



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## City Council Staff Report

**From: City Manager**

**Report Type: INFORMATION REPORTS**

**Lead Department: Transportation**

**Meeting Date: April 21, 2025**

Report #:2407-3271

### **TITLE**

Informational Report: Safe Routes to School Annual Report for the Period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025; CEQA Status – Not a Project.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This is an informational report, and no action is required.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This informational report provides a three-year summary of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program accomplishments and an analysis of 2016-2024 school commute travel mode share trends that are used to inform future SRTS program goals and objectives.

### **BACKGROUND**

The 2022-25 review period covered in this informational report recognizes the thirty-year anniversary of the Palo Alto School District (PAUSD), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and City of Palo Alto-supported Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Partnership<sup>1</sup>. Key thirty-year Partnership achievements include in-school K-3, 5 and 6 grade bicycle and pedestrian safety education, a local commitment to prioritizing school commute route safety and accessibility, and success in growing and sustaining nearly four times the national student walk and bike mode share rate.<sup>2</sup> The SRTS program has eliminated roughly 3,824,000 yearly car trips from local roadways,

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<sup>1</sup> Timing differences between the City's fiscal year, the school calendar year, and the September SRTS annual data collection period present a unique challenge in the development of SRTS Annual Reports. A June 2025 report that correctly aligns with the City's 2024-25 fiscal year prevents the potential for public comment during the summer holiday season. Alternatively, a complete report for the 2023-2024 fiscal year shared during the 2024 school year may only provide quantitative data through 2023, limiting potential trend analysis. For this reason, quantitative data through September 2024 and narrative data through April 2025 are provided in this Annual Report. If needed, April-June 2025 narrative data will be incorporated into the July 2025 through June 2026 SRTS Annual Report.

<sup>2</sup> City School Liaison Committee, April 1, 2025. Agenda Item #4 SR# 2503-4407,  
<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=17126>

reducing risk for families who walk, bike and use transit, and improving roadway access for families who must drive.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, SRTS Partnership work and program strategies are incorporated in four City Comprehensive Plan 2030 Programs and Policies, and are indirectly referenced in another seven, as well play a key role in the 2022 Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (S/CAP) (Attachment A).

## **ANALYSIS**

### **2022-25 SRTS Partnership Program and Project Analysis**

The following summary highlights June 2022-25 SRTS Partnership accomplishments in Education, Engineering, Engagement, Encouragement, Equity and Evaluation, the six pillars of the SRTS program. The 2017-22 SRTS Five-Year Work Plan of yearly strategic and ongoing objectives are shared in Attachment B. Efforts to complete Five-Year Work Plan yearly strategic objectives yielded a mean yearly completion rate of 72 percent, while Five-Year Work Plan ongoing objectives yielded a 100 percent completion rate. Efforts to generate a new SRTS Work Plan were paused due to gaps in volunteer and staffing capacity in 2023 and 2024. The SRTS Partnership aims to relaunch a revised SRTS Work Plan process in Fall 2025, pending staff and volunteer capacity.

- **2022-25 Education Program Highlights**
  - Hired a Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)-funded SRTS Youth Coordinator to expand middle and high school transportation safety education programming, increase student walk and bike mode-share rates and to accommodate emerging secondary student interest in SRTS-relevant content areas
  - Received approval to develop a bicycle safety education traffic garden at the Ventura Community Center in collaboration with the Public Works and Community Services Departments
  - Consolidated multiple bicycle and pedestrian-safety education service contracts into two contracts with vetted service providers
- **2022-25 Engineering Project Highlights**
  - Awarded federal funding to construct protected bike lanes along East Meadow Drive and Fabian Way as part of the South Palo Alto Bikeways Project
  - Received unanimous City Council approval for No-Right-On-Red restrictions at nine El Camino Real school commute corridor intersections as part of the Caltrans SR82 El Camino Real Bikeway Project
  - Collaborated with PAUSD partners to approve the application of temporary green bike lanes along the Jane Lathrop Stanford (JLS) Middle School East

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<sup>3</sup> City School Liaison Committee, April 1, 2025. Agenda Item #4 SR# 2503-4407  
<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=17126>

Meadow frontage to accommodate on-campus parking lot closures during multi-year school-campus construction

