



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



**Novato Task Force
Meeting Notes
October 18, 2012**

Present (11)

Wendi Kallins – Program Director for Safe Routes to Schools; Laura Kelly –Volunteer Liaison for Safe Routes to Schools; Jason Nutt – Novato Public Works Director; Andrew Barrington – Novato Police Department; Genny Boyd – Hamilton School; Jason Davis – Hamilton School; Seth Hayse – Rancho School; Shari Nemerovski – San Ramon School; Mike Christian – Loma Verde School; Krista Peach – San Jose Middle School; Cassie Alciati – San Jose Middle School.

Sinaloa Middle School Student Biking Accident

The Task Force discussed the tragic death of Hailey Ratliff, a Sinaloa Middle School student, who was biking home from school on September 27, 2012 when an SUV collided and killed her. Hailey was as riding west on Novato Boulevard west of Sutro Avenue when she was struck in the roadway by the eastbound SUV. Hailey had moved to Novato over the summer with her family from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Andrew shared that Hailey was unfortunately on the wrong side of the road and was hit head on. The speed limit for the area where Hailey was hit is a transition speed limit zone 45 – 35 mph.

Wendi shared that teaching children to ride in the same direction of traffic is very important safety message. Riding the wrong way in a bike lane is one of the most dangerous things you can do. Riding your bike on sidewalks is also not safe primarily due to walkers and drivers backing out of their driveways.

The following statement was released by Safe Routes to Schools after the Novato biking accident to all Marin County principals and SR2S Team Leaders at each school:

The Transportation Authority of Marin's Safe Routes to Schools program is deeply saddened by the tragic death of Hailey Rattiff, a 7th grade student at Sinaloa Middle School who was struck and killed while bicycling home from school on September 27. Our hearts go out to her family.

We recommend that you dedicate next Wednesday's International Walk to School Day for the safety of all children and remind everyone to take proper safety precautions whether driving, bicycling or walking.

Drivers need to:

- *obey all traffic laws*
- *abide by the speed limit*
- *be extra watchful for children on the roadway*

Walkers and bicyclists need to:

- *be alert and predictable,*
- *follow all traffic laws,*
- *be extra cautious when crossing the street*
- *make eye contact with drivers*
- *bicyclists should always ride on the right with traffic*
- *bicyclists should always wear a helmet*

There is no way to guarantee against these tragic accidents, but we can increase everyone's safety by abiding by these simple safety rules.

To date, there is no official report regarding the cause of the collision. Wendi said perhaps a lower speed limit in the neighborhood would have made a difference. The speed limit has not been changed in that area since the residential subdivision was developed. Could we request to lower the speed limit?

Jason said the primary basis for establishing a proper, realistic speed limit is the nationally recognized method of using the 85th percentile speed. This is the speed at or below which 85% of the traffic moves. Recording the speeds of motor vehicles using radar, or other speed-measuring device collects speed data to determine limits. A representative sample of vehicular speeds is recorded and these speeds would include local residents who drive through the zone. There are also other parameters used to evaluate speed data, such as the average, median and pace speeds. However, the 85th percentile speed is the most critical criterion in establishing a realistic speed limit. Volume of traffic and collision history is also weighted when setting a speed limit. The recent Novato accident adds a new collision on

record for that area, but the speed limit is not changeable. Use of the 85-percentile speed acknowledges that 15% of drivers are traveling above a speed that is reasonable and proper. This is the 15% of motorists at which enforcement action is directed. Studies have shown that this is the group of motorists that cause many of the crashes and have the worst driving records.

Seth shared that perhaps we can reach out more to educate young bicyclists that need to be taught not to ride against traffic, especially kindergarteners. Krista asked, what can we teach our Middle School students? It was agreed by the Task Force that more education is needed. SR2S will look into developing an educational piece targeted to young bicyclists, in addition to scheduling our safety classes for 2nd and 4th graders.

Krista mentioned a dangerous crossing zone in the San Jose Middle School is the area coming from country club which makes it difficult to cross Ignacio. Jason said Public Works is working to establish a few crosswalks and high visibility signage in that area. There is no budget for lighted crosswalks. Wendi said that communities like embedded lighting crosswalks because they are unobtrusive, however, SR2S doesn't like them because they are unobtrusive – drivers often don't see them. Cassie added it's not always comfortable for parents to have kids use the crosswalks, because drivers are still drivers.

