

# Travel Diary

## Making Responsible Transportation Choices

### A Three Session Curriculum for Middle School

Created for  
The Transportation Authority of Marin's  
Safe Routes to Schools Program

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# Goals & Objectives

## Goals (The sessions will...):

- ✓ Help students to develop and use critical thinking skills and take meaningful action.
- ✓ Help students make informed choices as individuals, consumers and citizens.
- ✓ Encourage students to take action that reflects personal commitment to balance their own mobility needs with the requirements of personal, social and environmental health.

## Objectives (Students will...):

### **Session One:**

- ✓ Become aware of the myriad ways in which to get around and a variety of alternative modes of transportation to that of the private automobile.
- ✓ Come to learn that patterns of transportation are mutable, that how their parents got around may have differed dramatically from how they themselves get around and by implication that transportation habits can change in the future.

### **Session Two:**

- ✓ Compare transportation alternatives, their convenience, energy requirements and ability to promote or damage personal and societal health.
- ✓ Gain insights into the hidden costs of transportation.
- ✓ Be encouraged to do some critical thinking and self-reflection as to the manifold ramifications of their own transportation choices.
- ✓ Assess weekly transportation use.

### **Session Three:**

- ✓ Be empowered with the knowledge that personal choices can make a difference in their own health, the integrity of the environment and the well being of society and future generations.
- ✓ Become inspired by positive changes in transportation choices by themselves and/or some of their classmates.
- ✓ Learn additional ways in which they can personally address and impact issues such as global warming.
- ✓ Assess weekly transportation use.

# Curriculum Relevance

The present series of classes entitled “Travel Diary” can be seen to fit in with the educational frameworks as set forth by the California State Department of Education curriculum content standards in the following ways:

## A) Health Framework

1. Benefits of Prevention
2. Life Skills and Positive Behaviors
3. Personal Health
4. Consumer and Community Health
5. Environmental Health

## B) History/Social Sciences Framework

1. Historical Literacy
2. Ethical Literacy
3. Cultural Literacy
4. Economic Literacy
5. Sociopolitical Literacy
6. Critical Thinking Skills
7. Participation Skills
8. People Making a Difference

## C) Science Framework

1. Science and The Environment
2. Earth Sciences

## D) Physical Education Standards

1. Self Image & Personal Development
2. Physically Active Lifestyle

# Session Summaries

## **Session One:**

1. Ways to Get Around  
Students will brainstorm a list of the myriad ways one can get around.
2. Introduction to the Travel Diary  
Students will be given a Travel Diary form and an explanation of how to go about filling it out to record all their trips in the coming week.
3. Parent Interview  
Students will be asked to interview their parents to find out the ways in which their parents got around when they were children.

## **Session Two:**

1. Transportation Opinion Continuum  
An interactive ice-breaker that will get students thinking critically about various issues involved in the transportation choices and alternatives relevant to their own lives.
2. Brief Review of Diary Results
3. Brief Review of Parent Interview Results
4. The Costs of Transportation  
A guided brainstorm about the many personal, social, governmental, and environmental costs of automobile usage and the relative costs of other modes of transportation.
5. Projections, Possibilities and Probabilities for Personal Change  
Students will be challenged to see if they can change their transportation patterns during the second week of keeping a Travel Diary.
6. Family Car Cost Calculator  
Students will be provided with an instrument by which their parents can accurately calculate their real annual transportation cost.

## **Session Three:**

1. Brainstorm Warm Up  
Brainstorm of a list of things that a person could observe, experience, or do while walking or biking that would be impossible or unlikely if traveling by car.
2. Review Changes from Week One to Week Two Diaries
3. Discussion  
Group discussion about what changed, how changes were experienced, what were the barriers to change and how those barriers were or could be overcome.
4. Parental Feedback  
Report back on parents' impressions and reactions to the Car Cost Calculator
5. Suggested Follow-Up  
A teacher facilitated discussion of different ways in which the students can make transportation choices and engage in actions that will have a positive impact on their own physical and mental health, as well as the health of society and the environment.

