APPENDIX H. ACCESS SAFE ROUTES PILOT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Pilot Program Overview

During the 2017–18 school year, program staff launched the Access Safe Routes Pilot Program, which aimed to increase program participation in historically under-resourced schools. The pilot provided highly-tailored, face-to-face support to participating schools in order to identify and address the barriers to increased use of active and shared modes. At the same time, site coordinators worked with the schools to build internal leadership that would result in a more sustainable program in the long term. Program staff tested strategies to understand and address the needs of under-resourced schools in order to help these, and other under-resourced, schools successfully implement a SR2S program.

Access Safe Routes Goals

The goals of the Access Safe Routes Pilot Program were:

1. To encourage greater participation by under-resourced schools in the SR2S program in the near term;
2. To understand how to build sustainable programs at under-resourced schools in the long term; and
3. To deepen our understanding of effective methods and strategies to engage with and get results in under-resourced schools.

The Access Safe Routes Pilot Program provided targeted support to under-resourced schools in exchange for input and engagement from the school. This approach informed short- and long-term efforts to develop the culture and infrastructure necessary to maximize the use of active and shared transportation modes for school-related travel.

Eligibility for Access Safe Routes Participation

Schools that received an equity score (see "Equity Analysis" side bar) above the county average of 47 were eligible to participate in the Access Safe Routes Pilot Program (*note: the higher the score, the more disadvantaged the school*).

Additional considerations for school selection included:

1. Schools that needed to be transitioned to school-led SR2S implementation;[1]
2. Schools that demonstrated need (based on site coordinator knowledge);
3. Existing interest and support from school administration;
4. Existing relationships with school or community contacts who could assist with communication, coordination, implementation, etc.; and
5. School participating in Alameda CTC's Affordable Student Transit Pass Pilot Program.

Access Safe Routes Activities

In addition to the standard program offerings, schools participating in the Access Safe Routes Pilot program received additional technical assistance and support from a site coordinator. Schools also received:

- A school-specific assessment and maintenance plan for future school-led efforts;
- A tailored approach to addressing the schools' needs, based on the unique circumstances that affect students' safe use of active and shared modes, and modes may have the most viability for that school; and
- Assistance in building leadership capacity of the school community to implement an independent SR2S program.

This pilot also identified effective strategies to engage with school partners at under-resourced schools to support sustainable programs.

Equity Analysis

Transportation equity is particularly important for disadvantage communities because of their common reliance on active and public transportation, which renders them more vulnerable due to poor infrastructure.

In 2016, Alameda County SR2S program staff conducted an equity analysis of all schools in Alameda County to identify gaps in SR2S programming; assess if the SR2S Program was reaching schools equitably in all jurisdictions in the county; and provide insight as to how the program operates in, and provides resources to, disadvantaged communities within the county.

The SR2S equity analysis assigned an "equity score" to public schools in the county based on ten demographic indicators obtained from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. Each of the ten indicators received equal weight in determining the composite equity score. The indicators used for the analysis are listed below.

- » Race,
- » Age,
- » Income,
- » Limited English proficiency,
- » Health insurance,
- » Single-parent household,
- » Unemployment,
- » Disability,
- » Inequality, and
- » Commute and vehicle access

The higher the score the higher the concentration of the presence of the above factors, thus the more disadvantaged the school. The analysis found that at the countywide level, overall Alameda County SR2S program participation is substantially greater among schools that are less disadvantaged.

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[1] *These schools may rely on Site Coordinator and other SR2S Program staff assistance for scheduling activities and hosting events, and participation in the Access Safe Routes program can support school-based leaders (teachers, administration, and/or parent volunteers) who can coordinate SR2S activities in the future.*

Access Safe Routes Program Findings

This Appendix provides an analysis of the Access Safe Routes Program performance by goal and objective. Where available, quantitative data is presented first, followed by any qualitative feedback garnered through the focus groups. Feedback offered by site coordinators is italicized to differentiate it from feedback provided by program participants.

