



Sun Valley Elementary School Travel Plan



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1. Purpose

1.1. SR2S Planning, Implementation and Monitoring

The Sun Valley Elementary 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 Sun Valley Elementary School Travel Plan qualifies as such a plan and identifies potential capital projects eligible for Safe Pathways funding.

2. Sun Valley Elementary School Profile

2.1. School Location

75 Happy Lane
San Rafael, California

2.2. Enrollment and Demographics

Table 1 shows the number of students enrolled per grade. **Table 2** shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of the student population.

Table 1: Enrollment by Grade, 2008-09

Grade Level	Enrollment
Kindergarten	80
Grade 1	76
Grade 2	70
Grade 3	70
Grade 4	70
Grade 5	67
Total	433

Source: California Department of Education

Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Subgroups, 2008-09

Racial and Ethnic Subgroup	Number of Students	Percent of Students
White (Not Hispanic)	284	65.6%
Hispanic or Latino	91	21.0%
Multiple or No Response	33	7.6%
Asian	16	3.7%
African American	5	1.2%
Filipino	2	0.5%
Pacific Islander	2	0.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0%

Source: California Department of Education

2.3. School Lunch Program

Information not obtained.

2.4. Existing Conditions

Entrances to School

- **Pick-Up/Drop-Off:** The school's formal drop-off and pick-up area is at the main entrance of the school off Happy Lane and 5th Avenue. Traffic is routed in a loop with the assistance of a crossing guard as per the SAFE Plan. An alternate drop-off and pick-up location exists at the corner of 5th Avenue and River Oaks Road.

Traffic Controls

- **Intersection of 5th Avenue/Racquet Club Drive:** T-intersection, stop-controlled on the 5th Avenue approach.
- **5th Avenue:** A school zone sign is located between California Avenue and Racquet Club Drive on 5th Avenue.
- **Happy Lane/5th Avenue Intersection:** T-intersection, stop-controlled on the Happy Lane approach.
- **River Oaks Road/5th Avenue Intersection:** T-intersections stop-controlled on the River Oaks Road approach. Signs stating "No parking during school drop-off and pick-up time" were recently installed.

Sidewalks

- Six-foot wide sidewalks on 5th Avenue from California Avenue to Happy Lane. A gravel pathway continues from Happy Lane to the school.
- Deteriorated asphalt/concrete (AC) bumper style curb and varying width sidewalk at street elevation of 5th Avenue.
- Deteriorated four foot wide sidewalk of the north side of 5th Avenue, east of California Avenue.

Bicycle Routes

- Class III bike route along 5th Avenue from H Street to California Street.
- Parents and students bicycling on 5th Avenue use the sidewalk, along with parents and children who are walking.

Crosswalks

Marked crosswalks are provided at the following locations near the school:

- Along 5th Avenue at California Avenue (Sun Valley Market), at Racquet Club Drive and at Sirard Lane.

- Happy Lane/5th Avenue Intersection: yellow transverse school crosswalks exist on the south and west legs.
- Happy Lane at school entrance: yellow transverse school crosswalk.
- River Oaks Road/5th Avenue: yellow transverse school crosswalks on south and west legs.

Crossing Guards

- TAM-funded crossing guards are stationed at the intersection of Happy Lane and 5th Avenue and 5th Avenue and River Oaks Road.
- One PTA funded parent crossing guard is stationed at the Happy Lane crosswalk at the entrance to the school.

School Buses

- Two school buses in the morning, two mid-day buses for kindergarteners and one bus in the afternoon. Buses serve the Canal District, Short School and the Parkside Child Care Center on B Street. The cost to ride the school bus is \$415 per year per child. Families with lower incomes can qualify for a reduced fee of \$225 per child per year. The cost is waived for families whose children receive free lunch. All families must pay a \$60 processing fee.

Public Transit

- The nearest public bus service consists of Golden Gate Transit Routes 22, 23, 26 and 27, stopping at Hilldale Drive and Red Hill Avenue (United Market).

