Safe Routes to School in California

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA:

Case Studies from Local Programs

Prepared by the Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center in collaboration with the Cities Counties and Schools Partnership.

The Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center is a program within California Active Communities, a joint Unit of the University of California, San Francisco and the California Department of Public Health, and funded through a Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure award from the California Department of Transportation.

October 2012

INTRODUCTION

TO CASE STUDY

PROJECT

Safe Routes to School

THE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SRTS) MOVEMENT BEGAN IN DENMARK IN THE 1970'S AND HAS GROWN TO BE AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO WALK AND BICYCLE SAFELY TO AND FROM SCHOOL.

In California, SRTS efforts were spearheaded by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) through a unique partnership between its California Active Communities Unit and the State and Local Injury Control Section. In 1996, a brainstorming session with various entities was held to discuss starting a Safe Communities program at CDPH to encourage safe walking and bicycling. In 1998, CDPH received a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to use the public health model to develop safe and walkable communities. CDPH subsequently funded projects in 16 communities through this grant.

Because of the success of the Safe Communities program, CDPH was awarded a second OTS grant in 1999 to fund ten communities to focus on pedestrian safety among children. It was from this funding that one grantee, Marin County, created a program that would become the model for the national SRTS program.

Congruently, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) convened a Pedestrian Safety Task Force to address pedestrian injuries and fatalities through traffic calming measures. CDPH was a charter member of the Task Force and in the subsequent formation of Caltrans' formal standing Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee. Additionally, in 1999, legislation (Assembly Bill 1475) authored by then Assembly Member Nell Soto established the California Safe Routes to School program, commonly referred to as SR2S, to provide awards statewide for infrastructure improvement projects around schools. This legislation was the first of its kind in the nation and the first time that a state legislature provided significant funding for SRTS projects.

The United States Congress funded two pilot SRTS programs in 2000. The funding was delivered through the United States Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Grant awards of $50,000 each went to Marin County in California and Arlington, Massachusetts. These pilots led to grassroots SRTS efforts throughout the nation and provided the model for the Federal SRTS program, which was established in 2005 as part of the Transportation Reauthorization Bill (SAFETEA-LU). Section 1404 of this legislation provided federal funding for the first time to State Departments of Transportation to create and administer SRTS programs.

By 2005, both programs, the Federal SRTS program and the California SR2S program, were funding infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects in California. While application cycles and requirements differ between each of the programs, both are administered by Caltrans and both provide millions of dollars each year to improve walking and bicycling safety and encourage children to walk and bicycle to and from school.

INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDY PROJECT

Safe Routes to School

THE CASE STUDY PROJECT

In 2007, Caltrans' Federal SRTS program awarded funding to establish the California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC). This center, housed in California Active Communities, a partnership of the University of California, San Francisco and CDPH, is tasked with providing support to communities with existing SRTS programs and those interested in establishing SRTS programs. More specifically, TARC support is focused on building capacity among SRTS non-infrastructure projects and engaging low-income schools and communities in establishing SRTS programs.

As part of that effort, TARC contracted with the Cities Counties Schools Partnership (CCS Partnership) to conduct case studies of successful community implementation of SRTS programs. Two in-depth studies have been conducted, one of the City of Chula Vista and one of Sacramento County. Each case study provides a different model of how to implement a successful SRTS program.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

At a Glance

This case study features a model of a SRTS program that is a partnership between a school district, a city, and community partners. It demonstrates the effectiveness of receiving both a non-infrastructure award and an infrastructure award for the same community in the same funding cycle. It highlights the important role the community plays in successful implementation of a SRTS program as well as the invaluable roles of parents, a committed SRTS Coordinator, and school resource officers.

Background

The City of Chula Vista is located seven miles south of the City of San Diego and seven miles north of the border between the United States and Mexico. It is the second largest city in San Diego County and Hispanics make up the majority of Chula Vista's population. In addition, 56 percent of the population has an annual income of less than $60,000.

The Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD) is the largest K-6 school district in California. The school district has over 40 schools and its student population is ethnically similar to that of the city. Thirty-five percent of the students are English learners and 48 percent qualify for the Free and Reduced Price Meals program.

