



MY SCHOOL IN MOTION

Concluding Report



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My School in Motion



Created in 1990, GVF, a not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to inspiring mobility choices for ALL. Through our 30+ years of expertise, GVF develops programs and initiatives that help educate and provide alternatives to driving alone, ultimately improving the quality of life for all.

Through PennDOT's Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Grant, GVF initiated the project, "My School in Motion." GVF partnered with Tredyffrin Easttown School District to bring the program to Valley Forge Middle School.

The My School in Motion program was developed to promote safety in walking and biking to school and educate the next generation of commuters on the benefits of walking and biking as an alternate mode of travel.

Biking and walking allow students to travel safely, emitting zero CO2 emissions while enhancing physical and mental well-being.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen a tremendous spike in biking and walking as modes of transportation. The increase in use tells us there is great value in investing in this type of infrastructure within our communities.

"Valley Forge Middle School is excited to participate with GVF on My School In Motion. We are looking forward to further educating our students on the benefits of safe walking and biking and providing opportunities for students to make meaningful differences in their community through civic engagement," Dr. Jacquelyn Hickey Rothera, Assistant Principal, Valley Forge Middle School.

Components of the program included:

- Parental/Guardian survey
- National recognition for the school through The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly America Program
- Walkability audits
- Website & video development
- Education and Marketing
- Events



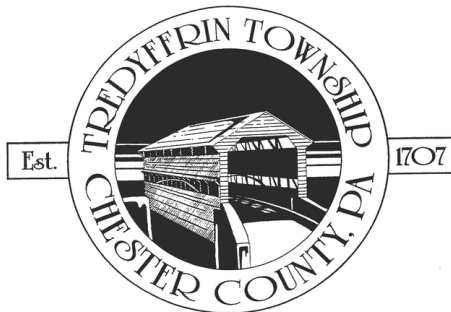
Partnerships



GVF worked with several strategic partners throughout the My School in Motion Program:

- **Chester County Planning Commission** provided insight into infrastructure and transportation projects within the area. The planning commission also spoke to the My School in Motion Club during the guest speaker series about Multi-modal Transportation Planning careers.
- **Tredyffrin Township** provided information on township priorities for multi-modal transportation projects, reviewed grant documents, and provided insight into the walking and biking audit completed by GVF.
- **Tredyffrin Easttown School District**
- **Valley Forge Middle School**
- The Traffic Unit of the **Tredyffrin Township Police Department** was provided an opportunity to review the parent survey results and comment on traffic issues in the Valley Forge Middle School zones.

GVF looks forward to continuing to work with our partners to implement the My School in Motion Program within additional school districts and continue to improve and strengthen our transportation systems.



Parent/Guardian Survey



**** The results highlighted below were obtained pre-COVID-19**

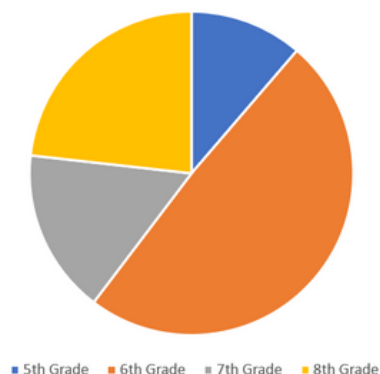
A parent survey was instituted as part of the 'My School in Motion' grant program for the academic school year 2019-2020. There were 260 survey responses received, representing 24% of the student population at Valley Forge Middle School.

Assessing initial parent and guardian perceptions of walking and biking to school was critical to establishing what barriers prevent families from fully embracing biking and walking. While the grant's goal was to increase awareness and enthusiasm for walking and biking, the grant also focused on the importance of investing in the infrastructure that will allow students to walk or bike safely to and from school.

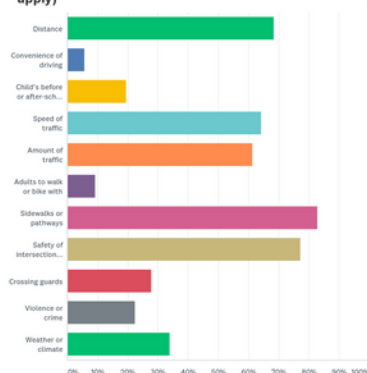
Key findings of the survey:

