



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



Kentfield Task Force

Meeting Notes

April 2, 2012

Present (12)

Wendi Kallins – Program Director for Safe Routes to School; Laura Kelly –Volunteer Liaison for Safe Routes to School; David Parisi – Parish Associates; Gwen Froh – Teen Coordinator for Safe Routes to Schools; Carey Lando – Senior Transportation Planner for Marin County; Billy Cameron – Vice Principal at Bacich Elementary School; Paul Miller – Facilities Manager for Kentfield Schools; Dominick Yazzolino – Deputy Sheriff; Marnie Ganong – Kent Middle School Parent Team Leader; Heather McPhail –Bacich School Parent Team Leader; Dana Morotto – Neighborhood Captain; Laurie O’Hara – Aide to Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice.

Safety Issues List

Heather updated and color-coded the safety issues list, which was distributed to the Task Force for review and discussion. The Issues List has been a work in progress for the Task Force this year. Most of the issues are geographically located close together. The color-coding clumps together areas of concern.

Wendi prompted the Task Force to review the “entity” column responsible for addressing and/or resolving the issues and fill in the missing entries during the meeting. The completed list is attached

McAllister was identified as the key neighborhood with lots of walkers and car traffic issues, and the main priority on the list, and then all other issues follow.

Carey said that it would be helpful if there were a map, which corresponded to the 25 geographical locations for each issue. This task could be completed using Google maps. Wendi and Heather will collaborate on completing this task before the next meeting.

Billy said that Wednesdays at Bacich are a concern when students are released early at noon. The traffic light signals do not allow enough time to cross to the other side and there is back up.

Billy also said that crossing Sir Francis Drake Boulevard at peak school travel hours is very unsafe for children and a major concern for Bacich. Part of it is enforcement, and part of it is operational. Carrie mentioned that the traffic signal synchronization would be installed later this year all along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, like on 4th Street in San Rafael. Marnie said that traffic light synchronization sometimes makes it more difficult to cross the street because walkers must wait a longer time to cross. Wendi suggested asking the crossing guard what the minimum time needed is to cross Laurel Grove, and ensure when the lights on Drake are retimed that the pedestrians continue to get the time they need.

Carey asked: what are the areas of main concern for students that walk and bike? Speeding on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is a main concern because of the worry it causes parents for their children to use the crosswalks. Drivers travel way too fast. Wolfe Grade and Manor crosswalks are the ones most heavily used.

Wendi asked what could be quick fixes? What are long-term solutions? Carey cautioned against any quick fixes, because sometimes it opens up larger issues.

Carey said she would review the Issues List with the County's engineers. She said the review process takes time, and that there is a backlog of projects. But they do want to address these and get the process moving along.

Marnie said the lack of safe crossing at Marin General to Creekside park needs attention getting walkers and bikers across the road. There is no current solution for them, because there is no crosswalk. Wendi suggested pulling in Marin General.

GO Green Spring Challenge

The GO Green Spring Challenge is underway at Bacich and Kent Middle School. A barcode scanning system is being used to track the number of walkers, bikers and carpools. The system is Active4.me and is an offshoot of Save-A-Gallon. The Active4.me system counts the number of students who travel green to school by walking, biking or carpooling.

To obtain the barcode key, all students under the age of 13 were required to have their parents complete a registration form. Students then received a small plastic green “foot tag” with a barcode to attach to their backpack. The registration process was reported to be a cumbersome process for parents. But once done, then the Active4.me program is in place for many years to come. Only incoming Kindergarten students will need to complete registration forms at the start of every school year.

Scanning devices are being used at school arrival times to scan students as they check-in. Parent volunteers assist with the set-up of two computers on scanning days to track data. Scanning days are twice a week. One set day, and one random day in which students are not told in advance that the scanners will be set-up. Wendi shared that the random strategy is a good tool, and that doing something every day is not as effective as doing it randomly. Wendi also suggested extrapolating the results to see what the savings are for the full week.

If a pack of students arrived at the same time, then there would be a problem of long lines for those students waiting their turn to be scanned. Not all children have the patience to wait in line and/or do not want to receive a tardy, so the system doesn't track all green travelers for the day. Wendi suggested giving the children an option to scan at lunchtime if they missed their morning check-in.

Gwen shared that tracking miles, CO2 prevention, calories burned, money saved and gasoline saved are all part of the benefits of using the program. Kent Middle School is implementing a random prize, which is generated by the computer in which a student must have a predetermined number of green trips to qualify. The Go Green Spring Challenge at Kent is also being tied in with a fundraiser for World Bicycle Relief, an organization that provides bikes to girls in Africa who need them to get to school. So students are motivated to travel green for a bigger cause.

Marnie shared that she did not find the scanner system to be exciting or user-friendly. The registration process was not an easy. Lots of kinks. The hassles were enough to make parents not want to do it again. Marnie also shared that in her opinion it was not fun for the kids to stand in line and be scanned, and that being late to class became an issue if the scanning line was long. CO2 reduction numbers are not huge because walkers live close by, and the stack of student registration papers goes against the school's efforts to go paperless. Wendi suggested we send out to parents a brief evaluation form to receive feedback. Wendi said the scanning system was intended for middle school-aged children, but we wanted to pilot the program at elementary school level.

Billy said 50% of the registration was the pain. Lesson learned. But now everyone is registered. Heather shared that once you get passed the registration process, parents

seemed to enjoy the program. Texting a parent back that their child arrived at school would be a beneficial step appreciated by parents.

Gwen said the program is a great tool for building awareness of the importance of how green travel reduces carbon emissions, even if the scanning process has its flaws. The computer results of carbon reduction data showcase how the school is making a difference. At Kent different houses were competing to have the highest carbon reduction. Students spearhead the green travel campaign led by the support of a 6th grade science teacher. Gwen said primarily 5th and 6th grade students are participating.

Wendi said she would develop on Survey Monkey an evaluation form to give to parents.

Next steps for the Travel School Program

1. Will your neighborhood captains remain the same? Or do you need to replace them?
2. Institutionalizing thoughts for neighborhoods to start taking ownership

How do we keep this institutionalized for next year and the program alive? It was suggested to seek approval to share emails addresses for neighborhoods. Privacy issues prevent this. Laurie asked if you could access the school directory for individual emails? Yes, but it's not electronic. Wendi suggested that neighborhoods set up their own Next Door account – a social networking program that is confined to neighborhoods and is very private – it would allow people to communicate with each other.

Bike Path Update

Paul added that the pathway project that goes to Creekside Park is scheduled to be done on April 7 and 8. The Task Force discussed possibly reconfiguring the fence area near the school. Paul sketched the design layout, and Billy approved it. It will help with the flow of traffic into the parking lot!

Our next Task Force meeting is scheduled for May 29th at 9:00 a.m. at the Kentfield District Office.

