Monterey County, California

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 Monterey South County Pedestrian and Biking Safety Plan provided SRTS programs for schools in King City and the City of Soledad. Several program elements worked synergistically to make the South Monterey County Pedestrian and Biking Safety Plan a success.

School presentations, assemblies, and bicycle rodeos educated students and teachers about safe walking and bicycling, while special events such as International Walk to School Day in October and Bike Day in May provided opportunities to practice bicycle and pedestrian skills in a festive environment. Monthly safety fliers, newspaper ads, and radio public service announcements using a Street Smarts media
Implementing Agency

Monterey County Health Department,
Public Health Bureau

Location

Monterey County
Caltrans District 5
CA Assembly District 28
CA Senate District 12

Funding

Federal SRTS Non-Infrastructure – Cycle 2

Participating Schools

Frank Ledesma Elementary,
Gabian Elementary, Jack Franscioni
Elementary, Rose Ferrero Elementary,
San Vicente Elementary, Main Street
Middle School, King City Charter Arts,
Del Rey Elementary School, Santa Lucia
Elementary School, Chalone Peaks
Middle School

84 to 96 percent of students in
participating schools are eligible for the
Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

Contact

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The campaign emphasized pedestrian and bicycle safety and educated parents and the community about traffic safety. Police participation helped to enforce traffic safety during drop off and pick up around schools and remind parents to drive safely and obey traffic rules in both King City and Soledad. During implementation of this program, students at both King City and Soledad benefitted from the recent completion of infrastructure projects that installed new or improved sidewalks around several schools (King City) and bicycle lanes (Soledad) that students were able to use.

PROGRAM SUCCESSES

• **Travel Mode Shift:** Morning walking increased by 44 to 50 percent at school sites between 2009 and 2011.

• **Safety Education:** 5,000 students benefitted from pedestrian and bicycle safety classroom presentations. 4,300 students participated in Bicycle and Pedestrian Rodeos with safety skills training and several hundred bicycle helmets were distributed at these events.

• **Taking on Bullying:** At the outset of the SRTS program, King City stakeholders identified student bullying as a particular challenge. While they were evaluating school wide bullying programs, the SRTS program distributed anti-bullying educational materials to facilitate discussion in school classrooms. The King City Safety Coalition organized parents to work on bullying issues in the community and the school district brought in an educational program to address bullying at all the schools.

• **Addressing a Community Tragedy:** Just as the SRTS program was beginning in Soledad, a student was seriously injured by a car while walking to school. The SRTS Coordinator addressed community concerns by giving a presentation to the Soledad School Board describing the components and benefits of the SRTS program and emphasizing how the program would help educate parents, teachers, and community members so that future injuries could be avoided. The school board and the Soledad Unified School District embraced the program.


