRTS offers technical assistance to K-8 schools and communities statewide at no charge. The program works off the premise of the 5 E's: encouragement, education, engineering, enforcement and evaluation.

Program Purpose

Per FHWA guidance for SAFETEA-LU funded SRTS programs:

Section 1404(b) of the legislation describes the purposes for which the SRTS Program was created:

(b) PURPOSES.--The purposes of the program shall be-

(1) to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;

(2) to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and

(3) to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.



Desired Outcomes

Per FHWA guidance for SAFETEA-LU funded SRTS programs:

Desired outcomes of the Safe Routes to School Program include:

- *Increased bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety*
- *More children walking and bicycling to and from schools*
- *Decreased traffic congestion*
- *Improved childhood health*
- *Reduced childhood obesity*
- *Encouragement of healthy and active lifestyles*
- *Improved air quality*
- *Improved community safety*
- *Reduced fuel consumption*
- *Increased community security*
- *Enhanced community accessibility*
- *Increased community involvement*
- *Improvements to the physical environment that increase the ability to walk and bicycle to and from schools*
- *Improved partnerships among schools, local municipalities, parents, and other community groups, including non-profit organizations*
- *Increased interest in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout a community*

Eligible Locations

Per FHWA guidance for SAFETEA-LU funded SRTS programs:

Traffic education and enforcement activities must take place within approximately two miles of a primary or middle school (grades K – 8). Other eligible activities under the noninfrastructure portion of the SRTS Program do not have a location restriction. Education and encouragement activities are allowed at private schools as long as other noninfrastructure program criteria are fulfilled.

For infrastructure projects, public funds must be spent on projects within the public right of way. This may include projects on private land that have public access easements. Public property includes lands that are owned by a public entity, including those lands owned by public school districts. Construction and capital improvement projects also must be located within approximately two miles of a primary or middle school (grades K – 8). Schools with grades that extend higher than grade 8, but which include grades that fall within the eligible range, are eligible to receive infrastructure improvements.

More discussion of this topic is included under the Major Components of the Vision section of this VP2015B.

Funding Overview

Prior to MAP-21, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program was provided a set-aside under federal transportation bills for funding infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure technical assistance, including a full-time coordinator position.

MAP-21

MAP-21 continues to provide the opportunity to fund a SRTS Program but no longer includes a set-aside and available funding is shared with the Recreational Trails Program and the formerly named Transportation Enhancement Program under the new Transportation Alternatives Program.

SAFETEA-LU

SRTS, at the time of this plan development, had a balance of Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109-59; SAFETEA-LU) funds which are available until expended (no expiration). SAFETEA-LU funds are the current source of the program support and will continue to be until expended. As such, unless another source of funds is applied, rules regarding eligible activities under SRTS relate to SAFETEA-LU guidance for the program. All funds not expended under the consultant agreement may be used to further SRTS non-infrastructure program assistance through State efforts.

SPR

Additionally, SRTS is an eligible Statewide Planning & Research (SPR) task and is included in the agency's work program under Strategic Planning and Projects – Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning and Oversight.

Consultant Oversight

The following information is pertinent to oversight of the consultant agreement for the SRTS Program:

<i>Project Number</i>	<i>DOT01703185PL</i>
<i>Contract ID</i>	<i>13DOT0013AA</i>
<i>Agreement Number</i>	<i>7.26-04(12)</i>
<i>Services</i>	<i>Provide a CT SRTS non-infrastructure program</i>
<i>Amount</i>	<i>\$925,210 (\$840,939.63 Scoped Work); 100% Federal SRTS; 2.5% Retainage</i>
<i>Consultant</i>	<i>Primary - VN Engineers, Inc. (Vendor ID 0000024795); Sub-Consultant- AECOM</i>
<i>Contact</i>	<i>Robert Gomez, P.E. - Design Manager/Vice President</i>
<i>Expiration</i>	<i>September 30, 2015</i>
<i>Extension Option</i>	<i>Agreement may be extended one year at the State's discretion for consultant services, if the supplemental agreement is executed prior to expiration</i>
<i>Funding Reallocation</i>	<i>November 2013; May 2015</i>

VN Engineers, Inc. leadership and staff have done a great job changing gears to implement the updated program vision. Work started in November 2014 with a “brainstorming” meeting that led to new processes and ways of looking at the program given the changing funding structure. The pieces of this *VP2015B* were born from that visioning session. The consultant team has provided valuable feedback to help build the *VP2015B* and accepted the new vision wholeheartedly. The consultant team recognizes the daunting level of work that remains to ensure that the program has a legacy. Their recent new hires to the team are evidence of their commitment to the program and its future. And, their continued energy networking for the program, coordination of events, and distribution of information has been indispensable. The team has already implemented many facets of the vision components described herein and continue to make progress towards the ultimate goal. Developing milestones/performance measures for the components of the *VP2015B* will help the Department and consultant team stay on task.

The consultant agreement expires in September of 2015 and has the option for a one-year extension. VN Engineers, Inc. qualifies as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and is also as a Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE). Although, no minimum DBE requirement exists on the contract, work performed by the firm will continue to be tracked and reported periodically towards the agency’s use of DBE businesses. Monthly meetings with the consultant team will continue.

**ACTION ITEM* Initiate process for consultant contract extension. Periodically update the DBE calculations relating to DBE work performed on the contract. Develop milestones/performance measures to keep the program on task with the VP2015B. Schedule monthly meetings with the consultant team and review invoices upon receipt.*

OVER-ARCHING VISION

The following bullets generally describe the vision. More detail follows later in the *VP2015B* where several major components of the vision are explored. Action items are also identified for the *VP2015B* following each discussion.

- Moving away from an Infrastructure-centric program and focusing on
 - technical assistance for walk audits
 - safety awareness training
 - local Champion training
 - community-wide program building
 - year-round program efforts
 - teaching manageable ways to incorporate evaluation and follow-up
- Redefining what the “SRTS Master Plan” will be to the program
 - documentation of the process
 - a living document, updated regularly based on lessons learned
 - outline of resources and tools for continuing the program
- Encouraging existing programs and developing new programs to be “complete”
 - more than just Bike/Walk to School Days
 - inclusive of stakeholders in the community to bridge gaps in communication –
 - connecting municipal (capital) government officials with school officials and Champions; rallying local businesses and organizations
 - year-round
- Purchasing and encouraging the purchase of incentives that are more focus on the audience and reinforce the program message, such as those that
 - functionally relate to walking/bicycling
 - incorporate age appropriate safety sayings
 - reward behavior associated with building bicycle and pedestrian skill knowledge, such as completion of training or bicycling/walking to school x/y days
- Moving towards self-sufficient programs
 - push for community-wide programs to have bigger impact
 - revise the walk audit process to include school officials in the field observations
 - revise safety awareness training to include school officials in the activity
- Wrapping up with IMPACT – engaging the community and leaving a legacy

This vision is critical to the legacy of the program – the more local champions who know how to develop a successful SRTS program and the more successful those programs become - the greater the probability that the good work will continue without federal and State assistance when program funds are depleted. By having successful programs statewide that are highly visible, other interested communities will have a place to look for ideas and to learn from experiences.

