

DATE: May 3, 2022

TO: Council Transportation Committee

FROM: Priyoti Ahmed, Transportation Planner
Ria Hutabarat Lo, Transportation Manager
Damian Skinner, Assistant Public Works Director

VIA: Dawn S. Cameron, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: Safe Routes to School Program

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an update on the Safe Routes to School program and provide feedback on current and future activities.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the City of Mountain View received a \$500,000 Vehicle Emissions Reductions Based at Schools (VERBS) grant, which were Federal funds administered by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). This grant funded a three-year program to encourage students to get to school safely by walking and biking. The City used the grant to hire a company, Safe Moves, to run the VERBS program (Figure 1) from November 2011 until October 2014. In 2013, the City received another \$500,000 VERBS grant to continue the program from April 2015 to March 2018.

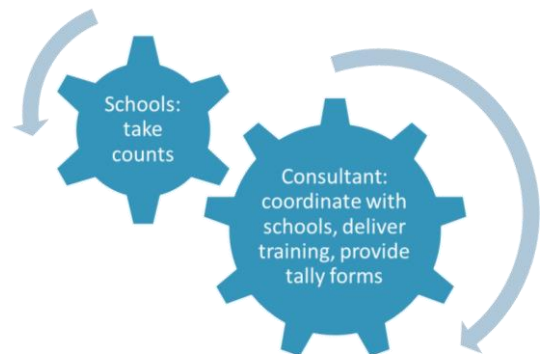


Figure 1: VERBS Model

Throughout the six years of the program, a significant number of students from participating schools engaged in bike rodeos, received safety training, and started to walk or bike to their schools. A report summarizing activities undertaken during the VERBS program was presented at the [Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee \(B/PAC\) on January 30, 2019](#).

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) 2.0

In preparation for a new two-year Safe Routes to School (SRTS 2.0) program, the City requested proposals and selected Alta Planning to prepare consultant services in support of the program. In June 2019, the City executed a \$45,991 contract for Phase 1 of the SRTS 2.0 program, which included reaching out to school and district staff, preparing suggested route maps, developing individualized school plans, and conducting a Citywide bike rodeo on August 1, 2019.

In [December 2019](#), the City was awarded \$184,904 in VTA 2016 Measure B funds for Phase 2 of SRTS 2.0 (Figure 2), providing for a total Phase 1 and 2 budget of \$230,895 for the Alta Planning contract. Phase 2 tasks include the following activities at each public school:

- School champion toolkit;
- Meetings with Parent-Teacher Associations or site councils;*
- Schoolwide bike skills academy;*
- Hip-hop traffic safety musical assembly;*
- Walk/Bike to School Day;*
- Walk/bike resource fair;*
- Neighborhood yard signs;*
- Data collection on access to school;*
- Bicycle repair workshop**; and
- Social media posts.**

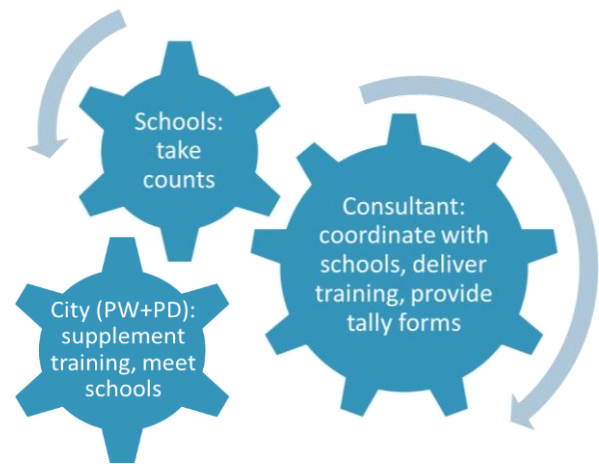


Figure 2: SRTS 2.0 Model

*Elementary and Middle Schools
**High Schools

In early 2020, consultants and City staff coordinated with schools and school district staff on the timing to kick off these on-campus activities.

COVID-19 Impacts on SRTS 2.0

In March 2020, the Health Officer of the County of Santa Clara issued a Shelter-in-Place Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that halted in-person classroom instruction until August 2021. SRTS 2.0 work was paused during this period. Staff considered carrying out SRTS 2.0 via online activities during the pandemic, but opted not to because online instruction did not provide a comparable learning experience to in-person rodeos, workshops, and trainings.