- While the school bus is the predominant mode of travel to and from school, a healthy percentage of students regularly walk or bike to school (16.6%).
- A large percentage of parent responses indicated that they would allow their children in the middle-school age range to walk/bike to/from school unaccompanied by an adult (65%). Roughly 31% would not allow their children to walk due to safety concerns or distance.
- When asked to name the issues that affected their decision to allow or not allow the walk/bike mode, parents overwhelmingly cited transportation infrastructure concerns in the following order:
 - Sidewalks or pathways
 - Safety of intersections or crosswalks
 - Distance
 - Speed and volume of traffic

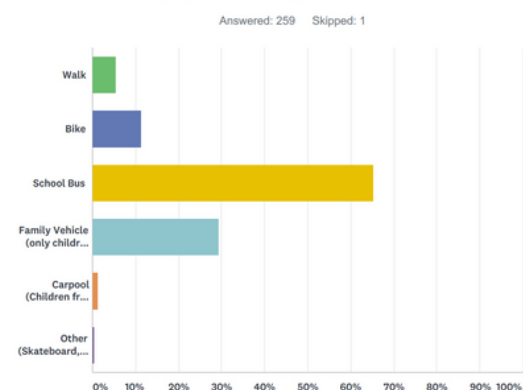
Parent Responses by Middle School Grade



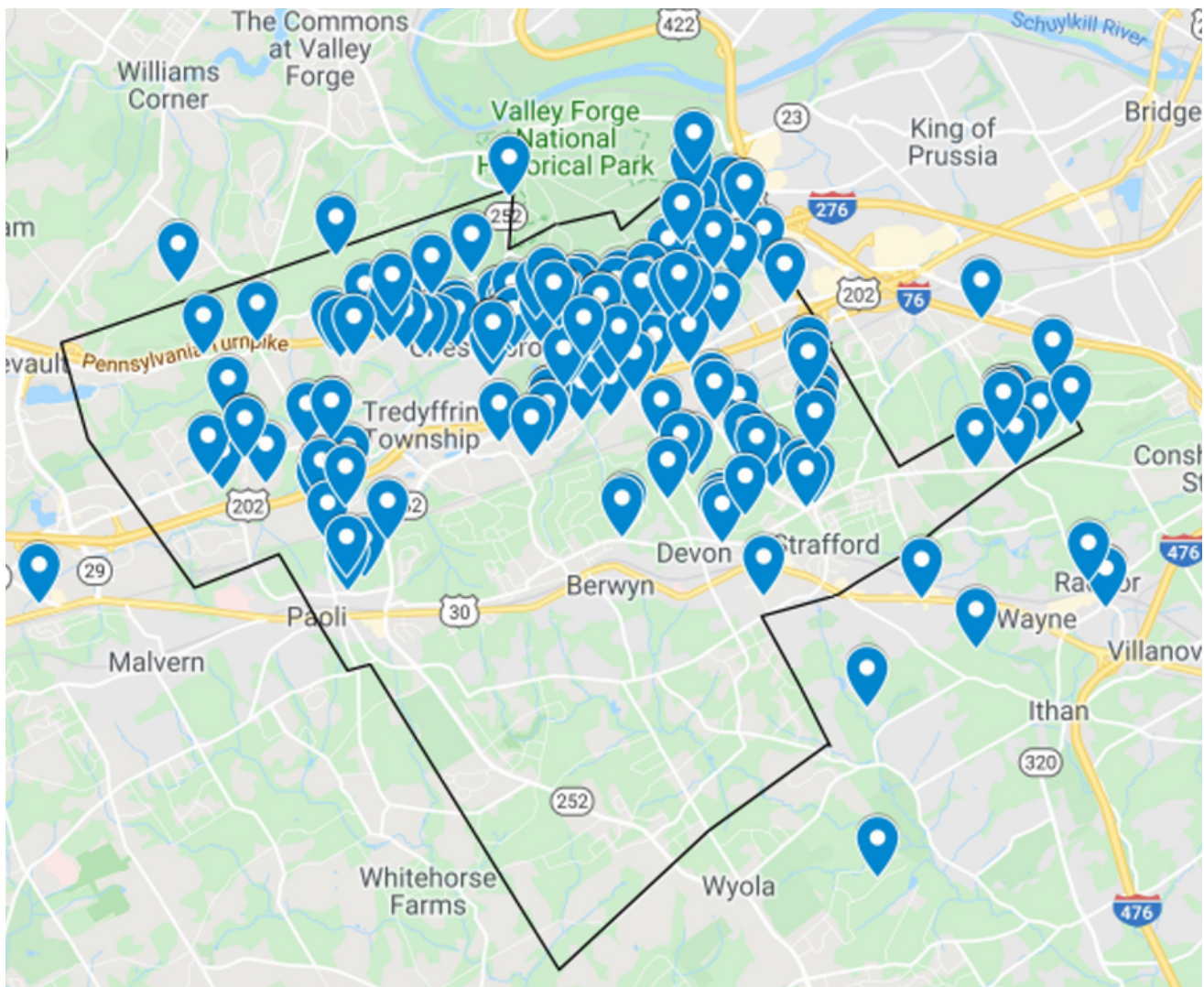
Q13: Which of the following issues affected your decision to allow, or not allow, your child to walk or bike to/from school? (Select ALL that apply)



