

# Safe Routes to School

*Improving Health for  
Connecticut's Children and  
Communities*

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*Material supplied by Sandy Fry, CRCOG*





# Outline for Today's Remarks

- What is Safe Routes to School (SRTS)?
- Why is it important in Connecticut?
- Who's doing it?
- Success factors
- Challenges & Barriers
- The Hartford Experience

# SRTS Gets Kids Walking and Bicycling to School

By identifying and creating safe ways to school for walking and bicycling

By encouraging children to walk and bicycle to school



# Safe Routes to School goals

- *Where it's safe, get children walking and biking*
- *Where it's not safe, make changes*



# SRTS gets parents and children on the same sidewalk



- Increases daily **physical activity** for children and adults
- Improves **pedestrian and cyclist awareness and safety**
- Empowers communities to **take charge of their children's safety**

# Why is SRTS needed in Connecticut?

Fewer kids today walk and bike to school...



...with unintended consequences to the environment, individual health, and the community

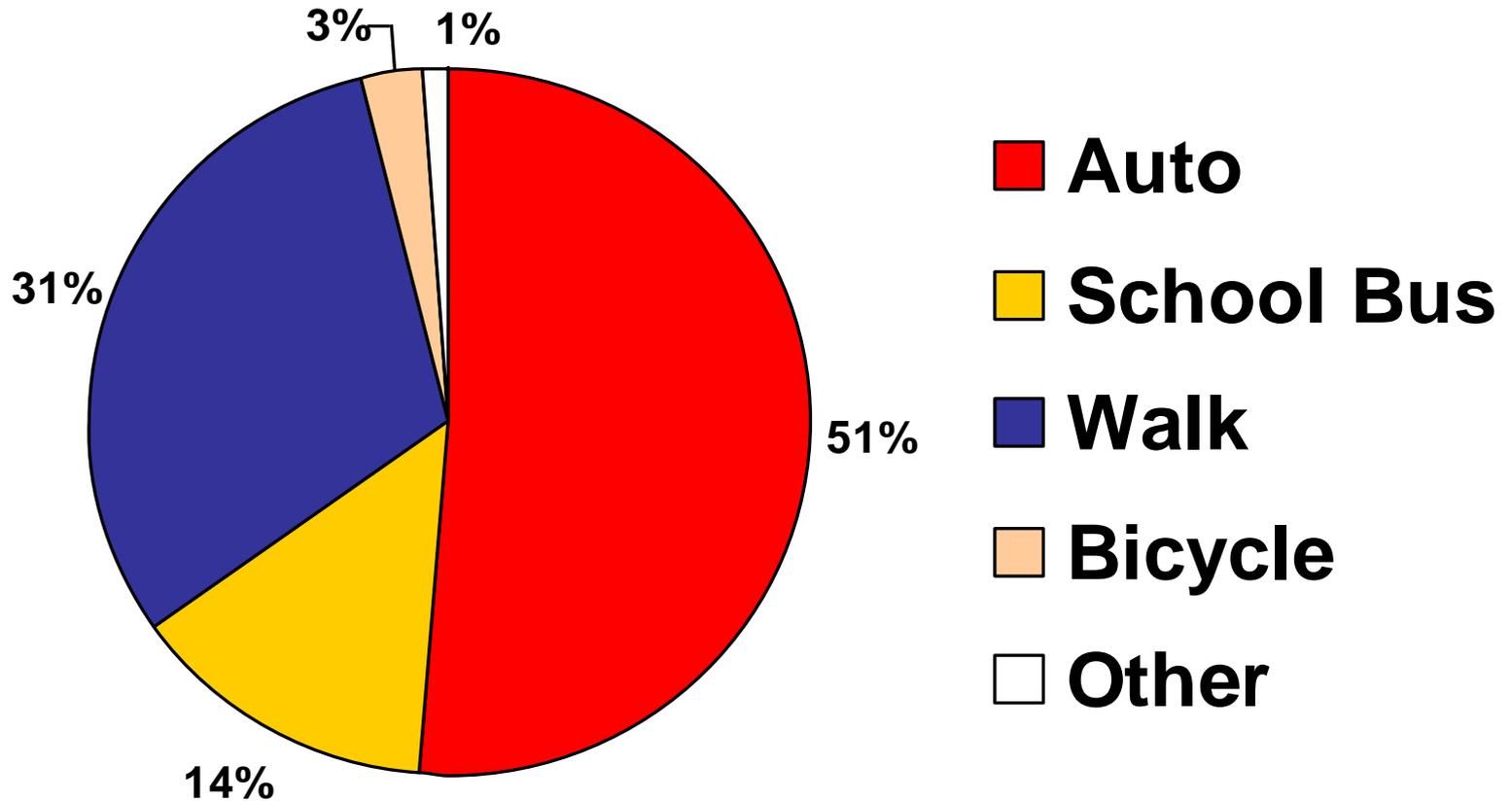
# Parents driving



Parents driving  
children to school:  
20%-25% of morning  
traffic

*(NHTSA 2003; Dept. of Environment)*

# Far More Children Ride in a Car or School Bus to School than Walk or Bicycle (trips 1 mile or less)



Calculations from the 1995 *Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey*. US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, unpublished data, 2000.

# Air quality

Measurably  
better around  
schools with  
more walkers  
and bicyclists

*(EPA, 2003)*



# Physical inactivity



- Most kids aren't getting the physical activity they need
- Recommended 60 minutes on most, preferably all, days of the week

