



## Michigan Safe Routes to School in Action... Make Trax Student Planning and Engagement Curriculum

Make Trax is the youth voice of Safe Routes to School, and provides a set of eight lessons and support materials that can be used inside or outside of the classroom. The curriculum engages students in the planning process as they identify challenges to walking and biking in their community, survey infrastructure, brainstorm solutions, and present action plans to local stakeholders and community members. While the program was originally designed to be used during the school day with middle schools students, the changing school environment and technology allowed a change in thinking on that: Make Trax was revised in 2015, and is now

targeted to upper elementary students in addition to middle school, and is geared toward after school and summer camp programming.



In the summer of 2016 over 60 students, grades 2-7, from Brownell STEM Academy, Holmes STEM Academy, and Durant-Tuuri-Mott Elementary in Flint, Michigan hit the streets to identify challenges to walking and biking in their communities. Led by facilitators from the CRIM Fitness Foundation, as well as the University of Michigan Urban Safety Corps and NCCC AmeriCorps members, students identified and came up with a number of practical and necessary solutions to making it safer to walk and bike. More traditional pedestrian safety curriculum was sprinkled in

with the projects, as it was important to facilitators that students recognize how their personal choices can make walking safer, while examining their school and city's role in this effort.

Students at Durant-Tuuri-Mott encountered a lot of trash on their walking audits, including an overwhelming amount of dead animal carcasses. They proposed a series of school-wide clean up days to combat the problem, as well as more Walking School Bus programs to make routes safer, and more crossing guards stationed at busy intersections. Students presented these solutions in a public meeting on July 20<sup>th</sup>, where local police, parents, school administration, and city officials were in attendance.

Students at Brownell and Holmes Academies uncovered similar challenges and solutions in their neighborhood. Number one on their list: clean up and re-do the sidewalks, many of which are in bad condition. Students also proposed a blight "clean-up" day, as well as more crossing guards along routes. Instead of a public presentation, students wrote letters outlining their concerns and actions items, and sent them to local stakeholders and city officials.

The work of these students is proof that hands-on, real world learning is vital in the success of Safe Routes projects, as well as in the development of leadership skills. Young people have a tremendous amount of perspective and innovation to add to the Safe Routes movement, and without their voices and insights this process is not complete.