Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization

Safe Routes to School Action Plan

New Mexico DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MOBILITY FOR EVERYONE

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
SERVING MESILLA, DOÑA ANA AND LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

Las Cruces Public Schools
Where Kids Come First!

City of Las Cruces
PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

Vision

"Safe Routes to School program will serve as a guide for the community to plan, build and support infrastructure and enact educational programs in efforts to promote safe and accessible active commuting to school and create a healthier, safer, cleaner and more livable community that links students, parents, schools and community members."

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Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AP	Action Plan
BCNM	Bicycle Coalition of New Mexico
CLC	City of Las Cruces
TOM	Town of Mesilla
DAC	Doña Ana County
DOH	Department of Health
DOT	Department of Transportation
ES	Elementary School
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HKLC	Healthy Kids Las Cruces
IWRTSD	International Walk and Roll To School Day
K-12	Kindergarten through 12th grade
K-8	Kindergarten through 8th grade
LAB	League of American Bicyclists
LC MPO	Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization
LCI	League Cycling Instructor
LCPD	Las Cruces Police Department
LCPS	Las Cruces Public Schools
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
MUTCD	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
MVBC**	Mesilla Valley Bicycling Coalition
NM DOT	New Mexico Department of Transportation
SAFETEA-LU	The 2005 re-authorization of the Federal Transportation Bill
SRTS	Safe Routes to School
WSB	Walking School Bus

Safe Routes to School Action Plan

Elementary Schools

Alameda
Booker T. Washington
Central
César E. Chávez
Columbia
Conlee
Desert Hills
Doña Ana
East Picacho
Fairacres
Hermosa Heights
Highland
Hillrise
Jornada
Loma Heights
MacArthur
Mesilla
Mesilla Park
Monte Vista
Sonoma
Sunrise
Tombaugh
University Hills
Valley View
White Sands

Middle Schools

Camino Real
Lynn
Mesa
Picacho
Sierra
Vista
White Sands
Zia

Funded By,

New Mexico Department of Transportation
Safe Routes to School Program

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Safe Routes to School Action Plan

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) in Las Cruces has been working since 2005 to encourage safe and healthy behaviors that benefit families and increase the number of children who actively commute to and from school. As explained in the Las Cruces SRTS Vision Statement, SRTS aims to create a healthier, safer, cleaner, and more livable community that links students, parents, schools and community members to one another. But you may ask, "Why focus on this issue? Are there really needs to be addressed through creating and sustaining a program such as SRTS?"

Consider that in 2009, only 0.5 percent of K-8 students within the Las Cruces Public School district (LCPS) who lived between one-half and one mile from their schools walked to school. That same year, 0.1 percent of students reported traveling to school by bicycle. The reported figures for students traveling home from school are similar – 0.7 percent for walkers and 0.1 percent for bicycling. Local statistics show a similar trend to one identified nationally. Figures from the "National Household Survey" taken just over a generation ago in 1969 reported that 42 percent of children 5 to 18 years of age walked or bicycled to school.

Likely reasons for these trends include increasing automobile ownership, fewer well-connected communities and decreasing funds for safe and convenient active transportation infrastructure. These trends are amplified by safety concerns that add reluctance to pursuing active commuting options. As a result, children and parents may be less inclined to walk or bike to reach their destinations.

Active Commuting
The LC SRTS program uses terminology that includes all children commuting to and from school. As such, you will find the phrase "active commuters," or some variation thereof, to signify children who walk or roll to school by any human-powered means.

As the number of children actively commuting to school has declined, traffic in the neighborhoods around our schools has increased. Increased traffic has, in turn, negatively impacted the safety of children, parents and school staff as well as the environmental health around school sites. There is also a notable connection between the decrease in active commuting and the rise in health problems among children. For example, the "Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Children: National Health Interview Survey, 2010" mentions that over "10 million U.S. children aged 17 years and under (14%) have been diagnosed with asthma." Additionally, childhood obesity rates nearly tripled since 1980 , and childhood diabetes is a rising concern. Increased active commuting may positively impact these issues and provide a platform for greater change in the health and wellness of students.

The purpose of the following Action Plan is to identify challenges and opportunities affecting student, parent and community ability and interest in actively commuting to and from school. This plan presents prioritized goals and objectives for the LC MPO SRTS program along with strategies to achieve them. The plan also serves to guide applications for future funding for the prioritized projects. Ultimately, SRTS seeks to increase the number of children actively commuting to school by improving the safety of built and human environments.

Thank you for taking the time to read this plan. We hope that you will find a way to get involved with the SRTS program or start a program at your local school. We look forward to working with you to encourage children and families within the LC MPO to actively commute to and from school!

Sincerely,

K. Naoma Staley
Safe Routes to School Planner,
Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization
700 North Main Street,
Las Cruces, NM 88004

"DID YOU KNOW?"
The word pedestrian, as defined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, includes "people on foot, in a wheelchair, on skates, or on a skateboard."

"DID YOU KNOW?"
A bicyclist is defined as a person operating a bicycle, a pedal-powered vehicle.

Executive Summary

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program has been gaining attention nationwide as a result of positive trends recorded in active transportation, health, safety and sustaiability. The Las Cruces Safe Routes to School (LC SRTS) program has been in existence since September of 2005, and the Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization (LC MPO) has employed an SRTS Planner since May of 2009. The Action Plan for Safe Routes to School has been an adopted MPO document since February 2012.

The Las Cruces SRTS vision states, “The Safe Routes to School program will serve as a guide for the community to plan, build and support infrastructure and enact educational programs in efforts to promote safe and accessible active commuting to school and create a healthier, safer, cleaner and more livable community that links students, parents, schools and community members.” Many school officials, transportation professionals and health advocates strongly believe that walking and biking to school would have a positive impact on children’s well-being and promote active living.

Our vision and goals will be achieved through the application of the “5 Es” as outlined by the National Center for Safe Routes to School: Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement. The Action Plan provides the detailed local efforts to achieve the goals of each “E” using the extensive data collection and analysis that has gone on within the LC MPO SRTS program. The LC SRTS Action Plan also consolidates a structured approach for the schools to start and run a successful SRTS program including possible funding strategies.

The purpose of this Action Plan is to evaluate school sites and safety concerns within the LC MPO area and identify potential physical improvements as well as non-infrastructural projects, such as education and encouragement programs, to address those concerns. Thus, it aims to provide a framework to guide short, medium and long-term investments. An included table of prioritized projects and tasks presents the issues, solutions, potential funding sources and the methods to evaluate the achievements of the program. This prioritization of projects is essential for the follow on activities to advance the “Next Steps” of the SRTS program to ensure its success.

Generally speaking, the “Next Steps” recommend a balanced approach that covers both infrastructural and non-infrastructural improvements. Infrastructural improvements for SRTS iclude the design, construction and maintenance of physical infrastructure to improve the safety and comfort of students walking and biking to school. Non-infrastructural improvements include encouragement, education and enforcement efforts toward creating a holistic approach to the program. The plan also serves to guide applications for future funding for the prioritized projects. Ultimately, SRTS seeks to increase the number of children

Introduction

Document Overview

The SRTS in Las Cruces seeks to achieve the three goals outlined in the program’s federal guidelines by addressing its “5 Es”: Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement and Enforcement. The first goal is to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to actively commute to school. The second is making active school commuting a safer and a more appealing transportation alternative and thereby encourage a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. Finally, SRTS will facilitate the planning, implementation and evaluation of engineering projects and education, enforcement and encouragement activities that will reduce traffic and fuel consumption while improving safty and overall environmental quality around schools.

The purpose of this Action Plan is to present a framework for the continued implementation of the 5 E’s within the LC MPO SRTS program. The plan identifies barriers and opportunities toward active commuting, provides resources to any individual or group interested in starting an SRTS program at a school, and delves into the background information on the LC MPO area focusing on strengths and weaknesses we must address to create a successful regional program.

The Action Plan currently includes all K-8 schools within the LCPS (Las Cruces Public Schools) District. LCPS encompasses 1,463 square miles, operates 24 elementary and 7 middle schools with 1 combined elementary and middle school, enrolling over 17,000 students within Doña Ana County (DAC) for a combined total of 32 schools eligible for SRTS.

International, National, State and Local SRTS Background

SRTS programs began in the 1970s in Denmark. The program’s goal was to reduce the increased traffic congestion in neighborhoods surrounding elementary and middle schools, particularly during student arrival and dismissal times. A likely cause of this increase in traffic volumes was the growing number of children being driven to school instead of walking, biking or otherwise actively commuting.

Inspired by the level of success attained by other nations, and predicated by the need for greater active-commuting opportunities, the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) funded related pilot projects in 2002. Because of the popularity and achievements of the pilot projects along with the subsequent growth in SRTS advocacy, Congress included funding for SRTS programs in the 2005 federal transportation law titled the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users” (SAFETEA-LU)[1].

SAFETEA-LU: the “Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users”

“August 10, 2005, the President signed (SAFETEA-LU) into law.” It “guaranteed funding for highways, highway safety, and public transportation totaling $244.1 billion.”

http://www.fhwa.dot.

Las Cruces MPO staff created a local SRTS program in August 2005. To ensure its success, MPO staff organized a Steering Committee to oversee the program, identify issues and coordinate SRTS activities. With the hire of the SRTS Planner in 2009, the Steering Committee began to meet monthly to inform the development and implementation of SRTS and its Action Plan, as well as share successes and lessons learned from their respective programs.

SRTS Funding and Federal Program Overview

The SRTS provisions of SAFTEA-LU (the 2005 re-authorization of the Federal Transportation Bill) provide funding for all fifty states and Washington D.C. for a statewide or regional SRTS program. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NM DOT) SRTS program provides funding in two phases. Phase 1 funding (up to $15,000) is for developing local SRTS Action Plans that cover a school or multiple schools. Once a school (or in the case of the LC SRTS program, multiple schools) develops their Action Plan and expends Phase 1 funding, they are eligible for Phase 2 application and funding. Phase 2 funding (up to $25,000 for non-infrastructure improvements and up to $250,000 for infrastructure improvements) is for supporting prioritized projects identified in the local SRTS Action Plan.