*(US Depts. of Health and Human Services and Agriculture, 2005)*

# Fewer kids are biking and walking More parents are driving.

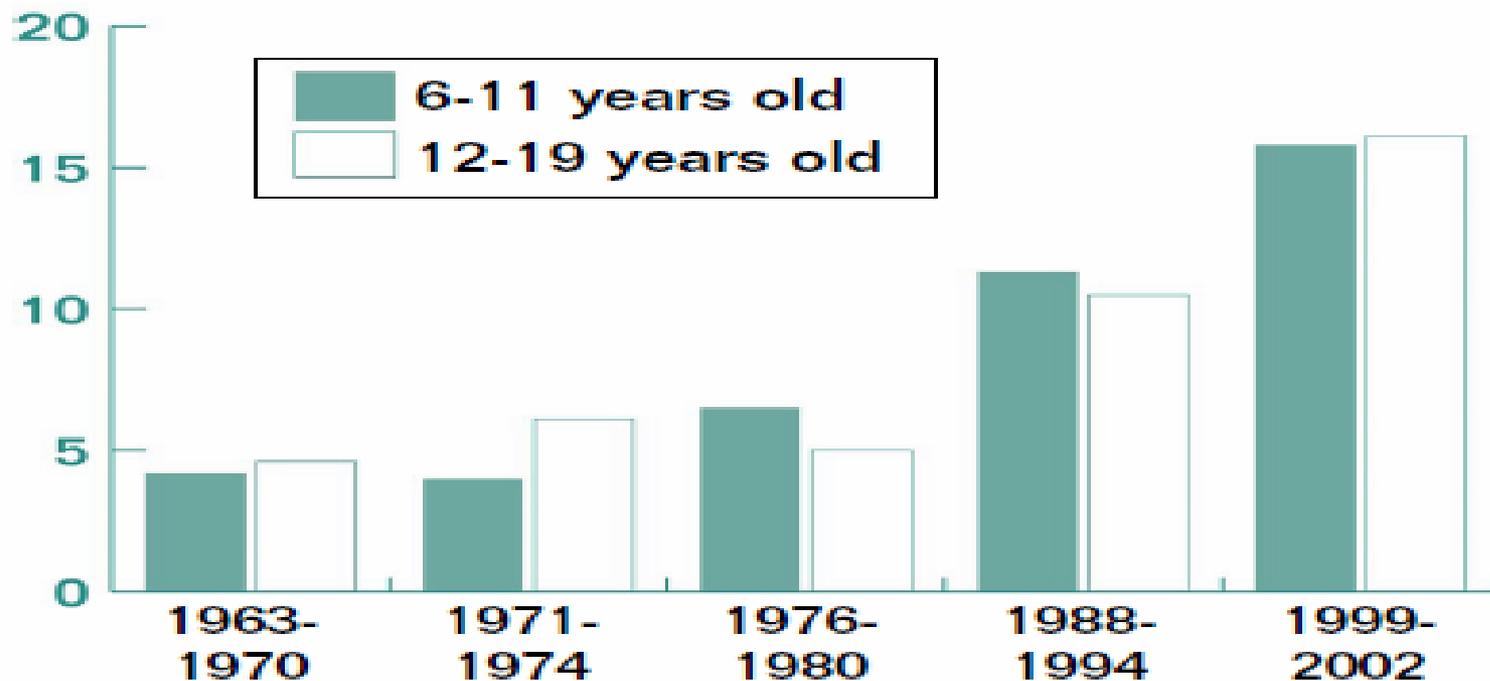
- 2001: 16% walked
- 1969: 42% walked

*(CDC, 2005)*



# U.S. youth overweight rates

**FIGURE 1.** Percentage of U.S. Children and Adolescents Who Were Overweight, \* 1963-2002\*\*



\*  $\geq 95^{\text{th}}$  percentile for BMI (Body Mass Index) by age and sex based on 2000 CDC BMI-for-age growth charts.

\*\* Data from 1963-70 are from 1963-65 only for children (ages 6-11 years) and from 1966-70 only for adolescents (ages 12-17 years). Source: National Center for Health Statistics.

# As we all know by now...



*Overweight children have an increased risk of an array of health and psychological issues:*

