

Memorandum

City of Lawrence

Planning & Development Services

TO: Lawrence City Commission and USD 497 School Board
CC: Dr. Anthony Lewis, Superintendent of Schools USD 497
Tom Markus, City Manager
Scott McCullough, Director of Planning & Development Services
Chuck Soules, Assistant Director of Municipal Services & Operations
FROM: Jessica Mortinger, Transportation Planning Manager
Amanda Sahin, MSO Project Engineer
DATE: March 19, 2019
RE: Safe Routes to School Progress Update

Background

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is an effort by parents, schools, community leaders and government to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to safely walk and bicycle to school. SRTS programs examine conditions around schools, conduct projects and activities that work to improve safety and accessibility, and reduce traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. The Lawrence SRTS initiative began in 2014 as collaborative effort between the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, Lawrence Public Schools, the City of Lawrence, and the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This partnership provided the framework for developing the holistic SRTS program, which includes bicycling and walking encouragement, education, enforcement, evaluation, and engineering. This memo details the SRTS planning and infrastructure implementation progress made in the last five years.

Encouragement, Education, and Enforcement

In addition to safe walking and bicycling routes, the SRTS initiative involves education, encouragement, and enforcement surrounding safe walking and bicycling behavior. Students participate in classroom education which covers pedestrian safety at intersections, crosswalks, and along the sidewalk.

Approximately 1,650 fourth and fifth graders annually participate in the Bicycle Lesson and Safety Training (BLAST) program as part of their physical education classes. In four classes, students learn about proper helmet fit, rules of the road, bicycle safety checks, road hazards and how to safely navigate through an intersection. Some students learn how to ride a bike, while all learn safe riding skills. On bike practice is taught using the school district's bicycle fleet. League of American Cyclists Certified Instructors (LCIs) assist PE teachers with the BLAST program.



Students are encouraged to participate in Walk to School Day in October and Bike to School Day in May. In 2018, approximately 400 students participated in Bike to School. Approximately 900 students participated in the 2017 Walk to School event.

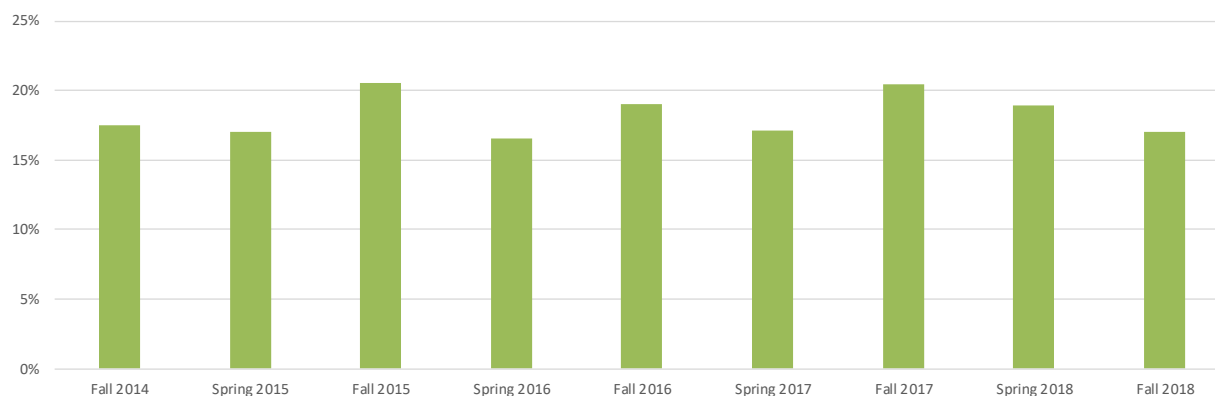
The Lawrence Police Department enforces yielding and speeding enforcement at the beginning of the school year in and around school zones for all Lawrence Public Schools (elementary, middle, and high schools). When specific concerns arise directed patrol is provided in and around the specific school zone of concern. Other proactive enforcement is conducted when time and call load allows.



