Marin Community Foundation Grant Aims to Reduce Climate Change

$175,000 to Start up SchoolPool Trip Match and Expand Teen Program.

The Marin Community Foundation (MCF) awarded the Transportation Authority of Marin a $175,000 grant for the Safe Routes to Schools program as part of MCF’s Climate Change initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The funding will go towards developing a county-wide SchoolPool program and expanding the teen program. The grant’s goal is to convince at least 800 students to shift to greener modes of transportation, keeping 420 tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

Marin County has a long history of environmental stewardship. Despite its strong environmentalist community, Marin's ecological footprint, at 27 global acres, exceeds the national average of 24 and far exceeds the carrying capacity for the planet, which is at 5 according to a study by the Environmental Education Council of Marin. A “footprint” measures ecological demand associated with human activities. It is gauged in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water required to provide the resources used and absorb the waste generated.

If everyone in the world used resources the way Marin residents do, 4.8 Planet Earths would be needed to meet the demand. The Bay Area’s transportation sector is the source of 51% of the area’s greenhouse gas emissions; in Marin, transportation accounts for 60%. To reduce Marin's carbon footprint, residents can reduce their automobile trips, especially for short trips such as driving children to school.

Marin’s Safe Routes to Schools program has successfully reduced the **[Continued on page 3]**
Infrastructure Improvements in Mill Valley Proceed to Construction

The City of Mill Valley will complete construction this fall of school-access improvements funded by the Safe Pathways to Schools from the Transportation Authority of Marin. These include:

- Removal and replacement of old sidewalk and installation of a refurbished bus shelter at Miller Avenue and Gomez, in front of Tamalpais High School; and installation of curb and gutter to separate the park-and-ride lot from the bike lane at Miller & Almonte.
- A concrete bulb-out that enlarges the sidewalk area at Edna Maguire School to reduce the street-crossing distance and make pedestrians more visible to drivers on Lomita Avenue. Also modification of the median in front of the school driveway.
- At Old Mill School, concrete bulb-outs on Lovell Avenue at Old Mill Avenue, at Lovell Avenue & Summit, and at Throckmorton & Old Mill Avenue.

The Safe Pathways program provides funding to schools that have completed Safe Routes to Schools Travel Plans to improve safety conditions around and along the routes to schools. The program is administered by the Transportation Authority of Marin and paid for by the Transportation Safe Tax.

$1.174 Million in State Safe Routes to School Grant Funds Benefit Marin

Marin County continues to bring in new money for infrastructure improvements to make it safer for children to walk and bike to school.

A $900,000 state grant awarded to the County of Marin will help fund pedestrian improvements along a two roads in Homestead Valley. The funding through the Caltrans Safe Routes to School program will cover the majority of the $1.1 million cost estimated for improvements along the south side of Evergreen Avenue and the west side of Melrose Avenue. The project will provide better access to Marin Horizon School students and link to other pedestrian improvement projects in Mill Valley.

Community meetings on the project will begin in late 2010 after preliminary design work has been initiated by the County.
Would you like to have your child(ren) walk to school but don't want them to go alone? Are you considering forming a carpool but you don't really know anyone from the school who lives near you? Safe Routes to Schools is launching a SchoolPool Trip-Match system that allows parents to register online at no charge to find companions for carpooling, walking, and biking to school together, or for bus buddies.

Later this Fall, families will be able to register on the system, indicating the school the child attends and the route they use to get to school, and the system will send back a match-list of other registered families who are looking for SchoolPool companions. Contact information will be included so families can e-mail or call one another. The system will be similar to a 511 commute rideshare system, with the latest in features, security and ease of use.

There may be incentives encouraging families to sign up, and inter-school challenges to reward high participation by individual schools.

Safe Routes to Schools surveys in Marin County last year showed that families would bike, walk or carpool more if they could find other families to share the responsibilities of getting the kids to school together. Support for the new Marin County SchoolPool Trip-Match system was provided by a grant from Marin Community Foundation (see article above) and continued Measure A support from Transportation Authority of Marin.
A strong sense of school pride is created by participating in a regular Walk and Roll to School Day. The mass effort feels good to all and becomes a contagious cultural force. This year, SR2S is asking all of its participating schools to establish a regular Walk and Roll to School Day, starting at least monthly and increasing to weekly by spring. Once families have the regular weekly experience of walking or biking with their children to school, they realize the benefits and are inspired to do it more often.