2.5. Policies

Information not obtained.

2.6. Classroom Education

Sun Valley participates in the Safe Routes to Schools education program. Annual classes taught include:

- Stop Look and Listen (2nd grade)
- Walk Around the Block (2nd grade)
- Helmet Safety (4th grade)
- Traffic Safety Game Show (4th grade)
- Bicycle Rodeo (4th grade)
- Safety Art (all school)
- Family Mouse (Kindergarten) *not implemented in 2007, teachers opted out*
- Assembly (all school) *not in 2007 may be on alternating years*

- Riding with Youth

The Twin Cities Police Department works with the school district to provide officers for education during Safe Routes to Schools Rodeos. Officers are also available to speak with students and/or parents on traffic safety. The Twin Cities Police also offer the RADkids program through the Larkspur and Corte Madera Recreation departments. RADkids teaches youth how to cope with personal safety situations.

2.7. Encouragement Programs

Sun Valley Elementary participates in the following encouragement programs:

- School Directory by Neighborhood
- Walk and Roll Wednesday
- Pollution Punch Card
- Cool the Earth – Cancel a Car

Appendix C provides detailed descriptions of these and other encouragement programs.

2.8. Student Surveys

Fall and spring student surveys have been conducted for the 2004-09 school years, with the exception of 2005. Teachers asked students how they traveled between home and school. **Table 3** shows the detailed survey results. Blank cells indicate that the information was not collected.

Table 3: How Students Got To School

Year	Fall						
	Walk	Bike	Bus	Transit	Carpool	Drive Alone	Other
2004-05	11%	4%	18%		8%	59%	
2006-07	13%	6%	15%		14%	53%	
2007-08	20%	6%	17%		14%	43%	1%
2008-09	16%	8%	18%	0%	12%	46%	1%
2009-10	13%	7%	19%	1%	8%	51%	0%
2010-11	24%	7%	16%	0%	10%	42%	1%

Year	Spring						
	Walk	Bike	Bus	Transit	Carpool	Drive Alone	Other
2004-05	18%	9%	14%		11%	48%	
2006-07	21%	9%	17%		22%	31%	
2007-08	20%	7%	14%		18%	40%	1%
2008-09	12%	6%	19%	0%	11%	51%	1%
2009-10	14%	3%	20%	0%	14%	48%	1%
2010-11							

Figure 1 charts the data in **Table 3**. Over the course of the survey years, the most students were driven to school in a family vehicle, compared to approximately 14 percent driven in a carpool. The percentage of students walking to school was the highest in the fall of 2010 at 24 percent. “Transit” and “other” were offered as answers since 2007, with one percent of students using these travel modes on average. Error! Reference source not found.**Figure 1: How Children Got To School**

3. Barriers and Opportunities

3.1. Parent Survey

Team leaders administered volunteer parent/guardian surveys as part of the 2007-2008 travel plan process. The survey was distributed at the school. Parents and guardians could either return the completed survey to the school or complete it online through a link on the Transportation Authority of Marin homepage. Sun Valley Elementary returned 155 parent surveys.

Concerns

The survey asked parents what concerns they had about their children walking and bicycling to school. Weather was the concern cited the most. Dangerous intersections and running late or tardiness were concerns cited often. **Table 4** shows detailed results to this question.

Table 4: Parental Concerns

Concern	Percent
Weather	35%
Dangerous intersections	31%
Running late/tardiness	30%
It's too far	27%
Child is too young	26%
Stranger danger	24%
Speeding cars	21%
On the way to work	21%
Unsafe or lack of sidewalks and/or bikeways	21%
Other	18%

Concern	Percent
Too much to carry	14%
It's too steep	6%
Child won't follow safety rules	5%
Lack of safe bike parking	2%
Scary dogs	1%

Potential Opportunities

The survey asked under what circumstances parents or guardians would allow their child to walk or bike to school. **Table 5** shows the responses to the survey. According to the survey, 46 percent of parents and guardians would allow their children to walk or bike to school if the children were “accompanied by other parents”. The opportunities cited second most frequently were if their child were older and if crossing guards were stationed at dangerous intersections.

