Safe Routes to School Coordinators Toolkit

Program Goals, Recommended Steps, and Resources in Maryland

MDOT in Motion

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1. BACKGROUND

Every year in America around 100 kids are killed and 25,000 injured while making their way to school. Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) is a national program that focuses on getting students to and from school safely by walking, biking, or rolling, using tactics of engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, equity, and evaluation. Community members, public health, planning and transportation professionals; and school communities must all work together and do their part to change norms and make it more safe for students to get around their communities, walk, bike, or roll to school. The collective aim of SRTS programs is to make it safer for students and to encourage more walking and biking where safety is not a barrier.

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) leads the state's transportation initiatives, including SRTS, with a vision of providing safe, reliable, accessible, equitable, and sustainable transportation options to Marylanders across the State. Serious about Safety (mdot.maryland.gov/safety) is an enhanced, department-wide program to promote safety and emphasizes four key pillars:

Serious About Safety

- **MDOT-led Initiatives:** Transforming our business practices to prioritize safety in every project, policy, and standard we implement.
- **Legislative Action:** Championing and collaborating on legislation essential for enhancing safety outcomes across the state.
- **Collaborative Advocacy:** Leading and partnering to deliver bold and measurable action needed to improve safety outcomes.
- **Customer Engagement:** Raising awareness through targeted outreach and education.

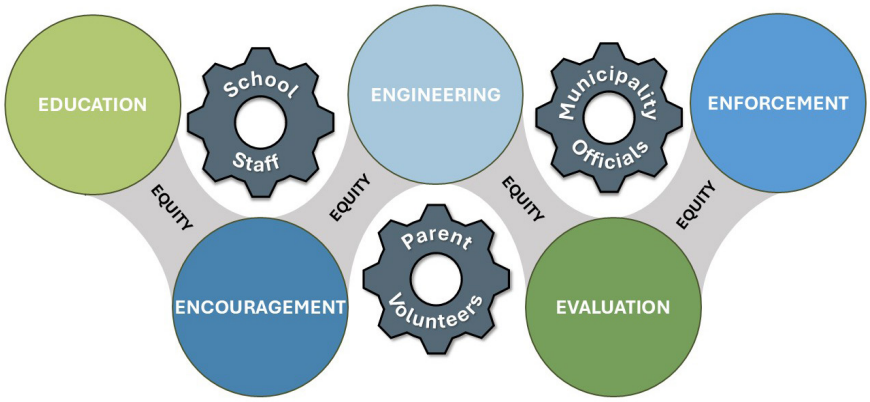
By employing a statewide approach to invest in SRTS coordinators at the local level, Maryland greatly accelerates progress towards reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries to zero (zerodeathsmd.gov) and improved health outcomes for K-12 students.

The implementation of an SRTS initiative across a jurisdiction in Maryland can:

- **Improve safety for students traveling to school:** SRTS helps improve safety for all students on their journey to school and within their communities. This includes students who ride the bus or travel in a car but especially focuses on students who walk or bike to school in Maryland.

- **Increase the number of students walking and biking to school:** SRTS enables and encourages children, including those with disabilities, to walk, roll, and bicycle to school. Hence, SRTS helps to make bicycling, walking, and rolling to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.
- **Facilitate community-wide safety planning:** SRTS helps to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of safety projects and activities that can reduce crashes, traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

By using proven strategies, sharing resources, and spending dedicated time and resources, SRTS has improved safety for children across the nation, and a concerted effort can reshape school transportation in Maryland. In addition to the strategies and activities recommended by SRTS, such as education, engineering, and encouragement, equity is an important part of the SRTS model because underserved communities traditionally lack transportation investments and deserve priority as they often do not have access to safe, comfortable roads for walking, biking, or rolling. As a result, low-income and minority populations are overrepresented in pedestrian and bicyclist injuries. Lastly, evaluation is key for developing an effective and sustainable program that can adjust to local school needs.



Linking Equity and Action: The SRTS Framework

This toolkit was designed to serve as a comprehensive guide for county-wide SRTS coordinators but may be informative for anyone seeking to implement or enhance SRTS initiatives in Maryland. It provides guidance for the role, recommended processes to follow, and a list of available resources in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) developed this toolkit in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as guidance for SRTS coordinators supported by Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) SRTS funding.

1.1. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN MARYLAND

MDOT is Serious About Safety and is working to reduce the number of traffic deaths and serious injuries. Guiding MDOT principles include Vision Zero, which aims to reduce the number of traffic deaths to zero, and the Complete Streets Policy (https://policymanual.mdot.maryland.gov/mediawiki/index.php?title=MDOT_750_Complete_Streets) which prioritizes safety for all roadway users, with an emphasis on vulnerable populations. The SRTS initiative is critical for improving safety for children, a particularly vulnerable population on our roadways.

The Safe System Approach (transportation.gov/safe-system-approach) is based on redundancy and dictates that we need to approach safety from multiple angles and a set of guiding principles:

- Death and Serious Injuries are Unacceptable
- Humans Make Mistakes
- Humans are Vulnerable
- Responsibility is Shared
- Safety is Proactive

Safe System Approach

Source: highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths

These principles are in turn reinforced by a set of priorities:

- **Safer People:** How can we affect human behavior to increase roadway safety?
- **Safer Vehicles:** How can we ensure vehicles themselves are a part of the roadway safety solution, rather than contributing to the problem?
- **Safer Roads:** How can we best orient the built environment to increase roadway safety?
- **Safer Speeds:** How can we ensure road speeds are safe for all users and appropriate for the local context?
- **Safer Post-Crash Care**: How can we ensure that if a crash does happen, the post-crash response is safer and more effective for all involved?

The SRTS coordinator initiative is evidence-based and data-driven to achieve results for safer people, safer roads, and safer speeds around Maryland's schools.

1.2. STUDENT TRANSPORTATION IN MARYLAND

Many schools in Maryland are experiencing an increase in traffic congestion during the morning and afternoon drop-off and pick-up periods, which creates safety hazards for everyone on the road and adversely impacts surrounding neighborhoods. The MSDE oversees the state's public education system and 24 local education authorities (LEAs). Regarding transportation, MSDE works with assigned transportation coordinators in each LEA who manage the student transportation operation for their LEA. This includes monitoring the non-transported distance set by each LEAs Board of Education, which is generally a radius around the school that dictates if a student will be transported by the LEA or if they will need to find their own transportation to school. Generally, these are around a mile but are often a shorter distance for schools with younger students. Each LEA sets criteria for waivers; for example, a student only a ¼ mile from a school may be transported if their journey includes crossing a hazardous roadway.

While LEA transportation tends to focus on students outside of a certain distance from school, SRTS can be a complementary initiative which teaches school bus safety and can reduce the number of

students transported in single occupancy vehicles by encouraging those families who live closer to the school to embrace biking and walking options. An SRTS coordinator can evaluate arrival and dismissal issues and work with stakeholders to address safety or congestion issues.

The MSDE Pupil Transportation Branch produces an annual report (https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/Transportation/Transportation-End-of-Year-Report-A.pdf) on student transportation statistics and tracks information that can inform an SRTS coordinator's work.

Table 1-1: Transported Students by LEA

LEA	TOTAL PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF TRANSPORTED STUDENTS[1]	PERCENT OF STUDENTS TRANSPORTED
ALLEGANY COUNTY	8,205	5,107	62%
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY	84,346	61,845	73%
BALTIMORE CITY	75,811	35,070	46%
BALTIMORE COUNTY	110,275	74,058	67%
CALVERT COUNTY	15,179	14,945	98%
CAROLINE COUNTY	5,676	3,868	68%
CARROLL COUNTY	26,123	25,401	97%
CECIL COUNTY	14,853	12,645	85%
CHARLES COUNTY	27,765	27,359	99%
DORCHESTER COUNTY	4,608	4,042	88%
FREDERICK COUNTY	47,681	31,418	66%
GARRETT COUNTY	3,455	3,394	98%
HARFORD COUNTY	38,105	33,286	87%
HOWARD COUNTY	57,633	41,422	72%
KENT COUNTY	1,732	1,478	85%
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	160,223	101,756	64%
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY	132,151	85,507	65%
QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY	7,502	7,551	101%
ST. MARY'S COUNTY	17,223	17,188	100%
SOMERSET COUNTY	2,894	2,791	96%
TALBOT COUNTY	4,502	4,531	101%
WASHINGTON COUNTY	22,549	19,813	88%
WICOMICO COUNTY	15,086	10,971	73%
WORCESTER COUNTY	6,848	6,338	93%
STATEWIDE	**890,425[2]**	**631,784**	**71%**

Source: FY2024 End-of Year Pupil Transportation Report, Office of Pupil Transportation and Emergency Management, MSDE, 2024 and Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender and Number of Schools, Division of Assessment, Accountability, Performance Reporting & Research, 2025

1. Pupil transportation figures may be higher than enrollment due to double counting in instances where students transferred and utilized transportation services in multiple LEAs.
2. This does not include the enrollment of the SEED School of Maryland.

