

Champaign-Urbana Safe Routes to School Project 2016-2017



Annual Report
July 2017



Summary

In the year of 2016 to 2017, the C-U SRTS Project has continued its work providing bike and pedestrian education and safety promotions in Urbana and Champaign. Work with the two school districts was undertaken in collaboration with several area agencies, University of Illinois students, local bicycle organizations, and community volunteers. Activities in the Urbana School District included programs such as Walk n' Roll to School Day, Bike to School Day, community bike rodeos, and SPLASH after-school bicycle safety classes. Active 4 Me, a bicycling and walking incentive program, and a Walking School Bus were continuously operated in the Urbana School District. These activities have reached thousands of students. Parents also participated by providing feedback in online regular parent surveys.

Included in this report is a brief background of the Safe Routes to School program and details of the work accomplished over the year from July 2016 to July 2017, including a summary of challenges and lessons learned. Further information about the C-U Safe Routes to School Project, including this report, can be viewed online at <http://cu-srtsproject.com/>.



Leal Elementary School students on Bike to School Day, 2017

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Safe Routes to School: A Solution for Health and Safety Concerns

Health

Nearly 38 percent of adults across the country are considered obese or overweight, while just over 17 percent of children fall under that same category.¹ Nationally, the average has been nearly one in three although recent studies show these numbers may level out with a possibility of decline.² Children with an unhealthy weight are at risk for health problems including heart disease, high-blood pressure, stroke and diabetes. Children with an unhealthy weight also risk suffering additional health problems in their adulthood as well.³

Physical activity helps kids maintain a healthy weight and protects against health risks. In fact, when continued into adulthood, “reaching the recommended minimum level of physical activity compared with no activity was found to lead to a reduction in all-cause mortality of 19 percent” and a reduction of “24 percent if an hour a day is spent.”⁴ Children who walk to school are significantly more active through the day.⁵ In this way, physical activity in one’s youth promotes habits of physical activity and health later in life.

Researchers tie physical activity not only to physical health but to positive mental, emotional, and academic outcomes as well. In a review of literature by the Center for Disease Control, “eleven of the 14 studies found one or more positive associations between school-based physical education and indicators of academic performance.”⁶ Although strained school budgets may seek to eliminate PE, eliminating physical activity from the school day may have consequences for student achievement.

Lastly, child health outcomes are also correlated to environmental health and air pollution. All children and adults, whether sitting in a car, bus, or walking or biking to school, are exposed to harmful air pollutants and efforts to “reduce exposure to and the concentration of traffic pollution will benefit all children on the trip to and from school, regardless of their selected way of getting to school.”⁷

¹ Prevalence of Obesity Among Adults and Youth: United States, 2011–2014. Retrieved July 19, 2016 from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db219.htm>.

² Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Flegal KM. Prevalence of Childhood and Adult Obesity in the United States, 2011-2012. *JAMA*.2014; 311(8):806-814. Retrieved June 30, 2014 <https://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1832542>

³ Penedo FJ, Dahn JR. Exercise and well-being: a review of mental and physical health benefits associated with physical activity. *Curr Opin Psychiatry*. 2005;18(2):189-193.

⁴ Woodcock, James, et. al. “Non-vigorous physical activity and all-cause mortality systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies.” *International Journal of Epidemiology* 40.1 (2011): 121-138.

⁵ Cooper, AR, AS Page, LJ Foster and D Qahwaji. “Commuting to school: Are children who walk more physically active?” *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 25,4 (2003).

⁶ The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance. Retrieved June 26, 2014 from http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf.

⁷ Ibid 6.

Safety

Child pedestrian and cycling safety is threatened by a lack of sidewalks, crosswalks, and street design that encourages driver speed and reduces visibility of other road users. Low-cost infrastructure improvements like sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic calming, crosswalks, and signage, as well as traffic law enforcement, can reduce pedestrian and cycling crashes. A sidewalk “reduces the risk by more than 50 percent that a pedestrian will be struck by a car.”⁸

Over the course of the 2014-2016 C-U SRTS grant, two crashes involving child pedestrians/bicyclists and motor vehicles have occurred in Urbana. Wiley Elementary School experienced a student being hit by a vehicle on the way to school when the student bicycled off the sidewalk into the street without first stopping to check for oncoming vehicles. Education and outreach to school and government officials as well as parents about safe bicycling skills to prevent crashes was undertaken. Wiley Elementary conducted a bike rodeo in the spring of 2016 to further teach bicycle safety skills to the students and is planning a helmet and bike lock education and distribution program for the coming school year. Another crash occurred at Washington and Kinch near Dr. Williams Elementary School right after school between a pedestrian and a motorist. A SRTS plan for Dr. Williams addressed safety issues at this location. The plan was funded by our last SRTS grant.