Table 5: Potential Opportunities to Increase Walking and Bicycle Among Children

Opportunities	Percent
Accompanied by other parents	46%
When he/she is older	34%
Crossing guards at dangerous intersections	29%
Safety training was provided for students	19%
Improved sidewalks and paths	19%
Accompanied by other children	19%
Cars slowed down	19%
Improved intersections	16%
More police enforcement	15%
Park and walk locations where we could walk part way	9%
Secure bike storage was available	8%
Other	7%
Route maps were provided	5%

Likelihood to Carpool

As part of the survey, parents were also asked under what circumstances they would carpool. The survey results show that 29 percent of parents and guardians would be likely to carpool if they were familiar with the driver and that 28 percent already carpool. **Table 6** shows the responses to this question.

Table 6: Likelihood to Carpool

Circumstance	Percent
You were familiar with the driver	29%
We already carpool	28%
You could find other parents who lived close by	19%
Other	8%

3.2. Walkabout Notes

A walkabout was held at Sun Valley Elementary School on May 27, 2004. Several locations were identified for improvement, including Lakeside, Pixley Avenue, and the school entrance. The identified issues included lack of marked crosswalks, desire for improved signing, poor visibility, and narrow sidewalks.

4. Programs and Projects

4.1. Engineering Design Concepts

Based on the walkabout and Task Force meetings, a series of design concepts were developed. They are summarized below. **Appendix D** provides illustrations of these concepts.

5th Avenue at Happy Lane

These improvements are aimed at improving safety at the 5th Avenue and Happy Lane crossings in front of the school. Improvements consist of the installation of a bulb out on the north corner, curb extensions on the southwest and southeast corners, a high visibility marked crosswalk using ladder stripes on 5th Avenue and a high visibility transverse crosswalk on Happy Lane. The City plans to install a sidewalk along 5th Avenue west of Happy Lane.

Happy Lane at the School Entrance

These improvements are aimed at improving safety at the school entrance on Happy Lane. The improvements would create 225 feet of sidewalk east of the school, remove the existing crosswalk on Happy Lane and install a high visibility marked crosswalk and install a curb ramp at the southeast side of the crosswalk.

5th Avenue Improvements

Currently, students bicycling or walking to school must share a 4-foot wide sidewalk on the north side of 5th Avenue west of California Avenue and a 4-foot wide asphalt path on the north side of 5th Avenue east of Happy Lane. Improvements west of California Avenue would restrict on-street parking on the north side of 5th Avenue during school commute hours and install a 7-foot wide Class II bicycle lane. Improvements east of Happy Lane would restrict parking and install a 6-foot wide concrete sidewalk, both on the north side of the street.

5th Avenue at River Oaks Road

Improvements at this intersection include raising the pavement adjacent to Sun Valley School to prevent parking on the crosswalk, sidewalk extensions on the southwest and southeast corners and high visibility marked crosswalks on 5th Avenue and River Oaks Road. Installation of a traffic circle is recommended.

River Oaks Road Improvements

Two options are proposed on River Oaks Road. Option 1 includes installation of 1,000 feet of concrete sidewalk along the east side of the street between 5th Avenue and Racquet Club Drive, curb ramps and a high visibility crosswalk and signage at Racquet Club Drive. This option will require approximately 150 feet of retaining wall and some fill. Option 2 consists of 300 feet of concrete sidewalk along the west side of River Oaks Drive between 5th Avenue and Racquet Club Drive.

5. Implementation Matrix

An implementation matrix with district wide improvements is in the San Rafael District Plan.

