

\$192,521 grant awarded to cut Salinas pedestrian deaths

MACGREGOR 'GOYA' EDDY

5:12 p.m. PST November 17, 2016



(Photo: Macgregor Eddy/For The Californian)

The Monterey County Health Department will work with three elementary schools in Salinas to provide education in pedestrian and bicycle safety.

The California Office of Traffic Safety has awarded a \$192,521 grant to prevent pedestrians and bicyclist traffic collisions. The program is called Safe Travels Via Salinas and will focus on Fremont, Los Padres and Sherwood Elementary schools. Monterey County Health Department Disease Prevention coordinator Jessica Perez will be responsible for the implementation.

"A unique feature of the grant is having the children practice with a mock town brought to their school," the health department announcement says. "Students will work with pretend traffic situations, such as cars

backing up in driveways and distracted drivers, learning to recognize the problems and how to protect themselves."

The yearlong grant will start on Nov. 21, an appropriate date since Nov. 20 is World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic victims (worlddayofremembrance.org (<http://worlddayofremembrance.org/>)). The grant aims to reduce pedestrian accidents in the Salinas. There were 55 pedestrians injured in 2015, and three of them died. To help with the program or for more information contact Jessica Perez at 755-8975, or email PerezJ7@co.monterey.ca.us (<mailto:PerezJ7@co.monterey.ca.us>).

SPD granted \$105,000 for crash prevention

The Salinas Police Department has been awarded \$105,000 by the OTS for crash prevention. "This grant will no doubt prevent death and injury in Salinas," said SPD Traffic Sgt. Gerry Ross. "This money provides us with the resources to keep working toward our goal of zero traffic deaths." Statewide, after falling to a 10-year low in 2010, the number of persons killed in collisions has climbed 17% in California with 3,176 killed in 2015, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Particularly alarming is the six-year rise in pedestrian and bicycle fatalities.

It is less than a month since the death of 17-year-old pedestrian Gabriela Beas, who was killed when motorcyclist ran a red light at high speed on North Main Street in Salinas. It feels right that these two grants are aimed at preventing such tragedies in the future.

Salinas pedestrian death rates high

Our police and our health department are taking the issue of pedestrian injuries and deaths seriously. As reported in this column on Oct. 28 (<http://www.thecalifornian.com/story/news/2016/10/27/pedestrian-deaths-should-shock-us/92864672/> (<http://www.thecalifornian.com/story/news/2016/10/27/pedestrian-deaths-should-shock-us/92864672/>)), the proportion of pedestrian deaths in Salinas is four times the national average, and twice the California average. "Over the last few years approximately half of the fatal traffic collisions in Salinas have involved pedestrians," Ross said. "We need to realize how dangerous it is to drive. If a two-ton machine strikes a person at even 20 to 25 mph, that person will more likely suffer serious injury or death."

The Health Department is concentrating on education, while the SPD plans to do both education and enforcement. "Years of research tell us that enforcement and education work best jointly," said OTS Director Rhonda Craft.

Improving our county's infrastructure with Measure X funds

The third E in preventing traffic collisions, (along with Education and Enforcement) is Engineering, which means building safer infrastructure. Our county has just successfully passed a self-help transportation sales tax (Measure X.) We can now set our priorities for safe transportation.

It is difficult for many people to attend the public meetings concerning transportation planning. To increase opportunities to contribute, the

Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) wants your ideas for pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Using an online interactive tool you can even draw what you want as well as: analyze gaps, identify sites for better connections, share routes that you currently walk/bike or routes that you would like to use if improvements were made. It is our money, our plan, so speak up now. Go to <http://www.tamcmonterey.org> (<http://www.tamcmonterey.org>) or call Virginia Murillo, TAMC Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, at 831-775-0903 or email: virginia@tamcmonterey.org (<mailto:virginia@tamcmonterey.org>).

MST Job Fair Saturday at its bus operations and maintenance facility at One Ryan Ranch Road, Monterey. Positions for bus drivers and mechanics are available. For full job descriptions, and applications, visit www.mst.org/about-mst/employment (<http://www.mst.org/about-mst/employment>).



✦✦

WRAP IT UP SALE

ENDS 12/20

Shop Now



See Details