

FLORIDA

MARCH
2019

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

STRATEGIC PLAN



Florida Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan

March 2019



Florida Safe Routes to School

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This Strategic Plan will guide the next five (5) years of the Florida Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. It is designed to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations and provide a framework to enable stakeholders to work toward common goals. This plan also supports the *Florida Strategic Highway Safety Plan*.

History of SRTS

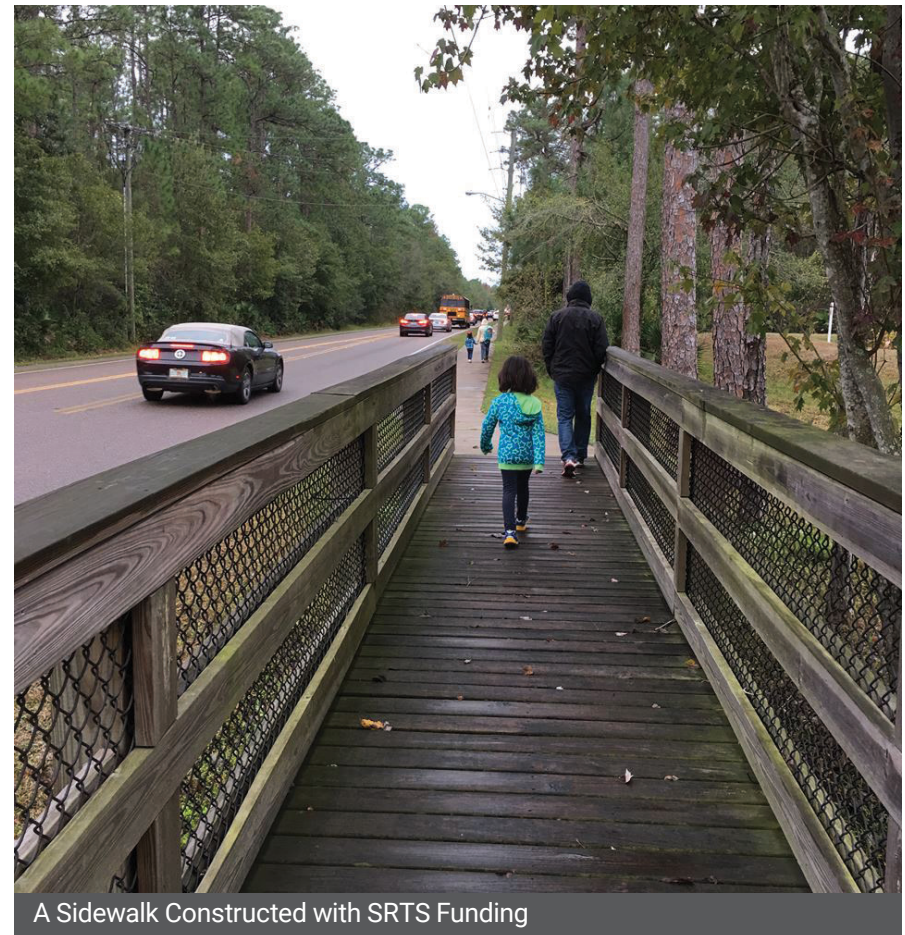
Florida was one of the first US states to begin working on SRTS in the late 1990s. The program grew in 2005 when the United States Congress funded the federal SRTS program through Section 1404 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Between 2007 and 2018, the Florida SRTS program dedicated over \$130 million to projects aimed at improving the safety of students who walk and bicycle to school.

Florida SRTS Program Structure

Florida's full-time SRTS Coordinator manages the program out of the State Safety Office. Each of the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) seven Districts have designated staff members responsible for SRTS. The District SRTS contacts have responsibility for day-to-day SRTS work with local schools, governments and other stakeholders.

Strategic Planning Process

This plan was the result of a planning process that included a stakeholder questionnaire, a series of stakeholder workshops held throughout the state and stakeholder interviews. The feedback gained through these means was integral to the development of this plan.



A Sidewalk Constructed with SRTS Funding

Strategic Planning Findings

A key finding from the planning process is that stakeholders feel the Florida SRTS program is very important.

Strengths

- Education
- Funding
- Resources and Tools
- FDOT Staff and Communication
- Collaboration and Public Input
- Applicant Workshops
- Application Assistance to Rural Communities

Weaknesses

- Application
- Not Enough Funding
- Project Selection and Eligibility
- Awareness
- Coordination
- Communication
- Program Resources and Best Practices
- Parent Surveys and Student Travel Tallies
- Lack of Planning

Opportunities

- New Partnerships, such as
 - Education Organizations
 - Health Organizations
 - Foundations
- Hospitals Improved Engagement with Community Traffic Safety Teams
- More Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Involvement

Threats

- Funding Cuts
- Education Program Cuts
- Lack of Support
- Sustainability

“ The Safe Routes to School program provides great resources and trainings to educate trainers and the public on the importance of pedestrian and bike safety. Our local Safe Routes to School Coordinator is extremely hardworking and has been doing an excellent job partnering with schools to encourage more bike/pedestrian safety. Encouraging teachers to implement curriculum in their PE classes seems logical and can reach a wide number and variety of youth. ”

– Feedback from the Stakeholder Questionnaire

Vision

Through the Florida SRTS Program, Florida communities will have access to the resources and tools needed to address critical safety concerns near schools and achieve measurable increases in the number of students walking and bicycling to school.

