

# Safe Routes Idaho

## Convening Notes

May 16, 2018



### Introductions

Fifteen people from five Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs around Idaho as well as four Idaho Smart Growth (ISG) staff attended the first annual Safe Routes Idaho convening. All five program coordinators participated as well as other paid staff and program volunteers. Two statewide agencies were represented, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and the University of Idaho Extension Service Eat Smart Program.

### Safe Routes Idaho (ISG SRTS program report) – Elaine Clegg (ISG)

The participants learned about the ISG SRTS program and received a first annual report of SRTS activity in the state. (PowerPoint attached.)

### Safe Routes to School measurements – Deanna Smith (ISG)

#### Why collect data? Who collects data today – how? What should we collect?

**Why?** – Collecting data helps communicate the need for infrastructure and other improvements to decision makers and potential funders. Attendees agreed that we need to collect and analyze consistent data across the state.

#### How is data collected today?

- **In-class tallies** – most Idaho SRTS programs do in-class tallies. Many are dependent on the local school or teacher submitting the tallies, and these are not always done completely or timely. Sometimes there is no support from a particular principal or teacher. Most do not have full school district support or the school district devolves those decisions to local school principals. It is important to count both the trip to school and the trip home. It would be helpful to have support from a higher level of leadership that tallies are important. Noting weather conditions is also important.
- **Physical bike/ped counts** – some programs do more than others. About half of the programs partner with cities, MPOs and others to get counts using electronic and tube counters as well as physical counts by volunteers. Other programs have less consistent counts happening. The Treasure Valley program has a volunteer-led count in spring and fall and they also use electronic and tube counters that are borrowed from the regional MPO (COMPASS). In one case augmentation by video showed a sprinkler coming on that was diverting kids away from a recently completed infrastructure improvement. Again, noting weather conditions is important.
- **Send home surveys** – there are the same issues with surveys as with in-class tallies. Additionally, the survey instrument from the National SRTS Partnership is long, hard to fill out, sometimes confusing, and not always relevant to Idaho conditions. There was

general agreement that an Idaho-specific instrument, especially if it could be made available online would be really helpful.

- **Program Data** – Some programs collect data on volunteers, both numbers and hours, but this is not consistent across programs. Most track staff hours and accomplishments for grant reports; that data could be useful for statewide reports.

#### **What should be collected?**

- Bike/ped counts
- Route maps
- Parent survey
- Crash data
- Car speed
- Other vehicle violations (failure to yield, etc.)
- Before and after counts where infrastructure improvements are completed.
- Program data – tracking volunteers, volunteer hours, staff hours and in-classroom time were all noted as potentially desirable.
- Lifestyle and economic development data

#### **Methods for collecting data that were discussed:**

**Origin/destination mapping** – Develop route maps of kids who walk and bike, identify highest use routes, conduct conditions assessments, and identify needed safety improvements. *A statewide online mapping app would be wonderfully helpful.* Could ITD help with this?

**Idaho-specific parent survey** – Could ISG facilitate developing a survey? Could ITD make it available online?

**Electronic cards system or online check-in system** – Would it be possible to develop an app or other check-in system for students to enter their own transportation mode to school each day?

**Crash data reporting** – Today's system rarely collects minor collisions or near misses where there are no or very minor injuries and when no police report was filed. Often these are reported to the school principal. There was discussion to see if there is a way to document these reports for analysis. Others who also might be helpful in collecting this data are crossing guards and bus drivers.

**Economic development** – Biking especially is being recognized in other parts of the country as an economic development tool. Is anyone in Idaho collecting this data?

#### **SRTS in Idaho – funded programs in Idaho today**

There are five funded programs in Idaho today. They served 10 school districts, 134 individual elementary and middle schools, and approximately 38,000 students in 2017-18. All programs participate in Walk to School Day and conduct regular walking and biking activities and giveaways. Most programs do not have up-to-date SRTS plans. There was agreement that such plans would help programs be more intentional and likely more successful. In addition each program has unique activities and structures.

**TVSRTS** – This program is the biggest in the state covering four school districts and 10 communities with four staff members. Funding is allocated by the regional MPO—

COMPASS—and passed through the local transit authority. They are housed in their sponsoring organization, the Treasure Valley YMCA.

*Activities:*

- School-based 30-50 minute classroom education – in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for pedestrian and safety and 8<sup>th</sup> grade for pre-driver’s education and bike safety. One of the school districts requires all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to participate. It is not as consistent in the other districts. *TVSRTS can share the curriculum for these two modules.*
- Bike rodeos in many individual schools. These are conducted during the school day and include giveaways of helmets and other incentives.
- Conduct school-based rides.
- Conduct summer camps, especially in partnership with their sponsor organization the Treasure Valley YMCA but also with boys and girls clubs, girl scouts and parks departments.