- Statewide in 2024, a total of 631,784 students (about 71%) were transported to public schools by their LEA. Around 260,000 students (29%) were not transported by the LEA and found other means to and from their school.
- Montgomery County Public Schools transported the highest number of students (101,756), while Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, and Talbot Counties have the highest percentage of their students transported.
- Baltimore City has the highest percentage of non-transported students (64%) and Montgomery County has the highest number of non-transported students (58,467).

This report can be used annually to assess which counties can benefit the most from SRTS. By reading the annual transportation report and working with the MSDE transportation coordinators, an SRTS coordinator can learn more about school transportation and how to work with their local school system to improve transportation issues.

1.3. STUDENT HEALTH IN MARYLAND

The mission of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control (the Center) is to improve the health of Maryland residents by preventing and controlling chronic diseases. Both adult and child obesity rates in the state are on the rise, raising concerns about the increased risk of chronic diseases. Since physical inactivity significantly contributes to obesity in children and adolescents, the Center prioritizes programs that encourage healthy lifestyles and physical movement among residents.

Student health in Maryland is a critical aspect of ensuring that children and young adults can thrive academically and personally. Maryland addresses student health through comprehensive programs, policies, and services that focus on physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The state collaborates with schools, public health agencies, and community organizations to provide resources and implement health initiatives.

One of the Center's key initiatives is improving walkability in communities across Maryland. By improving pedestrian infrastructure and creating safe and accessible environments for physical activity, the state aims to encourage walking, rolling, and other forms of movement as part of residents daily life. To achieve this goal, the Center supports SRTS initiatives that encourage safer walking routes for all community members. These efforts encourage children to engage in regular physical activity, helping to foster lasting habits that contribute to both their overall health and academic success.

Students Walking to School

1.4. PLANNING FOR SCHOOLS IN MARYLAND

Sound land use planning that focuses on walkable and connected communities is vital to successful SRTS programs. Schools are important community facilities that, when properly planned and sited, provide community benefit beyond their traditional educational role. Through the comprehensive plan process, counties and municipalities can plan for mixed-use, walkable communities where schools and other community facilities are woven into the community's fabric. Collaborative planning among municipal, county, and State agencies can ensure that schools are sited and developed to promote safe access for the entire traveling public, including pedestrians and cyclists. Strong community planning results in transportation choices and more active and healthy communities. MDOT, through the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), works with communities across the state to support strong community planning that includes SRTS. There are several statutory and regulatory tools in Maryland that support SRTS concepts as communities develop and as LEAs plan for new schools.

Table 1-2: Statutory and Regulatory Tools Supportive of SRTS

STATUE OR REGULATION	WHAT IT DOES
Land Use Article (mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/StatuteWeb/glu/glu.pdf)	Requires that local comprehensive plans align with the Eight Sustainable Principles (https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=glu&section=1-201&enactments=false): Land, Transportation, Housing, Economy, Equity, Resilience, Place, and Ecology.
COMAR 14.39.02.14 (dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/14.39.02.14.aspx)	Requires proposed sites for new or replacement schools that add capacity to be located in a Priority Funding Area, where land use is more compact and mixed, and the state and local governments have planned for growth and development to occur.
Safe Walk to Schools Act (2022 HB 19) (https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/Chapters_noln/CH_553_hb0019e.pdf)	Requires counties to submit Pedestrian Safety Plans to the Maryland Interagency on School Construction (https://iac.mdschoolconstruction.org/) (IAC) when seeking funds for the construction of a new school or renovations or additions to an existing school that would increase its capacity by more than 100 students. The Act requires the county to develop the plan with the local department of transportation and the Maryland State Highway Administration for the area around the school where bus service for students is not provided.

SRTS coordinators' participation in the development and implementation of local comprehensive plans, transportation plans, and bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts can ensure that these important planning documents reflect the bicycle and pedestrian needs within and surrounding school walk zones.

2. THE ROLE OF COORDINATORS IN SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

SRTS coordinators play a crucial role, making changes at individual, school, and community-wide levels in SRTS initiatives across Maryland. An SRTS coordinator must start by assembling their key stakeholders and defining what's needed in their community. An SRTS coordinator role may include but is not limited to the activities in **Table 2-1**.

Table 2-1: SRTS Coordinator Responsibilities

SCHOOL PROGRAM ASSISTANCE	COMMUNITY-WIDE ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY	FUNDING AND RESOURCE COORDINATION
• Select Schools • Perform a Walking Audit • Recruit a school champion ***If there is a champion:*** • Develop an SRTS School Plan • Connect schools to resources • Perform routine monitoring and evaluation	• Community Events • Awareness Campaigns • Local Partnerships for events and sponsorships • Engaging and Training Community Members • Incentives and Recognition • Student Ambassadors	• Transportation Alternatives Program SRTS Grants • Maryland Highway Safety Office Safety Grants • Local Health Department Programs • Non-profit grants (i.e. America Walks, AARP) • Local business and philanthropic partnerships • Shared resources

Find more information about each of these roles in their respective chapters of this toolkit.

2.1. GETTING STARTED

The first task for an SRTS coordinator is to speak with key stakeholders for school transportation within their jurisdiction. Ideally, an SRTS coordinator will make contact and start a working group that includes:

- **County Department of Transportation or Department of Public Works**: An SRTS coordinator will likely be hired by this department and should get to know their colleagues. Important contacts may include staff who work on bicycle and pedestrian projects and staff who apply for or manage grants. Knowing these key staff members can connect SRTS coordinators with resources for bicycle and pedestrian projects. They can also help SRTS coordinators manage the SRTS grant and prepare to apply for future Safe Routes to School infrastructure grants.

- **Local School System:** Each school system has an assigned school transportation coordinator who can help with navigating the school system. This person may assist SRTS coordinators in contacting schools in their district or prioritizing schools to work with, based on noted transportation issues or knowing which schools have a transportation champion ready to collaborate.
- **Local Health Department:** At the local health department, there may be programs to help increase walkability in the community. The health department may help connect SRTS coordinators to resources, grants, or community groups that can help perform walking audits and attend events.
- **Local Planning Agency:** Local planning agencies often know the context and history of infrastructure around schools. In working with the local transportation and/or public works agency, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) (if applicable), and state/federal agencies, a local planning agency is involved when new schools are built and may lead the development of a local pedestrian and/or bicycle master plan as well as the transportation element of the local comprehensive plan. The agency advocates for funding and implementing the pedestrian and/or bicycle master plan which, ideally, call for safe access to schools.
- **Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS):** The MCSS (schoolsafety.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx) is a state-level organization in Maryland dedicated to promoting and ensuring the safety and security of schools within the state. It serves as a central resource for best practices, training, and collaboration to address various aspects of school safety, including physical security, mental health, emergency preparedness, and violence prevention.
- **Law Enforcement:** In some counties local police or county sheriffs may also play an important role in school safety. It is important to make contact and understand what role they play, whether as crossing guards, speed enforcement, or officers assigned to schools.

Once an SRTS coordinator forms a working group of stakeholders, it is recommended to set up routine meetings to update them on progress. At a minimum, meetings should be scheduled quarterly. The working group can help keep the SRTS coordinator up to date on resources available and processes to follow. This group should review the SRTS coordinator's annual report to understand how the SRTS coordinator is meeting goals and objectives.

After forming a working group and launching their program, a SRTS coordinator may also consider forming a SRTS taskforce with members of the public. The taskforce may include the above-mentioned stakeholders in addition to transportation safety advocates, community members, parents, and students to champion community-wide engagement initiatives. The taskforce can support community events, lead informational sessions, distribute educational materials, promote infrastructure projects, effectively solicit feedback from fellow community members, and advocate for SRTS improvements. For more on forming a taskforce please visit: mass.gov/doc/forming-a-safe-routes-to-school-task-force/download.

A list of Maryland contacts and websites to help identify stakeholders can be found at: www.mdot.maryland.gov/SRTS.

3. SCHOOL PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

SRTS coordinators assist individual schools by helping with an initial assessment and, in partnership with the school, making an SRTS plan with tactics and programs tailored to the specific needs of the community and school. After an initial walking audit with a school, we recommend that SRTS coordinators require a school champion before working on an SRTS action plan for a school. This ensures buy-in from the school and that work will continue after the initial assessment.

