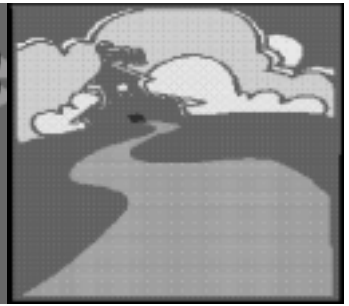


Safe Routes to Schools



Not so long ago, a vast majority of children routinely roamed their neighborhoods on foot or bicycle almost as a rite of passage. Today, a new generation of moms and dads chauffeur their kids to nearly all their activities, fearing for their children's safety on streets due to perceived dangers from both crime and traffic. Researchers estimate while more than two-thirds of all children walked or biked to school as little as thirty years ago, that number has now plummeted to less than ten percent¹



There is a way to break the cycle. A new movement is emerging that is focusing on getting kids back on their feet and their bikes again. Parent and neighborhood groups, school and local officials, and traffic engineers are working together to make streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists along heavily traveled routes to school, while encouraging both parents and their kids to take advantage of the many benefits of getting around on foot or by bike. With new transportation funding available specifically for this purpose, communities all across California are discovering the many benefits of providing "Safe Routes to School."

With less kids on foot, there are more cars on the road. Parents driving their children to school make up 20-25 percent of the morning commute²

The more the traffic increases, the more parents decide it is unsafe for their children to walk, adding even more cars to the morning chaos.

Did You Know?

Children are at risk from unsafe streets:

- + In California, as many as 5,000 child pedestrians are injured each year.³
- + Pedestrian accidents are the second leading cause of fatal injuries among 5-12 year olds statewide; bicycle crashes are fifth⁴
- + Children and seniors are at greatest risk relative to the overall population; children in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are at even greater risk.⁵

Children are losing their independence

- + Children are unfamiliar with their neighborhood, isolated from people and the environment.
- + Children are not acquiring traffic skills critical to their own safe mobility.
- + Youngsters are unable to participate in supervised after school programs that are emerging across the state.

Children are less active.

- + 78% of children fall short of the recommended dose of exercise of 30 minutes a day⁶

+ 70% of children watch at least one hour of TV each day; 35% watch five hours or more⁷

+ 22% of American children are now considered obese, a 55 percent increase from 1963.⁸

Our environment is degraded

- + Auto emissions are the largest cause of air pollution in California.⁹
- + More than 90% of all Californians live in areas with unhealthy levels of air pollution.¹⁰
- + Children's respiratory systems are especially at risk.



Walking + Biking = Healthy, Alert Children

Moderate to vigorous physical activity such as walking and biking positively affects academic performance and skill development. It stimulates and maintains muscular strength and good joint function. Children are better able to tackle the academic day. They have improved concentration, enhanced memory and learning, enhanced creativity and better problem solving ability. Studies have shown that their mood is improved for up to two hours following exercise.¹¹

Creating Safer Routes to School

In order to encourage more children to walk or bike, parents need to trust that it's both safe and convenient from a variety of perspectives. While a concern among some parents is the threat of violence as well as child abduction, parents surveyed recently by the California Department of Health Services cited the fear of traffic as one of their top concerns in allowing their kids to walk or bike to school. They noted the importance of stronger traffic education programs, better enforcement of traffic laws, and projects and programs to help slow down the speed of residential traffic. Indeed, it's exactly this type of comprehensive approach to traffic safety problems that's been shown to be most effective in creating safer streets and promoting increased walking and bicycling among Californians of all ages.

A Matter of Life and Death: 20 mph vs. 40 mph

A little extra speed can mean a world of difference for pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians hit by a car traveling 40 mph have a mere 15% chance of survival. At 30 mph, their odds increase to 55%. By stark contrast, a pedestrian has a 95% chance of survival if hit by a car moving at 20 mph.¹²

An engineering technique with tremendous potential for cost-effective speed reduction is known as "traffic calming." This practice focuses on physical design changes to residential streets and intersections that can slow traffic to acceptable

speeds and better balance the needs of vehicle flow and traffic safety. The City of Seattle reported a 77-91% reduction in traffic collisions after it implemented a citywide traffic calming program including 700 new residential traffic circles.¹³ For more information about traffic calming contact the Institute for Transportation Engineers at www.ite.org or 202-554-8050.

