Street Story: Starter Guide for Communities and Agencies

This guide includes an explanation about what Street Story is, how to enter information, how organizations can use the tool in community engagement efforts, and how people can use the information collected to improve street safety.

Street Story was created by a team at UC Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC), with city planning, public health, engineering, social welfare and computer science backgrounds. Members of the public, as well as agency and organization representatives and industry experts, provided important input.

1. What is Street Story?

Street Story is a community engagement tool that allows residents, organizations and agencies to collect local information about traffic crashes, near-misses, general hazards and safe locations to travel. Organizations and agencies can use Street Story to collect public input that is part of community needs assessments, transportation plans, grant applications for safety programs or infrastructure, or evaluations.

The platform and the information collected are free to use and publicly accessible.

Street Story includes a survey about roadway experiences and a dataset of community input with maps and tables that can be downloaded. Once the surveys have been completed, organizations and agencies can use the information as part of community needs assessments, transportation safety planning or evaluations.

The online version of Street Story is now available in English and Spanish. To access the Spanish version, click here.

Street Story data

Street Story collects experiences related to crashes, near-misses, general hazards and safe places to travel. Members of the public can provide information about a safety issue or safe place to travel, and observations about that place, including information about the built environment (sidewalks, roadways, bike lanes, etc.) and type of incident. Participants are able to provide a narrative or description about the incident or location.

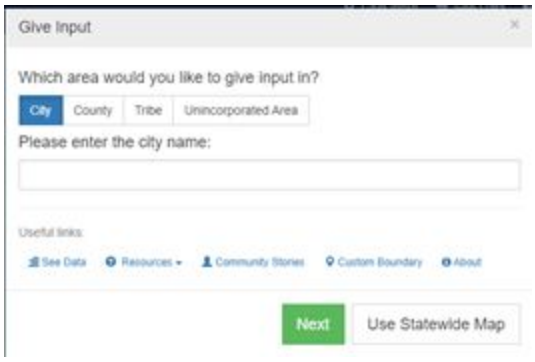
You can view and download Street Story information by going to the “See Data” tab on the platform’s main menu. SafeTREC will post narratives online once we make sure they do not contain identifying information.

2. How does the Street Story platform work?

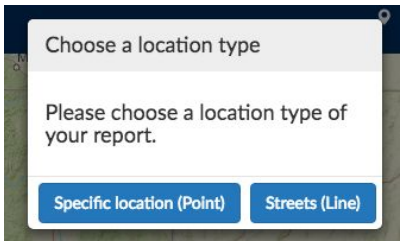
Data Collection

The platform allows people to provide feedback about transportation safety in communities across California. You can give input by following these steps:

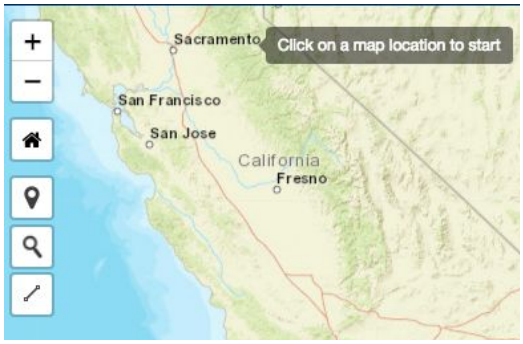
a) Go to http://streetstory.berkeley.edu and type the city, county, tribal area, or unincorporated area you would like to give input, and click the “Next” button.



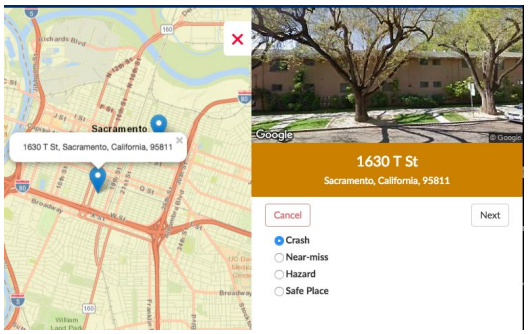
b) Choose whether you would like to give input about a specific location (point) or a stretch of road, sidewalk or pathway (line).



c) Choose the location where you want to give input. You can choose the location by zooming into the map and selecting a location, typing in the address in the search icon, or zoom to your current location by clicking on the location icon.



d) Choose the type of report you would like to make, then answer the questions that follow. You can skip any questions you would like to.