This evaluation considers program data collected from the SR2S team, from student hand tallies and parent surveys, as well as from Access Safe Routes Pilot Program focus group meetings. The focus groups were held during the spring semester of 2019. The project team conducted two focus group meetings for SR2S participants/teacher/parents. In addition, one focus group convened site coordinator program staff to solicit their professional understanding of the Access program. One scheduled focus group meeting was cancelled.

Goal 1: To encourage greater participation by under-resourced schools in the SR2S program in the near term.
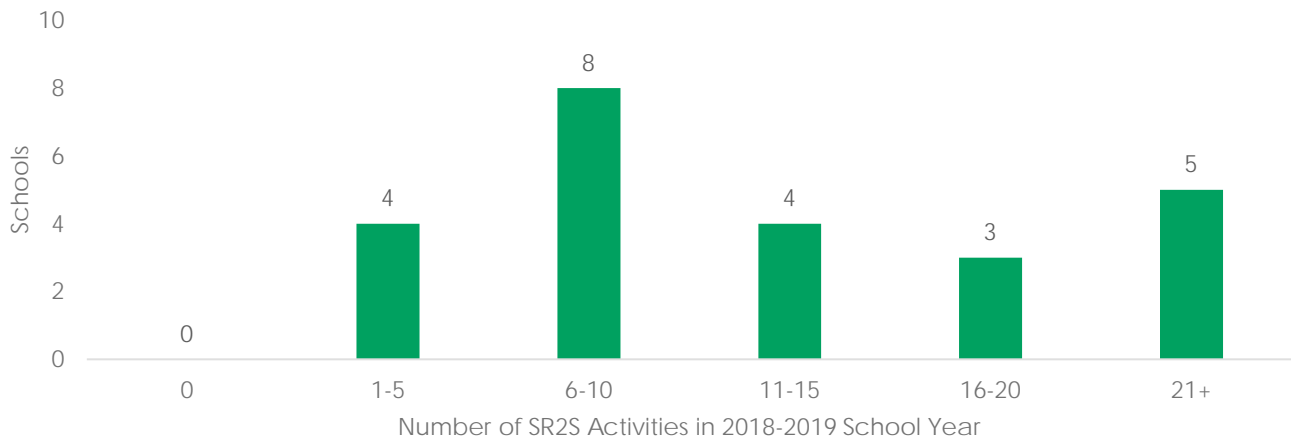
The Access Safe Routes program successfully enabled under-resourced schools to participate in the Alameda County SR2S Program in higher proportions than had participated in previous years.

During the 2018-19 school year, the Access Safe Routes Program reached 24 schools, including:

- » Alliance Academy, Oakland Unified
- » Anna Yates Elementary, Emery Unified
- » August Schilling Elementary, Newark Unified
- » Cabrillo Elementary, Fremont Unified
- » Community United & Futures Elementary, Oakland Unified
- » Esperanza Elementary, Oakland Unified
- » Fred T. Korematsu Discover Academy, Oakland Unified
- » Garfield Elementary (San Leandro), San Leandro Unified
- » Guy Jr. Emanuele Elementary, New Haven Elementary
- » International Community, Oakland Unified

- » John Muir Middle, San Leandro Unified
- » Malcom X Elementary, Berkeley Unified
- » Marylin Avenue Elementary, Livermore Valley Joint Unified
- » McClymonds High, Oakland Unified
- » Ocean View Elementary, Albany City Unified
- » Ruby Bridges Elementary, Alameda Unified
- » San Leandro High, San Leandro Unified
- » Searles Elementary, New Haven Unified
- » Southgate Elementary, Hayward Unified
- » Tyrrell Elementary, Hayward Unified
- » United for Success Academy, Oakland Unified

As Figure 1 indicates, all 24 of these Access schools held SR2S activities in the 2018-2019 school year. Of those who did hold events, four held 1-5 events, eight held 6-10, seven held 11-20, and five held more than 21 activities.

