



To: Members of the National Review Group

From: National Center for Safe Routes to School

Re: Integration of Recommendations from National Review Group into Action Plan for NCSRTS

Date: July 2009

After the meeting of the National Review Group (NRG) in March, 2009, the staff of the National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS) met to identify priorities for the next two years. Meeting notes from the NRG meeting (attached for your convenience) played a major role in how additional priority areas and action items were identified. As we noted in an earlier email, the National Center wanted input from the NRG for the refinement of our work plan.

Below are highlights of our plan for the next two years that directly relate to discussions at the NRG meeting. These items are not inclusive of the National Center's full work plan, as much of our work plan is determined by the scope of work in our proposal to become the clearinghouse. The priority areas here are provided to illustrate some of the ways in which the National Center will address recommendations from the NRG meeting.

The goal of these and additional activities is to advance Federal, state, and local Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, thereby increasing safe walking and bicycling to schools nationwide.

**Priority Area – Policy issues:** Identify and describe select major policies that influence walking and bicycling to school, and provide examples of how policies beneficial to SRTS Programs are being implemented by communities.

*Three topic areas were selected for initial actions:*

- *Addressing policies prohibiting walking and/or bicycling:* The National Center is working with the Safe Routes to School National Partnership to produce an article/reference piece about no-walking/bicycling policies and examples of how communities are finding solutions for understanding and addressing underlying issues.
- *Encouraging safe walking and bicycling through school site design:* The National Center will develop a broadly-based school site design resource to provide information about how to design school campuses for safe and convenient walking and bicycling. This piece will complement the materials currently being developed by NRG members.
- *Encouraging safe walking and bicycling through school siting:* The National Center will develop an information piece to address some of the many issues involved in locating a site for a school. It will provide information about a variety of points that could be at issue in a community and will direct the user to information already developed by NRG members.

**Priority Area – Partnership Development:** Safe Routes to School can be one of the solutions for addressing several problems facing communities today. National-level partnerships that capitalize on expertise of diverse stakeholders will strengthen and advance Safe Routes to School programs throughout the U.S. The National Center has already begun working with several NRG members whose help has enabled us to reach additional audiences. We plan to continue to work with NRG members as we move forward.

*Initial action items to enhance partnerships:*

- The National Center will identify key strategic partners to secure in next two years and will generate ideas for what issues these partnerships can help to address. One suggestion from the NRG meeting was to identify ways to include corporate/business involvement. To that point, we have begun discussions with a membership organization of Fortune 500 companies.
- *Topic Area – Education:* NRG member Dana Carr, who represents the U.S. Department of Education, secured a workshop presentation on SRTS at the National Conference of the US Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. The National Center has been invited to co-present at that conference. This is an excellent opportunity to advance SRTS among this important audience.
- *Topic Area – Health:* The National Center has been invited to participate in several health-related conferences and meetings. This participation includes presentations at several State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association (STIPDA) meetings (June and July 2009); serving as a member of the Working Group for the Transportation, Community Design, & Urban Planning sector of the National Physical Activity Plan (July 2009); and a presentation at the Weight of the Nation Conference (August 2009) .
- *Topic Area – Environment:* The National Center is currently investigating efforts required to become a U.S. EPA Climate for Action Partner. NRG member Matthew Dalbey, who represents the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Center will co-present at the WALK21 Conference in New York City in October 2009 on the impact of school siting on SRTS efforts.

**Priority Area – Understanding What Works:** The impact of local and state SRTS programs and specific strategies needs to be measured and assessed, and successes widely disseminated. SRTS programs are just now beginning to reach the stage at which impacts can be understood.

*Initial action items:*

- *Local Programs* –The National Center is conducting two research projects to 1) identify successful local strategies to increase walking and bicycling or improve safety, health and environmental outcomes; and 2) understand the safety benefits associated with SRTS programs. Initial results for strategy evaluations should be available by the end of 2009.
- *Local Programs* – The National Center’s 2009 James L. Oberstar SRTS Award is focused on outstanding SRTS programs that have overcome challenges. Award applications will be converted to case studies to disseminate programs’ successful approaches to potential SRTS barriers.
- *State Programs* – The National Center is working with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to develop a Best Practices guide for state programs.

**Priority Area – Beyond “Getting Started”:** SRTS programs are in operation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and at least 5,200 program awards have been announced. In order for SRTS to thrive and to change walking and bicycling habits, SRTS needs to reach beyond the early

adopters and ensure that other audiences are being reached. More information and messaging are needed to assist programs to engage children with disabilities, students above grade five, students in Tribal communities, and additional audiences.

*Selected action items:*

- *Topic Area – Engaging Children with Disabilities:* The National Center has committed to developing resources that support the inclusion of children with disabilities in SRTS programs. In June, the National Center hosted a webinar on ADA accommodations and SRTS programs, which was presented by NRG member Lois Thibault of the U.S. Access Board. This was one of the most highly attended of all National Center webinars.
- *Topic Area – Engaging Older Students:*
  - The National Center has recently completed an information piece on how to engage middle school students and is currently identifying the most-needed resources for middle school programs.
  - The National Center’s mini-grant program for 2009 will target schools, groups, or organizations that benefit middle school programs. The call for applications will occur in August 2009.
- *Topic Area – Engaging Students in Tribal Communities:* The National Center has committed to developing resources that support students in Tribal communities. The National Center plans to involve NRG member Esther Corbett in preparing a written resource, and the National Center is investigating hosting a webinar on successful SRTS initiatives in Tribal Nations.
- *Topic Area – Reaching more school audiences:* This will be accomplished largely through integration with all activities including new partnerships, identifying programs that reach expanded audiences, developing case studies, and the mini-grant program referenced in the bullet above. The National Center will seek to promote programs that strengthen the connection between SRTS and complementary goals such as improvements in air quality or physical activity. It is likely that the 2010 mini-grant program will continue to focus on expanding and strengthening existing programs.