

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

Promoting Walking & Biking to School

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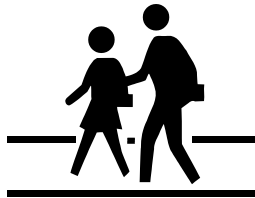


*Developed with federal transportation funds administered by the
VTrans Safe Routes to School Program*

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INTRODUCTION & GOALS

INTRODUCTION

This school travel plan lays out the ways in which the Bradford Elementary School is promoting and plans to promote walking and bicycling to school through the 4 E's: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement and Engineering. This plan was developed as part of the school's participation in the VTrans Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program.

In order to put the most important part of the plan – the action matrices and potential infrastructure improvements – at the start of this document, background and historical information appears as a series of Appendixes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Bradford Elementary School is located just outside Bradford's village area, on a fairly busy through street, Fairground Road. Constructed in the 1970s, the school replaced the older Bradford Academy building, which was located closer to the center of town. Many children in Bradford live beyond walking distance to school; hence local walk-to-school promotion has embraced drop-offs by either school buses or parent drivers.

Most village streets in Bradford do have sidewalks, and the sidewalks do connect the current school to the village. However, home sections of sidewalk are discontinuous, particularly in front of the Agency of Transportation district garage, where big trucks and lack of clear curb are a particularly poor combination with elementary-age children. Several street crossings have poorly-marked crosswalks, and traffic speeds are too high for drivers to reliably stop for pedestrians crossing. Many drivers are going considerably above the village speed limit. In combination, these barriers present a serious traffic safety concern to families interested in walking/biking to school.

GOALS

The Bradford Safe Routes to School team identified the following goals at a meeting in December 2008.

1. To promote physical health, mental health, and wellness through walking and biking to school.
2. To improve student learning; physical activity boosts brainpower for up to two hours afterward.
3. To make it safer to walk and bicycle to and from school.
4. To teach students about environmental stewardship in their daily transportation choices.
5. To promote a sense of community, and have fun.

The health and wellness aspects of walking/biking to school are the strongest interests in the Bradford SRTS initiative.

BRADFORD SCHOOL'S APPROACH & EVENTS

Bradford Elementary School's Walk to School Days, with 1/3 – 1/2 of the student body regularly participating, are grounded in the availability of three parent-supervised school walking groups originating in different parts of town.

The walking groups welcome students being dropped off by parents, and also provide an opportunity for students on the school buses to get off the bus and walk a mile! The walking groups rely on path connections between walkable village neighborhoods and the school, which is located just outside the village area. Parent volunteers assist with street crossings, and slowing traffic along sections of the routes with gaps in the sidewalks.

While Walk to School Days first became a regular, weekly event in 2008, Bradford Elementary School was one of the state's early leaders in promoting walking and biking to school. The Annual Bike and Walk to School Day began in 2004, modeled on the successful Norwich Bike to School Days. In these early events, parents and school buses dropped students off at one central point for a supervised bike or walk to school. Heather Toulmin of the co-seed program was the original champion of the 1st annual Bike and Walk to School Day. The Bike and Walk to School Day continued as an annual event, coordinated by Susie Tann school nurse and Jim McCracken, Kids Connect Coordinator. In the spring of 2007, the Bradford Health coalition was formed with assistance from the Vermont Health Department White River Junction office, primarily RN Melinda Goodwin, to promote healthy behavioral changes in the town of Bradford by focusing on positive health behaviors in the children of Bradford Elementary School. Members of the Bradford Health Coalition focused on the Safe Routes to School Program.

In 2008, Bradford Elementary School applied to the VTrans Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, with the successful application authored by parent Maureen Boardman. The school was selected for participation for the 2008-09 school year, and grant funds are available to purchase safety, educational, and promotional materials/supplies in support of the program. The School also hired a consultant to assist in the development of this School Travel Plan. See Appendix 1 for more background on SRTS.

