STREET SMARTS LAUNCHES!

The Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) and three communities have officially launched the STREET SMARTS MARIN program. This public education campaign is designed to target unsafe behaviors by drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

STREET SMARTS:
Addresses traffic problems at their source – in the minds of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.
Brings education to the equation by supplementing traffic safety efforts involving engineering and enforcement.
Works on many levels through outdoor advertising and the press, community events, school activities and discussions, neighborhood initiatives, corporate sponsorships and more.

Three communities – Corte Madera, Larkspur, and Mill Valley – are pilot-testing the STREET SMARTS MARIN campaign. Each of these communities is participating in the program through their city management: public works, law enforcement, planning and community services departments. Each of the towns also has an active Safe Routes to Schools Task Force, which is involved in the campaign.

The three communities have identified five traffic-related behaviors they are targeting:
- Vehicular speeding on streets
- Traffic-signal violations (running stop signs and red lights)
- Right-of-Way violations by drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Distracted driving
- Bicycling infractions and bicyclist safety issues

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$900,000 IN CALTRANS GRANTS FOR NOVATO AND LARKSPUR

In March 2008, Caltrans awarded almost $900,000 in California Safe Routes to School funding, to improve access to five schools in Larkspur and Novato.

$594,000 will go to improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety in the vicinities of Lynwood, Olive and San Ramon Schools in Novato. At Lynwood School, high-visibility crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, and curb extensions will be placed at Lynwood Drive and Sunset Parkway, and traffic signal changes will be made to enhance student safety when crossing South Novato Boulevard at Sunset Parkway.

Olive Avenue and San Ramon Way will be “traffic calmed” in the vicinities of Olive School and San Ramon School, respectively. On Olive Avenue, Bay Area Greenway Trail connections will be improved, and on San Ramon Way, curb extensions and crosswalks will be added.

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BLUSTERY RIDE N’ SEEK A SUCCESS

A harsh wind blowing off the Bay didn’t dampen the enthusiasm of participants for Ride n’ Seek, a rolling treasure hunt at Pickleweed Park in San Rafael on Saturday, April 19, 2008. Thirty-four teams of two to five people searched for clues on foot or by bike to learn the treasures of the Canal Community.

“It was really fun,” Michael Buckley of Sausalito told the Marin Independent Journal. “We learned about birds, wildlife and general ecology. It was a great event for Earth Day.” Buckley and his family took third place in the bicycling event. The winners on bikes were Sarah Leipsic and her family, who won a gift basket from Trader Joe’s and other prizes. Darry Ellsworth Yon and her two twins won first place in the walking competition, winning a $100 gift certificate from Safeway.

Thanks to all of the prize sponsors, including Trader Joe’s, Safeway, YMCA, Kaiser Permanente, The Marin Center, Craig’s Warehouse, Dharma Trading Company, Picante, Borders Books, Three Ring Cycles, Fresh Choice, Silver Screen Video and the Bay Area Discovery Museum. Thanks to Canal Gardens and Trails project for helping to organize the event.

Ride n’ Seek is an Earth Day activity for families. Participants learn about the bicycle paths in their community and the natural wonders and other features around them. Safe Routes to Schools is looking for a location for the spring. If you would like to include Ride n’ Seek among your Earth Day events, contact Peggy at 456-3469 ext 6# or peggy@marinbike.org.

STREET SMARTS LAUNCHES [CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE]

Each of the three towns has identified local “hot spots” where the targeted behaviors occur frequently.

Key messages were developed to raise awareness of the behaviors and change attitudes. After consultation with each city, various media such as banners, lawn signs, posters, brochures, and safety flyers were deployed.

Working with each community, TAM will evaluate the effectiveness of the program by conducting “before and after” studies. If the program is successful, the STREET SMARTS MARIN campaign will be expanded countywide. To find out more about STREET SMARTS MARIN go to www.streetsmartsmarin.org.
The Safe Routes to School program is proud to announce the creation of its first district-wide SchoolPool directory and map. Last spring, as part of the extended SchoolPool program, Mill Valley School District piloted SchoolPool.

