

Miller Creek Travel Plan

Marin County Safe Routes to Schools Program



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1. Miller Creek Middle School Profile

1.1. School Location

2255 Gallinas Ave
San Rafael, CA

Office: 415-492-3741

Fax: 415-492-3765

1.2. Enrollment and Demographics

1.2.1. Enrollment by Grade

Table 1: School Enrollment by Grade, 2007-08

Grade Level	Enrollment
6th	187
7th	196
8th	221
Total	604
<i>Source: California Department of Education</i>	

1.2.2. Enrollment by Ethnicity

Table 2: School Racial and Ethnic Subgroups, 2007-08

Racial and Ethnic Subgroup	Number of Students	Percent of Students
African American	9	1.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.5%
Asian	38	6.3%
Filipino	2	0.3%
Hispanic or Latino	67	11.1%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
White (Not Hispanic)	427	70.7%
Multiple or No Response	58	9.6%
<i>Source: California Department of Transportation</i>		

1.2.3. Free Lunch Enrollment

There were 43 children enrolled in the free lunch program in the 2007-08 school year.

1.3. Current Conditions

Entrances to School

- **Primary School Entrance** is in front of the school on Las Gallinas Ave.
- **Pedestrians & Bicyclists** can enter the campus on pathways from three directions. Two bridges provide access across creeks to Quietwood Drive and Miller Creek Road.
- **ADA Access** is provided with four spaces in the parking lot.

Cross Streets

- **Cross Street:** Elvia Court

Crossing Guards

- **Location of TAM Crossing Guards:** One crossing guard is located at the intersection of Las Gallinas Avenue and Miller Creek Road. This crossing guard also serves students going to Mary Silveira Elementary School. The intersection is approximately 1/2 mile from the main entrance to the school.

Transit

- **School Bus Availability:** Yes
- **Public Transit Availability:** No
- **Special Transit Needs Offered:** Taxis/Spec. Ed. students

Bike Racks

- **Location of Bike Racks:** Next to classroom M-5 on the south side of parking lot
- **Number of Bike Spaces:** Approximately 40-50
- **Rack Condition** is fair, but worn. Old style wheel mount racks are installed but do not support the bike frame. There have been reports of theft. One reason cited is because the racks are not clearly visible from the office.

1.4. Policies

Bicycle and Skateboarding

- Students should use wise safety practices while riding to and from school, and are required to wear helmets. Skaters need to take off blades or get off board as you enter the campus, as there is no riding or skating through campus at any time. Skates, boards and scooters must be left with a teacher who is willing to keep it in his/her room all day.
- Once bike riders are on the school grounds, bikes should be taken directly to the bike rack and locked. This is the only place bikes should be locked up. Bikes must remain locked, as students are not allowed in the bike rack area during school hours. All bike riders should use the bike path and refrain from riding in the parking lot.

1.5. Student Survey History

Student written and administered surveys are a new component to the Safe Routes to Schools program. The students of the 2006-07 school year created a presentation to the School Board based on their survey results with recommendations for solutions for the identified issues. The key portions of the presentation are included in **Appendix C**. For the 2007-2008 school year, middle and high school students are asked to write and administer surveys to their classmates. Five schools participated in the survey: Drake High School, Redwood High School, Miller Creek Middle School, Hall Middle School and White Hill Middle School. A total of 883 responses were received, 147 of which were from Miller Creek.

Grade

Eighth graders responded the most to the student survey. Only 1% of the respondents were fifth graders.

Grade	Response Percent	Response Count
Fifth	1%	1
Sixth	25%	37
Seventh	20%	29
Eighth	54%	80
	Answered Questions	147
	Skipped Questions	3

Gender

Slightly more females responded to the survey than males.

Gender	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	53%	78
Male	47%	69
	Answered Questions	147
	Skipped Questions	3

Means of Traveling to School

Almost half of the students rode the bus everyday to school, while a fair amount were driven or walked. Very few students bicycled or carpoled to school.

Table 3: Means of Traveling to School

Mode	Every Day	3-4 days/wk	1-2 days/wk	Not often	Never	Response Count
Bike	5%	6%	15%	15%	73%	109
Walk	18%	6%	18%	54%	54%	114
Drive	25%	15%	30%	26%	26%	110
Carpool	9%	2%	21%	66%	66%	102
Bus	49%	6%	7%	38%	38%	126
Answered Questions						147
Skipped Questions						3

Means of Traveling from School

The means of travel from school did not vary much from the means of travel to school. Most students rode the bus home from school, while a fair amount were driven or walked from school.

