

SRTS CASE STUDY:

American Fork, Utah

Safety incentives inspire Shelley Elementary students

SafeRoutes

National Center for Safe Routes to School



CASE STUDY

The kindergarten through sixth grade students at Shelley Elementary School in American Fork, UT, have no bus system to take them to and from school.

The only buses available are intended for the pre-kindergarten students and those students in special education, which means the remainder of the student population, totaling 1,021 children, must walk, bicycle or carpool to school.

“We’re trying to increase the biking and walking, so we can decrease all of the cars in the carpool,” said Cindy Davis, principal at Shelley Elementary.

Several years ago, Shelley Elementary staff invited the mayor and city council to learn the difficulties the students face in trying to walk and bicycle to school because of the lack of sidewalks and speed deterrents.

School officials wanted to apply for the grant, Davis said, because they did not want to rely solely on the town for the necessary funds.

It was important that school officials met with the mayor and city council to learn about budget constraints and realize it was necessary to apply for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funds, Davis said.

“We wanted to be proactive, as well as asking others to be proactive on our behalf,” Davis said.

To create a safer walking environment and promote walking and bicycling, officials at Shelley Elementary School collaborated with the city of American Fork to apply for SRTS funding through Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT).

In fall 2007, UDOT awarded Shelley Elementary with two SRTS grants—an \$8,000 grant for non-infrastructure activities and a \$150,000 grant for infrastructure projects.

The \$150,000 grant, which the city of American Fork matched to total \$300,000 in funding, will be used to install sidewalks around the school. Shelley Elementary officials already have worked with city engineers to outline an engineering plan, which was implemented in spring 2008.

The infrastructure projects likely will be completed by the end of 2009, Davis said.

And with the \$8,000 grant, supplies and incentives such as bicycle helmets, bicycles and pedometers have been purchased to increase participation at the annual school Bike Rodeo and Walk to School Day.

For the past few years, the PTA has organized a Bike Rodeo for the students. PTA members invite the police department and the fire department to come to the school and check the students’ bicycles and run bicycle courses.

The 2008 Bike Rodeo was held one Friday afternoon in May, Davis said, and it was larger than in years past, thanks to the grant.

There were 200 bicycle helmets distributed to the students during the Bike Rodeo, and teachers awarded bicycles to the students who won the school’s bicycle safety essay contest. And to promote walking, teachers passed out 1,000 pedometers, purchased with the grant money, to the students to participate in a walking contest to see who could walk the most steps in four days.

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“We determined our students combined could have walked to New York and back three times,” Davis said of the event’s success.

“Everyone was really onboard and having a good time for the contest’s sake, but we hope in the end it’s not just the contest,” Davis said. “We hope it will really start to establish healthier patterns and get more cars off the road and more kids walking on the sidewalks.”

Every year that Shelley Elementary hosts Walk to School Day, the students receive snacks once they arrive at school. With the additional incentive of a pedometer, Davis said residents from nearby neighborhoods commented that they had never seen so many families walking together.

“In the short term, this year it has been the re-enforcers like the snacks, the pedometers, the bike helmets and the bikes,” Davis said of the high number of students walking and bicycling. “In the long term, for parents to feel comfortable with kids walking and bicycling to school, we have to make our roads safe.”

“To provide a safe environment for kids and to promote walking and bicycling, it takes a lot of people working together,” Davis said.

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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.