

12. REGIONAL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM UPDATE

BACKGROUND

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs increase physical activity, improve health, reduce traffic congestion, and address air quality by getting more students walking and rolling to school and in daily life. SRTS aims to make it safer and easier for children walking and biking to school through both infrastructure improvements and education and training of drivers, walkers, and bikers.

Creating a regional SRTS program is identified in the goals of H-GAC's current 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), as well as in the draft 2026-2027 UPWP. H-GAC's SRTS program will accomplish three (3) objectives:

1. Conduct a literature review and best practices study of SRTS, including recommendations for the MPO's role in moving SRTS forward in the region.
2. Provide planning support for implementation of SRTS best practices in the region.
3. Provide technical support for regional, local area, corridor, and site specific SRTS plans.

H-GAC's SRTS program will leverage funding and policy opportunities to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety, expand mobility options, encourage alternative transportation use, and promote public health in the catchment areas of schools across the region.

CURRENT SITUATION

H-GAC staff reviewed the information from the Safe Routes Partnership—the premier organization advancing SRTS efforts across America—as well as websites and transportation plans of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to compile best practices for adopting and supporting SRTS programming at the regional level. The twenty-three (23) other Texas MPOs and four (4) out-of-state MPOs were researched. Staff produced a literature review with three (3) key recommendations to guide further advancement of H-GAC's program:

1. Incentivize SRTS infrastructure projects in the upcoming TASA call for projects.
2. If transportation alternatives (TA) funds are used for SRTS, separate SRTS planning projects into its own call so planning applicants do not compete with infrastructure applicants.
3. Inventory existing SRTS programs in the area and gauge stakeholder interest in starting more.

ACTION REQUESTED

Information only.