Prior to applying for Caltrans SRTS funding, the wheels for a SRTS program were already in motion. At one CVESD school, a parent organized a walking school bus, which is a group of students accompanied by an adult who walk together on a safe, pre-planned route to school. Other schools participated in International Walk to School Day, which takes place every year in October. However, these initial efforts would have remained one-time events if the city and school district had not partnered to apply for both non-infrastructure and infrastructure SRTS funding. Other efforts that encouraged the decision to apply for funds and to develop a SRTS program in Chula Vista were the countywide master plan for making San Diego County neighborhoods more

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

walkable and The California Endowment's (TCE) Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC) grant to the South Bay Partnership, which brought funding and attention to the need for improved access to healthy food and physical activity in Chula Vista and other cities in South Bay San Diego County.

The combination of these efforts built a groundswell of local and institutional support and data that enabled CVESD to receive a SRTS non-infrastructure award from Caltrans in Cycle 1 of the Federal SRTS program in 2007. This funding award paid for a two-year project that began with two pilot schools in year one and expanded to 15 additional schools in year two. The City of Chula Vista received a companion SRTS infrastructure award from Caltrans to cover the cost of infrastructure improvements near the two initial pilot schools involved in the non-infrastructure project.

The Partners and Their Roles

The Chula Vista SRTS program was a collaborative effort between the City of Chula Vista and CVESD. The school district took the lead in the implementation of the non-infrastructure portion of the program and the city was responsible for the infrastructure improvements. While these agencies were the leads with the day to day responsibilities, other partners were engaged in the program.

WalkSanDiego, a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to making San Diego neighborhoods more walkable, was integral to the application and success of the Chula Vista SRTS program. Early on, WalkSanDiego conducted walk audits for 36 Chula Vista elementary schools and provided training to city and school staff, community members, the Chula Vista Community Collaborative, and other stakeholders. The walk audits were used by the City of Chula Vista to establish a master plan for infrastructure improvements around city schools. Additionally, WalkSanDiego was instrumental in engaging the community. They trained community outreach workers on how to educate and engage the community in safe walking and bicycling. WalkSanDiego also facilitated meetings that brought together city staff, officials, and residents. These meetings gave residents the opportunity to express their concerns. Both city staff and residents reported that these meetings played an important part in engaging residents and in building trust.

The Chula Vista Community Collaborative, a city-wide consortium of 150 organizations that coordinates strategies to protect the health and safety of residents, provided outreach and education on SRTS activities and messages through *promotoras* (local Spanish speaking women trained to work with the community on a range of health topics).

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

On finding volunteers, "Look for parents or grandparents who are already active at the school. Have a booth at Back-to-School Night and give away t-shirts as an incentive to volunteer."

– CHULA VISTA PARENT CHAMPION

The South Bay Partnership, a nonprofit policy and advocacy organization that promotes changes in local policy to support a healthy community, was a 1999 recipient of a TCE HEAC grant. This grant was part of the impetus for the SRTS award and was a source of funding for the promotoras.

The Project

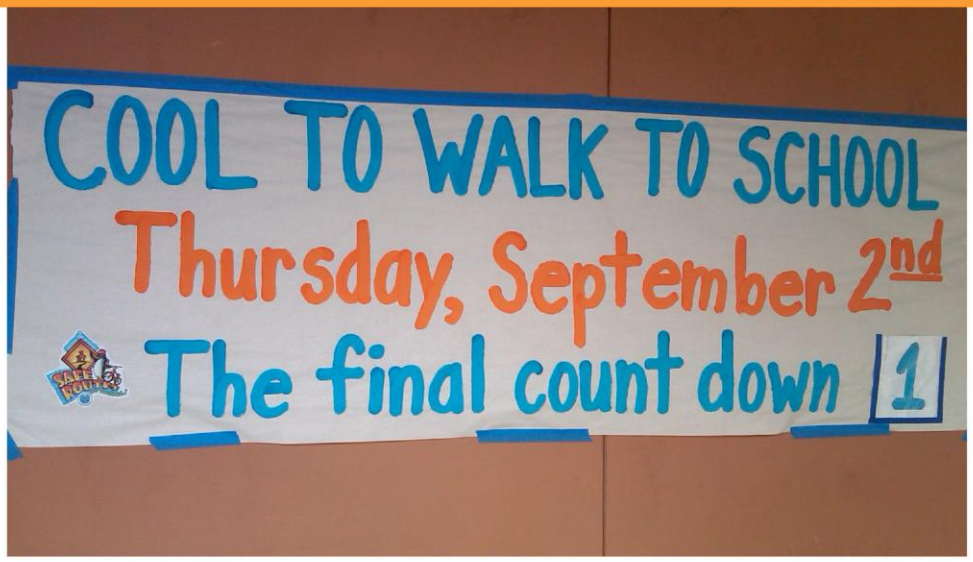
Chula Vista's SRTS program began with two pilot schools, both of which were located in older and lower income areas in Chula Vista. These schools were chosen following a four-month community process during which residents identified pedestrian safety and access issues. The city was committed to providing infrastructure improvements to make walking and bicycling more feasible in these communities. In addition, both schools were participants in the HEAC initiative.