LC MPO SRTS Planning Processes

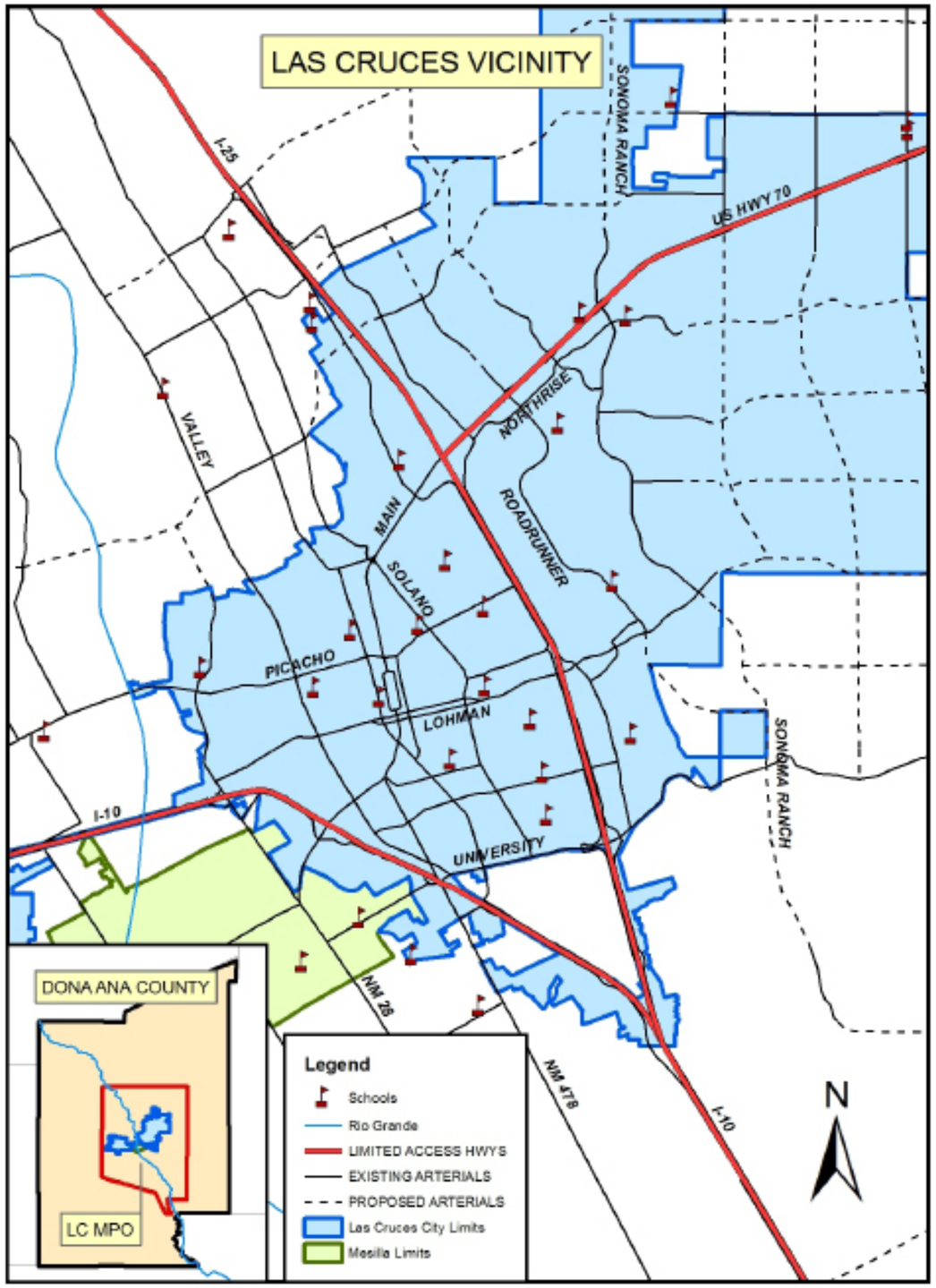
To evaluate the deficiencies in the LC SRTS program pertaining to the 5 Es, the LC SRTS Planner conducted data collection and analysis. These data, collected using two main methods, were used to create the Prioritized Table of Projects and Tasks, which inform the direction of the program's immediate, short and long-term development. The two data collection methods used were the Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School and the NM SRTS Assessment forms .

Parent Survey about Walking and Biking to School

In the fall of 2009, the SRTS Planner coordinated with LCPS to perform bi-annual data collection using the National Center for Safe Routes to Schools' Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School. The 2009 Parent Survey, designed by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, is a "5-10 minute questionnaire [designed to collect] information about factors that affect whether parents allow their children to walk or bike to school, the presence of safety-related conditions along routes to school, and other background school travel data. Results can help determine how to improve opportunities for children to walk or bike to school, and measure parental attitude changes as local SRTS programs occur."

Assessments

During the summer and fall of 2009, the SRTS Planner, MPO Staff and members of the SRTS Steering Committee completed School Site, Street Segment and Intersection Assessments at each LCPS school site. These data helped gain insight into local needs and concerns through interaction with students, parents, school staff, school administration, local professionals and community members that informed the composition of this Action Plan.



The SRTS 5 E's

The guiding principles of the SRTS program, referred to as the 5 E's are, Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement and Enforcement.

The following sections will define each "E" by referencing material provided by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, the NM SRTS program and other related sources. Each section will then outline what our local SRTS program has done from 2006 to 2011 to attain the mission of each "E." Finally, each section will include a summary of goals for each "E" as the program progresses in Las Cruces.

Based on the 5Es sections, you will be provided with a basic outline to get your SRTS program started along with some information on funding sources for your school.

Evaluation

According to the National Center for SRTS:
Long term Safe Routes to School programs generally start with a thorough evaluation of the situation at the school or for the school district. Surveys of parents help to reveal why parents are driving their children to school, and what changes might result in a shift in their behavior.

The NM DOT's SRTS website also states, "Evaluation involves monitoring outcomes and documenting trends through data collection before and after SRTS activities."

To date, the MPO's SRTS program has collected data for all eligible SRTS schools using three methods: the 2009 and 2011 Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School; Student Travel Tallies at schools actively involved in SRTS; and School Site, Intersection, and Street Segment Assessments at all schools.

As SRTS in the MPO progresses, the program will be evaluated through the prioritized projects. Additionally, the program will develop a Program Evaluation Strategy by 2013.

Goals

- Develop and implement the SRTS Program Evaluation Strategy (benchmarks, standards, etc).
- Delineate levels of SRTS involvement. Create a range of involvement levels that are clearly defined.

Engineering

Engineering modifications to the built environment around schools can help lower automobile speeds, reduce conflicts between motor vehicle and active-commuter traffic, and establish safe and fully accessible routes. Engineering improvements should always take into account the context and needs of the school site and surrounding community. On the NM DOT's SRTS website (http://nmshtd.state.nm.us), you can find an exhaustive list of the elements that all engineering activities in a SRTS program should include.

[11] http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/local/4191/4219
[12] http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=15637

Completed SRTS engineering projects not using SRTS funding include:

- Road modifications/road diets (Hillrise, 2006 and 2010; Valley View, 2012)
- Addition of ADA ramps to make accessible crossings (Conlee, Summer 2012)
- On-street markings (on-street parking, bicycle lanes, school site markings, etc at Hillrise, 2006; Hermosa Heights, 2010; Mesilla, 2011-12; Conlee and Valley View, 2012)
- Correct school-zone signing (Mesa Middle and Monte Vista, 2011)
- Bicycle racks (Mesilla Park, 2010)
- Solar-powered school-zone flashing lights (Hillrise, 2010)

Completed SRTS engineering projects using SRTS funding include:

- Bicycle racks (Hillrise, 2008; Mesilla, 2010; Desert Hills and Sonoma, 2012)
- In-pavement pedestrian signs (Mesilla, 2012)

Work in progress at Valley View Elementary

Goals

- Promote well-connected neighborhoods that support active transportation.
- Complete the infrastructure projects identified on the prioritized list.
- Seek funding solutions for projects that cannot be supported with traditional SRTS funds.

Education

Education activities include teaching pedestrian, bicyclist and traffic safety, and creating awareness of the benefits and goals of SRTS, such as the benefits to our health and our environment.

In Las Cruces, the SRTS Champions at Hillrise (2007-2010) and Mesilla Elementary (2009-present) and Camino Real Middle School (2010, 2011) implemented classroom "mini-lessons" tailored to each grade. The SRTS Planner organized two teacher training sessions addressing physical activity and the built environment. Las Cruces SRTS has hosted several webinars for the Steering Committee and other interested community members and partner agencies. Las Cruces SRTS has also hosted a walking school bus training for southern New Mexico.

Goals

- Implement training programs within LCPS (i.e. walking school bus trainings) to help expand SRTS to all schools.
- Develop and implement active-commuting curriculum within LCPS.
- Train students and parents about safe walking and bicycling techniques.
- Offer SRTS training that will provide teachers and school administrators with credits they need for continuing education.
- Provide pedestrian and bicyclist training to local law enforcement agencies.

[13] http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=15637

Encouragement

Encouragement strategies are about having fun; they generate excitement and interest in walking and bicycling. Special events, mileage clubs, contests and ongoing activities all provide ways for parents and children to discover, or rediscover, that walking and bicycling are doable and a lot of fun. In Las Cruces these activities have included participating in International Walk and Roll to School Day (2006 – present), forming walking school buses (WSBs) and bicycle trains (BTs), inviting motivational speakers and engaging in walk/bike-to-school-month competitions and poster contests.

Bicycle education at Mesilla Elementary

Goals

- Develop an SRTS rewards program.
- Create an MPO-wide walking school bus program.
- Create a "Safe Routes to Bus Stops" program based on the PedNet model, which operates in conjunction with the Walking School Bus program.
- Implement an alternate drop-off location policy.
- Develop an LCPS-wide Walk and Roll to School Week (by 2013) and then Walk and Roll to School Month (by 2015) competition.
- Mirror programming in LCPS by expanding "Bike to Work Day" to "Walk and Roll to Work Week" (by 2013) and then "Walk and Roll to Work Month" (by 2015) competition within the administrative staff of LCPS and all organizations represented on the LC Steering Committee.

Enforcement

The main goal for enforcement strategies is to deter unsafe behaviors of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists, and to encourage all road users to obey traffic laws and share the road safely. Enforcement can include partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings and proper walking and bicycling behaviors) and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.

In Las Cruces, all crossing guards are trained and employed by the LCPD (Las Cruces Police Department). The LCPD has also assisted with the International Walk and Roll to School Day three years in a row. Codes Enforcement, a division of LCPD, has organized bicycle rodeos. More recently, bicycle training for children has been coordinated by the Southern New Mexico Bicycle Educators (SNMBE). In the future, the SRTS program will create a "School Site Circulation Plan" for each school with the assistance of LCPD and LCPS. The plans will include an organized approach to combat hazardous behaviors that occur during arrival and dismissal. The SRTS program will also coordinate a community-education campaign that will rely heavily on the advice and participation of local police agencies.

Goals

- Coordinate a systematic approach to addressing the enforcement issues identified through the Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School.