In August 2021, schools resumed in-person classroom instruction; however, City staff and consultants were not allowed on campuses until COVID-19 protocols changed on March 10, 2022. After two years of the pandemic, school staff had to focus on helping their students catch up on missed learning and did not have the capacity to deliver SRTS elements through Physical

Education classes or any other classes. As a result of the time gaps between grant funding and missed learning during the pandemic, students in Mountain View did not receive SRTS traffic safety education or encouragement for four years.

Recent Collisions Involving Students

There have been five collisions involving students traveling to or from school since the return of students to school campuses in August 2021. These collisions are described below based on the collision reports.

- August 23, 2021—A noninjury collision occurred involving a motorist who did not come to a stop at the stop sign and entered the crosswalk to turn onto Miramonte Avenue from Hans Avenue. The motorist struck a Graham Middle School student who was riding a bicycle southbound on the northbound side of the roadway sidewalk and was crossing Hans Avenue at Miramonte Avenue on her way home from school. The student did not stop at the curb before entering the roadway. An ambulance attended the scene, but there were no significant injuries. This collision was both a result of the vehicle failing to come to a complete stop at the limit line and the bicyclist unsafely entering the roadway.
- September 30, 2021—A noninjury collision occurred on Rose Avenue along the frontage of Springer Elementary School involving a motorist traveling west on Rose Avenue to drop off a student in the morning. A Springer Elementary School student ran into the roadway outside of the crosswalk after exiting a parked vehicle on Orangetree Lane and was knocked over when the motorist struck the student with the passenger-side mirror of the car. The child suffered minor scrapes and was transported to the hospital by Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
- November 17, 2021—An injury collision occurred at the intersection of Hans Avenue and Phyllis Avenue. In this case, a Graham Middle School student was bicycling in the eastbound direction on Hans Avenue and made a right turn onto Phyllis Avenue. The student did not stop at the stop sign and collided with the rear portion of a vehicle that was being driven south on Phyllis Avenue. The student sustained broken bones.
- February 28, 2022—An injury collision occurred at the Mercy Street crossing of Shoreline Boulevard involving a motorist and a Graham Middle School student. The motorist was heading south in the third lane (closest to the curb) of Shoreline Boulevard and did not stop or yield when motorists in the first and second lanes yielded to the bicyclist. The motorist in the third lane struck the student who was riding across the crosswalk in a westbound direction. The bicyclist was in the crosswalk and had not activated the warning lights prior to entering the crosswalk. The student was temporarily hospitalized due to injuries.

- On March 17, 2022—A fatal collision occurred at the intersection of El Camino Real and Grant Road involving a truck driver and a bicyclist who was a Graham Middle School student. Based on the collision report¹, the motorist was driving a construction truck north on Grant Road and came to a complete stop at the red light at El Camino Real. The driver looked right and left and yielded to pedestrians lawfully in the crosswalk prior to moving forward to turn right on red onto El Camino Real. At this time, the bicyclist was traveling north on the eastern sidewalk of Grant Road and entered the roadway from the east sidewalk. As the bicyclist turned from the sidewalk into the roadway, the bicycle fell to the roadway, causing the rider to be ejected into the area in front of the truck, where he was struck and killed.

City Activities

Infrastructure Improvements Near Schools

Over the last four years, the City has installed a number of safety enhancements near schools. These enhancements include:

- New raised crosswalk with bulb-outs and pedestrian-actuated LED crosswalks on Escuela Avenue at Castro Elementary School (2018);
- Class IV protected bikeways on Castro Street near Graham Middle School (2018);
- Extension of Permanente Creek Trail between Rock Street and Middlefield Road, adjacent to Crittenden Middle School (2018);
- High-visibility crosswalks and advanced-yield markings near Crittenden Middle School, including at the intersection of Middlefield Road and Terra Bella Avenue (2018);
- “Yield to Pedestrian” in-street signs and/or “Slow Down” panels near Castro Elementary, Crittenden Middle, Graham Middle, Landels Elementary, Monta Loma Elementary, Mountain View High, and the German International School/Yew Chung International School (2019);²

¹ <https://www.mountainview.gov/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=1935&TargetID=9>

² Locations of panels include: Anna/Elka (2), Bryant/Ivan (2), Burgoyne/San Luis (2), Easy/Hetch Hetchy (2), Escuela, Escuela/Gamel (2), Laura (1), Mercy/Frances (2), Middlefield/San Pierre (8), Middlefield/Terra Bella (8), Middlefield/Tyrella (2), Miramonte/Hans (2), Miramonte/Park (2), Rengstorff/Junction (2), Rock/Permanente Creek Trail (2), Rock/Telford (2), Rose/Orangetree (2), San Pierre/Ormonde (2), San Pierre/San Domar (2), Thompson/Thompson (2), Truman/Bruckner (2), Whitney/Anna (4), Calderon/Villa (2), Cuesta/Bonita (2), Dana/Pioneer (4), Easy/Gladys (2), Escuela/Crisanto (2), Levin (8), Marilyn/Marigold (2), Marilyn/Satake (2), Mayfield (4), Mercy/Calderon (2), Whisman/Sherland (2).