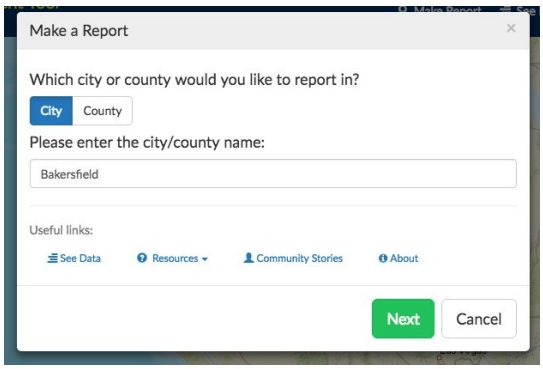


e) Once you have submitted your report, you can choose to answer some questions about yourself. You can skip any questions you choose.

Data Visualizations

You can view data that has been collected in the Street Story platform for a **specific city or county** by following these steps:

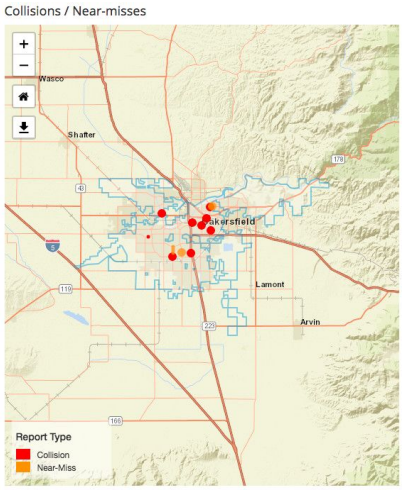
a) Go to http://streetstory.berkeley.edu and type in the city, county, tribal area, or unincorporated area you would like to see data for, and select the “Next” button.

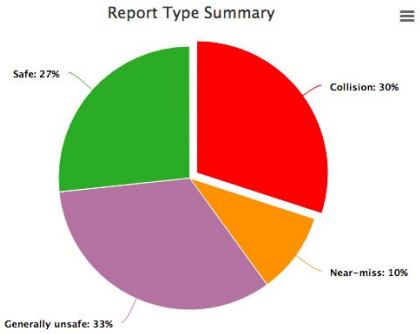


b) When directed to choose a location type, make a selection and in the top right hand corner, select the “See Data” link.

c) You will be directed to the “Reports” page, which will show maps and tables about the Street Story reports made in the city, county, tribal area, or unincorporated area you have selected and the demographics of the people who have made these reports.

d) To download a specific map or table, select the icon in the right upper corner of the visualization or the “download” button on the map.





e) To print or make a pdf of all maps and tables, select “Print” on your internet browser, then follow your browser’s instructions.

3. How can I use Street Story in my organization or agency’s community outreach efforts?

Street Story is designed to be used alongside other community engagement efforts. We recommend taking the following steps to develop community engagement efforts that fit your organization’s needs, and to learn more about innovative community engagement in the “Resources” subsection at the end of this section.

Steps for developing outreach strategies

a) Decide who you want to hear from and what you want to hear about

Before deciding which kinds of community engagement efforts you’re going to take on, define who your focus communities are and what they can teach you. Focus communities can be broad (e.g., everyone travelling through, living, or working within a specific corridor), or they can be very specific (e.g., residents and employees of a retirement home). It may also be helpful to set goals for the number of people you plan to reach and the information you hope to collect through community engagement efforts. To learn more about choosing focus communities and beginning community engagement efforts, see links outlined in the ”Resources” subsection.

