



Mill Valley
Middle School
Travel Plan



SAFE ROUTES
TO SCHOOLS
MARIN COUNTY



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1. Purpose

1.1. SR2S Planning, Implementation and Monitoring

The Mill Valley Middle School Travel Plan is the blueprint for identifying and prioritizing Safe Routes to School (SR2S) programs, resources, and capital improvements. The Travel Plan also documents program activities and impacts on school-related travel that can be used to assess the success of the SR2S program over time, and important school-specific transportation policies and operations.

The Travel Plan differs from most plans in that it is not a snapshot in time but a living document; one that is repeatedly updated and modified to reflect school staff, community, and parent input along with technical information and lessons learned. This input is primarily captured by a SR2S task force that meets periodically to identify and address new concerns. For more information on Safe Routes to School partnerships in Marin County, visit www.saferoutestoschools.org

1.2. Marin County Measure A

The Transportation Sales Tax Measure Expenditure Plan approved by voters as Measure A in November 2004 dedicates an estimated \$332 million in local sales tax revenues to transportation needs in Marin County. Approximately \$36.5 million (11%) of the sales tax expenditure has been earmarked to reduce school related congestion and safer access to schools. These funds are allocated to three sub-strategies, or programs:

- Safe Routes to School (SR2S)
- Crossing Guards
- Safe Pathways to School

The Safe Pathways infrastructure program is integral to the success of the overall strategy; it is the capital improvement element of the Safe Routes to School program. As a stated policy in the *Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) Measure A – Transportation Sales Tax Strategic Plan Update (2009)*, all projects eligible for Safe Pathways funding must be identified in Safe Routes plans. The Mill Valley Middle School Travel Plan qualifies as such a plan and identifies potential capital projects eligible for Safe Pathways funding.

2. Mill Valley School Profile

2.1. School Location

425 Sycamore Avenue
Mill Valley, CA 94941

2.2. Enrollment and Demographics

2.2.1. Enrollment by Grade

Table 1: Mill Valley Middle School Enrollment by Grade, 2006-07

Grade Level	Enrollment
Grade 5	
Grade 6	
Grade 7	
Grade 8	
Total	740

2.2.2. Enrollment by Ethnicity

N/A

2.2.3. Free Lunch Enrollment

N/A

2.3. Current Conditions

Entrances to School

- **Primary School Entrance:** Entrances to the school are provided all along Sycamore, at Camino Alto/Sycamore, and at the back of school adjacent to Community Center property, abutting the general parking lot.
- **ADA Accessibility:** ADA ramps are located at the main entrance and gym, and the entire interior of the school is ADA compliant.

Cross Streets

- **Cross Street:** Camino Alto

Traffic Controls

- The intersection of Sycamore/Camino Alto is signalized, and has an audible pedestrian signal.

- The intersection of Camino Alto/East Blithedale is signalized, and includes an audible pedestrian signal.
- The intersection of East Blithedale/Lomita/Roque Morales is signalized, and has an audible pedestrian signal.
- The intersection of East Blithedale/Tower is signalized.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks are provided at all major signalized intersections in the vicinity of the school.

- Camino Alto/Sycamore has yellow ladder-style crosswalks on all four legs.
- Blithedale/Camino Alto has white ladder-style crosswalks on all four legs.
- Blithedale/Lomita has white ladder-style crosswalks on all four legs, including a wide crosswalk on the west leg.
- A white standard transverse crosswalk is provided at a mid-block location on Camino Alto in front of the Safeway supermarket.

Crossing Guards

- **Location of TAM Crossing Guards:** TAM-funded crossing guards are on duty at Sycamore and Camino Alto and at Lomita/Roque Morales and East Blithedale.