Streets and neighborhoods also need to be redesigned to provide safety, access and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists. With wider sidewalks, more visible pedestrian crossings, clearly marked bike lanes or separated pathways and trails, and slower traffic speeds, children have more independence to roam, parents are freed from chauffeur duty and adults venture out more often for their own recreation. Studies have shown that residents of streets with low level traffic have three times as many friends and two times as many acquaintances as streets with high levels of traffic.¹⁴ Neighborhoods with high levels of pedestrian activity have more "eyes on the street" to protect against crime.



Walking School Bus
drawing by David Engwicht

Safer streets require:		Examples:
Engineering	Engineering tools include a variety of street design techniques that can reduce speed and improve safety.	Reconfigure streets to slow traffic, provide walkways, trails and bike paths, and create safe pedestrian crossings.
Enforcement	Enforcement enlists the help of local police departments to focus enforcement efforts in project areas and increase community awareness of school safety problems.	Post visible speed limits and aggressively enforce traffic violations.
Education	Education programs help train motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists in understanding their rights and responsibilities while promoting activities that encourage using alternative modes of travel.	Provide traffic safety courses, Teach safety programs in school, promote walking and biking activities

The Iron Horse Trail in Danville



Learning From the Global Experience

Communities all over the world have been introducing Safe Routes to School programs with tremendous success. Working together with parents, teachers, administrators, neighborhood groups, city officials and law enforcement officers, the regular routes to school are evaluated and measured. Street improvements, traffic calming and safe crossings increase the ability for children to walk or bike safely to school. The addition of special programs that teach good safety skills and utilize volunteers to help escort children increases the chances of a successful program.

England has been developing programs since 1995. Bicycle lanes, traffic calming and raised crossings have cut traffic speeds considerably making conditions much safer for pedestrians and bikes. Promotional events and incentives have tripled bicycle use over two years. Bicycle parking capacity has been doubled. Reduced speed zones in England (20 mph) reduced child pedestrian casualties by 70% and child bicycling casualties by 28%.¹⁵

California's Home Grown Success Stories

Here in California, aggressive traffic calming programs have been implemented in Sacramento, San Diego, Oakland, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz and Santa Monica. The town of Escalon is redesigning its main streets around its high school to reduce traffic speeds and allow safer passage for pedestrians. Towns in the Sierra Nevada foothills near Sonora are in the process of converting an abandoned railroad bed into a walking and bicycling trail that will connect nearly a dozen of the area's schools.

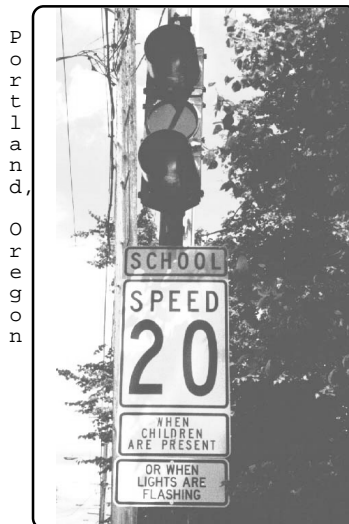
In Los Angeles, a very aggressive pedestrian safety sting operation



The Bicycle Boulevard, Palo Alto, CA

issued 7,200 citations in one year alone. The City of Glendale attributes their pedestrian sting operations for helping to dramatically reduce the number of pedestrian fatalities.¹⁶

“Walk Your Child to School Day” is an international program promoted in the U.S. by Partnership for a Walkable America. Dozens of California communities participate including the City of Oakland which introduced the event as part of their ongoing work with a community-based Pedestrian Safety Project. The Central Valley town of Reedley's participation allowed them to alert their police department to the numerous problems surrounding its schools. Police have beefed up enforcement and the town is improving its crosswalks and street lighting.



P
o
r
t
l
a
n
d,
O
r
e
g
o
n

How Can I Get Started?