Table 4: Means of Traveling from School

Mode	Every Day	3-4 days/wk	1-2 days/wk	Not often	Never	Response Count
Bike	5%	8%	7%	13%	74%	106
Walk	21%	7%	7%	22%	47%	113
Drive	17%	12%	12%	31%	33%	109
Carpool	9%	4%	7%	32%	52%	100
Bus	50%	6%	6%	6%	35%	126
Answered Questions						146
Skipped Questions						4

Barriers to Walking and Biking to School

The most common barrier students cited was that they lived too far away from school to walk or bicycle. The second most frequent barrier cited was that the students had too much to carry.

Table 5: Barriers to Walking and Biking to School

Barrier	Response %	Response Count
I already bike/walk	23%	32
I live too far away	49%	67
No friends to do it with	26%	36
My parents won't let me	20%	28
It's too steep	16%	22
Would have to get up too early	38%	52
Weather	25%	34

Barrier	Response %	Response Count
Stranger danger	25%	34
Lack of sidewalks and/or bike paths	9%	12
Dangerous intersections	13%	18
Lack of safe bike parking	2%	3
Too much planning	10%	14
Too much to carry	42%	58
I don't have a bike	17%	23
	Answered Questions	137
	Skipped Questions	13

Encouragement for Walking and Biking to School

Building school relationships would encourage the most students to walking and biking to school. Students also cited that having fun and getting exercise encouraged them to walk and bike.

Barrier	Response %	Response Count
Having fun	32%	31
Building school relationships	48%	46
Not creating global warming gas	29%	28
Improving overall health	31%	30
Getting exercise	35%	34
Being more alert at school	7%	7
Reducing air pollution	31%	30
Saving money	27%	26
Being more independent	20%	19
Reducing traffic	13%	12
Reducing stress	13%	12
Learning traffic rules	6%	6
Other		62
	Answered Questions	96
	Skipped Questions	54

Reasons Why Students Do Not Carpool to School

More than half of the students cited not knowing other people in their area to carpool with as a reason not to carpool.

Table 6: Reasons Why Student Do Not Carpool to School

Reasons	Response %	Response Count
I already carpool	20%	20
I don't know other people in my area that are interested in carpooling	52%	52
It's too much work to organize it	23%	23
My parent don't feel comfortable with it	15%	15
I would need to get up earlier	29%	29
Other		44

Reasons	Response %	Response Count
	Answered Questions	100
	Skipped Questions	50

Factors that Would Encourage Students to Carpool

Students would be most encouraged to carpool to school if they knew who wanted to carpool in their area.

Table 7: Factors that Would Encourage Students to Carpool

Encouragement	Response %	Response Count
I already carpool	26%	24
Knowing who wants to carpool in my area	54%	50
I'd do it if someone else organized it	33%	31
Other		36
	Answered Questions	93
	Skipped Questions	57

Factors that Would Encourage Students to Ride the Bus More

Most students already ride the bus. For those who do not, they might be encouraged to do so if they lived further away from school or if the service was free.

Table 8: Factors that Would Encourage Students to Ride the Bus More

Encouragement	Response %	Response Count
I already ride the bus	54%	63
I live too close	26%	30
The schedule was more convenient	8%	9
The cost was reduced	9%	10
If I could ride for free	21%	25
If the bus run closer to my home	10%	12
Other		23
	Answered Questions	117
	Skipped Questions	33

Benefits to Walking and Biking to School

Students cited, overwhelming, that the number one benefit to walking and biking to school is that it would improve their health. A significant amount of students also cited that it would be better the environment.

Table 9: Benefits to Walking and Biking to School

Benefits	Response %	Response Count
Gives you better overall health	91%	118
It helps reduce traffic	41%	53
It's environmentally friendly	72%	94
It's a peaceful way to start the day	19%	24
It wakes your mind for school	29%	37
Other		24
Answered Questions		130
Skipped Questions		20

Preferred Advertising Methods

Posters were the preferred method of advertising ways students could avoid driving to school, while word of mouth and homeroom presentations were the second and third preferred method, respectively.

Table 10: Preferred Advertising Methods

Advertising Type	Response %	Response Count
Posters	42%	47
Back pack mail	14%	16
Mailings	16%	18
Word of mouth	32%	36
Phone calls	17%	19
Intercom announcements	26%	29
Homeroom presentations	38%	43
Other		25
Answered Questions		113
Skipped Questions		37

2. Barriers and Opportunities

2.1. Parent Surveys

Parent/guardian surveys were administered through the team leaders and were voluntary as part of the travel plan process. A total of 36 surveys were collected from Miller Creek Middle School. The survey was distributed at the school and could be returned to the school or completed online through a link on the Transportation Authority of Marin homepage. Surveys were distributed between September 2007 and January 2008.