**Blaine County SRTS** – This program is county-wide and has one full-time staff. It is funded through an ITD TAP allocation and housed in their sponsoring organization, the local transit provider Mountain Rides. Weather impacts winter walking and biking.

*Activities:*

- Conduct bike to school rides in the fall and spring.
- Conduct bike rodeos in partnership with the sheriff’s department.
- Conduct in-classroom education when possible.
- Do a helmet giveaway annually with 250-300 helmets in partnership with St. Luke’s.

**LPOSD SRTS** – This program covers the Lake Pend Oreille School District and has one part-time staff. It is funded through an ITD TAP allocation and housed in their sponsoring organization LPOSD. Weather impacts winter walking and biking.

*Activities:*

- Conduct a fun filled bike assembly (at all schools?).
- Conduct a bike giveaway program.
- Facilitate a bike month with drawings for prizes based on participation.

**Moscow SRTS** – This program covers the Moscow School District and has one part-time staff. It is funded through an ITD TAP allocation through the University of Idaho which provides oversight and management.

*Activities:*

- In addition to the regular walking and biking events Moscow hosts a winter walk to school day called Polar Walk that has popular support and participation. They use an alternative drop-off point for this and other events to allow those on buses and who are regularly driven to participate.
- Partner with local city to improve infrastructure around schools.
- Conduct a pledge to support walking and biking to increase participation (need to learn more about this.)
- Conducting a program with the local farmers market to encourage people to walk or bike to the market. This will continue through the summer.

**BMPO SRTS** – This program covers Bonneville County and two school districts. It is funded through an ITD TAP allocation through the region’s MPO, the Bonneville

Metropolitan Planning Organization, which provides oversight and management.

*Activities:*

- Conduct crossing guard training. Guards are supported by the school districts.
- Following Walk to School Day the program conducts Walking Wednesdays during the school year.
- Conduct a bike challenge; challenged to ride 12 times in three weeks.
- Conduct an Art Contest with online voting where the winner gets a free bike.
- Completed a safety video.
- Visits with school principals about the program.
- Conduct a 5<sup>th</sup> grade bike ride (half of the schools one day, the other half another day) to a regional park for a BBQ. Each school gets a different colored t-shirt. The highway is shut down during the ride.

## **Facilitated discussion, improving and supporting SRTS in Idaho**

**Other issues** – These came up during the open discussion and are noted here for further follow-up in the future.

- **Health sector collaboration** – Can ISG help organize collaboration with other interests, especially the health sector, who might provide additional resources?
- **Budgets** – All budgets are tight which prohibits innovative ideas from coming to fruition. Could this group help find other state or foundation funds to help?
- **“Safe Routes to School Buses”** – We assess and improve routes to school, but not to bus stops. In rural communities these are often accessed on foot.
- **Sharing** – There was discussion if this group could be organized more regularly to explore sharing resources and information.
  - Chatroom, or blog – Can ISG organize a chatroom or blog to ask questions and share information?
  - Resources – Is there a way to create a joint buying contract for incentives, and to help utilize large donations of helmets and such?
  - Used bike giveaways – Is there a way to organize those with bikes to give away and those who need them?
  - Communication and messaging – Could ISG help create consistent and easy-to-use communication and messaging tools for programs?
  - National Safe Routes to School conference – Could ISG or others pursue funding for this group to travel as a group to the national conference?
  - Alternative, charter and private schools – how can clearinghouse information be provided to alternative, charter and private schools?
- **Prohibitions** – These make it harder for students to choose walking and biking.
  - Walking school bus – Some school districts have rules that walking school buses introduce liability and don’t allow them. Can we find a definitive ruling on how to overcome the liability issues so that school districts would change this policy?

- Wheels on school grounds – Some schools prohibit scooters and other wheels on school grounds (or require that they be carried once on school grounds).
- Wheels on school buses – Many school districts prohibit the transport of scooters, bikes, and other wheels on school buses. This prohibits kids from riding or wheeling to the bus stop and leaves them stranded once in town (some might travel to an after-school site to wait for parents for a ride home if they could).

**Other issues that may or may not be applicable to SRTS**

- **School bus safety** – some kids avoid the school bus because of bullying and other issues. Cameras on school buses were one idea discussed.
- **Yellow school buses as wider public transport** – are there efficiencies and better/wider public service that could be accomplished if yellow school buses could be used by a broader group of community members and/or used for other public transit during the day? Some are afraid of others on buses, yet bullying on school buses because of lack of oversight/adult presence is an issue in many communities.

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