

SRTS CASE STUDY:

Norwalk, Connecticut

Working to Promote Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School



CASE STUDY

Background

Naramake Elementary School and Nathan Hale Middle School are located on Strawberry Hill Avenue, a minor arterial street in Norwalk, Connecticut. Many of the children live within walking distance of the schools, but only a few children currently walk or bicycle to school because the lack of infrastructure makes the road unsafe. Strawberry Hill Avenue is a busy road, averaging 1,200 motor vehicles a day with an 85th percentile speed of 42 miles per hour and an average speed of 35 mph, both of which are higher than the posted speed limit. Residents and parents have expressed concerns about the high travel speeds and the need for additional traffic signals and pedestrian crossings along Strawberry Hill Avenue to increase safety for residents and children walking along the road.

Details

In 2006, the Connecticut Department of Transportation granted Naramake Elementary and Nathan Hale Middle \$350,000 through the Federal Safe Routes to School program to apply to engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation programs at the two schools. The city plans to dedicate an additional \$100,000 toward engineering improvements along Strawberry Hill Avenue.

Engineering projects along Strawberry Hill Avenue include the installation of a new traffic signal, a new pedestrian crossing, curb ramps, bicycle lanes, raised intersections and lane stripping.

Pedestrian and bicycle education is provided by the police department on an as-request basis; this service will continue for both schools. Each summer, the police department also teams up with a local bicycle organization to sponsor an annual bicycle rodeo for school-age children throughout the community.

The police department also supports annual 'Norwalk Slow-Down Days,' which is a week-long effort that enforces and rewards drivers for good traffic behavior. This program began in 2002 and occurs twice a year at both the beginning and end of the school year. Along with this event, enforcement along Strawberry Hill is increased with mobile speed display signs and permanent flashing speeding signs. The police department will continue to use and expand on these types of enforcement measures.

Both schools occasionally have participated in encouragement activities such as bicycle rodeos and Annual Walk to School Week, but with the grant money these programs will become part of the school's annual schedule.

Results

The engineering improvements are to be completed in summer 2008, and it is expected that evaluations will reveal an increase in children walking and bicycling to and from school, a decrease in traffic congestion around the school and an increase in air quality for the community. Results will be evaluated by parent and classroom surveys conducted in fall 2007 and spring 2008 and will show any change in the number of children walking and bicycling to school.

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For more resources and information on Safe Routes to School, please visit the National Center for Safe Routes to School Web site at www.saferoutesinfo.org.