- Touchless pedestrian push buttons near Crittenden Middle School and Castro Elementary School (2020);³
- New Class II bike lanes on Calderon Avenue (2021); and
- New crosswalk markings and red curb on Rose Avenue near Springer Elementary School (October 2021).

SRTS Webpage, Maps and Toolkits

During the school closures, City staff and SRTS consultants undertook work on webpage updates, SRTS maps, school champion toolkits, and other collateral materials for the program. The City also initiated communications with the School Districts and schools.

School Resource Officers Traffic Safety Efforts at Graham Middle School, September 2021

Following the collision at the Hans Avenue/Miramonte Avenue intersection in August 2021, the Police Department School Resource Officers (SROs) provided talks on traffic safety to students at Graham Middle School. Due to COVID-19 protocols, other City staff and SRTS consultants were not permitted on campus at that time. SROs also served as interim crossing guards for Graham Middle School between November 2021 and March 2022.

SRTS Leadership, November 2021

In November 2021, the City hired a new Transportation Planner who took over leadership of the SRTS program. This change in leadership allowed the City to reassess the model of City-provided and consultant-driven programming and consider lessons learned during the pandemic, when City staff and consultants were not permitted to enter school campuses. The City is now working to engage more closely with school communities in delivery of SRTS programming and identification of potential infrastructure enhancements.



Informal Safety Awareness Event, December 17, 2021

At the request of the Graham Middle School Principal, SRTS staff accompanied SROs to participate in an informal, outdoor event on December 17, 2021 to raise awareness of traffic safety at lunchtime and after school. Staff also

³ Locations of touchless pedestrian buttons include: California/San Antonio, California/Rengstorff, California/Escuela, California/Mariposa, Rengstorff/Stanford, Cuesta/Montalto, Shoreline/Montecito, Dana/Calderon, Grant/Bentley, Middlefield/Farley.

assisted students in basic bike maintenance activities such as checking tire air pressure and brakes.

SRTS Pilot Coordinating Committee, January 2022

In January 2022, the City established a pilot coordinating committee for Graham Middle School with key partners, including Public Works SRTS staff, Police, PTA representatives, school principals, school district staff, parents, and student leaders who are interested in transportation, safety, and sustainability. The purpose of the coordinating committee is to provide an avenue for the City to build long-lasting education and encouragement programs with the school community.

This pilot program is now being incrementally expanded to other school communities as the SRTS program delivery expands. The committee has provided input to the City on suggested route maps, safety trainings, and upcoming SRTS events, such as the Citywide Bike Rodeo. The committee has also provided a forum to discuss infrastructure improvements as they relate to school access.

Crossing Guard Expansion

At the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, the City of Mountain View had eight crossing guards serving 15 public schools (from three school districts) and five private schools in the City. These crossing guards are funded through the Police Department and positioned in close proximity to elementary schools.

On March 6, 2022, the City hired an additional crossing guard to serve Graham Middle School for the remainder of the school year. This temporary position was funded through the Active Transportation portion of the Sustainability Action Plan 4 (SAP-4) budget. The crossing guard is stationed at the Hans Avenue/Miramonte Avenue intersection, which is along the City's suggested route to school and was the site of a recent collision.

In line with the desire to adopt a more collaborative strategy with Mountain View Whisman School District, the City and School District are pursuing budget proposals to support five additional crossing guards for the next school year. The City has also submitted an application for an Office of Transportation (OTS) grant for two additional crossing guards. Staff is currently working on an analysis that overlays the suggested routes to school, the Vision Zero high-injury network, AccessMV bicycle level of traffic stress, and recent crash locations in order to determine priority locations for crossing guards.



Figure 4: A Crossing Guard at Hans Avenue and Miramonte Avenue

SRTS Training, April 7, 2022

Following updated COVID-19 protocols, schools now allow City staff and transportation safety education trainers on campus. On April 7, 2022, the City held its first safety training at Graham Middle School.



