

Florida Safe Routes to School Program



10 YEAR REPORT



March 2019



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What is Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs aim to “create safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools.”¹ Depending on their needs, SRTS programs use different approaches to do so. Where infrastructure elements such as sidewalks and high-visibility crosswalks already allow for safe walking and bicycling routes, education and outreach programs encourage families to adopt active travel to and from school. In places where the infrastructure for safe routes to schools is lacking, SRTS programs often pursue engineering improvements while raising awareness of active travel and providing safety education to the community.

A lifetime of being active can start on the way to school!



Figure 1: Walk to School Event at Campbell Park Elementary School, Pinellas County, FDOT District 7

1 “Safe Routes to School 101.” Safe Routes to School National Partnership, <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/about>

Program Goals

In 2005, the United States Congress created the first federal SRTS program through Section 1404 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The legislation provided funding for every state and the District of Columbia, and defined three overarching goals: (1) enabling and encouraging children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; (2) making walking and bicycling to school a safer and more appealing option, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and, (3) facilitating the planning, development

and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution around schools.

To achieve these goals, state SRTS programs funded and directed strategies in five areas: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation, often called the five E's. The three overarching goals and the five E's carry over to local SRTS programs, which rely heavily on collaborative problem-solving approaches to address unsafe walking and bicycling conditions, and to promote walking and bicycling to school.



Figure 2: An Interactive Street Being Used to Educate Children about Pedestrian Safety

The Five E's



Education

educating children and families on how to safely walk and bike to school, and educating drivers about how to drive safely



Encouragement

inspiring children and families to walk and bicycle to school



Engineering

improving the safety of pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure



Enforcement

reinforcing positive behavior in drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists



Evaluation

determining the effect of SRTS programs and studying possible improvements

Celebrating Florida's SRTS Program

How We Got Here

The Florida SRTS program has a long and successful history. In the late 1990's, before SAFETEA-LU established the federal program, Florida was one of the first states to begin working on SRTS. The state piloted "Safe Ways to School," a SRTS program modeled after a successful program in Melville, Australia. After testing the program at 10 elementary schools, the state developed the *Safe Ways to School Tool Kit*. The tool kit provided guidance on how to conduct school-level planning for safe walking and bicycling and remained a resource for communities long after the state SRTS program was officially established.

Following the passing of SAFETEA-LU, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) hired a state SRTS coordinator, and the first SRTS grants were funded in 2007. Initially, the program funded a mixture of infrastructure and non-infrastructure grants. After SAFETEA-LU ended,

FDOT restricted grant applications to infrastructure projects. FDOT continued its support of SRTS education and encouragement through statewide initiatives that provided support directly to schools.

In 2012, federal transportation legislation eliminated the stand-alone SRTS program, and incorporated SRTS and other walking and bicycling programs into the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Although SRTS projects remained eligible for funding through TAP, Florida communities applying for SRTS projects were competing against other TAP projects and had difficulty receiving funding. Consequently, in 2015, FDOT created a stand-alone SRTS program by transferring Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds to the state's Surface Transportation Program (STP), which has allocated \$7 million to SRTS annually.

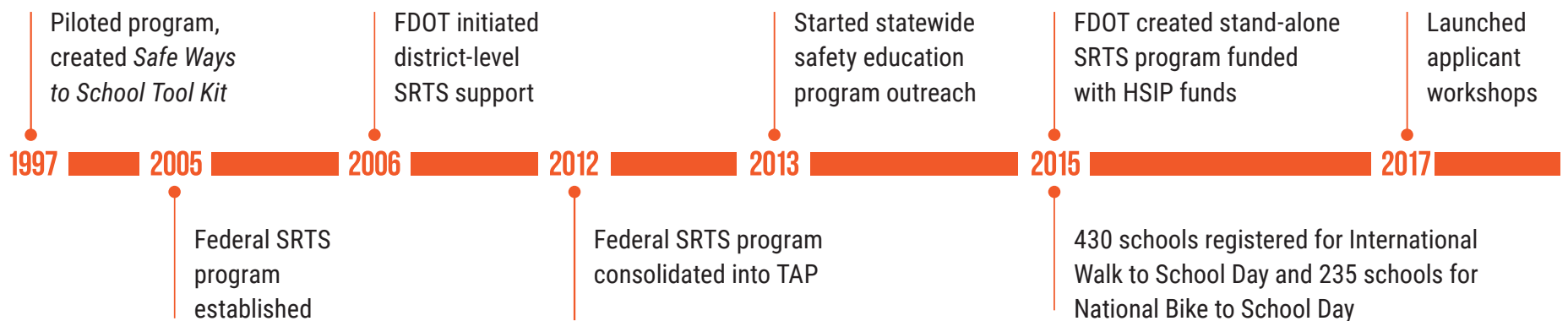


Figure 3: Florida SRTS Program Timeline

How Florida's SRTS Program Stands Out

Florida's SRTS program is unique. Unlike other state programs that require a 20 percent local match to receive federal funds, Florida funds 100 percent of the costs of SRTS projects thanks to state highway toll revenue (which replaces the local match requirement). Funds from the state are particularly crucial for rural and low-income communities with limited budgets. Although communities receive full funding, significant time and local resource commitments are required during the application and implementation process. This ensures effective and continual partnerships between schools, cities, counties and other local partners, which results in stronger projects. In fact, many Florida communities leverage the planning and organizational knowledge gained through the program to improve walking and bicycling safety throughout the community.