Appendix A: Neighborhood Descriptions

After District expansion, Sun Valley Elementary School now serves a broader set of neighborhoods, including those to the west, south and east of Downtown San Rafael. In the neighborhood descriptions below, the number of student residences is based on the 2007-2008 school year. Multiple students may live in one residence.

Sun Valley Neighborhood – This neighborhood has three sub-areas: Upper Sun Valley, Lower Sun Valley and the Racquet Club area. The generally flat Upper Sun Valley area has one pedestrian access via the new sidewalk on 5th Avenue. Up the hill to the south of the school is the Racquet Club area. The hills are steep and there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood. With blind hills and curves, ‘pass-through’ vehicles in this neighborhood can pose hazards to neighbors that walk with children. On-street school parking in the neighborhood causes additional issues for walkers. Lower Sun Valley encompasses H Street to L Street and distances are farther for younger walkers. No bus service is available. There are approximately 60 family residences with Sun Valley School students in this neighborhood.

Sun Valley Rafael Highlands, Fairhills and Central San Rafael Neighborhoods – Rafael Highlands and Fairhills are on the ridges to the north of Sun Valley and look down upon the school. Pedestrian access from Rafael Highlands is available on a half-mile trail which switchbacks up the hill from the school to the neighborhood. There are 21 student family residences in the Rafael Highlands Neighborhood. Fairhills is just to the east of Rafael Highlands, on the hill with narrow roads and no sidewalks, and is a greater distance from school. There are 12 student family residences in the Fairhills. Below Fairhills and east of the Sun Valley Neighborhood (across H Street) is the Central San Rafael Neighborhood. This neighborhood is flat, but crowded with eight student residences. For the three neighborhoods closest to the Sun Valley Neighborhood the total number of student residences is 41.

Gerstle Park Neighborhood – This neighborhood is served by a school bus. Walking is difficult due to the need to cross multiple busy streets between the Gerstle Park Neighborhood, Downtown San Rafael, and the Sun Valley Neighborhoods. These crossings include:

- 1st Street (where a child was injured in 2007),
- 2nd Street (one-way to the east and busy),
- 3rd Street (one-way to the west and busy),
- 4th Street (high volume of commercial traffic), and
- 5th Street (busy neighborhood throughway with only moderate sidewalks and no bike path).

The path of least resistance through these crossings would be either Shaver Street across 2nd Street and 3rd Street and up to 4th Street, or K Street with a single crossing across 2nd Street and 3rd Street, a busy crossing at 4th Street and connection up to 5th Street. The 4th Street crossing would benefit with improvement in both cases. Approximately 56 students live in this neighborhood.

West End Neighborhoods – Housing in this neighborhood is over Forbes Hill to the south. Vehicular access to the school requires travel up and over Forbes/Racquet Club Drive, which experiences surges in traffic before and after school. Students from south of 4th Street (the Miracle Mile) must cross several busy intersections if they are to walk or ride, as well as the trek over Forbes Hill. From north of the Miracle Mile, students must walk up to the ridge before they can walk down a trail (recently posted with no trespassing signs) to 5th Avenue. There is an easement which connects the Sun Valley Neighborhood and 5th Avenue to the West End Neighborhood, though a pedestrian pathway has not been built within the easement and the easement is on private property owned by the Grove Hill Homeowners Association. The original pathway (on a slightly different alignment) has been used historically to serve students in the West End Neighborhood. No bus service is available in the area. Approximately 40 student family residences exist in the West End.

Eastern Neighborhoods – The Eastern neighborhoods include Brett Harte (east of Gerstle Park), the Canal (between US Highway 101 and the Canal), and the eastern portion of Central San Rafael (from D Street to US Highway 101). The distance to these neighborhoods is between two and three miles on congested streets. These neighborhoods are outside the official school service area. The Canal is served by a school bus, though Brett Harte and Central San Rafael are not. Approximately 44 student residences are in these three neighborhoods.