Recommendations



Focus Area #1: Support Local SRTS Programs

Goal: Local stakeholders and partners have the resources they need to create effective SRTS programs and projects

Objective 1.1: Make it easier for locals to access the resources they need

Strategy 1.1: Create an online resource center that houses SRTS program tools and resources

Objective 1.2: Make it easier for local stakeholders and partners to share best practices

Strategy 1.2: Encourage better sharing of best practices through meetings, the development of mini-guides and development of a list serve



Focus Area #2: Increase Awareness, Improve Program Visibility

Goal: Stakeholders recognize, understand and embrace the SRTS program

Objective 2.1: Ensure stakeholders get the information they need at the optimal time

Strategy 2.1: Develop a marketing and communication plan and calendar

Objective 2.2: Give District SRTS staff and local SRTS programs the tools needed to effectively communicate with stakeholders

Strategy 2.2: Develop ready-to-use and customizable messages and materials to help District SRTS staff and local SRTS programs with communication

Objective 2.3: Increase awareness of the program through the celebration of successes

Strategy 2.3: Create a statewide awards program



Focus Area #3: Maximize Impact of Limited SRTS Infrastructure Funds

Goal: SRTS funding is awarded to the projects that have the greatest impact



Focus Area #4: Maintain and Expand Funding Sources

Goal: Sufficient funding is available to address SRTS needs in each District

Objective 4.1: Identify new sources of funding for the SRTS program

Strategy 4.1: Explore alternative funding sources

Objective 3.1: Increase SRTS planning so that the projects with the most impact get built

Strategy 3.1: Enable and encourage SRTS planning at the local level

Objective 3.2: Encourage MPOs/TPOs to support SRTS activities

Strategy 3.2: Work with MPOs to improve their impact on SRTS programs

Option A: Create separate application and funding streams for SRTS projects

Option B: Create funding application scoring systems that provide extra points for SRTS projects

Option C: Increase MPO participation in SRTS activities

Strategy 4.2: Identify new sources of funding for sidewalks and enact policies and ordinances to support sidewalk construction

Option A: Identify one or more state or federal funding sources that can fund new sidewalk construction

Option B: Review FDOT policies to see whether they could be strengthened to ensure necessary sidewalks are included as a matter of course on other FDOT projects

Option C: Encourage local jurisdictions to support sidewalk construction through ordinances and policies



Focus Area #6: Enhance the Project Application and Selection Process

Goal: The SRTS program application and selection process supports strong SRTS projects without over-burdening locals

Objective 6.1: Increase communication regarding future applicant workshops

Strategy 6.1: Ensure future applicant workshops are well advertised and clearly communicate who needs to attend

Objective 6.2: Simplify the SRTS program application process

Strategy 6.2: As the program application moves to the Grant Application Process (GAP), streamline multiple funding applications

Objective 6.3: Ensure that communities understand how to apply for SRTS funding

Strategy 6.3: Provide tools and promote available application assistance to communities

Objective 6.4: Match the application difficulty to the project complexity

Strategy 6.4: Consider different approaches to the application for projects of various costs or complexities

Objective 6.5: Obtain improved control of SRTS data

Strategy 6.5: Consider implementation of a statewide online parent survey/student travel tally system for schools to use in place of the National Center for SRTS Data Center

Objective 6.6: Adopt additional improvements to the SRTS application and selection process

Strategy 6.6: Convene a committee of SRTS grant recipients to suggest ideas to improve the application and selection process



Focus Area #5: Facilitate New Partnership Opportunities

Goal: Increase the number of SRTS partners to help advance program goals throughout the state

Objective 5.1: Strengthen the link between public health agencies and SRTS

Strategy 5.1: Encourage public health agencies to promote active transportation and SRTS to reduce chronic disease

Objective 5.2: Increase SRTS outreach to partners

Strategy 5.2: Promote SRTS at partner meetings, conferences and in newsletters

Conclusion

This strategic plan recommends strategies to strengthen the Florida SRTS program, which is among the top in the United States. The most critical next step will be to identify new funding so the SRTS program can continue to thrive and grow. Partnerships have been central to the SRTS program's success. The program should continue to build upon existing partnerships and create new ones. The program should also create channels to share, promote and celebrate the program's success. If implemented, this plan will help the SRTS program achieve even greater success.

Introduction

This Strategic Plan is for the Florida Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Intended to guide the next five years of the program, the Strategic Plan will set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations and enable stakeholders to work toward common goals. The strategies that it recommends aim to create the strongest possible outcomes given the resources available.

This is the Florida SRTS program's first formal strategic plan, but the state has a thriving, active SRTS program. The program offers local communities throughout the state opportunities to apply for grants to fund projects that improve safety for students who walk and bicycle to school. There is sustained demand for the program throughout Florida, with grant applications exceeding available funds. Stakeholders highly value the Florida SRTS program due to the breadth of needs it addresses,

from reducing child pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities, to creating opportunities for children to obtain the recommended amount of physical activity each day, to reducing traffic congestion around schools. Stakeholders throughout Florida would like to see the program continue and to grow.

This plan supports the *Florida Strategic Highway Safety Plan*. The 2016 Plan, *Driving Down Fatalities*, includes a Pedestrians and Bicyclists emphasis area. The SRTS Strategic Plan supports the following strategies under this emphasis area:

- Create urban and rural built environments to support and encourage safe bicycling and walking.
- Support national, state and local initiatives and policies that promote bicycle and pedestrian safety.



