



The Second Wave: State Network Policy Changes in 20 States 2010 Report



February 2011

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The National Partnership is a fast-growing network of more than 500 organizations and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices, secure funding and inform agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs across the nation. The National Partnership's mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. The National Partnership is hosted by the Bikes Belong Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which is a sister organization to the Bikes Belong Coalition.

For more information, visit www.saferoutespartnership.org.

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The Safe Routes to School movement has made remarkable progress in the short number of years it has been in existence in the US. More than ten thousand schools have launched a Safe Routes to School program, and as a result many hundreds of thousands of children are now getting the daily physical activity and exposure to the outdoors that will help to make them be more healthy, happy and ready to learn. In order to maximize on these efforts, Safe Routes to School programs need to be supported by an institutionalized set of policies that provide funding and access to a built environment that is safe and convenient for walking and bicycling.

The State Network Project is doing just that! By building partnerships and changing policies at the state level, state networks are increasing funding for programs and changes to the built environment, and making the use of existing Safe Routes to School funds more effective. State networks are also removing barriers that may impede Safe Routes to School efforts. For instance, only one-third of children even live within two miles of a school in the US. This means that two-thirds of American children have to travel long distances to get to their school – this is not a viable option for most families. Parents and other caretakers usually end up driving their kids to school, or the school district spends a lot of money providing busing. Either of those options mean many more traffic on the street, increasing safety risks, air pollution, leaving less school funding for education, and removing what used to be the primary way that kids got to be outdoors and active during the day. State networks change state policies to preserve the community-centered, or neighborhood school and also advocate for complete streets, ensuring that all roads can serve all modes. Once schools are near where kids live, they can become destinations for more than youth education, becoming after-school playgrounds, sporting venues, and even community meeting places and adult classrooms. Schools should, and can be again, the center of communities.

During 2010, the state network project helped state departments of transportation to succeed in awarding \$100 million in Safe Routes to School funds in the 20 states we are serving. The networks also changed the perception and attitudes of elected officials, influenced other state and local decision makers, and have catalyzed built environment improvements that are making neighborhoods more livable in the 20 states we served. The National Partnership thanks the more than 600 partners who participate in the 20 state networks, and is pleased to share their stories.

Sincerely,

Robert Ping
State Network Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
February 2011

The Safe Routes to School state network project (Project) links together leaders and stakeholders from a variety of disciplines, including health, transportation, bicycle and pedestrian advocacy, youth engagement, education and smart growth, to help the \$800 million federal Safe Routes to School program succeed, and to create state-level policy changes. The Project first started in the year 2007 with ten states; by 2010, the project had grown to include 19 states and the District of Columbia, thanks to generous funding support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Project works with partners in the 20 states to increase physical activity for children in grades K–8 by increasing safe opportunities for children to walk and bicycle to schools. State networks build partnerships with agencies, municipalities and advocacy organizations to institutionalize the Safe Routes to School program at the state level and leverage additional resources and policy changes to support walking and bicycling to school and improvements to the built environment, especially in low-income communities. In each of the states a 16 or 20-hour per week contractor works as the state network organizer within a local host organization.



What follows is a list of the 20 states and the organizations that led the state network project in 2010:

Arkansas	Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas
California	Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Colorado	The Children's Hospital/LiveWell Colorado
District of Columbia	Washington Area Bicyclists Association
Florida	National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
Georgia	Georgia Bikes!
Hawaii	Peoples Advocacy for Trails Hawaii/Hawaii Nutrition & Physical Activity Coalition
Illinois	Active Transportation Alliance
Kentucky	Kentucky Youth Advocates; Chair – Office of Lt. Governor, Second Lady
Louisiana	Center for Urban and Public Affairs, University of New Orleans
Maryland	Washington Area Bicyclists Association
Minnesota	Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Center for Prevention
Mississippi	Bike Walk Mississippi
Missouri	Missouri Foundation for Bicycling and Walking/Missouri Convergence Partnership/ Missouri Council for Activity and Nutrition
Montana	Eat Right Montana
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Bicycling Education Fund
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Walks and Bikes
Tennessee	YMCA of Middle Tennessee/Tennessee Obesity Taskforce
Virginia	Prevention Connections/ VA Foundation for Healthy Youth
Wisconsin	Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin

* See Appendix 1 for a US map showing the 20 current state network project states.

*Note: Michigan replaced Arkansas in 2011.

* See Appendix 2 for a flowchart of state network partners and federal funding.

