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Towards a Better Understanding of Best Implementation Practice for the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training Program

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Introduction

The Community Pedestrian Safety Training Program (CPST), funded by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), was established in 2009 to help promote informed community awareness, advocacy, planning, and programming in reducing pedestrian injuries and fatalities. Originally considering pedestrian safety only, the program was expanded to include bicycle safety in 2016 and became known as the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training Program (CPBST). The program is a statewide project of the Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC), a research center created in collaboration with the Institute of Transportation Studies and the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, and California Walks (Cal Walks), a nonprofit organization that specializes in promoting communities that are more just, inclusive, and walkable. SafeTREC and Cal Walks have worked with dozens of communities across California to develop localized recommendations to improve the safety of walking and biking in their respective communities. The CPBST includes a series of planning meetings and site visits that culminate in a community-centered workshop that details crash data trends, walking and biking assessments and includes programmatic and infrastructure strategies to ameliorate traffic safety concerns.

To help monitor program effectiveness and update the OTS on the effectiveness and progress of the program, SafeTREC conducts yearly surveys to assess the impact of and points of growth of CPBST workshops. These surveys gather feedback from local community members who, individually or through their organization, are instrumental in setting up the workshop in their community. These surveys generally glean their perceptions of the program’s effectiveness, the steps they observed were taken to promote safe walking and biking by their community in response to the workshop and their input on how the program could be improved. In response to the feedback gained through surveys, OTS allocated grant funding for SafeTREC to supplement feedback from an electronic survey to conduct case study interviews with past community partners to gain further insight into how the program can be strengthened or adapted to meet the needs identified from the interviews.

Methodology

The research team reviewed the list of communities where CPBST workshops had been conducted since the inception of the program. Given the time budget allowed for the study, SafeTREC internally decided to limit the scope of the procedures to three sites. To select the final three site candidates, the team reviewed the center's portfolio of workshops to assess which sites would be best suited for the study. When reviewing the portfolio, special consideration in the selection process was given to a few bases: 1) the geographic location of the site in the state, 2) the date of the most recent workshop conducted at the site, and 3) the relative land use and socioeconomic context of the site relative to the other sites in the portfolio. After reviewing background information on several finalists, Fresno, Muscoy, and Redding were selected as the final three sites for further analysis. The relative locations of these sites to the rest of California are shown in Figure 1.

Semi-structured interviews¹ with participants were conducted between May and July of 2023. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted with partners from each of the three sites of interest. An informal interview question protocol was employed to help situate both the interviewer and the interviewees in the discussion concerning CPBST. The questions included in the protocol asked participants to provide a summary of their responsibilities in their role, a description of their perceived successes of one or more CPBST workshops in their community, and any constructive criticism or suggestions for improvement concerning the workshops. Eight interviews were conducted by SafeTREC staff, with three participants coming from Fresno, two from Muscoy, and three from Redding.



Figure 1: Relative Locations of Three Sites in California

¹ Employed the Community Readiness Model as specified by (Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, 2014) to process the interview data

