

Traffic Safety Panel Discussion January 28, 2009

Attendees: Mr. Jerry Gruber, City Manager, Town of Atherton
Mr. Duncan Jones, Atherton Public Works
Officer Grace Castillo, California Highway Patrol
Ms. Trish Tice, California Highway Patrol
Sergeant Anthony Kockler, Atherton Police Department
Officer Tim Marks, Atherton Police Department
Officer Lou Tommel, Menlo Park Police Department
Deputy Todd Schindler, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office
Mr. Rene Baile, Transportation Engineer, City of Menlo Park

Objective: To educate parents about keeping children and ourselves safe when transporting them to and from school.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

- Face the traffic when you are walking. Do not have cars coming up from behind you.
- Use designated cross walks to cross street, as they are more visible to cars. Pedestrians do not have the right to step out in front of traffic per the vehicle law. Need to wait for a break in traffic.
- Obey the traffic signals.
- Do not walk alone – strength in numbers, especially for children.
- No children should be playing in the roadway.
 - a. Problem with MA students on Coleman.
 - b. Someone could be thrown off balance and injured.
- Be aware of your surroundings – left, right and behind.
- It is ok to walk with your phone, but pay attention to your surroundings.
- Do not cross the street while talking on the phone – unsafe.

BICYCLE SAFETY

- Bicyclists must travel in the same direction as cars.
- Bicyclists must follow the same rules as automobile drivers i.e., cars must stop at stop signs and bicycles must stop at stop signs.
- Know and use the proper hand signals, as described in the California State Vehicle Code 22111
(<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/d11/vc22111.htm>)
- Bicycles are required by law to yield to pedestrians.
- Ride single file in the bike lane, or to the extreme right of the road if no bike lane is available.
- No passengers allowed on handlebars or foot pegs.
- If using earphones, may only have one in so you can hear sirens, cars.
- Helmets must be worn until 18 years old.
 - a. Must be strapped tight under the chin.
 - b. Helmet law applies to scooters and skateboards.
- Use pant strap on right leg to avoid pants getting caught in chain.
- Walk your bike in a crosswalk – especially with children.
- Headlight mounted at night or you will receive a citation.

- Must have front, rear and side reflectors.

VEHICLE SAFETY

- Children under the age of 12 should ride in the back of the vehicle.
- Exception to above rule is some two seat vehicles with airbag disable buttons.
- The back, center seat is the safest seat in the car.
- DO NOT ever move the vehicle until the seatbelts are properly buckled.
- Ensure children's seatbelts are fastened and tightened properly.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle at any time for any reason. You will receive a citation.
- Do not allow passengers in the front seat to ride with feet up on dash -- an accident could push them through the windshield or break ankles and feet badly.

CELL PHONES TEXTING WHILE DRIVING – LAWS

- ZERO TOLERANCE for cell phones, unless designed and configured for hands free.
- Only one ear plug.
- Only exception is calling fire, police or medical for an emergency.
- Additional details can be found on the DMV website. (Vehicle Code Section 23123: <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/d11/vc23123.htm>)
- Drivers shall not drive while writing, sending or receiving text messages.
- Under age 18, no cell phones may be used even if integrated into car system. The only exception is making a 911 call for an emergency.
- Cell phones and texting are distracting to the driver and cause too many avoidable collisions, especially in bumper to bumper traffic.

BOOSTER SEATS/CAR SEAT

- Car Seat: Birth to 20 pounds -- must be in *rear facing car seat* unless being transported in a bed for medical reasons.
- Booster Seat: Up to age 6 or 60 pounds.
- Suggest that children remain in rear facing position until maximum weight of seat OR until age 2 to protect their necks. Spinal cord injuries may result from collisions because bones are still soft.
- 5 point harness system is best but needs to be installed properly or children can be ejected from seat. Clip is very important to install properly.
- Seat belt must fit on child like an adult -- across shoulder, sternum and hip. If it hits near the neck, the child needs to be in a booster.
- Booster seats should be used with a shoulder and lap belt.
- Call CHIP ((650) 369-6261) to make an appointment with a Safety Seat Technician if you need additional help or want to know the safest seats for children to sit in based on age and size.

