

Summer 2023

Madera Street Story Training and Technical Assistance

Follow-up Technical Assistance for the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training



Berkeley SafeTREC

Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and thank the CPBST Planning Committee. We acknowledge and thank the Planning Committee for hosting this training. We acknowledge the Yokuts peoples as the traditional land caretakers of the community of Madera.

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This report was prepared in cooperation with the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of OTS.

Introduction

The Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training (CPBST) is a joint project of California Walks (Cal Walks) and UC Berkeley Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) that works with local residents and safety advocates to develop a community-driven action plan to improve walking and biking safety in their communities and strengthen collaboration with local officials and agency staff. The program provides follow-up technical assistance to past CPBST sites to support the implementation of the action plan and recommendations outlined in their initial CPBST Summary and Recommendations Report

Background

In the summer of 2021, SafeTREC and Cal Walks (the Project Team) worked with the community of Northeast Madera to host a CPBST virtual workshop with residents and representatives from CalViva, the city of Madera, Madera County Transportation Commission, and Caltrans District 6. The focus of the CPBST workshop was to:

1. Improve bicycle and pedestrian access to local community centers, schools, and parks;
2. Increase walking and biking safety and comfort in residential and businesses corridors;
3. Reenergize and reconvene city, county, and statewide transportation agency stakeholders to recommit to improving walking and biking safety in Northeast Madera; and
4. Re-establish the Live Well Madera Collaborative, established in 2019 to develop the Madera Safe Routes to School Action Plan to identify areas for walking and biking safety improvements, strengthen agency partnerships and increase communication.

The 2021 CPBST report highlighted safety concerns in the community's walkways and streets, including incomplete or narrow sidewalks, faded crosswalk markings, drivers exceeding posted speed limits, and a lack of pedestrian-scale lighting and the Project Team proposed both short-term and long-term solutions, including re-establishing the Live Well Madera Collaborative through the Madera County Transportation Commission. This collaborative, originally initiated in 2019 as part of the Madera Safe Routes to School Action Plan, would provide insights into safety projects, identify funding opportunities, suggest policy changes, and improve communication between the city and community stakeholders regarding infrastructure improvements. Long-term recommendations involved introducing more frequent high-visibility marked crossings to enhance walkability, along with considering alternative crossing treatments like medians, hybrid beacons, rapid flashing beacons, and raised crosswalks.

