

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN RAVENSWOOD CITY AND SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

This brief summarizes a CalFresh Healthy Living-CHOICES Project Learning Collaborative Partnership model examining Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and the School Travel Fellowship (STF) in Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified school districts. SRTS promotes walking and biking by implementing projects that improve health, safety, and well-being while reducing traffic congestion and emissions.

The Issue

Every child should have the opportunity to grow up healthy. Communities that support safe active transportation and promote physical activity are essential for children's health, yet not all children have access to safe streets or places to be active.¹ In San Mateo County, 96% of high injury areas where youth pedestrian and bicycle collisions occur are within one mile of a school, particularly those serving families with low income.² SRTS supports healthier habits by creating safe, accessible options for students to walk, bike, or roll to school, addressing barriers to physical activity. Physically active students can experience lasting benefits for physical and mental health, academic performance, and long-term well-being.³ Through the San Mateo County Office of Education's (SMCOE) SRTS program, schools and cities in the county collaborate to implement projects that improve safety and promote active transportation around school zones. Collaboration among cities and schools can improve infrastructure to increase safe walking and biking and promote health for all.

About Safe Routes to School in Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified School Districts

San Mateo County envisions a comprehensive SRTS-School Travel Fellowship (STF) program across all K-8 schools. SRTS enables school children to walk and bicycle to school by implementing projects and activities that improve the health, well-being, and safety of children. The STF fosters cross-sector collaboration, providing technical assistance, workshops, and support for teams to design programmatic projects or test quick-build infrastructure improvements. This modeling project looked at implementing the program in two priority K-8 districts: Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified. County, city, and school district coordination, supported by a county Community Advisory Board, Grant Task Force, and city-level Task Forces, would guide the implementation of projects that advance active transportation and safety.

Comparing Costs and Outcomes

CHOICES cost-effectiveness analysis compared the costs and outcomes over a 10-year time horizon (2025-2034) of implementing SRTS with the costs and outcomes associated with not implementing the program.

Implementing Safe Routes to School in Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified school districts is an investment in child health and safety:



14,800
CHILDREN

would attend schools with safer transportation environments over 10 years



48
MORE ACTIVE MINUTES

per week for children who start walking or biking to school



\$47
COST PER CHILD

per year attending schools that adopt SRTS programs



\$232
ANNUAL SAVINGS PER FAMILY

whose students begin walking or biking

Conclusions and Implications

If SRTS-STF programs are adopted throughout Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified school districts, we estimate a 67% likelihood that pedestrian and bicycle injuries among elementary and middle school students during school travel hours could be lowered, even if more students are walking or biking than before.

Investing in initiatives that make it safer and easier for students to get to and from school boosts daily physical activity and offers additional benefits. Students who switch from passive to physically active commutes, such as walking, biking, or rolling to school, would engage in an extra 48 minutes of physical activity each week. Over 10 years, an estimated 14,800 students attending 18 schools could benefit from safer environments by expanding existing programs. This is urgent because students and families face unsafe street conditions around schools, including speeding cars, congestion, and dangerous crossings.

With the expansion of the SRTS-STF program, we estimate the annual implementation costs would be \$47 per student and \$691,000 overall. However, these costs could be offset by savings from reduced vehicle travel, estimated to save \$261,000 annually as more students walk or bike to school. Families whose students begin walking or biking—and consequently drive less for school trips—would see most of these savings, each saving \$232 annually.

Comprehensive SRTS programs may also reduce the risk of pedestrian and bicycle injuries.⁴ We estimate a 67% likelihood that, if SRTS-STF programs are adopted throughout Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified school districts, injuries among elementary and middle school students during school travel hours could be lowered, even if more students are walking or biking than before. The SRTS-STF program expands local capacity to pursue community-driven, locally responsive projects that transform school neighborhoods into healthier, safer, and more resilient places for everyone.



Citation

Watkins J, Vallez-Kelly T, Sanchez L, Ibarra M, Chan C, Gacutan-Galang J, Beccarelli M, Evans LW, Pugliese J, Gouck J, McCulloch SM, Barrett JL, Garrone ME, Cradock AL. *Safe Routes to School in Ravenswood City and South San Francisco Unified School Districts in San Mateo County* {Issue Brief}. San Mateo County Health, San Mateo, CA, and the CalFresh Healthy Living-Childhood Obesity Intervention Cost-Effectiveness Study (CHOICES) Learning Collaborative Partnership; December 2025. For more information, please visit choicesproject.org.

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