In order to create policy change at the state level, the 20 state networks each convened a diverse coalition of stakeholders that developed an action plan and participate in various policy action teams. Each of the 20 states conducted an evaluation of its state Safe Routes to School program to ensure that the program provides funding and technical assistance to local communities and schools, develops and advertises state Safe Routes to School program application processes based on best practices, and gets a high number of quality applications for the state Safe Routes to School program, including applications from low-income communities. If necessary, state networks work with their state Safe Routes to School department of transportation (DOT) program to improve these application and implementation processes.

In addition, networks work to increase the amount of additional dollars leveraged for Safe Routes to School and related programs through Strategic Highway Safety Plans, and other federal or state funding sources such as the federal stimulus funding. Additional policy targets in each state include ensuring Complete Streets for all users, protecting and promoting the community-centered school (School Siting), developing and funding bicycle and pedestrian traffic safety curricula and training programs, implementing Safe Routes to School-related legislation, adding Safe Routes to School into school wellness policies, and reducing school district busing costs near schools (especially hazard busing). In all state networks a special emphasis was given to serving low-income communities and increasing personal safety while bicycling and walking.



The state network project is successful due to the partnerships established in each state with agencies, municipalities, schools and non-profit groups at state, regional and local levels. These partners bring expertise, knowledge of policies, and help with outreach, expanding the capacity of the contracted part-time state network organizer. Networks meet monthly through telephone conference calls, and action teams are convened in addition to tackle specific policy issues. Network partners provide critical leadership and expertise in setting and achieving network goals and objectives. Below is an example listing of Tennessee's state network partners:

State: Tennessee

State Network Organizer: YMCA of Middle Tennessee - Pioneering Healthy Communities.

Partners:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Askew, Hargraves and Harcourt Associates, Inc. | Bike/Walk Tennessee |
| Clean Air Partnership of Middle Tennessee | Knox Area Transportation Planning Organization |
| Knox County Health Department | Memphis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization |
| Metro Nashville Department of Health | Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital/Vanderbilt Univ. |
| Nashville Area Metro Planning Organizations | Nashville Community Health/Wellness Team |
| Outdoor Chattanooga/Bike Chattanooga | Safe Kids Tennessee |
| TN Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations | TN Dept. of Education, Office of Coordinated School Health |
| TN Dept of Environment and Conservation | Tennessee Department of Health |
| Tennessee Department of Transportation | TN Governor's Highway Safety Office |
| Tennessee Obesity Task Force | TMA Group |
| University of Memphis | University of Tennessee, Center for Transp. |
| Vanderbilt University Institute for Obesity and Metabolism | Walk/Bike Nashville |



The State Network Project was highly successful in 2010. Networks leveraged additional funding, joined or initiated several statewide Complete Streets task forces and wrote guidelines implementing state Complete Streets laws (CA, HA, WI); helped establish state-approved bicycle and pedestrian safety curriculum and funding sources (HI, MT, OK); helped expand personal safety programs (DC, OK); leveraged school siting and joint use funding (KY), held state school siting summits (LA), got new school siting guidelines written (VA), plus much more. The DC network expanded its territory to include the greater Washington DC area and associated counties, in collaboration with the Virginia and Maryland networks. The state network project also benefitted from additional leveraged funds and human capital when state network host organizations in Colorado, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Missouri leveraged state and local funding for additional staff and intern positions to assist their network organizers with policy change efforts.

Collectively, the 20 state networks are engaging more than 600 partner organizations and agencies as active participants. The state networks set different priorities in their Action Plans based on the unique policy opportunities and challenges in each state, and chose approaches suitable to the state's unique situation. Networks built productive relationships with state Safe Routes to School coordinators and assisted state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) in launching and running effective Safe Routes to School programs through outreach to stakeholders, technical assistance, advice and the creation and distribution of supportive resources. In the policy realm, networks were in some cases the first statewide group to research, advocate and create a vision for how to influence transportation policies and funding, safety, land use, the environment and public health within the states. This report documents selected policy successes and challenges encountered in 2010 through the Safe Routes to School state network project.



The federal funds for Safe Routes to School flow from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to state departments of transportation (DOTs). How the state DOTs administer the collective hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding has a profound impact on the quality of local programs and whether the funding reaches underserved communities. This is critical because of the potential for Safe Routes to School to increase physical activity among children, especially those most affected by or at the greatest risk for childhood obesity.