- **2022-25 Encouragement Program Highlights**

- Collaborated with PTA Transportation Safety Representatives and community volunteers to bring Bike Palo Alto back as an in-person, family-friendly cycling celebration
- Provided technical assistance and outreach to facilitate partner requests to update the 2006 SRTS Partnership Consensus Statement and Bylaws
- Supported the collection of school community feedback on Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan and of the Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan

- **2022-25 Engagement Program Highlights**

- Continued Palo Alto Police Department (PAPD) Adopt-a-School efforts to station publicly requested Community Service Officers and uniformed motorcycle patrol officers around schools during arrival/dismissal times
- In partnership with PAUSD and PAPD staff, developed and shared electric bicycle safety communications
- In partnership with PAUSD, stationed permanent crossing guards at Cowper Street and East Meadow Drive, and at Stanford Avenue and Escondido Road

- **2022-25 Equity Program Highlights**

- Piloted a Bicycle Equity Initiative in collaboration with PAUSD and with local transportation equity-focused organizations, including the Silicon Valley Bike Exchange and Live in Peace Bike Shop, resulting in the repair of more than 500 bikes among five PAUSD secondary schools, and close to 100 percent on-bike and on-scooter participation to support 24 PAUSD Third Grade Bicycle Life Skills Bike Rodeo events
- Partnered with the Palo Alto PTA, PAUSD and community members to develop a PTA-sponsored Black History Heart and Soul Roll family-cycling event

- **2022-25 Evaluation Program Highlights**










- Generated a 2024 Third Grade Bicycle Safety Rodeo evaluation feedback approval rating of 100 percent among 82 educators, parents, and community volunteers
- Enhanced PAUSD Classroom Travel Tally summary data tables and PTA Parked Bike Rack Count secondary graphs to improve clarity and support pre-and post-pandemic mode share comparisons

## **2022-25 SRTS Quantitative School Commute Analysis**

Each September, Classroom travel tallies and yearly parked bike rack counts are administered at all PAUSD schools. Preliminary 2023 analysis shared during the 2021-22 Safe Routes to School Annual Report to City Council forecasted a trend in declining walk and bike student

mode share.<sup>4</sup> To confirm this analysis, staff supplemented 2022-24 yearly travel tally and parked bike count data findings with a mean summary of 2016-19 pre-pandemic and 2021-24 post-pandemic travel tally and parked bike count percentages. Findings are shared below each table and graph. Additional data considerations are shared in Attachment D.

**Table 1 Overview:** To calculate Travel Tally data, PAUSD school administrators email all K-12 elementary school homeroom or secondary English educators an online classroom show-of-hands tally form. Educators ask students to identify which travel mode was predominantly taken when arriving at school that morning.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1: PAUSD K-12 Classroom Show-Of Hands Morning Arrival Travel Tally Summary									
Grade	2024 Car 	2024 Carpool 	2024 Transit 	2024 Walk 	2024 Bike 	2024 Walk/Bike Mean Summary 	2016-19 Walk/Bike Mean Summary 	2021-24 Walk/Bike Mean Summary 	Difference btw. 2016-19 and 2021-24 Walk/Bike Mean 
K-5 (%)	54%	2%	4%	22%	17%	40%	40%	39%	-1%
K-5 (#)	2320	103	152	941	745	1686	2010	1668	-341
6-8 (%)	30%	2%	4%	13%	50%	63%	70%	66%	-4%
6-8 (#)	700	44	104	304	1155	1459	2038	1519	-519
9-12 (%)	37%	5%	1%	10%	46%	57%	60%	57%	-3%
9-12 (#)	1311	166	49	369	1638	2007	2409	2124	-285
K-12 (%)	41%	3%	3%	15%	38%	53%	57%	54%	-3%
K-12 (#)	4331	313	305	1614	3538	5152	6457	5311	-1146
Sum									-8%

**PAUSD Classroom Travel Tally Summary Results:** The sum of percentage data shared in the Table 1 PAUSD Classroom Travel Tally Summary *Difference btw. 2016-19 and 2021-24 Walk/Bike Mean* column suggests a combined K-12 post-pandemic walk/bike mode share loss of eight percent, when compared with 2016-19 pre-pandemic walk/bike mode share data. The breakdown by grade level suggests a one percent grade K-5 elementary school loss, a four percent grade 6-8 middle school loss, and a three percent grade 9-12 high school loss.