3.1. SCHOOL SELECTION

SRTS coordinators should work with their stakeholder group and agency to determine the best criteria for school selection. This may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction but should be documented so that it is clear how schools are selected and what a school may do to qualify for or request school program assistance. Selection criteria for consideration may include a combination of the following:

- **Safety Needs Assessment:** A jurisdiction may want to develop a method for evaluating the safety of routes to schools, including traffic patterns, and crash data. For this purpose, MDOT has created a beta version of an SRTS dashboard. This dashboard provides crash data and bicycle level of traffic stress, which may be used for a safety needs assessment.
- **Requests or Community Engagement:** Existing requests through 311 or sent to any of the SRTS stakeholders (DPW, LEA, or LDH) should be evaluated for school selection. If there are existing requests or involvement from local communities, parents, and schools, this indicates there may already be existing champions for the school who can help enact an SRTS plan.
- **Demographics**: A jurisdiction may consider various demographic factors for school selection. In Maryland, schools designated as Title 1 schools may be one criterion to consider because they serve a high number of low-income students. Generally, low-income students are more likely to walk, bike, or ride the bus to schools, making an SRTS plan more impactful.

Anne Arundel County SRTS Accessibility Studies

Anne Arundel County is conducting SRTS Accessibility studies for elementary and middle schools in the county to assess the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety. The study then provides a prioritized list of recommendations. In Phase 1, 17 elementary schools were assessed. In Phase 2, 10 elementary and 10 middle schools are being assessed. This type of study can be done in advance of hiring a coordinator to outline their work or can be conducted under their direction to prioritize projects.

- **Voluntary Participation from Schools:** A jurisdiction may also put out a call to schools for participation in the program. This will help assess the willingness of school administration and local stakeholders to participate in the program and implement recommended changes.
- **Community Schools Designations:** The MSDE leads the Community Schools program, which encourages a strong, equitable, and collaborative community ensuring student success. This includes coordination with families, educators, community partners, and local governments to identify institutional needs and provide resources such as personnel and wrap around services to support disadvantaged families. Jurisdictions may consider working with Community Schools to support their needs and existing initiatives. Collaboration with a Community School Coordinator is a great first step. More information on Community Schools can be found at: marylandpublicschools.org/about/pages/dsfss/community-schools/index.aspx.
- **Title 1 School Designations:** Title 1 schools provide all children the opportunity to have a fair, equitable, and high-quality education. This includes providing funding, support services, school accountability, parental involvement. Jurisdictions may consider Title 1 school designations in the criteria for school selection. More information on Title 1 Schools can be found at: marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/PIFS/index.aspx.
- **ENOUGH Act Community Designations:** The Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Act, administered by the Maryland Governor's Office for Children, is an initiative to end childhood poverty and increase economic mobility in Maryland. The four key pillars of this initiative include High-Quality Childcare and Education, Healthy Families, Economically Secure Families, and Safe and Thriving Communities. Schools and associated communities that have been granted ENOUGH funding may be good candidates for additional SRTS support. More information on the ENOUGH Act can be found at: goc.maryland.gov/Pages/enough-initiative.aspx.
- **Ongoing Programs:** A jurisdiction may consider schools that already have walking or biking events and initiatives, even if they are informal. If there are already some programs, the school may benefit from additional resources and the expansion of their current programs.

Community School: Woodside Elementary, Anne Arundel County

As a Community School: Woodside Elementary, Anne Arundel County, has a Community School liaison who helps coordinate efforts to support students and their families. The coordinator works with over 14 community partners to provide students and families the resources to thrive. In partnership with these organizations, Woodside provides services to address structural and institutional barriers to academic achievement. For example, Backpack Buddies provides food to address food insecurity. The Community School coordinator also organizes the school's participation in Walk to School and Bike to School days. Through their needs assessments, the school learned through their students, families, staff, and community members how to enhance their support services to achieve equitable learning outcomes.

Once an SRTS coordinator has set the selection criteria, they can also set a goal for how many schools they can work with per year. For the first year, this may only be a handful (4-6) of schools and following the launch of the program, the annual number could be adjusted to fit the needs and capacity of the jurisdiction. Sample goals for this can be found in the evaluation chapter of this toolkit. It is important to note that in addition to working with new schools, an SRTS coordinator should reserve time to check-in with schools already participating in the program to see how their specific SRTS plans are serving their needs and to routinely update their plans.

3.2. WALKING AUDIT

Once a school is selected to participate in the SRTS program, the first step should be to complete a walking audit. Walking audits are a great tool in creating communities where residents can participate in making their vision of healthy, safe, walkable streets into reality. Audits are essentially a walk around the school area to identify areas of safety concern and areas for improvement. They are guided by a checklist and performed with school staff and/or community members. The national Safe Routes to Schools partnership provides an in depth toolkit to learn more about walking Audits (https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/walk_audit_toolkit_2018.pdf). Any coordinator can do this by following a few simple steps:

Washington County's Walking Audit Form

Using funding from MDH, the Washington County Health Department developed a walking audit specific to Hagerstown. After starting with the generic AARP walking audit form, they adjusted the form after working with the Hagerstown Town Engineer. From this process they made a walking audit to fit within local abilities for short term safety interventions. Using grant funds, the Health Department led three walking audits with parents, students, and school staff, who were able to discuss more neighborhood and community level issues. The process also led to the schools designing artwork in the right-of-way with High School students that was acceptable to the engineer and compliant with transportation standards.

Step 1. **Prepare your materials:** It is recommended that each SRTS coordinator develop a walking audit checklist that is specific to their county and takes advantage of resources available. While checklists will be similar, an SRTS coordinator should take the time to review what is included on the list and adapt it to include safety issues or other issues which are easily rectified by their DPW or another partner agency. For example, an SRTS coordinator might have specific partners or know of programs unique to their jurisdiction that should be included, such as an urban tree program or an on-going pothole filling program. Here are some sample walking audit checklists which can be adapted:

- AARP has walking audit checklists for various street features: aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/aarp-walk-audit-worksheets-english/.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration offers this walkability assessment tool: nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/walkingchecklist.pdf.

Step 2. **Assemble your walking team:** A walking audit should always include someone from the school to accompany the SRTS coordinator, preferably someone who manages or works with arrival and dismissal. It can also include any number of people beyond the school representative, from council members, traffic engineers, parents, and even students.

Step 3. Plan your walk: The walking audit may be performed at any time that is convenient for the walking team, but during arrival and dismissal time is the most conducive for observing the school environment. A team may opt to perform the audit during the school day when everyone is available, but then an SRTS coordinator should also observe student arrival and dismissal times to get the full picture. The walking team should also agree on a route or areas to cover, aiming to take about an hour for the walk, including time to pause and observe at key locations. Generally, this should be routes walked by students or cover a few blocks in each direction around a school.

Step 4. Gather materials and walk: An SRTS coordinator should make sure every member of the walking team is prepared and has the correct materials. These materials include printed checklists to take on the walk, a map of the chosen area, clipboards, writing utensils, and high-vis or reflective gear for all participants. An SRTS coordinator should also remind the walking team of any other environmental factors to be aware of and discuss ground rules such as:

- Dressing appropriately for the weather
- Restroom, rest area, and water fountain locations
- Reviewing the checklist and route before departure
- Designating a walk leader and tail person so that no one is left behind.

Step 5. Discuss observations: Following the walk, reserve a few minutes for the walking team to discuss what they noted and observed. This gives an opportunity to discuss pervasive issues and if what was observed is the day-to-day norm. During this time, it is important to hear from school stakeholders common behaviors or issues that may not have been observed on the walk as well.

Step 6. Report issues: With the personalized walking audit checklist, discoveries and notes from the audit can be sorted into several categories to be resolved.

- **Quick fixes:** These are issues that are part of the local government's repertoire already. They may be reported through 311, or an SRTS coordinator may have a relationship with the responsible agency who can fix the issues. Examples include replacing street lighting, patching a sidewalk, requesting a speed bump, or other similar items that can be completed in-house.
- **Long-term issues:** Larger issues may not be resolved through a quick report, but an SRTS coordinator should keep track of these issues and see if there is an avenue to resolve them. This might mean working with DPW to add a desired sidewalk to a master plan, investigating a paving schedule to see if fixes can be made within that process, or picking one or two long-term issues per year for which the SRTS coordinator applies for an SRTS infrastructure grant. Long-term issues could also be shared with the appropriate agency for inclusion in a future capital project. Examples of long-term issue solutions include reducing the number of lanes near a school, constructing a shared use path, adding a stop light, constructing ADA compliant pedestrian crossings, or other engineering solutions.

- **School Responsibilities:** Some issues do not require a change of environment, but a change in behavior, norms, or rules. These issues should be recorded and can be a great starting point for an SRTS Plan for the school. Once the issues are compiled, examples of solutions might include updating the circulation plan and where parents are instructed to drop off their children, adding bicycle safety courses to PE or after school options, requesting a crossing guard to a challenging intersection.

