



# Memorandum

**TO:** ALL CHILDREN ACHIEVE  
COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer  
Robert L. Davis

**SUBJECT:** SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY  
PROGRAM

**DATE:** 02-26-04

---

Approved

Date

---

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept report on school traffic-related safety programs conducted by the San José Police and Transportation Departments.

## **BACKGROUND**

The All Children Achieve Committee Workplan, that was approved at the December 17, 2003 Rules Committee Meeting, contained an agenda item for its March 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, Item #2, School Traffic Safety Program. This memorandum is in response to this item.

## **ANALYSIS**

Together, the San José Police and Transportation Departments (SJPD and DOT) provide comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle safety programs to school children, in grades Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Both departments have School Safety Sections, which work together with schools and residents to promote traffic safety in school areas. A list of on-going safety programs for both DOT and SJPD is listed in Attachment A.

This memorandum will address changes and additions to programs addressed at the August 14, 2003 Committee meeting.

## **SCHOOL RADAR SPEED DISPLAY SIGNS**

The City of San José has purchased and installed 31 radar speed display signs. These signs display a message that can be programmed to read "SPEED LIMIT 25," "YOUR SPEED XX" (XX displays the speed of a passing vehicle) or it can operate in both modes, switching from one display to the other, depending on the speeds of passing motorists.

Twenty of these signs were purchased through a Safe Routes To Schools Grant, administered by Caltrans. These signs have been installed at school locations throughout the city.



At its meeting of June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) granted San José and other cities permission to install these signs as part of a continued study of the signs’ effectiveness. The signs were installed in August and September, and baseline data was collected at each sign location to use in the effectiveness study. Additional data will be collected this spring to compare against the baseline data to determine the effectiveness of the signs.

DOT met its goal of installing the signs in time for this data to be collected at the beginning of the school year. Most were activated within the first 30 days of school, with several activated later due to minor equipment issues. A list of the locations for the school radar signs is shown on Attachment B.

#### PAVEMENT-EMBEDDED CROSSWALK LIGHTS

DOT has secured grant funding to install blinking LED lights which are embedded in the roadway, at 10 school crossing locations. These are designed to warn motorists of pedestrians intending to cross the street. The LED lights will not be visible to pedestrians within the crosswalk, but only to motorists that are approaching. A pedestrian push-button, similar to those at traffic signals, will activate these lights. DOT is exploring appropriate pedestrian warning signs to be placed at these locations.

The bid process for the contract to install them has been completed, and the contract has been awarded. The schedule is on track to have the crosswalk lights installed in 10 locations by the end of September 2004. The first two locations will begin construction as early as March, the next four locations are scheduled in May, and the last four are tentatively planned for July. The original goal was to have the lights automatically activated by the motion of a pedestrian

intending to cross. Due to maintenance and technology issues, DOT has re-evaluated this, and is currently planning to install pedestrian push-button activation systems at these locations. The locations of these flashing-light crosswalk enhancements are identified in Attachment B.

### STREET SMARTS/BACK-TO-SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN

The Street Smarts Public Education program kicked off its second year with a Back-to-School Safety campaign, developed in collaboration with the San José Police Department; San José Unified and Alum Rock school districts; Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services and the City/School Collaborative, CHP; AAA; Safe Moves; and DOT's School Safety Program.

The goal of this campaign was to identify the primary traffic safety issues related to the back-to-school timeframe; inventory existing programs or efforts that address these issues; and perform a gap analysis to determine what additional efforts are needed to enhance the safety of San José children as they head back to school. Additionally, this effort explored ways for the City to better coordinate resources by leveraging existing efforts, and utilized the Street Smarts public education campaign to plan and implement a comprehensive back-to-school safety campaign. The campaign consisted of the following:

- Press conference launch at Williams Elementary with Vice Mayor Dando, SJPD, CHP, San José Unified School District, AAA and Safe Moves;
- 120,000 Back-to-School Safety fliers developed in three languages and distributed to all San José students;
- 5,000 pedestrian safety posters developed in partnership with Safe Moves and AAA, and produced by AAA, distributed to every elementary school classroom;
- Eight Pedestrian Rodeos providing interactive traffic safety education held at schools citywide;
- Special enforcement by SJPD at the beginning of the school year to remind motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists to obey the special school zone requirements, in an effort to prevent unsafe driving, parking and walking habits from forming at the start of the school year; and
- School safety banners distributed to 20 Street Smarts pilot schools.