Over the last decade, 52 of Florida's 67 counties participated in 324 SRTS projects, impacting 665 different schools. Between 2007 and 2018, the Florida SRTS program dedicated over \$130 million to projects that improve student safety (Figure 4). These projects ranged from new or improved sidewalks, to installing bicycle lanes, to safe bicycling skills training. FDOT's state SRTS coordinator, school officials and others continue to look for projects that can provide the greatest benefit to student safety while limiting taxpayer expenditures. There are projects located in every Congressional District in the state, as well as in over 90 percent of Florida Senate Districts, and nearly two thirds of Florida State House Districts.

10-Year SRTS Funding: 2007-2018

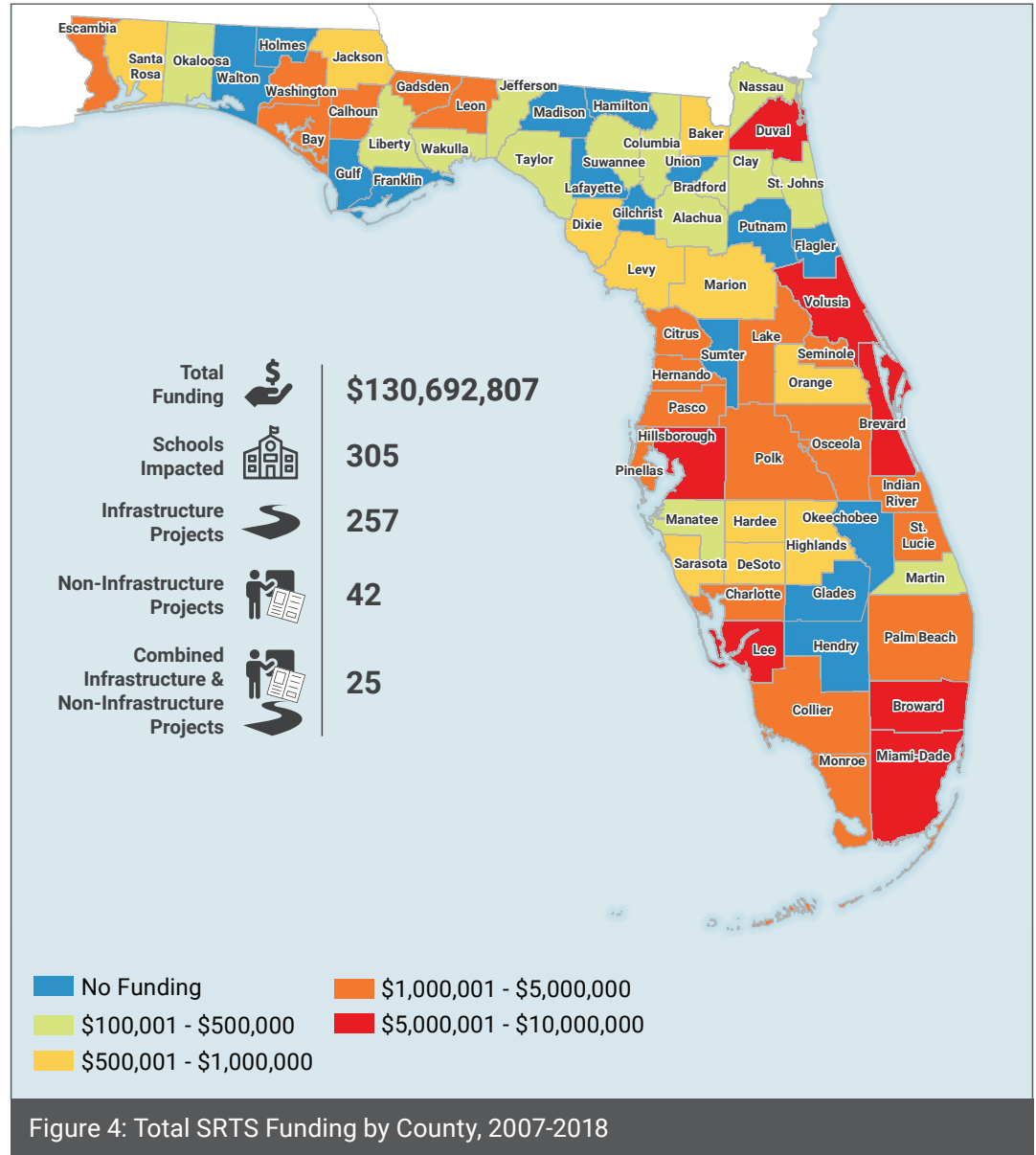


Figure 4: Total SRTS Funding by County, 2007-2018



Teaching Kids to Walk and Cycle Safely

The Need

When it comes to encouraging students and parents to walk or bicycle to school, a lack of safe pedestrian and bicycling skills can be as much of a barrier as poor infrastructure. Though walking and bicycling to school were common modes of transportation in the past, they are less so now. In 1969, about half of all students walked or rode bicycles to school, but by 2009 that figure dropped to just 13 percent (Figure 5). Students today are less likely to learn safe walking and bicycling skills from friends, parents and siblings. Teaching students these skills in the classroom can improve their safety on the road and give parents and students the confidence that walking and bicycling can be safe transportation options.

Students who are active on the way to school tend to be more alert and engaged in learning during the school day.