Each state DOT runs its own Safe Routes to School program and creates its own application guidelines for that program. Funds are apportioned to each state from the federal government based on the states student population, with each state receiving a minimum of \$1 million each year. Because each state DOT is unique, state networks play a critical role in providing guidance on application guidelines, outreach and implementation processes, and raising awareness of the program among potential applicants. In general, the National Partnership advocates for the following best practices for application guideline procedures. We encourage states to:

- Have separate applications and processes for infrastructure and non-infrastructure funds
- Maximize on non-infrastructure applications, especially those that fund local school and community Safe Routes to School program coordinators, to ensure that communities apply for and understand the value of non-infrastructure activities in getting kids and families to walk and bicycle to schools
- Ensure that the DOT application process assists low-income communities throughout the state, to ensure that the communities most in need have access to funding
- Utilize trainings, materials and/or contracted experts to teach local applicants how to create effective Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure programs
- Streamline the application, award and obligation processes as much as possible to get projects and programs started quickly
- Ensure that application processes take place while schools are in session, between fall and spring, to ensure that school officials are collaborating directly on Safe Routes to School
- Consider planning grants to help communities new to Safe Routes to School, especially low-income, to get experience and knowledge and to develop a needs assessment and local partners, in order to build a strong application for funds
- Consider awarding a statewide contract to handle non-infrastructure promotion, education and encouragement, as well as provide technical assistance to applicants



