

VIGNETTE 1
SHASTA COUNTY

Turtle Bay School Avoids the Loop



Turtle Bay School in the City of Redding serves 720 students from kindergarten through eighth grade, sixty-two percent of whom live outside the school's attendance area. This means that by 7:40 am, there is a snarl of traffic on the school's one-way driveway during school drop-off.

A Turtle Bay School parent had been participating in the school's Parent Faculty Club when she heard about Shasta County Public Health Department's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. Pure frustration with traffic, a can-do attitude, the assistance of the SRTS program, and the ability to commit a morning each week propelled this parent champion to launch *Avoid the Loop*, a campaign to promote more walking and, therefore, less driving to school every Friday of the school year.

When the principal introduced *Avoid the Loop* to faculty, the art teacher offered to invite her students to make posters to promote the campaign. Other teachers offered extra credit for walkers. The school secretary included Walk to School Fridays in the weekly newsletter, posted *Avoid the Loop* reminders on the school's reader-board, and hung up posters with a band of students each Thursday.

Every Friday at 7:15 am, come rain or shine, fall, winter, and spring, this parent champion met eager walkers at the nearby Caldwell Park. "Its huge parking lot made it easy for parents to drive through. Even children at the nearby apartment complex who were eligible to use the district school bus often met us at the park." Back at the school, the principal recruited whichever teachers were available that day. Teachers hopped in the principal's car and headed to the park. "We had different teachers each week," the parent champion remarked. "Parents don't know me, but they knew the principal and the teachers. That made them trust the program. The children thought it was fun to walk with their teachers."

On nice days, the group swelled from 30 to 60 students and they chose the scenic one-mile river trail. On dark rainy mornings, they donned rain gear, popped open umbrellas, and took a shorter sidewalk route. "We were a walking advertisement when we took to the road. Parents and students would drive by and we'd wave. The children in the cars saw they were missing the fun."

Avoid the Loop has been a team effort. With strong support from the principal, staff, students, and one dedicated parent volunteer, there is a little less traffic congestion on Friday mornings at Turtle Bay School.

KEYS TO TURTLE BAY'S SUCCESS:

- Having a parent champion
- Getting principal's buy-in early and using the principal to encourage teacher participation. Children love it when their teachers walk with them
- Promoting the program through a variety of approaches (e.g. involving students, making posters, doing announcements, etc.)

Rural Community Gets Mobilized



The City of Delano, a rural community in Kern County, has a lot of leadership for active living. But when it received a Cycle 2 Safe Routes to School (SRTS) non-infrastructure award, it did not have the internal staff or community agencies ready to launch the new program. The city chose to work with Youth Educational Sports, Inc. (YES, Inc.), a nonprofit bicycling and pedestrian safety organization, to help facilitate and implement its SRTS program.

Delano's SRTS program began with observations at each school site before and after the school day. The observations included tallying the number of children arriving by car, as pedestrians, on bicycle with or without a helmet, and by bus. It was discovered

that some students started their walk an hour before the first school bell, when their parents left to harvest field crops. The observations were followed by parent and student surveys. All information gathered was used to develop recommendations for the city engineer and other partners. The data collected at the onset helped to identify each school's circumstance and provide a baseline for the evaluation.

In Delano, the average per capita income is just barely more than \$11,000 and 35 percent of the children are living under the federal poverty level. Also, given the early and late hours of agricultural workers, it is very hard for schools to support an active parent teacher organization or get parent volunteers to help with walking and bicycling to school efforts. Because of this, principals and teachers in Delano are typically very open to resources and programs that will benefit their students.

Delano's local police department and explorer/cadet program became valuable resources in promoting safe walking and bicycling to school as well. The police department assisted with special SRTS events like valet week or bicycle safety rodeos. The explorer/cadet program, which is made up of 15-24 years old who apply, qualify based on their grade point average, and are then selected to serve as uniformed representatives of the police department, assisted in Delano's SRTS program by helping children practice traffic safety in a theatrical stage setting with large photos from Delano's roads.



KEYS TO DELANO'S SUCCESS:

- Collecting data early on to show where the project started and using it to plan for where the project should go
- Demonstrating that the program is a win-win for the school, principals, teachers, and especially students. If principals know how the program can help meet their own goals, they are more likely to embrace the program's objectives
- Recognizing law enforcement as allies and enlisting law enforcement's help with program implementation

Flexibility and Commitment to Sustainability



The City of Claremont, located in Los Angeles County, has a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program that is one piece of a larger effort to create a culture of non-motorized transportation and healthy living. Community members have a history of being engaged and the city has a long standing collaboration with the school district.

Claremont established the Bike Priority Zone in which infrastructure was developed to encourage bicycling and walking. This 2.5 square mile area represents about one-third of the city and includes the use of road diets and increased accessibility. The city also purchased 120 custom designed bicycle racks for long term bicycle parking. Each rack was installed conveniently in front of or in the proximity of popular destinations throughout the Bike Priority Zone. Once improvements were made,

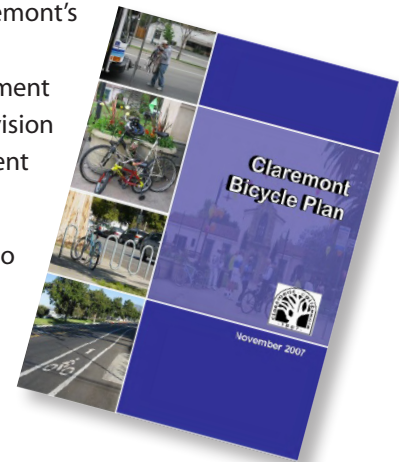
they tracked and found a 20 percent increase in both walking and bicycling in that area including about 100 students bicycling to school on a daily basis.

