

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN MCKINLEYVILLE



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INTRODUCTION

Through the Pedestrian Safety Injury Prevention Action Team project of the California Department of Public Health—funded by the Safe States Alliance through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)—California Walks consulted with key pedestrian safety practitioners in Humboldt County in the Fall 2014/Winter 2015 to identify high-need/high-risk pedestrian safety communities in the region, resulting in the identification of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and the unincorporated community of McKinleyville.

Following additional conversations with the Humboldt County Public Works Department and the Redwood Community Action Agency, the community invited the University of California at Berkeley’s Safe Transportation Research Center (SafeTREC) and California Walks (Cal Walks) to McKinleyville to facilitate a pedestrian safety action-planning workshop with an immediate focus on strengthening the County’s grant application for McKinleyville to the California Active Transportation Program (ATP) through a community-driven process. Cal Walks facilitated the workshop on April 29, 2015, which consisted of: 1) an overview of multidisciplinary approaches to improve pedestrian safety; 2) a walkability assessment at McKinleyville High School during morning student arrival; and 3) small group action planning discussions to facilitate the development of recommendations for the County’s ongoing active transportation efforts, as well as to inform the County’s ATP application for McKinleyville. This report summarizes the workshop proceedings, as well as ideas identified during the process and recommendations for pedestrian safety projects.

BACKGROUND

Community Pedestrian Safety Training Program

The Community Pedestrian Safety Training (CPST) program is a joint project of UC Berkeley SafeTREC and Cal Walks. Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The purpose of the CPST is to train local neighborhood residents and safety advocates in pedestrian safety and to educate them about collaborating with local officials and agency staff to make communities safer and more pleasant to walk. The half-day training is designed to provide participants with pedestrian safety best practices and a range of proven strategies (the 6 E’s: Evaluation, Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Encouragement, Empowerment) to address and improve pedestrian safety conditions and concerns.

Participants are then guided on a walkability assessment of nearby streets before setting pedestrian safety priorities and actionable next steps for their community.

For a summary of outcomes from past CPST workshops, please visit: www.californiawalks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CPST_Follow-Up_2009-14.pdf

Selected Pedestrian Safety Conditions in McKinleyville

Lack of Pedestrian Facilities Along Portions of McKinleyville Avenue



RECENT IMPROVEMENTS TO MCKINLEYVILLE AVENUE SOUTH OF MURRAY ROAD INCLUDE BIKE LANES, SPEED FEEDBACK SIGNS, HIGH-VISIBILITY CROSSWALK MARKINGS AND CONTINUOUS, LEVEL SIDEWALKS.

McKinleyville Avenue is a 2-lane, 25 MPH residential street that runs most of the length of the community, beginning just north of School Street and ending just north of Murray Road. McKinleyville High School and Morris Elementary School are located on McKinleyville Ave. between Bates Road and Murray Road.

The County Public Works Department has worked over the past several years to implement various pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements to McKinleyville Ave., including striped bike lanes, high-visibility crosswalk markings, fluorescent school zone signage,

continuous sidewalks, and speed feedback signs. These improvements have helped students living south of Murray Road to walk and bicycle get to school.

However, conditions are quite different for students living north of Murray Road. While sidewalks are now required for new developments, many of the homes and apartment complexes on McKinleyville Ave. have been grandfathered in—resulting in a discontinuous sidewalk network that dead-ends on McKinleyville Ave. just south of the Gassaway Road intersection. New homes are currently under construction just north of Gassaway Road and are expected to add more foot traffic to the street. After the sidewalk ends, students must either walk in the narrow roadway facing oncoming traffic or along the unimproved roadway area on the west side of the street. Residents have reported recent incidents involving a student being clipped by a car’s side view mirror on a narrow street and lack of physical separation for pedestrians, as well as a pedestrian fatality.



