

Oregon Department of Transportation  
Safe Routes to School



ALTA - COMMUTE OPTIONS - CYCLE OREGON - THE STREET TRUST

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Hood River County School District

# Safe Routes to School Implementation Strategy

*A strategy to foster a partnerships and programs that will make walking and rolling to school a safe, fun, and desirable activity*



# Acknowledgments

The following key people and their organizations participated in the development of this Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Implementation Strategy. Their creativity, energy, and commitment were critical to developing this Strategy, and their ongoing support is vital for the long-term success of Safe Routes to School within Hood River County School District.

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# 01 INTRODUCTION



## Safe Routes to School Background

**Safe Routes to School (SRTS)** is a comprehensive K-12 program to make school communities safer by combining engineering tools and engagement with education about safety and activities to enable and encourage students to walk and roll to school. SRTS programs involve partnerships among municipalities, school districts, transit districts, parks and recreation districts, public health agencies, community members, parent volunteers, and community groups. It is the shared vision of these types of partnerships that leads to long-lasting and meaningful SRTS programs.

Education programs within Safe Routes to School have the potential to lead to long-term culture shift, behavior change, and orientation toward public space and community. Hood River has a unique

opportunity to be a part of this wider movement. Cities across the country, including Hood River, have been designed to prioritize car travel. Our continued reliance on fossil fuels is accelerating climate change and separation from each other and the environment. Safe Routes to School in Hood River County has the power to connect students and families to each other through shared experience, to challenge cultural norms and conditioning around driving, and to increase connection to place. There is immense opportunity for shifting the needle toward a culture of wellbeing through consistent Safe Routes to School programs that families can rely on to make choosing active transportation easy, safe, and comfortable.

Learn more at: [www.oregonsaferoutes.org](http://www.oregonsaferoutes.org)

# About the SRTS Implementation Strategy

This document serves as a guide for the continued promotion of Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) programs within Hood River School District with a specific focus on education programs. This is the first time Hood River has had a SRTS Coordinator within the district, and there are a lot of opportunities for reaching new populations, expanding existing programs, and dividing up potential projects into smaller, more manageable chunks. This will be a guiding document for the SRTS Coordinator to implement and prioritize educational programming during the upcoming school year and to build a strong base for programs in years to come.

This Implementation Strategy is guided by input from the SRTS Coalition. This group is a combination of community organizations and agencies that have connections to SRTS or active transportation.

The recommendations in this document are built upon and will support previous SRTS programs in Hood River, including walking school buses, school streets, and demonstration projects. Key milestones in the program include:

**2020** — City of Hood River embarks on Safe Routes to School planning process

**2022** — City of Hood River completes Safe Routes to School Plan

Hood River School District receives ODOT funding to hire Safe Routes to School Coordinator

City of Hood River adopts long-term infrastructure recommendations into Heights Streetscape Plan

ODOT writes Business Case report to identify potential infrastructure projects at Parkdale Elementary

**2023** — City of Hood River installed demonstration project at Hood River Middle School

SRTS Coordinator assembles SRTS Coalition of partners to meet quarterly

City of Hood River develops Infrastructure Strategy Plan

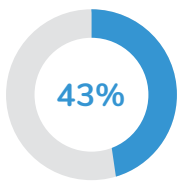
**2024** — School District is awarded funding for Planning Assistance for County schools

City of Hood River applies for Surface Treatment funding for Hood River Middle School

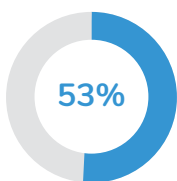


## Hood River County School District Demographics

Hood River County School District has five elementary schools, two middle schools, a high school, and the Options Academy for online learners. The total student population is 3,900 students; 43% are Hispanic/Latino, and 53% qualify for free or reduced lunch.



**1,677**  
students are Hispanic/  
Latino



**2,067**  
students receive free  
or reduced lunch

May Street Elementary and Hood River Middle School are within the City of Hood River limits, and Cascade Locks Elementary within Cascade Locks city limits, both incorporated with a relatively dense population of residents who live within two miles of the school. Most of the remaining schools in the county serve students in rural housing, either not within walking or biking distance of their schools or separated by highways that create barriers to walking or biking.

According to the Climate and Equity Justice Screening tool, many Hood River residents are considered disadvantaged because of the threat of building loss from natural disasters and because there is a greater than 65th percentile for low-income families.



# Barriers to SRTS in Hood River County

The City of Hood River has had significant volunteer effort from parents and community members in Safe Routes to School for many years. This volunteer-led effort had great success at increasing the number of students and families traveling by walking and rolling. In addition to this grassroots support, there had been significant interest and investment of resources from City and County partners and local organizations.