At a December 2008 meeting, the SRTS team participated in a facilitated planning session to outline this School Travel Plan. This meeting concentrated on the infrastructure elements of SRTS, and the SRTS team will also continue to strengthen the encouragement and education aspects of the program into the spring.

Most Vermont Safe Routes to School programs have a spring kick-off in April for the activities through the end of the school year. The Bradford SRTS team should hold a mid-winter meeting to further critique the system, and to organize the Spring 2009 events.

ACTION MATRIX – 2008-09 SCHOOL YEAR

Approaches Integrated in Chronological Order – incorporating notes from SRTS Coordinator 4/2/09			
Sept. 2008	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting to launch program, prepare for International Walk/Bike to School Day, other fall events.	All
Sept. 2008	Evaluation	Preliminary look at school site and town roads, sidewalks, paths.	SRTS Consultant
Sept. 2008	Education	Team members receive training in WalkSmart/BikeSmart safety instruction.	School Nurse
Sept. 2008	Evaluation	Regional planning commission (RPC) provides traffic data including speeds.	RPC Staff
Sept. 2008	Evaluation	School conducts classroom tallies	School Coordinator / School Nurse
Fall 2008	Education	WalkSmart instruction, K-2 focus	School Nurse
Oct. 2008	Encouragement	International Walk to School Day – kick off event for weekly walks for the fall	School / SRTS Team
Dec. 2008	SRTS Team Mtg	School travel plan meeting to discuss Engineering needs, confirm Education, Encouragement, Enforcement plans.	All
Winter 2009	Education	School coordinator to work with school staff to develop project to track carbon emissions with a goal of 5% reduction. Program to be developed for 2009-10 school year.	Kids Connect Coordinator Jim McCracken
Mar. 2009	Education	SRTS team to work with school nurse and Kids Connect teacher to develop bike repair & helmet giveaways part of bicycle safety curriculum – connections to bike shops. Etc.	SRTS team, parents, School Nurse, Kids Connect Coordinator
Mar. 2009	Education	BikeSmart instruction, Grades 2-6.	School Nurse
Mar. / April 2009	Education / Encouragement	Arrange spring press coverage; in 2009 invite the press to cover a walk to school day in April, with a story to run in advance of the school-wide Bike & Walk to School Day in early May.	School Coordinator, SRTS Team

Apr. – Jun. 2009	Encouragement	Weekly walk to school events with three supervised walking groups from different parts of town, including school bus and parent drop-off.	SRTS Team, parent volunteers
Late March 2009	Encouragement	Spring kick-off for walk/bike to school events – Newsletter notices and permission slips to go home prior to the program start.	SRTS Team
April 2009	Encouragement	Incentive program to reward walking/biking 10 times via frequent walker/biker punch card. Prizes to include toe tokens, small gifts, and gift certificates to Mr. Putts.	School / PE Teacher
Apr. 2009	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting with SRTS Coordinator, and to assess events / determine any changes needed.	All
Late Apr. / early May 2009	Education	Assembly at school to go over biking and walking safety, in preparation for May 5 Bike & Walk to School Day.	Town Police Chief
Friday, May 1, 2009	Education	Bicycle Skills Day / Bicycle Safety Fair	School Nurse, School Coordinator, Kids Connect coordinator, community volunteers
Tuesday, May 5, 2009	Encouragement	5 th Annual Bike & Walk to School Day. Grades 3 and up bike from the fire department. Grades K-2 walk from Bradford Academy building to school.	SRTS Team, parent volunteers
May 2009	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting to plan end of school celebration, plan for continuation to next school year, and update this matrix for 2009-10 and beyond.	All
Jun. 2009	Encouragement	End of School Celebration, including recognitions in incentive contests.	School, SRTS Team
June 2009	SRTS Team Mtg	Core team meeting with town staff to set things in place for the infrastructure grant application?	School Coordinator, School Nurse, Principal, Walking Group leaders, Town Staff

2009-10 SCHOOL YEAR & BEYOND

Approaches Integrated in Chronological Order. At each SRTS Team Meeting, it is recommended to review the upcoming events on the Action Matrix.

