Northeast Iowa

Safe Routes to School

10 Steps to Creating a Rural, Regional Safe Routes to School Program

How one rural region in Iowa found success with developing a regional Safe Routes to School program

UERPC prepared this report in 2014 with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and in part through local matching funds. The contents are the responsibility of UERPC. The U.S. Government and its agencies assume no liability for the contents of this report or for the use of its contents. Please call 563-382-6171 to obtain permission of use.

The cover photo is of a Walking School Bus in Decorah, Iowa.

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SRTS Background

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a movement which started in Denmark in the 1970s to combat the number of students being fatally injured while walking and bicycling to school (National Center for Safe Routes to School, 2012).

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in Postville, Iowa.

Now an international movement to enable and encourage students to safely walk and bicycle to and from school, SRTS has gained momentum and support in the United States since the late 1990s. SRTS programs are the result of parents, schools, communities and all levels of government joining forces in an effort to improve the health and safety of our children, our future leaders.

SRTS programs focus on the "5Es of SRTS" to improve environments around schools and attitudes about walking and bicycling:

1. Education to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety skills
2. Encouragement activities to build interest and enthusiasm
3. Enforcement measures to address safety issues
4. Engineering solutions to maintain traffic control devices and physical infrastructure
5. Evaluation methods to monitor impact and identify areas for improvement

Students participate in a Bike Rodeo in West Union, Iowa.

National Center for Safe Routes to School. (2012). History of SRTS. Retrieved from http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/about-us/mission-and-history

The SRTS Journey in Northeast Iowa

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in Northeast Iowa involves collaboration among the communities and schools in six counties (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek) and the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI). FFI is a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food and Community Partner working to improve the health of Northeast Iowa communities through promotion of healthy, locally grown food and active living and play. SRTS is a main focus of FFI because safer routes to school and areas for active play encourage people to be physically active. More information about FFI can be found at www.iowafoodandfitness.org.

The focus on SRTS in Northeast Iowa began in 2007 when the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI) was formed. During the 2008-2009 school year, FFI and Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development completed a regional SRTS plan, termed *Northeast Iowa Regional Safe Routes to School: Initiative for Healthier Students*, through support from the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT). This became Iowa's first regional SRTS plan. The plan can be located at: wwww.northeastiowarcd.org.

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in West Union, Iowa.

During the 2009-2010 school year, FFI piloted individual SRTS programs in six school districts and private schools. FFI focused on developing School Wellness Teams during the 2010-2011 school year. School Wellness Teams advocate for healthier, safer school environments in addition to SRTS programming.

School Wellness Teams continued to support SRTS efforts during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, the council of governments for the region and a core partner of FFI, received a grant through the Iowa DOT to develop a Regional SRTS Liaison position. Ever since, the Regional SRTS Liaison has been managing and championing the Northeast Iowa SRTS Program and continues to successfully assist schools and communities in Northeast Iowa with deepening SRTS education, encouragement and evaluation methods.

The Northeast Iowa SRTS Program

Students ride the Food and Fitness Bike Blender , a human-powered smoothie machine, in Oelwein, Iowa.

Northeast Iowa is fortunate to have a rural, regional Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program as well as a full-time manager and champion to oversee these SRTS efforts– the Regional SRTS Liaison. Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission continues to oversee the current Northeast Iowa SRTS program. The regional approach to SRTS in this rural area and Northeast Iowa's Regional SRTS Liaison are the only one of their kind in Iowa and likely even the country.

Spanning an area geographically equivalent to the state of Connecticut, Northeast Iowa is home to more than 20 school districts and private schools. From single K-12 buildings in one town to multiple school buildings in multiple towns to single K-12 buildings isolated in the countryside miles from the nearest town, school profiles in this rural region are nothing short of unique. Neither is Northeast Iowa's approach to turning the challenges of a rural setting into opportunities to advance rural SRTS work.

Community coalitions, strategic partnerships and a Regional SRTS Liaison continue to push Northeast Iowa's efforts forward. Through Safety Education, Walking School Buses, Mileage Clubs and more, the SRTS movement in Northeast Iowa is increasing student activity levels and raising community awareness of active school travel. Northeast Iowa is proving that rural regions do in fact have the capacity to build a healthier, safer and more active tomorrow.

Students learn about bike safety from a police officer in Postville, Iowa.

Developing a Successful Rural, Regional SRTS Program

As a result of the uniqueness of Northeast Iowa's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) efforts, this report has been compiled to assist other rural regions throughout Iowa and other states with starting their own SRTS programs. The following pages will describe the steps Northeast Iowa took to create a successful SRTS program, which continues on through today.

Ten Steps to Developing a Successful Rural, Regional SRTS Program

1. Designate Program Champion
2. Assign School District Profiles
3. Gauge SRTS Interest
4. Build Relationships
5. Find Local Champion
6. Form Coalitions
7. Determine SRTS Focus
8. Develop and Implement Plan
9. Evaluate
10. Recycle, Rethink, Rebuild

A student learns how to hand signal during a Bike Rodeo in Oelwein, Iowa.

Northeast Iowa students share why they like to ride their bikes.

Step One: Designate a Program Champion

In order to develop a sustainable Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program with regional impact, designating a program champion is imperative. This program champion will be able to offer assistance, support and expertise to each individual site while also keeping a broad focus on the region as a whole.

Depending on the size of the region and amount of SRTS momentum, this position could be either part-time or full-time; full-time is ideal. Northeast Iowa's program champion works full-time with a region covering six counties and never has a shortage of work.

Northeast Iowa has found that having a dedicated individual working solely on the regional program builds much success and sustainability.

The Regional SRTS Liaison, program champion in Northeast Iowa, helps a student properly fit his helmet in Oelwein, Iowa.

The Regional SRTS Liaison, program champion in Northeast Iowa, celebrates Walk to School Day with students in New Hampton, Iowa.

Step One continued

Duties will typically include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Daily communication (in-person, phone, email) with parents, school administration and staff, community members and stakeholders, businesses, newspapers and other organizations to spread the SRTS message and build relationships.
- Organize and facilitate meetings to introduce SRTS and plan for SRTS activities and projects.
- Present on SRTS to various parent, school and civic groups to build interest.
- Research SRTS-related news for best practices, ideas and opportunities.

The Regional SRTS Liaison, Northeast Iowa's program champion, joins a Walking School Bus in West Union, Iowa.

- Create messaging materials for public distribution (letters, flyers, postcards, posters, brochures, hand-outs).
- Support and assist with SRTS activities and projects.
- Travel throughout region to become familiar with schools, communities and physical infrastructure.
- Instruct students, school staff and parents on pedestrian and bicycle safety measures.
- Advocate for safe community routes and active youth.
- Act as a role model by obeying safety provisions and laws.

The Regional SRTS Liaison, Northeast Iowa's program champion, teaches students how to properly fit a helmet in Postville, Iowa.

Serving as program champion for a rural, regional SRTS program is a very rewarding position with much time spent in the public eye. It requires an energetic, passionate and dedicated individual with great organizational and communication skills.

