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Contact:
Michelle McGurk
(408) 535-4840, or (408) 655-7332 (cell)
PIO, Office of Mayor Reed

Linda Crabill Byrne
(408) 975-3238, or (408) 838-0642 (cell)
PIO, San José Dept. of Transportation

San José Leaders Give the Green Light to Traffic Safety at Back-to-School Kickoff Event

City unveils its first plug-in hybrid and a new school-site electric vehicle charging station as resources for its school safety team

San José -- As kids head back to school throughout San José, Mayor Chuck Reed, Councilmember Nora Campos, and a number of other city and school officials are calling on drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists alike to drive, walk and ride more carefully in school zones to prevent student injuries and fatalities.

“Everyone needs to make a commitment to slow down and pay more attention when they’re driving around schools,” said Mayor Chuck Reed during today’s (Sept. 3) school-safety event at Cureton Elementary School. “Keeping our children safe must be a priority.”

In an effort to protect student safety, the Mayor and City Council authorized four new Parking and Traffic Control Officers (PTCOs) in this year’s budget to promote compliance in school zones. And today, the City of San José showcased its fleet’s first plug-in Prius’ (100+ MPG), which will be assigned to patrol school zones. The vehicle will be able to run off of significantly less fuel, offering the city’s PTCO team another cost-effective and environmentally-friendly tool. It is also outfitted with a mounted speed-radar sign on the rear of the car to remind parents and neighbors to watch their speed in school zones.

“We all share the responsibility of making our communities safe for our children,” added Councilmember Nora Campos. “While driving slowly in your neighborhood may cost you a few extra seconds, it also may save a life.”

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Also unveiled at today's event was the first plug-in electric vehicle charging station located at a San José school. The Cureton Elementary station was developed by Silicon Valley start-up, Coulomb Technologies, and is the result of a collaborative project between Alum Rock Unified School District and the City's Transportation Department. The charging station will support the City's *Green Vision* goal of achieving a 100% alternatively-fueled vehicle fleet and demonstrate the potential of using the City's 62,000 streetlights as the backbone of a distributed charging system. Such a system is essential for widespread adoption of plug-in vehicles.

Also on hand at today's event was San Jose Transportation Director Jim Helmer; Jose Manzo, Superintendent of Alum Rock Unified School District; Captain Eric Sills from the San Jose Police Department; Brandie Dressel, Public Information Officer for the California Highway Patrol; and Jason Sorich, Principal of Cureton Elementary, who welcomed the crowd, complete with Cureton students and the San José Police Mounted Unit, to the school-safety event.

School zones everywhere are challenged with unsafe driving behaviors such as double-parking, speeding and blocking crosswalks during drop-off and pick-up times. On the pedestrian side, parents often call children across the street, inadvertently causing kids to jaywalk, a particularly dangerous idea, especially in school zones. For more tips about keeping kids safe in school zones, visit: GetStreetSmarts.org.

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