

# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION & SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NEWS

HUMBOLDT COUNTY AUGUST 2020



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## Back to School?

*by Jenny Weiss*

Normally, the act of touching a pedestrian signal button wouldn't trigger concern. How quickly things change. On top of traffic awareness, pedestrians and cyclists in 2020 now have new safety considerations to contend with, such as potential coronavirus exposure when trying to safely cross a street. This summer has been one that no one could have ever imagined and one that will be difficult to forget. The number of coronavirus infections has been increasing in recent weeks and is causing concern and confusion over whether or not schools will need to continue distance learning or be able to resume in-person lessons.

Schools and districts have been provided general guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) but are ultimately on their own to determine whether and how to implement these considerations. Tailoring guidelines to the needs and circumstances of each community is a challenge as not all recommendations are feasible or practical. The AAP has advocated for policy considerations to start with the goal of in-person lessons as there is evidence of negative impacts on children due to school closures in the spring of 2020. Being away from school can lead to difficulties in addressing learning deficits, potential abuse in the home, or depression and can create food insecurities for many children. Many educators recognize that school is the best place for children to learn, however balancing safety needs of children and staff, preventing community spread of COVID-19, and the capacity for schools to follow distancing guidelines make in-person learning challenging.

While some local schools have already made the difficult decision to start the 2020 school year remotely, other schools and districts are still weighing the possibilities of both options. It is widely understood that distance learning is not ideal for many children and that many families will struggle with balancing work while supporting their children's education from home. Children are accustomed to traditional classrooms where they can access more information and understanding through their teacher and classmates' body language and voice. The classroom also has fewer distractions and provide opportunities for being social. Getting students back on campus physically presents other challenges too, such as school transportation and the need to reduce school bus transportation due to social distancing requirements. Some families will not feel comfortable having their children physically back on buses or school campuses in the midst of a global pandemic



*Above: A teacher and student in a classroom.  
Photographer unknown.*

that will not be going away any time soon. Finding the right balance of appropriate strategies instruction strategies will take time and patience. As county officials continue continue to monitor the coronavirus outbreak statistics locally, one thing is certain: our students, families and the entire community will likely be feeling the impacts of this disruption to learning for a long time.

# Bicycle Skills Courses Provide Practice Opportunities

Two grant funded projects are helping create local opportunities for practicing bicycle safety and handling skills through the installation of bicycle drills courses in McKinleyville and Fortuna. Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Public Health has been administering an Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 3 project over the past two years to increase bicycle safety in McKinleyville and Fortuna. One element of the project was to develop and install bicycle skills courses at local parks and that vision is becoming a reality this summer.

Locally we have seen many temporary bicycle skills courses installed with chalk at one-day bike rodeos during May is Bike Month each year. Two permanently painted drills courses already exist in Eureka at Winship Middle School and Lafayette Elementary School. The ATP Cycle 3 grant created another opportunity to permanently paint courses at Hiller Park in McKinleyville and at Newburg Park in Fortuna. The new courses will allow children and adults to safely



*Above: Bicycle Skills course painted in yellow on the Winship Middle School playground*

practice bicycle drills away from vehicular traffic at their convenience. Both courses will be accompanied by instructional signage that will provide instructions for the drills. The signage will also help users prepare for the course by taking necessary safety steps such as wearing a helmet properly and ensuring their bicycles are checked, safe and ready to ride. The practice drills that these courses provide include straight line riding, hazard avoidance, left and right turn signaling, and figure 8/yielding.

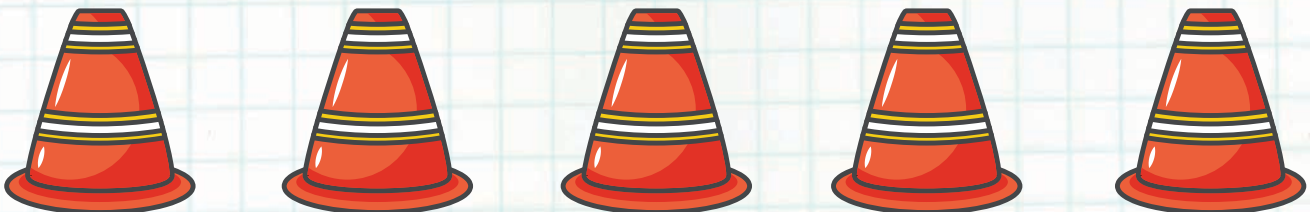
Humboldt County DHHS Public Health also administered an Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) grant which developed a Bike Skills Course report to evaluate locations for local bike skills courses and strategies for sustaining bicycle skills training in Eureka. The [report](#) was developed by Melanie Williams of [BikesThere](#) and can be found on the [Humboldt County Safe Routes to School website](#).

