

Report on Safe Routes to School Survey
Talmadge Middle School
School District 13J

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Introduction:

The Safe Routes to School Program is a collaborative effort between Central School District 13J and the Cities of Monmouth and Independence. It is a sustained effort to improve the health and well-being of children by assessing and taking measures to improve walking and biking conditions on the route to school while enabling and encouraging students to walk and bike to school.

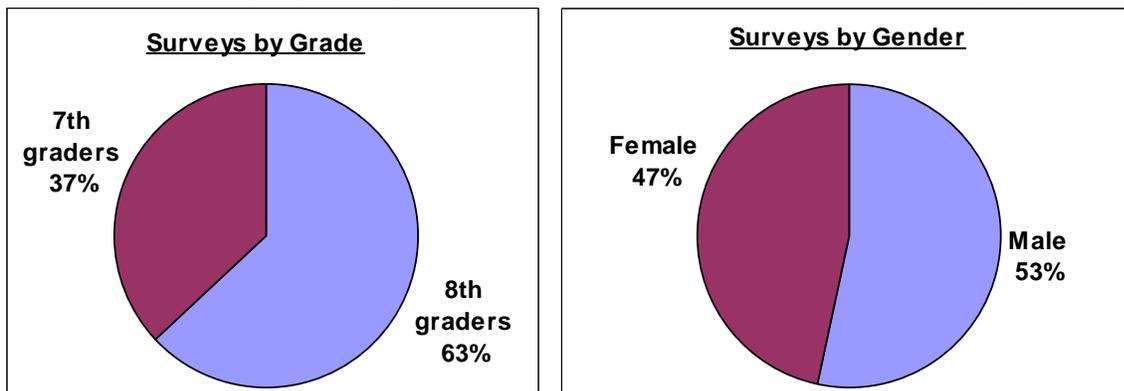
The Survey:

The Safe Routes to School Survey was dispersed at the November parent-teacher conferences. Surveys were handed out as parents entered the building and collected as they left. Spanish and English versions of the surveys were dispersed and we received a total of 47 completed English surveys and five completed Spanish Surveys. Two surveys were discounted because they were incomplete.

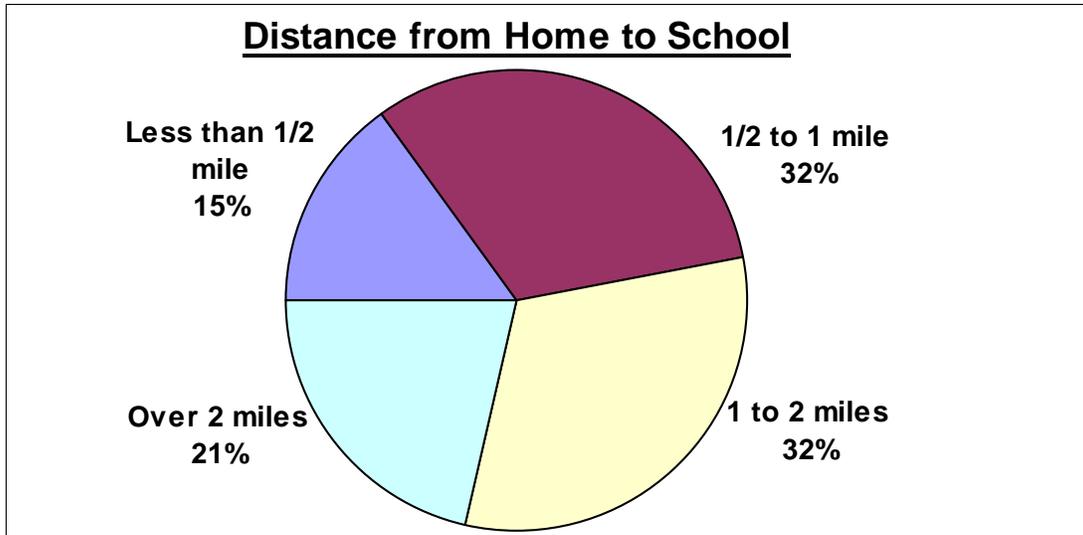
While the sample obtained is not sufficient to derive statistically significant correlations, the sample used for the primary 12 questions is large enough to provide a general idea of the concerns and issues related to walking and biking to and from Talmadge Middle School. The proceeding report provides results from the general survey questions.

