



SOLANO SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR



SOLANO TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY One Harbor Center, Suite 130, Suisun City

Solano Safe Routes to School

The objective of the Solano Safe Routes to School (SR2S) Program is to increase the number of students walking and biking to school by focusing on safety to make the journey a fun and healthy one. Using a comprehensive approach, the program includes 6 “e’s”: **Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, Engagement and Evaluation**. Solano SR2S offers all Solano County schools activities and programs to educate students about walking and biking safety and health awareness. The program also identifies safety improvements within our communities to enhance active student travel.

In 2008, the STA Board adopted Solano County’s first Safe Routes to School Plan and authorized staff to create a Safe Routes to School Program. This Plan provided the direction for the SR2S Program through 2012 and the adoption of second plan in 2013 which continues to guide the program today.

Solano SR2S during COVID

Since 2009, the SR2S Program has consistently engaged schools and the community through annual events, weekly walk and bike programs, and educational activities, but we have never encountered a year like 2020-21. Unfortunately, school closures that began due to COVID on March 16, 2020, were extended into the 2020-21 school year and continued with students in distance learning into spring of 2021. With these unprecedented closures SR2S staff shifted from typical SR2S program events and activities to the preparation for the return of in person learning.

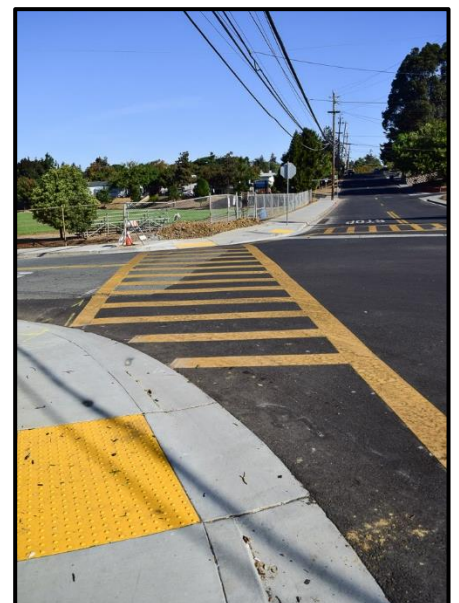
Beginning in March 2021, schools began to reopen for in person classes, offering families the choice to return to campus or continued virtual learning. While schools allowed students back on campus in a limited capacity, events and activities remained suspended. Despite these challenges, SR2S staff continued to support schools, convened SR2S Community Task Force and SR2S Advisory Committee meetings, worked with schools and cities to complete SR2S Micro Grant projects, and developed new resources for the eventual full return of students to campus. Here are the SR2S Program highlights of the year.



SR2S Micro Grant Project – City of Vacaville: radar feedback sign installed at Browns Valley Elementary.



SR2S Micro Grant Project – Vaca Pena Middle School (Vacaville): purchase and installation of locking skateboard racks.



ATP-2 crosswalk improvements and sidewalk widening completed at Robert Semple Elementary (Benicia).

Safe Routes to School 2020-2021 Highlights

Pilot SR2S Micro Grant Program – 13 of 14 Projects Completed

Encouragement - Engagement – Engineering

In December 2019, SR2S launched the Pilot SR2S Micro Grant Program with \$78,000 available for projects. Funding was made possible by Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds, Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District (YSAQMD) Clean Air funds and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) fines. Solano County schools, school districts, community-based organizations, and cities were eligible to apply for grants for small-scale projects or walk and bike programs at schools. SR2S received 16 applications totaling \$211,466.10. SR2S Advisory Committee members reviewed the applications and recommended 14 projects for funding which included walking/biking program incentives, safety equipment, the purchase and installation of bike and scooter racks, and radar feedback signs at or near schools.

During the 2020-21 school year, SR2S staff worked with grantees to complete 13 of 14 awarded projects; the remaining project, to install radar feedback signs at several schools in Vallejo, is scheduled to be completed in the 2021-22 school year. Schools received requested items to support new drop-off and pick-up plans and signage that helped schools adhere to district COVID guidelines for campus visits. Two cities delivered projects that addressed pedestrian safety around schools. Below are a few completed Micro Grant project highlights.

