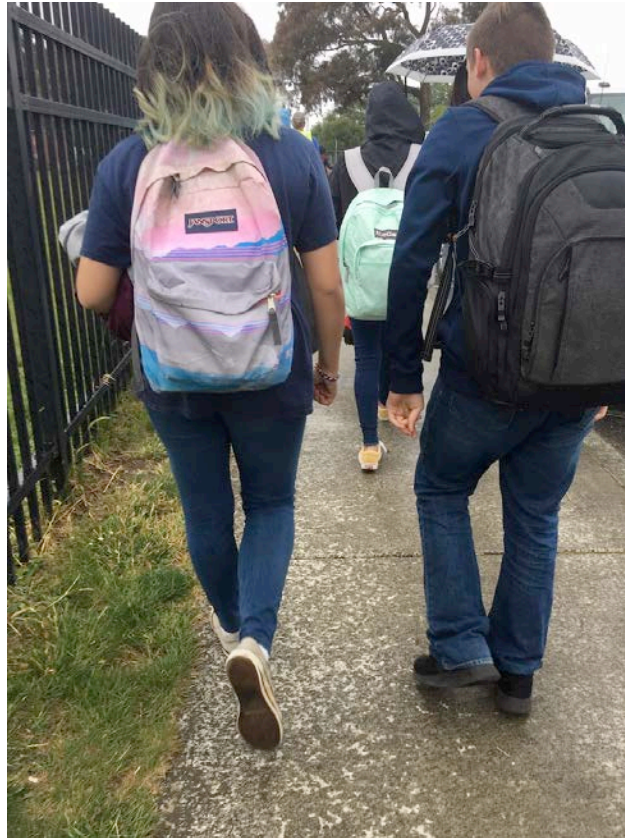


# McKinleyville Middle School Walkability Assessment Outcomes

May 15, 2019

Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Branch &  
Natural Resources Services Division of Redwood Community Action Agency

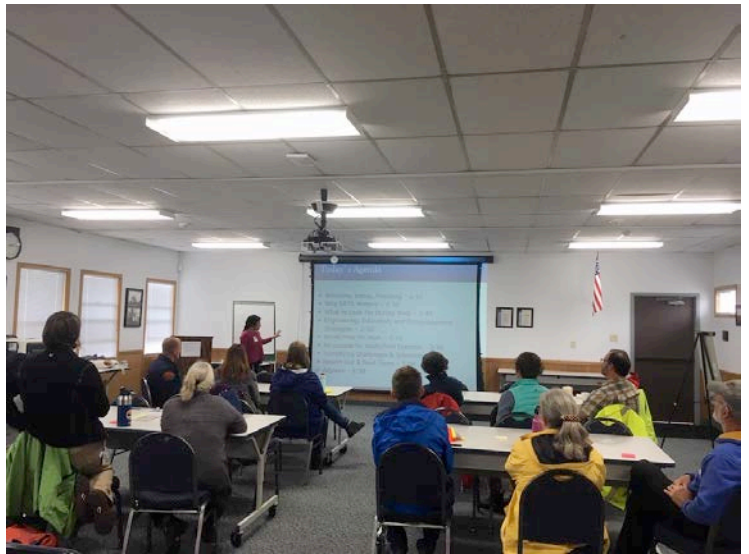


## Overview:

As part of the Fortuna and McKinleyville Active Transportation Education Program, made possible by an Active Transportation Program grant, a Walkability Assessment was held on Wednesday, May 15, 2019 to observe the peak student departure time at McKinleyville Middle School (MMS) in McKinleyville, California. The event enabled participants to identify concerns and solutions to safety issues around students walking and bicycling to school. Participants included the district superintendent, school principal, leadership teacher, Humboldt County Sheriff Department, Arcata Fire District, Humboldt County Public Works, Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, Redwood Community Action Agency, Humboldt County DHHS Public Health, Caltrans, McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee, Humboldt Independent Practice Association, community members, neighbors, and a student representing the McKinleyville Middle School Leadership Class.