Northern Neighborhoods – The northern neighborhoods are north of San Pedro Road and include Dominican, Civic Center, Los Ranchitos and Marinwood. Access from Dominican requires passing under US Highway 101 and through congested downtown San Rafael. Access from the other neighborhoods requires driving four to five miles, either on US Highway 101 or Lincoln Avenue, and through downtown San Rafael. These neighborhoods are also outside of the school service area. There are approximately 18 student households in these four neighborhoods.

Appendix B: Carpool Map

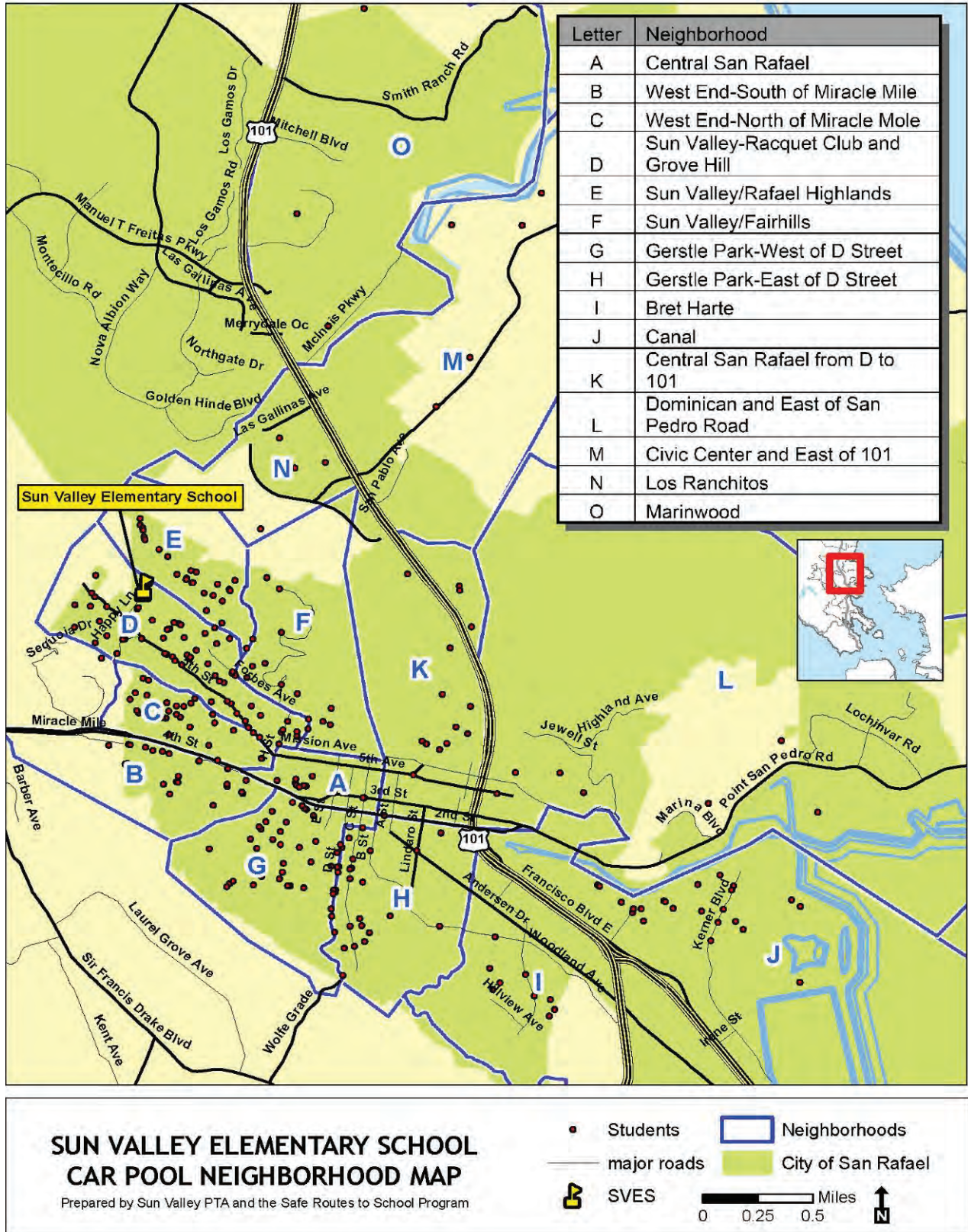


Figure 2: Car Pool Neighborhood Map

Appendix C: Encouragement Program Detail

Walkabout in the Neighborhood: Initial Concepts

A walkabout with school leaders and community members was held on November 10, 2004. Several locations were identified as needing attention, including: the 5th Avenue/Happy Lane intersection, the school's entrance on Happy Lane, the 5th Avenue/River Oaks Road intersection, and the River Oaks Road and 5th Avenue corridors. The issues included difficult to see crosswalks, narrow sidewalks, lack of curbs, and no on-street bicycle facilities. Considerable changes have been made to some of the infrastructure since the initial walkabout in 2004.

New Sidewalk on 5th Avenue; Happy Lane improvements

In the summer of 2006 the City of San Rafael and Sun Valley School succeeded in installing a new six-foot wide sidewalk on the north side of 5th Avenue from California Avenue to Happy Lane (approximately four blocks). Pedestrian crosswalks are marked at each of the four intersections along the way. This has been a major improvement for the safety of pedestrians and beginning bicyclists.

During the federal SRTS 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 funding cycles, the Sun Valley School was successful in securing additional funds to provide curb extensions, ADA ramps, and high visibility striping linking to the new 5th Ave sidewalk, as well as additional striping, ramps, and sidewalk to connect to the school entrance on Happy Lane. These improvements were constructed in 2010.

5th Avenue at River Oaks Road Intersection

The Parent Committee and program leaders for Safe Routes to School have had numerous meetings over a period of years with the City of San Rafael regarding congestion and pedestrian safety issues at the 5th Avenue and River Oaks Road intersection. A traffic circle was proposed at one time. The Parent Committee considers this an unsafe intersection and has encouraged the city to improve the intersection.

