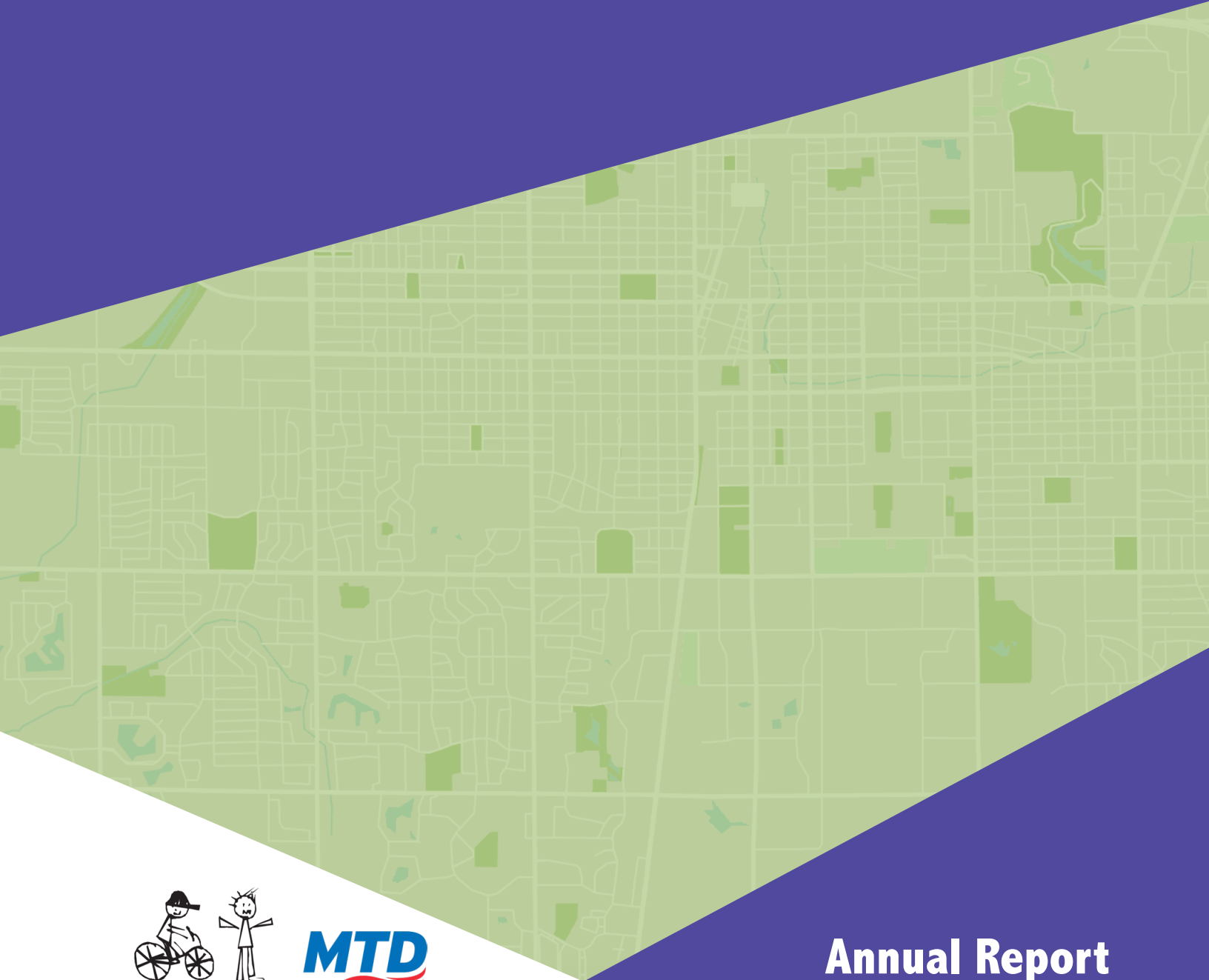


Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School



C-U Safe Routes to School Project
(C-U SRTS Project)



