



Stanislaus County Community Safety Champion Program

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT











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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CHAMPIONS FROM

Hughson
Modesto & Turlock
Patterson

The Stanislaus County
Community Safety
Champion Program is an active transportation
leadership development and community engagement opportunity for residents within Stanislaus County.

The program is a collaboration between California Walks (Cal Walks) and the Stanislaus County **Health Services Agency** (Stanislaus HSA), with funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) **Supplemental Nutrition** Assistance Program (SNAP). The program uses a cohort model and the Safe System Framework to empower participants to be local champions for pedestrian and bicycle safety within their county. Residents participated in a series of capacity-building training sessions that culminated into participant designed and led activation projects.

Champion program goals:

- Identify and discuss walking and biking safety concerns;
- Identify potential infrastructure and programmatic solutions;
- Build advocacy skills to engage local governments and agencies;
- Strengthen collaboration with local stakeholders; and
- Develop an activation project that engages the community and promotes walking and biking safety.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The program used a series of interactive capacity-building training sessions to prepare residents to lead an activation project and continue their advocacy work within their local community past the program. Training sessions included:



- Community Listening Session: Learn about program purpose, structure, and expectations.
- Community Visioning & Safe Systems: Review Safe System Framework and connect strategies through community visioning.



- Community Context: Learn about the community through a series of activities.
- Engaging Power: Learn about active transportation from the perspective of local agency officials and decision-makers.

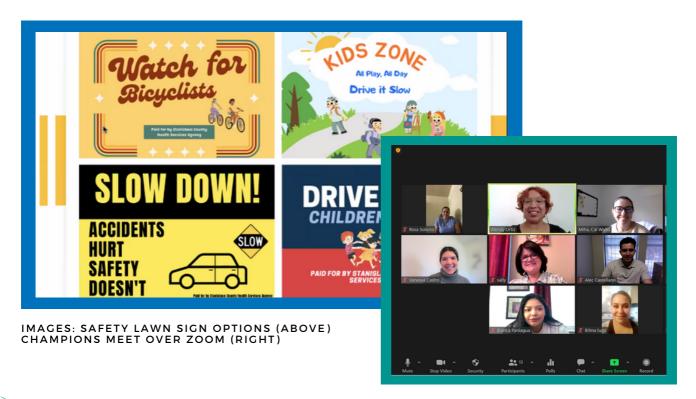


- Advocacy Skill Share: Learn the basics of advocacy and how to apply program concepts to advocacy planning, strategies, and projects.
- Community Power & Champion Showcase: Celebrate Champion accomplishments!

Activation projects are participant-led activities meant to engage community residents around a key walking and biking safety concern in their community.

The purpose of the activation project is to mobilize the workshop participants and their local community to take action.





TECH SUPPORT

Activation projects are developed with the support of the Project Team and can be completed independently or in collaboration with other participants.

Bilma Rosa Vanessa Lugo Solorino Castro HUGHSON: PARENT SURVEYS

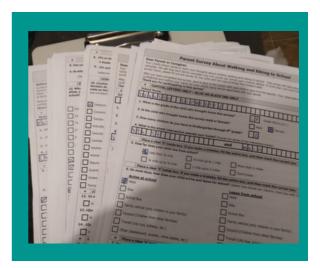
ACTIVATION PROJECT GOALS

- Understand how students get to and from Fox Elementary School and Hughson Elementary School.
- Learn about parents' concerns for walking and biking safety
- Identify infrastructure strategies to improve walking and biking safety for all students in Hughson

ACTIVATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Champions conducted a total of 17 English and Spanish Parent Surveys About Walking and Biking to School, which is a survey provided by the National Center for Safe Routes to School. The team collected ten surveys from parents of Hughson Elementary School and seven surveys from parents of Fox Road Elementary School.

A full report of the survey results can be found in Appendix A.