Step Two: Assign School District Profiles

When serving a regional area covering multiple school districts, it is helpful to categorize school districts by "School District Profile," which describes how buildings are organized within a school district. Northeast Iowa determined four main School District Profile types:

1. Single K-12 Building in Single Town
2. Isolated Single K-12 Building
3. Multiple School Buildings in Single Town
4. Multiple School Buildings in Multiple Towns

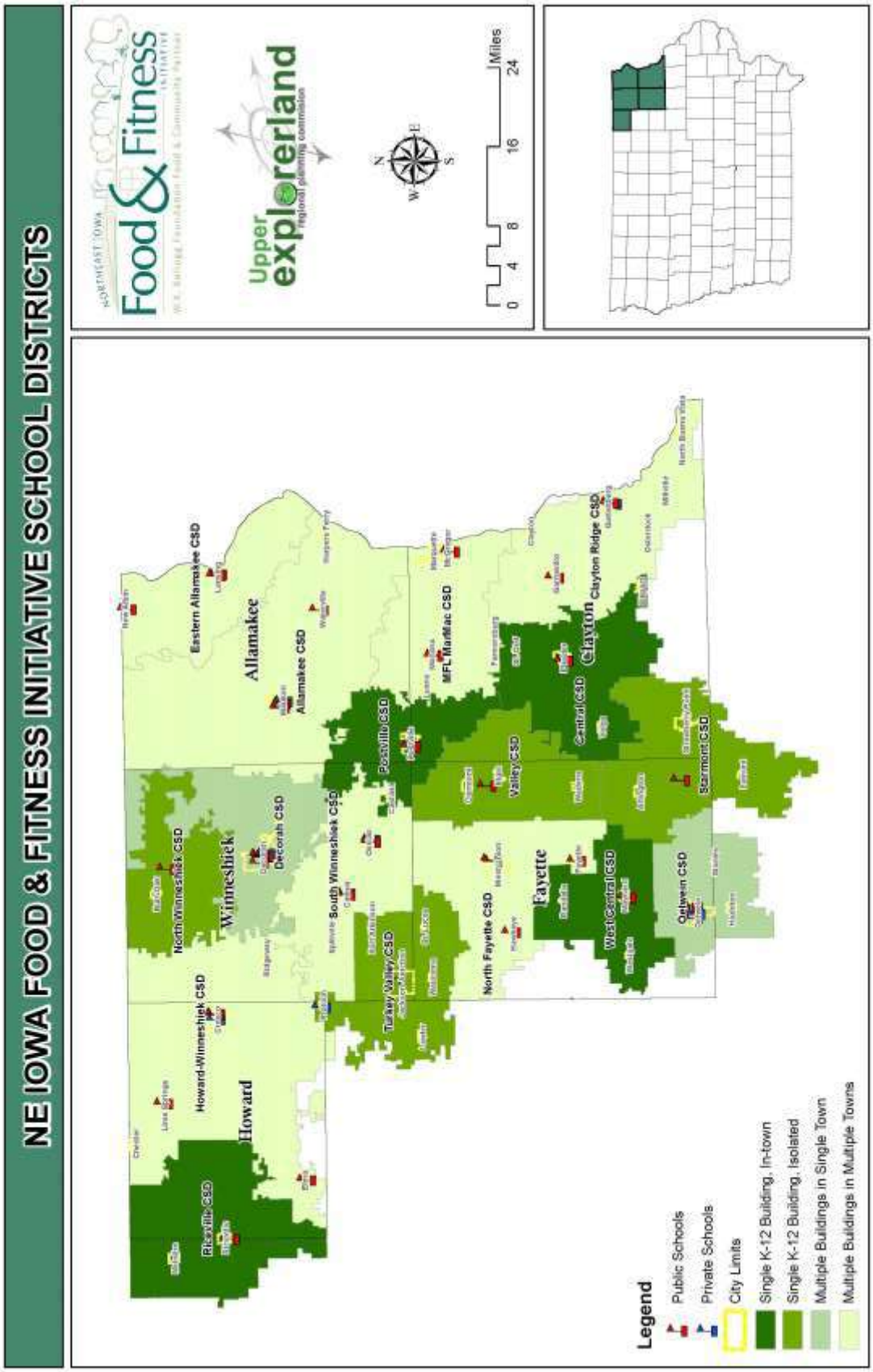
The process of classifying school districts is helpful for future program and activity planning. Where schools are within a walkable community, traditional Safe Routes to School (SRTS) methods such as a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train are used. Where distances are longer, other activities are promoted. For example, school buses can drop off students farther from the school entryway to allow for some walking. Or, bus drop-off points can be created around the school where students can finish their school trip on foot or bike.

In very isolated schools where walking or biking is not practical or safe, healthy activity is integrated into the school day. Some schools have introduced mileage clubs where students can win rewards for walking a certain number of laps or miles. In other cases, teachers use curricula that incorporate activity into daily lessons, such as acting out stories.

Below is a table highlighting some of the SRTS activities and projects used within each School District Profile type. The map on the following page shows Northeast Iowa's school district profiles in a geographical format.

School District Profile	SRTS Activities and Projects
Single K-12 Building in Single Town	Walking School Buses; Bicycle Trains; Bike & Pedestrian Education; Bike Rodeo; Mileage Club/Punch Card; Specified Walking Days; Bike Club (where trail is available)
Isolated Single K-12 Building	Bike & Pedestrian Education; Bike Rodeo; Mileage Club/Punch Card; Fitness Trail, onsite; Bike Club (where trail is available)
Multiple School Buildings in Single Town	Walking School Buses; Bicycle Trains; Bike & Pedestrian Education; Bike Rodeo; Mileage Club/Punch Card; Walking Wednesdays; Bike Club (where trail is available)
Multiple School Buildings in Multiple Towns	Walking School Buses; Bicycle Trains; Bike & Pedestrian Education; Bike Rodeo: Mileage Club/Punch Card; Walking Wednesdays; Bike Club (where trail is available)

Step Two continued



Step Three: Gauge SRTS Interest

The next step is to gauge Safe Routes to School (SRTS) interest in the region. This will determine readiness of schools and communities. The program will find more success by pinpointing certain schools to focus on first than with trying to work with all schools right away.

These "pilot" schools will allow the program to build credibility and a solid foundation for future outreach. Once the individual programs in the pilot schools are formed, the regional program can begin branching out to other schools. The program and program champion should not try to take on too many schools right away. The key is to start where readiness exists and build from there.

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in Postville, Iowa.

Ways to gauge SRTS interest include:

- Talking with school administration and staff
- Sending parent interest forms home with students
- Tabling at various school and community events to talk with parents, school personnel and community members
- Talking with students
- Hanging flyers up around town

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in Decorah, Iowa.

Step Four: Build Relationships

Getting to know the families, schools and communities to be served by the regional Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is incredibly important to the development of the program. Relationships build trust, and trust opens the door to success. The program champion should put much emphasis on building key relationships both within the region and beyond with key individuals who will be able to offer input, support and assistance for SRTS in their school and community:

Key individuals can include:

- Parents
- School staff
- School Wellness Teams
- Community members
- Local active living advocates
- Businesses
- Organizations
- Public health
- Parks and recreation
- Public safety
- Volunteer programs such as RSVP
- City governments
- Council of governments
- County conservation
- University extension offices
- State health department
- SRTS colleagues in other communities, regions and states

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in Waukon, Iowa.

The program will be much more productive once relationships are built, and the program champion will be able to accomplish so much more as a result of the support network he or she has built.