**Annual Report
2019 - 2020**



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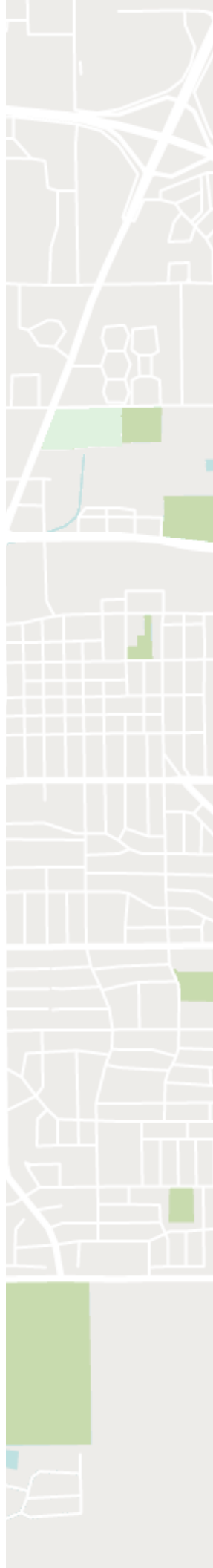
Executive Summary

The 2019-2020 year was an important one for the C-U Safe Routes to School Project (C-U SRTS Project) as they were awarded an Illinois Department of Transportation SRTS grant of \$48,587.00. This grant helped to pilot new programs and ensure that existing programs would have the equipment and resources necessary to continue until the next grant cycle. C-U SRTS conducts events and programs such as Train-the-Trainer, International Walk and Roll to School Day, Bike to School Day, Earn-a-Bike, and bike rodeos. These programs and events are all integral in supporting the goals of the C-U SRTS Project:

- Encourage and increase walking and/or bicycling trips to school
- Improve safety for students walking/bicycling to school
- Reduce congestion at schools during arrival/dismissal
- Raise community awareness of and compliance with school zones/roadway safety
- Expand and sustain SRTS programs for the school districts into the future.

C-U SRTS Project is supported through the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) that pays for staff time to operate the project as well as providing office space and administrative support. C-U SRTS Project has continuously worked with both Champaign and Urbana School Districts, the Cities of Urbana and Champaign, local law enforcement, local bike organizations, MTD, and the University of Illinois to help promote and educate the community on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

This report aims to summarize the achievement, work done, and lessons learned by the C-U SRTS Project between July 2019 and July 2020. More information, as well as a copy of this report, can be found online at www.c-usrtsproject.com.



Safe Routes to School: A Solution



Health

In the U.S. nearly 40% of adults are obese, and 18.5% of youth from ages 2-19 are obese as well, according to the most recent CDC data.¹ Childhood obesity presents a variety of immediate health complications and sets the stage for future health problems. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, breathing problems, type 2 diabetes are all immediate health risks that children with obesity face.² Furthermore, psychological problems and a propensity to remain obese can have future impacts on the health of obese children.²

Participating in physical activity can help prevent childhood obesity and even benefit students academically. In a report prepared by the CDC, it is stated “that participating in physical activity was positively related to outcomes including academic achievement, academic behaviors, and indicators of cognitive skills and attitudes, such as concentration, memory, self-esteem, and verbal skills.”³ This goes to show that physical activity helps children’s physical and mental wellbeing. C-U SRTS strives to increase and promote walking and biking to school as a healthy alternative to driving.

Safety

Children walking and cycling to school are faced with a variety of safety challenges mostly from lack of supportive infrastructure, negligent driving, uneducated cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. Improvements in infrastructure such as crosswalks, signage, sidewalks, bike lanes, and most importantly street design that reduces driver speed, are shown to help make streets safer. Beyond street design promotion of safety education for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists have been shown to improve safety outcomes.

C-U SRTS has a community-wide safety campaign to educate kids and adults alike on how to mitigate risks when walking or cycling. Furthermore, staff from C-U SRTS have been active in promoting Vision Zero legislation that promotes the idea of creating policy, infrastructure, and ideology of zero traffic-related deaths.

1 Prevalence of Obesity Among Adults and Youth: United States, 2011-2014. Retrieved May 22, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>

2 Childhood Obesity Causes and Consequences, 2016. Retrieved May 22, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>

3 The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance. Retrieved May 22, 2020 from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf



Project Background

CU-SRTS Project started in 2004 through a partnership between MTD and SafeKids Champaign County to promote International Walk and Roll to School Day. The 2004 event saw the distribution of walkability checklists and the participation of two elementary schools from the Urbana and Champaign school districts. Walk and Roll to School Day events have been a staple of the C-U SRTS Program ever since.

