

Safe Routes to School Action Plan DRAFT

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Introduction

What is Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national program that aims to make walking, rolling, biking and using small mobility devices safe, convenient, and fun for children traveling to and from school. This Action Plan outlines a framework to deliver a SRTS program for the City of Vancouver.

Why invest in SRTS?

Fewer kids walk and bike to school today than they did 50 years ago. In 1969, 48% of K-8 students walked or biked to school. By 2009, only 13% of students walked or biked to school. In 2022, 51% of K-12 students were driven or drove themselves to school, 33% took the school bus or other transit to school and only 10% walked or biked.²

More students walking, rolling, biking and riding small mobility devices to and from school has many potential benefits not only for students and their families but for all Vancouverites.

- Safer students: Street improvement projects funded through SRTS as well as
 safety education can improve traffic safety for students traveling to and from
 school. Additionally, SRTS encourages students and families to walk, roll, bike or
 ride small mobility devices to and from school in groups, helping put more eyes
 on our streets.
- Cost savings: Using lower cost transportation options can reduce the amount of money families need for personal vehicle use and districts need for school bus service.
- Reduced traffic congestion: More students walking, rolling, biking, or riding small
 mobility devices to and from school can reduce traffic congestion during school
 drop-off and pick-up and within neighborhoods surrounding schools.
- **Cleaner air:** Encouraging more students to walk, roll, bike or ride small mobility devices to and from school can improve air quality by reducing vehicle trips and miles traveled.

¹ National Center for Safe Routes to School. 2011. How children get to school: School Travel Patterns From 1969 to 2009.PedBikeInfo.com. ww.pedbikeinfo.org/pdf/NHTS_school_travel_report_2011_0.pdf.

² Federal Highway Administration. (2022). 2022 National Household Travel Survey, U.S. Department of Transportation, Washington, DC. https://nhts.ornl.gov/.

- Healthier students: Using active transportation modes to get to and from school supports increased physical activity and can improve student physical and mental health.
- **Better academic performance:** For some students, transportation can be a barrier to getting to school on time or at all. SRTS can not only help address this barrier, but it also encourages students to get physical activity on the way to school, which has been linked to improved academic performance.
- More connected communities: SRTS programs provide an opportunity for social connection between students and families as they walk, roll, bike or ride small mobility devices to and from school, helping to strengthen community connections.

Policy, Plan & Program Support

The benefits of SRTS align with the City of Vancouver's Core Values outlined in the Strategic Plan: livability, equity and inclusion, innovation, sustainability and resiliency, and community trust and relationships. City policies outlined in the 2024-2044
Transportation System Plan (TSP) and Climate Action Framework also support the development of an SRTS Program. The TSP's "Support Thriving Neighborhoods" policy framework calls on City staff to develop a SRTS program that enables and encourages students and caregivers to walk, roll, and bike to school along safe pathways.

Additionally, the Climate Action Framework's Transportation and Land Use focus area identifies "driving trip reduction for local schools" to reduce emissions from on-road vehicles and specifically mentions SRTS as one tool to help achieve this. Other City of Vancouver plans and programs that will help inform the implementation of a SRTS program include:

- Equity Index and Displacement Risk toolset
- 2025 Equitable Development Strategy
- Language Access Plan
- Equitable Engagement Toolkit
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- 2025-2045 Our Vancouver Comprehensive Plan
- Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program
- Complete Streets Policy and Program

Partners

SRTS is a program that extends beyond the classroom into our communities and requires partnerships between school staff and volunteers, community groups, government agencies and elected officials.

The City of Vancouver will play a central role in convening relevant stakeholders and building collaborative partnerships to increase the reach and effectiveness of SRTS and help avoid duplicative efforts.



School Staff & Parent Volunteers

School staff (at the district and local schools) and parent volunteers serve as the boots on the ground for SRTS, providing education and encouragement directly to students, implementing policies and programming that support physical activity and wellness and identifying traffic concerns surrounding school campuses. School partners identified for Vancouver SRTS include:

- Vancouver Public Schools (VPS)
- Evergreen Public Schools (EPS)
- Washington State School for the Deaf (WSD)
- Washington State School for the Blind (WSB)
- Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations (PTA/PTO)
- Family Community Resource Center (FCRC) Coordinators

Community Groups

Community groups may include non-profit organizations, active transportation advocates or other affinity groups related to student wellness and safety. These partners can help lead SRTS programs, advocate for desired infrastructure or cultural changes related to SRTS and offer lived experience on mobility issues to and from school. Potential community partners identified for Vancouver SRTS, their mission and, if applicable, their existing SRTS related efforts are listed in Table 1.

Table 1Potential Community Partners

Community Group	Mission and/or SRTS Related Efforts
Bike Clark County	Local advocacy organization that provides various bike education programs.
Cascade Bicycle Club	Implementing Statewide School-Based Bicycle Safety Education Program, which includes in-school bike safety education for some schools in Vancouver.
Clark County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Advises the county and participating City and State government staff on matters involving transportation for people walking and bicycling.
Clark County Youth Commission	Informs Clark County Council, staff and community organizations about issues important to youth, makes suggestions on how to address these issues and provides advice on how to build positive partnerships with youth.
Cycle Vancouver	Local advocacy group for safe biking.