These relationships may be formed by chance, such as finding a school champion while tabling at a school event or through word of mouth. Other times, the program champion will need to reach out to individuals he or she has determined as potential supporters and ask for their involvement. The program champion should focus a lot of effort into building these relationships and then continuing to foster these relationships throughout the duration of the program.

Step Five: Find Local Champion

Finding a local champion is imperative for developing a successful SRTS program. Not only will the individual program have more stability and support, but the regional program will also benefit. A local champion helps the program champion to embed the local program within the school and community to increase the likelihood of long-term success.

The program champion will work closely with the local champion to build and sustain the individual program. The local champion will be able to share knowledge about the local area with the program champion that could only be known by a local. The local champion will share a leadership role for the individual program with the program champion.

Northeast Iowa has found many local champions from a variety of backgrounds and settings:

- Public health nurses
- School nurses
- Passionate parents
- School guidance counselors
- Food service directors
- Retired teachers

Central Community School District students celebrate International Walk to School Day in Elkader, Iowa.

Step Six: Form Coalitions

Once the program champion is familiar with the region, relationships have been built and a local champion has been determined, it is time to form Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coalitions. The coalition will be a vital part of building a successful individual SRTS program as well as a successful regional SRTS program. It is amazing how much can be accomplished for the students, families, school and community through development of this strong collaboration.

Coalitions are made up of representatives from the school, community and others from the list shared in “Step Four– Building Relationships”. These people typically choose to be a part of the group because they want to be involved and help. Coalitions meet on a regular basis— monthly, quarterly or as needed— to promote physical activity among youth and work to make their communities safe and accessible for all residents. They discuss pedestrian and bicycle safety in their community and brainstorm solutions. They also plan and help implement SRTS activities for the school. Northeast Iowa has successful coalitions ranging from four to eight members.

While the program champion serves as the major point of contact and resource provider for the individual SRTS programs, having a coalition in place helps sustain SRTS efforts into the future.

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in Postville, Iowa.

Step Seven: Determine SRTS Focus

Once a coalition is in place, it is time to determine which Safe Routes to School (SRTS) activities and projects to focus on. Ideas can include:

- **Walking School Bus**- a group of students walking to and/or from school with responsible volunteers.
  - *A sample brochure is attached in Appendix A.*
- **Bike Rodeo**: A popular and fun event giving children the knowledge, skills and practice for becoming a smart, safe bike rider.
  - *A sample brochure is attached in Appendix A.*
- **Mileage Club**: A program where students earn foot token rewards by walking a certain number of miles around a track, gym or school hallway. It can take place before school, in an after-school program, during recess or during PE class.
  - More information can be found at: www.guide.saferoutesinfo.org/encouragement/mileage_clubs_and_contests.cfm
- **Walk and Bike to School Day Events**: These internationally and nationally recognized events celebrate the benefits of walking and bicycling.
  - More information can be found at: www.walkbiketoschool.org
- **Walkability Assessment**: Assess characteristics of a walking route such as driver behavior, infrastructure and enjoyment.
  - More information can be found at: www.idph.state.ia.us/iowansfitforlife/common/pdf/access_your_community.pdf
- **Physical activity promotion during the school day**: Finding ways to get students more active at school.
  - Examples include: active classroom lessons, classroom walk breaks, activity brain breaks
- **SRTS National Travel Tally Survey:** Collect data on how students travel to and from school.
  - The survey can be found at: www.saferoutesinfo.org/data-central/data-collection-forms
- **SRTS National Parent Survey:** Collect parent input on walking and biking to school.
  - The survey can be found at: www.saferoutesinfo.org/data-central/data-collection-forms
- **Low-cost or No-cost SRTS Projects:** Get more ideas!
  - *A sample brochure is attached in Appendix A.*

Step Eight: Develop and Implement Plan

Once the coalition determines its focus, the next step is developing a plan for implementing the activities and projects. Suggested plans for some of the projects and activities:

- **FALL start for Walking School Bus** *(Sample Walking School Bus Parent Interest Letter, Guidelines and Permission Slip attached in Appendix A)*
  - Late SPRING
    - Send Walking School Bus parent interest letter home to see if families are interested– ask for student participation interest and parent volunteer interest.
  - SUMMER
    - Set up routes based on interested families
    - Walk routes to find safest way and set route time schedule
    - Find volunteers (parents, newspaper articles, flyers around town, word of mouth)
    - Set schedule (1x month, 1x week, every day)
    - Set basic guidelines (poor weather, poor student behavior, etc.)
    - Develop permission slip
    - Contact families to confirm interest
  - FALL
    - Walking School Bus begins– join on first day
    - Send more letters home with students and submit more articles to newspapers if looking to add more families and volunteers
    - Offer continued support and join the Walking School Bus when able to
  - Late FALL
    - Determine if Walking School Bus will walk through Winter or start again in Spring

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in West Union, Iowa.

- **SPRING start for Walking School Bus** *(Sample Walking School Bus Parent Interest Letter, Guidelines and Permission Slip attached in Appendix A)*
  - Midway through FALL
    - Send Walking School Bus parent interest letter home to see if families are interested– ask for student participation interest and parent volunteer interest.
  - WINTER
    - Set up routes based on interested families
    - Find volunteers (parents, newspaper articles, flyers around town, word of mouth)
    - Set schedule (1x month, 1x week, every day)
    - Set basic guidelines (poor weather, poor student behavior, etc.)
    - Develop permission slip
    - Contact families to confirm interest
  - Early SPRING
    - Walk routes to find safest way and set route time schedule
  - Midway through SPRING
    - Walking School Bus begins– join on first day
    - Send more letters home with students and submit more articles to newspapers if looking to add more families and volunteers
    - Offer continued support and join the Walking School Bus when able to
  - Late SPRING
    - Determine if Walking School Bus will continue again in Fall

Students participate in a Walk to School Day celebration in Ossian, Iowa.

Step Eight continued

- **Bike Rodeo– best to have in late SPRING right before SUMMER** *(Sample Bike Rodeo Set-up, Station Assignments and other information attached in Appendix A)*
  - 2-6 months before:
    - Set tentative date, time and location
    - Contact necessary stakeholders for approval (school if during school day, police if needing to block off streets, etc.)
    - Brainstorm sponsors (helmet and bike giveaway, snacks, financial support)
  - 2 months before:
    - Contact potential sponsors
    - Determine Bike Rodeo stations and set-up
    - Determine number of volunteers needed
    - Brainstorm and contact potential volunteers
    - Brainstorm list of items needed and to-dos
    - Assign coalition responsibilities
  - 1 month before:
    - Get the word out through student letters and newspaper articles
    - Review list and determine last minute to-dos
  - 2 weeks prior:
    - Reminder to volunteers with details about assigned duties
    - Reminder to students/families and newspaper
  - Week of:
    - Gather necessary items
    - Plan to set up 2 hours prior to start of event

- **Mileage Clubs– contact PE teachers or school wellness team representative at beginning of FALL**
- **Walkability Assessments– best done in FALL, late SPRING or SUMMER**
- **International Walk to School Day– held the first Wednesday in October**
- **National Bike to School Day– held the first Wednesday in May**
- **SRTS National Travel Tally Survey– best done annually in the FALL or SPRING for evaluation purposes**
- **SRTS National Parent Survey– best done once every few years for evaluation purposes**

Step Nine: Evaluate

Evaluation should take place at the conclusion of each Safe Routes to School (SRTS) activity or project to determine if it was successful and whether or not it should continue into the future. Evaluation methods may vary depending on the activity or project, but the main form of evaluation should be participant feedback. It is important to gain feedback from students, parents, volunteers and other participants– if they enjoyed it, suggestions for improvements, etc.

