



# SAFE ROUTE NEWS

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## South Dakota Safe Routes to School (SDSRTS)

## Non-Infrastructure Ideas for your SRTS Program

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Federal funding for the SRTS program requires that 10-30% of costs go toward non-infrastructure projects.

Non-infrastructure includes the education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation components of SRTS.

Infrastructure, the engineering portion of SRTS, is an important aspect of the program. It makes improvements to the built environment and increases walkability, bikeability and safety.

Non-infrastructure is vital to the sustainability of the program. It changes behavior, increases popularity of physical activity, teaches safety and creates momentum and excitement for the program.

The following are a few ideas for non-infrastructure activities from the National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS):

### Education

- Pedestrian and bicycle safety instruction
- Pedestrian skills practice (simulated settings or real-life)
- Bike skills practice (bike rodeo or training on bike)
- Personal safety skills (such as how to deal with strangers)
- Safety driving near the school (targeted to parents and/or general public)
- Benefits of walking/bicycling (healthy, environmental and sustainable

transportation benefits taught to students and/or parents)

- Community-wide education and awareness program (focused on adults)

National Safe Routes to School  
online Guide Book <http://www.safaroutesto.org/guide/>

- Policy (new or change that supports SRTS such as requiring pedestrian or bicycle safety education in regular curriculum)

### Encouragement

- Walking School Bus program
- Bike Train program
- Ongoing promotional events (such as Walking Wednesdays, Bike Tuesdays, etc.)

### Dates to Remember:

SRTS applications must be postmarked by April 8, 2009.



## Buying Kids Bikes

Robb Rasmussen and Staff, Sioux River Bicycles & Fitness, Brookings

The decision to purchase a bicycle for a child has been made. An important factor to consider when making a bike purchase will be that of quality – for durability and safety reasons. The recommendation that is being made by the au-

thors of this article is that you consider your purchase through a specialty bicycle retailer. Through a bicycle retailer, you will get information from people who have expertise in bicycles and thus afford a higher level of long term satisfac-

tion to the rider and the purchaser... and here's why.

### Size Matters

Adult bicycles are selected according to frame size. Kids' bikes, however, are sized (and referred to) according to bike size (see

## Buying Kids Bikes cont. from page 1

chart).

There is more to bike fitting than determining height – coordination and cycling experience are important points to evaluate. For example, if a taller child lacks confidence, they will do much better on a smaller bike – more control of the bike will contribute to their comfort level. A coordinated 10-year old with long legs might be ready for a full-size bike.

HEIGHT	BIKE SIZE
35 to 40 inches	12 inch
39 to 46 inches	16 inch
45 to 52 inches	20 inch
51 to 63 inches	24 inch

Safety is perhaps the greatest concern. A common mistake is buying too big a bike expecting your child to grow into it. Over-

sized bikes are dangerous and can cause crashes. They're also harder to ride. A large, unwieldy bike may turn a child off to cycling. Ask the retailer about their trade-in policy when a child outgrows the bike. If the bike cannot easily be traded in, sell it in the newspaper or at a yard sale to buy the next-larger one.

A good bike fit means that the child can sit on the seat and place both feet firmly on the ground. He'll need to be able to hold himself upright and get on and off without difficulty. The support of training wheels allows the child to reach the ground with his toes only — this is adequate support. As he develops balance, gradually raise the training wheels so he gets used to leaning how the bike turns. A popular alternative is to simply remove the pedals and let them learn balance without training wheels first. The pedaling will follow.

A comfortable reach of the handlebars is extremely important for gaining proper control of steering. Handle bars out of reach will pull the rider forward causing a loss of control. If the bicycle has hand brakes, it's crucial that the child's hands

can reach and operate the controls. If the child doesn't have the hand strength to operate the levers, it's usually possible to adjust the systems to make it easier for them, which a good bike shop will help you with during the purchase. Most juvenile bikes now come with an ordinary foot, or coaster brake and also a hand brake to let them gradually learn hand brakes. Most children below 7 or 8 don't have sufficient hand strength to depend on hand brakes alone. Bike specialty shops also have better brakes and stay adjusted better.