National Trends in Walking and Bicycling to School and Bicycling to School

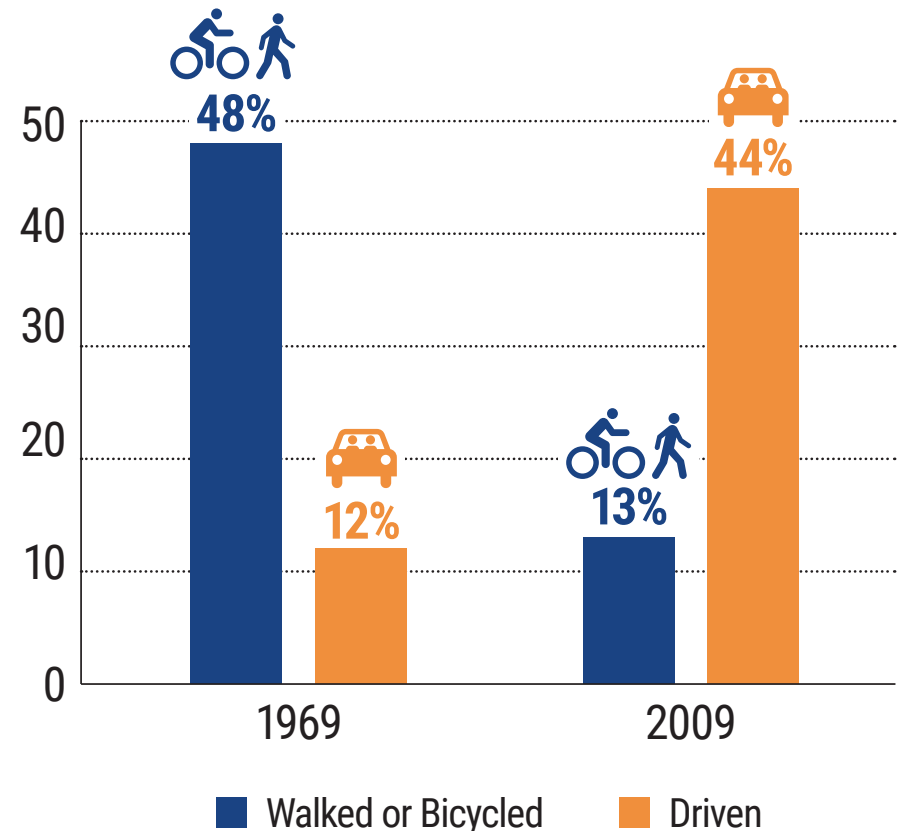


Figure 5: National Trends in Walking and Bicycling to School (US DOT, 2009)

A Leading Statewide SRTS Education Program

In the early years of the Florida SRTS program, there was no centralized education resource and communities were responsible for deciding how to teach students pedestrian and bicycle safety. While some efforts were successful, overall messages to communities were inconsistent and not every community provided safety education. To address this, the Florida SRTS program worked with the Florida Department of Education to develop a unified education program. Launched in 2013, the education program is managed by the University of Florida's Center for Health and the Built Environment and includes curricula and resources for teaching pedestrian and bicycle safety to school-age students. A corresponding education program website (floridasrts.com) (Figure 6) launched in 2017, ensuring teachers and parents can access up-to-date educational materials. The website also includes age-specific resources and interactive videos.

The Florida SRTS education program benefits from a close working relationship with teachers in hundreds of schools throughout the state. A team of education staff around the state provide hands-on training to physical education teachers who then deliver lessons to students in their classrooms. The education program provides course equipment, including trailers (Figure 7), to transport the bikes and other supplies to the school's front door (or any available location), and a pedestrian safety toolkit that unfolds into an interactive street (Figure 2). Children learn how to correctly fit and wear bike helmets, and in some cases,



students also receive new, properly-fitted helmets (Figure 8). In the 2017-2018 school year alone, nearly 10,0000 students received properly fitted bicycle helmets.

Currently, almost 200,000 students in over 600 schools are receiving pedestrian and bicycle safety education. The education program is preparing for launch in north-central portions of the state, the only region whose teachers have not received the necessary training. By the end of 2019, the Florida pedestrian and bicycle safety education program will reach teachers and students in every county.

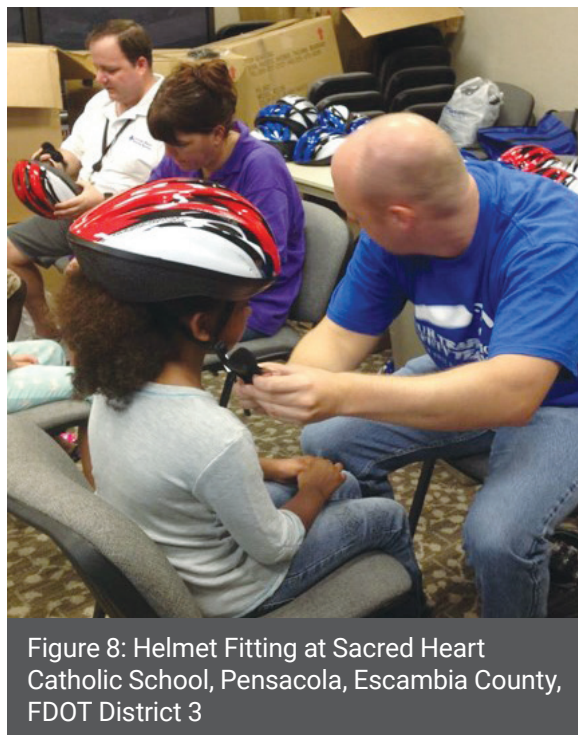


Figure 8: Helmet Fitting at Sacred Heart Catholic School, Pensacola, Escambia County, FDOT District 3

Youth Teaching Youth

Students at Challenger Middle School in Lee County (FDOT District 1) worked with teachers to create an impressive music video that doubles as a public service announcement on bicycle safety. A SRTS educator from All Children’s Hospital helped ensure that the video included important safety information. The school’s music students chose the melody and wrote the lyrics, the dance and theater students developed the choreography and the media experts edited the video. The completed video, which can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/SRTS-PSA>, was shared with all schools in Lee County.



