



John White <john.white@lacity.org>

Letter of support for Safe Routes to School Study, LA City Council Transportation Committee

1 message

Dr Michael Cahn <michael.cahn@sustainablestreetsla.org>

Wed, Mar 9, 2011 at 10:29 AM

To: Paul Backstrom <Paul.Backstrom@lacity.org>, john.white@lacity.org

Cc: Jessica Meaney <jessica@saferoutespartnership.org>, Alison Kendall <alison@kendallplanning.com>, Ron Durgin <rdurgin@gmail.com>, Annette Colfax <Annette.Colfax@smgov.net>, Deb Hubsmith <deb@saferoutespartnership.org>, Michelle Mowery <Michelle.Mowery@lacity.org>

Dear Paul Backstrom

I am writing on behalf of Sustainable Streets. We strongly support the proposed Safe Routes to School Study on the agenda for the Transportation Committee scheduled today

Please see attached

Thank you very much for your consideration

Dr Michael Cahn
www.sustainablestreetsla.org

 **LA_CC_Transp_SRTS.pdf**
306K



P.O. Box 35246 | Los Angeles, California 90035 | 310.564.6878 | www.sustainablestreetsla.org

educate • empower • transform

March 8, 2011

Attn: Honorable Bill Rosendahl and City of LA Transportation Committee
c/o City Clerk
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N Spring Street, Room 1010
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Via email: paul.backstrom@lacity.org and john.white@lacity.org

Re: Council File # of 10-0600-549 (scheduled for T-committee 3/9/2011)

Dear Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee:

Sustainable Streets is a California not for profit organization dedicated to promoting active transportation and more livable streets and communities throughout Los Angeles County. Our programs include bicycle and pedestrian planning, education, encouragement and evaluation programs in numerous communities from Santa Monica to Burbank, including several programs in the City of Los Angeles. We are active supporters of the Safe Routes to School programs in our partner communities, as these are excellent ways to raise the next generation of cyclists and pedestrians. We support Safe Routes to School programs as an important strategy for realizing the health, environmental and community benefits of active transportation to and from school. This letter is in strong support of the DOT staff recommendations to fund a study to develop a City-wide Strategic Safe Routes to School Plan. From our work with schools in LAUSD and in other districts we have seen the need for closer coordination and for an ongoing Safe Routes to School planning effort which precedes and follows up on specific SRTS grant applications. We support the staff proposal and the funding of this important and much needed, and have some

Board of Directors: additional suggestions to make the effort more successful.

Stephen Box

Brett Conrad

Michael Cahn

Ron Durgin

Alison Kendall

William McCarthy

Why Safe Routes to School Strategic Planning is important:

* Safety programs and strategic and comprehensive investments will allow the city to maximize existing resources, avoid duplicative efforts, and address one of the most vulnerable groups of our population, children and young adults.

* 1/3 of all morning congestion is caused by school motor vehicles dropping students off at neighborhood schools – this is a major factor contributing to pollution, congestion, and traffic hazards in our transportation networks that is currently not being addressed.

promoting sustainable,
active transportation
and livable communities

- * A plan like this would allow the City to strategically focus on projects at schools with the greatest need. Many low income LA neighborhoods have shockingly high rates of childhood obesity. The same neighborhoods have substantial potential for walking and biking to school should crime and traffic safety issues be addressed through coordinated Safe Routes to School Programs. We are currently working with some LAUSD schools which offer huge potential for the dramatic increases in walking and biking Sustainable Streets has helped encourage in Santa Monica schools.
- * A plan like this would position the City of LA to increase its competitiveness in securing federal and state funds with stronger proposal and innovative solutions to address improving walking and bicycling conditions to LA schools.
- * It is critical that the City of LA create a Pedestrian Coordinator position, and that specific staff be assigned to ongoing work with Safe Routes to School programs. 25% of all roadway injuries and fatalities are pedestrians and bicyclists – it is critical to develop staff expertise and coordination to address this troubling statistic immediately.
- * 12% of all trips in the SCAG Region are currently being done via walking or bicycling, yet our past investments efforts have allocated less than 1% of funding to support these modes (SCAG 2008 RTP).
- *The current process for how the city develops Safe Routes to School grant proposals happens on a case by case basis. We need a plan that is equitable, rooted in data, reflects good planning and increases the quality of project proposals and competitiveness.
- *There are substantial safety and education improvements which can be implemented at quite modest cost by empowering volunteers and working with partnership organizations such as the school Parent Teacher Student Association. We've worked with several volunteer SRTS programs in LAUSD schools who have been frustrated at the lack of support from the City of LA for their grant applications, education and infrastructure improvement needs.

Additional Recommendations:

We believe it is very important to include high schools and middle schools in addition to elementary schools, since these schools offer substantial challenges in reducing traffic congestion and associated hazards, but also great potential for initiating healthy active transportation patterns. **Sustainable Streets** began the SRTS effort at Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District in partnership with students concerned about the environment, and initiated Bike It!Walk It! Days with 30 percent of the district's 12,000 students walking, biking and using the bus.

Our comments are based on the project description found at:

http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2011/11-0333_RPT_DOT_03-03-11.pdf

Use socio-economic factors to help with the prioritization. Low-income communities tend to have higher collision rates, higher percentages of students currently walking and bicycling to

to school, as well as higher public health challenges such as high obesity prevalence rates.

Create a City-wide Safe Routes to School Task Force or Technical Advisory Committee to help oversee this project and bring multiple stakeholders to the table. Key stakeholders to consider inviting:

School district staff, Parent Teacher Student Association leaders, Public Health leaders, Planners, Engineers, Community groups/advocates, Pedestrian and Bicycle data and planning experts, Safe Routes to School experts, LAUSD Police and Office of Environmental Health and Safety, CHPS (Collaborative for High Performance Schools), Facilities Management staff and students themselves.

Sustainable Streets has worked with SRTS programs and grant applications at several schools in different districts in LA County and would be happy to advise LA DOT on how to build successful Safe Routes to School efforts.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Alison Kendall, LCI, AICP
VP-Sustainable Streets
Safe Routes to School and Public Planning Agency Liaison

c/c:

jessica@saferoutespartnership.org

Annette.colfax@smgov.net

Michael.cahn@sustainablestreetsla.org

Ron.Durgin@sustainablestreetsla.org

promoting sustainable,
active transportation
and livable communities