**ACTION ITEM* Reflect the above vision in all program materials, communications, and events.*

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE VISION

Several major components of the SRTS Program are explored herein that are integral to success of the *VP2015B*. Action items are identified for each component or subpart. The most fundamental aspect of every discussion in the *VP2015B* can be boiled down to leaving a legacy for the program – in other words, providing enough guidance that the local programs become widespread and self-sustaining without federal or State assistance.

Year-Round Efforts

The SRTS Program needs to maximize its reach by continuing strong year-round.

Summer K-8 Safety Education Initiative Skills Clinic

In 2015, for the first time, the program contacted municipal park and recreation directors to provide the opportunity for bicycle and pedestrian summer skills training. The regional planning organizations and public works directors were also informed as well as contacts maintained by the CT SRTS Coordinator and consultant team. This safety awareness training is offered at no charge to communities so there should be ample interest and a waiting list.

**ACTION ITEM* Additional work is needed to advertise this initiative for it to be successful. A goal for the summer skills training initiative would be to achieve registrations for 70% of the available days.*

More than Simply Bike/Walk to School Days

Too many of our existing SRTS Programs have flashy, large scale Bike/Walk to School Days and hand out bundles of goodies to participating students and have a community-wide support on those two days BUT do very little to maintain the momentum year-round. Program assistance efforts need to push for sustained programming through regular weekly activities like Moving Mondays, Walking Wednesdays or Footloose Fridays, not simply stand-alone activities. This further leads into the need to promote two other important pieces of the *VP2015B*: the Local SRTS Coordinator Training and Champion Toolkit.

One area that may further assist local SRTS Champions is to expand the recently developed Champion Toolkit with examples of email distributions to inform parents of upcoming activities or to ask for chaperones, posters, or templates to track activity schedules and volunteers. Consider using samples from schools in the State that have already done this or national materials – no need to reinvent the wheel.

**ACTION ITEM* Promote the Local SRTS Coordinator Training and the Champion Toolkit. Build additional parts for the Champion Toolkit, as necessary, to help Champions get a weekly activity started.*

Community Wide, Model Local Programs

Encourage communities to go district-wide to achieve the best possible outcome for the students' safety. Building a program that transcends and follows students from elementary through middle school will provide the best foundation for the life skills needed to safely navigate the transportation network as pedestrians and bicyclists.

In doing so, this will also help to better showcase the benefits of the program to other communities because it will be even more visible by nature of its wider impact. The program needs model communities for other nearby Champions to mirror. This will be particularly important when the federal monies are no longer available for technical assistance and local Champions have to rely on each other for lessons learned.

Several municipalities are already working towards community-wide SRTS programs. They are in varying stages of development. Focus needs to be brought to these school communities to fully complete their programs, including an up to date Master Plan, built-in safety curriculum, and year-round bicycle and pedestrian activities for students. Showcase these communities in a SRTS newsletter with interviews and stories of their success.

**ACTION ITEM* Work towards completing several community-wide SRTS programs. Highlight their successes to give due credit and to provide encouragement for other Champions.*

Local SRTS Coordinator Training Seminars

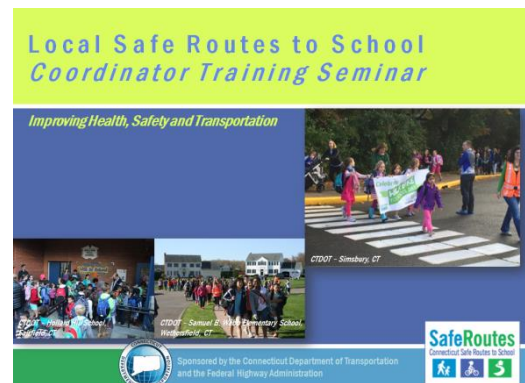
The Local SRTS Coordinator Training MS PowerPoint presentation has recently been overhauled. It is ready to go-live. Speaker notes are provided to highlight the message and guide the presenter. The seminar is a combination of presentation and interactive training components: mini arrival/dismissal walk audit, roundtable discussion with peers, and observation of student safety training.

A number of local programs are beginning to flounder and Champions are losing their steam and direction. At the Local SRTS Coordinator Training Seminar, Champions will be energized (or reenergized).

The training teaches Champions to make friends and gather partners before asking for money. They will learn about the importance of their stakeholders. Champions are taught that they can do a lot with little to no funds at the beginning and the success they have will attract interest and support from the community.

Champions are warned to watch for roadblocks:

- Burn out
- School administration and faculty changes
- Champion turnover
- Resistance from parents/others
- Program plateaus
- Never being more than a Walk/Bike to School Day group
- Excuses without solutions

