



**safe routes
to school**
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For more information about Safe Routes to School and other Feet First programs

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CASE STUDY



Safe Routes to School Program

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a growing movement to encourage and support active commuting by school children and families. At the intersection of public health, public safety, education, and transportation, SRTS helps communities by making it safer, easier, and more common for children to walk or bike to school. Safe Routes to school solutions are multi-faceted and can be categorized into the “5 E’s”: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation.

Program Partnerships

In 2010, neighbors applied for funding to begin a Safe Routes to School program at Hawthorne. Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) received a grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation that was awarded in 2011.

SDOT improved crosswalks, sidewalks, and curb curbs to provide a safer street environment for Hawthorne children and families. The education and encouragement programs emphasize student safety during arrival and dismissal times, Walking School Buses, parent involvement, and bicycle safety education. Extra steps are taken to engage all students and families in encouragement efforts, including those living outside of the school walk boundary and non-English speaking families.

The partners in these efforts include Feet First, Cascade Bicycle Club, the Friends of Hawthorne Parent Group and Hawthorne Elementary Administration.

Funding and Program Partners:



Hawthorne Elementary School, Seattle, WA

Year	Amount	Project Description
2011	\$ 132,000	The project includes pedestrian crossing flags, bike racks, traffic calming, traffic chokers, sidewalks, crosswalks, curb extensions, focus groups, parent/teacher education, bicycle safety curriculum, educational materials, walking school bus, and walk to school events.

Community Overview

Hawthorne Elementary is located in an economic and ethnically diverse Southeast Seattle neighborhood. The school currently serves 321 K-5 students, with seventy-six percent eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The Safe Routes to School program began at Hawthorne shortly after the Seattle Public Schools shifted the school assignment policy to favor neighborhood schools. This policy change resulted in having fewer students bused to Hawthorne, and more students potentially arriving on foot or by car. At the start of the project, only five percent of students walked to school. Parents identified the steep hill as a powerful disincentive to walking. SRTS program planners approached the hill as an asset by challenging students to “Hike and Bike Hawthorne Hill.”

Beyond the physical challenge, families also voiced concerns about traffic speeds on nearby arterials, and visibility issues caused by the steep hill. SRTS planners knew early on that traffic safety education would be central to this project.

Education and Encouragement Highlights

- Walking Audit
- School Circulation Plan
- Pedestrian Safety Flags
- “Park and Walk” Campaign
- “Hike and Bike the Hill” Campaign
- Basics of Bicycling
- Artistic Bicycle Assembly



Before



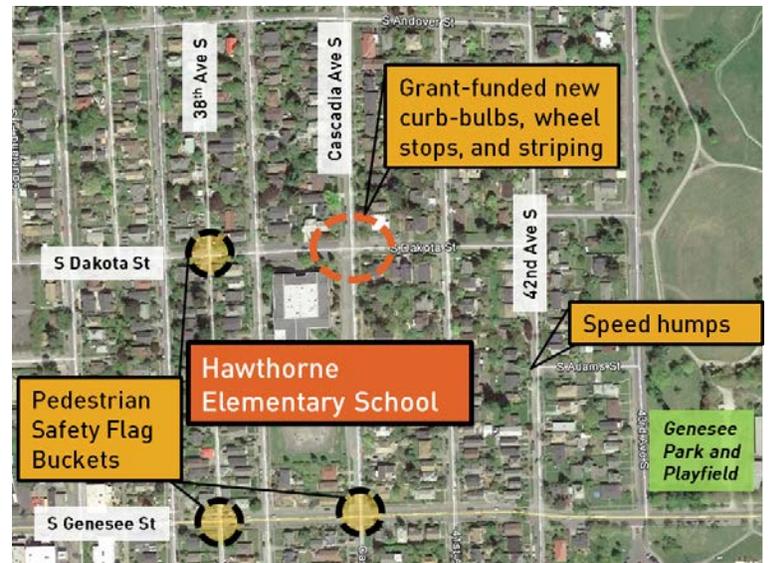
After

Before and after the wheel stop installation on S Dakota street

Infrastructure Improvement

The SRTS grant funded new curb bulbs and striping directly in front of the school at South Dakota Street and Cascadia Avenue South, as well as speed humps on 42nd Avenue South. Following a community walking audit, SDOT expanded the improvements to include wheel stops on South Dakota Street to prevent cars from parking across the sidewalk. The low-cost wheel stops effectively increased visibility at Hawthorne and made the area more walkable for people arriving from the west.