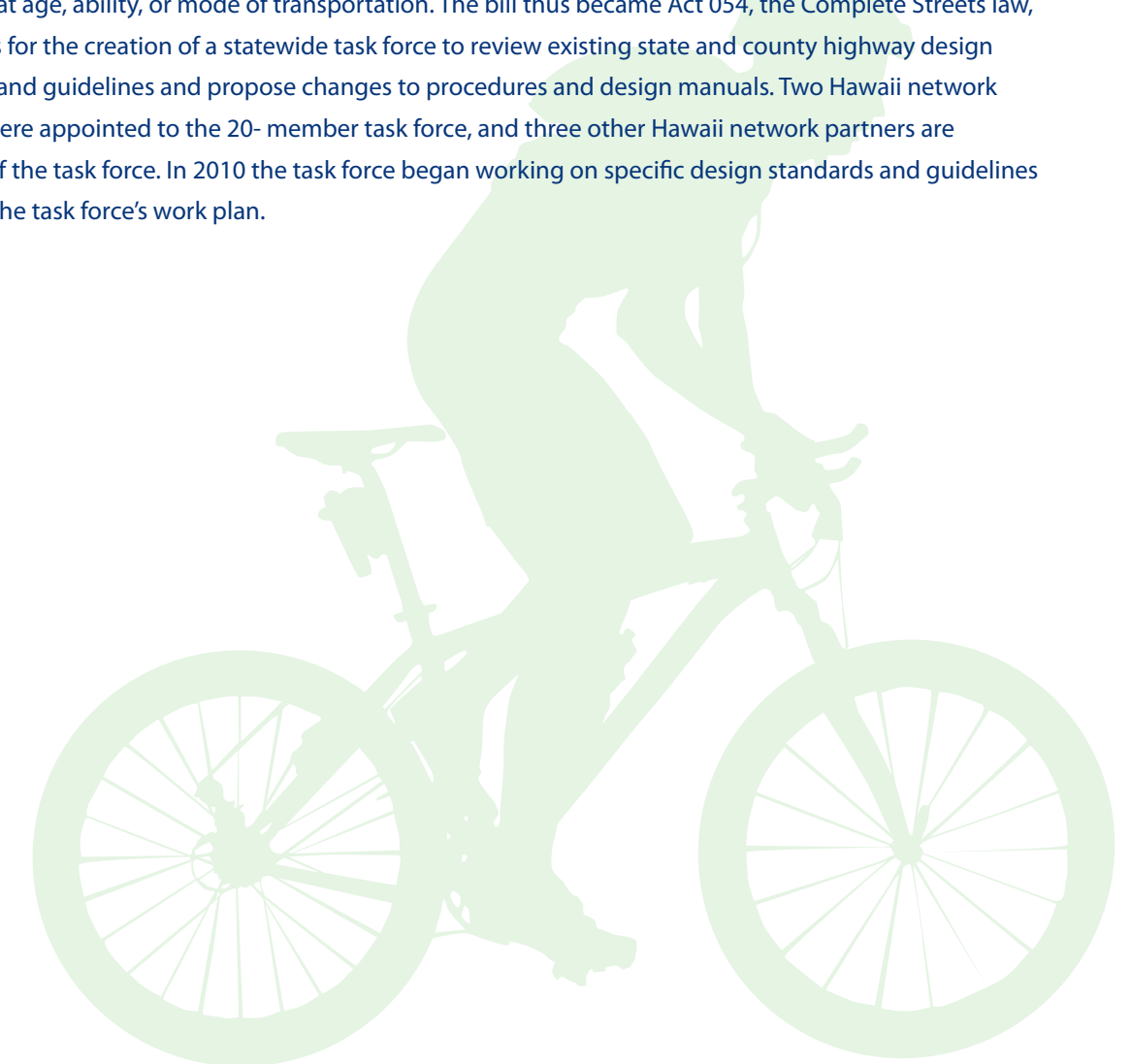
Maryland

In order to better support the processing of infrastructure project applications through the Department of Transportation's state Safe Routes to School program, the Maryland network successfully pushed for and has supported ongoing collaboration between the Highway Safety Office and the Office of Highway Development. The Maryland network also created a listserv to allow for communication between Safe Routes to School grant recipients about the challenges they encounter, best practices, and upcoming trainings and promotional events. In September 2010, a pre-application training workshop was hosted by the state Safe Routes to School program; the Maryland network was instrumental in outreach and promotion throughout the state, and subsequently nearly every county in Maryland had a representative at the workshop.

Complete streets policies require local and/or state jurisdictions to consider and address the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of all roadway and transit facilities. These policies ensure that bicycle and pedestrian safety needs are considered from the inception of a transportation project, rather than something to be added later through more expensive retrofitting projects. The end result is more facilities for safe and healthy physical activity in neighborhoods and on routes to school. Networks strive to get complete streets policies into state, regional or local transportation agency policies and procedures, and to ensure implementation.

Hawaii

Governor Linda Lingle signed **S.B. 718** on May 6, 2009, a landmark bill that requires the Hawaii Department of Transportation and all of the counties to establish policies to accommodate all users of the road, no matter what age, ability, or mode of transportation. The bill thus became Act 054, the Complete Streets law, which calls for the creation of a statewide task force to review existing state and county highway design standards and guidelines and propose changes to procedures and design manuals. Two Hawaii network partners were appointed to the 20- member task force, and three other Hawaii network partners are "Friends" of the task force. In 2010 the task force began working on specific design standards and guidelines as part of the task force's work plan.





State Safe Routes to School networks do not lobby for new state laws, due to restrictions on network funds. However, implementation of an existing law is a policy target among the networks. This can be a critical approach, since in many cases the state public agencies affected by a new law are reluctant to implement it, or may need assistance with the implementation process.

Colorado

The Colorado network was invited by State Representative John Kefalas to work on implementing new legislation, HB1147, which he authored, requiring that bicycle and pedestrian education be taught in schools across the state. The Colorado network began collaborating with the Colorado Departments of Transportation and Education to ensure that a strong curriculum is created, offered to, and used by schools. According to network partner Bicycle Colorado, the goal of the bill is “to reduce injuries to children and reduce costs to families, the state, and our health care system...the state will also benefit by increasing physical activity which reduces obesity related diseases. In today’s economic climate, more Colorado adults and their children are turning to walking and bicycling as low-cost, healthy ways to get around.”



Personal safety, especially in response to parental fear of crimes such as stranger abduction, traffic safety, gang activity and bullying, became a new focus for our state networks in 2010. Since Safe Routes to School programs provide elements that improve personal safety, state networks have formed partnerships with law enforcement agencies, public safety groups and others, and have been working to increase funding and support for state Safe Routes to School safety elements and related programs that improve personal safety, especially in low-income neighborhoods, such as crossing guards, safety patrols, walking school bus and bike train programs.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia (DC), in order to increase safety while walking or bicycling on city streets, instituted a Safe Passages program at area high schools. Currently the program consists of assigning additional police officers stationed on selected corners in patrol cars during high school dismissal time in order to deter crime and bullying and foster confidence among students walking and bicycling to and from school. The DC network is working with the DC Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Police Department to expand the program by adopting a model developed by Illinois SRTS state network partners, and in October 2010 identified a DC pilot school. In the new model, schools will be selected in DC neighborhoods with high crime rates, and police officers will reach out to residents within an eight-block radius around the school. Residents will volunteer to be either eyes on the street, corner captains at arrival and dismissal times, or school volunteers/tutors/mentors. Police trainees, community volunteers and beat patrol officers will conduct door-to-door canvassing, and DC network partners will provide door hangers to reach residents who are not home during the canvassing.