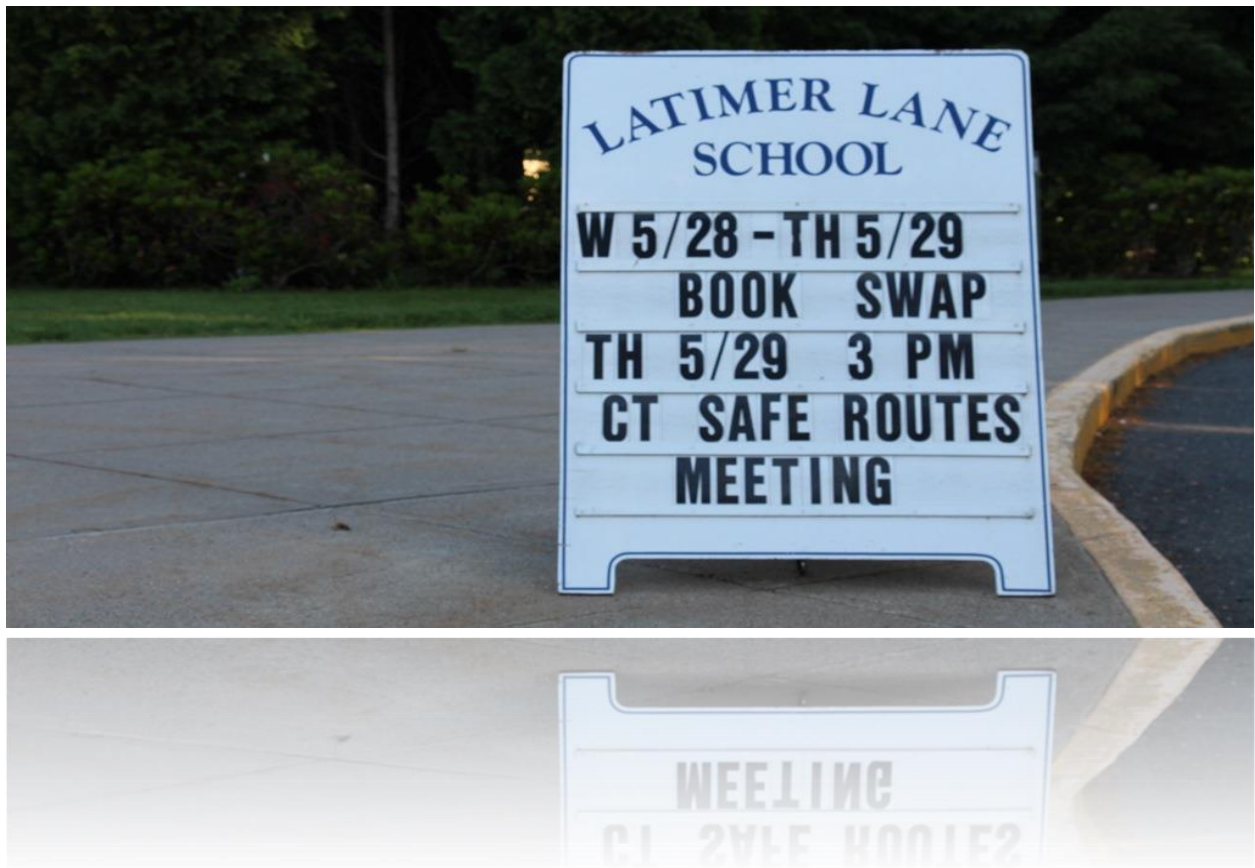


Participants will be introduced to the Champion Toolkit, website, Facebook and many other resources available to them. Additionally, they will be exposed to practical tools through the interactive training components. The Local SRTS Coordinator Training stresses the need for gathering data, documentation, continued adjustments to the program, and following through with evaluation.

**ACTION ITEM* Direct more effort to coordinating and widely advertising seminars. Several possible communities have been identified for the next venues. A goal is to achieve no less than 15 attendees per seminar, preferably twice that size, given the level of effort required for the day.*

Kick Off, SRTS Committee and PTO Meetings

The fundamental purpose and benefit of meeting is to bring the partners together and let everyone hear about the program. Continuing to provide a presentation on SRTS programs including issues and strategies related to engineering, enforcement, education, encouragement and evaluation to parent teacher organizations, local SRTS committees and municipal officials, will remain a program focus. These presentations are best served when informal for open discussion and with active participation of an already identified local champion. This is an important opportunity to discuss the appropriate next steps, action items, and a great way to work toward the vision.



**ACTION ITEM* Continue outreach with an effort to push for SRTS programs community-wide.*

Safety Awareness Training

The SRTS Team will continue to provide safety awareness training to K-8 graders. In doing so, training provided by the program will now push to have school faculty and teachers help with the training experience. Although this requires additional planning and coordination, this will help give the school representatives the opportunity and confidence they need to make this a regular part of the school curriculum.

To instill life skills in children relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety, training should be ongoing and age appropriate. As children age, their skills become more refined and their comfort levels broaden, requiring different advice. The best method for educating children and youth is by establishing a curriculum in the schools early, either in health or physical education courses, and provide training at least every other grade. Training parents on the “rules of the road” should also be considered as a component of this curriculum. Additionally, skateboards and “razors” should be addressed since many youth do not apply previously learned road rules as they transition to these modes.



**ACTION ITEM* Continue to provide student safety awareness training and promote it as a component of school curriculum when advocating the program.*

5 E's: Push for Evaluation

The 5 E's: encouragement, education, engineering, enforcement and evaluation, are critical to the program. Likely one of the most effective ways to gain support in the community is to prove success along the way - yet, evaluation tends to be the most disregarded of the “E's”. Every SRTS program, no matter the size, can benefit from evaluation.

**ACTION ITEM* Continue to incorporate the 5 E's in the program training and teach champions how to incorporate easy, repeatable methods into their local SRTS Programs to evaluate success. Develop pertinent materials for the Champion Toolkit to support this effort.*

Crossing Guard Curriculum

A Statewide Crossing Guard Training Program was initiated in November 2009 with the support of the Connecticut SRTS Program to provide standardized training to local law enforcement agencies. The current Crossing Guard Curriculum was devised by the previous program consultant team. It was utilized by Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy. At this time, it would be good to review the materials for any outdated laws or recommendations and update, as necessary, such as relating to new types of traffic control devices and safety equipment standards. Also, the materials could use a “facelift” to make the slides more engaging and follow more closely to program branding. Also, a regular training schedule has been discussed as a need to make student crossings a safety priority. If at all possible, a plan for training civilian volunteers who assist students crossing intersections during school arrivals/dismissals should be incorporated into the curriculum, if not done already. This has been preliminarily discussed with Highway Safety Office (HSO) staff.

**ACTION ITEM* Coordinate with Edmund Hedge in the HSO to review curriculum materials with the POST Academy training officers to update, as necessary, and provide a “facelift” to the presentation. Work to roll out training on a more regular basis. If possible, devise a curriculum appropriate for or reuse existing materials to train school volunteers assisting students at intersections during arrivals/dismissals and seek help from POST or UCONN Transfer Technology Center with that training.*

Project Outreach Support

As projects are developed relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety in the area of school zones, it will be necessary to provide outreach support to agency engineers and project managers.