Economic

Families and communities who shift from vehicle to walking or biking trips to school also receive economic benefits from fuel and health savings. Researchers examined mode shift of half of all car trips to less than five miles of biking in six Midwestern states (Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin). The model predicted that the improved air quality resulting from less pollution from traffic combined with the health benefits of the physical activity would result in savings of approximately \$8.7 billion in the region.⁹ The additional income saved from fuel and health expenses could not only provide additional income to families and increase local spending but also impact family quality of life and economic mobility.

⁸ Knoblauch, R, B Tustin, S Smith and M Pietrucha. “Investigation of Exposure-Based Pedestrian Accident Areas: Crosswalks, Sidewalks, Local Streets, and Major Arterials.” Washington DC: US Department of Transportation, 1987.

⁹ Grabow, Maggie, Scott N Spak, Tracey Holloway, Brian Stone, Jr, Adam C Mednick and Jonathan A. Patz. ‘Air Quality and Exercise-Related Health Benefits from Reduced Car Travel in the Midwestern United States.’ *Environmental Health Perspectives* 120 (2012): 68-76.

Background on C-U Safe Routes to School Project

C-U SRTS Project began its efforts to improve walking and bicycling for students in the Champaign-Urbana community in 2004 in partnership with SafeKids Champaign County. Four elementary schools participated the first year, two in each school district, in International Walk n' Roll to School Day events. Walkability checklists were provided to all participating schools and participation in the event has grown over the years.

In July 2008, C-U SRTS Project was awarded \$25,500 Safe Routes to School grant through the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. The purpose of the grant was to "educate community audiences on pedestrian and bicycle safety issues, and to encourage safe walking and bicycling to schools in Champaign-Urbana." In 2009 C-U SRTS Project was awarded a \$62,000 SRTS grant to "train and educate school and community audiences about Safe Routes to School, pedestrian and bicycle safety." In 2012 C-U SRTS received a \$76,000 grant and the project expanded and improved upon pedestrian and bicycle safety in partnership with area agencies, local bike clubs, educators, administrators, and student and community volunteers. With the most recent grant in 2014 for \$15,840 C-U SRTS aimed to "make walking and bicycling to school safe and appealing for children in Urbana and to ensure that students can use active transportation modes to get safely to and from school."



Dr. Williams Elementary School bike rodeo, fall 2016

Partnerships

Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District (CUMTD) has provided enormous support by providing staff time to administrate and implement the project programs. CUMTD managed record keeping, wrote quarterly reports, purchased items, managed website and email correspondence, and organized events. SRTS activities were also enabled by staff and volunteer time contributions from Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, Champaign County Public Health District, Champaign County Bikes, The Bike Project, Champaign Cycle, Neutral Cycle, and law enforcement officers, planners, and engineers from the City of Champaign and the City of Urbana. In addition to the support of key agencies, programs would not be possible without the everyday support from educators, parents and law enforcement.

Members of the C-U SRTS Steering Committee currently include:

- City of Champaign
- City of Urbana
- Champaign County Bikes (CCB)
- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
- Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD)
- Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District (CUMTD)
- Champaign County Bikes

Parents and PTAs

Parents participated in events such as Walk and Bike to School Day in addition to supporting school districts to implement Safe Routes to School programs. Parents participated through PTAs and served as volunteers with the Walking School Bus Program.

Educators

Educators play a critical role in the success of C-U SRTS programs because of their direct relationships to students and families. Some educators, informally known as ‘SRTS champions,’ take initiative on SRTS causes in their schools. School district administrators, teachers, and staff have played important roles during our bike rodeos and after school bike safety programs helping to educate students and inform the kids while also piquing their interest.

Law Enforcement

Successful implementation of C-U SRTS programs would not be possible without the support of law enforcement. Officers from both cities provide invaluable assistance on Walk and Bike to School Days, at bicycle rodeos, and by helping to enforce and educate the public about traffic laws that protect all roadway users, especially in school zones.

Elected Officials

Elected officials helped to draw media attention to SRTS events and increase visibility of SRTS objectives and events. City council members and mayors have participated in events every year

and usually provide for Walk and Bike to School Day proclamations. A city council member from the Urbana City Council has volunteered to assist with the after-school bicycle safety class, helped with bike rodeos, and helped with summer bicycle safety education camps through the Urbana Park District in July 2016 and 2017.

