

Oregon Department of Transportation
Safe Routes to School



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North Wasco School District

Safe Routes to School Implementation Strategy

A strategy to foster a partnership that will make walking and rolling to school a safe, fun, desirable activity



Acknowledgments

The following key people and their organizations participated in the development of this Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Implementation strategy. Their creativity, energy, and commitment were critical to developing this Strategy and their ongoing support is vital for the long-term success of Safe Routes to School within North Wasco County School District

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01

INTRODUCTION



Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a comprehensive K-12th grade program to make school communities safer by combining engineering tools and engagement with education about safety and activities to enable and encourage students to walk and roll to school. SRTS programs involve partnerships among municipalities, school districts, transit districts, parks and recreation districts, public health agencies, community members, parent volunteers, and community groups.

The benefits of implementing a SRTS Plan include improving safety, increasing access, encouraging physical activity, and reducing traffic congestion and motor vehicle emissions near schools. Implementing SRTS programs and projects benefits adjacent neighborhoods, as well as students and their families, by reducing traffic conflicts and enabling walking and rolling trips for all purposes.

Learn more at: www.oregonsaferoutes.org

Safe Routes to School Background

This document serves as a guide for the continued promotion of SRTS programs in North Wasco County School District with a specific focus on education programs. This will be a guiding document for the SRTS Coordinator to guide educational programming starting with the 2023–2024 school year and beyond. This document will help the SRTS Coordinator prioritize meaningful partnerships and activities based on community need for services.

The recommendations in this document are built upon previous SRTS programs in North Wasco County, including:

- ▶ 2020: North Wasco County School District was selected to participate in the ODOT SRTS Project Identification Program resulting in a **SRTS Plan completed in 2022** for the City.
- ▶ 2022: The City of The Dalles was selected as a pilot community for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) SRTS Quick Build Program, which **created additional pedestrian protection at the intersection of 16th Street and Trevitt Street**, adjacent to Colonel Wright Elementary School.
- ▶ 2022: North Wasco County School District was **awarded a Tier 1 ODOT Education Grant to fund a SRTS Coordinator** and develop this strategy.
- ▶ 2022: The City of The Dalles was **awarded an ODOT SRTS Construction Grant for bicycle and pedestrian improvements** near Chenoweth Elementary.
- ▶ 2022: Chenoweth Elementary **hosts their first walking school bus**.



North Wasco County School District Demographics

North Wasco County School District served 2,752 enrolled students in 2023 throughout its eight schools. Schools are located in and around the City of The Dalles.

Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year included:

School Name	Number of Students
Chenoweth Elementary	394
Colonel Wright Elementary	289
Dry Hollow Elementary	413
The Dalles Middle School	537
The Dalles High School	752
Innovations Academy	94
MAP Virtual	107
Mosier Community School	166

North Wasco County School District schools have an average of 60% to 85% of families below the poverty line. The District met the low-income threshold for the federal Community Eligibility Provision, which is only available to the nation's highest poverty schools and districts.

The District also has a greatly diverse student population, with a significantly high average of 50% BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)

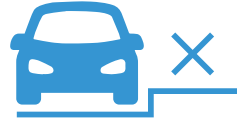


students district-wide. Also, 14.7% of enrolled students in 2023 were English Language Learners and 17.7% were Migrant Students. The District and partnering agencies provide special programming for these students, and a culturally appropriate SRTS program is needed to meet the needs of students and the community.

For more demographic information, see the [North Wasco County School District 2022-2023 Annual Report](#).

Barriers to SRTS in The Dalles

North Wasco County School District's six schools are located in the rural City of The Dalles. Heavy passenger vehicle traffic, high speeds, insufficient bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can create significant barriers for students trying to commute to school safely. There are limited sidewalks within a one-mile radius of many North Wasco County schools resulting in students who walk to school having to walk on the shoulder. The District's crash history shows three fatal crashes and 15 minor crashes within school neighborhoods. Though most families live within a mile of their school, many choose to drive because of road safety concerns.



Lack of sidewalks connecting neighborhoods to schools



Heavy vehicle traffic and high speeds



Perceptions of streets as being **unsafe for walking and rolling to school**

To address these issues, a holistic approach to the SRTS program is needed at North Wasco County School District and in the local community. SRTS programs aim to improve the safety and accessibility of walking and biking routes to school. These initiatives typically involve a combination of infrastructure improvements, educational efforts, and community engagement to promote active transportation and address traffic safety concerns.





02

SRTS PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

Community buy-in and participation is essential to the success of Safe Routes to School. The SRTS Coordinator will use the following tools to communicate with the wider community on program updates and offerings:

- ▷ Host and update a web page where community members can stay up to date on activities at each school.
- ▷ Attend back-to-school nights and other school-related events where the SRTS program can host a table of information and activities.
- ▷ Share program vision and goals on web page and through community social media and newsletter channels.





