



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
ADMINISTRATION

COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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June 8, 1999

AGENDA: June 22, 1999

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Santa Cruz County
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: REPORT BACK ON BIKE HELMET USE

Dear Board Members:

Your Board previously requested information on specific efforts being made to target the declining use of bike helmets among children in the Watsonville area.

Background

Community observation surveys of bicyclist's safety behaviors were conducted in 1993, 1995, and 1998. Helmet use among children in the Watsonville area rose dramatically from virtually no observed helmet use in 1993 to 61% use in 1995, immediately after the bicycle helmet law enforcement began. By 1998, despite an aggressive bicycle helmet use campaign including the distribution of over 2000 low cost (\$5.00) and "no cost" bike helmets (see attached list of activities from 1995-98), the rate had dropped to 28%. Though a community observation methodology is admittedly unscientific and its reliability open to question, it is a basis for concern.

Activities targeting decline in bike helmet use among children

In response to the drop in helmet use, the Community Traffic Safety Coalition (CTSC) is currently working with law enforcement agencies and the court to develop a bike traffic school for helmet violations and other bike infractions, as an alternative to paying fines. A similar program is being implemented in Monterey County targeting hard-to-reach youth. The Coordinator of the Bike Traffic School Diversion Program in Monterey County believes that this educational program is not only effective, it also seems to encourage law enforcement officers to issue citations. HSA will remain in contact with the Monterey County program in order to ascertain their success, and will also monitor the success of activities in Santa Cruz County by periodically reviewing the number of citations issued for various bike infractions including bike helmet use.

In addition, the CTSC has organized the Watsonville Bike and Pedestrian Safety Task Force composed of representatives from organizations and services in the Watsonville area to assess traffic safety concerns in South County including helmet use (see attached member list).

The Task Force's preliminary ideas to increase bike helmet use include:

- to continue providing bilingual bike safety education in schools targeting children and their parents. This program is administered by the Health Services Agency, and supported by Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding which will end June 30, 2000.
- to renew helmet art and reward programs;
- to work with local law enforcement and the judicial system to enforce the bike helmet use laws more effectively; and
- to continue to review Statewide Integrated Traffic Reporting System (SWITRS) data on bicyclist injuries and fatalities in Santa Cruz County as well as information on bicyclist safety behaviors including bike helmet use.

At subsequent meetings, the Task Force will prioritize their ideas, identify appropriate agencies and resources to implement interventions, and develop an evaluation plan to assess the success of current and planned efforts.

(* This program is administered by the Health Services Agency and supported by Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality [CMAQ] funding which will end June 30, 2000.)

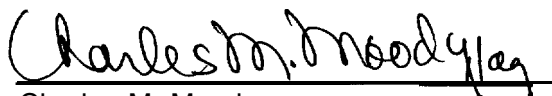
Conclusion

The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, in cooperation with CTSC and the Regional Transportation Commission, continues to actively work on the traffic safety issues affecting the residents of Santa Cruz County.

It is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that your Board:

Accept and file this report on bike safety activities in Santa Cruz County.

Sincerely,



Charles M. Moody
HSA Administrator

RECOMMENDED:



Susan A. Mauriello
County Administrative Officer

cc : County Administrative Office
Auditor-controller
County Counsel
HSA Administration

Public Health Commission
Transportation Commission

**Community Traffic Safety Activities in the Watsonville Area
1995 – 1999**

- Bilingual bicycle safety education in Pajaro Valley elementary schools, Parks and Recreation programs, and the Ninos Sanos program at Salud Para La Gente;
- Bicycle rodeos in elementary schools and at park sites;
- Rolling Hills Middle School Youthserve project on bicycle safety;
- Low cost bicycle helmet sales in elementary schools and through Watsonville Parks and Recreation programs;
- “Cheeseburger cite” program to reward wearing of helmets and safe cycling practices;
- Bicycle helmet painting project with E.A. Hall and Rolling Hills Middle School students who ride “low-rider” bicycles;
- Information tables to educate parents and children at public events in Watsonville;
- Bilingual bicycle safety information distributed to employees through local businesses during Bike-to-Work.

Organizations involved:

Community Traffic Safety Coalition
Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency
Pajaro Valley Unified School District
Watsonville Parks and Recreation Dept.
Watsonville Police Dept.
California Highway Patrol
Santa Cruz County Sheriffs Office
Pajaro Valley Transportation Management Association
Salud Para La Gente
Fenix Services
McDonald's of Watsonville
Bank of America

WATSONVILLE BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TASK FORCE

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