Program Accomplishments

C-U SRTS has not received further grants after the most recent one in 2014, but has maintained most of its biking and walking educational programs in this fiscal year. Events with the Urbana School District, such as bicycle rodeos, Bike to School Day, SPLASH, Active4.me, and International Walk and Roll to School Day, continue to be successful for the students. Traffic Skills 101 classes, a Volunteer Snow Removal Program and Bike to Work Day greatly benefited the Champaign-Urbana community by increasing the public's awareness of safe walking and biking.

C-U SRTS also has created new events, provided new classes and added new partners to the schedule. From 2016 to 2017, we have organized bike safety classes specifically to train youth bicycle instructors, pre-school children, and people interested in bicycle maintenance. One new program, the Earn-a-Bike Program, began in the summer of 2017. It is a youth cycling education program launched in July 2017 with the Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club.

The C-U SRTS Project website has continued to provide current information on events and programming as well as provide safety information to the community. C-U SRTS also helped create a website during Bike Month 2016 that integrates entries of the most updated events, participant registration and volunteering sign-up, thus greatly facilitating Bike Month events and organization.

Bike rodeos

C-U SRTS organized four bike rodeos from July 2016 to July 2017, enabled more than 120 kids to experience the course, and provided 35 helmets to the public at the reduced \$10 price. Volunteers from various agencies helped to staff these community events. Staff recorded participants, helmet sales, and volunteer information for each of the events.

Dr. Williams Bike Rodeo was held on September 10th, 2016 at Living Hope Church in Urbana. We had 10 students join us and 14 volunteers helped with skill training at all stations.

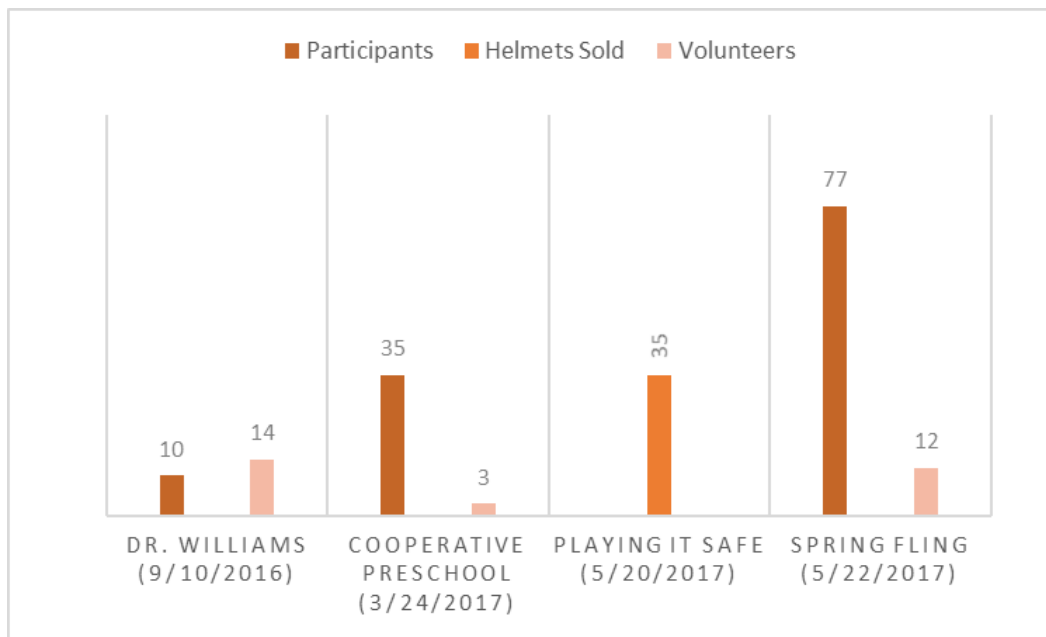
Cooperative Preschool Bike Rodeo was the first bike rodeo organized by C-U SRTS toward a young group of 2- to 5- year-old kids, teaching the most basic bicycle skills and safe biking habits. Working with Cooperative Nursery School in Urbana, we met with 3 classes of 2 to 3-year-olds, 3 to 4-year-olds and 4 to 5-year-olds on two separate days. Each session lasted 20 to 30 minutes. Around 35 kids joined us and three volunteers and several parents and teachers were there to help.



Kids learning bicycle safety in Cooperative Preschool Bike Rodeo

Carle's Playing It Safe Bike Rodeo at Leonhard Recreation Center was cancelled due to bad weather, but staff and volunteers moved inside and offered helmets fitting and sales to many potential bike riders in the community. We sold around 35 helmets on that day.

Spring Fling Bike Rodeo 77 kids went through the bike rodeo on May 22 at Garden Hills Elementary. Student practiced biking skills including starting and stopping, rock dodge, scanning, signaling, turning and yielding at eight stations. 12 volunteers helped with the event.



