Lucy Gonzalez and Morris Sherman
Florida Safe Routes to School Program
Florida Safe Routes to School Program Overview

• FDOT funded and administered through the University of Florida and other regional programs.

• Provide ped/bike education lessons that are administered in schools and communities.

• Provides “train-the-trainer” workshops where instructors are taught how to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety to children

• Incorporate the 5 E’s
Florida’s updated SRTS lessons

- Pedestrian and Bicycle education for elementary and middle school.
- High School curriculum that encourages Peer to Peer teaching.
- Progress from basic to more complex.
- Involve all learning styles.
- Comprehensive, but can be tailored for time and teacher needs.
- Meets FDOE standards.
- Adds other topics such as parking lots, school bus safety, and distractions.
Florida Safe Routes to School
Traffic Safety Education Guide

Focus is on development of pedestrian and on-bike skills for students in K-8 physical education classes.

• Introduction
• Pedestrian Skills (grades K-8)
• School Bus Safety (grades K-5)
• Bicycle Skills (grades 3-8)

• Classroom and Outdoor activities
• Videos

www.FloridaSRTS.com
FL SRTS Bike Trailers

- Complete with: bikes, rodeo equipment, helmets and educational materials
- Training required
http://www.pedbikesrc.ce.ufl.edu

Discover the wide variety of resources and information about walking and biking for all ages and levels of expertise. Topics include safety issues, important laws and policies, how to incorporate walking and biking into your commute to work or school, places to walk and bike, special events, plus trail and tour maps.
Challenges of Rural SRTS Educational Implementations

1. Perceptions “Our kids don’t need to learn to walk/bike to school”
2. Limited sidewalks connection surrounding communities
3. Fear of kidnapping
4. Community acceptance
5. School district buy in
6. High Speed limits near schools
7. Poor walkability scores
8. No sidewalks
Building the Community
Partnerships= Success

YMCA
Local Community Groups
County Governments
Safe Kids Coalitions
Success in Fl SRTS Rural Educational programs

- Worked with County agencies in Rural counties to incorporate SRTS classroom curriculum
- Provided Sumter, Lake and Marion counties with both technical assistance, infrastructure funding and bike rodeo trailers.
- Reached over 50% of schools in Lake, Marion and Sumter counties in 2 years
- Community buy in to support bike rodeo's and classroom education
Local Bicycle Clubs

The Lake Marion Bicycle Club
Goal?
What about in Rural Florida?
Build Partnerships
Create a school-wide event
Bike/Ped Safety is Traffic Safety
Bring the lesson to them
It takes a village...
“In the past, people thought that handing out some pamphlets and giving a pep talk were effective ways to teach bike safety. No one would think of teaching baseball, football, square dancing, car driving, or hunter safety by handing out brochures and talking to an auditorium full of kids. These days, we see it’s important to get the kids on their bikes and teach them real world skills.”

— John Williams & Dan Burden
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1969

50% of students walked or biked to school in the U.S.

2009

15% of students walked or biked to school in the U.S.

Federal Highway Administration (2015)
DECREASED ACTIVE TRAVEL =

- Decreased physical activity
  - Childhood obesity
  - Health problems later in life
- Increased Traffic
- Poor air quality
- Pedestrian and bike safety

Federal Highway Administration (2015)

5 MAIN ISSUES:

1. Traffic Congestion
2. Safety
3. Health and Obesity
4. Environment
5. Travel Costs

Image: Jewledilion CC2.0
1. TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Increasing the number of students walking and biking reduces traffic congestion

a. An estimated 20-35% of traffic during the morning peak is associated with travel to school

b. California study found the implementation of SRTS yielded an increase of walking and biking between 20-200%

2. SAFETY

Pedestrians are twice as likely to be struck by a vehicle in locations that do not have sidewalks

a. In 2013 → 288 pedestrians and bicyclists ages 14 and younger were killed

b. That same year 15,000 kids from this age group were injured from walking and biking in the U.S.
3. HEALTH AND OBESITY

Over the past 40 years, overweight and obesity rates among youth has increased significantly

- 25 million children
  - More prevalent in rural communities
  - Walking one mile a day to and from school, accounts for \( \frac{2}{3} \) of the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity
4. ENVIRONMENT

- By increasing the number of students walking and biking, we reduce the number of cars on the road, improving overall air quality.
  - One-third of schools are in “air pollution danger zones.”
  - If we could return to walking levels from 1969...
    - We could save 3.2 billion vehicle miles
    - 1.5 billion tons of CO2
    - 89,000 other tons of pollutants

This equals removing 250,000 cars from the road every year!
5. TRAVEL COSTS

- Approx. 55% of students are bused annually
  - That’s $21.5 billion on school bus transportation each year
- Eliminating just one bus route could save, on average, $45,000 each year

