

# MENLO PARK SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

# Annual Report

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School Year 2021-2022





# 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 private and public schools in four 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.

The San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) offers a countywide SRTS program that funds and provides technical assistance to local jurisdictions, school districts, and schools. The SMCOE SRTS program is funded by the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) and offers an annual grant to support local SRTS efforts. For many years, the school districts and other schools (in particular, Menlo-Atherton High School) in Menlo Park used the grant to organize encouragement and education events (e.g., bike rodeos, parent focus groups, Walk to School days). SMCOE also has staff supporting the Ravenswood City School District and acting as their SRTS Coordinator.

The Menlo Park SRTS Coordinator leads focused efforts on SRTS initiatives and community-led activities and events, guided by the Menlo Park SRTS Strategy.

24

Public and private schools

4

School districts (Las Lomas Elementary, Menlo Park City, Ravenswood City, Sequoia Union High)

SERVING STUDENTS FROM

Menlo Park  
Unincorporated Menlo Park (San Mateo County)  
Atherton  
East Palo Alto  
Redwood City

2018

City began work on an SRTS Strategy to convene partners in an Advisory Committee and to establish a work plan.

2019

City finalized the SRTS Strategy and hired an SRTS Coordinator to act as a liaison between the City and school communities.

2020

SRTS activities shifted online, and the SRTS Coordinator supported remote and hybrid learning in response to COVID-19 pandemic.

2021–2022

All schools in Menlo Park reopened for in-person education. The SRTS team continued to work with the schools and other organizations to promote alternative transportation modes, create a culture of SRTS in Menlo Park, and improve children's walking and biking safety.

# SRTS TASK FORCE

The SRTS Task Force was established in fall of 2019 to 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. The SRTS Task Force meets quarterly. The meetings have been virtual since spring 2020 and 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

## IMPROVING COLLABORATION

The SRTS Task Force facilitates collaboration between the schools and other organizations in Menlo Park. In fall 2021, Laurel School connected with the Menlo-Atherton High School Bike Club and SMCOE to get help with a bike rodeo organized at the school. The school bike club provided children bicycles while SMCOE donated the bike helmets.

4

Virtual meetings in September, December, March and June

20

Average number of attendees per meeting

## TOPICS

Traffic and safety updates

Program evaluation

School highlights and updates

Walk & Roll maps

School walk audits

SRTS programming and milestones

## Members and Organizations Represented

- Las Lomas Elementary School District
- Menlo Park City School District
- Ravenswood City School District
- Sequoia Union High School District
- City of Menlo Park, San Mateo County and Town of Atherton Public Works representatives
- Police department representatives: Menlo Park, Atherton, San Mateo County
- Complete Streets Commission (SRTS subcommittee representative)
- Parents for Safe Routes
- Menlo Park Fire District
- High school student representatives

# ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES 2021-2022



## Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

For the third straight year, Menlo Park celebrated Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in November. Thirty-five students from public and private schools in Menlo Park took a short quiz on Ruby Bridges' story to enter a raffle for a chance to win a gift certificate from local stores. Additionally, 50 helmets, generously allocated by the California Department of Public Health Kids' Plates program, were distributed on November 17, 2021, at Belle Haven School. The Menlo Park Police Department helped with helmet fittings.

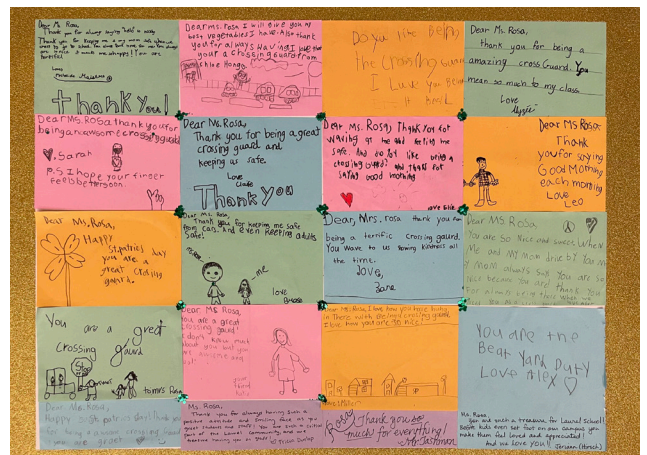
## SRTS Champion Toolkit

The toolkit was created by the SRTS program team to show ways how community members and families can lead and support SRTS activities and events. The handbook contains a step-by-step guide to plan school-based Walk & Roll events, monthly resources, templates for e-newsletters, safety tips, and fun activity ideas. In addition to providing resources and potential partners specific to Menlo Park, the toolkit shows different activities that can complement a Walk & Roll to School Day and how to plan them (e.g., how to organize a Bike Fairy Event or a Meet and Greet Table with local examples.)



## Crossing Guard Appreciation Week

In conjunction with the San Mateo County Crossing Appreciation Week, the Menlo Park SRTS program encouraged all schools to celebrate their crossing guards during the week of March 21. All the schools in the Menlo Park City School District signed giant thank you cards provided by the SRTS program. At Encinal Elementary, the Parent Teacher Organization purchased a folding chair for their crossing guard and parents came with presents. Laurel School classes made posters and cards and gave flowers and other gifts. Hillview Middle School students wrote thank you posters for the crossing guards and taped them up at their posts before their shifts. Students also showed their appreciation with fist or elbow bumps.



