Three Steps Up!

A Safe Routes to School Youth Engagement Program for Wisconsin

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
EAST CENTRAL WISCONSIN

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1 Introduction

Welcome! The East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC), in coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, developed *Three Steps Up!* to facilitate engagement in Safe Routes to School among middle-school-aged youths.

There are three primary audiences for *Three Steps Up!:*

1. Adults interested in learning more about SRTS youth engagement.
2. Adults facilitators of SRTS youth engagement projects.
3. Youths.

Three Steps Up! was developed in parallel with youth engagement pilot projects at Omro Middle School in Omro, Wisconsin and Woodworth Middle School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The insights gained through the pilot projects were instrumental in developing this guide and give it a practical grounding.

1.1 Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federally funded, state administered program designed to encourage and enable children in grades K-8, including children with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. SRTS programs address child health and safety, as well as the impacts of school transportation choices on communities and the environment. They are typically structured around the 5 E's—Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation—in recognition that transportation issues are multifaceted and complex.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs have traditionally been run as top-down approaches with school administrators, staff, and parents taking the lead on the program. Under this model, adults do most or all of the SRTS data collection, form the program recommendations, and work to encourage youths to bike and walk to school more. However, there is a growing recognition that this approach fails to give voice to key stakeholders—the youths themselves.

For More Information on SRTS

For more information about the ECWRPC SRTS program, go to **http://eastcentralsrts.org/**.

Information about the Wisconsin and national SRTS programs can be found at **http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/saferoutes.htm** and **http://saferoutesinfo.org**, respectively.

1.2 SRTS Youth Engagement

Youth engagement is the meaningful participation of a young person in an activity

with a focus outside of him or herself.[1] It is about youths developing the skills and abilities they need to be active and successful citizens *through hands-on experiences.*

Transportation to and from school is a part of every young person's daily experience. Youths are natural authorities on their school transportation and often have opinions about what works or doesn't work. Too often, youths are left out of decision-making processes impacting transportation to school, or their input is overlooked.

Youth engagement in SRTS amplifies youth voices related to school transportation, but also builds off the insights youths have to create more livable communities. Engaging youths in SRTS is a way for youths to connect their personal experiences with school transportation to larger issues that impact their communities and the globe, such as community planning, public health, social equity, energy conservation, and global warming.

Interest in combining youth engagement with SRTS has increased in recent years. Communities across the nation are now launching SRTS youth engagement programs or building upon existing SRTS youth engagement programs. East Central Wisconsin is one of the communities leading the charge. In 2011, the National Center for Safe Routes to School awarded Omro Middle School in Omro, Wisconsin the James L. Oberstar Safe Routes to School Award for "outstanding achievement in promoting safe walking and bicycling," citing the school's student-maintained bicycle fleet among several achievements. In 2013, youths at Omro Middle School and Woodworth Middle School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, participated in youth engagement pilot projects that provided critical insights for *Three Steps Up!*. The Fond du Lac SRTS program, called the Safe Kids Zone Initiative, is one of the nation's first SRTS programs and has involved middle school-age students since the beginning.

1 Modified from text in Centers for Excellence for Children's Wellbeing, Youth Engagement

1.3 Benefits of Youth Engagement

As a society, we have tended to underestimate the value of genuine youth participation. Genuine youth engagement offers multiple benefits to youths, adults, and communities.

Benefits for Youths

Youth engagement benefits youths by establishing a context within which youths can develop the skills and self-confidence they need to make positive changes to the conditions that affect their lives, both currently and in the future. Youth engagement projects provide meaningful opportunities for youths to:

- Listen to the perspectives of others.
- Make decisions collaboratively.
- Work together with others in pursuit of a common goal.
- Organize and execute plans and activities.
- Learn about emerging technologies.
- Develop marketable 21st Century skills.

Benefits for Parents and Adult Facilitators

Youth engagement programs also offer benefits to parents and adult facilitators.

Parents can:

- Become more involved in the school community.
- Develop a greater appreciation for their children's skills, abilities, and potential.
- Learn or relearn valuable civic skills alongside their children.

Adult facilitators can:

- Gain experience working with youths in an environment explicitly designed to facilitate youth participation, leadership, and decision-making.
- Learn how to listen carefully to youths, see them as equals in the process of development, and give up some control.

Benefits for Communities

Finally, youth engagement programs can benefit communities by:

- Helping youths develop the skills and habits they need to become active and engaged citizens.

- Bringing valuable youth perspectives and insights into the public arena.
- Leveraging youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.

1.4 Levels of Youth Engagement

Roger A. Hart developed a Ladder of Participation for youths to describe the levels at which young people could participate in projects that involved both youths and adults (Figure 1 Hart's Ladder of Participation)[2]. Hart's Ladder is useful because it distinguishes between genuine youth participation and non-participation, as well as between different levels of genuine youth participation. In many ways, these levels are defined by the degree to which adults recognize and cultivate youth agency and treat youths as genuine partners.

Youth Non-Participation

According to Hart, youth non-participation includes *manipulation*, *decoration*, and *tokenism*.

Manipulation involves adults using youths to advance their own agendas without youths understanding or consenting, while making it seem as if they do. For example, an adult compels a young person to read a script for a promotional video detailing the potential impacts of global warming on future generations, without the young person understanding or endorsing the point of view he or she is expressing.

Decoration is similar to manipulation, except that adults do not imply youth support. Rather, they use youths to advance their agenda indirectly. For example, in an effort to promote Bike to Work Day, an adult distributes Bike to Work Day t-shirts to youths, who wear them willingly but don't really understand or endorse the issues behind the event.

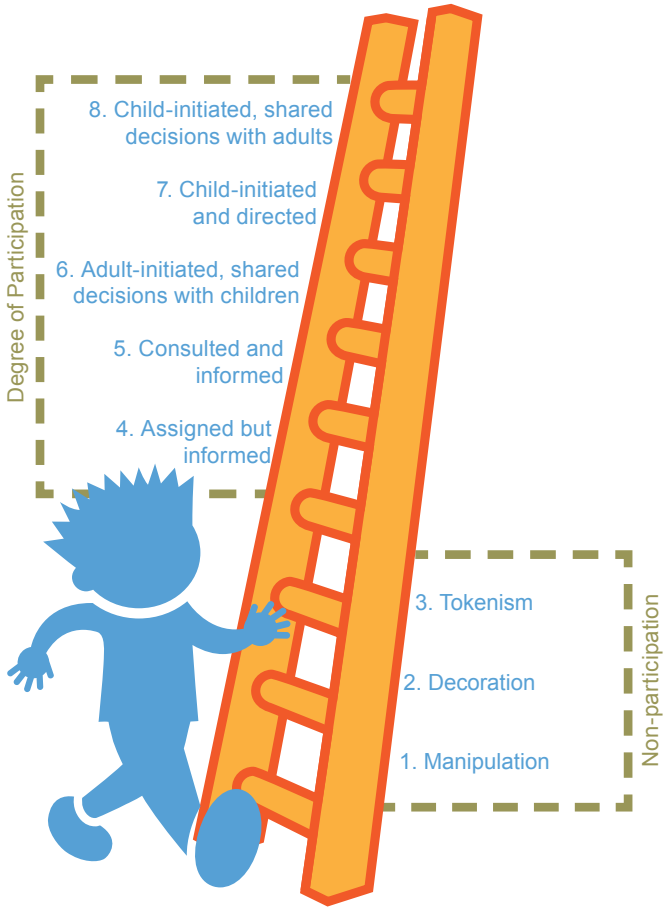

Figure 1 Hart's Ladder of Participation

Tokenism includes occasions when adults create the appearance of genuine youth participation but ultimately give youths no say in how they participate and disregard youth input. For example, an adult surveys youths about barriers to walking and bicycling to school as part of an SRTS planning project but then fails to include the feedback received in the final plan.

We as a society have shut kids out of activities that are socially meaningful. Yet it is through these activities that youths develop commitment to their communities and to other people in their communities. By relieving children of responsibility, we have ended up shutting them out of roles at exactly the development period when they need them in order to experience a sense of commitment to others and to the place where they live.

—Adapted from Calgary Guide to Youth Friendly Practices.

2 Adapted from Hart, Roger A. *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship.* UNICEF International Child Development Center, Florence, Italy, 1992. Available online at: http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf.

Manipulation, decoration, and *tokenism* are rarely motivated by any conscious effort by adults to manipulate or deceive youths. Rather, adults who involve youth in these ways typically believe they are acting in the youths' best interests, but end up establishing a non-participatory process due to lack of time, financial resources, or knowledge about genuine youth participation.

Genuine Youth Participation

Genuine youth participation must meet three basic criteria.

- ***Each youth's participation must be shaped by his or her own motivations and passions.*** Ideally youths will participate in the project voluntarily; however, there may be circumstances in which a classroom approach makes more sense. If a classroom approach is selected, the teacher must be careful to structure the project around the motivations and passions of the youths in the class.

- ***The contributions and opinions of youth participants in a youth engagement project must be evident in the outcome.*** When time is short it can be tempting for adult facilitators to take short cuts to implement a project in a way that dilutes evidence of the youths' role. Adult facilitators should resist this temptation. If more time is needed, they should adjust the schedule.

- ***Youths must work in partnership with adults who respect, listen to, and support them.*** Positive, meaningful, and respectful partnerships between youths and adults are at the heart of genuine youth participation. Each group has unique strengths to contribute to this relationship.[3]

Beyond these basic criteria, higher levels of youth participation involve youths taking a leadership role in the initiation, planning, and implementation of projects, and youths sharing decision-making with adults.

3 Adapted from comments provided by Arthur Orsini, Youth Engagement Facilitator at Urbanthinkers.

1.5 How to Use Three Steps Up!

Three Steps Up! is intended to empower adults and youths to pursue SRTS youth engagement projects. It is a guide rather than a curriculum. Instead of lesson plans, *Three Steps Up!* offers practical advice for getting started with SRTS youth engagement and strategies for encouraging youth interest, leadership, and decision-making. The goal is to help adults and youths think creatively about SRTS Youth Engagement, considering the conditions in their community and the unique motivations and strengths of the individuals involved.

Three Steps Up! is a guide rather than a curriculum.

Three Steps Up! is organized as follows:

- ***Chapter 2: The Adult Facilitator*** describes the role of the adult facilitator and best practices for effective adult facilitation of SRTS youth engagement projects.

- ***Chapter 3: Getting Started*** provides a model for the initial stages of SRTS youth engagement project development, including suggested activities.

- ***Chapters 4, 5, and 6*** provide practical strategies for both adults and youths in developing their local Youth Engagement Program. Recommended strategies are supported by illustrations from the Omro and Woodworth pilots and from other youth engagement efforts across the country.

    - Chapter 4: One Step Up—Let's Get Motivated! provides practical strategies for understanding, cultivating, and sustaining motivation as part of an SRTS youth engagement effort. It addresses issues related to the motivations of both adults and youths involved in SRTS youth engagement.

    - Chapter 5: Two Steps Up—Let's Lead the Way provides practical strategies

for establishing the conditions for youth leadership and cultivating it.

- Chapter 6: Three Steps Up—Let's Decide Together discusses ways to involve youths in shared decision making with adults, establishing the conditions for shared youth decision making, and cultivating youth decision makers.

- ***Chapter 7: Creating Sustainable SRTS Youth Engagement Programs*** provides strategies for creating sustainable youth engagement, including building on project successes and developing a culture of youth engagement.

- ***Chapter 8: Youth Engagement Case Studies*** highlights youth engagement case studies at the local and national levels, including additional details regarding the pilot projects at Omro Middle School and Woodworth Middle School. These case studies provide readers with examples of how SRTS youth engagement can unfold or develop.

- ***Chapter 9: Resources*** provides a list of resources to support youth engagement efforts, including SRTS youth engagement projects ideas, sample timelines, youth engagement advisors, organizations involved in youth engagement in the region and across the state, and references.

Adults interested in learning more about SRTS youth engagement should focus on chapters 1 and 2 of the guide. Adult facilitators should read through the entire guide, but focus on the chapter or chapters that may be most applicable to their project or program. Youths should focus on the youth activity sheets, which are meant to be detached from the guide and handed out.

A Note on Chapters 4, 5, and 6

The content and sequence of these chapters acknowledges different levels of youth engagement and suggests a general progression toward higher levels. It is not meant to imply that all youth engagement projects must achieve the highest level of youth engagement, or that all students within a given project must achieve the highest level of engagement. Youth engagement projects should be tailored to the existing capabilities of the youths within the group, with the goal of building upon those capabilities. Any SRTS youth engagement project may draw from all three of these chapters, or from a subset, and individual youths may be engaged at different levels from project to project, depending on their interests and skills.

2 The Adult Facilitator

This chapter describes the role of the adult facilitator and best practices for adult facilitation of SRTS youth engagement projects.

2.1 Role of the Adult Facilitator

Adult facilitators seek to maximize the benefits of youth engagement and overcome the challenges. Their job includes:

- Bringing the youth group together initially.
- Working with the group to establish and maintain a framework in which group members can thrive.
- Offering their experience and guidance when appropriate.
- Safeguarding group members' physical and emotional well-being.
- Developing the skills and self-confidence group members need to carry out the SRTS youth engagement project.

