



SAN MATEO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
**PARENT AND COMMUNITY
EMPOWERMENT TOOLKIT**

NOVEMBER 2018



San Mateo County
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Healthy Kids • Green Communities • Safe Journeys



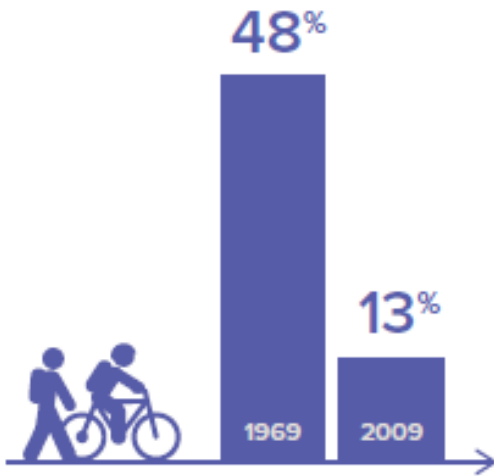
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THE PROBLEM:



The percentage of children walking or biking to school has dropped precipitously within one generation



Most kids are not getting enough physical activity



Roads near schools are Congested, decreasing safety And air quality for children

KIDS WHO WALK OR BIKE TO SCHOOL:



Arrive alert and able to focus on school



Get most of the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity during the trip to and from school



Are more likely to be a healthy body weight



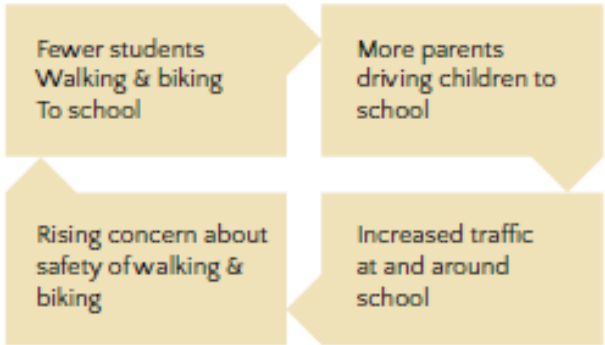
Demonstrate improved test scores and better school performance*



Are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety

THE SAFETY CONCERNS

FEEDBACK LOOP illustrates a reactive cycle that occurs when more parents drive their children to school instead of using active modes like biking and walking.



*More information, including primary sources, can be found at <http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org>

The Six E's of SRTS

SRTS makes school communities safer by combining improvements to walking routes with enforcement and education about safety and activities to enable and encourage students to walk and roll to school.



Equity: Incorporating equity considerations to ensure overall efforts are reaching all populations by including communities of color, addressing the needs of children of different genders, and reaching low-income communities



Engineering: Street infrastructure improvements (signage, crosswalks, signals, etc.) designed to improve the safety of people walking, bicycling, and driving along school routes



Education: Classes and activities that provide students and families with bicycle, pedestrian and traffic safety skills, and information about the benefits of bicycling and walking and the positive impacts these activities have on personal health and the environment



Evaluation: Evaluating the projects and programs of each of the other “E’s” helps to track progress and determine which programs and projects are most effective



Encouragement: Events and activities that spark families’ interest in walking and biking to school, with programs that reward participation



Enforcement: Strategies to deter unsafe behavior of drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians and encourage all road users to obey traffic laws and share the road safely around schools and on school routes

How can Parents & Community Members Get Involved?

Volunteers – whether they are parents, family members, or community members - are key players to supporting a SRTS program at your school. Caretakers and community members can offer a boost of energy and resources when school staff are stretched thin. You are critical to encouraging families in San Mateo County to ditch their cars and try walking, rolling and carpooling instead.

Use this guidebook to support a SRTS event at your school and recruit other families and community members along the way.

If your school does not already have a Safe Routes to School presence, consider reviewing the School Team Action Plan Workbook for guidance on how to get started. A School Team is a group of engaged volunteers working in partnership with school administrators, school district staff, government staff, and community-based organizations to discuss transportation safety issues and travel options at the school. Volunteers can be parents, guardians, community members, teachers, and/or school staff.