## **Attendees:**

The event gave Leadership students an opportunity to learn about and assist with developing strategies to address a community issue and learn from professionals on the Humboldt Countywide Safe Routes to School Task Force. The assessment was attended by:



Jan Schmidt, Superintendent, McKinleyville Union School District  
Julie Giannini-Previde, Principal, McKinleyville Middle School  
Maree Hebert, McKinleyville Middle School Leadership Teacher  
Steve Madrone, Humboldt County Fifth District Supervisor  
J Rutledge, Humboldt County Sheriff Deputy  
Sean Campbell, Battalion Chief, Arcata Fire District  
Tony Seghetti, Engineer, Humboldt County Public Works  
Bonnie Oliver, McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee  
Maya Conrad, McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee  
Areli Cupp, Health Educator, Humboldt County DHHS Public Health  
Elaine Hogan, Program Services Coordinator, Humboldt County DHHS Public Health  
Emily Sinkhorn, Director, RCAA/NRS  
Jenny Weiss, Projects Coordinator, RCAA/NRS  
Carla Avila-Martinez, Planning Assistant, RCAA/NRS  
Melanie Williams, Bicycle and Pedestrian Educator and Safety Advocate  
Alexis Kelso, Project Planning Liaison, Caltrans  
Kyle Finger, Local Assistance, Caltrans  
Tina Manos, Associate Professor of Kinesiology, Humboldt State University  
Meg Mahan, Nurse Practitioner, Humboldt IPA  
Erin Thompson, Registered Nurse, Humboldt IPA  
Johnny Calkins, McKinleyville Resident  
Mekhi Dodds, Zane Middle School student

**Visioning:** At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked to share their vision for the workshop and the outcomes they would like to see:

- Increase number of students walking/biking to MMS
- EMT/Fire Department hopes to prevent risks while responding to calls
- Increase safety for those walking/biking
- Improve/repair intersection at Railroad and Central
- Learning opportunity on how to create safer neighborhoods
- Observe existing projects and provide/receive input for improvements
- Utilize this opportunity as a catalyst for creating a pedestrian friendly environment
- Document concerns and ideas and refer to public input to develop future projects and opportunities
- Address concerns about Railroad Ave safety issues
- Incorporate concerns and ideas into McKinleyville Town Center planning
- Provide more opportunities for youth to increase physical activity
- Increase opportunities for safe, active commuting to encourage safe habits (i.e. proper helmet use)
- Help friends and family walk safely around McKinleyville
- Understand walking and biking routes and mitigate concerns
- Provide opportunities for resources, learning, and setting good examples
- Improve child health
- Convince families that walking and bicycling is a safe and healthy choice
- Provide education and create safer walking options
- Identify safety issues and improve conditions for walking/biking

**Background:** McKinleyville Middle School is centrally located on Central Avenue in McKinleyville, California and serves approximately 378 sixth through eighth grade students. Safe Routes to School parent surveys from Fall 2017 indicated that 18 percent of students walk to school in the morning and 29 percent walking from school in the afternoon. Of students living less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from school, 23 percent walk in the morning and 38 percent walk in the afternoon. Of students living  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from school, 35 percent walk to school in the morning and 59 percent walk in the afternoon. Approximately 19 percent of students living  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 mile from school walk in the morning and 41 percent walk in the afternoon. Sixteen percent of students who live 1-2 miles from school walk in the morning and 23 percent walk in the afternoon. Even 6 percent of students living more than 2 miles from school are walking to and from school in the morning and afternoon.

Prior to the walk, participants viewed a presentation highlighting different Safe Routes to School (SR2S) engineering, education, and encouragement strategies that could potentially help solve some of the safety concerns encountered during the observation.

### **Observation of School Environment:**



Participants first observed the arrival/dismissal area in front of McKinleyville Middle School before continuing along the walking route. The school has a loading zone adjacent to the school office as well as another loading zone in the front parking lot. Students are instructed to walk along the sidewalk around the front parking lot to get to the Central and Railroad intersection.

Buses are separated from private vehicles and pick up students in the rear of campus.

Participants then walked to the intersection of Central and Railroad to observe students leaving McKinleyville Middle School crossing or traveling along Central Ave on the sidewalk or crosswalk. Many parents choose to pick up their children across the street at the abandoned gas station which creates a hazard for pedestrians. There are no directional signs or pavement markings indicating which way motorists should enter or exit. Traffic was backed up leaving the school site as well as entering the school site from the North on Central.