Inspiring Kids

While an SRTS educator was teaching a SRTS lesson at a school, a teacher approached the educator and asked if the program had happened at another school recently. The educator responded that yes, in fact, it had. The teacher said that her grandson attends that school. Apparently the grandson, who had never previously been interested in learning to ride his bike or wearing his bike helmet, had recently told his grandmother that he wanted to ride his bike and asked for his helmet. The grandmother said that he quickly taught himself how to ride his bike. She thanked the SRTS program for inspiring her grandson to start the healthy, safe habit of riding a bicycle.

2 <https://www.childrenssafetynetwork.org/sites/childrenssafetynetwork.org/files/InjuryPreventionWhatWorks2014Update%20v9.pdf>

Superhero Safety Resources

In 2017, the Florida DOT released a media campaign titled *The Superhero Safety Squad: Guardians of Roadway Safety* (<http://wbt.dot.state.fl.us/ois/SafetyOfficeSHSS/>). The characters in the campaign were introduced through online videos, safety booklets disguised as graphic novels and trading cards. These adventurous characters—including *The Guardian*, a crossing guard with a super whistle and stop shield that allow her to stop speeding cars in its path, and *Walker*, a boy with a super ability to light the way for other children when walking after dark, teach the basics of pedestrian and bicycle safety. Children and parents statewide have widely embraced the characters because they bring roadway safety into a medium understandable and exciting for children. These resources are ideal for school, community or home use, and are available upon request. Over 100,000 copies have been distributed throughout Florida. A second printing is in process and a new series is in the works.

The media campaign provides other exciting opportunities, such as a poster contest. In 2017, the contest theme was *I'm a Safety Hero!* and one winner from each school district was selected to make a guest appearance in an upcoming issue of a *The Guardians of Roadway Safety* activity book. The Florida SRTS program continues to monitor the effectiveness of this campaign to ensure it remains relevant for the new generation of students.

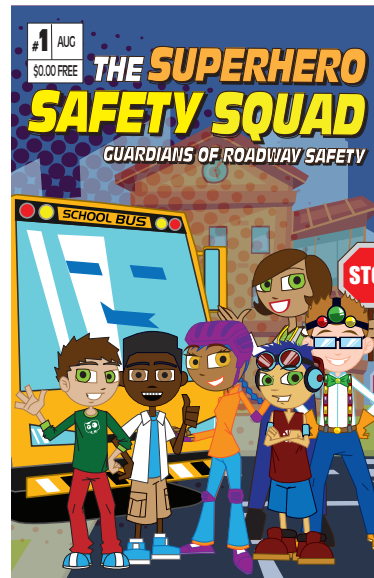


Figure 9: The Superhero Safety Squad: Guardians of Roadway Safety



ENCOURAGEMENT

Getting Kids Walking and Bicycling

The Need

Research shows that education, coupled with encouragement, can dramatically increase the rate of walking and bicycling. For example, one study showed that schools with SRTS education and encouragement programs experienced a relative increase in walking and bicycling of about 25 percent over five years³.

SRTS-themed events create excitement and enthusiasm for walking and bicycling to school. Each October, hundreds of schools across Florida join scores of others around the world to hit the sidewalks and celebrate

International Walk to School Day. Schools do it again, but with bicycles, scooters and skateboards, for *National Bike to School Day* each May. At some events, celebrities, police officers, firefighters and emergency response workers attend and speak to school children about the importance of safe walking and bicycling practices. These events build excitement about walking and bicycling while also emphasizing safety. Due to the success of these events, some schools hold walking and bicycling encouragement events on a more regular basis.



Figure 10: Professional NASCAR Driver Scott Lagasse Jr. Signs Autographs at Andrew Robinson Elementary School, Jacksonville, Duval County, FDOT District 2



Figure 11: Law Enforcement at an Event

3 Noreen C. McDonald, Ruth L. Steiner, Chanam Lee, Tori Rhoulac Smith, Xuemei Zhu & Yizhao Yang (2014) Impact of the Safe Routes to School Program on Walking and Bicycling, Journal of the American Planning Association, 80:2, 153-167, DOI: [10.1080/01944363.2014.956654](https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2014.956654)

Big Event Participation 2007-2017

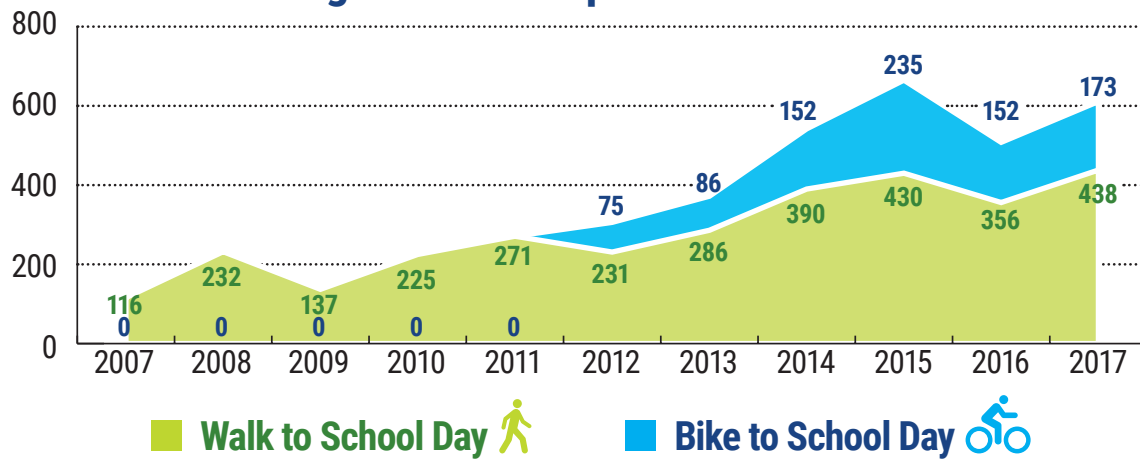


Figure 12: Participating Florida Schools in Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day from 2007-2017

