

# Safe Routes to School

## ***Governor's Transportation Vision Panel: February 25, 2015***

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### ***What is Safe Routes to School?***

*Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a nation-wide movement that is all about getting more kids to walk and bike to school. SRTS programs increase physical activity and improve unsafe walking and bicycling conditions on routes to and from school and throughout the community. In Oregon:*

- ❖ Walk+Bike Network and steering committee: a state-wide group of parents, teachers, grandparents, students, and community members that are excited to get youth and families walking and biking.
- ❖ Safe Routes to School Coordinators: positions funded through state SRTS funding and local funding in a school district, city, etc., to create a Safe Routes to School Program.
- ❖ Safe Routes to School National Partnership: advocates for safe walking and bicycling to and from school, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.

### ***What's currently happening with Oregon Safe Routes to School?***

*Thousands of people all across the state know that kids deserve to walk and bike to and from school, are supporting education and encouragement programs in schools that make it possible, and understand that making physical improvements around schools benefits our kids and our communities.*

- ❖ Members are from Eugene, Bend, Corvallis, Albany, Salem, Ashland, Roseburg, Portland, Gresham, Beaverton, Sisters, Medford, Milwaukie, Oregon City, Wilsonville, Hillsboro, Tigard, Redmond, Phoenix, Dallas, Hood River, and many more.
- ❖ Non-infrastructure programs like education and encouragement are inexpensive – and they complement infrastructure projects in the 1-2 mile radius around schools. Virtually free transportation planning!
- ❖ The Oregon SRTS program currently reaches 260 schools in Oregon, approximately 40,000 students.

### ***What's the problem?***

- ❖ Federal funding dedicated for Safe Routes to School, which previously ensured at least \$1 million for each state, no longer exists under MAP-21.
  - In Oregon, the Safe Routes to School program is now housed within the Traffic Safety Division and currently has approximately \$500,000 apportioned per year – currently allocated through 2016.
- ❖ There are 1329 schools in Oregon, and the Oregon SRTS program has reached 260 schools: less than 20%.
  - More than half a million kids in Oregon do not receive Safe Routes to School pedestrian & bicycle education; do not get encouraged to walk or bike to school through fun events and challenges; do not have the opportunity to identify where infrastructure changes around their schools could make it possible to walk or bike to school and in their communities.
- ❖ Schools with an SRTS Action Plan have identified infrastructure improvements around their schools, but there is not a solid process in place to ensure the needs make it into city TSPs and eligible for STIP Enhance, ConnectOregon, and other funding.
  - At ODOT, there is not currently a strong link between the SRTS program (non-infrastructure, housed within TSD) and the bike/ped improvement program (infrastructure grants, housed with the AT Division and funded through STIP/Enhance).

*How does a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program help address transportation issues we want to solve?*

- ✓ Transit access:
  - Improve transit access by coupling schools and transit stops in transportation planning.
  - Expand education and encouragement initiatives to include high school ages, with a focus on educated transit travel behavior.
  - Where service routing and frequency allows, create a youth pass program for public transit.
  - Work with ODE Transportation to ensure school budgets benefit from optimizing yellow bus routes.
  - Work with ODE Transportation to include active transportation in “pupil transportation” definition.
- ✓ Freight mobility:
  - 10-14% of morning rush hour traffic is attributable to parents and caregivers driving children to school; one-third of those drivers then return home.
  - SRTS initiatives can help freight mobility by relieving traffic congestion – making it feel like a school holiday, every day.
- ✓ Health, tailpipe emissions, environment & air quality:
  - Walking to and from school is up to 2/3 of the recommended 60 mins/day of physical activity for youth.
  - 35% of children aged 6-11 are overweight or obese, and that number is rising.
  - 10-14% of morning rush hour traffic is attributable to parents and caregivers driving children to school; distances are frequently less than three miles.
  - Work with OHA & ODE to facilitate implementing SRTS in school districts across the state, including School Boards adapts wellness plan to include SRTS
- ✓ Future mobility trends:
  - Millennials’ shifting behavior – reduced car ownership, increased transit and active transportation preference.
- ✓ Providing a comprehensive traffic safety education for all young Oregonians:
  - Pedestrian safety in 2nd grade and bicycle safety in 5th grade will ensure that in four years 100% of students graduating from elementary school will have received a comprehensive traffic safety education.
  - This teaches our youth life-long transportation skills that can and will be taken anywhere.
  - SRTS Action Plans are the first step of transportation planning for schools, cities, counties, and the state.
  - Education & encouragement initiatives could reach all young Oregonians at a cost of \$50/student, or \$5 million per year.
  - Dedicated & sustained funding is needed. Implement criteria and create a dedicated SRTS-infrastructure funding stream within STIP Enhance, ConnectOregon, etc., that ensures projects identified by SRTS Initiatives are prioritized for funding.

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*Safe Routes to School – HB 3712 (2001): "City and county governing bodies shall work with school district personnel to identify barriers and hazards to children walking or cycling to and from school. The cities, counties and districts may develop a plan for the funding of improvements designed to reduce the barriers and hazards identified."*