



Creating Safe Walking and Bicycling Communities: Safe Routes to School Decision Maker Toolkit

Community Readiness Assessment

Go through these steps to assess your community's readiness to engage in safe routes to schools or other active transportation projects. These questions will also help you identify areas that need to be developed and ways to prioritize investments in order to have long lasting and successful projects.

1. Is there a perceived public problem?

- **YES!** (Public complaints about traffic congestion, unsafe crossings, childhood obesity, etc.)
- **NO.** Who have you asked? Your first step will be to develop public awareness of the problem and possible alternatives before planning a solution.

2. Have you identified other leaders who recognize the problem?

Build a list of potential stakeholders. Talk to them and enroll them in your process.

At School Sites

- **Parents?** Individual parents or those already active on Parent/Teacher organizations or the school site council can convene site diagnosis and planning.
- **School Principal?** A supportive school principal is the strongest ally in school-site planning, proposals and programs. They can: engage staff in promoting active transportation; include walking and bicycling safety in physical education and the school site safety plan; utilize school communication systems to notify students and families of special walking and bicycling events.
- **Teachers?** In some schools, a teacher champion has led the effort. In middle and high schools, the issue of climate change and reducing a school's carbon footprint can be the strongest motivators to get teachers and students engaged. Tracking averted auto trips can become a math, science, or social studies activity.
- **Students?** Senior students can also get involved as leaders themselves. Is there student leadership/council or an environmental club to energize the students for new activities or advocate at public hearings?

Within the School District

- Is there a safety coordinator or another staff person assigned to monitor accident data?
- Who has been engaged in updating the district safety plan and/or student wellness plan? How have they addressed safe active transportation issues?
- Is safe walking and bicycling included in the physical education curriculum?

By Transportation Experts

- Transportation Planners?
- Public Works?
- Other interest groups? (bicycle clubs, walking clubs...)

By Health Advocates

- Is this a priority for county public health?
- Are there physicians or other health professionals who are potential champions and spokespeople?
- Seniors?

3. Have an array of community leaders met to build a shared vision?

Projects progress where there is sufficient administrative, staff and volunteer commitment and direction. Convene your stakeholders to frame the problem and identify next steps.

4. Has the problem been defined in detail?

- Decide at what level you'll begin. (Will you start small with one target school or a community with high accident rates? Are you going for a city or county-wide plan?)
- Work with site stakeholders and walk the neighborhood.
- Organize a walkability/bikeability assessment at targeted locations.

- Learn how to access (www.casaferoutestoschool.org/get-assistance/tools/) and review local accident data (<http://tims.berkeley.edu/resources/srts/main.php>).
- Consult walking and bicycling experts.
- Develop specific objectives.

5. Have stakeholders developed informed possible solutions?

- Engage public works expertise for cost-effective infrastructure strategies.
- Engage walkability/bikeability experts for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure.
- See what has worked in other communities. (See *Resources* at www.ca-ilg.org/srts-toolkit/resources)

6. You're ready to take action!

For more on active transportation, access the *Creating Safe Walking and Bicycling Communities: Safe Routes to Schools Decision Maker Toolkit* at www.ca-ilg.org/SRTS-toolkit.¹



¹ The *Safe Routes to School Decision Maker Toolkit* was developed by the Cities, Counties and Schools Partnership and the Institute for Local Government for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC). The SRTS TARC is a program within California Active Communities, a joint Unit of the University of California, San Francisco and the California Department of Public Health, and is funded through a SRTS Non-Infrastructure award from the California Department of Transportation.