

Newark looks to add schools to Safe Routes safety program

Tuesday, November 04, 2014
BY [LARRY HIGGS](#)



Crossing guard Erna Green, of Newark, works on her corner at the intersection of Orange Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. in Newark in a 2009 photo. (nj.com file photo)

Safety and community advocates are talking about how to beef up the Safe Routes to Schools program in Newark, and will be discussing plans tomorrow to add six schools to the program.

"The kids are walking to school now. We want to make it as safe as possible," said Meeta Patel, Safe Routes to Schools coordinator at the Meadowlink Transportation Management

Association, which is working with the city on the program.

A meeting will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority offices for Newark officials, parents and community organizations about recommending Safe Routes traffic plans for the Camden Street, Hawkins Street, Horton, McKinley, Sussex and 13th avenue schools.

What makes the program important is that 40 percent of Newark families don't own a car or don't have access to a vehicle, said Janna Chernetz of Tri-State New Jersey Advocate.

"Biking and walking are an option for some families and for others are a necessity," she said. "We want to make sure they get there safely."

Three community organizations, La Casa de Don Pedro, Ironbound Community Corporation and the Urban League of Essex County are working with the Tri-State Transportation Campaign and Meadowlink on the plans.

There are a lot of things students face when they travel to school," Meeta Patel, Meadowlink Transportation Management Association.

School travel plans look at the most frequently traveled routes students use and what improvements are needed to make them safer, Patel said.

Plans also include applying for federally-funded grants for infrastructure work

such as "count down" pedestrian signals, replacing broken or missing sidewalks, bike lanes and better street signs, Patel said.

"We want to use the grant to address them," Patel said.

A bike rodeo scheduled for Friday is designed to give children the skills they need to safely and comfortably ride their bikes to school.

The bike rodeo will be held from 12 noon to 3 p.m. on Nov. 7 at the Camden Street school and is open to students of the schools mentioned above.

Permission slips signed by a parent or guardian are required and are available at the schools.

A limited number of bikes from the Newark Bike Exchange will be available for children to practice on if they don't have a bike. Children can enter a raffle to win one of those bikes.