Parents and children at Hawthorne Elementary worked with Feet First to install **Pedestrian Safety Flag Buckets**¹ at three intersections around the school: Cascadia Avenue South and South Genesee Street, 38th Avenue South and South Dakota Street, and 38th Avenue South and South Genesee Street.



New striping and curb-bulbs at main school crosswalk

1. **Pedestrian safety flags** are used to increase visibility when crossing the road. Installing buckets at legal intersections is an opportunity for safety training and community engagement.



The pedestrian flags were decorated by Hawthorne students



Camina the Chicken encouraged drivers to “Park & Walk”

Education and Encouragement Activities

One of the primary concerns in the Hawthorne community is road safety. Fast speeds on Genesee and along 38th Avenue South, visibility issues caused by the steep road grade, and chaotic arrival and departure procedures were all significant barriers to walking.

Based on an initial observation of the arrival and departure procedures in April 2012, Feet First created a circulation map and communications plan for parent/guardian education, working with the school safety committee and engineers. In the fall of 2013, multi-language circulation flyers were distributed to communicate preferred arrival and departure procedures to families. An additional 500 flyers were left in the program “Sustainability Kit” to be distributed again in the fall of 2014.

Parent-led “Walking School Buses” were organized on Fridays for the “Hike and Bike the Hill” encouragement campaign. Hawthorne also hosted a “Park & Walk” campaign to encourage families that drove to park away from school and walk the remaining distance.

To further pique students’ interest in walk-to-school activities, Feet First distributed punch card key chains and “Toe Tokens” as an incentive for students to walk to school on Friday mornings.

In order to address pedestrian safety concerns immediately, Feet First worked with school families to build and install pedestrian flag buckets at three locations. The pedestrian safety flags were decorated by Hawthorne students at the Community Day School on campus. Three school families agreed to adopt responsibility for maintenance, and hosted a safety party to prepare the intersections and practice safety skills with their children.

The school also strengthened its bicycle safety education by providing PE curriculum with Cascade Bicycle Club’s “Group Health Basics of Bicycling” and “Artistic Cycling” programs.

“We are so much more mindful about safety and encouraging students to walk when possible.”

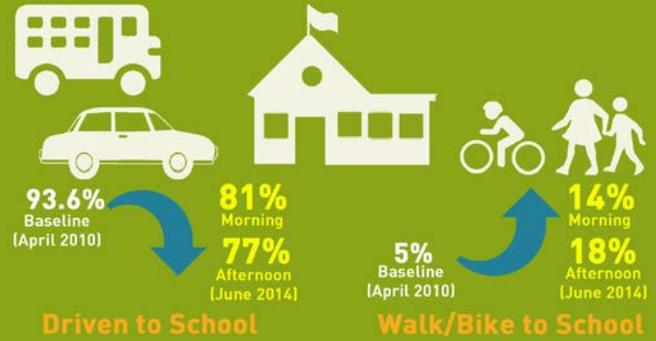
—Eileen Gray, Assistant Principal of Hawthorne, 2014



Children, teachers and parents at Hawthorne Elementary School participated in "Hike & Bike" event in October 2013

Motor-powered vs. Foot-powered Travel

Student Travel Tally Report
Pre- and Post-program Travel Mode to School Comparison



*Motor-powered travel includes school bus and family vehicle.

Results

Over the course of the SRTS grant, Hawthorne Elementary saw a measurable increase in active school commuting. The number of students walking and biking to or from school increased by eleven percent on average, from five percent to sixteen percent. The number of students driven to school by bus or car was reduced by about fifteen percent on average.

As the neighborhood school policy takes effect in the Seattle Public Schools, it is important to gather data about the policy's impact on student travel. The possibility that families would choose to drive rather than walk or bike short distances can be countered by Safe Routes to School education and encouragement campaigns. To best understand the impact of policy and programming efforts, this Hawthorne case study should be compared to data from other schools with similar reductions in school busing.

Next Step

Hawthorne elementary PTA partnered with Harborview Medical Center and plans to participate in Safe Kids Seattle's School Mural project by June 2015 (estimated cost: \$ 1,000).

This would include painting the school's logo, "Rise Up Phoenix", on Cascadia between South Dakota Street and South Genesee Street at the main school entrance and defining the school bus drop-off-zone on Cascadia by painting the curb and adding more visible signage to the bus drop-off area.



This document was produced by Feet First.

We work to ensure all communities across Washington are walkable. Contact us to find out more about our Safe Routes to School programs and how you can connect with others to make it safer and easier to walk to school.

Safe Routes to School Resources:

- feetfirst.org
- saferouteswa.org
- saferoutesinfo.org
- walkbiketoschool.org
- wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/SafeRoutes