Aug.	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting at very start of school year to prepare for International Walk/Bike to School Day, other fall events.	All
2009-10 school year	Education / Encouragement	Carbon emissions tracking program in conjunction with Kids Connect.	Kids Connect Coordinator
Sept.	Encouragement	Approach the PTO about a small amount of funding for incentives for this school year, \$250?	SRTS Coordinator
Sept.	Evaluation	Conduct classroom tallies, using the forms created by the National Center for SRTS; send in for computer scanning.	School Nurse
Sept.	Education	WalkSmart classroom presentations, especially grades K-2	School Nurse
Oct.	Encouragement	International Walk to School Day, launch of weekly walking program for Fall 2009, to run through December Break, weather permitting.	SRTS team, walking group leaders
Dec.	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting to prepare / organize for winter snowshoe walking program	All
Jan. – Feb.	Encouragement	Weekly snowshoe walks by grade, using school snowshoes, from January to end of February. Snowshoe from back of high school parking lot through Elizabeth Park to school.	SRTS team, walking group leaders, PE teacher.
Mar.	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting to prepare / organize for spring walking program. Arrange permission slips, ensure committed walking leaders, etc.	All
late March	Encouragement	Spring kick-off for walk/bike to school events – Newsletter notices and permission slips to go home prior to the program start.	SRTS Team

April – June 2010	Encouragement	Weekly walking program with three walking group routes, school buses dropping off. Punch card system for prizes by the end of the school year.	SRTS team, walking group leaders.
April	Encouragement	Incentive program to reward walking/biking 10 times via frequent walker/biker punch card. Prizes to include toe tokens, small gifts, and gift certificates to Mr. Putts.	School / PE Teacher
Apr.	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting with SRTS Coordinator, and to assess events / determine any changes needed.	All
late Apr. / early May	Education	Assembly at school to go over biking and walking safety, in preparation for Bike & Walk to School Day.	Town Police Chief
early May	Education	Bicycle Skills Day / Bicycle Safety Fair	School Nurse, School Coordinator, Kids Connect coordinator, community volunteers
early May	Encouragement	5 th Annual Bike & Walk to School Day. Grades 3 and up bike from the fire department. Grades K-2 walk from Bradford Academy building to school.	SRTS Team, parent volunteers
mid- May	Evaluation	Conduct classroom tallies, using the forms created by the National Center for SRTS; send in for computer scanning.	School Nurse
mid-May	SRTS Team Mtg	Team meeting to plan end of school celebration, plan for continuation to next school year, and update this matrix for next year.	All
Jun.	Encouragement	End of School Celebration, including recognitions in incentive contests.	School, SRTS Team

This chronological matrix, a revision of the 2008-09 matrix above, should guide the SRTS team through a typical school year, and cue the School Coordinator for when to hold key planning / organizing meetings with the team.

In continuing to develop the program for 2009-10 and beyond, the SRTS team is encouraged to consider:

- What did the team learn from the first year of the program, and what can be done to make things run more smoothly?

- What programs can be taken to the "next level" and how to do this?
- Are there parts of the program that worked very well, and should be repeated?
- How to keep the concept "fresh," and volunteers energized?
- Are there any potential safety concerns with how the program went in the past year, and what can be done to alleviate those?
- Without the education/encouragement funding from VTrans, how will the team obtain incentives for the program? *Possibly ask the PTO to provide a small amount of funding for incentives?*
- What is the best way to transfer coordinating and leadership positions from one "generation" of parents to the next? *Plan to take the STRS committee to the newly reorganized parent/teacher organization and see if we can make the STRS committee one of their committees as a way to reach out to the next generation of parents and volunteers.*

BRADFORD SRTS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Bradford SRTS team suggested the following policy recommendations:

- Propose to the school board to eliminate multiple bus stops within the village, to promote walking (see appendix 5).
- Endorse a possible law change to lower the truck weight limits on non-interstate highways, to discourage heavy trucks from traveling on Route 5.