Upgraded Signs, Pedestrian Push Buttons and Crosswalk at a School Crossing

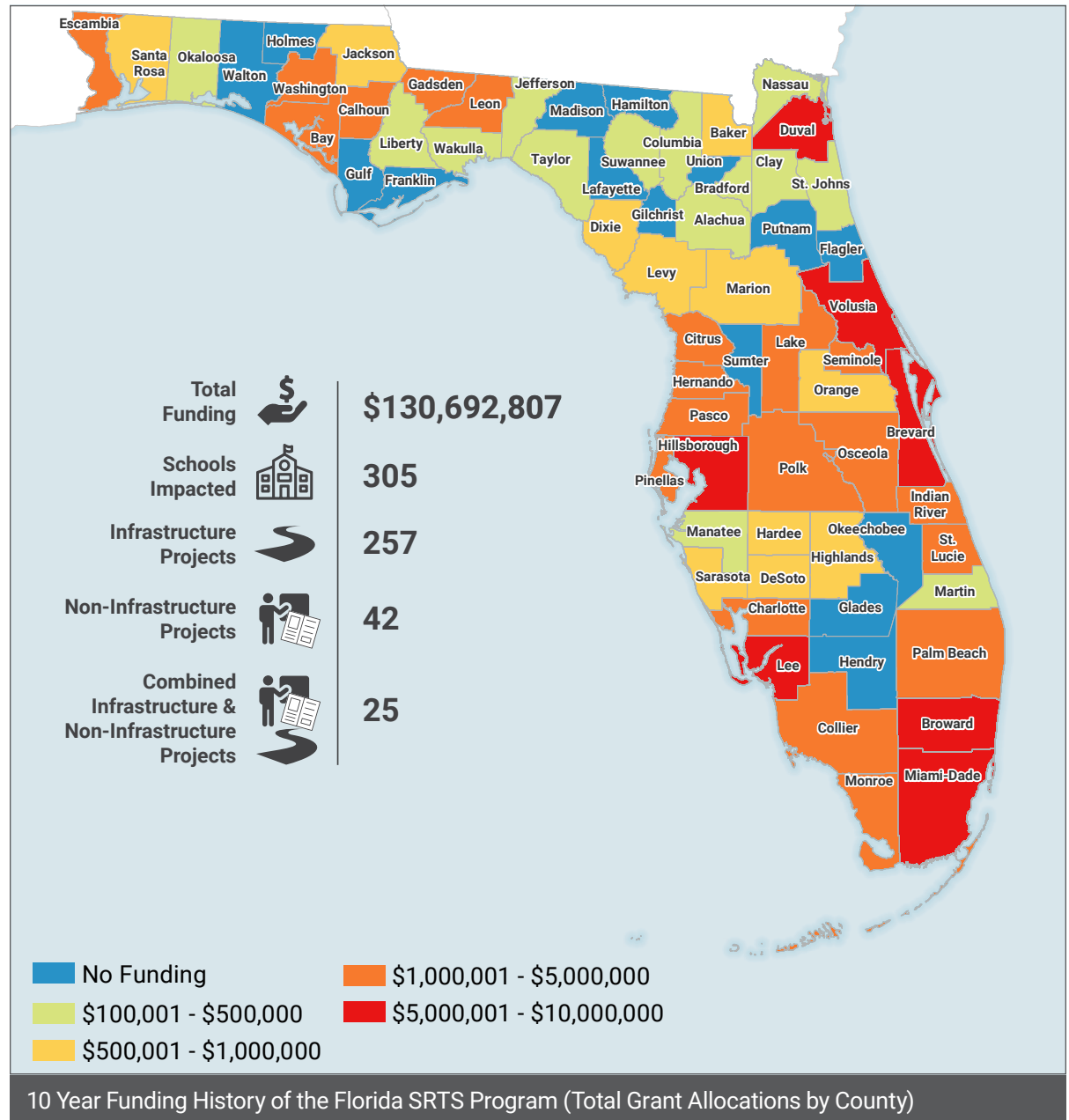
History of SRTS

In the late 1990s, Florida was one of the first (US) states to begin working on SRTS. The state piloted “Safe Ways to School,” a SRTS program modeled after “Safe School Routes” in Melville, Australia. The program was piloted at 10 elementary schools and resulted in the development of 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.

In 2005, the United States Congress funded the federal SRTS program through Section 1404 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The federal SRTS program had three goals:

1. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
2. 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
3. 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 schools.

10-Year SRTS Funding: 2007-2018



The legislation provided funding to every state and the District of Columbia. FDOT hired a statewide SRTS coordinator, and FDOT's first SRTS grant applications were funded in 2007. The program initially funded a mixture of infrastructure and non-infrastructure grants, however in later years grant applications were limited to infrastructure projects.

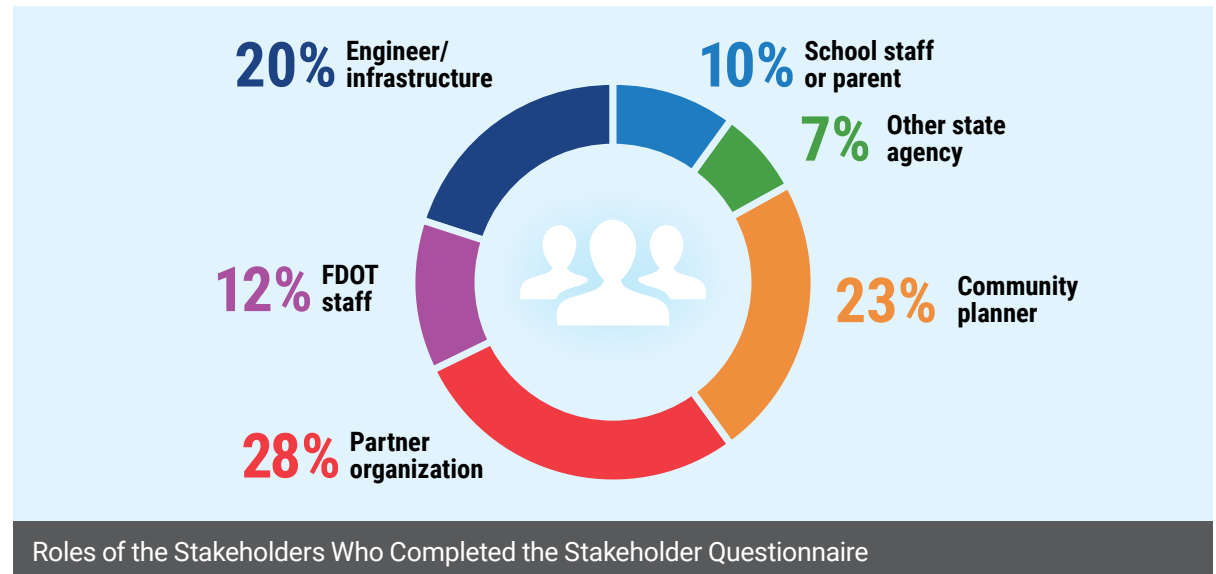
Successive transportation legislation, including the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21, 2012) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act, 2015), eliminated the stand-alone SRTS program and incorporated SRTS and other walking and bicycling programs into the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Although SRTS remained eligible for funding through TAP, FDOT staff soon observed that communities were having difficulty getting SRTS project applications funded due to increased competition from other TAP-eligible projects. FDOT decided to create a stand-alone SRTS program by transferring Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds to the state's Surface Transportation Program (STP). FDOT allocated \$7 million annually to SRTS since 2015. Between 2007 and 2018, the Florida SRTS program dedicated over \$130 million to projects aimed at improving the safety of students who walk and bicycle to school. The *Florida SRTS 10-Year Report* includes more information on the history and successes of the Florida SRTS program.

