

## Revere Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program Program Results September 2012 – May 2014

The Revere SRTS Program was designed to increase the number of children walking to elementary school by providing safety training, encouragement programs, on-street improvements to traffic safety, and education to students and their families. Nationally, SRTS programs have increased student physical activity and strengthened communities, while decreasing traffic congestion around schools.

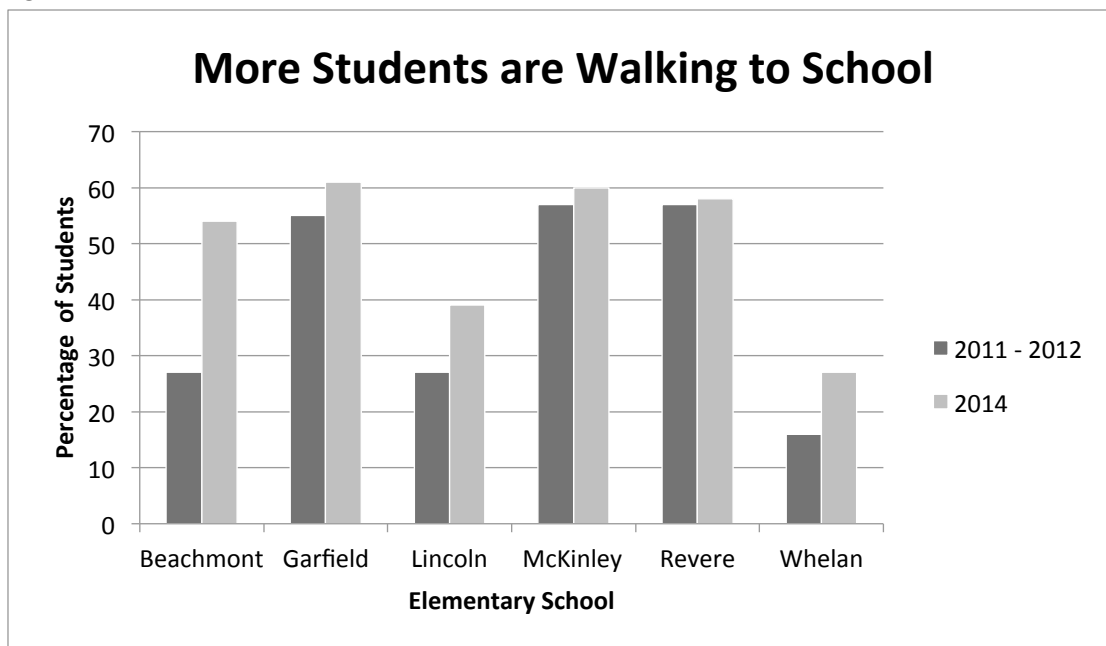
The specific program goal is to shift children’s travel from their parent’s cars to walking trips. The motivations of participants, parents, municipal staff, WalkBoston and program funders have been diverse, ranging from improving children’s health to enhancing community-school connections to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from school trips.

### Summary of Results

During its first two years the program has been very successful.

- **With all six Revere elementary schools participating the number of students who live within a half mile of school have increased by 100%, 69%, 44%, 11%, 5% and 2%. (See Figure 1 and Table 1.)**
- **This increase comprises approximately 470 more students regularly walking to school in Revere each day.**
- **The shift in travel mode has also resulted in an estimated reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Revere of approximately 177.47 tons of GHG annually (to be confirmed by MAPC).** Because mode shift programs are so difficult to track at the community level, WalkBoston is very pleased to have the tools and data to show this reduction.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1



<sup>1</sup> WalkBoston would like to thank Tim Reardon of the Data Services Department of the MAPC for his extensive and critical contribution to developing and using the tools needed to assess mode and other GHG changes in Revere. Final GHG results to be included once they are received from MAPC.

There is significant variation in walking rates among the six schools which is likely due to two key factors:

1. The land use pattern across the community which ranges from dense urban areas to a much more suburban pattern; and
2. The lower availability of family autos in less affluent, but more urban areas, where walk to school rates are higher.

As would be expected, the most significant increase in walking has occurred in the schools which had the lowest walking rates before the program began (Beachmont, Lincoln and Whelan Schools). Before the program the morning walking share (0 - .5 mile zone) ranged from 16% to 57% across all six schools. After two years, the range had narrowed to 27% to 61%. Before the program the afternoon walking share (0 - .5 mile zone) ranged from 16% to 66%. After two years, the range had narrowed to 33% to 68%.

### **Program Background**

Revere was selected for WalkBoston's program because several of the City's schools were revealed to have low rates of walking notwithstanding the fact that many of the City's schoolchildren lived within ½ mile of their schools. The data was collected via surveys carried out by WalkBoston and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council during the 2010 – 2011 school year (the surveys and survey tool were developed with the support of the Barr Foundation).