SURVEYS (ABOVE)

HUGHSON: PARENT SURVEYS

Hughson Elementary

Parent's primary safety concerns:

- Safety at intersections and crossings
- Speed of traffic along routes to school
- Distance from school
- Weather or climate



"I would like them to replace the light bulbs when street lights burn out. I would also like them to maintain the sidewalks and repair road cracks."

"Crosswalks need to be repainted and more lights to improve visibility."

Hughson Elementary

Additional comments from parents regarding safe routes to school:

 "We need more safety for the kids. Drivers sometimes speed and it's really dangerous for the kids."

HUGHSON: PARENT SURVEYS

Fox Road Elementary

Parent's primary safety concerns:

- Amount of traffic along route
- Speed of traffic along route
- Distance from school
- Violence and crime





Fox Road Elementary

Additional comments from parents regarding safe routes to school:

- "The intersection of 7th and Fox is not safe for kids to be crossing."
- "We need more crossing guards."

Sally Shawn Vanessa Castro



ACTIVATION PROJECT GOALS

- Understand Modesto residents' existing concerns with walking and biking safety along Oakdale Road
- Understand attitudes, challenges, and barriers to using active modes of transportation in Modesto
- Advocate for walking and biking safety improvements to the City of Modesto

ACTIVATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The champions developed an online survey for Modesto residents to collect feedback on general attitudes, challenges, and barriers with using active modes of transportation along Oakdale Road and in Modesto. 55 total responses were recorded.

A flyer for the survey was created with a scannable QR Code and shared via social media, and was posted with permission at local destinations, such as bike shops and Gallo Winery.



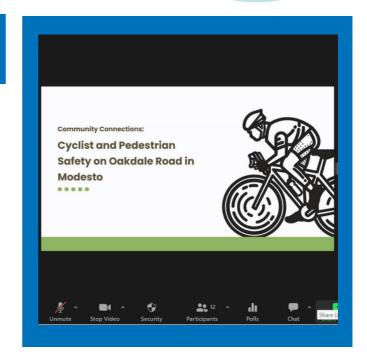
POSTER PROMOTING SURVEY AT A LOCAL BIKE SHOP IN MODESTO (ABOVE)

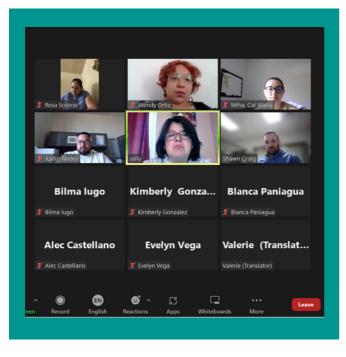
MODESTO: COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Barriers

Barriers to using modes of active transportation:

 Dangerous driver behaviors, such as speeding





Strategies

Strategies to encourage more people to walk and bike in Modesto:

- More destinations to walk and bike to
- Complete and improve the bikeway network in Modesto

MODESTO: COMMUNITY SURVEYS

ACTIVATION OUTCOMES

The Project team met with the City of Modesto Traffic Engineers and shared the findings of their survey. City of Modesto traffic engineers shared upcoming projects, local funding sources, which included pedestrian and bicycle facilities improvements along Oakdale Road. They expressed interest in receiving the final copy of the survey responses to show public support for active transportation on Oakdale Road when presenting this infrastructure project to City Council for approval.

The project team also accomplished establishing a relationship with the City of Modesto traffic engineering team to stay abreast of upcoming opportunities for public input and comments on active transportation projects in Modesto.

A full report of the survey results can be found in Appendix B.







Kimberly Blanca Gonzalez Paniagua PATTERSON: STUDENT SURVEYS

ACTIVATION PROJECT GOALS

- Understand how students at Patterson High School and Creekside Middle School travel to and from school
- Identify students' concerns with walking and biking in Patterson
- Identify infrastructure to improve walking and biking in Patterson

ACTIVATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The champions developed an online survey for Patterson residents and students at Patterson High School and Creekside Middle School to understand their travel behaviors, safety concerns, and needs for improvement. 19 Patterson community residents completed the survey, including 15 students between the ages of 13 - 17.