Figure 5: Safety Training at Graham Middle School

The safety training is outlined in Attachment 1 and included the following four engaging stations on safety topics:

- **Station 1:** Helmet Fitting—Students learned about the importance of wearing a helmet and were shown how to properly fit their helmets through a demonstration.
- **Station 2:** Bicycle Safety (ABC Quick Check)—Students learned about bike maintenance and how to determine if their bikes are safe to ride on the road. Key elements to check include Air, Brakes, Chain, Quick release features, and all-over Check (“ABC Quick Check”). Students also learned how to adjust their seat to ride safely.

- **Station 3: Crossing “SAFELY” Demonstration**—Students learned about defensive riding and participated in the steps needed to safely cross a street as a pedestrian or cyclist. These steps include:

- a. Stop at the curb;
- b. Activate the pedestrian button (for signalized crossings);
- c. Field of view scan;
- d. Eye contact with drivers;
- e. Lane-by-lane check (for multi-lane roads); and
- f. Yield to pedestrians (in crosswalks and sidewalks).



Figure 6: Crossing "SAFELY" Demonstration

During the demonstration, students volunteered to be a pedestrian or bicyclist and used “SAFELY” actions to walk or bike through a mock crosswalk shown in Figure 6. Students also received a handout that includes roadway rules for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

- **Station 4: Suggested Route map and feedback**—The City provided handouts on rules for riding, crossing safely, and ABC quick check and suggested route maps for Graham Middle School. Students had the opportunity to provide feedback about the training through open-ended comments and a dot exercise on the different stations. Comments included the importance of wearing a helmet, eye contact, and to look multiple ways before crossing. Students also expressed appreciation to staff on the training that they received.

The City is planning to hold similar safety trainings at Landels Elementary School and Bubb Elementary School before the end of the school year. City staff and consultants will provide safety training to other schools in Mountain View in the 2022-23 school year.

Planned Future City Activities

Additional Infrastructure Improvements Near Schools

Staff is currently working to design and implement additional infrastructure safety enhancements near schools. A list of 25 active Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects that involve active transportation improvements were listed as an attachment to the [April 12, 2022 City Council](#)

[Study Session Memo](#), with 15 of them along suggested routes to schools. These CIP projects include:

- Crosswalk restriping and enhancement near Bubb Elementary, Castro Elementary, Crittenden Middle, Graham Middle, Landels Elementary, Monta Loma Elementary, Mountain View High School, Springer Elementary, Stevenson Elementary, and Theuerkauf Elementary Schools (Project 21-12); and
- Augmenting a repaving project to provide a two-way Class IV bikeway on northbound Miramonte Avenue between Hans Avenue and Castro Street as well as bulbouts and LED enhanced crosswalks at Hans Avenue (Project 20-01).

Upcoming Activities Under SRTS 2.0

The City is working with Alta Planning to complete work under SRTS 2.0, including the following activities:

- Hosting safety trainings at all public schools;
- Holding a Citywide bicycle rodeo to be held on May 21, 2022 at Rengstorff Park;
- Coordinating a pedestrian and bicycle safety musical academy; and
- Providing an SRTS toolkit of options for school staff, parents, and students.

DISCUSSION

The City's SRTS program, from fall 2011 to spring 2018, was funded by \$1 million in VERBS grants, providing over \$165,000 per school year. The City used this funding to hire a consultant who developed curriculum and worked in collaboration with the schools to deliver traffic safety training and collect travel data. The City had one Transportation Planner at the time and relied on the Real Property Program Administrator to administer the SRTS consultant contract and the grant funds. This SRTS program did help increase the number of students walking and bicycling to schools.

By 2018, VTA had determined that cities would receive SRTS education and encouragement funding through the 2016 Measure B sales tax program and not from Federal transportation grants (i.e., the former VERBS program). The Measure B funds are being allocated to cities over the 30-year life of the sales tax based on population. Mountain View's share is approximately \$50,000 annually, a significant reduction from the average annual amount received under the VERBS program. On top of this, the Measure B funds were held up for a few years due to a lawsuit. The City's SRTS 2.0 program was started with \$47,000 in City funds in 2019 and was

supplemented by \$185,000 in Measure B funds after the lawsuit was resolved. This \$185,000 represented four years of SRTS funding (2017-2020) that has been stretched through 2022 due to the pandemic pausing the program.

Also by 2018, the City had added a Transportation Manager and a second Transportation Planner position. This additional staffing allowed the City to launch SRTS 2.0 with less consultant support due to less funding being available and more reliance on City staff. A third Transportation Planner position was added through the SAP-4; however, that position is vacant and is currently in recruitment.