Responding to numerous requests from principals, PTA members and parents, the Street Smarts program produced an additional 152 school fence banners, a portion of which were in Spanish at the request of school districts. These banners were provided in direct response to very positive feedback and distributed to all elementary and middle schools, in partnership with the SJPD.

Street Smarts continues to concentrate on the grass roots component of the public education campaign. To date, presentations have been made to 34 community groups and 18 schools and neighborhoods, with 10 neighborhoods adopting the program. Each neighborhood that adopts the program receives approximately three hours of interactive education relating to driver, pedestrian and bicycle safety. To date, community feedback about Street Smarts has been extremely positive.

On the regional front, Contra Costa County Health Department has joined Street Smarts and is planning a rollout to East Bay cities. The City of Berkeley Transportation Commission recently approved a partnership with Street Smarts and last year the City of Napa joined the program and began implementing it in their community.

Street Smarts partnerships are actively being explored by the Transportation Agency of Monterey County, which has convened a committee to consider implementation to all cities in Monterey County, and the City of Cupertino. The Florida State DOT recently contacted the City to ask about the possibility of using Street Smarts as a model pedestrian and bicycle safety program for their state law enforcement agencies. Initial inquiries have recently been received by the cities of Mountain View, San Diego, Escondido and the Town of Danville. In addition, presentations have been made to 13 public agencies and are continuing to be scheduled, in their jurisdictions toward the goal of implementing Street Smarts on a regional basis.

Data collection related to the five target behaviors:

- red-light running
- stop sign violations
- speeding
- school zone compliance, and
- crosswalk safety and compliance

is commencing for year two, at numerous locations citywide. This information will be compared with baseline data collected last year to evaluate potential new areas of program focus.

Typically, social marketing campaigns measure success over time. The traditional progression of such a campaign, such as recycling, for example, is to raise awareness in year one, change attitudes in year two and start to see an actual shift in behavior by the end of year three.

Preliminary data from the 2003 Community Survey indicates that 35 percent of respondents recall seeing or hearing about the Street Smarts public education program and, of those, 58 percent believe it will be very (17 percent) or somewhat (41 percent) effective. The complete results of this survey will be provided to Council in a separate report.

### SCHOOL AREA TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

DOT Parking Compliance and SJPD Officers from the Traffic Enforcement Unit (TEU) have stepped up their efforts at school locations, and have been responding to requests for enforcement.

DOT has built and maintains a close working relationship with school district officials, and continues to serve on various school district safety committees, work with school PTA officials, as well as school and district faculty and staff to promote safety in all areas.

### OPERATION SAFE PASSAGE

SJPD conducted stepped-up enforcement around San José schools beginning with the first week of school. In all, the SJPD issued 1889 citations, gave out 1047 warnings, impounded 48 vehicles and arrested 28 drivers. In addition, five radar display trailers were deployed at 25 schools throughout the city. TEU also deployed its new changeable message board at five strategic locations throughout the city. These items added an educational component to the Department's enforcement campaign by reminding motorists of the 25 M.P.H. speed limit requirement in school zones.

The second Operation Safe Passage for the school year in which SJPD and DOT Parking Compliance Unit participated, occurred January 5 to 9, 2004. As a result of a collaborative effort, a total of 394 officers responded to conduct traffic enforcement near 286 public and private schools throughout the city. Their school-related actions resulted in 2015 citations being issued, 884 warnings given, 48 vehicles impounded, and 19 drivers arrested. The DOT Parking Compliance Unit contributed to the program efforts by conducting enforcement at 46 schools for the week. They issued a total of 39 parking violation citations. In addition to the aforementioned enforcement actions, again all five radar display trailers and a changeable message board were deployed.

### SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION

DOT has provided traffic safety education to San José elementary and middle school students for the past several years through a contract with Safe Moves, Inc., a nationally recognized leader in pedestrian and bicycle safety training. Due to the current economic downturn, however, DOT was unable to renew the contract with Safe Moves when it expired February, 2004. DOT and SJPD are now exploring the possibility of "contracting-in" this service. DOT strongly believes that this type of education program can be a significant factor in keeping pedestrian- and bicycle-related crashes low, and wishes to continue the program by bringing this service in-house to better coordinate with existing City-school programs and improve cost efficiencies in the long term.

The City has applied for grant funding with the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to continue this program. OTS is expected to announce grant awards in May 2004, at which time, the Departments will move forward to develop an expanded School Traffic Safety Education Program, if the grant is awarded. In the meantime, Street Smarts is developing a mini-lesson in traffic safety for teachers to use in grades K-3. Activity sheets and a course curriculum will be provided on CD ROM to all elementary schools.

## GRANTS

Caltrans manages a highly competitive grant program to fund the construction of improvements that support safe access to schools. DOT applied for three Safe Routes to School Grants, in 2003 (the fourth cycle of grants), for a total of over \$1,200,000 in grant funding requests. San José was unsuccessful in securing funding for this cycle. The three projects applied for were:

- Install High Visibility (yellow-green) school warning, and crosswalk warning signs at 133 schools, totaling over 200 crosswalks. Although grant funding was not obtained, DOT is adding this signage, albeit at a much slower pace, on an “as needed” basis.
- Implement Phase II of the School Access Enhancement Program. Phase I has largely been completed, with only a few of the most complex tasks yet to be accomplished. Phase I identified 42 of the schools that were selected by Council Offices, School Districts, and DOT evaluations. Phase II was to have continued with 52 locations that are not as pressing, but still fairly high on the priority list. Although the program is “on hold” until additional funding becomes available, schools are still evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and City engineers are implementing improvements as part of their normal workload.
- Install a center median island on San Antonio, east of King Rd. This project would facilitate orderly movement of pick-up and drop-off traffic in front of the school by discouraging illegal U-Turns, and create a safer environment for pedestrians, by directing them to the crossing guarded locations at either the San Antonio/King or San Antonio/Lynette crossings.

DOT has applied for two new grants in the fifth cycle of Safe Routes to School Grants. The grants were submitted on February 27, 2004. These grants represent a potential influx of almost \$716,000, should they both be approved. They are 90 percent matched funds, so the City will need to fund the first \$71,600 of that \$716,000. The two new projects are for the following improvements:

- Sidewalk installation at Baldwin Elementary School (\$262,000) – Identified in Phase I of the School Access Enhancement Study
- Sidewalk installation at Carlton Elementary School (\$454,000) – Identified in Phase I of the School Access Enhancement Study

These sidewalk projects were identified during the 2002 School Access Enhancement study that was prepared by DOT and Alta Transportation Consulting. A total of 42 schools were selected for the study based on recommendations by school district officials, Council Offices and neighborhood associations. The study identified various improvement needs related to traffic controls, drop-off zones, education, enforcement, curb ramps, and sidewalks. Most of the improvement needs that were identified in the study as being within the purview of the City to accomplish, have been addressed. Regarding sidewalk improvements, eight projects are currently unfunded. Two of these will be included in the current grant funding cycle. For the Year 2004 Safe Routes to School (SR2S) grant cycle, the City will pursue the improvements recommended at the Baldwin Elementary and Carlton Elementary Schools, as these projects are within City jurisdiction. Other project recommendations that were identified as being the

responsibility of the school districts are being addressed, where possible, through recently passed local bond measures, and as other funding sources are identified by the school districts.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

Not applicable.

**COORDINATION**

This report has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

JAMES R. HELMER  
Director of Transportation

ROBERT L. DAVIS  
Chief of Police

Attachments