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Low self esteem
- Decreased physical functioning
- Obesity in adulthood
- Many other negative emotional & physical effects

*(Institute of Medicine, 2005)*

*The impact on the overall public health of Connecticut's community is real and it's growing.*

# SRTS can be part of the solution for healthier kids and communities in Connecticut

...by improving walking and bicycling conditions

...by increasing physical activity

...by decreasing air pollution



# It's not just distance

Students who live within 1 mile and walk or bike:

2001: 63%

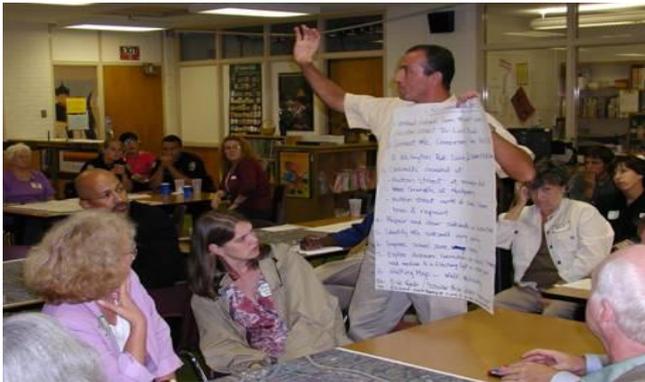
1969: 87%

*(CDC, 2005)*



# Who's Working on it?

Connecticut communities are taking action on behalf of Connecticut's children through Safe Routes to School