Demographics:

The survey sample was fairly well divided between 8th graders verse 7th grader and males verse females and thus provided a fair representation of the demographics of the student body (*see graph 1 & 2*). The distance that students lived was not as evenly divided. Only 13% of those surveyed indicated that they lived less than one-half mile away from the school. This is however, most likely a good representation of where most students live (*see graph 3*).



Graph 1 & 2



Graph 3

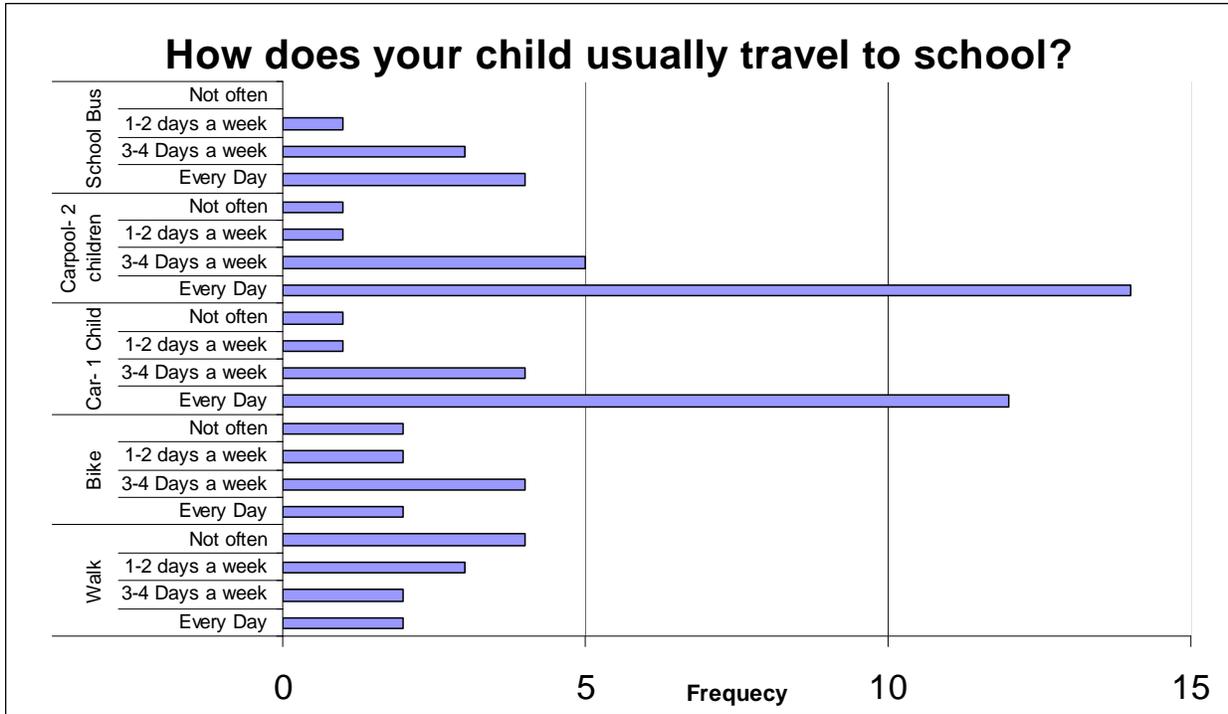
Mode of Travel To and From School:

Question number three of the survey (see attached) asked “How does your child usually travel to and from school?” The results show a number of interesting differences between how students travel to and from school, while also providing a good indication of the modes of travel that are most common.