Anyone can initiate a Safe Routes to School program. Ultimately the school district, city officials, parents and law enforcement need to work together for a successful program. While each community's needs are unique, every successful project has included the following elements:

- ◆ Invite stakeholders to participate in the planning process
 - School administration, teachers, parents and children
 - City officials including elected officials, public works, traffic safety and law enforcement
 - Neighborhood groups and community leaders
- ◆ Gather basic data on how children are now traveling and why
 - Survey parents and children
 - Map out the basic routes that children use or could use
 - Identify hazards
 - Recommend remedies
- ◆ Obtain funding and implement engineering improvements
- ◆ Initiate Education and Enforcement programs in the community
- ◆ Create excitement in the program through media coverage and special events
- ◆ Evaluate the program and reintroduce it each year

A successful Safe Routes to School program will improve the health and safety of pupils by reducing traffic around school facilities and encouraging greater physical activity among students. It has the potential for improving pupils' behavior in school and on the school journey; it provides opportunities for learning, particularly under the theme of citizenship. In addition, a program that reduces school traffic improves relations with the school's neighbors.

Local.Programs@dot.ca.gov or on the web at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/>.

Yet, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Local and regional transportation agencies all across California also spend more than \$10 billion annually on transportation projects — the vast majority of which is flexible enough to spent on pedestrian and bicycle safety and neighborhood livability projects if public and political



City and county governments also recognize the benefits from participating in and implementing a safe routes program. Local jurisdictions will experience reduced traffic congestion and collisions in and around schools and reduced speed in neighborhoods, helping to improve the quality of life for all its residents. More people will be able to walk and bicycle as a result of improved access. And the community's children will experience greater independence as well as learn valuable traffic safety skills.

Getting Your Project Funded

Billions of dollars in federal and state transportation funds are increasingly opening up for bicycle and pedestrian projects. The "Safe Routes to School" bill in California specifically provides \$20 million a year for Safe Routes to Schools projects through the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The legislation is a two year pilot project through 2001, but may be extended permanently if there is enough public support. More information is available through the Caltrans Office of Local Programs at 916-653-4727, by e-mail at

support can be generated. Other funding sources include transportation enhancement (TEA) grants available from Caltrans and regional transportation planning agencies, TDA Article 3 funds available from regional transportation planning agencies, Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP or STIP) funds available from counties and regional transportation planning agencies, county transportation sales tax measures, local Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds from cities and counties, and many more. Contact the Local Government Commission or the Surface Transportation Policy Project at the addresses below for further details.

Where Can I Go For More Information?

California Department of Health Services. State health agency with staff dedicated to active communities programs, safe routes to school projects, and Walk a Child to School day. Contact: 877-4-Safe-Rt. or www.dhs.ca.gov/walk2school
Local Government Commission. A non-profit organization serving local elected officials and agencies with an interest in livable communities,

traffic calming, and bicycle and pedestrian projects. Contact 916-448-1198 or visit www.lgc.org.

Surface Transportation Policy Project

National non-profit advocacy organization based in Washington DC with offices in Sacramento, the Bay Area and Los Angeles. Excellent source of information for transportation funding opportunities, regional planning initiatives and local groups throughout California involved in transportation reform initiatives. Contact 213-629-2043 or 415-956-7795 or visit www.transact.org/ca
California Bicycle Coalition. State-wide membership-based organization which mobilizes local bicycle advocacy coalitions for legislative campaigns to make California more bicycle-friendly. Contact 916-446-7558 or visit www.calbike.org

Rails to Trails Conservancy

National non-profit advocacy organization with a California field office in the Bay Area. Lots of detailed information on developing bicycle and pedestrian trails, particularly from abandoned railroad right-of-ways. Contact 415-397-2220 or visit www.railtrails.org.

Footnotes:

- 1 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- 2 Dept of Environment, Transport and the Regions, London/Greater Vancouver Regional District: Morning Peak Trip by Purpose
- 3 California Department of Health Services
- 4 California Department of Health Services
- 5 Latino Issues Forum
- 6 1996 Surgeon General's report on physical activity and health
- 7 Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- 8 Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- 9 The California 2000 Project
- 10 The California 2000 Project
- 11 The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
- 12 UK Department of Transportation; "Killing Speed and Saving Lives."
- 13 Institute of Transportation Engineers
- 14 Using Residential Patterns and Transit to Decrease Auto Dependence and Costs, Natural Resources Defense Council, June 1994
- 15 Department for Environment, Transport Regions London, England 1999
- 16 Surface Transportation Policy Project

This fact sheet produced and funded by the organizations listed above.