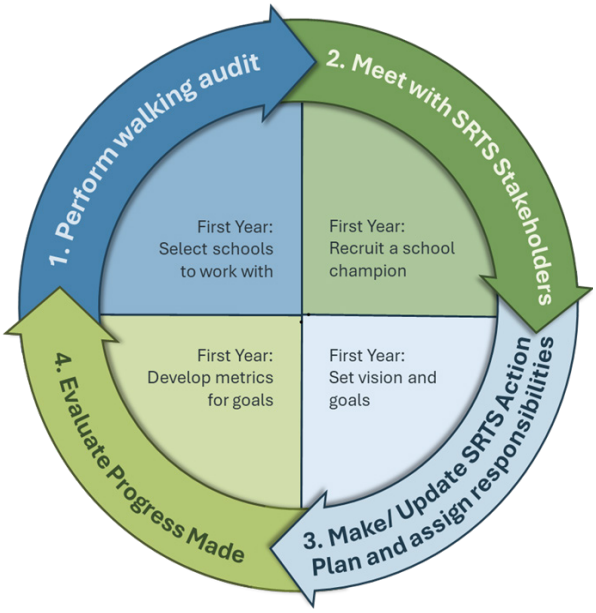
Walking audits can take any shape an SRTS coordinator desires, formal or casual. No matter what form it takes, this is a crucial step to get to know the situation on the ground at a participating SRTS school.

3.3. OUTLINE AN SRTS ACTION PLAN

Building upon the results of the walking audit, the next step in school program assistance is creating a SRTS School Action Plan (SRTS Plan). This step should only be taken if there is a SRTS champion at the school – this may be a staff person or a volunteer from the school community. This person is essential to demonstrate buy-in from the school, delegating actions to school community members, and working alongside the SRTS coordinator to follow up on plan implementation.

The SRTS coordinator and school champion should first assemble an SRTS team for the school. Members of this team ideally include an administrator, someone who oversees arrival/dismissal, a physical education teacher, a PTA/parent representative, and any other interested school stakeholders. Before the champion and SRTS coordinator dive into a plan, this group needs to decide on a few items:

- **Develop a long-term vision:** A school may have a vision of reducing the number of students being driven to school; reducing conflicts among buses, cars, and walkers; or having a seamless arrival and dismissal.
- **Set short-term goals:** Short-term goals may be to increase students walking or biking, to hold certain events, etc.
- **Identify the main safety issues:** Each SRTS plan should address at least one safety issue.
- **Make a list of assets:** Include partnerships, resources, communication channels, and specific people who are key to initiatives for the school.



SRTS Action Plan Cycle

The SRTS team for the school may be able to list the vision, goals, issues, and assets through a group discussion or may opt to distribute a survey to students, staff, and parents. Once this outline is developed, the champion or team can move on to selecting tactics and making a yearlong plan, which is described in the next chapter and may take several more meetings to develop. The full school SRTS team should plan to meet at least twice each year after adopting a plan.

3.4. SELECT ACTION PLAN TACTICS

From an outline, the SRTS champion can decide which tactics to include in their action plan to meet the vision and goals. The selections should address the identified issues and use the existing assets. It is important to be reasonable and not overly ambitious for the first year, since any plan will be implemented in addition to other school staff responsibilities. The SRTS coordinator can guide the SRTS champion by suggesting tactics and helping them select an appropriate approach to make their SRTS plan successful. A SRTS plan can be updated annually once there is a better sense of capacity of the school and stakeholders.

Tactics for SRTS are divided into E's, at a school level. **Table 3-1** provides the framework for the SRTS plan. Potential tactics are sorted by "E" and each require a different level of involvement or commitment from the school champion or person delegated to execute the tactic.

Table 3-1: E Framework for SRTS

"E" OF SRTS	TACTIC	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT	NOTES & IMPACT
EDUCATION	Update circulation plans for arrival and dismissal and communicate changes to parents, students, and staff.	Medium	Requires planning, helps with parental behavioral issues, and can ease conflicts.
	Share School Bus safety information with parents and guardians.	Low	MSDE has school bus safety information for parents and guardians available in English and Spanish[1]. MDOT has information for drivers near school buses online: zerodeathsmd.gov/news/maryland-school-bus-laws-and-safety-tips/.
	Invite a guest to give a safety seminar to students.	Low	Helps with student behavioral issues. Benefits students in their everyday lives.
	Add walking and biking safety to the PE Curriculum or after school activities. [2]	High	May require approval from LEA, funding, and a partner to deliver a curriculum. Benefits students in their everyday lives.
ENCOURAGEMENT	Host a safety day.	Medium	Input of stakeholders, including businesses, communities, and organizations is required to promote awareness and education.

1. MSDE school bus safety information in English can be found here: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/Transportation/Parent-School-Bus-Safety-Flyer-English-A.pdf and in Spanish can be found here: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/Transportation/Parent-School-Bus-Safety-Flyer-Spanish-A.pdf.

2. State Physical Education Standards and resources can be found here: marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/PE/index.aspx and the framework here: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/documents/dcaa/pe/physical-education-framework-a.pdf.

"E" OF SRTS	TACTIC	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT	NOTES & IMPACT
ENCOURAGEMENT	Celebrate Walk to School Day and/or Bike to School Day.	Low-Medium	These celebratory days require promotion, organizing events, and providing recognition or safety giveaways for participation.
	Develop ongoing walking school buses and bike trains.	High	The school should publish the various Safe Routes to School programs for awareness purposes.
ENGINEERING	Report small infrastructure issues to 311 or the responsible agency.	Low	Safe Routes to School partners should report small infrastructure issues that constitute safety concerns to the respective authority during the walk audit for safety purposes.
	Work with local or state governments to make long-term plans for the streets and sidewalks around a school.	Medium-High	Requires input from local or state government to strategize on plan to make routes to school safe in streets around the school premises.
	Apply for an infrastructure SRTS Grant.	High	School can apply for an infrastructure grant through its partner to promote the program.
ENFORCEMENT	Assign additional staff or parents to monitor and enforce arrival/dismissal rules.	Low-Medium	Appoint volunteers among parents or in the school to monitor and enforce arrival/dismissal rules.
	Work with local law enforcement or local DPW/transportation agency to perform a speed study, monitor an area for traffic violations, or install speed cameras where vehicle speed is an issue.	High	This requires school to partner with law enforcement agency to enforce traffic regulations for safety purpose.
	Hire Crossing Guards to aid Safe Routes to School on major roads.	High	Schools to engage the service of a trained personnel to help in crossing major roads for safety purpose.
EVALUATION	Perform arrival/dismissal counts to record how students arrive at school.	Low	Take a record of students' arrival and dismissal at school.
	Distribute surveys to families and caretakers about travel patterns, safety issues, and interest in SRTS programs.	Low-Medium	Schools should devise a feedback mechanism to obtain information from the parents and students.

Toolkits and resources for many of these activities and more can be found on the National Safe Routes Partnership Resource Library: saferoutespartnership.org/resources/.

Once this plan is in place, the SRTS coordinator connects the schools to various available resources to ensure a successful SRTS program in their county. This may include funding mechanisms, community-wide events, or potential partners who support SRTS. **Chapter 5** of the toolkit provides more examples of resources that can help realize an SRTS plan.

Lastly, the SRTS coordinator should check on each school with an SRTS plan at least twice per school year. This will help to make sure the school is on track and help the SRTS coordinator evaluate which SRTS tactics are working at various schools in their county to ensure the sustainability of the program. A sample outline of an SRTS school plan is available at: www.mdot.maryland.gov/SRTS.

The Maryland Highway Safety Office brings the Walk Smart, Drive Smart, Bike Smart educational campaign to classrooms with its mascot, Cheswisk the Crab (zerodeathsmd.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-bicyclist-safety/cheswick-the-crab/)

4. COMMUNITY-WIDE ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Planning community-wide events that foster collaboration among schools, parents, local government, and community organizations can help build a supportive network that enhances the program's effectiveness. Many successful SRTS programs implement regular community events, awareness campaigns, trainings, partnerships, and/or incentive programs. Engagement of the wider community can help reach those who are not involved with a particular school, may encourage additional schools to join your program, and may result in local political or business support. With a base of local support, an SRTS coordinator can advocate for policy changes and capital projects at local and state levels to promote safer routes and enhance community support for active transportation For more on community engagement, view the SRTS Partnership's Community Engagement Guide (https://saferoutespartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/community_engagement_guide_final.pdf).

4.1. COMMUNITY EVENTS

One of the easiest ways to get the word out about SRTS is to be out in the community. Attending or hosting community events can encourage more schools and community members to think about SRTS and overall safety throughout the community. Events can take place in a specific community/school zone or across multiple communities and schools and include various types of events like a county-wide safety day, community pop-up events, and walk & roll events.

Montgomery County Safety Days

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation hosts an annual safety day promoting traffic and pedestrian safety. To put on an event which attracts thousands of attendees annually, MCDOT partners with Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery County Recreation. This event includes traffic gardens to practice biking and walking safely, bicycle helmet safety demonstrations, safety gear challenges, and best driving practices. Lastly, there is entertainment and raffles to attract people, although MCDOT's Zeal the Safety Zebra mascot is known to be the biggest draw. The annual safety day is a family-friendly event that brings the community together and supports county-wide Vision Zero Initiatives.

