



# Communities Putting Prevention to Work

Advancing Safe Routes to School  
at the County Level





# Acknowledgements

## **This report was issued by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership**

*The National Partnership's mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. The National Partnership is hosted by Bikes Belong Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit which is a sister organization to Bikes Belong Coalition.*

*For more information, visit [www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org).*

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a fast-growing network of more than 500 organizations and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices, leverage infrastructure and program funding, and advance policy change to help agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs across the nation.

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### **Author**

Dave Cowan, Program Manager, Safe Routes to School National Partnership

### **Reviewers**

Deb Hubsmith, Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Robert Ping, Technical Assistance Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – National Center for Environmental Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

### **Contributors**

- Aaron Ritz, Active Transit Coordinator, City of Philadelphia
- Bev Brody, Get Fit Kauai Island Coordinator
- Bill Mahar, Built Environment Policy Coordinator, Tri-County Health Department
- Bridgette Smith, Program Manager, Miami-Dade County Health Department
- Carolina Gutierrez, Assistant Director, University of Miami WalkSafe™ and BikeSafe™ Programs
- Derek Stagle, M.S., Project Coordinator, University of Miami WalkSafe™ and BikeSafe™ Programs

- Diana Owens, Program Director, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
- Jack Zabrowski, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, La Crosse County
- Jenn Linton, MPH, ATC, Get Fit Kauai Safe Routes to School Coordinator
- Jennifer Barbour, Built Environment Specialist, Tri-County Health Department
- Megan Carmichael, Policy Analyst Manager, Pinellas County Health Department
- Mark Haber, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Pinellas County Health Department
- Patty Boyd, Program Manager, Tri-County Health Department
- Rebecca Zay-Lakoske, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, La Crosse County Health Department
- Sara Solomon, MPH, Program Manager, Get Healthy Philly
- Virginia Gates-Loehr, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, La Crosse County Health Department
- Victoria McBee, MPH, Community Liaison CPPW, Miami-Dade County Health Department



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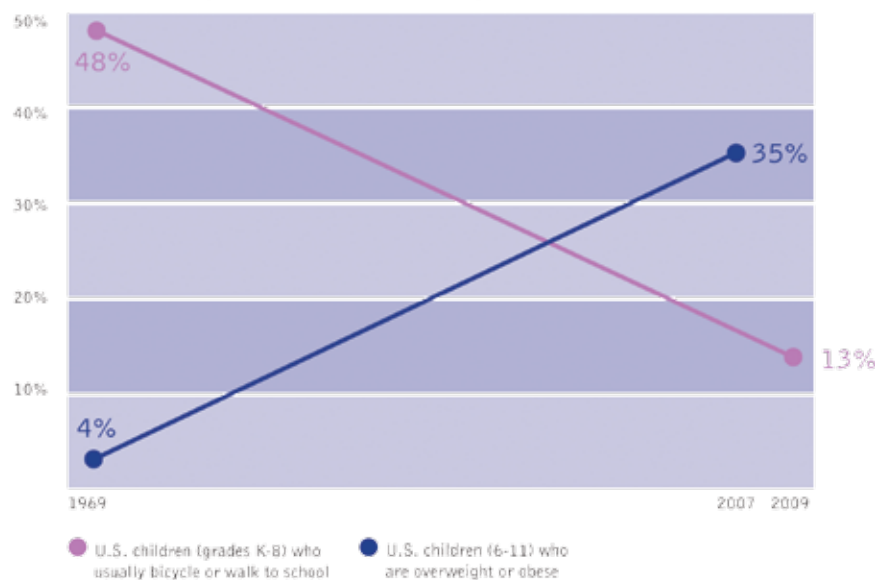
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# Safe Routes to School

Since 1969, the number of obese or overweight children has skyrocketed from four percent to 35 percent.<sup>1,2</sup> Simultaneously, the number of students who walk and bicycle to school has decreased from 48 percent to 13 percent<sup>3</sup>, a more than three-fold decrease (see figure 1). The lack of daily physical activity and exponential increases in obesity are costing the United States billions of dollars annually.<sup>4</sup> Obesity, among other societal issues such as air quality, traffic congestion, personal safety, physical activity, freedom of travel and rising gas prices, is at the heart of the Safe Routes to School national and international movement.

**Figure 1** Decreased activity leads to more overweight and obese children



Safe Routes to School can be a catalyst for the creation of safe, healthy and livable communities—urban, suburban and rural. Parents, school districts, local governments, police and community partners work together to ensure the safety of children on the trip to and from school. Safe Routes to School programs ensure that children of all abilities, income levels and cultures have traffic safety skills and regularly choose to walk and bicycle to school and in daily life. Safe Routes to School policies ensure that schools are sited near the children and parents they serve and that routes are safe for walking and bicycling. These shifts result in communities with fewer collisions<sup>5</sup>, less air pollution<sup>6</sup> and more physically active children and families<sup>7</sup>.

Safe Routes to School can also serve as a tool contributing towards a **Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP)**<sup>8</sup> and other “**health in all policies**” approaches<sup>9</sup> -for

example, CSPAPs work to ensure that students meet their daily minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity through quality physical education courses and activities before, during and after school. Leveraging revisions to school district wellness policies to include CSPAP and Safe Routes to School can provide more opportunities for physical activity in the daily lives of students.

The first Safe Routes to School program was implemented in Odense, Denmark in the 1970s. Evolving over time, Safe Routes to School projects grew in size and quality, eventually spreading to other countries, including the United States by 1999. Then, in the year 2000, two \$50,000 Safe Routes to School federal pilot programs were funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in Marin County, California and Arlington, Massachusetts. These projects thrived, with Marin expanding its programming from nine initial schools to now more than 50 schools in 12 school districts. They saw walking and bicycling increase from 21 percent to 38 percent of school trips during the first two years of the program and even passed a local transportation sales tax that further financially supports their work<sup>10</sup>. The success of the pilot programs highlighted the benefits of Safe Routes to School and paved the way for future projects and programs.

In 2005, in response to great demand throughout the U.S., Congress created the Federal Safe Routes to School program that has allocated more than \$1 billion dollars over the past seven years to the State Departments of Transportation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to fund programs and projects within two miles of the school that are based on the “Five E’s” of Safe Routes to School. As of 2012, this funding has been utilized by communities benefitting more than 12,300 schools nationwide to build sidewalks, improve street crossings, install pathways and implement critical educational and encouragement programs to get more students walking and bicycling. Currently, more than 5 million children have increased access to safer routes to school.

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## The Five E’s of a Safe Routes to School Program

The most successful Safe Routes to School programs have incorporated an approach that aims to get more students walking and bicycling through a five pronged “Five E” approach to programming:

**Education** – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking traffic safety skills and knowledge, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.

**Encouragement** – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling and to generate enthusiasm for the program with students, parents, staff and the surrounding community.

**Engineering** – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

**Enforcement** – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure that traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks and proper walking and bicycling behaviors) and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs and student safety patrols.

**Evaluation** – Monitoring and documenting outcomes, attitudes and trends through the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

# Strategies that Support Safe Routes to School



The Federal Safe Routes to School program has provided valuable funding so that schools, districts, cities, counties and states have been able to make an impact and bring their communities together to improve the built environment, increase physical activity, improve traffic safety and air quality, and increase personal safety. Since 2005 recipients of this funding have worked hard to refine successful programmatic approaches to Safe Routes to School but have also begun implementing sustainable changes that can support their programmatic efforts. While not a complete list, the following changes have been pursued by stakeholders interested in cementing important Safe Routes to School and healthy community concepts for lasting change:

## **Long-Term Planning and Built Environment Improvements**

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans** – Long-term visions for a network of safe walking and bicycling routes connecting to homes, schools, workplaces, transit and business establishments are developed as part of a bicycle and pedestrian master plan.

**Capital Improvement Plans (CIP)** – Short or long-term plan for towns or cities that serves as a blueprint for planning roadway and other capital expenditures and is considered one of the most important responsibilities of government officials.

**Regional Transportation Plans (RTP)** – Developed by an area's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) this federally-required document must be updated every four years and looks 20-30 years into the future to plan for transit, highways and local roads – these plans should include bicycle and pedestrian projects.