The number of local SRTS events in Florida has been growing. Over the last decade, the number of Walk to School events has almost quadrupled (from 116 to 438). The number of Bike to School events has doubled since such events were introduced in 2012 (Figure 12).

Walking School Buses

Florida's SRTS program supports the development of walking school buses. Walking school buses are groups of children walking to and from school with adult supervision, simultaneously alleviating parent safety concerns and providing fun and active travel to school. While walking school buses can be as simple as two families taking turns walking to and from school with each other's children, others are more formal with paid route leaders and/or designated walking routes and stops. Whether formal or informal, walking school buses are an effective way to boost walking rates. Florida's SRTS program has created a *Walking School Bus Guide* as well as an outreach packet (which includes a letter to parents, registration form, liability waiver and policy guide) that assists local communities in setting up their walking school buses. These materials are available on the floridasrts.com website.



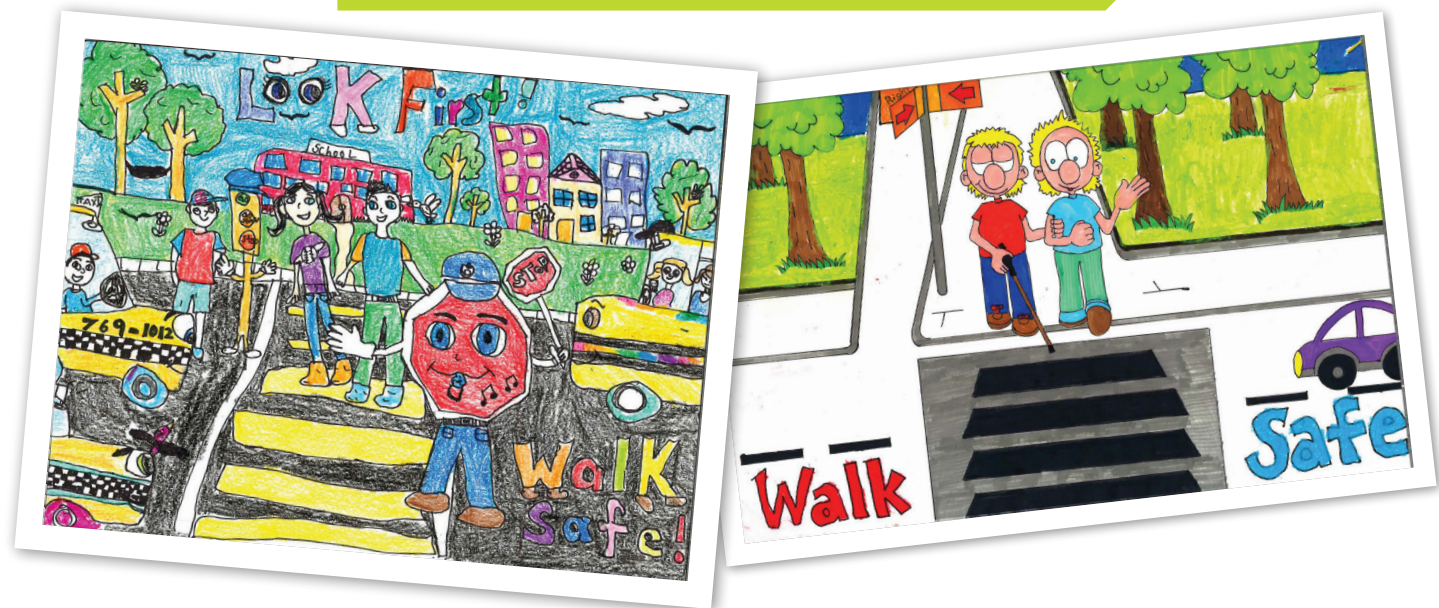
Figure 13: Walking School Bus for International Walk to School Day in Bunnell, Flagler County, FDOT District 5

Raising Awareness Through Art

Art can play a big role in communicating safety messages to children and their peers. The Florida SRTS program has sponsored a *Walk or Bike to School Safely* poster contest where students were encouraged to submit colorful and educational depictions of a SRTS safety theme. Schools throughout the state held poster contests and ultimately submitted one poster for judging. The theme changes each time the contest is held to ensure that it stays fresh and different aspects of safety are emphasized. In 2017, the theme of the contest was, *I'm a Safety Hero!* One winner was selected from each school district to make a guest appearance in an issue of a *The Guardians of Roadway Safety* activity book.



For the 2017 "Walk to School Safely" poster contest, one winner from each school district was selected to make a guest appearance in an issue of a "The Guardians of Roadway Safety" activity book.