Decreasing traffic and pollution benefits the community, while regular exercise benefits the children and the parents who accompany them. Children also gain confidence and independence by using their feet to travel to school. It's also a great life-long lesson that you can walk and bike to get places.

While International Walk to School Day is a major event, regular days become routine. Establishing a regular day is easy. The first step is to get your principal to declare one day as your school's weekly Walk and Roll to School Day. Many schools in Marin County select Wednesdays due to early-afternoon releases. Friday is the second most popular day.

Once you have set your day, recruit volunteers to help staff a welcome table for your regular Walk and Roll to School Day. Your best bet is your PTA or parent association. You can also recruit other walking and biking parents, and place a posting in your school newsletter for volunteers.

You also can ask parents who already walk or bike to school if they would be willing to take other kids from their neighborhood to form Walking School Buses or Bike Trains.

Promote the day through your regular school communications networks such as weekly e-blasts or newsletters, announcements from the principal and the teachers, and flyers and posters. Organize a schedule for your volunteers to greet students at the welcome table, and obtain PTA funds for food and refreshments to distribute. It's best to keep the rewards to something simple so the students don't come to expect a prize every week. Remember, the goal is to make everyday walking and rolling to school be the normal way to go.

Marin County at the SR2S National Conference

Marin County was well represented at the second National Safe Routes to School Conference, which took place in Portland, Oregon, from August 19 to 21, 2009. The conference, which drew more than 500 participants from across the US, showcased the best practices for SR2S from around the country. Marin representatives gave four different presentations at highly attended sessions: one on the teen program, one for Marin's efforts to combat global warming, an overview on how to create a long-term sustainable program, and ways to develop citywide and countywide programs. Marin's Program Director, Wendi Kallins, also participated in a lunchtime plenary panel discussion on how to further the movement of SR2S nationwide.

The conference highlighted the explosive growth of SR2S throughout the nation. Representatives from rural, suburban and urban communities shared their ideas and successes. The setting allowed attendees to experience the seamless transportation network of Portland, with wide, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks Miles of bike lanes and pathways Portland's TriMet transit system.
Contest Winners Ride Away on Their Bikes

There were many smiling faces on June 2, 2009 as the winners of the spring contests arrived at the Marin Bikes warehouse to pick up their new bikes. Throughout the year, these students walked, biked, scootered, carpooled or took the bus to school as part of the Frequent Rider Miles or the Pollution Punchcard contest. Some of them did a little of everything depending on the day. Thirty-five bikes were provided at cost and assembled for free by Marin Bikes and paid for by a grant from Kaiser Permanente.

Steve Glazer of Marin Bikes was on hand to help hand out the bikes and ensure that they fit the winners. The students were thrilled to get their new bikes and were looking forward to a summer of riding. Caroline Cohen, winner from Strawberry Point School, at first hid behind her mother and wouldn’t get on her new bike, but changed her mind when she saw her older brother test it out. That convinced her to get on it and her shyness dissolved as she rode it with her mother’s assistance.

Safe Routes to Schools continues to provide support for Marin County schools through development of travel plans to create safer routes around schools, teaching children traffic safety for walking and biking, and developing encouragement programs to get more kids on their feet.
The Street Smarts Marin program is back and has expanded to eight Marin cities and towns, targeting such behaviors as speeding, running red lights and stop signs, failing to stop at crosswalks, jaywalking, and bicyclists’ safety and bicycling traffic violations. Street Smarts Marin deployed special banners available for schools.

The pilot program, sponsored by The Transportation Authority of Marin, worked with the city staff, public works, police departments, schools and Safe Routes to Schools task forces to pilot-test the program in Corte Madera, Larkspur and Mill Valley, in 2008 from late August to early November.

The Pilot program received high marks and the program was expanded to include Fairfax, San Anselmo, Ross, Tiburon and Belvedere this fall.

The Street Smarts public education campaign promotes behavior change at the source: in the minds of drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The program employs banners, signs and posters displayed around participating towns and focused outreach to thousands of parents of school children.

