

**Safe Routes to School National Review Group
National Center for Safe Routes to School
November 12, 2009**

Review Group Members Present:

Dana Carr
US Dept of Education
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Sarah Coakley
Delaware Department of Transportation

Esther Corbett
Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona

Richard Dolesh
National Recreation and Park Association

Martin Gonzalez
California School Boards Association

Philip Haberstro
National Association for Health and Fitness

David Henderson
Miami-Dade MPO

Deb Hubsmith
Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Mary Pat King
American Diabetes Association

Renee Kuhlman
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Tina Lankford
CDC Division of Nutrition and Physical
Activity

Tracy McMillan, PhD
PPH Partners

Sharon Roerty
National Center for Walking and Biking

Sandy Scheffkind
American Occupational Therapy Association

Stephanie Shipp
HDR, Inc.

Ian Thomas, PhD
PedNet Coalition
America Walks

Arthur Wendel, MD
CDC National Center for Environmental
Health

National Center Staff Present:

Lauren Marchetti, Director

Nancy Pullen-Seufert, Associate Director

Pam Barth, Project Manager

Caroline Dickson, Communications and
Marketing Manager

Megan Cornog, Project Coordinator

National Center Partners Present:

Kelly Hardy
American Association of State Highway and
Transportation Officials

Diane Lambert
Toole Design Group

Katie Mencarini
Toole Design Group

US DOT Representatives Present:

Becky Crowe
Federal Highway Association

Paula Bawer
National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Lauren Marchetti, Director of the National Center for Safe Routes to School (National Center). Ms. Marchetti briefly welcomed National Review Group (NRG) members.

Ms. Marchetti reviewed the purpose of the National Review Group and the meeting goals:

Purpose of National Review Group

- Provide general guidance to help the National Center in its mission to promote safe walking and bicycling to school. This includes:
 - Helping to generate new ideas;
 - Providing insight into local needs; and
 - Providing feedback on existing efforts and proposed courses of action
- Identify ways in which members' programs and activities can help advance SRTS initiatives.

Reauthorization and Rescission

Ms. Marchetti introduced the first agenda topic of Federal SRTS program reauthorization and rescissions, explaining that the Center aims to provide NRG members three perspectives on the topic. The Federal perspective will be provided by Ms. Becky Crowe, the Safe Routes to School Program Manager from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National advocates' perspective will be provided by Ms. Deb Hubsmith of the SRTS National Partnership, and a State SRTS Coordinators' perspective will be provided by Ms. Sarah Coakley, the Delaware SRTS Coordinator.

Ms. Crowe welcomed the NRG members and thanked them for being a part of the success of the Federal SRTS program. She gave a brief update on the status of the program, explaining that she receives bi-weekly updates from the congressional affairs office, the last one being on November 6th:

- She explained that there was a rescission of \$8 billion in unobligated Federal Highway funds, and that \$27 million was taken from the Federal SRTS program. The impact of this rescission varied by State. States that had obligated most of their SRTS funding were virtually unaffected; States with less funding obligated saw greater impacts. The FHWA website to see a list of rescissions by State.
- It is also important to also note that while this rescission impacts pedestrian and bicycle projects in the States, some funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) are being used for pedestrian and bicycle projects.
- Regarding reauthorization, there have been two continuing resolutions passed relative to the SAFETEA-LU, the second resolution providing funding through Dec 18, 2009. States have been notified of available funds. Recently there has been discussion in the House of Representatives of another three or six month extension, but no movement has been made on either of those.

Ms. Hubsmith provided her update on the Federal SRTS program, explaining that one of the Partnership's staff members is based in Washington, DC and regularly meets with representatives. Her perspective is that Congress initially decided on a longer extension of the existing legislation due to concerns over the drop in available transportation funds (via the gas tax). Also, the Environment and Public Works Committee wants to first work on health care and climate, then work on the transportation funding issue before starting legislation. The timing of

the new legislation is unclear, but the extensions are continuing at Fiscal Year 2009 levels (\$185 million/year). While this does not necessarily provide job security for State Coordinators, funding is still dribbling into State DOT accounts.

Ms. Coakley provided a perspective on how the rescissions and program extensions have affected the State and local programs. She explained that the greatest challenge in administrating the program at this time is managing expectations with the local SRTS teams and schools. On a positive note, more people and teams are expressing interest in starting SRTS programs in their communities and at their schools. This is most likely due to the economy, as there is now a greater demand for fewer resources. Furthermore, many established SRTS programs are looking to implement their action plans and expand their efforts. But because the rescission came as a surprise to most State SRTS Coordinators, State programs are not able to fund everything that they had originally promised. This is impacting the credibility of State programs/Coordinators with the local SRTS teams. Ms. Coakley explained that SRTS Coordinators have handled this situation by either scaling back on identified projects or by reducing the number of projects funded (Delaware chose to scale back).