The **City of Vacaville** installed four radar feedback signs at Browns Valley, Callison, and Cambridge Elementary schools.

Kairos Elementary (Vacaville) used pedometers, incentives, and safety equipment received through the Micro Grant to teach students about pedestrian safety. The school plans to launch a walking program in fall 2021, when all students return to campus.

Riverview Middle School (Rio Vista - *photo 1*) installed fencing around existing bike racks to provide a secure area for students to store their helmets and bikes. **Knight Middle School** (Dixon), **Browns Valley Elementary** (Vacaville - *photo 2*), and **Vaca Pena Middle School** (Vacaville) installed bike, scooter, or skateboard racks.

Dan Mini Elementary (Vallejo- *photo 3*) used safety cones to help parents and visitors adhere to district COVID guidelines for campus visits.



Pilot SR2S Micro Grant Program – cont.

Dixon Montessori Charter School (Dixon- photo 4) revised school drop-off and pick-up procedures and received incentives and signage for its Walk or Wheel Wednesday Program planned to resume in the fall.



In December 2020, additional TDA Article 3 funding was awarded to three partially or originally unfunded Micro Grant projects. The Rocky Hill Trail (Vacaville), the intersection near Benicia High School at Military West and Denfield Ave. adjacent to Benicia High School (Benicia), and Solano-Widenmann Leadership Academy (Vallejo) will receive infrastructure improvements that address safety or encourage walking and biking.

With the success of the pilot Micro Grant program, Cycle 2 of the SR2S Micro Grant opened the call for projects in June 2021, \$100,000 from TDA Article 3 funding is available.

Active Transportation Program (ATP) - SR2S Projects

Engineering

Since 2008, the SR2S program (working with city public works departments, schools and districts) has completed 41 pedestrian infrastructure projects across the county. In spring 2021, seven additional projects began construction as part of the Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 2 award for improvements at schools in Benicia (Benicia Middle School, Joe Henderson, Mary Farmer, Robert Semple and St. Dominic School), and at Cooper and Lincoln Elementary schools in Vallejo. These improvements include high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian activated beacons, school crossing signage, and sidewalk installation or widening.



ATP-2 Project at Sonoma Blvd. and Florida St., at Lincoln Elementary, Vallejo



ATP-2 Project at Panorama Dr. and James Ct. near Benicia Middle School, Benicia

In addition, SR2S staff worked with the City of Fairfield and consultants on the city's ATP Cycle 5 application for the West Texas Complete Street Project and was awarded \$10.8 million, including \$114,000 for SR2S programming. This project brings bike and pedestrian improvements to a heavily travelled corridor and will impact students at two elementary schools and a preschool. SR2S programmatic support is slated to start at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

Engineering

The first project for HSIP Cycle 9 was completed by the City of Vacaville during the first quarter of FY 2020. The city installed Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons on Browns Valley Parkway (near Browns Valley Elementary) and at the Southside Bikeway crossing on Marshall Road. A walk audit at Padan Elementary identified that Marshall Road lacked a crosswalk for the bike path across this busy street. The new crossing serves students at Padan, Vaca Christian and Will C. Wood High Schools. Additional HSIP projects are scheduled for construction specifically around schools in Rio Vista and Suisun City later in 2021.



HSIP 9 crossing improvements at the Southside Bikeway crossing and Marshall Road (Vacaville)

In August 2020, applications were submitted for HSIP Cycle 10 for Ped Set-aside funding in 6 cities and the County. SR2S staff worked with the STA projects team, and city engineering staff to identify locations for crossing and pedestrian improvements and prioritize locations around schools. These project locations were identified through SR2S CTF meetings, the STA Countywide ATP, and walk audits. A total of \$4.7 million was awarded for HSIP Cycle 10 projects in Solano County at locations serving schools in Benicia, Dixon, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo.

