

CITY OF SANTA MONICA, CA Santa Monica Safe Routes To School and Bike To School Initiative



Alison Kendall of Kendall Planning + Design, an urban designer working on involving students and parents in Santa Monica's Land Use and Circulation Element Update, assisted students at Lincoln Middle School on a project to promote safe biking to school. Through the Youth Planning Project coordinated by Kendall, the students taught fellow students bike safety and planning, and advocated for more bicycle routes to serve their school to the School Board and City Council members at a Youth Planning Forum in April 2005. Several Bike to School Days increased the usual number of students cycling by over 10 times typical levels.

With City of Santa Monica transportation planner Beth Rolandson, Alison Kendall then prepared a successful grant to initiate a formal Safe Routes to School program at the two middle schools and two elementary schools, as a model for all local schools. The grant stressed opportunities due to planned school facility improvements and the City's Circulation Element update to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety at all schools and decrease traffic congestion and hazards for school students.

Students at Santa Monica High School organized the school's first Bike Day in October 2007. The events encourage students to rediscover the joys of biking to school, and decrease the impact of their trip to school on global warming. Two clubs held four Bike Day events in 2007-08, and continue the tradition in 08-09. The number of students biking to school has grown steadily from about 30 in October 2007 to over 125 in October 2008.

The Parent Teacher Student Association provides bike helmets and locks as prizes for student cyclists, helping helmet use to climb steadily, along with ridership. LA County Bicycle Coalition members helped organize a Bike Skills Class for Samohi students to address concerns about the safety of biking to school, covering rules of the road, basic bike maintenance, and safe cycling skills on local streets. Over the past four years, the PTSA has worked with City of Santa Monica and Big Blue Bus staff to promote walking, biking, and bus use at registration.

Bordered by Interstate 10, Santa Monica High School is surrounded by heavily traveled major arterials, with no bike lanes. Students who walk and bike to school have to cross two hazardous freeway on-ramps, and several major arterials. Among suggestions to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety around the school: rebuild a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the freeway at 7th Street to provide an alternative to hazardous Lincoln Avenue, increase campus bicycle parking, and extend Michigan Avenue as a pedestrian and bicycle route through campus and the Civic Center to the beach. Alison Kendall is now working with City and school staff to seek additional grant funding for these bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Project

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety,
Education and Encouragement Program
for Santa Monica Schools

Scale

3000 student high school and
1200 student middle schools

Date

2005-2009

Role

Grantwriter, Safe Routes Coordinator,
Transportation Committee Chair

