



APPENDIX VII: WHARTON SRTS MEDIA COVERAGE

A SURE WAY TO EASE THE MORNING COMMUTE

Sunday, July 2, 2006

By John Cichowski of the *Bergen Record*

You might have noticed that last week's morning commute was faster than it has been all year -- for an obvious reason: School is out, taking more than 1.5 million New Jersey kids out of the morning traffic mix.

What if there were ways to keep it that way year-round? What would you be willing to do to achieve that goal?

Planners in Morris County think they've found one solution.

"We're suggesting that parents stop driving their kids to school," said Patrick Franco, a county transportation planner.

This is the kind of suggestion that makes some Road Warrior readers see red.

"It's too far for my kid to walk, but not far enough to qualify for a bus," complained a Teaneck dad named David.

"I'm on my way to work anyway," said a Fort Lee mom named Deborah.

"Children tend to wake up at the last minute and not leave enough time to walk," explained Alan of Fair Lawn.

Franco has heard these arguments and others, like safety, before. He and transportation researchers at Rutgers University are weighing these reasons against California studies showing that 21 percent to 27 percent of morning traffic is caused by parents driving their children to school.

Think about that. Parents who don't want their youngsters to walk to school or ride buses are contributing to about one-quarter of the traffic and, presumably, the road rage, slowdowns, accidents and injuries that accompany it.

"Kids are getting too soft," concluded Tom, a Hillsdale parent. "They rarely walk anywhere."

Right, Tom! And their chauffeur-parents are paying twice for transportation. As drivers, the cost ranges from \$2.80 to \$3.05 a gallon. As property taxpayers, the range is about \$125,000 for buses in compact, 2.5-square-mile Ridgewood to \$2 million in 88-square-mile West Milford.



Borough of Wharton Safe Routes to School Program Plan 2006



What Can Be Done? Morris planners have published, "Bulletin No. 1 -- It's Not Cool to Drive to School" -- which you can read at mcdot.org. It calls for close monitoring of student travel times and habits, increasing car-pool options, building sidewalks under the state Transportation Department's \$5.2 million Safe Routes to School program, and encouraging school boards to offer incentives for students to walk, cycle or ride school buses.

One of these incentives has little to do with safety. It recommends charging teens for parking at high schools. West Milford has already begun charging a \$50 fee for its high school seniors. Its purpose, however, was to raise money, not to reduce traffic, said Schools Superintendent Glenn Kamp.

As for safety, Franco said some parents claim they drive their children to avoid accidents, stalkers and violence. Police, however, say stalking is rare and violence varies widely from town to town. But National Highway Traffic Safety Administration accident statistics strongly suggest that hitching a ride with mom or anybody else is not the safest way to go to school.

NHTSA says motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children younger than 15. And the school buses that drive some 500,000 New Jersey students to class every day? NHTSA crash data shows that buses represent the safest mode of transportation for school-age children, including teenagers.

WALK TO SCHOOL? PLANNERS SAY YES

Morris Plans to Encourage Students to Walk, Bicycle Each Day to Fight Congestion

Sunday, July 9, 2006

By Michael Daigle of the *Daily Record*

If the ride to work seems less crowded, it's because school is out for the summer, leaving 20 percent to 30 percent of morning drivers doing something else besides shuttling around their children.

To keep those drivers off the road all year round, the Morris County Division of Transportation said that the county needs a plan to have more children walk or bike to school.

In the first of what will eventually be 10 bulletins, the county issued "It's not cool to drive to school"--a bulletin that is part of the process to develop the circulation element of the Morris County Master Plan, which covers transportation issues.

Issues to be Addressed

County Transportation Director Gerald Rohsler said that the bulletins are summaries of the issues that will be addressed in later technical documents and the final circulation element. Other bulletins, for example, will discuss public transportation, alternate means of transportation and commuting.

The completed document will detail county transportation projects, demographics, issues and projections. The county adopted a circulation element to its master plan in 1992 and the current project is an update to that plan.



Borough of Wharton Safe Routes to School Program Plan 2006



The drive to encourage more walking and biking to school came out of the recent state-funded Safe Routes to School Pilot Program that started in Wharton last fall.

The goal of that program is to build a physical environment and social climate that supports a child's ability to walk, bike, carpool or take transit safely to school. The project began with International Walk to School Day in October and was followed in the spring with a bike rally.

Walking and biking to school increased from 20 percent to 70 percent on the day of the event, the bulletin said.

Rohsler said that in most interviews done to prepare the school transportation bulletin, the issue of morning and afternoon school-related traffic jams was raised.

He said safety while walking to school and riding a bus were the top issues raised in most towns.

The school transportation bulletin said today that only 10 percent to 15 percent of school children walk or bike to school, down from 70 percent 30 years ago.

The chief reasons for this decline, the bulletin said, were the distance from home to school, traffic around the school, lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, weather, crime and school policy.

Deep-Rooted Problem

"These conditions are the result of land and transportation decisions made over the last 40 years," the bulletin said.

Prior to World War II, most communities were compact and centered around schools and other public buildings, the bulletin said. Post-war "dispersal" land use policies that encouraged outward growth contributed to "school sprawl," which occurs when schools are located on the fringes of communities and accessible only by automobile or bus, the bulletin said.

Most of the county's nearly 80,000 public school students are either driven by car or take a bus even when they live close to school, the bulletin said.

The Federal Highway Administration reported that 90 percent of children living less than 2 miles from school are driven or bused.

Busing Changes

In the past two years, changes were proposed in the systems that bused students to school in East Hanover, Parsippany, Montville, Denville and Mount Arlington. Montville, for example, ended courtesy busing and substituted a subscription bus service that could cost parents up to \$500.

The county transportation division set two chief goals in this bulletin. The first goal calls for a reduction in the number of children driven to school in private vehicles.