Florida SRTS Program Structure

Florida's full-time SRTS Coordinator manages the program out of the State Safety Office. Each of FDOT's seven Districts have designated staff members responsible for SRTS. The District SRTS contacts have responsibility for day-to-day SRTS work with local schools, governments and other stakeholders. They also work with evaluation committees to review and rank the annual SRTS grant applications and then submit the selected project(s) to the state SRTS coordinator. The state SRTS Coordinator then reviews the requests and approves the projects. Finally, the District SRTS contacts notify applicants about whether their projects received funding.

Strategic Planning Process

While the Florida SRTS program is administered at the state level, its success is largely due to the work of a variety of stakeholders who implement the program locally. In developing this strategic plan, FDOT provided a number of opportunities for state and local stakeholders to provide input. Starting in the summer of 2017, stakeholders were invited to complete a questionnaire to provide their thoughts on what the Florida SRTS program does well and ways the program could improve. Responses came in from 169 individuals representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders across the state, including FDOT staff, local engineering staff, community planners and school staff and parents.



A series of strategic planning workshops were held throughout the state in the summer and fall of 2017. Regional and local stakeholders were engaged at meetings in each District; one meeting was held in each of Districts 4, 5, 6 and 7, and two meetings were held in Districts 1, 2 and 3 (the three largest Districts geographically). A separate meeting aimed at state-level stakeholders was held in Tallahassee. Nearly 100 individuals attended the workshops, including local SRTS applicants, school district transportation officials,

community planners, representatives from MPOs, FDOT staff and representatives from health and education agencies. The attendees provided input on aspects of the Florida SRTS program that work well and where there was room for improvement.

Finally, to supplement the input gained through the questionnaire and workshops, interviews were conducted with 12 stakeholders. The stakeholders included representatives from FDOT, education programs, the Florida

Department of Health, local SRTS applicants and MPO staff. These conversations provided additional insight into how the Florida SRTS operates, what makes it successful and how it could be improved. The feedback gained from the questionnaire, workshops and interviews was integral to the development of this plan. Key results from the stakeholder input are summarized in the next section.



Stakeholder Workshop

Strategic Planning Findings

Stakeholder engagement yielded input on a wide variety of topics. The feedback was analyzed to determine which areas were most important for a strong and effective SRTS program in the future. The following is a very broad summary of the key findings. A complete summary is provided in Appendix A. The full results from the questionnaire are included in Appendix B. The full results from the workshops are included in Appendix C.

If there was one key finding from this planning process, it was that the Florida SRTS program is very important to stakeholders. During one activity at the stakeholder workshops, participants were asked to provide one word to describe the Florida SRTS program today. By a large margin, the dominant theme was words describing the program's importance, such as "critical," "essential" and "necessary."

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Education	Application	New Partnerships, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Organizations • Health Organizations • Foundations • Hospitals 	Funding Cuts
Funding	Not Enough Funding		Education Program Cuts
Resources and Tools	Project Selection and Eligibility		Lack of Support
FDOT Staff and Communication	Awareness	Improved Engagement with Community Traffic Safety Teams	Sustainability
Collaboration and Public Input	Coordination		
Applicant Workshops	Communication	More MPO and TPO Involvement	
Application Assistance to Rural Communities	Program Resources and Best Practices		
	Parent Surveys and Student Travel Tallies		
	Lack of Planning		

Vision

A vision for the Florida SRTS program was developed with input from stakeholders who attended the strategic planning workshops. At each meeting, participants were invited to share their thoughts by completing the following sentence: “In five years, the Florida SRTS program will...”. The participants’ responses were evaluated to identify broad themes, and the resulting vision statement describes a future toward which the Florida SRTS program can work and aspire.

Vision: Through the Florida SRTS Program, Florida communities will have access to the resources and tools needed to address critical safety concerns near schools and achieve measurable increases in the number of students walking and bicycling to school.



An International Walk to School Day Event in Jacksonville

Recommendations

The recommendations in this plan are organized into six focus areas and are intended to help the Florida SRTS program achieve the plan vision. Each focus area contains a program goal, objectives and short- or long-term strategies to achieve the goal. The short-term strategies are intended to be implemented within 12 months of plan completion while the long-term strategies are intended to be implemented beyond the initial 12 months. The focus areas are not listed in any particular order.