The school district hired a SRTS Coordinator who was charged with overseeing implementation of the non-infrastructure award. To kick-off the program, the SRTS Coordinator called a meeting of stakeholders. A city traffic engineer, a police department representative, collaborative partners, community representatives, and school principals all attended. This initial meeting led to the formation of an ongoing advisory committee that met monthly in the first year of the project and bi-monthly in the following years of the project. Advisory committee members were kept up-to-date on school district SRTS events and provided feedback on project activities.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study



To engage students in the project at the outset, the school district held a SRTS logo contest for students at the two pilot schools. Submissions from two students, one from each school, were selected and combined into the logo that was used for all Chula Vista SRTS events and communication. The penguin in the logo became the program mascot and appears at educational assemblies in schools and at SRTS events.

Each of the participating schools had a task force made up of parents, teachers, and the principal who helped ensure the success of the program. A parent at one of the schools exemplified the important role parents can play by publishing a regular SRTS Newsletter and recruiting and supporting volunteers for Walk to School events. This "parent champion" also led the planning of the events, helped with data collection, and in general ensured the success of the program at the school.

The Chula Vista SRTS program addressed each of the five E's that make up a comprehensive SRTS program: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation. Highlights of some of the program's Education and Encouragement activities, as well as narratives of the Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation components are included below.

Education

- SRTS educational information was posted on the school district website.
- Advisory committee meetings helped spread information about successful efforts and solutions at participating schools.
- *Promotoras* educated Spanish-speaking families about safe walking and bicycling.
- Flyers and brochures in both English and Spanish were distributed at Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and community events and sent to students' homes.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

"Walk to school events are enhanced by a police presence."

– REPORTS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF STUDENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AT CHULA VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Encouragement

- The Neighborhood Pace Car program encouraged parents to put stickers in their car windows pledging to drive 25 miles per hour (mph) in school zones. These stickers were also posted in school district vehicles.
- Regular Walk on Wednesday events encouraged students to walk or bicycle to school at least one day per week. Promotoras helped supervise students during these events.
- Parent volunteers helped supervise walking school buses. They wore a special red shirt with the school district SRTS logo so that they were easy to identify.
- Schools created meeting areas for parents to park, gather, and walk to school with students who lived far from school.
- Incentives, such as shirts, key chains, and stickers were given to students who frequently walked or bicycled to school. These incentives were chosen by students and the students were in charge of an incentive "store."
- Some schools implemented the Golden Shoe Trophy award, in which a spray painted shoe modeled to look like a trophy was awarded to the classroom with the highest percent of students walking or bicycling to school.

Enforcement

The City of Chula Vista Police Department, with funding support from the school district, deployed school resource officers to deliver safety education and law enforcement coverage to all schools in the district. School resource officers issued "tickets" for violations and helped ensure the safe flow of children and vehicles during SRTS events. They also trained 5th and 6th grade students to be crossing guards and parents to serve on safety patrols at some of the schools. Crossing guards were allowed to issue "tickets" for violations of speed limits, parking restrictions, and crosswalk laws. The city launched a Stop on Red campaign to encourage safer driving in the vicinity of schools and to promote intense enforcement of red light running.

Engineering

The City of Chula Vista completed infrastructure improvements near the two pilot school sites. These improvements included both pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures. They were based on the walk audits conducted by WalkSanDiego and the South Bay Partnership. Some of the improvements were: an offset median; extended curbs/bulb-outs; pedestrian ramps; sidewalk repairs; setback limit lines; ladder striping at crosswalks; flashing yellow beacons; and school zone warning signs.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

