



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



Kentfield Task Force

Meeting Notes

December 2, 2010

Present (14)

Wendi Kallins – Program Director for Safe Routes to Schools; David Parisi – Transportation Authority of Marin/Program Manager for Safe Routes to Schools; Laura Kelly –Volunteer Liaison for Safe Routes to Schools; Mary Jo Pettegrew – Superintendent for Kentfield School District; Amanuel Haile – Marin County Public Works; Jenny Walsh – Vice Principal at Kent Middle School; Billy Cameron – Vice Principal at Bacich Elementary School; Amy Jones – Team Leader at Bacich; Katie Rice – Supervisor to Hal Brown; Chris Rardin – California Highway Patrol; Paul Miller – Facilities Manager; Marnie Ganong –parent volunteer; Heater McPhail –parent volunteer; Debra Fletcher – parent volunteer.

Program Overview

Wendi Kallins provided a PowerPoint presentation about Safe Routes to Schools, Marin County, which serves over 50 schools and 25,000 students. This is the first meeting of the new Kentfield Task Force for Safe Routes to Schools. Wendi also noted that a representative from the College of Marin will be invited to attend our next Task Force meeting.

Travel Plans

Wendi discussed why it is important for each school in the Kentfield school district to develop a Travel Plan, and the role of the task force members in the development process. A Travel Plan explores the obstacles and opportunities that increase walking/biking to school and decrease traffic congestion around schools. It documents the issues, identifies interventions and sets up an implementation program. The goal is to complete Travel Plans for each school by the end of 2011. Safe Routes will guide the Task Force through the process. Hard copies of past travel surveys to all Task Force members.

Identifying School Travel Issues in Kentfield

Task Force members were encouraged to discuss school travel problems and concerns as a starting point to become clearly aware of the issues. McCallister and Laurel Dell were identified as two of the top areas of concerns by most of the Task Force members. Below are some of the specific comments:

McCallister - The right turn from McCallister on to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard causes a major backup of cars. Katie noted that the backup is greater than usual due to the Creek project which will be completed by the end of the year.

Laurel Grove is a dangerous zone. Heather said that there would be more bikers and walkers, if the parked cars were not in the way. Parked cars are an issue on Laurel Grove because a biker has to go around the parked car in route to school. Amy shared that a larger median on SFD is needed near Laurel Grove. There is not enough space for kids to stand while waiting for the traffic lights to change (30 to 40 students are crammed on the small pad at 8:08 am). The sun is also blinding at times. Blinking lights might be a solution. Overall, making a turn on to SFD from Laurel Grove is a crazy and scary intersection. A CHP officer on a motorcycle would help to slow down drivers. Chris added that the CHP has never been asked to be present at this area, so please make phone calls to the CHP to get the presence needed. Wendi also mentioned setting up a Pedestrian Decoy with the help of the sheriff's department as a way to increase awareness.

Other areas of school travel concern:

Cinder Blocks on Sir Francis Drake were identified as a problem.

Right turn to from SFD to Bacich Parking lot was identified as a problem.

Enforcement and education for the new pedestrian overhead light are needed.

Communications with crossing guards is very poor.

Jenny suggested proposing that Golden Gate Transit dedicate a bus to get students to school on time. Wendi said that Marin Transit will not be offering any more buses dedicated only to a school route, but that we can talk with them about increasing ridership by adjusting the bus hours to match the school bell times. A meeting with Golden Gate Transit was encouraged by all.

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Marnie shared that the education and encouragement elements of Safe Routes to Schools over the years has been excellent. However, the actual “routes” to schools are stressful, even for the most passionate bikers. For the population of student and their families that do make the effort to walk and bike, it’s not an easy trek because routes are dangerous. Communications with crossing guards is poor too.

Acacia Avenue is a road where kids get hit. Car volume on McCallister and Acacia is huge. David said that education, law enforcement and encouragement of parents to be careful in the school’s danger zones will all help to increase traffic flow. The Task Force will help coordinate these efforts to increase awareness and safety.

Parent conducting U-Turns near Bacich were also identified as a problem. Billy shared that orange cones have helped to prevent U-Turns, but they are a problem. Kids have been hit by cars due to a parent making a U-Turn. A sheriff is sometimes present, but not effective, due to lack of educational instruction.

Chris added that the CHP would like to help with enforcement, but the way the system works is that parents or school officials will need to call in to identify the dangerous areas in order to obtain law enforcement. Chris distributed his business card to all members of the Task Force.

Everyone at the meeting agreed that clearly identifying the safest routes to schools would help encourage more walking and biking. Additionally, it was mentioned that a promotional campaign to get the word out about the paths/routes would be of equal importance (don’t just print a map, but host an event). When the creek project comes to an end this month and the distraction it has been causing is lifted, then that would be a good time to create awareness of the best paths to schools.

Next Steps

Wendi will schedule a walk audit for McCallister and Laurel Grove. Clearly identify the safety issues. Initially, education (traffic safety education) and enforcement will be more important than engineering steps. Debra suggested that we possibly tie-in the PTA with the education campaign and disseminate information through newsletter bulletins.

Wendi can also offer Safe Routes to Schools presentations at Bacich and Kent parent meetings to further increase awareness.

Topic for next meeting: Education programs, including driver education

