

Cuyahoga County

Walk and Roll to School in East Cleveland

Summary

The East Cleveland Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coalition, coordinated by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's Creating Healthy Community Program (CHC) and Environmental Public Health Services works to increase physical activity and improve safety for children walking and biking to and from school. The coalition is a group of community partners and stakeholders who have collaborated to raise almost \$500,000 for implementing the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) SRTS program for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects within the city.

Challenge

The city of East Cleveland has many safety concerns that impair walking and biking to school. It also has a disproportionately high rate of obesity. The decline in population, disinvestment, fears of crime, foreclosure issues, lack of coordination among community partners, and a decaying infrastructure have contributed to East Cleveland's current state. The city lacks adequate resources to maintain and improve the infrastructure within the community. These issues result in parents being fearful of allowing their students to walk and bike to school.

Solution

The opportunity of funding for SRTS from the Ohio Department of Transportation to improve safety was a unifying incentive that community partners identified as a mechanism for change. The SRTS program is multi-faceted in that it addresses both the physical environment and educating children about how to travel safely to and from school. The SRTS Coalition wanted to make every effort possible to supervise children traveling to and from school in order to make it safer and provide assurance for parents. The police bike patrol, increasing visibility of walking guards, and implementing parent and student patrols will make motorists aware of students and help students safely cross the street in designated areas.



Your Involvement is Key

East Cleveland SRTS Coalition welcomes community support for increasing awareness of the efforts to increase safe walking and biking for students.

- Policy makers can support Ohio Department of Transportation's funding for the Safe Routes to School program.
- Increasing safety is something that everyone can support. If more children can safely walk and bike to school, children will develop a lifelong habit of being physically active and reduce the risk of chronic disease and obesity.



Results

Goals for the first year include increasing walking and biking to school, improving knowledge about safety, and decreasing accidents between cars and pedestrians/bicyclists. The police bike patrol started Fall 2012. The initial response has been very positive, with officers identifying hazards and encouraging students to walk in highly visible areas (known as the Safe Routes). Parents appreciate the increased police presence at the time of arrival and dismissal. SRTS programs in general have overwhelmingly increased physical activity and improved the built environment. Studies have shown the link between physical activity, including walking and biking to school, and higher achievement test scores, lower school nurse visits and decreased tardiness. All of the strategies

selected by the SRTS Coalition were identified as best practices by the National Safe Routes to Schools Network, and approved by the Ohio Department of Transportation.



“Safe Routes to Schools will help us increase safety and physical activity of our students.”

- Ms Corley, Superintendent, East Cleveland School District

Future Directions

The SRTS Coalition is currently collecting data to determine if walking/biking has increased from before the action plan's implementation. The SRTS Coalition is also working to:

- Implement the student safety patrol
- Provide additional equipment for crossing guards
- Work with the police department to identify locations where new crossing guards are to be located (once hired)
- Implement parent patrols (includes identifying parents, conducting background checks, and identifying locations for parents to patrol)
- Organize motivational speakers, bike rodeo, and BMX safety event
- Promote the SRTS messages throughout the community through social marketing
- Continue to monitor how many students walk and bike to school through classroom tallies
- Work with ODOT assigned engineer to develop infrastructure improvement plans

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