

# Vermont Safe Routes to School

A publication of the Chittenden County MPO and  
the Vermont Safe Routes to School Steering Committee

Chittenden County Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Karen Akins, (802) 793-1481



Photos from Intl. Walk  
to School Week  
October 3-7, 2005



Gov. Douglas leads  
procession in Hinesburg



Richmond Walkers



Local Motion greets  
kids arriving at school

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## Vermont Gets \$1 million for Safe Routes

The federal transportation bill passed by Congress this summer establishes a national Safe Routes to School program.

This new program is designed to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make walking and bicycling to school safe and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of projects that will improve safety, while reducing traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Vermont will receive \$1 million per year for the next five years under this program for both educational programs and infrastructure improvements. The program will be administered by the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Financial assistance will be made available to state, local, and regional agencies, including non-profit organizations.

To be eligible for funding, infrastructure projects must be in the vicinity of schools, i.e. within two miles. Funding can be used for sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction

improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bike parking, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

For more information, contact Amy Bell, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, Vermont Agency of Transportation, 802-828-5799, or amy.bell@state.vt.us

## Pilot Project Enters Year 2: Progress Reports

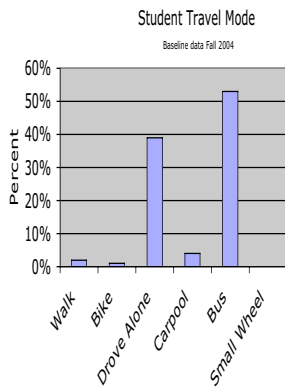
With the passage of federal Safe Routes to School legislation, the ongoing pilot project in Chittenden County has been given new meaning and importance. Learning what encouragement, engineering, education, and

enforcement strategies work here in Chittenden County will be particularly helpful in getting a statewide program off to a good start. A summary of each of the pilot programs at the three schools-Camel's Hump Middle School in Richmond,

Hinesburg Community School in Hinesburg, and C.P. Smith Elementary School in Burlington provides a glimpse of the challenges and successes we can expect from a larger statewide effort.

See pages 2-5 for progress reports on our three pilot schools.

# Progress Report: Hinesburg Community School



*Morning traffic alongside walkers on Route 116*



*HCS principal led the walking school bus during Way to Go week*



*Rice High School drum line salutes walkers*

## Background

Hinesburg Community School is located at the eastern edge of the village of Hinesburg in the old high school built in 1824. Recent growth on the opposite end of town from the school and existing rural residences sparsely spread throughout the school catchment area put most children outside of a reasonable walking distance to school. School busing is available to all children in the district, including those living in the village.

An incomplete sidewalk network within the village presents a problem for those who can walk. Heavy traffic along Route 116, where the school is located, discourages travel by bikes which must share the roadway with numerous trucks and other traffic traveling at high speeds. Faced with these obstacles, it took the commitment of three individuals to help start the Safe Routes program. A parent liaison who lives within the village, Hinesburg's MPO representative, and the school principal personally committed to the Safe Routes to school concept helped the project get off the ground.

## Safe Routes to School Efforts

An intensive effort took place during Way to Go week, the first week of May 2005. A walking school bus was launched utilizing a drop-off point in the village. During that week, students took part in a competition to encourage alternatives to solo driving. Students kept track of their personal travel behavior through punch cards, while classrooms took daily surveys to track travel behavior. Families were encouraged to plan ahead with Family Travel Planners. Awards and certificates were distributed to students after results were tallied. During the week, Bike Smart instructors trained students in Grades 5-7 in the PE classes. Students in younger grades viewed a pedestrian safety video developed by Honda, "Walking with ASIMO."

Students, staff, and parents enjoyed the walking school bus enough to continue it on "Walking Wednesdays" through the end of the school year, and started it up again in the fall. Students continue to walk with pompoms and signs such as "Honk if you love walking".

## Results

- 97 students participated in Way to Go week
- Walking Wednesdays continue to attract 30-50 kids led by parents and staff
- 130 students trained in Bike Smart Safety Curriculum
- International Walk to School Week 2005 built enthusiasm of students and community through special guests, daily themes-over 100 students walked with Governor Douglas and other state officials on Walk to School Day

## Challenges

- Long-term infrastructure improvements needed to improve biking/walking conditions
- Initial start-up delays due to transitioning of school principal

## Next Steps

- Continue to assess and prioritize roadway needs in conjunction with Town Plan
- Work on curriculum integration with school staff, institutionalization of walking and bicycling safety education.

# Progress Report: CP Smith Elementary

## Background

Located in a neighborhood setting in the New North End of Burlington, C.P. Smith Elementary is fortunate to be served by a complete sidewalk network connecting it to the surrounding residential areas. North Avenue, a north-south arterial that bisects the school catchment area is the primary traffic safety concern, but crossing guards at major intersections do provide safe crossing points for children. There is no school busing provided to students and virtually all students live within a reasonable walking or biking distance. The school has an ongoing tradition of participating in International Walk to School Day. In the past, the majority of students were driven to school by their parents.