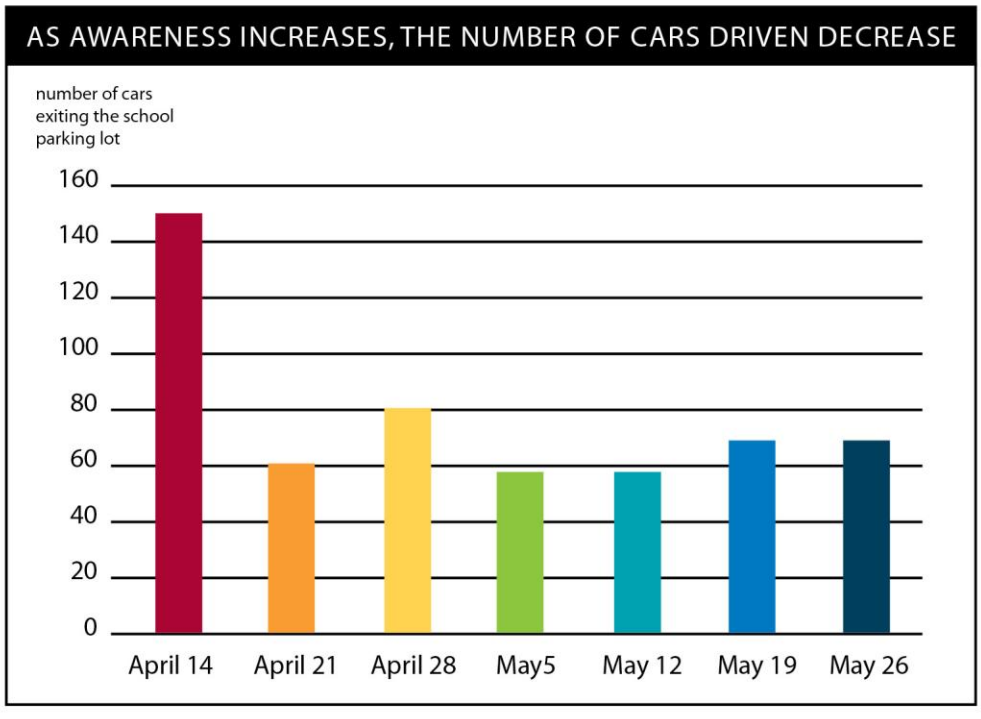
According to a Chula Vista traffic engineer, incidents of violence and crime may initially cause the number of students walking and bicycling to school to decrease, but having an existing SRTS program in place quickly turns that around.

Evaluation

The school district hired an outside evaluator to track progress and help keep the effort focused on achieving results. The evaluator helped set up a data collection methodology and prepared progress reports. The evaluator participated in the advisory committee and helped train parents, promotoras, and teachers in data collection methods.

Each school was responsible for collecting information on the number of students walking and bicycling to school. The results of these tabulations were sent to the school district SRTS Coordinator who compiled the information and entered it into the National Center for Safe Routes to School's (National Center) database. The National Center analyzed the data and sent reports back to the school district. The evaluator in turn used this information along with other information collected throughout the year to create a report on how the project was progressing.

One father counted the number of vehicles exiting the school parking lot during Walk to School Wednesday events at his daughter's school. The chart below shows the number of cars exiting the school parking lot during weeks one through seven of the campaign. During the first week, when awareness was low, the number of cars exiting the lot was double that of subsequent weeks, showing that the number of students being driven to school decreased as the campaign progressed.



CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

Specific Safety Issues Addressed

At one of the two initial pilot schools, students had to cross a four-lane road with average daily trips of 17,000 vehicles driving 35 mph and no traffic signal. Parents and students were crossing in the middle of the road because the safer crossing was inconvenient. A walk audit confirmed that drivers both stopped in crosswalks and failed to yield to pedestrians, including children. There were a lack of pedestrian signals and sidewalks in the area surrounding the school. In the ten years prior to the award, there had been nine pedestrian injuries in traffic incidents near the school.

At the other pilot school, the neighborhood surrounding the school had minimal pedestrian facilities. A walk audit identified unsafe crossing facilities at the two main intersections used to get to the school. It identified speeding and failure to yield to pedestrians with cars encroaching into the crosswalks as major safety issues. Pedestrian accessibility curb ramps were missing in many areas. There were long distances between intersections with traffic signals, which promoted dangerous mid-block crossings. Between 2000 and 2003 there were ten injuries in traffic incidents near the school.

Adding to these infrastructure related safety issues were parental fears about their children walking and bicycling to school. Evaluation data showed that parents were also concerned about safety at intersections, traffic speed, and traffic volume, as well as violence and crime.