**General Plans/Comprehensive Plans** – Revisited every five to 10 years, the General Plan is the blueprint for transportation, land use and development over time for a city or county. General Plans establish goals, purposes, zoning and activities permitted on local land.



**Safe Routes to School Jurisdiction Wide Plans** – A standalone method to coordinating a city, school district or county’s approach to Safe Routes to School, this plan works to manage funding, prioritize projects and focus various staff in a coordinated effort to get more students walking and bicycling to school.

**Completes Streets Policies** – Cities, counties or states that implement Complete Streets policies see every transportation or building project (whether new or retrofit) as an opportunity to provide better accommodations for everyone including drivers, transit vehicles and users, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

**Joint/Shared Use Agreements** – These agreements allow government entities to share the use (and therefore the overall costs and responsibilities) of a property or equipment. Shared use agreements centralize a school within a community and this often allows for increased funding for the district, supports neighborhood revitalization and increases physical and social activity in the area.

### **Systems and Standards within Schools and Districts**

**School Siting Policies** – State level policies often force schools to build on the edge of town where they can secure sufficient required acreage and reduce property costs. School siting policies that support Safe Routes to School encourage new schools to be built inside of existing communities where the majority of students attending the school can walk or bicycle.

**School Closure/Consolidation Policies** – School closure/consolidation policies that support Safe Routes to School ensure that the ease and general safety of students walking and bicycling to that school are one of the considerations in the closure decision-making process.

**School/District Walking and Bicycling Policies** – Evaluating and improving existing school/district policies to ensure that they are supportive of student walking and bicycling.

**School Wellness Policies** – Encourage physical activity before, during and after school through school wellness policies that include enforceable language that supports Safe Routes to School efforts.





**Bicycle and Pedestrian Education and Curriculum** – Ensuring students, parents and staff understand safe behaviors by institutionalizing traffic safety curricula during school hours will guarantee that everyone feels more comfortable allowing students to walk and bicycle to school and in daily life.

**Changing Motor Vehicle and Bicycle Parking** – The space allotted for car parking versus scooter, skateboard and bicycle parking can be a sign of which mode of transportation is truly encouraged at a school. Motor vehicle and bicycle parking policies can prioritize parking for non-motorized vehicles and consider visibility, access, security, lighting and protection from inclement weather.

**Addressing Speed Limits** – Reducing speed limits in school zones or increasing the size of school or residential zones creates a safer environment for children at play and in transit.

### **Local Planning and Funding for Safe Routes to School**

**Improving Safety Through Fine Based Funding** – Creating long-term, sustainable Safe Routes to School funding mechanisms that improve safety around schools with funds from increasing fines for those who make streets dangerous (by speeding or other traffic infractions near schools).

**School Bonds** – School bond measures are generally focused on improving school building and campuses, but can also be used to fund infrastructure improvements around schools that make walking and bicycling more accessible.

**Transportation Sales Tax** – Many local agencies are educating decision-makers on the benefits of a transportation sales tax of a quarter or half cent to fund roads, transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects as well as Safe Routes to School.

**Health Impact Assessments (HIA)** – Used to discover how land use, community design and transportation policies, programs and/or projects affect the long-term health of a population, the HIA is an excellent tool for building the case for funding Safe Routes to School projects.



**Crossing Guards** – Implementing a system that secures funding, hires and trains guards, identifies where guards are needed and provides equipment to them is an ideal solution to creating safer streets by adding more eyes and assistance for students walking and bicycling.

**Law Enforcement** – Developing systems that enhance law enforcement’s role in maintaining safety to and from school adds more eyes to the street and reinforces safe pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle behaviors near schools.

**School Busing Cuts**– When districts decide to eliminate or reduce busing it is important to have systems in place that protect students and families by providing safe alternatives such as walking and bicycling. Sometimes this includes improving an intersection that was previously hazard bused (a term that refers to busing students short distances to avoid safety hazards such as train tracks or six lane roads) or other techniques to make walking/bicycling more accessible.

**No Idling Policies** – The traffic congestion around schools can significantly impact the air quality which also can have an adverse effect on the number of students walking and bicycling. No idling policies work to limit vehicle emissions near schools and can create a safer, healthier environment for all students.

**Remote Drop-Off** – Transportation departments looking to improve air quality, mitigate traffic congestion and improve safety in front of schools can create systems that allow for remote drop-off of students by cars and buses. Then students can walk a short distance to the school from a nearby park, library or other location.

**Arrival and Departure Policies** – Schools or districts can institute policies that prioritize walkers and bicyclists making arrival and departure safer and easier for everyone.

A more comprehensive description of the scope of these policies and success story examples are available here: [\*Safe Routes to School Local Policy Guide\*](#)<sup>11</sup>.



# Communities Putting Prevention to Work



Chronic diseases, including obesity, are some of the most costly of health problems in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, they are also among the most preventable. With this in mind, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created the **Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW)**<sup>13</sup> program in 2009 with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that allocated \$650 million to “carry out evidence-based clinical and community-based prevention and wellness strategies authorized by the Public Health Service Act that deliver specific, measurable health outcomes that address chronic disease rates.”<sup>14</sup> Led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CPPW program focused on **50 communities**<sup>15</sup> in urban and rural areas as well as tribal communities throughout the United States that were chosen from a competitive application process that included more than 260 submittals. Each selected community, led by their county or state health department and in conjunction with their leadership team, developed Community Action Plans specific to the needs and opportunities of their counties that targeted reducing tobacco use and obesity (through increased physical activity and improved nutrition).

Allotted two years within which to use the funding, **selected communities**<sup>16</sup> quickly prepared by establishing goals, identifying strategies and moving forward with their actions plans. Central to the CPPW program was ensuring that all work advanced health equity while building and deepening community-wide coalitions. Health equity works to ensure that regardless of race, ethnicity, class or gender everyone is provided an equal opportunity to be healthy. A critical distinction throughout the duration of the program was ensuring that communities were working toward sustainable, evidence-based changes and not focusing solely on, but complementary of programmatic work. Historically Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure funding had been awarded to programs that encouraged more walking and bicycling. In designing Safe Routes to School strategies funded by CPPW it was necessary to bolster longer term, sustainable change that encouraged

entire populations to become physically active through walking and bicycling to school. In order to successfully achieve this, it became critical to clarify the differences between policy, systems and environmental efforts and programmatic work.

### Policy

A policy is defined as any purposeful action by an organization or institution to address an identified problem or issue through executive, legislative or administrative means. Policy can be voluntary or legally binding. For example, working at one school to identify safe walking routes and set up a **walking school bus**<sup>17</sup> (a supervised group of children who walk to school on a designated route at a designated time) is a *programmatic* approach to Safe Routes to School. To transfer the same line of thinking into *policy*, one could implement a policy like Seattle Public School's recently passed policy that requires each school in the district to develop and operate a minimum of one walking school bus route at each school in collaboration with the district's Traffic Safety Committee and district transportation department.

### Systems

Systems are rules within an organization that serve as a method or procedure that is followed internally by staff and with any person engaging the organization. A Safe Routes to School *program* might work within a school district to identify ideal locations for crossing guards and gather parent volunteers to make crossings safer. To address the same issue, a *systems change* approach could work with either the school district or the state Department of Education to survey the current crossing guards systems to ensure that they include best practices for identifying locations where guards are needed, a managed system for hiring and training guards in their responsibilities, uniforms and equipment and, in some cases, secured funds to manage the program.

### Environment

Environment change refers to "a physical or material change to the economic, social or physical environment".<sup>18</sup> The physical environment that surrounds us has profound effects on our daily choices. With regards to physical activity, the physical environment includes the number of nearby parks, accessible sidewalks, safe crossings, bicycle lanes





and other elements that encompass public amenities and access. From food to physical activity, there is a growing body of research that shows that inequity in the built environment has a negative correlation to overall physical activity, which is also linked to higher levels of obesity, especially among lower-income black and Latino populations<sup>19</sup>. A typical programmatic approach to Safe Routes to School is for local residents who are concerned about the poor traffic safety conditions of the streets near their school to work with a school-based team that includes school staff, parents, police and a city engineer to fix identified problems near the school and even apply for federal funding. This is a great local approach for one school, however, a more broad-brush approach to this same problem has been demonstrated by communities that began working with important partners including the city, county or state to implement a Complete Streets policy or ordinance that ultimately affected all of the roads within the community, thereby affecting all of the schools and improving traffic safety for the entire community at the same time. This approach is sustainable and would lessen the need to continue utilizing limited Safe Routes to School federal funding, freeing those funds to solve other issues that can further increase physical activity.