Safe Routes to Schools in San Mateo County

The San Mateo County Office of Education provides countywide support for SRTS, to encourage and enable school children to walk and roll to school by implementing projects and activities that improve children’s health, well-being, and safety while reducing traffic congestion and emissions caused by school-related travel.

Interested in learning about how SRTS can be implemented in the classroom? San Mateo County has developed a “Resilient Neighborhoods” curriculum for grades 2 and 4 that is being piloted in the 2018-19 school year.

PLAN A SRTS EVENT

Planning a SRTS event of any size is a team effort and requires advance planning. Starting early, developing a clear work plan and assigning roles, and getting the right people on board are essential for success.

Use the following steps to guide your event planning process. The next chapter has specific ideas about activities parents can lead and get involved in. Also see [Caltrans' Safe Routes to School Basics](#) for more resources to help you plan, create, and sustain a Safe Routes program in your community.

Getting Started

Schedule your event

- Schedule your event as far in advance as possible.
- Events can be just a single day (e.g. Cocoa for Carpools, bike fairies), once-a-week (e.g. Walk and Roll Fridays, Car-Free Friday), or a whole month (e.g. May Challenge).
- Coordinate with school principal and administrative staff to get the event on the school's calendar.
- Make sure that there isn't a conflict with another big school event, testing weeks, or holidays celebrated by your school community.

Recruit volunteers + engage stakeholders

- Engage your SRTS network to recruit volunteers to help organize and staff the event.
- Communicate the benefits of volunteering.
- Reach out to parent and neighborhood groups, school staff, and other interested community members where they are- at meetings, after school, or at other community events.
- Invite community VIPs, such as local elected officials or the fire department.
- Engage younger students, high school and college volunteer groups might be interested in getting involved.
- Keep a contact list of those who are interested to further follow-up.

There is always an opportunity to use the energy of volunteers from outside your direct school community. Consider recruiting volunteers from the following areas:

- Local faith community
- Neighborhood block clubs
- Grandparents
- Seniors and older adults who may live in the area
- Middle and high school students

Publicize your event

- Get the word out about your event. Make announcements at school staff meetings, during a school assembly, and over the loudspeaker.
- Send flyers home with students (or use PeachJar or other online service), include info in the school newsletter, distribute at family pick-up or during conferences. It can be a good idea to send safety information along with notice of events. The California Active Transportation Resource Center offers [customizable walk, bike, and roll posters and fliers](#) online.
- Post online on the school’s website and any social media. Other websites like Nextdoor can also be a good way to reach a wider audience.
- If possible, arrange for publication in community newspaper or on the radio.

Order incentives and seek donations

- Arrange for incentives and any donations you need for your event well in advance. While some in-kind donations can be processed quickly, others will take several weeks or more to get approved.
- Incentives should vary by age of students. Elementary students generally enjoy small tokens, such as stickers and pencils, and interactions with adults when they receive an item can reinforce desired behaviors. Middle school and high school students respond better to a higher-value prize, which can be offered as a raffle.
- Local businesses can provide small prizes, gift cards, or large raffle items. Local restaurants or cafes can provide healthy snacks and beverages that can help promote a party-like atmosphere.
- Customize the template [Incentives Request Letter](#) to use for your event.

Sample Timeline

At the beginning of the school year, work with other volunteers to decide what activities you want to focus on for the year. Create a schedule of when you need to get started on different events. Share the load! Assign different tasks to team members so no individual has to do everything. Most importantly, have fun!

Promote your program by tabling at back-to-school nights. Meet with other parents to organize Walking School Buses or regular Walk to School Days.

Convene volunteer groups to prepare for Walk to School Day. Organize Walking School Buses and Park and Walks, invite VIPS and the media to cover the party.