SHORT SIDEWALK SEGMENT ON MCKINLEYVILLE AVE. ENDS JUST SOUTH OF GASSAWAY INTERSECTION

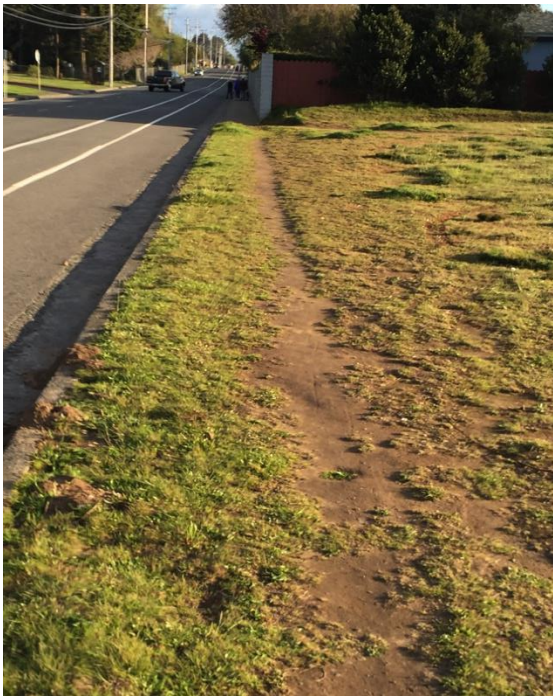


LOOKING NORTH ON MCKINLEYVILLE AVE.; A CLEAR , WELL-WORN PATH EXISTS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE STREET

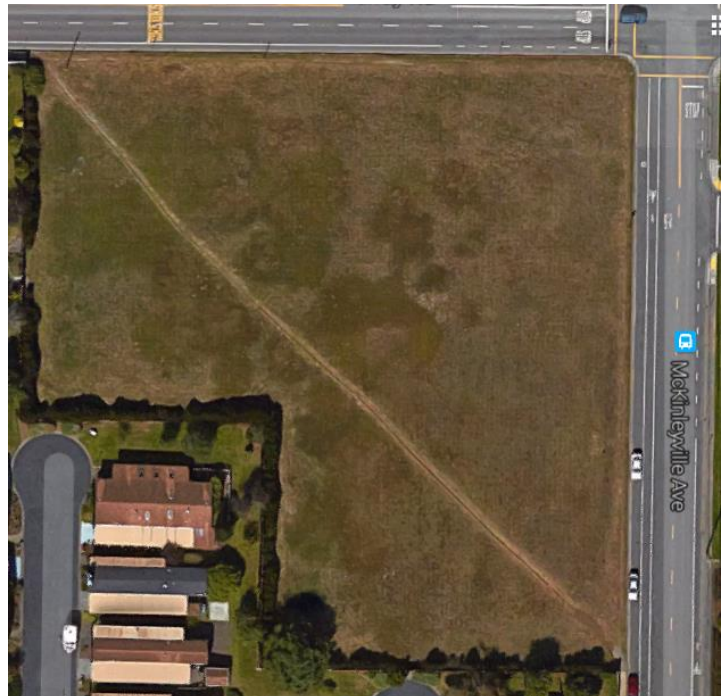


OBSCURED SCHOOL ZONE SIGNAGE ADJACENT TO WELL-WORN PEDESTRIAN PATH

Just south of Murray Road, McKinleyville Ave. lacks sidewalks on its west side, directly across from the High School. Well-worn paths indicate students and residents are traveling to/from the north of Murray Road, as well as further from the west down Murray Road.



PEDESTRIANS OBSERVED WALKING SOUTH ON MCKINLEYVILLE AVE. ALONG GOAT TRAIL TO EXISTING SIDEWALKS



WELL-WORN PEDESTRIAN PATHS CAN BE SEEN FROM AERIAL PHOTOS

High Traffic Volumes & Speeds Along Murray Road

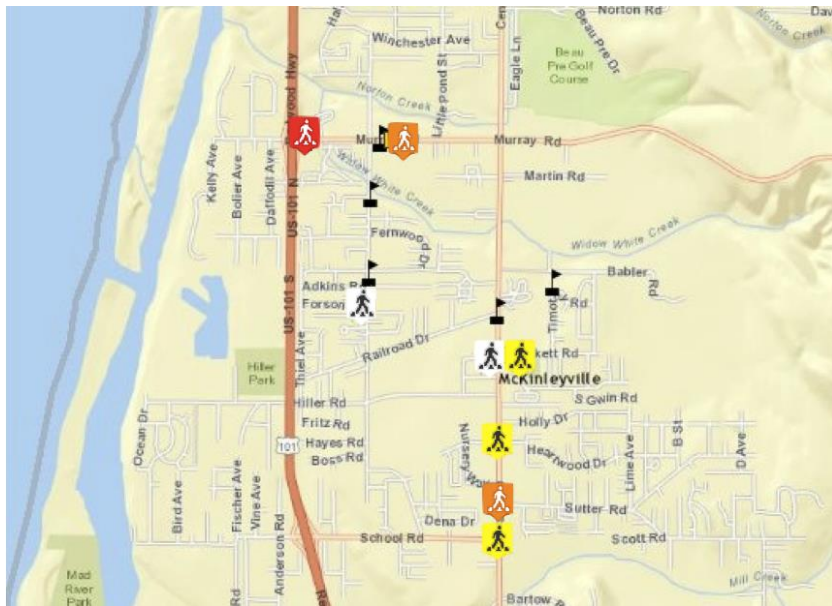
Murray Road is a four-lane, 35 MPH street, one of four that connect McKinleyville to the US-101 highway to the west. Murray Road has a center turn lane and/or dedicated turn lanes between Central Avenue (the former US-101 route) and US-101, bike lanes in both directions. Sidewalks are present and continuous on the south side of Murray Road—where the High School is located—between Central Ave. and McKinleyville Ave.; on the north side, sidewalks are discontinuous. Due to being one of the