The C-U SRTS Project has been awarded a number of grants through the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. All of these grants have been awarded for non-infrastructure purposes.

- 2008: \$25,500
- 2009: \$62,000
- 2012: \$76,000
- 2014: \$15,840
- 2019: \$48,587

Partnerships

CUMTD

CUMTD has been essential in enabling the C-U SRTS Project. The C-U Safe Routes to School Project has been heavily supported by the Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District (CUMTD) through their provision of staff time, office space, and administrative assistance.

C-U SRTS Steering Committee

The purpose of the steering committee was to establish communications with community stakeholders and gain insight on making key decisions. Furthermore, the members of the steering committee helps provide recommendations and support with various projects.

The members of the steering committee include:

- City of Champaign
- City of Urbana
- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
- Champaign County Bikes
- Urbana School District
- Champaign School District
- Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District

Parents and PTAs

Much of the work C-U SRTS Project conducts involves schools and children; therefore, the involvement of parents and PTAs is necessitated. This year, there were limited formal interactions with PTAs; although, many parents volunteered for Bike Rodeo events, Walk & Roll to School Day events, and through filling out walkability checklists. It is planned to increase involvement with PTAs in the future, especially in regard to the Walking School Bus Program and Bike Rodeo events.

Educators

C-U SRTS Project is intrinsically connected to educators as they have a direct role in the lives of students and parents. Teachers, administrators, and staff have been invaluable in the success of bike rodeos, safety programs, and Walk & Roll to School Day.

Law Enforcement

The partnership C-U SRTS Project maintains with law enforcement is incredibly important as the laws that protect pedestrians and cyclists require both education and enforcement. Furthermore, police departments from Champaign, Urbana, and Champaign County have assisted in Walk and Bike to School Days, bike rodeos, Risk Watch presentations, and educational training at various schools.

Elected Officials

The support of elected officials is critical to improving safety for students and their involvement helps to draw media attention to SRTS events and support bicycle and pedestrian friendly legislation. This year, the Mayors of Champaign and Urbana participated in Walk and Roll to School Day. The mayors have also participated in bike rides and bike rodeos over the years. Moreover, the Urbana City Council moved forward with the drafting of a Vision Zero policy.