### Bike Types

Kids' bike models vary as much as adult models. Check out your specialty bike retailer to see what they are currently offering. The very competitive bike industry has some ideas that might be new to you. In Europe, they have had tot friendly designs without training wheels and pedals for years. A Rapid City based company called StriderSports is marketing a running bike designed to let kids as young as 18 months learn to balance. Two and three year olds instinctively know to throw a leg over and go. Pedaling however is not instinctive. So, let them "run" with this type of bike and learn pedaling later. The Strider teaches steering, balance and coordination. When it's time for a big-kid pedal bike, there won't be any need for training wheels. As children grow, they will become more coordinated, and then it will be time to pick a BMX model, mountain bike with gears or other kids bike if you want them to keep up with you as you ride bike trails throughout the state. In Brookings, we had a three year old ride a pedal trailer for a fundraiser behind his father for 17 miles — smiling all the way! Riding with your children is the best way for you to teach them the skills and safety precautions they will need to become a bicyclist for life.

If your child is very small, you can pick out a bike for them. Once they get a little older, though, this gets tricky. Remember, it's their bike. Keep in mind that they're more likely to want to ride and to get excited about biking if they've got the two-wheeler they like best. Buying a matching helmet inspires them

want to wear that as well. So does wearing your helmet.

You may want to take them into a bike shop where they can look for and test a bike they especially like. Many shops are figuring out ways to host a kid friendly shopping experience. Look around at bike shops.

Tips for getting your children to wear bicycle helmets:  
<http://www.aap.org/family/ttipsfor.htm>

### Where To Buy

While it's true that you can purchase kids' bikes at many department and toy stores, we recommend buying from professional bicycle retailers. You may pay more, however, you get a lot more, too.

Only bicycle retailers have the tools and expertise to carefully assess your child and fine-tune a bike fit so that you get the right bike and a safe bike. Plus, because they normally guarantee new bikes, they stock only quality models tough enough to withstand even the most rigorous riding. Bicycle retailers professionally assemble the bicycles at no additional charge and offer a free mechanical check-up in 30 days or so. Many shops have a longer free adjustment period. Ask.

Besides superior service, the bikes are superior, too. Where the chain-store models can sport moving parts that are not easily serviced, and parts availability is questionable, the bike-shop models are more easily serviced and parts are more likely available. Construction of discount store bikes is often made with inferior materials that don't last as long as bike-shop models. In the long run, these details add value because the bike is easier and more enjoyable to ride, breaks down less often and can be handed down to a sibling or bring a good price or trade-in when it's time for a bigger bike.

Robb Rasmussen & staff at Sioux River Bicycles & Fitness in Brookings, SD provided the information for this article. More information can be found at their website: [www.501main.com](http://www.501main.com).

## Non-Infrastructure Ideas for your SRTS Program cont. from page 1

- Park-and-walk program
- Remote “drop-off and walk” system for bus riders
- Walking or bicycling route map (create or promote)
- Incentive program for safe travel behaviors
- SRTS promotion to general public
- Technology-based encouragement activities (such as Website, email list, text messaging)
- Policy (new or change that supports SRTS such as early dismissal for walkers.

### Enforcement

- Parent or student safety patrol program
- Crossing guard training program and equipment
- Speed feedback trailers or signs
- Photo speed enforcement
- Speed enforcement in school zones
- Neighborhood watch/Safe house program
- Traffic complaint hotline.
- “Pedestrian decoy” operations policy (new or change that supports SRTS

such as increased fines for speeding in school zones)

### Evaluation

- Printing and postage expenses

Each applicant is responsible for meeting the 10-30% federal requirement on their request for funding. This insures that each SRTS program has a comprehensive plan that is not just engineering based.

The NCSRTS has an online guide that includes more information about education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation and engineering. This guide can be found at: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/>

## Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains From NCSRTS

A simple solution for parental concerns for the safety of children walking and biking to school can be resolved by participating in “walking school buses” and “bicycle trains”. This is simply a group of children walking or bicycling to school with one or more adults supervising the walk.

Walking school buses and bicycle trains can be as informal as two families taking turns supervising the walk or as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

It’s like a carpool without the car with the added benefit of exercise and visits with friends and neighbors.

The flexibility of the walking school bus makes it appealing to communities of all sizes with varying needs.

National Safe Routes to School has created a guide that outlines the benefits of starting a walking school bus and bicycle train as well as points to consider before launching it. Two general ways to conduct a walking school bus are described: (1) starting simple with a small group of friends or neighbors or (2) cre-

ating a more structured program to reach more children. The benefits, considerations and variations of each are detailed so that organizers can choose the approach that matches local needs.

