

Community Spokes and Maine Safe Routes to School

The federally-funded Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program - a partnership of the Maine Department of Transportation, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine and communities like yours throughout the state - works to improve safety for children walking and biking to school and around town. Over 150 Maine schools have participated in various Safe Routes to School activities and many are expanding their initiatives.

Studies show that Safe Routes to School programs have been associated with:

- 20-200% increases in biking and walking
- an increase in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and a decrease in body fat in children between 12 and 19 years old.

Walk and bike to school activities also help to ease traffic congestion near your school, **boost academic performance & improve classroom behavior**, improve air quality, and can save many school districts money on busing costs.

Local Safe Routes to School activities in your community can include:

- bicycle and pedestrian safety education
- encouragement & incentive programs to get more students and their families walking and biking
- evaluation of local barriers to safe walking and bicycling and planning for improvements
- work on safety enforcement
- using federal SRTS funds for physical infrastructure safety improvements such as the construction of sidewalks and bike-pedestrian pathways, improved crossings, bike lanes, and traffic calming elements.

Maine SRTS staff are available to provide you with technical assistance and the program emphasizes collaboration - often including your local health officials, educators, planners, elected officials and community leaders. See attached **Menu of SRTS Possibilities for Maine Schools** for more info and contact program staff at: www.MaineSafeRoutes.org

Youth Engagement & Building Bike-Ped Culture

Bike-Ped Culture Builders – Help young people enjoy/experience/promote the freedom of motorless motion:

- **Bike-Ped Crew** type groups: optional & youth-led; **leads to sustained culture change even after adult facilitation**
- **School-based biking with fleets** - Bike-ped trails on/near school grounds; Phys Ed Classes & Noon/Recess Hour Program; Bike Field Trips (can be academic with stations); Cyclocross/Bicycle Skill Course; Youth Bike Repair Shops
- **BPSE** - Build bike-ped safety education into every school

School Travel Planning & Policy Work

School Travel Plans – Concentrate on bike-ped access at schools with kids living nearby; Go where the energy is; Work to incorporate elements in other community planning processes (comprehensive, school facilities, bike-ped plans, etc.):

- Parent & Student Mode Surveys & Infrastructure Audit(s)
- Review of Current Policies (Dismissal, Busing, etc.)
- Community Forum & Prioritize Improvements

Walk and Bike to School Policies – Encourage adoption of Walk and Bike to School Policy as well as other policies that disincentivize driving – parking fees, parent drop-off fees, etc.)

School Siting/School Transportation Funding – In BCM strategic plan; Hard nuts to crack; Get in first thing at the local level; Encourage adoption of local school siting policies

Voice SRTS Infrastructure Concerns at Every Juncture in Public Infrastructure Funding Process - **Incorporate our target audience in all decision making**

Tips for Community Spokes

- **Listen first for specific local needs & go where the energy is**
 - **Involve youth from the get-go**
 - **Bring in as many other people as possible, early on in your work**
- Potential allies are:

School:

- *Principal & other administration*
- *PTA/PTO representative*
- *Parents & students (especially students who already walk & bike to school)*
- *Teachers (start with physical education & health teachers)*
- *Staff who commute on foot or by bike*
- *School nurse*
- *Transportation director*
- *School improvement, wellness or safety committee*
- *School crossing guards*
- *Facilities/custodian representative*
- *Service learning team*

Community:

- *Interested community members*
- *Neighborhood association members*
- *Local businesses*
- *Local pedestrian, bicycle and safety advocates*
- *Hospitals*
- *Service Clubs (e.g. Rotary, Kiwanis)*
- *Health Clubs*
- *Health Insurance Companies*

Local Government:

- *Elected officials and staff*
- *Traffic engineer*
- *Local planner*
- *Public health representative*
- *Public works representative*
- *Law enforcement representative*
- *State or local pedestrian and bicycle coordinator*
- *Emergency Medical Service / Fire Department representative*

- **Consult regularly with Maine SRTS staff** - for brainstorming, technical assistance, and updates that may help with the work – as well as to offer a presence at initial or later community meetings
- **Remind communities that this work helps with their bottom-line** – in terms of improving academic performance & classroom behavior, and reducing transportation-related costs
- **Share your successes** - with other Spokes, the Bicycle Coalition, and Maine SRTS (so that we can share them further with the rest of the state). **Photos and stories are the greatest form of inspiration** to bring in others from your own community, build on your local programming, and boost the network of youth walk and bike efforts and improvements across Maine and beyond.

Community Spokes Mutual Aid Call – 4/11/12 Maine SRTS Program Presentation

Sarah Cushman

[Safe Routes to School Program](#) - Southern Maine Planner

94 Beckett Street, 2nd Floor

Portland, ME 04101

(207) 841-7186

sarah@sarahcushman.com

(Please note: my hours are Monday, Wednesday, & Friday from 9am-5pm.

Also: I will be taking a leave of absence from Maine Safe Routes to School from April 28-Sept 1, 2012 for an extended bicycle journey with my family.)