STREETS School Stakeholder Interview Qualitative Report

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Introduction

• The purpose of this study was to collect school stakeholders' knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of their campus' active commuting to school and Safe Routes to School attitudes, behaviors and programs, as well as perceived barriers and facilitators to active commuting and program implementation at their schools.

Methods

Study Participants

- Random sample of school contacts
- 8 teachers and administrators agreed to interview

		Number (%)
Sex	Female	5 (62.5)
	Male	3 (37.5)
School role	P.E. teacher	3 (37.5)
	Assistant principal	3 (37.5)
	Parent support specialist	2 (25.0)
School district	Austin	7 (87.5)
	Pflugerville (comparison)	1 (12.5)

Study Design

- Interview questions derived constructs based on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)
- Transcripts coded using the theoretical framework approach, with the initial themes coming from original interview constructs.
- NVivo program was used to analyze the interviews of the parents and children

Initial Themes

School challenges

SRTS Programming Barriers and Facilitators to ACS

ACS policy and program/policy expectations

Mobility Bond & COVID 19 effects

Results

Overall qualitative themes, Core concepts & Representative quotes

A major theme that emerged from these questions was cost of living, for both faculty and students.

"We were losing students to cost of living. So we're in South Austin - it's already getting more expensive and families were going south. So we have a lot of students who end up in Buda, end up in Dripping Springs, Bastrop, and the pandemic just made that, like, exacerbated - that concern and really sped it up."

School challenges

Students moving away from Austin due to cost of living

I think it's a combination of like...affordability of housing is one... I think from what teachers have told me... some of the workload that's a factor I think now. The COVID situation does play a factor... everybody wants to play catch up."

Teachers leaving due to cost of living, pay, and job uncertainty Some major themes that emerged were community involvement as an enhancer for current and potential programs, the perception of ACS being unsafe, and the perception of ACS being inconvenient.

Enhancing current programs and initiatives through community involvement

Changes to infrastructure may increase active commuting

SRTS Programming

Perception of being unsafe

"There's a perception that it's... it's faster to drive, so even though families wait in our long drop off lines, I think in their head because like the minute you drop off, you're good to go, that feels faster because even when we talked about like, just park nearby and walk up, it's really short."

Perception of being inconvenient

"There's traffic [that] backs up onto a major road and then families are trying to cross that area. We don't have a crossing guard on that spot, you need someone who's really going to be directing the traffic back and forth and eventually those teachers just didn't feel safe or comfortable doing it."

Interviewees were asked to describe things that make it more difficult to make changes and sustain active commuting to school programs.

Caregivers become easily impatient

Low community engagement/buy-in

Barriers to ACS

ACS can be hindered by major safety issues on the route

"I think a big factor that makes it difficult is just parents not knowing. We have parents that don't know."

Caregivers and communities lack of ACS education

"You have to cross Texas Oaks, which is that big one, and Slaughter then - that I don't feel is as safe. I wouldn't want - like I wouldn't trust most of our kids to cross Texas Oaks even with that pedestrian bridge." Interviewees were asked to describe things that make it easier to make changes and sustain active commuting to school programs.

ACS is generally safe

Facilitators to ACS

Partnering with local organizations and businesses

"I think one thing that we have found... we went outside and a lot of kids walk, walk in groups ... either they have close friends or they live close to each other"

Social factors influence ACS, and ACS may facilitate social interactions

"Brighter Bites - they, they basically get produce that's close to the end of its shelf life... and then they set up on campuses and they then hand out crates or huge boxes of fresh produce once a week. That seems like that might be a good place to kind of partner up - kind of connecting ultimate nutrition choices with healthier life."

School stakeholders were asked about their expectations of a potential active commuting to school program, policy, or initiative.

ACS may result in perilous situations for children

"One negative is just the safety factor.
Sometimes when the kids are walking,
they're distracted - their cell phone was on,
they have their headphones on their heads,
and they may not be paying attention to
what's going on around them. Whether it
could be a dog loose or it could be possibly
somebody in a car following... I think that's
probably the biggest challenge."

ACS policy and program/policy expectations

ACS has various benefits, especially that of child physical activity

"I think benefits - kids get more physical activity and I also think that just walking to school, possibly dealing with some things at home, it could possibly clear their head, get... blood flowing to their brains so that when they come to school they can focus a little bit better."

Lack of knowledge about the Mobility Bond emerged as a core concept.

COVID-19 affected attitudes toward school attendance

"For those couple of years kids were virtual, they didn't leave their house, parents and leaving the house and so those kids kind of got comfortable with waking up, if they turned on a computer, and going to school from their computers"

Mobility Bond & COVID 19 effects

Lack of knowledge about motility bond

"I know the mobility thing also has to do with putting the bike lanes on Slaughter and I don't think that that was a good idea."

Conclusion

- Various core concepts emerged including safety and active commuting to school, barriers and facilitators to active commuting, and caregiver and community involvement.
- This data can be useful in predicting active commuting patterns at various Austin and comparison schools based on their surrounding built environments and community cultures and attitudes.
- The data collected can be helpful in designing active commuting to school initiatives more specifically tailored to schools.
- Furthermore, the data collected can be used to derive changes in the City of Austin Safe Routes to School program that may encourage active commuting at more campuses.