

VERMONT
Safe Routes to
SCHOOL



Newport City School

Safe Routes to School Travel Plan

Winter 2015



Prepared with assistance from the VT SRTS Resource Center

SafeRoutesVT.org

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INTRODUCTION

The Five E's

SRTS combines many different approaches to make it safer for children to walk and bicycle to school and to increase the number of children doing so.

Engineering strategies create safer environments for walking and bicycling to school through improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools. These improvements focus on reducing motor vehicle speeds and conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists, and establishing safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

Education programs target children, parents, caregivers and neighbors, teaching how to walk and bicycle safely and informing drivers on how to drive more safely around pedestrians and bicyclists. Education programs can also incorporate health and environment messages.

Enforcement strategies increase the safety of children bicycling and walking to school by helping to change unsafe behaviors of drivers, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists. A community approach to enforcement involves students, parents or caregivers, school personnel, crossing guards and law enforcement officers.

Encouragement activities promote walking and bicycling to school to children, parents and community members. Events such as Walk to School Day, contests such as a Frequent Walker/Bicyclist challenge, or on-going programs such as a Walking School Bus or Bicycle Train can promote and encourage walking and bicycling as a popular way to get to school.

Evaluation is an important component of SRTS programs that can be incorporated into each of the other E's. Collecting information before and after program activities or projects are implemented allow communities to track progress and outcomes, and provide information to guide program development.

- Excerpted from "Safe Routes to School: A Transportation Legacy," the report of the National Safe Routes to School Task Force

This Travel Plan represents the work of the Newport City School Safe Routes to School Team. Our school believes that creating and maintaining this Travel Plan is a good way to ensure an on-going Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program.



Safe Routes to School programs adopted by schools like ours across the country have been shown to provide a variety of benefits to their communities. A strong SRTS program can help to:

1. Reduce traffic congestion around our school
2. Reduce costs and need for busing students to school
3. Increase our students' sense of independence and responsibility
4. Teach students fundamental life-long safety skills
5. Strengthen our sense of community
6. Provide more transportation options for everyone

The SRTS team at Newport City School consists of parents, teachers, and other community stakeholders who have provided input, guidance, and oversight in writing our plan.

The ideas and recommendations developed during this process will guide us in creating a well-balanced approach to building our SRTS program at Newport City Elementary School (NCES). Our school team will use this document as a resource to plan our encouragement, education, engineering, enforcement, and evaluation efforts with assistance from the VT SRTS Resource Center.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans), through the Vermont SRTS Resource Center, has provided technical assistance in producing this plan. With the help of the Resource Center, we have identified infrastructure improvements that would have a positive impact on walking and biking to school. These infrastructure recommendations are considered planning level and will require further engineering analysis to determine feasibility. It is our hope that our recommendations can be the basis for grants and/or improvements initiated by the City of Newport.

Members of the Newport City School SRTS Team	
Judy Boucher Principal	Jennifer Woolard Prevention Specialist, VT DOH
Beth Barnes Community Leader	Lindy Sargent School Liason/Retired Staff
Judy McKelvey Teacher	Colleen Moore de Ortizen School Nurse Liason, VT DOH
Pam Ladds Newport Resident/ Community Activist	Mary Ellen Prairie School Board
Julie Zenel Home to School Coordinator	Sharon Fradette School Nurse
Andrew Cappello Newport Parks and Recreation	Gail Aloisio NVDA

TEAM VISION

The SRTS program at NCES aligns with the community's efforts towards promoting active lifestyles through walking, hiking, and biking. The SRTS program goals of combining engineering, education, enforcement, evaluation, and encouragement strategies (also known as the Five E's) to improve the safety and health of students who walk and bike to school, fit our school and town values.

Our vision for NCES (and the surrounding town) is:

- To be a school where more students safely bicycle and walk to school
- To encourage a more physically active student body and community
- To build community support and respect of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the community
- To develop a regular Walking/Biking School Bus program
- To raise awareness by providing bike and pedestrian safety education in the school

This Travel Plan outlines NCES's intentions for making walking to and from school more sustainable and safer for students and the community. Through our SRTS program we hope to have 20% of our students walking or biking to school during year one and 25% of our students walking or biking to school in year two. We believe this goal is attainable through encouraging more walking and biking in town and through educating students on safe walking and biking practices.