Despite these resources, there have been several key barriers around Safe Routes to School in Hood River:

- ▶ **Coordination:** Without a lead coordinator position, SRTS efforts have been fragmented, making it difficult to sustain momentum over time. It has been challenging to sustain volunteer commitment and direction without paid staff coordination. As a result, turnover of parents and caregivers has meant that gains made in one school year are often lost over time rather than passed down year to year.
- ▶ **Equity:** Without a staff person tasked with serving the entire Hood River County School District, only schools with parent volunteers and other local resources were consistently able to participate in SRTS activities. Hood River County is diverse in terms of resources (such as parent time, funding for events and activities, and equipment for active transportation), and there are significant differences in levels of capacity among the various schools and communities within Hood River School District.
- ▶ **Infrastructure:** The built environment presents a consistent challenge for active transportation in Hood River County, especially for younger community members. There are many high-speed highways and rural truck routes located in the county, especially in the City of Hood River and the City of Odell. Sidewalks do not exist around the high school or in the two very rural towns of Parkdale and Odell.





# 02

## SRTS PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

# Community Involvement in SRTS

As stated in the previous section, Hood River School District has had significant public buy-in to SRTS through volunteer- and community-led initiatives. While there were gaps in these efforts before the SRTS Coordinator was hired, School District officials, school families, and community organizations such as Anson's Bike Buddies have been heavily involved in and supportive of SRTS activities. Hood River also has an established bike culture, mainly around mountain biking. The area's biking shops, clubs, and camp organizations are allies of Safe Routes to School.

The City of Hood River Police and Fire Departments, as well as the Hood River County Sheriff's Office, are engaged around enforcement, street safety, and infrastructure improvements. The Department of Public Health is also a reliable communications partner and supporter of grant opportunities.

In terms of infrastructure, the key partners or right-of-way owners are the Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District, City of Hood River, County of Hood River, and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).

Some recent successes related to these partnerships include:

- ▶ The Parks and Recreation District applied for and won \$6 million to fund the Indian Creek Trail connection to Hood River Valley High School.
- ▶ In September 2023, the City of Hood River installed its first-ever demonstration project, a Safe Routes to School project located adjacent to Hood River Middle School.
- ▶ Parkdale Elementary was a recipient of the ODOT Regional Planning Assistance process and is encouraged to pursue ODOT Quick Build funding to make the improvements recommended through that process a reality.
- ▶ The Hood River School District Superintendent wrote letters of support for infrastructure grant applications.
- ▶ PE teachers co-taught bike safety skills to a total of 1,075 students, and 83 students learned how to ride bikes for the first time.
- ▶ The Director of Family Engagement introduced the SRTS Coordinator to each of the school Family Engagement Specialists, which enabled the Coordinator to deliver 131 donated bikes to students in need.
- ▶ The City of Hood River Transportation Director connected the SRTS Coordinator with the City's Operations Manager and helped transport the bike trailer to each of the elementary schools.



# Key Partnerships

The following table summarizes how each key organization partner plans to contribute to the success of Hood River School District Safe Routes to School:

HOOD RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT	MID-COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT	CITY OF HOOD RIVER	HOOD RIVER COUNTY	HOOD RIVER VALLEY PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT	HOOD RIVER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	ANSON'S BIKE BUDDIES	OSU EXTENSION
<p>Coordinate and cross-promote communication materials, events</p> <p>Support coordinator in all SRTS school efforts</p> <p>Assist in promoting e-bike safety courses in older grades</p> <p>Distribute bikes to families through Family Engagement Specialists</p>	<p>Send out calls for bike donations</p> <p>Assist in identifying and applying for future grant funding and writing letters of support for those funds</p>	<p>Coordinate and cross-promote communication materials, events</p> <p>Help in implementation of projects</p>	<p>Identify and apply for grants to continue development of SRTS activities and improve infrastructure</p>	<p>Share information in newsletters</p> <p>Connect with families and provide information on SRTS</p> <p>Invite to events</p>	<p>Coordinate and cross-promote communication materials, events</p> <p>Promote traffic safety and health benefits of walking or rolling to school</p>	<p>Coordinate and receive donated bikes to be repaired</p> <p>Help distribute bikes to families in need</p>	<p>Coordinate and cross-promote communication materials, events</p>



## 03

## SRTS PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND PRIORITIES

The following tables outline three goals and associated actions for the SRTS Coordinator to move toward these goals. The goals are related to the long-term vision of the SRTS program in Hood River, and the actions are shorter term to be completed in the 2023–2024 school year.