Maintain momentum in the winter with monthly Walk to School Day themes, provide incentives with punch cards and through Bike Fairies. Encourage families to form rainy day carpools, host Cocoa for Carpool, or celebrate Winter Walk to School Day.

Kickoff springtime walking and biking with activities like Step into Spring, Earth Day, or Bike to School Day.

AUG

SEPT

OCT

NOV

DEC

JAN

FEB

MAR

APRIL

MAY

Ideas for including everyone in your event:

- Provide materials in multiple languages.
- Work with existing community groups to reach a wider audience, potentially involving older adults.
- Integrate with a Park and Walk program, so students who live far from school can participate.

See [*Caltrans' Safe Routes to School Basics*](#) for more equitable programming

Day of the event

- The day of the event will be busy! Get to school early to make sure to have enough time to accomplish everything. Recruit plenty of volunteers to come early too.
- Set up a table with sign-in sheets, small take-aways, like stickers and bookmarks, walking and biking maps, and more. Play music to create a festive atmosphere.
- Reward participants with enthusiasm!
- Make sure to take lots of photos and remember good stories from the day. Check in with the principal to be consistent with their photo and media policy.
- Ask for feedback from participants through a survey.

Reward participants with enthusiasm

Rewarding volunteer and staff for their time keeps people motivated and helps grow the program.

- Recognize and thank contributors publicly on the school or program website, bulletin boards, or in the newspaper.
- Plan volunteer recognition events, such as a lunch, or prize drawings.
- Pay people for their time when possible, or provide other benefits such as child care, meals/snacks at events, or a transit voucher for families to attend events.

Track participation

- Use sign-in sheets to track participation at any event. Collect names and contact information for adult family members to use to recruit volunteers at future events.
- For a one-time event or month-long challenge, consider using punch cards to track student participation.
- Organize names and contact information in a spread sheet to track participation over time and for communication purposes.

BOOST YOUR DAY WITH RALLY ACTIVITIES

Rally activities are fun activities that inspire more families to get involved in Safe Route to School event days and use active transportation every day.

These programs reward participation and make walking and rolling normal and fun. This section outlines ‘rally activities’ that can be combined and used to shape transportation habits at the beginning of the year or as part of campaigns throughout the year.

TABLE 1. RALLY ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

Level of Effort	Activity	Description	Level of Effort
	Transit Promotion	Encourage middle and high school students to take the bus to school by providing bus stop information.	LOW – Offer transit information and safety tips at back to school time.
	Bike Fairy or Surprise Giveaways	The Bike Fairy leaves small surprises on bikes, scooters, and skateboards parked on campus to say “thanks for riding” and encourage more students to try it out.	LOW - Stop by school on your own schedule to drop off notes and small incentives.
	Tree Mural	Students place a colored leaf on the banner when they walk to school, reinforcing the connection between environmentalism and active transportation.	LOW - Coordinate a location within the school or classroom to hang the tree banner.
	Lawn Sign Safety Campaign	Share safety messages with people driving near schools with phrases such as: “We take time to brake for our kids” and “Drive Like Your Kids Live Here”	LOW – Coordinate with families and neighbors to distribute safety messages to be displayed on lawns.
	Bike Art Contest	Let students create their own personalized bike lane and bike marking design – using art materials.	LOW – Coordinate table as part of larger safe routes to school event.
	Meet & Greet Table	Spread information to parents and students before an event or on the actual day of the event.	LOW – Gather materials and ask school permission to set up the table.
	Bike Blender	Reserve SMCOE’s bike blender for your event and have students blend smoothies using their own pedal power.	MEDIUM - Pick up bike blender and smoothie ingredients, staff the event.
	Pledge and Punch Cards	Families can pledge how often they will use active or shared modes, or students can get a punch for every active or shared trip they take.	MEDIUM – Volunteers can drop off pledge or punch cards to classrooms or staff a table during drop off times.
	Cocoa for Carpools	Reward students and families who carpool to school with hot cocoa.	MEDIUM – Pick up hot cocoa packets and a hot water heater.
	Park and Walk	Publicize a pre-determined parking lot or parking area where families can park and walk the remaining distance to school.	MEDIUM –Coordinate with school to determine a location and to publicize location among school community.
	Carpool Promotion	Provide information about carpooling (and supportive carpooling apps) and help build relationships between parents driving students from similar areas.	HIGH – Boosts relationships between parents who drive and can encourage families to use a carpooling phone app.
Walking School Bus	A group of students who walk to and from school with adults. Designate a route and stop where students gather or get dropped-off near their homes.	HIGH - Requires committed adults to coordinate logistics with a group of families.	