Creating a Successful Program

Based on understanding of the SRTS 5Es and familiarity with the national, state and local SRTS efforts detailed above, the following outline is provided for individuals interested in starting a SRTS program at their school. The outline includes a basic sequence of events, information, tools, and links to resources.

- Invite SRTS to present information to your SAC (School Advisory Council) or PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) on why the program is important and how it can be implemented. This presentation will include local goals, examples from other local schools, a proposed timeline of events for the first year of SRTS and all the data that have been collected to date for your school.
- Attend the SRTS Education and Encouragement group.
- Read the NM SRTS Resource Notebook. (The Resource Notebook is available on line at http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=17088. A hardcopy is available through SRTS and is available to be checked out, shared and returned.)
- Meet with SRTS to develop ideas pertaining to your school.
- Examine the data collected at your school site and compare it to the is sues you feel are most pressing. Revise or update data if necessary.
- Begin a walking school bus or bicycle education/bicycle train pilot program to gauge its potential at your school site and to better understand your specific challenges and opportunities. The SRTS Planner, local SRTS Champions, and local bicycle educators will provide you with the necessary information and training to begin this step in the process.
- Think creatively about how to incorporate SRTS into existing programs/groups/ clubs at your school.
- Use the school newsletter, morning announcements and other regular school communication to educate and encourage students and parents to get involved in active transportation to and from school.
- SRTS will assist you as you develop your school-site specific program. This will include addressing the education, encouragement, engineering and enforcement needs specific to your school.
- If needed, pursue funding to achieve your SRTS goals.

The MPO's SRTS program defines each school's involvement in three levels,

Active SRTS School

- Regularly participates in WSB and BT activities (at least one time per month).
- Conducts in-classroom active-commuting education.
- Participates in annual/national walking and bicycling events (International Walk and Roll to School Day, National Bike to School Day, etc).
- Conducts student travel tallies at least once per year and submits the data to the National Center for Safe Routes to School.

- Has an identifiable SRTS Champion who has met and communicates regularly with the SRTS Planner.
- Has an active SRTS Task Force (that meets at least twice per semester).

Involved SRTS School

- Regularly participates in WSB and BT activities (at least once per month).
- Conducts student travel tallies at the beginning of their involvement with the MPO's SRTS program.
- Participates in annual/national walking and bicycling events (International Walk and Roll to School Day, National Bike to School Day, etc).
- Has an identifiable SRTS Champion who has met and communicates regularly with the SRTS Planner.

Events SRTS School

- Participates in annual/national walking and bicycling events (International Walk and Roll to School Day, National Bike to School Day, etc.)

Children at Mesilla Elementary

Funding Your SRTS Program

The purpose of this Action Plan is to identify SRTS needs across the MPO and to guide application for funding to complete projects and tasks. The needs at a specific school site will likely differ from those of the entire district; the most successful SRTS programs will thus benefit from a variety of funding sources and an abundance of creative thinking. The following list includes some of the sources through which an individual school can apply for SRTS funding.

The National Center for Safe Routes to School has an entire section on its website devoted to funding. The "Funding Portal" contains the following information:

- Mini-grants : a competitive $1,000 mini-grant program that supports creative active transportation to school programs.
- Local funding : potential existing funds currently devoted to transportation, safety, health or school issues such as Capital Improvement Projects, operating budgets, PTO funds, etc.
- Private funding : community partners, foundations, individuals and other private organizations.
- Federal funding 101 : Federal-aid highway apportionment, state ap portionment and basic federal-financing process and terms.

For more information on funding, contact your LC SRTS Planner.

[14] National Center for Safe Routes to School "Funding Portal": http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/funding- portal
[15] Mini Grant information: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/funding-portal/mini-grants
[16] Local Funding information: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/funding-portal/local-funding
[17] Private Funding information: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/funding-portal/private-funding
[18] Federal Funding information: http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/funding-portal/federal-funding-101

Prioritized Projects & Tasks

Children walking at Hillrise Elementary

Projects and tasks have been identified, organized and prioritized based on the "School Site Asessment Analysis Summary by Question," the 2009 Parent Survey, and the 5Es of the SRTS program. The following pages contain the complete prioritized list of projects and their associated tasks.

To incorporate the information from the School Site Assessments, the percentage of the total possible score assigned to each question was organized by the time frame in which each task will be completed. Within that organization, the issues are presented from the greatest need to the least. To incorporate the information from the 2009 Parent Survey, the issues (and their associated proposed projects) were also organized by the time frame in which each task will be completed. Within that organization, the issues are presented from the greatest frequency of the proposed solution to the least.

Please note: The goal of SRTS is to increase the number of active commuters to and from school each day. Some of the school-site deficiencies address motorized transportation issues. These tasks or proposed projects are not eligible for SRTS funding. The prioritized list includes informtion about potential funding sources for projects and tasks.

No	Issues	Description	Assess-ment Question - Parent Survey Issue	Educate	Encourage	Enforce	Engineer
1	Traffic volume along route	Parents responded that traffic volumes around schools was an issue why they did not encourage their children to walk or bike.	3	X			
2	Support of encouragement activities	Use encouragement activities to grow the number of students actively commuting to school.			X		
3	Expand the SRTS program to all K-8 schools	Schools do not know about the SRTS program, nor do they have the tools readily available to build an SRTS program.		X	X		
4	Street Segment Assessments	These assessments were started in 2009. Upon further review, the data sets are incomplete and do not fully represent the issues around each school.					X
5	Intersection Assessments	These assessments were started in 2009. Upon further review, the data sets are incomplete and do not fully represent the issues around each school.					X
6	SRTS Assessments for GISD	To-date the MPO has identified the district-level SRTS issues at all K-8 schools within LCPS. Because Gadsden Independent School District (GISD) is within the MPO area, the SRTS program should also extend to it.					X
7	SRTS Program Support	SRTS Program Coordinator					X
8	Distance and safety	Parents responded that traffic volumes and speed around schools, potential violence or crime, safety at intersections, and overall distance to school were issues why they did not encourage their children to walk or bike. Parents not comfortable letting children commute alone.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X		
9	Traffic speed along route to school	Drivers may be unsure of school zone speed; Speed limit unclear or inconsistent from school zone to zone.	4				X

Prioritized SRTS Tasks & Projects

Tasks	When	Who	Potential funding source	Evaluation
Awareness of active commuting opportuni-ties: Improve awareness of active commuting opportunities, educate parents children and community members about the benefits that w/b holds for reducing traffic and congestion in neighborhoods.	Ongoing	LCPD, CLC, DAC, TOM	LCPD, CLC, DAC, TOM	Increase the number of students actively commuting to school.
Continue to support and promote events such as International Walk and Roll to School Day.	Ongoing	MPO, LCPS, GISD	MPO, LCPS, GISD	Increase the number of students actively commuting to school.
Las Cruces SRTS Coordinator will provide the basic technical support necessary for schools to begin their SRTS program. This will include program basics, training, educational materials and connections to resources. All K-8 schools: create grade-specific educational materials to be implemented into classroom activities and regular curriculum. Middle schools: facilitate school clubs pertaining to active commuting opportunities (such as bicycling clubs and educational bicycling trips), create on-campus recreational facilities for honing bicycle skills.	Ongoing	MPO, LCPS, GISD	MPO, LCPS, GISD	Increase number of schools participating
Complete Street Segment Assessments	Ongoing	MPO, LCPS	MPO, LCPS	Complete Street Segment Assessments
Complete Intersection Assessments	Ongoing	MPO, LCPS	MPO, LCPS	Complete Intersection Assessments
Complete School Site, Street Segment and Inter-section Assessments	Ongoing	MPO, GISD	MPO, GISD	Complete School Site, Street Segment and Intersection Assessments
Seek permanent funding for SRTS Program Coor-dinator; the Coordinator will assist in all levels of SRTS programming and implementation.	Ongoing	MPO	MPO, CLC, DAC, TOM, SRTS	Secure funding for SRTS Program Coordinator, hire and retain qualified personnel.
Walking School Buses & Bicycle Trains: Provide encouragement to form and/or join a walking school bus, or participate in an event to experience actively transporting themselves to or from school.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Record progress with instituting new walking school busses and bicycle trains.
School zones, 15MPH: Ensure all school-zones have state-mandated limit of 15MPH during ar-rival and dismissal times. Improve signage.	Short	CLC	CLC	All school zones compliant.

No	Issues	Description	Assess-ment Question - Parent Survey Issue	Educate	Encourage	Enforce	Engineer
10	Traffic speed along route to school	Length and placement of school zones may be unclear or inconsistent.	4				X
11	Traffic speed along route to school	Drivers not complying with posted 15 MPH school zone.	4			X	
12	Traffic speed along route to school	Perception that drivers are not complying with posted speed limits.	4			X	
13	Are there valets to assist students	Only one school in the district (MacArthur Elementary) had a "valet" system. The principal and assistant principal assisted students.	4.7	X	X		
14	Stand-back line (Student DO/PU Area)	Four schools had stand-back areas/lines for the student pick-up/drop-off areas	4.5	X			X
15	Stand-back line (Bus-Loading Zone)	Four schools had stand-back areas/lines for the bus-loading zone	5.7	X			X
16	Bicycle racks on school property; Two-point support; Safe and secure location	25 schools have bicycle racks, 7 have none. 5 schools have bicycle racks that provide two-point support, 27 do not. Many schools have bicycle racks located in unsecure or unsafe locations.	3.4, 3.5, 3.6				X
17	Access to school grounds	20 of 32 schools lack access to schools from more than one side of the property.	1.1	X			X
18	Pick-up/drop-off areas - Markings and Signage	Signage and markings are often vague, contradictory, or missing from key locations	4.1a, 4.1b				X
19	Safe access to bicycle parking; Routes clear of obstructions; Well maintained	Not all schools have bicycle routes on campus, but not all school locations are appropriate for designated bicycle facilities.	3.1, 3.2, 3.3				X
20	Distance	In general, schools can only be accessed from one or two points. In many cases, this requires students to commute further and make a less direct connection.	1				X

