

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST SAFETY FOR THE MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT (EL MONTE/SOUTH EL MONTE)



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INTRODUCTION

In collaboration with community-based organization Day One, the Mountain View School District was identified as a site for the Community Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Training program based on the District's interest in and need for technical assistance and resources to improve pedestrian safety, bicyclist safety, walkability, and bikeability in response to recent bike collisions involving the District's students.

Following additional conversations with Day One, Bike San Gabriel Valley, and Mountain View School District staff, the community invited the University of California at Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) and California Walks (Cal Walks) to Charles T. Kranz Intermediate in El Monte to facilitate a community-driven pedestrian and bicyclist safety action-planning workshop. Cal Walks facilitated the workshop on April 28, 2016, which consisted of: 1) an overview of multidisciplinary approaches to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety; 2) two walkability and bikeability assessments along two key routes where students walk and bike to/from school; and 3) small group action planning discussions to facilitate the development of community-prioritized recommendations to inform El Monte and South El Monte's active transportation efforts and the District's ongoing efforts to ensure safe routes to/from schools throughout the District, which lies within the cities of El Monte and South El Monte. This report summarizes the workshop proceedings, as well as ideas identified during the process and recommendations for pedestrian and bicyclist safety projects, policies, and programs.

BACKGROUND

Community Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Training Program

The Community Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Training (CPBST) program is a joint project of UC Berkeley SafeTREC and Cal Walks. Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The purpose of the CPBST is to train local neighborhood residents and safety advocates on how to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and to educate them on how to collaborate effectively with local officials and agency staff to make communities safer and more pleasant to walk and bike. The half-day training is designed to provide participants with both pedestrian and bicyclist safety best practices and

a range of proven strategies (the 6 E's: Empowerment & Equity, Evaluation, Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Encouragement) to address and improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety conditions and concerns. Participants are then guided on a walkability and bikeability assessment of nearby streets before setting pedestrian and bicyclist safety priorities and actionable next steps for their community.

For a summary of outcomes from past CPST workshops, please visit:

www.californiawalks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CPST-Annual-Report-2015.pdf

Selected Pedestrian & Bicyclist Safety Conditions in El Monte/South El Monte

Prevalence of Wide Neighborhood Streets

Though there are many wide arterial corridors in El Monte and South El Monte such as Durfee Avenue, Valley Boulevard, and Garvey Avenue, wide neighborhood streets also present problems for residents, including Fineview Street, Elliott Avenue, Maxson Road, and Parkway Drive. The widest of these, Parkway Drive, is a roughly 60 feet wide neighborhood street that is most often used by students to get to and from Charles T. Kranz Intermediate and Mountain View High School. The single travel lane in each direction is close to 20 feet wide with on-street parking on either side of the street. Research has demonstrated that wide streets and wide travel lanes are associated with higher vehicle speeds,¹ which affect safety for people walking and bicycling. Though speed bumps have been implemented on Parkway Drive to discourage high speeds, residents report that they have proven to be ineffective based on residents' observations of tire burns on the street and experiences with car races that continue to occur along this corridor. Traffic calming measures, including the addition of on-street bicycle infrastructure, may improve the conditions along these roads for all users.

Worn & Faded Street Markings

During Cal Walks' site visit, staff observed numerous worn and faded markings at crosswalks and along curbs to denote "No Parking" zones. The majority of these faded markings were observed on Durfee Avenue—a major arterial road—between Garvey Avenue and Ramona Boulevard, where five schools are directly located on or adjacent to the corridor: Madrid Middle School, Jerry Vorhis Elementary School, Twin Lakes Elementary School, La Primaria Elementary School, and Fernando R. Ledesma Continuation High School. Most of the marked crosswalks observed near the schools were extremely faded and not highly visible. At Durfee Avenue and Elliot Avenue, the crosswalk markings are faded, and the lack of red curb "No Parking" zones at the intersection contributes to decreased visibility and safety of people on foot.