Another method of evaluation is to utilize SRTS surveys. The National Center for SRTS has developed two main surveys for general data collection:

- **SRTS National Travel Tally Survey:** Collect data on how students travel to and from school.
  - The survey can be found at: www.saferoutesinfo.org/data-central/data-collection-forms
- **SRTS National Parent Survey:** Collect parent input on walking and biking to school.
  - The survey can be found at: www.saferoutesinfo.org/data-central/data-collection-forms

These surveys can be administered before the start of a program to collect baseline data as well as at the conclusion of a program for comparison. It may also be beneficial for data collection purposes to administer the surveys, especially the Travel Tally, on an annual basis to monitor progress over several years.

Students learn about hand signals during a Bike Rodeo in Oelwein, Iowa.

Step Ten: Recycle, Rethink, Rebuild

Once activities and projects have been evaluated, it's time to determine future plans. Some activities may have turned out great with no changes needed. Others may have turned out okay, but some improvements may be needed for the future. Others may need to be rebuilt as much opportunity for improvement exists. Still others may need to be crossed off the list completely. It is okay to admit an activity or project did not work; it opens the door for trying another one that may turn out to be the perfect fit.

A student gets her helmet fitted correctly during a Bike Rodeo at North Winneshiek School in rural Decorah, Iowa.

It may take a year or more to figure out which activities and projects really click with a particular school and community, but that is okay. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs will be much more successful and sustainable if much thought, time and effort is put into building the program as opposed to just throwing things together last minute.

Once future plans have been decided, it's time to continue forward in advocating for a healthier, safer and more active tomorrow.

Students participate in a Walking School Bus in West Union, Iowa.

Speed Bumps

Some common “speed bumps” for building a regional SRTS program:

- **Program Funding**
  - There is no longer dedicated funding for SRTS at the federal level. SRTS projects still have potential to receive funds at the state level, but they must compete against several other projects including trails and bridges.
  - Tips: It is ideal to find a funder to support the program over several years, but one may be difficult to find. Search for support within the communities being served. Many private funders are willing to support this type of work. Businesses may be another potential supporter.

- **Volunteer Recruitment**
  - While the coalition, local champion and program champion are the nuts and bolts necessary to start and hold a local SRTS program together, volunteers are what really make the activities and projects possible. Volunteers act as Walking School Bus volunteers, assist with Bike Rodeos, organize Mileage Clubs, the list goes on. Finding dedicated volunteers is one of the most difficult aspects of building a sustainable SRTS program.
  - Tips: Just ask– you might be surprised with the result. Parents, school personnel, retired citizens and older students have been key to Northeast Iowa’s success.

- **Building Support**
  - When people are introduced to SRTS for the first time, many assume it is a project run by the school because “school” is in the name. However, SRTS is much bigger than just the school
  - Tips: SRTS is a community–based initiative because if is within the community where the walking and biking to school take place, not within the school. Additionally, making routes to school and other community locations safe for children benefits everyone. Sharing these two points with people will help change their attitudes and hopefully encourage them to get involved. Building support can also take quite a bit of time; do not get discouraged.

- **Legal/Liability Issues**
  - Safety is a main concern of families, schools and SRTS programs alike. Legal issues also fall within these concerns.
  - Tips: While a program cannot be completely protected from legal action, it is general knowledge among SRTS professionals that no SRTS program has been sued since the movement came to the US in the 1990s. However, it is still important to take measures to prevent potential legal action. This can include using permission slips for Walking School Buses and Bike Rodeos and performing background checks on Walking School Bus volunteers.

Summary

The Northeast Iowa Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program has compiled this guide as a means to assist other rural regions in Iowa and other states with developing their own regional SRTS program. Each and every day, more Northeast Iowa families and students benefit from the program's efforts, and it is time to spread this success to other rural regions.

The Northeast Iowa SRTS Program continues to prove that rural regions do in fact have the capacity to build a healthier, safer, more active tomorrow. The Northeast Iowa SRTS Program hopes this guide will help other rural regions succeed with SRTS as well.

Students celebrate walking to school in New Hampton, Iowa.

Appendix A

Samples of many of the resources used by the Northeast Iowa Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program are included in the following pages:

- **Walking School Bus Brochure**
- **Bike Rodeo Brochure**
- **No-cost or Low-cost Safe Routes to School Projects Brochure**
- **Walking School Bus Parent Interest Letter**
- **Walking School Bus Guidelines**
- **Walking School Bus Permission Slip**
- **Bike Rodeo Set-up**
- **Bike Rodeo Station Assignments and Information**
    - **Welcome and Registration**
        - **Student Name Tag Cards**
        - **Consent Form**
        - **Student Registration Form**
    - **Refreshments**
    - **Bike Registration**
    - **Safety**
    - **Decoration**
    - **Maintenance**
        - **Inspection Check-list**
    - **Stop Sign**
    - **Yield Sign**
    - **Obstacles**
    - **Passing**
    - **Newspaper Throw**

What is a Walking School Bus?

A **Walking School Bus** is a group of students *(passengers)* walking to and/or from school with one or more responsible supervisors, such as a parent or volunteer neighbor (leaders). It is just like riding the bus...minus the bus!

A **Bicycle Train** is a variation of a Walking School Bus. The only difference is the group is bicycling rather than walking.

Another option is a **Remote Drop-off Location**. Students who live far from the school can be dropped off to join a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train for the remaining trip to school.

A Walking School Bus is for EVERYONE!

About Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School is an international movement to enable and encourage students to safely walk and bicycle to and from school and in daily life.

Safe Routes to School programs are the result of parents, schools, communities and government joining forces in an effort to ultimately improve the health and safety of our children.

The **Safe Routes to School** program in Northeast Iowa works with communities and schools in six counties (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek) in conjunction with the **Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative**, which promotes healthy, locally grown food and active living and play in the region.

Looking for more information?
Want to organize a Walking School Bus?
Want to help with a Walking School Bus?

Contact your
Regional Safe Routes to School Liaison today:

Ashley Christensen
Regional Safe Routes to School Liaison
Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission
achristensen@uerpc.org
563-382-6171

www.uerpc.org

Funding for this project provided by:
Iowa Department of Transportation

Northeast Iowa

Safe Routes to School

The Basics on:

A Walking School Bus

The *simple*, *fun* way to get children to school *safely* and *actively!*

It promotes health...

...it positively impacts academics...

...it improves safety in our community...

...and it is 100% FREE!

Why Choose the Walking School Bus

To improve the health of our children:

Walking and bicycling to and from school are easy ways to get children active, which is essential for healthy growth and development.

To impact our children's academic ability:

Studies show physical activity helps improve academic performance.