Users may enter demographic information, which may help determine whether you are hearing from the groups you intend to reach.

To learn more about choosing focus communities and beginning community engagement efforts, see links outlined in the ”Resources” subsection.

b) Partner with trusted organizations, leaders

When engaging with communities, it is important to partner with community leaders who are known and trusted by their communities.

When using Street Story with partner organizations, here are a few things to think about:

- When talking about Street Story, tell partners that the platform is free to use and the information is both publicly accessible and anonymous.
- You can share postcards and flyers with information about Street Story. These can be downloaded on the Street Story website.
- Consider the most appropriate way to get people involved in using Street Story. For example, you can share the link to the Street Story website then ask people to complete the survey on their phones, or you can provide paper versions of Street Story for people to complete the survey on.

c) Be where your focus communities are

We suggest collecting information at:

- Parking lots or garages
- Grocery and shopping areas
- Senior centers and retirement homes
- Healthcare centers
- Bus stops
- Libraries
- Community centers
- Schools

Prior to an event, check whether the site has Internet access.

Community Event Ideas

There are many different types of events your organization can host or attend to collect meaningful information about your communities’ transportation experiences. Below, we include a few ideas for events that we have incorporated Street Story into.

Walk audit
Plan a walk with a group of 5-15 members, and take notes about locations where people feel safe, unsafe or have experienced a crash or near-miss in the past. After the walk audit, convene at a location where the group can debrief about their experiences and can spend time recording information onto the Street Story website.

Steps:

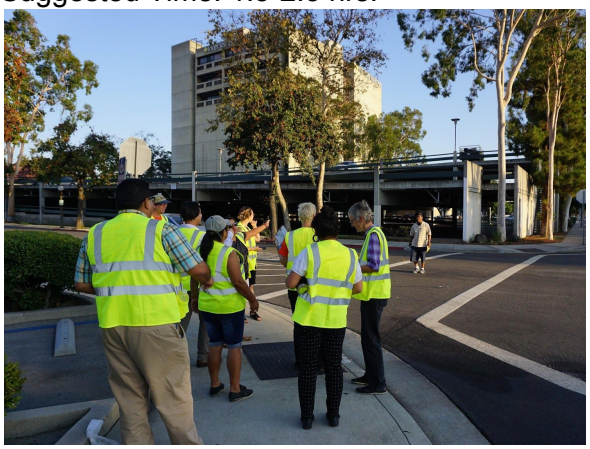
- Introduce Street Story to the group of attendees, including the types of information the group will collect to put into the platform (safe and unsafe locations, crashes or near-misses)

- Complete a short walk around the site (approximately 20-30 minutes is fine), and take notes about locations where attendees feel safe, unsafe or may have experienced a collision or near-miss at in the past
- Return to the meeting location and spend some time talking about observations and recording information collected using the online version
- Review the data collected on the Street Story See Data page (projector and WIFI must be available)

Materials:

- Meeting location with reliable WIFI access
- Computers or tablets
  Note-taking supplies
- Projector (optional)

Suggested Time: 1.5-2.5 hrs.



Community meeting
Hold a meeting where community members can discuss their transportation safety experiences and spend time recording information on the Street Story website. This could occur at a community center, school, library, health center, etc.

Steps:

- Introduce Street Story to the group of attendees, including how your group plans to use the information collected
- Introduce each input category - collision, near-miss, hazard and safe location
- Spend some time (e.g., 20-30 minutes, but this will vary with the size of the group) minutes allowing attendees to record their experiences
- Spend 10 minutes reviewing the data collected on Street Story's See Data page (optional if projector is available)

Materials:

- Location with reliable Wi-Fi access
- Computers or tablets
- Note-taking supplies

- Projector (optional)

Suggested Time: 45-60 min

Community events

Bring Street Story to existing community events. Ask attendees to provide information using a tablet or computer, or hand out flyers with Street Story information and ask attendees to input information on the website at home. You can think about bringing Street Story to events like:

- Farmers Markets
- Bike Rodeos
- Open Streets events
- Health fairs
- Sporting events
- School events
- Block parties
- Digital literacy training workshops
- Cultural events
- County fairs

Prior to an event, check whether the site has Internet access.