**Figure 1. Number of SR2S Activities per Access School**

Furthermore, Access schools are participating in SR2S program activities at a higher rate than non-Access schools in all Planning Areas, suggesting that additional support offered through the Access Safe Routes Pilot Program is simulating participation. As shown in Figure 2, Access schools were most active in the Central planning area, though Access Safe Routes Program participants were highly active across the county.

**Figure 2: Number of Access School Activities per Planning Area**
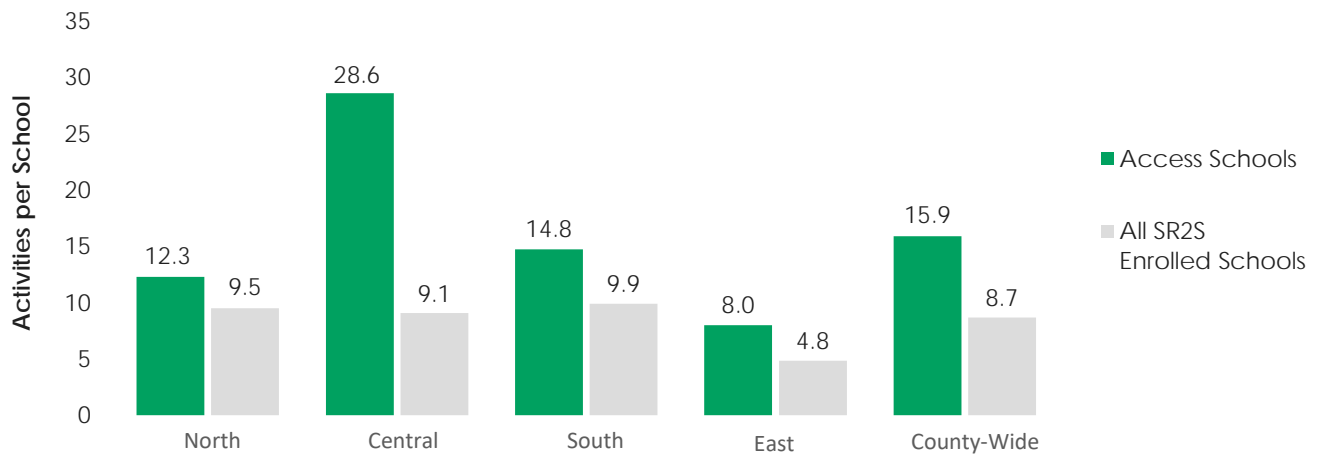
Furthermore, mode split data indicates that students from schools participating in the Access Safe Routes Pilot Program are walking at higher rates than non-Access school. As shown in Figure 3, approximately 40% walk at Access schools compared to 26% at non-Access schools.

**Figure 3: Access Program Mode Split Compared to Countywide Data**
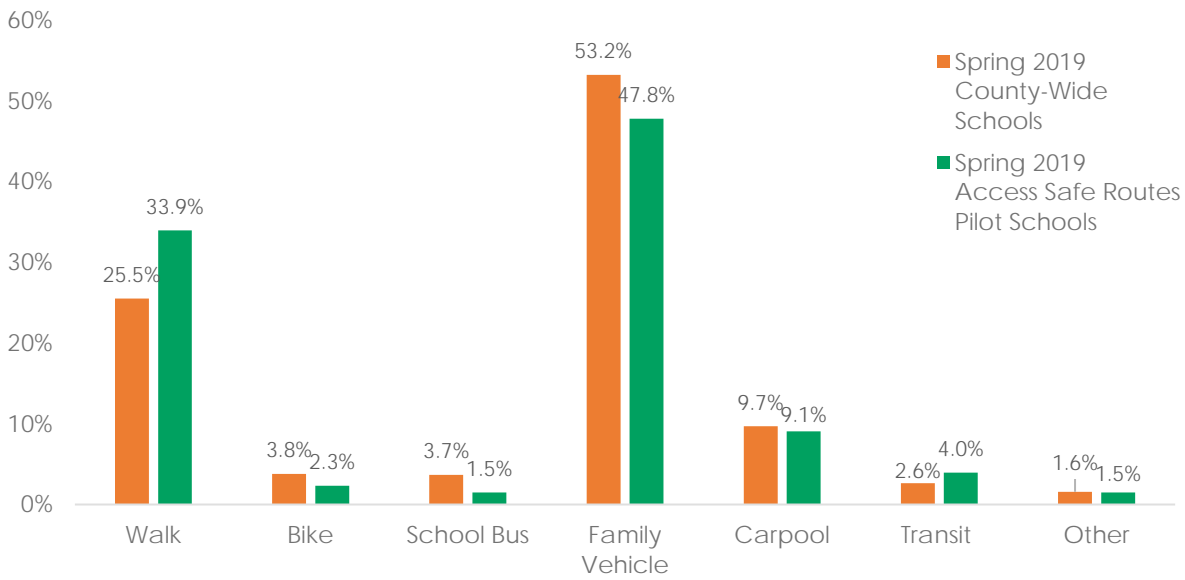
As Figure 4 indicates, Access Schools have seen a 7% decrease in travel by family car since 2015. This decrease in driving trips is correlated with notable increases in walking and public transit trips.