community's few routes to access US-101, much of the traffic on Murray Road is not related to either the High School or Morris Elementary School. Residents have noted that drivers routinely exceed the posted speed limit and disregard the reduced speed school zone. Recently, the County Public Works Department worked with the community residents to install a high-visibility marked crosswalk, pedestrian safety island, and advanced yield signs and markings at Murray and Little Pond to assist students in crossing Murray Road.

McKinleyville High School is located at the intersection of Murray Road and McKinleyville Avenue. This intersection is controlled by a 4-way stop sign; however, only two of the four legs of the intersection have crosswalk markings. Due to the lack of pedestrian facilities on McKinleyville Ave. north of Murray Rd., students and residents who walk on the east side will arrive at the intersection without a marked crosswalk to assist them in crossing. During our workshop site visit, participants observed drivers failing to yield to students attempting to cross Murray Rd. on the west side of McKinleyville Ave. in the unmarked crosswalk. Crossing on the west side of McKinleyville Ave. in the unmarked crosswalk is the most direct path to the high school, while crossing on the east side in the marked crosswalk leads to an unimproved parcel of land that lacks sidewalks. Moreover, since this intersection is the last intersection westbound drivers encounter on their way to US-101, many drivers do not fully stop, which may contribute to the observed high rates of failing to yield to pedestrians. Drivers traveling eastbound on Murray Rd. from US-101 may still be in a highway mindset, which may contribute to the speeding and failure to yield patterns observed.



STUDENTS ARRIVING TO THE UNMARKED CROSSWALK AT THE MURRAY RD./MCKINLEYVILLE AVE. INTERSECTION.



PEDESTRIAN COLLISIONS IN MCKINLEYVILLE FROM 2008-2012;
 RED: FATAL; ORANGE: SEVERE; YELLOW: OTHER VISIBLE INJURY; WHITE: COMPLAINT OF PAIN

McKinleyville’s Pedestrian Collision History

Between 2008-2012, there were 8 pedestrian collisions in McKinleyville, including 1 fatality and 2 severe injuries. Pedestrian collisions during this time period were concentrated primarily on the Central Avenue and Murray Road corridors, with an isolated incident on McKinleyville Ave. at Forson Road. The top two Primary Collision Factors for these pedestrian collisions were: Pedestrian Violations (37.5%) and Pedestrian Right-of-Way Violations (25%).

APRIL 29 WORKSHOP

The Humboldt County Public Works Department requested a workshop to address two goals: 1) to inform the development of the County’s ATP grant application for McKinleyville in alignment with community residents’ identified and prioritized needs, and 2) to provide County staff, community organizations, and residents with a toolkit for promoting pedestrian safety and walkability to inform future comprehensive active transportation planning and improvement efforts. The workshop was hosted from 7:30 AM-12:30 PM with breakfast provided to encourage community resident participation. The workshop was attended by 19 individuals representing a wide range of organizations and disciplines, as well as the community-at-large, including:

- Humboldt County Public Works
 - Tom Mattson, Director
 - Staff
- Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
 - Supervisor Ryan Sundberg, 5th District
- McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee
- McKinleyville Community Services District
- Redwood Community Action Agency
- Dow's Prairie Elementary School
 - Kevin Scheffler, Principal
- McKinleyville Middle School
 - Julie Giannini-Previde, Principal
 - 3 Middle School Students
- Community Residents
- Yurok Tribe