## Family Bike Rodeo in Belle Haven

Along with the Bike Month celebrations in May, a family bike skills event was organized in the Belle Haven neighborhood, in collaboration with the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition and the Onetta Harris Community Center. Children and adults came to the meeting point in front of the Belle Haven Library with their bicycles for quick fixes and light repairs. Over 15 children had their bicycle checked and got free helmets and bike lights. Although the event did not go as planned (the group did not ride from the Belle Haven Library to the new Meta Park), the SRTS team helped children to ride safely and collected many smiles!



## Walk & Roll Video Contest – Let’s Roll!

To celebrate May Bike Month, the SRTS program launched a school video contest for the first time. All students in Menlo Park were invited to share with their community in a short video why they like to bike to their favorite place. Seven students from Laurel School, Oak Knoll School, Las Lomitas Elementary School, and TIDE Academy participated in the contest, and three prizes (gift certificates for Menlo Velo and Sports Basement) were given out to the contest winners.



## School Walk Audits

Following last year’s efforts to collect data on safety near the schools in Menlo Park, two walk audits were conducted at Hillview Middle School (December 2021) and Laurel School Upper Campus (March 2022). A school walk audit assesses streets, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities around a particular school to see how safe and comfortable conditions are for walking and bicycling. Different stakeholders—city staff, police officers, school administration, teachers, parents, and students—are encouraged to attend a walk audit to share their various feedback, experiences and perspectives.



## Pedestrian Safety Curriculum Training

The Menlo Park Pedestrian Safety Curriculum was developed in spring 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the schools to close. In 2021–2022, the SRTS program reinitiated the effort with the development of an educational kit and lesson plan. A training was organized via Zoom for school staff and parents interested in knowing more about the curriculum. Representatives from Encinal Elementary, Laurel School, Las Lomitas Elementary School District, and SMCOE attended the training.

Week 2, Day 3

### Day 3: Crossing Safety

Note: This lesson requires preparation!

- Objectives:** Applying lessons from Week 1 into a crosswalk context
- Materials:** Jump rope/bean bags/basketballs for exercise stations, model roadways/crosswalks/intersection mats, laminated pedestrian signs
- Introductory activities:** Review words and concepts from Week 1 and introduce new words, explain non-verbal communication
- Main activity:** [See what a school!](#) Crosswalk demonstration
- Closing activity:** Ball activity for review

# EXISTING SRTS EFFORTS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Schools Reopening

The 2021–2022 year almost looked like a “normal” one. The SRTS program was allocated the initial pre-pandemic budget to staff a part-time SRTS Coordinator (8 to 12 hours per week), plan encouragement and education activities, and create new resources.

The schools were open for full in-person instruction and started to allow volunteers again on campus to help with SRTS activities. Seven public schools (out of 11) have parent SRTS champions that help the school administration promote the program and organize events.

## Stronger Partnership with the Community

Significant energy was dedicated in the first three years of the program to build relationships and develop a partnership between the school community, city staff, and local and regional organizations. The SRTS program benefits from these efforts and from a good collaboration between different City departments:

- Representatives from the police department always attend the Task Force meetings to share their efforts with bike and pedestrian education, provide safety and traffic updates, and answer questions.
- Staff from the City “Managers” Office help with promotion and communication, supporting the SRTS Coordinator with the newsletter, flyers, and website content.
- The Onetta Harris Recreation Center has helped with outreach and the organization of events in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

### Comment about the pedestrian safety curriculum during the meeting in May:

“I like that the curriculum can be taught as a big piece or in smaller bits that can be combined with other safe routes to school events.”

“I love the left-right-left practice activity before crossing the street!”

8

Events organized by the Menlo Park SRTS Program throughout the school year

5,164

Visits to the article “Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day now celebrated statewide” from Nov. 1, 2021

100

Kids’ bike helmets donated in the Belle Haven neighborhood in fall 2021, thanks to a generous donation from the California Department of Public Health Kids’ Plates program.

## Resources and Time Available

Finding time and resources to plan activities (including collecting student hand tallies or recruiting volunteers for school-based events) during the school year is still challenging.

In May 2022, the SMCOE SRTS program announced that the 2022–2023 funding for SRTS education and encouragement will not be available in fall 2022. This grant was allocated in the past to the four school districts in Menlo Park.

The Priorities and Resources section provides recommendations on how the SRTS program can address these challenges in the future.

# PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These priorities and recommendations are based on outreach activities, SRTS Task Force meeting discussions, and feedback from the schools and parents.

## Focus Areas and Next Steps

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Education

- Implement the Menlo Park Pedestrian Safety Curriculum and continue to provide training and support to schools and SRTS champions.
- In collaboration with schools and SRTS champions, implement a bike safety curriculum in the schools with a focus on grades 5 to 8.

### School Walk Audits

- Continue to assess walking and biking safety near the schools, develop recommendations for the City's Public Works department and the school districts, and identify funding sources to conduct school walk audits.

### Volunteer Capacity

- Support school-led events and projects by building volunteer capacity and recruiting SRTS champions.

### Encouragement Events and Activities

- Organize citywide events to build excitement around SRTS and encourage walking and rolling to school. Think of new ways to create excitement around walking and rolling to school and build awareness of an inclusive citywide SRTS program in Menlo Park.

### Technical Assistance

- Think of ways to support schools that will not have a SRTS grant for encouragement and education activities from SMCOE next school year.

### 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.



*Bike rodeo held at Laurel School in November 2021.*



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.