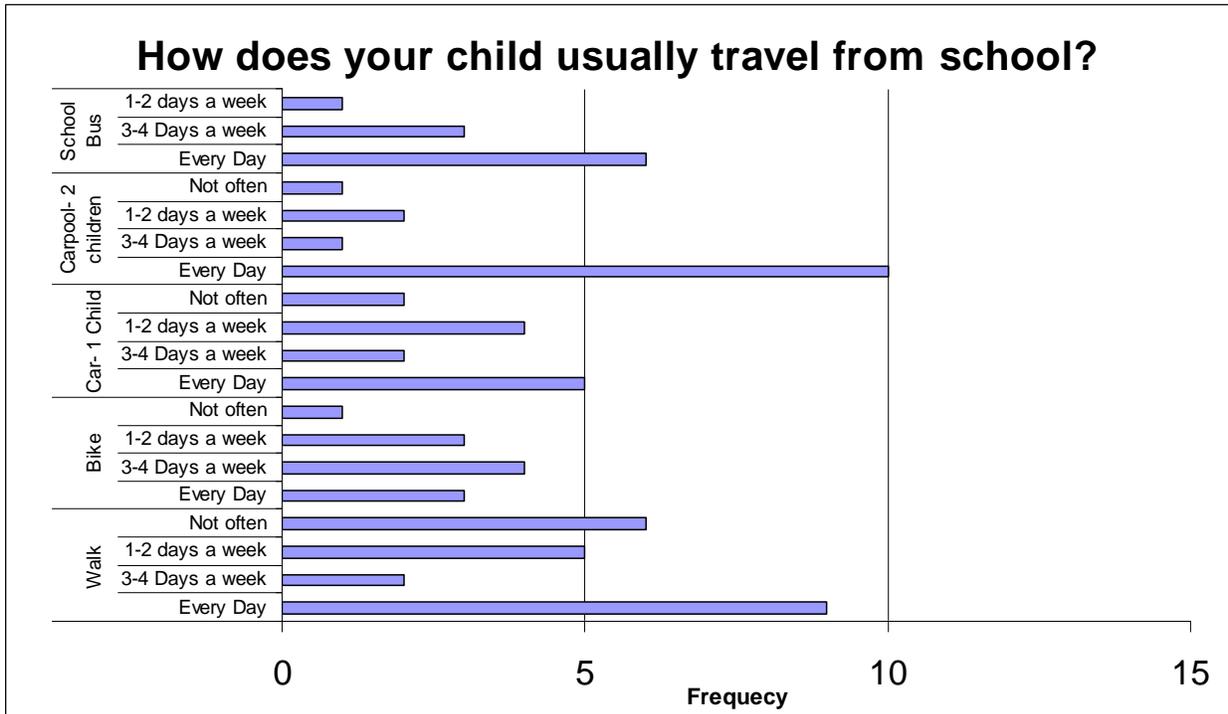
Most students travel to school by car or by carpooling (*see graph 3*). Travel from school to home differs significantly, with fewer students traveling by car and a greater number of students walking, biking or taking the bus (*see graph 4*). Generally, students are more likely to walk or bike from school to their home than they are from home to school. They are also more likely to take the bus from school to home.

There are a number of explanations for these differences in daily travel. Based on comments received through the surveys, many parents drop their children off by car on their way to work, but are unable to do so in the afternoon because students are done with school before parents are done with work. So, children are obligated to find another means of travel. Further, walking and biking may be more appealing in the afternoon, as students generally leave at the same time, thus there are others to walk and bike with. Also, temperatures are generally warmer in the afternoon and may be more conducive to walking and biking to school than in the morning.

Whatever the causes may be for increased pedestrian travel from school to home, it is important that the difference is taken into consideration when developing a Safe Routes to School Program at Talmadge Middle School. Cross tabulation of surveys could be used to determine these reasons however, the sample obtained is not sufficient perform such statistical analysis. The unknown reasons for these differences in travel should be identified at a later time and should be managed for, as they likely serve as the basis of the travel decisions being made.



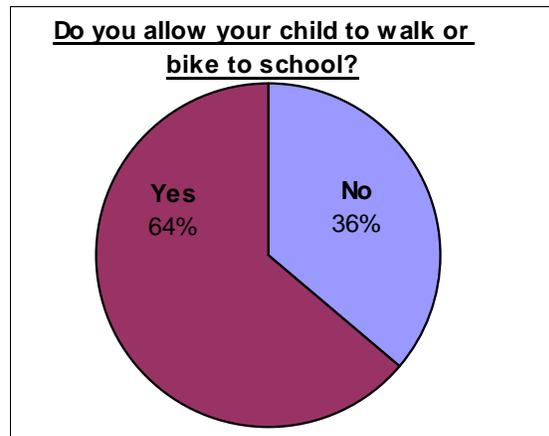
Graph 4



Graph 5

Walking and Biking

Question number four of the survey asked “Do you allow your child to walk or bike to school?” 64 percent of respondents indicated that they allow their children to walk and bike to school and the 36 percent do not (*see graph 6*). It is not possible to provide a statistically significant correlation, but as one might expect, those who lived further from the school were less likely to allow their child to walk or bike to school. For instance, in this sample 90 percent of respondents that lived 2 miles or more from the school do not allow their child to walk or bike to school, while 93 percent of those who lived between one-half and one mile from the school do allow their child to walk to bike (*see attached graphs*).