Tasks	When	Who	Potential funding source	Evaluation
School zones, MUTCD: Ensure that ALL school-zones, at a minimum, comply with MUTCD standards in the length and placement of the school-zone.	Short	CLC	CLC	All school zones compliant.
Speed limit enforcement: Work with local police to determine the most effective course of action for deterring dangerous driving behaviors.	Short	CLC	CLC	Speed studies before and after enforcement blitz.
Speed studies: Conduct analysis of existing speed study data.	Short	CLC	CLC	Speed studies before and after enforcement blitz.
Determine the feasibility of developing a “valet” program.	Short	LCPS, GISD	N/A	Record progress with instituting new valet programs.
Install stand-back lines on all school sites with waiting areas large enough to accommodate them. Enlarge waiting areas, if possible, to incorporate stand-back areas. Educate monitors and students how to use them.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with installing new stand-back areas and lines.
Install stand-back lines on all school sites with waiting areas large enough to accommodate them. Enlarge waiting areas, if possible, to incorporate stand-back areas. Educate monitors and students how to use them.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with installing new stand-back areas and lines.
Priority 1: Install bicycle racks at schools that do not have any. Priority 2: Relocate bicycle racks to secure and safe location. Priority 3: Replace old bicycle racks with bicycle parking that provides two-point support for bicycles.	Short	LCPS, GISD, MPO	LCPS, GISD, SRTS	Report new bicycle racks installed or those relocated to safe and secure locations; Report old bicycle racks replaced with two-point support racks.
Coordinate with LCPS & GISD and neighbor-hoods to create additional access points. For some schools, this will involve placing gates in existing fences. Review planned development to ensure well-connected access to school.	Short	LCPS, GISD, CLC, MPO	LCPS, GISD, SRTS	Increase the number of schools that have 3 or more points to access the school grounds. Improve plan review to coordinate better access to school grounds.
Inventory all signage and markings indicating DO/PU areas. Identify and replace old, con-tradictory, or missing signage and markings. Organize a sign and markings program to create consistency across the district.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with installing new and updated signs and markings.
Determine which schools would benefit from on-campus bicycle routes. Coordinate with LCPS & GISD to mark bicycle routes on campus.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD, SRTS	Install on-campus bicycle routes, where feasible. Maintain on-campus bicycle routes.
New schools should be developed with an access point from at least four sides of the school. Provided opportunities to retrofit, access into existing schools from neighborhoods and small streets for all users should be pursued.	Short	LCPS, GISD, CLC, MPO	LCPS, GISD	Coordination of municipal and school district planning.

No	Issues	Description	Assess-ment Question - Parent Survey Issue	Educate	Encourage	Enforce	Engineer
21	Distance	Particularly in newer areas, neighborhoods are not well connected to the schools that serve them.	1				X
22	Coordinating transporta-tion circulation	Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized transportation creates tensions that result in regular circulation changes around school sites. These tensions create inconsistencies and multiple modifications to the built environment, including moving signs, re-marking roadways and crosswalks, and re-doing asphalt and concrete work.					X
23	Funding for SRTS	Funding is required to complete projects, particularly those requiring engineering improvements.					X
24	Safety of intersections & crossings	Lack of bicycle and pedestrian education	2	X	X		
25	Traffic free of congestion, backup	Traffic not moving freely without congestion and backup	4.8	X	X	X	X
26	Safety of intersections & crossings	General public seems unaware of the rights and responsibilities of non-motorized users, making commutes more dangerous for children	2	X	X	X	
27	Access main entrance without crossing driveways; Monitors at driveways	All schools are required to have a school monitor out in front of the schools during each arrival and dismissal period. Some individuals have reported that there are not monitors present during arrival and/or dismissal times. Some may be inaccurate information - but some is inconsistency in monitoring.	1.2, 1.3	X	X		
28	Students protected from vehicles (Student DO/PU Area)	At 11 of 32 schools students are not protected from vehicles in the parent DO/PU lanes.	4.6				X
29	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance	Many ramps are not ADA compliant.	2.3				X

Tasks	When	Who	Potential funding source	Evaluation
Schools shall provide input on the active commuting connections to new neighborhoods constructed within a mile of a school site.	Short	LCPS, GISD, CLC, MPO	LCPS, GISD	Coordination of municipal and school district planning.
Create School Site Circulation Plan, including each school, to formalize improvements to the built environment and procedures pertaining to the transportation circulation of school sites and their level of walk- and bike-ability	Short	LCPS, GISD, CLC, MPO	MPO	Completed School Site Circulation Plan
Complete and submit a Phase 2 application for the LCPS & GISD prioritized list of infrastructure projects.	Short	MPO, LCPS, GISD	MPO, LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Create an active commuting education plan that addresses bicycling basics in all K-8 schools. This plan should include approved curriculum that will teach safe and smart cycling skills to youth and parents.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Implementation of in-classroom walking and bicycling education
Observe all school sites during DO/PU. Coordinate with the CLC's Neighborhood Traffic Calming program to determine if traffic back-up is notable at any specific schools. Work with LCPS, GISD, and CLC to determine what physical and programmatic changes could be implemented to decrease traffic in neighborhoods. These steps should be repeated with DAC and TOM.	Medium	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Observe traffic backed-up at schools before and after projects are com-pleted. Record data about drivers picking up children. Record the number and frequency of com-plaints before and after projects are completed.
Create a public information campaign that will educate pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists about their responsibilities and rights as users of roadways and other related public spaces.	Medium	MPO, LCPS, GISD, LCPD	SRTS, LCPS, GISD, LCPD	Increase the number of students actively commuting to school.
Update practices to improve monitoring on campus. Improve monitor visibility during arrival and dismissal periods. Research training methods to improve monitoring.	Medium	MPO, LCPS, GISD	SRTS, LCPS, GISD	Re-Assess all schools with the School Site Survey and compare to previous responses.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering improvements that can be made to the DO/PU areas. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Medium	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering projects to address ADA deficiencies. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Medium	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.

No	Issues	Description	Assess-ment Question - Parent Survey Issue	Educate	Encourage	Enforce	Engineer
30	Walking routes clear of obstructions; Well maintained	Walking routes often covered in sand, weeds, or thorny bushes; or impeded by fences, trash cans, cars, etc.	2.5, 2.6			X	X
31	Walking routes contiguous	Walking routes on school campuses are not all contiguous, the gaps are described in the School Site Assessments and the “School Profiles.”	2.2				X
32	Bus-loading zones - Markings and Signage	Signage and markings are often vague, contradictory, or missing from key locations.	5.1				X
33	Sidewalk width (Pedestrian facilities)	Most sidewalks meet minimum ADA requirements.	2.1	X	X		
34	Safety of intersections & crossings	Eliminate crashes involving students walking or bicycling to school.	2		X	X	X
35	Safety of intersections & crossings	Improve pedestrian safety at signalized intersections.	2				X
36	Safety of intersections & crossings	Increase driver education about pedestrian and bicycle issues.	2	X			
37	Waiting areas separated from vehicles? (Student DO/PU area)	At all schools, except Vista Middle School, students walking areas are separated by one means or another.	4.4				X
38	Violence or crime	Parents not comfortable letting children commute alone due to potential violence or crime.	5	X	X		
39	Traffic speed along route to school	Students and parents may feel uncomfortable walking or bicycling next to fast-moving traffic.	4				X

Tasks	When	Who	Potential funding source	Evaluation
Work with Physical Plant to clean and maintain walking routes free of debris, etc. Identify walking route impediments and organize their removal.	Short	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering projects to address walking route deficiencies. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Medium	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Inventory all signage and markings indicating DO/PU areas. Identify and replace old, contradictory, or missing signage and markings. Organize a sign and markings program to create consistency across the district.	Medium	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with installing new and updated signs and markings.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering projects to address sidewalk width deficiencies. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Medium	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Detailed analysis of crashes around schools: Conduct further analysis on the details of all pedestrian and bicyclist crashes on or around school sites. Utilizing "Pedsafe: Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System" determine most appropriate course of action for SRTS to pursue.	Medium	CLC, LCPS, GISD	CLC, LCPS, GISD	Zero crash rate involving students walking or bicycling to school.
Large intersections, protected pedestrian signals: Create protected pedestrian signals for intersections that carry a significant level of traffic, and have the potential for large numbers of children to be using them.	Medium	CLC	CLC	All signalized intersections outfitted with pedestrian signals.
Pedestrian & Bicyclist Education in Driver Ed: Require pedestrian and bicycle education in driver education.	Medium	MVD	MVD	To be determined. Bicycle advocates in New Mexico are already working on improving the bicycling questions.
Install bollards, curb, or other physical barriers, as applicable.	Long (but long-hanging fruit)	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Complete project at Vista Middle School
Provide educational and encouragement events to promote supervised commuting to and from school that encourages active transportation and strengthens community connections	Long	CLC, DAC, LCPS, GISD	CLC, DAC, LCPS, GISD	Increase the number of students actively commuting to school.
Determine whether a buffer, bicycle lane, or other engineering approach would appropriately address the issue.	Long	CLC, DAC, LCPS, GISD	CLC, DAC, LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.

No	Issues	Description	Assess-ment Question - Parent Survey Issue	Educate	Encourage	Enforce	Engineer
40	Violence or crime	Parents not comfortable letting children commute alone due to potential violence or crime.	5			X	
41	Buses separated from student DO/PU	Most bus-loading zones are in separate locations from the DO/PU areas.	5.2				X
42	Bus lanes 24'	Most bus lanes are 24' wide.	5.4				X
43	Parent DO/PU one-way, counterclockwise	“NO” responses indicate that a majority of the parent DO/PU are in parking lots, rather than being in separate areas - like bus lanes. This increases the opportunities for conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles.	4.2				X
44	Sidewalks wide enough? (Student DO/PU area)	Sidewalks on all school sites meet minimum ADA standards, but in many cases they are not wide enough for large numbers of children.	4.3				X
45	Walking routes separated from vehicles?	Most campus walking routes were separated from motor vehicle traffic.	2.4				X
46	Bus-loading zone one-way, counterclockwise	Most bus-loading zones are one-way, counterclockwise facilities.	5.3				X
47	Waiting areas separated from vehicles? (Bus-loading zone)	Most bus-loading zones have separated waiting areas.	5.6				X
48	Students protected from vehicles (Bus-loading zone)	Most bus-loading zones have a physical barrier separating the buses from students.	5.8				X
49	Sidewalks wide enough? (Bus-loading zones)	Sidewalks on all school sites meet minimum ADA standards, but in many cases they are not wide enough for large numbers of children.	5.5				X

Tasks	When	Who	Potential funding source	Evaluation
Develop a systematic approach to combating speeding, CODES issues, social concerns, and gang violence and bullying. Connect with the crossing guard supervisor to make sure that all LCPS & GISD crossing guards are placed at optimal locations.	Long	LCPD, LCPS, GISD, CLC, MPO, SRTS	LCPD, LCPS, GISD, CLC, MPO, SRTS	Increase the number of students actively commuting to school.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering projects to address conflicts between bus-loading zones and DO/PU areas. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering projects to widen all bus lanes to 24'. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine if there are physical or programmatic changes that can be implemented to move traffic through these areas in a one-way, counterclockwise direction.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine which sidewalks should be widened to better protect children walking on campus.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering improvements that can be made to provide better walking route separation. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine if there are physical or programmatic changes that can be implemented to move buses through these areas in a one-way, counterclockwise direction.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine engineering improvements that can be made to the bus-loading zone. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Install bollards, curb, or other physical barriers, as applicable.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Conduct more detailed site analyses to determine which sidewalks should be widened to better protect children walking on campus.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.