C-U SRTS Bike Rodeos Data 2016-2017

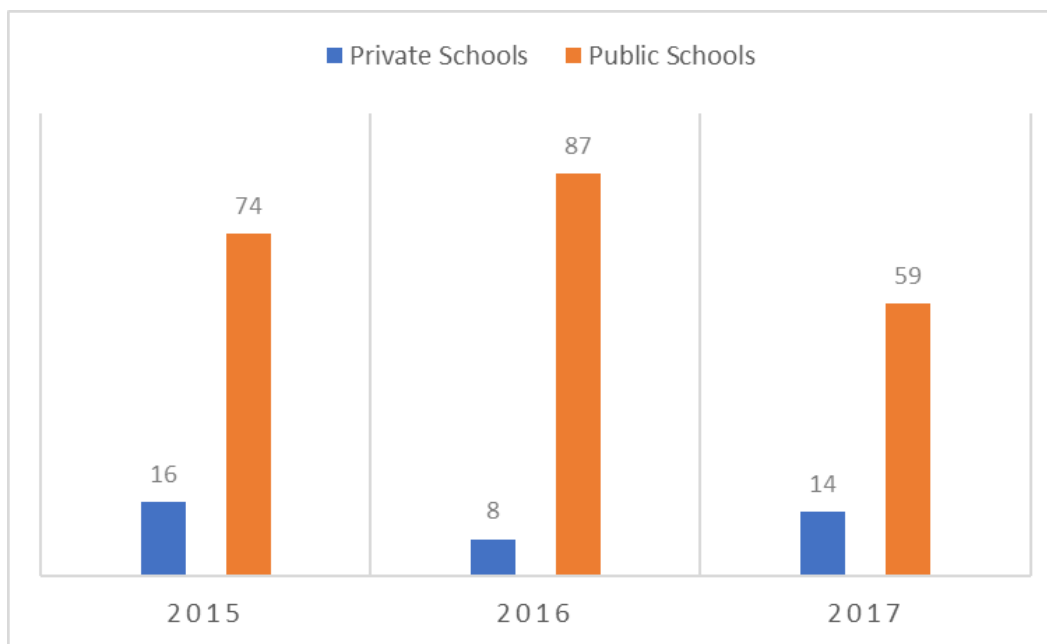
Bike to School Day

Individual participation in Bike to School Day (May 10th, 2017) was collected using an online registration form. 73 students registered for this event with destinations to 17 schools in Urbana and Champaign. Volunteers went to 6 schools on that day and handed out Bike Month T-shirts, backpack reflectors, and bike maps to students who came to school by bike in the City of Champaign, City of Urbana. Champaign County Bikes (CCB) provided critical support for Bike to School Day. Staff from CUMTD helped with the ordering and sorting of T-shirts and other handouts for the students.



Students biking to school on Bike to School Day

Participating students registered from 8 schools in Champaign and 9 in Urbana. Of all the participating schools, around 20% were private schools and 80% were public schools. Compared with numbers from the last two years, we see a slight decrease in the overall number of participants yet an increase in participants from private schools from 2016 to 2017.



Bike to School Day Registration 2015-2017

International Walk and Roll to School Day

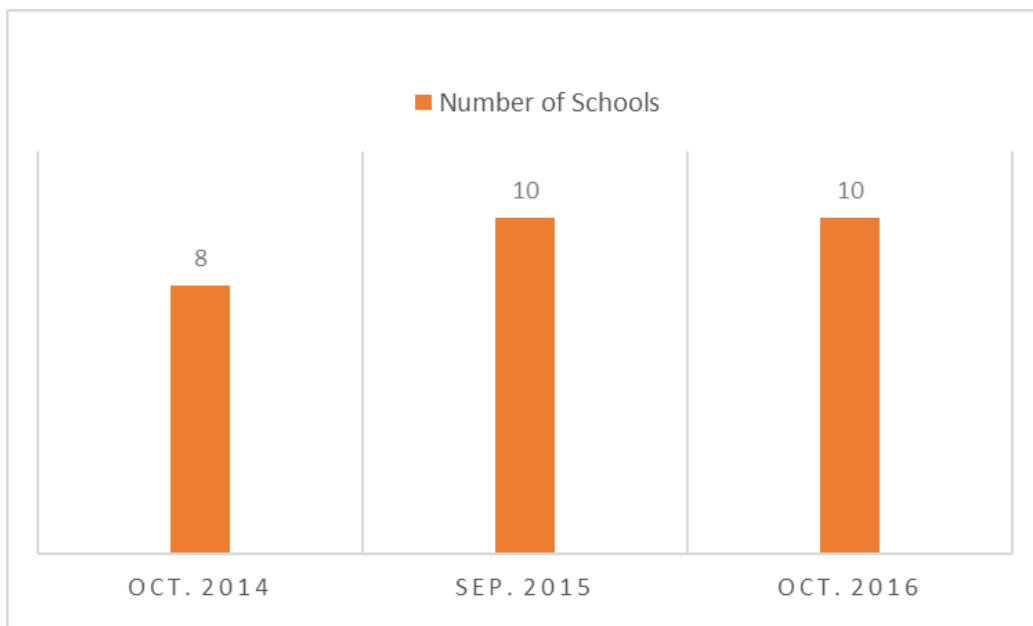
International Walk to School Day was celebrated on Oct 5, 2016. This event has been coordinated by C-U SRTS for the last several years. Ten elementary schools from both Urbana and Champaign participated in this year’s event: Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Williams (Prairie), Leal, Thomas Paine, Wiley, Yankee Ridge, South Side, Carrie Busey, Stratton and Bottenfield. Thousands of students walked together to school led by local organizations and celebrities, and were greeted and encouraged by friends, parents, teachers, and community members. This year’s event was reported by WCIA and Urbana Public Television.