Graph 6

Benefits of Walking and Biking to School

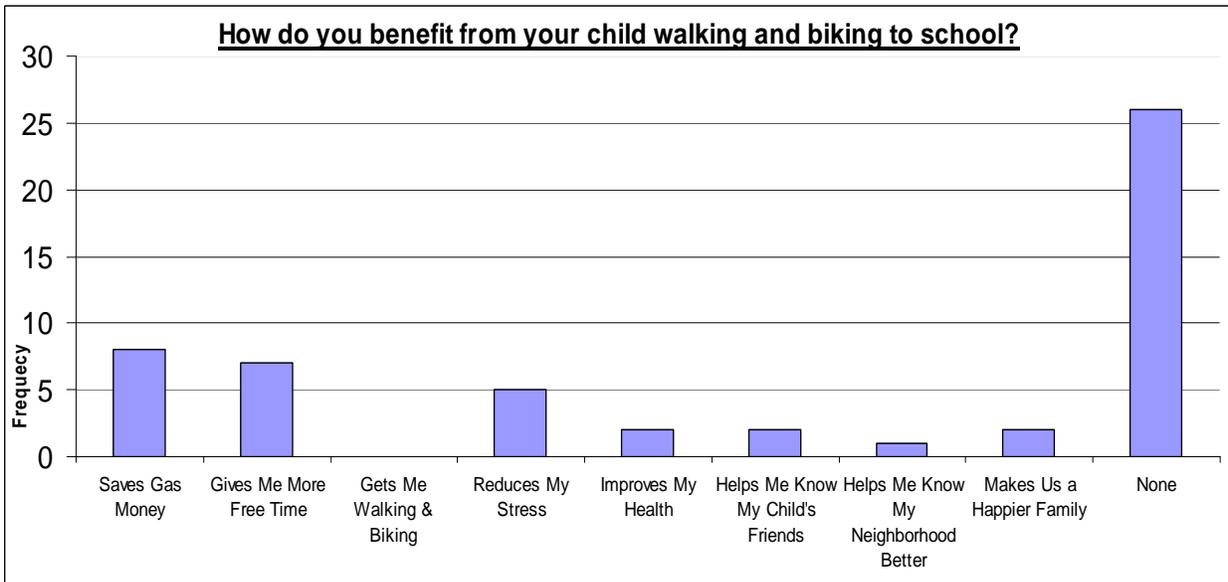
There were two questions on the survey that to evaluated the perceived benefits that parents and children received when a child walked or biked to school. The questions were only answered by those who indicated that they allow their child to walk or bike to school (question four). One problem with these questions is that there was not an option for “no benefit.” To fix the problem I assumed that those that did not check anything did not feel there was a benefit to their child walking or biking. Additionally, there was an “other” option which many people used to write in “none.” The “none” column may then seem misleading since this includes respondents that did not allow their children to walk or bike to school, as well as those who did, but saw no benefit.

Question number five read “How does YOUR CHILD benefit from walking and biking to school?” The most common answer was “Improved Health (n, 22)” followed by “Enjoyment/ More Fun (n, 12)” (*see graph 7*).

Question number six read “How does YOU benefit from your child walking and biking to school?” Generally, adults did not see a significant personal benefit from their children walking and biking to school (*see graph 8*). In fact, a number of respondents used the “other” option to explain, “I do not benefit, I worry” or “I don’t, I have to go looking for him.”



