

Rural Communities

CASE STUDY

Sturbridge

EDUCATION **ENCOURAGEMENT** ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION **ENGINEERING** EQUITY | URBAN **RURAL** SUBURBAN

Background

Burgess Elementary School in Sturbridge does not have any regular student walkers or rollers because there are no sidewalks or bike lanes in the area surrounding the school.

Burgess initially became involved with Safe Routes to School (SRTS) through our evaluation, education, and encouragement offerings in 2019. Burgess worked with SRTS to host bike and pedestrian safety lessons with students. Further, they celebrated SRTS flagship days with walk-at-school events where students would take laps around the school and gym during breaks throughout the day. The art teacher encouraged students to participate in SRTS's Yard Sign Design Contest and provided support to students interested in creating designs. The school had winning designs two years in a row!

Overview

After having great success with these activities, the Vice Principal at Burgess started a task force at the school that included a parent, the school facilities manager, and representatives from the town's public works, conservation, police, and planning departments. SRTS created a student address map to identify students that lived within one mile of the school. The task force collaborated with SRTS to conduct a walk/bike audit to identify targeted infrastructure improvements the school and town could make to increase student walkers and rollers.

Burgess was awarded an SRTS infrastructure grant in 2021 to install pedestrian and bike facilities on the school driveway. The town successfully applied for a state grant to install sidewalks on the road in front of the school, which will provide pedestrian access to Burgess from the neighborhoods to the west of the school. With these infrastructure changes, students will be able to access Burgess by walking or rolling.

Lessons Learned

- ✓ Engaging students who are not actively walking, rolling, or biking to school with pedestrian and bike safety education and events can really help build safety skills, awareness of active transportation options, and shift the culture of a school community to become more active
- ✓ In school settings where the infrastructure is lacking it is possible to find creative solutions, like taking laps around the school or gym on Flagship Days, to support and encourage healthy activity for all students



Impacts



Assembling a safety task force laid the foundation for collaborative town and school infrastructure improvements to benefit students walking and rolling to school



Task force partners became a strong community advocacy group supporting active transportation initiatives within the school and wider community