It is evident that policy, systems and environmental supports for Safe Routes to School all work together to make significant impacts over a long period of time. These types of efforts institutionalize a strong foundation, achieve better health equity and reach more people through relationships and responsibilities that allow for accountability, enforcement and consistent implementation.

### **Technical Assistance**

To support CPPW communities in implementing sustainable community change in emerging content areas, the CDC contracted with a national consulting firm to provide communities with the tools they needed to be successful. As a part of this contract, the firm utilized national content experts to provide technical assistance to communities throughout the grant period.

The approach and therefore the particular needs of each community were unique. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership (National Partnership), one of the contracted technical assistance providers,

specifically worked with communities to build local leadership and capacity to implement Safe Routes to School, establish Safe Routes to School programs and identify new and sustainable funding sources to maintain Safe Routes to School efforts following CPPW.

The National Partnership worked to achieve these goals through:

- 1) Strategy support to local Safe Routes to School program leaders via telephone calls and email correspondence on an as-needed basis;
- 2) Assistance with developing and managing a local work plan during the CPPW time frame and creating a sustainability plan for maintaining Safe Routes to School after CPPW ends;
- 3) In-person trainings/workshops, including presentations, attending and/or leading meetings and/or conducting walkabouts at schools;
- 4) Providing best practices and case studies from the national field;
- 5) Webinars or conference presentations that provided necessary content to local communities.

In many cases, technical assistance included educating leaders regarding the fundamentals of Safe Routes to School initiatives and the evidence based strategies for a given community to pursue sustainable implementation of these changes. While many communities requested technical assistance, others may already have had institutional knowledge of Safe Routes to School and related strategies without requesting support during the two year project. Each community experienced unique successes; we hope that their stories will be useful to other communities looking to achieve similar results. The following sample CPPW communities advanced change that supported Safe Routes to School in remarkable ways.



# Introduction to Community: La Crosse, Wisconsin



La Crosse County is nestled along the Mississippi river with quick and easy access to great natural resources that allow for all types of physical activity including hiking, bicycling, swimming and fishing. With a population that hovers around 114,600 the county is made up of two cities, four villages and twelve towns. In a recent random household survey of the area, 92 percent of residents surveyed rated their county to have a good to excellent quality of life.<sup>20</sup> However, in the last five years the adult obesity rate of the Great Rivers Region increased by 16 percent, so that nearly 65 percent of the adults in the region are now either overweight or obese.<sup>21</sup> With an excellent physical environment for supporting active living, La Crosse County was well poised to mobilize around their CPPW grant. The La Crosse CPPW team sought to increase the number of children walking and bicycling to school by implementing sustainable, evidence-based changes throughout the community to increase safety, access and utilization of area roadways, sidewalks and paths.

## **Complete Streets Policies**

Just prior to the launch of CPPW efforts in La Crosse County, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation implemented a Complete Streets law where state and federally funded projects are to take into consideration the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, the old, young and disabled in their planning processes. The La Crosse CPPW team decided to advance implementation of this new change by first building local knowledge of Complete Streets. They reached out to prominent community partners and were able to garner support from Gundersen Lutheran Healthcare, the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, American Heart Association, YMCA, La Crosse City Planning Department, Downtown Mainstreet Inc. and the La Crosse County Aging and Disability Resource Center. The La Crosse CPPW team presented to stakeholder groups throughout the community (especially those involved in transportation and/or health) about Complete Streets in La Crosse County. The team worked to demonstrate the powerful connection between Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School, in order to educate and inform decision-makers on the overall benefits of these initiatives.



On April 11, 2011 the La Crosse County Board unanimously passed Wisconsin's **first local Complete Streets policy**<sup>22</sup>. This inspired the city of La Crosse, La Crosse County's main urbanized area, to pass a city Complete Streets ordinance which was also the first of its kind in Wisconsin. During the CPPW project, the City of La Crosse increased the miles of existing bicycle lanes by sevenfold throughout the city, added 11 "Yield to Pedestrians" signs near schools and added marked crosswalks in multiple strategic locations. This, combined with their recent Complete Streets victory, won the City of La Crosse a Bicycle Friendly Communities "Silver" designation from the **League of American Bicyclists**<sup>23</sup>, an award they had unsuccessfully sought the previous six years in a row.



### School Liaisons for Safe Routes to School

The La Crosse County CPPW team was able to build upon their existing partnerships within the school districts, the Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition, Pioneering Healthier Communities, the SafeKids coalition, PTAs, police departments, city/county/town/village planners and relationships with other county partners in the state to have an impressive impact on the school leaders within their district. From past experience with Safe Routes to School, the La Crosse County CPPW team understood that 'outsiders' working toward change within schools are met with far more resistance than 'insiders', such as parents, school board members and staff. In order to create their own insiders throughout schools they offered an open application to La Crosse's 26 public K-8 schools to receive a \$4,000 stipend for a part-time (10 hours a month) Safe Routes to School liaison at each school. Thirteen of the schools were awarded a liaison and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the health department that committed the school to work towards evaluating current conditions, revising the physical activity portion of their wellness policy, updating walking and bicycling language in school handbooks, working to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian safety education into the school day and launch Safe Routes to School program activities. These liaisons were extremely supportive in all of the school-based successes in La Crosse County.

To support their initiatives with on the ground walking and bicycling to school programs, La Crosse County invested some of their liaisons' work time on programs that not only increased mode share for walking and bicycling at schools but grew



support for important changes that would sustain this work in the long term. Overall, through multiple programmatic initiatives in all 13 schools, students made 5,000 individual trips participating in the new walking school buses and 900 students in need were fitted with new bicycle helmets. The La Crosse and Onalaska mayors joined their students on Walk to School Day promotional events and the Mayor of La Crosse even initiated an **annual Walk to School Day proclamation**<sup>24</sup> for October 5.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education in Schools**

While the MOU between the schools and the health department required either helmet or bicycle safety education at least twice a year at each K-8 school, the ultimate goal was to incorporate lessons directly into the schools' overall curriculum. The Supervisor of Health and Physical Education for the School District of La Crosse, the largest district in the County, was committed to making this happen and wanted to offer teachers training on how to instruct bicycle and pedestrian safety in their classroom. Inspired by a two day train-the-trainer course, facilitated by a **League of American Bicyclists**<sup>25</sup> certified instructor, all of the district's physical education teachers now utilize several mobile trailers with classroom-sized fleets of bicycles and helmets available for use by all schools. In addition, the school district provided a letter of commitment that dedicated the district to providing bicycle and pedestrian education in their classrooms.



### **Walking and Bicycling in the School Handbook**

All schools participating in this project were asked by the La Crosse CPPW team to update their school handbooks to adequately address walking and bicycling safety for their specific school. The La Crosse CPPW team worked with the various schools to support them in updating their handbooks to be consistent with national best practices while also balancing the need and capacity of the schools to implement the changes. Introduced with supportive statements about walking and bicycling, the changes lay out safe walking and bicycling behaviors, prioritize walkers and bicyclists during school arrival and departure hours, and identify crossing guard and bicycle rack locations as well as the schedule and locations of walking school buses. Distributed to parents and school staff, these supportive walking and bicycling strategies provide an outline for students and families interested in safely walking and bicycling to school.

## School Wellness Policies

Reviewing and revising the physical activity portion of district wellness policies was also a major accomplishment of the La Crosse CPPW project. The team conducted a basic assessment of existing language; because of the La Crosse CPPW team's relationships within the school district, updating these strategies was relatively frictionless and new, supportive strategies were added at the district level that support Safe Routes to School and walking school buses and encourage schools to search for opportunities to participate.

## Challenges

The La Crosse County CPPW team was fortunate in having many valuable relationships in place and a diverse group of staffers with a prior background in Safe Routes to School. These relationships were critical in getting the school district to consider systems changes. The La Crosse CPPW team believes that much of their work would not have been possible without funding the Safe Routes to School liaison working within the school and with volunteers. Identifying and compensating a liaison that knows the school and has an established relationship with administrators, parents, staff and students was critical to embedding the program in the school culture.