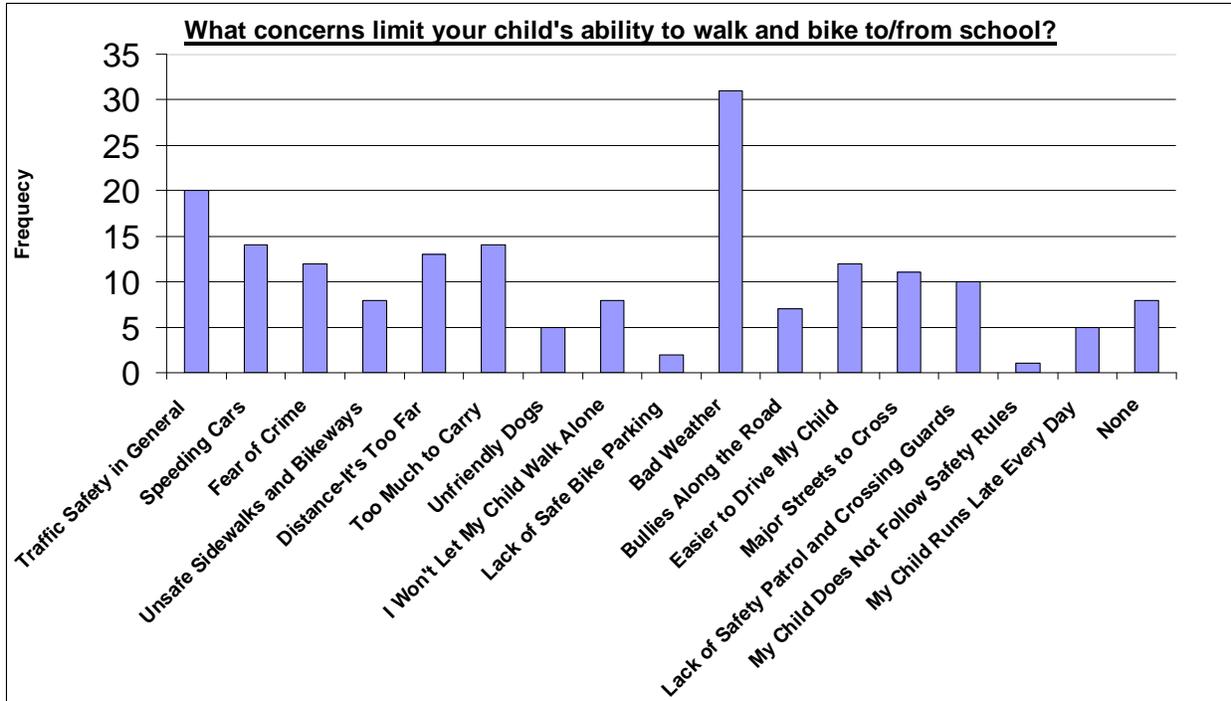
Graph 7



Graph 8

Concerns about Walking and Biking to School

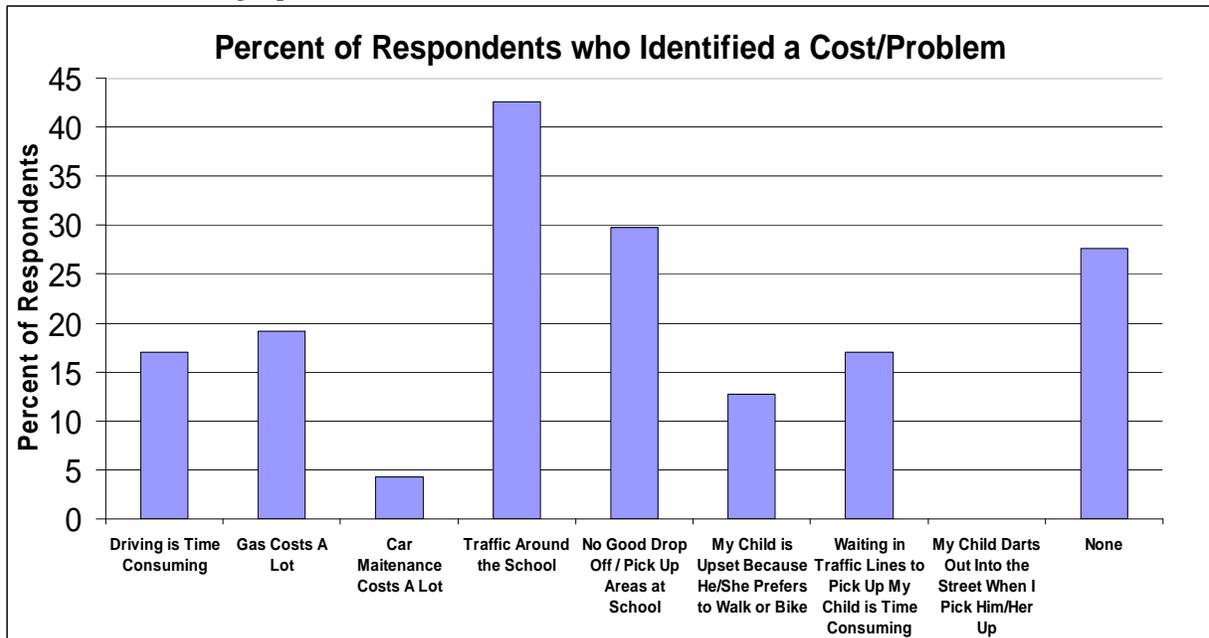
Question number seven of the survey asked “What concerns limit your child’s ability to walk and bike to/from school?” 66 percent of respondents indicated that “bad weather” was a concern and almost 43 percent of respondents were concerned with “traffic safety in general” (*see graph 9*). These two issues should be a focus of the Safe Routes to School Program. The “other” option for this question was also used quite often, with written responses that included concerns such as “sexual predators”, “railroad tracks”, “construction areas” and “traffic at the High School.”