States and school districts spend hundreds of millions of federal, state and local dollars every year to transport students to and from schools, often just very short distances. It is common practice to not bus students less than a minimum distance - such as one mile or less - in most school districts unless there is a "safety hazard", such as a busy arterial roadway, that allows for an exception. School districts may then provide busing for those students. Cuts in bus service typically lead to a sharp increase in parental automobile traffic near schools. Safe Routes to School programs and funding can improve the safety problem, thereby reducing the need for hazard busing in the first place. Networks are working to change funding formulas and promote the installation of Safe Routes to School safety treatments near schools, thereby potentially saving school districts a lot of money, reducing congestion and air pollution around schools, and improving safety and increasing physical activity, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

Illinois

Illinois House Joint Resolution 6 required the creation of a School Transportation task force to examine multi-modal school transportation plans and to study potential legislative changes. In January 2010, Illinois Governor Patrick Quinn appointed the Illinois state network to the School Transportation task force. The task force held its first meeting in May 2010. The task force is looking at ways to use hazardous route busing funds to mitigate hazards through bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, increase the rate of walking and bicycling to school in Illinois, and to save the state money on long term school transportation costs. The task force submitted recommendations on June 30, 2010 and is waiting for next steps from the Governor's Office. The Illinois network hopes that the task force recommendations will lead to policy changes that save money and increase physical activity and safety through walking and bicycling infrastructure near schools.



Only 31 percent of elementary and middle school students in the United States live within two miles of their school. Statewide policies on where schools are located, minimum campus acreage requirements, joint-use of facilities, and funding formulas on renovation versus new construction, can profoundly impact the percentage of students who live within walking or bicycling distance of their school. Networks educate decision-makers and state agencies about the benefits of community-centered schools, facilitate cross-agency collaboration, and work to change policies to protect and encourage community-centered schools. Joint-use policies are agreements with cities and school districts that allow for the use of city or school facilities after school hours, to provide opportunities for healthy physical activity, and to encourage schools to be located in the communities where students live.

Virginia – School Siting

In 2010 the Virginia network recommended that the Virginia Department of Education include the promotion of walking and bicycling to school in its revised Public School Facility Guidelines. The department's staff responded favorably, and subsequently inserted school siting language, although the final draft of the Public School Facility Guidelines was missing the new school siting language. The Virginia network quickly responded, requesting that the language be reinserted, which prompted the administration to move to approve and post the revised guidelines for public consumption. The new language was approved and the Public School Facility Guidelines school siting language now includes this passage:

Where possible, locate new schools in attendance areas that will promote students to walk or ride bicycles safely to school. When developing a new school site or altering an existing site the design should include features that encourage pedestrian or bicycle access to and from the school site.

Kentucky – Joint-Use

In order to increase opportunities for physical activity, the Kentucky network is working to promote joint use policies and agreements that allow schools and communities to partner together to share recreational facilities, with a special focus on how joint-use agreements benefit urban and rural areas, especially for lower-income communities that may not have adequate recreational facilities. In 2009, the Kentucky network developed a fact sheet on Joint Use Policies in Kentucky, which it distributed statewide. In March 2010, the Kentucky network hosted a statewide webinar on joint-use agreements, and in July 2010, the Kentucky network spoke on joint-use agreements to nearly a hundred participants at the Kentucky Coordinated School Health Institute.

In September 2010, the Kentucky Cancer Consortium led a collaborative effort with the Kentucky network in winning a \$175,000 grant, with joint-use agreements as an emphasis area building on the previous efforts



of the Kentucky state network, to fund a baseline assessment of joint-use agreements across the state. The Kentucky network and Kentucky Cancer Consortium will gather input on joint-use policy barriers and opportunities and provide technical assistance to support schools in developing their own agreements. Finally, the Kentucky network will develop a set of recommendations on how policymakers can encourage and fully exploit joint-use of schools and community facilities across the state of Kentucky.

The federal Safe Routes to School funds flow from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to the state departments of transportation. How the state departments administer their millions of dollars of federal funding has a profound impact on the quality of local programs and whether the funding reaches underserved communities. This is critical because of its potential to increase physical activity among children, especially those most affected by or at the greatest risk for childhood obesity. Unfortunately, many low-income communities don't have enough personnel to write grant applications or may need technical assistance with the grant application process. State networks provide guidance to state departments of transportation on how to structure application guidelines, outreach and implementation processes, and raise awareness of the program among potential applicants, ensuring that low-income communities are being served.

Virginia – Funding Assistance

In 2010 the Virginia Safe Routes to School state network successfully leveraged \$150,000 of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Virginia Department of Health for mini-grants for up to 75 Title 1, or low-income, schools throughout the state. The mini-grants are designed to provide seed money for schools to coordinate a walk or bike to school event as an initial step toward developing a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program.

