

Oregon Department of Transportation
Safe Routes to School



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Portland Public Schools

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



Acknowledgements

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 Portland Public Schools.

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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. PPS has a unique

opportunity to be a part of this wider movement. Cities across the country, including Portland, 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 Portland 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 PPS families can rely on to make choosing active transportation easy, safe, and comfortable.

Learn more at: www.oregonsaferoutes.org

About the SRTS Implementation Strategy

This document serves as a guide for the promotion of SRTS programs within Portland Public Schools (PPS) with a specific focus on education programs starting in 2023 and beyond. It is capturing a snapshot in time, but intended to guide the evolution of the program for years to come. This is the first time PPS has an SRTS Coordinator within the district, and given that PPS is the largest school district in Oregon, there are opportunities for reaching new populations, expanding existing programs, and dividing up potential projects into smaller more manageable chunks.

The recommendations in this document are built upon and supporting of previous SRTS programs in Portland conducted by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) including:

- 2001** PBOT formed the first SRTS program. House Bill 3712 provided the first funding to deliver school traffic safety services to five Portland Public Elementary schools
- 2006** Federal legislation established a national Safe Routes to School program
- 2013** Additional ODOT funding expanded the program into PPS Middle Schools
- 2018** PBOT writes 2018–2023 Portland Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan
- 2022** ODOT Safe Routes to School Grant funds an expansion for PPS to hire an internal coordinator
- 2022** PPS adopts Climate Crisis Response Policy which identifies and emphasizes the importance of active transportation infrastructure and support.

PBOT SRTS serves schools within PPS and other school districts in the greater Multnomah County. PBOT will be a key partner for PPS in reaching high-needs schools to deliver programs that meet their needs.

PBOT staff currently support parent champions across PPS in leading Bike Buses, Walking School Buses, encouragement events, and more. PBOT staff also have a presence in PPS schools training and supporting teachers to deliver Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education.

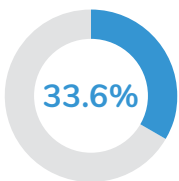
This Implementation Strategy is guided by input from the SRTS Steering Committee. This group is a combination of community organizations and agencies who have a connection with SRTS. Over the course of three interactive meetings, the Steering Committee discussed the roles and responsibilities each partner plays in delivering and expanding PPS's SRTS program, collaborated on forming the next steps towards reaching program goals, reviewed a draft Implementation Strategy document to provide feedback, and discussed how all parties can continue to move SRTS momentum forward.



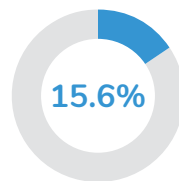
Portland Public Schools Demographics

PPS is the largest school district in Oregon, and the second largest in the Pacific Northwest. For the 2022–2023 school year, 45,456 students were enrolled throughout the district’s 81 schools. Of these

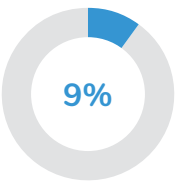
students, 20,850 were PreK–5, 10,217 were grade 6–8, and 14,389 were grade 9–12. Additional key demographics include:



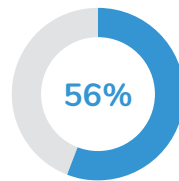
15,281
of students are historically underserved



7,098
of students receive special education services



4,082
of students have limited English proficiency



25,470
of students receive free or reduced lunch

Further 2022–2023 enrollment demographic information can be found in the [Enrollment Summary](#) by PPS.

Barriers to SRTS in Portland

Some of the most significant barriers toward Safe Routes to School in Portland include:

- ▷ Lack of bike parking on school grounds.
- ▷ Circulation challenges on school grounds as well as on adjacent streets which cause confusion and unsafe conditions at drop off and pick up.
- ▷ Student and family access to bicycles.
- ▷ School staff capacity and support for these programs.
- ▷ Limited funding for infrastructure improvements which requires PPS and its partners to be strategic in how funds are applied.
- ▷ Abandoned vehicles and camps create perceptions of risk and impede access to sidewalks during school commute times.
- ▷ High automobile traffic volume and speeds.
- ▷ Infrastructure that does not meet school community needs.

PPS's SRTS program seeks to address challenges families experience during their school commutes by:

- ▷ Reducing traffic related injuries and improving physical safety.
- ▷ Promoting healthy lifestyles and making physical activity enjoyable and fun.
- ▷ Improving conditions where there are narrow roads, limited space, and sidewalk improvement needs.
- ▷ Increasing staff and volunteer participation in events.
- ▷ Increasing parent awareness of all commuting options.

