



## CITY OF WILLITS

### Public Works and Engineering Department

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# PRESS RELEASE

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City of Willits

## The City of Willits is Evaluating Safer Routes to School

The City of Willits is eager to announce that the process for the development of safer routes to school has now begun. In June 2008, the City was awarded a grant through the Mendocino Council of Governments, for the development of a Safe Routes to School plan. This grant provides the City with the opportunity to evaluate and improve the local routes that the children of Willits use for their daily commute to and from school. The City's goal is to maintain the philosophy of the Safe Routes to School Program (SR2S) initiative, in its effort to help children overcome the physical and psychological barriers between home and school by providing children (*and their families*) with a healthier lifestyle through the establishment of safer routes for daily pedestrian and bicycle travel.

In accordance with the overall work program, the City proceeded with the Request for Proposal process to obtain a traffic engineering firm to assist with plan development; after much consideration of the proposals received, the City selected Whitlock & Weinberger Transportation, Inc. (W-Trans) of Santa Rosa. W-Trans will assist the City in developing a plan that meets the needs of all seven public schools within the city limits. Those schools include Brookside Elementary, Blosser Lane Elementary, Baechtel Grove Middle School, Willits High School, San Hedrin High School, the Willits Charter School (*at its new location*), and Willits Community Day School. In addition to the development of the new SR2S plan, W-Trans will also assist the City in applying for a construction grant through Caltrans, for the construction phase of this year's project.

W-Trans has made several visits to Willits to conduct school site visits and traffic studies, and have now reached a stage in their design where community input is desired. The City recognizes that community participation is a key ingredient if we are to make the Safe Routes to School project successful; therefore, the City would like to invite residents and industry professionals to a community workshop on May 28, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the City of Willits Community Center. At this workshop, W-Trans will gather input from residents and local stakeholders in order to develop a community supported, well balanced Safe Routes to School plan.

The workshop will begin with a presentation from W-Trans that will illustrate their initial findings. They will then present the newly developed route maps with alternatives, performance of those alternatives, and projected future traffic demands. Your attendance at this workshop is encouraged if you would like the opportunity to provide written and/or oral feedback on the proposed project. The City of Willits is looking forward to meeting with the community so that together, we can determine the appropriate next step in creating a safe and positive environment for children to walk and bike to school.

Questions regarding the 2009 Safe Routes to School Project should be directed to the City of Willits Public Works and Engineering Department at 707-459-4605.