Q5 On most days, how does your child arrive for school?



- A comparison of modes to school in the morning and home from school in the afternoon showed no change in the school bus and bike mode. However, the walking mode showed an increase of 100% from morning to afternoon (6% of respondents to 12% of respondents). Personal vehicle use showed a corresponding drop in the afternoon. Potential exists for converting personal vehicle mode to walker mode especially in the morning 'to school' period.
- 33% of respondents live within one mile of VFMS. This number is significant as Tredyffrin Easttown School District transportation policy states that bus service is not provided within a mile radius of the school if a 'safe' route exists. Demonstrated interest in this topic exists for families that live within reasonable walking distance.
- The geographical area represented: A large majority (over 65%) of parent respondents reside west of US 202. See map below.



Kick-Off Event



The kickoff event held at Valley Forge Middle School was a huge success, with over 350 students participating in biking or walking to school that day. That was close to double the number who normally walk or bike to school!

GVF organized and held the kick-off event in October 2019 in conjunction with International Bike or Walk to School Day.

The kick-off event was a great way to encourage and educate students on biking and walking to school and serve as an opportunity to encourage them to set a goal for the year to bike or walk to school, even if it was one day per week.

The event was held in the morning before classes started. When students arrived, they took a 'victory lap' around the school track, where there were five (5) trivia questions posted on signs about walking, biking, and transportation. The following assembly announced the 'My School In Motion' program, and the trivia question answers were provided in a fun way to keep the students engaged. In addition, prizes and gift bags were distributed to students.

GVF planned to hold an end-of-year event in May 2020. However, due to the pandemic and the school moving to virtual learning in March 2020, we could not hold in-person events.



Bike and Walk Events



With the pandemic stopping in-person events, GVF had to get creative and found ways to celebrate and recognize both International and National Bike and Walk to School days during 2020 and 2021.

International Bike and Walk to School Day

International Walk to School Day is a global event held every October and typically involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day.

GVF created an educational video that the school shared with students to recognize the day. The video included information on the following:

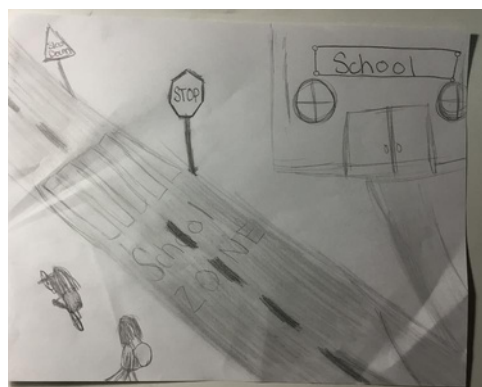
- School bike and walk facilities
- What is a bike and walk pool?
- Bike and walking safety tips
- Information about the My School in Motion Club

GVF organized a poster challenge where students were encouraged to create posters highlighting biking and walking safety.

Students were also encouraged to test their route to school by walking or biking one day during the month.

National Bike to School Day

National Bike to School Day takes place in the month of May. In 2021, the school was unable to host in-person events. GVF created a second educational video to be shared with students, encouraging them to test their route to school to assess safety for biking or walking.



My School in Motion Club



The My School in Motion Club was an opportunity to get students involved in physical activity, educate them on transportation options, and develop the confidence to vocalize their experiences with their community's connectivity.

GVF worked with the school to set up and oversaw the club through 2019–2021.

