



Strengthening Communities through Collaboration:

The Partnership between Sustainable Jersey and the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Program

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RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK
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NEW JERSEY
Safe Routes to School



www.saferoutesnj.org



U.S. Department of Transportation
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Acknowledgement

The New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program, supported by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, is a statewide initiative with a mission to partner with schools and communities to prioritize and implement opportunities for people to walk, bike, or travel by other wheeled devices. By focusing on improvements to support active travel by youth, we can create safe, healthy, equitable, and appealing conditions for all.

The New Jersey Safe Routes Resource Center assists public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the general public in creating safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environments for children in New Jersey through education, training, and research.

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The New Jersey Safe Routes to School program, along with the Sustainable Jersey and Sustainable Jersey for Schools programs, has a long history of collaboration to create healthier, more resilient, and walkable/bikeable communities in New Jersey. This report details the history and impact of this partnership, emphasizing the mutual benefits of aligning these efforts.

Background and Collaboration

The New Jersey Safe Routes to School program and Sustainable Jersey share a mission of fostering sustainability, safety, and active transportation in communities and schools. By promoting safe walking and biking routes, these programs support broader environmental and public health goals. The partnership has been strengthened through educational initiatives and policy advocacy. The NJ Safe Routes to School program’s mission is to partner with schools and communities to prioritize and implement opportunities for people to walk, bike, or travel by other wheeled devices. Sustainable Jersey actions help municipalities and schools integrate Safe Routes to School (SRTS) best practices into their resilience efforts, expanding reach and effectiveness. The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) is supporting the Safe Routes to School Resource Center (NJDOT SRTSRC) and regional Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) around New Jersey to provide Safe Routes to School programs to students and to assist municipalities in completing actions to earn points toward Sustainable Jersey certification.

Sustainable Jersey’s Role and Impact

[Sustainable Jersey](#) is a statewide initiative that supports municipalities, schools, and school districts in achieving sustainability goals through certification and funding. The program:



- Engages 83% of New Jersey municipalities and 64% of public school districts.¹
- Has awarded over \$7.6 million in grants to support more than 9,000 documented sustainability actions.²
- Provides free registration and funding opportunities for municipalities and schools.

By incorporating NJ SRTS goals and mission into Sustainable Jersey’s framework, schools and municipalities are encouraged to develop safer and more accessible walking and biking infrastructure, aligning with NJDOT’s long-term vision for safer active transportation.



Integration of Safe Routes to School Programs and Sustainable Jersey Actions

The NJDOT Safe Routes to School Resource Center plays a crucial role in updating, reviewing, and endorsing Sustainable Jersey actions related to active transportation. This ensures that Sustainable Jersey-certified actions align with national and state best practices for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Key advantages of this collaboration include:

- Municipalities and schools completing Sustainable Jersey actions automatically contribute to NJ SRTS program goals.
- The alignment of NJDOT pedestrian and bicycle priorities with Sustainable Jersey assists with consistency in implementation.
- The partnership incentivizes schools and municipalities to engage in safety and sustainability initiatives.

NJDOT Safe Routes Recognition Program and Benefits

The NJDOT Safe Routes to School Recognition Program encourages communities to participate in both NJ SRTS and Sustainable Jersey programs, offering a streamlined approach to achieving recognition for safety and sustainability efforts. Key benefits include:

- Automatic achievement of Silver Level NJDOT Safe Routes to School Program Recognition for municipalities and school districts completing Sustainable Jersey actions.
- Increased motivation for communities to implement sustainable transportation policies and programs.
- Enhanced efficiency in evaluating applications, ensuring alignment with NJDOT's safety and planning standards.

Sustainable Jersey Program Manager Anne Heasley highlights the value of this partnership: *“Sustainable Jersey actions provide municipalities and schools with an additional incentive to participate in the Safe Routes to School Program, helping them integrate sustainability and transportation safety goals.”*

