

South Merced / Golden Valley High School Executive Summary

Community Pedestrian and Bike Safety Training

The Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training (CPBST) is a statewide project of California Walks (Cal Walks) and the University of California at Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC). The CPBST program engages residents and safety advocates to develop community-driven action plans to improve walking and biking safety in their communities

The Golden Valley High School, South Merced County CPBST was collaboratively planned and facilitated by The Merced County of Public Health Department, the Planning Committee, Cal Walks, and SafeTREC to:

1. Improve the walking and biking conditions around Golden Valley High School; and
2. Co-create a community vision of safety and wellness with neighbors.

The May 28, 2020 training and the action planning session on July 14, 2020 consisted of:

- An overview of the 6 E's strategies to improve walking and biking safety using the intersectional 6 E's framework including: Evaluation, Equity, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement;
- A virtual walking and biking assessment along three (3) key routes; and
- Action-planning sessions to prioritize and plan for community programs, and infrastructure projects

Data

Cal Walks, SafeTREC, and the Planning Committee reviewed data which demonstrated a safety concern in the area. Over the 10-year period, 2009 to 2018, pedestrian injuries and bicycle injuries appeared to be increasing. From 2014 to 2018, there were 106 pedestrian victims and 104 bicycle victims in the project area encompassing southern and eastern City of Merced as well as adjacent unincorporated Merced County. A full discussion of pedestrian and bicycle collisions can be found in the CPBST report.

Walking & Biking Assessment

Workshop participants conducted walking and biking assessments along three (3) key routes used by students walking and biking to Golden Valley High School. Participants were asked to:

- Identify community assets;
- Assess infrastructure conditions; and
- Observe how road users are engaging with the built-environment.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The planning committee consisted of representatives from Merced County Public Health, Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program, Cultiva la Salud, Golden Valley High School, and Merced City Council District 1.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Workshop participants were community members and/or representatives from the Planning Committee.

For a more detailed discussion of the workshop, please download the full report on [SafeTREC's](#) or [Cal Walks'](#) websites.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Community Observations

Participants expressed concerns around:

- Variations in pedestrian infrastructure between the city and county jurisdictions, which poses a potential obstacle for community efforts to improve the roads in this area;
- Only the western half of the Highway 99 bridge has a narrow sidewalk. Students must walk on an adjacent paved path, behind a physical buffer between drivers in order to cross the bridge;
- Lack of sidewalks west of the Highway 99 bridge, along East Childs Avenue, forces students to walk to and from school along a dirt shoulder;
- The discontinuous sidewalk on the southside of East Childs Avenue forces students and pedestrians to walk a dirt path leading to the Highway 99 exit. The proximity to Highway 99 creates a “freeway mentality” for drivers;
- Drivers at the East Childs Avenue/Carol Avenue intersection are flowing in six different directions, making it extremely difficult for pedestrians to know when it is safe for them to cross. There are no crosswalks at this intersection, despite pedestrians needing to cross this area;
- Drivers appear to travel above the posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour on East Childs Avenue, as they exit east off of Highway 99, towards Golden Valley High School;
- When traveling east on East Childs Avenue, driver traffic bottlenecks at the school parking lot entrance, despite the dedicated left-hand turning lane into the drop-off zone; and
- There is a lack of shade trees near Golden Valley High School, particularly near the East Childs Avenue/Parsons Avenue intersection.

Community Recommendations

During the action-planning sessions, participants prioritized and outlined preliminary plans for the following community programs and infrastructure projects aimed at increasing the health and safety of the community:

- Lawn Sign Educational Campaign;
- East Childs Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Improvements; and
- Walking and Biking Infrastructure Enhancements at the East Childs Avenue/Carol Avenue intersection.

Cal Walks & SafeTREC Recommendations

The following are recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements:

- Develop and host an annual walking and biking safety assembly for incoming 9th graders;
- Develop an on-campus bike/skate club at Golden Valley High School;
- Develop designated safe routes to school maps for Golden Valley High School Students, particularly those crossing Highway 99 to get to school;
- Apply to join the Merced Bicycle Advisory Committee; and
- Explore funding opportunities to implement pedestrian and bicycle facilities recommendations along East Childs Avenue near Golden Valley High School.