Wisconsin – Social Equity

The Wisconsin Safe Routes to School state network has taken several steps to assist low-income school communities in the state. The Wisconsin network joined the state Safe Routes to School advisory committee starting in early 2010. The Wisconsin network then worked with the state Safe Routes to School program to plan a series of four training sessions focused on two funding programs for walking and bicycling - Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School - that have since awarded over \$36 million dollars in funds to Wisconsin communities in 2010, with \$1,846,882 going to low-income communities, including \$64,930 in planning grants. More than 100 advocates attended the sessions, located in regions across the state. The goal of these sessions was to create demand for both programs, encourage high quality projects, and to ensure that communities across the state apply for state Safe Routes to School funds, especially low-income communities. The Wisconsin Network convinced the Department of Transportation to select Milwaukee as one of the sites, in order to ensure that the largest low-income population in the state was being served. More than 27% of Milwaukee residents live below the poverty line, and the Milwaukee region contains over one-third of the population of the entire state.

Recognizing that a call for applications was likely in late 2010, the Wisconsin network convened an action team in mid-2010 to analyze the Wisconsin Safe Routes to School program application process and its accessibility to low-income communities. The state Safe Routes to School program is indeed serving a





diverse range of communities through strong state network-assisted outreach efforts, giving extra points in grant scoring to low-income community applications, and making planning grants available to local advocates and schools in low-income communities. The network is working with the State DOT to ensure that this practice continues and grows.

In 2005, the federal government established a new component of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) with the goal of significantly reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. As part of this law, each state is required to develop a Strategic Highway Safety Plan (Plan) which is a statewide, comprehensive, data-driven plan that provide a coordinated framework for reducing fatalities and serious injuries on the state's public roads. The Plans establish statewide goals, objectives, and strategies to address safety needs, and influence the spending of tens of millions of dollars of each state's federal HSIP funds. This funding is eligible to be spent on bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements near schools, but most state departments of transportation prioritize highway and auto safety spending instead of projects that facilitate safe bicycling or walking. State networks get bicycling, walking and Safe Routes to School language inserted into Plans, and secure funding for these types of safety improvements.

California – Fair Share for Safety

The California Safe Routes to School state network is working to ensure that 20% of Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds are allocated to bicycle and pedestrian needs, as these modes represent 20 percent of traffic fatalities in California. In 2007, the California network distributed a "fair share for safety" white paper to campaign for more funding, and was able to get several network partners placed on committees to develop the Strategic Highway Safety Plan's major challenge areas, to develop strategies to save lives. The California network succeeded in getting Safe Routes to School listed as the number one priority for the walking challenge area. In 2009, Caltrans, the state department of transportation, revealed that 27% of Local Assistance HSIP projects included bicycle and pedestrian features, a tangible step towards achieving a fair share for safety. In 2010, the network heard that Caltrans was going to change their structure for decisions on HSIP funding, so in April 2010, the California network reviewed and provided feedback on the new Safety Index Model, to help ensure that pedestrian, bicycle and Safe Routes to School projects would be competitive with road projects through the new modeling. In September 2010, when Caltrans announced a call for applications for \$75 million of funding through HSIP, the network conducted outreach to encourage local agencies and advocates of the ability to apply for HSIP funding for Safe Routes to School projects. The funded project list included many new crosswalks, sidewalks, pedestrian-activated walk signals with countdown timers, speed feedback signs, widened shoulders, bike lanes and other projects that will improve non-motorized safety. During 2010, California network partners also participated in a 3-day "train the trainer" session on developing a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, and served on the planning committee for the Statewide Pedestrian Data and Modeling conference.

Hawaii – Leveraging Partnerships

Hawaii had the fifth highest pedestrian fatality rate and second highest bicyclist fatality rate in the nation between 2001-2005. These rates make the Hawaii Strategic Highway Safety Plan of major importance for





increasing safety for non-motorized transportation in the state. The Hawaii Safe Routes to School state network chair, is the chair for Emphasis Area #4: Pedestrian and Bicycling Safety for the Hawaii Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Through this leadership role, the Hawaii network successfully partnered with Federal Highway Administration's Hawaii Division, the Hawaii Local Technical Assistance Program at the University of Hawaii Manoa School of Engineering, and the Department of Health to attract \$5,000 in federal "Accelerating Safety Activities Program" safety funds in 2010 to co-host a Bicycle Facility Design Seminar, attended by state and county engineers and planners, as well as many private planning, environmental and construction firms and community advocates, who noted that the training helped them to better understand how to incorporate bicycle facilities into their local roadway designs. In September 2010, the Hawaii network also hosted a three-day first-in-state Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Workshop that produced a draft Pedestrian Safety Action Plan for Hawaii County, including a strong emphasis on the importance of funding and fostering Safe Routes to School programs. These successful Seminars and Workshops for Hawaii's engineers and planners come on the heels of increased federal investment in walking and bicycling; the Hawaii Safe Routes to School state network has calculated that a record breaking \$92 million will be invested in bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Hawaii over the next six years from several federal funding sources, including HSIP. In addition, the Hawaii Department of Transportation has funded \$125,000 in bicycle and pedestrian projects, focused primarily on bicycle and pedestrian education and motorist awareness.



