

SRTS CASE STUDY: Rockville, Maryland

Rockville Safe Routes to School Program



Background

For several years the City of Rockville has coordinated Safe Routes to School programs in Rockville schools with an emphasis on education, enforcement, encouragement programs, and transportation improvements. The goal of the programs is to improve the safety of children walking and bicycling to school. In April 2007 the City's Department of Public Works received \$435,500 in federal grant funds to initiate a more comprehensive Safe Routes to School program, which the City will use to target six schools with speeding and pedestrian safety issues.

Details

The City of Rockville has a strong Safe Routes to School presence in nearly all its elementary schools and many middle schools. The grant will fund additional transportation improvements, increase law enforcement presence, strengthen pedestrian and bicycle safety programs, and help launch walk-to-school encouragement activities.

With the education portion of the grant, Rockville's Recreation and Parks Department will coordinate a pedestrian and bicycle safety training program taught to kindergarten through fifth graders, where the students use a mock street course that is designed for practicing pedestrian and bicycle safety. In some schools the program is taught currently by personnel from the city government, but with the new grant, the schools will become more involved by providing the teacher for the course. The teacher will typically be the school's Physical Education teacher.

For the enforcement portion of the grant, the Rockville Police Department will conduct enforcement activities within the walk zones of the schools, in an effort to decrease the number of speeders in the school zones and to increase proper motorist yielding behavior at crosswalks. As a separate program from the federal grant, recently both portable and fixed speed cameras have been implemented in school walk zones. These cameras record the driver's speed and the vehicle's license plate and then print a ticket that is mailed to the driver. There are 16 speed cameras at locations close to elementary, middle and high schools throughout Rockville.

For the transportation improvements portion of the grant, Rockville's Public Works Department will improve pedestrian safety by eliminating key sidewalk gaps, installing crosswalks, and installing pedestrian countdowns at traffic signals. To slow speeds, funds will be targeted toward the installation of speed indicator signs, flashing beacon signs to indicate the speed limit and installing traffic calming devices. One such improvement will be installing a 1,500 ft sidewalk to connect one of the elementary schools to the downtown area and to surrounding residential neighborhoods. Two smaller sidewalk links will also be completed at two other elementary schools. Other infrastructure improvements will include more crosswalks, pedestrian countdown signs, speed indicator signs, and flashing beacons.

For the encouragement portion of the grant, Rockville's Recreation and Parks Department will provide support to each school for the implementation of walking and bicycling encouragement programs, such as "Walk to School Day."

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Results

Since the initial programs were implemented in Rockville many improvements have been noticed. The law enforcement presence has slowed speeds and changed the behavior of drivers in school zones. The speed cameras have caused drivers to avoid the area in fear of receiving a ticket, which has decreased traffic congestion around the schools. The federal grant money will further increase safety around the schools through increased law enforcement presence, transportation improvements, education programs, and encouragement programs.

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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.