Travel Behavior

Parents are most likely to drive their children to school or allow them to walk, rather than bike or carpool. Table 4 shows travel mode during morning and afternoon hours.

Table 11: Parent Survey Travel Modes

School Access Mode	Morning	Afternoon
Walks	26%	26%
Bikes	8%	9%
Driven	26%	24%
Carpools	11%	7%
Bus	16%	28%
Shuttle	11%	6%
<i>Source: Parent Survey 2007-08, 36 responses</i>		

Concerns

When asked “What concerns limit your ability to walk and bike to school?” the top responses from parents were “too much to carry,” “weather,” and “dangerous intersections.” Some Safe Routes to Schools solutions that may address these concerns include focusing on carpooling, transit, crossing guards, intersection improvements, education for youth, promoting walking and biking to middle and high school students, supervised walking and biking and traffic calming along school routes.

Table 5, below, lists the concerns from least to most concerning.

Table 12: Parental Concerns

Concern	Percent
Child won't follow safety rules	1%
It's too steep	2%
On the way to work	2%
Child is too young	2%
Scary dogs	3%
Bullies	3%
Lack of safe bike parking	3%
Unsafe or lack of sidewalks and/or bikeways	7%
Stranger danger	9%
It's too far	10%
Running late/tardiness	10%
Speeding cars	10%
Dangerous intersections	10%
Weather	10%
Too much to carry	17%
<i>Source: Parent Survey 2007-08, 36 responses</i>	

Benefits

When asked “What benefits do you see in children walking and biking to school?” parents cited “child learns responsibility and independence,” “better for the environment,” “reduces traffic around school,” and “saves money on gas” as top reasons. Notably, only 3% of parents believed that the program gave them more free time. This reflects parents’ write-in answers as to why their children don’t walk and bike to school more: parents don’t have enough time, have to get to work

early, or have students that have to be taken to multiple schools. **Table 6**, below, lists the perceived benefits from least to most beneficial.

Table 13: Parents' Perceived Benefits

Benefit	Percent
Gives me more free time	3%
Gets me walking and biking	3%
We get to know our neighborhood better	4%
Less stressful than driving	4%
Child more alert at school	6%
Child learns traffic rules	8%
Saves money on gas	10%
Reduces traffic around school	13%
Better for the environment	15%
Child learns responsibility and independence	15%
<i>Source: Parent Survey 2007-08, 36 responses</i>	

Potential Opportunities

When asked under what circumstances they would allow their child to walk or bike to school, parents' top four responses were if the child was "cars slowed down," "accompanied by other children," "accompanied by other parents," and "more police enforcement." Only 3% of parents responded that they would "never allow their child to walk or bike to school." These responses reflect some of the solutions to the issues described above.

Table 14: Potential Opportunities to Increase Walking and Bicycle among Children

Opportunities	Percent
I would never allow my child to walk or bike to school	3%
Route maps were provided	4%
Park and walk locations where we could walk part way	4%
When he/she is older	4%
Improved sidewalks and paths	5%
Improved intersections	5%
Other	5%
Safety training was provided for students	6%
Secure bike storage was available	6%
More police enforcement	9%
Accompanied by other parents	11%
Accompanied by other children	15%
Cars slowed down	15%
<i>Source: Parent Survey 2007-08, 36 responses</i>	

When asked about circumstances under which they would allow their child to ride in a carpool, parents stated that they would "you were more familiar with the driver" and "you could find other parents who lived close by." Four percent would carpool if someone else organized the carpool and 7% already carpool.

Table 15: Potential Opportunities to Increase Car Pooling

Opportunities	Percent
Someone else organized it	4%
We already carpool	7%
You could find other parents who lived close by	17%
You were familiar with the driver	20%
<i>Source: Parent Survey 2007-08, 36 responses</i>	

2.2. Walkabout Notes

A walkabout was conducted at the Miller Creek School, with students, on May 14, 2007. Several issues were identified immediately surrounding the school property. Notably, ADA and bicycle access to the Miller Creek pathway is limited, and the existing five-foot sidewalk along the length of the school parking lot is too narrow to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Additionally, intersections adjacent to the school (Elvia Court and Roundtree Boulevard) lack curb ramps and other design features that ease mobility for pedestrians and people with disabilities. Please refer to the Marinwood plan for issues and recommendations along Las Gallinas Avenue

A community bikeabout was held on April 22, 2004, which identified multiple issues including lack of pathway connection, issues around the entrance to the school, speeding automobiles on Las Gallinas and intersection issues. Notes are in the appendix as well.