WalkBoston approached Revere on the Move—an initiative of MGH RevereCARES—and Revere Public Schools (RPS) with the proposal that WalkBoston would raise the funding needed to hire a Revere SRTS Coordinator for three years if RPS would agree to work with the Coordinator and host a robust walk to school program. The proposal was enthusiastically accepted by both RPS and Mayor Rizzo. WalkBoston's Walk to School Coordinator, Julie DeMauro, was hired in Spring 2012 and the in-school efforts began in Fall 2012. The program has been carried out as a partnership with MGH Revere CARES, a coalition of the Massachusetts General Hospital's Center for Community Health Improvement, and with the generous support of the Barr Foundation.

A pre-program survey of student travel habits was conducted in May 2012, and a two-year progress survey was conducted in May 2014. This report covers the results of the program as implemented for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. The program will continue during the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 1

Percent of Students walking

	To School (AM)		From School (PM)		Percent of students living within 1 mile of the school
	0 - .5 mile	.5 - 1 mile	0 - .5 mile	.5 - 1 mile	
<b>Beachmont</b>					
2012	27%	29%	28%	33%	90%
2014	54%	33%	54%	24%	
<b>Garfield</b>					
2011	55%	31%	53%	33%	87%
2014	61%	44%	63%	48%	
<b>Lincoln</b>					
2012	27%	7%	28%	7%	88%
2014	39%	12%	43%	14%	
<b>McKinley</b>					
2012*	57%	na	57%	na	100%
2014	60%	24%	68%	24%	
<b>Revere</b>					
2011	57%	5%	66%	5%	79%
2014	58%	12%	63%	10%	
<b>Whelan</b>					
2011	16%	0%	16%	0%	87%
2014	27%	5%	33%	5%	

\* McKinley 2012 survey shows average across whole school - no differentiation between walking distances or between morning and afternoon trips. The .5 mi - 1 mi. walk mode share for 2012 is not available with any accuracy.

## Community Context

The SRTS Program has been implemented during a period of significant community engagement in programs to improve the health of community residents through increased physical activity. Among the programs and projects that have taken place during the same years as the SRTS program are:

- City participation in the MA Department of Public Health Mass in Motion program, which includes a community coordinator who has worked with the schools.
- Revere on the Move project of the Revere CARES Coalition whose coordinator has worked with the schools.
- Implementation of two new urban trails by the City
- Successful completion of a Kickstarter campaign to fund a new Revere Walking Map
- Active RPS Wellness Committee that works to build awareness, grant opportunities and idea sharing regarding health and wellness throughout the district
- Efforts to improve quality of life issues, specifically including walking and walking safety, in the Shirley Avenue neighborhood – WalkBoston, The Neighborhood Developers and the City worked jointly on this effort

As described by Cate Blackford, the Revere Mass in Motion Coordinator, at a 2013 DPH workshop, implementation of the SRTS program has had numerous ripple effects in Revere, including:

- Raising local awareness of street, sidewalk and crossing conditions which has led to identifying SRTS routes as a priority for repairs and upgrades to sidewalks and crossings
- Adding other efforts to encourage people to walk, including creation of walking clubs, and development of a fitness challenge walk of the Urban Trail
- Creation of a new urban trail in the Beachmont Neighborhood
- Based on participation numbers of school children in the walking program, identification of the need for more morning activities and the creation of wintertime before-school walks and games in the Whelan gym
- Use of data on the number of walkers and the original walk-shed analysis as key illustrators of the need in Revere's application to MassDOT's SRTS crossing & sidewalk repair program.
- Perhaps most striking, Cate stated that *"having children walking has made the neighborhood feel safer – people are getting to know more of their neighbors and the neighborhood feels more walkable."*

## SRTS Approach

The SRTS coordinator's approach evolved as the City and School Department embraced the program. As described below, the coordinator initially focused on involving individual parents and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA's). In the program's second year, the coordinator successfully enlisted the support of the schools as a means of institutionalizing the program and thereby moving it in the direction of sustainability. Year three, just getting underway, will continue to build the program into the Revere Public School's activities so that they will continue in future years as the WalkBoston funded coordinator position comes to an end.

### Year 1: Focus on Parents

In the program's first year, 2012-2013, the coordinator concentrated on trying to work with parent volunteers either on an individual basis or through the PTA's. She had mixed success with this approach. Parents pitched in for special events such as the National and State Walk to School Days and somewhat inconsistently for the safety training of second graders.

- A major program focus in the first year was Walking School Buses (WSB), a coordinated approach to children walking in groups to school with an assigned adult. While the

children embraced the WSB's, parents were reluctant to commit to a regular schedule or sustained commitment. Even a WSB organized and led by the coordinator who walked with her children attracted few students toward the end of the first year. However, the publicity associated with the creation of the WSB helped to publicize the program and introduce it to students and parents.

