

King County Metro

**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL TOOLKIT**

# ENCOURAGEMENT



Encouragement activities are about generating excitement and having fun walking, biking or carpooling. They are meant to inspire families and the school community to get involved with rewards for participation.



## OUTREACH AND ENCOURAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Encouragement activities can be combined to create campaigns during events like Walk & Roll to School Day or a Back-to-School Blitz to shape transportation habits at the beginning of the year or in the spring.

Special events like Back to School Blitz, mileage clubs, contests and ongoing activities provide opportunities for families and their students to discover or rediscover that walking, biking, bussing and carpooling are within their reach and are a lot of fun. They also build interest and enthusiasm and can be quick and easy to implement and done with little funding. And offer teachable moments to reinforce safe travel.

This Toolkit describes many encouragement activities, such as Walk to School Days. Please refer to the Appendix for examples or checklist on how to get your event off the ground.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

**SRTS education and encouragement programs can result in a 25% increase in walking and biking over 5 years.\***

*\*6 McDonald NC, Steiner RL, Lee C, Rhoulac Smith T, Zhu X, Yang Y. Impact of the safe routes to school program on walking and bicycling. J Am Plann Assoc. 2014. doi:10.1080/01944363.2014.956654.*

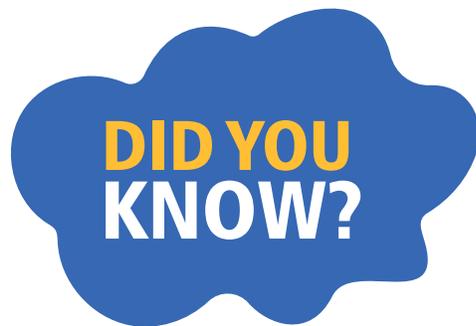


**RideshareOnline.com**  
Helps you find a buddy  
to share carpool, walk or  
bike trips together  
to and from school.

## SCHOOLPOOL

RideshareOnline's SchoolPool Program is a way to help families share rides with other parents at the school.

School administrators or principals at public or private elementary, middle or high schools in King County can set up a SchoolPool program for free. Parents sign up and enter travel preferences and privacy options, and SchoolPool provides ride matches to help families join a carpool, Walking School Bus or Bike Train.



**14% of all morning  
traffic is from  
parents driving  
children to school.\***

*\* Federal Highway Administration.  
(2011). Summary of Travel Trends:  
2009 National Household Travel  
Survey.*

### BENEFITS

- ★ Families can share the trip to school and make new friends
- ★ Reduces pollution and improves the air quality around schools
- ★ Reduces traffic congestion and improves safety for people walking and biking around schools

A SchoolPool brochure is provided on page 45 of Appendix A that can be used to promote the website and encourage families to sign up. See page 100 of Appendix B for more information about SchoolPool



## BACK TO SCHOOL BLITZ

Families set transportation habits during the first few weeks of the school year and may not be aware of the multiple options available and default to driving to school in the family car.

A “Back to School Blitz” focuses outreach right before school starts and at the beginning of the school year to promote walking, rolling, bussing, and carpooling for the school commute.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Influences parent travel behavior before habits and routines are set
- ★ Sets expectations for safe drop-offs and pick-ups for all modes
- ★ Establishes baseline awareness of SRTS and transportation options that can build momentum for activities later in the school year

Please refer to page 101 of Appendix B for specific ideas and materials to help you plan your Back to School Blitz.



## WALK & ROLL TO SCHOOL DAYS

Walk & Roll to School Day events in October and May are great ways to get students and families to give walking or rolling to school a try.

These events can be simple or elaborate, depending on the organizers' preference and ability to table for participation, offer incentives, and prizes, and coordinate activities. Begin by informing families about their travel options by setting up a table at the school entrance, provide Suggested Route Maps and help families plan how they will get to school on the designated day. See Appendix A for Outreach Materials and suggestions to get the word out and build momentum for your event.