Working with the Local Caltrans District

SRTS was new to Chula Vista and to the country when the first cycle of Federal SRTS awards were authorized. Because of this, staff in the school district and the local Caltrans office did not have a blueprint to follow or processes in place to guide the implementation. City and school district staff established a working relationship with Caltrans district engineers early in the process. Staff met with the Caltrans District Local Assistance Engineer prior to preparing an application. The purpose was to understand the specifics of what was needed for the application. Once funding was awarded, the school district SRTS Coordinator worked with the assigned local assistance engineers to establish a checklist for obligating the funds. They also worked out the best ways to communicate with each other. These early efforts paid off as the project was implemented. Little time was needed to figure out what could be reimbursed and how to submit forms or reports, as those processes had already been established with input from both Caltrans and the school district.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

Challenges and Solutions

The school district and city faced several challenges during the program's implementation. The list below outlines some of those challenges and solutions employed by the school district and city.

- **Getting the message out to all schools in the district.** The SRTS Coordinator spoke at a school district principals' meeting and sent out information to each principal. When there was a low level of response to these methods, the SRTS Coordinator began calling principals, ultimately getting more schools to participate.
- **Changing parental attitudes.** Newer parts of the city were designed for walking and bicycling, but parents still had fears about child abduction. The program addressed these fears through messages in newsletters and in other communications to parents and by engaging parents in walking events.
- **Getting all teachers to collect pre-and-post data on the number of students who walk and bicycle.** The program addressed data collection issues by limiting the number of times data was officially collected and training those who were helping with data collection. Also, since much of the program relied on volunteers, the evaluator made data collection as clear and simple as possible and collected only the minimum of what was needed.
- **Even though body mass index change is not a standard evaluation measurement for SRTS programs, it was something that the school district wanted to look at as a part of their SRTS project evaluation.** The evaluator encouraged the school district to eliminate the body mass index measure since their limited resources meant that the evaluation needed to remain simple.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

"Make sure that the goals and objectives of the program are clear to everyone involved, from the student on up."

– WALKSANDIEGO ON THE SUCCESS OF THE CHULA VISTA SRTS PROGRAM

- **Timing data collection with program elements.** Three critical structural improvements near the schools happened after the spring data collection. While nothing could be done about this occurrence, the evaluator worked to identify alignment of future elements.
- **Older parts of the city did not have the appropriate infrastructure to support students walking.** The city developed a Pedestrian Master Plan and sought funds to systematically improve the walking environment near all schools.
- **Residents often wanted street improvements that did not align with city, state, or federal standards.** Community meetings held by SRTS program partners brought together city traffic engineers, the school community, and neighborhood residents to discuss options that would work for everyone. Also, city traffic engineers participated in walk audits, which helped identify possible solutions early in the process.

Results

Early evaluation results show that:

- Four of the schools increased the percentage of students walking to school.
- The City of Chula Vista approved infrastructure projects at two schools based on the needs assessment conducted by WalkSanDiego.
- Eight schools improved their Fitness scores from 2009 to 2010. While it is not clear that these improvements were attributable to the SRTS program, it may be seen as a contributing factor to a culture of increased physical activity.
- The City of Chula Vista adopted a Pedestrian Master Plan based on the walk audits conducted by WalkSanDiego at 36 elementary schools. The plan can be found on the city's website at www.chulavistaca.gov.

The Chula Vista SRTS program has spread from the original 2 schools to 11 others, all of which have regular SRTS events. Six additional schools have participated in at least one SRTS effort since the program began. Some schools have even begun SRTS programs on their own, without connecting to the wider school district program.

Much of the success of the SRTS program in Chula Vista can be attributed to the extensive engagement of the community in the original application, in the expansion of the program, and in ongoing efforts.

CASE STUDY 1

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Chula Vista Case Study

Keys to Success from Chula Vista SRTS

For developing the application and program

- Broadly engage the community, city, schools, and nonprofit partners in the effort.
- If using a grant writer, be sure she/he is familiar with the city and the schools.
- Apply for complementary infrastructure and non-infrastructure funding.
- Enlist the assistance of local walking and bicycling organizations to help inform the process.

Working with a low-income community

- Utilize community residents and organizations to do direct outreach and ongoing education.
- Teach residents how to advocate for the needs of their community.

For non-infrastructure program implementation

- Begin small, expand as capacity grows.
- Employ a SRTS Coordinator for a school district-wide effort.
- Engage school principals, parents, and students in the effort.
- Establish an inclusive advisory committee to guide implementation.
- Identify parent champion(s) and establish a task force at each school.
- Identify and address parents' safety and traffic concerns.
- Share successes and challenges to promote learning across school sites.

For law enforcement

- Engage law enforcement as regular participants.
- Have police presence during walking events.
- Increase enforcement of traffic laws in walking zones.

