



Recommendation to the City of Los Angeles Transportation Committee on use unallocated Measure R funds

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Good Afternoon LA City Council and Committee members,

Thank you for this opportunity to present on how the City of Los Angeles could develop a data driven Citywide Strategic Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan.

My name is Jessica Meaney – I work for the Safe Routes to School National Partnership – which is a national nonprofit working to support walkable and bikable communities – in which people can walk and bike safely and with ease to their community school.

Caltrans administers the competitive grant program of Safe Routes to Schools – with both federal and state sources of dollars. This is about \$50M annually. There is great demand for these funds all throughout the state – typically 1 out of 5 grants are awarded.

According to the EPA, 1/3 of all morning congestion is caused by car drop off at school – how kids are getting to and from school is an element in transportation planning currently overlooked in many cities and communities.

As way of some background – I think it's critical that our transportation policy makers – here in So Cal know that currently:

- 12% of all trips are being done walking or biking (SCAG 2001 Regional Household Travel Survey),
- Yet less than half of 1% of our transportation funds (SCAG 2008 RTP) go towards projects that support those modes

- And 25% of those injured or killed on our So Cal roadways are pedestrians and bicyclists (2008 SWITRS data) – a percentage higher in our low-income communities.

As I understand it, the process the City of LA is currently using to submit SRTS applications to Caltrans is that each of the 15 council districts submits a application – how the schools in the council district are prioritized does not seem to have a good data driven strategy behind it, in fact it's unclear to me how the schools are selected. (CRA also submit proposals)

I would like to encourage the City to develop a city wide Safe Routes Strategic Plan – one that is driven by collision data – and prioritizes hot zones that critically need to be addressed. Other factors, in addition to collisions history, could also be used when developing this – but I would urge the city to champion safety as a key way of prioritizing projects.

LAUSD is the 2nd largest school district in the US, only New York City Department of Education has a larger student population. I'd like to recommend that the City of LA look at how NYC developed their SRTS plan and perhaps use it as a model. Their [prioritization plan](#), developed in 2003, and posted online, examined accident histories around the city's 1400+ elementary and middle schools and established a list of 135 priority schools to be considered for traffic safety improvements. (List was also prioritized within Burroughs – this could be done for LA Council districts)

Each priority school underwent thorough study that included outreach to each principal, meetings with parents and other interested parties, collection and analysis of data – and then provided short and long term safety improvement measures.

By developing this priority list of schools – the city then had a plan and knew what school would be applying at each funding cycle – far in advance.

A plan like this would allow LA to – not only address serious safety issues for some of our most vulnerable community members (kids) but to also be a strong competitor for SRTS funds – as well as other sources of dollars like HSIP – whose annual funding is almost doubles the available SRTS dollars.

A data driven – safety plan for LA’s school kids to walk and bike to school - would be a tremendous move for the City of LA to make – on so many levels. I recognize it would be challenging and complex – but I do believe there is a way the City could develop a meaningful and effective program.

In addition to the NYC’s prioritization plan – they also developed an education and encouragement curriculum for schools interested in supporting students walking and biking to schools. The NYC DOT Traffic Safety Unit – has educators that go to interested schools to train teachers on the curriculum. It seems to be a pretty fantastic program.

I have been talking with staff at the [Safe Transportation Research and Education \(SafeTrec\) Center](#) at UC Berkeley on how a prioritization based on safety – and possibly other criteria - such as low income might play out for the City of LA. (Research has show that low-income residents are more adversely affected by traffic collisions and therefore faces a disproportionate amount of risk when traveling to school).

The City could tap into existing State resources regarding collision mapping and school locations – that would not require a heavy burden of data collection – it’s already there.

The State of California contracted with SafeTrec to map collision data across the state. This has already been done, is currently available statewide to all government agencies and soon for the general public.

The City of LA should take advantage of this tremendous resource and works towards safety driven data solutions. In NYC – they looked at all crashes – not restricted to just bike/ped collisions – therefore the improvements around schools – are not only helping the students – but all the greater community by addressing unsafe road conditions.

In addition to the existing collision mapping resource that is currently available, there is also the State Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center (TARC), which is currently working to overlay the collision data – with school locations. I have been in early discussions with them on how they might be able to support the City of LA with this type of project.

This positions the City of LA – to take advantage of existing resources to then improve safety, increasing walking and bicycling, support the successful implementation of SB 375, and become increasingly more competitive for bringing in state and federal funds to LA to improve our transportation network for all users.