**ACTION ITEM* When requests come in for outreach support, provide resources as available for student safety awareness programs and local SRTS champion training. As part of this effort, continue support to assist local schools in East Hartford develop a community-wide, year-round SRTS program as part of the public outreach initiative for DOT00420315 (Project Manager: E. Jarboe).*

Walk Audits

The walk audit is essential to the SRTS process. This is the step that tends to identify what works and what is not working more clearly and from multiple perspectives, to bring together tangible solutions and varying viewpoints.

Inclusion of School Community Members

Moving forward with respect to walk audits, school community members will be included in the actual walk audit, not just the post meeting. Local SRTS Champions need to know how to do a walk audit or simple “walk about” in a structured fashion to observe behaviors, document safety concerns, and obtain stakeholder buy-in.

With “evaluation” being critical to the 5 E’s, the walk audit is a great point to return to for later evaluation of the success of improvements. So, it is imperative that the school community can repeat this independently.



Although this adds the burden of coordinating more people and requires more advanced planning/training, it is value added for school community members as well as for the legacy of the program. Setup can be team based with technical advisors from the State SRTS program split amongst several groups to help guide the process.

**ACTION ITEM* Institute a walk-audit process that includes school officials in the documentation and observations.*

Intra-Agency Review Committee

Additionally, the CT SRTS Coordinator has been working towards an intra-agency review committee for walk audits. This has been a daunting task and will continue to be complicated by the nature of regional assignments for traffic engineering staff. Reviews will likely be assigned to different staff depending on the location of the school making consistency difficult. As such, it is imperative that the CT SRTS Coordinator individually contact reviewers to ensure that they understand the nature of the SRTS program. Request that technical advice be in the context that improvements are for helping children navigate the roads and also to help adults see and avoid those children when driving.

Walk audits will be forwarded to Chuck Harlow for staff review. At which time, it is important to request that the names of those assigned to each walk audit be provided so that follow-up can be made direct to that staff person.

**ACTION ITEM* More effort is needed in the area of coordinating intra-agency reviews of walk audit reports so that turn-around is timely, context-sensitive to children navigating the transportation network and can be followed up on directly with reviewers.*

Reorganize/Revamp Walk Audit Reporting

Draft reports underway and future reports will be clear, concise, and designed for the laymen. All reports will be well organized, preferably with the use of headings and an index to find topics/locations easily. Mapping and photo documentation relating to the text is paramount to delivering a complete “picture” of the school and will be included. Each safety concern will be clearly identified, followed by recommended solutions. To the extent practical, a matrix will be included at the end of each report that lists recommended solutions by short, medium and/or long-term timelines with possible partners to consider or other relevant information. Additionally, reports will always recommend use of the most current Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and will refer to current State guidelines relating to school zones signage. These changes will help to quicken review time by the intra-agency team at the CT DOT and provide a more user-friendly product to school communities.

**ACTION ITEM* Update the walk audit report template.*

Champion Toolkit

The Champion toolkit is meant to be a starter package and a return-to resource for the overwhelmed local program leader. It contains all the basics for creating a successful program. The toolkit is a living document that will need to be updated periodically. It is currently posted at ctsaferoutes.org and only referenced with a link from walkitbikeitct.org. The toolkit follows a set format to brand the program:

- Section A includes reference articles created by the program for Connecticut that contain information that does not change often. Section A items follow the original SRTS blue and white block format that the SRTS has been used for several years.
- Section B is solely for applications related to the program.
- Section C contains all special announcements. These are one-time resources, such as event notices, sample letters or registration forms. Section C materials are prepared on a white background with the large SRTS logo in the heading. This section will change more frequently.
- Section D is reserved for reference materials from third parties. Materials from third-party sources are kept in their original format.

As new information and resources become available or new events are posted, the Champion Toolkit needs to be updated following the format established.

The Champion Toolkit is posted as a PDF Portfolio which contains a face sheet with a list of what is included and four folders labeled in recommended viewing order that correspond to the sections listed above. The Adobe PDF Portfolio file format requires Adobe Flash Player to load but includes the full Champion Toolkit package of files in one easy download. A standard PDF file cannot be used to contain all the files unless unsupported SRTS application files in Section B are updated. To accommodate any Champions that do not have Adobe Flash Player, the individual files are also listed separately on the site in standard PDF format for download.

**ACTION ITEM* Post the full Champion Toolkit on walkitbikeit.org. Update the Champion Toolkit accordingly on both sites with new information that is consistently formatted materials. If time, simplify the application forms and create easy, fillable PDFs.*

Permission Slips and Waivers

One time-consuming task that burdens the SRTS Program is obtaining releases for each photograph of children and youth that is taken at school and training events. The consultant team was tasked with developing a form that was all-inclusive form that provided parental/guardian permission and release for use of photographs. The form should include language indicating that the actual names of minors will not be used unless specific written consent of the parent or guardian has been requested and the parent/guardian has had the opportunity to view the photograph. Legal staff review of a final draft of the form should be sought.

**ACTION ITEM* Finalize the permission slip/release form and seek legal staff review. Institute the form in time for participant registration in the Summer K-8 Safety Education Initiative Skills Clinics.*

Incentives

Moving forward the program will be geared less toward providing incentives in the form of “goodies” for every child, so as to discourage incentives being simply handouts. One of the lessons learned has been that many schools are not venturing past the Bike/Walk to School Days. As such, the incentives that are being provided are not necessarily part of a bigger SRTS message as was intended.

Now, incentives will be purchased with a focus on providing to participants of safety awareness training or for use by schools that are truly instituting a complete SRTS program. Purchases will be for functional items that are value added to the effort – increase interest and safety awareness for children walking and bicycling to school, such as:

- reflective shoe laces
- bicycle bells
- bicycle LED lights with flashing option (white for the front, red for the back)
- water bottles (choose wisely for safe materials)
- reflective sling bags
- helmets
- reflective zipper pulls for younger students
- bright colored rain ponchos (not appropriate for bicycling)

Other items that will be considered are educational materials, such as the “I’m Safe” line, that teachers can use in the classroom or send home. Decals that students might place on bicycle helmets will no longer be purchased by the program, as these can hide cracks or other defects.

Schools will be encouraged to promote the program with a message that relates to walking and bicycling safety. The Champion Toolkit provides an article on this topic with ideas. Since sayings come and go on the “cool” scale, schools will be encouraged to take a list to their students for consideration and buy-in, such as through a contest. Additionally, schools and the SRTS Team can add impact by creating a hashtag (#) for a saying and printing the hashtag message on incentives.