City Councilwoman Stephanie Moulton-Peters, who has served as chair of Mill Valley’s Safe Routes to School Task Force for the past four years, spoke highly of the Street Smarts campaign. “I am very excited to see it returning to Mill Valley,” she said. “The reports I heard last spring were that it was eye-catching, humorous and informative.”

To help spread the word, neighborhood groups, organizations and businesses can request a presentation of the Street Smarts traffic safety presentation titled “Get Street Smart – Did You Know ...?” which also includes safety brochures and Street Smarts lawn signs for their neighborhood.

Street Smarts gets people thinking, but the true goal is to change attitudes and behaviors, making Marin County streets safer and friendlier for everyone who uses them.

Peter Breen, Mayor of San Anselmo, said “Ever since the Streets Smarts Pilot began last year, we, in the Ross Valley, have been working with our Safe Routes To School [Ross] Valley Task Force to keep the pressure on TAM to make sure the program came to San Anselmo. Now that it is going to happen, the Council, staff, and police department are anxious to begin seeing the positive results we expect from parents, and the public at large.”

As part of the Street Smarts outreach, residents are encouraged to go to StreetSmartsMarin.org for more information, to provide feedback about Street Smarts on a survey or to find out how to participate.
Riding with Youth

Riding with Youth workshops are free and held throughout Marin County after school or on a weekend day during the spring and the fall. The 2.5 hour workshops feature fun skill-building activities including blacktop drills, instructional video and a neighborhood group street ride. Learn about proper equipment, communications, and appropriate behavior.

Fall Class Dates and Location
Saturday, October 10: 9:30 to 12:00
San Rafael Community Center, San Rafael

Children must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Both adults and children must bring their own bikes. This class is designed for children in grades 2 to 8 with prior on-the-street riding experience.

This class is not designed for:
• Children riding with training wheels
• Children riding on a trailer bike attached to an adult bike
• Children riding on sidewalks

Advance class registration is necessary. A confirmation will be sent to all who are registered for a class. Please register by providing your name, children’s names and ages, address, email, phone and class date and location to: Peggy Clark at (415) 456-3469 ext 8# or email peggy@marinbike.org.

Do You Stop at Stop Signs?

Free Basic Street Skills bicycle safety classes are held eight times per year at various locations throughout Marin County and are presented by the Marin County Bicycle Coalition. This two-hour presentation teaches participants to safely and confidently use a bicycle for transportation. Topics covered include how to avoid crashes and citations, how to improve visibility, how to navigate through intersections, the legal rights and obligations of cyclists, and more. Drivers benefit from the class as well, by learning how bicycles maneuver on the roads and why specific choices (for example, positioning in intersections or turn lanes) are safer for cyclists.

The classes are taught by Frances Barbour. Frances currently teaches the Safe Routes to School curriculum throughout Marin’s public and private primary schools. She also conducts Share the Road presentations and Bike Commuting workshops for adults through the Marin County Bicycle Coalition.

Classes are held throughout Marin County; please consult the list for dates and locations or visit www.marinbike.org - Share the Road.
Measure A, Marin’s half-cent transportation sales tax, provides funding for Safe Routes to School programs in all Marin schools. If your school is not currently participating, contact Wendi Kallins, Program Director, Safe Routes to Schools.

415-488-4101
wendi@marinbike.org

Students who walk or bike on a regular basis will be recognized in their school this year with a Roll Model or Green Feet award. Students will be chosen by their Safe Routes to Schools Teams for walking every day or biking long distances to get to school. CLIF Bar has graciously donated pencils, notebooks, posters and nutrition guides to reward these students.

CLIF Bar also donated CLIF Kid products for International Walk to School Day. They providing CLIF Kid Organic ZBar® and CLIF Kid Organic Twisted Fruit® to walkers and bikers for the October 7 event.

“Bike & Walk to School Day is an awesome way to promote the physical health of kids, improve air quality, and develop safer walking and bicycling routes to schools,” says CLIF Kid representative Melissa Leebove. “We here at CLIF Kid think those things are pretty important, and we are pleased to provide some of our healthy CLIF Kid snacks to help nourish kids in motion on this day.”

Photo: 2009 Marin Bike Commuter of the Year, Dixie School student Clay Kaufmann with Marin County Bicycle Coalition's Executive Director, Kim Baenisch (left) and his parents.