A full report of the survey results can be found in Appendix C.



ONLINE SURVEY FOR THIS PROJECT (ABOVE)

PATTERSON: STUDENT SURVEYS

Motivation to walk/bike more

- Less and slower traffic in the areas dedicated for bike/pedestrian lanes
- Better sidewalks, lighting, more crossing guards, and designated pick up/drop off location
- Repave roads for bicyclists

"The City should make pedestrian and bike safety education mandatory in road building or improvement planning. Cycling lanes and safe crossing points/signage.

Reduce speed limits."

"We need better roads and more space to ride bikes especially near areas like the high school where it's really busy and a tight squeeze for bikes."

"Crosswalks need to be repainted and more lights to improve visibility."

To improve safety, the City could:

- Protected bike lanes near the schools
- Speed bumps to slow drivers
- Pedestrian head start near schools
- Pedestrian-scale lighting



TURLOCK: LAWN SIGNS

ACTIVATION PROJECT GOALS

- Raise awareness about how speeding drivers impact transportation crashes in <u>Stanislaus County</u>.
- Encourage drivers to slow down in Turlock.

ACTIVATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The champions designed a series of lawn signs that were meant to reduce traffic speeds in residential areas in Turlock that have a high number of walking and biking crashes. They surveyed Stanislaus County residents to choose their favorite design. They then printed the signs and used the Transportation Injury Mapping System data to identify high crash areas in Turlock.

After knocking on doors to hand out the lawn signs, residents shared that speeding is a major concern for safety.



THE WINNING LAWN SIGN (ABOVE)

TURLOCK: LAWN SIGNS









CHAMPIONS FINAL SURVEY

Champions were surveyed after their Activation Showcase session and provided the following feedback about their experiences and the program.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



of Champions agreed that they:

- Have a greater understanding of available resources and strategies to support traffic safety improvements in their community
- Expanded their knowledge, understanding, and analysis around the systems impacting traffic safety, mobility justice, and community power
- Developed useful skills as a community leader and advocate

Being a community
leader means:
"Providing education and advocacy when needed."

"Willingness to participate and make the time to make a difference."



CHAMPIONS FINAL SURVEY

What Champions liked most about the program:

- Connecting and collaborating with other community leaders
- All the knowledge they gained from the trainings
- Find like-minded individuals in their county.
- Being able to interact with city/county representatives.
- The dedication of the facilitators. Wendy and Miha are great!

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

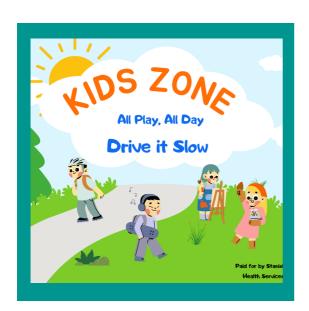


WOULD RECOMMEND THE PROGRAM TO THEIR COMMUNITY

Being a community leader means:

"Being willing to work across different sectors/groups within my community to work towards a common goal"

CHAMPIONS FINAL SURVEY





SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

What Champions would like to see improved about the program:

- Increased stipend
- Invite City Planners or leaders to the activation showcase to hear and learn about grass roots movements
- Meet twice a week
- Spend more time explaining some of the bureaucratic processes, agencies and their roles.
- Start activation projects sooner so that that there is more time to share the results with the group.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Program Description and Application Materials

Based on phone calls with potential applicants and feedback from Stanislaus HSA on the application and description of the program, we recommend updating the description to better resonate and explain the program, goals, and requirements for activations. Potential additions can be to define the program less in terms of walking and biking safety and more around safe and active living. A reframing of the program could help the program appeal to a wider audience. For example, one champion of this cohort was interested in air quality, especially in and around the Modesto airport neighborhood, as well as other environmental concerns. There is an opportunity to present the program in a way that still focuses on active transportation but also opens the opportunity for advocacy and activation projects with other components. Several potential applicants called the Program Manager to get a better sense of the program requirements and timeline. Cal Walks recommends more clearly outlining the timeline requirements in the application and offering an email, phone number, and space in the online application to ask any follow up questions. Cal Walks also recommends simplifying the application and accepting paper and electronic versions, as well as offering to complete the application over the phone to support those who need technical support.