**ACTION ITEM* Limit incentives to functional items. Utilize this tool more for training attendees and schools with complete programs. Encourage the use of bicycle and pedestrian safety slogans and possibly incorporating a hashtag (#) for youth.*



Branding and Marketing with a Clear Identity

Branding and marketing with a clear identity is paramount to reaching the target audience. This includes keeping clean recognizable formats to program materials and websites. Consistency is key to branding and marketing. Recognition of public sponsorship is also important on many levels to this effort.

Accurately reflecting the source of funding and support through acknowledgement of the Department's and federal partner's roles is crucial to transparency in the planning process. It further allows recipients to make an educated decision in responding to emails as they are less likely to dismiss as a "scam". In this era of data mining, our stakeholders might not be confident in the source of communications when received from a listserv and may also fear hidden charges if we do not provide clear identification.

The consultant team is often a public face for the program at events and their daily work on the program is very much valued. It is of utmost importance, though, that the FHWA and the CT DOT are readily identified as the sponsors of the State's SRTS activities. As materials go out from the consultant team on behalf of the program, efforts will continue to be made towards this branding and sponsorship message.

- The body of major correspondence will be specific with early, prominent identification of the source and sponsorship of the program.
- Also, where possible and appropriate, logos from the FHWA and/or Department will be incorporated. This likely will not work on all correspondence but is more appropriate for public outreach materials such as flyers, presentations, etc.
- Realizing that, in some cases, there may be an effort to keep correspondences brief but identification of the sponsors is an area that cannot be skipped. At minimum, a footnote will be provided.
- Brief email signature (tag) lines about the program will be used to help automate the process and ensure inclusion.
- The website and Facebook links will be included in transmittals. In addition to being incorporated into the body of major correspondence, this can be accommodated by an email tag line.

Examples of language that may be included:

- The Connecticut Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) is a federally funded initiative with the goal of enabling and encouraging children, in grades Kindergarten- eighth (K-8) to walk and bicycle to school. Our focus is to promote safe practices and also to reduce traffic congestion which leads to environmental concerns. We offer technical assistance to schools and communities statewide at no charge.

- Our firm, VN Engineers, Inc., is under contract with the Connecticut Department of Transportation through funds of the FHWA to help communities [with this effort/implement a local Safe Routes to School Program].
- The Connecticut Safe Routes to School Team thanks you! This is a program sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. Check us out at walkitbikeitct.org.

**ACTION ITEM* Continue with consistent and clear marketing and branding of the program through established formats and sponsorship identification.*

Partnering and Communication

Communication is key to good public outreach and ensuring success with the vision. The consultant team and the SRTS Coordinator currently both work on this effort through varying methods to reach the most people.

In order for the vision to be successful, the program's reach needs to be far bigger than it currently is, especially given the dwindling resources for providing technical assistance. School communities tend to be seasonal, volunteer-based, and can be disconnected from regional or municipal government offices.

Distribution Lists

Networking and continued attention to contacts requires timely and meaningful connections. Currently the consultant team maintains a distribution list for SRTS Program contacts which grows with every event and networking venture. This part of the program can be a daunting, endless loop.

Sending too many or too few correspondences can be detrimental to those networks so a good balance is needed. The services of the SRTS Program are provided at no charge so there should be ample audience with interest in what the program has to offer. However, more needs to be done to reach this wider audience and keep them informed.

This is an area of the program that will be focused on as it has the potential to positively effect change towards the vision. The SRTS Program values and encourages collaborating with a much wider base. As such, our own efforts will be wider. From here, individual posts and communications can be catered to different audiences.

**ACTION ITEM* Build a broader ranging distribution list. Consider adding municipal leaders, federal staff, regional staff, law enforcement, public works directors and planners, social and youth service directors, parks and recreational directors, etc. Think big! Follow up more through personal communication when planning events and to keep the network fresh.*

Program Newsletter

A periodic newsletter will be developed and distributed that highlights successes of local programs. Items to include will be interviews with local SRTS Champions, upcoming events and seminars, newly posted items to the Champion Toolkit, and grant programs available to Champions. Additionally, it may be worth introducing regional planning staff to school communities through short biographies. This will be a valuable resource to getting information out to school communities but should have a wide distribution beyond simply schools.

**ACTION ITEM* Develop a program newsletter that is branded with the SRTS format.*

Email

The consultant team has been given directive to use a generic email address to the extent practical moving forward. This will help with branding as well as to reduce confusion from emails coming from a private firm. Additionally, this will allow the SRTS Coordinator to monitor the messages sent and received. The email address that they established is info@walkitbikeitct.org. Access to the email can be setup within MS Outlook. Since this email is associated with the domain of the walkitbikeitCT.org website, it will not likely be available if the website domain rights are not renewed.

**ACTION ITEM* The consultant team will use the generic info@walkitbikeit.org email for communications to SRTS audiences. The CT SRTS Coordinator will setup up access to the info@walkitbikeit.org account to monitor communications.*

Websites

The SRTS program currently has two websites running simultaneously. Each of which has the concern as to how payment for the domain will work as the program moves forward. This issue will need to be researched further and a plan developed to address the situation.

walkitbikeitCT.org

The following information is pertinent to walkitbikeitCT.org:

- maintained by consultant team
- access for Department staff does not exist since Mac-based
- this site was created to replace CTsaferoutes.org
- the website domain has been purchased by the consultant team through Go Daddy
- if the domain rights are not renewed, they likely expire and the site will no longer be available
- the info@walkitbikeitct.org email is housed as part of the website

Although updated regularly, this website will be freshened up to make it less visually busy. Also, items posted moving forward will consider the basic user needs: what do they know already, what do they want to know, and what do they need to know. The vision of the program should be evident by the type of information posted and the organization of the materials.



**ACTION ITEM* Design materials for website that are “timeless” so that website can act as resource even after funds are depleted. Research when website domain is at risk of being lost to the SRTS program and develop a plan to ensure continued payment.*

CTsaferoutes.org

The following information is pertinent to CTsaferoutes.org:

- site was the original program website
- appears that information technology staff helped develop this site for the program
- site is live and still receives “hits”
- access for Department staff is available via a login and pages can be updated fairly easily
- site has been updated recently and cross references walkitbikeitCT.org
- items posted to this site should be “timeless” so as not to appear outdated
- the Champion Toolkit is posted to this site and must be kept up to date if altered
- it is unclear how this site domain is being paid for and whether it is at risk of being lost

Website and FTP login access has been documented via separate cover.