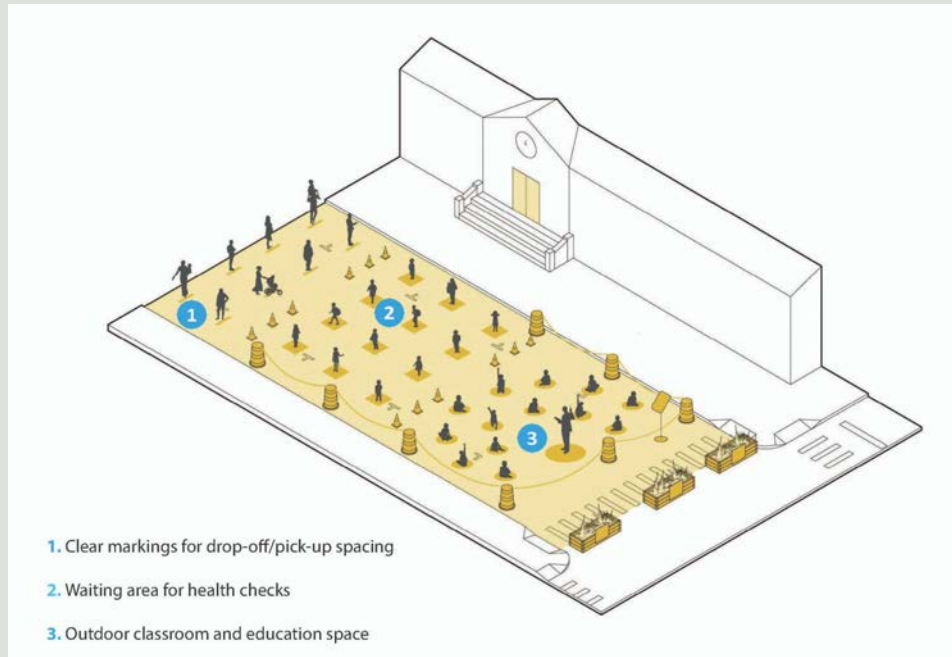
## Social Distancing Considerations For School Reopening

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) is an association of major North American cities and transit agencies providing transportation ideas and practices to build cities with safe, sustainable, accessible, and equitable transportation choices that support a strong economy and vibrant quality of life. They recently developed a guide entitled *Streets for Pandemic Response & Recovery* to showcase emerging practices in transportation and street design in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The requirement to social distance at least 6 feet between people combined with bans on gathering in groups may mean that we need to reallocate our streets and sidewalks for public use during this crisis. To meet immediate health needs and chart a potentially safe course for allowing schools to reopen, these guidelines may help our local community adapt streets to create safe, distanced areas for school arrival and dismissal, as well as for teaching and learning during the day. NACTO's principals to guide COVID-19 response and recovery include supporting the most vulnerable people first, amplify and support public health guidance, support workers and the local economy, and partner with community based organizations. Perhaps most importantly, we need to act now and adapt over time.

In preparation for reopening, NACTO recommends that schools/districts coordinate with their city/jurisdictional government to plan for outdoor facilities and access needs, such as creating 'School Streets'. Finding space to implement these suggestions may mean removing existing parking spaces, narrowing vehicle lanes, shifting parking/loading zones away from the curb, and/or designating streets as local access only to reduce vehicle volume so that street space can be shared. All projects should have clear goals and metrics and will need to be monitored regularly to ensure that physical changes remain in place appropriately, are understood and may need modifications as public health needs change.





