

**W A M P O**

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization



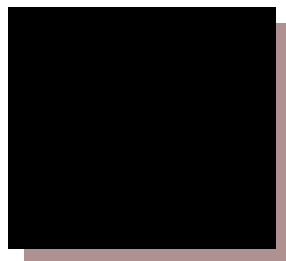
# Regional Safe Routes to School Plan Executive Summary

A Joint Plan of:

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

&

Safe Kids Wichita Area Coalition



Adopted by:  
WAMPO Transportation Policy Body  
August 12, 2008

Safe Kids Wichita Area Coalition Board  
July 15, 2008

## Executive Summary

### **Overview**

This project was originally conceived in response to the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program announced by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) in June 2006. As implemented by KDOT, SRTS is a federally funded program that provides 100% reimbursements to cities, counties, school districts, and other organizations to encourage children to walk or bicycle to school more safely. This encouragement may come in the form of infrastructure improvements or non-infrastructure projects, such as educational programs. At the center of this program are the “5 Es,” which are engineering, enforcement, education, encouragement, and evaluation.

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO) applied for funding during the inaugural application cycle to create a regional SRTS plan focused on the education and encouragement aspects of the 5 Es. WAMPO has teamed up with Safe Kids Wichita Area Coalition (Safe Kids), which is the local chapter of Safe Kids USA. Safe Kids is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the overall safety of children between the ages of zero and 14 years. The vision of this planning effort is to help create an environment in the WAMPO region where children can safely make the trip to and from school by walking or bicycling.

### **Planning Process**

The Pedestrian Safety Task Force, which was created as part of the Safe Kids/FedEx Walk This Way grant program, served as the Steering Committee for plan development. A listing of Task Force/Steering Committee membership is provided as Appendix A. The Steering Committee realized early on that it was not feasible to involve every school in the entire WAMPO region in the planning process. Therefore, target communities/schools that would be representative of the entire area were identified early in the process. All of the target communities applied for funding during the initial KDOT SRTS cycle, and they were known to have an interest in the vision of the plan. This included the communities of Cheney, Haysville and Valley Center. Additionally, Harry Street Elementary School of the Wichita Public School District (USD 259) was included since they were involved in programs with Safe Kids. This list of participants includes representation from rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Initial stakeholder meetings were held with the target communities. These meetings included representatives of the schools and city governments. The purpose of these meetings was to explain the planning process to the community representatives, gain

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an understanding of issues/conditions that impact student travel, and establish a relationship with the individuals participating in plan development.

An extensive parents' survey in the target schools was the central activity of the planning process. This survey, conducted early in the planning process, was used to identify existing travel behaviors, parental concerns, parental attitudes, and opportunities to affect student travel behaviors. The surveys were distributed to the parents of students in the target schools.

Based on the stakeholder meetings and surveys, the Steering Committee created an Action Plan, which identifies issues that impact student travel behavior and suggests projects to address those issues. Follow up meetings have been held within each of the communities and/or schools to gather further input from parents, school officials, and city officials. The Safe Kids Board of Directors also had the opportunity to provide feedback.

In the future, the surveys will be administered again to assess the impact of the projects that are implemented as a result of the planning process. The original results will be compared to the follow up results to measure the changes in student travel behavior and parental attitudes. An analysis report will then be prepared and published. This report will be shared with the communities, school districts, WAMPO, and KDOT. It will also be posted on the WAMPO website.

## Key Survey Findings

- Almost 53% of children travel to school in a family vehicle, while about 40% make the return trip home in a family vehicle.
- Half of all students have asked permission to walk to school.
- More than twice as many children walk home from school (27%) than walk to school (13%).
- About 37% of parents say that they would never allow their children to walk or bike alone to school, regardless of age.
- The majority (82%) of parents feel that schools do not actively encourage or discourage children walking or biking to school.
- About 90% of parents view walking and biking to school as being a healthy activity.
- The biggest factor limiting children from walking to school is distance, as indicated by 46% of parents. Other factors limiting walking to school are traffic volume (43%), traffic speed (41%), intersection safety (35%), perceived violence/crime (35%), weather conditions (35%), and inadequate sidewalks (28%).

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## Action Plan Overview

An Action Plan for providing Safe Routes to School was developed using the information gathered in the planning process. The following is a condensed version of the Action Plan. The detailed version is provided in the Action Plan section.

**Goal 1** – Provide encouragement to walk or bicycle to school.

- **Objective 1** – Help schools encourage walking or bicycling.
  - **Strategy 1** – Local incentive programs.
  - **Strategy 2** – Staff development.
- **Objective 2** – Encourage children to walk or bicycle to school.
  - **Strategy 1** – International Walk to School Day.
  - **Strategy 2** – Local encouragement campaigns.
- **Objective 3** – Encourage parents to allow children to walk or bicycle to school.
  - **Strategy 1** – Walking school bus programs.
  - **Strategy 2** – Crossing guard programs.
  - **Strategy 3** – Local encouragement campaigns.

**Goal 2** – Educate children on safe pedestrian and bicycling behaviors.

- **Objective 1** – Provide schools with walking and bicycling safety materials.
  - **Strategy 1** – Cyrus the Centipede curriculum.
  - **Strategy 2** – Pedestrian safety brochures.
  - **Strategy 3** – Bike and wheeled sports safety brochures.
- **Objective 2** – Provide interactive walking and bicycling safety education.
  - **Strategy 1** – Bicycle safety programs/bike rodeos.
  - **Strategy 2** – Pedestrian safety assemblies.

**Goal 3** – Provide a safe environment for children to walk or bicycle to school.

- **Objective 1** – Engineering/enforcement project identification.
  - **Strategy 1** – SRTS plans.
  - **Strategy 2** – Provide input and feedback on projects.
- **Objective 2** – Obtain funding for engineering/enforcement projects.
  - **Strategy 1** – SRTS funding.
  - **Strategy 2** – Safe Kids/FedEx Walk This Way grant program.

**Goal 4** – Evaluate the effectiveness of SRTS-themed projects.

- **Objective 1** – Evaluate SRTS plan projects.
  - **Strategy 1** – Administer follow up surveys.
- **Objective 2** – Help evaluate future local projects.
  - **Strategy 1** – Administer baseline and follow up surveys.