### Goal 1: Build and maintain strong community partnerships through consistent communication and outreach

ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMELINE	LEVEL OF EFFORT	IMPACT
Write and distribute quarterly newsletter to all project partners and Coalition Members with project updates and ways to get involved	SRTS Coalition, project partners	Once per quarter	Medium	Low
Seek out additional funding opportunities through partnering with local organizations and agencies applying for infrastructure funding	MCEDD, City of Hood River	Ongoing	High	Medium
Submit press release twice per year to all relevant media outlets in the region to promote upcoming demonstration projects and events	School District, City of Hood River, Hood River County, Media Outlets	Twice per year (fall and spring)	Low	High
Maintain consistent communication to school and district staff including principals, parent organizations, PE teachers, and Transportation Director to keep them updated on opportunities and relevant infrastructure projects	School District	Ongoing	Low	High
Maintain consistent communication with City and County staff to coordinate around funding opportunities and track and evaluate infrastructure projects	City of Hood River, Hood River County	Ongoing	Medium	High



## Goal 2: Increase safety for students and families traveling to school particularly those who walk and bike out of necessity

ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMELINE	LEVEL OF EFFORT	IMPACT
Bike Safety Education lessons implemented in all elementary and middle schools within the district	School Administrators, Teachers	Ongoing	High	High
Implement demonstration crosswalk project through Governors Highway Safety Association	ODOT, Governors Office	February–October 2024	Medium	High
Seek out funding opportunities for Safe Routes to High School to fund opportunities including the Indian Creek Trail	ODOT, Hood River Parks and Rec	Ongoing	Medium	High
Host five walk and roll events at each elementary school in the district	School Administrators, Parent Teacher Organizations	Ongoing	Medium	Low

**Goal 3: Increase access and opportunity to walk and bike to school for all residents, with a particular focus on transportation-disadvantaged populations.**

ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMELINE	LEVEL OF EFFORT	IMPACT
Facilitate walking school buses and bike buses at Elementary Schools across the district	School Administrators, PTOs	Ongoing	Medium	High
Partner with Anson's Bike Buddies to provide free bicycles to students who need for transportation to and from school	School Administrators, Anson's Bike Buddies	Ongoing	Medium	High
Seek out and apply for funding opportunities to build out bike fleet, storage, and helmets for each Elementary School	PTOs	Ongoing	High	High
Coordinate and facilitate Walk and Roll clubs at Middle Schools	ODOT, PTOs, School Administrators	Ongoing	Medium	High
Coordinate and facilitate e-bike after school club for students who are 16 and older	ODOT, PTOs, School Administrators	Fall 2024	Medium	Medium
Plan for and operate e-cargo lending library for caregivers to borrow e-bikes as needed	CAT Transit, Oregon Ebikes	Fall 2024	Medium	High
Facilitate School Street demonstration at May Street Elementary	City of Hood River	April-June 2024	Medium	High

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# 04 NEXT STEPS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Hood River SRTS program will continue to thrive and expand with the support of consistent funding and partnerships. The table in this section highlights funding opportunities to sustain the SRTS Coordinator position into the future. Some immediate next steps towards sustainability include:

- ▷ Consider what elements of the Hood River SRTS program can be deepened and expanded upon in the coming two years
- ▷ Have conversations internally at the district about a five-year vision for the program based on what was implemented in the 2023 school year
- ▷ Discuss program evaluation with Hood River County and opportunities for growth
- ▷ Share progress toward goals and actions with SRTS Steering Committee on a quarterly basis and troubleshoot challenges with the group

# SRTS Program Structure

The Safe Routes to School Coalition will be led by the SRTS Coordinator to meet quarterly throughout the school year to discuss upcoming events, troubleshoot transportation challenges in the community, and support the program overall. Specific roles and responsibilities for the Coalition moving forward include the following:

- ▷ Supporting the SRTS Coordinator in applying for grant funding to sustain the program
- ▷ Providing feedback and guidance on aligning actions with program goals
- ▷ Sharing program updates and events through existing communication channels
- ▷ Meeting quarterly to hear updates from the SRTS Coordinator and discuss the program

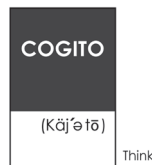


# Funding Opportunities

In addition to the ODOT Education Grant, there are other opportunities to fund various aspects of the SRTS program, from educational materials to campaigns

to infrastructure. The table below outlines opportunities for funding and sustaining the Hood River County SRTS program.

GRANT NAME	AGENCY	TIMELINE	DOLLAR AMOUNT	PURPOSE
Oregon Community Paths Grant	Oregon Department of Transportation	Every other year	\$150,000 to \$750,000 for planning and design \$500,000 to \$6 million for construction	To fund links and community multi-use paths
Education Programs Grant	Oregon Department of Transportation	Every other year	-\$100,000	To fund education and encouragement programs including funding a Safe Routes Coordinator position.
Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program	US Department of Transportation	Annual	\$100,000 to \$25,000,000	To prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets involving all roadway users



# alta

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