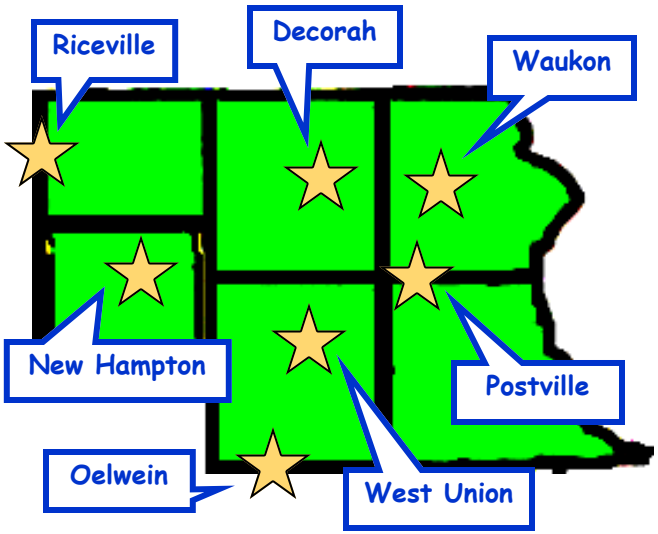
Plus, teachers report children behave better in the classroom when they are active before school.

To make our community a safer place:

Advocating for safer walking and bicycling pathways will benefit people of all ages and abilities, especially our children.

Also, when more people are active outdoors in their communities, crime rates actually go down.

Northeast Communities with Walking School Bus Routes



...put your community on the map!!

Start a Walking School Bus in your neighborhood or community TODAY!

If you are a student, parent, older brother, older sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, grandparent, teacher, volunteer, retiree, business representative, city official, youth leader, friend, neighbor, community member, the list goes on...

YOU can **make a difference**!

Read on to learn how to start a Walking School Bus ➔

How To Start a Walking School Bus

1 Team up!

Contact your Regional Safe Routes to School Liaison– Ashley Christensen– your Walking School Bus expert. She is here to assist you! *(Contact info on back)*

2 Organize!

Recruit neighbors to join– both as passengers and leaders. Assign who will lead each walk.

3 Plan!

Decide where, when and how often to meet. Pick a route, and go for a test walk to make sure it will be safe for traveling.

4 Prepare!

Share contact information, set expectations and have steps in place for unexpected events, such as sickness or bad weather.

5 Have Fun!

Make this an exciting learning opportunity for the students! Track how many miles you have traveled. Take notes of interesting things seen along the walk. Be creative!

What is a Bike Rodeo?

A Bike Rodeo is an event teaching children bicycle safety lessons.

...

The size of a Bike Rodeo can range from 5 kids to 500 kids or more!

...

Bike Rodeos are organized by parents, teachers, local law enforcement or other active community groups and members.

...

Bike Rodeos are well-supported by the community. Everybody wants our children to be safe.

...

"Bicycle Smarts" will stay with your kid long after they are done being a kid.

About Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School is an international movement to enable and encourage students to safely walk and bicycle to and from school and in daily life.

Safe Routes to School programs are the result of parents, schools, communities and government joining forces in an effort to ultimately improve the health and safety of our children.

The **Safe Routes to School** program in Northeast Iowa works with communities and schools in six counties (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek) in conjunction with the **Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative**, which aims to promote healthy eating and active living and play in the region.

Looking for more information?
Want to organize a Bike Rodeo for your community?
Want to help with a Bike Rodeo?
Contact your
Regional Safe Routes to School Liaison today:

Ashley Christensen
Safe Routes to School Liaison
Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission
achristensen@uerpc.org
563-382-6171

www.uerpc.org

Funding for this project provided by:
Iowa Department of Transportation

Northeast Iowa

Safe Routes to School

A *fun* and *exciting* way to teach kids how to *properly* and *safely* ride their bikes!

The knowledge...

...skills...

...and practice...

...for becoming a smart, safe bike rider!

Why
Bike Rodeos are Important

Bicycling is more popular than ever:

Bicycling is a growing recreational sport and form of active transportation.

People of all ages and abilities, especially children, find true enjoyment in riding their bike.

Bicycle safety is an important topic:

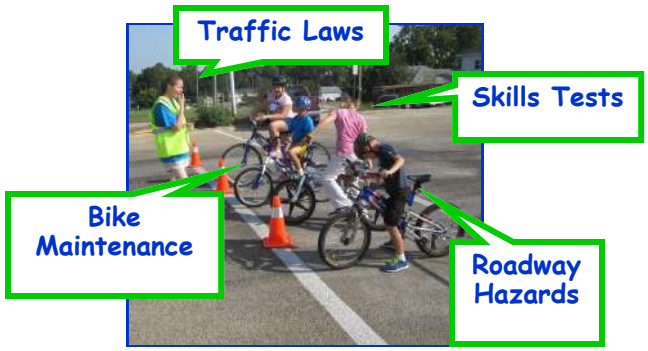
44,000 bike-car crashes are reported each year. Another 40,000 go unreported.

Each year, over 700 bicyclists are killed in accidents. 1 in 7 of those killed is under the age of 15.

Bike Rodeos help keep our children safe:

By teaching children bicycle safety education at a young age, children will be more responsible behind the handle bars and less likely to form dangerous habits.

What a
Bike Rodeo Teaches



North Fayette Valley Community School District students participate in a Bike Rodeo.

Bike Rodeos teach children real-world biking survival skills necessary to ride smart and ride safely!

Students from Oelwein Community School District enjoy a skills test during their Bike Rodeo.

How You Can
Promote Bicycle Safety

1 Attend or organize a Bike Rodeo

A Bike Rodeos are effective because these events actually give children the chance to practice what they have learned.

Wondering if your community already hosts a Bike Rodeo? Thinking about organizing a Bike Rodeo for your school? Contact your Regional Safe Routes to School Liaison today! Find contact information on the back of this brochure.

2 Require helmets to be worn at all times

Wearing a bicycle helmet is one of the smartest thing bike riders of all ages, especially children, can do.

3 Lead by example

If you ride a bicycle, make sure you are setting a positive example for younger riders: wear a helmet, obey road signs, use hand signals, respect other road users, do everything you would want to see your child doing.

Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness

Contact your Safe Routes to School Liaison for more information:
Ashley Christensen ★ achristensen@uerpc.org ★ 563-382-6171

Safe Routes to School

No-cost or Low-cost Safe Routes to School Projects

***Simple** and **easy** ideas to help you get started!*

As a *FAMILY*

Start a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train in your neighborhood.

Celebrate Walking and Biking to School with decorated posters, hats, helmets and book bags.

Play a Game on the walk to school.

Conduct a Walkability Assessment around your community.

Teach your children about Pedestrian and Bicycling Safety.

Pledge to be a pace car, and Always Drive the Posted Speed Limit on city streets.

View Iowa's Bicycle and Pedestrian Encouragement Guide.

★★★This Brochure is INTERACTIVE★★★

Access all these helpful resources by downloading the hand-out from our website and clicking on the blue links:
www.uerpc.org/safe-routes.html or
www.iowafoodandfitness.org/site/srts.html

As a *SCHOOL*

Use Iowa Kids on the Move curriculum at your school.

Celebrate International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day.

Conduct a Survey about Walking and Bicycling to School among students and parents.

Start Weekly or Monthly "Walk and Wheel" Events.

Walk a Mile at School before, during or after the school day.

Designate a Park and Walk or Remote Drop-off Location, where students can be dropped off to walk or bike the remaining trip to school.

Start a Mileage Club, and reward students for participating and reaching goals.

