Gold Level Partners work to create long term sustainability, beginning with support from the school PTA. One of the following three activities are suggested to help create program sustainability:

- Pedestrian and bicyclist classroom education for all students;

- SRTS programs integrated in to the school's reward system; OR

- Staff members actively participating in with the program.

The Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center strongly encourages Gold Level Partners to develop a Travel Plan as part of their efforts to create a sustainable program. General information on SRTS Travel Plans and instructions on how to develop a plan are included in this chapter. Companion templates are in the accompanying Workbook.

Ten Georgia schools have completed travel plans. These plans are available on the Resource Center website at http://www.saferoutesga.org/content/completed-travel-plans.

What is a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan?

A Safe Routes to School Travel Plan is a tool that describes how best to improve safety and encourage more children to walk and bike to school. Typically, your school's SRTS team writes the plan to reflect the characteristics and needs of your community.

The most successful SRTS Travel Plans include programs and projects by "E": education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation (referred to as the "5 E's"; see Appendix B for full details).

Writing Your SRTS Travel Plan

This Guide will take you through the process of developing your Travel Plan. The Resource Center has created a companion Workbook with templates for you to record information needed to create your travel plan. In some cases, completing the template will be as simple as checking off a series of boxes or filling in the blanks. Modify the templates and make other changes as needed to meet the particular needs of your community.

The Workbook is available as a downloadable PDF at www.SafeRoutesGA.org. Click on Program Toolkit and download the document titled, "Writing your SRTS Travel Plan". Templates are located here, too, as a Word document. Copy this document on to your computer to start using them.

Section 1: Introduction and Start of the SRTS Travel Plan

Summary. The introduction to your SRTS Travel Plan explains your understanding of and motivation for completing the Plan, i.e. a brief statement of what your community hopes to accomplish through the plan.

What to include. Choose a name for your plan, and the reasons that best suit your school's situation. The introduction may include a summary of a visioning exercise to answer the question, "5 years from now, I'd like to see…" and specific goals, such as increasing the number of students walking or biking to school It will explain your school's main motivations for wanting to improve walking and bicycling to school.

Engage all stakeholders to accurately represent your community's priorities for school travel.

- Pose the two questions stated above to the school community during your public input activities such as meetings, interviews and surveys.

Section 2: Your SRTS Team

Summary. A SRTS team is a core group of people that commit to preparing, writing and following through with the School Travel Plan and its strategies. The most successful SRTS Travel Plans are created by a variety of stakeholders who are concerned about kids walking and bicycling to school safely. In this section you identify each member of your team. Also choose a primary contact person for the plan among the team members listed. This person will serve as the team leader.

What to include. List each member of your SRTS team and her or his affiliation using the fields provided. Keep the size of the team manageable, ideally from nine to thirteen people. If you already have a SRTS team, this part of the Travel Plan should be easy.

Tips for completing this section

The following is a list of potential candidates to consider asking to volunteer on your SRTS team:

- The school principal or assistant principal

- Two to four interested parents

- One or two teachers (consider those with outside duty before or after school)

- Neighborhood or community association member

- A local transportation planner or engineer from your local transportation agency

- A school crossing guard

- A local police representative

- An advocate from your local pedestrian or bicycle group

- One or two children who already walk or bike to school or who are a student safety patrol member

Section 3: Current School Travel Environment

Summary. This section paints a picture of how students and families currently travel to and from school. This includes important baseline data that will help your school measure the effectiveness of your initiatives.

What to Include. This section should include information available at your school, such as

- *Current travel modes and numbers.* Identify how students currently travel to and from school, as well has how many students use each mode. As a Bronze Level Partner, you should have this information from student tallies and parent surveys.

- *Distance lived from school.* Knowing the number of students living within walking distance (under one mile) or bicycling distance (under two miles), or further, is important in determining the type of approaches to use in your Plan.

- *Crossing guards and other supports.* Identify school crossing guard locations, student safety patrols, police department presence, neighborhood watch programs, etc. Interview these people to identify issues with student pedestrians and bicyclists safety. (Information gathered may help to inform Section 4 of the Plan.)

- *Arrival/dismissal procedures.* Identify any unique arrival/dismissal procedures for pedestrians and bicyclists, school buses, private vehicle drop-off/pick-up and school staff.

- *School travel policies.* Cite any official or unofficial policies of the school relating to student travel, such as bicycling bans, early dismissal of walking and bicycling students, age restrictions or special permissions related to walking and bicycling.
- *What your school is doing already.* This section should also include anything your school is currently doing or has done in the past that promotes SRTS-supportive programs such as physically active transportation, healthy lifestyles and traffic safety.

