

Safe Routes to School™

Safe Routes to School: A Planning Tool for Everyone! Part 2 of 4

“Good habits formed at youth
make all the difference.”

—Aristotle

TOOLS, TOOLS, TOOLS!

Part 1 of *SR2S: A Planning Tool for Everyone* informed planners how to make communities safer for bicycling and walking to school. Do you want to make those changes happen? The *SR2S Handbook*, filled with templates and tools for instant implementation and tips on the suggested planning process, is the answer. Michigan leads the nation by providing this great tool within a comprehensive, user-friendly format. The *SR2S Handbook* also hosts a *SR2S* training program for school and community stakeholders with a training curriculum which parallels the *SR2S Handbook*. The materials are available on-line and include templates that can be customized for each school and location.

The *SR2S Handbook* encourages active participation by both professionals, parents, students, and the entire community. It provides a step-by-step process that encourages a grass roots effort—emphasized through changing lifestyle habits as well as solving physical impediments that keep kids from being active. The “Five Es” principles in the Handbook include recommendations for:

- *Engineering: infrastructure improvements, traffic calming measures, and need for future studies;*
- *Education: knowledge and skills for awareness and safety methods to apply when walking or biking to school;*
- *Encouragement: activities, methods, and programs to help students (and parents) choose a walking or biking option such as ‘walking school buses’ drop zones, etc.;*
- *Enforcement: applications of existing traffic laws and methods for changing traffic conditions through signals, signage, monitors, etc.; and*
- *Evaluation: technical support through the SR2S staff and documentation of outcomes.*

HANDBOOK SECTIONS

Sections of the handbook are oriented around the calendar school year, starting in the fall, although the process may be applied at any time, and adjusted for individual situations. Sections include:

- **Welcome to Safe Routes to School:** An array of state departments endorse the plan; plus testimonials from pilot schools describe their experiences; and a two-year calendar outlines short and long-term monthly activities are included;
- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- 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
- 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 elementary schools.



Photo credit: www.bikepedimages.com/DanBurden

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Sidewalks;
- Traffic calming and speed reduction;
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements;
- On-street and off-street bicycle facilities;
- Off-street pedestrian facilities; and
- Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

NONINFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Activities to encourage walking and bicycling to school;
- Public awareness campaigns, community outreach;

- Traffic education;
- Traffic enforcement operations in the vicinity of schools;
- Student training sessions (bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment); and
- Funding for training volunteers and managers of safe routes to schools programs.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- Eligible recipients include state, local and regional agencies including nonprofit organizations;
- SR2S funding is 100 percent federal; no match is required; and
- Infrastructure projects must be within a two-mile radius of the school.

In Michigan, a school-based planning process must be completed as a prerequisite for funding the Governor's Council on Physical



Photo credit: Portland Office of Transportation

Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements are eligible activities with 100 percent federal funding under the SR2S grant program.

Fitness, Health and Sports/Michigan Fitness Foundation at (800) 434-8642 or visit the Web pages: www.michiganfitness.org or www.saferoutesmichigan.org.

- **Walk to School Day:** Every good idea needs an event! Materials are provided to promote activities to raise awareness of the health, safety, and welfare issues;
- **SR2S Team:** It takes a combined effort of educators, parents, and local leaders to make SR2S successful and sustainable. This section helps SR2S champions identify good resources and how to rally a winning team;
- **Behaviors and Attitudes:** Looking for results? A series of parent and student surveys with methods for documenting before and after results of the SR2S effort;
- **Safe Routes:** After preparation is complete, hit the pavement! A 'walking audit' which includes students in identifying opportunities

and barriers for walking routes to schools; and

- **Making Change:** A review of next steps in the process. Appendix literature supports short and long term items that can be used to implement an action plan.

For your own copy of the Handbook, visit www.saferoutesmichigan.org.

 **FALL IS ALMOST HERE...**
Future articles will address details such as:

- Statistics and baseline information from pilot schools tracking results;
- Details on the grant application and funding; and
- Success stories from other SR2S projects.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doug Schultz, RLA is the Director of Landscape Architecture at ROWE Incorporated. He is a charter member of the Safe Routes to School Coalition that helps shape the program along with other key stakeholder groups.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information contact the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports/Michigan Fitness Foundation at (800) 434-8642 or visit the Web pages: www.michiganfitness.org or www.saferoutesmichigan.org.