Joining community events planned by a partner is a great way to get started. At these events, an SRTS coordinator can focus on sharing information, hearing safety concerns, and making people aware of SRTS programs and how to be involved. For this an SRTS coordinator can use existing departmental outreach materials and stock their own materials geared towards students and their families. This starts with a table, a tablecloth, basic information about the department, and giveaways to help draw people to the table. Giveaways can be safety focused, like clip on lights for walking in low light, reflective gear, and activity books that teach about roadway safety.

Once a program is more established, you may consider hosting your own event and inviting others who share the goal of safety to participate. For an event like this, an SRTS coordinator should have a goal such as focusing on an upcoming project near the event space or providing on-site safety education. This might look like having an information session and feedback board about the project or having a local

biking group host safety lessons. Depending on the topic, local partners with similar goals should be invited to table or lead events alongside the SRTS program.

4.2. AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Running awareness campaigns can help spread safety information and educate the community about the benefits of SRTS programs. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) can be utilized to share safety tips and success stories and highlight the need for SRTS coordinators. When combined with safety giveaways, this can be an effective way to spread the word about topics like pedestrian visibility, bicycle helmet fittings, how to perform a bike safety check, and encouraging participation in safety events. For some months, MDOT MHSO, NHTSA, and SRTS may have graphics or sample posts to make this easier. Some examples of awareness campaigns include:

- **May is Bike Month:** National Bike & Roll to School Day is the first Wednesday of May annually and bike safety celebrations continue the whole month. This is an opportunity to post bicycle safety information and to share events in a targeted campaign. One additional tactic is to create a challenge during the month to walk, bike or skate every day in May. This challenge and activities create awareness around pedestrian safety, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and healthy modes of transportation. For ideas and materials visit: www.walkbiketoschool.org/ and saferoutespartnership.org/resource/2025-bike-roll-day-toolkit/.
- **October is Walktober and Pedestrian Safety Month:** National Walk to School Day is the first Wednesday of the month annually and Pedestrian Safety Month is recognized nationally in October. In Maryland, this is called "Walktober" which emphasizes the importance of pedestrian safety and encouraging walking as a healthy mode of transportation. This is a great time to launch an awareness campaign about safe walking tips and participate in events. For more on Maryland's Walktober and Pedestrian Safety Month visit: mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=136.
- **Walk Maryland Day:** Walk Maryland Day is a celebration of the state of Maryland official exercise—walking. It is always celebrated statewide on the first Wednesday in October. It is a call to action to promote awareness about regular walking year-round, to encourage physical activity and improved health, engaging Marylanders with fun walks for all. All Marylanders are encouraged to take time on that day to lead or join a walking event around where they live, work or play. For more on Walk Maryland Day visit: health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/WalkMD/pages/walkmdabout.aspx.

4.3. ENGAGING AND TRAINING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

An SRTS coordinator may want to develop specific materials for parents and community members who want to participate in school safety events. This can be started by surveying the community on their various concerns and interests regarding school travel safety and identifying those who may want to volunteer. By providing opportunities and training, an SRTS coordinator can encourage those interested

parents and community members to volunteer as SRTS coordinators or helpers. They may be trained to help with school arrival and dismissal or to help at specific events. For more on engagement and training community members visit: https://saferoutespartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/recruiting_volunteers_0.pdf.

Opportunities for volunteers and community member participation include:

- **Crossing Guards:** One way for community members to be involved in Safe Routes to Schools is to work or volunteer as a crossing guard. Employing crossing guards instantly increases pedestrian safety by ensuring safe crossing practices and reducing risk during peak school travel times. Crossing guards are managed differently in each county in Maryland. In some counties it is managed by the schools or LEA, and others by law enforcement or the local DOT. An SRTS coordinator should work with their stakeholder group to determine the best avenue for guards in their county. Once this is known, neighbors to schools, retirees, and other interested community members are often great candidates to be trained, equipped, and serve as crossing guards for school arrival and dismissal.
- **Community Clean Ups:** Schools and walking routes are great locations for community clean ups. These may be part of a larger city-wide clean up day or be organized as a stand alone event. Events can be led by school volunteers by simply promoting the event, providing basic cleaning supplies (gloves, trash bags, etc). For larger events, access to school restrooms and refreshments is encouraged.
- **Bike Train and Walking School Bus Leaders:** Interested parents and community volunteers often lead or participate in Bike Trains or Walking School Buses. A Bike Train or Walking School Bus is a way for students to get physical activity and practice pedestrian safety while traveling to school supervised by adult volunteers. Having parent involvement in these efforts can strengthen school communities and foster safety. An SRTS coordinator should invite parents and community volunteers to participate in these initiatives. For more information on Bike Trains and Walking School Buses visit: https://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/get_rolling_w_a_bike_train_program_2021.pdf and https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/step_by_step_-_how_to_start_a_walking_school_bus_at_your_school.pdf.

Biking Fridays in Silver Spring

On most Fridays, Mario Emanuel Perez and his two children take a 30-minute bike ride to their Silver Spring, MD elementary school, with dozens of other children and parents joining along the way. This "bike bus" helps to get children comfortable cycling on local streets, encourages healthy habits, and reduces congestion in the parent pick-up line at the school.

4.4. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Recruit students to champion SRTS initiatives, making it a peer-led effort by establishing a platform where students assist younger peers in safe travel to school. For more on student involvement visit: https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/srtsandstudentleaders_final_93015.pdf.

- **Student Contests:** Contests are one way to make safety a fun topic for students. This tactic can be adapted for nearly any age group and tied into existing campaigns. For example, during May, which is traditionally bike month, students of any age can compete by drawing their bike, but older students might be challenged to make safety videos. In Montgomery County, the annual safety video PSA contest for high school students had the theme of "Heads Up, Phones Down" (https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/department-transportation/walk/heads-phones-down).
- **Student Ambassadors:** Ambassador programs tend to require more organizing and are best suited for students in high school. These programs require consistent commitment on behalf of the organizer and the ambassadors, requiring a plan for the ambassadorship, which generally lasts a whole school year. Student ambassadors may represent their school on a countywide program where they receive training and bring what they learn to their school through supported activities or information sharing. Examples include a high school student who learns about traffic safety and then shares information on morning announcements, or who attends a bike safety class and then leads their local bike train to school. In Maryland, ambassador programs can contribute to public high school requirements for 75 Student Service Learning (SSL) hours.

WABA Vision Zero Youth Leadership Institute

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) offers an outreach internship for Prince George's County youth ranging in ages 14-18. This program allows for youth to get involved in promoting safe and active transportation and to learn about transportation equity. It also provides context to transportation decision-making throughout Prince George's County. As a result, these individuals get first-hand public speaking and presentation experience and lead the Youth Transportation Safety Summit held annually in Prince George's County.

4.5. PARTNERSHIPS

An SRTS coordinator can uncover resources and volunteers when they collaborate with community groups and businesses routinely. This may take the form of a local taskforce or partnership to make the call for resources or sharing messaging. Key groups include:

- Businesses that can sponsor events or donate goods for raffles, giveaways, and awards.
- Local bicycling and walking groups can partner on encouragement events, help identify safe routes, and organize volunteers for programs like Walking School Buses.
- Local AARP chapters or senior groups offer opportunities for older adults to connect, a strong source of volunteers, and can be a tremendous resource in planning for age-friendly, livable communities.

For any community members or schools that excel, SRTS coordinators may consider incentives and recognition. By creating awards for schools and individuals, an SRTS coordinator can earn media attention and garner interest in SRTS. This may be an award program funded through a partnership, or it could be other public recognition that is publicized through local media outlets.

5. FUNDING AND RESOURCE COORDINATION

SRTS coordinators can help connect schools to funding and resources to support SRTS projects, including grants and partnerships, which can lead to improved facilities and programs. Maryland has several programs and resources available for SRTS programs. **Table 5-1** provides a summary of state and federal funded resources available for SRTS programming. Following the table is more information about each program.

Table 5-1: Funding and Resources Cheat Sheet

PROJECT TYPE	TAP SRTS	MHSO	MDH	SRTS PARTNERSHIP
EDUCATION MATERIALS	✓	✓	✓	✓
PROMOTIONAL AND OUTREACH MATERIALS	✓	✓	✓	✓
BEHAVIORAL STUDIES	✗	✓	✓	✗
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND DESIGN)	✓	✗	✗	✓
CONSTRUCTION	✓	✗	✗	✓
ELIGIBLE APPLICANT	**TAP SRTS**	**MHSO**	**MDH**	**SRTS PARTNERSHIP**
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	✓	✓	✓	✓
SCHOOLS	✓	✓	✓	✓
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	✓	✓	✗	✓
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS	✗	✗	✓	✗
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES	✓	✗	✗	✓

5.1. MDOT TAP SRTS FUNDING

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a federally-funded reimbursable program administered in Maryland by the State Highway Administration (SHA). The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in 2021, codified SRTS as an eligible project type under TAP. Schools, non-profits, and local governments may apply for TAP funding for SRTS projects that support infrastructure or non-infrastructure activities through a competitive award process. Example project types include:

- **Feasibility Studies:** A good first step for an infrastructure project is completing a feasibility study to identify areas of safety concerns, assess project goals, and ensure the practicality of a project. Feasibility studies can help determine project costs and engage the public and stakeholders early in the process.
- **Design Projects:** Design projects further a set of goals or ideas by developing them into a set of plans. Design projects begin with a concept and culminate in construction plans. They ensure projects are viable and meet current state and federal standards.