# Session One (10-20 Minutes)

## 1. Ways to Get Around (Brainstorm)

With a blank black board or large sheet of paper ask the students to brainstorm as many as possible “ways to get around.” Answers should include (you can add them if nobody comes up with them) walking, biking, skateboard, scooters, roller blades, cars, carpools, buses, taxi, planes, boats, trains, etc.

After you have created your list, go over each one and get an informal show of hands of who has experienced that form of transportation.

## 2. Introduction to the Travel Diary

Pass out the Travel Diary forms and explain to the students that for the next week they will be keeping track and recording the various forms of transportation they use to and from school, to after school activities, to go shopping, meet with friends, etc. Explain how the form is to be filled out, giving the necessary information for each trip made. Ask if there are any questions.

## 3. Parent Interview

The second part of their homework assignment is to ask their parents and/or grandparents how they used to get around when they were middle school age. Again the question should include to and from school, shopping trips, after school activities, play dates with friends, etc. The students should write the responses down on a sheet of paper and bring it with them to class for the session next week.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Travel Diary

Week Of \_\_\_\_\_ (dates)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason for Travel</b>	<b>Mode of Transportation</b>	<b>Distance in Miles</b>
<i>Example</i>	<i>Home to School</i>	<i>Bike</i>	<i>.75 Miles</i>
<i>Example</i>	<i>School to Soccer</i>	<i>Car</i>	<i>5 Miles</i>
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

## Weekly Totals

<b>MODE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TRIPS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF MILES (Total)</b>
<b>Bike</b>		
<b>Walk</b>		
<b>Bus</b>		
<b>Carpool</b>		
<b>Car</b>		
<b>Other (Describe)</b>		

## Session Two (50 Minutes)

1. Transportation Opinion Continuum (5 Minutes)  
(see separate sheet for process and statements)

2. Brief Review of Diary Results (5 minutes)

Have the students get out their Travel Diaries from the preceding week and just get a flavor of the results through a show of hands as to 1) How many found that most of their trips were by car? 2) How many people biked places? 3) Did anybody walk? Bus? Carpool?

3. Brief Review of Parent Interview Results (5 minutes)

Ask for a show of hands to see how many people found that their parents walked to school? Took a bus? Rode a bike? Were driven by their parents? Ask for volunteers to report back anything they found interesting or surprising in what their parents or grandparents told them.

4. The Costs of Transportation (20 Minutes)

Ask the class how they would go about calculating the costs of getting around in an automobile. The Chances are they will think of the cost of a car and the cost of gasoline, but these are only a fraction of the total financial costs to the individual of driving a car. In addition there are other non-monetary costs to the individual (physical health, stress, loss of sense of place and connectedness, etc.), and beyond these, there are many other environmental, social/cultural and governmental costs associated with car trips.

After presenting in a general way these four categories of costs (see attached Cost Analysis), see if you can get the students to brainstorm what costs in each category might be associated with driving. Supplement their suggestions with the factors presented in that analysis. After writing them up on the board reflect upon which ones are issues (and to what extent) in the case of walking/biking/car pooling and bussing.

5. Projections, Possibilities and Probabilities for Personal Change (10 minutes)

Have the students review the trips listed on their previous week's log and with regard to each trip they made by car, have them note on their forms the degree of difficulty (easy, moderate or hard) of replacing that particular ride with walking, biking, carpooling or taking public transit. Combining different purposes into a single trip also counts as a savings.

Pass out another batch of Transportation Logs and encourage/ challenge them to see how much they can reduce their overall transportation “costs” while promoting their own health as well as that of the environment in the coming week.

6. Family Car Cost Calculator – Dollars/Mile and Hours/Week (5 minutes)

The second part of their homework assignment is to take home the Family Car Cost Calculator and give it to their parents to compute. Parents may prefer to keep the results of their calculations confidential, and that is fine. This is primarily a tool to help families assess the true financial and labor costs involved in driving. Rather than actual numbers ask the students to bring in their parents’ comments and observations upon completion of the Cost Calculator (e.g. Were they surprised? Did the results inspire them to reflect on possible cost-saving measures with regard to their transportation patterns?).