*Towns and Cities like  
Manchester, Norwalk,  
Vernon, Hartford, and  
others*

*are taking  
infrastructure and  
process steps to  
implement SRTS*



# Walk and Bicycle to School Programs

Walk to School Day

Walking Wednesday

Walking School Bus

Safe Routes to School

Classroom Learning

No Idling

Campaign

Eyes on the Street

# Success Factors for SRTS programs

- Education
- Encouragement
- Enforcement
- Engineering
- Evaluation



Lenexa, KS

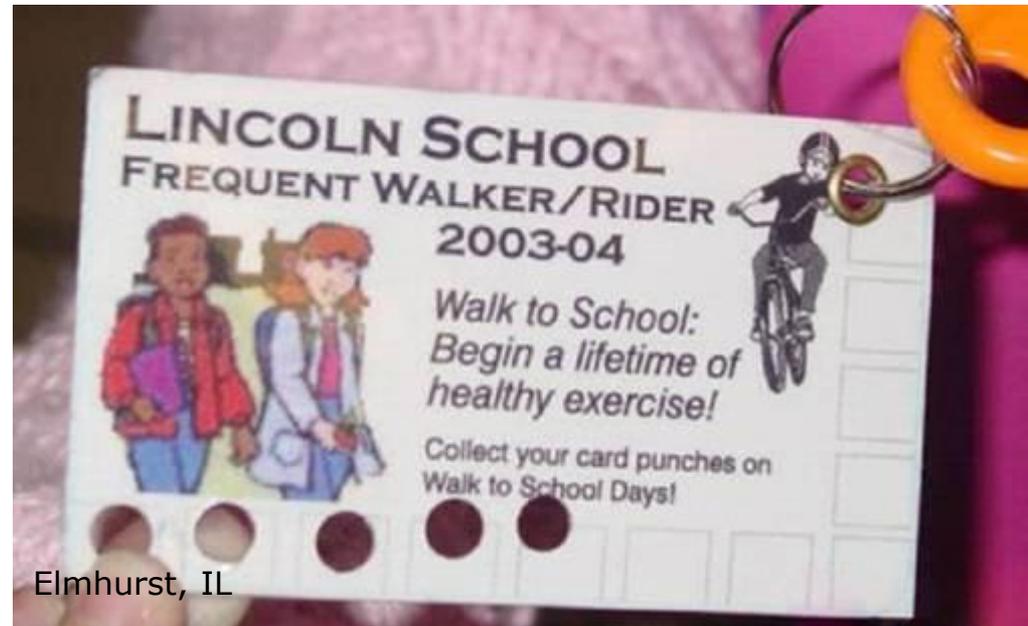
# Education

- Imparts safety skills
- Creates safety awareness
- Fosters life-long safety habits
- Includes parents, neighbors and other drivers



# Encouragement

- Increases popularity of walking and bicycling
- Is an easy way to start SRTS programs
- Emphasizes fun



# Enforcement

- Increases awareness of pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improves driver behavior
- Helps children follow traffic rules
- Decreases parent perceptions of danger



# Engineering

- Creates safer conditions for walking and bicycling
- Can influence the way people behave



West Valley City, UT

# Evaluation

## SURVEY ABOUT WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL - FOR PARENTS -

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Your child's school wants to learn your thoughts about children walking and biking to school. This survey will take about 10 - 15 minutes to complete. We ask that each family complete only one survey per school your children attend. If more than one child from a school brings a survey home, please fill-out the survey for the child with the next birthday from today's date.

After you have completed this survey, send it back to the school with your child or give it to the teacher. Your responses will be kept confidential and neither your name nor your child's name will be associated with any results. Thank you for participating in this survey!

**These first few questions gather some general and background information.**  
Remember, all information will be confidential, and no identifying information will be released.

1. What is the grade of the child who brought home this survey? (K - 8) \_\_\_\_\_ grade
2. Is the child who brought home this survey male or female?  MALE  FEMALE
3. How many children do you have in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade? \_\_\_\_\_ (Write)
4. What is your ZIP Code? (please provide ZIP code below) \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP code  
*your reply will also show your ZIP code*
5. How far does your child live from school? choose one:
 

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. less than 1/4 mile      | <input type="checkbox"/> e. 1 mile up to 2 miles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. 1/4 mile up to 1/2 mile | <input type="checkbox"/> f. More than 2 miles    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. 1/2 mile up to 1 mile   | <input type="checkbox"/> g. Don't know           |

