

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

Wednesday, February 15th, 2023 10a.m.- 11a.m.

Task Force Members Present

- Alysia Bixler, RCAA
- Melody Mallick, Public Health
- Netra Khatri, City of Arcata
- Beth Wiley, Fuente Nueva
- Ken Comlin, Humboldt County Office of Education
- Elaine Hogan, Public Health
- Gabe, Public Health
- Tammy, Pacific Union
- Natalie Arroyo, District Supervisor

Announcements & Updates

- HCAOG is preparing a Sustainable Communities Grant application which is a part of Caltrans' Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program. The program objectives are sustainability, preservation, accessibility, safety, innovation, economy, health, and social equity.
- As a part of this grant, Oona is including a feasibility assessment for locally funding a Regional SRTS Director position.
- Netra—There are other SRTS tasks included in this grant. HCAOG approached him to see if any schools in Arcata could benefit from the grant. There is a need for improvements at Fuente Nueva. Grant money could be used for education and planning for infrastructure improvements. They have a brief scope previously used for other SRTS projects, including guarding, striping, signage, and walking audits, which will be included in the grant. This grant has a short time window. Netra will focus on this school for now and move on to another school after this application is submitted.
- Oona is looking for letters of recommendation to support the feasibility study to include in the Caltrans grant.
- RCAA is coordinating an ATP grant at McKinleyville High School to create driver safety PSAs (tik tok videos). There is concern that High School students are driving unsafe on their way to school, endangering nearby middle schoolers and other students. Please reach out to Alysia with any relevant educational tools.
- Melody, Elaine, & Gabe are in the process of developing their next three-year work plan starting in October. They are incorporating elements of SRTS into the work plan. They are still determining what it will look like, if it's aimed at a younger audience, if it will be in the community setting, etc. She may be reaching out for feedback or convening a small group to help shape this. In past efforts,

they have focused on education and encouragement. This will still be part of their scope, but they are moving toward policy, systems work, and environment changes. It won't be infrastructure, but it may be crossing guards, paint, and other similar features. This is not competitive funding and not competing with other projects locally.

Report Out

- Beth- teachers could use those tik toks! They blast through school zones! Drives of all shapes and sizes could use this education.
- Fuente Nevua is putting in new fencing that creates unsafe situations for students. There are no clear ways to walk out of a car without walking behind another car to get to the sidewalk. They are looking at putting a band-aid on this. They have created drafts of the design to help. Are there any resources within this community to provide feedback on this? Can they run their plans by someone with expertise?
- Natalie- Are you specifically wanting to create a pickup/ drop off plan with maps and similar tools for your school? Is there something else that you are trying to accomplish?
- Beth- It is beyond the pickup/drop-off needs. They have a robust pickup/drop-off plan. The fencing is creating a whole other layer for walkers. It is impeding walkers' ability to get into the school safely. The entrance is cut off. She would also like to improve the drop-off system. Some students walk through areas where other students are being dropped off. Maybe another set of eyes could see a different opportunity to improve safety.
- Natalie- In the past, RCAA has had funds to do walk audits to identify better paths in/ out and obstacles. But you already seem to know what the obstacles are. She isn't sure who has experience doing this kind of assessment. County folks, do you have any thoughts?
- Melody- She is going to search her email. Cal Walks has approached them recently about their availability for a walk audit. She will forward that email to Beth and Alysia.
- Netra-They can look at this problem, do a walk audit, and try to address it with the Sustainability grant. Every school has a different need, no one solution for all. He will coordinate with Beth to include this in the grant application.
- Elaine- Public health has a fleet of youth bicycles and a draft MOU template to loan the bicycle fleet. The bicycles can be loaned to schools, after-school programs, or any youth-serving agency willing to train their staff to implement cycling. They have not been able to pilot it, utilize the cycling trailer, or get it out into the community. Schools, what is the best way to enter into an agreement at the school or district level? Is there interest?
- Beth- County office can help get information to school leaders. Avoid superintendent lists. Fuente Nueva is very interested! The kids love bike week! It

would be great for their after-school program. They are not trained, but maybe they should. If you get the word out, there will be many interested schools.

- Are there any issues around the school entering into a no-cost MOU? Can the principal enter into that kind of agreement, or must it be at the district level? The principal can!
- Tammy- AB 2028 is offering bicycle and scooter safety instruction at schools. You should be able to push this out through the county office to promote this offering. Under this new legislation, we can teach safety as part of the curriculum. You could tag this onto your implementation of getting the bikes out. Pacific Union would love to do a partnership.

Review PSA Ideas Around School Speed Limits & Safety

- Last meeting SRTS task force identified a need for educational PSAs around how to drive safely in school zones. The main message we agreed upon is 'always drive 15mph in school zones.' This is due to potential unforeseen hazards that may arise unexpectedly when driving through school zones.
- Alysia created three radio messages, a 60-second, 30-second, and 15-second script. Feedback?
- Tiffany- So grateful you took the time to do this!
- Ken- They are great!
- Netra- They can drive slower than 15 mph, so change to 15 mph or less.
- Alysia- Which version do you prefer? Is it better to provide more information or keep it simple with the main message 'always go slow in school zones?'
- Ken- Radio stations prefer to air 30-second versions rather than 60 seconds.
- Any feedback for the Canva School Safety Zone document?
- Include a street sign that says 15mph to reinforce your message. Repeated messaging helps.
- Alysia will contact radio stations to air the PSA and send all SRTS members copies of the messaging and Canva document.
- Alysia will alter the Canva document to say 15mph or less.

Survey for Future SRTS Projects

- Do we need a survey for teachers, parents, or bus drivers to get information about safety conditions and background information of schools to identify future SRTS projects?
- Future ATP funding cycle will happen in 2024. This could be a good time to brainstorm ideas for future projects. We could use the information gathered from the survey and pair it with the prioritization tool and traffic stress analysis to figure out where we should apply for ATP grants in 2024. Should we pursue the idea of surveying bus drivers? This surveying task could be a part of the SRTS coordinator position, but that position may not materialize for a while.

- How will this survey be different key informant interviews we do for the prioritization tool? Is it because it would be bus drivers and people outside the school instead of school administrators?
- Alysia- Isn't the prioritization school about understanding which schools are more competitive and more likely to receive grants? Rather than focusing on what projects are needed. This survey could identify additional safety issues not detected in the key informant interviews. Bus drivers could be asked questions like 'what are the most unsafe things you see in your day-to-day?'
- We should review what questions are already being asked in the key informant interviews and the safe routes parent surveys. In the parent surveys, we already get school background information and safety information.
- What about the idea of surveying school bus drivers?
- Ken- We could come up with five simple questions for bus drivers and then garner the response from that to ask administrators and parents what their views are based on the responses.
- How can we gather responses from bus drivers? Do they even have any administration time? Perhaps with a google form survey on their phone?
- Ken can ask his transportation director how to handle something like this.

Action Items

- RCAA will contact radios and school principals to coordinate a school zone safety PSA with Netra and the City of Arcata.
- **Next meeting: April 19th, 10-11 am**
- Please reach out to Alysia with future agenda topics!