The MVSD SchoolPool Neighborhood Map was developed for the use of MVSD families, to allow them to find other families in their neighborhoods interested in “SchoolPooling.”

As the school district collected updated information for its school directory for the school year, they offered families the chance to “opt in” if they were interested in being contacted by other families for SchoolPooling. Meanwhile, Safe Routes delineated the Mill Valley neighborhoods, and then numbered and mapped them using geographic information system (GIS) technology. The school district added the SchoolPool neighborhood numbers to the directory for each family that had opted in. Families could use the map (online, or paper versions posted at schools) along with the school directory to identify their SchoolPool area and make contact with other SchoolPool families.

The district promoted the program, encouraging families to get in touch with each other using the School Pool District Directory.

Here’s what’s involved from the schools:
- A District Superintendent and/or principals support the implementation (minimal time involved)
- A volunteer or small committee, usually a Safe Routes to Schools Team Leader, helps identify neighborhoods and does promotion and outreach (a few hours)
- The school directory database manager incorporates the neighborhood codes into the directory database (1 to 2 hours)

The SchoolPool team from Safe Routes to Schools does all of the heavy lifting on the project, every step of the way. To see how the program works, go to: http://www.saferoutestoschools.org/Programs/MVSchoolPool2008.htm.

To explore this program’s potential to help reduce congestion and pollution around your school community, please contact Deborah Cole, SchoolPool specialist, at Deborah@parisianassociates.com.
Everybody was smiling as the winners of the grand prizes from the Spring Contests picked up their bikes on Saturday, June 21, at Vallecito School in Terra Linda.

The bikes had been assembled by Marin Bikes employee volunteers. Safe Routes to Schools assistant instructor Tommy Bensko was on hand to ensure that each winner was properly fitted to his or her bike. At 2 p.m., families began arriving, with the children eagerly searching for the name tags on the bikes. “The anticipation is like Christmas,” said Brendan Corr, age 7, a student at Lower Brookside School in San Anselmo.

Agil Bassa of Hall Middle School in Larkspur, is serious about riding to school. Agil will be a freshman at Redwood High School next year and plans to ride his new bike to school.

Safe Routes to Schools offered two options for the contests. The Frequent Rider Mile Contest has each student keep track of the times they walk, bike, take the bus or carpool to school. When they reach 20 times they get an instant reward and their name entered into the raffle.

In the Pollution Punch Card contest, each student receives a card to clip to their backpack. Once or twice a week, if the student has chosen a green way to travel to school, a carbon gremlin would be “punched” out of their card. Each time a student filled up a punchcard, they also receive an instant reward and an entry into the raffle. Each participating school had a final raffle, with the grand prize being a new Marin Bike.

Gina Vaziri’s daughter, Natalie, was giddy with delight at riding her new bike. Gina, a former team leader from Glenwood School in San Rafael, said the contest really worked at her school. “A swarm of 5th graders started biking to school and it became the thing to do as more and more kids starting joining the pack,” she said.

Thirty-five schools participated in the contest this year, an all-time record. The bikes were provided at cost by Marin Bikes and paid for by a grant from Kaiser Permanente.
What would the world be like if people drove less and walked and bicycled more? Eight schools found out when they were treated to the new SR2S Pedal Power assembly in Spring 2008. The skit promotes awareness of the consequences of air pollution and global warming from too much burning of fossil fuels. This lighthearted skit features a new song written especially for Safe Routes to Schools by famed children’s songster Tim Cain.

In the skit, a mother (sporting a chauffeur cap) and her children are stuck in traffic, with chaos surrounding them. Horns are blasting, kids are bored, nerves are frayed, and frustrations mount. The family begins choking on fumes created by a Traffic Monster, who is feeding the car with his pals, Gas and Oil. Eventually, the parent and children leave the beastly vehicle and follow the Traffic Transformer, a magical bicyclist, through a passage into a world where there is no pollution because so many people walk and bike together to get places. The cast sings the Tim Cain song about how biking and walking celebrate freedom and joy, independence and friendship with nature.