Transit

- **School Bus Availability:** Mill Valley Middle School has no regular school busing.
- **Public Transit Availability:** The nearest public bus service to Mill Valley Middle School are Golden Gate Transit Routes 4 and 17, which stop at Miller Avenue/Camino Alto, and at E. Blithedale Avenue/Camino Alto.
- **Special Transit Needs Offered:** N/A

Bike Racks

- **Location of Bike Racks:** The main bicycle rack is adjacent to public parking lot. A 6th grade rack is adjacent to 6th grade play structure near Sycamore/Camino Alto entrance.
- **Number of Bike Spaces:** 140
- **Rack Condition:** Good

2.4. Policies

Pick Up and Drop Off

- **Location:** The primary drop-off/ pick-up designated location is the Green curb alongside the MVMS Gym. Cars arrive from a timed light and pull as far forward as possible, discharge students onto the curb and rejoin traffic headed the opposite direction. Drop-off for more complex days with projects or loads is available in the parking lot between the Gym and the Skate Park. This lot needs improved directional street painting.

The secondary drop-off/pick-up locations include two at the Mill Valley Community Center. There are directly in front near the bike racks and at the other end of the main building at the corner of the ball field. Both supply excellent pedestrian and bike access about 500 feet to campus.

Additional Drop off/ Pick up locations are at the Safeway parking lot, with a traffic light crossing and audible alert signal at the Redwoods. This location is 1,000 feet away from campus.

Drop off and pick up for students who live in Strawberry is best accommodated at the parking lot adjacent to the Hamilton Drive Public Safety Building. This route is 1,200 feet from campus and includes a bridge over the Pickleweed Marsh.

Drop off and pick up at MVMS excludes the School District lot in front of the school, thereby eliminating cross traffic for the drop off curb. Drop off has been learned at most elementary schools and the results at MVMS show parents for the most part are efficient at the green curb. There are no parent volunteers to monitor the drop off and sometimes pick up is more problematic because there are cars waiting for students which congest the lane.

- **Parking Policy:** Mill Valley Middle School has the following policies related to walking and bicycling, and driver safety:
 - MVMS encourages students to walk or bike to school as much as they can. It's safer, healthier, cleaner and more fun for the students than riding in a car. Wednesdays are Walk or Wheel Wednesdays at MVMS. The Mill Valley School District is part of a model program for the nation that promotes children walking and biking to school.
 - Crossing guards are located at Sycamore/Camino Alto and E. Blithedale/Lomita. Please remind your children to obey the crossing guards, the signal lights and the crosswalk signal. In addition, student bicyclists **MUST** wear a buckled helmet when crossing, look left, right, and left again and use hand signals when turning.
 - Carpool: If you must drive, please carpool. Note that traffic congestion continues to be a major problem at the school, so we suggest you drop-off/pick-up at alternate locations:

- MV Community Center by the baseball diamond, not the front door, Safeway, Miller Avenue 7-11, Hauke Park, Rite-Aid/Albertson's parking lot.
- Drop-off zone: MVMS has one drop-off zone. Please drive east on Sycamore Avenue past the gym, follow the drop-off signs and make a hard left turn into the drop-off lane, which is parallel to Sycamore Avenue and next to the gym. Pull all the way forward along the curb and stay with your vehicle. Please exit slowly. Do not enter the staff parking lot, which is the larger lot next to the drop-off zone. Please be cautious of students crossing the driveway entrance to the staff parking lot as we have had many near accidents at this location. [The front lot near the main doors of the school is NOT open for drop-off/pick-ups.] Please be safe and courteous to all students.
- Dangerous/reckless drivers: We encourage all our students to be vigilant, and to note the car make, color, driver and license plates when they see bad drivers. Every school in Mill Valley has "Driver Alert" forms at the office which students or parents can complete. The school office faxes them in to the MV Police, and the registered owner of the car is sent a warning letter by MVPD.

Parking

- **Staff and General Parking:** Staff parking at Mill Valley Middle School is located adjacent to the gym, alongside the drop-off lane (separated by sidewalk), with the parking lot entrance on Sycamore. General public parking is located in the back of gym, entrance on Sycamore, adjacent to skate park and near bike path. There is available overflow curb parking for peak periods. There is limited parking for district at main building entrance off Sycamore. Mill Valley Middle School is discouraged there in favor of drop-off lane.

2.5. Student Survey History

Since the 2003 school year, students have been asked how they traveled to school, once in the fall and once in the spring. Most students reported being driven to school, however, students walking in the fall has increased, while at the same time students driven to school has decreased. The results of these surveys are below, in **Table 3**, and depicted in **Figure 1**.