Additionally, students at PPS have concerns about traffic safety, bullying, street harassment, and hate speech while traveling to and from school. In 2017, PBOT's SRTS Strategic Plan indicated that active transportation encouragement events in the past typically served schools with higher rates of free and reduced lunch. Within PPS, 38 of 81 schools are high-need, serving low-income students, students of color, and families that speak English as a second language. Reaching these schools and integrating programs meaningfully is central to the PPS SRTS program.

Up until now, PPS SRTS programs have been sustained by "champions", such as teachers, principals, and parent volunteers. When champions leave the school community, the support for SRTS activities often leaves with them. It is also common for much of the program to fall on a couple of active individuals who eventually move on from the school or lose steam keeping programs going on their own.

It will be important for the PPS SRTS Coordinator to analyze and address these barriers through hearing directly from champions about what is helpful in supporting their programs, to learn what high-needs schools most desire from these programs, to be an extra set of hands at walk and roll events, and more.

In order to prioritize schools, the SRTS Coordinator will work with consultants and utilize existing tools and data such as the Regional SRTS Walkshed Analysis to select high needs schools not currently receiving programming. High needs is defined as having above average numbers of students with disabilities, low income students, absenteeism, barrier streets, students of color, english language learners, crashes, and missing sidewalks. Throughout the rest of this document "priority schools" refers to schools that rank high on this prioritization process.





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SRTS PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

Community Involvement in SRTS

Community buy-in and participation is essential to the success of Safe Routes to School. Up until now, PPS parents and teachers have led a lot of the planning and implementation of Safe Routes to School events and programs with the support of PBOT staff. This has taken the form of weekly Walking Buses and Bike Trains, as well as Walk and Roll to School Day events. With the addition of an SRTS Coordinator, there is the potential for more cross-school collaboration and for resources to be housed and distributed at a district level, rather than parent and teacher champions working in isolation. The SRTS Coordinator will be an integral part of expanding on the existing champion relationships and maintaining trust and transparency. The following tools will be used and initiated by the SRTS Coordinator to communicate with the larger community on program updates and connect champions across schools:

- ▶ Develop a comprehensive communication strategy that includes various channels such as newsletters, social media platforms, community meetings, and direct outreach to reach a wide range of community members.
- ▶ Continue and expand existing walking and biking groups to increase access to and awareness of SRTS programming.
- ▶ Regularly provide updates on program progress, upcoming events, and relevant information through the chosen communication channels.





Key Partnerships

The following groups have been participants in the SRTS Steering Committee and are committed to helping the program succeed. Each group has offered different ways to support the SRTS Coordinator and have provided feedback on the program and approach through Steering Committee meetings.

These groups will collaborate with the SRTS Coordinator to implement the actions listed in the next section. They all offer different skills and resources that can help the PPS SRTS program move toward its goals.

- ▷ PPS Climate Team
- ▷ PPS Educators
- ▷ PPS Facilities
- ▷ PPS Communications
- ▷ SRTS Champions
- ▷ Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT)
- ▷ Metro
- ▷ Community Cycling Center
- ▷ Oregon Walks
- ▷ PPS Transportation





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SRTS PROGRAM GOALS AND ACTIONS

These goals and actions were developed in collaboration with the PPS SRTS Coordinator following conversations during the Steering Committee meetings. Though it was created in 2023, it can be used year after year in order to to prioritize actions and program activities and involve necessary partners. The Steering Committee provided feedback on the goals and actions below during their third meeting as a committee.

Goal 1: Increase student and parent understanding around the benefits of active transportation and decrease the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips to school

Action	Partners Involved	Timeline	Level of Effort	Potential Impact
Distribute back to school safety messaging through existing PPS Communication channels in collaboration with PBOT back to school messaging	PPS Communications, PBOT	Fall	Low-mid	Education, encouragement
Understand history of parent/caregiver surveys in PPS schools and discuss survey approach with PBOT	PPS Communications, PBOT	Fall	Low-mid	Community perspectives, engagement
Request incentives through PBOT's and ODOT's existing incentives programs to distribute to students at Walk and Roll events	PBOT, ODOT SRTS Team	As needed, per event	Mid-high	Participation, access, encouragement
Collaborate with PBOT on planning and attending spring Walk+Roll events at 3-4 schools	SRTS Champions, PPS Communications, PPS Educators, PBOT	As needed, per event	High	Supporting schools, engagement
Share videos, photos, and social media stories from students and parents who attended Walk+Roll events	PPS Communications, PBOT, SRTS Champions	As needed, per event	Low	Promotion, engagement
Inventory where bike rodeo events are happening and identify 2-3 new schools based on school prioritization process to host events at each fall and spring	PPS Educators, SRTS Champions, PPS Facilities, PPS Communications	Fall	High	Education, engagement
Develop a sustainable bike/ped education delivery model in partnership with PBOT, ensure that roles are clear and schools know how to access resources	PPS Educators, PBOT	Spring	High	Education, encouragement
Assess where students who are regularly being driven live to target programming (walk zone vs. bus zone). Survey parents who regularly drive students to understand needs.	PPS Communications	Winter	Mid-high	Community perspectives, engagement, encouragement