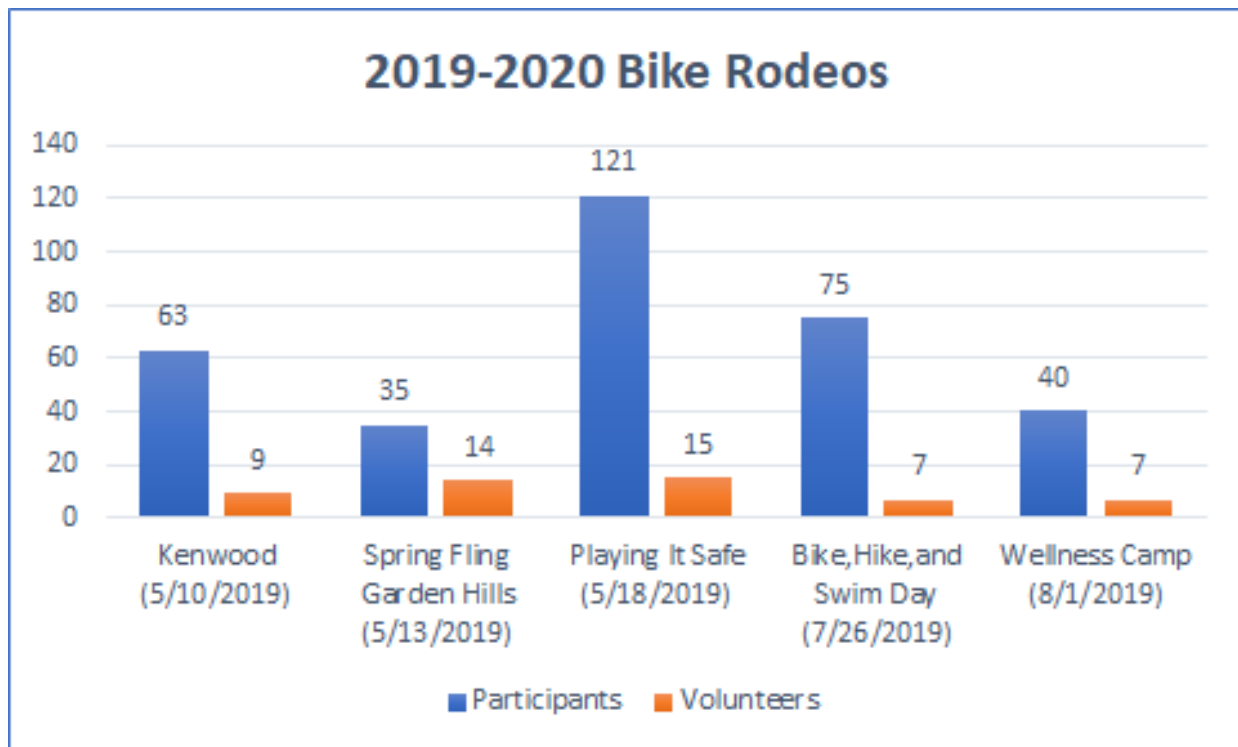
Program Accomplishments

Non-Infrastructure Grant

The C-U SRTS Project received a non-infrastructure grant of \$48,587.00 in July of 2019 to purchase supplies and equipment, provide support for education and encouragement campaigns, and fund a train-the-trainer initiative. This grant was instrumental in supporting all existing programs and pioneering the train-the-trainer program in which Lotte Bech from the Danish Cycling Institute will be coming to meet with local officials, cycling advocates, and educators. The training was originally scheduled for April of 2020 but had to be canceled and rescheduled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bike Rodeos

C-U SRTS Project organized a total of five bike rodeos between May 2019 and May 2020. These bike rodeos allowed for 334 kids between the ages of 6-14 to participate in the skills course with the help of 52 volunteers. This year zero helmets were sold to the public at a reduced price. Information was recorded at each of the bike rodeo events and is included below. All bike rodeos scheduled for the spring of 2020 were cancelled due to restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Kenwood Bike Rodeo

This bike rodeo was held at Kenwood Elementary School in Champaign on May 10th, 2019. The event is run with only fourth grader students and included 63 students. Students completed the course and received a bicycle safety workbook to take home with them. Nine volunteers assisted with this bike rodeo.



Spring Fling Bike Rodeo



The Spring Fling Bike Rodeo is traditionally held at Garden Hills Elementary in Champaign, and in 2019 the tradition was continued on May 13th. 35 students of all ages learned and then practiced bicycle safety skills on the bike rodeo course. This bike rodeo was fortunate enough to have the enthusiastic help of volunteers from DREAM (Driven to Reach Excellence and Academic Achievement in Males) as well as others, totaling 14 volunteers.

Bike, Hike, and Swim Day Bike Rodeo

The Urbana Park district hosted a recreation day for all of its summer camps known as Bike, Hike, and Swim Day. Campers came to Crystal Lake park and hiked through Busey Woods, swam at Crystal Lake Aquatic Center, and participate in a bike rodeo. This year the event was held on July 26th, 2019 and saw participation from 75 kids from ages 7-12. The oldest group aced the course and had a Q+A session with Cynthia Hoyle from C-U SRTS on bike and pedestrian safety. A total of seven volunteers from the Urbana Park District and Healthy Champaign County made the event successful.



Playing It Safe Bike Rodeo



This is usually C-U SRTS Project's largest bike rodeo of the year. Carle's Playing it Safe event at Leonhard Recreation Center draws many Champaign-Urbana families out to have a good time and learn about safety. The event provides C-U SRTS with an opportunity to interact and engage with new audiences to show how cycling can be safe and fun. On May 18th, 2019, 121 kids of all ages participated in the bike rodeo. Upon completion, the kids were awarded t-shirts, workbooks, and reflectors as prizes. While also having the most participants, the Playing it Safe bike rodeo had the most volunteers for the year with 15.