School Updates

San Jose Middle School would like to schedule 6th grade safety classes. Wendi shared all the Novato schools are offered free safety classes for 2nd and 4th graders. Classes can be scheduled by contacting peggy@marinbike.org

All Novato schools reported International Walk and Roll to School Day to be a huge success. Updates and photos can be viewed at www.saferoutestoschools.org

Wendi shared an effective parent/child agreement created by Venetia Valley parents to ensure their child's safety. The form opens communications about the importance of safe bicycle riding to school *every day*:

Biking Safety Rules

1. Wear a correctly fastened helmet.
2. Ride on the right side of the road (with traffic).
3. Obey all traffic signals – lights and stop signs.
4. Check all driveways carefully for cars pulling out.
5. Be cautious about parked cars – they may open doors or pull out.
6. Stay with riding group unless given permission to go ahead.

7. Use hand signals for turns.
8. Do not mess around or be careless when driving near traffic.
9. Follow all directions from adults.
10. Use eye contact with drivers (assume drivers who don't make eye contact don't see you)

I promise to obey all biking rules at all times. I know I will not be allowed to bike if I do not obey these rules, because I won't be a safe rider! Signatures:

_____ Mommy _____ Daddy _____ Your Child

Law Enforcement Updates – Novato Police Department Received National Award for Traffic Safety

The Novato Police Department was recently awarded first place honors for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety by the California Office of Traffic Safety and the California Highway Patrol. The award was for the department's participation in the California Law Enforcement Challenge to promote and enhance traffic safety in the community.

Andrew said more than 100 citations have been issued for Distracted Driving – drivers using cell phones while driving. Tickets bring awareness to the issue, warnings are not as effective. Jason added driver behavior is the hardest to tackle. Wendi shared we are seeking three high schools to pilot a new program to address distracted driving behavior of teens; specifically texting and talking while driving. The program is designed to engage and educate the students on the elements necessary to create a comprehensive outreach campaign. Three thousand teens die each year due to distracted driving -- cell phone texting and talking are the leading causes. It's a habit deadlier than drunk driving. SR2S is collaborating with high school student leaders to bring awareness to peers, family and friends about the dangers of using cell phones while driving. A classroom presentation took place at Novato High and SR2S is looking to recruit students.

Genny shared that police car presence near the school keeps drivers alert to be cautious for students. Andrew said it's extremely effective during school hours, but that the police force is limited so they can't be at all dangerous crossing zones. Jason said they are trying to examine pathway opportunities for Hamilton.

Cassie said lack of crosswalks is a problem on Ignacio to get to San Jose. As a result, sidewalks are used by bikers from Ventura to Sunset. She said that there are not a lot of driveways along that stretch but it's the only way the students can get to a safe controlled crossing.

Grant update

Jason shared good news that a grant has been approved for pathway improvements at Lynwood Elementary and Sinoloa Middle School. Design work will begin this year.

1. Lynnwood – A pedestrian pathway will be constructed in 2013-14.
2. Sinoloa – Biking and pathway striping will be added at Vineyard and Wilson, just beyond the school, making it more conducive for students to cross.

Genny asked if another speed limit trailer can be installed at the other entrance to Hamilton. Andrew reported that they do not have the staff to physically move them. Jason said the cost is \$9,000 for additional trailers. No budget for more.

Walk Audit for San Jose Middle School

A walk audit will be scheduled in November. Suggested dates are November 6, 7th or 9th. Traffic light adjustments will also be included. Jason said there is a grant to reconfigure 35 of the 39 traffic lights in the spring in efforts to increase pedestrian walk times, as well as bicyclists.

Wendi said one of the team leaders suggested a ‘No Right on Red’ coming out of Bel Marin Keys This will be examined during the audit.

Jason said a consulting team will review three locations. 1) Sunset Boulevard bike lanes. 2) Vineyard/Sutro. 2) – Lamont.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 7, 2013 at 9:30 am.