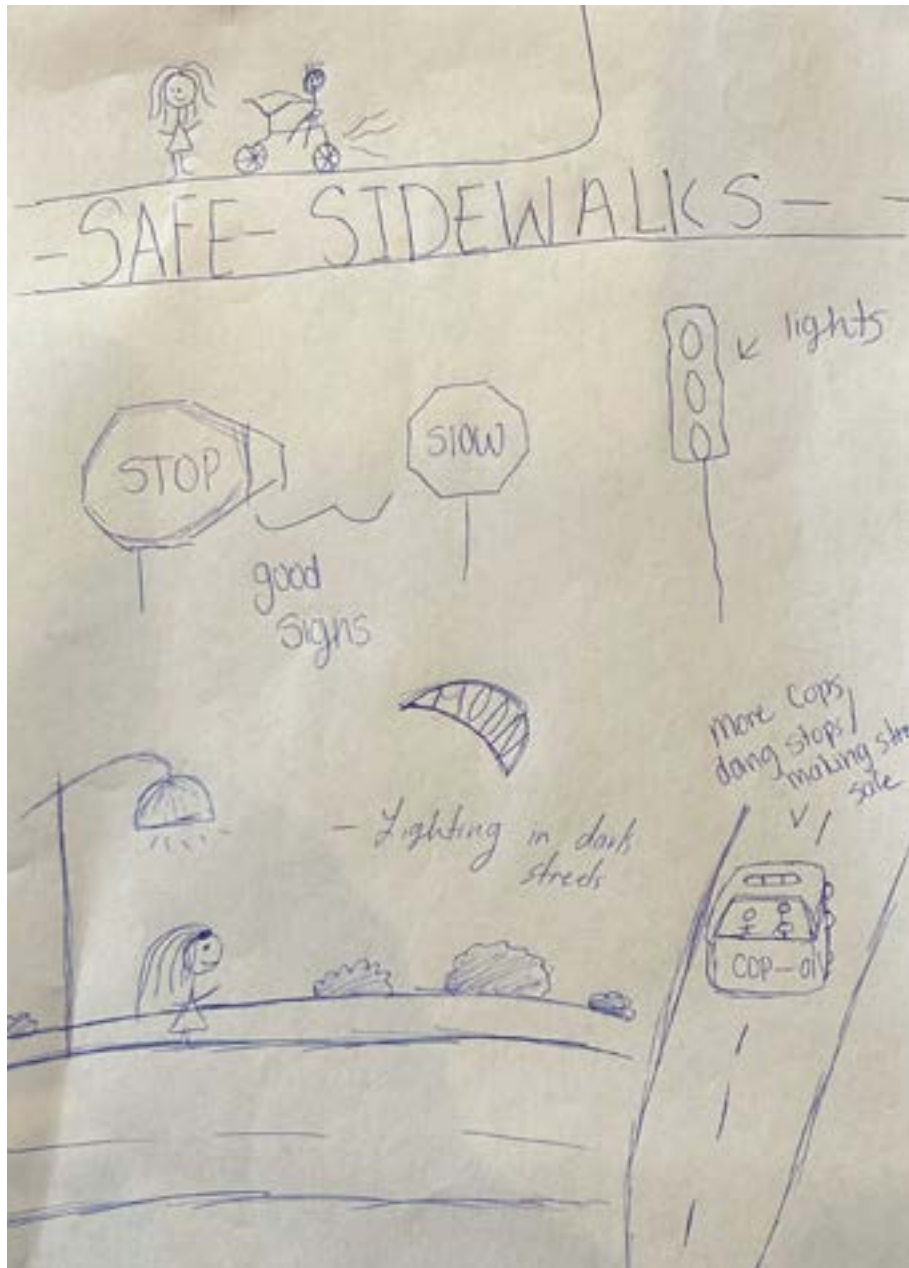
For more information on the 2021 CPBST workshop, you can access the full [Madera CPBST Summary and Recommendation Report](#).

In order to achieve some of the goals included in the report, the Madera County Department of Public Health, the City of Madera, Caltrans District 6, CalViva Health and others reconvened to strategize how to conduct community engagement using Street Story, a web-based tool for collecting community feedback on transportation safety issues. Through the use of Street Story, the Planning Committee planned to re-engage community members to help identify problem areas specifically along Yosemite Avenue and discuss potential solutions for non-infrastructure improvements. This reports summarizes the discussions and outcomes of the technical assistance training.

Visioning Activity

Participants that attended the Street Story training were asked to envision what a safe, comfortable, and joyful Madera looks and feels like. Participants shared elements that would make Madera safer and more appealing to people walking and biking. The following photos document what a safe, comfortable, and joyful Madera looks to them.

Participants shared elements that would make Madera safer and more appealing to people walking and biking.



A participant's drawing from the visioning activity

Street Story Training

On June 29, 2023, California Walks and UC Berkeley SafeTREC provided a follow-up Street Story training to support the walking and biking safety goals identified during the 2021 virtual northeast Madera Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training (CPBST) workshop.

The goal of this training was to teach the Planning Committee and other stakeholders how to engage the public and gather information about traffic safety from Madera residents. The information collected will be used to identify and prioritize safety projects.

Street Story is a web-based community engagement tool that allows residents and community organizations to gather information that is important to transportation safety, including crashes, near-misses, general hazards and safe locations to travel. To promote access to the tool, SafeTREC offers technical assistance to communities and organizations interested in using Street Story. The platform and the information collected is free to use and publicly available in English and Spanish. Visit: <https://streetstory.berkeley.edu>.

The Project Team demonstrated how to use Street Story to gather community feedback through walk audits and community meetings. During the training, attendees were introduced to the purpose of the Street Story tool, demonstrated how to enter data via the tool, and discussed ways to perform outreach by using a custom boundary in the tool. The Project Team and the participants also discussed potential limitations of the analysis of the data, such as how personally identified information is protected and the potential timelines for delivery of raw data and analysis.

Participants shared elements that would make Madera safer and more appealing to people walking and biking.