Adult facilitators of SRTS youth engagement projects:

- Enjoy working with youths.
- Are passionate and knowledgeable about SRTS and youth engagement.
- Know the school and the community.
- See youths as equals in the process of development.
- Are sensitive to the needs, fears, and motivations of youths. (See *Understanding Youths* on this page.)
- Recognize the unique qualities and strengths of each individual and build upon them.
- Treat everyone fairly and equally.
- Have strong communication skills.
- Are patient and open-minded.
- Are able to let youths lead.

Understanding Youths

Three Steps Up! is intended for middle-school-age youths, roughly between the ages of 10 and 13. Youths at this age tend to share several common characteristics:
A desire for self-expression and self-determination.
A preference for hands-on learning that is personally relevant.
An expanding awareness of social, cultural, and environmental issues.
A growing concern for peer approval.
An admiration for older youths.

How many adult facilitators?

Being an adult facilitator is a significant responsibility. In some cases it may be worth having a co-facilitator to help share this responsibility.

2.2 Adult Facilitator Best Practices

These following best practices guide effective adult facilitation of SRTS youth engagement projects:

1. ***Allow youth motivations to shape and direct the project.*** Genuine youth engagement occurs when the project is shaped by the individual motivations and passions of the youths in the group.
2. ***Adjust approaches if youths seem disinterested.*** Consider different learning styles. Provide a variety of activity types to engage students.
3. ***Slow it down.*** Genuine youth engagement takes time.
4. ***Involve key adults.*** SRTS youth engagement projects are unlikely to be successful without support from key adults, such as school staff and parents.
5. ***Gain experience.*** Inexperienced facilitators should consider assisting another, more experienced adult, attending a youth engagement workshop, and/or reading some of the resources on adult facilitation of youth engagement projects provided in *9.5 References* on page 67.
6. ***Connect with youths.*** The work of establishing this connection can't be rushed and should be built into the early stages of the project. If an adult facilitator has no previous experience with the youths involved in the project, it may be a good idea to include another adult who is more familiar, at least in these initial stages.
7. ***Facilitate peer relationship building.*** The middle school years are a time when peer relationships and peer opinions are particularly important. Time should be built into youth engagement projects to allow youths to build relationships with each other.

3 Getting Started

This chapter provides adult facilitators with practical advice for the initial stages of SRTS youth engagement project development, including:

- Recruitment
- Framing
- Barriers and opportunities
- Project identification
- Project planning
- Project implementation[1]

Sample activities accompany the discussions of framing, barriers and opportunities, project identification, and project planning. Sample activities are meant to provide adult facilitators with a more detailed understanding of how meetings oriented to each stage might be structured. They are not meant to imply that each stage must be accomplished in one meeting.

The pace with which each group goes through each stage will vary depending on a variety of factors, including the previous experience of the youths and the amount of time available to meet. It may make sense to spend more than one meeting working through some stages. In fact, there is considerable value to slowing things down to ensure that youths have the foundation they need for success and everyone's voice is heard. (See *The Value of Delayed Decision-Making* on page 14.)

1 A reminder that for the purposes of this guide the term "SRTS youth engagement project" refers to a planned set of interrelated tasks to be executed within an established timeframe. The term "SRTS youth engagement program" refers to ongoing (i.e., not time limited) efforts to engage youths in SRTS.

3.1 Recruitment

When identifying a group of youths to lead an SRTS project, it is important to locate and engage youths who are motivated to take ownership of the project. This section provides advice on how many youths to recruit, where to recruit them from, and methods and strategies for recruitment.

The recruitment process can happen quickly or take some time, depending on circumstances. For example, there may be a group at the school, such as an environmental club, that may already be working on SRTS-related issues. In this case, it may be relatively easy to recruit the group, or a subset of the group, to carry out an SRTS youth engagement project. In other cases, it may be necessary to build a culture at the school that is supportive of SRTS generally before attempting to recruit youths for an SRTS youth engagement project. (See *4.1 Cultivating Motivations for SRTS Youth Engagement* on page 20.)

How Many to Recruit

While the size and form of an SRTS youth engagement group may take can vary greatly, a group of approximately 6-8 youths may be optimal. Larger groups are possible but can be more difficult to manage. Adult facilitators considering a larger group should read the Woodworth Middle School case study *in 8.1 Wisconsin Pilot Projects* on page 39 for insights and lessons learned.

Where to Recruit

Members of an SRTS youth engagement group are typically recruited from one of two sources:

1. The general student population
2. A pre-existing group including members of the student population

Suitable pre-existing groups often have an inherent connection to SRTS or youth engagement and may be affiliated or unaffiliated with the school. (See *Examples of Suitable Groups for SRTS Youth Engagement* on this page.) If the group is large, adult facilitators should consider creating a sub-group that includes the 6-8 youths who seem most interested in SRTS youth engagement.

Examples of Suitable Groups for SRTS Youth Engagement

School-affiliated Groups
Health and wellness clubs
Math, science and environmental clubs
A/V clubs
Student councils
Vocational clubs
Youth honor societies and leadership groups
Recreational and sports clubs

Other Groups
Boys and Girls Clubs
Boy and Girl Scout Troops
4-H Clubs
Key Club or Builders Club
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)
Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)
DECA

Recruitment at Omro

At Omro Middle school, the existence of a vibrant SRTS program meant students were already suggesting new ideas and clamoring to become more involved. In this way, students self-selected participation in the program and the youth engagement project gave them a structured way to be involved. School staff and administration merely helped foster youth voice in the creation of the group. This is likely a best-case scenario but one possibly available in many locations.

Adult facilitators should consider sustainability as they recruit. If all of the youths involved in the project are from the top grade level, who will be available for SRTS projects in the following year? A mix of youths from different grade levels is optimal, and adult facilitators should consider recruiting one or two high school-age youths to participate in the project and help mentor younger youths.

Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment strategies should target what inspires youths' interests, motivations, and agency. When recruiting, adult facilitators should think of questions that may spark the youths' interests, such as:

- Do you want to bike or walk to school but can't because of safety?
- Do you wish your parents didn't have to drive you everywhere?
- Do you think streets around your school and home are safe for people who want to bike or walk? If not, do you think that's fair?
- Do you want the chance to do something about it?

Adult facilitators may also want to mention ways that participation in an SRTS youth engagement project can help youths fulfill school requirements, e.g., for community service or service learning hours.

Adult facilitators can recruit youths from the general student population using posters, flyers, PA announcements, and other media. Adult facilitators can also make their pitch at places and times when student walkers and bikers congregate, such as the school bike racks during arrival, or ask teachers and administrators for help with identifying recruits.

Adult facilitators who decide to approach an existing group should explain how SRTS youth engagement intersects with the group's focus or mission. It may also help for adult facilitators to mention project ideas that group members are likely to find particularly engaging. (See *9.1 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Projects* on page 47.)

3.2 Framing

Once the adult facilitator has garnered sufficient interest, their next step will be to bring the group together to establish the framework for the project. Establishing the framework includes:

1. Providing youths with a clear understanding of their role and the adult facilitator's role.
2. Providing youths with an opportunity to articulate their personal goals.
3. Coming to agreement on ground rules.
4. Developing youths' understanding of, and personal connection to, the issues and concerns behind SRTS.

> It is very important that all participants in the project have an opportunity to articulate their perspective and feel it is respected.

This step may be accomplished in one meeting or extended over multiple meetings, depending on how much time is available and the youths' previous experience.

Facilitators should anticipate that youths have little or no experience with either SRTS or youth engagement. They should state very clearly at the outset that the goal is for youth to participate as fully as possible, including taking a leading role in generating ideas for the project, planning the project, and implementing the project.

> If participation in the group is voluntary, then youths should not be considered members of the group until after the framework for the project is clarified and they indicate their desire to join the project.

Ground rules should be established that specify, at a minimum, that all school (or organizational) rules apply, safety is the top priority, and that nobody will be compelled to do something they don't want to do. They should also establish rules regarding how members of the group will interact with one another and a process for making group decisions. It is very important that all participants in the project have an opportunity to articulate their perspective and feel that their perspective is respected by the group. It is also important that youths feel that the group's decisions are arrived at through a fair process.

Once the group agrees on ground rules, the adult facilitator and the youths in the group share joint responsibility for keeping them in the forefront. In cases where the adult facilitator is coming in from outside, youths may be given primary responsibility for articulating school (or organizational) rules, since they are likely to be more familiar with these rules than the adult facilitator.

Adult Activity Sheet 1: FRAMING SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Motivations

The adult facilitator asks each of the youths to fill out a card with their name, email address, hobbies, and motivation for attending the meeting, then collects the cards and asks each of the youths to introduce themselves and say a little bit about what prompted them to attend. The adult facilitator can supplement this with a continuum exercise. Create room in the meeting space for the youths to form a line. One end of the line signifies “fully agree,” the other signifies “fully disagree,” and the middle signifies “don’t know/don’t care.” Read various statements, such as “I like to walk” or “I want to make a difference in my school” and have the youths place themselves along the line according to how they feel.

SRTS Basics

The adult facilitator lists some key goals of SRTS on a flipchart, blackboard, or whiteboard and then asks youths for feedback. Is anything missing that should be added? Which goals resonate with the youths most? The adult facilitator then asks the youths to vote for the goal they most want to work toward by writing it on a piece of paper and putting it into a box or hat, tallies the vote, and asks the group to reflect on what the vote means for the group going forward.

Roles

The adult facilitator clearly describes the roles of the youths and the adult facilitator in the project. Youths are expected to take a leadership role. The adult facilitator provides concrete examples for each role and asks youths what it means to be a leader. What qualities does a leader have? How does a leader interact with others? What motivates a leader? Can anybody be a leader?

Ground rules

The adult facilitator establishes that school (or organizational) rules apply for the group and that safety is the number one priority but says that the group will also develop a common understanding of what they need from one another to feel safe, heard, and be fully able to participate.

One strategy is to have the youths develop a list of ground rules using “popcorn” style, i.e., taking suggestions from any volunteer. Another strategy is to have the youths write suggestions on slips of paper, so their thoughts can be anonymous, and use the slips to create a list. (The youths should feel free to write/say more than one thing). Once a list has been created, have the youths either all raise their hands to indicate they are willing to participate under these guidelines, or have everyone sign the list, signifying their agreement.

3.3 Barriers and Opportunities

One way to increase youths' familiarity with SRTS and help them coalesce around a common project is to spend some time considering barriers that prevent students from walking or bicycling to school and opportunities for increasing walking and bicycling. Potential discussion questions include:

- What are some of the barriers that prevent more students from walking or bicycling to school?
- Are these barriers based on roadway design, driver behavior, student behavior or something else?
- What are the opportunities for increasing walking and bicycling at the school?
- Are there forums or events that the group could utilize to increase awareness about the benefits for walking and bicycling?

The process of examining barriers and opportunities will begin to shape the context for selecting a project idea that addresses a specific barrier or opportunity, rather than something that is general and less focused. As possible solutions and opportunities for change are discussed, it is important to also recognize potential implementation challenges.

Barriers and Opportunities at Woodworth

At Woodworth, students brainstormed reasons why people might not walk or bike to school and then categorized these barriers according to which of the five Es (Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Encouragement or Evaluation) might best address the barrier. This provided a framework for students to begin crafting potential solutions for each of the identified barriers.

Adult Activity Sheet 2:
BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Barriers

The adult facilitator asks the youths to consider the barriers that prevent them from walking or bicycling more.

- What keeps you from walking/bicycling (more)?
- What do you not enjoy about walking/bicycling?
- Is there anything that would make you walk/bike more?
- Think of your friends/family. What keeps them from walking/bicycling (more)? What would get them to walk/bicycle more? Do you know? Do you need to ask them to find out?

Opportunities

The adult facilitator asks the youths to consider the opportunities there might be to encourage active transportation to school.

- Why do some people walk and bike? What motivates them? Could the group tap into this in some way?
- Are there events or forums coming up that the group might tap into to educate the students and/or adults about the benefits of walking and bicycling or emphasize that walking and bicycling are fun and cool?
- Are there groups working on active transportation or related issues in the community that might be able to support the project in some way?

The adult facilitator keeps a running list of the barriers and opportunities identified through this process that the group can refer to later.

How do you address it?

The adult facilitator notes that there are many ways to make change happen and that addressing an issue often requires more than one strategy. The adult facilitator breaks the youths up into groups of 2 or 3 to brainstorm ways to address the barriers and/or take advantage of the opportunities they've identified and then creates a master list.

The youths should leave this stage with a better understanding of the types of projects the group might pursue, while continuing to think other potential projects.

3.4 Project Identification

The next step is to begin the process of identifying a project. Depending on youth interest and engagement prior to the group forming, youths may already bring ideas they are interested in carrying out. However, it is extremely important to not let one youth's idea dictate the direction of the group and to recognize the diverse array of interests and ideas within the group, so that the project that is ultimately selected is one in which *all* of the youths in the group are excited to participate.

It may be helpful for adult facilitators to come to the project identification stage with examples of SRTS youth engagement projects that have been done by other groups to provide the group with a tangible understanding of what can be accomplished. (See Chapter *8: Youth Engagement Cases Studies* on page 39). The adult facilitator can use these examples to catalyze the groups thinking about what their own project might look like. Adult facilitators may also wish to review the sample project ideas and sample timelines provided in *9.1 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Projects* on page 47 and *9.2 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Timelines* on page 62.

Project Identification at Omro

At Omro, the youths brought many ideas with them to the group. Some small tasks (such as a student survey) were conducted by a subset of the full group as part of the exploration phase. The group held significant discussions about what was desired and feasible for the full group before deciding on their main group project.