NCES hopes to engage 100% of its student population through the next year in their Safe Routes to School program.

ABOUT THIS PLAN

Our SRTS team met three times with the VT SRTS Resource Center to develop and adopt this SRTS Travel Plan. Each meeting provided education on the benefits of SRTS and highlighted successful program components and strategies. We discussed education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation strategies which helped identify needed and complementary programs to support proposed engineering strategies.

Meeting Date	Content and Outcomes
September 2014	<p>Kick-off Meeting: How the VT SRTS Travel Plan Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Award of the planning assistance grant - Overview of the planning process <p>Engineering Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity and barrier discussions - Observed arrival and dismissal
October 2014	<p>Plan Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewed the draft plan - Identified roles and continued steps for non-engineering recommendations <p>Engineering Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team visioning - Walk audit
January 2015	<p>Plan Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopted Plan - Discussed continuation of non-infrastructure recommendations

TRAVEL PLAN CONTEXT

NEWPORT CITY SCHOOL AND CITY OF NEWPORT OVERVIEW

NCES is located in the City of Newport, VT on the shores of Lake Memphremagog. Newport has a population of approximately 4,500 year-round residents. The Lake divides the city in two, connected by two bridged roads - US Rte 5/VT 105 and Railroad Square. The southern portion of the city consists mostly of the densely populated historic main street. The northern portion of the city where the school is located consists of a business district on E. Main St and a less dense pattern of development.

NCES is located on Sias Avenue - a Class 2 town road. To the north, Elm St, a quiet residential street serves as one of two primary routes to school. To the south, E. Main St, a busy State highway and retail corridor serves as a second route via Sias Ave.

The SRTS program at NCES is a key component in the school's efforts to improve the health of its students and community as well as to increase awareness of bicycles and pedestrians within town.

Several years ago, the State of Vermont passed Complete Streets legislation which took effect July 1, 2011. Complete Streets policies ensure that state and local transportation agencies consider all users in the design and operation of the right of way to make roads safer and more accessible for everyone regardless of age or ability. Complete Streets policies, working in tandem with the SRTS travel plan, will help to define Newport as a walkable, bikeable, and sustainable community.



CURRENT SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

NCES serves the City of Newport and has 315 students enrolled in grades K-6 for the 2014-2015 school year. NCES offers busing to all students.

Demographic	Count	Percentage of student body
Free/Reduced Lunch	##	% %
Students with Disabilities	##	% %
Limited English proficient students	##	% %
Distance From School		
Students living within 1/4 mile of school	8	2.7%
Students living within 1/2 mile of school	86	29%
Students living within 1 mile of school	142	48%
Students living within 2 miles of school	268	90%
Students in grades K-3	183	58%
Students in grades 4-6	132	42%

CURRENT STUDENT TRAVEL MODES

Travel Mode	Walk	Bike	School Bus	Family Vehicle	Carpool	Public Transit	Other
Number of Students (AM)	12%	2%	44%	41%	0.9%	0%	0%
Number of Students (PM)	14%	2%	49%	34%	0.6%	0%	0%

Data based on SRTS Student Tally Report administered in May 2014.

SCHOOL ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

NCES relies on policies, practices, and support activities to ensure a safe and orderly process for arrival and dismissal, regardless of how students travel to school. Parents are reminded of these procedures in the student handbook and in newsletters that are mailed to students' homes.

The school day begins at 8:30 am. Students walking, biking, or travelling by car typically arrive between 7:45 am and 8:30 am. Two buses, each making an early run and a later run during both the morning and afternoon, serve the school. The first run of the school bus arrives at 7:45 am, dropping students off at the front entrance where they may proceed inside for breakfast. The second bus run arrives around 8:15.



A crossing guard leads students up Sias Ave to Elm St.

Student walkers arrive at school between 7:45 and 8:30, entering through the main door. Two crossing guards are stationed at the crosswalk in front of the school on Sias Ave. At dismissal, the crossing guards escort students across Sias Ave and then either northward to Elm Street or southward to E. Main St depending on the student's destination.

Students who walk to school typically travel east on Elm St and south on Sias Ave or east on E. Main St and north on Sias Ave to reach the school. Students travelling by bicycle may park at the bike rack on the north side of the school building.

The main parking lot entrance on Sias Ave consists of a two-way driveway that is used by the buses and staff. Parent drop-offs take place in the back parking lot and begin at 8:00am.