Tips for completing this section

- Use the Student Travel Tally sheet to determine current student travel modes. The Student Travel Tally sheet is a show-of-hands survey completed in the classroom with students for two or three days, (avoid Mondays and Fridays) that records how each student travels to and from school each day. We recommend using the Student Tally Sheet from the National Center for Safe Routes to School at http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/data.
- Identify student walking routes. Your school district may have designated walking routes as part of their transportation planning to determine hazard busing needs. Another option is obtain student addresses without names from your school administrators and plot them on a map. This will show where students are (or could be) walking. You can also gather distance information by administering the Parent/guardian Travel Survey, discussed in the next section.
- NOTE: School districts typically bus students outside of a "walk area," except when the walking route is considered "unsafe" based on factors such as lack of sidewalks, traffic volumes, unmarked crossings, or major arterial roads.
- Compile and summarize your school's travel policies. These policies may be included in a parent handbook. Alternately, interview the school principal or other school officials to obtain this information.
- Document the source of each piece of information. This will come in handy when updating the information in the future.

Section 4: Collect Data on Existing Conditions and Barriers

Summary. Identify existing conditions along with barriers that hinder students' ability to walk or bicycle to school in this section. Focus on existing conditions and barriers in the neighborhood at the school site and along roads up to 2 miles from the school, especially along student walking and bicycling routes. Once information on existing conditions and barriers is compiled, you will have a good picture of where walking and bicycling conditions for students can be improved.

What to include. Start by making a list of the conditions and barriers to include, noting how important each is to collect by designating it as high, medium or low. This step helps your team know where to spend its time. The information below is organized according to the 5 E's (Engineering, Encouragement, Education, Enforcement and Evaluation). This is a good start, but your team may collect other information based on your community's own unique circumstances.

Engineering
- Identify roads that are busy and/or wide that divide neighborhoods and are difficult or impossible for students to cross. Freeways, streets with 4, 6 or 8 lanes, and streets with posted speed limits of more than 35 mph are examples. Other barriers to identify include waterways, railroad tracks and private roads or communities that are not open to the general public.
- Identify missing bicycle facilities that make it difficult or impossible to bicycle to school. This could include short sections of trail, bike lanes or directional signing.
- Identify missing sidewalks, especially those where students already walk along the side of the road to get to school. Look for locations where there may be a 'start and stop' mixture of sidewalks and gaps.
- Identify locations with missing curb ramps and broken sidewalks. Students who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices to help them walk, require curb ramps. Visually impaired students require truncated domes (little bumps) on curb ramps to let them know when they are entering to roadway.

Education
- Identify safety signs needed near or at the school. Examples include signs that say "Watch for Children", "School Zone" and a bike symbol followed by "Share the Road".

Encouragement
- See if there is bicycle parking at the school. If so, is it sufficient? Existing bicycle racks may be in disrepair or be in a location that leaves the bicycles subject to vandalism and theft.
- Identify school crosswalks and school walking/bicycling routes that lead children to the school. Your school may already have an official route that directs children to school crosswalks and crossing guards.
- Document behavior at your school pick-up and drop-of area. Are parents following the rules? Student arrival and dismissal times are often characterized by long lines of vehicle traffic, clogged streets and parking lots, and illegal parking. Many schools experience impolite or even aggressive behavior by drivers, including parents.

Enforcement
- Identify locations that currently have crossing guards and parent/student patrols.
- Identify times and locations of current enforcement activities near the school.
- Identify streets that have a problem with speeding motorists. Many communities grapple with the difficult task of calming traffic, and increasing adherence to traffic laws. High posted speed limits and poor street design can contribute to extremely unsafe driver behavior.
- Identify locations where there are public safety concerns. Anxiety surrounding public safety and security (real or perceived) can be a major barrier to walking and bicycling.

Evaluation
- A pattern of traffic crashes is often a strong indicator of areas needing improvements. Talk to your local police department, planning agency or public works department to see if they can produce a map showing pedestrian and bicyclist crashes within your school's attendance boundary. You may notice a pattern where most crashes are along one or two corridors. Try to collect three to five years of crash data.

Other (include attitudes about walking and biking, e.g., parent attitudes)
- Identify difficult crossing locations near the school. The lack of safe crossing points is one of the major barriers to walking and bicycling. Problems include speed, wide roadway crossings, a lack of traffic controls, and the need for crossing guards.

