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**

WALKSacramento, a pedestrian advocacy organization, worked with Sacramento County on a SRTS Non-Infrastructure (NI) project to promote walking and bicycling to and from school in unincorporated areas of the county. Howe Avenue Elementary School, in the San Juan Unified School District, was one of 15 schools served under this project.

WALKSacramento conducted a walk/bicycle audit around the school and provided consultation and support to determine the best strategies for promoting safe walking and bicycling to school.
WALKSacramento also worked closely with Howe Avenue Elementary’s Parent Traffic Safety Committee, providing guidance on what routes to walk, which educational material and encouragement programs could enhance student safety, and how to organize volunteers.

**PROGRAM SUCCESSES FOR THE 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR:**

- **Secured Additional Funding:** Findings from the expert-led walk audit helped to secure a State SRTS Infrastructure award. This new project was awarded in June 2012 and will improve safety around the school, which recently had a child pedestrian fatality (that occurred when a seven-year old was walking home from the school).

- **Safety Improvements:** Four new parent-supervised Walking School Bus routes were created to maximize the safety of young children walking to and from school. Participation in these weekly Walking School Buses has grown steadily over the year to an estimated 60 students each week. Participation continues to grow and represents a proud, tangible accomplishment for parents who committed to improving safety for their children. Walking School Bus volunteers benefit from training as well as from safety vests, flags, and a route map with detailed information on start locations and times.

- **Increased Parent Involvement:** Parent involvement continues to grow through an ever-expanding Howe Avenue Elementary Parent Traffic Safety Committee. Many of these parents have also been trained on pedestrian safety practice so they can help supervise weekly Wednesday Walking School Buses.

- **Reaching a Low-income Community:** This project exemplifies the success of SRTS funding in reaching low-income communities with much-needed safety education and roadway improvements.

**Implementing Agency**
WALKSacramento

**Location**
Sacramento, Sacramento County
Caltrans District 3
CA Assembly District 5
CA Senate District 6

**Funding**
Federal SRTS Non-Infrastructure – Cycle 1

**Participating School**
Howe Avenue Elementary School
96 percent of students at the school are eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

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