The Value of Delayed Decision-Making

Delayed decision-making is a useful tactic in two circumstances. It can help to maintain a more diverse array of ideas following from brainstorming sessions, and it can help to reframe 'slightly contentious' activity plans

When time is at a premium – as it usually is – decisions often need to be made that will make the most of the participants' time and effort. However, quick solutions can sometimes curb a group's creativity because they favour those participants who can readily articulate their thoughts. Tactics to 'delay' a decision can model a more dialogic process by reconsidering what has already been said and re-evaluating quick decisions: i.e. "Our conversation has led us to this, but if we back-up for a minute, where else might it take us?"

—Arthur Orsini, "Learning Without Teaching: Youth-Led Programs To Reduce Car-Trips To School"

Once all of the group's ideas have been collected, the group will need to begin the process of selecting their desired project. It's important for group members to have a basic understanding of what each project might entail, so they can make an informed decision. Adult facilitators can help group members develop this understanding by designing activities that encourage them to visualize what the project will look like when implemented, for example, through dramatization.

Some questions the group must grapple with when considering potential projects include:

- Is the project feasible?
- Can it be completed within the timeframe?
- Are there questions that must be answered before a decision can be made?
- Is the project sustainable?

Once group members have sufficient knowledge and understanding about their options, the adult facilitator can help them build consensus around a project that meets the group's current needs and abilities and is likely to succeed. Adult facilitators have a voice and vote in this process, and should make their case for different options, but the youths must support and be excited about the project that is ultimately selected for it to be successful.

Ideas that are not selected should be preserved in some way. Even if these ideas aren't selected as the group's top choice, all things considered, they may very well be worth considering as circumstances, conditions, and group capacity continue to evolve.

Adult Activity Sheet 3: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Benefits and Challenges of Potential Projects

Now that the group has developed a pool of project ideas, it will need to consider the benefits and challenges associated with each. This can be accomplished through a variety of means but should in some way get at the following questions:

- What excites/is interesting to the youths in the group?
- What project(s) would best address the barriers and opportunities related to walking/bicycling that the group came up with earlier?
- Which project(s) would have the greatest impact?
- Which of the project ideas would be possible for this group to do considering timeframe, number of youths, capacity of the group, etc.? If an idea is exciting to members but looks too big or if there is not enough information at this time, would it be possible to overcome the current barriers and still make it happen?
- What knowledge/resources does the group still need to collect before it can decide on the proposed projects?

Visualization of Potential Projects

To help the youths develop a better understanding of what a proposed project might entail, ask them to visualize it.

- What does the project look like?
- What are people doing?
- Who is involved?
- What are the youth leaders doing?
- What did the leaders to do make this happen?

This can help the group identify what must be done to make the project a reality, and whether this is feasible.

Project Selection

After the youths have developed a basic understanding of potential projects, there should be a process for deciding which project or projects to pursue in the immediate term, considering the group's capacity and available time. It's important for this process to be perceived as fair by the youths in the group and to discuss specific goals and objectives, so the group can maintain its focus if elements of the project need to be adjusted in response to circumstances.

3.5 Project Planning

Once the group has selected a project, it's time to develop a more detailed project plan. The group should have gained an understanding of what the process would look like for their project prior to selecting it, but now is the time for the group to think more deeply and fully about what needs to be done and how it will be accomplished. The group should do the following before beginning work on the project:

1. Establish a timeline by working backwards from the final project date or deadline.
2. Identify tasks to be completed.
3. Define roles and responsibilities.
4. Assign youths to each task and role (youth-led assignment, not adult-directed).
5. Clearly describe the scope of the project and the anticipated outcomes.
6. Determine where more research is needed.

Project Planning at Woodworth

At Woodworth, the youths decided on a biking and walking competition. The larger group then divided itself up into three smaller subcommittees to manage various aspects of the project. A survey team was responsible for tallying students who walked or biked to school every morning. An events team planned encouragement events, such as a group walk to a nearby yogurt stand and the end-of-competition celebration and awards ceremony. The marketing team created posters promoting the competition and created announcements to be read over the school PA system.

Adult Activity Sheet 4: PROJECT PLANNING SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

What's a Project Plan?

The adult facilitator briefly describes what a project/work plan is and why it's useful for a large project. Examples of useful project management tools can be helpful.

What Do We Need to Do?

The adult facilitator asks the youths to brainstorm the steps required to successfully implement their project. The youths should consider the project overall, thinking about different steps or different smaller projects that need to be completed. It may be helpful for the adult facilitator to help the youths more thoroughly flesh out the project's goals and objectives. If so, the adult facilitator should allow time for this in large or small groups.

Creating a Plan and Timeline

For a large group, it may be best for adult facilitators to break the group into sub-groups by task and work with each sub-group to develop a list of subtasks and a timeline for completing them. With a smaller group, the full group can discuss the complete project. Make sure the youths are able to think about what they as a group can accomplish and what outside resources they may need, such as volunteers, donations, approval, etc.

Plan Assignments and Roles

With an adult facilitator's assistance, the group or sub-group should decide what role each individual will play in moving the project forward. No group member should be assigned a task he or she does not want perform.

3.6 Project Implementation

After the development of the project plan, the group should begin work. Subsequent meetings should include opportunities for youths to:

- Give status updates on tasks.
- Provide feedback on the project to date.
- Consider potential revisions to the project plan.
- Develop leadership and teamwork skills.
- Build friendships.
- Have fun!

It's important to help students contextualize the project as an exciting way to be active in their school and community.

It's important to help youths contextualize the project not as "work" or "something that has to be done" but as an exciting way they can use their passions and interests to be active in their school and community. Adult facilitators should:

- Arrange fun and engaging activities that speak to diverse learning styles and help group members develop needed skills and work toward project goals.
- Offer their experience and advice, where appropriate.
- Help connect the group with people and resources in the community that can help them with their project.
- Ask questions aimed at helping youths think about, work through, and anticipate important considerations related to the project.
- Gradually shift to the background, as youth leaders gain confidence and step forward.

Adult facilitators should ensure what happens during the youth engagement project is documented in writing and with photos or videos.

The adult facilitator should also help set expectations for the project and should remind the group that there will be elements of project implementation that are beyond their control. If there are setbacks, group members should take them in stride, respond as a team, and stay positive.

Finally, adult facilitators should make sure that what happens during the youth engagement project is documented in writing and with photos or videos. Such documentation is invaluable. It can help the group evaluate the project after it is implemented, can assist with outreach during the project, and can be used to promote future SRTS youth engagement efforts. Youths can and should participate in this documentation effort.

Project Implementation at Omro

The main project of the Omro Middle School youth engagement pilot was a pair of presentations conducted by students during the school's annual Career and Hobby Day. Adult staff facilitated participation, but students fully designed and implemented the 40-minute sessions. Once students understood this, they became even more engaged and excited about following through with the project.

4 One Step Up - Let's Get Motivated!

Motivation is the juice that gets a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) youth engagement program off the ground and keeps it going. It's what brings youths to that first meeting and keeps them coming back until their project is completed. It's what powers youths up Hart's ladder to higher levels of participation, and it's what enables adult facilitators to fulfill their role effectively. Motivation is also a critical component of genuine youth engagement, since *each youth's participation must be shaped by his or her motivations and passions.*

This chapter provides practical strategies for understanding, cultivating, and sustaining motivation as part of an SRTS youth engagement effort. It addresses issues related to the motivations of both adults and youths involved in SRTS youth engagement. It also provides illustrations from the SRTS youth engagement pilot projects at Omro Middle School and Woodworth Middle School to help adults and youths visualize how a particular strategy might work in practice.

4.1 Cultivating Motivations for SRTS Youth Engagement

Cultivating motivation for SRTS youth engagement is about speaking to adults' and youths' existing interests and passions in a way that prompts them to begin supporting or participating in an SRTS youth engagement project or program. The ultimate goal might be to attract youths to the kick-off meeting for an SRTS youth engagement project, to recruit an adult to facilitate the project, or to obtain support and buy-in from key adults, such as the school principal, parents, or potential community partner groups. Cultivating motivation is about establishing the foundation for these initial steps.

> Motivation is the juice that gets an SRTS youth engagement program off the ground and keeps it going.

The following sections provide strategies for adults who want to cultivate motivation for SRTS youth engagement. These sections are accompanied by a youth activity sheet with suggestions for youths who want to get peers and adults interested in walking and bicycling.

> Cultivating motivation is about speaking to adults' and youths' existing interests and passions.

Cultivating Adult Motivation

Prior to launching an SRTS youth engagement project or program, it may be necessary to cultivate support for SRTS youth engagement among key

adults, since SRTS youth engagement projects are unlikely to be successful without their support.

SRTS youth engagement projects are unlikely to be successful without support from key adults.

Key Adults may include:

- ***Parents***, whose permission is required for youths to participate in an SRTS youth engagement project or program, whether as members of the core leadership group, youth volunteers outside the core leadership group, or participants in activities or events planned by the core leadership group.

- ***School staff members***, especially if the project will be conducted at a school. Important school staff members include the school principal, who is the final authority regarding school programming, and school staff members, who might play leading or contributing roles in the SRTS youth engagement project or program, such as the physical education teacher. environmental science teacher, drama teacher, nurse, school resource officer, or crossing guard.

- ***Adult leaders of extracurricular programs or clubs***, especially if the SRTS youth engagement project or program will be conducted out of an extracurricular program or club. Such programs and clubs may or may not be affiliated with the school.

- ***Adult leaders of potential partner organizations.*** Potential partner organizations are organizations whose goals intersect with SRTS youth engagement and that might provide volunteers, speakers, technical assistance, materials, and financial support for the SRTS youth engagement project or program. Examples of potential partner organizations include a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), community walking and bicycling groups, groups with a youth empowerment focus, or groups with a health or environmental focus. A list of potential partner organizations in East Central Wisconsin is provided in *9.4 Youth Engagement Organizations* on page 64.

***Strategies for Cultivating* Adult Motivation**

- ***Highlight the benefits of SRTS and/or SRTS youth engagement.*** Appropriate forums might include informal conversations with key adults, the school newsletter, a PTA meeting, a school staff meeting, an extracurricular program staff meeting, or a potential partner organization meeting.
  - Explain that the goal is to start an SRTS youth engagement program. Support and advice is needed from key adults.
  - Be prepared to provide examples of successful SRTS youth engagement projects in other communities. (See *Chapter 8: Youth Engagement Cases Studies* on page 39 for local and national SRTS case studies.)

- ***Assess school travel modes and perceived barriers to walking and bicycling and present findings to key adults.*** Key adults may be more willing to support or participate in an SRTS youth engagement project or program if they have a better understanding of existing conditions at a school. Commonly used assessment tools include the Student Travel Tally and Parent Survey developed by the National Center for Safe Routes to School.

- ***Conduct a walk and bike audit with key adults and youth,*** including observation of school arrival or dismissal and a walk along key walking and bicycling routes near the school. Bike and walk audits can help key adults gain a better understanding of school travel patterns and potential barriers to walking and bicycling. Invite youths to participate in the bike and walk audits and solicit their perspectives. Suggest that involving youths might be valuable going

forward, as the group attempts to expand its understanding of the barriers to walking and bicycling and ways to encourage more walking and bicycling to school.

- ***Establish an SRTS committee at the school.*** The committee might include key adults such as the principal or vice-principal, PTA president, parents, law enforcement officer, healthcare professionals, and others, including youths. The goal of the committee might be to assess existing conditions and develop an SRTS travel plan.

- ***Plan a walk or bike to school event.*** Walk and bike to school events include walk and bike to school days, bicycle rodeos, walk-a-thons, and other large events that encourage walking and bicycling. Such events can be used to highlight the benefits of walking and bicycling to school for adults as well as youths. Ideally, youths will participate in planning and implementing these events.

Cultivating Youth Motivation

Most schools will have a group of youths that is interested in walking and bicycling. The challenge might be finding these youths or building their interest to the point where they are willing to take the next step and show up for the first meeting of the SRTS youth engagement leadership group. It may be also be important to activate the curiosity of youths who may not ultimately join the core group, but that may otherwise help the group implement its project or participate in the activities or events planned by the group.

Strategies for Cultivating Youth Motivation

- ***Plan a walk or bike to school event.*** Walk and bike to school events can help enhance youth interest in walking and bicycling and related issues, as well as adult interest, which is why walk and bike to school events are so strongly encouraged. Walk and bike to school events help establish the message that walking and bicycling are valuable activities worthy of celebration, and this is a message many youths will pick up on. The experience of participating in a walk or bike to school event may also help develop youths' interest in helping to plan and implement future walk and bike to school events.

Omro Middle School
Annual Bicycle Field Trip

Every May, approximately 100 Omro Middle School students take part in an eighth-grade bicycle field trip with 30 teacher/parent chaperones. Students are divided into teams for a day-long scavenger hunt spanning 30 miles of bicycling. The annual ride has helped boost interest in bicycling at the school and created a foundation for the school's SRTS youth engagement program.

—Adapted from Safe Routes Matters, March/April 2012

- ***Plan a walking or bicycling field trip or scavenger hunt.*** While youths may have walked or bicycled to school previously, they may not have much experience walking or bicycling for other types of trips. A walk or bicycle field trip to a park, museum, or movie theater can help communicate to youths how practical and enjoyable walking and bicycling are as modes of transportation. A bicycling or walking scavenger hunt can help youths develop safety and wayfinding skills that can make them more confident walkers and bicyclists.