Imagine what could be done with these funds!
Success of SRTS

Mcdonald, Steiner, Lee, Smith, Zhu & Yang (2014)

- Study of 800 schools in Washington, DC, Florida, Texas, and Florida
  - Treatment and non-treatment
  - With controls for timing and school locations
- SRTS increases the number of students that are walking and bicycling to school
- Both infrastructure and non-infrastructure investments increased with SRTS investments.
ABOUT SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

○ Roots in 1970s Europe
○ Florida Safe Ways to School established in U.S. in 1997
○ Established federal SRTS program in 2005
  ● Federal and state funding
  ● State SRTS coordinator
○ Promote active travel to schools
○ Effort to enhance rural participation
  ● REDI Communities
PROGRAM’S FOCUS AND MISSION

○ Encourage and motivate children, and those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school

○ To make bicycling and walking safer and more appealing for our youth which promotes an active lifestyle overall

○ Facilitate planning to support safety, reduce traffic, decrease fuel consumption, and improve air pollution
BENEFITS OF SRTS PROGRAMS

Student Benefits

○ Freedom and responsibility
○ Access to fresh air
○ Familiarity with neighborhood
○ Physical activity before school
  • Academic achievement
  • Improves learning environment
○ Lifelong health habits

Image: SRTS (2013)
BENEFITS OF SRTS PROGRAMS

Community Benefits

○ Infrastructure upgrades
○ Decrease school car traffic
○ Community health
○ Hands-on community involvement and planning

Image: McClure (2016)
FUNDING HISTORY

○ Federal SRTS program established in 2005-2012
  ● Standalone program
  ● Funded $1 billion for infrastructure and programming

○ 2012 Map-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century) Act passed
  ● SRTS was combined with Transportation Alternatives
  ● Funding was cut by 30%
  ● SRTS is now competing with other transportation alternatives
  ● 50% of funds to state DOTs; rest to large urban, mid-sized communities, small cities
  ● Now a requirement for communities to come up with 20% of funds as a match

- 2015 FAST (Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act) – reinforced 2012 changes

How equitable is this for under-resourced and rural communities?
FUNDING ANALYSIS


- Looked at…
  - Funding Analysis
  - School and Neighborhood Analysis
  - Neighborhood and School Demographics

- What they found…
  - “schools that received SRTS funds had higher enrollment, had more Latino students, and were more likely to be located in cities”

- The distribution of Safe Routes fund after 2012
  - How equitable is it?
DISPROPORTIONATE EFFECTS ON RURAL COMMUNITIES

19% of vehicle traffic occurs on rural, non interstate roads.

41% of traffic fatalities occurred on these roads.

The Road Information Program (2005)
WHAT IS A RURAL COMMUNITY?

US Census Designation

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Definition:

County or municipality within a county with:

- Population <75,000
- Population <125,000 that is contiguous to a county with population <75,000

Transportation Research Board (2011).
RURAL COMMUNITIES IN FLORIDA
RURAL COMMUNITIES: MISCONCEPTIONS

- Rural communities have acceptable infrastructure
- Less traffic = safe traffic

Image: Heather Perry/ National Geographic Creative (n.d.)
RURAL COMMUNITIES: CHALLENGES

- Car-oriented development
- Highways as main streets
- High speed limits
- Heavy freight truck traffic
- Lack of infrastructure
- Deteriorating infrastructure

Image: WITN (2016)
BARRIERS TO ACTIVE TRAVEL

- Lack of funding
- Lack of infrastructure
- Unsafe infrastructure
- Lack of programs that promote walking and biking

Image: SRTS (n.d.)
POLICY BARRIERS: LOCAL

Inadequate local policy
- Leash laws
- Speed controls

School district policy:
- Incorporate SRTS into existing policy (School Lunch Program)
POLICY BARRIERS: FUNDING

Unequal distribution of funding:

○ State statutes may not consider special needs of rural communities
○ Definition of hazardous walking conditions focus on high traffic volume
○ Fewer students in walkable range compared to urban counterparts

Image: SRTS (2016)
WHY RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE A GREAT FIT:

*Rural Communities: A Two Pronged Approach for Improving Walking and Bicycling*

1. Rural Villages and Communities have the ability to create “activity hubs”

2. Although rural areas are seen as sprawled, you can use spokes to connect residents
   - Trails
   - Sidewalks
   - Bike lanes

Rural Communities come up with innovative approaches!

- Remote drop-off
- Walking school busses
WHAT IS BEING DONE?

- Florida Program is Distinct in the Changed Environment

- Safe Routes to School and its various partners are tackling these issues
  - National Partnerships
    - Guides, Toolkits, Resources
  - Local Agencies
    - TPO/MPO support
    - Regional Planning Council support
  - Technical Assistance
    - Center for Health and the Built Environment
    - Florida Traffic and Bicycle Safety Center
CONTACT US

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dcp.ufl.edu/saferoutes

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