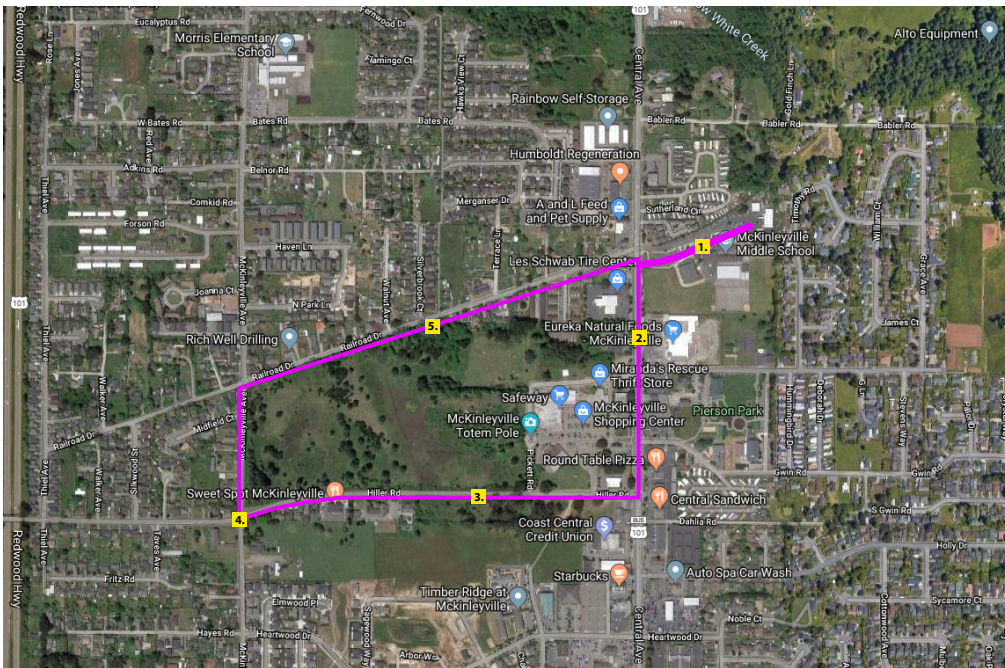
Participants then walked down Central Avenue, crossed at the Hiller Road signal and continued walking on the south side of Hiller Road in the shoulder. Sidewalks are absent along the majority of Hiller Road with the exception of a short section adjacent to the Grace Good Shepard Church and the McKinleyville Family Resource Center. Upon reaching McKinleyville Avenue, participants first crossed Hiller, then McKinleyville Avenue and continued walking north on McKinleyville Avenue noting the awkward alignment of the intersection and lack of crosswalks. Organizers chose the west side of the road to walk on due to the lack of sidewalks on the east side. Multiple utility poles located in the center of the sidewalk were observed making it more challenging for those using

assisted mobility devices or pushing strollers. One residence had created a wider swath of sidewalk around a utility pole by expanding the sidewalk into the grass on their property creating easier access for pedestrians around the pole. The group crossed Railroad Drive, then used the crosswalk to cross McKinleyville Avenue and headed east on Railroad Drive. At Central Avenue, the participants crossed the street then crossed Railroad Drive and walked back onto campus reconvening in the conference room.

## Route Map:

McKinleyville Middle School Walkability Assessment Route

1.9 Miles  
45 Minutes



**Identifying Concerns and Solutions:** After the observation walk, participants returned to the conference room where street scale maps of each section of the route were displayed on tables. Observations and issues encountered along the route were located on the maps and concerns were written on yellow sticky notes and attached to the maps. Suggestions for improvements were written on pink sticky notes and attached to the map with consideration given to engineering, education, enforcement, and encouragement strategies. A key concern included the lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Hiller Avenue which could be a primary commuting corridor between downtown McKinleyville and Hiller Park/Hammond Trail if infrastructure was in place. Participants also recognized speeding motorists and utility pole sidewalk obstructions on Hiller Ave., McKinleyville Ave., and Railroad Drive as high priority concerns as well as the following:

## **AREAS OF PRIMARY CONCERN:**

### **Student Behavior**

Students on bikes and skateboards without helmets  
Students walking distracted while on phones  
Students cutting diagonally through ENF parking lot  
Fear of ped/car conflicts at driveways at ENF and along Central Ave.

### **Parent/Pick up Behavior**

Parents picking up students offsite (across the street on Central and in ENF parking lot)

### **Infrastructure**

Long/wide crossing distance on Central Ave.  
Congested pedestrian crossing waiting area at Central and Railroad  
Speeding cars on Central trying to get 'in front of traffic' where lanes merge at Railroad  
Left turn exiting MMS does not detect bicycles  
No crosswalks across shopping center driveways on Hiller  
Cars speed around corner from Hiller into shopping center on Pickett  
Lack of consistent striping and pedestrian and bicycle facilities on Hiller Ave.  
Hiller Ave has inconsistent widths and is mostly very wide  
Lack of lighting along Hiller Ave.  
No Posted speed limit on Hiller Ave.  
Intersection at Hiller and McKinleyville Avenue is wide, not squared, and lacks crosswalks  
Bike lanes end south of Hiller on McKinleyville Ave.  
Lack of directional signage for cyclists to the Hammond Trail  
Proposed 'town center' will need planning for safe ped/bike access  
Utility poles cause obstructions along McKinleyville Ave and Railroad Drive  
SE corner of Railroad Drive and McKinleyville Ave. 'ramp to nowhere' with non-existent sidewalks  
Motorists speed on Hiller Ave., McKinleyville Ave. and Railroad Drive  
Inconsistent sidewalks on Railroad Drive  
Railroad Drive lacks lighting and bike lanes  
Wide turn radius from Railroad onto Silverbrook causes fast turns by motorists  
Lack of cautionary and/or directional signage at Mid-town Trail  
Senior housing on Railroad Drive has no sidewalks or ADA leading to/from it

