SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL SUCCESS STORY

San Francisco, California
CALTRANS DISTRICT 4, SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

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
San Francisco's SRTS Program, led by the San Francisco Public Health Department, incorporates all 5 E's – Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation.

Key program elements include:

- Classroom lessons on pedestrian and bicycle safety to kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 4th grade students;
- Annual Fall Walk to School Day and Spring Bike to School Day;
- Working with parents and caregivers at individual schools to form their own regular, recurring walk and roll events for their school community;
- Regular traffic enforcement by law enforcement including enforcing new 15 mph school zones citywide;
- Walk audits and a city-wide prioritization system to inform SRTS capital infrastructure project applications; and

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California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center, a program of California Active Communities
www.CaSafeRoutesToSchool.org
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Implementing Agency
San Francisco Department of Public Health

Location
City and County of San Francisco
Caltrans District 4
CA Assembly Districts 12 and 13
CA Senate Districts 3 and 8

Funding
Federal SRTS Non-Infrastructure – Cycles 1 and 3
Metropolitan Transportation Commission Regional SRTS Program

Participating Schools
58 percent (average across 15 schools) of students eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

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• Conducting evaluation to consistently improve the program by administering and analyzing student travel tallies, parent surveys, and team progress reports.

PROGRAM SUCCESSES

• **Travel Mode Shift (Over a One- to Two-Year Period):** Eleven out of 15 schools (73 percent) increased rates of walking and bicycling. Six schools (40 percent) decreased rates of single family vehicle driving. Although modest, this is first time the SRTS Program has seen positive trends in mode shift. This is particularly significant because it was also the first year parent and caregiver outreach was conducted, clearly indicating that this type of outreach is key to mode shift.

• Partnered with University of California, San Francisco Pediatrics: Conducted a school district-wide school commute study, the first of its kind to look at student commute in San Francisco.

• Partnered with San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA): Established school prioritization system based on the school commute results and injury data. This is the first time MTA has established a systematic way to prioritize schools for capital improvements. MTA is now using this system that was developed with federal SRTS Non-Infrastructure funds to pursue SRTS capital infrastructure funding. MTA was just awarded a state SRTS Infrastructure project for Jean Parker Elementary School, the number one school ranked for infrastructure needs on the prioritization system.

• **Community Mobilization:** In February 2012, there was an attempted kidnapping of a girl walking to George Washington Carver Elementary. With assistance from the SRTS team, the community turned a negative event into a positive outcome. Parents and community-based organizations pulled together and organized DAILY morning and afternoon walking school buses to make sure students were chaperoned and safely walking to and from school and after-school care.