# Session Three (50 Minutes)

## 1. Brainstorm Warm Up (5 minutes)

Ask students to brainstorm a list of things which a person could observe, experience, or do while walking or biking which would be impossible or unlikely if traveling by car. Possibilities include such things as smelling the flowers, meeting, greeting and talking to friends or strangers, getting exercise, etc.

## 2. Review Changes (5 minutes)

Have students get out their two diary forms from each of the two weeks under review and scan them for any changes (e.g. Less/more trips overall? Less/more trips by car? Additional trips walking or biking? Public transit? Carpooling? Other changes?

## 3. Discussion (20 minutes)

### A. What Changed

Using either a Go 'Round method, so you hear from each student or a simple discussion with students volunteering to share, ask students to share what changed from week one to week two in terms of the above questions.

### B. How Were Changes Experienced

As the students share, have them express what was different about their experience given any changes (e.g. "When I rode to school I felt more refreshed and awake by the time school started" or "When I walked to a friend's house, I ran into another friend and we all three hung out together," etc.).

### C. Barriers to Change

After covering A and B above, ask the students to share what are the barriers to making positive, healthy and helpful changes in their patterns of getting around (e.g. parents won't allow to take public transit or bike has a flat tire or no sidewalks along the road leading to school, etc.).

#### D. Overcoming Barriers

In each case, when barriers are presented, brainstorm along with the students for possible solutions to help overcome barriers to change.

#### 4. Parental Feedback (*10 minutes*)

Ask the students if they have anything to report back from their parents' filling out of the Family Car Cost Calculator. They can share either specifics from the calculations or general comments and reactions their parents might have had to the exercise.

If there is not much to report or the conversation lags, this would be a good point to review how much the students have internalized about the various "true costs" of driving, by asking them to recall the categories and specific costs associated with driving from the previous class period.

#### 5. Suggested Follow-Up (*10 minutes*)

Pass out copies of "The Five R's of Traffic Reduction" and briefly discuss the various options given. Then see what methods the students can suggest they themselves can adopt both in the near future as well as during their high school years and beyond to promote healthy and cost-effective means of transportation and to help preserve the alarmingly threatened web of nature which, after all, constitutes our own life support system.

# The Transportation Opinion Continuum

(For use with the Travel Diary curriculum, Session Two)

The Opinion Continuum is a method for getting students involved in thinking about an issue. The activity encourages critical thinking and the ability to stand up for one's beliefs. There are no right or wrong answers, so the activity helps create an environment where expressing one's opinions is both encouraged and safe.

The method is to assign numerical values in a continuum along one wall of the classroom where #1 represents "Strongly Disagree with Statement under Consideration" and #10 represents "Strongly Agree with the Statement." The rest of the numbers represent decreasing degrees of disagreement from 1-5 and increasing degrees of agreement from 6-10.

Read the statement out loud and repeat it. Ask the students to quietly (without talking) go to the spot on the continuum that best represents their opinion with regard to the statement. After they go to their spots, ask for a volunteer from a few of the positions to explain why they chose the spot they are at. There should be no side-talk nor comments about each person's input at this point. After hearing from a few people, the teacher can ask if after hearing the opinions, anybody would want to change their position.

The students should return to their starting places at the other side of the room (away from the continuum). The next statement is read and the process repeated. A few sample statements for the current lesson follow.

1. There is nothing a kid can do to affect the problem of global warming.
2. Bike riding is a "boy thing."
3. The most important factor to consider when choosing a mode of transportation is speed.
4. It is better to get around on one's own than to be chauffeured around by one's parents.

# Individual and Family Car Cost Calculator

Approximate Miles Driven Per Year \_\_\_\_\_(a)

Average Miles Per Gallon \_\_\_\_\_(b)

Total Gallons Per Year (a:b) \_\_\_\_\_(c)

## FIXED COSTS:

Ownership (monthly payments x 12,  
or purchase price : yrs owned. \_\_\_\_\_

Depreciation (10% purchase price per year) \_\_\_\_\_(d)

Maintenance and Repair \_\_\_\_\_(e)

Insurance \_\_\_\_\_(f)

Registration \_\_\_\_\_(g)

Smog Test and Certificate (divided in half) \_\_\_\_\_(h)

Total Fixed Costs (d thru h) \_\_\_\_\_(i)