Borough of Wharton Safe Routes to School Program Plan 2006



The transportation division, TransOptions, a regional agency, and the county superintendent of schools should explore carpooling options, opportunities and incentives for parents to reduce the number of individual trips to school.

The county division should develop more safe Routes to Schools programs and work with the superintendent of schools to seek a statewide funding source.

The county should organize a school transportation summit for all school boards, superintendents and principals to identify common transportation problems.

Systematic monitoring of students should be done to determine travel behavior. School boards should be encouraged to provide incentives to students who walk, bike or ride the bus to school. Boards should also be encouraged to limit the number of parking permits issued to students or charge them for parking spots. Bus ridership should also be increased by ensuring parents of bus safety through driver education, global positioning technology, bus monitoring and random bus inspections.

The second goal calls for an increase in bicycle and pedestrian accessibility to schools.

The county should require transportation infrastructure that supports walking and biking in any new development or redevelopment proposal, while encouraging maintenance of existing facilities that do so.

SAFETY ROPES KIDS AT WHARTON BIKE RODEO

April 24, 2006

The Daily Record

WHARTON -- Kaelli Zacchini shook her head from side to side and up and down, and grinned as her bicycle helmet wobbled on her head. Nancy Statt from Morristown Memorial Hospital removed the helmet, replaced the rubber pads inside, and placed it back on the girl's head.

It didn't wobble as much but the 7-year-old still grinned. Statt said that many of the helmets she examined Wednesday were ill-fitting.

She was a member of the New Jersey Safe Kids/Safe Communities team at the "Ready to Roll" bicycle rodeo at MacKinnon Middle School that attracted more than 150 local students. The kids displayed their riding skills on a slalom course, took a bike safety ride under the watchful eyes of Wharton police officers, had their bikes tweaked by professionals and learned how to be safe on the borough's busy streets. The rodeo is part of a Safe Routes to School pilot program sponsored by the Morris County Division of Transportation. The division plans to develop safety ideas and techniques that can be implemented at schools throughout the county. Wharton was selected because it is a compact town with its schools at the same location. Deena Cybulski of the Morris



Borough of Wharton Safe Routes to School Program Plan 2006



County transportation division said the borough's network of small streets and a large walking population of students made it ideal for the pilot program.

She said the overall goals of the program are improved safety for students walking and biking to school, to encourage more parents to allow their children to walk to school, to reduce congestion at morning drop-offs, promote car-pooling and encourage exercise for children.

Not all the ideas developed through the pilot program will be practical for all the county's schools, Cybulski said. It could be harder to implement some of the ideas at regional schools and schools in larger towns that were built on more rural roads that lack sidewalks, for example.

The public is invited to a meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the school to help refine the vision for the Wharton plan, and help identify strategies and projects that would lead to safer routes to school.

Jennifer Zacchini, who brought Kaelli and her brothers Danny, 5, and Dominic, 3, to the rodeo, said the event was timely with her boys getting ready to do more bike riding. Kaelli just nodded and grinned when her mother asked if she was learning about bike safety. Zacchini said that they were picking up tips that would help them be safer bikers.

Wharton's streets are generally safe, she said. Central Avenue, a main street, is busy, she explained, but the side streets generally see little traffic. Dozens of students buzzed the parking lot next to the school during the rodeo.

Miguel Moreno, 11, a fourth grader, said he was reminded that bike safety was very important, especially stopping at intersections. Sebastian Munoz, 9, a fourth grader, said he learned to be careful walking to school. He said he and his neighborhood friends walk together each day and think about safety.

Raymond Lopez, 14, a seventh grader, was happy with his new bike helmet. He had just successfully completed the slalom course that allows the students to exhibit control as they take sharp turns around orange cones.

Among the organizations at the rodeo were Morristown Memorial Hospital, Marty's Cycles, TransOptions, school and town officials and the local parent-teacher's association.

Judy Maltese and Luis Home were operating TransOptions' "Wheel Fit" booth, which Home admitted was misnamed.

If you go...

A public meeting on the state-funded Safe Routes to School program proposed for Wharton will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Marie V. Duffy School on Central Avenue. Safe Routes to School is a program that promotes safe walking and biking to schools. Designers of Wharton's program will outline the scope of the project. For details, call Patrick Franco at (973) 829-8101

"We're fitting more seats than wheels," he said. Most of the time the pair was adjusting the height of bike seats for students. The proper height of bike seats allows riders to keep their flat feet on the ground while resting, he said. Most of the seats were too low -- "way low" -- Home said.



Borough of Wharton Safe Routes to School Program Plan 2006



Wharton Police Detective Bob Lubia said the rodeo was a way to reinforce bike safety rules in a friendly atmosphere, which he exhibited by stopping a student from riding his bike backwards through the lot.

Principal Chris Herdman said the Safe Routes to School project reinforces many of the rules that students learn in school.

As part of the project a seventh grade math class compiled data based on a walking tour of the borough that measured how much gasoline they saved and how many calories they burned among other statistics. By encouraging walking and biking to school, the program also supports health education students get on fitness and obesity, Herdman said.

K.J. Fuery, an injury prevention consultant from Morristown Memorial, said the hospital sees about 12 children annually who are severely injured in bicycle accidents. Many more are treated by family physicians, or receive no treatment at all, she said.

The hospital provided these national statistics:

- In 2002, 130 children ages 14 and under died in bicycle-related crashes.
- The death rate associated with bicycle crashes involving children 14 and under dropped 70 percent between 1987 and 2002.
- Children ages 14 and under are five times more likely to be injured in a bicycle-related crash than older riders.

Fuery said the effort to provide safer routes to schools will help reduce bike-related injuries, which would be a significant step, "but one is too many."