

## SRTS CASE STUDY:

# Eugene, Oregon

## Building a Safe Routes to School Dialogue

**SafeRoutes**

National Center for Safe Routes to School



CASE STUDY

## Background

Eugene, OR, is home to Roosevelt Middle School, which was constructed in 1942. The combination of the school's small parking lot and high volume of car traffic created safety hazards for student pedestrians and bicyclists. Parents and teachers at Roosevelt recognized that promoting bicycle and pedestrian safety must occur alongside addressing car traffic concerns.

## Details

In 2005, Roosevelt began addressing health and safety issues through a School Wellness Committee comprised of parents, community members and school personnel. The committee members worked with local resources, such as a professor of urban planning at the University of Oregon, city officials, engineers and planning personnel. The committee is focused on improving safety and the traffic flow in the school's overcrowded parking lot. In February 2007, the committee distributed the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) parent survey with the goal of better understanding the transportation activities at Roosevelt. The results indicated that 52 percent of Roosevelt students were driven to school, 25 percent walked or bicycled, and the remaining 23 percent used mass transit or rode the school bus.

In April 2007, the wellness committee decided to designate two alternative lots adjacent to the school as the "preferred parking" areas to reduce the number of single occupancy motor vehicles using the school's small main parking lot. By decreasing traffic congestion, the wellness committee members created a safer atmosphere for students walking and bicycling to school. Drivers use one of the preferred parking lots more than the other, most likely because it is a shorter distance from the school, and there is less interaction with car traffic. Although there has not been a decrease in traffic congestion, drivers who use the lot return everyday. The parents who use the lots tend to be parents at Roosevelt Elementary School, and the school believes that its pedestrian safety program is influential in encouraging new parents to use the preferred parking areas. To increase the number of parents who use the lots, the school publishes reminders in its monthly newsletter. Once a month, the school's Bike Phantom gives out prizes and raffle tickets to students who are dropped off at the lots. Also, during Walk & Roll Week, the school sponsors a quesadilla breakfast for those parking in the preferred parking lots.

At the school's request, the city also assists safety efforts by providing the school with parking enforcement officials during the first weeks of the school year. These officials help reinforce proper pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic laws to ensure the safe use of the main parking lot and main roads around the school. The city repainted the crosswalks at two major intersections in front of the school, which increased drivers' visibility of the cross points created a safer road for the students to cross.

To enhance the program's sustainability, the school's physical education teacher became a trained bicycle safety educator by receiving certification from the League of American Bicyclists. In 2008, the teacher will educate 75 percent of the sixth graders (approximately 230 students) on bicycle safety from April to June. In the years to follow, all students will learn about bicycle safety. In addition to the SRTS funds, the school received a Eugene Education Fund grant and an ACT Bicycle mini-grant for purchasing 35 bicycles for the BikeEd course. This will allow the school and the physical education teacher to have 35 new bicycles, so students do not have to bring their own bicycles to the classes.

# Building a Safe Routes to School Dialogue

On Oct. 3, 2007, approximately 80 students, parents and school staff gathered at Amazon Park's south parking lot to participate in the school's first annual International Walk and Bike to School Day. Volunteer parents and teachers led pedestrian and bicycle groups to the school through the Amazon Park system of multi-use paths. Students carried signs promoting bicycling and walking, and the University of Oregon duck mascot added to the festivities. Raffle tickets, blinking lights and juice boxes were distributed to students and a Eugene city police officer was present at the meeting site. There were 25 bikers and 37 student walkers who participated at the event. An additional 43 bikers and 126 student pedestrians biked and walked to school on their own for a total of 231 students (35% of the student body) who participated in the October 3rd event.

## Results

In January of 2008, the City of Eugene held a Walk & Bike summit. At the event, people from the community came together to gather information and to provide their input. There were three breakout sessions, and Safe Routes to School was one of them. The main parent volunteer at Roosevelt and the SRTS Program Manager facilitated that session. Since the summit, the Eugene SRTS Team was formed, including key players from the City Council, a university professor, a pediatric nurse, a public transit employee working on a Smart Ways to School program, a community group working on "healthy and active youth", and a Roosevelt representative. The team is finalizing their Goals and Activities and working to expand their membership to include representatives from the two local school districts as well as a student. The team is writing a position paper to bring to the school board to discuss transportation choices and goals.

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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](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).