As the SRTS 2.0 winds to a close and the City begins looking toward SRTS 3.0, the level of City-dedicated resources is a key policy consideration. The City can expect only around \$50,000 a year in VTA Measure B funding to help support consultant assistance. The City's Transportation Section has a very full workload with many programs, initiatives, and studies designed to achieve the City's transportation goals. At best, when fully staffed, they can provide 30% to 40% of a Transportation Planner's time to SRTS.

Recommended Approach to SRTS 3.0

Potential City-Led Activities

Under SRTS 3.0, staff recommends focusing the City's limited funds and efforts on traffic safety training and training safety trainers. For example, if school communities are amenable, this might occur through League Cycling Instructor (LCI) training and pedestrian safety training among school district employees, teachers, and PTA representatives. The City is also continuing to invest in crossing guards and has expanded this investment for the coming school year.

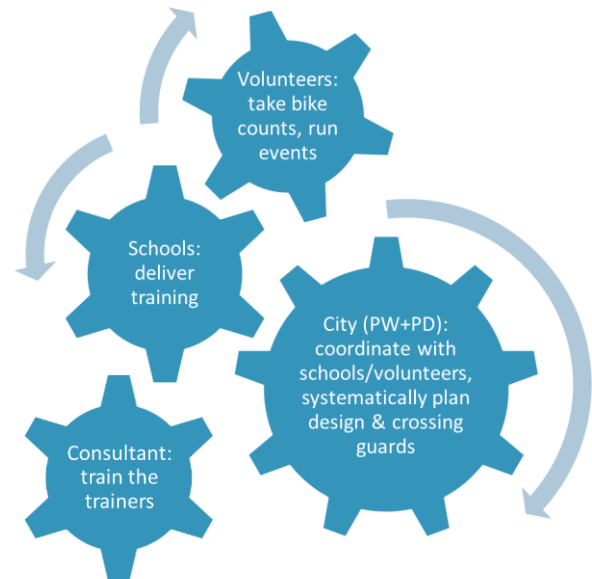


Figure 7: SRTS 3.0 Potential Model

The City has also begun work to implement and expand the SRTS Coordinating Committee, which began under the Graham Middle School pilot program. The coordinating committee brings together Public Works staff, Police SROs, the Principal, parents, teachers, youth leaders, and other stakeholders to discuss traffic safety education and training opportunities and identify the school needs. The coordinating committee helps to establish ongoing relationships with the school community, leverage school and PTA networks for communications and delivery of encouragement activities, and avoid future gaps in SRTS programming. Staff hopes that this more integrated approach can create more relevant programming, provide more direct input on

infrastructure improvements, and facilitate continuous programming across external discontinuities, such as gaps in grant funding timelines and public health protocols.

Potential Volunteer-Led Activities

With more focused City efforts, staff would like to explore opportunities for a partnership approach to some SRTS activities. For example, this could include engaging parent and student volunteers to champion transportation safety and sustainability issues through encouragement and coordination events at each campus. With support and materials provided by the City, these efforts could include:

- Identifying key access routes and issues;
- Coordinating bike trains and/or walking school buses;
- Conducting bike counts and/or tallies of student access to school;
- Surveying bike racks on campus;
- Holding “Walk and Roll” events;
- Distributing suggested route maps; and
- Distributing transportation safety and sustainability materials.

Potential School-Led Activities

City staff would also like to explore interest in some school-led activities such as:

- Communications with students on safety concerns;
- Supporting SRTS events through advertising and coordination;
- Delivery of pedestrian and bicycle safety training as part of the school curriculum, such as orientation week, puberty/adulthood classes, and/or PE classes; and
- Supporting efforts such as school access tallies as part of school curriculum.

Potential District-Led Activities

Finally, school-led activities may depend upon leadership, support, and encouragement from School Districts to incorporate traffic safety programming into the curriculum, make time for

teacher training, and elevate the importance of traffic safety education among school principals. Additionally, the City is working with School Districts to increase investment in crossing guards to serve at priority locations across the City.

NEXT STEPS

Staff and consultants will be providing traffic safety training at Landels Elementary School on April 26 and April 27, 2022, and they will conduct a Citywide bike rodeo at Rengstorff Park on Saturday, May 21, 2022. City staff is also expanding the coordinating committee as additional schools express interest and participate in safety training.

Staff is also working to identify key locations for new crossing guards to be sponsored by the City and Mountain View Whisman School District for School Year 2022-23, pending approval of funding by City Council and the School Board.

PA-RHL-DS/TS/4/PWK
935-05-03-22M

Attachment: 1. Safe Routes to School Training Day Agenda for Graham Middle School

cc: SRO—Guervera, School Superintendents