Graph 9

Costs of Driving a Child to School

Question number eight asked “what costs or problems arise when you drive your child to school?” The most common costs dealt with the traffic conditions and drop-off areas around the school. 43 percent of respondents were identified “traffic around the school” as a cost of driving their child to school and 30 percent of respondents said that there was “no good drop off/ pick up area at school” (see graph 10).

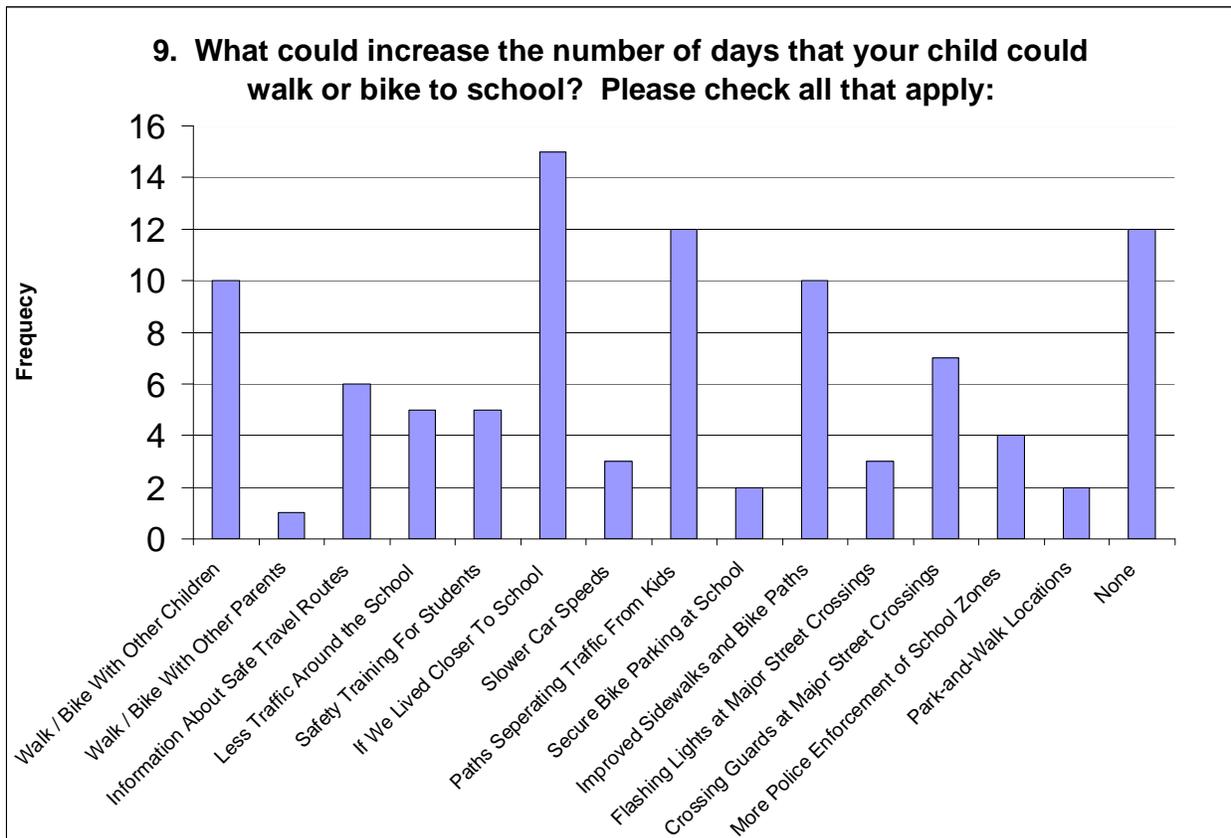


Graph 10

Methods to Increase Walking and Biking

Question number nine asked “what would increase the number of days that your child could walk or bike to school?” 32 percent of respondents answered “if we lived closer” which was the most popular answer (*see graph 11*). A large number of respondents (26 percent) indicated that “paths separating traffic from kids” would increase the number of days that their child could walk or bike to school. The construction of the Ash Creek Trail would satisfy this need.