Take your students on a Walking Nature or Field Trip to enjoy and explore their surroundings.

Participate in Live Healthy Iowa events throughout the year: *Fall Fitness Day*, *Kids' 10 Week Wellness Challenge* during the winter and *Go the Distance Day* in the spring.

Host a Safe Routes to School Game Show or Activity during class.

As a *COMMUNITY*

Host a FREE Safe Routes to School Workshop in your community.

Plan a Bike Rodeo for children.

Reward students for wearing a helmet by starting an "I Got Caught Wearing a Helmet" program.

Adopt a Complete Streets Policy, and review city laws and codes to ensure sidewalks are required for new developments.

Make sure residents keep sidewalks maintained and cleared year-round. Start a Golden Shovel Award program.

Develop a Neighborhood Watch and Safe Haven program.

Run a Keep Kids Alive Drive 25 campaign.

Increase Crosswalks and Pedestrian Signage around schools.

Hold a Walk-a-thon to raise awareness about Safe Routes to School.

upper explorerland

Adapted from the Iowa Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School Getting Started webpage:
www.iowadot.gov/saferoutes/projects.html

Northeast Iowa

Safe Routes to School

All Aboard!
Spring Walking School Buses for NFV!

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This spring, students will have the exciting opportunity to jump on board a Walking School Bus. **A Walking School Bus is a group of students walking to school with one or more responsible supervisors**. Walking School Buses get kids active, which is essential for healthy growth and development, academic achievement and classroom behavior.

The Walking School Bus will operate again this spring and provide a safe and fun way for students to get to school. Four Walking School Bus routes have been operating in West Union since Spring 2013. Plans are underway to start Walking School Buses in the communities of Fayette and Hawkeye, too!

Walking School Buses plan to operate on Wednesday and Friday mornings starting in March. They will arrive at school or school bus stops in time for shuttle buses and breakfast. Adult volunteers will join students on the Walking School Bus.

Interested in having your student(s) participate in the Walking School Bus? Interested in helping with the Walking School Bus? **Please fill out the bottom half of this sheet and have your student return it to the school office by Thursday, November 21st.**

The Walking School Bus is proudly supported by your school, the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative and Upper Explorerland's Regional Safe Routes to School Liaison. Please contact Ashley Christensen at 563-382-6171 or achristensen@uerpc.org to find out more.

Thank you for caring about the health and well-being of our future leaders!

NFV Walking School Bus Interest Form

Please return to the school office by **Thursday, November 21st.**

☐ **Yes, I am interested in having my student(s) participate** in the Walking School Bus.

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Parent/Guardian phone number and email: _____

_____

Student(s) name and grade in school: _____

_____

Please check your community: ☐**Fayette** ☐**Hawkeye** ☐**West Union**

☐ **Yes, I am interested in volunteering my time** to help lead the Walking School Bus.

Specify availability (every week, 2x a month, 1st Wednesday of month, etc.):

_____

Northeast Iowa

Safe Routes to School

West Union

Walking School Bus Guidelines

Bad weather: Bus does not run if raining, lightning or thunderstorm

Unplanned school delay: Bus does not run

Sick students: *Parents*– inform coordinator:
Joann Boyer 563-422-6267
Volunteers- Joann will contact you of absences

Poor student behavior:
Inform Coordinator:
Joann Boyer 563-422-6267
Punishments:
1st warning- walk upfront
2nd warning- off for one week
3rd warning- off WSB for good

Volunteer cancellation: Contact coordinator to find replacement: ***Joann Boyer 563-422-6267***

Unexpected student participation: Have new student's parent contact coordinator to obtain permission slip: ***Joann Boyer 563-422-6267***

Failure of registered participant to meet bus:
Wait for one minute at location; Report no-shows to school

Northeast Iowa

Safe Routes to School

West Union

Walking School Bus Guidelines

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Failure of registered participant to meet bus:
Wait for one minute at location; Report no-shows to school

Northeast Iowa

Food & Fitness

Safe Routes to School

West Union Walking School Bus: Student Registration and Consent Form

DATE: Spring 2014
SCHOOL: West Union Elementary School,
North Fayette Valley Community School District

Parental Consent for Participation in the West Union Walking School Bus:

I understand and agree to the following:

- The West Union Walking School Bus (WSB) promotes walking to school to increase daily physical activity for children and adults in the neighborhood and increase safety for pedestrians.
- The WSB is intended to reduce the risk of injury for children as they travel to and from school through the use of adult supervision. However, there are risks associated with child pedestrians, including risk of injury as a result of a motor vehicle crash, a fall, overexertion or carelessness. I understand and agree that by participating in the WSB, I am assuming these risks.
- In consideration of my child or ward being allowed to participate in the WSB, I hereby release from liability and agree to indemnify and hold harmless Palmer Community Health, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, my child or ward's school, and their officers, employees, volunteers and agents from any claim or cause of action arising out of and related to any injury, loss, damages or other liabilities that may occur as a result of my child or ward's participation in the WSB.
- I authorize any official, employee, agent or volunteer of the WSB to consent to emergency medical treatment as necessary for the health and safety of my child or ward. I further agree that no official, employee, agent or volunteer will be held responsible for injuries or damages arising from the provision of any such emergency medical treatment.

I further grant permission for my child or ward to appear in person or in voice, video or photographic presentation for radio, television, electronic or print media to promote participation in the WSB.

I certify that I have read this consent form and understand the WSB and its risk. By signing this consent form, I agree to allow my child to participate in the WSB.