Table 2: Means of Travel to School

	Fall						
Year	Walk	Bike	Bus	Family Vehicle	Carpool	Transit	Other
2003-04	15%	14%	1%	51%	14%		
2004-05	15%	14%	1%	51%	19%		
2006-07	20%	19%	0%	43%	19%		
2007-08	27%	19%	3%	37%	12%		5%
2008-09							
2009-10	23%	22%	0%	38%	13%		4%
2010-11	22%	13%	24%	28%	13%	0%	2%
	Spring						
Year	Walk	Bike	Bus	Family Vehicle	Carpool	Transit	Other
2003-04	25%	21%	1%	40%	12%		
2004-05							
2006-07	33%	13%	0%	37%	17%		
2007-08	19%	12%	0%	51%	19%		0%
2008-09	24%	15%	0%	47%	11%	1%	2%
2009-10	22%	10%	0%	44%	20%		
2010-11							

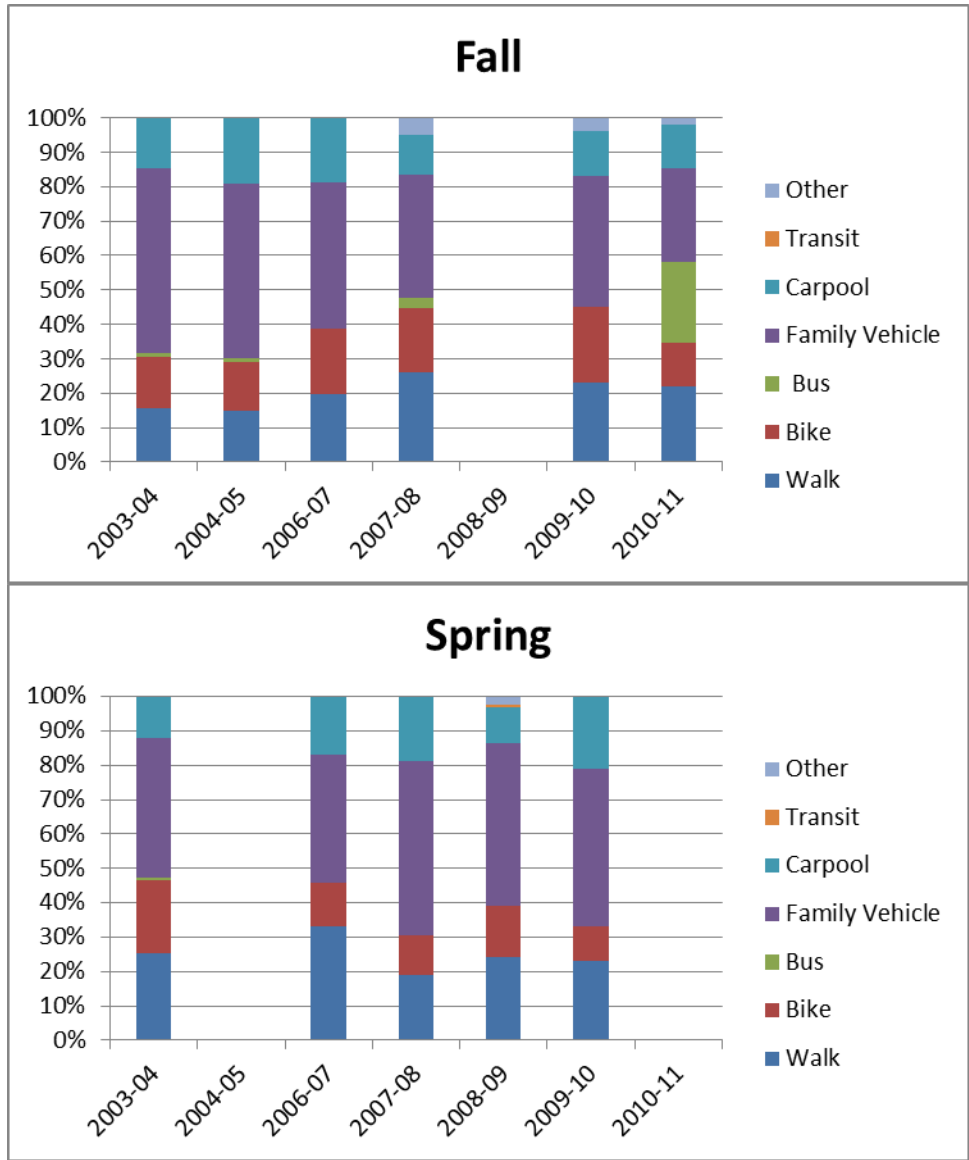


Figure 1: How Children Got to School

3. Barriers and Opportunities

3.1. Parent Survey

Parent surveys were distributed between September 2007 and January 2008 at the schools and on the Transportation Authority of Marin home page. Mill Valley returned 13 surveys during this time. Note that due to the number of surveys collected, the results are not likely to represent the behavior and attitudes of the school population as a whole.

Distance Traveled to School

Nearly all of the respondents to the survey reported traveling over one mile to school.

Table 3: Distance Traveled to School

Distance	# of Responses	% of Responses
1/4 - 1/2 mile	1	8%
1 - 2 miles	6	46%
Over 2 miles	6	46%

Means of Travel to and from School

Most respondents reported driving to school, either solo or by carpool. Notably, no respondents reported traveling to the school by bus or local shuttle.

Table 4: Means of Travel to and from School

	Not Often		1-2 Days/Wk		3-4 Days/Week		Every Day	
	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From
Walks	0%	31%	8%	23%	0%	15%	8%	15%
Bikes	15%	38%	23%	31%	15%	23%	0%	23%
Driven	0%	46%	8%	38%	23%	31%	38%	31%
Carpool	23%	46%	8%	46%	23%	38%	38%	38%
Bus	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	38%	0%
Local Shuttle	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	38%	0%

Barriers to Biking and Walking to School

Respondents cited dangerous intersections as their number one concern. The lack of sidewalks and having too much to carry were also cited by respondents.

Table 5: Barriers to Biking and Walking to School

Concern	# of Responses	% of Responses