No	Issues	Description	Assess-ment Question - Parent Survey Issue	Educate	Encourage	Enforce	Engineer
50	Adequate lighting?	Most schools have lighting for parking lots and school grounds	1.4				X
51	Violence or crime	Parents not comfortable letting children commute alone due to potential violence or crime.	5			X	

Tasks	When	Who	Potential funding source	Evaluation
Conduct more detailed site analyses to deter-mine lighting projects that can address lighting deficiencies. Prioritize and implement proposed projects.	Long	LCPS, GISD	LCPS, GISD	Report progress with identifying and installing projects.
Utilize CPED concept in SRTS	Long	SRTS, LCPS, GISD, LCPD	SRTS, LCPS, GISD, LCPD	Increase the number of students actively commuting to school.

Our Safe Routes to School Story

In anticipation of Congress including SRTS in SAFETEA-LU, planners within the LCMPO incorporated support for SRTS programming in the MPO 2005 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Thus, with federal and local support, the SRTS program in Las Cruces was born.

Steering Committee, MPO SRTS Planner, and Action Plan for SRTS

The SRTS Steering Committee, formed in September 2005, brought together professionals with expertise on the various aspects of SRTS to serve as a technical-advisory group. The committee selected Hillrise Elementary to pilot the LC SRTS program because of optimal testing conditions available at this location and the principal's interest in implementing the program at her school.

Hillrise became the first school in Las Cruces to develop a site-specific action plan, which was completed in late 2006 by Andy Hume of the LC MPO. The plan identified barriers to walking and bicycling, prescribed corrective strategies based on the 5Es and formed the basis of the SRTS program at the school. Following the completion of the Action Plan, Mr. Hume submitted an application to the NM DOT for Phase 2 funding. Subsequently, LCPS received $27,460 for non-infrastructure activities at the school and hired Suzanne McQueen, a local Champion, to coordinate the program. To address the infrastructure needs identified in the Action Plan, SRTS coordinated with the CLC (City of Las Cruces) and LCPS. For a complete copy of the Hillrise Elementary Action Plan, and for details on their SRTS program, see the LC SRTS website (*www.saferoutestoschool-lcmpo.com*).


THE LAS CRUCES BULLETIN

Program helps get kids to walk more to school

Adults accompany students on walks

Publicity in local newspapers

Encouraged by the success of the Hillrise SRTS Phase 2 program, additional schools began contacting the LC MPO asking for help establishing an SRTS program at their school. From 2005 to 2009, Camino Real Middle and Mesilla Elementary were two such schools that officially began SRTS education and encouragement activities, received Phase I funding and completed school-specific action plans. Mesilla Elementary went on to apply for and receive Phase 2 funds. (For complete action plan and Phase 2 application details, see supplemental document "School Profiles (web only)".) From 2005 to 2009, various other schools also expressed interest in starting a SRTS program at their school.

[20] For a complete examination of schools and their involvement with SRTS to date, see "Supplemental Document: School Profiles" online at the MPO website.

Because of the interest expressed in the LC SRTS program, LC MPO staff and the NM DOT began exploring the possibility of creating a district-wide action plan to implement SRTS in Las Cruces schools. In 2007, the NM DOT and MPO determined that supporting the increasing number of schools involved in SRTS as well as developing a district-wide plan was a large enough effort to require a full-time SRTS Planner. This planner would be responsible for the composition and development of the Action Plan for SRTS and activities in the LC MPO area. In the agreement between the NM DOT and the MPO, the position and program costs were covered by the NM DOT, and incidental costs were covered by the MPO. In May of 2009, the LC MPO hired a full-time SRTS Planner. For the first two years, the planner focused primarily on creating, refining and implementing an action plan covering the LCPS district.

To evaluate the deficiencies in the LC SRTS program pertaining to the 5Es, the LC SRTS Planner conducted data collection and analysis. The data were collected through two main methods: the Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School[2] and the NM SRTS Assessment forms[3]. These data were used to create the Prioritized Table of Projects and Tasks, used to achieve the program's immediate, short and long-term goals. The information also helped the MPO gain insight into local needs and concerns through interaction with students, parents, school staff, school administration, local professionals and community members.

In 2010, funding for the SRTS Planner position was extended two additional years to focus on Ation Plan implementation and program expansion. During that time period, the Steering Committee also developed their vision statement for SRTS in Las Cruces. The vision statement, found on the opening page of this document helps guide the direction of the program. The committee also helped identify the criteria used in the Action Plan's project prioritization process

With the LC SRTS' goal for long-term program sustainability in mind, the committee reached a consensus to update the committee structure to include three working groups: Education and Encouragement; Engineering and Traffic; and Enforcement. The Education and Encouragement group will introduce newcomers to successful SRTS programs in the area and allow those with more SRTS experience to share ideas and information. The Engineering and Traffic group will help SRTS partners attain the tasks and goals outlined in the SRTS Action Plan and encourage greater inter-agency coordination. The Enforcement group will work to ensure that students can safely commute to and from school.

Each group will have a lead and co-lead who together will help define the purpose and goals of the group, organize the work sessions and report the session minutes to the SRTS Planner. The SRTS Planner will participate in all working group sessions. The Steering Committee will continue to meet as a whole on a quarterly basis and serve as an advisory board to the SRTS Planner as the LC SRTS program grows.

Regional Characteristics

Understanding the characteristics of the Las Cruces region will enable LC SRTS to function more efficiently. The topography and climate of the area, the demographics of our student population and the status of children's health as indicated by the Department of Health (DOH) all help to identify the program's issues and potential.

The following section serves to provide the reader with a detailed understanding of the Las Cruces area and enable them to promote active transportation to and from school. We believe that by actively participating in their own commute, students are given the chance to learn and explore on their way to or from school. With proper education and adult supervision, children are equipped with the tools they need to navigate a safe route to school.

Organ Mountains

Geography and Climate

The term "desert southwest" often conjures images of a harsh, hot and dry place to live. However, the Mesilla Valley, where Las Cruces and surrounding towns (Doña Ana, Mesilla, and Mesilla Park) are located, has many geographical and climatological characteristics that favor active commuting.

Las Cruces, New Mexico sits at 32.28°N, 106.75°W and is 3,878 feet above sea level. In this high desert air, the Las Cruces area experiences more than 330 days of sunshine a year. The coldest average monthly temperature, 26 degrees Fahrenheit, occurs in January, and the hottest average monthly temperature, 94 degrees Fahrenheit, occurs in June and July. The season often referred to as the "windy season" occurs between late February and early April. Also, the Las Cruces area receives slightly less than 10 inches of rain annually, normally during the monsoon season in the summer months of June and July. The weather during the majority of the school year is favorable for active transportation to and from school.

The Las Cruces area is located in south-central New Mexico, in the northern region of the Chihuahuan Desert. Within this arid region, creosote, mesquite, agave, ocotillo, and other cacti dominate the landscape. In addition to plant life, students will often encounter native animals and insects on their way to or from school. Students in the predominantly rural areas of the school district may also encounter loose dogs, free-range cattle or horses. There are regionally significant topographical characteristics that affect the function of SRTS in the Las Cruces area, such as the Rio Grande River valley which is generally flat

and bounded by escarpments to the east and west. The East Mesa is another significant feature that includes land east of I-25, extending north to the Doña Ana Mountains and south to Tortugas Mountain. The East Mesa is not literally a mesa, but is in fact an alluvial fan of sediment originating from the Organ Mountains. The mesa also contains the drainage system for the Organ Mountains, characterized by large arroyos and hills. Several schools are located along drainages or arroyos, and these notable features affect the accessibility of and commutability to these campuses.

The river valley encompasses the Las Cruces region's urban area as well as suburban and rural developments. The urban area has a generally well-connected roadway system. The suburban and rural areas usually have fewer direct transportation connections and greater commuting distances. To accommodate the suburban and rural development on the east mesa, roadways are generally more curvilinear with cul-de-sacs. These roadway features can impede connectivity and create greater distances between schools and homes.

Water features associated with an occasionally wet, Southwestern climate create potential commuting routes connecting neighborhoods to school yards and other destinations. The river valley is the only area through which the Rio Grande runs; however, the entire LCPS district area contains water features such as intermittent streams, arroyos, and large puddles that form during the summer monsoons. In the urban area, many of the intermittent streams have been turned into formal, sometimes concrete-lined structures. The local water features also include canals and drains owned and operated by the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID).

Aerial Photograph showing arroyo

	LCPS		Statewide	
Student Characteristics	#	%	#	%
Female	12,232	49.1	161,820	48.8
Male	12,694	50.9	169,846	51.2
Caucasian	5,774	23.2	94,244	28.4
African-American	644	2.7	8,832	2.7
Hispanic	17,935	71.9	187,609	56.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	335	1.3	4,798	1.4
American Indian	238	0.9	36,183	10.9
English Language Learners	3,379	13.6	52,497	15.8
Students with Disabilities	3,771	15.2	47,323	14.3
Economically Disadvantaged	15,384	61.6	223,274	67.3
Source: 2010 120D PED Submission				

Socio-Demographics

There are several socio-demographic characteristics to consider when developing and implementing a SRTS program. The projected growth of the student population, its ethnic diversity, parental income data and the varying needs of students including those with different levels of mobility and cognitive abilities are all significant factors. Upon examination of the LCPS socio-demographics, the necessity of encouraging safe, active, inclusive and inexpensive modes of transportation to and from school becomes apparent.

Las Cruces is the second most populous city and LCPS is the second largest school district in the state of New Mexico. Las Cruces has experienced a 23.7 percent increase in population between 2000 (74,267) and 2010 (97,618). According to data developed for the MPO's 2010 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) "Transport 2040," the number of school-aged children in the Las Cruces area is also expected to increase over the next few years. It is important to examine these growth trends because increasing populations typically result in growing demands on the transportation network. Most pertinent to SRTS, an increase in the population of school-aged children will place additional pressures on transTable # indicates some of the characteristics of the LCPS district. Notably, there is a predominantly Hispanic population and a large percentage of English Language Learners. Consequently, it is imperative that the SRTS program components, such as outreach, education, and encouragement materials, are culturally relevant to the population.