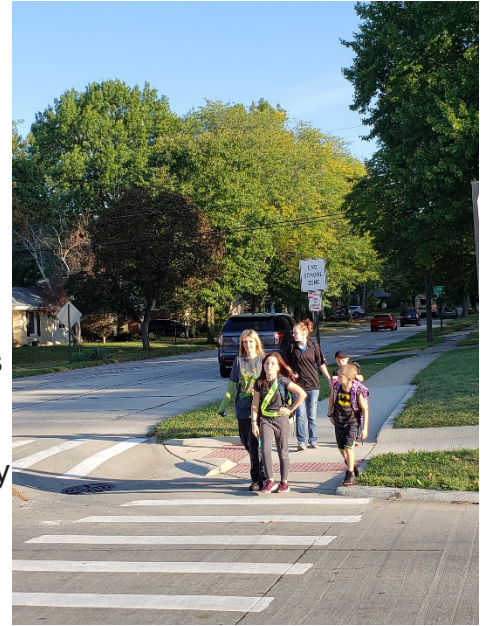
Wellness Camp Bike Rodeo

The University of Illinois hosts a wellness summer camp which has continually shown interest in having a bike rodeo as part of their curriculum. This bike rodeo was held on August 1st, 2019 and had 40 participants from ages 6-14. Seven volunteers from the Campus Bike Center and Campus Recreation helped to make the bike rodeo a success. The oldest group was proficient on the course, so a mock intersection was designed to teach introductory on-road bicycling skills which had not been done at any bike rodeo this year.

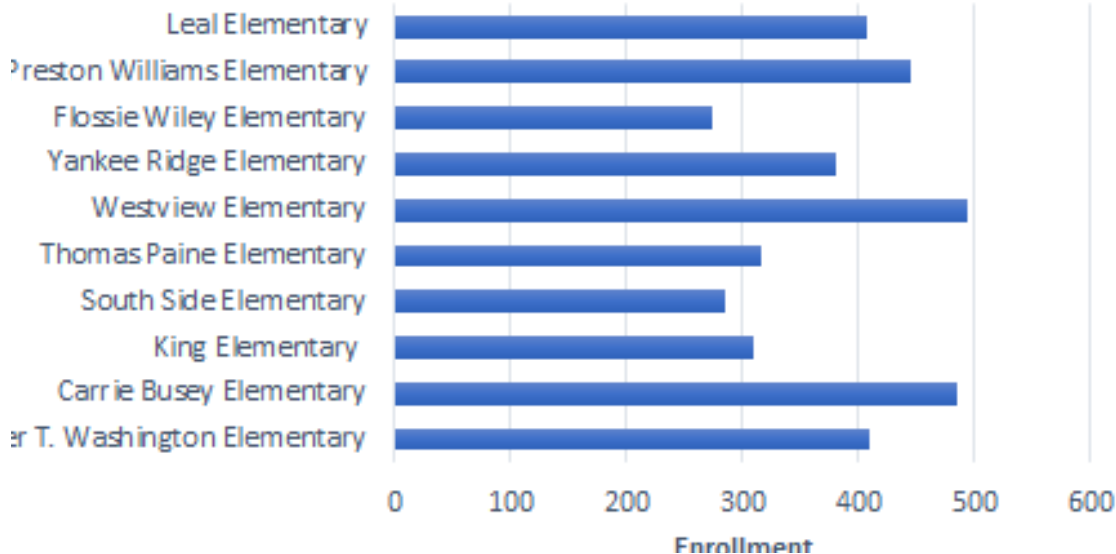


International Walk and Roll to School Day

Walk and Roll to School Day 2019 was organized and implemented on October 2nd with our partner organizations including: Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), City of Champaign, City of Urbana, and Urbana and Champaign School Districts. Ten schools throughout Champaign-Urbana participated with approximately 4,000 kids being reached. Every student in participating schools received a packet with a parent letter, a safety tip sheet, a walkability checklist, and a copy of the SRTS routes map for their school. Each school held an event, and the mayors of Champaign and Urbana also walked with children to school. Backpack reflectors were distributed to the six schools that registered by the deadline. A parent survey form was created for each of the ten schools and sent to the school staff to distribute to the parents electronically. Tally sheets were provided to each school with instructions for teachers on why we need the data and how to collect it. The event received front page coverage in the local newspaper the day after the event and Urbana Public Television station made an excellent video of the event that Mayor Diane Marlin attended at an Urbana Elementary School. We received 33 completed walkability checklists, 63 classroom tally sheets, and 74 parent surveys. The data from the tally sheets was recorded on the National Center for Safe Routes to School Data Center website. All schools were registered for the event through the International Walk & Bike to School website.



