



MEMORANDUM

Public Works Department

DATE: November 30, 2021

TO: Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee

FROM: Priyoti Ahmed, Transportation Planner
Ria Hutabarat Lo, Transportation Manager

SUBJECT: Safe Routes to School Program

RECOMMENDATION

Review Safe Routes to School program information and give input on goals and future actions.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the City of Mountain View received a \$500,000 Vehicle Emissions Reductions Based at Schools (VERBS) grant. 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](#) from November 2011 through October 2014 (see Figure 1). In 2013, the City received another \$500,000 VERBS grant to continue the program from April 2015 to March 2018.

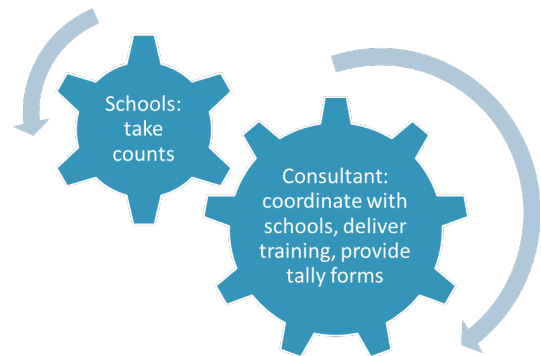


Figure 1: VERBS Model

During the VERBS program, the share of students walking and biking to schools increased from 10% (8% walking and 2% biking) to 43% (21% walking and 22% biking) over a six-year period (see Figure 2).

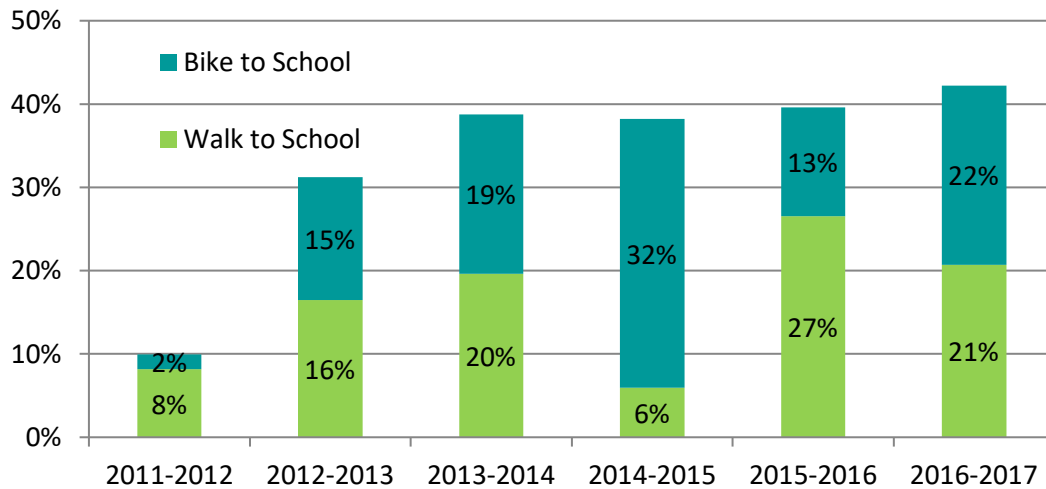


Figure 2: Walk and Bike Share for Students Accessing Mountain View Schools Participating in the VERBS Program, 2011-12 to 2016-17

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 SRTS 2.0 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 (see Figure 3), providing for a total Phase 1 and Phase 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**.

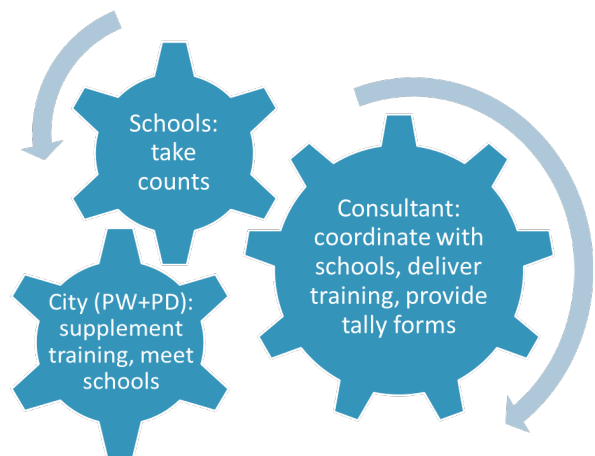


Figure 3: SRTS 2.0 Model

*Elementary and Middle Schools

**High Schools

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

ANALYSIS

COVID Impacts on SRTS 2.0

Due to the sudden and prolonged closure of schools between March 2020 and August 2021, work was paused on SRTS 2.0 Phase 2. City staff considered carrying out SRTS 2.0 via online activities during the pandemic, but this option did not provide a comparable value to in-person rodeos, workshops, and training.