## VARIABLE COSTS:

Fuel at \$\_\_ /gallon, multiplied by (c) \_\_\_\_\_(j)

Parking (include work, home, meters) \_\_\_\_\_(k)

Oil and Oil Changes \_\_\_\_\_(l)

Total Variable Costs (j thru l) \_\_\_\_\_(m)

TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS (i + m) \_\_\_\_\_(n)

Cost Per Mile (n divided by a) \_\_\_\_\_(o)

Hours Worked Per Week to Support Car  
(n divided by \$/hr net = Hours/Year  
then divide Hours/Year by 52) \_\_\_\_\_(p)

# The Costs of Car Culture

## An Introduction to “The True Costs of Automobile Usage”

The private automobile has become an integral part of the fabric of U.S. life and lies at the very heart of the American Dream of comfort, convenience and freedom of movement. It is not realistic to imagine that it is going to disappear anytime soon. This makes it all the more imperative that we take a realistic look at the true costs of automobile ownership and operation, so that we can at least make wise choices with regards to its use and the periodic, if not habitual, use of several alternatives that are available (e.g. walking, biking, carpooling, public transit and reducing/combining trips made).

We live in an environment designed for automobiles yet not only our surroundings but also our experience of them is entirely mitigated by the automobile. Incased in tons of glass and steel, our cars are artificial environments protecting us from the elements but severing us from them as well, cutting us off from our climate and the feel of warm sun and crisp fresh air or the smell of flowers or the sound of our neighbors' voices. We no longer interact with the people in our community by shopping locally, supporting community owned business and building relationships with local merchants. Children cannot navigate their neighborhoods because of the hazards of traffic. They are denied their independence and must rely on being driven to school, sports activities and friends' houses. This prevents young people from having the important developmental opportunity of exploring their environment and mastering the valuable skills and gaining the confidence which comes from being able to get around on your own.

A certain sense of place has been lost in the transition from neighborhoods to what we now call subdivisions or developments. In the modern suburb people are increasingly isolated from other members of the community. Buffered by private land, fences and hedges, and accessed only by automobile, they are less likely to interact with their neighbors. They are less likely to walk anywhere and tend to spend less time socializing in public spaces, therefore minimizing casual contact with others.

Building schools, shopping centers and other places of interest that are conveniently accessible only by cars can prevent people from safely walking, riding bicycles or playing outdoors. Today youth between the ages of 5-15 do not walk or ride their bicycles as much as they once did. 30 years

ago 60% of children walked or rode bikes to get to school. Today the national average is 13%.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, a third of adults get little or no exercise. The lack of exercise is one factor leading to a rise in adult and child obesity. More than 3 in 10 adults are overweight, as are one-fourth of youth aged 6-17. According to a county survey, 34% of Marin County children aged 2-17 are overweight at risk or are obese. The CDCP and other organizations are advocating, “Active Community Environments” that promote physical activity and have sidewalks, on-street bicycle facilities, parks, paths, trails and recreational facilities.

The accompanying “True Costs of Automobile Usage” primer divides these costs into four major categories (i.e. Personal, Social, Governmental, and Environmental). The category of Personal Costs is further divided into financial, physical health, and emotional health costs.

Who pays these costs? In some cases it is the producers; in more cases it is the end users; and in an alarmingly high percentage of cases it is society at large, the natural environment and future generations who are being asked to foot the bill. It is in this somewhat murky area of “externalizing” costs, that the oil and automobile industry has thrived and consumers too have been able to create the appearance of an almost free ride. We, as individuals, as members of society and as an integral part of nature can no longer afford to ignore these true costs, but must factor them into our calculations of the cost/benefit considerations that guide our choices and actions.

# The True Costs of Automobile Usage

## 1. Personal Costs

### A. Financial

Car Purchase or Lease, Registration, Emissions Testing, Insurance, Maintenance (including tune-ups and tires), Repairs, Gasoline, Oil, Tolls and Parking.

- ◇ The average family in the U.S. spends 15-20% of its annual income on automobile ownership and operation. That's one full day of work each week just to support the car.

