

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES — TRAFFIC SAFETY

School administrators are key to a successful Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program so it is critical to understand their perspective on children actively getting to and from school. The California SRTS Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC) surveyed and interviewed principals and vice principals across California to explore strategies for overcoming their most common concerns, one of them being the need to make the journey to school safer for young pedestrians and bicyclists.

Every school is unique, but the following ideas can serve as a good starting point to address traffic safety.

### Conduct In-class Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training for Children

Teaching children proper pedestrian and bicycle safety is an essential part of SRTS programs. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has both a Bicycle Safety Program and a Pedestrian Safety Program that include lesson plans, activities and worksheets. Learn more at [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov).

TARC also maintains a list of educational resources for children and teens, some of which are linked to California Education Standards, available at [www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org/safe-routes-to-school-basics/preparation/educate-kids-and-parents/](http://www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org/safe-routes-to-school-basics/preparation/educate-kids-and-parents/).

### Hold a Bicycle Rodeo

Bicycles are “vehicles” and children need to be trained on how to safely navigate in traffic. Holding a bicycle rodeo skills event in partnership with local bicycle

It is no surprise that neighborhood streets clogged with traffic make parents and school administrators nervous about children walking and bicycling to and from school. SRTS projects can help to reduce traffic congestion by increasing the number of children walking and bicycling, instead of riding to school in private vehicles, and improve safety by focusing on infrastructure improvements, student traffic safety education, and driver enforcement.

advocacy groups and the local police department provides fun and instructional on-bicycle skills training. Learn more at [www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org/whats-happening-in-california/national-bike-to-school-day/](http://www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org/whats-happening-in-california/national-bike-to-school-day/).

### Encourage Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains

Many parents are understandably reluctant to let their children walk or bicycle to or from school alone or with friends due to safety concerns. To help ease these concerns, promote formal or informal walking school buses or bicycle trains with adults escorting groups of children walking or bicycling to school together. Not only will this help ease fears of “stranger danger,” it also reduces the risk of traffic-related injuries since groups of children traveling together are more visible to drivers. Learn more at [www.CAactivecommunities.org/w2s-year-round-activities/walking-school-buses-and-more/](http://www.CAactivecommunities.org/w2s-year-round-activities/walking-school-buses-and-more/).

## Establish School Bicycle Helmet Policies

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Encouraging and enforcing helmet use among children who ride bicycles to school is critical to helping protect young bicyclists from injuries. Implementing a school helmet use policy will encourage compliance with California State Law and allow schools to enforce consequences against students who repeatedly put themselves at risk. Learn more about school bicycle helmet policies at [www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org](http://www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org).

Bicyclists and passengers under age 18 must wear an ANSI or Snell approved helmet when a passenger or riding upon a bicycle. (California Vehicle Code 21212)

## Address Driver Safety

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Drivers who are in a hurry to get to work can sometimes forget how their driving behavior can impact children walking or bicycling to school. Educating drivers about traffic safety can be a daunting task and needs community support to do it right.

A few simple strategies to initiate driver safety awareness at schools include: leaving fliers on vehicles, handing out "I helped keep our students safe!" tickets, or giving gift certificates to local businesses to incentivize safe driving. More intensive strategies can include working with the local public works department to modify parking and stopping restrictions, and partnering with local law enforcement to enforce the rules of the road, especially before and after school.

## Partner with Law Enforcement

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Developing partnerships with local law enforcement is critical to addressing traffic safety issues. SRTS programs ideally involve a wide range of law enforcement officers, including executives, school resource officers, patrol/safety officers, bicycle officers, community policing officers, and training officers. Law enforcement can conduct targeted speed limit and crosswalk enforcement operations around schools, speak at school SRTS events or assemblies, and serve on SRTS committees. Finally, look for ways law enforcement can positively reinforce good driver behavior or bicycle helmet use. Learn more at <http://apps.saferoutesinfo.org/lawenforcement/>.

## Improve School Drop-off and Pick-up Zones

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Improving school drop-off and pick-up zones is often a key priority of school administrators, but care must be taken to ensure it is fixing an identified safety problem for young pedestrians and bicyclists and not just making it easier for adults to drive children to school. Facilitating walking and bicycling to school will decrease traffic congestion and can make drop-off and pick-up inherently safer.

Helping school administrators address this issue can be a small success that helps build trust and foster a more robust SRTS program. Learn more about easy ways to improve drop-off and pick-up at schools at [www.CAactivecommunities.org/w2s-year-round-activities/drop-off-zones/](http://www.CAactivecommunities.org/w2s-year-round-activities/drop-off-zones/).

Read the full *Crosswalk* issue brief and supplemental tip sheets online at [www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org](http://www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org).



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