Transit Promotion

Taking public transit to school can be a good option for students who live too far to walk or bicycle, or who don't have the option of riding a yellow school bus. Plan your route ahead of time and learn about tips to practice good transit riding.

Parent SRTS champions and volunteers can promote students' using the bus by providing information about relevant bus lines for your school, and communicating that:

- 511.org allows you to enter your origin and destination in [the transit planner](#) and discover useful trip information for 22 systems in the Bay Area. Use it to obtain multimodal travel all over the Bay Area.
- Spare the Air Youth's [Riding the Bus Etiquette](#) and [Taking Your Bike on the Bus Etiquette](#) provide helpful tips for a smooth ride.

Did you know?

- SamTrans has 34 school-related routes, which are scheduled to align with bell schedules and the academic calendar.
- Youth age 18 and under are eligible for reduced daily and monthly fares, a youth Clipper card, and Summer Youth Passes – find out details on [SamTrans' Youth webpage](#).
- Students in grades 1-6 can win a chance to have their artwork displayed on the side of a SamTrans bus for a year! Check out the [Art Takes a Bus Ride](#) contest.

Bike Fairy or Surprise Giveaways

The Bike Fairy visits schools during the day while students are in class to leave small surprises on bikes, scooters, and skateboards parked on campus. This is a great way to say “thanks for riding” and encourage more students to give it a try. The Bike Fairy leaves bookmarks, pencils, stickers, info cards, and other treats. A Bike Fairy Event or other surprise party or giveaway is a great addition to Walk + Roll to School Month.

- The City of Portland's Bike Fairy Program has been very popular and contributed to increases in students biking over the past several years. Check out [their program](#) to learn more!
- Kirkland, WA implements bike fairies through Bike to School Day, sponsored by [King County Metro SchoolPool](#) (see flyer right)

BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY FAIRIES
Program Implementation

Background

A BIKE FAIRY CAMPAIGN encourages students to bike or roll to school through building excitement, offering incentives and using the element of surprise.

The bike fairy visits schools during the school day while students are in class to leave a small surprise on bikes, scooters, and skateboards parked on campus. This is a great way to say “THANKS FOR RIDING!” during National Bike Month in May or on Bike to School Day.

MAY IS A GREAT TIME to encourage biking safety and biking as a mode of transportation as students will leave for summer vacation shortly after.

THE BIKE FAIRY IS A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TOOL for kids and families to try something new, especially when the weather is warmer, the ground is drier, and the daylight lasts a little longer. Our hope is that after that first ride, kids will want to roll to school more and more.

Fliers

Include information about Bike Fairies in developed collateral for Bike to School Day/Month to reduce printing demands. Coordinate with your school or PTA/PTSA liaison with the city to include this information early on in your planning process.

Incentives

FAIRY PACKS could include pencils, safety-tip book marks, how-to-lock-your-bike information cards, a SchoolPool sticker, and/or other small incentive items.

- ★ Pencils could be branded with SchoolPool or Bike Fairies. Consult with your City SchoolPool liaison.
- ★ Consider using paper baggies enclosed with a sticker or string to keep the fairy pack items together and tie them or hang them on the bikes and scooters.
- ★ Reach out to parent groups or local businesses for additional incentive ideas or resources.