6. On most days, how does your child arrive at school and leave for home after school? (circle one choice per column)

|  | Active at school   |  | Leaves for home  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Walk<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. Bike<br><input type="checkbox"/> c. School Bus<br><input type="checkbox"/> d. Family vehicle (only with children from your home)<br><input type="checkbox"/> e. Carpool (riding with children from other families)<br><input type="checkbox"/> f. Transport (city bus, subway, etc.)<br><input type="checkbox"/> g. Other (please list: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> a. Walk<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. Bike<br><input type="checkbox"/> c. School Bus<br><input type="checkbox"/> d. Family vehicle (only with children from your home)<br><input type="checkbox"/> e. Carpool (riding with children from other families)<br><input type="checkbox"/> f. Transport (city bus, subway, etc.)<br><input type="checkbox"/> g. Other (please list: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> a. Walk<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. Bike<br><input type="checkbox"/> c. School Bus<br><input type="checkbox"/> d. Family vehicle (only with children from your home)<br><input type="checkbox"/> e. Carpool (riding with children from other families)<br><input type="checkbox"/> f. Transport (city bus, subway, etc.)<br><input type="checkbox"/> g. Other (please list: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> a. Walk<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. Bike<br><input type="checkbox"/> c. School Bus<br><input type="checkbox"/> d. Family vehicle (only with children from your home)<br><input type="checkbox"/> e. Carpool (riding with children from other families)<br><input type="checkbox"/> f. Transport (city bus, subway, etc.)<br><input type="checkbox"/> g. Other (please list: _____) |

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TALLY SHEET

School Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ # of students enrolled in class \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Monday's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School's Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ (used to identify weather conditions)

- Teachers, here are simple instructions for using this form:
- Please conduct these counts each of the five days of the assigned week.
  - Before asking your students to raise their hands to indicate the one answer that is correct for them, read through all potential answers so they all know what the choices are.
  - Ask your students as a group the question "How did you arrive at school today?"
  - Read each answer and record the number of students that raised their hands for each.
  - Follow the same procedure for the question "How do you plan to leave for home after school?"
  - Please conduct this count regardless of weather conditions (i.e., ask these questions on rainy days, too).

| Step 1. Fill in the weather conditions and number of students in class each day |   | Step 2. Ask students "How did you arrive at school today?" and "How do you plan to leave for home after school?" (record number of hands for each answer) |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|------|------|---------------|---|---|---|---|
|   | Weather<br>Conditions<br>On-site<br>On-site | Number<br>of<br>Students<br>(in class<br>when count<br>taken)   | Walk | Bike | School<br>Bus | Family<br>Vehicle<br>(only with<br>children<br>from your<br>family) | Carpool<br>riding<br>with<br>children<br>from<br>other<br>families<br>(other<br>families) | Transport<br>(city bus,<br>subway,<br>etc.) | Other<br>(please-<br>list, school,<br>public,<br>other<br>states, etc.) |
| Mon AM  |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Mon PM  |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Tues AM   |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Tues PM   |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Wed AM  |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Wed PM  |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Thur AM   |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Thur PM   |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Fri AM  |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |
| Fri PM  |   |   |      |      |               |   |   |   |   |

Comments (Please list any disruptions to these counts or any unusual travel conditions before the school on the days of the tally):

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## Is the program making a difference?

# Barriers

- The decline in many locations of “neighborhood schools”
- Parental fear for children’s safety from traffic and from crime
- Ability to mobilize parents and volunteers
- Adverse weather
- Lack of safe cycling skills among children
- Infrastructure problems, like poor or no sidewalks

***Every school and community faces different challenges***



# Most common barriers to walking and bicycling to school

- Long distances 62%
- Traffic danger 30%
- Adverse weather 19%
- Fear of crime danger 12%

Note: Sum of percentages is more than 100% because respondents could identify more than one barrier.

*(CDC, 2005)*

# The Hartford Experience



# Steps in creating a SRTS Plan

1. Bring together the right people
2. Hold a kick off meeting
3. Gather information and identify issues
4. Identify solutions
5. Develop a SR2S Improvement Plan
6. Fund the plan
7. Act
8. Evaluate, make changes, keep moving!