Although not reflected in the table above, staff conducted a comparative, separate grades 6-12 travel tally analysis for walking and biking to determine whether losses are more closely correlated to biking or walking mode share. A minimal one percent difference between 2016-19 pre-pandemic middle and high school walk percentages suggests losses described in the

<sup>4</sup> Study Session: Safe Routes to School Annual Report for 2021-2022. Page 9:

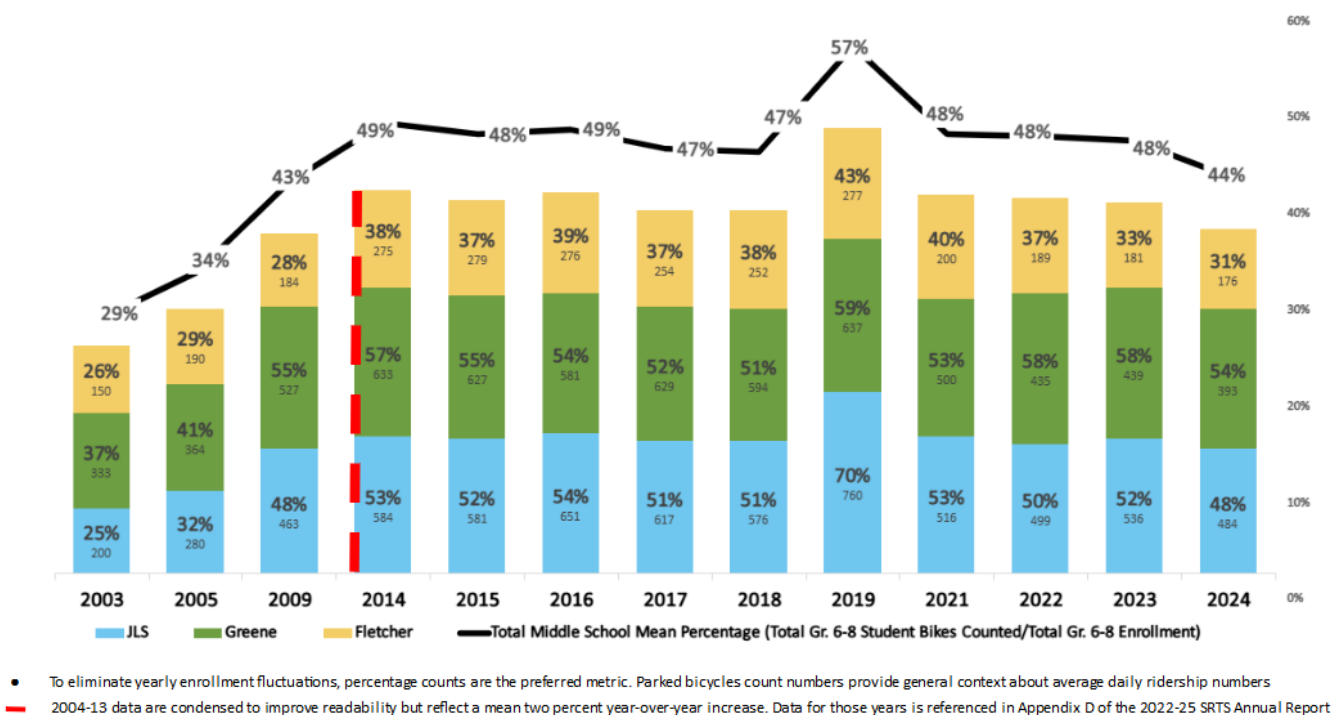
<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/transportation/safe-routes-to-schools/annual-reports-information/srts-annual-report-2021-2022.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> To eliminate the impact of yearly enrollment fluctuations, percentage counts are the primary metric referenced for comparisons in this table. Numeric data is provided for a general reference. Table 1 percentage estimates are generated by dividing the number of respondents for each travel mode with the total number of respondents for grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12, respectively. Table 1 numeric estimates are generated by multiplying percentage data for each grade with the total school enrollment for each specific year.