Dangerous intersections	8	62%
Unsafe or lack of sidewalks and/or bikeways	7	54%
Too much to carry	7	54%
Weather	6	46%
Speeding cars	5	38%
Other	4	31%
Running late/tardiness	3	23%
Stranger Danger	2	15%
Scary dogs	1	8%

On the way to work	1	8%
It's too steep	1	8%
It's too far	1	8%
Lack of safe bike parking	0	0%
Child won't follow safety rules	0	0%
Child is too young	0	0%
Bullies	0	0%

Benefits of Biking and Walking

Respondents cited improved health and better for the environment, and having their children learn independence as the number one benefits to walking and bicycling to school.

Table 6: Benefits from Bicycling and Walking to School

Benefits	# of Responses	% of Responses
Improved Health	12	92%
Better for the environment	12	92%
Child learns responsibility and independence	12	92%
Reduces traffic around school	11	85%
Saves money on gas	10	77%
Less stressful than driving	10	77%
Gives me more free time	9	69%
Child more alert at school	8	62%
Child learns traffic rules	8	62%
Gets me walking and biking	7	54%
We get to know our neighborhood better	5	38%
Other	1	8%

Encouraging Biking and Walking to School

Most respondents thought that adding crossing guards at dangerous intersections, improving the intersections, and improving the sidewalks and paths were the best way to encourage their children to walk and bicycle to school.

Table 7: Ways to Encourage Biking and Walking to School

Ways to Encourage Biking and Walking	# of Responses	% of Responses
Crossing guards at dangerous intersections	8	62%
Improved intersections	8	62%
Improved sidewalks and paths	7	54%
Cars slowed down	7	54%
Accompanied by other children	3	23%
Safety training was provided for students	2	15%
Park and walk locations where we could walk part way	2	15%
More police enforcement	1	8%
Accompanied by other parents	0	0%
Secure bike storage was available	0	0%
Route maps were provided	0	0%
When he/she is older	0	0%
I would never allow my child to walk or bike to school	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Encouraging Carpooling

Most respondents felt that making the schedule more convenient would encourage them to carpool more. Notably, almost a third of respondents already carpool.