Schools Registered for WRTSD 2019



Bike to School Day

Bike to School Day 2020 was postponed due to COVID-19. This is a major C-U SRTS event that coincides with Bike Month. All other activities associated with Bike Month 2020 were also cancelled. The circumstances of the Governor's Stay-at-home order resulted in closure of schools through the end of the school year. While a formal event was unable to be held, C-U SRTS encouraged parents and kids alike to take advantage of less car traffic to bike to parks and schools. Using the 2019 grant funding, a special t-shirt was developed to distribute to those who register as a Bike to School Day participant. This measure aims to encourage parents and kids in the community to continue to bike and become comfortable biking to their respective schools.



A t-shirt, bicycle safety workbook, a postcard with the IL Bicycle Safety Quiz link, and a bookmark were delivered to registered student's homes in a C-U SRTS Project cinch pack purchased with a previous SRTS grant. The program will continue to run through the summer months.

C-U SRTS Project worked with the C-U Bike Month's Steering Committee to do outreach and provide education to the community about safely bicycling during the pandemic. Health department guidelines were shared and several routes for family bike rides in the community were created and posted to assist families in finding and enjoying safe routes to local parks and trails.

Walking School Bus

The Walking School Bus was inactive during the 2019-2020 year. C-U SRTS staff met with the new Urbana School District Superintendent, Dr. Jennifer Ivory-Tatum, and her staff to discuss expansion of the walking school bus program and repair of the Active4me equipment. The school district is planning to hire a new Walking School Bus Coordinator to restart the program next year. Under the previous administration the program was not operating well and the program needs reorganization and additional staff to be hired.

Active4.me

The Active4.me program is an active transportation incentive program that uses a solar powered RFID reader to log when students at Urbana Middle School walk or bike to/from school. The reader tracks miles, trips, and calories burned in order to provide incentives to the participants. The program has been out of commission during the 2019-2020 year due to problems with the hardware necessary for conducting the program. C-U SRTS has used funding from the 2019 grant to repair the hardware and have it reinstalled. Currently, staff is working on acquiring approval for a renewed contract with Dero, the company responsible for providing all the technical aspects of the program. C-U SRTS staff is also currently working on a publicity campaign to gain enrollment for the program upon the opening of Urbana Middle School, if schools resume in the fall of 2020.



Snow Removal Program

C-U SRTS has had a snow removal program since 2016 which employs the help of community volunteers, known as “Snow Angels”. The volunteers use specific maps, featured on the C-U SRTS website, to choose a specific section of sidewalk which they agree to shovel within 48 hours of at least two inches of snowfall. Volunteers can also ask to borrow equipment in order to complete their shoveling. Staff coordinates volunteer sign ups and delivers equipment while also taking pictures of shoveled walkways to commend dedicated community members for their contributions. This year, an ad campaign was run to promote the program. Radio stations played a snow removal PSA during the winter months, bus board advertisements were purchased to raise awareness, and C-U SRTS staff appeared on local news channel WCIA to provide insight on the program. Currently, staff is waiting on approval to purchase new shovels, custom C-U SRTS hats, and winter gloves to distribute to future Snow Angels for future volunteers.



cu-srtsproject.com



Bicycle Safety Education Class

Bicycle safety classes are a key component of the safety education campaign C-U SRTS continues to provide for the community. This year, only one bicycle safety class was held. It was a Traffic Skills 101 class held on July 13th, 2019. Eight people participated in the class including two employees from MTD and advocates from cities around Illinois. The course consisted of learning bicycle safety checks, starting and stopping, scanning and signaling, as well as more advanced maneuvers. The course was led by two League Certified Instructors (LCI) who took the group on a ride throughout Urbana to practice the skills they had accomplished during the course.



Train-the-Trainer Program

This program was conceived in 2018. Funding from the SRTS non-infrastructure grant provided a unique opportunity to advance training for teaching young children bicycle safety skills. The goal of this program is to train educators on bicycle and pedestrian safety, with a focus on promoting cycling to young children through playing games. The highlight of this program be a visit from Lotte Bech, a cycling instructor, from the Danish Cycling Embassy. The Danish Cycling Embassy has created a curriculum and pedagogy for teaching children bicycle safety from pre-school through high school. Lott's expertise is in the cycling games curriculum will provide insight into how to teach kids from a very young age to be comfortable, safe, and have fun on a bike. Plans for bringing Ms. Bech to Champaign-Urbana included having her meet advocates, state and local leaders. Moreover, staff from C-U SRTS had planned a series of train-the-trainer workshops geared toward P.E. teachers and other educators. However, neither of these initiatives have come to fruition due to COVID-19. Mrs. Bech's visit has been postponed to a later date TBA and the workshops have since been cancelled or moved to online.