Focus Area #1: Support Local SRTS Programs

Throughout Florida, communities are implementing a wide variety of successful SRTS projects. The Florida SRTS program has shared these best practices through newsletters and the Resources page on the Florida SRTS website. The goal of this focus area is to build upon the existing practices and broaden the sharing of SRTS best practices and resources throughout the state. This will entail compiling existing resources as well as developing new ones.



Focus Area #2: Increase Awareness, Improve Program Visibility

Awareness of the program and its activities is critical to its growth. SRTS is active and thriving in Florida, but recognition of the program could be stronger among schools, parents and local communities.



Focus Area #3: Maximize Impact of Limited SRTS Infrastructure Funds

Since demand for the SRTS program exceeds available funding, it is important to maximize the impact of the funding that is available. This can happen through supporting projects that will have the greatest safety benefit and impact the greatest numbers of students walking and bicycling to school.



Focus Area #4: Maintain and Expand Funding Sources

Throughout the stakeholder involvement process for this plan, the most commonly raised issue was the need for additional SRTS funding. Stakeholders said that there are very few funding sources for many common SRTS projects, particularly construction of new sidewalks.



Focus Area #5: Facilitate New Partnership Opportunities

The FDOT SRTS Coordinator has been an active promoter of SRTS, serving on a variety of state-level committees for health/wellness, education and pedestrian/bicycle safety. There are many other successful SRTS partnerships throughout Florida at the state, District and local levels. Partnerships can help FDOT promote the SRTS program and expand the reach of existing program elements, as well as leverage non-FDOT funding sources for SRTS activities.



Focus Area #6: Enhance the Project Application and Selection Process

Stakeholders indicated that while the funding applications resulted in strong projects, they were too difficult and time-consuming to complete given the possibility of not receiving funding.



Focus Area #1: Support Local SRTS Programs

Goal: Local stakeholders and partners have the resources they need to create effective SRTS programs and projects

Objective 1.1: Make it easier for locals to access the resources they need

Strategy 1.1: Create an online resource center that houses SRTS program tools and resources

Timeframe: Short Term

Build upon the existing SRTS Resources webpage to create a comprehensive online resource center for Florida SRTS. The resource center would provide planning tools (such as the revised Safe Ways to School Tool Kit and project prioritization tools), implementation resources (such as templates for stickers and certificates that locals can print on their own) and case studies and best practices from throughout Florida. The website would be organized so that resources are easy to find.

Objective 1.1 Performance Measures

- Creation of Online Resource Center
- Number of online resource center website visits
- Number of resource downloads

Objective 1.2: Make it easier for local stakeholders and partners to share best practices

Strategy 1.2: Encourage better sharing of best practices through meetings, the development of mini-guides and development of a list serve

Timeframe: Long Term

This strategy is intended to encourage better sharing of best practices at the local and District level. Consider encouraging District SRTS contacts to hold periodic meetings aimed at allowing locals to share SRTS best practices with others in their region. This includes developing mini-guides for SRTS programs and activities (for example, see the Vermont SRTS mini-guides (<https://saferoutes.vermont.gov/resources/miniguides>)) and including them in the online resource center. It could also include starting a listserv, Google Group or other mechanism to give locals working on SRTS in Florida the ability to communicate with each other to ask questions and share best practices.

Objective 1.2 Performance Measures

- Number of District best practice meetings
- Number of mini-guides developed
- Development of a list serve, Google Group or other tool to allow locals to e-mail questions about best practices



Focus Area #2: Increase Awareness, Improve Program Visibility

Goal: Stakeholders recognize, understand and embrace the SRTS program

Objective 2.1: Ensure stakeholders get the information they need at the optimal time

Strategy 2.1: Develop a marketing and communication plan and calendar

Timeframe: Short Term

A marketing plan includes a statement of need, identification of target markets and a description of resources needed to achieve desired goals. A communication plan is a component of the marketing plan that outlines how to provide stakeholders with information. The communication plan defines specific stakeholders, messages and communication channels (i.e. social media, newsletters, etc.). A communication calendar establishes a timeline for when specific information will be communicated throughout the year.

The marketing and communication plan should address a variety of stakeholders, including— but not limited to—school principals, teachers, school boards, county commissions, Community Traffic Safety Teams, regional transportation agencies/ MPOs/TPOs, local governments, the Department of Education, health departments (state and local), local elected officials, parents of school age children and students. The plans should address both communication amongst the stakeholders (i.e. FDOT Headquarters to Districts to local SRTS contacts) and communication directly to students and parents (e.g. the use of media opportunities to promote programs). It is important to note that the stakeholders may also provide valuable channels through which to provide the messaging. For example, the Department of Education may be able to assist with messaging to schools and school boards.

The plan may include:

- Key messages for FDOT staff working on SRTS and local SRTS programs.
- Specific media opportunities that FDOT and local SRTS programs will pursue to spread the word about important programs such as the education program, grant application opportunities and the Superhero Safety Squad: Guardians of Roadway Safety.

- Review of methods used to disseminate information to District and local SRTS contacts, including updates to the database of state and District e-mail lists.
- Recommendations for trainings for District SRTS staff on communication expectations and methods.