Regarding economic factors, examination of national and local demographic data reveals that the percentage of households below the poverty line in Doña Ana County is 25.39 percent compared to the U.S. rate of 12.38 percent (MTP, 2010). This information is significant to the SRTS program because "persons who are below the poverty line are often located in disadvantageous locations for walking or bicycling," while they are also "in greater need of active transportation" opportunities.

[23] New Mexico Department of Health Report on Body Mass Index (BMI) Surveillance System

According to the summarized results of the 2009 Parent Survey, 3,286 parents (54.4 percent) reported driving their child to school in a family vehicle while only 36 parents (0.4 percent) indicated their child biked to school, and 423 (7 percent) said their children walked to school. Based on the trends indicated in the survey, it is likely that the projected increase in school-aged children in the Las Cruces area will result in more idling vehicles and increased congestion on local streets near schools during arrival and dismissal times.

In 2010, the New Mexico Department of Health compiled a report of their findings of the elementary school Body Mass Index (BMI) surveillance system . The purpose of the BMI surveillance system is to monitor the weight of New Mexico children and give the DOH a tool to measure progress towards creating a healthier New Mexico. The findings indicated that 13.2 percent of kindergarten students and 22.6 percent of third-grade students were obese. In comparison, 19.6 percent of 6 to 11 year olds nationwide were obese (NHANES, 2007-2008).

This data indicates that New Mexico's third-grade students have higher obesity rates than the national average. In fact, the report shows that "Adding the students who were overweight brings the combined percentage of overweight or obese children to 30.3% for kindergarten students and 38.7% for third grade students."

The report also outlined the differences in the statewide childhood obesity rates categorized by grade and race/ethnicity. Pertaining to grade, the report found that "By the third grade a greater proportion of children were obese rather than overweight. The difference between kindergarten and third grade was also statistically significant for the combined overweight/obese category." Pertaining to race/ethnicity, the percentage of obese "white, non-Hispanic kindergarten students [is] 8.8% and [there are] almost twice as many obese Hispanic kindergarten students (12.9%). This pattern of disparity continued for third grade students although the differences were smaller."

Data Collection & Methodology

In order to investigate the behavioral characteristics of students and parents and the physical layout and condition of schools within LCPS, the LC SRTS program collected regionally-specific data using the two primary methods mentioned in the "Steering Committee, MPO SRTS Planner and Action Plan for SRTS" section.

The two primary methods of data collection and their implementation into the Action Plan and prioritized list of SRTS projects are discussed below.

2009 Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School

The 2009 Parent Survey was designed by the National Center for Safe Routes to School, and is a "5-10 minute questionnaire [designed to collect] information about factors that affect whether parents allow their children to walk or bike to school, the presence of safety-related conditions along routes to school, and other background school travel data. Results can help determine how to improve opportunities for children to walk or bike to school, and measure parental attitude changes as local SRTS programs occur."

In the fall of 2009, the LC MPO coordinated with SRTS and LCPS administration to distribute the survey to all K-8 schools in the district. A total of 15,980 surveys were given to parents, with English and Spanish versions provided based on LCPS records indicating primary language spoken in each student's home. 7,083 surveys were returned (a 44 percent return rate) and sent to the National Center for Safe Routes to School for data analysis and entry into the National SRTS Database used to track progress of the SRTS program at both the national and state levels.

Many of the findings and conclusions regarding student-travel information and parent perspective in this report are drawn from the data collected in the 2009 Parent Survey.

School Site Assessments

In addition to the 2009 Parent Survey, the SRTS Planner and staff from various agencies conducted School-Site Assessments of all 32 eligible K-8 schools. School-Site Assessments collect information about the built environment at each school site, including a detailed analysis of on-site pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as student drop-off and pick-up areas.

The assessment forms were originally created by the NM DOT SRTS Program to standardize data collected across the State. The LC MPO staff and SRTS Planner revised the forms to refine aspects such as question clarity, answer consistency and overall organization. These revised forms are now used by the NM DOT SRTS program and are available on the NM SRTS website. A copy of the assessment form is included in the Appendix E.

All data collected through the School Site Assessments was entered into a spreadsheet and used to prioritize schools and projects for future SRTS funding applications. The SRTS program will coordinate these improvements (such as replacing the inaccurately posted school speed zone at Mesa Middle school depicted to the left) with the Public Works departments of the CLC, DAC and TOM, and assist each respective department with securing funding.

The two largest sources of data were the 2009 Parent Survey and the School Site Assessment forms. Each section in this plan analyzes data from those two sources and organizes the data into challenges to active commuting. Following the analysis, goals, projects and tasks for the LC SRTS program are identified and prioritized.

Data Analysis & Conclusion

The two largest sources of data were the 2009 Parent Survey and the School Site Assessment forms. Each section in this plan analyzes data from those two sources and organizes the data into challenges to active commuting. Following the analysis, goals, projects and tasks for the LC SRTS program are identified and prioritized.

2009 Parent Survey on Walking and Bicycling to School

In the 2009 Parent Survey, Question 10 asked parents if they would probably let their children walk or bike to school if a certain problem were changed or improved. The top five responses to this question were:

1. Distance (2,142 responses, or 38.5 percent)
2. Safety of intersections & crossings (1,987 responses, or 35.7 percent)
3. Traffic volume along route (1,986 responses, or 35.7 percent)
4. Traffic speed along route to school (1,983 responses, or 35.6 percent), and
5. Violence or crime (1,652 responses, or 29.7 percent)

Following, you will find these issues defined and discussed using information the LC SRTS Planner has identified through interviews and conversations since 2009. The strategies presented in the "Goals, Projects, and Tasks" section in Appendix F, were developed to address the challenges listed below.

1. Distance (2,142 responses, 38.5 percent)

Families within the walking boundaries: Some individuals perceive the distance they live from their school as prohibitive to walking or bicycling to school. Potential reasons for this perception are: lack of practice walking as primary means of travel or misestimating the amount of time it takes to walk a mile or half mile; lack of direct routes from homes to destinations increases the walking or bicycling distance traveled; or walking along routes with high-traffic volumes can be stressful and thus tiring.

Families outside of the walking boundaries: Some families live more than one and a half miles from their school and thus face active commuting challenges. Potential reasons for this are, some schools have large attendance areas (including the fact that LCPS allows out-of-district transfers) and state school policies and city planning policies have not supported constructing neighborhood schools.

2. Safety of intersections and crossings (1,987 responses, 35.7 percent)

Many parents and guardians feel that intersections along school routes are dangerous. In speaking with numerous parents, "dangerous" is defined as too many cars, wide intersections and obstructed visibility. Additionally, many parents or guardians feel that Las Cruces drivers do not pay enough attention to pedestrians, bicyclists and other active commuters.

3. Traffic volume along route (1,986 responses, 35.7 percent)

Many parents and guardians believe that the amount of traffic along their child's school route creates a dangerous situation. The morning traffic volume during the school year is 20-25 percent higher than when school is not in session. However, in order to reduce traffic volumes it is imperative that the LC SRTS program educates students, parents and community members that they create traffic by continuing to drive their children to school. As it is the goal of SRTS to increase walking and bicycling, we will work to help people become aware of their own role in creating traffic and advise them that active commuting is the safest and most efficient mode of transportation for nearby destinations.

We must also be aware of the fact that locating schools, particularly elementary schools, along arterial roadways rather than within neighborhoods perpetuates the perspective of traffic volumes being too high for active commuting. Also, locating the school building in the midst of parking lots with many driveways and limited or no sidewalk access creates an unsafe environment that may influence parents' decisions to drive children to school.

4. Traffic speed along route to school (1,983 responses, 35.6 percent)

Parents and guardians believe that traffic in the Las Cruces region does not adhere to the posted speed limits creating dangerous environments for students walking/biking to school. As noted in the previous "challenge," the school location as well as the site layout contributes to this issue. We will address these reservations by educating the public, parents and schools about the realities of these dangers and gain experience mitigating these circumstances as we encourage more active transportation community wide.

5. Violence or crime (1,652 responses, or 29.7 percent)

Though "violence or crime" is not the most common response on the list, it is usually one of the top issues parents have cited as a barrier to active commuting. Because of attention to juvenile kidnappings and the lack of social connectivity within communities and neighborhoods, parents and guardians are largely unwilling to allow their children to actively commute to or from school on their own.

However, in the past 12 years in Las Cruces, no juvenile kidnappings by strangers have been reported (not including juvenile kidnappings by family members or acquaintances). This indicates that the Las Cruces area is a comparatively safe and secure location to promote active school commuting.

The LC SRTS program will address parental fears by creating commuting groups by which we can build trust and increase the social equity at individual schools. The LC SRTS program believes that the best way to confront these issues is to create positive experiences with parents that may decrease apprehension.

School Site Assessments and Prioritization

Along with analyzing the behaviors creating barriers to active transportation, it is important to address the built environment as observed through the physical conditions and layout of each school site. As noted in the previous section, the school sites were assessed using the NM DOT School Site Assessment.

The assessment form contains a series of questions used to evaluate physical properties of school sites. In many cases, the assessments revealed deficiencies that could be barriers to active commuting. The SRTS Planner, the Steering Committee and other professionals identified projects that would alleviate the deficiencies. All projects are currently being identified and proposed through the assessment process; as SRTS submits their paperwork to the NM DOT, engineers will work with the team to identify final project details.

The majority of the School Site Assessments were conducted during the summer of 2009. Since that time, various schools have been assessed during arrival and dismissal. The dates of the original assessments are included on the paperwork available in the "Supplemental Document (Web Only)". Future assessments will all be conducted during arrival and dismissal times.

Las Cruces SRTS developed a scoring system in order to prioritize the projects. The scoring system was created by assigning a numerical value corresponding to the "yes," "no" or "N/A" answers generated in the assessments. In general, "yes" responses received two points, "N/A" responses received one point, and "no" responses received zero points. The points were then tallied and compared to the total possible points resulting in a percentage score.

The results of the percentages are interpreted as follows:
Higher percentages: These indicate that a school site currently has a more favorable physical environment for actively commuting to and from school. These are sites that are more suitable for an immediate focus on Education and Encouragement.
Lower percentages: These scores indicate significant deficiencies in the physical environment. The focus for these schools should be on Engineering and Enforcement projects which would create safer and more accessible routes to school.

School Site Assessment Summary by Category

Using the points assignment for "yes," "no" or "N/A" answers, points were tallied for each assessment question resulting in a score. That score was then divided by the maximum number of points possible for the question to calculate a percentage of the possible score. All percentages generated through this process are representative of the scoring of all 32 surveyed schools.

The results of these calculations (left) indicated that, overall, pedestrian facilities and bus-loading zones scored highest and are therefore the most complete aspects of the physical environment. Bicycle facilities scored lowest, indicating that these aspects of the physical environment need the most attention. While the results of this summary point out large-scale challenges measured in the built environment, they do not necessarily indicate countermeasures that can address deficiencies at specific school sites.