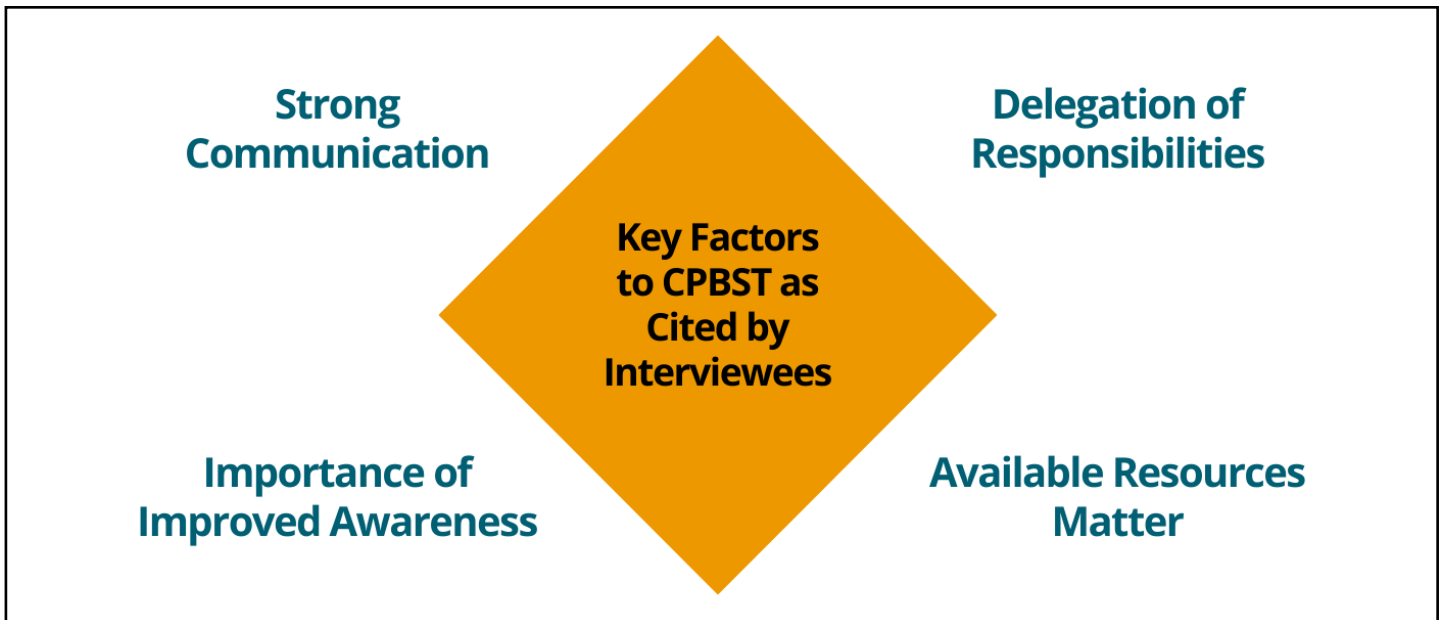


Figure 2: Key Factors Cited by Interviewees in the Success of CPBST Implementations

Key Findings

The interviews provided a plethora of information, but a number of key insights were consistently cited across the set of interviews by participants. These insights are summarized below and visually displayed in Figure 2.

The Importance of Strong Communication

Interviewees expressed the importance of healthy communication lines between the various stakeholders in the CPBST workshop development process. Clear communication between leadership, community organizations, and residents of the community was essential for solving issues that arose, raising interest in the workshop, increasing turnout, and sustaining community interest in walking and bicycling safety.

Delegation of Responsibilities

Two of the three communities faced challenges due to the complex network of entities involved that were responsible for different aspects of the project area of interest in the respective CPBST workshop. For example, certain roads in a municipality in a project area may be managed by the municipality itself, while other roads in the same project area are managed either by the county or the state. Cross-jurisdictional delegation of responsibilities created communication challenges amidst the planning process that had to be resolved by project organizers.

The Importance of Improved Awareness

Community interest in safe bicycling and walking varied across the three sites and depended on several community-specific features, such as the influence of local private developers, the involvement of neighborhood advocates, and the previous work performed in the local community concerning the issues pertinent to CPBST. Nonetheless, interviewees cited that greater awareness of the importance of safe bicycling and walking benefited from the entire process of planning and conducting the workshops because of the ideation and discussion that stemmed from the process.

Available Resources Matter

The resources available to the community were essential to the success of implementing recommendations that were developed during the CPBST workshop. Such resources include, but are not limited to, capacity to write and finalize grant applications to funding sources for active transportation safety, leadership that were allies of safe walking and bicycling, and community organizations willing to help continue work in engaging residents in not only participating in the CPBST workshop but also continuing in advocacy and bringing issues of concern to elected officials and other stakeholders once the workshop was complete.

