



Evaluating Portland's Safer Routes to School Program

BACKGROUND

Portland first began to develop its Safe Routes to School program in 2000 in response to heightened local and national awareness and concern about increasing rates of childhood obesity, school related traffic congestion, and the lack of bike- and pedestrian-friendly transportation infrastructure around schools. In 2005, the city's Department of Transportation redesigned the program to focus on five main components known as the five Es—engineering, encouragement, enforcement, education, and evaluation—and re-labeled the program Safer Routes to School (SR2S). The program began with 8 elementary schools in the first year but has since expanded to 25 elementary schools throughout the city.

OUR RESEARCH

The primary components of the program's evaluation efforts are the parent and handraising surveys that have been administered every fall and spring since fall, 2006. Regarding the program's primary goal of increasing the proportions of children and parents choosing active transportation choices such as walking or biking, the fall 2008 survey results are encouraging.

	<i>Parent Survey Reported Mode Shares for All SR2S Schools</i>	
	<i>Active</i>	<i>Passive</i>
<i>Fall 06</i>	31.6%	68.4%
<i>Sp. 07</i>	36.6%	63.5%
<i>Fall 07</i>	35.8%	64.2%
<i>Sp. 08</i>	36.1%	63.9%
<i>Fall 08</i>	38.4%	61.6%

The results of the parent survey indicate that the proportion of parents and students choosing physically active transportation modes as their most frequent means of getting to and from school is at its highest level since the surveys began in fall 2006. According to the results of the parent survey, the mode share of active transportation choices is 22.0% larger than it was in the fall of 2006, increasing from 31.6% to 38.4%.

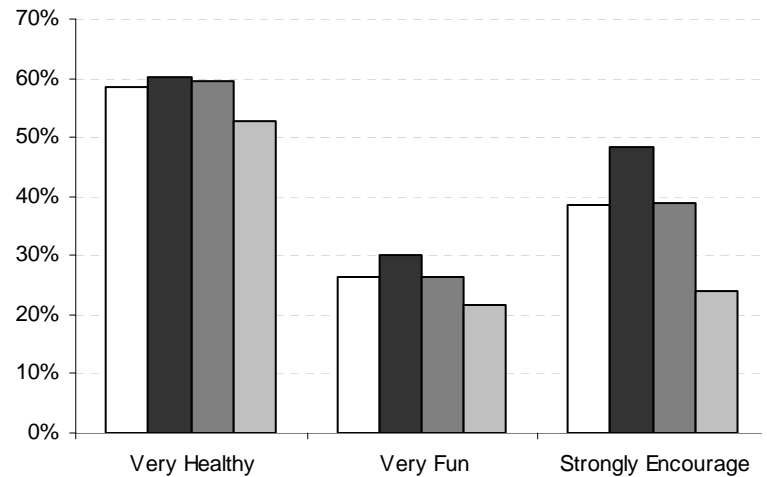
This trend is also evident, but to a much smaller degree, in the handraising survey results. Active modes in fall 2008 accounted for 29.3% of all trips in the most recent survey, up from 28.0% in fall 2006, indicating that 4.6% more students went to and from school by bike, foot, or other active modes this year than in fall 2006.

The parent survey results also suggest that the program is positively affecting parents' perceptions of the health and enjoyment of walking and bicycling, and their perceptions of the impact the program is having on their schools' and their children's interest in walking and biking. For each of the survey's questions related to these general attitudes, the highest rates of the strongest positive responses were posted by the 1st year schools that have been in the program the longest, and the most recently added 3rd year schools posted the lowest rates.

Handraising Survey Reported Mode Shares for All SR2S Schools

	<i>Active</i>	<i>Passive</i>
<i>Fall 06</i>	28.0%	72.0%
<i>Sp. 07</i>	35.0%	65.0%
<i>Fall 07</i>	29.3%	70.7%
<i>Sp. 08</i>	29.2%	70.8%
<i>Fall 08</i>	29.6%	70.4%

□ All Schools ■ 1st Year ■ 2nd Year □ 3rd Year



This correlation between length of time in the program and strong positive attitudes indicates that the program is contributing to the differences in attitudes between groups that have been in the program for different lengths of time.

Contact Information:

Steve White

Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation
Center for Urban Studies
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751 • Portland, Oregon • 97207-0751
ibpi@pdx.edu