- The schools enthusiastically supported the safety-training program with several teachers and even some principals participating in the safety training. The training was offered at all six elementary schools.
- At the conclusion of Year 1, the coordinator decided to seek more active school participation in SRTS and established a Task Force with representation from each of the schools as well as the Superintendent's office (a list of Task Force members is provided as Appendix 1).
- The Revere Public School Wellness Committee that seeks to build awareness, grant opportunities and information sharing on health and wellness also contributed to the program's success. The coordinator's participation in the Wellness Committee enabled her to promote the program to the teachers in addition to the principals. This resulted in more interest on the part of the teachers and reduced the time commitment for principals.
- Beginning in 2010 the City of Revere, Revere on the Move and Mass in Motion worked together to promote interest in, and awareness of, the importance of fitness and healthy living. The Revere Safe Routes to School program was also added to the growing list of health and wellness initiatives established by the City.

## **Year 2: Focus on School Participation**

With the SRTS Task Force established, the coordinator began to work more closely with the schools and their staff. Gym teachers actively promoted SRTS within their schools. The coordinator felt she had finally found a "fit" in the gym teachers whose primary goal was student fitness and who were under less time pressure for academic testing in their classes. Within individual schools, most of the teacher representatives on Wellness Committees are gym teachers.

The second year also saw a tailoring of the SRTS program to individual school resources and staff interests. To support school efforts, the SRTS coordinator provided standardized walk notices and program ideas. Schools promoted walking through a variety of activities.

### **Beachmont School**

- Staff actively participated in weekly Walking School Buses. Several staff members live in the neighborhood and walking with students was easy to incorporate into morning routines.
- Staff and school administration communicated the SRTS message with morning and classroom messages and sidewalk bulletin boards.
- Students who walked were recognized through the Walk of Fame Board, extra gym time and a Golden Shoe Award.

### **Garfield School**

- Heavy staff participation in weekly Walking School Buses.
- Strong promotion by the staff and administration - assistant principal, guidance counselor and teachers

### **Lincoln School**

- New drop off/pick up policy made it safer for children to walk to school and more difficult for parents to drop off/pick up – a “stick” approach which resulted in Lincoln showing the second highest percentage increase in walking of the six schools.
- Staff changes in the Physical Education Department helped to build a better wellness program which focused on daily walk to school and other physical activities.

#### **McKinley School**

- The principal joined students on the Walking School Bus that operates once a week.
- The top 25 students who walked weekly received extra gym time as a reward for their walking efforts.
- Staff and administration strongly supported the program.

#### **Paul Revere School**

- Weekly Walk to School Day with designated park and walk locations for parents and students to meet to begin walking to school.
- Strong staff promotion and support for the program.
- Student recognition with paper sneaker that they designed for display along the school hallways.

#### **A.C. Whelan School**

- Continuation of bi-weekly walking school buses.
- Increase in students walking to and from school as a result of less traffic along walking routes.

During the first year of the program, the Revere School Department made the decision to give fewer students the option of attending schools outside their school zone. This resulted in a slightly greater percentage of students living within the one half mile of school.

At a citywide level walking is being promoted through the creation of trails: the Beachmont Urban Trail (near Beachmont School) and the West Revere Urban Trail (near Whelan School). A Revere Walking Map funded through a KickStarter Campaign will draw walkers to its designated seven routes throughout the city.

#### **Year 3: Sustaining SRTS**

The goal of the third year work program is for the schools to assume full ownership of SRTS under the guidance of the SRTS Task Force. We are pleased to report that to date, three schools represented by three Task Force members are beginning to do so. In January 2015, the task force as a whole will discuss and develop best practices that will be used in the years to come to sustain the program.

The school year began with a pilot 2nd grade safety training program being offered at all elementary schools. The pilot incorporates the key components from WalkBoston’s current pedestrian training program, with additional props that will be taught during the student’s physical education block. It is planned that these training will become part of the district Physical Education curriculum.

## **Appendix 1**

### SRTS Task Force Members

- Julie DeMauro – Coordinator/Whelan representative
- Sylvia Chiang—Revere on the Move/Revere CARES of MGH
- Chris Malone Asst. Superintendent RPS
- Carol Tye School Committee
- Stacey Rizzo School Committee
- Nate Dore PE Teacher - Beachmont
- April Freeny PE Teacher - Lincoln
- Emma Lombard Teacher - Garfield
- Bridgett Mongale Teacher - McKinley (new to the board)
- Suzanne Harvey PE Teacher - Paul Revere School
- Andrea Aeschlimann - Science Teacher and Bike advocate RMA