Geographic Scope and Community Focus

In the development of the Champions Program, it was decided that the program would be open to all county residents, but the geographic focus would be in the City of Modesto. The program would work to engage both City and County planning and engineering agencies to inform them about the program, identify opportunities for collaboration with champions, and build on past California Walks work in the County and City. The countywide program with a city focus was confusing to some applicants with a few reading the application as a requirement to live in or have a significant connection to the City of Modesto. Some of these potential champions reached out, and we were able to clarify that the project was open to anyone living in Stanislaus County.

The focus on the City of Modesto did not represent either the applications or chosen champions. Applicants represented mostly the City of Modesto but also smaller rural communities and cities. The champions largely represented Modesto, Hughson, and Turlock. To reflect both urban/suburban and rural communities, Cal Walks offered two in-person walk and bike assessments, one in the City of Modesto near Fremont Elementary School and one focused on the City of Hughson, which was conducted entirely in Spanish.

Cal Walks recommends the program remain countywide with no city or regional focus to eliminate confusion and make the program accessible to all in the County, especially small and rural communities. The county focus should be reflected in the application, and curriculum via images and examples, and in the opportunity for walk and bike assessments in urban and rural settings.

Project Timeline and Impact on Outreach

Due to staff changes on both the Cal Walks and Stanislaus HSA project teams, the project activities began in early May 2022. The delay in project inception especially impacted outreach. Once the application and flyer were finalized, it was too close to the end of the school year and the beginning of summer to outreach to schools and universities. The Stanislaus County University of California Cooperative Extension shared that it is very difficult to outreach and share information with students and staff during the summer since so many are not on campus or checking their school emails regularly. Prior to the start of summer, they would have had several student groups that would have been interested in the program topic.

Similarly, during summer months, public school Peachjar flyer distribution software can not be used to reach parents through individual schools because schools are closed, and school administration is closing out the school year, making it more difficult to connect and identify the best outreach methods for the parents. We believe the delay in outreach impacted applications received, by July we had only received a handful of applications and made the decision to extend the program to November 2022 and outreach until the end of August in the hopes of getting more applications after the second round of outreach. Combined, both outreach periods had significantly more outreach in person, online, and through direct calls compared to past cohort-style programs in three southern California counties. It's interesting to note that in past counties, the program outreach was largely complete by the end of the school year and the start of summer. The delayed timeline also impacted participation once applicants had been accepted into the program. Two accepted applicants shared their schedules and were no longer open during the selected day and time.

Cal Walks recommends that, whenever possible, the project starts no later than the end of February so an outreach plan and materials can be completed and shared as early as March. We recommend a minimum of two full months of outreach and training to begin shortly after the application timeline closes to keep the excitement and momentum going.

From our outreach efforts and discussions with champions, we believe outreach should focus on sharing the program widely in the community combined with direct outreach through phone calls and local meetings, both ongoing community meetings and scheduled to best reach the community. We also recommend direct outreach specific to cities and communities in the County rather than focusing on the City of Modesto.