One person asked if anyone in the Group knows how much of the ARRA Energy Efficiency Grants have gone to pedestrian and bicycle projects, and where those projects are located. Ms. Hubsmith responded that if this is being tracked, the results have not been publicized. Three percent of the funds were required to go to Transportation Enhancement funds, and roughly 50% percent of that is supposed to be allocated to pedestrian and bicycle projects. There could also be pedestrian or bike components to other projects funded with ARRA funds, but the "ready to go" requirement has made it difficult to add pedestrian or bike facilities to existing projects. Ms. Crowe will provide a website for ARRA which provides a list of every project funded by ARRA (later in the call she noted that these projects could be found at www.recovery.gov). Ms. Hubsmith mentioned that there is currently a call for applications from CDC related to physical activity which may provide opportunities to fund SRTS projects (website later provided by call participants: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/recovery).

Comments from NRG Members

Ms. Pam Barth of the National Center for Safe Routes to School asked the members to speak about ways in which changes in their organization or area of expertise could affect The National Center work plan priorities. She mentioned that she would also encourage the members to email her updates about programs and initiatives.

- Dr. Ian Thomas of PedNet has been hired by the Missouri SRTS program to teach one-day workshops on how to do a walking school bus. So far, they have held 10 workshops, and each host school also receives a \$1,500 mini-grant. They are seeing great successes with small amounts of money.
- Mr. Rich Dolesh wrote an article for Parks and Recreation Magazine that focused on the ways that school grounds are being used as public playgrounds (<http://nrpablog.typepad.com/prnow/November-2009.html>). New schools are now designing their grounds to serve as community resources complete with joint-use agreements with the jurisdictions. These new schools allow for increased after hours and weekend use, which was not permitted before. Mr. Dolesh stated that he had already communicated with the National Center and the National Partnership on this topic and commended the National Center for their interest. Ms. Marchetti announced

- that the National Center will host a Spring webinar on joint use agreements and assured the NRG that the National Center is already on board with this issue. Ms. Renee Kuhlman stated that the 21st Century School Fund is doing a project on joint use. They are currently collecting case studies, and the information should come out next 6-8 months.
- Ms. Sandy Schefkind attended a recent conference for occupational therapy that held sessions showing strategies for creating school grounds that promote healthy environments. The sessions promoted SRTS programs as resources for creating better social and mental health opportunities for students. Furthermore, the session explained that SRTS programs facilitate health routines for families. Ms. Marchetti indicated that the National Center is interested in learning more, and Ms. Schefkind responded that she would like to partner with others on the line as well, possibly to consider grant applications.
 - Dr. Arthur Wendel mentioned several projects that could be of interest to NRG members.
 - o He noted that the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s project, *Common Community Measures for Obesity Prevention (CoCoMo)*, may be another helpful partner for SRTS. This project matches SRTS goals and strategies to reduce obesity and promote physical activity in communities. (Dr. Wendel provided this URL after the call: www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/community_strategies_guide.pdf)
 - o He also stated that the Alliance for Bicycling and Walking will produce a *benchmarking report in March 2010* that will contain data and policies to help communities see where they stand on walking and bicycling. (Dr. Wendel provided this URL after the call: www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/memberservices/bicycling_and_walking_benchmarking_project/)
 - o Additionally, Dr. Wendel noted that there is a health impact assessment project that could be useful to the SRTS community. This project is funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts. (Dr. Wendel provided this URL after the call: www.healthimpactproject.org)
 - Dr. Tracy McMillan explained that during this past spring and summer several research briefs were published that reported on correlations between physical activity and healthy outcomes. One interesting outcome was increased academic performance.

Update on the National Physical Activity Plan

Mr. Phil Haberstro, from the National Association for Health and Fitness, provided an update on the National Physical Activity Plan. The website is www.physicalactivityplan.org, and the next phase will take place in February or March, 2010. Mr. Haberstro also discussed the Healthy People 2020 initiative.

Update on the SRTS National Partnership

Ms. Hubsmith updated the group on the activities of the SRTS National Partnership, including the following highlights:

- Continuing to stay involved in discussions related to the next Transportation Bill, specifically the portions that impact the Federal SRTS program.

- Working to expand the reach of the Federal SRTS program. For example, the proposed bill is recommending expanding the program to include high schools. This version of the bill is currently undergoing review by the House of Representatives.
- Partnering with Representative Earl Blumenauer (OR) on his efforts on the Climate Bill.
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is expanding the State SRTS Network Project from 15 to 20 States. The intent is to time the expansion with the Department of Transportation's release of SRTS funding.
- The Partnership has just released the three-year report, and it is now publicly accessible online. The report shows how some States are successfully implementing the program. The intent is for this report to be used as a model for those States that are not experiencing the same level of success.
- The Partnership has released a report discussing how the Federal SRTS program should be expanded to equally serve those students with disabilities.
- Creating a resource that explains four strategies for reaching low-income schools. This report is expected to be publicly accessible in December of 2009.
- Two additional reports are planned for release that will provide toolkits for incorporating physical education and physical activity into the classroom. Specifically they strategize how to put incorporate these curriculums into low-income schools and communities. One of the resources aims to offer strategies for reversing bike bans. These reports are expected to be available in June. To receive these reports, email Margo@saferoutespartnership.org.
- For more updates on the Partnership progress, visit this website where the reports are organized by topic.