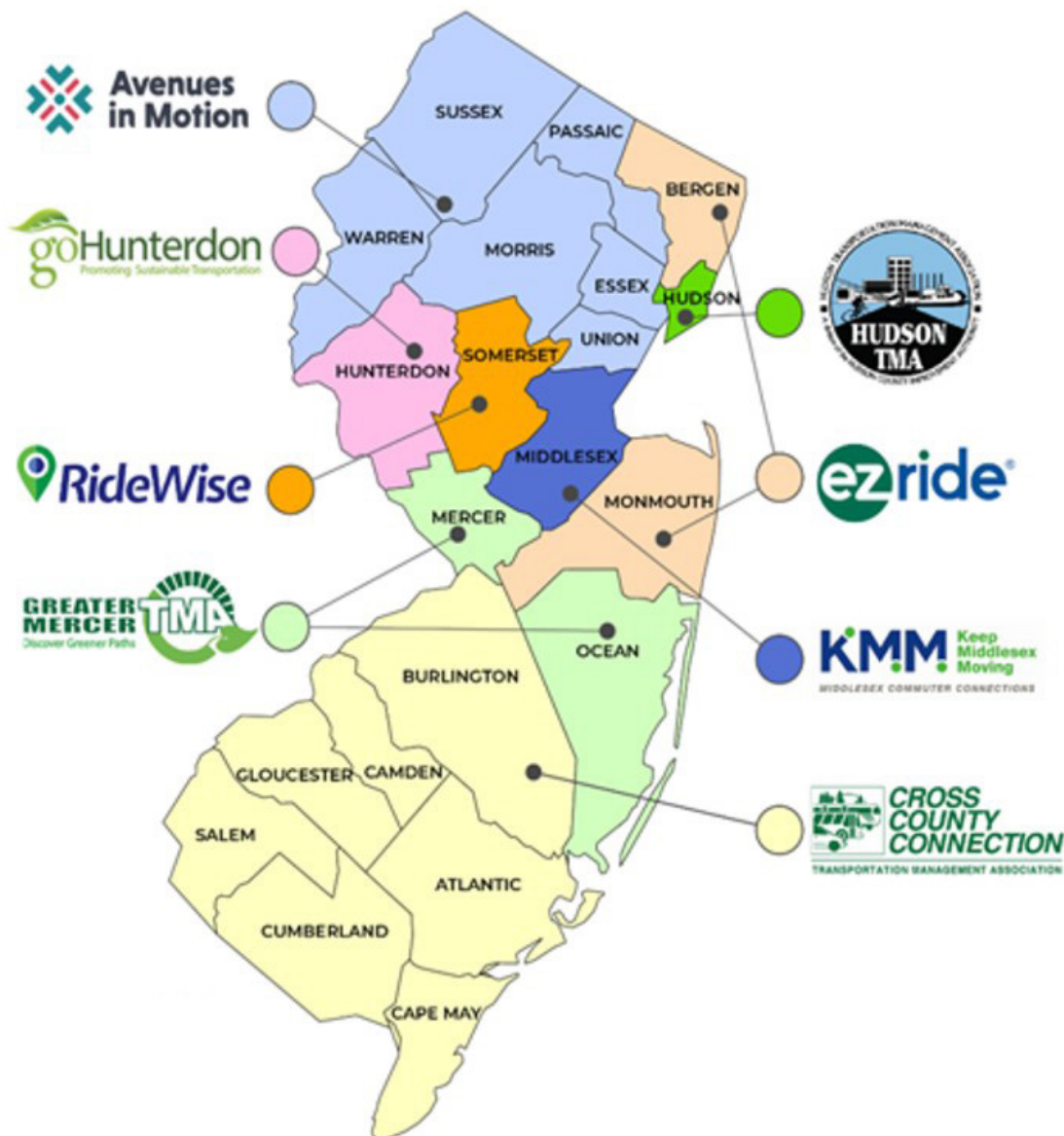


Leveraging Sustainable Jersey Actions to Expand Safe Routes Participation

New Jersey's eight Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) play a critical role in engaging schools and municipalities in NJ SRTS initiatives. By leveraging Sustainable Jersey certification, TMAs can:

- Offer schools and districts additional incentives to adopt Safe Routes to School programs.
- Use Sustainable Jersey Green Teams to facilitate outreach to municipal and school staff interested in active transportation.
- Increase participation through activities like walk audits and school travel plans, which earn Sustainable Jersey points.