Cal Walks recommends that the project timeline be included in the application, including no more than a two-week estimate of when the cohort starts. We also recommend the training meeting days and potential times be clearly listed in the applications, so applicants know when they need to be available to participate before applying. Cal Walks included nine (9) potential training days and time combinations on the final version of the application for 2022. We recommend selecting no more than two (2) to three (3) options for future cohorts. We also believe that COVID-19 and the circumstances of the last three years also impacted outreach. Several partners in the County also shared that in-person activities had resumed, but participation was significantly lower than in pre-pandemic times. Not having in-person activities to attend in the last few years also reduced the number of recent contacts and partners we had to reach out to. We made up for this by using our internal contact lists of planning committees from past programs, working with Stanislaus HSA to identify new partners to meet with, and directly calling CBOs and offering to meet and discuss the project.

Stanislaus County and City of Modesto Outreach and Commitment

As part of the project, Cal Walks committed to engaging and securing a commitment from the County and City of Modesto Planning and Public Works departments. Although we have completed several trainings in the City and worked with city staff on planning committees for these projects, it was more difficult to engage and secure a commitment from City staff. We believe this is partly due to turnover in the agencies but also that the agencies were not involved in the development of the project before contracting with Cal Walks.

Cal Walks recommends that Stanislaus HSA meet with County and City staff prior to the project start to introduce the program and goals and invite feedback on the project. Prior discussion with agency partners would have better set up our ask of them to participate and could have identified ways the project could support planning and community engagement efforts related to walking and biking. We believe some agency staff was put off by the fact that they had not heard about the program from the County rather than through Cal Walks. Alternatively, Cal Walks can also attend an initial meeting and lead a discussion on how the program supports existing agency goals and activities during the project timeline. We learned after the project started that the City of Modesto is preparing a comprehensive update to the Urban Area General Plan, which guides the City's decisions around urban growth, development, transportation, jobs, housing, parks, and more. Cal Walks believes we could have highlighted this process and opportunities for champions to participate through the program curriculum as well as potentially support an activation project focused on the General Plan update.

In the end, we did secure a commitment from each agency to meet the champions and present in our Engaging Power session. Champions shared they were hoping to get more concrete ways they could support walking and biking in the city and county, beyond connecting through reporting apps. One activation group felt comfortable after the Engaging Power session to set up a meeting with City staff to discuss their walking and biking safety concerns and the activation project.

Outreach Locations and Types

Cal Walks developed a robust outreach plan which included in-person flyer distribution, direct phone calls, emails, social media direct messaging, and social media posts. A list of potential outreach categories and locations was developed, followed by an online review of the county and local community program lists. Cal Walks also included the program summary and application in two statewide newsletters. The Stanislaus HSA also assisted Cal Walks in connecting to specific organizations and groups by inviting us to in-person events such as the Grayson Community Bike Ride in Grayson. The HSA also widely shared the flyer and application with community and agency partners and local stakeholders. Cal Walks also presented the program to the Caltrans District 10 Bicyclist Pedestrian Advisory Committee, where it was shared with 40 representatives. Overall, outreach well-exceeded efforts by county compared to Cal Walks prior Ambassador cohort program in three southern California counties.

Cal Walks shared printed flyers with Modesto City Schools Training & Safety Operations Supervisor (Transportation) and the Director of Parent Engagement & Outreach, and the University Extension, but we received no applications connected to these locations. Similarly, we shared the printed flyer at the Modest Farmers Market, local bike shops, and libraries.

Cal Walks recognizes both in-person and virtual outreach was skewed towards businesses, organizations, and groups within the City of Modesto and immediately surrounding areas. This is where we have the most partners from past projects. We recognize that we need to build partnerships with communities outside the urban areas and with smaller cities, such as Hughson, Salida, Turlock, and Grayson. We recommend that in future iterations, a community engagement plan identifies in-person and virtual outreach for each city in the County. Two (2) champions represented the City of Hughson and shared there is a great need to address walking and biking safety concerns in smaller cities and rural towns.