Gwen Froh, who also helps direct plays for the Ross Valley Schools Yes Foundation, headed up the team that created the program. For each performance of the skit, Gwen and her team invite children, teachers and team leaders from each school to participate. They provide costumes and rehearsal sessions prior to the assembly.

Expert seamstresses Monique Kunst and Mundi Gove designed and created the costumes. An art contest was held for students to design the sets. Entries from White Hill students Estelle Comstock and Ellie Cope were chosen from dozens of outstanding entries. Estelle designed a beautiful nature scene with a colorful bicyclist in the foreground. Ellie designed an ominous abstract of pollution. John Reed created the background sets for the assembly, reproducing Estelle and Ellie’s work in large scale.

To sign up to have the assembly performed at your school, contact Peggy at 456-3469 ext. 5# or email peggy@marinbike.org. The regular assembly runs for 20 to 30 minutes, and an abbreviated version is also available. For an extra $300, Tim Cain will arrive in person on his hand-powered recumbent bicycle to sing the song and perform other favorite tunes with an environmental theme.
The bicycle blender was a big hit at the Redwood High School Sustainability Fair. Photo by Mike Graham Squire

MEET THE BIKE BLENDER

Pedaling a bicycle can save on energy in more ways than one. You can save money on gas by not driving, but did you know you can pedal to save electricity as well? Students from various high schools and middle schools found out first hand as they pedal-powered the blending of their own fruit smoothies.

Safe Routes to Schools purchased a Bike Blender from the Juice Peddler last spring and made the rounds of local middle and high schools. The blender attaches to the back of a regular bicycle. The bike can then be put on a stationary stand so that students can cycle in place to blend their own juices. The Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) partnered with Safe Routes to Schools in providing demonstrations at the schools. YLI has been promoting healthy food choices, and the Bicycle Blender is a perfect blend for promoting good nutrition and physical activity.

The Bike Blender was a big hit wherever it went. Kids loved taking turns using their own power to create great blended juices. The teens also got the message that biking is cool and not just for little kids.

The Bike Blender made an appearance at the Marin County Fair last summer as part of the Play Fair Marin Fun Fest booth, which was sponsored by the Healthy Marin Partnership. YLI and SR2S joined up with Generation Chefs on Wednesday July 2, to provide tasty, healthy smoothie samples as kids took turns trying out the blender. The theme was Rethink Your Drink, and more than 1000 samples were given away during a three-hour period. The Bike Blender returned to the Fair on Saturday, July 5 as part of a Transportation-themed segment put on by Marin Link. During that session, another 500 samples were blended and distributed.

Parents and children alike were delighted with the Bike Blender, and many were eager to tell us how they walk and bike to school already as part of the Safe Routes to Schools program.

To bring the Bike Blender to your middle school or high school, contact Peggy at 456-3469 ext. 6# or email peggy@marinbike.org

Sustainability Week at Redwood High

Interns from the Community Service Learning program teamed up with Safe Routes to Schools to develop programs for Redwood High School in Larkspur. The students created a survey to give to their peers to determine barriers to, and opportunities for, encouraging green transportation choices.

The students gave several presentations to Redwood’s student council and Environmental Action Club, getting the support and feedback of these groups, while also educating the students in various issues associated with sustainable transportation. They also met with Redwood’s vice principal to discuss strengthening the school’s carpooling program.

As their contribution to Bicycle Commute Week, the interns participated in a “sustainability week” from May 12 through 16, 2008. They sponsored a competition that brought about 100 students biking to school on Bike to School Day (Tuesday, May 15), with about 50 students biking each day of that week. Safe Routes interns held a workshop on the carpool program to encourage students and their parents to form carpools and use them every day. Other students participated in a panel discussion on sustainable transportation, joining a representative from the Marin County Bicycle Coalition and Next Generation, who did a presentation on bio-diesel. During lunch, students got the chance to create their own juices using the Bicycle Blender.
Middle School Students Educate Peers

To educate their peers on the virtues of walking and bicycling to school, students from Hall, Miller Creek and White Hill Middle Schools helped create a Safe Routes assembly, planning and presenting the entire assembly themselves. Enthusiastic crowds responded to the assembly. Students played roles exploring why walking and biking is great for their health and the environment, while addressing barriers that keep kids from using these modes.