Figure 4: Access School Mode Shift, 2015-2019 Hand Tally Data
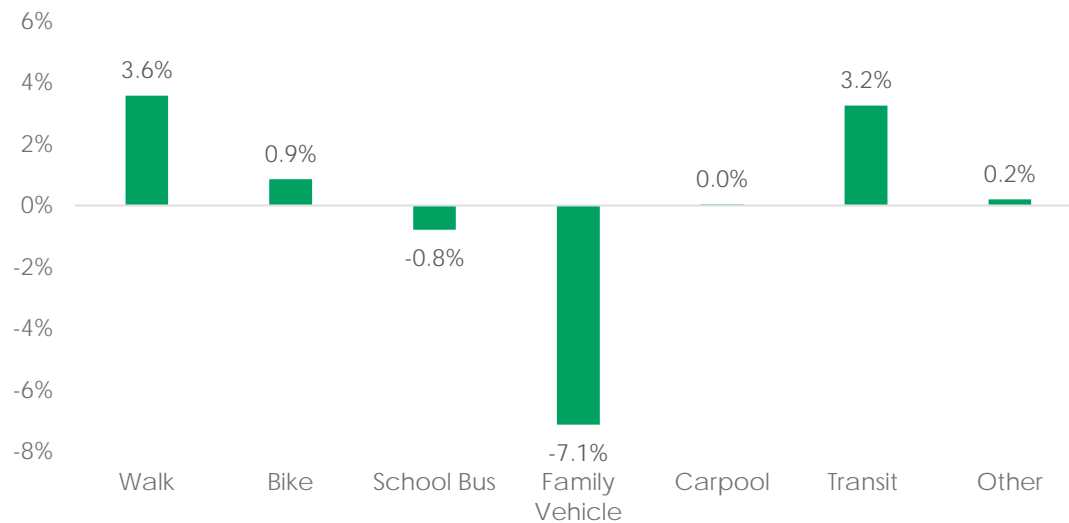
As Figure 5 indicates, most Access schools chose to participate in the Golden Sneaker Contest, International Walk & Roll to School Day, BikeMobile, Pedestrian Rodeos, Bike to School Day, and Bike Rodeos. Additionally, about half of all Access schools participated in Rock the Block and in Ongoing Walk and Roll Events. Few Access schools chose to participate in Cocoa for Carpools, Walking School Bus programs, or Drive Your Bike. No Access schools held Step Up Crew assemblies or transit education.