In spring of 2007 parking was prohibited on River Oaks Road during drop-off and pick-up hours. Still the back entrance of school presents safety problems. In February 2008 the Parent Committee implemented additional procedures to increase safety at the 5th Avenue and River Oaks Road intersection. These included:

- No parking in the fire lane at the back entrance of the school. This includes the area from the fire hydrant to the back gate of the school. This zone is marked with cones to make the area more visible and to increase the safety at the crosswalk.
- No double parking along 5th Avenue to smooth traffic flow and eliminate visual obstructions for motorists approaching crosswalks.
- Parents wishing to pick up their children at the back entrance are encouraged to park along 5th Avenue and walk to the back entrance.

- Parents are encouraged to avoid using River Oaks Road as a cut-through from Racquet Club Drive. The lack of sidewalks, a blind curve, and blind hill on this road already make this a tricky path for those that walk to school along this route.

School Directory by Neighborhood

The annual school directory is a project of the Sun Valley PTA. In addition to the standard name and address format, lists of students were also provided by street name to facilitate communication among same street neighbors. This was helpful in identifying neighborhood kids that could walk, bike or carpool together (i.e., “SchoolPool”). In the 2007– 2008 directory, these lists were expanded to include entire neighborhoods and mapped on a carpool neighborhood map (see **Appendix A**). This map helps locate where students are and to quantify how many students are in each neighborhood.

Walk and Roll Wednesday

The first Wednesday of each month children are encouraged to either walk or ride to school. When students arrive at school “grab and go” snacks (i.e., apple slices, granola bars, etc.) are provided for added encouragement and/or a complimentary item such as stickers, key chains or book marks may also be available. Each class tallies how the students got to school—walk, bike, bus or carpool vs. single car occupant. The class with the most participation earns the ‘Golden Sneaker Award’ and a piece of playground equipment, such as a football or rubber ball for their classroom. Data collected on Rock and Roll Wednesdays provides our participation counts.