School Site Assessment Summary by Question

In efforts to identify and prioritize ways to promote SRTS, we needed to examine how school sites scored on individual assessment questions. Each question on the School Site Assessment relates to countermeasures that can mitigate a particular gap in the built environment. To develop an accurate projects list, responses were reorganized into a summary ranked by percentage of the maximum score, similar to the process used by the "Summary by Category." The table to the left shows the results from this summary.

A detailed breakdown of the "School Site Assessment" scores/results for individual schools is available in the supplemental document "Las Cruces Public School Profiles: Site information, Parent Survey Summary Results, and Assessments." The list of prioritized projects is available in the "Goals and Strategies" section.

Next Steps

a. School zone sign b. Bicycle parking at Mesilla Elementary c. Crossing improvements at Valley View

This section outlines recommendations and next steps for a balanced approach to infrastructural and non-infrastructural improvements. Using the analysis to prioritize programs and available resources, projects can be undertaken on short, medium and long-term bases.

Infrastructural Improvements

Infrastructural improvements for SRTS include the design, construction and maintenance of physical infrastructure that can improve the safety and comfort of students walking and biking to school.

1. School-Zone Improvement

These primarily include signage, such as stop signs, speed-limit signs and school-zone signs as well as traffic-control devices, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, bulb outs, crosswalks and pedestrian-crossing signals. Device installation at a specific location should be done only after reviewing the traffic study of the school surroundings; devices should be properly maintained for visibility, legibility and functionality. Signage and traffic devices would help control speeding and traffic volumes within the school zones increasing student safety. (Refer issues 1, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

2. Bicycle-Parking Facilities

Schools can encourage children, faculty and visitors to bicycle to school by providing secure and convenient bicycle-parking facilities. Secure bicycle parking should preferably be in a high-visibility or fenced-in area. Schools that do not have any bicycle-parking facilities should take immediate installation priority; schools requiring relocation of existing facilities would receive subsequent attention. (Refer issues 16 and 19 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

3. Pedestrian-Crossing Improvements

Many parents feel that it is unsafe for children to cross certain intersections because of traffic volumes and uncontrolled traffic signals. A continuous network of sidewalks and crosswalks would help address these concerns by increasing safety and encouraging walkability. Also, the presence of visible pedestrian-crossing pavement markings along with signals on both sides of the street would help provide a safe way to cross traffic-light controlled intersections. Further, providing adult crossing guards near the schools would create safety gaps in traffic at uncontrolled intersections. Such crossings could also take place outside the school zones as per the requirement. (Refer issues 22, 24, 26 33, 34, 35 and 36 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

4. Waiting Areas and Stand-back Lines

Large waiting areas at bus-loading zones and parent pick-up/drop-off areas are essential in keeping children away from nearby traffic. Groups of children waiting to board vehicles curbside face a safety hazard from traffic – providing stand-back lines would create an effective safety buffer for children. (Refer issues 14, 15 37, 47, 48 and 49 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

5. Parent's Pick up/Drop off Facilities

Since the majority of pick-up and drop-off facilities are in school parking lots, there's an increased opportunity for conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles. To address this problem, separate pick-up and drop-off facilities should be provided with one-way loop traffic in counter clockwise direction. Proper signage and markings should be included to direct traffic. Such facilities would also decrease chaos and traffic volumes within the school vicinity during pick up/drop off hours. (Refer issues 14, 15 and 37 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

6. Accessibility Improvement

Most schools are accessed by one or two points of entry which can cause students to have to commute further and take a less direct connection to reach their destination. New schools could be developed with access points from at least four sides while the existing ones could be retrofitted to improve accessibility from neighborhoods and small streets. (Refer issues 17, 20 and 21 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

Non-Infrastructural Improvements

These types of improvements include efforts in the area of encouragement, education and enforcement that are required to create a more holistic approach towards the SRTS program.

1. SRTS Champion and Task Force

Identifying SRTS Champions and initiating the basic walk-bike safety training are important steps toward implementing the SRTS program in schools. Awareness of active-commuting opportunities among children and parents could be created through such measures. Formation of a SRTS Task Force, which includes interested parents, teachers, students, school officials and people from the local community, would also be an effective way to reach out to stakeholders of the program. (Refer issues 3 and 7 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table).

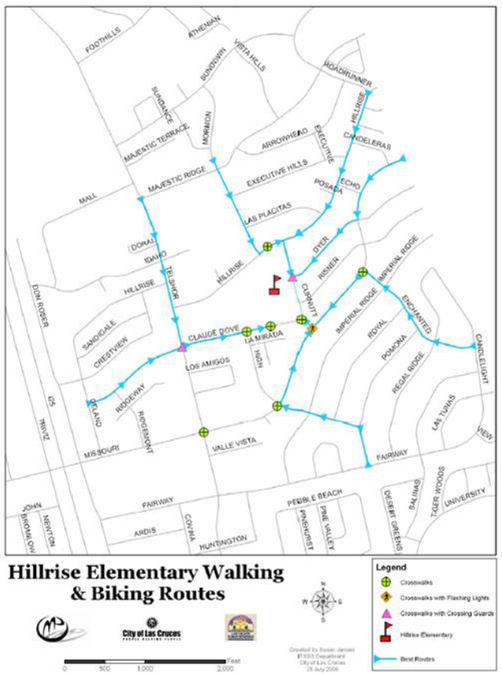
2. International Walk and Roll to School Day

The International Walk and Roll to School Day is celebrated annually on the first Wednesday in October. This event can serve as a kick-off to a concentrated effort toward generating awareness and enthusiasm for SRTS programs. Activities may include a special walking school bus led by local politicians or school administrators, school assemblies and contests. These tend to build

Stand Back Lines (SBL)
Children stand behind these lines to keep a safe distance from the curb or edge of the street waiting for pick up.

SRTS Champion
Communities with flourishing SRTS programs have attributed their success in part to a program champion - someone who has enthusiasm and time to provide leadership for the group and keep things moving.

a. Pick up area at Valley View Elementary b. Walk & Roll to School Day at Highland Elementary



Suggested Walking Map for Hillrise Elementary

Weekly Bike Train at Mesilla Elementary

increased attention and excitement that can be tapped to attract volunteers to maintain efforts year round. Such events would also be good opportunities to create public-information campaigns that could educate parents and children about their responsibilities and rights as pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. (Refer issue 2 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

3. Suggested School-Routes Map

Suggested school-routes maps would be the most cost-effective way to encourage children to walk to school. These maps provide a number of safe routes (avoiding increasingly busy intersections) to parents and school officials to plan the best possible paths for children to walk or bike to school. It is important to keep maps up-to-date with the latest information on traffic in school vicinities.

4. Walking School Buses and Bicycle Trains

Parents are often apprehensive about children walking or biking to school alone because of potential safety issues. Walking school buses and bicycle trains address this issue by providing opportunities for parents to experience active transportation with their children to or from the school. Members of a SRTS coalition or interested parents and teachers can volunteer to accompany a group of children walking or biking to school. (Refer issue 8 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

5. Enforcement Efforts

It is important to enforce speed limits within the school zones. An improvement in driver behavior is typically observed when a police vehicle is present. Schools should seek assistance from the Las Cruces Police Department regarding increasing patrol presence during the school-commuting period within the school zone. (Refer issue 40 in Prioritized SRTS Projects and Tasks Table)

Sustaining the SRTS Program

Introducing active-transportation education and encouragement into the school curriculum would help integrate the efforts put forth by the SRTS program into school activities. Class projects, field trips and school competitions related to active transportation could create a strong partnership between the SRTS program and school authorities. Also, creating awareness about active transportation at an early age among children will be key to program success.

The SRTS program has potential to improve walking and bicycling conditions for everyone and create interest in active transportation beyond schools. So, it is important to find a variety of local partners to support the program. Other pertinent programs, initiatives, organizations and not-for-profit entities that may not solely focus on active transportation for students but cater to bicycle/pedestrian planning at large could employ the SRTS program on a broader level.

Securing diverse funding opportunities would help create a self-sustaining program that could become a part of a daily lifestyle rather than just being an imposed policy. Finding creative ways to accommodate funding for SRTS programs in local budgets would help to actuate new projects. Local operating budgets usually have provision for general infrastructure maintenance which could be used for relatively inexpensive projects, such as lanes and crosswalk striping. Meanwhile, transportation budgets could include school-zone signage improvements and public school budgets could include funding for bicycle and pedestrian safety training.

The many benefits of the SRTS program, if publicized, could attract private funding. Events such as walkathons and bicycle rallies would not only raise the funding but would also raise awareness about active transportation. Local businesses could also benefit from sponsoring such events through the inherent publicity they bring.

Walking Field Trip

When considering funding, it's important to remember that sustaining and advancing the SRTS program goes beyond just providing means to complete infrastructural projects but also entails creating awareness within the community to promote safe and accessible commuting options.

Appendices

Appendix A

Education and Encouragement

To educate individuals about what SRTS is and to encourage participation in the program MPO staff, local champions, and members of the Steering Committee have promoted SRTS through activities such as the following:

- International Walk and Roll to School Day (2006 to present)
- Walk Across America at Hillrise Elementary (2009 and 2010)
- Bicycle education events
- Health and safety fairs
- Presentations to school staff regarding SRTS programs and building participation by students and parents

Partnerships

In an effort to build a strong working relationship between the school district and local government, MPO staff has provided updates to the LCPS school board and Las Cruces City Council. SRTS has also partnered with the New Mexico Department of Health (NM DOH) Region 5 to promote initiatives such as Healthy Kids Las Cruces, Playful Cities USA, and Prescription Trails.

Professional Development Day

Naoma Staley (SRTS Planner), Andy Hume (Las Cruces MPO Planner), and Suzanne McQueen (Champion Hillrise/Camino Real Middle School) presented classroom materials LCPS teachers could use to meet Math, English or Social Science requirements while also teaching kids about safe walking and biking to school. The presentation, titled "Physical Activity and the Built Environment," was part of a professional-development day for two consecutive years (2010 and 2011). As a result of preparing for the workshops, we were able to create a basic packet of SRTS related materials to use within the schools. These materials were developed and successfully implemented locally.

NMSU Advocacy Writing Class

For three semesters (fall of 2009 and 2010, and spring of 2011), the MPO SRTS Planner presented the basics of SRTS to students attending the "Advocacy Writing Class" at New Mexico State University (NMSU). Because of these presentations, more than 120 students received information about SRTS, and nine students across the three semesters contributed 54 volunteer hours to the MPO's SRTS program.