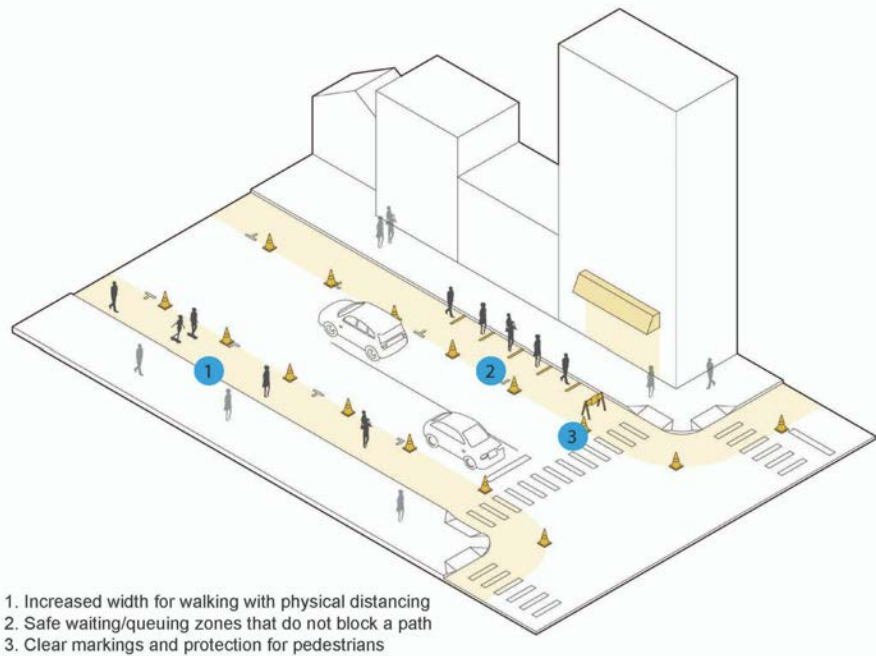
### When planning for opening schools, NACTO recommends:

- Preparing for outdoor facilities and access needs such as staggered start times and pre-entry health checks.
- Allot space for pre-entry health and temperature checks; create waiting spaces for caregivers near entrances.
- Prioritize schools and education/care facilities with limited space on school grounds, that will be over capacity under public health guidelines, or serve vulnerable groups.
- Develop contingency plans for extreme or inclement weather.
- Analyze the impacts of removing some or all travel lanes. Consider adjacent streets and bike/transit facilities to inform options and possible duration of street closure.

NACTO suggests engaging with school staff and parents, such as through Site Councils or Parent/Teacher Organizations to communicate all changes to school facilities, access, and health policies. Posting large, brightly colored signs to clearly indicate different zones (health checks, waiting, instruction) can also provide guidance and help alleviate

confusion. If possible, fully or partially close streets adjacent to or around school facilities by placing physical separation at entrances to indicate restricted or limited vehicular access. Large planters are a good way to create a barrier while incorporating nature. Using paint, color, and other markings on surfaces to invite play and learning at safe

physical distances is also



1. Increased width for walking with physical distancing
2. Safe waiting/queuing zones that do not block a path
3. Clear markings and protection for pedestrians

*Above: Example of how to create sidewalk space for pre-entry health checks*

suggested. Indicate clearly the locations and spacing for drop off and pick up. These guidelines should be reviewed and analyzed to ensure they are meeting needs of students, parents/caregivers, and teachers. Ask for feedback and revise and improve your design and operation as needed. Be sure to assess how children are getting to school and which routes are being used so that appropriate changes to adjacent streets can be made. In some regions, outdoor classrooms are even being provided, however that is more challenging in our region where rain is frequent during much of the school year.



*Above: Shared streets in Somerville, MA*



*Above: Outdoor classroom in Turin, Italy*



*Above: Cones and a simple stencil were used to extend sidewalks in Somerville, MA*

It is also important to plan for and create safe crossings adjacent to and near schools. This includes identifying streets or intersections with safety and accessibility challenges such as missing sidewalks, long crossing distances, and gaps between safe, marked crossing areas. In some cases, temporary infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalk extensions into parking lanes, strategic cone placement to reduce exposure and shorten crossing distances, and even vehicle lane closures if necessary will improve safety at locations with higher pedestrian use such as at school entrances during arrival when health and temperature checks are underway.

Schools that are able to open may eventually have to re-close due to surges in coronavirus cases. Working together, our local jurisdictions, schools and districts will have to remain flexible in order to create and maintain safe spaces for children to learn, move and thrive.

For more information about [NACTO](https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NACTO_Streets-for-Pandemic-Response-and-Recovery_2020-06-25.pdf) and to read the full report, visit [https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NACTO\\_Streets-for-Pandemic-Response-and-Recovery\\_2020-06-25.pdf](https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NACTO_Streets-for-Pandemic-Response-and-Recovery_2020-06-25.pdf)



*Above: Cones make pedestrian crossings more visible in Oakland, CA*



*Above: High school students in Wuhan, China line up for school on markings on the ground as they wait to enter their school.*

## Fortuna and Rio Dell ATP Project Updates

The City of Fortuna is completing an Active Transportation Program Cycle 2 project that addressed the need for safety improvements at Linnell K. Walker, (formerly known as South Fortuna Elementary School). This project, which began in the fall of 2018, was designed to benefit elementary students as well as Fortuna Middle School students who walk and bike to the bus stop located at the elementary school to catch the bus to the middle school. Infrastructure

improvements are being completed this summer before the start of the school year and will benefit the entire community by improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and encouraging active modes of transportation. The project has connected Lawndale Drive, which had no existing pedestrian or bicycle facilities, to Newburg Road through the installation of sidewalks and bike lanes. There is also a new paved path on the north end of the school parking lot that directly connects to South Fortuna Boulevard.