Dismissal procedures begin at 2:45 pm. Car riders are dismissed first, followed by bus riders, and finally walkers and bikers. Bus riders line up outside the main door and board when their bus arrives. Car riders wait inside for their parents to park and come into the school to pick them up. Students walking home from school exit through the west doorway on Sias Ave, closest to the crossing guards. School staff are present at dismissal to ensure that children are behaving properly and safely as they leave the school grounds.

Arrival		
Travel Mode	Procedure	Time
Walk	Arrive staggered	7:45-8:30 am
Bike	Arrive staggered	7:45-8:30 am
School Bus	Arrives at designated times	7:45, 8:15 am
Family Vehicle	Arrive staggered	8:00-8:30 am
Dismissal		
Travel Mode	Procedure	Time
Family Vehicle	Dismissed as parents arrive through main door	2:50 pm
Bus	Dismissed through main door	2:55 pm
Walk	Dismissed last through Sias Ave door (staff walk students across Sias)	3:00 pm
Bike	Dismissed last through Sias Ave door (staff walk students across Sias)	3:00 pm

EXISTING TRAVEL HABITS

Students travel to NCES via Sias Ave typically from Elm St. or E. Main St. if they do not live on Sias Ave. While only 3% of students live within ¼ mile of the school, 80% live within 1 ½ miles – a very walkable distance for most children since the town is served by a well-connected network of sidewalks and bike paths. The majority of students either live around Main Street downtown or on streets to the north or south of E. Main St near the school. Those students who do walk from the downtown area can take advantage of a pathway and pedestrian bridge across the Lake, completely separated from vehicular traffic for a large portion of their journey. On September 15th, 2014, (the day of our safety observation) about 30-40 students were observed walking home from school. No students were observed bicycling from school.



The lakeside path provides a comfortable place to walk or bike

A parent survey was conducted from September to November 2014. 60 parent surveys were returned. The survey identified the following barriers to walking to school:

Issue	Child does not walk/bike to school	Child walks/bikes to school
Speed of Traffic Along Route	67 %	33 %
Distance	65 %	100 %
Weather or climate	65 %	67 %
Amount of Traffic Along Route	63 %	33 %
Safety of Intersections and Crossings	59 %	67 %
Violence or Crime	55 %	0 %
Time	43 %	67 %
Adults to Bike/Walk With	35 %	33 %
Crossing Guards	31 %	67 %
Participation in After School Programs	27 %	33 %
Convenience of Driving	25 %	0 %
Sidewalks or Pathways	25 %	33 %

(Data based on SRTS Parent Survey results administered in September 2014)

Many of the issues in the list above can be addressed with either infrastructure or non-infrastructure strategies (or in some cases both). We kept these concerns in mind when picking the strategies that we want to accomplish.

KEY ISSUES

The team identified the following barriers to walking and biking to school:

Issue: A large number of wide and uncontrolled parking lot driveways along E. Main Street create an undesirable location for children to walk.

East Main Street is a primary route to school for many children who live to the south or on one of its connecting streets. However, there is little to no separation between sidewalks and parking lots along much of the street and wide parking lot driveways are very frequent. Despite the fact that sidewalks extend from Sias Ave. to Union St. along E. Main St. many parents see this as a dangerous place for children to walk due to the high potential for conflicts with motor vehicles and pedestrians.



A high number of parking lot driveways along E. Main St create an undesirable place for children to walk

Issue: Many of the primary barriers to children walking to school may not be infrastructure related.

Around 15% of the students at NCES typically walk to and from school on any given day. However, about 80% of the student population lives within walking distance (1.5 miles) of the school. The majority of streets that serve as walking routes to school have sidewalks on one or both sides. While it is possible for a large majority of students to walk to school, the fact that they do not may be based on parents' perceptions, attitudes, or other practicalities associated with walking to school.

Issue: Sidewalks along Union Street are narrow and uncomfortable to walk along.

Union Street provides an alternative to E. Main St. for students walking to school from downtown. But the sidewalk along the north side is narrow with no buffer from vehicular traffic. The speed and volume of motor vehicles along Union St. contribute to a feeling of discomfort for pedestrians and the perception that this is an undesirable route to travel to school.

Issue: The driveways at Waterfront Plaza create undesirable crossings for students walking and biking to school along the lakeside bike path.