For engineering

- Conduct walk audits to assess possible infrastructure improvements and help with project prioritization.
- Communicate with local traffic engineers and the public works department early on in the process and involve them in walk audits.

For evaluation

- Make sure everyone understands how to use the data collection instruments so that data is collected the same way across all school sites.
- Be sure timelines for evaluation data and reports are clearly communicated to school staff.
- Make sure goals and objectives of the program are clear.

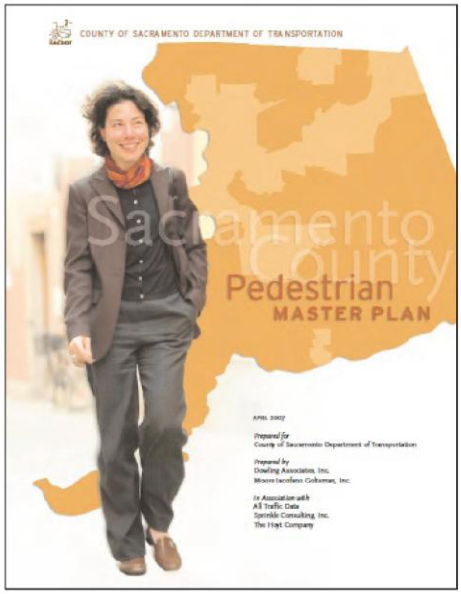
CASE STUDY 2

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Sacramento Case Study

At a Glance

This case study highlights the roles of multiple agencies in the development of varied SRTS projects. It tells stories about SRTS investments in the unincorporated community of Carmichael and in the Natomas area of the City of Sacramento. It demonstrates how SRTS programs and projects do not start with a proposal, but rather how they start with people who want to make a difference and are willing to try various approaches with diverse partners. It also offers a glimpse of a regional approach to planning and prioritizing future projects.



Background

Sacramento County is situated in the northern portion of California's Central Valley. It has seven incorporated cities, the largest and oldest being the state capitol, Sacramento. Much of the county is urbanized, unincorporated areas. There are 14 school districts in Sacramento County. This case study features school sites from two of the school districts.

The Partners and Their Roles

Sacramento County Department of Transportation (SACDOT) has a long history with SRTS. SACDOT was among the initial award recipients in the first two years of the California SR2S program. It has since developed a systematic approach to identify, prepare, and select sites deemed ready for SRTS projects and funding. Developing that approach was not easy.

After two years of successful California SR2S applications, SACDOT began encouraging school districts to submit proposals directly to Caltrans. That approach did not yield desired results because school districts simply did not have the resources to complete competitive proposals. So when Sacramento County completed a Pedestrian Master Plan in 2007 that identified $318 million in pedestrian projects, SACDOT sought collaborative partners to address pedestrian safety. It teamed up with area walking and bicycling coalitions to pursue the first round of Federal SRTS non-infrastructure funding. This strategy was successful and has led to a systematic approach that uses non-infrastructure strategies to lay the ground work for infrastructure proposals.

CASE STUDY 2

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Sacramento Case Study

One example of a successful partnership was between SACDOT and **WALKSacramento**, a nonprofit community organization working to create walkable communities throughout the Sacramento region. In 2007, they worked together to write a Federal SRTS non-infrastructure funding proposal. WALKSacramento provided on-the-ground experience that enhanced the proposal. The proposal was approved and became one of the first non-infrastructure projects funded in California. WALKSacramento was selected to be the lead agency for delivery of the project. The three-year award included 15 walk audits in unincorporated areas of Sacramento County, an annual Walk to School summit, and promotion of Walk to School programs such as Walk to School Wednesdays and walking school buses.

Additional support for area SRTS efforts came from the **Sacramento Regional Safe Kids Coalition**, housed at the local hospital, **Mercy San Juan Medical Center**. It supported SRTS by offering photojournalism awards, assemblies, and coaching to schools wanting to establish walking and bicycling programs. The goal of these efforts was to imbed a supportive school culture of walking and bicycling. Safe Kids Coalition staff, including the Safe Kids Coordinator, worked with the Head Start program, a middle school science teacher running a carbon emission reduction project, and the local Girl Scouts. The Safe Kids Coordinator also provided continuity to schools when students, parent volunteers, or principals changed.

SACDOT now dedicates engineering staff time to ensure area applications meet funding requirements, counsel schools and communities on SRTS, participate in walk audits, and provide necessary engineering input. This support has been instrumental to Sacramento County obtaining both Federal SRTS and California SR2S awards.