Figure 5: Number of Access Schools Participating per Activity
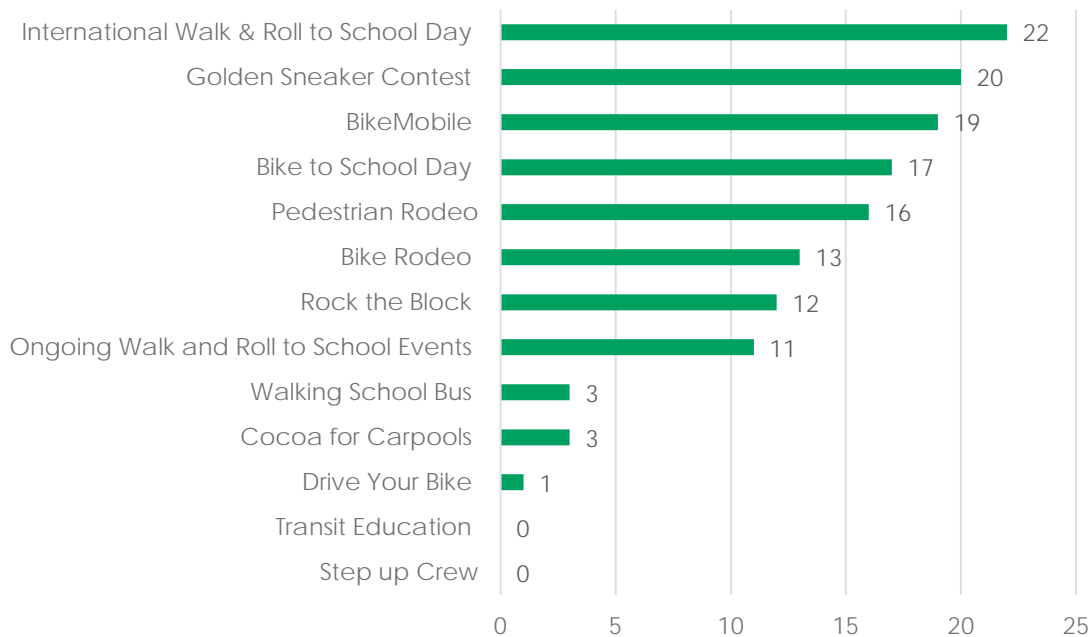
During the program evaluation process, several champions also noted the importance of focused staff time and support from the overall SR2S program in their ability to offer activities and engage with Access schools.

Focus group participants offered several ideas about further increasing the participation of under-resourced schools in the future, including:

- » Programming that targets parent behavior and perceptions
- » Improvements to drop-off and pick-up circulations issues
- » Increased crossing guard presence
- » Increased program awareness among teachers
- » More direct communication with students

Goal 2: To understand how to build sustainable programs at under-resourced schools in the long term.

With only one full year of the Access Program completed, it is not possible to quantitatively assess learnings about building sustainable programs at under-resourced schools. Future evaluations will seek to better understand this metric by 1) establishing specific new approaches for promoting sustainability and 2) testing these approaches via dedicated surveys, focus groups, and other means. A comprehensive evaluation should also define what is meant by 'sustainable' programs; potentially considering how long the program lasts, how many people are engaged, and what obstacles the program is able to overcome.

In the short term, several partners who engaged with the Access Program, whether school administrators, parent or other champions, or site coordinators, offered the following thoughts and insights on challenges to sustainability:

» *Turnover of champions and school administrators can disrupt awareness of and support for the program, impeding schools from participating in SR2S activities from year to year*
» *Difficulty generating parent interest and recruiting volunteers, which impacts activity planning and participation*
» *Constrained resources and funding limitations, which impact the ability of under-resourced schools to participate*

Overall Site Coordinators felt that the extra attention and opportunity to participate in activities during the Access Program's initial year was an effective strategy for making an impact at under-resourced schools in both shifting trips and improving safety for students walking and biking. They attribute this success to:

» Relationship building,
» Tailoring the program to the needs of the school,
» Building SR2S program recognition and awareness, and
» Goal setting and planning for SR2S program participation throughout the year.

Goal 3: To deepen our understanding of effective methods and strategies to engage with and get results in under-resourced schools.

As with Goal 2, it is difficult to quantitatively determine the impact of the Access program on improving the understanding of effective methods and strategies to engage with under-resourced schools.

