

Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) County-Wide Task Force Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 24, 2023, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Task Force Members Present

- Alysia Bixler, RCAA
- Bren Juarez, Loleta School
- Kate Hollander, HTA
- Mat Bigham, Pacific Union
- Kyle Finger, Caltrans
- Oona Smith, HCAOG
- Scott Mauroff, Eureka City Schools

Review August Meeting Minutes

- In the last meeting, we discussed the city of Arcata's Reconnecting Communities Grant. Are there any updates?
- The scores are due to Caltrans on the 27th, so no decisions have been made yet.

Report Out

ATP User Count Rio Dell

- GHD has an SRTS pedestrian facility project in Rio Dell that recently completed construction. As it is an ATP-funded project, Caltrans requires post-construction ATP user counts to close the project. Does anyone know folks with experience in performing these user counts? They are looking for assistance. They aim to have the counts completed by the end of the current academic term for Rio Dell schools. Caltrans requires both infrastructure user counts and non-infrastructure classroom tallies.
- By non-infrastructure counts, does that mean education and outreach components? Are they surveying classrooms? Do you know who got the grant, was it Rio Dell? Alysia doesn't have much more information. Oona can think about it but doesn't have any ideas.

McKinleyville ATP

- Alysia and Vanessa with RCAA have collaborated with Gabe and Mellody from Public Health to provide pedestrian and bicycle safety education at Morris Elementary to third and fifth grades. They also celebrated International Walk to School Day and will celebrate Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. Public Health brought their bike fleet to practice bike riding and safety skills.
- This ATP grant ends in December when RCAA will lose funding to facilitate the SRTS Task Force. The last meeting RCAA will facilitate is in December.

- While this ATP grant ends soon, Public Health's funding to provide bike safety education and use their bike fleet will continue next year. Reach out if you would like to utilize the bike fleet!

Rio Dell Clean California

- RCAA is working with the City of Rio Dell and GHD engineers on a Clean California grant to develop the Eel River Trail to connect Davis Street to Edwards Street alongside the river corridor. Students will be able to utilize this trail as they walk to school.
- RCAA's outreach will focus on litter abatement and trail stewardship. RCAA will work with students to mobilize awareness and community support. In January, we will go to classrooms and do mapping activities, clean up field trips, and facilitate 'Keep the River Clean' art projects.
- There is some SRTS funding, but just for participation in attending Task Force meetings.

City of Eureka Bike Plan

- On Thursday, October 26th, the City of Eureka is hosting an online community meeting to share information about the ongoing development of the Eureka Bike Plan. This is the first of three webinars to occur during plan development. They will focus on bike plan overview, bikeway network existing conditions, responses to the survey, and next steps.

HCAOG Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant

- HCAOG successfully awarded the Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant they applied for over the summer. They don't have a contract yet. They will likely start in January. There are many different pieces, but the one directly associated with SRTS is funding for a feasibility study to determine if local funds can pay a full-time SRTS director.
- The study will collaborate with the Department of Public Health and other subcontractors like 'Bikes There' who have done education for the last decade. They will compile the history of what SRTS grants have done over the years. This will help inform people as they do interviews. Interviews will target parents, teachers, faculty, health educators, and others in the schools.
- They will ask respondents if they are aware of SRTS programs, what their strengths/weaknesses are, what parts of SRTS programs are most helpful, ideas for sustainable funding sources, and where this position could live. This is a fact-finding, needs, and asset assessment study.
- HCAOG will reach out for contacts for who should be interviewed.
- Another specific project within this grant will help the City of Arcata. HCAOG, The City of Arcata, and Fuente Nueva will pilot a self-assessment tool to help with walk audits, drop-off and pick-up safety improvements, and general walking and biking to school safety improvements. Fuente Nueva will do the assessment, and the city will help with a temporary pop-up that will include traffic calming devices.

- This will begin at the beginning of the new year. Netra from the City of Arcata will be the main director and will work with Beth from Fuente Nueva.
- These Caltrans grant funds will be available for the next three years.
- The feasibility study may be able to fund SRTS Task Force meeting facilitations when RCAA's ATP grant ends. At least until another funding source is identified.
- HCAOG will be working on this over the next year. Mellody will start by compiling the history of SRTS programs. HCAOG needs to get a pulse from the community for when the best time is to do these interviews.

Discussion: Next ATP Grant Cycle: January 2024

- California Transportation Commission is kicking off the next cycle of the statewide 2025 Active Transportation Program grant funding cycle 7. The call occurs every other year. The call for projects begins March 21-22, 2024 and the project application deadline is June 17, 2024.
- Go to [the Active Transportation Resource](#) Center to access workshops, guides, and other application resources.
- RCAA has applied for and facilitated many ATP grants in the past. We don't have any staff members with ATP application experience currently, but we are open to pursuing this funding as a co-applicant if there is a need. If anyone knows of a project or wants to collaborate, please contact Alysia. ATP grants take a lot of time so let's start planning soon.
- Bren—Anything Loleta! Off the top of her head, this is what is needed based on conversations with community members:
 - There is an unsafe area when you exit Loleta Drive from the freeway and pass the school; there is no physical crosswalk. There is a yellow outline, but there is no crossing guard available. Students have articulated a need for a flashing beacon crosswalk.
 - As cars exit the highway, they speed as they drive past the school. The speed limit is 30mph, but cars frequently go faster.
 - When you drive to Old Town from the school, there is a blind spot on the road. This is an accident waiting to happen.
 - Only a handful of students walk to school, and most who walk live nearby. There is no safe walking path from the school to Bear River. You either go up or down Eel River Drive or walk on the highway. Both are unsafe. There is also no safe walking path to downtown. They do not really have crosswalks.
 - With the Great Redwood Trail (GRT) coming in, the plan is for the trail to go through Loleta through the tunnel, where it will connect to CR. There are no safe walking paths to connect to the planned GRT route in Loleta. We need to plan for this now, especially if there is an increase in tourism.
 - There have been multiple community members asking for flashing crosswalks and speed bumps. There is much work to be done, and she doesn't know where to start to help her community.
- Vanessa Griffin has done outreach to Loleta around the GRT. She is connected to Bear River and Wiyot. Blue Lake got community support to get parts of the trail