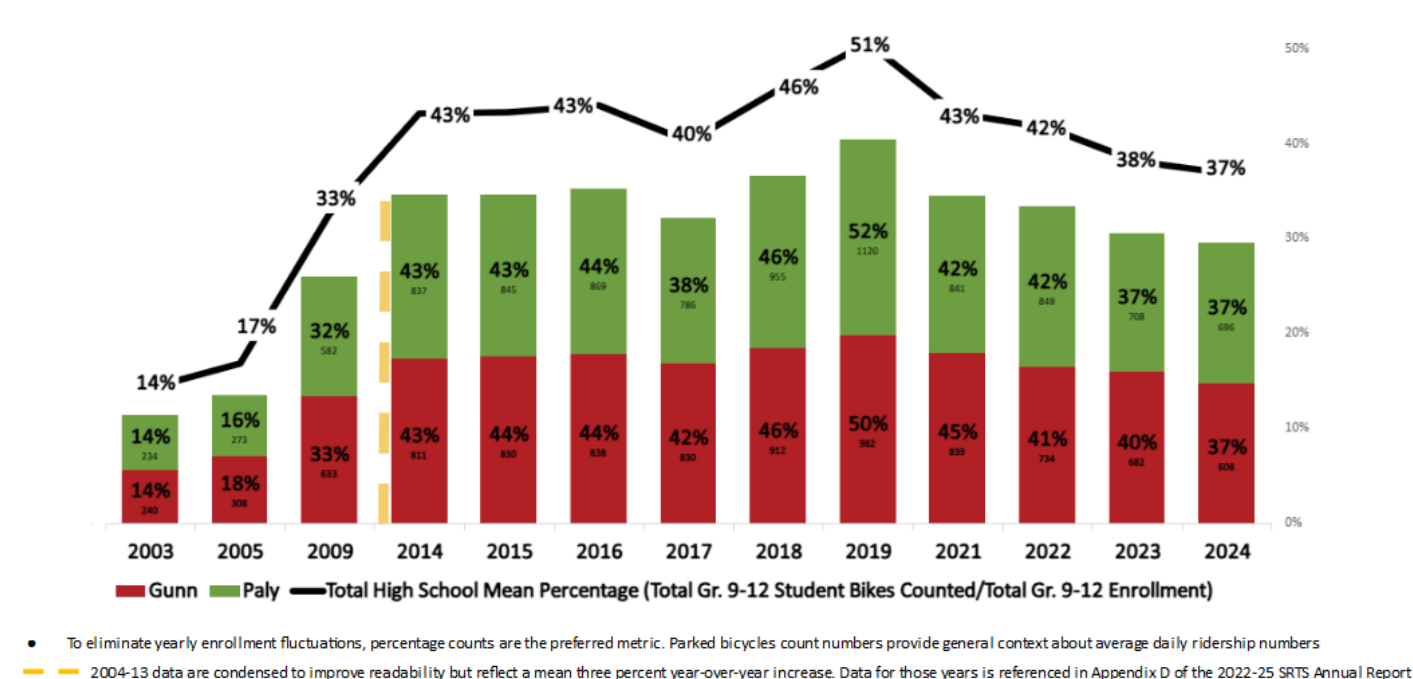
*Difference btw. 2016-19 and 2021-24 Walk/Bike Mean column are more closely correlated to losses in biking rather than walking.*

**Chart 1 and Chart 2 Middle School and High School Parked Bike Rack Count Overview:** PTA Transportation Safety Reps conduct one-day counts of parked bikes at each campus to produce the data in the Parked Bike Rack Count charts. This long-term data smooths out yearly outliers and helps identify possible social bias in Table 1. Stacked bars show each school's bike percentage, with a linear trend line showing the combined mean. Data from 2004–13 (left of the red dashed line) is condensed for clarity but shows a 2–3% annual increase. Raw bike counts are listed below each percentage in Charts 1 and 2.

**Chart 1: 2003-24 Middle School Parked Bike Rack Counts**



**Chart 2: 2003-24 High School Parked Bike Rack Counts**



### 2003-24 Middle and High School Parked Bike Rack Count Summary Results and Trend

**Analysis:** Charts 1 and 2 show a 4 percent drop in parked bike counts at middle and high schools from pre- to post-pandemic (48 percent in 2016–19 vs. 44 percent in 2021–24). Chart 1 indicates a 3 percent decrease in middle school bike rack occupancy, from an average of 50 percent pre-pandemic (2016-19) to 47 percent during 2021-24. Similarly, Chart 2 shows a 5 percent decline in high school bike rack occupancy, dropping from 45 to 40 percent over the same periods.