## Sustainability Planning and Advancement

Over the two year CPPW period, the La Crosse County CPPW team worked to include Safe Routes to School language in many policies and integrate it into the district's curriculum in order to ensure that the project is sustained beyond the initial burst of CPPW funding. By the end of the CPPW funding period, 13 schools were engaged in the Safe Routes to School project. The La Crosse Health Department is currently seeking ongoing funding from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School program and other agencies to continue supporting the Safe Routes to School coordinators, liaisons and associated activities in La Crosse County. Many communities in La Crosse County have or will apply for infrastructure funds to improve walking and bicycling conditions in La Crosse County, making lasting changes in the community. At the same time, the La Crosse CPPW team worked to implement Complete Streets changes that will provide safer streets for students to walk and bicycle to school, and in daily life, well into the future.



# Introduction to Community: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



The City of Philadelphia, with roughly 1.5 million residents, is one of the 10 largest U.S. cities. A markedly high 25 percent of the population (roughly 380,000 out of 1.5 million) lives in poverty<sup>26</sup>, representing the poorest of the 10 largest cities. Of particular interest to the Communities Putting Prevention to Work team's initiative is the 46.9 percent of children 6-17 years of age who qualify as obese or overweight<sup>27</sup>. This highlighted the need for the Health Department to focus on increasing the availability and affordability of healthy foods, decreasing marketing and availability of unhealthy foods and beverages, and increasing opportunities for physical activity among Philadelphians. This initiative, called "**Get Healthy Philly**"<sup>28</sup> was funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW).

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education in the Schools**

In Philadelphia, schools were key in Get Healthy Philly's major physical activity successes. The Philly CPPW team, seeing increased education and outreach as a primary target for more active students, leveraged relationships with the school district, local nonprofits and city departments to get the Philadelphia school district to help lead Get Healthy Philly's strategic direction. This led the way to their success in achieving extensive safety education outreach and reform at the district level. Additionally, Get Healthy Philly contracted with the **Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia**<sup>29</sup> (BCGP), as a part of their team, to build a **website**<sup>30</sup> and **curriculum**<sup>31</sup> that could be utilized and taught inside the 178 elementary schools in the district through their Safe Routes Philly initiative.

The Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia (BCGP), contributing to the Get Healthy Philly goal to institutionalize bicycle and pedestrian safety in Philadelphia classrooms, created a teacher's guide for 2nd grade pedestrian and 5th grade bicycle safety lessons, a DVD of tutorials to help

teachers show more complex bicycle and pedestrian safety concepts and a website to house all of the materials as well as to collect data online. Teachers were encouraged to attend “train-the-trainer” sessions held during their teacher in-service days that allotted 2.5 credits towards their continuing education to learn how to implement the curriculum in their classrooms. In addition to these services, the BCGP worked with schools interested in taking the traffic safety education beyond the classroom in order to augment encouragement events to get more students walking and bicycling to school. During the 2010-2011 school year, the BCGP educated 20,000 students. By the end of the CPPW project in June 2012 it is projected they will have educated an additional 30,000 students. More than 204 school staff representing 147 of the 178 public elementary schools received training to continue bicycle and pedestrian education in the classroom beyond the scope of the CPPW grant.

### Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and Improvements

Long-term planning that addresses the built environment is an important addition that complements and advances work being done to revise systems and update policies to support physical activity. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health wanted the Get Healthy Philly initiative to capitalize on the flat, walkable and bikeable grid of the city and to support existing work by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and the Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities (MOTU). The Get Healthy Philly team focused CPPW efforts on both the Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator and Active Transportation Coordinator positions with the Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities and leveraged existing relationships with the Philadelphia Planning Commission (PPC). Then, the MOTU, PPC and the BCGP, as a part of the Get Healthy Philly team, worked through a series of community meetings to garner community input on the city’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. The plan has been divided into two phases, the first of which **has been completed**<sup>32</sup> and the second which is still underway. Currently, the plan aims to “improve safety for all pedestrians and bicyclists, encourage walking and bicycling to promote healthy, active living and to enjoy the associated economic and environmental benefits, increase the connectivity of the bikeway and walking networks, promote and enhance the role of sidewalks and streets as the public realm, and garner recognition for Philadelphia as a leader in pedestrian and bicycle achievement.”<sup>33</sup>



*“The Safe Routes Philly Program has increased student interest in biking to school. Thanks to the training students are enthusiastic about biking. Thanks to the program we are developing safe and systematic ways for students to bike to school. The program is a fantastic resource that we would like to continue to utilize to keep our students informed about safe biking practices. The safety classes are fun and informative because the instructors meet the students at their level.”*

*~ Emilia Rastrick  
Health and Physical Education  
Teacher,  
Lingelbach Elementary School*



Get Healthy Philly funding allowed the community to begin several significant improvements to the built environment in Philadelphia. Thanks to the Get Healthy Philly campaign, 350 bicycle way-finding signs were installed by the Philadelphia Streets Department throughout the city. Get Healthy Philly staff also worked to have 2.5 miles of buffered bicycle lanes (bicycle lanes that are separated from adjacent traffic to prevent drivers drifting into or parking in the bicycle lane) installed and 6.2 miles of sharrows (bicycle and chevron symbols stenciled onto the middle of a road surface that remind drivers that bicyclists are allowed to ride in, or ‘take’, the lane) throughout the city. Get Healthy Philly got the School District of Philadelphia to install 249 inverted U-shaped bicycle racks at 44 schools across the district, and MOTU to install 100 “Walk Your Wheels” sidewalk decals on sidewalks in Center City to help reduce illegal sidewalk riding by July 2012. Finally, Get Healthy Philly supported an update of the Philadelphia City Bicycle Network map and printed more than 22,000 copies that will be made available through public meetings and local nonprofits like BCGP. These important improvements make increasing physical activity to and from school possible by making bicycling the easy, safe and efficient choice with relatively inexpensive improvements to the built environment.



### Walkability Audits

In an effort to continue to bridge the gap between planning and health, Get Healthy Philly focused CPPW efforts on a health department position within the city’s planning department. One goal of this position was to find an adequate measure of the effect of bicycle and pedestrian improvements on citizen’s health; modifying the **Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index**<sup>34</sup> (PEQI), an audit tool that rates the walkability of any given neighborhood, the team was able to pilot a new, easier to understand and more complete walkability audit in four neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Once this data has been tested for reliability it will serve as an objective measure that can contribute to recommendations regarding priority improvements to intersections and transportation corridors in the city’s Comprehensive Plan, **Philadelphia 2035**<sup>35</sup>. Utilized appropriately, this will serve as a tool to help ensure that the 18 city planning districts where the comprehensive plan is being applied will adequately address existing walkability shortcomings by providing planners with the data to inform their decisions regarding project funding and prioritization.

## Education and Enforcement Initiative

After seeing a **near doubling**<sup>36</sup> in the number of bicycle commuters between 2005 and 2008<sup>37</sup>, the Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities partnered with the Philadelphia Police Department, the Philadelphia Health Department, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and the Get Healthy Philly team to kick off their *Give Respect – Get Respect* education and enforcement initiative. This targeted initiative focused on Center City, the highest crash area of Philadelphia as identified by a 2010 analysis of bicycle and pedestrian crashes. Every year approximately 2000 pedestrians and 500 bicyclists are involved in crashes in Philadelphia. Center City was chosen as the target area for the "edu-forcement" initiative as it has the highest concentration of all road users, and correspondingly the highest geographic concentration of bicycle and pedestrian crashes. Between May and October 2011, the Philadelphia Police Department dispatched teams of eight to 10 bicycle mounted police officers two to three days per week with the specific charge of stopping, educating and enforcing the rules of the road. The targets were specifically the most common and dangerous driving, bicycling and pedestrian habits (brochure available **here**<sup>38</sup>), and in the hopes of creating safer spaces for children and adults to travel to and from school and in daily life. This unique systems and environmental change builds safer places to be physically active and created the *Give Respect-Get Respect* internal system within the Philadelphia Police Department that advocates for safe, active transportation.

