La Mesa, California
CALTRANS DISTRICT 11, SAN DIEGO COUNTY

34%
decrease in motor vehicle collisions involving pedestrians or bicyclists over a three-year period

75%
of the schools increased rates of students walking to school

38%
of schools increased rates of students bicycling to school

5,000
students benefitted from having the Safe Routes to School program at their school

There was a time when the sight of children walking and bicycling to school was a familiar scene in communities across California. In fact, in 1969 approximately 50 percent of children walked or bicycled to school. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children do and rates of childhood obesity and overweight are overwhelming.1,2 Concerns about traffic safety are often cited as one of the main reasons children do not walk or bicycle to school.3 And for good reason, as in 2010 alone, over 21,000 California school children were sent to an emergency department and over 1,500 were hospitalized due to pedestrian or bicycle injuries.4

Creating safe opportunities for walking and bicycling is critical to improving the safety of young pedestrians and bicyclists and to reducing overweight and obesity among California’s youth. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs are key to reversing these trends. SRTS programs increase the number of children who safely walk and bicycle to school through education and encouragement programs, enhanced enforcement, engineering improvements, and strong program evaluation.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The La Mesa SRTS Program works to increase the number of students safely walking and bicycling to school in order to improve their health, the health of the environment, and safety.

The program is focused on community engagement and inviting participation from all age groups. Program staff work with students, parents, school staff, and other community stakeholders at six elementary schools and two middle schools located in the City of La Mesa. Together, these eight schools have approximately 5,000 students enrolled.

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California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center, a program of California Active Communities
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The program is comprehensive, incorporating aspects of all 5 E’s: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation. It has sparked a variety of other successful efforts in La Mesa focusing on creating a more walkable, livable, and safe community for residents of all ages.

**PROGRAM SUCCESSES**

- **Travel Mode Shift During the Two to Three Year Program Period:**
  - Six of the eight program schools (75 percent) showed increases in students walking to school.
  - Three of the eight program schools (38 percent) showed increases in students bicycling to school.

- **Safety Improvements:** Pedestrian/bicyclist collisions were reduced both in number and in percent of collisions.
  - Pre-Project (August 2008-2009): 41 collisions involving pedestrians/bicyclists were reported, accounting for 7.3 percent of total motor vehicle-involved collisions.
  - Post-Project (August 2010-2011): 27 collisions involving pedestrians/bicyclists, accounting for 6.8 percent of total motor vehicle-involved collisions.

- Seven schools within La Mesa currently have daily, weekly or monthly walking/bicycling to school programs.

- Four of the seven schools have older adult SRTS volunteers who actively support the program as crossing guards through the intergenerational component of the project.

- Suggested Routes to School maps were completed for all eight La Mesa schools and provided to parents and schools.


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