ENGINEERING: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Bradford is fortunate to have sidewalks on most of the streets in the village area. However, the crosswalks and unmarked crossings of busy streets are problematic. The crosswalks are not as visible as they could be, and speeding in the village means that drivers lack the reaction time to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. Several trails used as part of the school walking routes cannot be used year-round due to grades, icy conditions, and sharp bends that prevent snowplowing.

To improve conditions, the Bradford SRTS team identified key crossings, a few short stretches of sidewalk, radar speed signs, and trail upgrades. These suggested improvements are concentrated in the village area; the Bradford SRTS team's approach is to encourage those living on the more rural roads to drive or take the school bus to join a walking group in the village area.

The potential projects described below are each located on the map on page 11.

POTENTIAL SRTS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

1. **Crosswalk Improvements:** Several crossings, with or without crosswalks present a barrier to walking / biking to school. Make these crossings more visible, by potentially adding bump outs, raised crosswalks (speed table crosswalks), and/or additional signage or revised striping patterns. Add radar speed signs (see next item) to reinforce appropriate traffic speeds. Conduct a site assessment in the spring to determine each crosswalk's current configuration and potential improvements.

- Crosswalks along Route 5 / Main St.:
 - Between High School and Fairground Road
 - At Wright's Avenue
 - At Bradford Academy
 - At Denny Park (end of business section)
 - At Bank St. (core business area)
- Possible additional crosswalks at Little River Health Care and near the High School.

Next Steps: SRTS consultant, Bradford DPW staff, and SRTS team members to conduct site visits in the spring, discuss potential treatments, and develop budget for inclusion on SRTS infrastructure grant request.



2. **Radar Speed Feedback Signs:** Radar speed feedback signs are most appropriate on the way into the village area, where the streetscape does not provide sufficient cues for drivers to slow to village speeds. Add radar speed feedback signs at the following locations:

- On Route 5, prior to the Wright's Avenue crosswalk, headed into town.
- On Route 5, prior to the Bradford Academy crosswalk heading north.
- On Goshen Road near High Street, headed into town.



- On Fairground Road near Elizabeth Park Driveway, both directions.

Next Steps: Clarify locations for signs. Include radar speed signs in SRTS infrastructure grant request. SRTS consultant to provide cost estimate.

3. **Sidewalk on Goshen Rd.** The village streets including North and South Pleasant Streets, Summer Street, and High Street all terminate along Goshen Rd., which lacks a sidewalk to connect these streets together. A short section of Goshen Rd. connecting North and South Pleasant Streets is used by the Little Rivers Walking Group, and should be prioritized for sidewalk construction. More broadly, conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a sidewalk along Goshen Rd. from Main St. to the town forest, with its associated walking trails.

Next Steps: SRTS consultant, Bradford DPW staff, and SRTS team members to conduct site visits in the spring, discuss potential treatments, and develop budget for inclusion on SRTS infrastructure grant request. Determine whether the project can apply for construction funds, or needs a feasibility study.

4. **VTrans Garage Improvements.** The VTrans district garage on Fairgrounds Road presents a considerable barrier for schoolchildren using the sidewalk. The garage lacks a clear driveway; the sidewalk is obliterated across the property. Work with VTrans to improve their access management practices and improve sidewalk facilities along their property.

Next Steps: SRTS team / consultant to connect with VTrans district maintenance staff to discuss potential operational and/or infrastructure changes.



5. **Path Improvements to Connect School to Cottage St.** This path provides the best linkage between the village and the school. The path currently traverses steep banks, and a simple bridge, built by an Eagle Scout, crosses a small stream at an awkward angle. Improve this path to ensure its long-term use, bikeability, and winter maintenance. The path needs improved drainage, bridge angle and grades. This land is owned privately but with a public right of way.

Next Steps: SRTS School Coordinator to discuss potential plowing with town staff / selectboard. SRTS consultant, Bradford DPW staff, and SRTS team members to conduct site visit in the spring, discuss potential treatments, and develop budget for inclusion on SRTS infrastructure grant request. Potential partners may include Upper Valley Trails Alliance and/or Vermont Youth Conservation Corps.