Closed Crossings and Insufficient Crosswalks/Crossings

Along many corridors in El Monte and South El Monte heavily used by pedestrians, Cal Walks staff observed closed crossings despite clear generators of pedestrian activity. One of these intersections is close to Madrid Middle School on Durfee Avenue and Stoddard Way. This intersection is used by students to get to and from school and would create more access to the school if all four legs of the intersection were opened to pedestrian crossings and marked with crosswalks. At Durfee Avenue and Ferris Road, the crosswalk legs across Ferris are open, though not marked, and the markings across Durfee Avenue are faded. The conditions are similar at Durfee Avenue and Deana Street and other stop-controlled intersections.

¹ See Kay Fitzpatrick, Paul Carlson, Marcus Brewer, and Mark Wooldridge, "Design Factors That Affect Driver Speed on Suburban Arterials": Transportation Research Record 1751 (2000):18–25.



STUDENTS WALKING TO SCHOOL IN ROADWAY IN AREAS WITH NO SIDEWALKS

of Fineview Street, sections of Caminar Avenue, and Bryce Road.

Lack of Bicycle Facilities Connecting Students' Homes and Schools

Currently, only Kranz Intermediate and Madrid Middle School Students are allowed to bike, scoot, and skate to school in the Mountain View School District. Cal Walks staff surveyed approximately 20 youth who bicycle to and from Kranz Intermediate School, and most of them indicated that they bike everywhere, not just to and from school. The students explained that their typical bike ride to/from schools is about five to ten minutes long and voiced strong support for installing more bike lanes in their community, given that there are only four bike lanes in the area now. The students expressed particular support for bike lanes along Durfee Avenue. School officials have expressed concerns with conflicts between students riding bikes with students walking on the sidewalk, so current dismissal policies have students who bicycle to school wait ten minutes after school dismissal before being allowed to leave so as to not intervene with students walking.

Lack of Sidewalks & Discontinuous Sidewalks around Kranz Intermediate School

Sidewalks provide physical separation for people walking from vehicle traffic and are a critical component for pedestrian safety, especially for students walking, using a scooter, or skateboarding to school. During our site visit, Cal Walks staff observed areas around Kranz Intermediate School that lacked sidewalks, including the eastern side of Rush Street just south of Durfee Avenue to its southern terminus, Parkway Drive between Fineview Street and Rush Street, Burkett Road near the intersection with Rush Street and east



SIDEWALK CONFLICTS BETWEEN STUDENTS WALKING, SKATEBOARDING, AND BICYCLING DURING SCHOOL ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL



INTERSECTION AND CROSSWALK BLOCKED DURING SCHOOL ARRIVAL/RUSH HOUR

Conflicts between Vehicle Traffic and Students Walking & Biking During Arrival/Dismissal

As part of our site visit, Cal Walks staff observed school arrival at Madrid Middle School on Monday, March 21, 2016. Madrid Middle School is located in an industrial area of El Monte next to the I-10. Morning rush hour traffic associated with the I-10, particularly between 7:15 am and 7:45 am, posed challenges for students walking and biking to school aiming to arrive at 7:30 am. Though the School District has designated an off-site drop-off area for parents driving their children to school along Durfee Avenue and Garvey Avenue in addition to a designated on-site drop-off area on Stoddard Way, these two drop-off areas are insufficient for the number of parents dropping off/picking up their children. Parent drivers and other rush hour drivers also

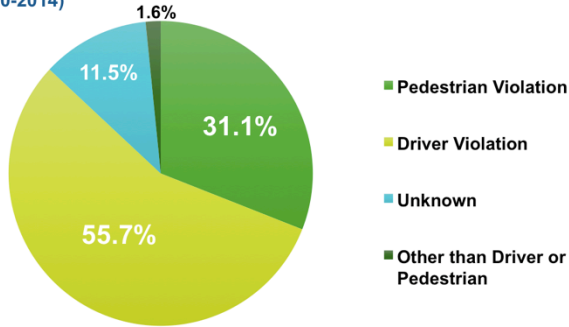
frequently blocked the intersection of Durfee Avenue, Garvey Avenue, and the I-10 on/off-ramps during school arrival hours. The high traffic volumes and turning vehicle movements from Durfee Avenue create challenging crossing conditions for the high volumes of students crossing at Durfee Avenue and Garvey Avenue. The School District has attempted to mitigate this situation by placing multiple crossing guards at this intersection, and additional measures are necessary.