**ACTION ITEM* Design materials for website that are “timeless” so that website can act as resource even after funds are depleted. Research when website domain is at risk of being lost to the SRTS program and develop a plan to ensure continued payment.*

Facebook

The Facebook account is managed by the consultant team on a day-to-day basis. However, the SRTS Coordinator needs to forward information as it becomes available and monitor the site. New articles, ideas, event news, and success stories that support the program vision need to be posted regularly. The CT SRTS Coordinator can obtain access to modify the page if they choose. The Facebook address is <https://www.facebook.com/CTSafeRoutesToSchool>.



**ACTION ITEM* Obtain access to Facebook. Continue to provide materials for posting.*

YouTube

YouTube videos have been developed and posted on the SRTS websites. Several of these videos are now outdated given changes to program funding and will need to be revisited – strategic editing may be an option to correct discrepancies.



Learn more about CTSRTS and visit our [YouTube Channel](#).



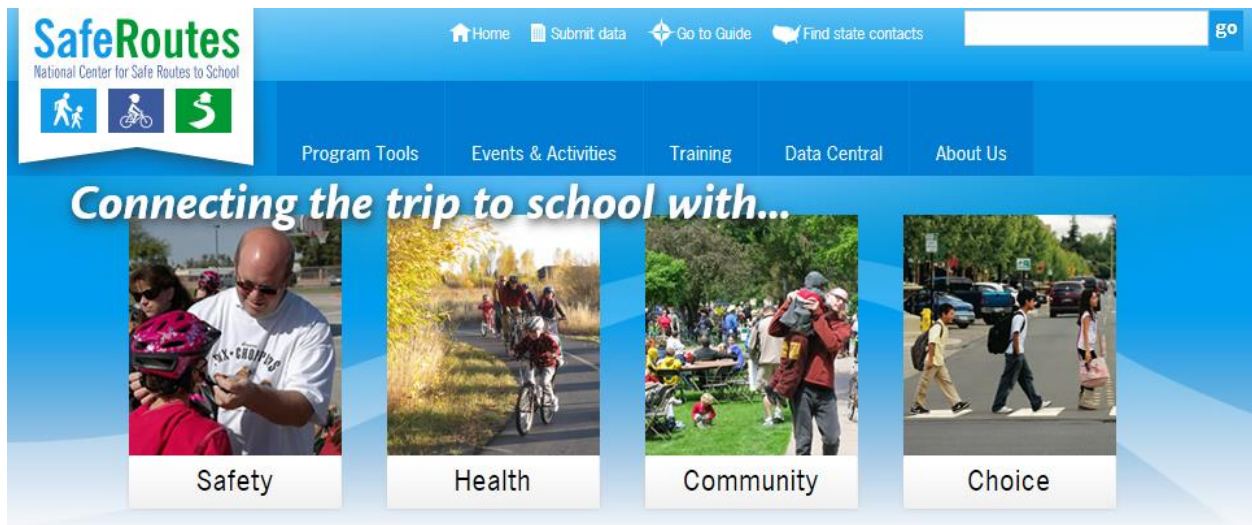
[Connecticut Safe Routes to School Walk Audit Overview](#)

**ACTION ITEM* Obtain access to YouTube. Consider editing outdated videos with information current with the vision.*

National Listserv

All State SRTS Coordinators need to be signed up with the national listserv:

- to receive notices from the as well as
- to gain access to logon to the national site.



**ACTION ITEM* Contact Seth LaJeunesse for access at lajeune@hsrc.unc.edu. Monitor the listserv emails for information pertinent to the program and distribute/respond accordingly.*

Eligible Locations

Historically in Connecticut, the SRTS Program has followed the infrastructure eligible locations definition because non-infrastructure technical assistance tended to be for the purpose of preparing schools to do infrastructure projects. By program guidance definitions (refer to earlier discussion), there is some flexibility for the non-infrastructure program to expand beyond K-8 with technical assistance. However, considering limited remaining resources, it may warrant keeping the prior K-8 restriction to the entire program.

**ACTION ITEM* Review the program guidance for SAFETEA-LU SRTS funds with FHWA staff and the consultant team to consider whether to expand assistance or keep K-8 restriction to the program.*

Infrastructure Program

Since 2006, 21 infrastructure projects have been awarded to 18 communities with over \$9.5 million allocated to these initiatives.

Current and Ongoing Projects

The last two infrastructure projects were initiated in the Fall of 2014:

- DOT01020355PE – Norwalk, Roton Middle School
- DOT00770236PE – Mansfield, Southeast Elementary School



Others have continued their progress:

- DOT00320146CN – Coventry, Captain Nathan Hale Middle School/Coventry Grammar School
- DOT01090171CN – Plainville, Middle School of Plainville/Louis Toffolon Elementary School
- DOT01310201PE/CN – Southington, Joseph A DePaolo Middle School
- DOT01460197PE/CN – Vernon, Skinner Road School
- DOT01510324PE/CN – Waterbury, Gilmartin School
- DOT01380242PE/CN – Stratford, Wicoxson Elementary School

Although this vision plan focuses on the non-infrastructure portion of the CT SRTS Program, it is important to note that infrastructure projects remain in development from past awards. These projects will continue to be managed on a day-to-day basis by agency engineers. However, it remains imperative that project design reviews are conducted by the SRTS Coordinator to ensure that the improvements or construction proposed are eligible for SRTS program funds and consistent with the basis for competitive award, program purpose, and desired outcomes.

Final approval of the project design with respect to eligibility and consistency with program intent rests with the SRTS Coordinator. Additionally, documentation of these projects through their development, including photographs, Champion interviews, narratives, and evaluation of success is essential to the program.