For communities with interest in starting a bicycle train, additional considerations are highlighted. Examples of real-life walking school buses and bicycle trains are included to provide ideas and inspiration.

This guide is found at: [http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking\\_school\\_bus/index.cfm](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking_school_bus/index.cfm)

## Site's of Interest

SD SRTS

<http://www.sddot.com/srts/>

American Heart Association: Children's Health

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.ihtml?identifier=1477>

Don't Thump Your Melon

<http://www.sdemsc.org/dvtm.html>

SD Bicycle Coalition

<http://www.southdakotabicyclecoalition.org/>

Coordinated School Health

<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/schoolhealth/index.asp>

Healthy South Dakota

<http://www.healthysd.gov/>

Mark Fenton's America's Walking

<http://www.pbs.org/americaswalking/>

## What's Happening in SRTS

SRTS Applications for Round 2 of funding are available by emailing:

[angela.olson@state.sd.us](mailto:angela.olson@state.sd.us)

Applications must be completed and postmarked by April 8, 2009. No exceptions.

SRTS National Training Course and SRTS Presentation available by request. Onsite National Training Course or SRTS Presentation is highly recommended at the beginning of your application process!



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We are on the Web  
[www.sddot.com/srts/](http://www.sddot.com/srts/)

Where it's safe, get kids  
walking and biking.  
Where it's not safe,  
make it safe.

## Applying for SRTS Funds?

Please contact Angela Olson immediately to schedule a SRTS presentation with your SRTS Team.

Time is running out!

April/May Newsletter Will Included:

What's Next?

The Selection Process

SD Schools Walk

Please send pictures and news articles of your Safe Routes to School activities to:  
[angela.olson@state.sd.us](mailto:angela.olson@state.sd.us) Article ideas, comments and questions are also welcomed



## Safety in Safe Routes to School from NCSRTS

**Enforcement** programs start with identification of unsafe behaviors of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclist around the school. There are many ways to identify unsafe behaviors; an observation of student arrival and departure from school is a good way to start. Speed measurements and examination of recent crash reports near the school provide additional information. Look for these common unsafe behaviors: Speeding, failing to yield to students—especially at crossings, running red lights or stop signs, passing stopped school buses, parking or stopping in crosswalks.

**Speed Matters** Some drivers don't think about the risks they create. A driver may not think going 10 mph over the speed limit will be noticeably less safe, but just a 10 mph difference in speed can be critical to whether a pedestrian lives or dies when struck by a motor vehicle. This is especially true for children and older pedestrians. At 20 mph, a pedestrian has about a 5 percent

chance of dying if he is hit by a motor vehicle. At 30 mph, the chance of dying increases to roughly 45 percent. If a pedestrian is hit by a motor vehicle traveling 40 mph, the risk of dying increases to 85 percent.

Frequently, speeding problems near schools are related to the school itself. Often the parents and staff from the school are the speeders.

Unsafe driver behaviors on the school campus typically involve student drop-off or pick-up. These include: Illegal parking, motor vehicles stopping in the bus zone, dropping off students in the street rather than in the appropriate location adjacent to the curb, drivers letting students walk between parked cars, violation of school drop-off and pick-up procedures.

These behaviors need to be identified and addressed in a good comprehensive SRTS Plan when applying for SRTS funding. For more information see: [http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/enforcement/identifying\\_unsafe\\_behaviors.cfm](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/enforcement/identifying_unsafe_behaviors.cfm)

## Physical Activity and Academic Performance by Rae Pica

Physical activity feeds the brain.

Thanks to advances in brain research, we now know that most of the brain is activated during physical activity—much more so than when doing seatwork in the classroom. Movement increases the capacity of blood vessels (and possibly even their number), allowing for the delivery of oxygen, water, and glucose (“brain food”) to the brain. This optimizes the brain's performance! Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that students who are physically active have improved academic performance, achieve higher test scores and demonstrate a better attitude towards school.

*Rae Pica is a children's physical activity specialist and the author of A Running Start: How Play, Physical Activity, and Free Time Create a Successful Child.*  
<http://www.movingandlearning.com/Resources/Articles.htm>