The Need

One of the primary goals of Florida's Safe Routes to School program is to improve the walking and bicycling infrastructure surrounding schools. Safer infrastructure can reduce the likelihood of collisions involving pedestrians and bicyclists and lessen crash severity when collisions do occur. Additionally, engineering improvements around schools are shown to increase relative walking and bicycling rates by an average of 18 percent over five years,⁴ and can result in cost savings for school districts by reducing bus routes. Florida statute mandates that schools provide school bus transportation when hazardous walking conditions are present, regardless of distance from school. SRTS infrastructure projects can remove the need for these recurring local expenses.



Figure 14: New Sidewalk Serving Bryant Elementary School and Farnell Middle School, Hillsborough County, FDOT District 7

Making Connections and Saving Money

Mary E. Bryant Elementary School and Farnell Middle School are located on the west side of Nine Eagles Drive, a street with heavy traffic in Tampa. However, the only sidewalk was on the east side of Nine Eagles Drive, requiring any students traveling between a large subdivision on the west side of the street and the schools to either cross the street twice to get to school or to walk in the grass adjacent to traffic. The SRTS program funded the construction of a new sidewalk on the same side of the street as the schools. Students now walk and bicycle to the schools on the new sidewalk. The new sidewalk has also saved the school district the cost of hazard busing. Since the sidewalk was constructed, the district no longer provides busing for middle-school students who live within the walk zone served by this sidewalk. The district also intends to cut busing for the elementary school students who live in the walk zone served by this sidewalk in the future.

4 Noreen C. McDonald, Ruth L. Steiner, Chanam Lee, Tori Rhoulac Smith, Xuemei Zhu & Yizhao Yang (2014) Impact of the Safe Routes to School Program on Walking and Bicycling, Journal of the American Planning Association, 80:2, 153-167, DOI: [10.1080/01944363.2014.956654](https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2014.956654)

Project Justification and Selection

Through the SRTS infrastructure program, Florida communities apply for funding to build projects that will improve the safety of walking and bicycling to school. The program typically receives more applications than it can fund, so a key goal of the SRTS program is to maximize public benefit for each dollar spent. Each school is required to evaluate travel patterns and determine existing walking and bicycling levels by surveying students and parents during three different periods: before the application

is submitted; immediately before a project begins; and three to six months after project completion. FDOT district staff evaluate SRTS infrastructure applications using factors such as community support, financial need, existing safety hazards, right-of-way availability and location of existing busing. The state SRTS coordinator makes the final decision on which projects to fund, but the multiple levels of review ensure that only the best projects are constructed.



Figure 16: Improved Crossing at Julia Landon College Preparatory School, Duval County, FDOT District 2

Engaging Students in the Process

Participation in International Walk to School Day in 2010 served as a catalyst for a variety of SRTS efforts at Julia Landon College Preparatory School in Jacksonville. The middle school students learned about pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the school year and produced a series of videos to teach other students about safe bicycling. They also worked with a team of planners and engineers (who volunteered their time) as well as parents, teachers and public officials to identify safety issues on their routes to school, such as missing sidewalks or marked crosswalks, sidewalks in disrepair or insufficient signs and traffic signals. With FDOT and parent assistance, they applied for and received SRTS funding to add new sidewalks and to enhance crosswalks and traffic signals. Construction was completed in 2014 and has improved safety for students walking and bicycling to the school and throughout the community. The students who were involved in this project are now in college and say they are proud to have been involved in a project that helped improve their community for other students.

“ I am now attending college and have a heightened awareness about being safe when I ride my bike and walk since I do a lot of both because I don’t have a car. I also think it has helped me pay more attention to bicyclists and pedestrians when I do drive. I feel fortunate to have made an impact in my neighborhood to make it safer for students to get to school. ”

— Jesse Evans
Former Landon Student
Participant

Sidewalks, Trails and Other Improvements

Over the past decade, the Florida SRTS program has completed over 230 engineering projects throughout the state. These projects include new sidewalks, improved roadway crossings and signage to increase the visibility and safety of pedestrians as they cross roadways, and traffic calming treatments to decrease traffic speeds around schools. To improve bicyclist safety, the Florida SRTS program invests in new bicycle routes, lanes and trails around schools, and provides bicycle racks on school sites.

Many communities in Florida lack sidewalks, which can pose a barrier to children who live even a few blocks from school. SRTS funds are a crucial resource that local governments rely on for sidewalk installation projects, which provide a simple, but effective backbone for other pedestrian infrastructure improvements, and can completely transform a community.



Figure 15: Ribbon Cutting at Dale R. Fair Elementary School, Polk County, District 1

Transforming a Community

Dale R. Fair Elementary School applied for funding to install sidewalks on one side of State Route 17 in Babson Park. After the initial application was approved, the project estimates were so far under budget that the community was able to install sidewalks on both sides of the street. At the ribbon cutting celebration for the new sidewalk, an elderly gentleman asked to speak, appearing deeply moved. He came up to the podium and told the gathered crowd that he had lived in the neighborhood his entire life but that day had walked to the post office, the barbershop and the convenience store for the very first time.

This particular sidewalk greatly benefited the elementary school that applied for the project, allowing students to walk or bicycle to school. It also benefited members of the broader community, such as the elderly gentleman and students at Webber International College who now use the sidewalk to get to band practice or the football practice field.