- ***Implement a walking and bicycling incentive program.*** An incentive program can help motivate youths to walk and bike. Youths may ultimately internalize this motivation, as they discover how much fun walking and bicycling are.

- ***Establish an afterschool walking or bicycling club, or bicycle mechanics program.*** Walking and bicycling clubs emphasize fun, relationship building, and the development of basic safety skills. Bicycle mechanics programs teach youths how to maintain bikes. Either can catalyze youth interest in the larger issues that impact walking and bicycling to school.

- ***Survey youths to understand how they get to and from school and what they like or don't like about it.*** The information collected can help establish existing conditions and provide insight into potential strategies for encouraging walking and bicycling to school. Completed surveys can become entries in a prize drawing to be conducted at the SRTS youth engagement group's first meeting. Youths can also assist with developing and administering this survey.

- ***Involve youths in built environment exploration.*** This can be done as part of a bike and walk audit with adults or separately as part of class or afterschool activity. Ask youths to document their observations. These observations then can provide the impetus for further action.

- ***Teach an SRTS curriculum or integrate SRTS concepts into an existing curriculum.*** A list of age-appropriate SRTS curricula is provided in *9.5 SRTS Curricula* on page 65.

- ***Invite high school-age youths to make a presentation on the benefits of active transportation or SRTS.*** Middle school youths often admire high school age youths and perceive them as role models.

- ***Ask youths who are already interested in SRTS youth engagement to help get others interested.*** Youths are often the most effective messengers for promoting walking and bicycling to school. *Youth Activity Sheet 1:* on page 24 provides some tips for what youths can do to get their friends, classmates, and adults interested in walking and bicycling.

- ***Connect with the East Central's Regional Safe Routes to School program.*** The Regional SRTS program offers a variety of resources to local communities, including a bicycle blender and bike fleet that can be used by local communities to increase youth motivation for SRTS. For a summary of these resources, go to http://eastcentralsrts.org/regional-srts-programs/.

Omro Middle School
Young Mechanics Program

Omro Middle School's physical education teacher has trained a crew of young bicycle mechanics. The young bicycle mechanics work out of the school's "Bicycle Shoppe." Their job is to maintain the school's bicycle fleet, which is used during physical education classes, and assist other students with bicycle maintenance issues. The young mechanics earn "bike bucks" for their work in the Bicycle Shoppe, which they can redeem for bicycle parts, tires, and sale bikes.

Youth Activity Sheet 1:

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET OTHERS INTERESTED IN WALKING & BIKING

Do you like walking or bicycling to school? Do you think it would be good if more kids walked and bicycled, or if walking and bicycling to school were easier and safer? Here are a few suggestions for getting your classmates, friends, and adults interested in these issues.

Ideas to Get Your Friends and Classmates Interested

- Coordinate with your friends to walk or bicycle to school together.
- Start an afterschool walking or bicycling club.
- Use social media to connect with friends and classmates who are interested in walking and bicycling.
- Write an article for the school newspaper about the benefits of walking and bicycling. Provide readers with a way to contact you if they are interested in increasing walking and bicycling to school or making walking and bicycling to school safer and easier.
- Suggest transportation to school as a discussion item at an upcoming student council meeting. Ask if the members of the council might be interested in pursuing an initiative to increase walking and bicycling to school or make walking and bicycling to school safer and easier.

Ideas to Get Adults Interested

- Suggest a family bike ride on the weekend. Use the opportunity to talk with your parents about the benefits of walking and bicycling and your desire to ride your bicycle more often.
- Talk to your parents about walking and bicycling issues. Suggest that they walk or bicycle to school with you. If there are things about your route to school that you think could be improved, point them out as you go along.
- Take photos or videos of things that concern or interest you related to walking or bicycling at your school, and share them with your parents, teachers, or other adults.
- Start a campaign to start a youth Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Committee! Collect signatures from youths and adults who want to increase walking and bicycling at your school or make walking and bicycling to school safer and easier. Give the signatures to the principal and suggest that the school establish an SRTS committee with youth participation.

4.2 Understanding Motivations for SRTS Youth Engagement

The previous section was about cultivating motivation, so that adults and youths become willing to take the first step toward supporting or participating in an SRTS youth engagement program or project. For some youths, this first step will be to attend the initial meeting for the SRTS youth engagement project. However, adult facilitators should not assume they understand why youths have come to that first meeting. There may be many reasons. Some youths may come to the SRTS youth engagement meeting thinking that it's about starting a bicycling or walking club. Others may see it is an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Still others may come because a friend will be there or because a teacher they like is the adult facilitator.

It is important for adult facilitators to understand the diverse motivations that drive youths to the first meeting and subsequent meetings, so that they can facilitate the project in a direction that reflects the individual motivations and passions of the youths in the group. Otherwise, it will be difficult for the adult facilitator to sustain the motivations of the youths in the group or to ensure that the project is genuinely engaging.

Soliciting feedback about what motivated each youth to attend the first SRTS youth engagement meeting should be a top priority. It is recommended that adult facilitators ask for this feedback in writing first, since some youths may be uncomfortable speaking in front of groups. Additionally, since youths typically don't want to stick out, they may be tempted to adjust their responses based on what others have said before them.

Soliciting feedback about what motivated each youth to attend the first SRTS youth engagement meeting should be a top priority.

Motivations for Participation in SRTS Youth Engagement at Woodworth

At Woodworth, when asked what they enjoyed most about the project in a follow up survey, responses ranged include, "spending time with my friends," "practicing my art skills," "helping others," and "learning to be more of a leader."

Strategies for Understanding Youth Motivations

- ***Ask each of the youths to fill out a card with their name, email address, hobbies, and why they decided to attend the meeting.*** Collect the cards and then go around the room asking the youths for their name and why they decided to attend.

- ***List the overall goals of SRTS on a flipchart or blackboard and then ask youths for feedback on these goals.*** Is anything missing that should be added? Which goals resonate with the youths the most? Ask them to indicate what goals they feel are most important on a slip of paper. Tally the votes and then report back to the group. Ask group members to reflect on the vote and what it means for the group going forward.

4.3 Sustaining Motivation for SRTS Youth Engagement

Once youths and adults have decided to support or participate in an SRTS youth engagement project, it will be important to sustain and potentially intensify their level of motivation throughout the project.

Sustaining Youth Motivation

One of the keys to sustaining youth motivation has already been mentioned: understanding what motivated the youths to attend the initial SRTS youth engagement meeting. The project should be shaped around these motivations. If youths don't see an opportunity to pursue their goals and interests through a project, if they don't feel like the project in some way suits their personality or identity, they may lose interest or drop out.

Strategies for Sustaining Youth Motivation

- ***Listen to youths.*** The first task of the adult facilitator is to provide youths with opportunities to express themselves and then to listen to what they say. Youths who feel like they are being listened to will realize that they can have a real impact on the outcome of an SRTS youth engagement project, and this help can motivate them to stick with the project and increase their effort as necessary.

- ***Establish a culture of trust.*** Adult facilitators should be careful to follow through on promises to the group. The core promise of any youth engagement project is that there will be genuine youth engagement.

- ***Set realistic expectations.*** It is important for youths to have realistic expectations of what a project will entail. Projects that fail to meet expectations can sap youth motivation.

- ***Anticipate potential challenges.*** Adult facilitators should think ahead and anticipate potential challenges. Is it possible that parents or school administrators may object to the project? What approvals are needed? What other challenges may prevent the project from moving forward? The adult facilitator must work with youths to address such challenges in order for an SRTS youth engagement project to be successful, and success is critical to sustaining youth motivation.

- ***Reward and acknowledge youth efforts.*** Rewards and acknowledgements are important after a project is completed, but they are also important in the week to week life of a project. If a group member does some research that helps the group gain a better understanding of existing conditions or makes contact with a key adult about the group's needs for the project, their contribution should be acknowledged. When the group reaches a key milestone, the group can celebrate with a party or an afternoon at the park.

Figure 2 Bike to School Day at Woodworth Middle School

- ***Provide youths with opportunities to have fun and socialize with peers.*** SRTS youth engagement projects can't be approached as a job. Youths will need moments of fun and play interspersed with the work of planning and implementing the project. They'll need opportunities to socialize, make new friends, and deepen relationships. The adult facilitator should try to build these opportunities into almost every group meeting, and should consider structuring some meetings exclusively around fun and socializing.

Sustaining Adult Motivation

It is also important to sustain adult motivation and interest for SRTS youth engagement. SRTS youth engagement is a partnership between youths and adults, and both partners must be engaged throughout the course of the project for it to succeed.

Strategies for Sustaining Adult Motivation

- ***Provide regular updates to key adults.*** Key adults such as school administrators and parents are more likely to continue supporting SRTS youth engagement if they feel informed and consulted about SRTS youth engagement activities.

- ***Invite key adults to participate in SRTS youth engagement activities.*** This will enable them to see first-hand what youths have accomplished.

- ***Recruit a co-facilitator.*** Facilitating an SRTS youth engagement project is a significant responsibility. A co-facilitator can help share this responsibility and prevent burn out.

5 TWO STEPS UP - LET'S LEAD THE WAY!

A key goal of SRTS youth engagement is for youths to take a leadership role in the initiation, planning, and implementation of SRTS projects. Leadership has a variety of meanings, but in this context it means youths contribute to the initiation, planning, and implementation of the project.

This chapter provides practical strategies for establishing the conditions for youth leadership and cultivating it. The strategies are supported by illustrations from the SRTS youth engagement pilot projects at Omro Middle School and Woodworth Middle School and from SRTS youth engagement programs across the country.[1]

> Youth leadership means youths contribute to the initiation, planning, and implementation of the project.

1 The content of this chapter assumes that an SRTS youth engagement group has already formed and that the youths in the group are motivated to participate. Please see *Chapter 4: One Steup Up: Let's Get Motivated!* on page 20 for strategies to understand, cultivate, and sustain motivation for SRTS youth engagement.

5.1 Establishing the Conditions for Youth Leadership

Three conditions are necessary for developing youth leadership in an SRTS youth engagement context:

1. Youths must understand that they are expected to take a leadership role.
2. Youths must understand what it means to be a leader.
3. Adults must deemphasize themselves as "the leader" of the group.

Youths must understand that they are expected to take a leadership role.

Youths who decide to participate in an SRTS youth engagement project or program may or may not have previous experience with youth engagement or leadership. Their expectations coming into the project will be conditioned by their previous experiences and by the context in which the SRTS youth engagement project is set. For example, youths are unlikely to expect that they will be asked to take a leadership role if the context is a school, where adults often manage the terms of youth involvement in classes, events, and activities.

Therefore, it is extremely important that adult facilitators clearly communicate at the first meeting that youths are expected to take a leadership role in initiating, planning, and implementing the project. Adult facilitators will likely have to revisit this message in subsequent sessions. At the same time, adult facilitators must assure the youths that they will not be doing the project alone. The role of the adult facilitator is to help them develop the skills they need to carry out the project and to connect them to needed resources.

Youths must understand what it means to be a leader

Once the adult facilitator has clearly communicated the expectation that youths will take a leadership role in the project, the next step is to elaborate on what this means. The adult facilitator might begin by providing examples of the roles or tasks youths might be expected to fulfill (e.g., brainstorm project ideas, decide on a project, identify needed resources, collect needed resources, etc.). Then, the adult facilitator might move on to discuss with the youths, in more general terms, what it means to be leader.

- What qualities does a leader have?
- How does a leader interact with others?
- What motivates a leader?
- Can anybody be a leader?
- How does one become a leader?

This can be an extremely fruitful conversation and can be a great segue to a discussion of the ground rules for intragroup interactions. (See *3.2 Framing* on page 10.)

It is extremely important that adult facilitators clearly communicate that youths are expected to take a leadership role.

Adult facilitators must also understand that the way they act within the group can have a powerful impact on the youths' perceptions of what leadership means. Therefore, they should be conscientious about modeling the leadership skills and behaviors they intend the youths in the group to acquire. Middle school youths particularly admire older youths, so it may also be helpful to involve older youth in the project who have good leadership skills and can model them for the youths in the group.

Establishing the Conditions for Youth Leadership at Ormo

At Ormo, students came in without fully understanding they would be responsible for implementing project ideas. Once this was clearly explained, the students actively accepted the challenge.

Adults must deemphasize themselves as "the leader"

In order for youths to take a leadership role in the SRTS youth engagement project, adult facilitators will likely need to deemphasize themselves as the group's leader. Because the adult facilitator is an adult, youths will assume that they have greater authority within the group than any other group member and are thus the group's leader. This perception is correct when it comes to certain basic issues, such as safety and age-appropriate behaviors, but can get in the way of youth leadership if it is not sufficiently managed.

Adult facilitators can deemphasize themselves as "the leader" in a variety of ways.

- **Rearrange the meeting space:** If meetings are held in a school classroom, the adult facilitator can arrange the classroom so that it is less classroom-like. In a typical classroom, student desks are arranged in ranks facing the teacher's desk. This suggests the traditional teacher-student relationship, where the teacher is clearly the leader and the student is clearly the follower. If the desks are movable, the adult facilitator could arrange them in a circle. If the desks are not movable, the adult facilitator can sit or stand to the back or side of the room.