6. **Feasibility Study for a Sidewalk on Route 5, extending the Upper Plain Sidewalk.** There is currently a sidewalk on one side of the street from the lower driveway of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church to Fairground Rd. The SRTS team would like to extend the sidewalk from the Church to the Blue Spruce sub division, including the connection to the High School. This sidewalk comprises a walking route to the Elementary School; the route connects through the High School and Elizabeth Park on trails to connect to the Elementary School without going down and then back up hill as the roads go. It also avoids the significantly challenging intersection of Fairground Rd. and Main St.

Next Steps: SRTS consultant, Bradford DPW staff, and SRTS team members to conduct site visits in the spring, discuss potential scope of project for inclusion on SRTS infrastructure grant request. Feasibility studies are eligible under this grant.

7. **Route 5 Bridge over the Waits River.** Ensure that this bridge, when reconstructed, includes sidewalks for the benefit of walking / biking to school.

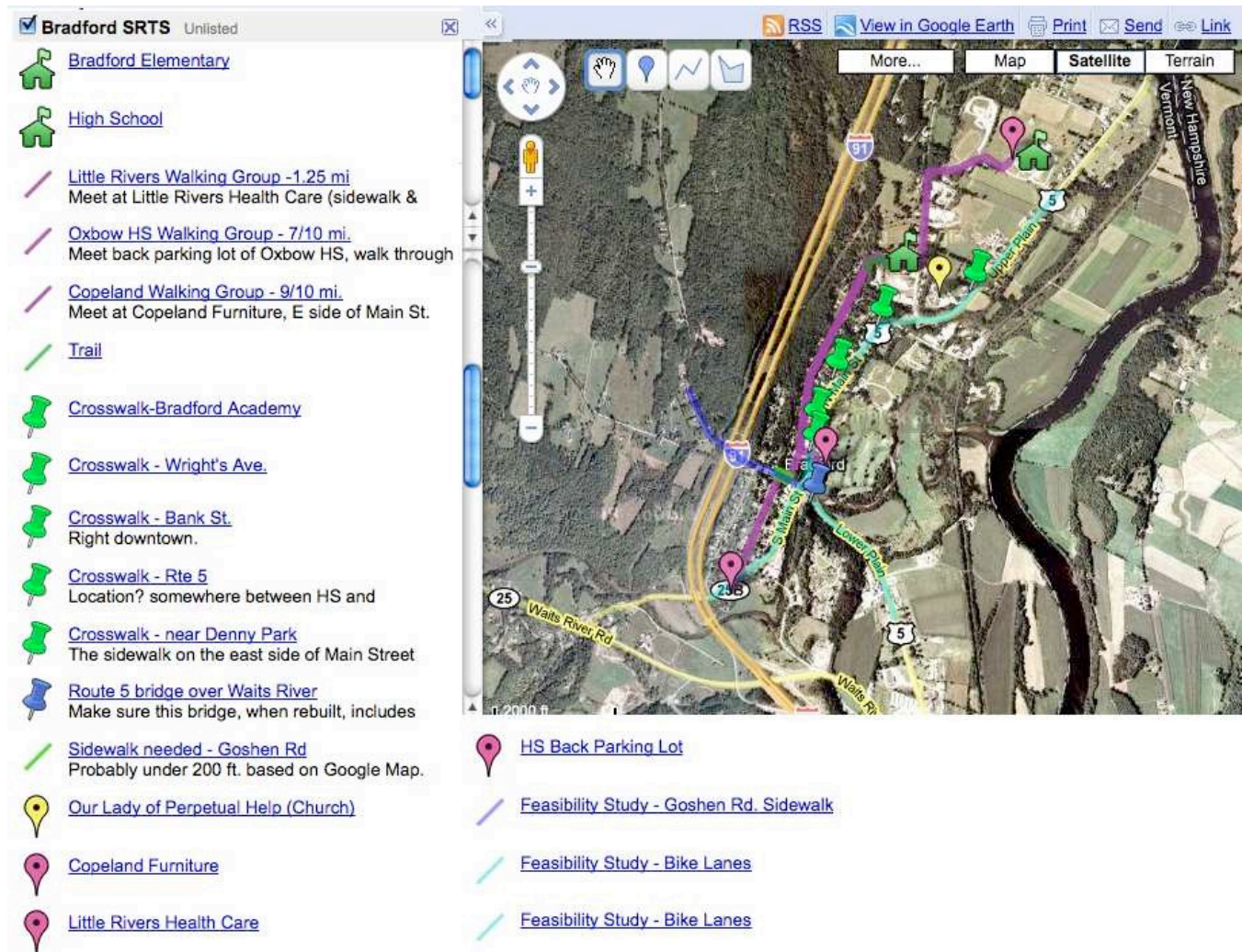
Next Steps: Connect with the Regional Planning Commission and VTrans with regard to the status of this bridge; seek to include pedestrian access in purpose and need statement for this project.