Pollution Punch Card

The Pollution Punch Card Contest occurred in May 2007. Eight random days were chosen as “pollution punch card days.” Every student received a pollution punch card that was kept by class. Students who walked, bicycled, carpooled or took the bus on one of the designated days had their carbon gremlin on their card punched. When the card was punched six times, the student qualified for a raffle. In all, 212 students, or 50 percent qualified for the raffle. Twenty-two prizes were given out. Grand prizes, obtained by Safe Routes to School from corporate donors, included a mountain bike, helmet, bike lock and back pack. Bike bottles filled with stickers, pencils and other small items made up additional prizes.

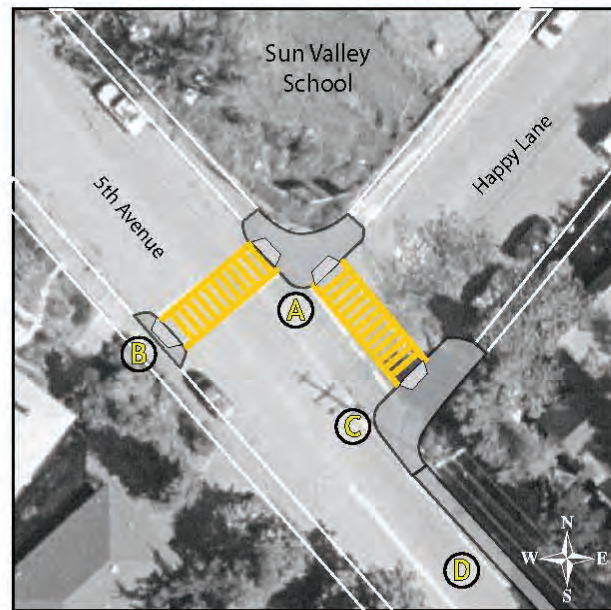
Cool the Earth - Cancel a Car Program

Cancel a Car Program started in the 2007-2008 school year. Children can participate in a variety of activities to reduce their carbon footprint such as replacing light bulbs and not driving to school.

Appendix D: Engineering Concepts

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5TH AVENUE AND HAPPY LANE



Looking southwest across 5th

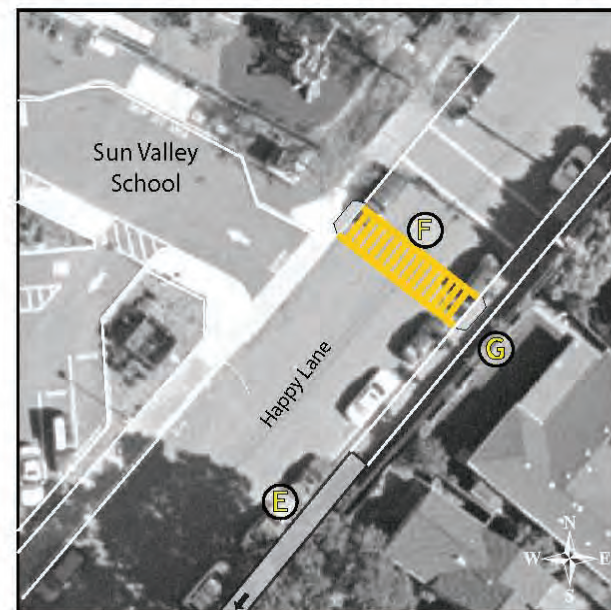


Looking southwest across 5th

Recommendations

- A** Install bulb out on north corner
- B** Install curb extension and ramp on southwest side of 5th Avenue
- C** Install curb extension on southeast corner
- D** The City has plans to install sidewalk along 5th Avenue

HAPPY LANE AND SCHOOL ENTRANCE



End of sidewalk
Looking northeast along Happy Ln.