### B: Physical Health

Pollution related illnesses (particularly respiratory ailments), Obesity and Disabilities and Diseases Related to Sedentary Life Styles and Lack of Exercise.

- ◇ More than 15% (1 out of 7) children in the U.S. are overweight or obese.
- ◇ According to the *Marin County Health Survey*, 34% of Marin County children 2-17 are overweight at risk/or are obese.
- ◇ The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 300,000 Americans die each year due to complications associated with obesity and sedentary life styles.
- ◇ In the U.S. car crashes are the leading cause of death of people 1-25 years old.
- ◇ Cars have killed over 30 million people since they were invented less than a century ago.
- ◇ Vehicles kill one pedestrian in the U.S. every one and a half hours.

### C: Mental Health

Stress, Loss of Sense of Place and Connection to the Environment Through Which One Passes (increasing feelings of insecurity and alienation), Loss of Social Interaction, Diminishment of Self Reliance, Loss of Time from Traffic Congestion Caused Delays.

## 2. Social Costs

Diminishment of the Commons, Loss of Sense of Community and Neighborhoods, Decrease in Safety, Decrease in Spontaneous Exchange Opportunities, Paving Over of the Natural Environment, Loss of Agricultural Productivity, Urban Sprawl and the Resultant Homogenization of Communities, Wars Fought to Control Oil Resources, and Civil Liberties Sacrificed in the Conducting of Those Wars.

- ◇ Auto infrastructure, including paved roads and parking lots, consume 40-65% of our urban environment.
- ◇ The American Lung Association estimates nationwide air pollution related health costs (including the costs of health care and lost productivity) to be billions of dollars each year.

## 3. Governmental Costs

Road Construction and Maintenance, Traffic Signals and Signage, Law Enforcement, Emergency Services,

## 4. Environmental Costs

Air Pollution, Acid Rain, Greenhouse Gases, Global Warming, Soil Pollution, Water Pollution, Lost or Degraded Animal Habitat.

- ◇ Americans lose an estimated 2,000 to 2,800 acres of rural land every day to highways, housing developments, shopping malls, airports and other non-farm uses.
- ◇ Although one gallon of gasoline weighs 6 pounds, when it is burned in a car a single gallon of gasoline produces 25 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> (a major contributor to global warming) and approximately .8 pounds of carbon monoxide and .08 pounds of nitrogen oxides.
- ◇ In addition to pollution from automobiles, herbicides used to kill weeds along roads runoff and pollute rivers, lakes and soil. The same is true of other forms of automotive debris such as bits of tire rubber, brake lining fibers, heavy metals and oil.
- ◇ If improperly disposed, oil from one oil change can contaminate a million gallons of fresh water.

## Suggestions for Strengthening/Extending Lesson

Of course, there are a number of ways in which the issues discussed in the present sessions can be extended and/or strengthened. The nature and degree of such extensions will be determined primarily by the availability of time and the specific interests of the teacher and students participating. A few suggestions can be made here.

### ◇ **Further research of the true cost of car culture**

As the costs of automobile usage are so numerous and varied, there is the opportunity to have individuals or groups take on one category or another and do further research to specify the costs involved in that particular realm. Also if time is available, the material from “The Costs of Car Culture” could be presented during class time and discussed. These cultural aspects, though ubiquitous and pernicious, are rarely given their due.

### ◇ **Creating a group statistical information chart**

During Session Three the class could create a large chart of the overall group’s modal changes from Week One to Week Two (e.g. the total amount of additional bike or carpool trips, the overall number of car trips reduced, etc.).

### ◇ **Looking at the barriers in the way of making responsible choices**

Another area that could use further reflection and discussion is that dealing with the barriers or obstacles to making more responsible choices. What keeps kids from riding their bikes more often or taking the bus to school? Why don’t they carpool to and from soccer practice, etc? Once the obstacles have been identified, the students, again individually or in groups, could come up with ways to overcome those obstacles, not just for themselves but in the case of their fellow students as well. For example they could develop a mini public relations campaign to promote alternative modes of transportation to school (posters, skits, rewards, special events or whatever they can come up with).