Outreach Method	Count	Locations
Flyer Distribution	725 Printed Flyers	Modesto City Schools, Catholic Charities, Stanislaus County Library, Modesto Certified Farmer's Market, local bike shops, West Modesto Collaborative, University of California Cooperative Extension, Burbank Elementary School, United Community Foundation, Invest in Me
Social Media	76 Separate Twitter or Instagram Accounts	Representing 45 separate organizations, groups, or individuals.
Cal Walks Email Newsletter	291 Opens from Recipients	Representing statewide community-based organizations, agencies, and individuals.
Direct Phone Calls, Virtual and In- Person Meetings	20+	Representing local community-based organizations, agencies, and individuals, including Stanislaus Bicycle Club, City Ministry Network, American Walks Roundtable, Caltrans District 10 BPAC, Invest in Me, Grayson Community Center, Tulomne River Trust, Stanislaus County Planning and Public Works Departments.

Activations and Activation Support

The shortened timeline meant that champions would need to identify, scope, plan, and complete an activation project in no more than nine (9) weeks. We believe this was only possible because we created space each week to discuss and plan activations and offered multiple opportunities to contact the project team for support. We also provide tailored support to one champion by providing all email communication and materials by text as well as email and in Spanish. The 2022 champions did an amazing job at planning and executing their activations. Each activation had a clear goal and multiple components. Cal Walks recommends better defining activation requirements to align with training sessions and to guide cohorts in building out their projects. We recommend activations include a project description and goals, assessment component and data component (Community Context Session 3), and visual component requirements (flyer, photo, materials).

All champions chose to work in groups of two (2) or three (3) to complete their activation projects. Alongside introducing the activation requirements in the Listening Session (Session 1), Cal Walks provided time in each subsequent session for champions to meet in breakout groups to discuss and plan their activation project, as well as offered support via email, phone, text, and two (2) hour-long weekly activation office hours. This cohort preferred to request support via email or during the activation breakout groups each week rather than the weekly office hours. In past cohorts, Cal Walks assigned homework each week, but we found it was not necessary for this cohort. Instead, we asked them to think about or make a decision on one component of their activation project each week. For example, after the Listening Session (Session 1), we asked them to come back with a focus area or topic, by the second week, we asked them to identify their project teams and project, and during week 4, we recommended they start to identity materials they might need for their project. We could better reflect these weekly progress asks in our presentation material, especially in the Listening Session, by providing more activation project examples and timelines.

Cal Walks recommends that activation planning time be included during each training session to minimize the need to schedule additional meeting times and to allow Cal Walks to join breakout sessions with each activation project group and answer questions after each training session. We believe this helped each group identify, scope, and plan their activation despite the shorter timeframe of the program. This meant they had time to complete portions of their activations prior to the champion's Showcase (Session 6) and still had time after the training program to finalize their activations and submit their final materials. In instances where the project timeline is extended between February and September, it may not be necessary to offer as much in-training activation support since champions will have even several months to complete their projects.

Champion Compensation

Champion compensation was originally \$200 but due to a smaller cohort we were able to increase it to \$400 per champion. During outreach we heard from community-based organizations to consider increasing the stipend in future projects and to calculate the hourly commitment alongside the stipend amount. Cal Walks recommends securing funding with each cohort to pay champions for their participation. We believe the stipend influences who applies and how committed they are to completing the program. champions have expressed gratitude for the stipend in past cohorts to help cover some of the costs of participating, such as WiFi, transportation and materials, and their time.

Training Schedule

The Champions' training schedule included meeting weekly for two (2) hours for 6 consecutive weeks, along with two (2) optional in-person activities. Participation in the cohort was very consistent, with no champions having unexcused absences and only two champions missing training due to work-related conflicts. Most champions also arrived before each training session so we could start on time. Cal Walks recommends all training sessions be completed consecutively and no more than 6-8 training be offered to keep champions engaged, provide necessary activation project support, but also allow for ample time to complete activations without scheduled trainings. Past cohorts offered 12 training sessions, which felt too long for both the project team and participants. Where more than eight sessions are offered, consider combining sessions with 1-2 longer in-person activities.