Objective 2.1 Performance Measures

- Creation of the marketing and communication plan and calendar
- Number of subscribers to the SRTS e-mail list
- Number of website visits
- Number of repeat website users



A Winning Entry from the 2015 SRTS Poster Contest



Focus Area #2: Increase Awareness, Improve Program Visibility

Objective 2.2: Give District SRTS staff and local SRTS programs the tools they need to effectively communicate with stakeholders

Strategy 2.2: Develop ready-to-use and customizable messages and materials to help District SRTS staff and local SRTS programs with communication

Timeframe: Long Term

Customizable materials, such as talking points, sample presentations, sample Walk and Bike to School Day press releases, social media messages and other communication tools, can help ensure stakeholders are spreading consistent messages that accurately reflect the goals of the Florida SRTS program. While some materials currently exist, they are not always readily available to those who need them. Therefore, it is recommended that the materials created or compiled as part of this Strategy be made available on the Online Resource Center (see Strategy 1.1). The communication plan recommended under Strategy 2.1 should include plans for how to promote these materials.

A few examples of needs this strategy could address include:

- Sample presentations for District Government Liaisons, Safety Staff and SRTS contacts to present at Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) meetings as well as meetings hosted by other groups. Also, a sample presentation to educate District safety offices and local governments on the hazardous walking conditions law.
- Ready-to-use messages for local partners to use during back-to-school, International Walk to School Day, National Bike to school Day and Crossing Guard Appreciation Day (either link to the resources available on national websites or create Florida-specific resources).

Strategy 2.2 Performance Measures

- Creation of resource content
- Number of resource downloads

Objective 2.3: Increase awareness of the program through the celebration of successes

Strategy 2.3: Create a statewide awards program

Timeframe: Long Term

There are countless SRTS programs throughout Florida that have provided communities with all kinds of benefits. By celebrating and acknowledging these successes, FDOT can increase awareness and improve program visibility while also recognizing key local and regional stakeholders. Awards can drive media coverage and encourage new stakeholders to participate in SRTS.

Potential award categories could include:

- Outstanding Partners of the Year: to recognize a school or other partner that is successfully implementing SRTS.
- Champion of the Year: to recognize a person that plays an important role in advancing SRTS.
- Most Innovative Project: to highlight a project that successfully tests a new idea.

Strategy 2.3 Performance Measures

- Creation of a statewide awards program
- Number of award nominations per year
- Number of media stories about awards



Focus Area #3: Maximize Impact of Limited SRTS Infrastructure Funds

Goal: SRTS funding is awarded to the projects that have the greatest impact

Objective 3.1: Increase SRTS planning so that the projects with the most impact get built

Strategy 3.1: Enable and encourage SRTS planning at the local level

Timeframe: Short Term

Creating SRTS plans and pedestrian and bicycle plans, as well as using other tools, can help communities identify and prioritize potential projects according to their impacts on safety and the number of students who would benefit. These tools can make local jurisdictions better equipped to pick strong projects for their funding applications.

FDOT could take a variety of approaches to encourage SRTS planning.

Option A: Provide resources to assist local stakeholders with SRTS planning

FDOT's Safe Ways to School Tool Kit helps locals understand how to complete SRTS planning. This resource, along with other existing project prioritization tools such as the National Center for SRTS safety-based prioritization tool (http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pdf/Community_SRTSstate_SafetyBasedPrioritization.PDF) or the methodology developed and used to prioritize schools and projects in FDOT District 6 (<http://www.miamidadetpo.org/library/reports/safe-routes-to-school-2014-infrastructure-plans-final-report-2015-08.pdf>), could be compiled and placed on the Florida SRTS Online Resource Center described under Strategy 1.1. These tools can help locals make better decisions about which SRTS projects to include in their SRTS funding application.

Option B: In reviewing SRTS funding applications, give greater weight to projects that were identified through and are currently included in existing plans

The current SRTS application offers additional points for projects that are identified as a priority in a bicycle/pedestrian plan. Consider giving additional weight to this question, and include SRTS plans specifically as a qualifying plan.

Option C: Offer assistance with the creation of SRTS plans

Dedicate a portion of existing program funds or identify new funds to provide consultant assistance to help schools or communities develop a SRTS plan. Several state SRTS programs offer such assistance with positive outcomes. Schools or communities apply for assistance and if awarded the state DOT hires a consultant to partner with them to complete a SRTS plan. Each SRTS plan identifies SRTS projects and organizes them into high, medium and low priority, which informs decisions when applying for funds. In addition to identifying priority projects, consultant-assisted planning can ease the application process for the community. SRTS plans often compile much of the information that is required on funding applications. The consultant can help the locals undertake some of the required application steps, such as public involvement meetings and completion of the parent surveys and student travel tallies.

Strategy 3.1 Performance Measures

- Existence of new planning resources or planning support
- Number of awarded SRTS projects that were included in plans



Focus Area #3: Maximize Impact of Limited SRTS Infrastructure Funds

Objective 3.2: Encourage MPOs/TPOs to support SRTS activities

Strategy 3.2: Work with MPOs to improve their impact on SRTS programs

Timeframe: Short Term

Some Florida MPOs are leading robust SRTS programs, but others have room for improvement. There are a variety of ways that MPOs can support SRTS projects, both through their TAP apportionments and through participation in SRTS projects. Examples include:

Option A: Create separate application and funding streams for SRTS projects

Dedicate a portion of an MPO's TAP apportionment to SRTS projects and create separate application processes for SRTS and TAP. For example, the Maricopa Association of Governments (Arizona) created separate application processes for SRTS infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects, in addition to the standard TAP application. Similarly, the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada created a TAP application with different project types. One was non-motorized infrastructure projects and another was SRTS non-infrastructure projects.

Option B: Create funding application scoring systems that provide extra points for SRTS projects

Within their existing TAP application process, MPOs can create a scoring system that provides extra points for SRTS projects, improving their ability to compete against other applications. The River to Sea TPO (Florida) is an example of an organization that has taken this approach: projects that are close to schools and that enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists get extra points. The TPO encourages SRTS-eligible projects.

