

A History of Commitment and a Youth-Driven Plan



The City of La Mesa, located in San Diego County, began a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program that continues to be successful because of commitment from city leadership, involvement of the school district and community partners, and the engagement of La Mesa's youth.

La Mesa youth designed and conducted the California Department of Public Health's Communities for Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention (CX3) project. As a part of this project, the youth completed a walking assessment of East La Mesa. They mapped the obstacles to safe walking and bicycling, the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables at area markets, access to public transit, and location of parks. The data from this project helped support La Mesa's largest SRTS

application for infrastructure funds. The project was awarded funds that later led to two additional successful SRTS applications to improve conditions around elementary schools in the city and to develop a comprehensive SRTS non-infrastructure program.

La Mesa's SRTS non-infrastructure program is a partnership between the City of La Mesa, the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, and WalkSanDiego. WalkSanDiego, a local non-profit active transportation advocacy and education organization, works closely with the city's schools to promote walking and bicycling as safe and healthy ways to get to and from school.

La Mesa schools have also been very involved in International Walk to School Day, which is held each year in October. Participation in this annual celebration has inspired schools throughout the district to hold more frequent Walk to School Day activities.



KEYS TO LA MESA'S SUCCESS:

- Engaging youth in the process and having them help with data collection and reporting
- Leveraging data to support SRTS funding proposals
- Including partners at all levels: students and their parents; schools; non-profits and community members; and city and county leaders
- Working with an active transportation advocacy group to provide expertise and help with walk audits, education, and outreach