Virtual vs. In-Person Training

The Champion Program was intended to provide in-person training to community members, but due to COVID-19, the initial program and the Stanislaus County pilot were offered virtually. In Stanislaus County Cal Walks offered two in-person optional walk bike assessments. Although we would like to host the training in person to facilitate more collaboration and community among the champions, a countywide program makes it difficult, especially during these times. A countywide program means that participants could be very short or long distances from each other, putting the burden on some to travel to meeting locations. In-person trainings also require more funds to reserve meeting rooms, materials, equipment, and support services such as childcare, food, and in-person interpretation. In the final survey, champions that having to meet for the program in person would have impacted their decision to apply and participate because in-person trainings require more time and resources to travel to meeting destinations and additional support such as childcare and food. Champions recommended keeping the program virtual but continuing to include several in-person optional components.

Community-Based Organization Support

Cal Walks recommends including funding for small contracts with community-based organizations (CBOs) to assist with outreach, especially in smaller cities and rural areas. In past cohorts, funding allowed for contracts with CBOs to support outreach, application support, curriculum components, and activation support. Funding for CBOs helps compensate them for their outreach efforts but also supports their work in the community. Collaboration with CBOs would have helped us outreach to cities and communities where neither Cal Walks nor HSA has deep relationships.

Multi-Year Projects and Coordination with Existing HSA Programs

In the Community Power & champion Showcase, champions shared they would like to continue meeting and co-learning together at least once a year through in-person activities. Consider if multi-year funding is possible to support both a new cohort of champions and also continue collaborations with past champions to expand reach and support existing efforts in the County. For example, two champions focused on the safety of students getting to and from school in Grayson. Their activation included in-person surveys with parents using the National Center for Safe Routes to School Parent Surveys. The surveys ask about what factors affect whether parents allow their children to walk or bike to school, the presence of safety conditions along routes to school, and other background information. The surveys are a first step in identifying safety concerns and ways to improve opportunities for students to walk or bike to school and offer an introduction to safe routes to school efforts for a school. The 2022 program allowed for this data gathering but champions are ready to work on addressing safety concerns and share they would like additional support.

Conclusion

Despite a late start, we were able to select nine (9) dedicated champions who were ready to learn and engage with their community. Champions represented diverse backgrounds, demographics, locations, and interests, but all were committed to making their community and neighborhood safer for walking and biking. Several shared personal stories of their family member's encounters as pedestrians and bicyclists, including a young cyclist being seriously injured in a hit-and-run crash, near misses for students walking to and from school, and concerns around walking and biking in their neighborhood due to the fast speed of cars or lack of connectivity to desired destinations. Some champions were already walking and biking in their community and others hoped that with safety improvements they could also take part in active transportation.

Champion attendance was consistent with only two (2) excused absences throughout the program. We believe this reflects the dedication of each champion and also supports the shorter program model with shorter and lower number of sessions.

Champions shared in the final session that they learned and expanded their knowledge of active transportation but were also encouraged and equipped to take part in personal activation projects following the program. The cohort requested follow-up meetings to stay connected and engaged and suggested annual meet-ups such as bike rides, walk assessments, or other additional activities.

Cal Walks staff are honored to have worked with a dedicated group of champions. We learned a lot about each community represented as well as priorities and concerns across communities in the County. The program and champion feedback helps us to see where we can focus our efforts in Stanislaus through other training and technical assistance programs. Champion feedback also helps us improve the program for future cohorts with the goal of making it more accessible, educational, and enjoyable.







Appendices

- 1. Hughson Activation Project: Presentation & Parent Survey Reports
- 2. Modesto Activation Project: Presentation, Survey Results, Outreach Poster
- 3. Patterson Activation Project: Presentation, Student Survey Results
- 4 Turlock Activation Project: Presentation, Lawn Sign Design
- 5. Champions Final Survey Results