Students at Dr. Williams Elementary on WRTSD
pc: Gabe Lewis



Students, U of I athletes, and staff at Wiley Elementary School
pc: Annie Adams



International Walk and Roll to School Day Participation

SPLASH fall 2016

SPLASH is an after-school program at Urbana Middle School. We developed a bicycle class called “Ready. Set. Bike!” to teach students safety and maintenance skills. During the 2016 program, we organized a 5-week course including both classroom and on-bike instruction including helmet fitting, rules of the road, basic bike maintenance, a bicycle rodeo and a group ride. Students met every Wednesday from April 6th through May 4th and finished the class with a bicycle ride to practice their new bicycle safety skills.



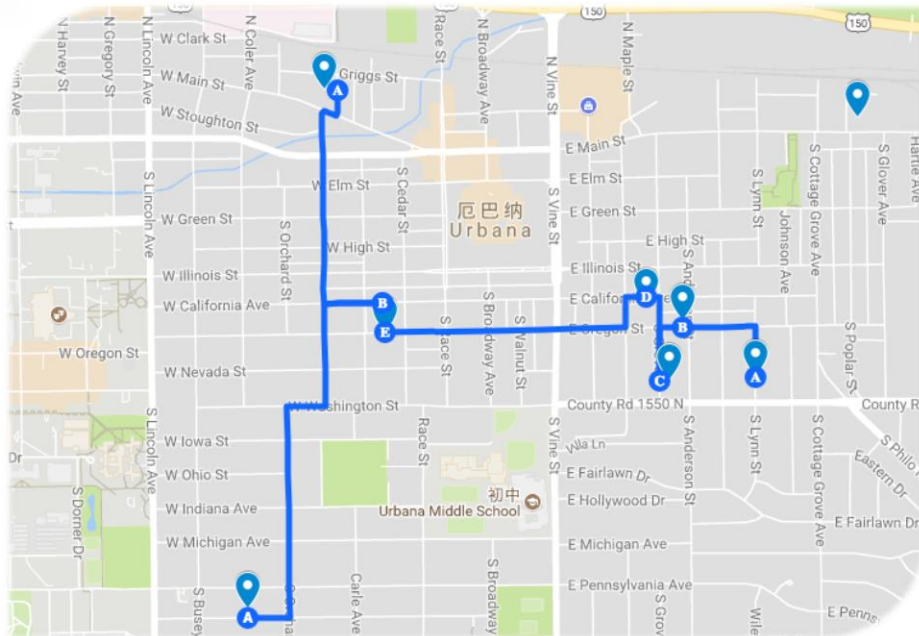
Students in SPLASH class Spring 2016

The program teachers include League Certified Instructors, local bike shop representatives, police officers, Champaign County Public Health department workers, and many more volunteers. The Bike Project helped make the class accessible to all students by offering to donate a refurbished bike to any student that needed one. Students also received a bike helmet, bike light set, and a lock for participating.

Walking School Bus Program

The Walking School Bus Program was offered at Leal School in the academic year of 2016 to 2017. Trained adults walk with children to school following a planned route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers. The Urbana School District has continued to pay a \$1,000 stipend to hire a University of Illinois graduate student to serve as the WSB Coordinator for the semester. The position requires about ten hours of work per week reaching out to parents, teachers, university students, and community groups.

The Spring 2017 WSB program started on March 6th, with three different routes developed for this semester: Route 1 has 7 volunteers, 5 kids, walking on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; Route 2 has 4 volunteers, 4 kids, walking every day; Route 3 has 2 volunteers, 1 kid, walking on Monday and Friday.