Evaluation

The University of Kansas (KU) and the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department (LDCHD) formed an Academic Health Department in 2013. Part of this venture included KU evaluating the Partnerships in Community Health (PICH) grant which included the SRTS program. The evaluation looked at the intensity of SRTS activities implemented and their impact to walking and biking rates. The analysis used student travel tallies (fall and spring surveys asking students how they arrived at school), parent surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015, and field observation of driver yielding rates. The evaluation found there was variability between the fall and spring semesters and generally the rates of active transportation increased since the inception of the program (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Per Semester Active Student Travel for All Lawrence Public Elementary and Middle Schools



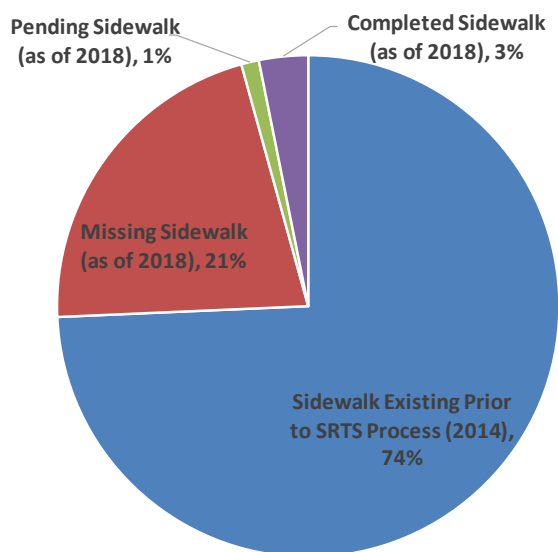
Engineering and Routes

Routes were developed during the SRTS planning process in 2015 by reviewing student addresses, school boundaries, and possible 2.5 mile walking routes (the demarcation for bussing) from each school based on the pedestrian network. This data allowed the SRTS staff team to propose primary routes which collect students who would be walking and/or bicycling from their residential streets. Input on these initial routes was gathered through multiple means. A community meeting was held on January 14, 2015. It was attended by approximately 75 representatives of Lawrence elementary and middle schools. Additionally, numerous other smaller

meetings with parents, school officials, and other interested parties were held. Routes were finalized by the SRTS partnership, taking into account all of the input and feedback provided through this process. Route maps were published for every public K-8 school on the Lawrence SRTS website: www.beactivesaferoutes.com. An overall route map can be found online at: www.lawrenceks.org/assets/mpo/SRTS/RouteMap.pdf. These routes were incorporated into the Regional Pedestrian Plan and are part of the priority pedestrian network.

SRTS sidewalk gaps on SRTS identified routes have been prioritized in the Transportation Commission's Non-Motorized Prioritization program¹. Figure 2 shows the progress Lawrence has made in creating SRTS routes with sidewalk on both sides of streets. (The SRTS planning process identified sidewalks on both sides of the SRTS Routes as the goal.) The SRTS The blue portion of the pie chart shows the sidewalk which existed at the beginning of the SRTS sidewalk initiative. Since the SRTS sidewalk initiative began in 2014, an additional 3% of the network has been completed.

Figure 2: SRTS Routes Sidewalk Network – Both Sides of the Street



The SRTS planning process identified sidewalks on both sides of SRTS Routes as the goal.

The SRTS route improvements utilize several funding sources including: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Transportation Alternatives (TA) grants, and incorporation into larger Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects or private development projects. The City of Lawrence has successfully received TA grants administered through KDOT. In 2016, \$189,000 was awarded to install SRTS sidewalks in various locations and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs, shown in the picture) in locations at existing school crossings which do not currently have a crossing guard. In 2017, the city was awarded \$394,000 to install SRTS sidewalks.



¹ <https://assets.lawrenceks.org/assets/boards/transportation-commission/NonMotorizedPolicy.pdf>

The City submitted another SRTS TA application in August 2018 for additional funding; however, the FY2020 SRTS TA application was not funded.

Future Work

In 2019, the SRTS partnership, led by the MPO, will conduct a planning process to develop a citywide SRTS plan. The process beginning in 2019 will include new and old partners: the Health Department, City, MPO, Lawrence Public Schools, the University of Kansas (as part of the Academic Health Department), and the Lawrence-Douglas County Sustainability Office. The process will review/revise the Community's goal for SRTS, evaluate the SRTS routes established in the Regional Pedestrian Plan, and make recommendations for improved walking and biking to Lawrence's Elementary and Middle Schools. The process will provide opportunities for the public to hear about the progress we have made and provide input as we continue to work towards being more walkable and bikeable.