### ◇ **Environmental Ethics & Personal Responsibility**

A lively discussion could be facilitated using the attached “Environmental Ethics & Personal Responsibility” sheet. This could be passed out to spark a discussion or a written assignment on the topic of “Why would people voluntarily restrict their choices in order to lessen environmental impacts?” Or alternatively, “Why not?”

### ◇ **Special interests from the Bibliography list**

Another arena for further study can be found in the attached Selected Bibliography. As a common or extra-credit assignment students could select and report on some area of special interest presented in the Bibliography.

### ◇ **Drawing from students’ experiences**

Ultimately the richest repository of themes and topics for further investigation consists of the experience, perspectives and dreams of the students themselves. There is virtually no limit to the ways in which this repository can be tapped for further discussions, projects and reports, given only the time and the will to do so.

# Environmental Ethics & Personal Responsibility

*“Why would young people voluntarily rethink their choices in order to lessen environmental impacts?”*

**Here are a few reasons:**

1. **Enlightened Self Interest:** Perhaps the most indisputable reason for behaving in an environmentally responsible manner is self-interest. “What’s in it for me?” is at the heart of most decision-making. Thus it is important that each of us understands what’s at stake for our self with regard to our own physical health, emotional well-being and financial independence.

2. **Citizenship:** Good citizenship means acting in the interest of the group rather than the individual. Before the advent of Western individualism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, people’s worth was defined by their role in a larger community. Environmental damage is the total of many individuals making small choices. When you consider environmental impacts and choose to take the bus, carpool, walk or ride a bike, you’re considering the welfare of the whole. This is the essence of good citizenship.

3. **A Sense of History and Continuity:** Through the course of human history, nature has been praised, blamed, conquered, changed, protected, but always depended upon. Many of our greatest human accomplishments – works of art, literature, music – have been inspired by the natural world. Because nature is such an integral part of our lives and culture, we are compelled to respect and perpetuate it.

4. **Obligations to Future Generations:** Today we are encouraged to value the present over the future. “You can have it now – no money down!” We are encouraged to consume now and pay later. Our capitalist economy is, in many ways, addicted to growth. This growth depends on people consuming ever-increasing amounts of goods at ever-increasing rates. Environmental stewardship requires thinking of future generations. However, it is unrealistic to expect individuals to change their behavior for the sake of future generations unless they place some value on future generations to begin with.

5. **The Environment – An Ethical Issue:** The interaction between humans and the environment is often viewed in the context of right and wrong – an ethical issue. Ethics can motivate people toward certain outcomes. Ethics can also be an expression of a person’s sense of self, and a reflection of self-respect.

Adapted from the “Going Places, Making Choices” curriculum of the National 4-H Council

# Organizations

## Working to Enhance Alternative Transportation in Marin

### **511.org -**

[www.511.org](http://www.511.org)

An interactive website that helps users plan a trip using public transit, bicycle or ride shares rather than private car.

### **Transportation Authority of Marin –**

[www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov)

Administers funds generated by the Transportation Sales Tax.

### **Marin County Bicycle Coalition –**

[www.marinbike.org](http://www.marinbike.org)

Promotes bicycling for everyday transportation. Provides bike maps and education and promotes infrastructure improvements.

### **Safe Routes to Schools –**

[www.saferoutestoschools.org](http://www.saferoutestoschools.org)

A Program of T.A.M. (above). Promotes biking and walking to school, creates school travel plans and provides education.

### **Marin County Transit District –**

[www.marintransit.org](http://www.marintransit.org)

Provides transit services to Marin (contracts with Golden Gate Transit).

**Golden Gate Transit:** (415) 455-2000

**Golden Gate Ferry:** (415) 257-4400

**West Marin Stagecoach:** (415) 526-3239

### **Spare the Air in the Bay Area -**

[www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org)

Part of the Air Quality Management District. Monitors air quality and promotes alternatives in order to reduce pollution.

### **Local City Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees**

(See city government websites)

### **Transportation Alternatives for Marin -**

[www.wtb.com](http://www.wtb.com)

Works to educate diverse decision-making groups and build consensus that bikes are the optimal transportation solution for many pressing problems.

### **The Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) –**

[www.transcoalition.org](http://www.transcoalition.org)

Promotes progressive land use and transportation policies in the Bay Area

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