The lakeside bike path provides students with a unique pathway to school, completely separated from vehicular traffic for the majority of their route. The trail crossings at the two driveways for Waterfront Plaza, however, are difficult to navigate due to the width of the driveways, perceived speed of vehicles entering and exiting, and placement of crosswalks at the driveways.

Issue: Several key school route crossings are unsafe to cross and receive little compliance from motorists.

Intersection safety is a priority for improving the comfort of those who might walk or bike to school and their families. Unsafe crossings at Main Street/Quebec Central Railroad and at Union Street/Maple Street, and lack of crosswalks at Elm Street/Indian Point and at Western Ave/the Access Road were noted as locations of particular concern.

TRAVEL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This Travel Plan is comprised of several sections detailing activities and programs for NCES to implement now and projects for us to develop over time with local officials.

Non-Engineering Plan

This Travel Plan identifies best practices in education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation that are suitable for our school. Information on the advantages and considerations for each strategy, and resources to help us implement each, are included in **Appendix F**.

16-Month SRTS Activity Calendar

Our team will pursue a smaller subset of items in the non-engineering plan during the next 16 months. We will review our work periodically, adding additional activities that will build the SRTS program momentum. The Calendar is located in **Appendix A**.

Engineering Recommendations

With assistance from the Vermont SRTS Resource Center, we have identified short, medium and long-term engineering treatments to make walking and bicycling to school safer for our students. Engineering Recommendations can be found in **Appendix C**, along with typical infrastructure recommendations in **Appendix B**.

Snow Removal Toolkit

Snow, sleet, slush, ice, and rain impact all modes of transportation, and the timely clearance and removal of the elements are essential for the functionality and accessibility of a Safe Routes to School program. A Snow Removal Toolkit can assist communities with snow removal policies and procedures, providing tools to increase compliance and safety. Snow removal recommendations are located in **Appendix H**.

NON-ENGINEERING TRAVEL PLAN

We identified a number of activities and programs to promote walking and biking to school. These activities and programs, while grouped by “The Five E’s,” are dependent upon each other for their individual success. We plan to work on our highest priority programs this year, following up with other programs in successive years. We used the timeframe below to determine when to initiate programs:

Type	Short	Medium	Long
Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, Evaluation	<i>What we plan to do this school year</i>	<i>What we plan to do next school year</i>	<i>What we plan to do starting in two years</i>

EDUCATION STRATEGIES

The education strategies included in our 16-month activity calendar are aimed at providing all students with safe pedestrian walking skills. Our education activities this year include:

- Provide educational materials for parents and residents regarding general safe-driving behaviors via the School newsletter, school handbook and registration packets.
- Incorporate WalkSmart/BikeSmart Vermont! Curriculum into 2015/2016 school year through physical education classes.

- Offer bike safety education through a bike rodeo every spring. The curriculum should include general bike safety, including hand signals, bike inspections, and helmet fittings.
- Partner with other schools in the area such as United Christian Academy and Turning Points School and request the Bike Smart Trailer from Local Motion in order to supply bikes and equipment needed for on-bike skills training.
- Partner with the Kingdom VELO Bike Group to implement “Our Town, Slow It Down” campaign and to assist with teaching bicycle education.
- Work with the parents’ club and community partners to hold an all-school assembly annually in advance of International Walk to School Day.
- Dedicate a section of the school newsletter to “Walk and Roll” news, tips, and events.

ENCOURAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Encouragement strategies included in our 16-month activity calendar will help students and their parents feel more comfortable and confident about walking and bicycling to school. Our encouragement activities will include:

- Host a Vermont Intergenerational Walk and Roll to School Day event each May.
- Host an International Walk to School Day event each October.
- Host a Winter Walk Day event each February.
- Establish Walking School Bus routes for monthly walk to school days.
- Encourage students to ride the bus and carpool during the winter months when walking and biking is less popular due to weather conditions.
- Distribute free or reduced-cost bicycle helmets to students in need.
- Change dismissal to allow walkers and bikers priority release in the 2015-2016 school year.
- Pair older students with younger students to walk to and from school together.
- Create a competition, such as the Golden Shoe Award or Punch Card Raffle, for frequent walkers/bikers.
- Kick-off *Walking Wednesdays* in Spring 2015.
- Work with School Board to revisit bussing policy to define a “walking radius.”