## Challenges

The *Get Healthy Philly* project saw some great successes but not without overcoming several challenges. The first challenge, with limited availability of class time and the pressure of standardized testing, was getting the district and their schools to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian safety education as part of physical education curriculum. The Get Healthy Philly team overcame this challenge by allowing teachers to earn professional development credits and by linking directly with the School District, bicycle and pedestrian safety education was prioritized. Also worth noting with regards to Safe Routes to School, Philadelphia has a high murder rate relative to the rest of the nation, which significantly impacts parental perceptions of street safety. The fear of crime and personal safety were a difficult issue to approach, however these challenges, and others, were addressed by utilizing the existing relationships that Get Healthy Philly had in place in the various communities to build support for Safe Routes to School. For example, through relationships with their community partners Get Healthy Philly held parent focus groups that aggregated concerns and identified solutions to parental fear of students walking and bicycling that are now being implemented. All of Get Healthy Philly's successes were a direct result of building and maintaining relationships with already active nonprofits and community leaders.

## Sustainability Planning and Advancement

Even though Get Healthy Philly's CPPW funding came to an end in June 2012, the work of Get Healthy Philly will continue. In schools, bicycle and pedestrian safety lessons have been built into the physical education curriculum and all resources are available online. The BCGP, carrying on the momentum of Get Healthy Philly, will continue to work directly with the district to disseminate information related to Safe Routes to School program work that can be utilized to bolster future strategies. In addition, the partnerships formed during this period will continue to work towards increased safety throughout the city. The BCGP will begin to focus on improving safety in identified corridors and will work with several city agencies to inform the intervention, including the Department of Public Health, Police Department, Streets Department and the Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities.

# Introduction to Community: Tri-County, Colorado



Tri-County Health Department's jurisdiction encompasses Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas counties, which border the Denver metro area. Comprised of 25 percent of Colorado's overall population, the Tri-County area includes approximately 1.3 million people in 26 cities and towns. Uniquely, the Tri-County area spans from urban to suburban to rural, requiring a particularly individualized approach for each area with regards to Safe Routes to School projects and policies.

In order to foster evidence based changes in support of Safe Routes to School, the Tri-County CPPW team committed to using the awarded CPPW funds to increase opportunities for their residents to make healthy choices with regards to eating and physical activity. While Safe Routes to School was not originally an explicit Community Action Plan objective of the Tri-County initiative, the Tri-County CPPW team did work extensively on active transportation and provided school districts the opportunity to bolster their Safe Routes to School efforts as a "special project". The Tri-County CPPW team embarked on many projects that ultimately encouraged more walking and bicycling to school from a variety of standpoints: planning, grant trainings and support, active schoolyard projects and Wellness Coordinators.

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans and General Plans**

When bringing on staff to initiate the CPPW project, Tri-County health was innovative in hiring four professional planners that were dedicated to thinking about health from the perspective of zoning, planning and land use. Knowing that the built environment significantly affects the health of the community it encompasses, Tri-County set forth with delivering support to communities interested in developing Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans - plans that identify existing bicycle and pedestrian paths, lanes, routes and future locations of bicycle and pedestrian improvements that will provide for future connections to



*“Thanks to the collaborative efforts of just about everybody, Bennett is rejecting the traditional status quo and pushing forward to make the community a happier, healthier place to live.”*

*~ Town of Bennett Mayor, Sue Horn*

schools, libraries, parks and local businesses for bicyclists and pedestrians. While the cities of Aurora and Commerce City were able to utilize the support from the Tri-County CPPW team to develop a macro approach to connecting bicycle facilities, the cities of Littleton and Englewood were able to apply the Tri-County CPPW support to hire consultants to develop specific routes and connections to schools within the community while also reserving some of their funding for signage, bicycle maps, bicycle racks, bicycling sharing programs and striping of sharrows throughout their cities.

In more rural communities the challenges were different. Smaller communities in rural areas wanted to implement bicycle and pedestrian planning and improvements but lacked the internal staff capacity to achieve it. For example, in the rural community of Bennett, CO the Mayor was willing to work with the Tri-County CPPW team to create connections between schools, businesses and residences, but in many places there were no existing sidewalks. Understanding that some residents were unwilling to allow easement on their property to build sidewalks, and to cover the costs, the community decided to stripe a walking and bicycling lane onto the sides of the already wide streets. As part of this project, the community and school district developed a community outreach event involving the students to paint designs into two crosswalks. This event helped increase awareness about safely crossing the street and created support for the walking and bicycling lane. This is an example of how rural communities can work creatively with limited resources and existing infrastructure to catalyze enthusiasm for walking and bicycling!

### **Active Schoolyards, Active Minds**

The Tri-County CPPW team recognized the value of creating recreational spaces around schools that are beautiful, creative and support physical activity for students and community members that centralizes the school in the community as a place for multigenerational use. As these schoolyard designs are implemented they can be a catalyst to encourage prioritization of the site for future pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connect the school with other parts of the community. In order to further this goal, the Tri-County CPPW team, through its Active Schoolyards, Active Minds



Photo Credit: Tri-County Health Department, Bennett Colorado



project, supported 55 schools in creating plans to redevelop school properties to encourage activity on school grounds and also encourage safe and active transportation to and from these schools. The team worked extensively with the surrounding communities through more than 100 planning sessions that involved parents, community members and school staff to create plans for near shovel-ready projects that can be implemented when funding becomes available.

### **Grant Trainings and Support/Wellness Coordinators**

While many of the Tri-County CPPW team's efforts were focused on longer-term plans to improve the built environment through the Active Schoolyards Active Minds project, they wanted to be certain to supplement this work with an educational campaign within the school districts themselves. The Tri-County CPPW Leadership team included two school district superintendents that worked with the team and their school districts to create an opportunity to educate, and subsequently work with, other superintendents to identify three major objectives towards physical activity and healthy eating within the districts: 1) Encourage physical activity for students and community residents, 2) Create functional and beautiful schoolyard environments, 3) Foster academic success through increased physical activity. Critical to the project's success were the superintendents' input and investment in the plan from the onset. After identifying these three overarching objectives the Tri-County CPPW team worked with school district wellness coordinators as well as school and administrative staff to train them on the specifics of Safe Routes to School programs, the grant process for applying for federal Safe Routes to School funds from the Colorado Department of Transportation and ideal strategies for writing a winning grant for funding. Once trained, many districts took to composing their own grant applications and the Tri-County CPPW team worked with many of them to edit and refine these applications for submission. In 2011, after this training, seven school districts and four municipalities in Tri-County applied for a total of 14 Safe Routes to School grants. Six of the districts won grants for a total of \$414,264, representing 13.7 percent of the available Safe Routes to School funding through the state that year. This was the highest number of applications and the highest amount of funding districts and municipalities in the jurisdictions of Tri-County had received since the federal Safe Routes to School program began in 2005.



## Challenges

Tri-County Health Department covers one of the largest jurisdictional areas in the state. Its diverse landscape makes policy, systems and environmental change challenging as the CPPW team works with a large varied range of communities within the three county area. Taking the time and energy to create strategies and plans that are customized to the needs of each of the participating communities was absolutely essential to the overall success of the Tri-County CPPW project.

## Sustainability Planning and Advancement

Planning is one of the best tools for sustainability. Through their work on the CPPW project the Tri-County CPPW team and their consultants created plans for 55 schoolyards and plans for bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the three counties. These plans are part of the blueprint for Tri-County's future health.



# Introduction to Community: Kauai, Hawaii



Kauai, Hawaii is the geologically oldest of the main Hawaiian Islands, and is known as the “Garden Isle”. It has an area of 562 square miles and has a population of approximately 65,000 people. The city of Lihue on the southeast coast is the County seat, and the island has varied land uses from urban in Lihue, to suburban coastal towns, to rural areas outside towns and leading up to the mountain in the center of the island. The island is circled by one main highway, the Kuhio Highway, except for the northern most part of the island called the Napoli Coast, where sheer cliffs plunge into the ocean. The Kuhio Highway is two lanes of fast moving traffic along most of the island, with four travel lanes plus center turn lanes in the busiest regions.