3. Programs and Projects

3.1. Classroom Education

Students have received presentation on the “True Cost of Driving” through Mike Schulist’s science classes.

3.2. Encouragement Program

Students at Miller Creek participate in a Safe Routes to Schools club with teacher advisor Mike Schulist, a science teacher at Miller Creek. Students meet weekly at lunch time meetings to discuss projects and issues. They have conducted student surveys, a walk audit, and made board presentations. They have also organized a school assembly, special contest, and weekly events at the school to promote walking and biking.

4. Implementation Matrix

Implementation plans for the Dixie School District are summarized in the District Travel Plan. Please refer to that plan for implementation efforts.

5. Appendix A: Marinwood Walkabout Notes May 14, 2007

With students from Mike Schulist's class.

Issues

- Crosswalks on Las Gallinas in poor place, curb forces you off bike. You go head on into exiting automobiles. No curb cuts.
- Only one cross walk on Las Gallinas – lots of jay walkers. Automobiles don't stop. Stop signs unclear. Add another crosswalk? Blinking lights? Crossing guard?
- Drivers don't obey pedestrian rules – talk on cell phones, eating breakfast. Drivers have a bubble around them, they don't see you. Sometimes automobiles don't stop at all. Worse in the pm but that depends where you are.
- Path from Las Gallinas to the School is thin, cracked. No room for both walkers and bikers. Bikes need a lane – they have to go on the sidewalk. Path is sloped, not bike friendly.
- Bike Racks – not enough. Unsafe, with no fencing, invite vandalism. Poor view from office. Helmets get stolen (they don't fit in lockers) would like a cage around the racks. Put two racks in – one on other side of parking lot and another at the back entrance to the school.
- Path from Marinwood Park to school is thin, cracked, unsafe – eats tires from thorns. Question on which pathways are the most important – school would like to abandon the one that skirts the side of the school as adults use it during the school day.
- The bridge is not bike friendly cause of the bars and its too narrow. Not used much as a result.

Priority

- Fix entrance to the school
- Add bike racks
- Fix pathway system

6. Appendix B: Marinwood Bike-About May 22, 2004

6.1. Bike-About Locations

Location: Lucas Valley Road

Issues

- Sidewalk does not continue towards the freeway (sidewalk at Los Gamos)
- Speeding automobiles
- Lucas Valley Road bisects the neighborhood
- Intersection enhancements have improved the situation



Sidewalk does not continue towards the freeway.

Suggested Solutions

- Physical barrier on streets over 35 mph as it is in Europe
- Crossing guard
- Check all planned projects for bike and pedestrian safety access
- Striping through intersections for bike lanes as it is in Europe



Questions:

- How many kids are going on the routes?

Location: Roundtree

Issues

- No safe crossing
- Bike path and park are along the route to school



Street crossings are unsafe at Roundtree.

Suggestions:

- Flashing pedestrian warnings

- 3-way stop
- Controlled intersection
- Embedded lights crosswalk
- Raised intersection or crosswalk

Location: Stop sign at Miller Creek Middle School

Issues

- Motorist make illegal turning movements
- Motorists roll through stop signs and then speeding up

Suggestions:

- Increase enforcement
- Driver's education
- Traffic calming

Location: Las Gallinas and Miller Creek

Issues:

- Long crossings
- Commuter area
- Has some traffic calming in place
- Embedded lights or other pedestrian lights
- Raised islands and/or pork chops
- Traffic circle or modern roundabout
- Crossing guards



Las Gallinas Avenue and Miller Creek Drive have long crosswalks.

Location: Mary Silveira School

Issues:

- Getting parents out of automobiles and getting kids walking
- Stranger danger concerns out of proportion to the reality of the neighborhood

- Too many automobiles makes it dangerous for bikes and peds in front of school

Suggestions

- Safety monitors
- School Pool

Location: Bike path behind Miller Creek

Issues:

- Poorly lit
- Surface difficult in the winter
- Path exits go nowhere

Suggestions:

- Add lighting
- Crushed gravel surface
- Connect pathways



Path behind Miller Creek is poorly lit and difficult to travel during the winter.

Location: Idylberry and Miller Creek crosswalk

Issues

- Too hard to cross – automobiles don't yield for pedestrians. Kids have to wait too long and are late to school

7. Appendix C: Miller Creek SR2S Board Meeting Presentation

Safe Routes to Schools at Miller Creek Middle School

Board Meeting presentation

February 13, 2007



Results of Students Survey at Miller Creek MS

(survey done during the week of September 25 – 29, 2006)

- 6% Bike
- 12% Carpool
- 15% Walk
- 31% Car
- 36% Bus



Problem: Solutions:

- The intersections at Lucas Valley, Terra Linda, Miller Creek, and Las Gallinas are dangerous.
- Put a light and cross-walk at Miller Creek and Lucas Valley.
- Increase visibility of cross-walks.
- Use a warning light (for cars making a right hand turn) to make crossing the streets easier.