CONSIDER BIKE LIGHTS OR BIKE BELLS for safety promotion if theft is not a high risk (see full Incentives list).

King County Metro SchoolPool Kirkland | BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY FAIRIES | 1

Tree Mural

As part of a spring or fall walking challenge, volunteers can set up a Tree Mural to celebrate students using active and shared modes to get to school. Students place a colored leaf (green for spring or red/orange/yellow for the fall) on a large tree banner for each day they walk to school. This could be as simple as a hand-drawn tree on butcher paper.

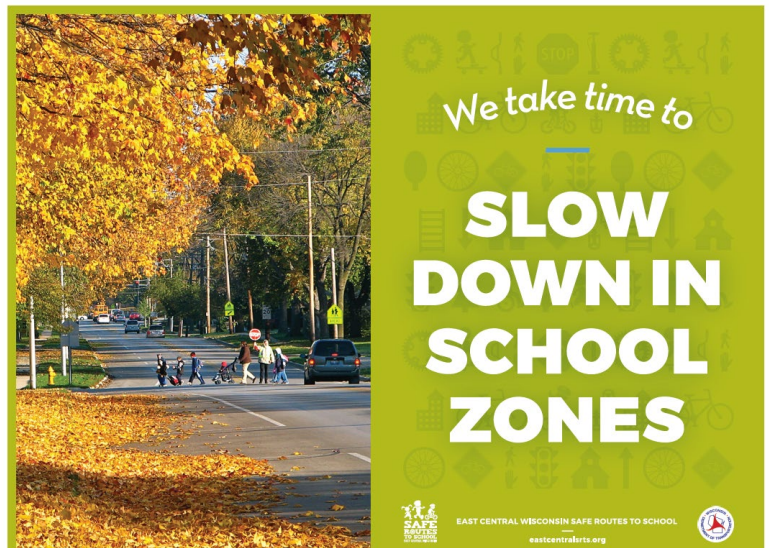
The mural raises awareness about the environmental benefits of using green modes to get to school. This activity can be used to create a friendly competition between classrooms or grades, or even between different walking school bus routes, if applicable at your school.



Lawn Sign Safety Campaign

Help spread safety messages to people driving near schools or other affected areas with yard signs. Slogans can include phrases such as “We take time to slow down in school zones” and “We take time to brake for our kids.”

- San Mateo County has developed [Street Smart yard signs](#) (in English and Spanish) to encourage drivers to adhere to safe driving behaviors.
- Vision Zero campaigns aim to eliminate all traffic-related deaths. The City of Sacramento developed a [Vision Zero traffic safety campaign](#), stating that in their city, safety is “homegrown.”
- East Central Wisconsin SRTS launched a media campaign to raise awareness of the need to reduce speeds to improve safety for all families (see right).



Bike Art Contest

Art contests are a fun way for students to use their artistic talents to communicate their love for walking or bicycling. The “Make you Mark” art contest allows students to personalize their own on-road bike marking. To conduct this activity, all you need to do is print out outlined bike markings and supply some coloring materials. This is a good way to open a conversation about bike safety and how to bike on streets with bike lanes and bike “sharrows”.

- Students in Portland took part in the [Bikes to Books Coloring Contest](#), and the students with winning designs had their art installed on a bike lane by Portland street striping crews.
- Oakland youth have a lot of pride for their city. The “Make your Mark” coloring activity let them design shared lane markings (“sharrows”) and bike signage that feels tailored to their city.





