

From: Philip Mooney [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, March 30, 2023 1:46 PM

To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>

Subject: School Buses - please include the following letter as a public comment at city council

Dear San Rafael City Council Members,

I am writing to urge the City of San Rafael to collaborate with San Rafael City Schools and provide free school buses for public schools in our community. The heavy traffic during school drop-off and pickup times causes frustration for parents, students, and local residents, while also negatively impacting air quality and hindering the effectiveness of the Safe Routes to Schools program.

I am the vice-chair of San Rafael's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and I spend a lot of time thinking about making alternative forms of transportation safe and enjoyable for all ages and abilities. This includes collaborating with the Safe Routes to Schools program. However, the heavy traffic during school drop-off and pickup times can make it difficult and dangerous for students to walk or bike safely to school. I love getting around town by bike, but I currently don't take my daughter to Sun Valley Elementary by bike because of conflict with all the backed up car traffic of other parents dropping off their kids.

Safely and efficiently transporting dozens of kids in a classic yellow school bus is an effective tool to reduce congestion, but the current pricing structure discourages families from using the service. San Rafael City Schools offers a bus program, which I currently use to transport my daughter to Sun Valley school, but the annual transportation fee of \$420 per child, plus a \$60 processing fee, is costly. Although a reduced fee is available if a household meets income-based eligibility requirements, making the school bus completely free would encourage more students to take advantage of the service. The school district doesn't have the budget to do this by themselves.

Policy M-5.5 of our General Plan 2040 addresses school-related traffic and seeks to "actively encourage public and private schools to reduce congestion caused by commuting students and staff." One recommendation in the report is "**supporting increased funding for school buses.**" I encourage the City to follow the suggestions of our own General Plan and work with San Rafael City Schools collaboratively to increase bus ridership by making the school buses free. I realize this effort will be costly, but I believe it's money well spent for the good of the community.

We face overwhelming traffic getting everyone to the same place at the same time for the start of school. Nobody likes getting stuck in in school-related traffic, waiting in a long line of cars, riding or walking near a long line of cars, or breathing the exhaust of all of these waiting cars. By providing free school buses, we can encourage more students to take the bus; thereby alleviating some traffic, making it safer for students to walk or bike to school, and reducing air pollution around schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely
Philip Mooney
Gerstle Park