Kauai’s CPPW grant was received by the State of Hawaii Department of Health in 2010. The Department of Health partnered with the non-profit **Get Fit Kauai**<sup>39</sup> (an affiliated entity of the University of Hawaii) to create a CPPW Community Action Plan that called for task forces for both Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School which brought together diverse stakeholders to support sustainable, population-wide changes that will increase active living on the island.

## Complete Streets

As background, prior to CPPW, in 2009, Hawaii implemented a policy requiring the state Department of Transportation in each of the state’s four counties to implement Complete Streets policies that accommodate all users of the roadway including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorists and persons of all ages and abilities. With this mandate, Get Fit Kauai coordinated a Built Environment Task Force which educated decision-makers on Complete Streets model policies and implementation.

The County of Kauai also formed a working group including departments of Health, Public Works, Parks and Planning to develop Complete Streets standards. They began a process of using the **Living Streets Manual**<sup>40</sup> (produced in Los Angeles through CPPW funds) and held monthly

meetings on each chapter to adapt the language to the unique needs of Kauai. The County intends in the future to update their ordinances to match the new Living Streets Guidelines. Much advancement in Complete Streets was achieved after Get Fit Kauai organized two site visits from national experts including representatives from the National Complete Streets Coalition and the consulting firm Nelson/Nygaard. These site visits included countywide meetings, community walkability audits and an analysis that resulted in the redesign of some roadways, including new bicycle lanes which are being installed on Rice Street in Lihue that will provide access to Wilcox Elementary School.

The Kauai County Council also included funds in 2011-2012 to hire a new transportation planner who will review all roadway design projects to ensure that Complete Streets standards are actually implemented.

### **Safe Routes to School**

Early on, the Kauai CPPW team recognized the synergy between Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School and linked the outcomes of these standards together in their strategies to improve the built environment. With CPPW funds, Get Fit Kauai hired a part-time Safe Routes to School Coordinator who organized task forces at five elementary schools and enlisted the participation of parents, principals, teachers, non-profits and the Hawaii Department of Education (which has one school district for the entire state). Get Fit Kauai presented on the goals of Safe Routes to School at principal meetings, and worked with the state Department of Education to ensure that their Wellness Policy (which encompasses the entire state as Hawaii has one school district) focused on Safe Routes to School as a strategy to increase physical activity. To institutionalize the program and policy outcomes, Get Fit Kauai also worked with the Department of Education to initiate a school district standard requiring each school to create a Safe Routes to School task force as part of the schools' safety committee.

To get the parents involved, Get Fit Kauai organized monthly Walk and Bike to School Days at participating schools, and worked extensively with local media, including newspapers, radio and television stations, to educate around the goals of creating safe





spaces for kids to walk and bicycle to and from schools and in daily life. Get Fit Kauai also began to focus on remote drop-off, to enable students who live too far to walk or bicycle a chance to participate by developing safe places for parents to drop children off and then have them walk to school.

In May 2011, the County of Kauai initiated a **Safe Routes to School policy**<sup>41</sup> recognizing that the health and safety of Kauai's children is directly related to county policies and the actions of their Departments. The change called for the creation of a Countywide team for Safe Routes to School including all relevant agencies - public works, planning and law enforcement – to continue to work together to ensure the health and safety of the island's children, and for the county to prepare to apply for a federal Safe Routes to School grant from the Hawaii Department of Transportation. By the end of Get Fit Kauai's CPPW grant period, the County Safe Routes to School Team and five school task forces were meeting regularly, and preliminary engineering assessments had been completed for infrastructure improvements around seven elementary schools: **Kalaheo**<sup>42</sup>, **Koloa**<sup>43</sup>, **Wilcox**<sup>44</sup>, **King Kaumualii**<sup>45</sup>, **Kapaa**<sup>46</sup>, **St. Catherine's**<sup>47</sup> and **Kilauea**<sup>48</sup>. Safe Routes to School was now integrated as part of the Complete Streets assessments made by the Department of Public Works, and real infrastructure improvements were taking shape on the islands' streets.



The Countywide Team for Safe Routes to School, including all relevant departments, was chaired by the Assistant Director of Public Works for the County and tackled issues including road design, law enforcement and creating a bridge between parent volunteers and county workers to generate a greater understanding of community needs. Safe Routes to School was advanced through the help of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, which held monthly meetings with Get Fit Kauai and had two site visits. Within two short years of Get Fit Kauai's CPPW work, Safe Routes to School was well-known throughout the island of Kauai and had created policy changes within the County and the Department of Education.

### Challenges

A major challenge of Kauai's active living work is the fact that there is only one busy highway which circles the island which creates difficulties for accommodations and safe crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Many students live far away from schools, and despite the warm weather, much of the culture of transportation on the island focuses on driving. To create system and infrastructure changes, which would result in behavioral changes, these barriers need to be overcome.

In addition, it was difficult to sustain parent volunteerism for the school task forces. Within the five schools where Get Fit Kauai focused, there was generally one or two very active parents who would seek to engage others within the Parent Teacher Association or Safety Committee, but these parents were already involved in many school activities and became overworked.

### **Sustainability Planning and Advancement**

The Complete Streets program will be sustained through the new Complete Streets Guidelines which are projected to be implemented in the summer of 2012, in addition to the new internal Complete Streets design culture within the Public Works and Planning Department that includes walking, bicycling, transit and inclusion of facilities for all users in the construction of roads. The new transportation planner position will also help to advance sustainability for built environment improvements that promote physical activity.

For Safe Routes to School, by the end of Get Fit Kauai's CPPW grant period, the Hawaii Department of Transportation had hired a full-time statewide Safe Routes to School Coordinator and indicated that they would soon be releasing a call for applications for grants. Kauai was then ready to apply for funds and submit grants to retain their island Safe Routes to School Coordinator, and apply for infrastructure funds to improve walking and bicycling accessibility at several schools throughout the island. Separate from the CPPW grant, state legislation was introduced in 2012, HB 2626 HD1, which would generate traffic fine revenue of \$25 for each school zone moving violation and \$10 for all other moving violations. The funds would be collected by the state and distributed back to each county to fund Safe Routes to School programs. Further, Get Fit Kauai is preparing a grant application for continued funding to continue their Safe Routes to School work through the State Department of Health's Healthy Hawaii Initiative, contracted through the University of Hawaii. Get Fit Kauai's founder and Kauai island coordinator, Bev Brody, received a 2011 award from the University as Outstanding Employee of the Year for her work on advancing health outcomes through their CPPW work. This award inspired the university to invite Get Fit Kauai to submit another Safe Routes to School grant.



# Introduction to Community: Florida's Pinellas and Miami-Dade Counties



The state of Florida, with 67 counties, has a total population of 19,057,542 (as of 2011). With 663 miles of beaches and various other attractions Florida draws as many as 76.8 million visitors annually that have an annual economic impact of \$57 billion dollars. At the same time, Florida has the highest Pedestrian Danger Index of any other state in the union while four of the top 10 most dangerous metro areas [for pedestrians] in the United States also reside within the state<sup>49</sup> (Orlando-Kissimmee, Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, Jacksonville, Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach). This makes walking for exercise, transportation or tourism particularly perilous.

It was excellent timing when the Florida state health department was awarded a state and territorial CPPW grant to focus on increased physical activity, improved nutrition and tobacco-free parks. In order to address the safety hazards that were evident to those choosing to walk, the Florida CPPW team, made up of 13 regional coordinators, focused primarily on **walking school buses**<sup>50</sup>, by working with the goal of getting walking school bus standards passed that require schools to implement walking school buses at all 67 school districts throughout the state. This work dovetailed particularly well in Pinellas and Miami-Dade county, which were awarded CPPW funding for a county-wide effort to get more students walking and bicycling to school.