Pedestrian & Bicyclist Collision History

Between 2010-2014,² there were 172 pedestrian collisions, including 5 fatalities and 16 severe injuries, in El Monte, and 301 bicyclist collisions including 1 fatalities and 9 severe injuries, in El Monte citywide. During the same time period, there were 42 pedestrian collisions, including 2 fatalities and 6 severe injuries, and 78 bicyclist collisions, including 3 severe injuries but no fatalities in South El Monte. The major collision corridors include Valley Boulevard, Garvey Avenue, Santa Anita Avenue, Tyler Avenue, Peck Road, and Durfee Avenue. SafeTREC staff also analyzed pedestrian and bicyclist collisions that have occurred around Madrid Middle School and Kranz Intermediate School. Around Madrid Middle School, collisions centered around major corridors including Five Points. None of these injuries were fatal, but seven resulted in severe injuries. In the area surrounding Kranz Intermediate School, collisions were scattered around major corridors in both El Monte and South El Monte. Two of these collisions were fatal and seven were severe injuries.

² Please note that 2014 collision data is provisional and not yet final.

**Pedestrian Collisions by Primary Collision Factor (PCF)
(2010-2014)**



Data Source: SWITRS.
Collision data for 2014 is provisional and not final.

In El Monte, more than half (55.7%) of pedestrian collisions can be attributed to a driver violation, while roughly one third of pedestrian collisions (31.1%) can be attributed to a pedestrian violation. Driver violations were largely failure to yield to a pedestrian with the right-of-way,³ while pedestrian violations were primarily failure of the pedestrian to yield to vehicle traffic when crossing outside a crosswalk.⁴ For bicyclist collisions in El Monte, 39.6% can be attributed to bicycling on the wrong side of the road (against traffic) and an additional 16.1% can be

attributed to failing to yield to vehicle traffic with the right-of-way.

In South El Monte, more than half (58.3%) of pedestrian collisions can be attributed to a driver violation, while nearly 42% can be attributed to a pedestrian violation. Driver violations were largely failure to yield to a pedestrian with the right-of-way (27.5%), while pedestrian violations were primarily failure of the pedestrian to yield to vehicle traffic when crossing outside a crosswalk. For bicyclist collisions in South El Monte, 38.1% can be attributed to bicycling on the wrong side of the road (against traffic) and an additional 16.8% can be attributed to failing to yield to vehicle traffic with the right-of-way.

APRIL 28 WORKSHOP

The community-based organization, Day One, requested a workshop to 1) provide City/County staff, community organizations, the Mountain View School District, parents, and other residents with a toolkit for promoting pedestrian and bicyclist safety to inform future active transportation projects including an application for the state-wide Active Transportation Program; 2) strengthen working relationships between Day One, Bike SGV, and the Mountain View School District to ensure the best outcomes for students and their families; and 3) develop consensus



PARENTS AND RESIDENTS LEARNING ABOUT THE 6 E'S APPROACH TO PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST SAFETY

³ Pedestrian Right-of-Way Violations are defined as instances where a driver fails to yield to a pedestrian in a marked or unmarked crosswalk when the pedestrian has the right of way (e.g., when the pedestrian has a “Walk” signal at a signalized intersection).

⁴ Pedestrians have the right-of-way in marked and unmarked crossings, and drivers are legally required to yield to pedestrians in these instances. However, when pedestrians cross outside of marked or unmarked crossings, pedestrians must yield the right-of-way to drivers. This is not the same as the term “jaywalking,” which refers to crossing outside of a marked or unmarked crossing between two signalized intersections. A pedestrian is legally able to cross outside of a marked or unmarked crossing between two intersections where one or none of the intersections is signalized but only if the pedestrian yields the right-of-way to oncoming drivers.

regarding pedestrian and bicyclist safety priority and actionable next steps.

The workshop was hosted from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm with breakfast, childcare, and simultaneous Spanish translation, and Spanish-language workshop materials provided to encourage community resident participation. Forty (40) individuals attended the workshop, including parents, community liaisons from each school in the Mountain View School District, and Mountain View School District staff. Two of the five small groups were facilitated entirely in Spanish during the action planning session, and participants were encouraged to communicate in the language they felt most comfortable in throughout the workshop.