Problem: Solutions:

- The parking lot is dangerous for bikers in the mornings and after school.
- Provide better bike paths.
- Offer a more convenient bike rack.
- Educate parents about safer driving.
- Have an adult directing traffic.



Problem: Solutions:

- Backpacks are too heavy.
- Allow more time for students to visit lockers after school.
- Have a class set of textbooks so they don't have to be brought home.
- Create a school wide homework folder so kids don't have to take heavy binders home.
- Create bike baskets for books.



Problem: Solutions:

- Lucas Valley Road is unsafe.
- Put in a row of reflectors to separate bike lane from road.
- Paint clear signs delineating a bike lane.



Problem: Solutions:

- Parents feel it is unsafe to walk to school.

- Create meeting places in neighborhoods where students can meet.
- Add a section to the Dixie Directory where parents can find the phone numbers of neighbors who want to walk to school.



Problem: Solutions:

- The drivers in this area drive too fast and are unsafe.

- Educate drivers in Marinwood and Terra Linda about safe driving practices for walkers and bikers.
- More strictly enforced laws.
- Create more awareness through speed bumps, stop signs, and solar powered speed signs.



Problem: Solutions:

- “Laziness...”
Kids feel that:
 1. They don’t have the extra time needed to walk and bike.
 2. They have to get up too early if they walk or bike to school.
 3. Walking and biking take “too much energy.”
- Educate kids and parents about:
 1. Environmental crisis and how transportation is connected to it.
 2. How exercise benefits kids health.
 3. How to prepare for biking and walking (I.e. clothes...)
- School day could start later
- Promote contests with prizes at school to motivate Students.



What’s Next?

- Work further with administration and school board to make an action plan in order bring about necessary changes (i.e. provide better and bigger bike racks)
- School wide encouragement programs such as the Pollution Solution Spring Contest.
- Put up a bulletin board to make the case of transportation visible.
- Provide classes for students to teach them about:
 1. the connection between transportation, the environment and health issues
 2. Safe skills to biking and sharing the road with motorists.



8. Appendix D: Engineering Design and Concepts

Based on the walkabout and Task Force meetings, a series of Design Concepts summarized briefly below, were prepared. The subsequent pages show these concepts in more detail. A series of recommendations to improve pedestrian and bicyclist access and connectivity around the school property include the following:

Bicycle Path and School Driveway Recommendations

Option 1: Construct Bike Path and Reconstruct Driveway

- Replace the sidewalk along the length of the school parking lot with an eight-foot wide paved bike path to accommodate multiple users. Allow two feet clearance on each side of bike path for total width of twelve feet.
- Move and reconstruct exit driveway approximately seven feet north to accommodate the new bike path.

Option 2: Construct a Two-Way Driveway on North Side of School

- Close the exit driveway to motor vehicle use to channel motorized vehicles into a single entry/exit point with three lanes. Replace the sidewalk with an eight-foot wide paved bike path.

Intersection Improvements

Las Gallinas Avenue and Roundtree Boulevard

- Option 1: Construct curb ramps for compliance with ADA accessibility guidelines, stripe a white ladder crosswalk across Las Gallinas Road and install MUTCD pedestrian crossing signage.
- Option 2: Recommendations from Option 1, plus tighten the corner radius on both sides of Roundtree Boulevard by extending sidewalks. Add a median tip at Roundtree Boulevard crosswalk for pedestrian refuge.
- Option 3: Recommendations from Option 1, plus curb extensions on the north and south corners of Roundtree Boulevard and a median on the outer edge of the crosswalk. These recommendations tighten the turning radius for motor vehicles and offer greater protection and comfort for pedestrians by reducing exposure time in the roadway.

Las Gallinas Avenue and Elvia Court

- Option 1: Construct curb ramps for compliance with ADA accessibility guidelines.

- Option 2: Construct curb extensions with ramps to reduce pedestrian exposure in roadway, reduce motor vehicle speeds and improve sightlines.

Miller Creek Pathway and Bridge Improvements

- Replace the existing two-foot wide path with an eight-foot asphalt path to accommodate multiple users comfortably. Create a path extension that directly connects to the school.
- Connect the path to the existing bridge over Miller Creek and to the existing bike path.
- Replace the bridge at the north edge of school with a prefabricated bicycle and pedestrian bridge to accommodate all path users.