2020-2022 Public Safety Education and Enforcement Grant (Cycle 5)

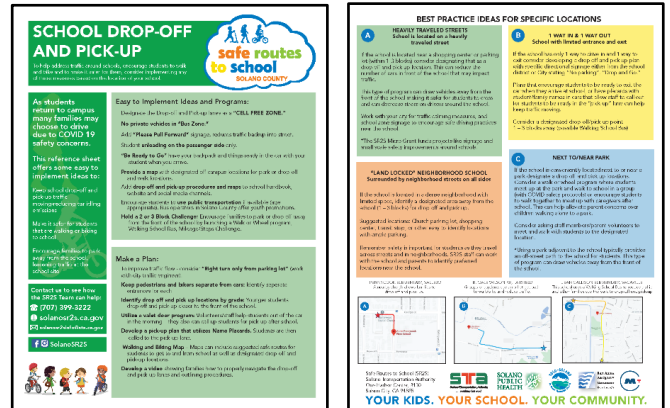
Education – Enforcement

In August 2020, the SR2S Program awarded the Benicia Police Department \$75,000 for Cycle 5 of the SR2S Public Safety Education and Enforcement Grant Program for FY 2020-2021. The grant award allowed for the continuance of a SR2S dedicated non-sworn Community Service Officer (CSO) position and partnership with SR2S to provide safety education for youth in Benicia while schools were closed. During this time, Benicia PD staff engaged with youth around town to provide safety education. When schools reopened in spring 2021, CSO Elisa Delatorre provided enforcement in addition to parking, distracted driver and pedestrian safety education to drivers and students.

The SR2S Program extended its partnership through fiscal year 21-22, with the Suisun City Police Department and awarded \$64,000 to fund a part-time non-sworn School Safety Traffic Officer (SSTO). When schools resumed in-person learning in March 2021, SSTO Don Hafich resumed the work at Suisun City schools to address parking and traffic safety issues during drop-off and pick-up. SSTO Hafich also worked closely with the school district, school site administrators, SR2S staff, and Suisun City Public Works to help identify infrastructure safety improvements around the schools to be included in the updated SR2S Plan.

New School Resource – Drop-off and Pick-up Plan Engagement - Encouragement

Preparing for an anticipated increase in single family vehicle trips when schools reopened, staff developed a Drop-off and Pick-up guide to help reduce school traffic. SR2S provided this resource to help schools prior to students' return in early 2021 and the guide will be offered as SR2S engages schools in the 2021-22 school year. The guide provides procedural and signage suggestions; active solutions, such as a Walk or Wheel or remote drop-off and pick-up programs; and general suggestions to encourage families to park away from schools during drop-off and pick-up and reduce traffic back-up in front of the school.



Virtual Bike Lessons – Bay Area Bike Mobile Education – Engagement

Crystal Middle School's Beyond Differences Student Service Organization (BDSSO) and the Suisun City Youth Commission (SCYC) hosted virtual bike-related lessons leading up to Bike Month in May. Students from the SCYC and BDSSO collaborated with SR2S staff in planning the afterschool event. Via Zoom, the **Bay Area Bike Mobile** taught four interactive lessons: "Proper Bike Fit and Types of Bikes," "How to Lock Your Bike to Keep it Safe," "ABC – Quick Check Pre-ride Inspection," and "How to Fix a Flat Tire". Twenty-two students from seven elementary, middle and high schools in the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District participated in the virtual lessons – the only ones offered in Solano County. On June 17, 2021, SR2S staff attended a recognition event at Crystal Middle School (Suisun City), where students that participated in the virtual lessons received bike helmets, bike lights and bells.



Virtual Bike Lesson participants received bike safety equipment at Crystal Middle School in Suisun City.

Champion School Highlights Encouragement - Engagement – Evaluation

SR2S staff developed Champion School Highlights to showcase schools that are proven "champions" within the SR2S program. These stories capture the history of the school's evolution in SR2S participation, travel tally survey data, and provide examples of how SR2S programming has supported school objectives or helped address parent and administration safety concerns. These highlights can be found on the SR2S website listed by city.