In August 2021, schools reopened for students. City staff and consultants have reached out to school districts, but are not yet allowed on campuses due to COVID protocols. School staff is struggling to catch up on missed learning and have indicated that they do not have capacity to deliver SRTS elements through P.E. or other classes.

SRTS consultants have recommenced work on webpage updates and school champion toolkits. For other activities, the City plans to complete SRTS activities when City staff and consultants are allowed on campus and able to schedule services that work with school COVID protocols (for example, the program budgets for one musical assembly per school).

As a result of time gaps between grant funding and missed learning during the pandemic, students in Mountain View have now not received SRTS traffic safety education or encouragement for four years.

Recent Incidents

On August 23, 2021, a noninjury collision occurred, involving a motorist entering Miramonte Avenue from Hans Avenue and a Graham Middle School student who was riding a bicycle across Hans Avenue at Miramonte Avenue. Following this incident, Mountain View Police Department School Resource Officers (SROs) have given presentations on traffic safety to students. SROs are also serving as crossing guards and are working to train volunteer crossing guards for the Hans Avenue/Miramonte Avenue intersection.

On September 30, 2021, a second minor collision occurred at Rose Avenue/Springer Road, involving a motorist and a Springer Elementary School student who was walking in the roadway.

On November 17, 2021, a third collision occurred at Hans Avenue/Phyllis Avenue, involving a motorist and a Graham Middle School student. The student was bicycling and did not stop at the “Stop” intersection.

Safety Enhancements Near Schools

Following the incidents listed above, City staff have been working to design safety enhancements near both Graham Middle School and Springer Elementary School. City staff plan to use a repaving project along Miramonte Avenue to enhance safety in that location.

In the last few years, the City has also installed safety enhancements near schools. These enhancements include:

- Protected bikeways on Castro Street near Graham Middle School (2018);
- Permanente Creek Trail extension adjacent to Crittenden Middle School (2018);
- “Yield to Pedestrian” in-street signs and/or “Slow Down” panels near Castro Elementary, Crittenden Middle School, Graham Middle School, Landels Elementary School, Monta Loma Elementary School, Mountain View High School, and the German International School/Yew Chung International School (2019); and
- Touchless pedestrian push buttons near Crittenden Middle School and Castro Elementary School (2020).

Next Step for SRTS 2.0

The City is working with Alta Planning to complete the SRTS 2.0 scope and deliverables, including a safety toolkit for school staff, parents, and students. Along with the Champion Toolkit, the City will launch a Safe Routes to School Coordinating Committee to bring parents, principals, teachers, youth leaders, and other stakeholders together to discuss education and training opportunities, and identify the needs of the individual school.

Coordinating Committee

As part of the City’s Sustainability Action Plan (SAP-4), the Transportation Section has been provided a third Transportation Planner position, which will increase the capacity of staff to focus on safety and sustainability issues once all three Transportation Planner positions are filled. This additional staff could help the City to establish a coordinating committee and coordinate directly with the school community. The coordinating committee would provide continuity and allow the City to build an ongoing relationship

with key partners, who could include Police, PTA representatives, school principals, school districts, and student leaders who are interested in transportation, safety, and sustainability.

This type of partnership approach has been successfully implemented in Palo Alto (see Figure 4), where 68% of students now walk or bike to school, and Cupertino, where 50% of students walk or bike to school.