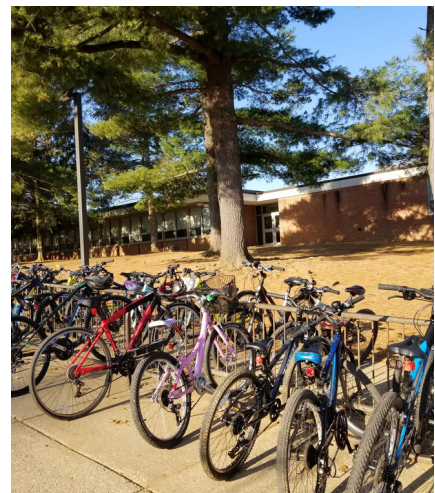
GVF assisted the club with the following items:

- Identifying staff members to assist with overseeing the club
- Identifying a time and day for the club to meet consistently
- How to advertise the club to students
 - Add a notice to the school newsletter and website
 - Collaborate with physical education teachers and the school nurse on healthy initiatives/challenges to further engagement.
 - Talk about it on the morning announcements.
- Identifying a club mission

Set club goals

Club members, with assistance, identified annual goals they would like to achieve. GVF assisted by providing the following suggested goals:

- Assist with school bike and walk events
- Complete and maintain the Bicycle Designation through the League of American Bicyclists for the school
- Complete a walking audit of streets within a 2-mile radius of the school to rate safety for walking and biking to school
- Educate the school community on the benefits of biking and walking
- Organize school bike and walking challenges



Club Activities



Below are activities GVF provided and worked on with the club:

Walking and Biking Audits

Walking and biking audits are a great tool for gathering information about street conditions, engaging club members, and informing communities of infrastructure gaps, such as sidewalk connections and bike amenities.

GVF and club members completed a walking and biking audit of the streets surrounding the school to assess how safe it is to bike or walk to school.

Information collected was shared with Tredyffrin Township so they can evaluate for future infrastructure planning.

Questions included:

- Are there sidewalks along the block?
- Does the sidewalk continue along the entire block?
- Is there anything blocking the sidewalk?
- Is there a crosswalk or a safe place to cross the street?
- Are there bike lanes?
- Are there protected bike lanes?

GVF developed a walking and biking audit report to showcase the findings.

The Bicycle Friendly Designation

GVF provided information and encouraged the school to apply for the designation. More information can be found on page 10. The goal is to allow the club to be responsible for completing and maintaining the designation on behalf of the school. This will make them aware of the school's facilities and help them identify areas the school can grow in biking and walking.

Guest Speaker Series

GVF scheduled monthly guest speakers from the transportation and planning field to talk about their careers, biking and walking safety, and the importance of multi-modal transportation options.



Bicycle Friendly Program



Through The League of American Bicyclists, schools are eligible to apply for The Bicycle Friendly America Program. The program provides recognition and guidance for schools, states, communities, universities, and businesses to showcase and enhance their bicycle-friendliness. In addition, the program provides a practical blueprint, hands-on assistance, and resources to help make places better for bicycling.

Deserving schools are recognized at the Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum levels, and all applicants receive valuable feedback and assistance in becoming more welcoming to bicycling.

Awarded schools are recognized in a national press release, through the League's social media, and on an interactive awards map.

GVF provided information and encouraged the school to apply for the designation. GVF is excited that Valley Forge Middle School applied in May 2021. Recognition will be announced in September 2021. If awarded, Valley Forge Middle School will be the first Pennsylvania middle school to be recognized. The designation must be renewed every four (4) years.

It is encouraged that the My School in Motion Club is responsible for maintaining the recognition.

The club should review the application annually and create goals for improving biking throughout the school, ultimately increasing the recognition level with each renewal. GVF is also available to review and help the school apply when renewal is due.

For more information visit:
bikeleague.org/business





GVF developed and maintained the website schoolinmotion.com to serve as a resource with information about the My School in Motion program, as well as national examples of biking and walking resources

Valley Forge Middle School integrated the School in Motion website on the school's website. This allowed program information to be easily accessible to students and parents.

The website includes:

- How students can join the club
- Club mission and goals
- Club activities
- Student activities
- Upcoming events
- Parent resources
- Biking and walking facilities available in and around the school



Program Manual



At the end of the grant, GVF provided Valley Forge Middle School with a program manual to continue the program.

The program manual is 12 pages long and includes information on the following program components:

- Parental/Guardian survey
- National recognition for the school through The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly America Program
- Club member participation in walking and biking audits
- Communications
- Education and Marketing
- Events

GVF plans to utilize the program manual to bring the My School in Motion program to other schools within the region. GVF would like to expand this program and offer it to other school districts in our region. The program manual and lessons learned from this program will be very valuable.

GVF has encouraged continued partnership with Valley Forge Middle School to help strengthening and further the My School in Motion program and components outlined in the manual.





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