Appendix B

Lessons learned from the Pilot Project

The steering committee ultimately decided that the best way to proceed was to start a pilot program at one area school. Principal Andrea Fletcher of Hillrise Elementary in Las Cruces volunteered her school as the test site. As the MPO did not have a specific grant or budget to support the pilot program at Hillrise Elementary, the steering committee focused on improvements that could be made using city resources and on activities that could be carried out by volunteers. Beginning in April 2006, employees from the city's Public Works and Facilities Departments added crosswalks,repaired sidewalks, cleared branches overhanging sidewalks andobscuring signs, and restriped a major road to reduce vehicle speeds.

Lessons Learned from the SRTS Champions

Making personal connections with kids does inspire them to walk/bike frequently and reinforce it with flyers and letters to the parents.

- Establishing walking and biking routes and running them for a couple of months will help determining the infrastructure needs.
- Support from administration and school staff is essential not only for "good job, go ahead and do that' but also for their active involvement and participation in such activities.
- The kids who walk the walk and bike with the Walking School Bus and Bike Train know the rules of the road. The repetition practice get engrained it in them. Those students who only learn in the classroom, are much less sure of the rules.
- Change is slow. People have imbedded habits and breaking those can be difficult. Breaking away from car culture takes an effort. Making people realize the benefits of walking their
- children to school on a regular basis can be difficult.
- It doesn't take a formal paid SRTS program to get this off the ground at school. Mesilla, Highland and Loma Heights have proved this effectively. Rather than funding, it is all about getting dedicated parents, staff, etc. to get everything together and coordinate it.
- Having multiple volunteers/staff members is always beneficial in case the champion is not able to lead the group.

Appendix C

Healthy Kids Las Cruces

The Healthy Kids Las Cruces initiative began in Las Cruces in December 2007. The purpose of the initiative is to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity in Las Cruces. More than fifty local stakeholders gathered in December 2007 to develop an implementation plan that outlined goals and action steps within five different settings: Community and Regional Planning, Education, Food System, Healthcare and Community and Family. Goal 1 under "Community and Regional Planning" is that "All LCPS elementary schools will have a Safe Routes to School Program by 2013. In the first year at least two additional LCPS elementary schools will participate in a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program." Since that time (the 2007-2008 school year), there have been a number of schools along with Camino Real Middle School actively participating in a school-site SRTS program.

Prescription Trails

Prescription Trails is a program developed to increase physical activity within Las Cruces. This program was first established in Albuquerque through the leadership of Charm Lindblad with NM Healthcare Takes on Diabetes. This program is meant to be used as a tool for physicians and even veterinarians to "prescribe" physical activity using the trails and walking paths outlined in this program via booklets and websites. The Las Cruces Prescription Trails program was officially started on Sunday, June 27th. Booklets will be available at various locations including physician offices, and documents are available on the following websites: www.healthynm.org; www.las-cruces.org; www.prescriptiontrailsnm.org.

Playful Cities USA

Las Cruces, NM, was designated as a "Playful City USA" in 2009 and 2010. Playful Cities USA's mission is to "create great play spaces through the participation and leadership of communities." Their ultimate goal is having "a place to play within walking distance of every child in America." They aim to attain success in that mission by using three central strategies:

- Constructing innovative, kid-inspired play spaces using a community-build model that improves the well-being of the children we serve as well as the neighborhoods in which they live.
- Sharing the knowledge and tools needed for anyone to find, improve and/or build playgrounds on their own.
- Building a broad movement driven by research, analysis, policy and community engagement.

Transport 2040

Transport 2040 is the Las Cruces MPO's 2010 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This document is the long-range transportation plan that guides planning, construction, operation and maintenance of an integrated, multi-modal transportation network. The MTP sets the regional transportation vision and priorities through a variety of principles and strategies.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets are defined as streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users including children, seniors and those with disabilities. They address both policies and design standards requiring consideration of all users in planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the traveled way and roadside. Complete Streets include design elements such as bicycle lanes, pedestrian buffers, curb extensions, narrow residential roadways and improved signal timing.

Walk Across America

In conjunction with the SRTS program, Hillrise Elementary participated in "Walk Across America" and "Walk the Great Wall of China" to get kids outside and active and educate them on the benefits of walking and running. The classes that traveled the furthest received a "Hawaiian Luau" and then "Emperor's Banquet" party.

- Each student had the opportunity to walk/run laps around the perimeter of the field at the school. This could be done before or after school, during recess and lunch.
- Each student logged how many laps they completed each day on their class's weekly personalized log sheet. This was completed on the honor system.
- The school's field was marked at a quarter mile and was used to track laps only at school.
- At the end of each week, each class recorded the number of miles they completed during the week at the top of their log sheet. These numbers were averaged per classes of 20 students. Each class tracked their progress for the "Walk Across America" and "Great Wall of China" contests.
- Teachers were required to turn in log sheets by each Monday morning to get credit for the previ ous week's progress.

International Walk and Roll to School Day

"In 1997, the Partnership for a Walkable America sponsored the first National Walk Our Children to School Day in Chicago, modeled after the United Kingdom's lead. Back then, it was simply a day to bring community leaders and children together to create awareness of the need for communities to be walkable.

By the year 2002, children, parents, teachers and community leaders in all 50 states joined nearly 3 million walkers around the world to celebrate the second annual International Walk to School Day. The reasons for walking grew just as quickly as the event itself. Walk to School Day events are aimed at bringing forth permanent change to encourage a more walkable America — one community at a time.

For more information visit: http://www.walktoschool.org/about/index.cfm

Walking School Buses (WSB) and Bicycle Trains

"Parents often cite safety issues as one of the primary reasons they are reluctant to allow their children to walk to school. Providing adult supervision may help reduce those worries for families who live within walking or bicycling distance to school." One way to address parents' concerns is to implement walking school buses or bicycle trains that encourage students to commute to (or from) school in groups, instead of as individuals.

"A walking school bus (WSB) is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. If that sounds simple, it is, and that's part of the beauty of the walking school bus. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers. A variation on the walking school bus is the bicycle train, in which adults supervise children riding their bikes to school. The flexibility of the walking school bus makes it appealing to communities of all sizes with varying needs."

For more information visit: http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/

Appendix D

Bike Rack Data

During the summer of 2008, the NM DOH Region 6 hired an intern to inventory all bicycle racks on school sites within LCPS. The information included the presence, condition, location and number of bicycle parking spaces. Since that time a few schools have updated their bicycle parking through SRTS and other sources, and those changes are noted in the bicycle rack data provided. The bicycle rack data was entered into a spreadsheet and used to prioritize schools.

Bicycles in Racks Data

In coordination with BCNM (Bicycle Coalition of New Mexico) research on bicycles in racks, SRTS has gained access to data tracking the increase or stability in the number of bicycles in racks for select schools across LCPS.

Appendix E

School Site Assessment and Prioritization

This appendix reiterates and expands on the information found in the "Data Analysis and Conclusions" section under the heading, "School Site Assessments and Prioritization."

After analyzing the behavioral characteristics that can create barriers to active transportation, it is also important to address the built environment as observed through the physical conditions and layout of each school site. The school sites were assessed using the NM DOT School Site Assessment. , The assessment posed a series of questions aimed at evaluating the physical properties of the school site. In many cases, the assessments revealed deficiencies in the physical environment that could be barriers to active commuting. The SRTS Planner, the Steering Committee, and other professionals identified projects that would mitigate the deficiencies.

The majority of the School Site Assessments were performed during the summer of 2009. At that time all but two of the schools in LCPS were on break. Thus, the data accurately represents the dimensions and layout of the school sites, but may lack some information pertaining to the flow of traffic during school hours. To compensate for this, SRTS asked for insight from the LCPS Director of Transportation, school staff, parents and volunteers and the CLC Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program Coordinator. These individuals examined the results of the surveys and provided feedback. It is the opinion of the LC SRTS program that the data from the School Site Assessments could be improved by conducting arrival and dismissal observations throughout the year, but the current data is an accurate representation of the conditions and needs of each school site.

The SRTS team then developed a scoring system to evaluate the responses to each question and prioritize proposed projects. The scoring system was created by assigning a numerical value that corresponded to the "yes," "no" or "N/A" answers generated through the assessments. In general, "yes" responses received two points, "N/A" responses received one point, and "no" responses received zero points. The points were then tallied and compared to the total possible points resulting in a percentage score.

The results of the percentages developed are to be interpreted as follows:
Higher percentages: These indicate that a school site currently has a more favorable physical environment for encouraging children to actively commute to and from school. These are sites that are more suitable for an immediate focus on Education and Encouragement.

[25] A copy of the assessment form is available at http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=16780.

[26] For the purpose of this assessment, the School Site Assessment was performed solely as an examination of the physical environment owned and operated by Las Cruces Public Schools. The assessment did not include any adjoining infrastructure, such as sidewalks or streets. Further analysis using the Street Segments and Intersections Assessments will gather additional data about the adjoining physical environment.

[27] Upon further use of the forms, the SRTS team found that some questions asked two questions in one. These were broken into two scores for the prioritization process. Additionally, some questions were answered with a numerical value. The detailed breakdown of the scoring process can be found in Appendix E.

Lower percentages: These scores indicate significant deficiencies in the physical environment. The focus for these schools should be on Engineering and Enforcement projects that would create safer and more accessible routes to school.

During the evaluation and scoring of the School Site Assessment questions, a few responses required slightly different scoring methods to ensure that they could be assessed across school sites. Below are the explanations of the modified scoring methods:

Question 1.1:

Sidewalk Width	Score
4’	1
5’	2
6’+	3

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) mandates four feet as a minimum sidewalk width. Therefore, since school sites with four-foot wide sidewalks are fulfilling their responsibility to ADA standards, they are only awarded a “neutral” number of points. However, wider sidewalks provide a greater safety measure, especially for child pedestrians, and school sites with sidewalks wider than four feet received additional points.

Question 1.4:
This question was answered “yes” if the assessors observed light standards in fairly uniform distribution across the school site. In some cases, individuals familiar with the school site were present for the assessments, and could assist in the “yes/no” determination of the question. In the future, the quantification of “sufficient” may need to be clarified. Also, a night visit to each school site would be beneficial.

Question 4.1 (4.1a & 4.1b):
During the evaluation of each school site, this question was often answered with both “yes” and “no” because many of the sites had good signage and poor markings, or poor signage and good markings. Thus, during the scoring process it was determined that the best solution would be to break this question into two separate questions and award two sets of points.

Supplemental Documents

Las Cruces Public Schools Profiles: Site information, Parent Survey Summary Results and Assessments (Web only).