Meet and Greet Table

A ‘meet & greet table’ is a great way of spreading the word about your event beforehand and sharing information on the actual day. Don’t forget to ask your school’s principal for permission to set up the table before your event and on the event day. The best locations are near the school entrance but out of the way so you don’t block the school entrance if you have a large crowd at the table. You should coordinate with other groups to get resources and information about what other activities will be happening on the day of your event. Groups you may want to speak with include:

- Neighborhood organizations and PTA - specific activities and materials to hand out
- Your local Police Department – local bicycle and safety information, bicycle registration, and helmet fitting
- Local bike shops – bicycle safety check and maintenance
- City staff – invite city council and elected officials invited to bike or walk to the event with neighbors
- SMCOE Safe Routes to School, PTA, and local businesses – seek incentives for attendees
- Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition – valet bike parking, tabling, education and information

Bike Blender

A bike blender is a bike pedal-powered blender. The blender is attached to the back of the bike and kids can pedal the bike to power the blender. Bike Blenders are a great tool to reward participation in Safe Routes to School activities, teach about health and wellness, and enhance education and encouragement activities.

The San Mateo County Office of Education provides a rental bike blender to interested schools and programs serving local children at no cost. Reserve your bike blender on the [San Mateo County Office of Education website](#).



Pledge and Punch Cards

Pledge cards can be used to help students set intentions around how they get to school. These intention setting tools must be coordinated with parents and caregivers, as they are ultimately decision makers of how their child gets to and from school. Pledge cards can be distributed to students to have them record how many days a week they would like to get to and from school using active or shared modes.

Punch cards provides a system that keeps track of and incentivizes students getting to school by active modes. It can be used as part of a larger walking, rolling or carpooling campaign. Once a student gets a certain number of punches, they may be eligible to receive a small prize or incentive.

- The King County Safe Route to School Toolkit includes templates for [Pledge and Punch cards](#).
- Marin County's [Pollution Punchcard Guidebook](#) offers basic steps for organizing a campaign that makes the link between students' transportation choices and the environment.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
PUNCHCARD



Get your card punched or stamped every day you walk, bike, carpool or take the bus/shuttle to school

NAME: _____

ROOM #: _____

1 2 3 4 5

Cocoa for Carpools

Cocoa for Carpools encourages families to carpool or try an alternative way of getting to school rather than individual families driving the family vehicle. Carpooling students are rewarded with a delicious morning beverage, and this event is best when planned for a cooler winter morning.

- Spare the Air Youth provides [“SchoolPool” carpooling materials](#) available in English, Spanish and Chinese.
- Safe Routes to School in Marin County provides [carpooling promotional materials](#).
- Alameda County Safe Routes to School has information about [Cocoa for Carpools](#).



Park and Walk

A Park and Walk program encourages families to park several blocks from school and walk the rest of the way to school. Children arriving on school buses can also be part of this program. This program identifies an off-site location for students to gather and walk to school with their families, such as parking lots that are typically vacant or unused during school drop-off and pick-up times. Parks, places of worship, or malls with large parking lots may be willing to share their space. Walking School Bus or Bike Train programs in which a parent, teacher, or community member volunteer provides supervision for a group of students from the parking location, can be fun, safe, and practical additions to a Park and Walk Program. Encourage students to carpool to the parking location.

This program reduces traffic congestion around the school’s pick-up and drop-off areas while still accommodating parents who drop their child off at school on their way to work.

- The National Center for Safe Routes to School has information on how to start a [Park & Walk program](#).
- Minneapolis, Minnesota has a [Bus Stop & Walk Guide](#) that outlines how school buses can be part of park and walk programs.



Carpool Promotion

For families who live too far from school or are too busy to walk or bike, or during bad weather, carpooling is a great way to share the trip to school with other families.

Online tools and mobile applications can help match interested parents, but there is no replacement for one-on-one coordination. Begin by determining which families can carpool together: bring a large map to the meet and greet table at school events and ask interested families to mark where they live. Define neighborhoods of students who live nearby and identify a neighborhood captain who will manage logistics. This may change as new families join the school or others move on.

Once you've identified the group planning to carpool together, here are some steps to organizing:

- Decide who is driving and how much space they have in their cars.
- Think about when and where each child will be picked up. Options include picking up each child at his/her home, meeting at the driver's home, and meeting at other participants' homes.
- Talk about what to do if a driver or student is sick, if a child is late and misses the carpool, or a child unexpectedly brings a friend, and what to do if an emergency arises.