An existing school health team and strong leadership from the school's principal allowed the SR2S effort to be quickly implemented, where it was immediately embraced by parents and students. An active parent with a background in public health initiated the project and serves as the school liaison.

## Safe Routes to School Efforts

Encouragement programs began in the spring of the 2004-2005 school year, beginning with a Step into Spring assembly designed to get kids thinking about using more active ways to school once the weather moderated. Walking Wednesdays began on March 9th and continued throughout the spring. One walking school bus regularly runs from neighborhoods to the northeast, gathering 25 or more students along the way. Student interest was maintained through creation of a festive atmosphere on these days, complete with music, special guests, and frequent walker cards. Bike Smart (in-classroom) education took place as part of PE classes for all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. A bicycle safety fair was held in May where 50 children received on-bike training and free helmets.

## Results

- Walking Wednesday increased walking from 21% to 51% one day a week
- Daily walking has increased from 21% to 25% in the first year
- Daily biking has increased from 2% to 5% in the first year
- Use of small wheel (scooters, skateboard, etc) increased from <1% to 6%
- 180 students trained in Bike Smart curriculum, 50 attended on-bike training
- Noticeable decrease in school-related traffic backups on surrounding streets and in school zone

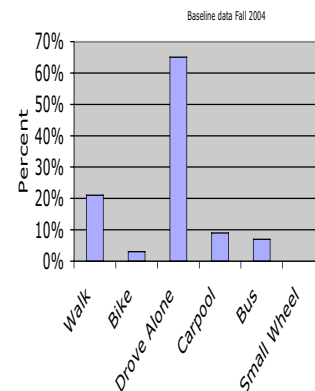
## Challenges

- Maintaining enthusiasm and interest over summer break and extreme weather months.
- Expanding weekly promotion to daily change in travel habits.

## Next Steps

- Expand emphasis on biking through Ride your Bike Fridays
- Continue programs through the winter months
- Organize more walking school buses from other areas

Student Travel Mode



*Kids practice on-bike skills at Bicycle Safety Fair.*



*Students proudly wear Frequent Walker Cards*



*Faculty and staff punch FW cards in front of school on Wednesdays*

# Progress Report: Camel's Hump Middle School

## Background

Camel's Hump Middle School is located 1/2 mile from Richmond's town center. This union school draws its students from a large area, including the Towns of Huntington, Bolton, Richmond, and parts of Jericho. While students from Richmond village are within walking and biking distance, the conditions along Jericho Road are perceived as dangerous due to the lack of a buffer between the sidewalk and roadway as well as heavy morning traffic. There are daily backups at the Four Corners intersection caused in large part by school-related traffic. School busing is available to all students, but many commuters prefer to drop their children off on their way to work. Bike Smart education was already being offered in the classroom at this school and a highly successful in-school walking program was in its second year.

Richmond's MPO Representative serves as the local liaison for the project. There are numerous infrastructure needs, including a major upgrade to Jericho Road and a proposed second access to the school. A supportive principal and town officials enabled this program to serve as a focus for school-related improvements the first year along with some encouragement activities.

## Safe Routes to School Efforts

The Safe Routes to School Team coordinated the school's effort during Way to Go Week. Four walking school bus routes were established, and adult escorts were recruited to ensure students were adequately supervised. The local police department provided crossing guard services and traffic control along a narrow section of roadway for the week. Reflective safety vests and flags were provided to each walking school bus. During Way to Go week students kept track of their personal travel behavior through punch cards, while classrooms took daily surveys to track travel behavior. Families were encouraged to plan ahead and were distributed Family Travel Planners. Awards and certificates were distributed to students after results were tallied. An after-school Traffic Tamers program involved middle school students in the future planning for Way to Go week as well as other traffic reduction activities.

## Results

- Second access to school proposal developed in conjunction with police, highway, school, and neighboring property owner,
- Walkability audit of Jericho Road
- Infrastructure needs identified
- 75 students participated in Way to Go week
- Students and families demonstrated continuing enthusiasm for walking to school during International Walk to School Week

## Challenges

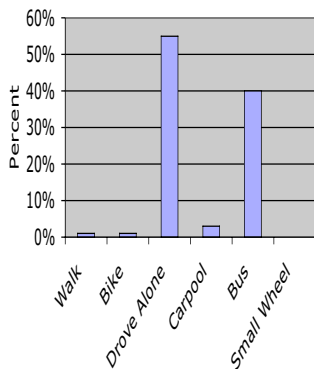
- Turnover of school principal and school resource officer at the end of year one has created need to re-educate and re-engage major players in project
- Shifting travel from parent drop-off to school busing or carpooling
- Funding/training permanent crossing guard at major intersection
- Sustaining weekly walking event with volunteer escorts in spite of perceived danger and liability concerns

## Next Steps

- Continue to assess and prioritize roadway needs in conjunction with Town Plan
- Address liability concerns of school and volunteer walking school bus "drivers"
- Institutionalization of pedestrian and bike training as well as promotional events