There was an “other” option for this question as well, which provided for a number of useful comments. Of the “other” things that could increase the number of days a child could walk or bike, “better equipment for bad weather” and “more street lights” are recommendations that should be considered, especially considering that 66 percent of respondents thought bad weather was a barrier to walking and biking to school. It should be noted that the results of this question may seem sparse as there was a relatively low frequency for each option of this question. This occurred because a large number of parents that did not allow their children to walk or bike to school, skipped the question entirely, possibly indicating that nothing can be done to increase the number of days that their child walks or bikes to school.



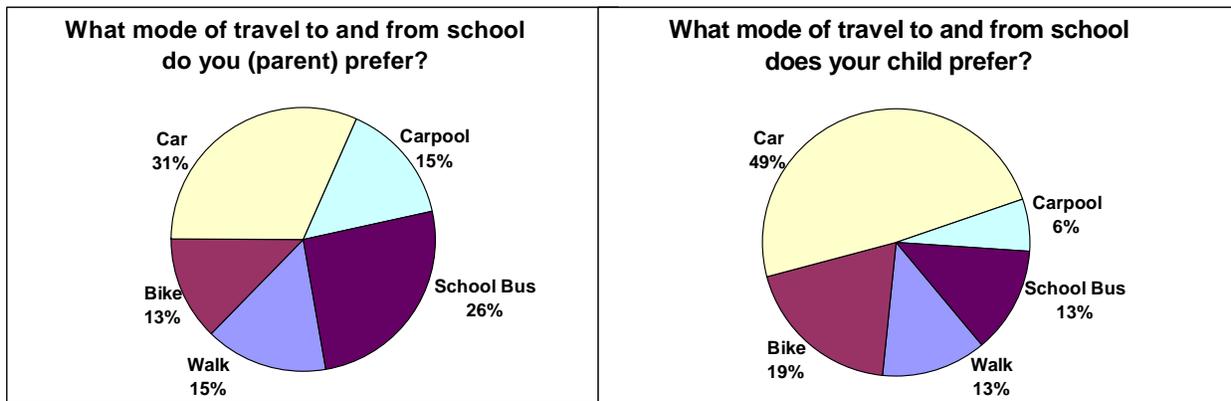
Graph 11

Preferred Modes of Travel

Question number ten was a two part question which asked “What mode of travel to and from school do YOU prefer?” and “what mode of travel does YOUR CHILD prefer?” It is important to note that there was some apprehension of adults who answered this question as the required response was absolute, whereas preference often depended on things like the weather. Respondents actually used the margins to justify the preference choices that were made or to explain that preference depended on the weather.

The results were interesting. According to the parents, 54 percent of students prefer to travel to/from school by car or carpool and 32 percent of students prefer to walk or bike (*see graph 13*). Of the parents that were surveyed, 46 percent preferred travel by car or carpool and 28 percent of parents preferred their child walked or biked (*see graph 12*). Many more parents preferred travel by bus than did students.

Caution should be taken when analyzing these results, as the parents answered for their child. There is a possibility that parents assumed their child’s preferred method of travel, without actually knowing which they prefer. A follow up study could test this potential discrepancy in the data.