Innovative Facility Design

Near Dommerich Elementary School in Maitland, there was heavy demand for pedestrians to cross the street at a curve in the roadway but the curve inhibited the visibility of the crossing. The SRTS program funded the construction of an innovative facility to improve the safety of the crosswalk and make it easier to see. Called a “banana crosswalk,” the project included landscaped medians on each approach to the crosswalk to slow cars down before they reach the crossing. The design ensures that oncoming drivers can see pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Figure 17: An Improved Crosswalk, Dubbed a “Banana Crosswalk” near Dommerich Elementary School and Maitland Middle School, Orange County, FDOT District 5

Benefiting Multiple Schools with One Project

Deerfield Beach Elementary School applied for funding to build a new sidewalk on the west side of Southeast 2nd Avenue in Deerfield Beach. The sidewalk serves students at the elementary school, as well as students at Deerfield Beach Middle School and Somerset Academy Key (a public charter school that was formerly Zion Lutheran School).



Figure 18: New Sidewalk near Deerfield Beach Elementary School, Broward County, FDOT District 4



Figure 19: New Sidewalk Near Golson Elementary School, Jackson County, FDOT District 3

Completing the Sidewalk Network

The City of Marianna applied for and received funding for a new sidewalk near Golson Elementary School. The sidewalk was completed in 2008, filling a key gap in the sidewalk network in an area of high pedestrian demand. In addition to proximity to the school, the new sidewalk is also near a hospital, the Health Department and several residential and commercial developments. The new sidewalk serves Golson Elementary School students and the community and is in an economically disadvantaged area. The project consisted of 3,115 Linear Feet of new sidewalk and was completed for \$253,091.

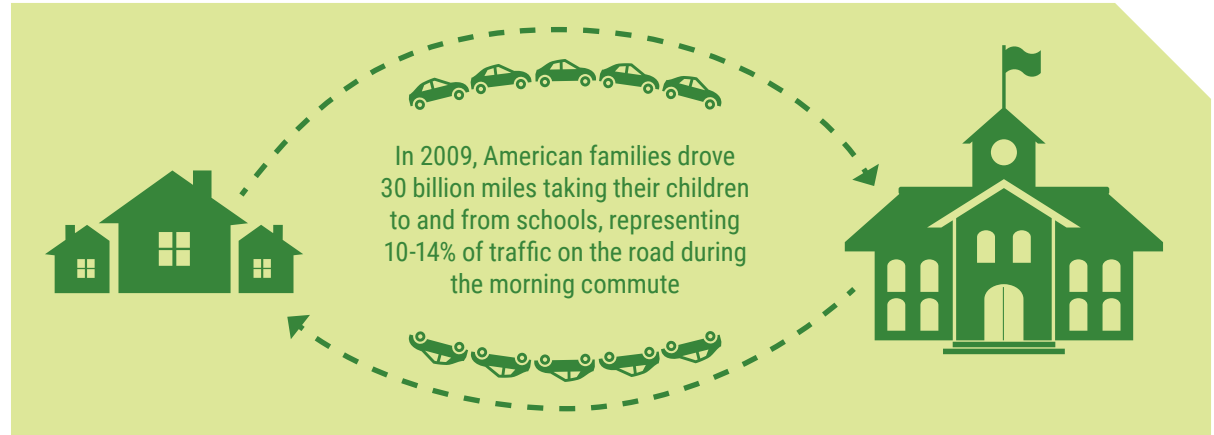


Figure 20: Intersection Improvements at Leisure City K-8 Center, Miami-Dade County, FDOT District 6

Improving Safety for Children Crossing Streets

Leisure City K-8 Center, located in Homestead, applied for and received funding to improve the safety and accessibility of roadway crossings used by students walking and bicycling to school. As part of the project, high-visibility crosswalks were added, in addition to pedestrian traffic signal heads, push buttons, accessible curb ramps and school crossing signs.

Construction was completed in 2015. The school has since incorporated pedestrian and bicycle safety education into instructional time and coordinated with the local police department for sporadic enforcement of traffic laws.

Helping Communities Build Sustainable SRTS Programs

From state-level resources, such as the SRTS Toolkit, to on-the-ground assistance from FDOT District Coordinators, the SRTS program has developed a rich and varied toolbox during the last 10 years. The following are examples of FDOT tools and resources available to communities as they apply for SRTS funding and implement SRTS programs.

“ Our local SRTS Coordinator is extremely hard working and has been doing an excellent job. ”

—Anonymous Respondent to SRTS Stakeholder Questionnaire

Resources	Application Workshops	District-Level Assistance	REDI Community Assistance
<p>The Florida SRTS program provides a variety of resources to help communities develop local SRTS programs. For example, the program is currently updating the Safe Ways to School Tool Kit. The new Florida Safe Routes to School Toolkit will give communities the tools and information they need to create an effective SRTS program.</p>	<p>In 2017, the Florida SRTS program instituted a new requirement for those applying for SRTS funds: attend a workshop to learn about the applications requirements and how to write a strong application. The first <i>Writing a Competitive Safe Routes to School Application</i> workshop was well-received with over 90 percent of attendees rating it as “valuable” or “very valuable.” The SRTS Program will continue to hold these workshops regularly to help those applying for SRTS funds.</p>	<p>Each FDOT District has one or more SRTS staff who are available to answer questions about SRTS projects and applications. These staff are invaluable resources for local communities. Eighty-two percent of respondents to a stakeholder questionnaire had spoken with or worked with an FDOT District SRTS staff member and the District staff were able to help in 92 percent of the cases.</p>	<p>Rural counties often have extremely limited staff and resources. In recognition of this, FDOT offers additional application assistance to designated communities as part of the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI). Initially piloted in 2016, the Florida SRTS program helps with site selection, data gathering, public outreach and initial project scoping to state-designated rural communities. To date, all of the communities that received this assistance had their projects funded.</p>

Partnerships

The Florida SRTS program's success is the result of collaboration with a variety of partners at both the state and local level. While the Florida SRTS program has grown dramatically over the past decade, its FDOT staff is only composed of eight individuals. In a state of over 21 million people, working with partners is crucial to expanding the program's reach. Many partners allow a relatively small program to make a mighty impact. These partners include cities, counties, law enforcement agencies, school districts, universities, public health organizations, medical centers and non-profit organizations.