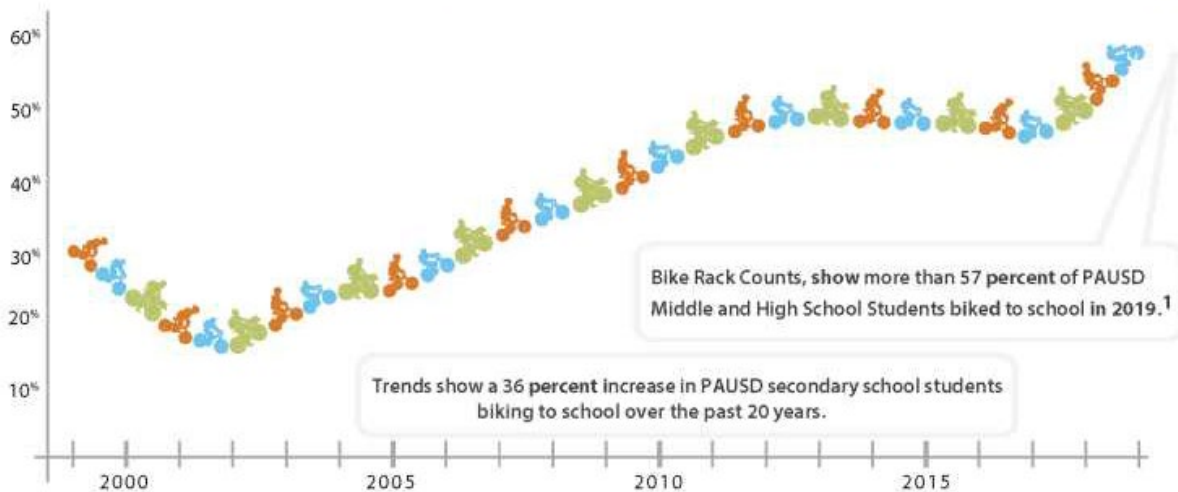


Figure 4: Palo Alto Middle and High School Student Bicycle Mode Average

The work scope for the expanded Transportation Section may also include infrastructure audits at school crossings. Small improvements identified through this process may be funded through the City's Active Transportation Improvements program included in the 5-Year Capital Improvement Program (budget) for 2023 and 2025.

Exploring Options for SRTS 3.0

While past VERBS/SRTS programs have increased the number and safety of students getting to school by walking and biking, the City is unlikely to receive the same level of SRTS funding in the future. The City is, therefore, rethinking what SRTS services to provide and how best to do so. Staff hopes that a new SRTS program can address concerns about stops and starts in the program due to grant funding gaps, difficulty pivoting during the pandemic, and a lack of relationships with school communities.

City staff plans to implement the current program as COVID restrictions ease. Staff are also thinking about how to create more continuity, build relationships, and improve flexibility in the next version of Safe Routes to School "SRTS 3.0". On top of that, staff also wants to find ways to do more with less funding, which is estimated at around

\$50,000 per year. SRTS 3.0 funding could also be focused on a training the trainers program. For example, City staff would like to gauge interest in League Cycling Instructor (LCI) training and pedestrian safety training among teachers and PTA representatives. This training could be included in a consultant contract that would be funded by Measure B.

Potential Volunteer-Led Activities

City staff also wish 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 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;
- Throwing Walk & Roll events;
- Distributing suggested route maps; and
- Distributing transportation safety and sustainability materials.

Potential School-Led Activities

Finally, City staff would like to explore interest in some school-led activities such as (see Figure 5):

- Communications with students on safety concerns; and
- Delivery of pedestrian and bicycle safety training as part of the school curriculum.

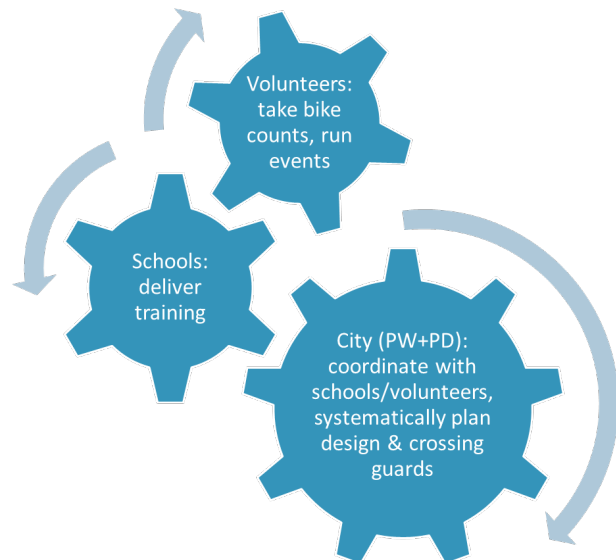


Figure 5: SRTS 3.0 Potential Model

DISCUSSION

The following key questions will be discussed at the Mountain View B/PAC:

- What are the most important goals for the SRTS program?

- For those who have participated in SRTS programming, what have been the most memorable and helpful aspects of the program?
- Do you agree with the suggested direction for SRTS 3.0, including a partnership approach and engagement of school communities?
- Do you have suggestions for potential partners or participants?
- What ideas or concepts do you suggest to improve cycling and walking within our schools?

~~PA RHL/BW/1/PWK~~

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cc: SRO Curns

School Superintendents