Community Group	Mission and/or SRTS Related Efforts
Vancouver Neighborhood Associations	Brings neighbors together to work with the City to share information and resources, provide opportunities for community input, address neighborhood problems and undertake projects to benefit the neighborhood.
Local after school programs/facilities	Various organizations in Vancouver, such as the <u>Boys and Girls Club of Southwest Washington</u> and <u>Right At School</u> , provide after school programming that align with the goals for SRTS.
Washington Safe Routes to School Network	Network of organizations across Washington that share SRTS information and resources.
Bikes for Kids Foundation	National organization that provides new bicycles and helmets to underserved second and third grade students.
Safe Routes Partnership	National organization that provides technical support, research, advocacy and information and resource sharing related to SRTS.

Government Agencies

Coordination between state, regional and local government agencies can expand resources for SRTS and can provide school districts and community groups access to funding, data sets, staff time and expertise to support various components of SRTS. Government agency partners identified for Vancouver SRTS include:

- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC)
- Washington State Department of Health Safe Kids Coalition (Safe Kids)
- Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (SWRTC)
- Clark County Community Planning, Public Health and Public Works
- Clark County Public Transit Benefit Area Authority (C-TRAN)
- City of Vancouver (CoV) Community Development, Public Works, Communications and Police Department (VPD)

Elected Officials

Elected officials and lawmakers can adopt policies, dedicate funding and staff and approve projects to support SRTS. Elected official partners identified for Vancouver SRTS include:

- City of Vancouver Council Members
- Clark County Council Members
- Vancouver Public School Board
- Evergreen Public School Board

Funding

The City of Vancouver has dedicated \$200,000 annually to support staff time, activities and materials for the SRTS Program. The City also received a Climate Planning Grant from the Washington Department of Commerce to help launch the program. Additional funding sources that could help fund SRTS infrastructure projects and programming in the future are listed in Table 2.

Table 2Potential SRTS Funding Sources

Source	Eligibility	Availability
WSDOT Safe Routes to School Program	Provides funding to local agencies or organizations for infrastructure projects within two miles of a school serving children in kindergarten through 12th grade, design-only projects or education and encouragement activities.	Biennial
WSDOT Statewide School- Based Bicycle Safety Education	 WSDOT has contracted with Cascade Bicycle Club to implement their Statewide School-Based Bicycle Safety Education. Schools can apply for this which includes two programs: One program available to elementary and middle schools (grades 3-8) to be implemented in school physical education classes. One program available to community organizations for middle and high school youth (grades 6-12) to be implemented out of school or after school. 	Annual
WSDOT Transportation Alternatives administered by SWRTC	Provides funding to local governments for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, community improvement activities, and SRTS.	Annual
United States Department of Transportation Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)	Provides funding to regional, county and local governments for infrastructure projects related to Local Road Safety Plans and high crash corridors.	Annual

Vision, Goals & Actions

In the City of Vancouver, we envision a future where walking, rolling, biking and small mobility options are safe, convenient, accessible and desirable for all students and families to get to and from school and around their neighborhoods.

To develop a well-rounded, comprehensive program, the City of Vancouver SRTS goals follow the national framework set by the Safe Routes Partnership³ and are centered on the "Six Es": Engagement, Equity, Encouragement, Engineering, Education and Evaluation. Developing measurable action items to achieve these goals guides the next steps for implementation. Each action identifies potential partners, including lead and support organizations, and a timeline of near-term (one to two years) or long-term (two to five years).



Engagement

Listen to students, families, school staff and community organizations that support schools to ensure that the elements of the SRTS program are responsive to the needs, desires and perspectives of the school community. **Build intentional, ongoing engagement opportunities** into the program to collect feedback and generate interest from students, families and school staff.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Connect with partners currently supporting bike and pedestrian safety to understand existing programming and identify opportunities for collaboration.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, WTSC, Safe Kids, Clark County, Bike Clark County, Cascade Bicycle Club, Clark County	Near-term
Set up a webpage with SRTS Program information, resources and contact information.	Lead: CoV Communications Support: CoV Community Development	Near-term
Provide program updates to the City of Vancouver's Transportation and Mobility Commission.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: None	Near-term

³ Safe Routes Partnership. 2020. What is Safe Routes to School: The 6 Es. https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school/101/6-Es.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Identify a point of contact/ SRTS champion at each school. This could be school staff or a parent volunteer.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, PTAs/PTOs	Near-term
Establish a SRTS Working Group with key stakeholders to help with messaging, outreach, and amplification of program updates.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, SRTS champions, WTSC, Safe Kids, SWRTC, Clark County, Bike Clark County, Cycle Vancouver, Cascade Bicycle Club	Near-term