8. **Bike Lanes.** Look at key routes in town to consider adding bike lanes. Consider the bikeability of routes including Route 5 / Lower Plain, Route 5 / Main St., and Rowell Brook Rd.

Next Steps: SRTS consultant, Bradford DPW staff, and SRTS team members to conduct site visits in the spring, discuss potential treatments, and report back to the SRTS team to determine the relative priority of such a project.

The map provided below shows the Bradford School Walking Routes, and the approximate sites of the potential infrastructure projects described above. This map is available for online viewing and exploration on Google Maps, linked via: <http://tinyurl.com/c4dmen>

Bradford SRTS Infrastructure Locations Map



APPENDIX 1 : HISTORY & BACKGROUND OF SRTS

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) movement started in the 1970s in Odense, Denmark, to address disturbing trends in traffic incidents involving students walking or bicycling to school. In the early 1990s, walking and bicycling advocates initiated a similar program in the United Kingdom, and the program then spread to other countries around the world. Pilot programs in the U.S. were initiated in the late 1990s in California and Massachusetts. Interest then spread across the country, with some states initiating programs using state funding sources. In Vermont, a pilot program was conducted from 2004-2006 with regional funding from the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The national Safe Routes to School program began in 2005, when Congress incorporated funding for Safe Routes to School into the federal transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU), with small population states like Vermont receiving a minimum of \$1 million per year for five years. SRTS provides 100% federal funds, with 10%-30% of each state's allocation going to education and encouragement, and the remaining 70-90% to infrastructure projects.

The VTrans Safe Routes to School Program began in earnest in the spring of 2006, by soliciting schools to participate in education and encouragement activities. Another round of schools was selected in 2008, and Bradford Elementary School is among the schools in this second round.

Schools that are participating in the education and encouragement activities are eligible to apply for infrastructure grant funds, also administered by VTrans. In the 2007 grant round, VTrans accepted applications for projects up to \$250,000, and awarded a total of \$1.4 million.

The 2009 infrastructure grant round has not yet been announced; the criteria and total award amounts may change for the new application. Schools participating in either round of the education /encouragement program will be eligible to apply, so long as the school is actively continuing to promote walking/biking to school. These grants provide 100% federal funds to key improvements identified in the School Travel Plan. No local match is required. As many as 60 schools could be eligible to apply for infrastructure funds in 2009.

APPENDIX 2: SRTS TEAM

This core team is supplemented by parent volunteers who are engaged in Walk/Bike to School Days.