One student played “The Professor,” instructing the students about the reasons why walking and biking are good for the environment, and answering the concerns of the “Who Cares” student who, well, just couldn’t care. A third student talked about why biking is so much fun, as well as important. The skit was accompanied by music and a dynamic PowerPoint presentation. Each presentation of the assembly included results from a student survey for each school.

At Hall Middle School (Larkspur), the students created questions based on the assembly and offered other students small prizes if they knew the answers. Students at Hall and White Hill (Fairfax) were also treated to a lunch-time activity with the Bicycle Blender. As they ran these events, the leadership students focused on promoting walking and biking to school.

White Hill and Miller Creek (Marinwood) schools used the assembly as a launching point for their Spring contests, which also encourage more walking and biking to school. Hall Middle School used the opportunity to hold the raffle for its Pollution Punch Card Contest.

Any middle school interested in participating in the Safe Routes teen program can contact Aviva at 456-3469 ext 5# or email aviva@marinbike.org.

DRAKE TEENS RIDE TO THE MOVIES

One hundred twenty-five students and four teachers from the ROCK program at Sir Francis Drake High School participated in a bicycle-powered field trip to the Rafael Film Center on Wednesday, May 7.

Safe Routes to Schools conducted an educational seminar prior to the event on safe bicycling skills, and also helped to organize the trip, arranging the escorts and assisting with logistics.

The ROCK (Revolution of Core Knowledge) teachers were looking at ways to continue doing field trips at a reduced cost to the school and environment, and decided to participate in the Rafael Film Center’s educational outreach program to local high schools. The students viewed the film Persepolis, which related to the Social Issues and World History classes taught in the ROCK program.

The ROCK teachers—Mary Kitchens, Paul Grifo, Michael Wing and Jasper Thelin—thought of riding bikes with their students on the 2.5 mile journey to downtown San Rafael instead of traveling in several dozen automobiles. The ecological ramifications and the timing (the week before Bike To Work/School Week) increased the significance of the trip. Drake also hosted an official Bike to Work Energy Station on May 15.

The large group was divided into four small packs of riders, each accompanied by adult chaperones, to lessen the impact on traffic flow. The San Anselmo and San Rafael Police Departments helped plan the safest route, and provided staff to navigate the groups through tricky intersections. The Broken Drum restaurant generously provided secure bicycle parking for the 100-plus bicycles. The students were genuinely excited about biking and even those on their heavy beach cruisers handled the ride beautifully.

Sir Francis Drake High School has long prided itself on its commitment to action-oriented education for its students, from national and international community-service field trips to dynamic small-learning communities, to a campus-wide effort at reducing our carbon footprint. Field trips such as this one can serve as a blueprint for future school outings that are inside the four-mile radius. That short radius typically makes up the bulk of all automobile trips.

If you would like to plan a bicycle field trip for your middle school or high school, contact Peggy Clark at 456-3469 ext. 6# or peggy@marinbike.org.

DRAKE TEENS RIDE TO THE MOVIES

Photo: Hans Roenau

Bicycle Field Trip

Photo: Hans Roenau

Hall students prepare for assembly. Photo by Renee Goddard
International Walk & Roll to School Day!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

This year, International Walk to School Day will be the second Wednesday in October. Safe Routes to Schools has posters, give-aways, and other tools to help you plan a great event for the whole school. To find out more about how your school can participate, call Laura at 456-3469 ext 2# or email laura@marinbike.org.

$900,000 IN CALTRANS GRANTS FOR NOVATO & LARKSPUR

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Avenue, the traffic lanes will be narrowed, bike lanes will be widened, and pedestrian crossing enhancements will be implemented. San Ramon Way’s intersections with San Benito Way and San Juan Court will be narrowed to slow motor-vehicle traffic speeds and improve pedestrian crosswalks.

$296,730 will go to Larkspur to provide a new pathway to connect Apache Road and William Avenue on either side of Sandra Marker Trail. The pathway will consist of ramps and possibly stairs to improve access to Hall Middle School and Redwood High School.