Tips for completing this section

- Most of the data can easily be collected by taking a walk (walkabout) or bike ride (bikeabout) around your school area on streets commonly used by students.

- Taking a walk or bike ride with your SRTS Team (and other stakeholders) is one of the best ways to generate interest and enthusiasm for completing and implementing your SRTS Travel Plan.

- Write down anything you think is important under "Notes." Your notes may be something positive such as "observed lots of kids using this sidewalk" or something to address such as "this crosswalk is worn and needs to be replaced."

Ways to engage members of the public and local partners.

The public input process is designed to assist you with gathering both baseline data and information because barriers and obstacles to walking and bicycle to school.   The following summary describes the types of public input to consider:

- *Administer parent surveys.* The National Center for Safe Routes to School recommends using a parent survey to capture critical attitudes of parents and caregivers regarding walking and bicycling to school, and opinions of real and perceived dangers. Surveys can also gather information regarding problems along the walking route and how far students reside from school. We recommend using the National Center for Safe Routes to School Parent Survey. The National Center offers two options for completing the survey: a paper survey and a web-based survey via Survey Monkey. The National Center tallies surveys for options. Check the following for more information: http://tinyurl.com/parent-surveyInfo.

- *Interview local partners (a.k.a. key stakeholders).* Talking individually with those directly involved with student travel can provide valuable insight into the issues at hand. Principals, crossing guards, parents, and local traffic planners, engineers and law enforcement officials are good people to contact for interviews.

- *Solicit student opinions.* Students often have a unique perspective on walking and bicycling to school. After all, they are the ones doing it. Find out what students think by including them as members of the SRTS Team and in other public input activities. Or you can specifically ask students what they think through the student council, during an assembly or as part of an essay assignment.

- *Host a public comment period.* One simple way to gather public opinion is   to announce a public comment period. Pose a simple question to the public: "How can we improve walking and bicycling to school in our community?" Publicize the question through newsletters, websites and email.

- *Conduct a community 'walkabout' or 'bikeabout'.* Neighborhood walkabouts and bike-abouts are exercises used in many SRTS programs to raise awareness of issues and conditions that effect walking and bicycling. They also can be used to garner support for needed changes and to gather information needed to help create school route maps. Have participants use the Walkability and Bikeability Checklist to record their impressions during a community walking or biking exercise. These checklists are available at: http://tinyurl.com/walk-bikeSurvey under "Education".

- *Incorporate information from your community's existing bike or pedestrian plan.* You may already have an approved, local plan that includes pedestrian and bicycle policies, programs and plans. This document may include relevant information on walking and biking conditions to schools, including pedestrian and bicyclist counts, crash data and proposed improvements.   Consult your local planning agency to see if you have one of these plans. If they do, see where you goals overlap and tailor your plan to include any strategies and projects that serve both sets of needs. Include proposed improvements in Sections 5 and 6 of your Travel Plan.
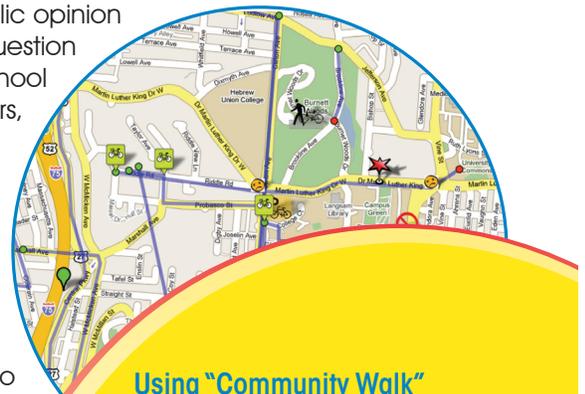
Using "Community Walk"

Community Walk is an interactive map website that can be used for SRTS projects, offering a forum for recording comments and recommendations for school walking and bicycling routes and conditions. See www.communitywalk.com for more information.

How to display information. Organize and display the information you collect in a way that tells a story. While some of the information can be summarized in text form or in a chart or graph, much of it is best captured on maps that instantly identify existing conditions and where there are problems or deficiencies.

Obtain or prepare two maps: A School Neighborhood Map and a School Site Map. The maps may be simple, hand drawn creations, computer-drawn maps, or more sophisticated, interactive web based maps. The maps should be a fairly large size, so that there is enough room to make observation notes directly on the maps.