Reflections from Walkability Assessment

Walkability assessments were conducted immediately preceding and following school arrival for McKinleyville High School at the intersection of Murray Road and McKinleyville Avenue, as well as the section of McKinleyville Avenue between Murray Road and Gassaway Road. Participants were asked to 1) observe infrastructure conditions and the behavior of all road users and 2) note strategies and solutions that could help overcome infrastructure deficiencies and unsafe driver, pedestrian, and



WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS OBSERVING TRAVEL BEHAVIORS DURING SCHOOL ARRIVAL

bicyclist behavior. Following the walkability assessment, participants returned to Azalea Hall to learn about the 5 E's approach to Safe Routes to School and pedestrian safety. Following the walkability assessment, participants shared the following reflections:

- **Lack of Crosswalk Markings & Maintenance:** Participants noted the lack of marked crosswalks at 2 of the 4 legs of the McKinleyville Ave./Murray Rd. intersection. The crosswalks and stop bars at this intersection and at McKinleyville Ave./Gassaway Rd. are not

high-visibility, ladder-style crosswalks, and are faded and in poor condition.

- **School Bus & Transit Needs:** Participants observed several bus-car conflicts at the intersection and noted that the turning radius from Murray onto McKinleyville Ave. appeared to be rather tight for buses. Moreover, there is no marked crosswalk at the mid-block southbound Redwood Transit System bus stop across from the high school on McKinleyville Ave. Workshop participants observed alighting students crossing directly from the bus stop to the high school, which compounded further challenges with vehicles entering/exiting the school's west side drop-off area.
- **McKinleyville Ave./Murray Rd. Intersection Sight Lines:** Though the undeveloped parcels at the northeast and southwest corners of the intersection contribute to enhanced sight lines for drivers and pedestrians, vehicles are allowed to park at several corners of the intersection, reducing visibility of pedestrians.
- **McKinleyville Ave. Between Murray Rd. & Gassaway Rd.:** Participants concurred that the existing conditions on McKinleyville Ave. in this section exposed pedestrians to potential conflicts with drivers and noted the recent pedestrian collision that occurred in this section. Students and other residents were clearly using the street as evidenced by the well-worn pedestrian paths on the west side of the street. The street is quite narrow and the creek presented a real obstacle.
- **Unsafe Driver Behaviors:** Participants remarked that drivers appeared to be in a rush to get to US-101 and were not obeying school zone speed limits. Drivers in both directions of Murray also consistently failed to yield to students crossing, particularly at the unmarked crosswalk on the east side of McKinleyville Ave.
- **Unsafe Pedestrian Behaviors:** Participants noted that several students did not look both ways before beginning to cross Murray Road; many students were caught up in conversations with their friends. Additionally, students tended to walk side-by-side, even when walking in the roadway—given how narrow McKinleyville Avenue is between Murray and Gassaway, this may not be the safest way to walk for this section.

Community Resident Recommendations



HUMBOLDT COUNTY SUPERVISOR RYAN SUNDBERG WELCOMING RESIDENTS TO WORKSHOP

Following a presentation by Tom Mattson, Director of the Humboldt County Public Works Department on the County's potential Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant application for McKinleyville, Cal Walks facilitated small-group action planning discussions. Workshop participants were tasked with developing concrete recommendations to improve pedestrian safety in the area of McKinleyville observed during the workshop, including evaluating whether the County's ATP application aligned with the community's priority. The ATP application proposal concept involves providing a multi-use asphalt sidepath along McKinleyville Ave. between Murray and Gassaway to help students safely walk and bike to school. Workshop participants provided the following recommendations for the grant application and overall pedestrian safety improvements in McKinleyville based on the 5 E's of Safe Routes to School and the walkability assessment:

1) **McKinleyville Ave. Path:**

Participants unanimously supported the ATP proposal concept for providing an asphalt path (rather than a sidewalk) on McKinleyville Ave from Murray to Gassaway. While participants recognized the challenges and increased costs of providing a path on both sides, they expressed a strong desire for the project to provide paths on both sides if at all possible and encouraged the County to work with the property owner of the northeast parcel to secure an easement for the east side path. If providing a path on both sides ends up not being cost-effective, participants did not express a strong preference for which side the path should be located.



RESIDENTS DEVELOPING ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MCKINLEYVILLE

2) **McKinleyville Ave. / Gassaway Rd. Improvements:** Residents would like to see this intersection improved with the installation of a 3-way stop sign, as well as curb ramps and high-visibility

marked crosswalks at the intersection. The south side crosswalk of the intersection should only be striped if the path an east side path is constructed (i.e., participants did not want a “crosswalk to nowhere.”).

