



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



Safe Routes to Schools
Novato Task Force Notes
Wednesday, May 31, 2017

Attendees: Wendi Kallins- Safe Routes to Schools, Peggy Clark- Safe Routes to Schools, Monica Leifer- Safe Routes to Schools, Manijeh Larizadeh-DPW City of Novato, Gretchen Schubeck- PTA President, Tyler Cantley-Novato Police Dept., Mark Silva- Novato School District, Barb Curtice- Parent San Marin High, Paul LaPerriere-Resident

Infrastructure updates:

Safe Path Gap Closure scheduled improvements at Arther and Plum Streets. The sidewalks will be closed during work. The project will be completed by the start of the next school year.

Pedestrian Access to Transit and Crosswalk Improvements: Project List provided by the DPW:

1. Novato Blvd at McClay Rd
2. DeLong Ave at Sherman Ave.
3. Diablo Ave at George St (Safeway)
4. Redwood Blvd at Rush Creek Place
5. Alameda del Prado at Posada del Sol

Lynwood School mid-block crosswalk: Leafwood Rd

This issue was reviewed by the previous DPW engineer who no longer works for Novato. The new engineer did not have current details; she will look into this issue. A mid-block crosswalk from the school's parking lot and a flashing beacon were under review.

The speed of vehicles has been studied by the DPW. The recorded speeds were not as high as school community members expressed. Vehicle drivers are perceived to be speeding because of the road conditions by the school. The average speed is 25-30 mph; not illegal speeds.

Wendi proposed the 15 mph school zone be considered for Lynwood School. This new zone for schools has been implemented in Ross Valley School District and the

Mill Valley School District is under consideration. This could be a deterrent for drivers using the school area roads as cut through to avoid traffic on the highway when students are in school.

Another consideration was to post a “no left turn” from Rowland to Leafwood during school hours. This would be an inexpensive quick fix and would be effective if the police could enforce.

Tyler explained the police department will have additional staff soon. This will help with enforcement. It is also helpful when a “traffic complaint” form is submitted to the police department. Each report is logged/tracked and followed up on. On occasion the police department will place decoys to observe unsafe behavior of vehicle drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. These are used as education opportunity for the police department.

San Jose Middle School

During the last SR2S meeting the DPW was reviewing a no left turn into the school and recommending a 2nd driveway into the campus. The school is not supporting a 2nd driveway. The issue has not been addressed and it still on the SR2S project list.

The DPW was requested to confirm there are “school zone” signs posted at Lynwood School.

San Marin High School

Safe Routes to Schools issues list has several items that have not been addressed for five years since the death of Sinaloa Middle School student Hailey Ratliff was killed on Novato Blvd. between the intersection of San Marin Dr. and her neighborhood, Novato Chase on Sandy Creek Way. The lawsuit against the City of Novato was settled in 2014. We are requesting the DPW to revisit the issues that were outlined in the minutes of our May 2013 meeting that provided detailed feedback from the community regarding the concerns from this area adjacent to San Marin High School. A “walk audit” was not conducted in the past and is recommend as soon as possible.

Paul requested Safe Routes to Schools reference a letter he wrote to Council Member Pat Eklund on May 10, 2017 addressing the prior safety issues identified back in 2012 and new concerns that have evolved since then. reference a letter he sent to the City of Novato addressing many safety concerns. He lives in the community near the school and is past President of the Neighborhood Assoc.

The trees along Novato Blvd. are aging. Several hundred-pound tree limbs are falling onto the street. A homeowner’s vehicle was damaged and last April a limb fell on a Sunday. It was five feet high and 100 feet long. If this had fallen when students were traveling to/from school, it could have been fatal. There is the high

school's softball field, Gary Gates Field that has trees hanging over the field too. These trees clearly appear to be on City property. This area is very windy and when the trees are not trimmed properly they become unstable and weak from the unbalanced trimming that is being conducted by the city and PGE. The DPW was requested to evaluate the unsafe conditions and hire a professional arborist.

Barb supported the need to revisit the issues addressed in Paul's letter. As a resident of the area she has witnessed the increased traffic. She recently took a video of the San Marin intersection where nine lanes converge. Students tend to avoid crossing at the intersection because it is too busy and takes time. They tend to cross mid-block in a very un-organized fashion. The street was repaved a few years ago and speed feedback signs have been installed. They have been effective.

Safety issues remain with traffic from the west. Drivers speed and use the area as a shortcut to avoid highway traffic. Police enforcement is needed on a regular basis.

Wendi will work with the school, task force members and the DPW to schedule a "walk audit". This will be a valuable assessment tool to observe driver behavior and the road facilities near the schools. With the school year coming to an end it may be difficult to schedule in the next week. She will research dates and schedule with meeting members as soon as possible. It may not be possible to schedule the audit until the fall when students are back in school and engineers would be able to observe current conditions when school is in session.

Once the audit is completed a list of recommendations will be presented to the DPW from the Safe Routes to Schools engineer. This will assist the City to determine what issues need to be addressed. The DPW should also have notes/files from previous year meetings taken by DPW staff.

Safe Routes to Schools will continue to support positive action by the community to address safety concerns. The "walk audit" will be a very helpful resource for the community and school district to move forward. This is an opportunity for other City Council members to get involved too.

The Novato BPAC was requested via the DPW to assist with the issue of speeding drivers on Novato Blvd. The police department does have a speed warning sign available if the city approves. This could be placed immediately; before school is out. There is also a license plate reader device that could be placed in the same location.

Another recommendation included in the 2013 letter was a "welcome to Novato" sign. This would help increase awareness to drivers they are entering a community and they are leaving the higher speed limited roads; entering a town. This was also addressed with previous DPW staff but never followed up on.

SchoolPool:

Discussion about how to increase carpooling in Novato schools:

The carpool program at San Jose Middle School is very effective. The PTA has a position appointed to manage the carpool program. The school has the highest percentage of students carpooling in the county.

Safe Routes to School can assist San Jose and other schools to develop neighborhood maps for families to use to identify carpool families. The first step is for families to tag where they live and then the school coordinator uses a spreadsheet to track and connect families. This could be a very useful tool for Lynwood families too. When families learn about each other and set-up walking groups traffic at schools is reduced.

Next meeting:

Wednesday, August 30th at 4:00pm. The time and location will be confirmed at a later date.

Attendees would like to address how to keep issues alive and under the radar for the city between Safe Routes to Schools Task Force meetings. They feel time between the meetings is long and issues can get delayed. They would also like to increase awareness of the task force to increase meeting attendance in the future.