## Pinellas County, Florida

Pinellas County, located on a small western peninsula in Florida, is a densely populated county with just under a million residents. Made up of 24 municipalities and one school district, Pinellas County has 118 schools, of which 74 are elementary schools. Including many travel destinations, Pinellas County has many parks, trails and beaches that should inspire



*“Our daily walking school bus program began as a labor of love by two outstanding women volunteers who saw a need for ensuring that young children were able to walk to school safely.” Says Principal Patricia Davey, “This grew into a passion for not only providing supervised ‘walking bus’ transportation, but for providing a healthy alternative that energized students, preparing their brains for an active day of learning.”*



more physical activity throughout the county, however the roads themselves are not accommodating to bicycling and walking. A common feature throughout the county is wide, multiple-lane, fast-moving, high traffic roads, which are very difficult for children, seniors, disabled, families and others to safely navigate and cross. The Pinellas County CPPW team, awarded a \$4.85 million CPPW grant in 2010 to improve physical activity countywide, chose to focus on Safe Routes to School as a strategy for getting students active more often. Since the Pinellas County CPPW grant award came roughly eight months after Florida State’s CPPW grant award there was an opportunity to build on the recent Florida state walking school bus work to strengthen the Pinellas County CPPW team’s overall strategies.

Prior to the CPPW grant, the **Children in Balance**<sup>51</sup> and **Steps to a Healthier US**<sup>52</sup> grants provided the Health Department the opportunity to form a strong partnership which fueled local Safe Routes to School efforts once Pinellas county was awarded the CPPW grant. In fact, Safe Routes to School in Pinellas County started at one elementary school in 2009 as a result of Children in Balance and Steps to a Healthier US funding. Simultaneously, the county health department began working with the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (PCMPO) by attending its Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Council and the School Transportation Safety Committee (subcommittees of the PCMPO). Relationships through these groups were formed with county and city council members, city managers, mayors, county engineers and planners and a representative of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority. The Pinellas County CPPW team built a leadership team that included the Board of County Commissioners, Health and Human Services Coordinating Council, Local Businesses, Department of Health and Human Services, Pinellas County Mayor’s Council, Juvenile Welfare Board and the Pinellas County School Board. All of these partners, and more, have become champions for Safe Routes to School in Pinellas County thanks partially to the efforts of the Pinellas CPPW team.



### Walking School Buses in School District Wellness Guidelines

The CPPW Community Action Plan for Pinellas County identified implementing guidelines in the school district to support the five components of Safe Routes to School program, (Evaluation, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement and Engineering) for all of Pinellas' Elementary Schools. The Pinellas County CPPW team worked to engage schools through meetings, presentations and open houses to educate residents to participate in and volunteer to lead Safe Routes to School programs, including walking school buses. At the same time, they worked within 13 pilot schools to build active walking school buses to demonstrate the benefits of investing time and energy in these efforts. Finally, the Pinellas County CPPW team, while building momentum and understanding of Safe Routes to School and walking school buses on the ground, used this momentum to leverage for a supportive policy through the district's School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC). The SHAC, which is directed "to develop, implement and monitor the district Administrative Guidelines for Wellness, Physical Activity and Nutrition"<sup>53</sup>, ultimately developed and instituted a district wellness guideline, written by the CPPW team, that encourages collaboration between government agencies to implement Five E's Safe Routes to School programs at all Pinellas schools and to also assess, develop and utilize walking school bus routes at each school.



### School Rezoning

Prior to the CPPW grant, the Pinellas School District began looking at rezoning their school catchment areas. The district increased their busing eligibility distance from a minimum of one mile away from the school, to two miles, and reduced or eliminated 'courtesy' or 'hazard' busing, the practice of busing students to school inside the minimum distance from school in response to community requests. These requests are often made to bus students living near the school but who are impeded from safely walking or bicycling on high traffic roads, across railroad tracks or other perceived hazards. The school rezoning ultimately affects almost 2,100 students and results in roughly 75 percent of students living closer to their new school than the school that they previously attended.

Careful consideration was made by the district during this rezoning process to ensure an equitable distribution of students to their

community schools. The Pinellas County CPPW team seized the opportunity to educate and prepare schools, students and families for the rezoning by: 1) training district staff on creating safe, healthy alternatives for students to get to school 2) addressing liability concerns about walking and bicycling safety and 3) giving the district tools to further support and manage walking and bicycling programs internally. The Pinellas County CPPW team brought in national experts from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and Public Health Law and Policy to facilitate a workshop for more than 100 school district, school, city and county staff. This workshop was the impetus for a groundswell of support for walking and bicycling to school. Ultimately, it served to bring together important governmental staff that previously had little communication with one another, and to bridge that ‘silo’ gap by creating opportunities to collaborate through Safe Routes to School.



## Challenges

Perceptions of dangerous pedestrian safety conditions in Pinellas County made the walking school bus strategy very difficult. In addition, recruiting adult volunteers is challenging because of a perception among Pinellas residents that a lack of available volunteer time, poor pedestrian safety conditions and long distances make walking and bicycling to school too difficult for some students. The Pinellas CPPW team noted that once a local volunteer does agree to walk children to school then the program quickly gains momentum, but without that primary volunteer it is difficult to get a program started in most schools. Getting a district walking school bus change made seems even more difficult without a demonstrated success of walking school bus programs in schools. It became absolutely essential, then, to first show the benefits of walking school buses through programmatic efforts on the ground at the 13 pilot schools. Without these programmatic efforts there may have been little to no support for the district changes.

Also, to evaluate the success of the project, the Pinellas County CPPW team originally utilized **in-class student travel tally forms**<sup>54</sup> to measure the effect of the walking school bus on student travel, but the school district rezoning effort shuffled students to new schools, so the follow up tally would not have provided a reliable statistical comparison.

## Sustainability Planning and Advancement

After the Pinellas CPPW project is complete in 2012, the Pinellas County Health Department will continue to be represented on the MPO subcommittees and will actively promote Safe Routes to School. The Pinellas school board supports the Safe Routes to School program, and made the effort to train many of their district



staff and volunteer coordinators on the Safe Routes to School program. With the Pinellas County School Board rezoning schools so that they are more walkable and bikeable, the push for Safe Routes to School is growing through the district. Finally, all volunteer coordinators from Pinellas County Schools were trained in the aspects of Safe Routes to School by the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and another nationally recognized consultant to ensure each school had the tools to implement their programs. As a result of much of the Pinellas CPPW team's efforts, Pinellas cities, counties and the school district are all now working together to ensure that walking and bicycling is a top priority.

### **Miami-Dade County, Florida**

With almost 2.5 million residents, Miami-Dade County also houses the fourth largest public school district in the United States. At the same time, Miami-Dade sprawls across urban, suburban and rural landscapes throughout the county's 35 municipalities and extensive unincorporated areas. With a 66.3 percent rate of obesity/overweight for adults in the county, the Community Action Plan created by the Miami-Dade CPPW team was intent on increasing physical activity and improving nutrition.

Safe Routes to School, one of the physical activity strategies of the Miami-Dade CPPW team, set forth with two primary goals to achieve by March 2012: the first was to educate Miami-Dade School District leadership on the importance of establishing Safe Routes to School standards, and the second was to educate the city on the significance of providing an adequate amount of crossing guards for district schools to support safe walking and bicycling to school. These goals could not be met without extensive partnerships, so the Miami-Dade CPPW team began by partnering with key organizations including the Florida State Senate, Miami-Dade County Health Department, Public Schools, Community Health and Planning, City of Miami Police Department, South Florida Hospital and Healthcare Association and University of Miami WalkSafe™ Program. These partnerships proved critical towards informing their Community Action Plan and leveraging existing relationships to make strides with their primary objectives.



## Pedestrian Safety Curriculum Improves Safety

In order to build broad-based support for a district-wide Safe Routes to School standard, the Miami-Dade CPPW team first wanted to implement pilot educational and encouragement programs, and conduct an assessment of current walking and bicycling standards throughout the school district. The team engaged in the WalkSafe™ program from the University of Miami-Miller School of Medicine. The WalkSafe™ program had already built strong relationships within the school district from their three-day pedestrian safety course, which is taught to elementary school students by classroom teachers, who have gone through a train-the-trainer model session with WalkSafe™ staff. The WalkSafe™ materials and strategies were developed by a multi-disciplinary team of experts and have since been evaluated to contribute to a **62 percent decrease in child pedestrian-hit-by-car admissions**<sup>55</sup> in Miami-Dade County Level One Trauma Centers. Along with the continuous support and endorsement of school administration (School Board members, Region Superintendents and Directors) the WalkSafe™ curriculum was implemented in 100 percent of the K-8 schools in the district in 2011, and neighboring counties and schools in other states are using the curriculum to train students and teachers while building support for Safe Routes to School.