TAP Grant Project Profile

Title: Connecting Communities to Schools Across Route 40
Project Sponsor: City of Havre de Grace
Project Type: Feasibility Study
Project Description: Identify opportunities for safe, accessible and connected bike/ped routes from subdivisions west of US 40 to Havre de Grace Elementary, Middle and High Schools.
Expected Outcome: Report detailing preferred safe routes and safety projects with timelines, costs, and project concerns.
Grant Award: $120,000
Application Requirements:

- Complete scope of work
- Detailed cost estimate
- Project map (project must be within approximately 2 miles of a school)
- Project schedule

Preferred Application Items:

- Data demonstrating the need for the project.
- Letters of support

- **Construction Projects:** These comprise of construction, installation, and/or rehabilitation of infrastructure. For TAP SRTS projects this includes sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and other bicycle or pedestrian safety improvements within approximately two miles of a school. In addition, the school can also apply to the Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program with similar projects to act as a local match for this type of award.
- **Non-infrastructure projects:** Non-infrastructure projects under this program typically include Education and Outreach, Encouragement Initiatives, Community Engagement, Policy Development, Transportation Alternatives, and Safety Campaigns. In addition to the state-funded programs, there may be other resources available for an SRTS program

TAP SRTS projects must benefit school children in grades K-12 and require a 20% cash match contribution. The application window is announced by MDOT yearly and usually occurs in the Spring. The TAP SRTS guidance provides extensive details on the funding application and will help an applicant submit a complete and competitive application. For the TAP SRTS guidance and additional information please email **completestreets@mdot.maryland.gov**.

5.2. MARYLAND HIGHWAY SAFETY OFFICE – SAFETY GRANTS

The Maryland Highway Safety Office (MHSO) is housed in the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration and is dedicated to saving lives and preventing injuries by reducing motor vehicle crashes through the administration of a comprehensive network of traffic safety programs. MHSO Safety Grants target changing behaviors through education, engagement, and enforcement to improve traffic safety in Maryland directly relating to SRTS initiatives. MHSO Safety Grants can fund safety pilot projects, safety projects related to the Maryland Strategic Highway Safety Plan, safety campaigns, educational materials, and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) countermeasures that are proven. These include but are not limited to, a walk audit, SRTS School Action Plan, printing materials for educational purposes, and the purchase of helmets, bike lights, safety vest, stop/ go signs, and reflective bands for children. The application window occurs on an annual basis and is typically from January to February. For more information on MHSO Safety Grants please visit: zerodeathsmd.gov/grants/safety-grants/

MHSO Safety Grant Project Profile

Title: Talbot County Rolling Rodeos
Project Description: The grant will fund five Rolling Rodeos during the 2025–2026 school year for 4th and 5th graders in Talbot County. These events feature a simulated road course where kids learn essential bike safety skills like handling, signaling, and following rules.
Expected Key Activities: The rodeos promote safe cycling and pedestrian safety, teach bike skills, and the importance of wearing a helmet, and they provide free helmets and bike lights.
Grant Award: $21,505.25
Project Description: Talbot Thrive
Application Requirements:

- Problem Statement
- Proposed Solution
- Timeline
- Funding Request

Preferred Application Items: Successful applications can be duplicated in other regions of the state or in collaboration with other traffic safety disciplines.

5.3. LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS GRANTS

Collaborating with local health departments can enhance funding opportunities. These partnerships can provide additional resources for educational initiatives and community engagement efforts. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) periodically offers grants to local health departments for safe routes initiatives. MDH Safe Routes funding targets local health departments to develop and complete a walk audit in their jurisdiction to identify infrastructure and programming needed to improve walkability

and implement projects that improve the safety of children who walk, roll, or bike to school. MDH Safe Routes funding serves as an initial step to support local health departments in continuing their work and exploring additional funding opportunities in collaboration with MDOT. For more information on the Maryland Department of Health, Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, please visit: health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Pages/ccdpc_home.aspx.

5.4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Many counties and municipalities allocate funds for SRTS initiatives as part of their transportation and capital improvement budgets. Local agencies can request funding through their respective budget processes for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. Early coordination with local counties and municipalities on SRTS needs is recommended as budget amendments and processes typically occur well in advance of the current budget year.

MDOT distributing lights and safety activity booklets, safety giveaways can be funded by several grants in Maryland.

5.5. NON-PROFITS AND PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Some non-profit organizations such as the National Safe Routes to Schools Partnership offer grants specifically aimed at promoting health and safe transportation initiatives. Local schools and community organizations may apply. Funds can be used for educational programs, community events, and small infrastructure improvements. For more information on the National Safe Routes to Schools Partnership, please visit: saferoutespartnership.org/.

6. EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Evaluation is considered the final "E" in the framework of an SRTS program. To ensure long-term sustainability and help improve SRTS programs, regular monitoring and evaluation must be conducted. Monitoring and evaluations are strategic tools for making a program more effective and ensuring accountability. Regular evaluations will help facilitate:

- **Program Success:** Completing evaluations provides evidence of the SRTS program's success by measuring outcomes and assessing goals and objectives. Jurisdictions can utilize the results to make program adjustments and help integrate successful initiatives permanently into the program. Sustainable programs are often those that incorporate lessons learned from routine evaluations into program practices.
- **Informed Decision Making:** Regular evaluation allows program managers to identify what is working well and what needs improvement. This promotes informed decisions and enables the implementation of adaptive strategies and efficient use of resources.
- **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Many grant programs require evaluations and evidence-based justification to continue or increase resources. Data produced from regular evaluations can strengthen grant applications and budget requests by clearly demonstrating the SRTS programs and SRTS coordinators value and efforts to date.

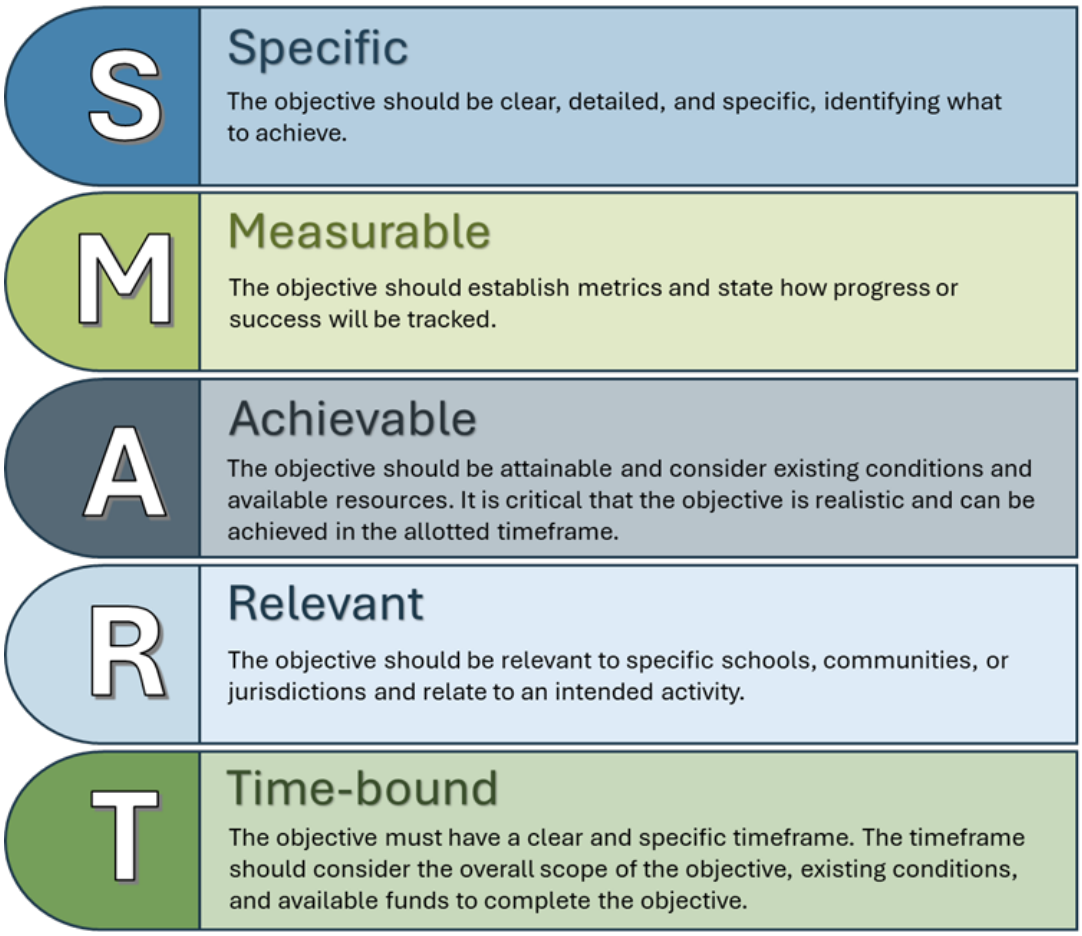
Students Walking to School

- **Stakeholder and Community Engagement:** Regular evaluations and presenting progress can increase both stakeholder and community engagement. Whether stakeholders and the community are a part of an evaluation through surveys or reviewing the results of an evaluation, it enables engagement which provides transparency and builds trust. When stakeholders and the community are involved early and often in a program there is a greater chance for advocacy and long-term success.