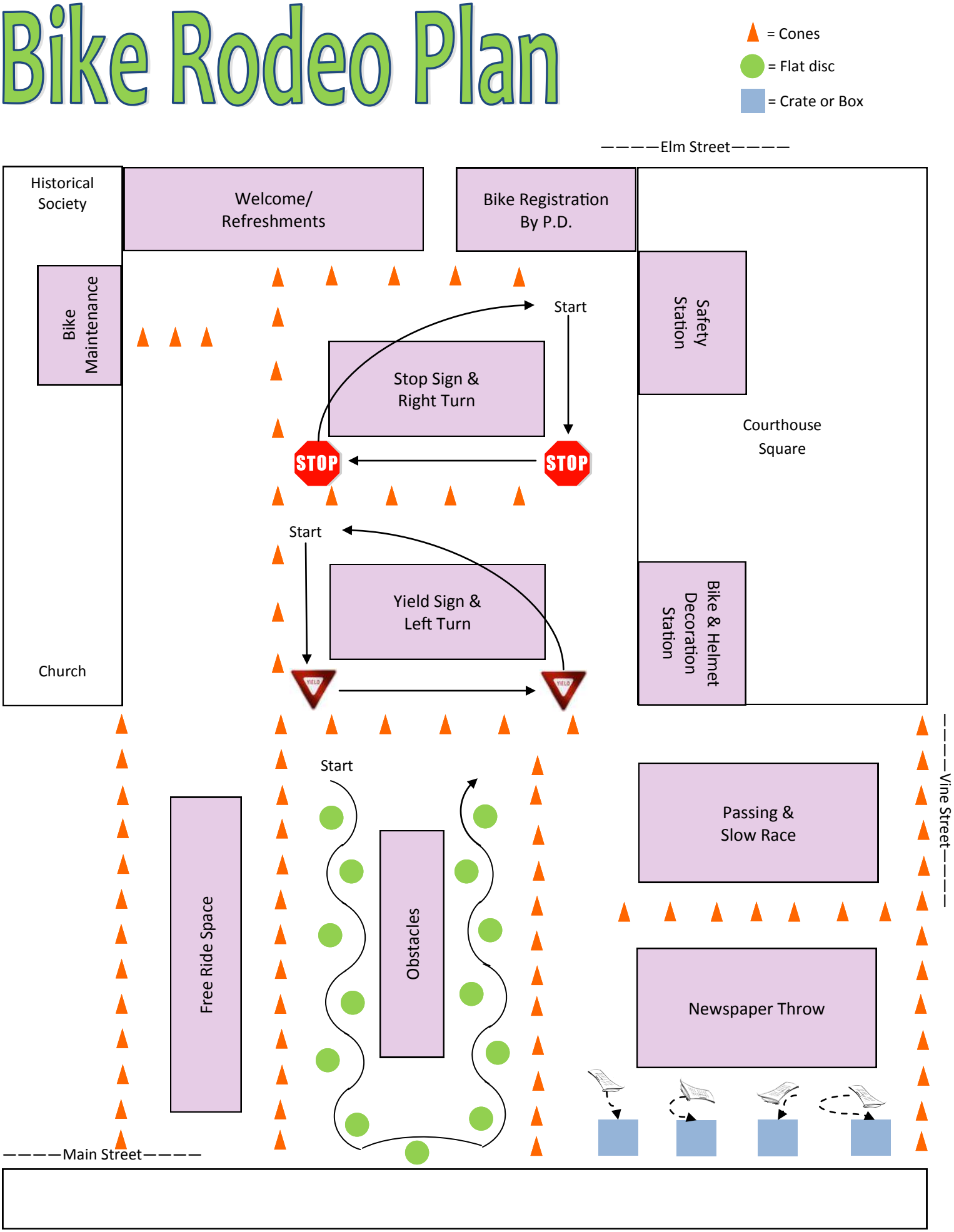
STUDENT NAME and GRADE: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME (PRINT): _____

Bike Rodeo Plan



NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- WELCOME AND REGISTRATION

Volunteer(s):

- Register students as they show up:
    - Record student/parent information on Student Registration sheet
    - Show parents consent form and get their signatures on Student Registration sheet
    - Fill out name and grade of student on name tag card and put on necklace chain (ignore the other blanks on the card)
- Inform students they must visit all stations to be put in the prize drawing (bikes, helmets, locks, etc.):
    - The drawing will take place at 11a; need not be present to win
    - Completed name tag cards and chains need to be returned to Registration Table
    - Students must first visit the “Safety Station”, but can go in any order after that
    - Remind students they must walk their bike in between stations and to walk on the sidewalk or grass
- Let students know restrooms are available in Historical Society building
    - One of you may have to help young students
    - Make sure students aren’t causing any problems in the building
- Let students know we have refreshments on hand
- Let students know we have a first aid kit (and a couple of nurses!) on hand in case they get hurt
- Send students home with goodie bags after they return their card

Supplies

- Goodie bags
- Pens
- Name tag cards
- Chains
- Tables (2)- 1 for registration; 1 for prizes
- Consent form
- Student Registration Forms
- Vests
- Bag/bucket for drawing

NFV SMART BIKER CARDS

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Phone number or address: _____

Visit each station to enter the prize drawing!
AFTER Registration and Safety, you can go in any order!

___ 1st- Registration
___ 2nd- Safety
___ Bike Maintenance
___ Bike Registration
___ Stop Sign
___ Yield Sign
___ Obstacles
___ Passing
___ Newspaper Throw
___ Decoration Station

NFV SMART BIKER CARDS

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Phone number or address: _____

Visit each station to enter the prize drawing!
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___ Bike Maintenance
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___ Stop Sign
___ Yield Sign
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___ Passing
___ Newspaper Throw
___ Decoration Station

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Name: _____

Grade: _____

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___ Bike Maintenance
___ Bike Registration
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___ Yield Sign
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___ Newspaper Throw
___ Decoration Station

NFV SMART BIKER CARDS

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Phone number or address: _____

Visit each station to enter the prize drawing!
AFTER Registration and Safety, you can go in any order!

___ 1st- Registration
___ 2nd- Safety
___ Bike Maintenance
___ Bike Registration
___ Stop Sign
___ Yield Sign
___ Obstacles
___ Passing
___ Newspaper Throw
___ Decoration Station

NFV Bike Rodeo Consent Form

Parental Consent for Participation in the NFV Bike Rodeo:

I understand and agree to the following:

- The NFV Bike Rodeo (Bike Rodeo) gives students the knowledge, skills and practice for becoming a smart, safe bike rider.

- The Bike Rodeo is intended to reduce the risk of injury for children as they travel on bicycle. However, there are risks associated with child bicyclists, including risk of injury as a result of a motor vehicle crash, a fall, overexertion or carelessness. I understand and agree that by participating in the Bike Rodeo, I am assuming these risks.

- In consideration of my child or ward being allowed to participate in the Bike Rodeo, I hereby release from liability and agree to indemnify and hold harmless Palmer Community Health, Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, my child or ward's school, and their officers, employees, volunteers and agents from any claim or cause of action arising out of and related to any injury, loss, damages or other liabilities that may occur as a result of my child or ward's participation in the Bike Rodeo.

- I authorize any official, employee, agent or volunteer of the Bike Rodeo to consent to emergency medical treatment as necessary for the health and safety of my child or ward. I further agree that no official, employee, agent or volunteer will be held responsible for injuries or damages arising from the provision of any such emergency medical treatment.

- I further grant permission for my child or ward to appear in person or in voice, video or photographic presentation for radio, television, electronic or print media to promote participation in the Bike Rodeo.

(PLEASE SIGN STUDENT REGISTRATION FORM)

NFV Bike Rodeo Student Registration- signature shows approval of Bike Rodeo Consent Form

	Student Name	Student Grade	Parent Name	Phone Number or Email	Parent Signature
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- REFRESHMENTS

Volunteer(s):

- Water and cups
- Snacks
- Replenish supplies as needed

Supplies

- Hand sanitizer
- Wipes
- Cups
- Snacks
- Water cooler
- Table
- Trash can/bag
- Vest

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- BIKE REGISTRATION

Volunteer(s): West Union Police Department

Supplies

- Table
- Pens

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- SAFETY

Volunteer(s):

- Why do you/people like to bike?
    - Fun, exercise, good for environment, to get from place to place
- Where should you ride when you ride a bike?
    - Which side of road? On the Right side WITH traffic
    - Sidewalk as long as it is allowed
        - Always watch out and yield to people walking
- Rules of the Road
    - A bike is a vehicle so you need to obey traffic laws
        - Stop at Stop signs
        - Yield to pedestrians
        - Use a turn signal
            - Teach hand signals
                - RIGHT LEFT STOP
    - Be careful at intersections, driveways, car doors
- Safety Tips
    - Clothing
    - Shoes
    - Lights
    - The most important thing to wear when riding a bike? HELMET!
        - Proper helmet fitting
        - Fit each kids helmet
- Take photos during down time

Supplies

- Helmet
- Bike attire
- Camera
- Vest
- Clipboard
- Pen

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- DECORATION STATION

Volunteer(s):