Build the event with stamp cards, prizes, and education activities like having classrooms calculate their emissions (see Competitions & Incentives as well as Classroom Curriculum & Skills Training for ideas). Also consider forming Walking School Bus or Bike Train groups of families walking and biking together to school. To enable students who live too far to walk or bike or who encounter other barriers to participate, consider organizing a Park & Walk Program Bus & Walk, or Carpool & Walk Program. Whatever you do, the camaraderie, safety tips, and additional support should inspire people to try out a new way to get to school.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Promotes walking, rolling, bussing, and carpooling
- ★ Makes parents aware of potential walking and biking routes available in their area
- ★ Make parents aware of carpool drop-off areas and protocol
- ★ Creates a supportive, encouraging environment for parents and kids who do not regularly walk or roll to school
- ★ Sets community norms around active and shared school commutes

Please refer to page 102 of Appendix B for materials to help you plan your Walk and Roll to School Day.



## WALKING SCHOOL BUS OR BIKE TRAIN

A walking school bus is a group of students with a trained adult volunteer who walk together to and/or from school.

It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their students to school, to a structured route and schedule with rotating adult leaders.

A Bike Train is a variation of the School Bus where students ride their bikes to school with adult leaders. The group has an established route and picks up students from their homes or at designated stops, at pre-arranged times. Provide basic bike safety training for participants (see Classroom Curriculum & Skills Training), safety tips sheets for families (see Parent & Caregiver Education), and designate an adult volunteer to lead and sweep. The program can be a one-time event for Walk to School Day, or routes may operate daily, weekly or monthly.

Cities and districts can support walking school buses by providing maps of where students live, so volunteers can form groups with nearby families, and suggested routes to school, so the group knows the best route to take.

Start simple and make it fun!

### BENEFITS

- ★ Addresses parental fears about stranger danger and traffic safety
- ★ Allows students to develop and practice transportation safety skills while under adult supervision
- ★ Saves time for parents who are not walking/ biking with the group
- ★ Helps develop bonds among classmates and neighbors
- ★ Allows for active social time for students before the school day begins

Please refer to page 103 of Appendix B for materials to help you plan and sustain your Walking School Bus or Bike Train.



## COMPETITIONS & INCENTIVES

A competition where students track their trips encourages families to try alternatives to driving in the family car.

This program can be implemented as an opt-in club, a classroom activity, a collaborative school-wide event, or a friendly school-to-school competition. Students track trips or their cumulative mileage made by walking, rolling, bussing or carpooling using SchoolPool, a classroom poster, or a punch card. Participants can earn prizes such as a Golden Sneaker Award, pizza/ice cream party, or raffle entry.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Encourages friendly competition for students, classrooms and/or schools to try alternatives to driving in the family car
- ★ Allows for flexibility and can be tailored to each school and age of participants
- ★ Provides easy setup with ready-to-go instructions, outreach materials, tracking software, and education resources

Please refer to page 104 of Appendix B: Implementation Toolkit for competition and incentive ideas and resources.



## PARK & WALK PROGRAM

A Park & Walk program identifies an off-site location for students to gather and walk to school with their families.

In situations where distance, safety concerns, or a disability prevents students from walking or biking to school, organizing a Park & Walk Program can be an inclusive option so all students can participate in SRTS activities.

The SRTS team should coordinate with nearby schools to identify parking lots that are typically vacant or unused during school drop-off and pick-up times. Parks, churches, or malls with large parking lots may be willing to share their space. Walking School Bus or Bike Train programs in which a parent, teacher, or community member volunteer provides supervision for a group of students from the parking location, can be fun, safe, and practical additions to a Park & Walk Program. Encourage students to carpool to the parking location.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Increases physical activity and allows students who live far away from school to participate in SRTS activities
- ★ Reduces traffic congestion around the school's pick-up and drop-off areas
- ★ Accommodates parents who drop their child off at school on their way to work

Please refer to page 105 of Appendix B for materials to help you plan your Park & Walk Program.