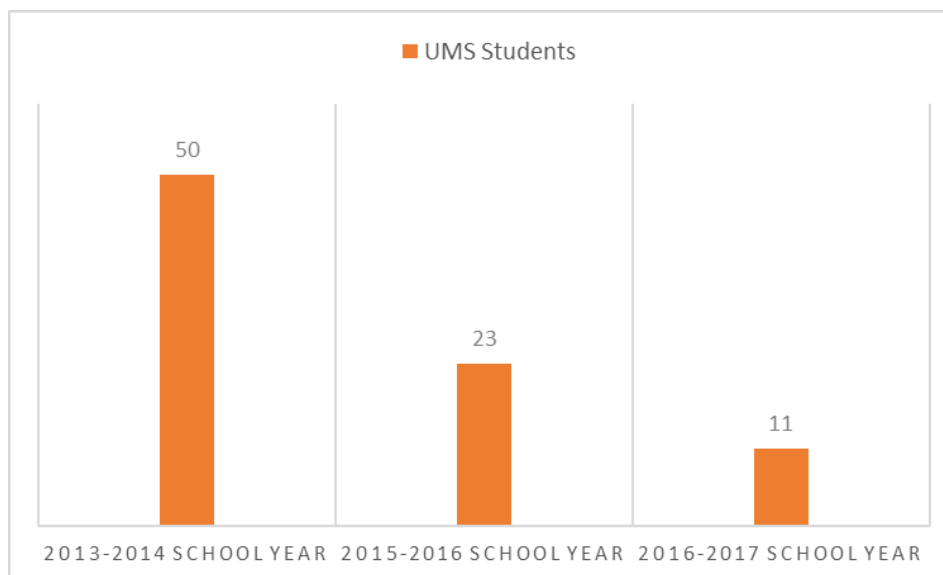
Spring 2017 WSB Routes with different schedules

Active4.me

Active4.me is an active transportation incentive program for kids using a solar-powered RFID reader. Students receive an RFID card that they wave underneath the computer every day they walk or bike to school. The computer tracks trips, mileage, and calories burned and students receive prizes based upon these values. In early spring 2013, C-U SRTS installed the Active4.me equipment at Urbana Middle School and with help from CUPHD-held focus groups to determine students' interest incentives. The program saw a decrease in participants, with 23 students from Urbana Middle School taking part in the program 2016-2017. Changes in staffing and a transition to a new software and operating system, along with reduced efforts at outreach to students, resulted in the decline in participation.



UMS Active4.me participants receive wrist bands and other incentives, spring 2014



Active4.me Participation

Bicycle Safety Education Class

Providing bike safety classes has been one of C-U SRTS's ongoing efforts to increase bicycle education in the community. In the year 2016 to 2017, C-U SRTS organized three classes for cyclists at all levels and helped with bike safety classes at the Urbana Park District.

Youth Instructors Training Class. Following the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Skills 123 Clinic curriculum, this class teaches and certifies adults to organize and administer children's bicycle rodeos and other youth bicycle education classes. This 4-hour workshop was offered on October 15th, 2016, with 7 participants. Students attended classroom instruction and 2 hours of outdoor bike rodeo setting-up practice.

Bike Maintenance Class at CUMTD. This class was hosted by CUMTD, a recognized Silver Bicycle Friendly Business, to support its staff who would like to bike and walk. C-U SRTS and a Neutral Cycle staff organized the class. Class was held on April 23, with 2 students, working on many hands-on basic and advanced bicycle maintenance practices.

Traffic Skill 101. C-U SRTS successfully held a TS 101 class on May 27th, 2017. Seven students joined us in the 4.5-hour on-bike class, after completing their online course and test. Under the guidance of League Certified Instructors (LCI), students practiced basic bicycle safety skills including bicycle safety checks, starting and stopping, scanning and signaling, and advanced skills such as emergency maneuvers called a quick stop and quick turn. At the end of the course, all the students and instructors took a group road ride that brought all the safety concepts into practice.



Traffic Skills 101 participants, 2017



Student practicing signaling during on-street riding

Snow Removal Program

C-U SRTS launched “Snow Angels”, a volunteer snow removal program with the support of MTD and the Urbana School District in winter 2016. Community members were encouraged to sign up as “Snow Angels” and committed to clearing sidewalks along their designated routes within 48 hours of the end of a snowfall that accumulated snow of more than 2 inches. This program was to encourage community members to clear up routes for kids and people with mobility challenges. From December 2016 to February 2017, 9 volunteers signed up for the program and undertook snow removal work in the community.



