

# Safe Routes to School Plans Chart the Path for Student Physical Activity

by: Be Healthy QC

## SUMMARY

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national program to encourage and foster safe, convenient and fun ways to bicycle and walk to/from school. SRTS programs can build support for better health and safety within communities. A SRTS travel plan examines conditions around a school that might limit or discourage students from bicycling and walking, and offers potential solutions to forge better, safer ways to get there. Successful programs combine the five E's of education, encouragement, engineering, enforcement and evaluation to remove barriers.



## CHALLENGE

Three school and one community center SRTS plans were created in Year Two by Bi-State Regional Commission (a metropolitan planning organization). While some schools had common barriers such as busy streets, poor sidewalk conditions and longer distances to school, one school had both physical and social barriers that required cross-sector community collaboration.

In 2015, the Moline-Coal Valley School District revised school

boundaries and reassigned students to Lincoln-Irving Elementary School. This included students from the Floreciente Neighborhood in Moline which is comprised of a high proportion of low-income and Latino households. The new school location of Lincoln-Irving Elementary increased the walking barriers for the Floreciente students due to increased distance, elevated topography, decreased safe route options, and increased high volume traffic crossings.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

This work was made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in support of Be Healthy QC. Administered by the Quad City Health Initiative, Be Healthy QC seeks to increase access to healthy food and beverage options and physical activity opportunities through the implementation of policy, systems and environmental change across the community. Follow our progress at [www.behealthyqc.org](http://www.behealthyqc.org) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/quadcityhealthinitiative](http://www.facebook.com/quadcityhealthinitiative).

*"The benefits of walking to school instead of using a car are many. Getting outdoors, enjoying the neighborhood, and moving more makes you feel better. SRTS are a great way to reinforce how walking makes us and our community healthier."*

*- Gena McCullough (Bi-State Regional Commission)*

## Contact

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## SOLUTION

As part of the community collaboration in the SRTS planning process, Bi-State staff worked concurrently with Global Communities. Global Communities is a community action group focused on reinvigorating the historic Floreciente neighborhood and improving the quality of life of its residents. Collaboration allowed access and feedback from stakeholder meetings and surveys conducted by Global Communities to supplement data collected for the SRTS travel plan. That input, combined with the sidewalk inventory and analysis conducted by Bi-State staff, better identified the neighborhood's needs and barriers. Other local agencies and private partners assisted in this process.

## RESULTS

Many improvements have been made to the active transportation network at Lincoln-Irving Elementary School for the Floreciente Neighborhood students. The partnerships created during this project have had positive results for the neighborhood including the installation of a new bus shelter, sidewalk replacements and improvements, and a weekly farmer's market. An essential product of the plan were the maps of SRTS (with crosswalks, sidewalk conditions, and transit shelters) for distribution to families and students attending Lincoln-Irving School. The success of the plan was covered by local news media which helped spread word of the plan's completion. The SRTS plan will enhance future community development efforts for the City of Moline, the Moline-Coal Valley School District, MetroLINK and Floreciente stakeholders.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

All the Safe Routes to School travel plans developed included steps for local schools to implement the proposed solutions. Educational and implementation support will continue to be given to the schools throughout their SRTS journey. Enthusiasm for physical activity is growing through the SRTS travel plan process. It will take school leaders, elected officials, parents, teachers, law-enforcement and community groups working together to continue the momentum and make safe, convenient ways to and from school.