- **Asking or Framing Questions:** Adult facilitators can also deemphasize themselves as the group's leader by asking questions

I … found it very useful to simply let the students talk amongst themselves about different ideas they had after starting the conversation with a few questions. At times you may need to bring them "back in" but I found some of the most beneficial and engaging discussions came from the students interacting with themselves and not necessarily just responding to my questions.

--Mike Patza, Adult Facilitator for the Omro Middle School pilot project

instead of making statements and by resisting the temptation to instigate, mediate, and conclude every conversation within the group.

- **Letting Youths Discuss Ideas Amongst Themselves:** Sometimes the adult facilitators should let the youths talk among themselves without intervening. It may even be helpful for the adult facilitator to step out of the room, or for the adult facilitator to suggest that the youths meet separately from time to time. In these cases, it is recommended that the adult facilitator provide a way for the youths to contact him or her, or another adult with knowledge of the project, if an important issue arises.

5.2 Cultivating Youth Leadership

Adult facilitators are responsible for helping youths develop the skills and abilities they need to carry out the SRTS youth engagement project. Leadership skills take time and practice for youths to develop. Each youth will come to the SRTS youth engagement project with a different set of existing skills and experiences, and will develop differently over the course of the project. Adult facilitators shouldn't expect the group to complete projects that are beyond their collective capabilities, given the timeframe, and shouldn't expect a member of the group to fulfill a role in a project that he or she is unprepared or unwilling to perform.

Leadership skills take time and practice for youths to develop.

Quick Wins

When considering project alternatives, adult facilitators should encourage youths to match project complexity with their current skills and experience. In some cases, adult facilitators should steer youths toward "quick wins" that provide challenges but that also have a high likelihood of success. Such "quick wins" can boost youths' self-confidence and can help them develop the skills they'll need to take on larger, more complicated projects down the road.

Cultivating Youth Leadership at Omro

During initial planning for their main project, Omro youths built momentum and confidence by updating an SRTS map and by conducting a short survey of other students' walking and bicycling habits. These activities gave students a sense of accomplishment early in the process and provided time for them to think more deeply about what they wanted to do next.

"Quick Win" Project Ideas

- ***Marketing Materials:*** Youths create a poster, brochure, public service announcement, school newsletter article, or social media page promoting SRTS issues, and coordinate delivery to members of the school community.
- ***Photo/Video Voice:*** Youths take photos or videos of barriers to walking and bicycling to school and compile them into a presentation that can be emailed to the school's SRTS team, PTA, and/or other bodies with an interest in school transportation.
- ***Mapping:*** Youths develop a bicycle or walking route or infrastructure map and make it available to other youths.
- ***Walking School Buses/Bicycle Trains:*** Youths coordinate walking school busses and bicycle trains.
- ***Surveys:*** Youths develop and administer a survey of other youths about transportation to school, and email the results to the school's SRTS team, PTA, and/or other bodies with an interest in school transportation.

- ***Poster Contest:*** Youths administer a poster contest on an SRTS-related theme and feature the winning poster as part of a future project, such as anti-speeding campaign or a walk or bike to school event.
- ***Carbon Footprint:*** Youths calculate the school's carbon footprint, devise strategies for reducing it, and communicate these strategies to members for the school community.

Walking and Bicycling Challenge
Woodworth Middle School

Youths participating in the Woodworth Middle School youth engagement pilot project coordinated a walking and bicycling challenge that spanned multiple weeks and involved a variety of activities and events, including counts of student walkers and bikers, PA announcements, poster promotions, prizes, afterschool walks and bike rides, and a concluding celebration.

Big Wins

Once youths have sufficient experience with leadership, they can take on larger, more complex projects. "Big win" projects can be more elaborate versions of projects that might otherwise be classified as "quick wins" or can include multiple "quick win" projects as part of a coordinated campaign.

"Big win" projects will likely require more time and coordination with adults, but can have a greater impact and offer more opportunities for youth leadership. It's the adult facilitator's responsibility to ensure that the timeframe allotted for the project is sufficient, and to adjust the timeframe as necessary to ensure youths take a leadership role. The adult facilitator is also responsible for helping the youths think through the practical details of the project, including necessary resources, tasks, and the timing of task completion. This applies to all projects, but is especially necessary for larger, more complex projects, due to the number of moving parts and elongated timeframe.

"Big Win" Project Ideas

- ***Marketing Campaign:*** Youths develop a marketing campaign to promote SRTS activities, walking and bicycling to school, and/or safe school travel. The campaign might include a variety of strategies targeting both peer youths and adults, including social media outreach, promotional videos, public service announcements, brochures, and/or school newsletter articles.
- ***Walking/Bicycling Challenge:*** Youths administer a walking and bicycling challenge or competition and announce results over the school's PA system or during a school assembly.
- ***Walk/Bike to School Event*:** Youths plan a walk or bike to school day event such as Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day, a bike rodeo, or a walk-a-thon.
- ***SRTS Assembly:*** Youths produce an assembly on an SRTS theme. The assembly might include youth skits dramatizing the benefits of active transportation, youth speakers, and adult speakers.

"Big win" projects can be more elaborate versions of "quick win" projects or can include multiple "quick win" projects as part of a coordinated campaign.

Sample timelines for "quick win" and "big win" projects are provided in 9.2 *SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Timelines* on page 62.

Figure 3 Youth-led bicycle safety session at Omro Middle School.

Youth Activity Sheet 2: WHAT IS A LEADER?

1. Who are some people that you consider to be leaders? List up to three people.
   -
   -
   -

2. What about these people makes them leaders in your mind? What traits or qualities do they have in common? How are they different?

3. Review the list of qualities below and select the three qualities or skills that you think are most important in a leader.

○ Good at speaking in front of others	○ Good at listening to others
○ Makes decisions	○ Collaborates with others to make decisions
○ Wants to achieve personal goals	○ Wants to help others achieve their personal goals
○ Takes responsibility	○ Shares responsibility
○ Always in front of people taking the lead	○ Sometimes in the background and letting others lead
○ Does everything herself	○ Works with others to accomplish things
○ Takes credit for accomplishments	○ Gives credit to others for accomplishments
○ Prioritizes relationships with other leaders.	○ Shares ideas and respects everyone

4. Can anyone be a leader? How does one become a leader?

5. Do you consider yourself a leader? What leadership qualities or skills do you think you have already? What leadership qualities or skills would you like to develop more?

6 Three Steps Up – Let's Decide Together!

This chapter discusses ways to involve youths in shared decision making with adults, establishing the conditions for shared youth decision making, and cultivating youth decision makers.[1] In the context of SRTS youth engagement, shared decision making with adults means youths are actively involved in the process of making decisions about their travel to school. This is different from being consulted or given an opportunity for input. It means that a youth participating in a decision with adults is a full partner and has a vote of equal weight to that of an adult.

Involving youths in decisions about issues impacting school transportation is important for three reasons.

1. Youths are directly affected by school transportation decisions and should have some say in these decisions.

2. Youths have insights that can be extremely valuable when making decisions about school travel, since they are often the ones most familiar with the barriers to walking and bicycling.

3. Shared decision making is the essence of citizenship but takes practice. Youths cannot be expected to become full-fledged members of society at age 18 if they have no previous experience with shared decision-making.

Shared decision making means youths are actively involved in the process of making decisions about their travel to school.

1 This step assumes that youths are already motivated by SRTS issues and have developed some leadership skills.

6.1 Ways to involve Youths in Shared Decision-Making with Adults

There are many ways to involve youths in decision making about issues that impact school transportation. Here are a few examples.

- ***Youths can help develop an SRTS action plan.*** In particular, youths can share in decisions about what action items are included in the plan and how those action items are prioritized. Youths can also help assess existing conditions.

- ***Youths can serve on a school or community SRTS coalition.*** In this role, youths can help make decisions about how SRTS programs are implemented and evaluated.

- ***Youths can serve on other committees and boards that make decisions affecting school transportation.*** For example, youths could participate on a citizen board established by the school district to provide advice on school transportation issues.

6.2 Establishing the Conditions for Shared Youth Decision-Making

Whatever the chosen forum for shared decision making between adults and youths, it will be important to think carefully about *how* youths will participate and what sort of preparations or adjustments to the decision-making body or process may be necessary to enable youths to participate as full partners. Key issues include:

- When and where meetings of the decision-making body occur.
- How meetings of the decision-making body are run.
- Institutional and social barriers to shared decision making.
- Cultivating youths as decision makers.

When and Where Meetings of the Decision-Making Body Occur

The location and timing of decision-making meetings can impact the ability of youths to participate. For example, it may be difficult for youths to participate in evening meetings due to evening curfews, homework, or family and extracurricular commitments. It may also be difficult for youths to attend meetings that are held in locations that are far away from their home or school. Consequently, meeting times may need to be adjusted and/or transportation provided in order to ensure youth participation.

If such adjustments are not possible, youth input can also be obtained outside of the main decision-making body. For example, a subcommittee might be established that meets at times and places that are convenient for youths. The subcommittee can vote on transportation issues before the main body, and the subcommittee's decision can be communicated to the main body by a representative.

Finally, it is important to remember that decision making does not only happen in meetings. If youths are to be full partners in the decision-making process, they should also be included in the other decision-making activities, such as emails, teleconferences, and social gatherings.

How Meetings of the Decision-Making Body Are Run

The structure and conduct of decision-making meetings can also impact youth participation. For example, if the group is large and discussions are freewheeling, then it is unlikely youths will participate. Youths are more likely to feel comfortable contributing if the group is divided into smaller groups or pairs prior to discussion among the larger group. It may also be a good idea to ask each group member to provide input separately, for example as part of an end-of-meeting go around. Although there will be exceptions to this, decisions on significant matters should ideally be made through a democratic voting process in which youth votes count as much as adult votes.

Institutional and Social Barriers to Shared Decision Making

Finally, it is possible that school policies and rules, community laws, or social barriers may need to be addressed in order to establish the conditions for shared decision making between adults and youths. For example, formal policies may specify that voting members of the decision-making body be adults. If such policies exist, the potential for changing them to allow youth participation should be investigated. If the rules or policies cannot be changed, then ways of incorporating youths in decision making outside of the formal voting process should be explored.

There may also be social barriers to youth participation in an adult decision-making body. Adult members of the body may hold stereotypical views about youths that prevent them from treating youths as equal partners in decision-making, and youths may also have stereotypical views of adults. Adult members may also be tempted to use jargon that youths are not familiar with, inadvertently shutting youths out of the conversation. As a consequence, it may be necessary to provide some instruction to adult and youth members of the decision-making body, so that they are prepared to interact with each other appropriately and create an environment that is conducive to shared decision making.

6.3 Cultivating Youths as Decision-Makers

It will also be necessary to make sure youths are prepared for their role on the decision making group and receive help and guidance as they adjust to life within the group. For example, youths who are joining the body should receive training covering the group's mission, goals, procedures, and history. Youths will need a basic understanding of the transportation issues engaged by the group. They'll also need a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as the reasons behind their inclusion in the group.

Once a youth joins the group, it may be helpful to assign her or him an adult mentor or ally, who can advise the youth as he or she adjusts to the group. It may also be necessary to work with the youth to develop skills that are needed in order for them fully participate in the activities of the group, such as the ability to evaluate alternatives and public speaking. (See *Youth Activity Sheet #3: Evaluating Alternatives* on page 36.)

Youth Activity Sheet 3: EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

Briefly summarize the issue you are considering.

What are the potential positive and negative outcomes related to each alternative? How do you feel about the alternatives generally? How do they fit your values or accomplish your goals? Fill out the boxes below.

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Description of Alternative			
Potential Positive Outcomes			
Potential Negative Outcomes			
How do I feel about each alternative generally?			
How do the alternatives fit with my values and accomplish my goals?			

7 Creating Sustainable SRTS Youth Engagement Programs

To this point, the focus has been on implementing an SRTS youth engagement *project*. An SRTS youth engagement *project* is a discreet, time-limited effort that is carried out by a specific group of youth and culminates with implementation of a clearly defined action or set of actions. Planning and delivering a Bike to School Day event is an example of an SRTS youth engagement project, but what happens to SRTS youth engagement after the project is complete? How can the group continue to pursue its goals? How can youth involvement in SRTS be sustained and increased going forward? The answer involves establishing a sustainable SRTS youth engagement *program*.

Establishing a sustainable SRTS youth engagement program involves building on project successes and creating a culture that supports youth engagement.

7.1 Building on Project Successes

A successful youth engagement project can be an excellent catalyst for building a sustainable youth engagement program. This is one reason why it is so important to select projects that have a high probability of success. Youths who've had a positive experience are more likely to participate in future youth engagement projects. Youths who've observed from the sidelines are more likely to join in the next time around. In order to maximize the value of project successes, it's important to properly acknowledge what's been accomplished and leverage the lessons learned. Strategies for doing so include incorporating evaluation at project closure, recognizing youth contributions, and celebrating project achievements.

Evaluation

After the project has been implemented, the group should take some time to reflect on what they have learned through the project, how engaged they felt, and whether they believe they had a leading role. Evaluation is an important aspect of sustainability, since only through such deliberate opportunities for reflection can adult facilitators and group members understand what adjustments may be necessary to ensure the long-term viability of an SRTS youth engagement program.