PARTICIPANTS CONDUCTING WALKABILITY ASSESSMENTS

Reflections from Walkability & Bikeability Assessment

Workshop participants conducted walkability and bikeability assessments along two routes heavily used by students. One route traveled from Kranz Intermediate to Mountain View High School along Parkway Drive, while the other route traveled from Kranz Intermediate to Mountain View Park and back along Fineview Street, Maxson Road, and Durfee Avenue. Participants were asked to 1) observe infrastructure conditions and the behavior of all road users; 2) apply strategies learned from the 6 E's presentation that could help overcome infrastructure deficiencies and unsafe driver, pedestrian, and bicyclist behavior around Kranz Intermediate; and 3) identify positive community assets and strategies which can be built upon. Following the walkability and bikeability assessment, the participants shared the following reflections:



UNSAFE CROSSING BEHAVIOR OBSERVED DURING WALKABILITY ASSESSMENTS

- **Insufficient Crossings & Crosswalk Visibility:** There was lack of school zone markings along Fineview Street as participants approached Parkway Drive. Participants also noted that there were no marked crosswalks allowing people to cross from one side of Parkway Drive to the other for 0.5 miles between Fineview Street and Elliot Avenue along Parkway Drive. Additionally, two Kranz Intermediate students were hit while cycling through the intersection of Elliott Avenue and Durfee Avenue.
- **Accessibility Challenges & ADA Violations:** Tree roots have created large cracks and uplifted a number of sidewalks, creating a tripping hazard and making it difficult and sometimes impossible to navigate the sidewalk for people walking with assistive devices, using wheelchairs, or pushing strollers. In a number of areas, the sidewalk network is incomplete. Increased coordination with the City's code enforcement department is needed to address overgrown vegetation and ADA-non-compliant sidewalk sections with light poles in the middle of the sidewalk that obstruct the pedestrian's path.
- **Safety Challenges along Parkway Drive:** Participants noted that the travel lanes on Parkway Drive are very wide. Corner turning radii are also very wide: during the walkability assessment, a shuttle driver did not slow down or stop at a corner, coming very close to a group of the participants. Additionally, although "Celebrate El Monte Shuttles" have routes on Parkway Drive, there is a lack of bus stop shelters, signage, and other improvements. Although there are currently no bicycle facilities, participants observed multiple cyclists during the assessment. The wide right-of-way on Parkway Drive may make it easier to plan and implement physically-separated cycling infrastructure along this route.
- **Unsafe Driver Behaviors:** Participants observed drivers on Durfee Avenue and along other neighborhood streets traveling above the posted speed limits. A number of drivers were also observed parked in red "No Parking" zones and either too close to some crosswalks or in the crosswalk itself.
- **Signal Timing & Maintenance:** Participants walking southeast along Elliott Avenue waited for nearly 5 minutes for the pedestrian crossing signal to cross Durfee Avenue after pushing the



SIDEWALK OBSTRUCTIONS AND OVERGROWN VEGETATION

pedestrian button. Ultimately, the traffic signal did not change, so they had to cross to the opposite side to push the walk signal. Moreover, when participants finally received the walk signal, the signal timing was too short to complete the crossing in a safe manner. Additionally, participants noted the lack of a red “No Parking” zone in front of the liquor store on the southeast corner; at the time of the collision, witnesses observed that the sightlines were blocked by vehicles parked on the corner.

Community Resident Recommendations

Following the walkability and bikeability assessment, Cal Walks facilitated small-group action planning discussions in both English and Spanish. Workshop participants discussed two sets of questions: the first focused on identifying and prioritizing infrastructure improvements for students walking and biking to school in the District and the second focused on identifying and prioritizing non-infrastructure activities that could be implemented District-wide to educate and encourage students to walk and bike to school safely.