One online session was held through Ride Illinois, the statewide bicycle organization for the state of Illinois, on May 6th. The session titled, "Cycling Education for Kids Through Fun and Games" featured Lotte Bech and Cynthia Hoyle. The session had 26 attendees from around the state and region. The League of American Bicyclists has scheduled a similar session to be held in July of 2020.

Presentations, Conferences, Health and Safety Fairs

One of the goals for C-U SRTS is to advocate and educate on bicycle and pedestrian safety. This means that staff is often asked to present on the work they have been doing in a public setting. Here are a few of the occasions where C-U SRTS presented:

- Illinois Department of Transportation Pedestrian Safety Peer Exchange 2019
- City of Urbana Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission
- IAHPERD Midstate Conference 2020



Earn-a-Bike Program

The earn-a-bike program from 2017 was very successful with six students completing classes in bicycle maintenance and traffic safety skills thus earning each of them their own bicycle, helmet, lock, and light set. This year, C-U SRTS has been in communication with Circle Cycle, a University of Illinois student organization which has been planning an earn-a-bike program through the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club. C-U SRTS has purchased 18 bikes for this program. Currently, the program is scheduled to run sometime July 20-23.



Risk Watch

The Champaign and Urbana School Districts operate a safety education program named Risk Watch through the elementary schools. The program runs throughout the school year providing a comprehensive injury-prevention curriculum. The program is designed to help children and families create safer homes and communities by teaching the skills and knowledge to make positive choices about personal safety and well-being.

Bicycle and pedestrian safety are part of the program and C-U SRTS Project has been very involved in safety presentations to 2nd and 4th grade students.

