

SRTS CASE STUDY:

Waltham, Massachusetts

Walking School Buses on the move in Massachusetts

SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School



CASE STUDY

Background

A grassroots program, Healthy Waltham Initiative, brought the Executive Office of Transportation's Massachusetts Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program to Whittemore Elementary School in Waltham, Mass. The principal and parents of Whittemore Elementary saw a need to help keep their children safer from the traffic congestion on their journey to school. Working with Whittemore Elementary, parents searched for ways to increase the students' ability to walk safely to school. And with the creation of a SRTS program in early 2006 at Whittemore Elementary, the parents and staff began seeing these needs filled.

Details

In spring 2006, Whittemore Elementary School, with the help and support of the parents, kicked off their SRTS program by promoting "Walking Wednesdays." Both the parents and the school believed the "Walking Wednesdays" program was the right step in addressing their traffic safety concerns. With the support of MassRIDES, the school organized four Walking School Buses, an event at which a group of parents and students meet at a designated location and then walk together to school with other students joining along the way. School approached the task force for help. The school officials wanted to develop a safety patrol and to place three marked crosswalks at the intersection, to increase the safety of children walking to school. Parent volunteers joined the patrol, and the number of walkers, along with the ease in picking up and dropping off students, increased.



Students and parents participant in one of the "Walking Wednesdays" events at Whittemore Elementary School

Results

The Walking School Bus has allowed the school to focus on increasing walkability, raising awareness of walking to school and changing students' perceptions regarding walking and bicycling. The program continues its four walking school buses every Walking Wednesday. At the start of the program in spring 2006, 21 percent of students walked to school. By fall 2006, the percent of students walking had increased to 53 percent. Thanks to the efforts of the parents, the school and partner organizations, Whittemore has seen both measurable and sustainable results in the number of students walking and bicycling to school.

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For more resources and information on Safe Routes to School, please visit the National Center for Safe Routes to School Web site at www.saferoutesinfo.org.