## **Maintenance**

Uneven pavement on walking path on Central Ave.

Faded bike lanes on Central Ave.

Bike lanes on McKinleyville Ave. and crosswalk at Railroad and McKinleyville Ave are faded

Overgrown vegetation on Railroad Drive, especially west of Central at public transit stop

## **Recommendations and Action Items:**

Groups reported out on what concerns they identified as well as proposed engineering, education and encouragement strategies to help solve some of the issues.



**Figure 1: Waiting area to cross Central is small and crowded.**



**Figure 2: Students cut across the Central Ave. businesses parking lot.**



**Figure 3: Students were seen on bikes and skateboards not wearing helmets.**



**Figure 4: Central Ave. has a wide crossing distance at Railroad.**



**Figure 5: Concerns about pedestrian/car conflicts at driveways in front of Central Ave. businesses.**



**Figure 6: Lack of crosswalks across driveways leading from Hiller into shopping center**





**Figure 7: Inconsistent striping and lack of sidewalks and pedestrian lighting on Hiller Ave.**



**Figure 8: Wide street/inconsistent street width lacking bike lanes on Hiller Ave.**



**Figures 9 &10: Irregular intersection at Hiller and McKinleyville Ave. is not squared and is awkward for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.**



**Figure 11: Intersection at Hiller and McKinleyville Ave. lacks crosswalks or a clear way to cross safely.**



**Figures 12 & 13: Many utility poles obstructing sidewalks on McKinleyville Ave.**



**Figure 14: Bike lane is faded on McKinleyville Ave.**



**Figure 15: Crosswalk at McKinleyville Ave. & Railroad Dr. is faded.**



**Figure 16: The Mid-Town Trail lacks cautionary and directional signage.**



**Figure 17: Railroad Dr. is wide street lacking striping and bike lanes. Motorists often speed.**

**Improvement Recommendations:  
MMS Arrival/Dismissal Area and Central Avenue**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
School	Distracted walking	Education Expectation Station
School	Students not wearing helmets	Education Expectation Station Positive reinforcement campaign
School	Bad air quality	No Idling campaign!
School	Kids cutting corners in parking lot	Education/Expectation Station
School	Not a lot of kids using back access	Education
Timothy Rd. entrance	Noise complaints	Education for students on being respectful Education for parents on being courteous Education for neighbors on benefits
Gas station/ ENF	Parents picking up students in offsite locations	Have a planned offsite drop off/ pick up location such as Church two blocks south
Railroad & Central	Potential ped/car conflicts from left turn lane exiting school	Create advanced ped crossing
Railroad & Central	Crosswalk monitor not visible	Provide yellow reflective vest
Railroad & Central	Crowded corner at south east intersection	Extend/enlarge waiting area for peds Install side gate and walkway/path towards ENF to direct peds away from corner
Railroad & Central	Long crossing distance (odd angle) Not enough time to cross the street	Re-orient and restripe crosswalk During arrival/dismissal have a Leading Pedestrian Interval and longer ped crossing period, Install Median island
Railroad - Central	Northbound cars speeding in right lane to get 'in front' of where lanes merge north of Railroad	Conduct County traffic study Create right-turn only lane into MMS Move merge lane arrows before Railroad
Railroad & Central	Left turn out of school (going southbound) doesn't detect bikes	Install in-road bike detection for signal
Central	Green bike lane ends	Extend green bike lane to school
Central	Safeway xwalk leads to nowhere	