- [Work with City to prioritize school walking routes in the sidewalk plowing program.](#)

ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES

Our SRTS enforcement strategies are aimed both at changing the behavior of drivers and making the town safer and more secure for students walking to and from school. Our enforcement activities this year will include:

- Create a “Safe Space” program that identifies local businesses and community facilities that children can access in case of an emergency.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement to patrol walking routes during arrival and dismissal.
- Request personal safety education from the police department.
- Recognize Crossing Guards by celebrating “Crossing Guard Appreciation Day” held the Friday before the Thanksgiving Holiday.

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Evaluation is an important component of our SRTS program. We plan to complete regular in-classroom student tallies and evaluation tools such as the student tally and parent survey forms provided by the National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS). Parent surveys will help us measure the effectiveness of SRTS efforts over time. We first administered parent surveys in September 2014 and student tallies in May 2014, which provided baseline information on student travel behavior and parental perceptions.

We will continue to conduct walk audits on a regular basis to evaluate the existing walking and biking environment as well as monitor the progress of recommended projects.

Other evaluation strategies we will work on after this year are:

- Administer parent surveys annually to capture opinions of new parents and changes in overall parental perceptions.
- Collect student tally data each year to measure progress toward goals.
- Keep the SRTS Travel plan updated and use it as a tool for increased SRTS activities.

Evaluation Tool	Leader	Schedule
Parent Surveys	Judy B.	Annually in November
Student Tallies	Judy M.	Annually in May
Walk Audits	SRTS Team and students	Annually, within first two months of school

ENGINEERING TRAVEL PLAN

Our goal for engineering improvements is to enhance the physical environment along walking and biking routes that students use. Engineering improvements generally fall into three categories: sidewalks and paths, crossings, and on-site infrastructure to improve school drop-off and pick-up practices. Descriptions of typical engineering recommendations can be found in **Appendix B**.

We recognize that infrastructure improvements can take time to complete and are a collaborative effort among NCES, the City of Newport and potentially VTrans. The following short, medium, and long-term timeframes are a guide for anticipated project completion, but actual timeframes may vary:

Short term	Within 2 years
Medium term	Within 5 years
Long term	Longer than 5 years

The SRTS team prioritized the infrastructure improvements as high, medium, or low. The factors affecting this ranking include:

- Locations with specific safety concerns
- Locations along existing student walking or bicycling routes, or with a significant number of school family residences
- Locations that are priorities for the school community

Engineering Recommendations for specific locations in the vicinity of NCES can be found in **Appendix C**.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGN AND FUNDING

Design

- All infrastructure recommendations in this plan are considered “planning level” and will require further engineering analysis, design, or public input before implementation.
- Recommended changes to existing traffic patterns (adding a signal, adding a stop sign, changing lane patterns, etc.) will require a study to evaluate the potential impact that the recommendation could have on existing traffic conditions.
- Drainage, existing utilities and ADA compliance will need to be evaluated for all recommendations at the time of design. ADA guidelines recommend particular design features to accommodate people with disabilities. ADA design considerations for include appropriate slopes, landing areas, surface conditions, and use of detectable warning materials for visually impaired pedestrians.
- Right-of-way was not evaluated as a part of this project. Recommendations assume that sufficient right-of-way exists or that a method to gain needed right-of-way will be identified as the project progresses.
- VTrans district office staff will be involved in the planning and design process for any recommendations involving State roads.
- All infrastructure recommendations should comply with federal, state, and local standards including the most recent editions of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials’ (AASHTO) *Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* and the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*.

- Refer to the *Vermont Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Manual* for state guidelines on pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

Funding

- A variety of funding sources may be used for the recommendations. For example, projects requiring right-of-way acquisition or existing utilities relocation are not typically eligible with SRTS funds, but may be funded through other sources.

More information on the types of projects eligible for SRTS funding through VTrans can be found online at: saferoutes.vermont.gov/getting_started/funding.

LIST OF APPENDICES

- A. Non-Infrastructure Strategies Calendar
- B. Typical Infrastructure Recommendations
- C. Location-Specific Engineering Recommendations (Location Key, Recommendations Tables)
- D. Student Population Locator
- E. Student Tally Report, May 2014 & Parent Survey Report, September-December 2014
- F. Non-Engineering Strategies Resource Guide
- G. Infrastructure Strategies Resource Guide
- H. Snow Removal Best Practices