The Florida SRTS education program is one example of an effective statewide partnership. It is carried out in collaboration with the University of Florida's College of Health and Human Performance. The University of Florida oversees the statewide education program and partners with other organizations around the state to hire SRTS educators and oversee SRTS activities.

A partnership with the Florida Blue Foundation worked to strengthen a Walking School Bus program for low-income students at Sulphur Springs Elementary in Hillsborough County. The Florida Blue Foundation provided resources and provided stipends for Walking School Bus leaders.

The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine's KIDZ Neuroscience Center is a local partner working in FDOT District 6. The Center focuses on preventing childhood brain and spinal cord injuries in south and central Florida through two key programs: WalkSafe and BikeSafe. Both programs provide curriculum and trainings for teachers to instill safe walking and bicycling practices among students. Over the last decade, these two programs reached an estimated 1.3 million students in Florida schools and another 50,000 individuals at community events. Throughout the state, other local partners with an active role in implementing the statewide education program include the

John Hopkin's All Children's Hospital, the India River Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization, among others.

Other key program partners are the FDOT School Crossing Guard Training Program at the state level and crossing guard agencies at the local level. Adult crossing guards play an important role in helping children cross streets safely at key locations near schools, and in educating them about pedestrian safety. Crossing guards help parents feel more comfortable about their children walking or bicycling to school.



Expanding Partnerships

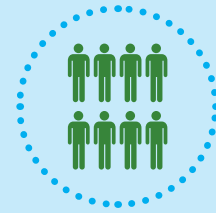
Despite the strong collaboration that the Florida SRTS program has fostered, developing strong partnerships is not always easy. In fact, during the 2017 SRTS stakeholder workshops held by FDOT, difficulty establishing effective partnerships was noted as being among the primary challenges communities face in developing successful SRTS programs. Over the last year, program leadership took on this challenge and worked to improve engagement between different parties.

Innovative Local Partnerships

The Broward Regional Health Planning Council and Partnerships Transforming Our Community's Health (TOUCH) worked with local partners to develop "Safe Routes Broward," a mobile and online tool for reporting non-emergency safety issues around schools and in neighborhoods within the Broward Municipal Services District. The system sends the issues to the proper authorities and allows residents to track the status of their reports.



Figure 21: Safe Routes Broward is an Example of a Local Partner Advancing SRTS, Broward County, FDOT District 4



Florida SRTS Program
8 people

State of Florida
21+ million people



Working with partners is crucial
to expanding the program's reach.



Figure 22: The Police and Fire Departments at a SRTS-related event in St. Petersburg, Pinellas County, FDOT District 7

Making an Impact

Florida’s SRTS program, while small compared to FDOT’s overall budget, plays an extraordinarily important role in ensuring Florida’s school children can safely walk and bicycle to school. Through modest investments, the program decreases vehicle trips, lessens congestion and air pollution around schools and encourages community-building toward a common goal: the safety, well-being and health of children. Program stakeholders were asked to pick a word to describe the program at a series of workshops held in 2017. Figure 24 illustrates the words mentioned: stakeholders frequently used words such as “necessary”, “needed”, “crucial”, “important”, “valued” and “essential” to describe the SRTS program.

Effectiveness

Nationally, SRTS programs have been shown to dramatically improve walking and bicycling rates; these benefits can be sustained over time. One of the most rigorous studies on SRTS, analyzing over 800 schools in four states (including Florida), found that SRTS programs that employ a combination of education, encouragement and engineering strategies could potentially see relative increases in walking and bicycling to school of up to 43 percent over five years.⁵ Sixty percent of this increase was attributed to education and encouragement programs, while the remaining increase was from engineering improvements.



Figure 23: How Stakeholders Describe the Florida SRTS Program Today

5 Noreen C. McDonald, Ruth L. Steiner, Chanam Lee, Tori Rhoulac Smith, Xuemei Zhu & Yizhao Yang (2014) Impact of the Safe Routes to School Program on Walking and Bicycling, Journal of the American Planning Association, 80:2, 153-167, DOI: [10.1080/01944363.2014.956654](https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2014.956654)

Moving Forward

Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan

Although Florida's SRTS program has grown dramatically over the past decade, far more remains to be done. While projects and programing improve the lives of children in communities across the state, Florida's large size and large population mean that many communities require additional investment to ensure safe routes to school for students.

The Florida SRTS program will soon unveil a new SRTS Strategic Plan to guide the program's direction for the next five years. As part of the planning process, key SRTS stakeholders throughout Florida completed an online questionnaire and were asked to describe how the program could be improved. The online questionnaire was followed by in-person

stakeholder meetings held in each FDOT District to explore the strengths and weaknesses, goals and objectives, and opportunities for the SRTS program. These stakeholder meetings helped the facilitators create a compelling and inclusive vision for the plan; responses from both the questionnaire and the meetings were used to shape the plan and identify opportunities for the program. When implemented, the SRTS Strategic Plan will provide a framework for continued program growth and expansion, effective and efficient use of program funds and new and strengthened partnerships. With continued support for SRTS, Florida can improve the safety and well-being of countless additional children over the next decade and beyond.



Figure 24: A Stakeholder Meeting for the SRTS Strategic Plan

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Florida Safe Routes to School

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