### Eureka Natural Foods (ENF) Business Area

<b>Location</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
ENF	Parents picking up in ENF parking lot	Create safety procedures and agreement for students/parents to sign
ENF	Ped/car conflicts on ENF driveways, cars turning too fast	Paint "LOOK" or yellow stripes across driveway entrances
ENF	Students cutting diagonally through ENF lot	Education/Work with businesses to hang signage with same language as expectation stations Paint yellow stripe with warning message on driveway sidewalk Provide reflective tape/stickers to students Team up with businesses, such as The Club, for activities/education
Central	Narrow sidewalk	Widen sidewalk
Central	Speeding	Install speed radar when speed changes to 25 Extra patrols Educate drivers to slow in school zone Install flashing lights 30 mins. before/after arrival/dismissal
Central	Crosswalk leads to bike lane/nowhere at Sushi Spot, awkward	Create connection from crosswalk to sidewalk
Central	Fire trucks/ student conflicts	Paint yellow stripe with warning message on driveway sidewalk Education on emergency vehicles
Central	Debris on bike lane	Ask County to conduct regular maintenance
Central	Cracked sidewalks	Repair sidewalks
Central	Low hanging vegetation in way of sidewalk	Trim vegetation

**Hiller Road:**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Hiller & Central	Lacks sidewalks, difficult for strollers. Sidewalk only exists on north but not south side of street in one small area near FRC	Fill in sidewalk gaps
Shopping center	Long crossing distance on driveways	Paint crosswalk & repaint STOP
Shopping center	Cars speeding in and out from/to shopping center (Pickett) from/to Hiller	Paint sharper radii on turn Install BOTS DOTS
Shopping center	Lack of sidewalk to shops/not ped friendly	Install sidewalks
Hiller	Wide street	Paint bike lanes/fog lines
Hiller	Lots of debris in shoulder	Maintain shoulder
Hiller	Dark at night	Install pedestrian scale lighting
Hiller	No striping or bike lanes	Install fog lines or bike lanes
Hiller	Speeding/ inconsistent width of lanes	Install bike lanes/fog lines Speed tables/humps Speed radar signs Narrow lane width/chicanes
(McK Family Resource Center)	Overgrown bushes	Trim vegetation
Hiller	Lack of speed limit signs	Install speed limit signs
Hiller & Mck Ave.	Hammond Trail location unknown	Install Hammond Trail way finding signs
Hiller & Mck Ave.	Wide/ not squared intersection, traffic lanes not marked, lack of clear directions	County should redesign 'Neck' in or reshape intersection first with paint, then curbs if funding available. Extend sidewalk on McK Ave. further north on SE corner. Extend stop sign on McK Ave. further north to increase visibility of peds. Create improvement plan. Install crosswalks in each direction. Install traffic circle

### McKinleyville Avenue:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Mck Ave.	No bike lane on Mck Ave. south of Hiller	Install bike lane
Mck Ave.	Utility pole obstructions on sidewalk	County extend pavement around poles. Encourage homeowners to do it (use existing example)
Mck Ave.	Students biking against traffic, people walking on bike lanes	Education
Mck Ave.	Speeding motorists	Install permanent or temporary speed radar. Install speed humps. Education campaign at elementary and high school
Mck Ave.	Bike lane debris/obstructions	Clean and maintain
Mck Ave.	No crosswalks to side streets	Install crosswalks Install signs 'Cross at ___street'
Mck Ave.	Dark at night and early mornings	Install ped scale lighting
Mck Ave.	Cars parked against traffic	Education
Mck Ave.	Faded bike lane	Repaint
Mck Ave.	Bike lane located in 'door zone' –close to parked cars	Education for cyclists and motorists Encourage 'Dutch Reach'
Mck Ave.- Midfield	Wide intersection, electric pole/utility box obstruction	Install bulbouts around utility pole and on each corner to reduce crossing distance
Mck Ave. & Railroad	Faded (north) crosswalk	Repaint
Mck Ave. & Railroad	SE corner with "ramp to nowhere"	Connect curb ramp to sidewalks on McKinleyville Ave. and Railroad Drive

**Railroad Drive:**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Railroad	Inconsistent sidewalks	Fill in sidewalk gaps
Railroad	Lack of bike lanes	Restrict parking on north side and add bike lanes on both sides of the street
Railroad	Speeding cars	Install speed tables/humps Temporary or permanent speed radar sign
Railroad	Overgrown vegetation	Trim
Railroad	Senior housing 'island' - No ped access to senior housing	Fill in sidewalk gaps and add ADA
Railroad	Limited lighting	Install ped lighting
Railroad	Utility poles obstructing sidewalks	Extend sidewalk around poles
Railroad & Silverbrook	Wide turn radius	Sharpen turn angle with paint
Mid-town Corridor	Lack of awareness	Install Mid-Town trail sign Install "expect bikes/ peds"
Railroad & Central	Overgrown tree covering Bus Stop sign	Trim vegetation Install bus shelter



**Figures 18 & 19: Participants use maps to make suggestions for improvements.**