

MENLO PARK SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Annual Report

School Year 2020-2021



MENLO PARK SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Menlo Park Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program is a citywide program that encourages and enables children to walk, bike, or bus to school by making school travel safer, easier, and more fun. The goal of Menlo Park SRTS is to support 23 public and private schools in both private and four public school districts across Menlo Park, unincorporated Menlo Park (San Mateo County), Atherton, East Palo Alto, and Redwood City to help youth get to school safely.

In March 2019, the City of Menlo Park hired a SRTS Coordinator through Alta Planning + Design, the City of Menlo Park SRTS consultant. The SRTS Coordinator serves as a liaison between the City and school communities with focused an effort on SRTS initiatives and community-led activities and events.

In the summer of 2019, Alta Planning + Design finalized the SRTS Strategy that outlines recommendations based on feedback from stakeholder and community meetings held during the fall of 2018.

School districts, schools, parents, local organizations, and students were invited to give their feedback on the SRTS Strategy before the plan was finalized. The SRTS Strategy provides a framework to help implement the program in Menlo Park schools and details a number of recommendations and goals for the City of Menlo Park and SRTS partners.

In March 2020, all schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and citywide SRTS events planned for the spring were cancelled. SRTS program priorities shifted to adapt to the new protocols at schools, such as providing resources for distance learning and hosting virtual activities and events. The SRTS Task Force meetings also switched from in-person to virtual meetings in June 2020.

In-person education progressively resumed in August 2020, with different learning model options for families (fully distance learning, hybrid or fully in-person learning).

SRTS TASK FORCE

The SRTS Task Force was established in fall of 2019 to help guide and implement the SRTS program, discuss issues and concerns, and craft recommendations to improve the program. In addition to sharing information and ideas on SRTS, the SRTS Task Force engages the community around SRTS, partners on events, and supports schools and school districts with strategy implementation. The SRTS Task Force includes approximately 15 members representing a variety of organizations. Meetings are open to the public.

Mission, Roles and Goals

- Define and collaborate on objectives, goals, and milestones for the Menlo Park SRTS program
- Help organize and support different tasks and activities
- Be a liaison to share information and market the program to the school community

Members and Organizations Represented

- Las Lomas Elementary School District (LLESB)
- Menlo Park City School District (MPCSD)
- Ravenswood City School District (RCSD)
- Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD)
- City of Menlo Park, San Mateo County and Town of Atherton Public Works representatives
- Police Department representatives: Menlo Park, Atherton, San Mateo County
- Complete Street Commission (SRTS subcommittee representative)
- Community organization / Parents for Safe Routes representative
- Menlo Park Fire District
- High school student representatives

4

Virtual meetings in September, December, March and June.

14

Average of attendees per meeting.

TOPICS

School reopening plans and student transportation

Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

Public Input Map/Walking and Biking Safety Near Schools

Citywide Online Walk and Roll map

School Walk Audits

SRTS programming and milestones

ACTIVITIES 2020–2021



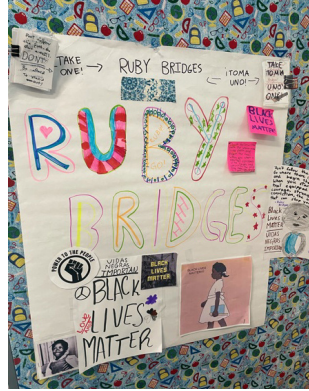
Helmet Giveaway in Belle Haven

On Wednesday, October 21st a bike helmet giveaway was held in front of the Belle Haven school. Parents and children received a personal fitting and safety tips with the free helmets. Thanks to a generous donation from Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital/Safe Kids, the Menlo Park Safe Routes to School team distributed 50 kid helmets, along with bike lights and SRTS resources.

Walk to Anywhere Week and Bike to School Month

With students back to in-person learning and others continuing with distance learning, the SRTS program adjusted its activities to allow in-person and from home participation. International Walk to School Day became Walk to Anywhere Week and the SRTS program encouraged students and families to celebrate Bike to School Day throughout the month of May.