A Note about Ridesharing Apps

A wide variety of mobile apps offer modern ways of organizing a carpool. Before using one, consider the following:

- Use your judgement about whether the drivers have been adequately vetted.
- Talk to your child about being safe with strangers. Make sure they know your cell phone number!
- Remember that Uber and Lyft are taxi-like services and aren't a "green" alternative to driving alone.

• Palo Alto SRTS encourages families who usually walk or bike to form Rainy Day Carpools, to skip the heavier-than-usual traffic at drop-off and pick-up during inclement weather.

- Marin County SRTS's [SchoolPool resources](#) provide tips for organizing neighborhood captains, who hosted house parties so interested parents can meet others who are participating.



Walking School Buses

Many families would like to walk to school, but are concerned about traffic, have personal safety concerns, or may lack the time to walk with their children to school. Sharing the trip with other families provides adult supervision for groups of students, reassures parents that their children can get to school safely and on time, and builds community in the neighborhood.

A Walking School Bus is an organized group of students who walk to and from school with adults. It can be formal or informal. Both have a designated route and stops where students gather or get dropped-off near their homes. These programs are great way for students to get daily physical activity and travel to school, while having fun with their classmates. Students will learn how to be safe while walking, gain confidence exploring their communities, and protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- The County of San Mateo has compiled [Walking School Bus coordination materials](#).
- The SRTS National Partnership's [Walking School Bus Primer](#) is a comprehensive resource for those organizing a Walking School Bus for the first time.
- The City of Portland has information about the [benefits of a Walking School Bus](#) and [instructions for how to create cute walking school bus cut-outs](#) for photos.
- Walk with Us El Monte is a comprehensive [Walking School Bus program](#) with resources to create a formal program and track its effectiveness. All materials are provided in English and Spanish.

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APPENDIX A. TEMPLATES

Planning Checklist

Incentives Request Letter

Volunteer Sign Up



Use this checklist to get organized for your event, to spread the word to your community, and to solicit volunteers.

Day-Of the Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Host a family/PTSA coffee table with volunteer information
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide healthy snacks at front door
	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold a “How did the chicken cross the road” joke-telling contest
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have students sign in on and decorate a large piece of butcher paper
	<input type="checkbox"/> Take photos for the yearbook, newsletter and/or website
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use pedometers to track steps
Tracking Success	<input type="checkbox"/> Track total miles walks (by classroom, grade or whole school)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Set up a friendly competition between classes or grades
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use survey tools to count student travel modes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Share results: website, newsletter, assembly and PTSA meetings
Following Up	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a prize drawing and recognition at school assembly
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey teachers and parents for feedback
	<input type="checkbox"/> Choose a champion for the next campaign

Incentives Request Letter

[DATE]
[RECIPIENT’S NAME AND ADDRESS]

To whom it may concern:

[YOUR SCHOOL OR PROGRAM] is preparing for [EVENT OR PROGRAM], which is scheduled for [DATE]. We would greatly appreciate your help in making this day a memorable day for [SCHOOL NAME].

We are hoping that [RECIPIENT NAME] will donate **[A GIFT CARD/HEALTHY SNACKS AND BEVERAGES/SMALL INCENTIVES]** to our school. Your donation will provide us with funding to purchase refreshments for students that walk or ride to school on [DATE].

San Mateo County Safe Routes to School is run through the San Mateo County Office of Education. The program involves robust engagement of stakeholders to promote active transportation (walking, bicycling, skating, and other foot-powered modes) and shared transportation (carpooling, school bus, shuttle, or public bus).

If you are willing to provide the incentive to encourage students in [CITY] to use active transportation, we would be happy to announce your participation [IN THE NEWSLETTER, DURING THE EVENT, ETC].

Please let me know if you can make a donation on behalf of [EVENT OR PROGRAM].

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

[YOUR NAME]
[SIGNATURE]
[PHONE NUMBER]