Street Story data captured during training

Street Story and Walking/Biking Assessment

As of August 8, 2023, there were three Street Story reports made in northeast Madera, including one crash and two near-misses near Courthouse Park. Examples of narratives include:

- “[A] group of pedestrians were using the crosswalk and [a] driver failed to yield properly and nearly hit them.”
- “A pedestrian crossing Yosemite Ave at E St from S[outh] to N[orth] was almost hit by a vehicle traveling S[outh] W[est] in the #2 lane on Yosemite [Avenue]. There was a large [...] truck stopped in the left turn [lane] on [...] Yosemite [Avenue] waiting to turn left onto S[outh] E[ast] E street [which obstructed visibility of the crossing pedestrian at the intersection].”

These reports were submitted immediately following a walking and biking assessment conducted around the Courthouse Park on West Yosemite Avenue in Downtown Madera. Many participants expressed issues regarding the narrowness of sidewalk width and poor conditions of the sidewalks along West Yosemite Avenue in both directions. Participants shared that students from Madera High School and from the surrounding elementary schools walk and bike to school crossing West Yosemite Avenue, which could pose potential safety risks for students. The sidewalks along this street are also difficult for people with limited mobility or pushing strollers to navigate as tree roots are visibly lifting through the cracks. On top of the poor conditions of the sidewalks, there is heavy traffic at the West Yosemite Ave/ North G Street intersection in front of the Courthouse Park which further poses safety concerns for pedestrians and bicylists. At this intersection, participants noted they would like the cracks in the sidewalks to be fixed, and the addition of continental crosswalks markings. Cracked and uneven obstructed sidewalks paths due to tree roots cause lifting. Participants also noted they would like upgraded pedestrian push buttons to include audible buttons at intersection crossings along Yosemite Avenue. Furthermore, West Yosemite Avenue does not have protected bike lanes which leads those biking to choose between biking on the road with the heavy traffic or on the sidewalks where it feels safer, but poses a potential conflict with pedestrians.

Street Story and Walking/Biking Assessment

Participants shared that the crossing distance from curb to curb on West Yosemite Avenue is too far to feel safe crossing; participants suggested bulbouts and advanced yield lines to make each intersection from South H Street to North C Street feel safer. The pedestrian countdown at the West Yosemite Avenue/ South Gateway Drive intersection should also include audible pedestrian signals. Participants stressed the importance of adequate high visibility signage throughout the walk assessment.

Bike lanes on 6th Street at D Street are due for restriping and a stop sign is needed at this intersection in order to provide a safer, more comfortable biking environment. There are missing sidewalks on 6th Street and Gateway Drive which poses a safety risk for pedestrians, but participants noted there is adequate shade near the Dollar General. Participants shared that the area is well lit but not safe enough to walk or bike.

Driver travel lanes are wide. Road widths encourage drivers to speed; the road is cracked and has potholes along 6th Street.

Along West Yosemite Avenue at the intersections with 6th Street, G Street, and L Street, there are faded marked crosswalks, including shark teeth and standard yellow paint. Also, at those intersections, there is pedestrian crossing signage, no speed signs, no school zone signage, obstructed and low visibility due to trees obstructing signs for crossing there exists crossing for assisted mobility devices. There is a safety island on Yosemite Ave where drivers typically stop for pedestrians, although the view is obstructed.

Training Resources

- [Street Story Starter Guide](#)
- [Custom Boundary Instructions](#)
- [Street Story Tutorial Video](#)
- [Street Story webpage](#)
- [How communities are using the tool](#)

Conclusion

The training demonstrated the community's continued commitment to making Madera a safe and welcoming place for residents to walk and bike. The committee committed to continue to seek opportunities that are collaborative and include residents in the decision-making process to uplift community voices and prioritize their needs. Gathering qualitative data through Street Story can help inform their focus for future traffic safety projects and campaigns.

With the reconvening of the Planning Committee and renewed commitment to prioritize the safety of those walking and biking in Madera, the project team will continue to explore ways to engage residents and promote the Street Story tool to capture travel experiences throughout the city. The Planning Committee aims to conduct more targeted training with Madera residents to take place at a library and at upcoming existing community events and meetings.

Thank you for your interest in the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training Program.

For more information, please visit:
<https://safetrec.berkeley.edu/programs/cpbst> or
<https://www.calwalks.org/cpbst>

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