<u><i>Name</i></u>	<u><i>Title</i></u>	<u><i>Organizations / Roles</i></u>
Maureen Boardman	SRTS School Coordinator, parent	Walking group leader
Charles "Skip" Barrett	Principal	Bradford Elementary School
Lynn Sheldon	parent	Planning Commission member, Walking group leader
Susie Tann	School Nurse	Bradford Elementary School staff, Walking group leader
Andrea Covey		Parks & Recreation Committee
Nancy Jones		Conservation Commission member
Tomika Leonardo	parent	Bradford Elementary School parent, Walking group volunteer
Sarah Copeland		State Representative, Walking group volunteer.
Hanzas	parent	
Mike Aldrich	PE Teacher	
Darlene Sanborn	Parent / Volunteer Coordinator	
Ryan Chase	Selectboard member	
Gene Martin	Town Constable	
Phil Page	Road Commissioner	

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:

Trevor Star at VTrans District Maintenance – lives in Bradford

APPENDIX 3: PRE-PROGRAM CONDITIONS

LEVELS OF WALKING & BIKING: CLASSROOM TALLIES

(Insert summary of Bradford's Spring 2009 tallies. Please note that Bradford made up their own forms, so that the data is not compatible with the National Center for SRTS, and cannot be scanned to prevent data entry.)

BARRIERS TO WALKING & BIKING: PARENT SURVEY

Bradford conducted a parent surveys prior to initiating their expanded walk/bike program in early 2008. While the team used the results of the survey in constructing their program, the survey data itself has gone missing and is therefore only summarized below.

At the Safe Routes to School travel planning meeting in December 2008, the SRTS team identified the following barriers to walking/biking to school in Bradford.

1. **Distance.** A parent survey conducted prior to the program identified distance as a major concern. In response to this, the Bradford SRTS team created the drop-off based school walking groups, and began encouragement activities. With 80-100 schoolchildren participating on a regular basis in the weekly program, this solution is clearly working.
2. **Traffic Safety – traffic speed, crosswalks, lack of sidewalks.** Members of the SRTS team identified traffic safety concerns as the next concern after distance. Having adult supervision through the school walking groups alleviates this concern along the specific walking group routes, but only when adult supervision is available through the weekly program. The infrastructure portion of this plan identifies improvements to reduce travel speed and make safer for upper elementary school children to walk to school alone or with friends.
3. **Walking alone, lack of chaperone.** General personal safety and lack of supervision were also identified as concerns, and the weekly walking groups alleviate this concern on the organized walking days.
4. **Big Trucks.** Trucks were highlighted as a particular concern for children walking to school; Bradford's location along U.S. Route 5 brings extra trucks into the village as a result of truck weight limits. The truck weight limit is lower on the interstate than on non-interstate roads; as a result, Route 5 sees heavy truck traffic by heavy trucks.

TRAFFIC COUNTS & SPEEDS

Traffic speed is anecdotally a concern for the Bradford SRTS team, and a traffic speed analysis conducted by the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission in 2005 corroborates this concern. *(See attached separate PDF, eventually to be integrated into this document.)*

SIDEWALK AND CROSSWALKS IN BRADFORD

Note: This preliminary map clearly needs to be improved. There are no sidewalks on the interstate! The Bradford SRTS team indicated a willingness to field-survey sidewalks. A hand drawn sidewalk map was created by SRTS Coordinator Maureen Boardman, and copies will be provided to the Regional Planning Commission and the VTrans SRTS program.

Field survey data to collect: Sidewalks (which side of the street, width, condition); Crosswalks; Advance warning signs for crosswalks. The survey should include the Elizabeth Park trails, and sidewalks along the Upper Plain just off this map.



INFORMAL ROUTES TO SCHOOL

In addition to sidewalks, there are at least two informal routes/paths to school that should be noted. First, is the path between Cottage Street and the school playground. Second, the trails through Elizabeth Park. *(Can we map each of these?)*

Are there any ancient roads in town that may be relevant to SRTS? Who is the right contact for ancient roads in Bradford?

APPENDIX 5: SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

SCHOOL BUS ROUTES: WALK/BIKE TO THE BUS STOP?

Bradford Elementary School provides bus service even within the village area. The SRTS team has discussed whether school bus routes could be simplified to promote walking to the bus stop within the village area. There is currently a village bus route. A simplified route might include stops only to avoid major street crossings; it might even be possible to eliminate a bus route entirely.