The group's evaluation should speak to the goals that the group identified at the beginning of the

> Facilitators should provide opportunities for youths to evaluate their experience on the project both verbally and in writing.

project, but should not be limited to those goals, since there may be lessons learned or successes gained that hadn't previously been envisioned. The goals themselves should reflect not only the group's desire for change as it relates to school transportation, but also what members of the group hoped to learn or gain as individuals, and the connections and bonds they formed.

Recognizing Youth Contributions

It's important that youth contributions to an SRTS youth engagement project be recognized in a public way and that the achievements of the project be celebrated and publicized. A school might recognize youth participants by giving them an award at a school awards ceremony, making an announcement of the school's PA system, or recognizing the youths in the school newsletter. The important thing is to recognize the youths publicly in a way that communicates to members of the school community—teachers, parents, and students—that the youths involved in the youth engagement project have accomplished something worthy. Recognition of this kind can build the self-confidence of the youths involved in the project and increase the likelihood they will participate in future projects. It can also inspire a desire in other youths and adults to participate in similar projects.

Celebrating Project Achievements

The achievements of the project should also be celebrated both within the immediate school community and beyond.

- An article in the local newspaper or a TV or radio segment on a local station can help build awareness in the larger community and bring in outside groups. Such groups might provide support to the program through funding or expertise.
- An article in the school newsletter or an email home to parents can help build and sustain parent support.
- Photos and videos of the project on Facebook or YouTube can help bring in new youth recruits.

Adequately celebrating project achievements requires some work ahead of time. Photos and videos must be taken, notes kept, press releases issued, and media outlets contacted. Youths can and should participate in all of these tasks.

7.2 Developing a Culture of Youth Engagement

The culture at the school plays an important role in youth engagement. If the school cultivates youth leadership and shared decision making with adults, then it will be easier to sustain a youth engagement program centered around SRTS. With this in mind, the adult facilitator may wish to work with other adults at the school to incorporate youth engagement principles into curricular and extra-curricular activities more fully. It is also important to structure recruitment for SRTS youth engagement projects so that there are a mix of youths from different grade levels. This makes it possible for youths in lower grades to gain experience with SRTS youth engagement that can be tapped in future years.

8 Youth Engagement Cases Studies

8.1 Wisconsin Pilot Projects

In parallel to developing *Three Steps Up!*, two youth engagement pilot projects were conducted to test out a variety of possible strategies for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) youth engagement programs. These programs were conducted over the course of approximately three months in the spring of 2013. Schools were selected based on a number of factors, including a desire to engage different sizes and types of communities, past SRTS programming, availability of youths to participate, and ability to complete a pilot project in the time allotted.

Omro Middle School

Background

The City of Omro is a small, rural community (pop. 3,300) located eleven miles west of Oshkosh in northeast Wisconsin. Only 42% of Omro Middle School students live within two miles of the school, and many of these students must cross one or more major roads if they walk or bicycle to school. As a result, the vast majority of students are eligible to be bused (approximately 90% district-wide). Student enrollment is approximately 300 students in grades 6-8.[1]

Prior to the SRTS youth engagement pilot project, significant SRTS programming had already been implemented by adults at Omro Middle School and in the Omro community. Existing programs included an 8th grade class bicycle trip, a Bicycle Shoppe and young mechanics program, a school bicycle fleet for use during PE, lunch hour, and special events, a Walking School Bus and Bike Train, and a 6th grade environmental retreat incorporating bicycle education. The youth engagement program was viewed as a great way to incorporate youth more fully into the overall Omro SRTS program.

Pilot Project

For the youth engagement pilot, Joe Horvath, a PE Teacher and leader in the Omro SRTS Program, asked a number of students if they were interested in participating in the leadership group. The final group consisted of seven students: two 6th graders, three 7th graders, and two 8th graders. They had all shown leadership qualities and interest in different ways of promoting walking and bicycling at Omro Middle School.

Because of limited school staff time, it was determined that an outside facilitator, Mike Patza from the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, would lead the group. The group established a schedule of meetings every other week. Each meeting lasted approximately an hour, and students were pulled from their respective classes to work on the project.

1 Adapted from the SRTS Award application

The youths' first meeting together was on March 13, 2013. This meeting allowed the group to connect with one another and brainstorm possible project ideas. Because of existing programs and already established youth interest, there was no shortage of ideas. Additionally, two youths had conducted a student survey prior to the meeting to examine reasons why students did or did not walk and bike to school, as well as gain a general understanding of the percentage of students walking and bicycling to school.

Mr. Horvath was in attendance at the first meeting, which helped the youths feel comfortable with Mr. Patza, the outside facilitator. He was also able to share ideas youths had brought up previously.

The youths decided they wanted to hold an event to promote walking and bicycling and teach bicycle safety as part of an already established Career and Hobby Day. Additionally, the youths decided to update a walking map previously created by the SRTS committee that the youths believed was underutilized and not understood. With youth input, Mr. Patza used his technical skills to adapt the map based on the specifications provided by the youths.

Meetings included project planning and discussion about the activities to be conducted. However, it was not until approximately half way through the program that the youths understood they would be planning and leading the two 40-minute sessions.

The youths broke into two smaller groups, each of which planned a session for Career and Hobby Day. One of these subgroups focused on developing a session on bicycle safety, bicycle mechanics, and the parts of a bicycle. The other subgroup focused on boosting student interest in bicycling by allowing students to make smoothies using a bicycle blender, ride a variety of different kinds of bikes, and participate in a bicycle slow race. Each session was introduced by Mr. Patza and then led fully by the youths themselves. Each session had approximately 22 students attend, with some students attending both sessions.

Figure 4 Updated Omro Walking and Biking Map

Lessons Learned
Omro Middle School

In reflecting on the project and final event, the youths and adults felt it was a success. Once they recognized they would be fully responsible for the Career and Hobby Day sessions, they took charge of the project and took the steps necessary to successfully complete it.

Group Selection: Because the general SRTS program at Omro was already established, many youth had shown enthusiasm for working on a project. Using that information, the youth engagement leadership group was pulled together by Mr. Horvath, who knew the youths, their interests in walking and bicycling, and their leadership abilities.

Scope of Project: While the presentations at the Career and Hobby Day event went well, the sessions reached only about 10% of the student body. When selecting an event to put time and effort into, a group should think about the impact it might have and whether there might be ways to increase the impact.

Clear Communication*:* It is important to make sure everyone involved in the project has an understanding of their roles. It is especially crucial for youths to know they will be leading and conducting whatever projects are undertaken by the group; an adult facilitator is there to assist but will not be doing the work.

Connection to One Another: It is important to make sure time and effort is put into building rapport among group members. If youths know each other, but the adult facilitator is an outsider, the adult facilitator should build time into the process to establish a connection with the youths, or invite an adult who is familiar with the youths to participate as a co-facilitator, at least in the initial stages.

Woodworth Middle School

Background

Woodworth Middle School is located in the City of Fond du Lac in central Wisconsin on the southern end of Lake Winnebago. The city is the main community in the Fond du Lac metropolitan area, one of the smallest metro areas in Wisconsin. Woodworth has a student population of approximately 520 students. Based on previous surveys, approximately 53 percent of Woodworth students travel to and from school in a family vehicle and approximately 27 percent travel by foot or bicycle. About 59 percent of students live within one mile of school. For parents of children that do not walk or bicycle to/from school, the top three concerns are the amount of traffic, distance from school, and weather.[2]

Fond du Lac has long participated in SRTS. The Fond du Lac Area School District developed the Safe Kids Zone campaign, which was one of the first SRTS programs in the country and predated the federal SRTS program. The Safe Kids Coalition has developed public service announcements and runs an annual parent pledge campaign. The Safe Kids Coalition also does annual parking and traffic assessments at all of the schools within the district.

Figure 5 Fond du Lac Bike to School Day

2 Adapted from Woodworth Middle School SRTS Action Plan

Pilot Project

Woodworth administrators identified the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) to conduct the youth engagement program. The group consisted of approximately 40 youths, all in eighth grade, with the adult facilitator being the NJHS sponsor, Brianne Catarazoli.

The first meeting with the group took place on March 21, 2013. An outside guest, Jason Jenkins of Active Transportation Alliance, attended and led the first session. Mr. Jenkins gave the youths an introduction and overview of the SRTS movement, the scope of the project, and desired outcomes. The youths brainstormed a number of possible projects and gravitated toward two: 1) a walk/bike to school contest in which NJHS would promote walking and bicycling to school, count walkers and bikers, and reward walkers and bikers with prizes and 2) a petition for installation of an advanced pedestrian hybrid beacon.

At the start of the next meeting the youths decided to pursue the bike/walk contest as their primary project and identified other projects in conjunction with the main contest. The youths were then broken into teams of 7-8 youths to take on specific tasks as follows:

- Promotions Team—Created school-wide announcements and posters promoting the contest.
- Survey Team—Arrived early to school and counted the number of students walking or bicycling every Wednesday and Friday.
- Cherry Berry Event Team—Coordinated two afterschool trips to a nearby yogurt stand named "Cherry Berry," where students get a free yogurt on Thursdays with their id.
- 8th Grade Bike Ride Team—Coordinated a bike ride for eighth graders
- PBIS Team—Explained the project to the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) teachers and coordinated a PBIS event based on the project.

The youths seemed engaged early on in the project, and the survey teams seemed to have no problem completing their tasks. However, there were complications associated with some other components of the project.

The "Cherry Berry" event was well planned and promoted but ended up being called off when a parent objected. This was very disheartening to the group of youths planning this event, and while alternate plans were suggested, including planning a walk to pick up trash at nearby trail, these walks were derailed by bad weather.

Planning for the bike ride was scuttled by lack of student commitment and miscommunication with another school, with whom the members of the 8th Grade Bike Ride Team were trying to coordinate.

The PBIS team successfully worked with PBIS teachers to reserve "bike blenders" through the East Central SRTS program for two separate days, including Bike to School Day, and set up an event on the last day of school. The plan for the last day of school was for student walkers and bikers to be entered into a prize raffle and given an opportunity to ride the bike blenders. However, the team struggled to find sources for prizes and was disappointed when it didn't have better prizes to offer.

The PBIS event was also envisioned as an awards ceremony and wrap up celebration for the project. However, due to preexisting school schedules and conflicts, the only day available was the last day of school. This was not ideal, since the last day of school was a half day during which little else was planned or organized for students, and this resulted in lower than expected participation.

Lessons Learned
Woodworth Middle School

Overall, it appeared that, while the project got off to a good start, a number of factors diminished youth motivation and engagement as time went on.

Size of the group: The NJHS group included 40 youths, which seemed like an asset initially. However, as the project progressed, the youths became disengaged and frustrated that there wasn't more work for them to do. A smaller group might have been easier to engage.

Competing Activities: Because of the structure and composition of the group, many of the youths prioritized other school activities over their SRTS project obligations. A requirement that youths commit to the project in some way might have prevented this from happening.

Clear Understanding of SRTS Concepts: Youths should have time to get up to speed on SRTS concepts, and transportation in general, before selecting and designing a project. Fond du Lac had an established SRTS program called Safe Kids Zone that might have helped with this process, had those involved with Safe Kids Zone been more aware of the pilot.

Clear Objectives: While the youths seemed to have a clear idea of their project initially, the process of project selection did not include developing objectives or goals. Consequently, when the focus of project shifted more toward data collection, the youths did not understand the implications. Ensuring that the youths had had a firm grasp of their goals, and how each program component furthered those goals, might have helped them feel their time was more usefully spent.

Avoiding Disappointments: A number of the youths commented that they felt it was a big disappointment when the Cherry Berry walk or the 8th grade bike rides fell through due to external factors. It is important for an adult facilitator to recognize and evaluate such possibilities to avoid failure whenever possible, especially if it is unrelated to youth work and effort.

Active Project Components: Youths were overwhelmingly positive about actually getting to *do something*. They enjoyed making posters, conducting the announcements, talking with new people, and being with friends. Youths were less engaged when meetings focused on administrative matters, such as task updates.

Connecting the Project to the Group's Mission: One of the elements of the NJHS charter is service, and the project was intended to serve as the group's community service project. Several youths commented that one of the things they liked best about the project was helping other people be active.

8.2 National Youth Engagement Programs

In addition to the program pilots in East Central Wisconsin, other programs exist across the country that contain youth engagement elements. The following sections profile four examples: ECO2school, Make Trax, Teens Go Green, and Active Transportation Alliance.

ECO2school

The ECO2school program is designed to educate, inspire, and mobilize youths to take positive action around global climate change. The program has primarily been used to increase walking, bicycling, and carpooling to school in Northern California schools. Although the program uses adult facilitators, it is designed to engage youths in developing programs and activities to further the goal of reducing the impact of travel to school on climate change. Youths are encouraged to join teams that create and lead programs encouraging bicycling, walking, and carpooling to school.

The ECO2school Project Manual is designed to orient a school team of youth leaders and teacher champions to the main aspects of ECO2school and guide them through a step-by-step process of how to implement the project, including planning, preparation, outreach, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. The manual includes some ready-to-use templates that youths may use or refer to during the course of the project. Youths may decide to come up with new templates that help them implement the project in better ways. Finally, the manual includes resources to help the project team network with other ECO2school teams as well as youth groups from colleges and universities involved in the climate protection movement locally and nationally.