**ACTION ITEM* Continue to perform design reviews as materials are provided from engineering staff and attend project meetings, as appropriate. Document project development. Evaluate success post-construction. Share lessons learned and stories online as well as with the national program.*

Past Projects

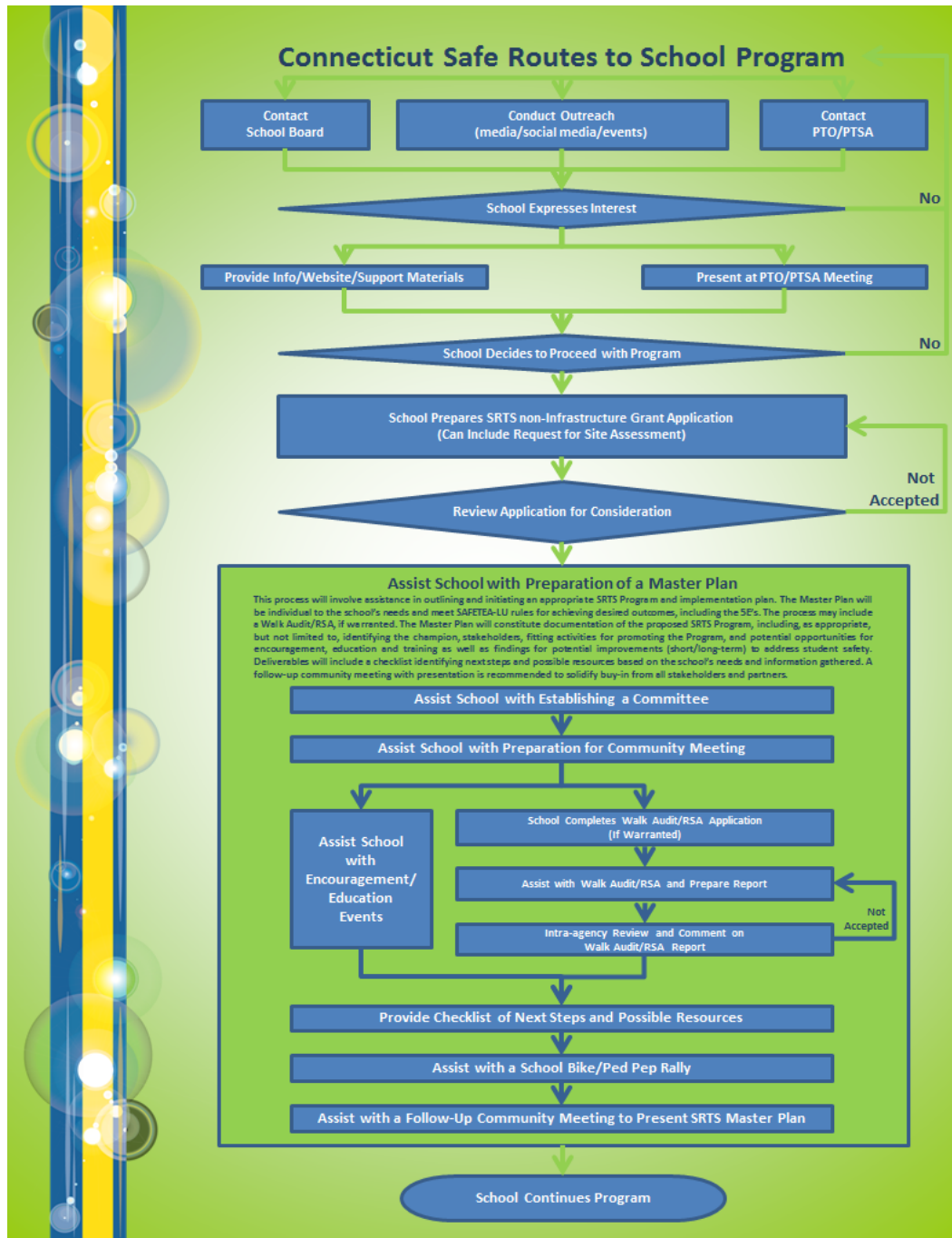
A number of projects have been completed. Post-construction evaluation is an essential part of the program and the 5 E's. Follow up is necessary to document the success and lessons learned with these projects. Photographs, Champion interviews, narratives, and evaluation of success should be gathered.

**ACTION ITEM* Evaluate success of past projects. Share lessons learned and stories online as well as with the national program.*

PROCESS FLOW

Refer to Figure 1 for the SRTS Program process flow moving forward and detail on the SRTS Master Plan as it is now defined. This is a fluid process and experience shows that many school communities come into the process from different stages of development and with different needs. Ultimately, the intent is for the SRTS Team to provide assistance individual to the community. Consider the SRTS Master Plan as both the documentation of the process that has happened thus far and the outline of what is to come.

Figure 1 SRTS Program Process Flow



The Master Plan

“What goes in the Plan?” you ask. Champions are encouraged to:

- write what they know and understand first
- let it grow with information over time
- don’t over think it or over complicate it

More specifically, the Plan should:

- identify Champion and partners
- create map of study area
- gather data and anecdotal stories, existing conditions
- surveys results
- stakeholders interviews
- walk audit findings
- outline strategies – base them on the 5 E’s
- short-term/low-cost solutions (low hanging fruit) and necessary partners
- long-term solutions and necessary partners – talk early about how to get there
- draft a timeline, including events to plan

The Plan should be a living document:

- adjusted based on new data and trends
- revisited and updated often, adding
 - lessons learned
 - possible ways to improve
 - new partners and effective ways to reach them
 - event ideas or events that were a success
- followed through, including evaluation



Detail is provided on the technical assistance aspect of the SRTS Program process flow in Figure 2.

Figure 2 SRTS Program Process Flow - Detail of Master Plan Assistance

Assist School with Preparation of a Master Plan

- This process will involve assistance in outlining and initiating an appropriate SRTS Program and implementation plan for local schools/districts.
- The Master Plan will be individual to the school's needs and meet SAFETEA-LU rules for achieving desired outcomes, including the 5E's.
- The process may include a Walk Audit/RSA, if warranted.
- The Master Plan will constitute documentation of the proposed SRTS Program, including, as appropriate, but not limited to, identifying the:
 - champion
 - stakeholders
 - fitting activities for promoting the Program, and
 - potential opportunities for encouragement, education and training
 - as well as findings for potential improvements (short/long-term) to address student safety.
- Deliverables will include a checklist identifying next steps and possible resources based on the school's needs and information gathered.
- A follow-up community meeting with presentation is recommended to solidify buy-in from all stakeholders and partners.

Set Up the Locals for Success

From the standpoint of the local SRTS Champion, the process has a slightly different flow. The following steps are outlined in the Local SRTS Champion Training. These are intended to guide Champions starting a new program or help get an existing program to the next level. The Champion Toolkit and website materials also build on these steps.

Steps: Where to Begin

- Watch and Share the Video – CT Safe Routes to School Introduction Video
 - Great resource to get the conversation started in your community
 - WalkitBikeItCT.org or YouTube
 - Forward it on
 - Link to it from your organization's Facebook/website
- Attend a Local SRTS Coordinator Training Seminar!!!