Goal 2: Understand student, caregiver, and staff transportation challenges and work toward solutions that address these challenges

Action	Partners Involved	Timeline	Level of Effort	Potential Impact
Identify 3–5 priority schools to develop new relationships with this school year. Utilize existing demographic and SRTS participation information to prioritize schools who have high populations of low-income, and students of color, and have not receive SRTS programs or support previously	SRTS Steering Committee	Fall	Mid-high	Engagement, encouragement, supporting schools
Collaborate with PBOT around prioritizing and supporting projects for funding	PBOT	Fall	Low-mid	Partnering, supporting schools
Discuss opportunities for quick build improvements along primary investment routes, and temporary Demonstration Projects adjacent to schools. Identify 2–3 schools for quick build improvements Work with PBOT to align this work with moving Infrastructure bond funding forward.	PBOT	Fall	Mid	Engagement, supporting schools
Identify and meet with principals at priority schools to learn more about specific transportation challenges that impact families and school staff	School Administration	Fall	Low-mid	Engagement, community perspectives, supporting schools
Consider opportunities for addressing staff transportation challenges through programs like a Transportation Wallet or Transportation Options funding	PPS Educators	Fall	Mid	Encouragement, supporting schools
Identify staff trainings to attend to inform teachers and staff about SRTS opportunities and messaging they can share with their students	School Administration	Fall	Mid	Engagement, education, encouragement

Goal 2: Understand student, caregiver, and staff transportation challenges and work toward solutions that address these challenges

Action	Partners Involved	Timeline	Level of Effort	Potential Impact
Work with the PPS Climate Team to integrate transportation related questions in surveys and listening tours. Consider drawing survey questions from previous PBOT questions.	PPS Climate Team, PBOT	Spring	Mid	Engagement, community perspectives, partnering
Assist with forming SchoolPool and other carpooling efforts in schools without existing SchoolPool programs	PPS Communications, ODOT SRTS Team	Ongoing	Low-mid	Encouragement, supporting schools
Based on conversations with principals and with PBOT, identify 3-4 priority schools to pilot solutions to address circulation challenges at schools	School Administration, PBOT	Spring	Mid-high	Engagement, community perspectives, encouragement, supporting schools

Goal 3: Collaborate with community partners on integrating Safe Routes into existing programs, initiatives, and events

Action	Partners Involved	Timeline	Level of Effort	Potential Impact
Compile list or calendar with community events for the school year hosted by partners and prioritize which to have a presence at. Share this calendar with Steering Committee members. Coordinate with PBOT on existing circulation planning work and school visits.	Steering Committee Members	Fall	Mid	Promotion, partnering
Determine 3-4 organizations to prioritize building partnerships with for the upcoming school year and learn more about their values and upcoming events.	Steering Committee Members	Fall	Mid	Partnering, engagement, community perspectives
Determine internal PPS meetings and events to present about new and existing SRTS Coordinator accomplishments and priorities	PPS Communications	Fall	Low-mid	Promotion, engagement
Track which SRTS-related grants that partners are applying for and provide letters of support for applications.	Steering Committee Members	As needed depending on grant timeline	Low-mid	Partnering
Connect SRTS grants with larger climate justice related grants as opportunities come up*	PPS Climate Team	PPS Climate Team	Mid	Funding, sustainability
Meet with PBOT to discuss pilot project feedback to determine what a longer term program could look like for completed pilots	PBOT	Fall	Low-mid	Partnering, supporting schools

Goal 4: Institutionalize Safe Routes to School programs internally at the district level

Action	Partners Involved	Timeline	Level of Effort	Potential Impact
Develop a mechanism for paying walking school bus and bike bus leaders	SRTS Champions	Summer	High	Sustainability, supporting schools, encouragement
Create a system for schools to request SRTS services as needed throughout the school year	PPS Communications	PPS Communications	Low-mid	Engagement, community perspectives, supporting schools
Create physical resources including standardized signage for walking school bus leaders to use, and include these resources in the school request system.	PBOT, SRTS Champions	Spring	Mid-high	Encouragement, promotion, supporting schools
Meet with school crossing guards and safety patrol leaders to hear about what materials and resources would best support the continuation of their work. Include supportive resources in the school request system	SRTS Champions, Metro	Fall	Mid	Engagement, community perspectives, supporting schools
Add information about walking and rolling to the district transportation website	PPS Communications	Fall	Low-mid	Promotion, encouragement
Identify support within the district around redistricting efforts to ensure clear and consistent communication with school communities in future redistricting processes	PPS Facilities, PBOT, Superintendents Office	Fall	Low-mid	Community perspectives, engagement, supporting schools
Partner with PBOT to assist with Transportation Academy for high school students.	PBOT	Winter	Low-mid	Education, partnering
Develop policy language for bike parking design and implementation including standards, sourcing, funding options, and implementation resources.	PPS Facilities, PBOT, Superintendents Office	Winter	Mid-high	Supporting schools