Ideas and resources to walk and roll from anywhere were shared with the schools: Walk and Roll Activity Book, Rhyming Safety Tips for Crossing Streets, Bingo Sheet.



Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

For the second straight year, the City of Menlo Park celebrated Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. On November 18, 2020, students and their families were encouraged to celebrate by walking to school or anywhere. In total, 180 students participated in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. In addition to students walking on this day, teachers discussed the historical impact of Ruby Bridges and encouraged students to create artwork highlighting what they had learned.

Public Input Map and Community Meetings

In April and May 2021, the Menlo Park community was invited to participate in a survey on safety near the schools. A total of 179 responses were collected.

Two virtual community meetings held in June complemented the survey with discussions on the data collected through the survey and potential community-led solutions.

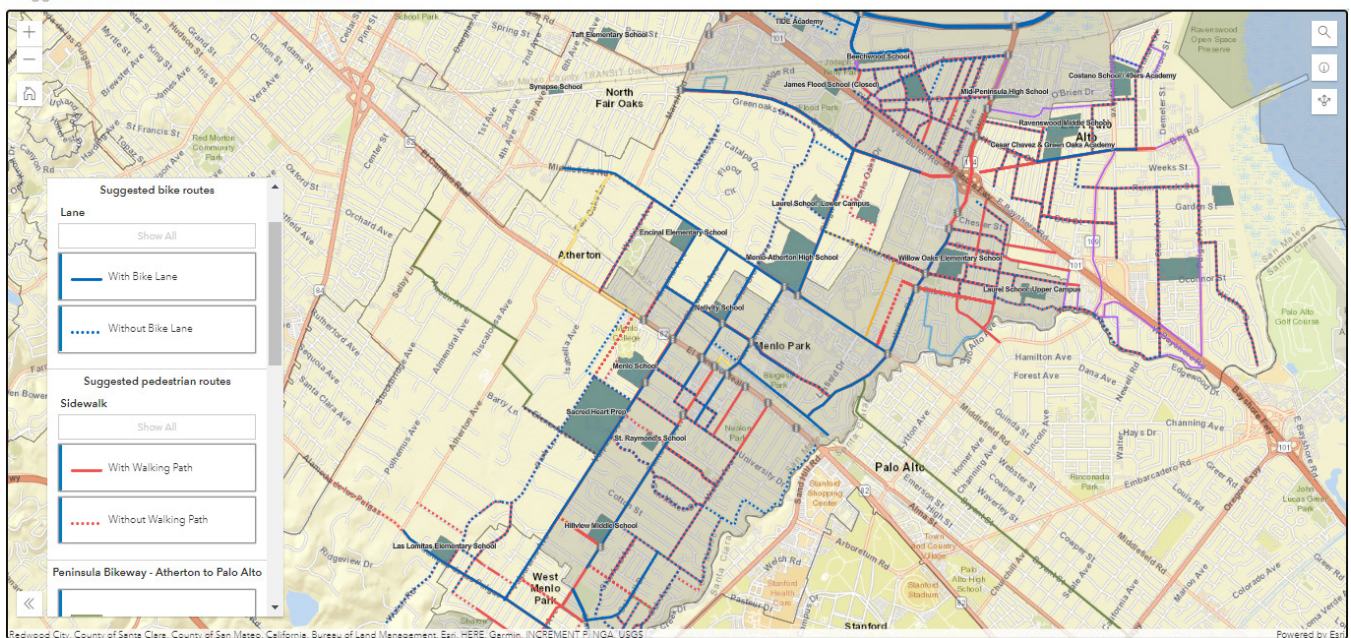
The top three problems mentioned in the survey were: Driver Behavior (29%), Sidewalks (27%), and Street Crossings and Intersections (25%).