Activate the Learning Network

The state network project originally began in spring 2007. State networks that have participated since the beginning have learned a lot about how to sustain network partners over time, how to understand and change policies that are technically complex, and how to access and leverage sources of funding in their state. Newer states bring a fresh perspective to the table; since the Safe Routes to School movement has matured over the past five years, new types of organizations are now becoming champions, and new ways of thinking about how to advance walking and bicycling for children have emerged. All of this information is useful, and critical to the success of state network project policy change efforts. But it can be difficult to learn about this useful information without attending conferences or hiring consultants. Instead, we learned that having our own learning network is the most cost-effective and useful method.

The learning network is a combination of four primary venues:

1. Full-time state network managers who work for the National Partnership each coach 10 state network organizers on policy change. The managers attend all monthly state network telephone meetings, and many action team meetings, work with state organizers through one on one calls on opportunities and challenges, and disseminate knowledge about progress in other states, as well as national best practices and research.
2. Mandatory monthly team meetings are held via webinar with all 20 state organizers, which provides for dialogue between peers and allows the management team to bring in new ideas and research, and guide the overall project.
3. Weekly voluntary policy cafés, led by network organizers for their peers, are held each week and are focused on a particular policy subject, featuring open small group discussion, and with invited guest speakers when appropriate.
4. A 'cloud-based' computing system allows for online discussion groups, sharing of documents such as progress reports and model policies, and a database management system for tracking partners and sending action alerts. This is particularly important because state network project contractors and staff live and work remotely all over the country.

Focus Leadership on Specific Objectives

There are a number of distinct policy objectives that need to be met in each state in order to meet the state network project's goals of increasing walking and bicycling to school and improving safety. State networks have learned that partner participation is most effective when there are distinct, measurable objectives that can be taken on by a smaller group of volunteer partners on one particular policy issue.



Since state networks are volunteer-based teams, managing these volunteer efforts can be time-intensive and complex. In order to maximize volunteer effectiveness, network organizers have learned to energize volunteers by focusing their efforts on particular policy issues, in addition to the overall goals. For instance, a transportation department staffer will be an expert on – and likely have a strong interest in - policies that will institutionalize Complete Streets in their state, but perhaps would not have as much interest or expertise in protecting community-centered schools. This person would likely be a valuable member of a Complete Streets action team. The network organizer would look for land-use and school-affiliated organizations and advocates to lead or join a school siting action team, for instance.

Assure Social Equity

Low-income and minority communities often struggle to compete for state funding, infrastructure and traffic safety improvements, and other opportunities to improve livability and safety in their neighborhoods. State networks are focused on ensuring that underrepresented communities have a voice at the state level on walking and bicycling, Safe Routes to School, and associated safety issues. Networks learned that the first step is to ensure that the federally funded state Safe Routes to School program has structures in place to reach out to and assist underrepresented communities in receiving notifications about the application process for Safe Routes to School funds. In addition, state programs can provide technical assistance to low-income communities that are submitting grant proposals and help with completing the required steps to meet federal and state guidelines. The state program can also offer small planning grants that will help local communities that do not have their own financial, volunteer or staff resources to complete the steps needed to receive funding. Networks learned that some other states offer planning grants for low-income communities, to help build capacity and community support for a future infrastructure project or non-infrastructure program, and that these grants were helpful.

State network organizers have learned to ask this question of any policy issue in their state: “What can we do to ensure that all communities, including low income communities, have a voice and access to funding and positive change on this policy?” By approaching policy change work through this lens, state networks are working to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented communities in increasing walking and bicycling, improving personal safety, and the overall livability and safety of their neighborhoods.

The state network project was originally launched in 2007 with ten states, but the January 2010 expansion of the Project to 20 states changed the scale of our peer learning network, management style and structure, and even our approach to policy change, since the new states were able to launch with the knowledge, resources and peer influence developed over the previous three years. This meant that the new 2010 states were able to start in a more advanced position than the original 2007 states, and the Project was able to achieve more in 2010 than in any previous year as a result.