Table 8: Ways to Encourage Carpooling to School

Ways to Encourage Carpooling	# of Responses	% of Responses
The Schedule was more convenient	6	46%
We already carpool	4	31%
You could find other parents who lived close by	2	15%
It was provided for free	2	15%
You were familiar with the driver	0	0%
Someone else organized it	0	0%
Other (please specify)	0	0%
there was an adult escorting the children	0	0%
The cost was reduced	0	0%
It was a yellow school bus	0	0%
My child already rides the bus	0	0%

Safe Routes to School Program Interest

Most respondents were most interested in helping identify traffic safety issues, while no respondents were interested in organizing carpooling in their neighborhood, participating in a carpool, or helping with events and contests.

Table 9: SR2S Interest

SR2S Interest	# of Responses	% of Responses
Help identify traffic safety issues	4	31%
Organize a Schoolpool (walk, bike, and/or carpool together)	2	15%
Other	1	8%
Organize a carpool in your neighborhood	0	0%
Participate in a carpool	0	0%
Help with events and contests	0	0%

3.2. Walkabout Notes

A walkabout for Mill Valley Middle School revealed several locations in need of improvements, including Sycamore/Camino Alto crossing issues; narrow sidewalks and vegetation management on Sycamore, blocked sidewalks near La Goma intersection, need for improved signage/striping at Miller/Evergreen, need for improved signage and markings at Miller/Reed, and need for enforcement at East Blithedale/Lomita.

4. Programs and Projects

Since Safe Routes to Schools became a project of the Transportation Authority of Marin, the program has been able to increase participation countywide. A record 49 schools, representing nearly 22,500 students, currently participate in the program. Mill Valley had 710 students enrolled for the 2007-08 school year.

4.1. Engineering Design Concepts

The following locations describe the recommended design concepts. **Appendix A** provides these concepts in more detail.

Camino Alto and Miller Avenue

The improvements to this intersection include a reconfiguration of the existing sidewalk into a multi-use path which will extend to the school, re-alignment of the crosswalk, and installation of a curb extension on the north east corner of the intersection.

Altamonte Boulevard and Miller Avenue

The improvements to this intersection include a raised island on the north west corner of the intersection, signage and striping improvements, and re-location of the bus stop.

4.2. Education Programs

Classroom Education. Mill Valley Middle School participates in the Safe Routes to Schools education program.

4.3. Encouragement Programs

Mill Valley currently participates in the following programs:

- International Walk to School Day
- Parade Prep
- SchoolPool
- Task Force

5. Implementation Matrix

Implementation Plan

The City of Mill Valley has implemented a number of improvements in recent years that have benefited Mill Valley Middle School. These include:

- Restoration of existing multi-use pathway along Camino Alto
- Modified traffic signal timing at Blithedale/Lomita to benefit pedestrians
- Installed crosswalks, stop signs, and ADA ramps at Redwood/Frontage and US101
- Installation of Fluorescent Yellow Green School Zone Warning Signage
- Installation of high-visibility crosswalks and advance warning signage
- Installed audible pedestrian signals at Blithedale/Tower, Blithedale/Lomita, Camino Alto/Sycamore, and Miller/Camino Alto
- Installed new sidewalk and ramps on Sycamore from County MUP to Corp Yard
- Reconstructed steps between Miller & Ethel (behind Jenny Low's)

The city also has a number of planned/pending project that would benefit Mill Valley Middle School. These include:

- Resurface east end Sycamore Avenue install bike lanes to connect to County N/S multi-use path on Sycamore Ave between Camino Alto and the multi-use path
- Modify existing multi-use path along east side of Camino Alto on Miller b/w Sycamore and Miller
- Sidewalk Improvements on Montford Ave (west side) between Ethel and 26 Montford
- Miller Avenue sidewalk and bike lane improvements as part of Miller Ave. Precise Plan
- Buena Vista walkway on Buena Vista between Manor & Golf Course

6. Funding

The Camino Alto multi-use pathway project was funded with a \$343,000 Safe Routes to Schools grant in 2003, and the Blithedale/Lomita signal re-timing project was funded with a \$40,000 Safe Routes to School Grant in 2001. Signage and crosswalk enhancements were funded with City Capital Improvement Program funds.

Appendix A: Engineering Design Concepts