
Chapter 7. Conclusion

The main hypotheses of this study were:

- 1) After the implementation of a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, children change to sustainable modes of transport to travel to school.
- 2) After the implementation of a SRTS program, child accident-rates decrease.
- 3) After the implementation of a SRTS program, congestion in the morning peak hour decreases.

The conclusions related to the three main hypotheses are:

1) After the implementation of a SRTS program in the town of Bray, children haven't changed to sustainable modes of transport to travel to school. However, the use of the car hasn't increased as it has in the control group; constituted by the area of Dublin County, where no SRTS program has been implemented.

Results obtained concerning to this issue in some school travel initiatives developed in Denmark and the U.K don't seem to follow a pattern, as in some cases the use of the car has increased over the years, even when some SRTS scheme was carried out – see paragraph 3.3.1.2- and in other cases a big reduction on car use has been achieved –see paragraph 3.3.2.3-. In general the majority of authorities believe that it is too soon to tell if SRTS are having an effect on modal shift.

Nevertheless, better results have been obtained in those cases where the school principals have been involved in the program, and the best results coincide with the schools that have organised activities and other events around sustainable transportation. Well-implemented SRTS programs can reach a reduction of 58% on car use in two years –see paragraph 3.3.2.3-.

The first conclusion is that even when road improvements are necessary to decrease the perception of danger by students and parents, a campaign on sustainable transport modes is needed to achieve satisfactory changes on modal share. So a good SRTS scheme should combine road improvement and school involvement in sustainable transport campaigns.

2) In the town of Bray no major changes can be noted on children accident-rates after the implementation of the SRTS program. This is a good result taking into account the fact that traffic levels have increased an overall 17% the main roads of Bray.

Other studies have shown an improvement in child safety of 10% to 15% due to SRTS measures, which corresponds to a 2% to 3% injury reduction per year –see paragraph 3.3.1.2-.

The second conclusion is that a well-implemented SRTS program improves child safety.

3) A well-implemented SRTS leads to modal share changes, so taking into account that 18% to 20% of the cars on the road, in urban areas, in Ireland and the U.K., in the morning peak hour are taking children to school, a reduction on morning peak hour congestion can be achieved.

According to the results obtained in the town of Bray, a total reduction of 16% of car journeys on the route to school, during the morning peak hour, could be possible by changing car trips to school to walking or cycling in the cases where the driver goes back home after dropping the child off at school.

The third conclusion is that, realistically speaking, at least a reduction of a 3% of morning peak hour congestion is possible only by changing from the use of the car to walking, in the cases where the driver goes back home after dropping the child off at school. Much better results could be obtained if all car trips, which are 39% of all the morning trips to school, turned to sustainable modes of transport, but this will require greater efforts from all the stakeholders involved in school transportation.