RideWise TMA Outreach Manager Sara Catherine notes: *"Municipalities frequently use walk audits and travel plans to earn Sustainable Jersey points. The overlap between these programs brings more stakeholders to the table, increasing engagement and resources."*



Strengthening Community Partnerships for Safe Routes Success

Sustainable Jersey provides TMAs and the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Resource Center with valuable contact information on municipalities and schools interested in active transportation initiatives. This allows TMAs to:

- Target outreach efforts more effectively.
- Foster collaboration among municipal partners, school officials, and community stakeholders.
- Ensure Safe Routes to School projects align with safety goals.

Lisa Lee from EZ Ride TMA suggests expanding this collaboration further: *“Pairing experienced Safe Routes Coordinators with parent groups, municipal and school staff, and offering assistance with completing SRTS actions strengthens program integration.”*



Aligned Goals and Performance Measures

Sustainable Jersey and NJ SRTS align closely with NJDOT's Safe Routes to School strategic plan goals. Key objectives include:

- **Educating communities on safe, active transportation:** Increasing the number of schools and municipalities adopting policies that promote walking and biking.
- **Prioritizing health:** Encouraging the adoption of policies that increase physical activity, such as walking and bicycling events.
- **Strengthening partnerships and advocacy:** Expanding participation in Safe Routes to School programs through Sustainable Jersey certification.



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Reviewed Actions Supporting Safe Routes to School and Sustainable Jersey Goals

To ensure compliance and effectiveness, staff at the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Resource Center serves as expert reviewers of Sustainable Jersey actions related to Safe Routes to School and active transportation. Each year, the following Sustainable Jersey actions are reviewed to ensure alignment with NJDOT SRTS priorities:

Sustainable Jersey for Schools Actions:

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety & Promotion Initiatives
- Safe Routes to School District Policy
- School Travel Plan for Walking and Bicycling

Sustainable Jersey Municipal Actions:

- Safe Routes to School
- Complete and Green Streets for All Policy
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Audits
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Improvement Projects

Conclusion: Strengthening Communities through Collaboration

The collaboration between NJ Safe Routes to School and Sustainable Jersey exemplifies a successful partnership in promoting sustainable, safe, and active transportation in New Jersey. By aligning their efforts, both programs enhance community engagement, streamline recognition processes, and support broader state goals for healthier and more accessible communities. Moving forward, continued integration of policies and initiatives will further strengthen the impact of both programs, ensuring long-term benefits for New Jersey residents.

Sustainable Jersey and NJDOT's Safe Routes to School Program Background and Resources

This section provides additional context and resources that support and strengthen the partnership between the NJ Safe Routes to School program and Sustainable Jersey. Section A outlines key opportunities for communities to access state and federal funding through NJDOT grant programs, including how School Travel Plans and Complete Streets policies can enhance applications. Section B highlights how the goals of the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan align with Sustainable Jersey actions. Section C details how participation in Sustainable Jersey supports the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Recognition Program, further incentivizing schools and municipalities to implement best practices in active transportation.

A. NJDOT State and Federal Grant Applications & Planning Assistance

Extra Points for School Travel Plans in NJDOT SRTS Grant Applications

Developing a School Travel Plan offers several advantages, including earning extra points when applying for the New Jersey Department of Transportation's SRTS federal infrastructure grants.

Resource: New Jersey Department of Transportation Federal-Aid Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Program 2024 Program Handbook, <https://www.saferoutesnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2024-SRTS->

Extra Points for Complete Streets Policies in NJDOT Grant Applications

NJDOT provides special consideration to municipalities with adopted Complete Streets policies when evaluating applications for federal and state grant funding. Municipalities that align with the principles outlined in Complete and Green Streets for All: A Model Complete Streets Policy and Guide may have a competitive advantage in securing funding.

Resource: <https://www.saferoutesnj.org/complete-streets-in-new-jersey/>

NJDOT's Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program for Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning

A Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan demonstrates a community's commitment to reducing reliance on motorized transportation and prioritizing safer, more accessible walking and bicycling options. New Jersey municipalities can apply for planning assistance through NJDOT's Bureau of Safety, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Programs Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program. Selected municipalities receive consultant support and NJDOT-funded planning services, with no local match required. Municipal Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans receive SJ points towards certification.