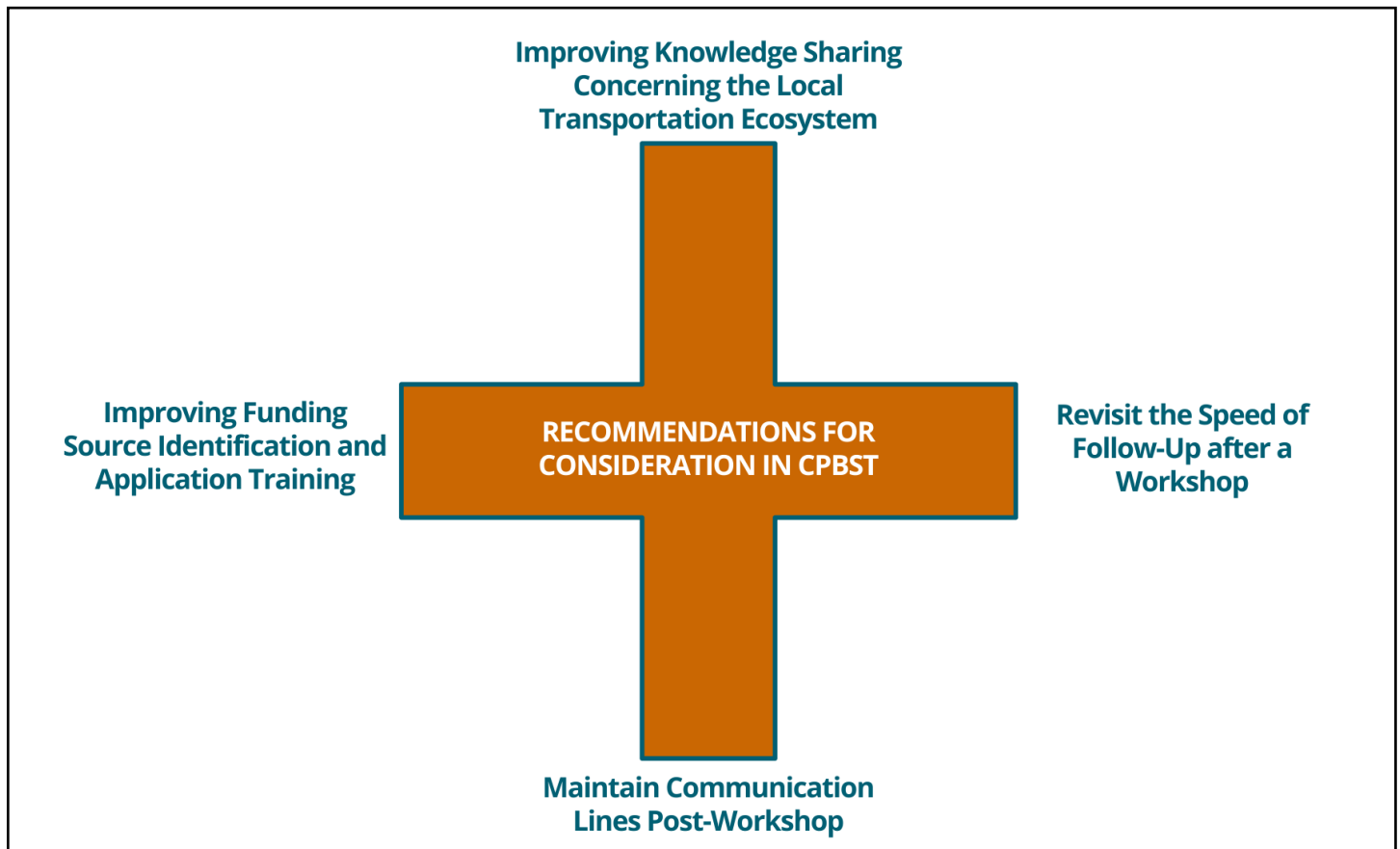


Figure 3: Summary of Opportunities Identified for the CPBST Program

Conclusions

After synthesizing the key takeaways from the semi-structured interviews, the team developed a list of opportunities that can be explored further to better position the CPBST program to serve the needs of California communities more effectively. These takeaways are discussed below and visually summarized in Figure 3.

- 1. Improve Funding Source Identification and Application Training:** Across each of the three study sites, interviewees expressed a strong desire for assistance in acquiring funding for implementing recommendations stemming from the CPBST workshops. As the CPBST program evolves, it could be helpful to incorporate more information on the funding application process featuring specific examples of potential funding opportunities. Providing instruction on applying for these grants may require more extensive time and budget allocation given the constraints of the current CPBST protocol, but this could be motivation for exploring the expansion of the program to include this critical element.
- 2. Revisit the Speed of Follow-Up after a Workshop:** The struggles that communities experienced in funding various recommendations may be minimized by more timely follow up with communities by workshop organizing partners. Given the overwhelmingly positive feedback that the interviewees provided about the CPBST workshops and their citing of positive community reception of them, it can be hypothesized that the momentum for garnering support for initiatives to advance safe walking and biking is high immediately following a workshop. It is important for the community to effectively leverage this post-workshop period because the early victories may be important for increasing and maintaining the momentum generated from the workshop. The CPBST program should revisit its follow-up process to identify areas for improvement in helping communities leverage the workshop momentum strategically.
- 3. Maintain Communication Lines Post-Workshop:** The CPBST workshops held in all three communities were made possible because of the connections between community members, local organizations, and governmental leadership representatives in city and county government. Several interviewees cited that strong communication was one of the, if not the most, critical factors leading to a successful CPBST workshop in their respective communities. Nonetheless, it is important for these communication lines to be maintained in the mid- and long-term for effective program planning and implementation, policy formation, and funding acquisition. The workshop could be modified to include more information on best practices for keeping communication strong post-workshop.
- 4. Improve Knowledge Sharing Concerning the Local Transportation Ecosystem:** Each community went through a different process in setting up their local CPBST workshop(s) despite similarities in the process across the three sites. The governance system varies across each site, and it will be important for local community members to be educated on the major stakeholders for improving the safety of bike and pedestrian transportation in their area. Given the complexity often associated with these ecosystems, consideration should be given to providing more education about the local ecosystem during the CPBST workshop or in subsequent workshops. Providing better education on the transportation ecosystem, such as the structure and responsibilities of the local Department of Transportation or the local pedestrian and bicycle advisory committee, will promote community knowledge of the issues, which could lead to more informed input on the strategies and recommendations put forth by leaders and other stakeholders.

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