6.1. SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

For the purpose of an SRTS program, goals are the overarching outcomes that a SRTS jurisdiction-wide program is expected to achieve. These can be broad such as improving safety for students traveling to and from school or to facilitate the planning of SRTS projects jurisdiction wide. Objectives are most effective when they are clear, measurable, and help achieve a specific goal, (e.g., increase walking and biking rates, and reduce traffic injuries).

The "SMART" objective framework will help an SRTS coordinator produce practicable and achievable objectives. The acronym "SMART" stands for:



SMART Goals

Tying "SMART" objectives to overarching program goals can allow for more seamless evaluations and long-term program success.

The SRTS coordinator should work with their stakeholders to set goals and objectives for the program. Then they can make a workplan of activities to achieve program goals and set objectives for each element of their program.

An SRTS coordinator should also help individual schools set goals and objectives that directly align with established jurisdiction-wide goals and objectives. A school-specific objective will support and inform a jurisdiction-wide objective through SRTS tactics and initiatives that collect information and data. The information and data at the school level is required to achieve both the school and jurisdiction-wide objectives and informs jurisdiction-wide evaluations. Continuous coordination between the SRTS coordinator and the schools must occur to ensure the school objectives directly support the jurisdiction-wide goals and objectives.

Table 6-1 lists examples of SRTS goals and corresponding jurisdiction-wide and school-specific objectives for an SRTS program. These examples include fictitious schools.

Table 6-1: Example SRTS Goals and Objectives

EXAMPLE GOALS		EXAMPLE OBJECTIVES
Improve safety for students traveling to and from school.	Jurisdiction Wide:	Develop **four** school SRTS Action Plans **each year**, in partnership with a school champion at each individual school to improve student safety.
	School Specific:	Select an SRTS champion at WALKmore[1] Elementary School and perform arrival/dismissal counts to record how students arrive at the school to inform the SRTS Action Plan within **one year**.
Increase the number of students walking, biking, and rolling to school.	Jurisdiction Wide:	Increase the number of students biking to school by **10%** jurisdiction wide within **one year** by helping **five** schools participate in Bike & Roll to School Day.
	School Specific:	Increase the number of students walking to WALKmore Elementary School by **25%** in **one school semester** by organizing **four** individual walking school buses.
Facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of SRTS infrastructure projects.	Jurisdiction Wide:	Submit **five** complete and thorough grant applications within **two years**.
	School Specific:	Identify pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure gaps at WALKmore Middle School by completing a walking audit within **six months** and select **one sidewalk improvement** project to pursue.
Grow awareness and interest in the SRTS Program.	Jurisdiction Wide:	Increase stakeholder coordination and engagement by hosting **quarterly** progress meetings and attending **4 community events in one year** to share SRTS safety information.
	School Specific:	Host **quarterly** walking and biking safety after school activities to increase student and parental awareness of SRTS at WALKmore High School by **20% within one year**, tracked by annual surveys.

1 WALKmore is a fictional school for demonstration purposes.

6.2. COLLECTING DATA AND FEEDBACK

Collecting data and feedback is critical to evaluating SRTS Program goals and objectives. The SRTS coordinator is responsible for collecting, organizing, and tracking data and feedback, ensuring it relates to the established objectives and initiatives. This includes baseline data on existing conditions, perceived SRTS knowledge throughout the community, and data collected after an SRTS initiative or project.

Both quantitative and qualitative data are applicable to SRTS programs and should be given equal consideration when appropriate. Quantitative data focus on numerical information and are measurable while qualitative data is descriptive and interpretative. Below are common metrics that can be utilized:

Quantitative Measures

- Number of students walking/biking to school.
- Number of traffic incidents near schools.
- Bicycle level of traffic stress. (For more information visit: https://fitp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=15ad5a70d0234da58d88cd173e0cd86b)
- Changes in traffic volume.
- Vehicular speeds in school zones.
- Attendance at safety events.
- Bicycle helmet usage amongst students.
- Absenteeism in schools.

Qualitative Measures

- Community feedback on infrastructure improvements.
- Student and parent perceived safety.
- Parental and community SRTS support.
- Student arrival and dismissal observations.

Baseline metrics documenting existing conditions are collected prior to activities and projects that are expected to make a change. Using an example objective listed above, “Increase the number of students walking to WalkMORE Elementary school by 25% in one school semester by organizing five individual walking school buses”, it is imperative that we gather quantitative data on the current number of students walking to school before we complete the activity so that we have data to analyze and meet the objective. In addition, a student and parent survey on perceived safety could be completed annually prior to activities as qualitative data to complement the quantitative data collected and perhaps help explain the number of students currently walking to school. Following the walking school bus activities, the same metrics should be collected to evaluate the success of the activity.

With the necessary data clearly identified, it is essential to understand the various methods for collecting data and feedback. SRTS Coordinators must establish open channels of communication for ongoing school and community member feedback. Collection methods vary depending on the desired data; however, it is important that data is collected at the school, community, and jurisdiction-wide level. For example, students may have a meaningfully different perspective than teachers and/or parents. The following data collection methods are widely used in SRTS programs and have been proven successful when implemented.

Collection Methods

- **Surveys:** Conduct pre and post activity surveys of students, parents, guardians, teachers, and staff. Surveys are low-cost and very successful at collecting specific SRTS data. The SRTS coordinator and individual schools may use surveys to collect data.
- **Hand Tallies:** Typically conducted by teachers, student hand tallies are a quick and easy way to get information from students. A frequently asked question of students is how they travel to and from school.
- **Audits & Observations:** Audits and observations are commonly used to document existing conditions. Walking audits can be used to identify areas of safety concern and areas for improvement or arrival and dismissal observations monitoring the vehicular and pedestrian movements during these times.
- **Interviews:** Interviews are utilized to collect qualitative data and are known to be successful in documenting specific experiences.
- **Community Meetings**: Community meetings, focus groups, and taskforces are ways to engage the community and gather insights on various SRTS topic areas such as existing conditions or community needs. Meetings provide a platform for the community to have their voice heard and be involved.
- **Traffic and Pedestrian Counts:** Monitoring the number of vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists during peak school hours is critical for SRTS initiatives related to safety and infrastructure improvements.
- **Incident Reports:** Similar to traffic and pedestrian counts, tracking the number of crashes or near-misses reported by the community is valuable data for SRTS initiatives related to safety and infrastructure improvements. Coordinating with crossing guards and/or safety officers may reveal further incidents that may not be captured by reports.

In addition to the above data collection methods, it is recommended that the SRTS coordinator partner with local and state departments of health, safety, and transportation to review existing data that may be relevant to SRTS initiatives. Whenever possible, employing a variety of data collection methods is suggested to enhance the scale and accuracy of the data. For additional information and templates, please visit: guide.saferoutesinfo.org/evaluation/ways_to_collect_information.cfm.

6.3. REPORTING AND PROGRAM TRACKING

Having established clear program goals and objectives and completed data and feedback collection, the next step is to present our findings. Program tracking and reporting is essential to show the progress of a program and/or individual SRTS initiatives. When developing materials to track progress and report on program achievements, the materials should be tailored to the intended audience. The audience may include stakeholders, grant administrators, elected officials, local governments, schools, parents, communities, and/or business owners. As a result, the format may vary among annual reports, grant reports, activity summaries, and individual school reports. **Table 6-2** lists specific report formats, report details, intended audiences, and general timing of each report.