- Kids get to deck out their bikes and helmets!!!
- Also:
    - Have kids sign the “Thank You” cards
        - Kids can use both sides of cards
            - write/draw why they like to bike
    - Have kids sign the school posters
        - Write/draw why they like to bike

Supplies

- Tables
- Cards
- Signs
- Markers
- Decorations- reflective stickers, spoke reflectors, stickers, pipe cleaners
- Vest
- Clipboard
- Pen

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- MAINTENANCE

Volunteer(s):

- Keeping your bike in good condition is important.
    - Ask kids why?
        - So it doesn't break down on you, not as likely to crash, so you can keep up with your friends
- ABCs of Biking
    - Air – check if tires are pumped
    - Brakes – do your brakes work, is your wheel rubbing on your brakes
    - Chains, cranks, cassette (or just chain to keep it simple) – make sure everything looks good is running smoothly, is your chain rusty or dirty
- Go through inspection checklist with kids:
    - Write student's name on sheet (don't worry about filling in anything else)
    - You do not need to go through each item step by step, but do a good overall inspection
        - Include student in inspection as best as you can
    - Make notes as necessary
    - Focus on:
        - Wheels
        - Tires
        - Frame
        - Chain
    - Cover others if you have time or are familiar with them
    - Send sheet with student
- Fix what you can, such as putting air in the tires
    - Might not be anything else you can really fix, but hopefully parent/guardian will help fix the rest at home
- If you have many, many students or students with parents/guardians:
    - Have students look over their own bikes as you walk them through it
        - Hand them a sheet and pen to record their own inspection
        - Assist as necessary

Supplies

- Maintenance checklists
- Pens
- Clipboard
- Tire pump(s)
- Sample bike- maybe
- Vest

BICYCLE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

NAME _____ DATE _____

MAKE OF BICYCLE _____ SERIAL NO. _____

MODEL: ☐ BMX ☐ Single speed/coaster brake ☐ 3-5 speed ☐ 10-12-18 speed

INSTRUCTIONS: Place a check mark in the proper box. Complete the items applicable to the bicycle and accessories. ✓

WHEELS

	Front YES	Front NO	Rear YES	Rear NO
spokes loose, broken	☐	☐	☐	☐
axle nuts tight	☐	☐	☐	☐
rim bent	☐	☐	☐	☐

TIRES

	Front YES	Front NO	Rear YES	Rear NO
correct inflation	☐	☐	☐	☐
cuts, cracks, bulges	☐	☐	☐	☐
worn tread	☐	☐	☐	☐
valve centered	☐	☐	☐	☐

REFLECTORS

	Front YES	Front NO	Rear YES	Rear NO
clean	☐	☐	☐	☐
damaged, loose	☐	☐	☐	☐
missing	☐	☐	☐	☐

FRAME

	YES	NO
bent, cracked	☐	☐

SPROCKETS

	YES	NO
teeth damaged	☐	☐

CHAIN

	YES	NO
loose	☐	☐
damaged	☐	☐
lubricated	☐	☐
clean	☐	☐

PEDALS

	YES	NO
loose/bind	☐	☐
tread worn	☐	☐
reflectors affixed	☐	☐

FORK

	YES	NO
loose	☐	☐
bent	☐	☐

HANDLEBAR

	YES	NO
loose	☐	☐
proper height	☐	☐
grips loose/missing	☐	☐

SADDLE(seat)

	YES	NO
loose	☐	☐
correct height	☐	☐

COASTER BRAKE

	YES	NO
stops smoothly, quickly	☐	☐

HAND BRAKE

	YES	NO
lever moves easily	☐	☐
adjusted properly	☐	☐
pads worn	☐	☐

DERAILLEURS

	YES	NO
shift mechanism clean	☐	☐
lubricated	☐	☐
adjusted properly	☐	☐
cables frayed	☐	☐

Equipment & Accessories

HELMET

	YES	NO
damaged	☐	☐
correct fit	☐	☐

BELL/HORN

	YES	NO
loose	☐	☐
damaged	☐	☐
loud enough	☐	☐

LOCK, CHAIN or CABLE

	YES	NO
chain/cable long enough	☐	☐
strong lock	☐	☐

REMARKS _____

(see reverse side for bicycle diagram)

028.377 2/93

BICYCLE PARTS DIAGRAM

BMX Bicycle

10-12-18 Speed Bicycle

American Automobile Association
Traffic Safety Department

Stock No. 3287
Printed in the U.S.A.

Photos provided by
Huffy Bicycles

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- STOP SIGN

Volunteer(s): Students practice stop and right hand turn signals at each stop sign

- Check to make sure students signals both stopping and right turn AND looks both ways before turning
- Check to make sure form is correct
- Make sure students know to check for all kinds of traffic: cars, walkers, other bikes, dogs!

- Have students go through until they can remember the signals on their own
  - Kids can go through as many times as they like
- Space kids out when sending them through the course
  - Once one kids reaches the next sign, let the next go

Supplies

- Clipboard
- Pen
- Vests
- Stop signs
- Cones

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- YIELD SIGN

Volunteer(s):

- Students practice yielding and left hand turns
    - Check to make sure students slow down for yield sign, look both ways and signal Left Turn
    - Check to make sure form is correct
    - Make sure students know to check for all kinds of traffic: cars, walkers, other bikes, dogs!
- Make sure students know they should slow way down at yield signs, even stop sometimes
    - If traffic of any kind is coming from either direction, they need to stop and wait until the roadway is clear
- Have students go through until they can do it all correctly on their own
- Space kids out when sending them through the course
    - Once one kids reaches the next sign, let the next go

Supplies

- Yield signs
- Cones
- Clipboard
- Pen
- Vests

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- OBSTACLES

Volunteer(s):

- Kids practice balancing on their bicycles while avoiding obstacles in pathway
    - Want to focus on avoiding obstacles with the front bike tire
        - If the front tire hits, more likely to fall over handle bars
        - If the back one hits, a flat tire is typically the worst thing to happen
- Tell kids it is not a good idea to try and ride over object
    - Bad for tires
    - Risk of falling off
- You can also act as an obstacle

Supplies

- Sponges (used as obstacles)
- Cones
- Clipboard
- Pen
- Vest
- Backpacks for kids to wear during station activities (practice for riding to school with a backpack!)

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- PASSING

Volunteer(s):

- 2 kids at a time
    - One starts out slow, the other comes from behind and practices passing
    - Saying “on your left” well in advance
        - Should be used when passing other bikers and pedestrians
    - Look behind before pulling out to pass (practice for looking for cars and other bikers)
    - Give proper space between bikes before pulling back into line
- If only one kid
    - You can act as a pedestrian, and the drill can be carried out in the same fashion
- You can also have kids do the “slow race”- see who can cross the line LAST
    - This will be a fun challenge, and it will work on the children’s balance at the same time.

Supplies

- Cones
- Vest
- Clipboard
- Pen

NFV Bike Rodeo Station Assignments- NEWSPAPER THROW

Volunteer(s):

- Should be challenging, but kids will LOVE this!
- Kids try throwing the newspaper in the box to practice balance and just have fun
- One kid at a time
    - Kids can go through as many times as they want to

Supplies

- Newspapers
- Box
- Book Bags for kids to wear during station
- Vest
- Clipboard
- Pen