



For Immediate Release
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**Help Get Kids to School Safely:
Participate in Fall Safe Routes to School Planning in Santa Cruz County**

Santa Cruz, CA – Help create a Safe Routes to School Plan for 16 schools in Live Oak, Aptos and Scotts Valley in partnership with Ecology Action, the County of Santa Cruz, City of Scotts Valley, and the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency. The goal of this project is to gather community input and create a comprehensive plan for traffic safety improvements near schools. Parents, teachers, neighbors and concerned citizens are invited to attend one of three community meetings and provide input to create a comprehensive plan that reflects community needs.

“Getting to school shouldn’t be a near-death experience. Everybody has a right to safety,” Santa Cruz resident Alex Yasbek said.

Traffic collisions involving bicyclists and pedestrians are a serious issue in Santa Cruz County. In 2015 the California Office of Traffic Safety ranked Santa Cruz County #1 worst out of all California counties for bicycle collisions that caused injury or fatality. While biking and walking account for only 8% of trips in unincorporated Santa Cruz County, cyclists and pedestrians are involved in 26% of injury crashes.

The plan will identify barriers preventing students from walking and biking to school safely and include a list of projects to improve safe access to schools. This allows the County of Santa Cruz and City of Scotts Valley to prioritize and build projects rather than responding to the traffic issue of the day. Having a Safe Routes to Schools Plan in place will also make the County and City more competitive for grant funding, which is available through Caltrans’ Active Transportation Program. This project was modeled after a similar planning process in the City of Santa Cruz; after completing the plan, Santa Cruz received \$1.4M in grant funding to design and construct a variety of safety improvements around Santa Cruz City Schools.

Community members are invited to attend one of the project kickoff meetings on October 2nd, 4th and 10th to give input on traffic safety issues around schools. Dinner and childcare provided as well Spanish translation.

Tuesday, October 2nd, 6:30 – 8:00pm
Live Oak Elementary, 1916 Capitola Road, Santa Cruz

Thursday, October 4th, 6:30 – 8:00pm
Scotts Valley High, 555 Glenwood Drive, Scotts Valley

Wednesday, October 10th, 6:30 – 8:00pm
Mar Vista Elementary, 6860 Soquel Drive, Aptos

Following the kickoff meetings, walking audits will be held at each school to observe the school drop off and hear from parents and school administrators about specific safety issues. The planning team will present the list of recommendations to stakeholders and get their feedback in the spring of 2019, and the final plan will be presented to the City Councils in early 2020. This project is funded through a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant.

Find more information at ecoact.org/planningcounty, or contact Amelia Conlen at aconlen@ecoact.org or (831) 515-1351.

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