VideoVoice with Older Adult Walking Clubs

to promote Health, Walking & Pedestrian Safety

California WALKS
2010

Introduction
California WALKS was selected as one of twelve national demonstration sites for a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) demonstration grant to conduct four workshops on older adult pedestrian safety. In the summer and fall of 2010 we partnered with the United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County (USOAC) and their walking clubs to provide the workshops in Oakland, California. This report provides a snapshot of our exciting and engaging accomplishments to increase walking for older residents and improve the walking environment in Oakland.

Walking is Critical to Older Adult Health & Mobility
Walking is a primary form of both physical activity and transportation for older adults. As our nation’s population ages, we will see an unprecedented increase in the number of older adults who will be walking for health and transportation. Our task is to ensure that the walking environment is safe and accessible for older adults. California WALKS believes that if our communities are safe and walkable for older adults they will be safe and walkable for everyone. We strive for safe and walkable communities that promote healthy and active transportation and play for persons of all ages and abilities.

Pedestrian Safety for Older Adults in Oakland, CA
In 2009 Oakland ranked fourth in statewide older adult (65+) pedestrian fatalities for a city of its size (California Office of Traffic Safety, 2011). Common barriers for older pedestrians in Oakland include wide streets with high speeds, inadequate crossing signal timing with few crossing improvements on large block faces along arterials, real and perceived crime, aggressive and loose neighborhood dogs, cracked and interrupted sidewalks, and long distances between desired destinations. However, despite the gravity of the health and safety concerns for older pedestrians, there is great social capital in Oakland and many older adults have already formed weekly walking clubs so that older adults can maintain regular physical activity that is safe and social. This project worked with the existing walking clubs to build their capacity regarding safe walking and walking environments for older adults.
Workshop Background
The Pedestrian Safety Workshop: A Focus on Older Adults materials were developed by the University of North Carolina’s Highway Safety Research Center (UNC HSRC) through a generous grant from NHTSA. The goal of the workshop is to advance the process of creating more pedestrian friendly environments by both encouraging dialogue among a variety of community members and equipping participants with ideas to improve walkability in their community. Workshop materials include an on-line instructor training, workshop modules and a handbook to guide instructors on all the necessary steps to execute a successful workshop. The workshop itself is three hours long, including a walk route assessment and is geared towards both older adult community members and professionals. The workshop materials can be found at www.rsa.unc.edu/psw/.

VideoVoice Mapping with Older Adults
VideoVoice is a process of engaging community residents to self-collect video data on important issues in their neighborhood environment. This technique collects data of existing environmental and social conditions that impact the walking environment, communicates identified issues to policy makers and community leaders, and educates and engages community residents to be active in civic life. Despite warnings of video technology being a barrier for older adults, we found that older adults have fully embraced working with simple video cameras to capture community conditions impacting their health. Video data captured by older adults is shared across the web and social media sites reaching a greater audience than ever before. Using VideoVoice with older adults is a promising and fun strategy that spans generations, effectively captures community conditions from the user’s perspective, and relays the information with ease and simplicity to the greater community and policy and decision makers.

During the course of this project California WALKS collected VideoVoice data from the four walking group workshops on a variety of issues including (but not limited to) transit access, graffiti at parks, pedestrian crossings at senior centers, real and perceived crime, and speeding in residential neighborhoods. The videos were shared with the older adults and are now available for public viewing on the California WALKS website. In addition, we have created a map using HealthyCity’s online GIS mapping tool. This map locates the four workshops, has the VideoVoice segments embedded, shows age and parks/open space in Oakland by zip code. Visit HealthyCity.org to view our story and map.
The Four Workshops

Each of the workshops was hosted by a walk club and it was the role of the walk club leader to recruit participants and spread the word for the workshop. Flyers were created and distributed among walk club members, at community and recreational centers, and posted on the walking club calendar. In the end, the most effective way that the walk club leaders were able to recruit the participants was through word of mouth and encouragement. Walk club leaders did this by calling their members one week and a day before to remind them to attend and told them the benefits of attending as well as a brief overview of what they would be learning. Professionals were also invited to the workshops, and they were targeted based on neighborhood activities and likelihood of involvement. The end result was a successful turnout for each of the workshops, with the hosting walk club members representing the majority of participants and other residents and professionals representing the other participants.

1. Eastmont Mall

Hosted by the Eastmont Mall walking club, this first workshop was a great success. During the workshop discussion participants emphasized the importance of walking as a group for safety and social interaction. During the walking route to observe the walking environment and collect video data, participants articulated difficulty in safely accessing the transit station as an older pedestrian. The USOAC walk club leadership group has prioritized workshop outcomes and is working with this group to improve safe access and crossing to the transit station.

2. Arroyo Viejo Park

The Arroyo Viejo Park walking club workshop drew attention from professionals and older adults alike, and was successful in recruiting two new members to join the walking club! The park itself provides an ideal walking environment for older adults and meets the needs of a variety of levels of walking abilities. Over the last few years many community members including the walk club have invested time in the community park to beautify and reclaim the park from recent gang and drug activities. The walking club members are committed to maintaining park safety and have identified both the need to walk as a group for safety, as well as the presence of walking clubs may deter unsafe/unhealthy uses of the park.
3. **West Oakland**

The West Oakland Senior Center was interested in revitalizing their walking group and the effort was led by Senior Center staff that have been encouraged and mentored by other walk club leaders. During the workshop, participants strategized on developing a walking club and potential walking routes that are safe and accessible for older adults of all mobility and ability levels. This location is fortunate to have a community park directly across the street; however, concerns during the walking route were raised regarding vehicle speed and signalized countdown time to cross the street in order to safely access the park. This group was successful in gaining interest for a walking club, and is working with USOAC’s walk club leadership group to increase crossing safety to the park.

4. **North Oakland**

The North Oakland Senior Center workshop was a culmination workshop that engaged new participants, assessed the walking conditions in the area, and celebrated all the walking groups. Members from five walking groups were present at this workshop, which provided an opportunity for walking clubs to learn and share with one another their successes and priorities to increase walking among older adults and safe walking environments in Oakland. This workshop, similar to the others, walked in the nearby neighborhood to apply new knowledge of pedestrian safety and walkability. The discussion and group work at the end of the workshop was valuable in identifying walking and safety goals for individuals, walking clubs, and the walking club leadership committee.
Evaluation & Outcomes
Participants overwhelmingly had an increase in knowledge and stated that the workshop was educational, well organized, and relevant to them (See Figure 1). Beyond the paper evaluations, we have had a number of outcomes and activities stemming from the workshops themselves suggesting that the activities are having an impact on the community. These outcomes include, development of four VideoVoice projects posted on the California WALKS website and Healthy City for public viewing, member participation in activities during the workshops and street days, volunteering with Safe Routes to Schools, attendance at the statewide Pedestrians Count! conference, new relationships that have been formed, the formation of a new walking club, revitalized personal and group motivation and development of personal and group goals. USOAC has organized the walking club leadership committee and they have prioritized actions to address identified older adult walkability concerns around Eastmont Mall and the West Oakland Senior Center.

Conclusion
Each individual workshop was a great success and together they culminated into a celebration of the commitment of older Oakland residence to be engaged in their individual and community health and safety. Each of the workshops set goals, activities and next steps, many of which have been completed, are in progress or are prioritized for the near future. One of the wonderful things about creating videos as part of an action is that the videos will live on beyond the program itself. The videos have been posted on-line and will remain there for community members, public officials and leaders to view.

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Advocating Walkable Communities for Everyone