## DUMP THE PUMP CARPOOL DAY

Dump the Pump Carpool Day encourages students and families to carpool to school or try an alternative to getting to school, rather than driving individually in their family vehicle.

In situations where distance, safety concerns, or a disability prevents students from walking or biking to school, organizing a Carpool Day as a component to Walk & Roll Day can be an inclusive option so all students can participate in SRTS activities and feel part of saving the planet and reducing congestion.

The SRTS can utilize the secure RideShareOnline.com/schoolpool platform for encouraging families to find carpools within their neighborhood.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Reduces traffic congestion around the school's pick-up and drop-off areas
- ★ Helps develop bonds among classmates and neighbors
- ★ Saves time for parents who do not need to drive their student to school
- ★ Increases awareness of carpool drop-off areas and protocol

Please refer to page 106 of Appendix B for materials to help you plan your Dump the Pump Carpool day.

## BIKE REPAIRS & EARN-A-BIKE PROGRAM

Learning how to repair your own bicycle is an important part of building confidence and knowledge.

Up to 50 percent of students do not ride their bikes due to minor issues, such as a flat tire or worn out brakes. Through Bike Repair and Earn-a-Bike Programs, students learn about bike maintenance, build teamwork skills, problem solving, and make friends.

Earn-a-Bike Programs provide students with a bike who may not otherwise have access to this inexpensive, fun mode of transportation.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Builds student confidence and technical skills in a hands-on environment
- ★ Students build relationships with local bike shops
- ★ Provides students from low income households with the opportunity to own a bicycle
- ★ Strengthens relationships between the school and local community partners, such as bike shops and bike advocates
- ★ Can provide older students with basic job skills

Please refer to page 107 of Appendix B for materials to get started on your Bike Repair Program and/or Earn a Bike Program.



## ART CONTESTS

Student promotional competitions (such as poster, essay, or video contests) showcase local talent while teaching traffic safety principles.

Students create art or other content about why they like to walk, bike, skate, ride the bus, or carpool. An entire classroom can participate in this activity and learn about the benefits of active transportation and reducing vehicle trips.

Social media campaigns are another fun way to engage with youth. A hashtag campaign is a good communications strategy that encourages participants to take photos of themselves walking, rolling, carpooling, or taking transit and connect with others doing the same.

Promotional competitions can be creative and tailored to the interests of the students and school staff. Prizes and incentives should be provided and can include gift cards to local businesses, bike lights, or movie tickets.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Flexible and can be tailored to each school
- ★ Encourages students to be creative and thoughtful about walking and rolling.
- ★ Sparks fun competition between students and classes
- ★ Creates positive artwork that can be displayed throughout the school
- ★ Allows for integration with existing classes, such as art or technology classes

Please refer to page 108 of Appendix B for materials to help you plan your promotional competition.



## STUDENT CLUBS

An after-school club can address different themes, including bike repair, cycling, environmental issues (green teams), and community/civic engagement. Clubs allow students to work together on issues they care about and often result in excellent ideas and successful projects.

For example, students develop outreach materials and content for other programs, such as Walk to School Day or a School Safety Campaign or older students teach younger students in bike maintenance and skills.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Can be customized to fit the interests of students in different grades
- ★ Teaches leadership skills
- ★ Provides a fun, free after school activity

Please refer to page 109 of Appendix B for materials to help you plan your student club.



## HIGH SCHOOL PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

A high school parking permit program can encourage high school students who are eligible to drive to carpool and/or use other modes than driving alone.

Charging a small fee or establishing a carpool lot in the most appealing area of the parking lot can encourage students to carpool or use other transportation options.

### BENEFITS

- ★ Reduces traffic congestion around school parking lots and pick-up and drop-off areas
- ★ Can be customized to fit the needs and desired outcomes of individual schools
- ★ Encourages resourceful use of parking capacity and vehicle use

Please refer to page 110 of Appendix B for materials to help you implement a High School Parking Permit program.