One of the contributing factors was the addition of new types of network partner organizations that were not prominent partners from 2007-2009, such as health insurance, senior citizen, law enforcement, environment, climate change, and clean air advocates, along with governmental agencies such as metropolitan planning organizations, counties and cities.

We also benefitted from new types of state network host organizations in 2010 including many more health partners. By 2010 the health advocacy movement, specifically through childhood obesity initiatives, had become one of the strongest and most powerful supporting allies of Safe Routes to School and related bicycling and walking policy goals.

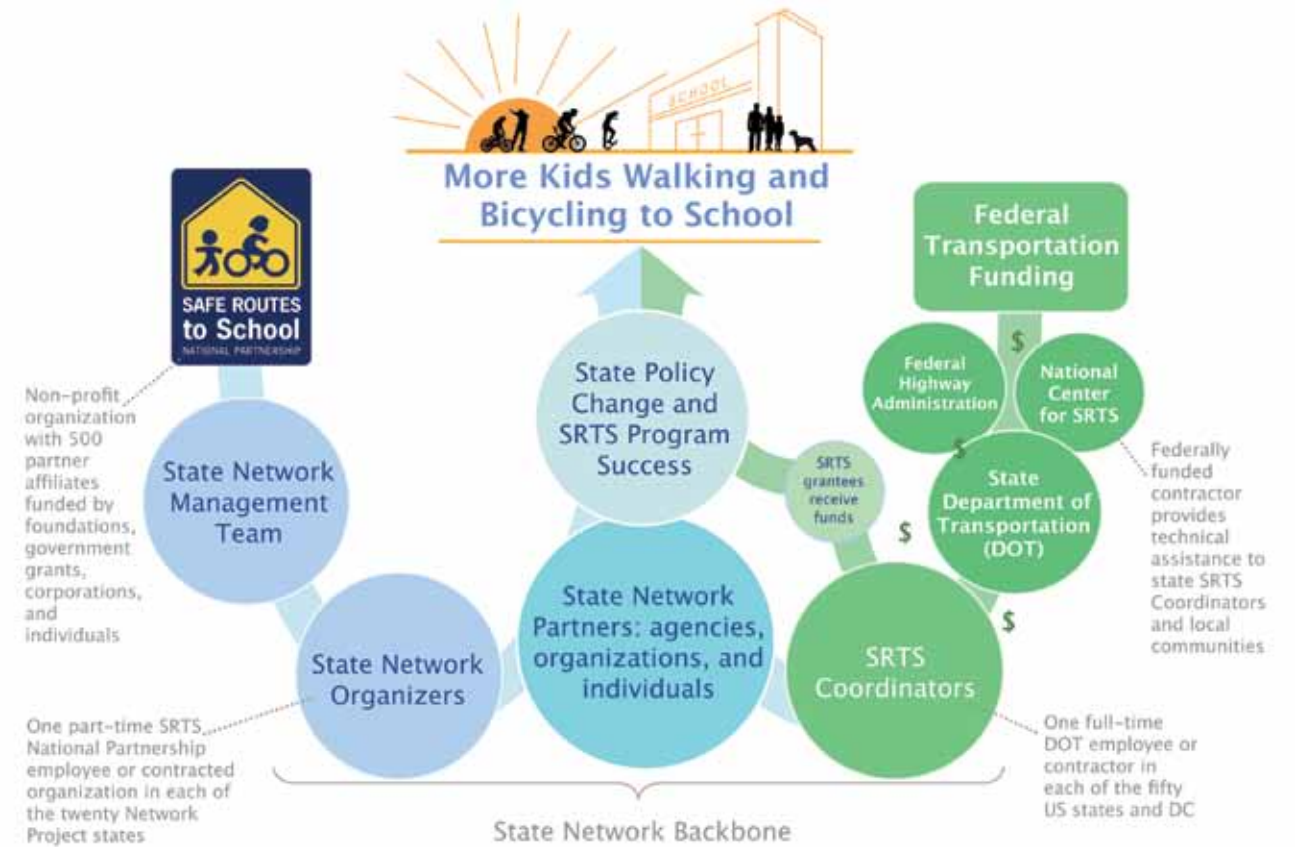


These new factors, in addition to the lessons learned on policy change since 2007, have contributed to a stronger, more effective state network project which is resulting in states with more walkable and bikeable communities and increased opportunities for children to engage in physical activity. The state network project is now poised to achieve even greater policy changes and leveraged funding in 2011 and beyond, and has even begun inspiring other states to start or expand their own networks.

Safe Routes To School State Network Project States - 2011



Safe Routes To School (SRTS) State Network Project





**For more information about the State Network Project,
go to: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/state/network>**

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