School District Involvement in SRTS

The North Wasco County School District is heavily involved in SRTS, having demonstrated commitment by securing an ODOT Education Grant (Tier 1), which enabled the District to hire a full-time SRTS Coordinator. North Wasco School District has offered their support to the SRTS Coordinator through:

- ▷ Coordinating with school administration to send emails to families about SRTS activities and messaging
- ▷ Distributing parent/caregiver surveys to understand transportation behavior and barriers.
- ▷ Formalizing support for SRTS by:
 - » Hosting SRTS events at the district level for all schools
 - » Scheduling Bicycle and Pedestrian Education for PE teachers through the Jump Start Train the Trainer program
 - » Providing space and tables during arrival or dismissal, All Parent Nights, and other major existing events

Community Organization Involvement in SRTS

Several community-based organizations and government agencies support the SRTS Coordinator and collaborate on building the North Wasco School District SRTS program. These partnerships are important in creating a holistic program that reaches a diversity of people in The Dalles. The program would not be possible without these partnerships.

The following organizations have participated in four SRTS Coalition meetings through spring and summer 2023:

- ▷ City of the Dalles
- ▷ Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD)
- ▷ The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce
- ▷ North Central Public Health District (NCPHD)





City of the Dalles

The City of the Dalles' continuous support of SRTS is vital for program sustainability and effectiveness. The City of the Dalles has offered their support to North Wasco County's Safe Routes to School program in the following ways:

- ▶ Integrating SRTS recommendations from the Project Identification Program into future planning efforts
- ▶ Involving SRTS representatives in future planning efforts to include considerations for improved school access
- ▶ Continuing to seek funding for transportation improvements that benefit school access
- ▶ Providing traffic control for SRTS events through the police department.
- ▶ Participating in existing citywide events including All Parents Nights and Safe Kids events
- ▶ Identifying solutions to transportation barriers identified in parent/caregiver surveys
- ▶ Participating in community partner meetings



MCEDD

MCEDD services Hood River County, Wasco County, and Sherman County, and offers support in economic development, grant writing, infrastructure project planning and administration, and other technical services. MCEDD has offered their support in the following ways:

- ▷ Participating in tabling events
- ▷ Identifying new community partnerships
- ▷ Identify funding sources and assisting with grant writing

The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce

The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce works to advance agricultural, professional, commercial, industrial, civic, tourism, and general interest in The Dalles area and region. The Chamber of Commerce has offered their support in connecting local bicycle shops to help with SRTS events and bicycle repairs for students.

NCPHD

NCPHD serves Wasco and Sherman Counties with a mission to prevent, promote, and protect for a thriving community. The NCPHD has offered their support in the following ways:

- ▷ Sharing information on website and social media channels about Walk+Roll events
- ▷ Sharing historical context around SRTS in the area and ideas for engaging teachers
- ▷ Sharing or donating a-frame signs and other materials for events
- ▷ Recruiting volunteers through the Medical Reserve Corps, a group of volunteer emergency responders, who also do non-emergency volunteer work
- ▷ Connecting Safe Routes to School with existing events, such as Get Ready The Dalles, an emergency preparedness event hosted annually





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SRTS PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND PRIORITIES

These goals and actions were developed in collaboration with the North Wasco County SRTS Coordinator following conversations during the Coalition meetings. This strategy is intended to be a guiding document for the 2023–2024 school year in order to prioritize actions and program activities and involve necessary partners. The Coalition provided feedback on the following goals and actions during their third meeting together. These goals and actions are intended to build a strong foundation for the program and to prepare to apply for future grant funding including Tier 2 ODOT Education Grant in 2024.

Goal 1: Increase the number of families safely using active transportation for the school commute through educational communications and events

Action**Partners Involved**

Participate in tabling events at schools and in the community including All Parents Nights.

North Wasco Co. SD

Receive health-oriented SRTS materials to incorporate into tabling materials.

NCPHD

Distribute helmets and other SRTS safety materials at Get Ready The Dalles.

NCPHD

Share information about upcoming SRTS events through existing websites and social media channels.

City of The Dalles,
NCPHD, North Wasco
Co. SD

Create a timeline or calendar of SRTS events housed online for families and school staff to access. This may include Walk+Roll events as well community events that relate to SRTS.

North Wasco Co. SD

Order incentives through ODOT SRTS to distribute at Walk+Roll events.

ODOT SRTS Team

Develop suggested route maps or walking school bus route maps for each school to encourage and inform families on how to walk and roll to school.