The crosswalk at Florida & James Cherry, across from Thomas Paine Elementary, leads to a virtually nonexistent sidewalk.

Let’s Get Rolling Earn-a-Bike Program

C-U SRTS partnered with Champaign County Bikes to raise funds to purchase 15 bicycles to be used in a pilot Earn-a-Bike program in Champaign-Urbana. Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club worked with us to organize and schedule the first-class July 11-13, 2017. Six students completed the application and the online Bicycle Safety Quiz created and hosted by Ride Illinois - the statewide bicycle advocacy organization. Five League Cycling Instructors, certified by the League of American Bicyclists, assisted with the class.

Let's Get Rolling!
C-U Earn-a-Bike Program

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE CLASSES
July 11 (Tue), 3-5 pm

- Two hours of basic bicycle assembly, maintenance, and helmet fitting

ON-BIKE SAFETY SKILLS AND RIDE
July 11 (Wed), 12 (Thu), 3-5 pm

- on-bike safety skills, rules of the road, avoiding crashes and cycling in all kinds of weather.
- A ride with local cycling instructors.

GET YOUR BIKE !

A New Bike + A Helmet + Lights + A Lock

Submit Application to Cynthia Hoyle, choyle@cumtd.com, 217 278-9059

2017 Earn-a-Bike Program is also supported by Champaign Cycle | Champaign County Bikes | C-U Mass Transit District

Program Flyer

The first class was held at The Bike Project with assistance from a Bike Project Steering Committee member. Students assisted with assembly of their new bicycles and learned some basic bicycle maintenance skills. The class also included helmet fitting and discussion on the benefits of wearing a helmet.

The second class met at the Lake House at Crystal Lake Park. The Urbana Park District provided indoor space for instruction and closed the adjacent parking lot to be used to teach bicycle safety skills in a bicycle rodeo. Students learned basic bicycle skills and practiced using their skills on short rides through the park using the park district's low speed roads.



Students learning bicycle maintenance skills

On the third day, the class met at the Lake House as the departure point for the on-street ride. All the students bicycled from Crystal Lake Park to southeast Urbana, where a refreshment stop included a visit to Red Bicycle Ice Cream shop. The class then bicycled from SE Urbana through the U of I Campus and back to the Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club,

where each student was presented with a certificate of completion, their own bicycle, lock, helmet, and bike lights.



Students get their bicycles after completing the program

Presentations, Conferences, Health and Safety Fairs

C-U SRTS Project participated in events between 2016 and 2017 including:

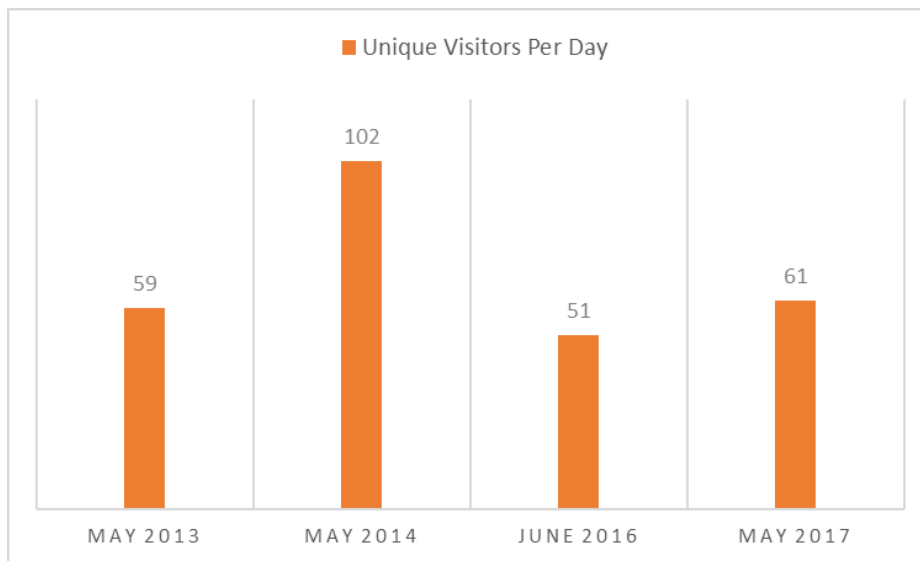
- Champaign School District Board Meeting 2016
- BPAC and Urbana City Council on snow removal program

Website

C-U SRTS. The website has continued to improve and expand to cover all events and activities that go on at C-U SRTS. Each of the events and programs are covered from the time they are planned until a summary is written about how successful it was. There are also resources given that help parents and children with walking and biking throughout the community. Resources are also provided in Spanish and a Google Translate feature makes the site accessible in 80 languages. While there have been many advances and improvements made to the site, web traffic has seen a decrease toward the end of this grant period compared to past years.