Partnerships - Solano Public Health

Education – Engagement

Solano Public Health continued to be an invaluable partner with the SR2S program, by working with staff to develop messaging to encourage physical activity for students and their families throughout distance learning. Messages included the health benefits of physical activity and ways to get moving safely during the pandemic. SPH and SR2S will continue to partner during the 2021-22 school year.

Safe Routes to School Community Task Forces (CTF)

Engagement – Engineering

SR2S staff engaged with Community Task Forces (CTF) in Fairfield and Suisun City and discussed Safe Routes to School projects under construction and potential projects to include in the SR2S Plan update. Potential projects discussed include locations and improvements identified through school walk audits, the STA Countywide Active Transportation Plan (ATP), and stakeholder discussions. In May 2021, The Suisun City SR2S Community Task Force prioritized a short list of projects around schools and are working on securing funding to complete these projects in the next few years. The Fairfield 3Es (Enforcement, Education and Engineering) Committee is working on prioritizing a list of projects around schools, including projects that can be completed within regular street maintenance schedules. When schools resume in fall, SR2S staff will reconvene the CTFs in the remaining cities to prioritize their list of improvements for the upcoming SR2S Plan update. This will help STA, SR2S and the cities to readily apply for grants and funding.



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons were installed at Fairview Elementary (Fairfield). This location was identified for an improved crossing with a SR2S walk audit and discussion within the Fairfield 3Es Committee.

Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee (SR2S AC)

Engagement

The SR2S program receives guidance from the SR2S Advisory Committee (SR2S AC), which is comprised of community members from cities and disciplines within Solano County. The committee gives recommendations for funding SR2S projects and programs to the STA Board. In 2020-21 the SR2S AC met virtually each quarter where staff provided updates on completed Micro Grant projects, and current SR2S projects under construction, discussions about students' return to campus and SR2S school engagement.

23rd Annual STA Awards – Safe Routes to School Category

Engagement

For the first time, STA hosted its STA Annual Awards ceremony virtually in November 2020. Two schools, Crystal Middle School (FSUSD) and Dixon Montessori Charter School (charter) were recognized in the Safe Routes to School Category.

With support from Principal Jay Dowd, Community Liaison David Knott, and the Beyond Differences School Service Organization, Crystal Middle School (Suisun City) was recognized as a champion school for its work prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group collaborated with SR2S to host a bike workshop that included bike repair by the Bay Area Bike Mobile, making healthy smoothies with the SPH Blender Bike, proper helmet fitting and helmet safety education.



Crystal Middle School, Principal Jay Dowd welcomes students to the bike workshop.



Families participate in Dixon Montessori WOW Wednesday by walking to school.

Dixon Montessori Charter School (Dixon) was celebrated for its participation in SR2S and for starting a Walk or Wheel (WOW) Wednesday program when Executive Director, Ben Ernest, noticed a considerable increase in bike riders after Bike to School Day in 2017. WOW Wednesdays encourage students to walk or ride to school and aligns with school goals to promote independence for students, strengthen community, and reduce traffic congestion. School staff and parent volunteers support the weekly event which has a high rate of student and family participation.

SR2S Grant Funding Awards

Encouragement – Education – Enforcement

The SR2S program applied for and was awarded \$805,000 in funding from the California Office of Traffic Safety, the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. These grants enable the SR2S program to continue its level of pre-Covid engagement and programming once school activities return to normal.

In January 2021, SR2S and the Benicia Police Department applied for CA Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) funding to help support the SR2S Education and Enforcement Grant Program. This grant will provide funds to continue Benicia and Suisun City PD's scope of work to provide school site parking enforcement, education on safe driving around schools, and targeted enforcement when needed. A tentative award of \$155,000 was announced in June 2021 for the next fiscal year (October 2021 through September 2022).

In June 2021, SR2S was awarded \$50,000 in Clean Air Funds from the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District. This grant award will provide additional funds for the SR2S Micro Grant Program, support walk and bike programs, and SR2S education for schools in the cities of Dixon, Rio Vista and Vacaville.

SR2S was awarded \$600,000 for FY 21/22 and 22/23 from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Quick Strike Program in June 2021. This funding will provide for program staffing needs and continue SR2S program activities for Solano County through FY 2023.