Sacramento Case Study

STORIES FROM TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Girl Scouts at Mary Deterding Elementary School

San Juan Unified School District

Mary Deterding Elementary School (Deterding) is located in Carmichael, a suburb of Sacramento County. In Spring 2008, Deterding's Junior Girl Scout Troop 2706 decided to pursue a Girl Scouts USA Bronze Award for a community leadership project. They had heard a presentation from the Safe Kids Coalition on walking safety and knew their school neighborhood had safety problems. The Troop decided to document reasons why students did not feel safe while walking to school. The Safe Kids Coalition offered them a small photo journalism award. The Troop participated in a walk audit, documented hazards, and even created a YouTube video. When their research was shared, the principal contacted the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to help improve safety around the school. CHP provided fluorescent orange cones that were used to mark a safer drop-off site for students.

The Troop wanted more. They decided to launch a Walking Thursdays program. Since Deterding is a magnet school attracting students from various distances, they arranged walking school buses from three drop-off sites within walking distance of the school.

The Safe Kids Coalition provided another small award for student incentives and educational assemblies. They worked with the regional FedEx office and its national Walk this Way program. FedEx printed banners, flyers, and parent surveys, and provided volunteers to lead walking school buses. The PTA helped promote the program in its newsletter. The principal delivered encouragement messages to every home through the school's automatic Ed Connect phone system. As a result, the number of students who walked or bicycled to school on Walking Thursdays increased by nearly 500 percent. The PTA decided to adopt the Walking Thursdays program permanently when the girls from Troop 2706 moved on to middle school. An additional incentive to encourage walking and bicycling to school came in Fall 2009 when school budget cuts forced the school district to eliminate all non-mandatory busing. Parents convinced the San Juan Unified School District to put in a pathway from a residential neighborhood through Deterding's western play yards and SACDOT installed a crosswalk.

Sacramento Case Study

In order to address more costly infrastructure needs, Mercy San Juan Medical Center teamed with SACDOT to prepare a Cycle 2 SRTS proposal. The proposal was rejected. Undeterred, SACDOT resubmitted the Deterding proposal for California Cycle 9 SR2S funding in Fall 2010. The proposal was awarded funding and was among the 20 percent of applications submitted to Caltrans during that cycle that were accepted.

Bannon Creek Elementary School

Natomas Unified School District

Natomas is an area that has both older and newer communities. Bannon Creek Elementary School (Bannon Creek), a school in the Natomas Unified School District (NUSD), is located in a midcentury neighborhood nestled between major thoroughfares in south Natomas.

In the early 2000's, parents at several Natomas area schools began promoting active transportation to school, including organized awareness events and Walk to School Days. One such parent volunteer encouraged another parent, who lived in Bannon Creek's surrounding neighborhood and was already walking his first grade son to school, to become a walking school bus "driver" and lead a walking school bus for other students wanting to walk to school. So the parent donned a bright yellow Bannon Creek t-shirt and began leading students to school while also teaching them pedestrian safety tips along the way.

SRTS awareness activities at Bannon Creek were soon expanded, with regular Walk and Bicycle Days designated on the first Friday of every month. To build student excitement, these included theme-based events such as Crazy Hat Walk to School Day and Pajama Walk Day. International Walk to School Day was also expanded to a full week of activities and events. Eventually, in 2006, a group of volunteers calling themselves the Traffic Tamers launched Walking Wednesdays, a regular parent-supervised walk to school occurring every Wednesday morning throughout the school year. Students would meet designated parent leaders at specific locations in the neighborhood, from which they would walk to school together. Students who walked received a raffle ticket making them eligible for prizes, many of which were donated by local businesses.

CASE STUDY 2

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Sacramento Case Study

In 2007, Traffic Tamers added yet another incentive program called WALKtober. During the month of October, every class in the school was challenged to make at least 35 percent of all trips to school either by walking or bicycling. Twenty-two out of 33 classes reached this goal and each received a class prize.

The NUSD Superintendent was more than sympathetic to parents' promotion of walking and bicycling to school. The Superintendent joined WALKSacramento and soon became the chair of the Sacramento Partnership for Active Communities (Partnership), a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded initiative. The Partnership, for which WALKSacramento had been a lead agency, performed walk audits at schools where parents had started walking programs and conducted community walkability planning workshops for three schools.