Ms. Dana Carr added that at the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools conference they are looking at the physical education program and are publishing new requirements that will be accessible for public comment in early 2010. These revisions will include language for SRTS policies, and will emphasize the needs and benefits for creating safe spaces for children to be active. Dana encouraged everyone to review these requirements and offer comments.

Ms. Marchetti mentioned that on October 1st she participated in an invitation-only discussion of school safety, climate and culture with the US Department of Education Assistant Deputy Secretary Kevin Jennings regarding role of SRTS within Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools.

NCSRTS Work Plan Highlights

Resource Development

Ms. Nancy Pullen-Seufert provided an update on the resources that the National Center is currently developing. These resources include:

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is developing an online SRTS Guide for law enforcement officers to be hosted on the National Center website. This guide is expected to be publicly accessible by the Spring of 2010.
- The National Center is also in the process of developing a resource on SRTS for Children with Disabilities. This will be a practical guide to help local programs be inclusive.

Integration of Safe Routes to School into National Conversations

Transportation: Ms. Marchetti mentioned that the Transportation Review Board (TRB) Panel on Livability meeting is scheduled for January 2010. The National Center will be presenting a

session in conjunction with the USDOT liability initiative. The sessions will be covering how to build on pedestrian and bicycle successes as well as other non-motorized projects.

Communities: Ms. Caroline Dickson reported that the latest edition of the National Center newsletter was sent out. Highlighted in this issue was the Mayor of St. Petersburg, Florida, Rick Baker, for his “Play’n Close to Home” initiative, which aims to provide a park within walking distance of every home. Mayor Baker’s initiative was identified at the National League of Cities conference last month, during which National Center staff presented on the Federal SRTS program. To nominate another person to be highlighted in the newsletter or to receive newsletters in the future, email Dickson@hsrc.unc.edu or call 919-962-5835. It is also possible to sign-up for the newsletter on the National Center website.

Health and Safety: Ms. Pullen-Seufert reported that the National Center staff was involved in several health and safety related conferences and meeting, including. *Weight of the Nation Conference, STIPDA meetings, National Coordinating Committee on School Health & Safety*

Understanding what works:

- Ms. Pullen-Seufert mentioned that the National Center is researching SRTS programs to see what strategies and conditions affect program success at the national, state and local levels.
 - One way that the National Center is planning to conduct this research is by hosting expert panels, with representatives from the CDC, the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Education, etc. to talk about appropriate methods for local programs to use when they are looking to understand the relations between SRTS and potential health and environmental benefits.
 - Another aim is to research the best ways to gather data at the local level and review and analyze that data at the national level. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is developing a guide that will describe promising practices for State SRTS programs.
- The National Center is also improving SRTS data collection tools such as the parent questionnaire, and student travel tallies. The current data collected includes 258,000 parent surveys and 47,000 student travel tallies. This data represents all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Data Presentation: Ms. Barth delivered a PowerPoint presentation (see Attachment 1) entitled “Pre SRTS walking and bicycling conditions around the US: A brief look at date submitted to the National Center.” This presentation summarized current data collection tools and baseline base line data received.

Recent events

Ms. Pam Barth reported 550 people registered for this year’s SRTS National Conference (co-sponsored by the Partnership) held in Portland Oregon. Feedback was universally positive.

Ms. Barth also reported that this year’s Oberstar SRTS Award was presented to Ben Murch Elementary School of Washington, D.C. on October 26th. Murch Elementary School won the award by reversing policies that required parental permission to ride bicycles to school, implementing a new student safety patrol program and overcoming neighborhood opposition to the construction of new sidewalks along popular school walking routes. Distinguished guests of

the award ceremony included Representative James L. Oberstar, Eleanor Holmes-Norton, and State SRTS Coordinator Jennifer Hefferan. Lauren Marchetti and Pam Barth represented the National Center

Ms. Barth reported on the progress of the National Center's first mini-grant program. A total of 247 applications were received from 45 states. Staff are now reviewing and judging these applications. The intent is to award at least 25 projects awards of \$1,000 each by December 1st.

Ms. Dickson reported that Walk to School Day received over 3,000 registrants; a 17% increase from last year. The event, held at locations throughout all 50 States and the District of Columbia received great media coverage.

Upcoming

Ms. Dickson mentioned that The National Center is working to develop an advertising campaign. She invited the NRG to comment on messages and images that would resonate best and also for ideas for appropriate exposure.

Ms. Crowe mentioned that many of the programs discussed during the call can be found online at www.recovery.gov.

Ms. Marchetti concluded the meeting by asking the NRG to let The National Center know how to best partner with the representatives in the coming months. Another meeting will likely be held in conjunction with the Bike Summit scheduled for 2010. Ms. Marchetti thanked the group for their enthusiasm and input.