Equity

Ensure SRTS initiatives **benefit all demographic groups** with particular attention to safe, healthy, and fair outcomes for low-income students, students of color, students of all genders and sexualities and students with disabilities. Use a **data-driven approach** to ensure resources are prioritized for students at schools with the greatest need and most impacted by unsafe conditions.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Create a prioritization methodology—informed by CoV Equity Index, school resource needs, crash data and network gaps—to identify which schools should be prioritized for SRTS programming.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: CoV Public Works, VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Near- term
Leverage CoV Equitable Engagement Framework to inform outreach for SRTS Program.	Lead: CoV Communications Support: CoV Community Development	Near- term
Translate materials into appropriate languages. The threshold for translation is 5% of the population in adjacent census tracts that speak a primary language other than English.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: CoV Communications	Near- term
Facilitate volunteer or staff support for under-resourced schools.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Clark County, Bike Clark County, Cascade Bicycle Club, Cycle Vancouver, Neighborhood Associations	Near- term

Action	Partners	Timeline
Coordinate with Washington Schools for Blind and Deaf on how to best provide bike and pedestrian safety education.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: WSD, WSB, CoV ADA Coordinator	Long- term
Connect students, families and schools with resources for free or low-cost bikes and/ or skateboards, locks, helmets, lights and skills classes to reduce barriers following the law.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Bike Clark County, Boys and Girls Clubs, Cascade Bicycle Club, Safe Kids, Bike for Kids Foundation	Long- term
Explore opportunities to integrate adaptive equipment for bike and pedestrian safety education.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Clark County, Bike Clark County, Cascade Bicycle Club, CoV ADA Coordinator	Long- term



Encouragement

Generate interest and enthusiasm amongst students, families, teachers and school leaders in walking, rolling, bicycling and using other small mobility devices to get to and from school through events, activities, and programs.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Promote existing resources that encourage walking, biking, rolling and taking transit for students and their families.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Safe Routes Partnership, Washington SRTS Network, WTSC, Clark County, Safe Kids, C-TRAN, Bike Clark County, Cascade Bicycle Club	Near- term
Use City communication channels, including social media and enewsletters, to promote SRTS related events.	Lead: CoV Communications Support: CoV Community Development	Near- term
Develop encouragement resources for schools and community groups to host and share their own SRTS events such as walk, roll & bike to school day, bike rodeos, walking/biking school buses, park and walk day.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Safe Routes Partnership, Washington SRTS Network, WTSC, Clark County, VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Near- term

Action	Partners	Timeline
Facilitate trainings and presentations to enable schools, parents and volunteers to organize SRTS activities and events that encourage walking, biking and rolling.	Support: WTSC, Clark County, Safe	Long- term



Engineering

Build, fund and support physical improvements to streets and neighborhoods surrounding schools that make walking, rolling, bicycling and using other small mobility devices safer, more comfortable, convenient and fun.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Identify infrastructure needs around schools through analysis, site visits and walk audits.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, WTSC, CoV Public Works	Near- term
Develop infrastructure project list informed by traffic volumes and speeds, crash data and network gaps.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, CoV Public Works	Near- term
Add SRTS infrastructure projects to 6- year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Transportation System Plan (TSP) Capital Projects list.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: CoV Public Works	Near- term
Apply for grant funding to implement high-priority infrastructure projects.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, CoV Public Works, WSDOT, SWRTC	Near- term
Provide convenient bike and small mobility storage at schools.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, CoV Public Works	Long- term
Install speed feedback signs or increase traffic enforcement in locations with recurring traffic safety issues. Also consider speed enforcement cameras.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: CoV Public Works, CoV Police, VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Long- term
Pursue quick build infrastructure improvements and/or demonstration projects.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, CoV Public Works, WSDOT, SWRTC	Long- term



Education

Provide students, families, teachers and school staff the skills to walk, roll, and bicycle safely. **Share information** about transportation options, and **educate** students, families and school staff about the numerous benefits of walking, rolling, bicycling and using small mobility devices.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Promote existing programs that teach pedestrian and bicycle skills.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Bike Clark County, Cascade Bicycle Club	Near- term
Develop educational resources for students and families such as walking, rolling, biking safety tips.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: Safe Routes Partnership, Washington SRTS Network, WTSC, Clark County, VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Near- term
Update and distribute school district walk route maps based on walk audits and new infrastructure projects.	Lead: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB Support: CoV Community Development	Long- term
Develop and promote school zone safety campaign and driver safety campaign for drivers.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: CoV Communications, WTSC, Clark County, Safe Kids, VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Long- term



Evaluation

Track progress of SRTS programs and initiatives to ensure they support equitable outcomes, determine which efforts are most effective and identify opportunities for improvement.

Action	Partners	Timeline
Track number of SRTS activities and events held at each school annually.	Lead: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB Support: CoV Community Development	Near- term
Review SRTS budget and staff needs annually.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: CoV Public Works	Near- term
Collect feedback via survey from students, parents and guardians about the SRTS program every three years.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Long- term

Action	Partners	Timeline
Collect student travel mode data annually.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB	Long- term
Review and update school transportation conditions around school campuses every five years.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, CoV Public Works, WTSC, Clark County	Long- term
Update the SRTS Action Plan every five years.	Lead: CoV Community Development Support: VPS, EPS, WSD, WSB, WTSC, Clark County	