Resource: NJDOT Local Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Assistance Program, <https://njbikeped.org/njdot-local-bicycle-and-pedestrian-planning-assistance-program>

B. Aligned Goals in the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan (2020)

Resource: New Jersey Safe Routes 2020 Strategic Plan Update, <https://www.saferoutesnj.org/2020-nj-safe-routes-to-school-strategic-plan/>

There are several goals listed in the New Jersey Safe Routes 2020 Strategic Plan Update that rely on involvement with Sustainable Jersey programs, including:

Goal 1: Educate about safe walking, bicycling, and other active transportation and encourage usage as a healthy part of everyday life.

Objective: Increase the number of schools and communities adopting and implementing policies, plans, and practices that support the Safe Routes program as every day, lifelong activities.

Performance Measures:

- Number of schools and municipalities that received points for bicycle and pedestrian actions as part of the Sustainable Jersey and Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Program.



- Number of Schools and Districts with supportive policies for walking, bicycling, school travel plans, and other wheeled active transportation devices as part of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Program.

Goal 2: Prioritize health and equity for people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds and neighborhoods in program implementation.

Objective: Incorporate healthy and equitable best practices into decision-making.

Performance Measure: Number of municipalities and school districts with Sustainable Jersey Anti-idling Action points

Goal 3: Nurture strong partnerships and cultivate a network of local, regional, and state champions throughout New Jersey to advocate for actions and policies that encourage Safe Routes for all.

Objective: Improve planning and policy development for Safe Routes.

Performance Measures:

- Number of counties/municipalities with Bicycle/Pedestrian or Circulation Plans and Complete and Green Streets Policies that address Safe Routes elements, and municipalities with supportive Safe Routes programs
- Number of School Travel Plans
- Number of school district Safe Routes policies passed, including those that receive Sustainable Jersey points

Goal 4: Create, foster, and promote a safe, accessible, and coordinated transportation network that enables people of all ages and abilities from all backgrounds and neighborhoods to choose active transportation.

Objective: Encourage infrastructure improvements that treat traffic fatalities as preventable through sustained funding and supportive programs.

Performance Measures:

- Number and location of walk, bike, and road safety audits, including those that receive Sustainable Jersey action points.
- Number of temporary and permanent infrastructure changes completed, submitted, and awarded points under Sustainable Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Action.

C. NJDOT Safe Routes to School Recognition Program and Sustainable Jersey Actions

The New Jersey Safe Routes to School Resource Center recognizes municipalities and schools (public, private, or charter) for their commitment to the Safe Routes to School program. TMA Safe Routes to

School Regional Coordinators can assist with nominations, or municipalities and schools can apply for recognition themselves. Municipalities and Schools that meet the requirements for the NJ Safe Routes to School Recognition Program can also earn points toward Sustainable Jersey and Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification. Included below are tutorials that guide how to implement actions under the Sustainable Jersey program that make communities walkable and bikeable. Nominees are asked to apply for recognition at one of four levels: First Step, Bronze, Silver, or Gold.

Resources:

About the Safe Routes to School Recognition Program, <https://www.saferoutesnj.org/about-the-safe-routes-to-school-recognition-program>

Active Transportation Sustainable Jersey Actions, <https://www.saferoutesnj.org/sustainable-jersey-actions>

Sustainable Jersey for Schools Actions

NJ SRTS Recognition Program	Sustainable Jersey for Schools
Two SRTS events and one active transportation best practice toward Bronze recognition	10 points toward Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety and Promotion Initiatives action
School Travel Plan toward Gold recognition	10 points for school toward School Travel Plan for Walking and Biking action
Show ongoing support from School Green Team toward Gold recognition	Establishing a School Green Team is required for registering for SJ for Schools
Show ongoing support from School Wellness Council from Gold recognition	10 points for School Wellness Council action

Sustainable Jersey Municipal Actions

NJ SRTS Recognition Program	Sustainable Jersey
Silver level NJ SRTS Recognition Program	10 points for municipality toward Safe Routes to School
Adopt Complete and Green Streets for All Policy toward Gold level recognition	10 points for municipality toward the Adopt Complete and Green Streets for All Policy action

Endnotes

1 Sustainable Jersey Program Overview, 2/21/2024 https://www.sustainablejersey.com/fileadmin/media/Grants_and_Resources/Green_Team_Resources/Program_Overview/SJ_Introductory_Presentation.pdf

2 Ibid

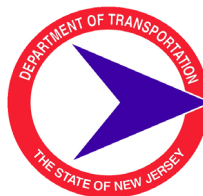


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