- Check out the WalkItBikeItCT.org - download the Champion Toolkit
 - Review the Getting Started Page on WalkItBikeItCT.org
 - Learn about the 5 E's
- Like us on Facebook to receive timely program announcements

Steps: Bring Together the Right People — BE INCLUSIVE

- Involve the children!
- Find a program Champion (you?)
- Seek out support for the Champion
- Think big
 - Parents, faculty/staff, administrators
 - Municipal planners, public works, youth services
 - Law enforcement or safety resource officer
 - Bus company
- Single school or district-wide?
- Start thinking about the makeup of your SRTS Committee look for a natural fit in an existing committee or PTO
- Before asking for money, make friends and gather partners!

Steps: Hold a Kickoff Meeting and Set a Vision

- Bring the partners together
- Lets everyone hear about the program
- Provide a presentation on SRTS programs
 - Preliminary thoughts on issues and strategies
 - Introduce the 5 E's
- Two main product goals:
 - Create a vision
 - Generate next steps

Steps: Gather Information and Identify Issues

- Review the routes
 - Gather available traffic counts, speed/injury data
 - Walkability/bikeability checklists
 - Perform a walk about/audit watch SRTS YouTube video for guidance
 - Review policies
 - Make a map
- Conduct parent/student surveys
 - Current participation
 - Attitudes
 - Additional barriers
- Examine barriers for children with disabilities!

Steps: Document Findings and Identify Solutions

- Safety is the first consideration
Do NOT encourage children to walk and bicycle to school until it is safe
- Include the 5 E's
 - Prioritization is key
 - "Quick wins" can generate early enthusiasm
 - Combination of strategies may be necessary
- Develop the plan
- Fund the plan

Steps: Get the Plan and People Moving

- Safety is always #1
- Get SOMETHING started right away
 - Host a community kick-off event
 - Invite local media and neighborhood businesses
- 5 E's strategies will all come together as pieces of the plan are implemented

Steps: Evaluate, Adjust and Keep Moving

- Keep Up the Good Work
- Continue regular SRTS meetings
 - Follow progress
 - Identify issues
 - Stay energized
 - Recruit volunteers
- Include a Summer Skills Clinic Component
- Evaluate the Program
 - Continue education and encouragement
 - Survey parents and students to track changes
 - Are you on schedule?
 - Make adjustments and add elements
- As you learn something, write it down

ACTION ITEMS QUICK REFERENCE

ACTION ITEM Initiate process for consultant contract extension. Periodically update the DBE calculations relating to DBE work performed on the contract. Develop milestones/performance measures to keep the program on task with the VP2015B. Schedule monthly meetings with the consultant team and review invoices upon receipt.....	7
ACTION ITEM Reflect the above vision in all program materials, communications, and events.	8
ACTION ITEM Additional work is needed to advertise this initiative for it to be successful. A goal for the summer skills training initiative would be to achieve registrations for 70% of the available days.	9
ACTION ITEM Promote the Local SRTS Coordinator Training and the Champion Toolkit. Build additional parts for the Champion Toolkit, as necessary, to help Champions get a weekly activity started.	9
ACTION ITEM Work towards completing several community-wide SRTS programs. Highlight their successes to give due credit and to provide encouragement for other Champions.	10
ACTION ITEM Direct more effort to coordinating and widely advertising seminars. Several possible communities have been identified for the next venues. A goal is to achieve no less than 15 attendees per seminar, preferably twice that size, given the level of effort required for the day.	11
ACTION ITEM Continue outreach with an effort to push for SRTS programs community-wide.	11
ACTION ITEM Continue to provide student safety awareness training and promote it as a component of school curriculum when advocating the program.....	12
ACTION ITEM Continue to incorporate the 5 E's in the program training and teach champions how to incorporate easy, repeatable methods into their local SRTS Programs to evaluate success. Develop pertinent materials for the Champion Toolkit to support this effort.	12
ACTION ITEM Coordinate with Edmund Hedge in the HSO to review curriculum materials with the POST Academy training officers to update, as necessary, and provide a "facelift" to the presentation. Work to roll out training on a more regular basis. If possible, devise a curriculum appropriate for or reuse existing materials to train school volunteers assisting students at intersections during arrivals/dismissals and seek help from POST or UCONN Transfer Technology Center with that training.	13
ACTION ITEM When requests come in for outreach support, provide resources as available for student safety awareness programs and local SRTS champion training. As part of this effort, continue support to assist local schools in East Hartford develop a community-wide, year-round SRTS program as part of the public outreach initiative for DOT00420315 (Project Manager: E. Jarboe).....	13
ACTION ITEM Institute a walk-audit process that includes school officials in the documentation and observations.....	14
ACTION ITEM More effort is needed in the area of coordinating intra-agency reviews of walk audit reports so that turn-around is timely, context-sensitive to children navigating the transportation network and can be followed up on directly with reviewers.	14
ACTION ITEM Update the walk audit report template.	14

ACTION ITEM Post the full Champion Toolkit on walkitbikeit.org. Update the Champion Toolkit accordingly on both sites with new information that is consistently formatted materials. If time, simplify the application forms and create easy, fillable PDFs. 15

ACTION ITEM Finalize the permission slip/release form and seek legal staff review. Institute the form in time for participant registration in the Summer K-8 Safety Education Initiative Skills Clinics. 15

ACTION ITEM Limit incentives to functional items. Utilize this tool more for training attendees and schools with complete programs. Encourage the use of bicycle and pedestrian safety slogans and possibly incorporating a hashtag (#) for youth. 16

ACTION ITEM Continue with consistent and clear marketing and branding of the program through established formats and sponsorship identification..... 18

ACTION ITEM Build a broader ranging distribution list. Consider adding municipal leaders, federal staff, regional staff, law enforcement, public works directors and planners, social and youth service directors, parks and recreational directors, etc. Think big! Follow up more through personal communication when planning events and to keep the network fresh..... 18

ACTION ITEM Develop a program newsletter that is branded with the SRTS format. 19

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ACTION ITEM Contact Seth LaJeunesse for access at lajeune@hsrc.unc.edu. Monitor the listserv emails for information pertinent to the program and distribute/respond accordingly..... 22

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ACTION ITEM Continue to perform design reviews as materials are provided from engineering staff and attend project meetings, as appropriate. Document project development. Evaluate success post-construction. Share lessons learned and stories online as well as with the national program..... 24

ACTION ITEM Evaluate success of past projects. Share lessons learned and stories online as well as with the national program..... 24