City of the Dalles

Goal 2: Understand student, parent, and staff transportation challenges and work toward sustainable solutions

Action	Partners Involved
Distribute parent/caregiver transportation surveys at each school in the District at the start of the school year.	North Wasco Co. SD
Develop system for receiving, tracking, and analyzing survey results.	North Wasco Co. SD
Connect with the parent association at each elementary and middle school to learn more about what their priorities are for the school year and how SRTS overlaps with existing work.	North Wasco Co. SD
Connect with elementary school administrators and ask to present at upcoming staff meetings at each school to learn more about teacher transportation challenges and interest in SRTS in their classrooms.	North Wasco Co. SD
Maintain consistent communication through existing meetings with City of The Dalles to understand progress toward designing and building SRTS Construction Grant project near Chenoweth.	City of The Dalles
Schedule Jump Start training for PE teachers to get trained in teaching bike and pedestrian safety in their classes for the next school year.	ODOT SRTS Team

Goal 3: Collaborate with community partners to integrate Safe Routes into existing programs, initiatives, and events

Action**Partners Involved**

Identify streets and corridors close to schools that could benefit from additional shade and street trees to apply for Street Tree Grants.

City of the Dalles,
City Beautification
Committee

Develop system for tracking funding opportunities and prioritizing relevant SRTS grants.

MCEDD

Invite SRTS Coalition members to attend walking school buses, bike bus, and Walk+Roll events as they occur.

All

Invite local politicians including city council and the mayor to attend Walk+Roll events alongside students.

City of the Dalles

Meet with Parks and Recreation to discuss opportunities for starting a partnership.

North Wasco County
Parks and Recreation

Meet with local bike shop to learn more about opportunities for partnership at bike rodeos or other SRTS events.

Bike Shops

Share suggested route maps with the City Beautification Committee to inform future tree planting opportunities.

City Beautification
Committee

Goal 4: Institutionalize Safe Routes to School programs internally at the district level	
Action	Partners Involved
Coordinate traffic control for 2023–2024 walking school buses, bike buses, and other Walk+Roll events in order to develop a streamlined process for District-led SRTS events in the future.	City of The Dalles, The Dalles Police Department
Make a plan for which Walk+Roll events to host and conduct outreach to principals to sign up for event support and coordination.	North Wasco Co. SD
Consider opportunities for discussing the SRTS program with other District staff through regularly scheduled internal meetings and communications.	North Wasco Co. SD
Add information about walking and rolling to the district transportation website.	North Wasco Co. SD
Create a system for schools to request SRTS services as needed throughout the school year.	North Wasco Co. SD





04

NEXT STEPS AND SUSTAINABILITY

SRTS Program Structure



The Safe Routes to School Coalition will be led by the SRTS Coordinator to meet monthly throughout the 2023–2024 school year to discuss upcoming events, troubleshoot transportation challenges in the community, and support the program overall.

In spring 2024, North Wasco County School District will be eligible to apply for a Tier 2 ODOT Education Grant, which can continue to fund the SRTS Coordinator position for the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school years. Some steps that the SRTS Coordinator can take to prepare for a Tier 2 grant include:

- ▶ Attend the January 2024 webinar about ODOT SRTS grants
- ▶ Consider what elements of the North Wasco SRTS program can be deepened and expanded upon in the coming two years
- ▶ Have conversations internally at the District and with Coalition members about a five-year vision for the program based on what has been implemented so far in the 2023 school year
- ▶ Discuss program evaluation with Coalition members and opportunities for growth

Funding Opportunities

In addition to the ODOT Education Grant, there are other opportunities to fund various aspects of the North Wasco County School District SRTS

program from educational materials to campaigns to infrastructure. The table below outlines opportunities for funding and sustaining this SRTS program.

Grant Name	Agency	Timeline	Dollar Amount	Purpose
Regional Travel Options	RTO	Yearly in January Rolling	Awards start at \$50,000	Increase travel options, such as carpooling, transit, telework, etc.
ODOT SRTS Competitive Infrastructure Grant	ODOT	Every other year	\$60,000 to \$2 million	To fund safety improvements on public right-of-way within 1 mile of schools
Oregon Community Paths Grant	ODOT	Annual	\$150,000 to \$750,000 for planning and design \$500,000 to \$6 million for construction	To fund links and community multi-use paths
ODOT SRTS Education Programs Grant	ODOT	Every other year	\$150,000,	To fund education and encouragement programs including funding a SRTS Coordinator position
Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program	US Department of Transportation	Annual	\$100,000 to \$25,000,000	To prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets involving all roadway users
Columbia Gorge Health Council Grant	Columbia Gorge Health Council	Application open June 1-August 20	Up to \$200,000	To fund projects that improve access, quality, and equitability of the local healthcare system



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