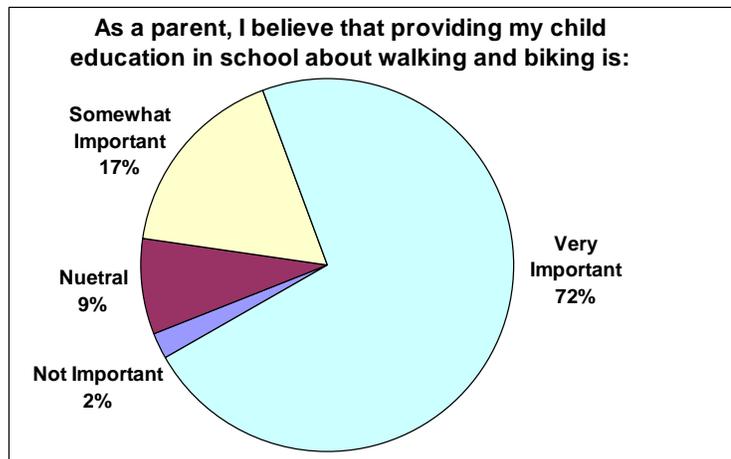


Graph 12

Graph 13

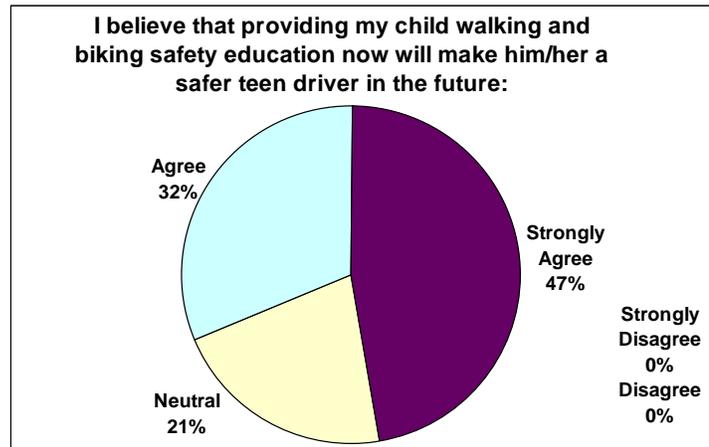
Walking and Biking Safety Education

Question eleven and twelve sought to evaluate the perceived importance of providing education about walking and biking in school. Question eleven stated “As a parent, I believe that providing my child education in school about walking and biking safety is.” 89 percent of parents thought that teaching walking and biking safety in school was either very important or somewhat important (*see graph 14*).



Graph 14

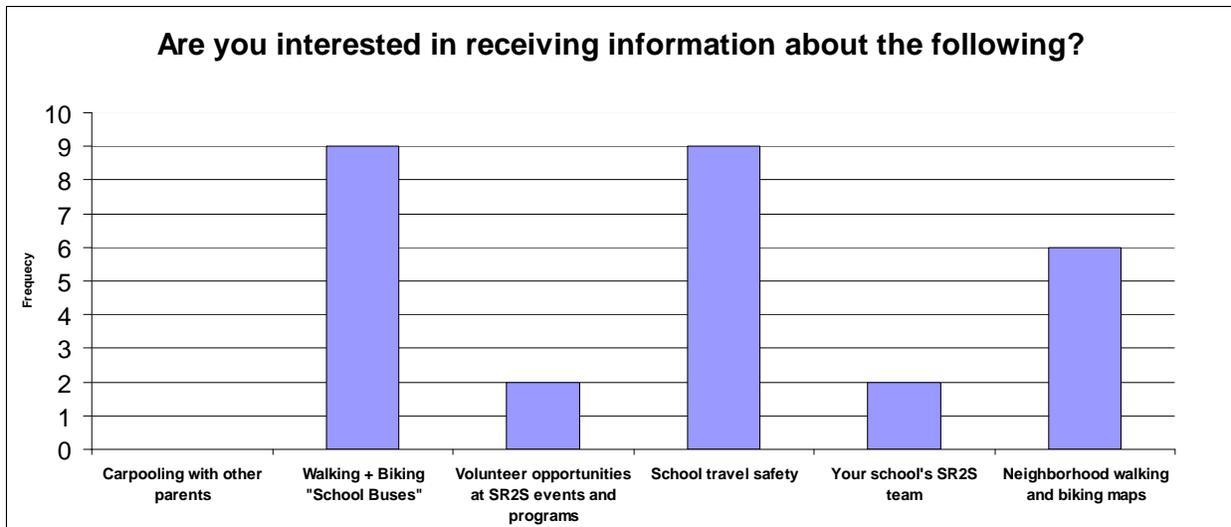
Question twelve stated “I believe that providing my child walking and biking education now will make him/her a safer teen driver in the future.” Of those surveyed, parents did not feel that walking and biking safety education was as important to the safety of their child as a teen driver. Nonetheless, 79 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that teaching walking and biking education now would make him/her a safer teen driver in the future (See Graph 15).



Graph 15

Further Information

Question number thirteen asked “Are you interested in receiving information about the following?” Most respondents were not interested in receiving further information however, the results do provide a general idea of the parts of the Safe Routes to School Program that parents are interested in (See Graph 16).



Graph 16

Using the Survey

The survey is the first step towards developing a Safe Routes to School Program. The results provide a good overview of the issues, concerns and feelings regarding walking and biking to school. While the sample obtained is not ideal, it can serve as a basis for direction of

the Safe Routes to School Program. A group of interested teachers, parents and community members should now be formed at Talmadge Middle School to make use of this, and other information to develop ways to encourage, enable and educate students about walking and biking to school. The information will only be valuable if there is substantial support to do something with it. So, it is important that a Safe Routes to School Committee is formed to use the information obtained to develop special events, contests, and programs as a part of the Safe Routes to School Initiative.