TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: FEBRUARY 6, 2006

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION ON SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

RECOMMENDATION
The City/School Liaison Committee and staff recommend that Council adopt the attached resolution (Attachment A) endorsing the Safe Routes to School National Partnership Consensus Statement (Attachment B) as a means to encourage the continued collaboration of City, School District, and community partners in their efforts to reduce risk for students and encourage more families to use alternatives to driving to school more often. An equivalent recommendation has been forwarded to the Board of Education for the Palo Alto Unified School District.

BACKGROUND
In April 2004, the City/School Liaison Committee agreed to include a discussion of school traffic safety issues on its agenda each quarter. This was in response to a request from the Safe Routes to School Task Force, a community group. These discussions have highlighted joint city/school traffic safety initiatives as well as the efforts of PTA volunteers at certain schools to work with school administrators to reduce the number of cars near school by encouraging students to walk, bike, carpool or take transit when possible.

At its meeting on November 30, 2005, the committee considered a draft resolution endorsing the Safe Routes to School National Partnership Consensus Statement. This statement was developed by a coalition of national, state and local non-profit organizations, professional groups and state, regional and local government agencies working to address the decline in walking and biking to school over the last 30 years and to ensure the success of the new federal Safe Routes to School program. Locally, the statement was endorsed by the Executive Board of the Palo Alto Council of PTAs at its October meeting, and by the members of the Safe Routes to School Task Force.

While the committee expressed support for the principles in the consensus statement, school board members raised concern regarding possible misinterpretation of one bullet in the consensus statement regarding locating schools away from busy corridors, since Palo Alto is a built out community and several existing schools are located along major streets. The committee directed staff to return in January with a revised resolution that could be forwarded to both Council and the Board of Education concurrently.
COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS
On January 25, members of the City/School Liaison Committee reviewed the revised draft resolution as well as the consensus statement. School board members agreed that their concerns had been addressed by the elimination of the phrase “not along busy streets on the edges of neighborhoods” at the end of the sixth bullet at the bottom of the first page of the consensus statement. Committee members discussed the need to include education and efforts to change attitudes that induce parents or teenagers to drive to school as part of local Safe Routes to School efforts. After discussion, by unanimous vote, the committee then recommended to the City Council and the Board of Education adoption of the resolution endorsing the Safe Routes to School National Partnership Consensus Statement.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
This recommendation is consistent with Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Policy T-39: To the extent allowed by law, continue to make safety the first priority of citywide transportation planning. Prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety over vehicle level-of-service at intersections, and Policy T-40: Continue to prioritize the safety and comfort of school children in street modification projects that affect school travel routes.

ATTACHMENTS
A. Resolution endorsing the Safe Routes to School National Partnership Consensus Statement
B. Safe Routes to School National Partnership Consensus Statement, as endorsed by the City/School Liaison Committee on January 25, 2006

PREPARED BY: ___________________________________________________
KATHY DURHAM
Transportation Systems Management Coordinator

DEPARTMENT HEAD: ______________________________________________
STEVE EMSLIE
Director of Planning and
Community Environment
CITY MANAGER APPROVAL: ______________________________________

EMILY HARRISON
Assistant City Manager

Cc:  City/School Traffic Safety Committee members
     Safe Routes to School Task Force
     Melissa Caswell, President, Palo Alto Council of PTAs