## Safe Routes to School District Policy

In order to improve the district's current method of prioritizing and evaluating Safe Routes to School and other pedestrian/bicycle improvement projects, the Miami-Dade CPPW team worked to institutionalize use of a Transportation Surveillance System throughout the school district. The system was designed to monitor student transportation habits, collecting information on all public school students' modes of transportation on an annual basis. Within a year, the CPPW team successfully incorporated this system into school district protocol. This system is now a part of what principals and vice-principals complete annually to inform district transportation choices and evaluate school or neighborhood-level trends in active transportation. After achieving that initial systems change, the Miami-Dade CPPW team was able to get the Miami-Dade Public Schools' Division of Safety and Emergency Management to expand the system to include an assessment of school walk/bicycle standards and specific transportation issues related to students with special needs.



The Transportation Surveillance System established through CPPW efforts has proven useful to CPPW team members and other community agencies and transportation organizations. Baseline survey data on school walk and bicycle standards have been analyzed and will inform future efforts at the school and district levels. Of the 319 schools in the district that responded to the survey, the Miami-Dade CPPW team found that 40 percent of respondents had a walking standard, and 22 percent had a bicycling standard. Parental consent was required by 61 percent of the schools for students to walk or bicycle to school and 10 percent of schools said that walking was either prohibited or discouraged. The data provided is being used by the Miami-Dade CPPW team to construct a firm understanding of the current walking and bicycling policies throughout the school district. Additionally, the data collected by the surveillance system is being used by the local Metropolitan Planning Organization in two studies with county-wide implications. The results were used in a project that established standard criteria for prioritizing school infrastructure projects, as well as another study establishing standard criteria for prioritizing schools in need of crossing guards.



### Crossing Guard Policy

At the beginning of the project, the Miami-Dade CPPW team noted that there were significant disparities in the crossing guard allocation among schools. The City of Miami had the most pedestrian/vehicle crashes in Miami-Dade county yet was allocated the fewest number of school crossing guards. Providing more crossing guards became central to the Miami-Dade CPPW team's efforts. The team decided to develop a sustainable crossing guard action plan and then CPPW funding was used to hire 23 additional crossing guards to improve safety. This additional enforcement presence was considered a measure to reduce the existing disparity between the City of Miami and unincorporated Miami Dade schools in crossing guard to school ratio. The team then educated decision-makers at the city and county levels, noting a common concern about the lack of a funding mechanism for sustaining an increase in crossing guard presence within the city. The Miami-Dade CPPW team created educational messages that showed that crossing guard programs have injury prevention, health promotion, community support, organizational support and economic/ financial benefits for local

communities and families. The Miami-Dade CPPW team showed decision-makers that something seemingly simple, like the importance of having safe crossings for students, has a positive effect on all of the county's residents.

The Miami-Dade CPPW team used these messages about the importance of crossing guards to educate and inform the Public Works Department, the director of Intergovernmental Affairs, as well as state-wide decision-makers. Later, in 2011, the Florida Senate Transportation Committee unanimously supported a policy that would allow local governments to include a surcharge on school zone moving violation tickets to provide an optional funding stream for additional crossing guards. The Miami-Dade, CPPW team was reminded that although this standard had not been approved by the end of the CPPW grant period, it had strong support from decision-makers - oftentimes impactful change does not happen overnight.



## Challenges

The Miami-Dade CPPW team was working within what is considered to be one of the worst pedestrian environments in the country. This rating came about after decades of deprioritizing pedestrian and bicyclist safety on streets. While the Miami-Dade CPPW team made advances in their work it is a time-intensive task to encourage an attitudinal shift among decision-makers toward prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle improvements. The diverse population composition of Miami-Dade has also posed unique challenges to the Miami-Dade CPPW team. While working toward change at the city and county levels, the team has had to maintain sensitivity to the different needs, abilities and priorities of a variety of population subgroups.

## Sustainability Planning and Advancement

As the CPPW Miami-Dade project came to a close, the WalkSafe™ team, with a letter of support from the Miami-Dade County Health Department, to potentially receive a prevention specialist (intern from the CDC) to continue to move this work forward over the next two years. The prevention specialist's project will focus on school and district-level transportation standards change, using the surveillance data collected through the CPPW Safe Routes to School project to attempt to increase adoption of school standards that encourage walking and bicycling. The specialist will also work with WalkSafe™ staff to continue educating decision-makers on the importance of the sustainability and enhancement of crossing guard programs, where they are needed most.

# Lessons Learned for Future Communities



It is evident that the Communities Putting Prevention to Work program has had an enormous positive impact on increasing physical activity through its Safe Routes to School efforts. Specifically, the funding has not only brought a great deal of attention to the important benefits walking and bicycling to school and in daily life can have on the overall health of the general population, but it has also made great strides beyond the realm of programs that support Safe Routes to School into the realm of important and sustainable changes that will continue these initiatives well into the future. The examples included in this report as well as dozens of other communities that have innovated and created remarkable changes through planning process, funding mechanisms or strategy changes will serve as a beacon to communities that are just starting Safe Routes to School. We encourage other communities, whether through funding from **Community Transformation Grants**<sup>56</sup>, other funding mechanisms or through inspiration to make larger impacts through Safe Routes to School strategy and environmental efforts, to take to heart many of the lessons learned from successful Communities Putting Prevention to Work projects:

## 1. Build a Task Force and Break Down Silos

The leadership teams the CPPW communities designed at the beginning of the project were integral to long-term success and implementation of the Community Action Plan. To create change, it's recommended that communities build a task force made up of all currently relevant and future relevant stakeholders from the department of transportation, parks and recreation, state and local health departments, public works, local council of governments, school districts, nonprofits, religious leaders, city and/or county officials, bicycle and pedestrian groups and more. Successful communities also made inroads because they broke down departmental silos. In many of the community case studies



there were health department staff working within the public works department or planners that were hired to work within the health department. Allowing for cross-pollination between departments led to previously unrealized gains for each department. The regular interaction of the task force allowed an opportunity for non-traditional partners to find ways to work together towards the same cause. The more successes each community seemed to have the more likely they were to have constant communication and collaboration between all departments and organizations involved.



## 2. Evaluate

In order to decide how to move forward it is important to know where you currently stand. Identifying and utilizing tools to evaluate community needs through **walkability audits**<sup>57</sup>, **student tallies**<sup>58</sup>, **parent surveys**<sup>59</sup> and larger-scale community assessments is useful in crafting a Community Action Plan. This data can serve as a compelling argument to decision-makers but will also provide a baseline and background on potential future direction and the ability to ultimately measure progress.

## 3. Create a Community Action Plan

It is also important to utilize a task force and evaluation data to identify measurable and attainable goals and objectives for the project. Tap into the expertise and influence of your task force to find the best recourse for achieving these goals.

## 4. Work with the Media

Each CPPW community was staffed with a media expert. They were tasked with managing all things related to common project language as well as print and video materials. Part of this required designing compelling media campaigns but also included closely working with media outlets and social media to publicize successes and appropriately highlight the participation of key stakeholders. Children walking and bicycling to school is an excellent selling point and successful campaigns fully utilize images and ideas of children safely walking and bicycling to help sell their message.



## 5. Plan for Sustainability

Funding for projects may have deadlines however partnerships and community support that is built in favor of Safe Routes to School should continue to be leveraged. CPPW Communities that will continue to thrive planned ahead by identifying strategies to leverage funds to increase impact and synergy between programs and initiatives with their strong partners.

Ultimately, CPPW communities were planning for sustainability. We saw this in the form of bicycle and pedestrian master plans, Complete Streets standards, school district Safe Routes to School standards and work towards long-term funding mechanisms. Through systematic change each of the CPPW communities made long-term sustainable advances that were absolutely essential for lasting impacts.



As the Communities Putting Prevention to Work program comes to an end, it's important to reflect on the tremendous work of the communities. By building teams that were focused on utilizing sustainable community-wide change to increase physical activity through Safe Routes to School the CPPW communities utilized innovative strategies that will provide future lessons to communities championing for Safe Routes to School. This is not the end, but the beginning of work towards systematic change that is building a new generation of healthy, physically active young adults.

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