Workshop participants provided the following recommendations for overall pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements:

Infrastructure Concerns & Priorities

- **Improve Sidewalk Conditions:** There is a general need to ensure that sidewalks are level and free from obstructions like vegetation and utility poles. Participants expressed a desire for wider sidewalks along Klingerman, and to complete the sidewalk network by filling in the gaps along Rush Street, Burkett Avenue, Parkway Drive, and around Miramonte School. To increase visibility and safety, better pedestrian-scale lighting is needed, especially along Durfee Avenue. Participants also noted the need for bus stop improvements—and in some cases bus stop signage indicating current stops.
- **Improve Crossing Conditions:** Participants identified the need for wider crosswalk markings to accommodate the large volume of children walking to school, as well as the need for high-visibility crosswalk markings along Durfee Avenue, Voorhis School, Klingerman, and at all crossings adjacent to schools. Participants also voiced support for the installation of pedestrian safety islands, pedestrian countdown timers (especially on Durfee/Elliot), advanced yield lines, and better aligning curb ramps to direct pedestrians into marked crosswalks. Participants also identified Zamora Park as an ideal location for implementation of daylighting at crosswalks, as well as the need for signalized crossings along Little Five Points and Five Points. Lastly, participants supported the construction of a pedestrian bridge or other path to access Madrid Middle School that avoids I-10.
- **Traffic Calming to Reduce Speeds:** Participants repeatedly identified high speeds as an issue that needs to be addressed through traffic calming and design in order to improve safety for people walking and biking. Participants noted that the current 40 MPH speed limit of Durfee Avenue should be reconsidered during any future redesign of the street. Participants supported the implementation of road diets and other street calming measures in school zones and noted that these areas should be re-marked and signed more adequately, especially along Garvey. Participants also highlighted the need for the School District to address concerns around the Madrid Middle School drop-off area. It was suggested that students can be dropped off at a nearby location and then shuttled into the school to reduce the car traffic.

- **Implement Physically-Separated Bike Infrastructure:** Participants supported the installation of physically-separated bike lanes, especially along Durfee Avenue, in order to help students traveling to Madrid Middle School.

Participants felt that infrastructure improvements should be prioritized through 1) school-based walkability and bikeability audits to determine needs of each individual school and 2) an analysis of the areas with the greatest number of pedestrian and bicyclist collisions.

Non-Infrastructure Concerns & Priorities

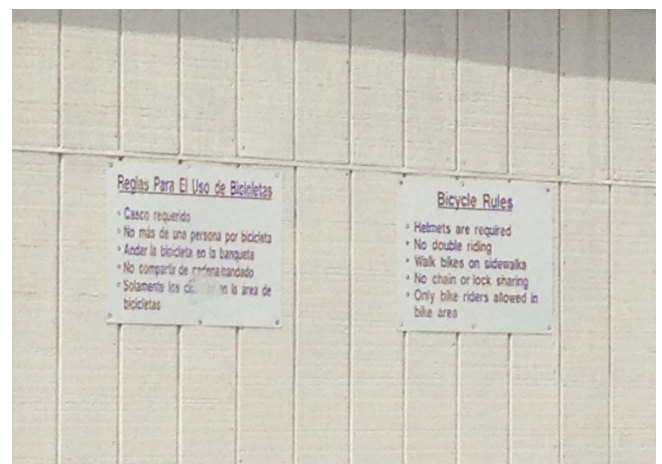
Participants also identified the following education and encouragement programs that could be implemented by the Mountain View School District and the cities of El Monte and South El Monte:

- Organize parents to conduct walk audits around all schools in the district and compile this information along with pictures, video, and create a PowerPoint presentation to present at a City Council meeting;
- Host bike and walk safety classes and workshops;
- Encourage walking via a Walking School Bus program;
- Educate students regarding pedestrian and bicyclist safety at assemblies;
- Host a mandatory workshop for all parents regarding walkability and bikeability issues. Some of these issues can be discussed at Back-to-School Night or at an Open House. Additionally, an educational campaign can be conducted through announcements, flyers and calls to the house.
- Create a Safe Routes to School Plan for the District;
- Leverage Local Control and Accountability funds (LCAP) to meet the safety goals of LCAP Plans;
- Hire more crossing guards especially on Durfee Avenue/Fineview Street and Tyler Avenue/Fineview Street;
- Develop prizes and incentives to encourage students to follow the rules and learn the rules;
- Host a community fair and/or carnival with food trucks to educate the community on pedestrian and bicyclist safety issues; and
- Implement a bicycle education diversion program in lieu of ticketing students for bicycle-related infractions.

