

## Contacts

For more information about the City of Colorado Springs Signs for Life Program and the associated Safe Routes to School mobile classroom project, please use the following contacts:

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The American Public Works Association (APWA) Colorado Chapter awarded the City of Colorado Springs the Public Works Program Award for Large Community Public Relations/Public Awareness/Community Involvement Programs for the "Signs for Life" Solar Mobile Classroom Program 2012

# Signs For Life Safety Education Program



School Safety Program  
Traffic Engineering  
City of Colorado Springs Public Works



School Safety Program  
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## History of the Program

In 2012, City of Colorado Springs completed the conversion of a former transit bus into an innovative mobile classroom with auxiliary solar power to take its "Sign for Life" safety education program to schools and community centers. The goal of the City's "Signs for Life" program is to educate elementary school students, including those with physical and cognitive disabilities, about the facilities, signs and markings they will encounter when walking and bicycling around Colorado Springs. The City has a long standing commitment to improving pedestrian and bicycle access and travel options, especially around schools, and the Signs for Life program educates students on how to travel safely.

The Signs for Life program was originally developed in 1999, by Signs & Markings field staff, which opened up the City's sign shop in 2002 to students with physical and developmental disabilities for field trips where they were taught the importance of key traffic and other safety related signs in a hands-on-environment. Staff also opened up the shop to at-risk youth in special education and vocational education programs where they were exposed to the equipment, work tasks and operations of the shop, highlighting possible career paths. Initially, the program was informal but grew in popularity, and the pressure to allow more school groups to experience the Signs for Life program created problems with maintaining the City's workload at its working sign shop. The City recognized the value of outreaching to the students about safety and wanted to respond to the growing number of requests for the Signs for Life program. The work demands on the sign shop and its staff made it difficult to meet that growing demand.

Public Works staff brainstormed that an older City transit bus could be acquired at auction and converted to a classroom to take the Signs for Life Program on the road. In 2012 the first ever solar mobile classroom was engineered, designed and built.

## Safe Routes to School Grant Opportunity

The idea to bring the Signs for Life program mobile classroom stemmed from an informal conversation among staff, who brainstormed that one of the City's transit buses up for sale during budget cuts should be purchased to take the program on the road. That idea grew and staff began investigating how a transit bus could be converted into a mobile classroom. Soon Traffic Engineering staff, in partnership with Drive Smart Colorado and LiveWell Colorado Springs, developed a grant application for the federal Safe Routes to School funding program (<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes>), which was submitted in late 2009.

The City's innovative Signs for Life proposal emerged as the highest ranked education project submitted to the 2010 federal Safe Routes to School funding program, and the City of Colorado Springs was awarded \$89,967 to acquire one of the City's transit buses at auction, convert it to a mobile classroom and pilot the Signs for Life experience at the elementary schools in Harrison School District 2.



## Bus to Mobile Classroom Conversion

After the funding contract process was completed, staff moved forward with acquiring one of the City's transit buses that was being sold at auction. Then the complicated process of converting the bus into a mobile classroom began. Challenges staff encountered with the conversion included:

- Creating an interesting and engaging classroom environment out of a utilitarian transit bus interior
- Working around wheel wells, removing seats and other bus equipment and creating two learning areas, staff work space and storage
- Adding needed electrical outlets and lighting
- Creating an auxiliary power source using roof-mounted solar panels to support the added lighting and audio-visual equipment
- Adding multi-media equipment to deliver interactive curriculum
- Creating interactive education using actual traffic devices
- Creating graphic representation of various signs to assist students in identification of traffic and other safety signs

## Project Partners

Even with the award of the federal Safe Routes to School grant, the City of Colorado Springs received various donations of outside funding, reduced cost materials and labor, and other project support to the Signs for Life project from the following businesses and groups:

- 3M Innovation
- Brian Shevock
- Drive Smart
- Kids on Bikes
- LiveWell Colorado Springs
- Memorial Health System
- JATC (Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee)
- IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)
- Rhino Linings
- Safe Kids Colorado
- The Sign Shop
- Tumbleweed Upholstery
- Walmart

## Next Steps

The City of Colorado Springs began piloting the mobile Signs for Life classroom experience with elementary schools in Harrison District 2 in Fall 2012. Federal Safe Routes to School require pre- and post-project surveying of students that are impacted with funded projects. So the City of Colorado Springs partnered with both Drive Smart Colorado and Live Well Colorado Springs (<https://about.livewellcolorado.org/livewell-colorado-springs>), which works in many District 2 schools with its health and wellness programs, to pilot the new Signs for Life mobile classroom experience in the District's 14 elementary schools. After the pilot phase is completed, the mobile program will be rolled out to other schools.