Option C: Increase MPO Participation in SRTS activities

MPOs can be SRTS leaders within their region. MPO staff should be encouraged to learn about SRTS programs and to participate in SRTS activities, such as visiting local schools during arrival and dismissal and discussing challenges and opportunities with school leaders. MPO staff may also be helpful in facilitating public input meetings and in collecting input from and encouraging collaboration among the many types of SRTS stakeholders, such as school districts, local governments and health departments.

Strategy 3.2 Performance Measure

- Number of meetings, discussions or communications between FDOT staff and MPOs to encourage growth in MPO support of SRTS



Pedestrian Safety Education at a School



Focus Area #4: Maintain and Expand Funding Sources

Goal: There is sufficient funding to address SRTS needs in each District

Objective 4.1: Identify new sources of funding for the SRTS program

Strategy 4.1: Explore alternative funding sources

Timeframe: Short Term

Identifying new funding sources may be critical to the future of the Florida SRTS program. New funding is also necessary to ensure that the popular SRTS education program can continue. The education program is considered a key program strength and the Five Es (Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation) are a defining feature of SRTS programs. New funding is also necessary to ensure the continued use of SRTS incentives which help encourage schools to participate in SRTS and students and parents to participate in events.

Some states dedicate funds received from school zone moving violations to SRTS programs and projects. Other states use state funds to supplement SRTS funding. Whatever approach is taken, additional funding is recommended to ensure the continued success of the Florida SRTS program.

Strategy 4.1 Performance Measures

- Annual funding amount for Florida SRTS projects
- Number of incentive items delivered to schools
- Annual funding amount for Florida SRTS education program

Strategy 4.2: Identify new sources of funding for sidewalks and enact policies and ordinances to support sidewalk construction

Timeframe: Long Term

There are few sources of sidewalk funding in Florida and a desire for sidewalks drives a large percentage of SRTS applications. Identifying new funding, policies and ordinances will help the SRTS program to more effectively address all different types of pedestrian and bicyclist safety issues near schools. There are a variety of potential approaches for increasing sidewalk construction in Florida:

Option A: Identify one or more state or federal funding sources that can fund new sidewalk construction

Consider identifying one or more additional state or federal funding sources for which the construction of sidewalks could become eligible activities. One potential candidate may be the municipal Small County Outreach Program (SCOP), although using that for sidewalk construction would require a legislative change.

Option B: Review FDOT policies to see whether they could be strengthened to ensure that necessary sidewalks are included as a matter of course on other FDOT projects

While the 2018 FDOT Design Manual provides improved guidance for the provision of sidewalks as part of projects, review other FDOT policies and guidelines to find opportunities to strengthen when sidewalk construction becomes required as part of other construction projects. For example, Florida's Design Criteria for Resurfacing, Restoration and Rehabilitation (RRR) of Streets and Highways does not appear to explicitly require the construction of sidewalks on any projects. While the Design Criteria require a recommendation by the District Pedestrian/Bicycle Coordinator on any RRR project, they do not appear to require that the Coordinator's recommendation be followed.



Focus Area #4: Maintain and Expand Funding Sources

Option C: Encourage local jurisdictions to support sidewalk construction through ordinances and policies

Develop model ordinances, case studies or other resources to encourage local jurisdictions to enact policies and legislation to encourage more routine construction of sidewalks. Compile model ordinances and policies such as the ones described below and make them available on the online SRTS resource center (Strategy 1.1):

- Enact ordinances requiring sidewalk construction as part of development projects.
- Assess impact fees when warranted by new development, as new development has impacts to congestion, air and water quality and other public utilities and services. Some communities charge impact fees on certain development projects and dedicate that funding to improving non-motorized transportation or public safety.
- Off-site mitigation for new development: communities may require new developments to construct sidewalks outside the development boundaries if there is a likely negative transportation impact resulting from that development.

Strategy 4.2 Performance Measures

- Existence of other funding sources for sidewalk construction
- Completion of an assessment of FDOT policies to see if requirements for sidewalk construction as part of other projects can be strengthened



SRTS-Funded Pedestrian Bridge in Collier County



Focus Area #5: Facilitate New Partnership Opportunities

Goal: Increase the number of SRTS partners to help advance program goals throughout the state

Objective 5.1: Strengthen the link between public health agencies and SRTS

Strategy 5.1: Encourage public health agencies to promote active transportation and SRTS to reduce chronic disease

Timeframe: Long Term

Several states are recognizing the overlapping goals between SRTS programs and state and local health departments. Like SRTS practitioners, health departments are often also focused on chronic diseases that stem from a lack of physical activity, and on safety issues such as pedestrian injuries and fatalities. FDOT should consider working with the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) to identify appropriate grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and others that could be used to fund SRTS activities such as bicycle and pedestrian education and SRTS encouragement efforts. For example, the Ohio Department of Transportation partners with the Ohio Department of Health to advance SRTS in the state, and the Ohio Department of Health encourages county health departments to include SRTS activities in their work plans. FDOT could work with FDOH to encourage county health departments to include active transportation and SRTS activities in their work plans when funding allows.

Strategy 5.1 Performance Measure

- Number of meetings, discussions or communications between FDOT staff and Florida Department of Health and/or County Health Departments

Objective 5.2: Increase SRTS outreach to partners

Strategy 5.2: Promote SRTS at partner meetings, conferences and in newsletters

Timeframe: Long Term

Recruit district staff and other partners to train their colleagues or present their successes to community groups working on SRTS, as well as at their respective professional conferences and meetings. In addition, recruit partners to submit SRTS-related articles to any newsletters put out by groups to which they belong.