Goal 4: Institutionalize Safe Routes to School programs internally at the district level

Action	Partners Involved	Timeline	Level of Effort	Potential Impact
Develop a district walking school bus and bike bus program including job descriptions and payment for leaders, standard policies and procedures, and a list of resources for community members interested in learning more	PPS Communications, PPS Champions, Superintendents Office	Summer	High	Sustainability, supporting schools
Discuss funding options for providing free transit passes for all PPS students	PPS Transportation, Superintendents Office	Spring	Mid-high	Sustainability, encouragement
Support the exploration for PPS's involvement in the HB3014 "Bike Bus Bill"	Steering Committee members and SRTS Champions	Ongoing		





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NEXT STEPS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The PPS SRTS program will continue to thrive and expand with the support of consistent funding and partnerships. The tables in this section outline the important collaboration with PBOT and funding opportunities to sustain the Coordinator position into the future. Some immediate steps and conversations to ensure sustainability include:

- ▷ Watch recorded webinar about ODOT SRTS grants
- ▷ Consider what elements of the PPS SRTS program can be deepened and expanded upon in the coming years
- ▷ Have conversations internally at the district and with PBOT about a 5-year vision for the program based on what has been implemented so far in the current school year
- ▷ Discuss program evaluation with PBOT 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

Delineating the work of PBOT SRTS and PPS SRTS Coordinators and staff is a critical next step in the program development phase. PBOT’s 20-year history of delivering SRTS programming for PPS has created the nationally recognized program we have today. Communication and collaboration between PPS and PBOT will be essential to not duplicate efforts and to craft programs that address needs and challenges gathered by both organizations.

The table below outlines the core responsibilities that distinguish PBOT SRTS from PPS SRTS:

Category	PPS	PBOT	Collective
Communication	<p>Organize & share contact information of families, school staff, and teachers as needed with PBOT for SRTS programming</p> <p>Continually update the district website with program updates and seasonally relevant safety messages and information</p> <p>Facilitate PPS SRTS Steering Committee</p>	<p>Communication with PPS schools and families around circulation and construction projects.</p>	<p>Utilize existing communication channels for PBOT to highlight PPS’ SRTS work and vice versa.</p>
Infrastructure	<p>Consider policies and strategies at the district level to address transportation challenges around circulation, rebalancing, school siting, and school renovations.</p>	<p>Track infrastructure project funding and implementation and inform PPS on updates in quarterly reports</p>	<p>Collaborate on school circulation to maximize safety for the school and surrounding neighborhood communities, including through circulation and parking plans, pilot projects, and infrastructure improvements</p>
Education Programs	<p>Facilitate trainings and support for walking school buses, bike buses, and park and walk programs</p>	<p>Share materials with PPS SRTS Coordinator, including safety brochures and pamphlets, tabling materials, and event prizes and incentives</p>	<p>Facilitate bicycle and pedestrian education in schools</p> <p>PPS oversees SRTS programming within schools with advice and support from PBOT SRTS team</p>
Evaluation	<p>Track participation in programs and evaluate successes</p> <p>Evaluate circulation plans.</p>	<p>Evaluate process for circulation planning at schools and collaborate with PPS on equitable distribution of programming and services in conjunction with circulation visits.</p>	<p>Work together on follow-up from circulation visits to provide necessary education programming and support to schools with transportation challenges.</p>

Funding Opportunities

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

to infrastructure. The table below outlines opportunities for funding and sustaining the PPS SRTS program.

Grant Name	Agency	Timeline	Dollar Amount	Purpose
Regional Travel Options (General Grants)	Metro	Yearly in January	\$100,000-\$200,000	The Core and Emerging Partners track is for existing transportation focused programs, including SRTS, to fund 1-3 year programs
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
Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF)	City of Portland	Yearly in February	Up to \$100,000 for planning grants, up to \$10 million for implementation grants	Fund projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve climate resilience in ways that advance racial and social justice.
Regional Travel Options (Small Grants)	Metro	Rolling	Up to \$5,000	Fund specific, one-time purchases of materials and services to support events, education, and outreach activities.



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