Quick Solutions for Developing Base Maps

There are a number of ways maps can be prepared. A commercially available road map pinned to a board can serve as a base map, with the information added via markers or highlighters. However, these maps may not show enough detail so you may need to look elsewhere for a map that will work for your purposes. Check out the following sources:

- Your state, regional, county or municipal planning or transportation agency may be able to create a map for you.

- The school construction or master plan (a map which was created when the school was built or remodeled) may be available from your school district.

- Your school district may have a map of the school attendance boundary and walk zone.

- Internet map websites such as Google Earth (http://earth.google.com) can be used.

- Interactive web-based maps such as "Community Walk" can be used.

Tips for completing this section

- The School Neighborhood Map should cover a one-to-two mile radius in every direction from the school. It should include road names; names of major destinations such as parks, shopping centers, libraries and community centers. It should also cover bicycle facilities and the school's walk/zone (if there is one) or non-transport limits where busing is not provided. From here you can add the other information on existing conditions and barriers.

- The School Site Map should be a large map of the school property. This map should depict parent and school bus drop-off and pick-up zones, on-site bicycle parking, and pedestrian and bicycle access routes between the public street and the entrance(s) to the school. Include sidewalks, bicycle facilities and information about the streets immediately adjacent to the school, and other information on existing conditions and barriers.

Section 5: Creating Solutions

Summary: Use this section to identify solutions to the barriers you have identified in Sections 3 and 4. You will no doubt have developed a diverse list of barriers to walking and bicycling, as well as opportunities to encourage more students to walk or bike to school. Your solutions will be multi-faceted, based on the goals stated in the Introduction, and organized around the 5 "Es".

What to include

- *Goals.* You created a vision for the SRTS program at your school and identified why you decided to prepare a Travel Plan. Refer to this information as you develop solutions.

- *Strategies.* Strategies directly address the barriers identified in the previous section, organized by the 5 "Es". Strategies are specific, measurable activities that answer the question, "How will I meet my goal?" Each strategy should include a measurable target and timeframe for implementation. Be aware of the things you can do within existing programs and few resources, compared to things that require additional resources and local partner input, i.e., from other sources such as your local transportation agency.

The National Center for Safe Routes to School's online guide (www.saferoutesinfo.org) describes in detail each of the 5 "Es", including ideas for specific activities. Suggested strategies for the 4 non-engineering "Es" -Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation are activities included

in Appendix B of this Guide. Review this list to identify strategies that may be appropriate for your school.   Other good resources to use are on the National Center for Safe Routes to School website at http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/; and at the Safe Routes to School National Partnership website at http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/home.

Section 6: The Completed Travel Plan

Summary.   This is the section where you put everything together your team can use to guide implementation.

What to include.   List and describe each strategy, along with the "Coordinator"; "Timeframe/ Frequency"; "Necessary Resources"; and "Status". If possible, include a map showing the location of strategies targeted for a particular location.

Tips for completing this section

- Consider separating engineering strategies from the other "Es". Your school SRTS team will not implement engineering strategies and they generally take longer to implement. Your team is more likely to implement Encouragement, Education, Enforcement and Evaluation strategies, and within a shorter timeframe.

- Consult with each of the local partners who are responsible for implementing each strategy before assigning responsibilities and setting timeline targets.

- Consider ordering the strategies to reflect the timeframe – i.e. immediate items first – later items last.

- For example, begin with strategies that are low cost or can move forward immediately because of an opportunity to "piggy back" onto another project or program.

- Consider creating a 12-month activity calendar that targets when an activity will happen and when to plan for it. You may already have developed a calendar as a Silver Level Partner. A sample calendar is in Appendix A.

- Be creative in finding resources. Many education and encouragement resources are available at no cost on the Georgia SRTS Resource Center website, www.SafeRoutesGA.org, so your main costs will be paper and printing. In many cases, you may be able to use school resources or those of an area business or other non-profit organization. Private foundations may have grants to support active and healthy living programs. Remember to work with your local transportation agency as they may be able to include SRTS infrastructure improvements as part of other planned projects or through funding for SRTS infrastructure projects. See Appendix C for more funding ideas.

Section 7: Plan Approval

Summary. This section celebrates the Travel Plan completion with approval from all team members and endorsements from your local partners.

What to include. List local partner names and affiliations, along with letters of support they may provide.

Tips for completing this section

- Placing team approval for your Travel Plan at the beginning of the Plan sets a positive tone. Team members can sign below their name, if that is your preference. A team photograph is a great way to put a face on the document.

- Local partner endorsements can be listed at the front of the plan or at the end. Letters of support belong at the end, however.