More information about the ECO2School program may be found on the program website: http://eco2school.org/

Make Trax

The Make Trax program is a self-contained curriculum meant to engage youths in the SRTS planning process. The curriculum contains eight lessons where youths examine neighborhood conditions and then create and make recommendations to overcome challenges to walking. The program was developed to promote civic and technology literacy, and help youths learn about the multiple benefits of active transportation

Lessons cover the following topics: (1) ideas of safe walking and bicycling, (2) mapmaking and technology, (3) field work to examine neighborhood conditions, (4) using information to explore project possibilities, and (5) creating recommendations. The program culminates with a presentation to parents, school administers, and/or local officials. Older middle school-age youths may be able to use the Youth Field Guide with little or no guidance.

Benefits of the program include: promoting leadership and understanding of planning for youths; an integration of math, social studies, and science curricula; increase in technology literacy; and building general support of SRTS initiatives. Additionally, youths have used the program as an advocacy tool. In Detroit, youths were able to get buildings condemned and torn down or boarded up after participating in a walk audit of the neighborhood.

While the program has many advantages, it has been hard to get schools to adopt it for programming during the school day. Thus, after school programs, summer camps, and similar programs with more flexibility might more easily be able to implement such a program. The program engages youths on a specific project over a short timeframe but may be part of a larger youth engagement program.

Materials for the Make Trax program are available through the Michigan Department of Transportation SRTS website: http://saferoutesmichigan.org/maketrax

Teens Go Green

Teens Go Green is a youth engagement initiative of the Marin County, California Safe Routes to Schools program, designed to engage middle and high school youths. The main project components are skill building through classes and trainings, raising awareness through assemblies and presentations, and getting youths to take action.

The program has been implemented both with local teacher champions and in existing classes and clubs. The teacher champion/leader model has provided schools flexibility to bring together excited youths. This has also allowed programs to build from year to years as youths age, creating a culture of active transportation within the school.

A Teens Go Green Coordinator focuses on about 10 schools a year to more fully implement some type of programing, while other schools connect on specific projects. When engaging a group, the following model is often used:

- Identify an ecological goal.
- Study broad issues at play.
- Evaluate existing conditions (for walking/bicycling/active transportation).
- Create and work on a short term action plan.
- Create and work on a long term action plan.
- Evaluate progress (and move back through steps as necessary).

More information about the Teens Go Green program can be found on their website: http://saferoutestoschools.org/teensgogreen.html.

Active Transportation Alliance

Active Transportation Alliance (Active Trans) has done a variety of youth engagement work in a variety of settings. Often these programs are very specific to a time and place based on specific organizational projects or specific desires of a school or group. One such program, called Drive With Care, engaged a class of high school youths to look at transportation issues in their community and work to advocate for change. Youths investigated barriers and safety risks to students walking, created a video detailing some issues happening outside their school, and met with local officials to discuss their findings and proposals. Youths also traveled to lobby state elected officials to assist in the passing of a new law related to pedestrian safety.

In the past, Active Trans also helped run an afterschool bike program for high school students. Youths learned bicycle mechanics and took bike rides. Some of the youths were then hired by the City of Chicago to participate as Junior Bicycling Ambassadors as part of a larger city program. Junior Ambassadors worked approximately 6 weeks during the summer giving bike safety presentations at Chicago Park District sites and participating in other bike safety initiatives.

Active Trans staff have also supported youth-led efforts to promote and plan Bike to School Day events. After sharing experiences and ideas from other similar events, youths created their own plans to promote the event, track student trips, and give out incentives and prizes to student participants. The youths were guided by a teacher, but the project was fully organized and completed by the youths of a high school social studies class as part of a service learning project.

9 Resources

9.1 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Projects

The tables below include sample SRTS youth engagement projects. The projects are grouped according to the levels discussed in *Three Steps Up!*:

- One Step Up—Let's Get Motivated!
- Two Steps Up—Let's Lead the Way
- Three Steps Up—Let's Decide Together!

Each sample project entry includes a summary of benefits, considerations, estimated effort/complexity level, and resources, including web links and organizations.

Table 1 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Projects: One Step Up—Let's Get Motivated!

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-led Built Environment Exploration Can be done as part of a bike and walk audit with adults or separately as part of class or afterschool activity.	Great way build youth interest in ped/bike issues. Youths are natural authorities on their school transportation and often have valuable insights.	May require approval from parents. If conducted out of a school, will require approval from the school principal Need to schedule bike and walk audit at a times when youths are available. Ask youths to document their observations.	Low	***Links:*** Bike and Walk Audit Checklist (ECWRPC)

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-led Poster Contest Adults coordinate contest in which youths create posters to promote walking and biking or highlight key SRTS issues. Poster designs may then by displayed inside the school and/ or reprinted on yard signs, banners, etc.	Enlists youths to help spread SRTS messag-es. Youths know what other youths will find cool and fun! Resource and coordina-tion requirements are minimal. Flexible with respect to season, time of day, weather, etc.	Best when tied into another (larger) event or activity. Requires coordination process to gain poster submissions, identify prizes, and select a win-ner.	Low	N/A
Presentation by High-School Youths Adults invite High school-age youths to make a presenta-tion or perform a skit (e.g., on the benefits of active transporta-tion or SRTS).	Elementary school age and middle-school-age youths often perceive high school youths as role models, which creates the potential for High school students to be very effective messengers on SRTS-related issues.	Will require approval from parents of High school youth(s) and from school, if High school youth(s) are expected to deliver presentation/skit during class time. Identify High school presenters by contact-ing adult leaders of club/ classes focused on drama, public speaking, environmental issues, and health issues/physi-cal education. High school present-ers will require time to develop and practice the presentation.	Low	N/A

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-led Youth Survey Adults survey youths to understand how they get to and from school and what they like or don't like about it.	The information collected can help establish existing conditions and provide insight into potential strategies for encouraging walking and bicycling to school. Completed surveys can become entries in a prize drawing to be conducted at the SRTS youth engagement group's first meeting.	If conducted at a school, will require approval from the school principal and possibly the school district administration. Depending on how the survey is administered, may also need assistance and buy in from teachers. Best if survey is short. Must consider how data will be compiled and summarized.	Medium	***Links:*** Student Travel Tally Form (National Center for SRTS)
Adult-led Walking/Biking Competitions Adults coordinate a walking or biking-related competition. Classes and individuals can compete based on total bike/ped mileage, frequency of bike/ped trips to/from school, and carbon emissions savings.	Provides positive reinforcement for walking and biking. Can include youths with disabilities or youths who cannot walk to school because of distance or other barriers if designed appropriately.	If conducted at a school, will require approval from school principal and support from parents and school staff. Need method for tracking competition metrics, e.g.., miles walked/biked. Need way for competitors to track their position relative to other competitors. Need to identify incentives/prizes that youths will find motivating.	Medium	***Links:*** Bicycle Blender Program (ECWRPC) Mileage Clubs and Contests (National Center for SRTS) Fire Up Your Feet Program (SRTS National Partnership) Golden Shoe Award (Alameda County SRTS Program)

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-led Walking or Bicycling Field Trip Adults lead youths on a field trip by bicycling or walking. Potential destinations include parks, museums, and movie theaters.	Can help communicate to youths how practical and enjoyable walking and bicycling are as modes of transportation. Can help youths develop wayfinding and bike/ped safety skills. Can make youths more confident walkers and bicyclists.	Requires permission from parents, and approval from the school principal, if conducted during school hours. Need to preview routes to ensure they are suitable. Need to provide ped/bike safety training in advance of field trip.	Medium	***Organizations:*** Omro Middle School Neenah School District Marion School District
Adult-led SRTS instruction Adults teach an SRTS curriculum or integrate SRTS concepts into an existing curriculum	Goes beyond to ped/ bike safety to include other aspects of SRTS, e.g., health and environments benefits of walking and biking.	If conducted in a school, may require approval from principal. Send information about SRTS and SRTS curriculum, so they understand the benefits Consider ways to incorporate state learning standards as part of SRTS instruction.	Mediuim-High	***Links:*** See 9.4 SRTS Curricula on page 65. ***Organizations:*** Readfield Elementary School, School District of New London

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-led Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Programs Adults coordinate bicycle or pedestrian safety education program for youths.	May help alleviate parental concerns about youths walking and biking to/from school. May help develop youth interest in walking and bike to school. Develops habits and skills that benefit children throughout their lives, regardless of the potential for walking or biking to school.	Best taught using a combination of methods, including one-time instruction (e.g. assemblies), multi-lesson classroom curricula, and skills practice (e.g., bicycle rodeos). Requires able and willing instructors Should be age-appropriate Inform parents of safety training, so they can skills at home. Bicycle safety education may require an outside instructor, e.g., a police officer or League Certified Instructor (LCI).	Medium-High	***Links:*** Walking Safely (ECWRPC) Wheeling Safely (ECWPRC) Bike Safety Month (ECWRPC) Strategies for Educating Children (National Center for SRTS) Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) Teaching People on Bikes to Ride Safely (League of America Bicyclists) Bicycle Rodeos (Bicycling Life) ***Organizations:*** Police department SafeKids League of American Bicyclists

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-led Walk and Biking Events Adults organize a walk or bike to school event, e.g., Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day.	Great way to generate youths' enthusiasm for walking and biking and build community awareness of safety issues. Lots of materials available for support.	Will require approval from school principal and support from parents (e.g., PTA/PTO) and school staff members. Preparations for elaborate celebrations must begin several months in advance to allow time to identify partners, plan activities, order incentives, and promote the event. Should provide bicycle and pedestrian safety information to youths and parents in advance of event.	High	***Links:*** Walk/Bike to School Day website East Central SRTS Website (posters available)
Adult-led After School Walk or Bike Club Adults coordinate an afterschool walk or bike club focused on recreation and developing safety skills.	Can lead to broader engagement in issues impacting walking and biking. Excellent way for youths to practice pedestrian or bicycle safety skills. Once youths develop competence, they can communicate pedestrian or bicycle safety messages to other youths.	Requires approvals from parents, and, if conducted on school property, approval from the school principal. Developing safety skills should be priority one. Requires an adult facilitator who with experience teaching pedestrian or bicycle safety skills, e.g., League Certified Instructor (LCI). Bicycle clubs require students to have a bicycle, either one provided by the youths themselves or one provided by some other source.	High	***Links:*** Ways to Include Bicycling in Your SRTS Program (National Center for SRTS) ***Organizations:*** Adult cycling clubs Bike shops J.R. Gerritts Middle School

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	Resources
Adult-coordinated Bicycle Mechanics Program or School Bike Shop Adults coordinate a program designed to teach youths how to repair bicycles. Once students develop bicycle repair skills, the adult coordinator can help them make those skills available to the broader school community by establishing a school bike shop.	Can lead to broader engagement in issues impacting walking and biking. Excellent way for youths to develop bicycle maintenance skills. Can lead to more bicycle riding among youths whose bikes are repaired.	Need approval from school principal if conducted on school property. Need suitable workspace. Need bicycle repair tools. Need adult facilitator with bicycle repair skills.	High	***Links:*** Omro Bike Shoppe ***Organizations:*** Adult cycling clubs Bike shops

Table 2 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Projects: Two Steps Up—Let's Lead the Way!

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youth-led Poster Contest Youths coordinate a contest among their peers to create posters promoting biking and walking or raising awareness of SRTS-related issues. Poster designs may then by displayed inside the school and/or reprinted on yard signs, banners, etc.	Same benefits as adult-led poster contest. In addition: Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.	Same considerations as adult-led competitions.	Low	N/A	N/A
Youth-created Walking/Biking Maps Youths develop or update maps showing existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, designated or preferred walking/biking routes, crossing guard locations, and/or remote drop-off/pick-up locations.	Maps encourage walking and biking. Youths develop awareness of issues impacting walking and biking by mapping them. Youths develop mapping skills.	Requires adult facilitator who is familiar with mapping technologies, such as Google Earth, ArcGIS, and others. Requires mapping software.	Low-Medium	Math, Science, or Environmental Club	See photo of Omro Middle School map on page 40 for an example.