Originally, a SRTS non-infrastructure award was given to Claremont's police department, but by the time the funds were available, budget cuts made it impossible for the department to implement the program. Working with Caltrans, the City Engineering Division was able to contract with an outside organization to implement the city's SRTS program.

The new SRTS program employed a recognized SRTS trainer to train teachers, parents, and students. Outreach included use of a dedicated website, social media, and a local radio station located at the Claremont Colleges. The program included data collection as an analysis to measure success and to make adjustments as needed.



The City of Claremont and the school district are committed to making SRTS a self-sustaining effort. They do this by encouraging parents to be invested in the program and by training both parents and students so the program will continue from one year to the next.



KEYS TO CLAREMONT'S SUCCESS:

- Gathering community input and involvement early in the process
- Incorporating Complete Streets in all transportation projects
- Outreaching to parents and getting their participation

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.

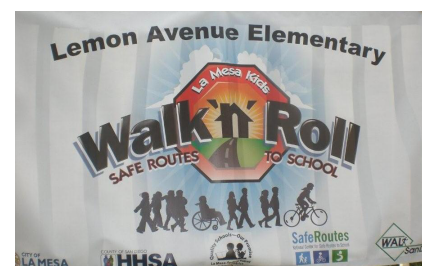
La Mesa's SRTS non-infrastructure program is a partnership between the City of La Mesa, the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, and WalkSanDiego. WalkSanDiego, a local non-profit active transportation 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



Leadership and a Vision for Change



The City of Long Beach located in Los Angeles County calls itself “the most bicycle friendly city in America”. Bicycling has been a part of the culture of Long Beach since the 1800’s. The city was known as a beach community with an active and healthy lifestyle. Somewhere along the way this culture was lost and the city became like many others, a place dominated by vehicular traffic.

With support from the community and city leadership, Long Beach began working

to create an environment for non-motorized traffic. Part of the goal was to make Long Beach a charismatic community that draws people in and stimulates economic development.

Long Beach received a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) award to implement a program to address the 5 E’s that are the foundation of a comprehensive SRTS program: education; encouragement; enforcement; engineering; and evaluation. The award was used to help leverage \$21 million in additional funding to develop a comprehensive program. Long Beach now has over 100 miles of safe bicycle and walking infrastructure.

Long Beach’s SRTS program includes bicycle lanes, sharrows (traffic lanes shared by vehicles and bicycles), roundabouts, traffic signals, and a bicycle trail connecting three schools. At one school, a sharrow was created to get bicycles off the sidewalks, which doubled the number of students biking to school.

Safe Moves, a non-profit organization, provided the education and encouragement components of Long Beach’s SRTS program. It taught bicycle safety through indoor school assemblies, outdoor replication of city streets, parent workshops, and community events.

KEYS TO LONG BEACH’S SUCCESS:

- A comprehensive program that addresses the 5 E’s of SRTS
- City leadership with the vision to make change
- Community support for change
- Leveraging funds to create a comprehensive approach
- Investing in infrastructure for non-motorized transportation

Planning, Prioritizing, and Partnering



The Riverside County Department of Public Health (RCDPH) received a non-infrastructure award to conduct a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in 13 elementary schools in the Riverside Unified and Alvord Unified School Districts. Prior to applying for the award, RCDPH's Epidemiology, Research, and Evaluation Department compiled pedestrian and bicycle injury and fatality data among children 5-15 years old. This study helped RCDPH identify the "hot spots" that were used to select which school sites to include in the SRTS program. Additionally, all of the participating schools had at least 50-75 percent of students who were eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Meal program.

Riverside County was successful in institutionalizing sustainable SRTS activities at participating schools. Part of its success was due to holding SRTS workshops county-wide. These workshops highlighted the collaborative nature of the RCDPH SRTS program, including having representatives for each of the SRTS five Es (education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation). The workshops were also used to gather input from community stakeholders that was later used to make infrastructure improvements.

Riverside County's participation in its first International Walk to School Day had 15 schools with over 3,000 students participating. From this initial success, the program grew to include *Walking Wednesdays* at all of the SRTS program schools plus other schools that were not officially part of the program. The entire community has come to anticipate Walk to School Day every October. Local elected officials and police and fire departments, along with many other volunteers, participate in the annual event by walking or bicycling to school with students.

Riverside County maintains a SRTS coalition of more than 40 community stakeholders that meet regularly to discuss the progress of the SRTS program, plan for events, and network with one another. The SRTS program continues to expand by using strategies such as bar code scanning to track students walking and bicycling to school. This technology tracks miles traveled, calories burned, gas saved, and also notifies parents when their children arrive at school.

KEYS TO RIVERSIDE COUNTY'S SUCCESS:

- Branding the program
- Strong relationships across a broad section of the community
- Consistent collection and use of data
- Commitment and buy-in from key decision-makers
- Wise use of resources from the National Center for SRTS, SRTS National Partnership, Caltrans, California SRTS Technical Assistance Resource Center, and other organizations