### Middle and High School Table 1 Travel Tally Data Comparisons with Charts 1 and 2 Bike Counts

**Counts:** Table 1 data shows a seven percent drop in walk/bike rates for grades 6–12 between 2016–19 and 2021–24, aligning with an eight percent decline in combined middle and high school bike counts from Charts 1 and 2. Middle school walk/bike rates fell four percent, matching a three percent drop in Chart 1 bike counts. High school data shows a three percent walk/bike decline, consistent with a five percent drop in Chart 2 bike counts. Elementary bike counts also declined slightly—one percent—from 16 to 15 percent.

**Data Interpretation:** Middle and high school 2016-19 pre-pandemic bike count data suggests record mean percentages, with high schools exceeding 50 percent cycling rates for the first time. The 2021-24 post-pandemic data confirms a disruption to these trends at the middle and high school level. Declining student walk and bike mode share suggests an uptick of an estimated 4,600 additional daily car trips, or up to 825,100 additional yearly car trips along

school commute corridors. Declining middle and high school parked bike count data suggests a mean loss of up 324 daily secondary student bike trips per day. The following factors and recommended actions may help to explain and reverse mode share declines.

**Changing Community Priorities:** Since the pandemic, there was a contraction of partner involvement. Endorsing the revised Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Partnership Consensus Statement and Bylaws and approving the Palo Alto Council of PTAs (PTAC), City Council, and PAUSD Board of Education will reaffirm local commitment to SRTS goals.

**Youth Education:** Parent-led programs, such as the 8th-grade "Getting to High School" initiative were not sustained in 2022-25. This coincided with reduced participation in opt-in bike safety education programs like Middle School Bike Skills. The new Safe Routes to School Youth Coordinator/Associate Planner will expand teen bicycle and pedestrian safety educational offerings including enhanced e-mobility devices road-sharing education.

**Transit Options:** Pandemic/post-pandemic transit cuts included eliminating the Palo Alto Shuttles (serving Paly, Greene, and JLS), reducing VTA 288 service, and scaling back PAUSD yellow bus routes at several schools. To improve youth access to sustainable and equitable transit, the new SRTS Middle and High School Associate Planner will work with transit providers to explore expansion opportunities. Staff will also continue reviewing youth ride-hailing data to evaluate levels of use during peak commute times.

**School Site Access:** Since the pandemic, locking school entry points before and after morning arrival may have disrupted some active commutes by increasing time-pressured driving and causing confusion about access. To address this, the City School Transportation Safety Committee will evaluate construction alternatives, arrival/dismissal best practices and support a collaborative approach to improve pedestrian and cyclist access.

**School Community Engagement and Outreach:** Engaging busy families remains challenging, especially when misinformation circulates on social media platforms where city staff are unable to respond. To address this, staff continue soliciting parent feedback to inform Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan proposed projects and priorities, in addition to drafting educational resources to support the development of effective transportation service requests.

## **FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT**

The SRTS program has 3.0 FTE supporting the program, with 1.0 FTE funded through 2016 Measure B Local Streets and Roads Funding. The program has an annual operating budget of \$0.4M and receives an annual appropriation of \$0.1M in the SRTS Capital Improvement Project (PL-00026). Staff is not requesting any supplemental funding at this time, and no additional budgetary action is required.

## **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

The Safe Routes to School Partnership is a collaborative program. According to the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), collaborative programs allow for *partnership with members of the public to identify problems and develop solutions*. SRTS partners include OOT and Police Department staff, PTA parent Transportation Safety Representatives at each PAUSD school, student representatives, school principals, and PAUSD staff in Sustainability, Facilities, and Administration. For decades, the City of Palo Alto, PAUSD, and the PTA have hosted monthly student-transportation safety-focused collaboration called the City/School Transportation Safety Committee (CSTSC). Between 2017 and 2022, a Five-Year Action Plan developed and adopted by SRTS stakeholders furthered the mission of the Partnership. Yearly reports to the City/School Liaison Committee and City Council have historically supported program transparency, accountability and effective communication between staff, community members and elected officials.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This report is for informational purposes only with no action required by the Council and is therefore not a project subject to CEQA review.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: SRTS-Related City Policies

Attachment B: SRTS 2017-23 Five-Year Work Plan Outcomes

Attachment C: SRTS 2022-25 Comprehensive Program Summary

Attachment D: SRTS 2022-25 Data Considerations

## **APPROVED BY:**

Lily Lim-Tsao, Interim Chief Transportation Official