Citywide Interactive Map

While there are individual Walk and Roll maps that are customized for each school, the City of Menlo Park also developed a citywide interactive map to help facilitate longer trips across the City. The map displays bicycle lanes, walking paths, the Peninsula Bikeway, SamTrans routes, traffic signals and schools.

Users can toggle the walking or biking routes on/off, and can also search for a specific address on the map.

Suggested Safe Routes to School - Walk and Roll



EXISTING SRTS EFFORTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

More Families Walk and Bike

In May 2020, local organizations -- such as Parents for Safe Routes, Menlo Together, Menlo Spark, Bike Menlo Park, and Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition -- created a survey on Menlo Park Streets to get a sense of how the streets were used by the residents during shelter-in-place. The survey was open from May 3rd to May 19th, with 339 responses received.

Trends included Increased walking and biking, decreased of driving

- 72% of respondents walk a lot more or somewhat more
- 78% of respondents observed a lot more or somewhat more school-aged children riding a bike
- 81% of respondents observed a lot more or somewhat more school-aged children walking

Back to School during the COVID-19 Pandemic

All public schools in Menlo Park were closed to in-person learning until the 2020-21 school year. In August 2020, Menlo Park public schools started the new school year with a tentative full-time distance learning model. By October 2020, most schools had decided to either use in-person or hybrid learning models for the school year.

Schools had to implement new COVID-19 protocols including physical distancing measures. Physical distancing protocols for school buses and SamTrans buses largely reduced their capacity. As a result when in-person education resumed, more than 400 elementary and middle school students in MPCSD and LLESB had to find other transportation modes. School districts strongly encouraged walking and biking to school as an alternative.

The Menlo Park Safe Routes to School program, with the input of the Complete Streets Commission and the Menlo Park SRTS community, suggested alternative bike routes to the suspended bus routes. Street improvement recommendations were also passed to the Public Works department.

180

Students that participated in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day 2020

- 74% of students walked/rolled to school
- 25% of students walked/rolled around their neighborhood

11

Parent or staff champions at seven public schools

179

Responses collected from the survey and Public Input Map on safety near schools

50

Kid bike helmets donated in the Belle Haven neighborhood, thanks to a generous donation from Lucile Packard Children's Hospital/Safe Kids.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The priorities and recommendations are based on stakeholder meetings, outreach activities, SRTS Task Force meeting discussions, and feedback from the school administration survey. The recommendations complement and prioritize the recommendations included in the October 2019 SRTS Strategy and the 2019-20 SRTS Program Annual Report.

Focus Areas and Next Steps

- Continue to work with the schools and stakeholders to improve bike and pedestrian education
- Continue to assess walking and biking safety near school, develop recommendations for the City's Public Works department and the School Districts, and identify funding sources to conduct school walk audits.
- Support school-based events and projects
- Organize citywide events to build excitement around SRTS and encourage walking and rolling to school
- Build awareness of an inclusive citywide SRTS Program in Menlo Park:
 - Creating a culture of SRTS and active transportation
 - Standardizing SRTS messaging and education in Menlo Park

Recommendations

SRTS Coordinator

Consider expanding the SRTS Coordinator position to a full-time role to provide more support to schools and SRTS champions. With the support of the SRTS Task Force, define the roles and priorities of an expanded SRTS Coordinator role.

SRTS Partnership in Menlo Park

Collaborate with the Menlo Park Police Department on bicycle and pedestrian education, along with messaging to schools and families in the Menlo Park community.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Education

Pilot the Menlo Park Pedestrian Safety Curriculum for PE teachers in two or three elementary schools.

Develop a Bicycle Safety Curriculum targeting grades 6 to 8.

Walking and Biking Safety Near Schools

Encourage and support school/community-led projects to improve student safety. Examples include demonstration projects, walking school buses, awareness campaigns, safety patrols, and promoting park & walk locations.

The Menlo Park Safe Routes to School Program is a partnership between the City of Menlo Park, Las Lomas Elementary School District, Menlo Park City School District, Ravenswood City School District, Sequoia Union High School District, private schools, and local community stakeholders.