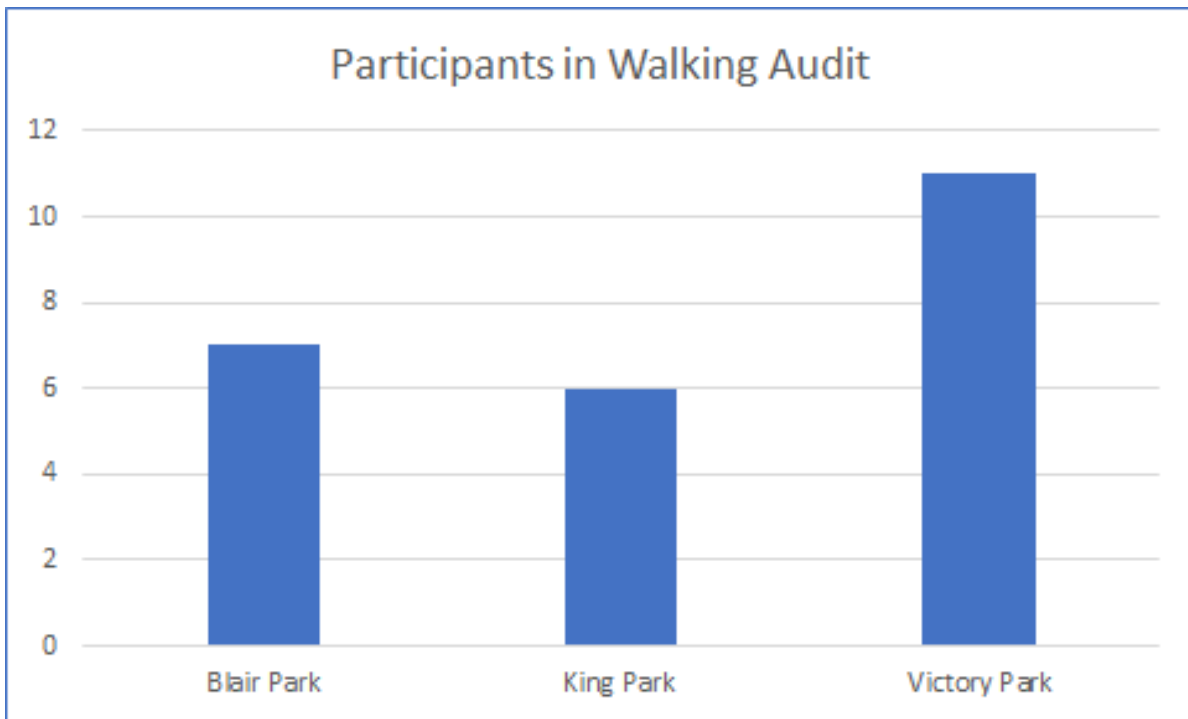


Additionally, C-U SRTS Project has run bike rodeos at some elementary schools for 4th graders. During the 2019-2020 academic year C-U SRTS Project made 22 presentations and ran one bike rodeo. The presentations to the 4th graders include a bicycle helmet safety demonstration called the Melon Drop. Two melons are used. One melon has a happy face because it is dropped inside a helmet. The other melon has a sad face as it is dropped without a helmet and usually cracks open demonstrating the benefit of wearing a helmet.



Safe Routes to Parks

The Safe Routes to Parks (SRTP) program is a new initiative started in 2019 which is dedicated to promoting safe walking and biking routes to parks throughout Champaign-Urbana. C-U SRTS has worked closely with the Urbana Park District (UPD) to identify parks with potential mobility barriers that are to be studied as a part of the SRTP Program. C-U SRTS, with the help of interns from the U of I Regional Planning Department and Community Learning Lab, has collected information on local neighborhood organizations and stakeholders, reached out to contact these organizations, prepared and conducted walking audits of the routes to each park, and exhibited the information in reports and presentations. So far, information has been collected and reports have been prepared for Victory Park, King Park, and Blair Park all of which are in Urbana. Currently, C-U SRTS is working with a graduate student from Eastern Illinois University to prepare a walking audit for Crystal Lake Park, which is Urbana's largest park.



Websites

C-U SRTS Website



C-U SRTS maintains a website which contains a variety of resources, details on events, and documentation of projects. Staff provides details on future events, where and when they will be held, what the event will include, and a summary is included upon the completion of the event.

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Bike Month Website

The C-U Bike Month website is maintained by C-U SRTS staff, CCRPC staff, and CCB staff. Together, these entities provide up-to-date information on Bike Month activities, a comprehensive calendar, and various other forms of supplemental information. On the site, people of C-U can register for events and view pictures and resources from previous Bike Months.

Data Collection

C-U SRTS strives to collect data on pedestrian and cyclist activity in order to measure the project's success. International Walk and Roll to School Day is when C-U SRTS collects the majority of its information for the year. Grant funding is used to print out walkability checklists, parent letters, safety tips sheets, and maps for each student every registered school. Classroom tally sheets are delivered to every classroom in participating schools. All data collected is sent to the National Center for Safe Routes to School for analysis.

C-U SRTS Project has also historically done bike counts at schools during the spring to collect data on how many students ride their bikes to school. This year, due to school being switched to online learning, we were unable to collect this data.

Challenges and Lessons Learned



Challenges

This year proved to be successful in many respects; however, we, along with the rest of the world, were faced with the great challenge of COVID-19. We were forced to improvise, indefinitely postpone, or simply cancel many SRTS events. A major portion of our grant was to be spent on the Train-the-Trainer program, and that program has been postponed. Furthermore, schools have been shut down making aspects of our work that deal directly with the schools very difficult or impossible to accomplish at the time. Beyond the setbacks the COVID-19 pandemic has created, there are the usual challenges which C-U SRTS faces: lack of staff time to accomplish all potential projects and having too few volunteers and/or instructors for programs and events. These issues are usually exacerbated by lack of funding, however, the SRTS grant provided a great deal of support for programming during this academic year. The final challenge faced by C-U SRTS was the change of leadership within IDOT's SRTS Program.

Lessons Learned

With COVID-19 we have learned people are walking and cycling more which has placed more emphasis on the importance of our work. We have been increasing online resources and we are continuing to promote, encourage, and participate in walking and cycling in Champaign-Urbana. We found ways to expand our outreach and programming to support families and kids in walking and bicycling safely. The Super Heroes Cycling program, created to replace Bike to School Day, is one example. We also created and posted numerous family-friendly bike ride routes via the C-U Bike Month website and promoted bicycling fun and safety via multiple media platforms. Moving trainings to online platforms is another example that has been popular with cycling instructors and educators. Flexibility and resiliency have been key to maintaining our programming and helping create a safe community for children and families to walk and roll in.



Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School

Annual Report 2019-2020

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C-U Safe Routes to School Project
C-U SRTS Project



2020