The Police and Fire Departments at a SRTS-related event in St. Petersburg



Focus Area #5: Facilitate New Partnership Opportunities

Examples of meetings and conferences where SRTS presentations may be valuable:

- Community Traffic Safety Team meetings
- School Transportation Working Group meetings
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meetings
- Florida Association of Pupil Transportation Conference
- Safe Kids Coalition meetings
- Florida Parent Teacher Association Leadership Convention
- Florida Association of School Administrators conferences
- Shape Florida (Society of Health & Physical Educators) Convention
- Florida American Society of Landscape Architects Conference & Expo
- Florida Section of the Institute of Transportation of Engineers meetings and workshops
- Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association Annual Conference
- Florida School Crossing Guard Supervisors meetings
- Florida Association of School Resource Officers Conference
- Florida Sheriffs Association Conferences
- Florida Police Chiefs Association Conferences
- Florida Academy of Family Physicians Spring Forum
- The Future of Pediatric Practice Conference by the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Strategy 5.2 Performance Measures

- Number of partners on the SRTS e-mail list
- Number of conferences and meetings reached



A Student Shows Off Her SRTS Safety Poster



Focus Area #6: Enhance the Project Application and Selection Process

Goal: The SRTS program application and selection process supports strong SRTS projects without over-burdening locals

Objective 6.1: Increase communication regarding future applicant workshops

Strategy 6.1: Ensure future applicant workshops are well advertised and clearly communicate who needs to attend

Timeframe: Short Term

Stakeholders indicated that the applicant workshops were very helpful. However, not all stakeholders received notice of the meetings, and there was misunderstanding about who was required to attend. One solution is to ensure that as the workshops continue, they are heavily advertised. Another is to clearly communicate who is required to attend. Finally, if resources allow, more than one workshop could be offered in each District each year.

Strategy 6.1 Performance Measures

- Number of applicant workshops
- Number of applicant workshops attendees

Objective 6.2: Simplify the SRTS program application process

Strategy 6.2: As the program application moves to the Grant Application Program (GAP), streamline multiple funding applications

Timeframe: Long Term

The SRTS funding application is currently using a standalone form. FDOT has plans to move the SRTS funding application to GAP in the future, which will facilitate electronic completion of the funding application. As this occurs, consider allowing

local agencies to submit one application and have Districts decide which funding source (SCRAP, SCOP, Sun Trails, TA, SRTS, etc.) is best for each project application.

Strategy 6.2 Performance Measure

- Completion of the move to GAP and the streamlining of application funding

Objective 6.3: Ensure that communities understand how to apply for SRTS funding

Strategy 6.3: Provide tools and promote available application assistance to communities

Timeframe: Short Term

Stakeholders suggested that a few key tools and wider advertising of the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Communities application assistance program would enhance the project application experience. Often, many stakeholders are required to successfully complete a SRTS program application. Providing an example application that labels the various sections of the application according to which stakeholder typically completes it would help communities to avoid confusion. Stakeholders also expressed a desire to better understand what types of projects are eligible for SRTS funding. Consider developing a resource that covers the spectrum of eligible project types. Additionally, stakeholders indicated that the assistance available to assist REDI Communities with their SRTS application was not widely known and could be promoted more clearly on application materials.

Strategy 6.3 Performance Measures

- Posting of sample SRTS applications and eligible project resource on website
- Edits to application materials to more clearly advertise REDI assistance



Focus Area #6: Enhance the Project Application and Selection Process

Objective 6.4: Match the application difficulty to the project complexity

Strategy 6.4: Consider different approaches to the application for projects of various costs or complexities

Timeframe: Long Term

The same SRTS application is required for both small and large SRTS projects. Consider implementing an application with differing requirements for projects of various costs or complexities. For example, consider offering a simplified application with fewer requirements for projects under a certain dollar amount or for certain types of projects that don't require as detailed design.

Strategy 6.4 Performance Measure

- Establishment of new application process

Objective 6.5: Obtain improved control of SRTS data

Strategy 6.5: Consider implementation of a statewide online parent survey/student travel tally system for schools to use in place of the National Center for SRTS Data Center

Timeframe: Long Term

The National Center for SRTS has reduced its support for the processing of parent surveys and student travel tallies and no longer supports the scanning of paper copies. Stakeholders also indicated that it can be difficult to be granted access to the data for the schools with which they work. Facing many of these same challenges, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) recently implemented a statewide online parent survey and student travel tally system, which makes it simpler for schools to start surveys and tallies. Locals can e-mail ODOT to gain access to their data and the system gives ODOT ownership of the data and enables the completion of better statewide data analysis. One downside of the system is that it does not support paper surveys, however it does support completing surveys from smartphones.

Strategy 6.5 Performance Measure

- Implementation of a statewide online parent survey/student travel tally system

Objective 6.6 Adopt additional improvements to the SRTS application and selection process

Strategy 6.6: Convene a committee of SRTS grant recipients to suggest ideas to improve the application and selection process

Timeframe: Short Term

Consider convening a committee of SRTS grant recipients to suggest ideas to improve the application and selection process. While an overwhelming number of stakeholders indicated that the application is too time consuming, many stakeholders also indicated that the current application process led to stronger finished projects. A committee could help identify which application components are most critical to ensuring strong projects.

Strategy 6.6 Performance Measure

- Establishment of the committee



A 2017 International Walk to School Day Event

Conclusion

This strategic plan recommends strategies to strengthen the Florida SRTS program, which is among the top in the United States. The program is aligned with other state goals related to safety, access, air quality and health. The next step will be to identify new funding so the SRTS program can continue to thrive and grow. Partnerships have been central to the SRTS program’s success, and the program should continue to build upon existing partnerships and create new ones. The program should also create channels to share, promote and celebrate the program’s success. If implemented, this plan will help the SRTS program achieve even greater success.



The Florida SRTS Program Developed a Series of Safety Brochures Modeled After Graphic Novels



How Stakeholders Describe the Florida SRTS Program Today

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