Table 6-2: Example SRTS Goals and Objectives

REPORT FORMAT	DESCRIPTION	AUDIENCE	TIMING / FREQUENCY
PROGRAM REPORTS	Program reports are typically formal comprehensive reports that share annual SRTS program wide findings with stakeholders, schools, parents, and others. The annual report should detail program outcomes, specific efforts to meet program goals and objectives, provide evidence using data collected throughout the year, detail program updates or changes for the upcoming year, and future funding scenarios.	Stakeholders, Grant Administrators, Local Governments, Schools, Communities, General Public	Annually
GRANT PROJECT REPORTS	The use of grant funding on projects often requires monthly, quarterly, and/or annual reporting on both program/project progress and financial information. SRTS coordinators should coordinate directly with grant administrators on specific requirements and templates. For example, TAP grant funding requires quarterly reporting using the TAP quarterly report form.	Stakeholders, Grant Administrators	Monthly, Quarterly
ACTIVITY SUMMARIES	Activity summaries are reports that describe the activity or initiative, related goals and objectives, pre-event data, post-event data, and lessons learned. These reports should document the activity or initiative in its entirety. Activity summaries should be completed at both the individual school level and jurisdiction wide level. These reports will help inform formal reports such as annual reports, grant reports, and individual school reports.	Stakeholders, Local Governments, Schools, Communities	Following each activity, event, or initiative

REPORT FORMAT	DESCRIPTION	AUDIENCE	TIMING / FREQUENCY
INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL REPORTS	Individual school reports are reports that document SRTS efforts at specific schools. This includes detailing SRTS projects and initiatives and supporting data at the school level and resembles a SRTS jurisdiction wide annual report. Individual school reports help inform annual program reports and is a section of the annual updates to the SRTS Plan.	Stakeholders, Local Governments, Schools, Communities	Annually

For any report, it is important to use clear language and visuals (charts, graphs) to illustrate data effectively. This includes translating documents as needed to ensure reports are accessible to and inclusive of their intended audience. Typically, a report points to the goals and objectives, summarizes findings, compares results, analyzes trends and lessons learned, and makes recommendations for next steps. Reports generated more frequently should remain concise and streamlined to support quick understanding and effective decision-making. A successful report communicates valuable information and documents successes in a clear and engaging manner.

An SRTS coordinator may be asked at any time to present the current status or findings of the program. This could include findings for specific SRTS events, efforts at individual schools, and/or jurisdiction wide program initiatives. The reports mentioned above contain the information and data necessary to prepare a presentation. Presentations can be delivered at coordination meetings, school events, PTA meetings, community meetings, webinars, lunch & learns, and other similar events. Similar to developing reports, it is important to consider the intended audience as they can vary from direct stakeholders, who are well informed, to the general public, who may be less familiar with SRTS. Evaluations, reporting, and presentations will lead to an improved, successful SRTS program and ultimately enhance safety for students walking, biking, and rolling to and from school.

7. CONCLUSION

Maryland's SRTS Toolkit serves as a comprehensive resource for communities aiming to enhance the safety and accessibility of routes for students traveling to and from school. By implementing the strategies and tools outlined in this toolkit, communities can create a supportive environment that encourages walking and biking, ultimately fostering healthier lifestyles among students. The journey toward safer routes for schoolchildren is a collaborative effort that requires commitment, creativity, and ongoing evaluation. By leveraging the resources and strategies provided in this toolkit, communities can make meaningful progress in creating a safer, more inviting environment for students. This not only enhances their safety but also promotes healthier habits, strengthens community ties, and fosters a culture of active transportation for generations to come. Together, we can pave the way for a brighter, safer future for our children as they embark on their daily journeys to school.

A list of SRTS supplemental resources, references, cited sources, related state and federal policy and program guidance can be found at: www.mdot.maryland.gov/SRTS.

Students Walking to School

LINKS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Table of Links

DOCUMENT	LINK	CHAPTER IN TOOLKIT
MDOT Serious About Safety	https://mdot.maryland.gov/safety	1
Zero Deaths Maryland	https://www.zerodeathsmd.gov/	1
2024 Complete Streets Policy	https://policymanual.mdot.maryland.gov/mediawiki/index.php?title=MDOT_750_Complete_Streets	1.1
Safe System Approach (USDOT)	https://www.transportation.gov/safe-system-approach	1.1
Zero Deaths and Safe System (USDOT)	https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths	1.1
MSDE End-of-Year Pupil Transportation Report	https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/Transportation/Transportation-End-of-Year-Report-A.pdf	1.2
Land Use Article	https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/Statute_Web/glu/glu.pdf	1.4
Eight Sustainable Growth Planning Principles (Land Use Article §1–201)	https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Laws/StatuteText?article=glu&section=1-201&enactments=false	1.4
COMAR 14.39.02.14	https://dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/14.39.02.14.aspx	1.4
Safe Walk to Schools Act (2022 HB 19)	https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/Chapters_noln/CH_553_hb0019e.pdf	1.4
Interagency Commission on School Construction	https://iac.mdschoolconstruction.org/	1.4
Maryland Center for School Safety	https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx	2.1
Forming a Safe Routes to School Taskforce	https://www.mass.gov/doc/forming-a-safe-routes-to-school-task-force/download	2.1
Community Schools	https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/Community-Schools/Index.aspx	3.1
Title I Schools	https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/PIFS/index.aspx	3.1
ENOUGH Act	https://goc.maryland.gov/Pages/enough-initiative.aspx	3.1

DOCUMENT	LINK	CHAPTER IN TOOLKIT
Let's Go For A Walk: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit	https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/walk audit toolkit 2018.pdf	3.2
AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit Worksheets	https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/aarp-walk-audit-worksheets-english/	3.2
NHTSA Walkability Checklist	https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/walkingchecklist.pdf	3.2
Parents School Bus Safety Flyer (MSDE MCSS)	**English:** https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/Transportation/Parent-School-Bus-Safety-Flyer-English-A.pdf **Spanish:** https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/Transportation/Parent-School-Bus-Safety-Flyer-Spanish-A.pdf	3.4
Maryland School Bus Laws and Safety Tips	https://zerodeathsmd.gov/news/maryland-school-bus-laws-and-safety-tips/	3.4
Standards-Based Physical Education	https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/PE/index.aspx	3.4
Maryland Physical Education Framework: Pre-Kindergarten Through High School	https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/documents/dcaa/pe/physical-education-framework-a.pdf	3.4
Safe Routes Partnership Resources	https://saferoutespartnership.org/resources/	3.4
Cheswick the Crab	https://zerodeathsmd.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-bicyclist-safety/cheswick-the-crab/	3.4
SRTS Partnership Community Engagement Guide	https://saferoutespartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/community engagement guide final.pdf	4
National Bike & Roll to School Day	https://www.walkbiketoschool.org/	4.2
Bike & Roll Day Toolkit	https://saferoutespartnership.org/resource/2025-bike-roll-day-toolkit/	4.2
Walktober	https://mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=136	4.2
Walk Maryland Day	https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/WalkMD/pages/walkmdabout.aspx	4.2
Engaging and Training Community Members	https://saferoutespartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/recruiting_volunteers_0.pdf	4.3
Get Rolling With a Bike Train Program	https://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/get rolling w a bike train program 2021.pdf	4.3

DOCUMENT	LINK	CHAPTER IN TOOLKIT
How to Start a Walking School Bus at Your School	https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/step_by_step_-_how_to_start_a_walking_school_bus_at_your_school.pdf	4.3
Safe Routes to School and Student Leaders: Facilitator's Guide to Engaging Middle School Youth	https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/srtsandstudentleaders_final_93015.pdf	4.4
MCDOT Heads Up Phones Down	https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/department-transportation/walk/heads-phones-down	4.5
MHSO Safety Grants	https://zerodeathsmd.gov/grants/safety-grants/	5.2
Maryland Department of Health, Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control	https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Pages/ccdpc_home.aspx	5.3
National Safe Routes to Schools Partnership	https://saferoutespartnership.org/	5.4
Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Map	https://fitp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=15ad5a70d0234da58d88cd173e0cd86b	6.2
The National Center for Safe Routes to School Guide, Ways to Collect Information	http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/evaluation/ways_to_collect_information.cfm	6.2
Safe Routes To School Resources and References	www.mdot.maryland.gov/SRTS	7

Table of Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS	DEFINITION	CHAPTER INTRODUCED IN TOOLKIT
ADA	Americans with Disabilities	3.2
DPW	Department of Public Works	3.1
ENOUGH	Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households	3.1
IAC	Maryland Interagency Commission on School Construction	1.4
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act	5.1
LDH	Local Department of Health	3.1
LEA	Local Education Authority	1.2
MCDOT	Montgomery County Department of Transportation	4.1
MCSS	Maryland Center for School Safety	2.1
MDH	Maryland Department of Health	1
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation	1
MHSO	Maryland Highway Safety Office	4.2
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization	2.1
MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education	1
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	4.2
PE	Physical Education	3.2
PTA	Parent Teach Association	6.3
SHA	State Highway Administration	5.1
SMART	Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound	6.1
SRTS	Safe Routes to Schools	1
SRTS Plan	SRTS School Action Plan	3.3
SSL	Student Service Learning	4.4
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program	1
The Center	Maryland Department of Health Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control	1.3
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation	1.1
WABA	Washington Area Bicyclist Association	4.4

For questions or comments about the Maryland SRTS Coordinator Pilot Program, please contact the MDOT Office of Active Transportation and Micromobility at completestreets@mdot.maryland.gov.

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