Student Travel Mode

Baseline data Fall 2004



*Morning backup at Four Corners Intersection*



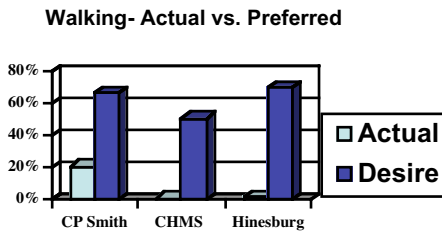
*Walking school buses arrive on time during Way to Go week*



*Volunteer walking school bus drivers*

## What Kids Want...to walk and bike to school

In spite of low initial walking and biking rates at our pilot schools, it is clear that children in all three schools would prefer more active routes to school. In classroom surveys conducted in the fall of 2004, students indicated in large numbers that they would like to walk to school. It is interesting that all three schools reported high levels of interest, even though a majority of students at Camel's Hump Middle School live beyond a reasonable walking distance and ages varied between schools.



Surveys show latent demand for walking and biking

At the beginning of the 2005/6 school year, the survey was expanded to include walking and biking preference. At the two schools where surveys were returned, the survey showed demand for biking was even higher than for walking, indicating children also have a desire for speedier travel.

The gap between current travel behavior and desired mode provides a good measure of receptivity to Safe Routes to School efforts. Instead of persuading those who prefer to travel by car, our efforts can focus on helping those who already want to make healthier choices by providing education, adult supervision, and improving infrastructure.

## Everything Fit & Healthy Expo Set for October 22nd

The Champlain Valley Exposition, in cooperation with the Champlain Initiative, the United Way of Chittenden County, the Vermont Department of Health, the University of Vermont (UVM), Vermont Public Interest Research Group, and the Greater Burlington YMCA have announced the first annual "Everything Fit & Healthy" Expo. The event will take place on Saturday, October 22, 2005, and brings a unique, enjoyable and educational event for adults, children and families to Vermont and the Champlain Valley.



"Everything Fit & Healthy" will include demonstrations of cooking nutritious food on a budget, healthy lunches your kids will eat, having fun while getting fit, organic farm products, health screenings, massage, and more. There will also be seminars conducted throughout the event including a kickoff and welcome from Governor Jim Douglas and Dr. Lewis First, Chief of Pediatrics at Fletcher Allen Health Care and host of "First with Kids."

## Vermont Safe Routes to School Steering Committee

Chittenden County MPO

Vermont Agency of Transportation

Local Motion

Vermont Bike & Pedestrian Coalition

Vermont Department of Health

Vermont Department of Education

Vermont Forum on Sprawl

American Heart Association

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Vermont Safe Routes to School Steering Committee

c/o CCMPO  
30 Kimball Ave.  
Burlington, VT  
05403-6825

PHONE:  
(802) 660-4071

E-MAIL:  
vtsr2s@yahoogroups.com

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://www.ccmpto.info/SR2S/>

## Safe Routes to School Training in Vermont

Statewide leaders in health, education, law enforcement, planning, and engineering will be invited to attend a national Safe Routes to School training course to be held in Vermont in late winter/early spring. The course will be taught by two certified instructors. The purpose of the training is to increase knowledge about Safe Routes to School programs among potential partners and to share lessons from the experience of the pilot program. Individuals interested in serving as local champions in their own community are especially encouraged to attend.

### For More Information:

To register your interest in attending the training course, please contact the CCMPO Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Karen Akins, at [karenakins@onebox.com](mailto:karenakins@onebox.com) or call (802) 793-1481. The training is tentatively scheduled for Monday, February 6th in central Vermont.

### How to contact your local Safe Routes to School Team:

#### C.P. Smith Elementary School Safe Routes to School Team

Local coordinator, Jill Nye-McKeown (Parent Volunteer)

Phone: 802-860-7505

Email: [mckeown4@adelphia.net](mailto:mckeown4@adelphia.net)

Group email: [CPSmithSR2S@yahoogroups.com](mailto:CPSmithSR2S@yahoogroups.com)

#### Hinesburg Community School Safe Routes to School Team

Local coordinator, Pam Mathews (Parent Volunteer)

Phone: 802-482-4120

Email: [pammy@madriver.com](mailto:pammy@madriver.com)

Group email: [HinesburgSR2S@yahoogroups.com](mailto:HinesburgSR2S@yahoogroups.com)

#### Camel's Hump Middle School Safe Routes to School Team

Local coordinator, Virginia Clarke (Richmond MPO Representative)

Phone: (802) 434-4415

Email: [vclarke@gmavt.net](mailto:vclarke@gmavt.net)

Group email: [CamelsHumpSR2S@yahoogroups.com](mailto:CamelsHumpSR2S@yahoogroups.com)

#### Safe Routes to School Pilot Project

For general questions, please contact Karen Akins, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, at (802) 793-1481 or [karenakins@onebox.com](mailto:karenakins@onebox.com). For information about the Vermont Safe Routes to School Steering Committee, contact Peter Keating, the steering committee chair, at the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization, (802) 660-4071, ext. 14 or [pkeating@ccmpo.org](mailto:pkeating@ccmpo.org).