



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



**Safe Routes to School
Novato Task Force Meeting Notes
May 15th, 2019**

Attended:

Wendi Kallins, Peggy Clark- Safe Routes to Schools, Rene deBoss-Resident, Diane Gasson- Novato School District, Paul LaPerriere-Resident, Manijeh Larizadeh- City of Novato DPW, Cindy Leonard- Parent San Marin High, Gretchen Schubeck-City of Novato, Dabney Smith- Resident, Michelle Tjosvold- Resident, Kelly Zalewski- Marin Transit,

San Marin:

San Marin hosted their first ever Bike to School event last week. ASB (Leadership) students hosted the morning event . Popcorn was very popular - it encouraged students to come to the welcome table to fill out a raffle ticket for biking to school. The raffle tickets included various safety questions for students which they had to answer to participate in drawing. In this manner, we were able to educate the teens on the rules of the road. Sample Question:

If a parked car is blocking the bike lane, you are allowed to go around it. However, before you merge into a car lane, you should:

- a. Sing Hallelujah
- b. Look back over your shoulder to be sure it's clear to change lanes.
- c. Signal that you're moving into the car lane
- d. Both b and c

In February 2019 Chris Blunk accompanied by Ashley Leonard (student at San Marin High) presented the scope of the proposed project to the City Council. Ashley did a wonderful job presenting! The project was identified as a CIP which makes it a priority project for the City of Novato. It will be included in the draft budget – July 2019-2020.

Some signs and a radar detection monitor (feedback display) have been placed on the road. Trees have been cut back. The Welcome to Novato sign will be put up soon.

Diane meet with the San Marin High Principal regarding the options to fund a crossing guard. The community is supportive; however the students have chosen to focus resources on mental health concerns at the school. The schools available funding will support those efforts.

The City of Novato will be asked for funding for a crossing guard or a pedestrian mid-block flashing signal. The estimated cost for the signal could be similar to that of a crossing guard. The DPW (engineers) are waiting for an evaluation. Many people expressed opposition to a light. The DPW does not know how long this project will take. This issue has been on the SR2S project list for five years.

Working Group Update

The purpose of the School Travel Working Group is to develop Novato-specific strategies to:

- *Increase biking, walking, and carpooling to school;*
 - *Decrease vehicle congestion at school pick-up and drop-off;*
 - *Reduce idling at school pick-up and drop-off;*
 - *Identify safe walking and biking routes to each school in Novato;*
 - *Increase driver awareness of pedestrians, cyclists, cars and buses in school zones;*
- and*
- *Promote the environmental and health benefits of biking and walking to school.*

The Safe Routes to Schools Task Force Subcommittee will continue to work specifically on 2-3 issues next year. The sub-committee task is to focus on SR2S issues at specific schools and to use resources in the city to get them completed.

The Task Force focus will remain on infrastructure and the working group will work on school specific projects and continue to report back to the Task Force

During the last meeting the group looked at the issues listed for San Jose Middle School. The entrance on Sunset Parkway has experienced traffic delays for a long time. Members including Chris Blunk , Mark Silva and Novato Police officers discussed the option to close this entrance except to school staff. The main student drop off would be on Ignacio Blvd. The next step would be for the DPW traffic consultant to study the proposal, work with the School District, go through the approval process: upon approval: paint signs, paint curbs, distribute information to the school community before the start of the next school year.

*** Mark Silva has resigned from his position. The School District will be seeking a replacement.

Dabney has been representing the residents near the school on Merritt Drive. Many continue to be concerned additional parking will be lost on Sunset Drive forcing drivers to Merritt Drive.

Mapping program

Demographic data of students is planned to be collected. This data would not include specific addresses of students; but the neighborhoods from which they travel to school, to enable a transportation study to assist with identifying suggested safe routes students can take. The data would be private.

Bus options – History of bus service in Novato

In the past Novato had three schools that actively used a yellow bus service. The cost of the service increased leading to the service being stopped. It was not free to students. Many of the schools campuses were designed for busses not for drop-off/pick-up. Over time habits changed and families became accustomed to driving to school.

The Safe Routes to School Student Travel Surveys data demonstrates how the use of single-family vehicles has increased over the years. Current survey results can be reviewed on the Safe Routes to School [website](#).

Safe Routes to Schools provides each school a Report Card providing a summary on travel, encouragement, curriculum and survey results for the prior school year.

The County of Marin cancelled the yellow bus program in 2009 due to lack of funding. Traffic has increased as a direct result of no yellow bus service. Yellow bus service is provided for special needs students only.

Marin Transit (MT) has been providing transportation services for many years and has been proactive to support students traveling by bus throughout the county. In the last few years several school districts have renewed the yellow bus service with specific district funding. MT has been actively involved in each districts efforts including the use of public buses used by students. MT is always looking to increase suplimental bus service for student's county wide. No routes will be cut as busses are full; additional drivers and buses are needed. Each school site MT support has a liaison to assist with promoting and processing enrollment in the districts with the yellow bus service currently.

Loma Verde Park and Walk program

Safe Routes to Schools secured a grant from the Air District to fund a Park & Walk pilot program this school year. An aggressive and well supported promotion was developed including handing information flyers to vehicle drivers, social media and school bulletin notices.

The number of students participating in the program reached 63% of the school population. On January 25, 2019 151 vehicles were counted driving into the school campus. During the Park & Walk program as low as 53 vehicles were counted driving to campus. Once the direct

promotion of the program ended the number of vehicles remain low: 81 vehicles counted on one day.

First and second grade students participated the most. They and the parents/guardians were very excited. The principal was very supportive along with staff, parents and neighborhood volunteers. Safe Routes will encourage the program be conducted next school year; a school resource will be needed to manage the promotion next year. The program may be rolled out to other county schools too.

Safe Routes to Schools was very encouraged by the reduction of vehicles during the pilot and the number of drivers that continued to park and walk vs driving on to campus after the promotion period.

The following Goals were met:

1. Traffic and pollution reduction on school campus for increased safety and health:
Prior to pilot = 160 cars at drop off circle, during PAW = 50 cars, follow-up traffic count = 80 cars (Michelle).
2. Engaged and inspired school community - Administration and families thanked SR2S for the Pilot program and expressed desire to do it again next fall. It was FUN and rewarding for families.
3. The PAW pilot provided an opportunity to increase safety awareness:
SR2S was able to bring back pedestrian education to their school - 2nd and 3rd grade classes
Driver and pedestrian safety messages were included in route maps and on flyers.

Vineyard Road

The DPW is scheduled to pave the road in late May. There have and may be more rain delays. The DPW and police department has been a huge support for this project. Under the direction of Chris Blunk this project has been successfully managed and will be completed.

Rene de Bos has made this project a priority for himself over the two years. Now that it is coming to completion he would like to continue to support efforts with Safe Routes to Schools and the City of Novato.

Next School Year

Team Leaders are welcome and encouraged to attend all meetings moving forward. Their input is very valuable for encouragement and to identify issues at each school. The School District Board support and active involvement is essential to recruit and support team leaders at each

school each year. PTA groups have so many responsibilities they tend not to have the resources to recruit Team Leaders. They need support from the school district too.

Schedule next meeting

NEW date: Wednesday, July 31 at 7:00 pm

Suggested agenda items:

- Purpose of working group
- Team Leader recruitment and attending meetings