The arrival/dismissal area is also being made safer for children who walk or bike as well as for those dropped off and picked up by their parent/caregiver by relocating the loading zone to the north side of the parking lot and installing a paved sidewalk and curb where students load and unload. The direction of traffic flowing into and out of the parking lot has also changed. Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) developed an

arrival and dismissal map with clear procedures in English and Spanish which will make the improvements even easier to understand and utilize. RCAA has also been leading pedestrian and bicycle safety education and Walk and Roll Events to provide students with the skills they need to be safe while helping parents/caregivers feel more comfortable allowing their children to walk or bike to school.



Rio Dell is also seeing their community transform thanks to an ATP project currently under construction. The City of Rio Dell received an Active Transportation Program Cycle 2 grant to address the need for a safe, non-motorized connection from neighborhoods to downtown. Infrastructure improvements are underway along Belleview Street which has new bike lanes going in, at the intersection of US 101 and Wildwood Avenue where pedestrian crossings have been made more visible, and along Davis Street behind the elementary and middle school campuses and along the Davis Street highway overpass where intersections have had new curbs and ramps installed. Meaningful education and encouragement programs for Eagle Prairie Elementary School and Linell K. Walker Elementary students in light of the coronavirus pandemic will continue to be provided this fall through modified online resources and demonstration videos to ensure the safety of students and staff.



# Humboldt Transit Authority Donates Transit Passes to Local Schools



The coronavirus pandemic has presented many challenges for schools, forcing new policies and systems to be created or adapted to ensure the safety of students, families, and staff is prioritized. Among the challenges schools face is the ability to transport students to and from school safely while abiding by social distancing requirements. Spacing students out on buses will result in fewer students traveling on each bus and this reduced capacity means some routes may need to be cut. Walking School Buses are being considered by some districts as an option for schools that have to expand their walking zones and reduce the distance they can provide bus transportation. Another solution has been provided by the Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) who will be providing transit passes to students and families with transportation limitations as a means of getting them to and from school.

The passes have been provided to HTA by Caltrans through Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) funding. The Humboldt County Safe Routes to School Task Force would like to thank Bryan Little of Redwood Coast Montessori and Greg Pratt of HTA for identifying this issue and working together to come up with a positive transportation solution for students throughout the county.

The passes will be made available to Humboldt County Schools and school districts for distribution through Redwood Community Action Agency. If you are aware of students or families that are in need of school transportation and have access to the Redwood Transit Service or Eureka Transit Service lines, please contact Jenny Weiss at [weiss@nrsrcaa.org](mailto:weiss@nrsrcaa.org) to arrange for passes to be delivered to your school or school district. A local press release about the Caltrans LCTOP funding can be found [here](#).



# STARTING A WALKING SCHOOL BUS: THE BASICS



## WHY START A WALKING SCHOOL BUS?

Many schools have found that Walking School Buses can be a fun, low cost mode of school transportation. During these uncertain times, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for schools and districts to transport the same number of students on school buses while following social distancing guidelines. This may be the perfect time to start a Walking School Bus to help fill the transportation gap caused by COVID-19.

Students who walk or bike to school not only get the daily physical activity they need to be healthy, but studies also show that children who walk or bike also tend to perform better in school.

## WHAT IS A WALKING SCHOOL BUS?

A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It sounds simple because it is! However, there are some modifications that need to be put in place due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements.

Typically Walking School Buses range in size from just a few kids to a dozen, with an appropriate number of adults to provide supervision. Due to COVID-19, walking school buses should consist of **no more than 6 children and one adult**. They can be structured like a regular bus by creating one or more meeting points, a timetable, and a regular schedule of volunteers.

## START SIMPLE!

Walking School Bus programs should start simple and can always change or grow as needs arise. Start with a single neighborhood that has parents and children who are interested and live nearby. It is like a carpool, without the car! Added benefits include exercise, fresh air, and being with friends.

Are you home due to COVID-19? Consider walking your child and including a few other children from your neighborhood.

For an informal bus:

- Locate and invite nearby children to walk with you
- Pick a route and **take a test walk before school starts**
- Decide in advance how often you will walk together and **what the return trip for each student will be**
- Have fun!