SAFE ROUTES TO LAUREL SCHOOL PROJECT

Safe Routes to Laurel School Project – started in January 2007 – based on community meetings, law enforcement input, input from Laurel School and Menlo Park City school district officials, and input from the multi-jurisdictional group consisting of the San Mateo County, the City of Menlo Park and the Town of Atherton. Currently, there are six main areas of planned improvements for the Safe Routes to Laurel Project as follows:

- 1) *Bay Road and Greenwood Drive/Suburban Park: Proposing new crosswalk on south side, handicap ramp on the west side, adding sidewalk on the west between new handicap ramp and bus stop sign, for kids to wait for bus stop so they are out of the bike lane, wider bike lanes on Bay Road and additional street lights on the east side contiguous to Flood Park.*
- 2) *Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue: Proposing additional street lights at the intersection, permanent 6" concrete curb that keeps southbound cars turning from Bay to RW from getting into the bike lane, wider bike lanes, and handicap ramp at the northeasterly corner of the intersection.*
- 3) *Willow Road and Coleman Avenue: Adding fourth crosswalk and count down signals.*
- 4) *Ringwood Avenue between Coleman Avenue and Edge Road: New stop signs at Ringwood Avenue and Coleman Avenue, new high visibility cross walk at the west leg of Ringwood Avenue at Coleman Avenue, lighted crosswalk at the existing crosswalk on Ringwood Avenue at Edge Road, 8 foot pathway (either AC or concrete) for bikes and walkers on the north side of Ringwood Avenue (Atherton side), additional no parking signs on the north side of Ringwood Avenue (Atherton side), landscape trimming to improve visibility, and Speed Feedback display sign, just west of the intersection of Ringwood Avenue and Coleman Avenue, for the eastbound cars*
- 5) *Ringwood Avenue between Edge Road and Colby Avenue – Proposing new 6" concrete curb that will separate a new 6'wide pedestrian pathway from the parked carpooling cars and "Park against Curb" signs on the north side of Ringwood Avenue (School Side).*
- 6) *Ringwood Avenue at Colby Avenue: Proposing new, high visibility, crosswalk on the south leg of the intersection, a new, high visibility, lighted crosswalk on the west leg of the intersection, and a Speed Feedback Display sign, just east of the intersection of Ringwood Avenue and Colby Avenue, for the westbound cars .*

Estimated time to implementation is approximately one to one and half years but they are trying to start ASAP. Safe Routes moved forward without final resolution for Coleman Avenue to avoid delays. Elected officials from the San Mateo County, Town of Atherton, and City of Menlo Park, and officials from the Menlo Park City School District and Sequoia Union High School District are currently working on the Safe Route to School improvements on Coleman Avenue and planned improvements on Coleman Avenue may be considered for a State grant in summer of 2010.

Questions & Answers

- 1) Question re: traffic around MA High School and increased police presence to discourage cars stopping from dropping kids in no drop zones, people double riding and kids walking in the street. Traffic near MA is particularly bad due to construction of the performing arts building. City will look into getting new signs that are more visible for No Stopping to try to keep cars and kids out of the bike lane for those going to and from Encinal School.
- 2) Question re: where is the safest place for your children to be when you are riding on bikes with them? Kids should be in the #1 position so you can guide them properly. They should not ride behind you because you can not see them and can not yell at them to stop. Continuous turning around by parent could cause accident.
- 3) Question re: riding bikes on school property. As soon as bikes and riders hit the paths on school property all bikes should be walked. There is no riding on school property at any time.
- 4) Question re: scooters and skateboards. Menlo Park law states no bikes in the skate park and helmet law must be followed in addition to elbow pads and knee pads. Bikes will be confiscated and must be retrieved by an adult.
- 5) Question re: riding or walking across crosswalk on Ringwood. Per Atherton Police, bikes should be walked across cross walk with kids in front of you and very close to you, especially with the K-3 age range. Police also restated that pedestrians do not have the right to step in front of traffic per the vehicle law.
- 6) Question re: left hand turn into school property while on bike and right of way. Vehicle code must be adhered to so bikes must yield to oncoming traffic until it is safe to make a left turn onto Edge Road. Police restated that this is potentially a very dangerous situation for the kids and encouraged people to use the cross walk and walk the bikes.
- 7) Question re: safest place to ride along Ringwood, especially given carpool lane at pick up and drop off. Police stated bikes should ride with the flow of traffic if the bike lane is unavailable or as close to the right side as possible. This is an area being addressed with Safe Routes.
- 8) Comment made encouraging drivers to be extra vigilant when driving and turning into school property because of proximity to bike lane and bikers leaving school. MP Police mentioned that Oak Knoll has one central crossing place for all bikes and this has alleviated many of the crossing problems they had at the school.
- 9) Comment regarding unsafe situation at pick up when rules of the road are not followed. Drivers are watching Carl, traffic flow on Ringwood, carpool lane, pedestrians in crosswalks as directed by Carl (crossing Edge & Ringwood), MA students walking down Ringwood with low visibility because of bushes as well as bicyclists that are riding up right side of traffic on Edge and not stopping.
- 10) Comment regarding dissatisfaction with the location of the bike racks.
- 11) Question re: MA students crossing at Middlefield and Oak Grove as well as Middlefield and Ravenswood. Suggested that new crossing system be implemented like San Francisco where all pedestrians can walk across intersection in any direction for specific period of time to clear up congestions and delays caused by cars inability to turn right during this time. Atherton PD said any changes here are unlikely but they are writing tickets for kids crossing the road illegally.