Bannon Creek observers recognized that the parents living in high density apartments on dangerous busy roads were not going to stop driving their children to school until there were safer crossings. A dangerous road crossing on a major street near the school was the most obvious need for SRTS remediation. Using the walk audit recommendations, the NUSD Superintendent and WALKSacramento joined forces with the City of Sacramento for a successful California SR2S Cycle 5 award. Today, the intersection has been transformed with a signal, turn lanes, and striped crosswalks. Its transformation was a well-publicized victory with a celebrated opening that featured happy walking Natomas children on the evening news.

The NUSD Superintendent and the Partnership also realized that one victory would not change walking behavior among students and residents. So they partnered with the Local Government Commission to bring a nationally renowned walking expert to Natomas and hosted a series of community forums, including one at Bannon Creek. At the community forum, they walked the neighborhood, examined maps, discussed options, and identified both infrastructure and non-infrastructure solutions to promote safe walking and bicycling to school.

CASE STUDY 2

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Sacramento Case Study

Information gathered at the community forums was used by one parent champion to develop a $5,000 proposal to the Sacramento First 5 Commission. The grant was awarded, with WALKSacramento serving as the fiscal agent, and was used to fund newsletters, t-shirts, prizes for walkers, and for portable, sturdy pedestrian crossing signs to place in intersections.

Meanwhile, the NUSD Superintendent and the school board understood that for their schools to become walkable, they would have to finance solutions. They placed two funding measures on the June 2006 ballot—a bond for infrastructure improvements and a parcel tax for programs. Both measures included "safe walking routes" language. Both received around 60 percent support, which met the bond threshold, but not the higher parcel tax threshold. The new bond brought $1 million to NUSD and was used to match the only Sacramento area SRTS Cycle 2 infrastructure project awarded to a school district. In 2007, NUSD secured a non-infrastructure award to fund a school district-wide SRTS Coordinator. The SRTS Coordinator's role included supporting existing programs and working to replicate them throughout the school district.

Success and Growth

Both the Deterding and Bannon Creek SRTS projects exemplify the greater successes of SRTS in Sacramento County. Jurisdictions within Sacramento County have been awarded over $11 million in infrastructure and non-infrastructure awards and all resulting efforts have increased walking and bicycling to school in the region.

CASE STUDY 2

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Sacramento Case Study

Keys to Success from Sacramento SRTS

- **Think long-term.** Changing habits takes time.
- **Include walkability assessments in non-infrastructure award proposals.** These will establish the need for future infrastructure proposals.
- **Realistically assess school campus commitment and volunteer resources.** Prioritize projects with demonstrated principal or staff champion(s) and organized parental leadership.
- **Don't underestimate parent volunteers.** Include them in planning, support their efforts, and view them as real partners.
- **Cluster projects.** Map potential sites and consider the benefits of working across school campuses in a single neighborhood. Clustering adds efficiencies in training, in idea generation, in volunteer retention as children move from elementary to middle school campuses, and in shared infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks and crosswalks. It can build a community culture of walking and bicycling.
- **Plan for transition of organizing events** to new staff and new parent volunteers.
- **Have an organizational home for SRTS activities.** This may be the on-site school safety committee, PTA, or an informal network of parents. Incorporate SRTS in the school safety plan, which is reviewed and adopted by the school site council.
- **Seek high level champion(s)** to initiate and lead efforts.
- **Train and maintain relationships with mid-level administrators.** They are critical for continuity. Incorporate coordination of SRTS in job descriptions.
- **Include SRTS in local financing plans,** such as in school bonds and transportation districts.

Acknowledgements and Credits

The Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center would like to thank the following people for their participation in the creation of this document.

Sonja Atkins, *Mercy San Juan Medical Center*

Tana Ball, *Youth Educational Sports, Inc.*

Connie Busse, *Cities Counties Schools Partnership*

Gail Carlson, *County of Riverside Department of Public Health*

Steven B. Freison, *Birge Engineering*

Charles Gandy, *City of Long Beach*

Yvonne Garrett, *City of La Mesa*

Andy Hamilton, *WalkSanDiego*

Pat Hines, *Safe Moves*

Catherine McDonald, *Evaluation Consultant, City of Chula Vista*

Melissa Minas, *Chula Vista Elementary School District*

Ted Link Oberstar, *Parent, Bannon Creek Elementary School*

Terry Preston, *WALKSacramento*

Barbara Sheppard, *Safe Moves*

Sara Sundquist, *Shasta County Public Health*

Maria Tipping, *City of Claremont*

Francesca Wright, *Cities Counties Schools Partnership*

Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC)
California Active Communities
California Department of Public Health
P.O. Box 997377, MS 7217
Sacramento, California 95899-7377
www.CAsaferoutestoschool.org