- 3) **McKinleyville Ave. Sidewalk at Murray Rd.:** Participants would like to see a sidewalk installed on the vacant parcel on southwest corner of the McKinleyville Ave./Murray Rd. intersection in order to accommodate the students and residents already walking along the well-worn dirt paths. Participants acknowledged that this project could possibly wait until the parcel is developed and require sidewalk installation as part of the development.
- 4) **Collaborate with Redwood Transit System:** Residents would like the County and School District to collaborate with Redwood Transit System to address the accessibility and crossing needs at the bus stops on McKinleyville Ave. near the high school. Participants noted the need for bulbouts and a high-visibility mid-block crossing to accommodate the southbound transit riders crossing McKinleyville Ave. to access the school; participants would like the agencies to consider installing a raised crossing supplemented with a rectangular rapid flashing beacon. Additionally, residents would like to see the bus stops upgraded and made fully accessible to persons with disabilities.
- 5) **Leverage High School “Link” Orientation Program for Pedestrian Safety Education Efforts:** The high school runs a “Link” orientation program for entering freshmen that is led by upper classmen that covers a variety of issues. Workshop participants, including middle school youth, recommended taking advantage of this existing infrastructure to create and disseminate pedestrian safety education materials. Younger students look up to the upper classmen, and this approach would allow for a youth-led, peer-to-peer education effort.
- 6) **Develop Youth-Created Walking Maps & Crosswalk Stencils:** Workshop participants highlighted the need to get more youth involved in Safe Routes to School and pedestrian safety efforts. One priority strategy that emerged was to work with applied science and/or art classes at the high school to design and develop school route walking maps for parents and students, as well as decorative crosswalk stencils to make pedestrian safety a fun issue.
- 7) **Establish Ongoing Communication Structure Between Law Enforcement & Schools:** Due to the passage of Measure Z, McKinleyville is slated to receive more law enforcement resources beginning over the next few months. School principals participating in the workshop shared their challenges in working with the various law enforcement agencies in the past and voiced the need for a consistent, ongoing communication structure (possibly through a task force or committee) for schools to communicate regularly with the law enforcement agencies. This organizing structure would also help to overcome the frequent law enforcement staffing changes that have occurred in the past that left schools in the dark and without a contact. Participants also supported the concept of sharing the law enforcement among the different schools in McKinleyville in order to coordinate and ensure law enforcement presence at the beginning/end of the year and holidays at each school.
- 8) **Implement Daylighting & Enhanced Crosswalk Treatments:** Participants noted that a few low-cost strategies should be implemented as soon as possible, including: daylighting or corner

parking restrictions at marked crosswalks, especially around schools; and advanced yield line pavement markings and supplemental signage to help encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians.

- **Engage Youth through Youtube Traffic Safety Web Series:** Middle school youth participants emphasized that educational efforts needed to be paired with incentives to encourage participation and learning. Workshop participants proposed creating Youtube series of traffic safety education videos that would be paired with a tracking and incentive program. Either teachers or parents would sign off on the videos a student has watched and after a certain number of safety videos viewed, students would be able to redeem prizes, such as gift certificates to local businesses or Starbucks. This project could be jointly developed and championed by other civic groups and the Chamber of Commerce and could be integrated into the County's forthcoming smart phone app.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the community of McKinleyville for inviting us and for hosting the Community Pedestrian Safety Training. Thank you to Tom Mattson, Director of Humboldt County Public Works and Jenny Weiss and Emily Sinkhorn of the Redwood Community Action Agency for their full commitment to and leadership of community-driven transportation planning and meaningful engagement with community residents. Thank you also to Greg Orsini of the McKinleyville Community Services District and Ben Shephard of the McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee who provided leadership and organizational support in planning the workshop. We would also like to acknowledge Humboldt County Supervisor Ryan Sundberg, Principal Kevin Scheffler of Dow's Prairie Elementary School, Principal Julie Giannini-Previde of McKinleyville Middle School, community members, and representatives from the Yurok Tribe whose dedication to pedestrian safety meaningfully informed and strengthened the workshop's outcomes. Lastly, we would like to thank Principal Giannini-Previde for involving her middle school students in this process and enabling her students to participate in the workshop to experience creating meaningful change in their own community. All together, you demonstrate the impact a Pedestrian Safety Action Team makes in utilizing the Community Pedestrian Safety Training to advance pedestrian safety.

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