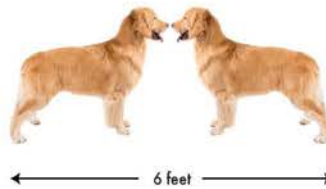
## BIKE TRAINS FOR OLDER STUDENTS

A variation on the Walking School Bus is called a Bike Train. Bike Trains may be more appropriate for families that live further from school or for older students. In a Bike Train, adult chaperones ride bicycles with children to supervise their ride on the way to or from school. The flexibility of the Walking School Bus or Bike Train make them appealing to children of all ages and communities of all sizes with varying needs.





## COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS



Due to the dangers of the highly contagious coronavirus, schools and districts must ensure that all students and walking adults adhere to social distancing requirements.

To keep students and volunteers safe, please follow these guidelines:

- All walkers **must wear a mask**
- No more than 6 children and 1 adult per Walking School Bus
- Encourage **all walkers to wear bright/reflective clothing** and during winter months, flashlights are also encouraged
- Space students out **6 feet apart** when meeting and while walking
- In order to stay safe in traffic, **walkers may be closer than 6 feet for short periods of time when crossing at crosswalks or intersections**, which is why everyone **must wear a mask**. As soon as it is possible, walkers will resume the 6 foot space

Sample Walking School Bus Schedule

Date	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sept. 14-19	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones
Sept. 22-27	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones
Sept. 14-18	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones
Sept. 21-25	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones
Sept. 28-Oct 1	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones
Oct 3-7	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones
Oct 10-14	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Mr. Anderson P.M. Mr. Jones	A.M. Ms. Smith P.M. Mr. Jones

Developed by Redwood Community Action Agency and BikesThere with inspiration from the National Center for Safe Routes to School. For local resources on Safe Routes to School visit [humboldt saferoutes.org](http://humboldt saferoutes.org)

Above graphic is available for download [here](#)

## WHEN PICKING A ROUTE, ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

- **Do you have room to walk?**
  - Are there sidewalks or paths?
  - Do trash cans create obstacles?
- **Is it safe to cross the street?**
  - Can you see cars and can they see you?
  - Are there crosswalks?
- **Are drivers aware of pedestrians?**
  - Are you crossing in a crosswalk?
  - Are there school zone signs or flashing beacons to warn drivers?
- **Does the environment feel safe?**
  - Can you let your neighbors know more kids are walking?

For more help identifying walkable routes, visit [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/walkability\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/walkability_checklist.pdf)

## REACHING MORE CHILDREN

Determine who lives within walking distance and is interested in participating.

Determine if you will operate once a week or everyday and decide on a meeting place.

Identify a group of reliable adult walkers and create a schedule.

Determine if you will walk in the morning and in afternoon so it is known how children will get home at the end of the day

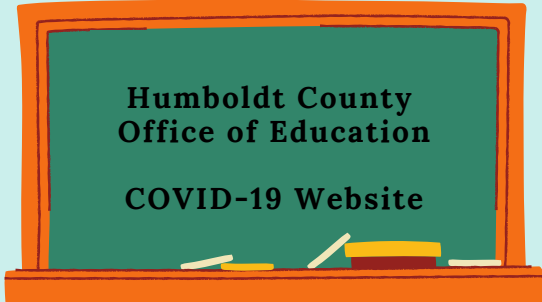
# RESOURCES

## Humboldt Safe Routes to School Website



Did you know Humboldt County has its own Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Webpage? Hosted by the Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG), [humboldtsaferoutes.org](http://humboldtsaferoutes.org) is the clearinghouse for all things Safe Routes in Humboldt County! Here you will find:

- Humboldt SRTS Task Force information
- SRTS parent survey reports
- School Walking Maps
- Walkability Assessment reports
- and much more!



The Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE) has a helpful COVID-19 website with information, resources and updates on school closures at <https://hcoe.org/covid-19>.

There, you will also find learning resources and activities for families, health resources and information, a newsroom, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), Safe Routes to School resources and more.

## Noticias sobre COVID-19 en español COVID-19 news in Spanish

Noticias locales de COVID-19 ahora disponible en español en <http://kymkemp.com/category/en-espanol/>

Local COVID-19 news now available in Spanish at: <http://kymkemp.com/category/en-espanol/>



Please share!





To learn more about what **Natural Resources Services - RCAA** is up to, visit our website [here](#).



This newsletter has been developed for school teachers, administrators, transportation planners, public health, and pedestrian and bike safety advocates in order to keep you informed of the latest news involving our local Active Transportation and Safe Routes to School efforts and programs. For more information contact [weiss@nrsrcaa.org](mailto:weiss@nrsrcaa.org) or (707) 269-2062.