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youth-coordinated Walking School Buses/Bicycle Trains Youths coordinate walking school busses and bicycle trains.	Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.	Will require support from parents. Need to provide safety training to youth participants. Need to recruit adult walking school bus drivers or bicycle train conductors. Helpful to have adult facilitator who is familiar with mapping technologies, such as Google Earth, ArcGIS, and others.	Medium	Youths that currently walk and bike to school Health and wellness clubs	***Links:*** The Walking School Bus: Combining Safety, Fun and the Walk to School (National Center for SRTS)
Youth-led Walking/Biking Competitions Youths coordinate a competition related to walking and biking. Classes and individuals can compete based on total bike/ped mileage, frequency of bike/ped trips to/from school, and carbon emissions savings.	Same benefits as for adult-led walking and biking events. In addition: Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.	Same considerations as adult-led competitions.	Medium	Youths who currently walk and bike to school, Health and Wellness Clubs, Math, Science, or Environmental Clubs	***Links:*** Mileage Clubs and Contests (National Center for SRTS)

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youth-led Assessment and Advocacy Youths examine conditions, attitudes, and behaviors related to walking and biking by documenting unsafe conditions and conducting surveys. Youths then analyze the data collected and develop findings, which they present to local government officials, school leaders, or others who can create better conditions for walking and biking.	Youths develop skills related to data collection, data analysis, and presentation. Youths develop an understanding of how decisions impacting walking and biking are made and how they can influence these decisions. Youths are empowered when the findings they present have an impact on walking and biking conditions.	Requires a significant amount of time to develop youth understanding of walking and biking issues and possible solutions. Important to set realistic expectations, e.g., youths should not expect that all of their findings/recommendations will result in change. If time is limited, focus may be on assessment rather than advocacy.	Medium-High	Youths who currently walk and bike to school, student council, youth leadership organization	See *Make Trax* on page 65.
Youth-led Video Production Youths produce videos documenting bicycle and pedestrian safety, unsafe conditions around the school, or the benefits of walking and biking.	Video is a powerful communication tool. Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.	Need adult facilitator with experience using video. Need video equipment and editing software. May need parent approval if videos feature youths.	Medium-High	A/V clubs	***Links:*** Come Together Go Green (Marine County SRTS Program)

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youth-led Marketing Campaign Youths develop a coordinated marketing campaign that includes videos, posters, brochures, public service announcements, school newsletter articles, and/or social media outreach to Highlight SRTS issues.	Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Youths develop skills related to advertising and promotions. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.	Campaign can include a variety of strategies targeting both peer youths and adults. May require parent permission to publish photos and videos of youths. Need adult facilitator with appropriate media skills. Need appropriate equipment and software, e.g., computers with word processing/document layout software.	Medium-High	Youths who currently walk or bike to school, A/V clubs, creative writing clubs, English classes, art classes or clubs, FBLA	N/A
Youth-led Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Youths lead activities that promote safety around walking and biking.	Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Youths develop skills related to public speaking. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way. Good way to engage barrier of safety concerns.	Need to provide thorough pedestrian and bicycle training to youth leaders. Requires adult facilitator who has a thorough understanding of ped/bike safety issues and how to communicate them.	High	Health and Wellness Clubs, Recreational and Sports Clubs	***Links:*** Mayor Daley's Bicycling Ambassadors Alexandria Features Junior Bicycle Ambassadors

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youth-led Walk and Biking Events (e.g., Walk to School Day, Bike to School) Youths design, plan, and implement a walk or bike to school event.	Same benefits as for adult-led walking and biking events. In addition: Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way. Youths derive a sense of accomplishment from putting on a school-wide event.	Same considerations as adult-led walk/bike events. In addition: Adult facilitators should help guide youths toward an event plan that is within youths' capabilities, considering timeframe, and builds on their individual talents and interests. Important to set realistic expectations regarding participation, which may vary based on circumstances beyond youths' control, e.g., weather.	High	Youths who currently walk and bike to school, youth council	***Links:*** Walk and Bike to School Day Website.
Youth-led SRTS Assembly Youths produce an assembly on an SRTS theme. The assembly might include youth skits dramatizing SRTS themes, youth speakers, and adult speakers.	Youths develop skills related to organizing and executing plans and activities. Youths develop skills related to advertising and promotions. Youths develop skills related to public speaking. Leverages youths' ability to influence and connect with other youths in a positive way.	Must obtain approval from school principal. Need adequate time for students to develop and practice scripts. Must schedule with adult speakers well in advance.	High	Drama club	***Links:*** Pedal Power Assembly (Marin County SRTS Program)

Table 3 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Projects: Three Steps Up—Let's Decide Together!

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youths-Participate in SRTS Action Plan Development Youths share in decisions about what action items are included in the plan and how those action items are prioritized.	Youths develop skills related to shared decision-making. Allows youths to influence decisions regarding school transportation that affect them. Leverages youth insights regarding school transportation issues.	Need to consider best way to collect youth input regarding action plan.	Low-Medium	Youths who currently walk and bike to school, student council, youth honor societies and leadership groups	***Links:*** 15 points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision-Making (Youth on Board)

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youths Serve on School or Community SRTS Coalitions Youths help make decisions about how SRTS programs are implemented and evaluated.	Youths develop skills related to shared decision-making. Allows youths to influence decisions regarding school transportation that affect them. Leverages youth insights regarding school transportation issues.	Consider when and where meetings will be held to enable youth participation. Establish a youth subcommittee if an appropriate time/ location cannot be found. May need to modify meeting format to enable youth participation, e.g., include discussion in small groups or pairs, so that youths feel more comfortable sharing their views. May need to provide training to adults and youths, to prepare them to interact on an equal footing and to address stereotypes. Need to provide youths with training regarding the group's mission, transportation issues, and their role/responsibilities. Consider pairing youths with an adult mentor or ally.	Medium-High	Youths who currently walk and bike to school, student council, youth honor societies and leadership groups	***Links:*** 15 points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision-Making (Youth on Board)

Sample Project Types	Benefits	Considerations	Estimated Effort/ Complexity Level	May be suitable for youths recruited from…	Resources
Youths Serve on Committees and Boards that Make Decisions Affecting School Transportation Youths work with adults to make decision that impact school transportation, e.g., as members of a citizen board established by the school district to provide advice school transportation issues.	Youths develop skills related to shared decision-making. Allows youths to influence decisions regarding school transportation that affect them. Leverages youth insights regarding school transportation issues.	Consider when and where meetings will be held to enable youth participation. Establish a youth subcommittee if an appropriate time/ location cannot be found. May need to modify meeting format to enable youth participation, e.g., include discussion in small groups or pairs, so that youths feel more comfortable sharing their views. May need to provide training to adults and youths, to prepare them to interact on an equal footing and to address stereotypes. Need to provide youths with training regarding the group's mission, transportation issues, and their role/responsibilities. Consider pairing youths with an adult mentor or ally. May need to address institutional barriers to youth participation, e.g., school policies or community laws may specify that voting members must be adults.	High	Youths who currently walk and bike to school, student council, youth honor societies and leadership groups	***Links:*** 15 points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision-Making (Youth on Board)

9.2 SRTS Youth Engagement Sample Timelines

The following timelines are meant to be general possibilities for ways in which a project may take shape. For ease of explanation, the specific project that a group decided to embark upon is listed, but similar timeline way exist for a variety of project types.

"Quick Win" 3-month time line – Student survey and data collection

A group given a short time frame will often gravitate to a project that is self-contained and easily understandable. In this scenario, the initial group is formed during the middle of the school year under the expectation that it will complete at least one project before the end of the year.

February – Recruitment

Using processes described in *3.1 Recruitment* on page 9, students are brought together to form a youth engagement group.

March (3 weeks)—Establish a Framework, Project Identification: Barriers and Opportunities, and Decide on a Project

At the first meeting, the group will discuss the goals they have for the project what issues the group members share that they might want to work around. The next session will pick up on interests and ways in which they can engage their school around these or similar interests. At the following meeting, the students decide that they want to conduct a survey as a way to find out more about how other students feel about walking and bicycling in anticipation of the group using this information to create engaging future projects after the school year is complete.

Mid-March and April – Project Planning

Students develop a timeline for survey development and start looking at how they will distribute the survey. The survey is developed in a way to gain information the students think will be useful in coming up with future projects to increase walking and bicycling to the school. Questions that speak to reasons a student would walk or bike and barriers to walking and bicycling are preferenced to overly basic questions, such as "Do you like to ride your bike?" Additionally, students decided how to conduct the survey so it will truly be a representative same of the student body so it may be a full understanding of the school's situation.

Early May – Project Implementation

Students distribute the surveys and tally their results. Depending on time remaining, they may examine the data, create charts and graphs that show current attitudes of the larger student body that would be useful to the group or others working on SRTS issues in the future.

"Big Win" 6-month time line – Creating a Classroom "Carbon Challenge"

November – Recruitment

Using processes described in *3.1 Recruitment* on page 9, students are brought together to form a youth engagement group. A fall recruitment time can be good time to find students who have not already committed to other areas in the school or, after trying other things, are now looking for other ways to be involved in impacting the school.

December – Recruitment: Establish a Framework

Since most schools have a standard winter break, the few weeks before the break can be used to help students come together to learn about common interests and determine if they will want to continue in the group—and what the group would look like—in the coming year.

January – Project Identification: Barriers and Opportunities and Decide on a Project

The start of a calendar year and return from break can bring new energy from students and a good time to jump into the challenges they want to look at during the second half of the year. Spending a month narrowing down what the group wants to accomplish before the end of the year is a good way to lead to a cohesive plan and project. In this case, students decided they wanted to find a way to incentivize walking and bicycling to school by other students and created the idea for a classroom competition to do so.

February—April – Project Planning

To conduct a large-scale competition, a significant amount of time and planning are required for successful implementation. Items such as finding prizes, determining how data will be collected and tabulated, and creating a promotional campaign are all important and time consuming mini projects that need to happen prior to the main competition. It may be desired or necessary for youth engagement group members to find others outside the group to assist in these and other tasks leading up to project implementation.

May – Project Implementation

Over the course of the three week competition, students work and connect with classroom teachers to gather information and create a competition update with group standings as well as carrying out raffles and other intermediate incentives. The program culminates with a short assembly honoring individual and group winners.

"Big Win" Full Year time line – Student Advocacy Project

August/September – Recruitment

Using processes described in *3.1 Recruitment* on page 9, students are brought together to form a youth engagement group. The onset of the school year is often a time when students are looking for something to be a part of, so using this time to recruit can be particularly successful.

September/October – Recruitment: Establish a Framework
One or more meetings may be used to help students become comfortable with one another and gain an insight into what brought them together in the first place. If a larger number of students have shown interest than is useful (perhaps more than 10), this might also be used as a time to get more specific in the framework and figure out the students who would best be able to carry out a project.

October/November – Project Identification: Barriers and Opportunities and Decide on a Project
Having a longer period to conduct the examination of what barriers and opportunities exist may also allow for more research prior to determining a project. Additionally, additional time at this phase in project development may allow for more research as to what projects may be useful. In the case of advocacy, students decided to conduct student surveys (a "quick win" in itself) to find out more about barriers all students were facing before they decided on what specific advocacy project was going to be most useful to implement.

December—May – Project Planning and Implementation
In an advocacy project, the project planning time often includes a variety of smaller projects that are working toward the long-term end goals. For example, conducting student surveys, which in itself might be a "quick win", could simply be a part of a group building its case for a specific advocacy goal, such as instillation of new sidewalks or changing procedures about who can bike to school and when.

9.3 Youth Engagement Organizations

Below is a list of organizations that are involved in youth engagement efforts in Wisconsin. Organizations like these might provide support for an SRTS youth engagement project.

- Boy Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- 4-H
- YMCA
- YWCA
- DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America)
- FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America)
- FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America)
- Key Club
- Builders Club
- Future Teachers of America
- Rethink Youth Coalition, Winnebago County Health Department

9.4 SRTS Curricula

The following SRTS and pedestrian and bicycle safety curricula may be suitable for middle school-aged youths.

Iowa Kids on the Move

Iowa Bicycle Coalition

Seventeen-lesson pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum for children in grades K-6. Lessons 10-17 are for children in grades 5-6 and address the environmental and health benefits of walking and bicycling, pedestrian safety when crossing or walking along the road, and teaching pedestrian safety to younger students.

Available online at:
http://katana.hsrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/iowa%20kids%20on%20the%20move.8.22.08.pdf

Make Trax

Michigan Fitness Foundation

Eight lesson youth engagement curriculum for students in grades 6-8 that involves students in SRTS planning through hands-on activities designed to teach civic, technological, and presentation skills. Supplemental materials include a youth field guide, handouts, worksheets, logos, and webinars.

Available online at:
http://saferoutesmichigan.org/maketrax

Neighborhood Navigators

Oregon Safe Routes to School

Five lesson pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum for children in grades K-8 that is organized into three levels for grades K-3, 4-5, and 6-8. Lessons for grades 6-8 explore how travel mode choices affect the environment. Supplemental materials include workbooks, handouts, and a student pedestrian safety pledge form.

Available online at:
http://www.oregonsaferoutes.org/education35

NHTSA Child Pedestrian Safety

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Five-lesson pedestrian safety curriculum organized into three levels for grades K-1, 2-3, and 4-5. Lessons for grades 4-5 include more complex situations and analytical thinking related to walking near traffic, crossing streets, crossing intersections, parking lot safety and school bus safety. Supplemental materials include handouts, flashcards, pre and post assessment tests and parent/caregiver tip sheets.

Available online at:
http://www.nhtsa.gov/ChildPedestrianSafetyCurriculum

Safe Routes in the Classroom

Safe Routes Nebraska

SRTS activity resource for children in grades K-8. Activities are divided into five levels: grades K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8. Activities for grades 5-6 focus on the health and environmental benefits of walking and bicycling. Activities for grades 7-8 focus on students taking a leadership role in promoting walking and bicycling and pedestrian safety.

Available online at:
http://www.saferoutesne.com/educators/srintheclassroom.html

Safe Routes to School Bike & Pedestrian Safety Education Program

Bicycle Alliance of WA, Feet First

Eight-lesson pedestrian and bicycle safety curriculum for children in grades 5-8 that addresses pedestrian safety rules, safe pedestrian crossings, and walk audits. Supplemental materials include handouts, pre and post assessment tests, and a letter for parents/guardians.

Available online at:
http://www.saferouteswa.org/Data/Sites/2/media/documents/safety-education-curriculum/121016---bike-and-pedestrian-safety-education-curriculum---full---web.pdf

Stepping It UP

Smart Commute, a program of Metrolinx and municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area of Canada

Stepping it UP is a motivational SRTS video with activities intended for students in grades 4-8. Activities address such topics as factors influencing transportation choices and ways to promote active transportation.

Available online at:
http://www.smartcommute.ca/media/uploads/pdf/Stepping%20it%20UP%20Teachers%20Guide.pdf

9.5 References

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