Steps:

- Coordinate with event organizers to set up a table at the event
- During the event, ask attendees to provide feedback using a smart phone, tablet or computer, or distribute flyers with Street Story information

Materials:

- Street Story flyers
- Location with reliable Wi-Fi access or paper version (optional)
- Tablet (optional)
- Note-taking supplies

d) Measure how well community engagement efforts work

Guidelines for measuring the effectiveness of community engagement efforts:

- Who are you trying to reach with your engagement activities and how will you know when you are successful?
- What can communities teach you, and how will you integrate this information in your future work?
- How many people do you want to collect information from?

Street Story measures the following:

1. Number of total entries within a jurisdiction.
2. Number of entries into each of the four categories, e.g., collisions, near misses, hazardous places, safe places.
3. Demographics.
4. Whether Street Story participants are first time users.
5. How often participants attend transportation safety-related community meetings in order to show whether Street Story is collecting information from people who are or are not already participating in other community engagement efforts.

This information can be obtained in the “See Data” option on the Street Story website.

Community engagement resources

Here is a selection of resources that have helped us to put this guide together. Feel free to explore further:

- MetroQuest’s 100 Great Community Engagement Ideas: https://metroquest.com/wp-content/uploads/Guidebook-100-Great-Community-Engagement-Ideas.pdf
- Use of Communication Technologies to Enhance Public Involvement in Transportation Projects

https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/planning/policy/public-involvement/fdot-bdv29-977-32-rpt.pdf?sfvrsn=9eff0f7b_2
- NACTO's webinar "Public Engagement that Counts" https://nacto.org/event/nacto-webinar-public-engagement-counts/

Ethical considerations

When having conversations about people's experiences, it's important to remember that the participant is in charge, and they can decide how much information they give and when they want to end participation.

Narratives are reviewed prior to posting in order to ensure that no identifying information appears on the platform.

Addressing the digital divide

The digital divide is a term used to describe the social and economic inequity related to access to and use of the internet and technology. When using technology to collect public feedback, it's critical to think about whether groups you are reaching out to have access to and are comfortable using web-based technologies. For more information, visit Pew Research Center's series of articles about the digital divide.

There are a number of ways you can use Street Story with people who do not have access to reliable internet, data plans, smartphones or computers. You can:

- Host community events in areas with free, accessible WIFI.
- Bring devices, like tablets, that connect to the internet to community events.
- Host events at locations that have devices that connect to the internet, like libraries, schools or job centers with publicly available computers.
- Use the paper version of Street Story.

4. How can my organization or agency use Street Story data in transportation safety efforts?

Street Story information is publicly available at an aggregate level at streetstory.berkeley.edu, on the "see data" tab. These maps and tables can be downloaded and used in reports, outreach materials or funding proposals.

Street Story data complements other data sources about street safety, including police-reported collisions (TIMS), hospital-reported collisions, and built environment characteristics.

Street Story data is not a substitute for reporting crashes to the police. To make a crash report, contact 911 or your local law enforcement. To access police-reported collision data, visit SafeTREC's Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS platform).

Using the Street Story paper version

Street Story is designed to be used online, but there is also a paper version available in English and Spanish for people who might not have digital access or who feel more comfortable providing information or experiences on paper. A link to each report type is listed below.

Crash questions (RED)
Near-Miss questions (ORANGE)
Hazard questions (YELLOW)
Safe Place questions (GREEN)
Demographic questions (Optional)

Working with youth

People must be 13 years or older to enter information into Street Story.

Stay Connected!

To learn more about Street Story, visit Street Story's program page on the SafeTREC website. To follow SafeTREC on Twitter go to https://twitter.com/UCBSafeTREC. Questions? Please email us at streetstory@berkeley.edu.