California Walks/SafeTREC Recommendations

California Walks and SafeTREC also submit the following recommendations for consideration by the Cities of El Monte and South El Monte and the Mountain View School District:

- **Engage Students in Encouragement Projects:** Currently, the streets surrounding the school are very uncomfortable and unsafe for many cyclists. Although sidewalk riding is approved under some conditions in El Monte and South El Monte, students have reported being subject to enforcement of sidewalk-riding violations. By providing on-road, physically-separated bicycling infrastructure, the City and School District will help reduce the confusion with the law and conflicts



WALL IN STUDENT BICYCLE PARKING AREA THAT COULD BE USED FOR A MURAL WITH SAFETY MESSAGING

between people walking and biking on the sidewalks. We recommend that the School District engage the students in the discussions to plan for new bicycle facilities, as well as in the planning process itself. We also recommend the City and School District continue to collaborate with community partners, like Bike SGV, who have established relationships with community youth. Additionally, we recommend the City and School District consider engaging students through mural and other group projects to promote walking and biking: for example, the wall facing the bike corral at Kranz Intermediate School would be an ideal place for a student-created mural celebrating walking and biking to school and encouraging safe behaviors, including wearing helmets.

- **Collaborate with Community Partners to Strengthen Applications to Secure Additional Funding for Transportation Planning & Implementation:** Many new and existing sources of state and federal transportation funding for walking and biking projects are increasingly including priorities related to community engagement in the transportation planning and decision-making processes. The state’s Active Transportation Program, for example, scores projects that conduct meaningful and effective community outreach for a walking or biking project, meaning these projects enabled residents to participate early on during the project conception phase and/or made the planning process open and accessible by hosting workshops or meetings during hours that suited the residents, provided translation and child care services, and were hosted in places that were easy to access by transit. Formally partnering with community-based organizations who have established relationships with residents—either by providing direct funding for outreach activities or by partnering with an organization to help scope or write an application—can lead to strengthened and successful funding applications.
- **Install Bike Lanes & Create Safe Bike Routes to School:** Participants and students noted the need for bike lanes along busy streets like Durfee Avenue. The School District has expressed concern about students’ safety biking to school and have considered banning biking to and from school for middle school students in the District. The School District and the cities of El Monte and South El Monte have an opportunity to create a network of streets, possibly those less traveled by cars, like Parkway Drive, where students can safely bike to and from school. Interim bike lanes could be installed along Parkway Drive between Kranz Intermediate and the High School as an immediate next step, while working to identify additional possible student bicycling routes. The continued involvement of youth and community partners is key in identifying the preferred routes to school that should be prioritized for both students who walk and bike to school.
- **Improve Signage, Crosswalks and Sidewalks Around Schools:** California Walks and SafeTREC support the improvement of walking and crossing conditions, especially around schools, through the installation of improved signage, high-visibility crosswalks, and sidewalks. Installing sidewalks around Kranz Intermediate School and high-visibility crosswalks along Durfee Avenue should be among the highest priorities because of the proximity to numerous schools.
- **Strengthen and Build Partnerships:** The Cities of El Monte and South El Monte have strong community-based organizations like Day One and Bike SGV who are committed to improving walking and biking conditions, especially for youth. Both cities would benefit greatly from continued partnerships with these organizations, which have built long-term relationships with residents, parents, and youth. The Madrid Middle School Park, for example, is a perfect example of these partnerships in action: the park was built in partnership with the community-based organization Amigos de Los Rios. Amigos de Los Rios is also actively working to

implement its Emerald Necklace vision for the San Gabriel Valley, which is another opportunity for the Cities of El Monte and South El Monte to partner and work toward a shared vision for a safer and more walkable and bikeable community in both cities.⁵

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Day One, Bike SGV, and the Mountain View School District for inviting us into their community and for hosting the Community Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Training. Thank you to David Diaz from Day One and George Schonborn of the Mountain View School District for their full commitment to and leadership of community-driven transportation planning and meaningful engagement with community residents.

We would like to acknowledge the many community members whose attendance at the workshop and dedication to pedestrian and bicyclist safety meaningfully informed and strengthened the workshop's outcomes.

Funding for the Community Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Training program was provided by a grant to University of California at Berkeley Safe Transportation Research & Education Center (SafeTREC) from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

⁵ For more information regarding Amigos de Los Rios, please visit <http://www.amigosdelosrios.org/>