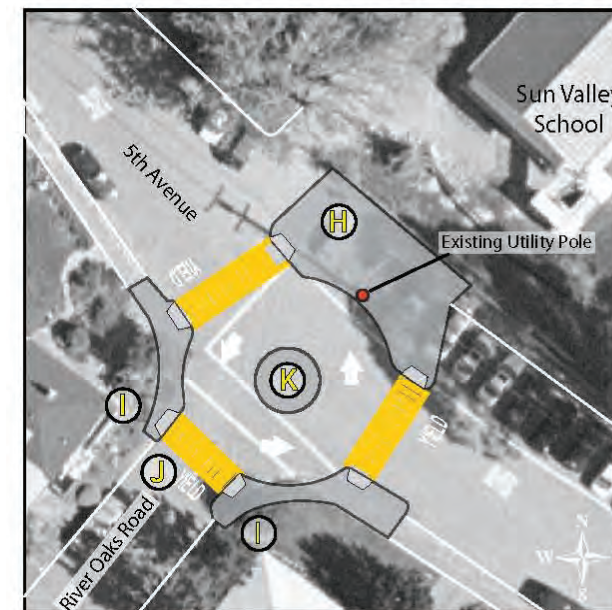


Crosswalk location
Looking northeast along Happy Ln.

Recommendations

- E** Complete 225 ft of sidewalk east of school
- F** Move school crosswalk on Happy Lane southwest
- G** Install curb ramp at southeast side of crosswalk

5TH AVENUE AND RIVER OAKS ROAD



Looking southeast at intersection
of 5th and River Oaks



Looking southeast at intersection
of 5th and River Oaks

Recommendations

- H** Raise pavement to prevent parking on crosswalk across 5th Ave
- I** Install curb ramps on southeast and southwest corners and extend sidewalk around corners to meet curb ramps
- J** Move school crosswalk on River Oaks Rd. southwest
- K** Install traffic circle at intersection, if feasible

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR SUN VALLEY SCHOOL

March 2006



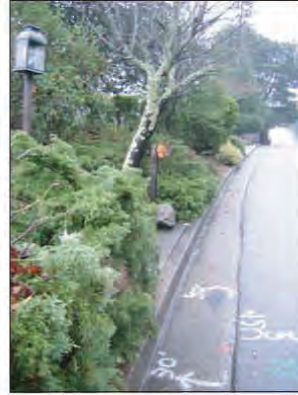
Figure 4: Intersection Improvements

SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION ALONG RIVER OAKS ROAD

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Fencing encroaching on right-of-way



Landscaping along River Oaks Road



Steep grade at 20 River Oaks Road. Sidewalk construction may require retaining wall.

Recommendation: Option 1

- A** Install 1000 feet of concrete sidewalk along east side of River Oaks Road between 5th Avenue and Racquet Club Drive.
- B** Due to steep topography adjacent to roadway, sidewalk construction on east side will require 150 feet of retaining wall and fill in front of 20 River Oaks Drive.

Option: Construct sidewalk within roadway and restrict parking.
- C** Install curb ramp at south corner of River Oaks Road and 5th Avenue.
- D** Install curb ramps, high visibility crosswalk and related pavement markings and MUTCD signage at Racquet Club Drive to connect to existing sidewalk on south side of Racquet Club Drive.

Recommendation: Option 2

- E** Install 300 feet of concrete sidewalk along west side of River Oaks Road between 5th Avenue and Raquet Club Drive.

Notes

For either option:

- Sidewalk will be constructed within city-owned right-of-way and will not require curb and gutter relocation.
- Landscaping will need to be removed and encroaching mailboxes and fencing relocated.
- Driveway crossings to be constructed to meet ADA crossslope requirements (2% maximum).



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR SUN VALLEY SCHOOL



Figure 5: Sidewalk Construction along River Oaks Road