However, throughout the year and in previous years, all SR2S partners have collaborated with under-resourced schools and have preliminary insights into what approaches work best in those settings. Focus group participants highlighted methods and strategies that they perceived to be effective in engaging with Access schools, including:

» Integration of SR2S programming into the culture of a school. For example, Tyrrell Elementary has linked SR2S into their broader Health & Wellness Committee resources and volunteer base
» *Recruiting and maintaining engaged Champions and internal leadership*
» *Frequent in-person contact with the schools, which allowed for building better relationships*
» *In-person engagement, which tends to be more productive and produced better and more responsive relationships*

Parents and caregivers at Access schools did report that some activities were more effective at encouraging walking and biking among students, including:

» 65% of Access parents/caregivers who reported their child walked/biked more often after receiving Pedestrian Safety Education
» 57% of Access parents/caregivers who reported their child walked/biked more often after receiving Bicycle Safety Education
» 56% of Access parents/caregivers who reported their child walked/bike more often after participating in Ongoing Walk and Roll to School Events

Objectives

Objective 1: Maintain or increase the current participation level of under-resourced schools currently participating in Alameda County's SR2S program.

All Access schools participated in SR2S events, with about half participating in over 10 events during the course of the 2018-19 school year

As reported in the analysis of progress toward Goal 1, Focus Group participants generated strategies for further increasing participation of under-resourced schools. Key strategies discussed include:

- » Programming geared toward parents
- » Site circulation improvements that respond to parent concerns
- » Increased crossing guard presence
- » Increased program messaging and outreach among teachers
- » More direct communication with students about program activities
- » Continued additional support for the planning and provision of SR2S activities at under-resourced schools

Implementation of these strategies during the course of future school years would support the growth of student participation in SR2S programming at Access Safe Routes schools.

Objective 2: Develop context-sensitive plans to encourage and promote SR2S participation in under-resourced schools.

Site coordinators working with Access schools began developing activity plans, which identify unique challenges and opportunities at each school, and identify which SR2S activities may be most applicable to that school. During the 2018-19 school year, site coordinators began developing these plans, although most of them remain incomplete.

Site coordinators noted that *the ability to develop in-depth relationships and conduct engagement with under-resourced schools through the Access Safe Routes Pilot Program provides an opportunity for tailoring SR2S activities based on the needs of the neighborhood, community culture, and school culture.*

Additionally, School Safety Assessments were conducted at August Schilling Elementary, Esperanza Elementary, and Fred T. Korematsu Discovery Academy during the course of the 2018-19 school year. This bring the total number of School Safety Assessments completed at Access Schools up to 16. These School Safety Assessments included in depth site evaluation and collaboration with school representatives to identify detailed site-specific recommendations, including crossing improvements, bike facility recommendations, pedestrian signage, signalization recommendations, and bike parking improvements. These context sensitive recommendations will serve to enhance the safety and comfort of walking and biking to school for students of these Access Safe Routes Pilot Program participants.

Objective 3: Provide broader recommendations for how under-resourced schools can participate fully in the SR2S program.

Site coordinators offered the following commentary on how the Access program can support under-resourced schools participating in SR2S activities:

- » *The in-depth support and flexibility Alameda County's Access Safe Routes Pilot Program offers is vital to the participation of under-resourced schools*

» *Accomplishing equity goals will require support from an on-going Access Safe Routes Program over multiple school years*

Much of the feedback provided in the focus groups centered on barriers to walking and biking, which are particular challenges for under-served schools. The implication is that addressing these barriers would enable more students at participating schools to walk or bike, or for the schools to more easily participate in Alameda County SR2S activities.

Focus group participants discussed infrastructure improvements as an important step in increasing walking and biking to school, with general infrastructure requests including:

- » Protected bike lanes;
- » Crosswalk improvements;
- » Consistent sidewalk connectivity; and
- » Secure bike racks.

Enforcement was also identified as an area for improvement that might stimulate participation, including:

- » Parking enforcement to ensure vehicles do not park in bike lanes, and
- » Increased enforcement to ticket and educate drivers making traffic infractions near schools.

Additional suggestions for improving school engagement include:

- » *Language and cultural differences are barriers to effective engagement, suggesting program materials could be translated into additional languages.*
- » Improved access to bicycles could also stimulate participation.