C-U SRTS Website



C-U SRTS Website Traffic

C-U BIKE MONTH. C-U Bike Month website was created for the eighth annual Bike Month in 2017. It integrates resources and events organized by all the bicycle communities, bike shops, and organizations during Bike Month; it also provides a one-stop platform for bicyclists to check ongoing activities and sign up for events, fundraising or volunteering opportunities. This website has facilitated the publication of events like Bike to Work Day and Bike to School Day. The traffic of this website reached its peak of 784 pages views and 422 visitors in the beginning of May.

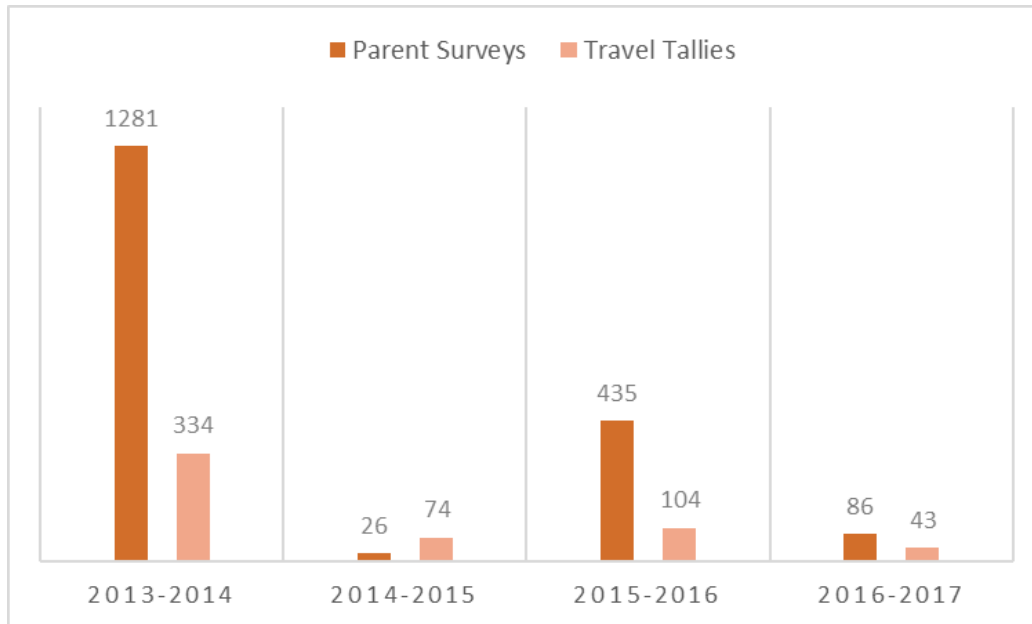


C-U Bike Month Website

Data Collection

In previous years, C-U SRTS Project used grant funding to print, distribute and collect travel tallies, as well as walkability and bikeability checklists, to every classroom in schools that wanted to participate in Urbana. Parent attitude surveys were sent out using online tools provided through the National Center for Safe Routes to School. All data was sent to the

National Center for Safe Routes to School for analysis. Discussions are underway with the school districts to determine if we will continue to print and provide the walkability checklists this year due to lack of funding. Efforts to find funding from local sponsors to continue data collection may also be undertaken.



C-U SRTS Data Collection

Challenges

Challenges

C-U SRTS Project has utilized numerous opportunities to network and leverage SRTS grant funding and activities by working with local organizations, public officials, schools, PTAs, the University of Illinois, C-U Public Health District, local bike clubs, and the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (CUMTD). CUMTD has provided staff support by paying for a student intern to assist with tasks as well as the consulting services of a transportation planner (Cynthia Hoyle, FAICP, LCI) and other district staff. CUMTD has also provided storage and maintenance of the bike rodeo trailer and picked up the insurance for the trailer in 2017. The Regional Planning Commission, Cities of Urbana and Champaign, and C-U Public Health District contributed staff time and support in addition to support and volunteer time provided by elected officials from the City of Urbana.

Consistent challenges to implementation remain, such as lack of funding, staff time and resources. Another challenge has been having enough instructors and volunteers to implement the requests for bicycle education in the community. During last grant period, we held bicycle safety education programs and attracted the interest of more bicyclists. To keep most of the programs running we need more certified League Cycling Instructors and volunteers. We now have eleven LCIs in the community, most of whom have full-time jobs, which made scheduling events a challenge. Some resource-intensive events like bike rodeo require a reasonable number of volunteers to organize all the essential stations.