expedited. She would love to participate in those conversations so Loleta can be included and prioritized.

- Bren—We don't want the GRT trail to come with Loleta unprepared. Loleta has had problems with their park's insurance. They received a non-renewal notice for the park and were told to shut down. Luckily, they were able to find someone to renew their insurance for a year, but this is something they want to get ahead of, so they are not scrambling to find insurance every year. Humboldt County cannot take it on as a county park.
- Oona—Bren, thanks for coming. It is exciting to hear about your community and your needs. She hears all the components for a strong ATP program application. The biggest question is who wants to be the lead applicant and how big can you go. Maybe it would be the county. You must decide whether to go for a big grant with construction components or a scaled-back planning application. Get a good plan together and then go for the bigger grant later. Ask yourself if it's the right time for a big grant.
- Oona—What struck me about Loleta being perfect for ATP is the 30mph in front of the school. You can get that dropped with the new laws in place, they allow 20 or 25. There are new laws that can support this. Talk to your community to decide if they are on board with this.
- When crafting your application, you need to understand if your community is interested in pursuing an SRTS project and a broader ATP project to connect communities. Does your community want to go for something that links the school to Main Street and improves safe walking and biking connectivity? You can ask for this in your ATP grant.
- Definitely include connectivity with the GRT in your application. This includes intercity and regional components. Say: we are looking at filling these gaps, in the future, it could lead to more tourism. Right now, cars speed off the freeway, which reduces safety and pedestrians/ bikers. However, you have a very walkable community by land mass, but the streets have not been made safe. You don't have such a big community that it's too far for kids to walk. It could be a very walkable, connected community if improvements were made. You can talk about bringing in tribal communities and governments and working together. That's what ATP likes to see.
- There is a lot of opportunity to get more resources to Loleta.
- Bren—Attendance is already a big issue in our school system. Now our bus system is down, which puts pressure on our community. It would be great to start making improvements. Community members have had these ideas for so long, and there is funding, but no one is making the connections.
- Oona—your story about the park is strong. You should include it in your application. I have not read a story like this before. The only safe place for kids in Loleta to play outside is not secure. This would help tell your story.
- Bren—when considering the whole child perspective, you must create safe spaces for kids to play inside and outside school. Our park needs some help, and there is no safe space for kids to play beyond school or reservations.
- Alysia—is there another entity that would be an appropriate lead applicant other than the county?

- RCAA or Bren's school at Loleta can apply; schools and community-based organizations are eligible. However, if the county does not play a part, it won't be as strong of an application. They are the best entity to coordinate the construction component and hire the contractors. Unless the tribes want to lead.
- Bren—When you say the county, who does that mean?
- Oona—Public Works. The director is Tom Matson. He works on safety projects and ATP. He is on HACOG's technical advisory committee. You can find him at those meetings once a month. With the possible link to the GRT, you may get some of Hank Seaman, but he will be very busy over the next year.
- Bren—has met with Hank & Rex previously, but they were unable to help with Loleta Parks insurance problems.
- Bren—If the County is the lead applicant, would they write the grant? What does that entail?
- Oona—they don't have to write it, RCAA could write it. The County has paid RCAA to write applications in the past. You are as much of a leader in this as you want to be. What ATP likes to champion is partnerships. With that in mind, you decide what role you want and go to the county. Everyone comes to the table and lays down what they want to give. It's all about relationship building and collaboration.
- Hank is not usually the person who does ATP. He works mostly with the GRT and Bay Trails. But it is great you have already had one meeting.
- Bren—What you're saying is if we work with the County, I could facilitate collaboration with Loleta, the tribes, RCAA, and the County.
- Oon— an education-based ATP grant is called 'non-infrastructure,' and it asks less from the County. They don't have to do anything additional in their day jobs for you to implement an education and encouragement program. If you want to include construction, you need the County to help develop the application.
- Bren—What we are looking for does include infrastructure construction. Even if the county can't support this right now, maybe we could get on their to-do list for 2024 or 2025. We are not expecting this to happen overnight. Let's keep planting these seeds with the County.
- Bren—Should we start with education and non-infrastructure to get the youth interested in why this is such important work? They could help advocate when we apply for the infrastructure piece.
- Oona—When you meet, you can figure out your best strategy: planning grant, non-infrastructure, infrastructure, or a combination.

Next Steps: RCAA will compile meeting notes to send out to the SRTS Task Force & other RCAA staff. RCAA staff will follow up with Bren to continue the ATP grant program and application conversation.

Here's a link to an [ATP guide on the Safe Routes partnership](#) website.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 13th 10-11 am