



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



## **Safe Routes to Schools Novato Task Force - Meeting Notes Wednesday, January 15, 2020**

**Attendance:** Carey Lando- Marin County Dept of Public Works, Wendi Kallins- Safe Routes to Schools, Peggy Clark- Safe Routes to Schools, Leslie Benjamin-Novato School District, Bernard Johnson- Crossing Guard- Transportation Authority of Marin, Paul LaPerroere- Novato Resident, Monica Leifer- Safe Routes to Schools, Joakim Osthus- Novato BPAC, Dabney Smith-Novato Resident, Michelle Tjosvold- Novato Resident, Diane Gasson- Novato School District, Manijeh Larizadeh- City of Novato Dept of Public Works, Kelly Zalewski- Marin Transit

### **San Marin and Novato Blvd – Update**

Paul has been meeting with Chris Blunk, Director for the City of Novato DPW and tracking the progress of this project.

#### Infrastructure Update

The City hired an engineering consultant to complete a study; field work was completed last August; data was submitted in October. In summary the engineers recognized the intersection has several unsafe features. Initially they developed proposed solution on three categories with a number of options for each scenario.

By the end of January 2020, a report will be submitted to the city. The city will review and present to the residents of Novato. In time with approval, it will be folded into the capital improvements budget.

#### Education Update

Safe Routes to Schools, Ashley and Paul recently learned that San Marin High has eliminated the Share the Road program that as presented last school year. The school stated they needed to re-prioritize specific programs.

Ashely has meet with the principal to present a case for maintaining the program. Task Force representatives from the School District representatives have offered to reach out to the district office Prevention Coordinator to learn if the district can reconsider this change and reinstate the education program.

### **Yellow School Buses**

Last year Marin Transit provided an update to the School District on what it would take to develop a Yellow Bus program on Novato. It was agreed that a Yellow Bus program could not be funded at this time. It would take a good deal of partnership funding to subsidize a program along with added costs to families. It would take millions of dollars to fund a program for the whole county.

In the mean time, Marin Transit (MT) was awarded a grant of \$44,000.00 to kick start additional bus services for students. MT has purchased 2 new busses.

The funded amount will not cover a Yellow Bus program in Novato as that costs \$100,000 a year per bus.

In August a supplemental school-targeted public transit service was added from Hamilton to Novato High School that is timed to the school bells. This new service shifts demand from overcrowded Route 151 to the new 149 bus route. Ridership numbers is currently about 25 student riders in AM and 25 student riders in PM. Marin Transit (MT) has information on their website and provided details at the start of the school year to the school.

MT is very happy with the additional service; the operating budget will include this route for the long run. It is partially funded by Lifeline funds for the initial service year; but is not expected to rely on future grant funding to ensure continuation of service

Dabney requested MT look a the traffic flow and how it is affected by the bus route for San Jose Middle School. The bus stop is not designed for busses to pull off the road way; therefore traffic backs up.

### **Updates on existing projects**

Novato DPW did not have any new updates

### **Novato BPAC- Update**

The committee has been discussing and planning options for the committee to be more involved and increase community awareness for the pedestrian and bicycle advocacy work they focus on. They want to hear from the public on what is working and what is not working. The BPAC will be supporting/volunteering efforts for the Tour of Novato in 2020.

BPAC members have been requested to assist the DPW with the City Master Plan Study. The city has limited funding and would like the support on pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

### **Mapping Progress**

#### **Review Pleasant Valley and Loma Verde maps**

##### DPW- Map process

Safe Routes to Schools needs clarification from Novato DPW regarding who will be creating the suggested route maps for each school. This was discussed in 2019; clarification is needed. SR2S has a limited number of maps it can develop each year due to funding. SR2S wants confirmation from the DPW on this decision.

Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) along with PTA representatives from 4 schools conducted a workshop on suggested route maps. SR2S has received draft maps from Pleasant Valley and Loma Verde only. The School District was requested to follow-up with the school contacts for the missing maps.

##### Loma Verde Map Update/Review

Volunteers added a good deal of detail to the draft map, including all routes to the school from every neighborhood. These maps are intended to be a resource for the most traveled, suggested route(s) to a school, not all routes.

The school principal's input is needed, and a new/fresh map needs to be created to display specific facilities including the front and back of the school campus. The location

of “Park & Walk and crossing guards are needed. Once the final revisions are made the map will be sent to the City and County for review and approval.

Comments/Issues identified on the map:

1. The crossing guard boundaries have changed. Many drivers drive as if students are not present nor using crosswalks even when a guard is present. A request was made to ask the police to increase enforcement.

2. Student drop-off at the back of the school: Drivers are conducting U-turns in the middle of crosswalks. A crossing guard is not at this location; a formal request needs to be made to the DPW for submittal. The location will need to be vetted by the TAM crossing guard process to determine if it qualifies.

A recommendation was made to restrict drop-off at the rear of the school or re-direct the flow/direction of traffic by the school to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists during AM drop off. These ideas need to be evaluated to identify how they would influence other travel patterns. There are sidewalks to promote Park & Walk.

3. Ignacio Blvd at Fairway. Cut through traffic is causing unsafe conditions for students. It was posted “no right turns” off Ignacio onto Fairway during specific times of the day

4. Alameda De La Loma: Gridlock conditions are caused by drivers turning left in the campus that is backed up. A proposal was made to only allow the school bus and special needs vehicles to pull into the campus.

This would impact the neighborhood; the number of parked vehicles would increase. Engineers would need to review the proposal; along with the school district administration/principal and PTA.

Safe Routes to School mission is to create safe travel for students walking and biking to school; if traffic is impacting safe travel this is an issue to address. Otherwise, improving the drop off/pick up situation is outside Safe Route’s mission.

5. Pathway across from Nugget Markets by apartment complex: Referred to as “Alameda De La Loma & Via Del Plano” pathway. Students have used this pathway; however, the overgrown plants, sharp plant needles and flooding does not make this route a safe travel option for students. The DPW was requested to determine if there is an easement for this pathway and to schedule regular maintenance to encourage the pathway be used more frequently.

## Pleasant Valley Map

This map will be unique due to the many streets without sidewalks and the many routes students take to get around the neighborhood as they head to the school campus. Streets without sidewalks impact the routes students can take when walking.

## **Safe Routes Pilot Program at Rancho**

Safe Routes will begin the process this school year for a new pilot program. Three schools have been identified for the pilot; Rancho School is included. Research studies will be gathered this school year and the program will be implemented in the fall of 2020.

The program is focused on identifying key factors that influence behavior changes. One component SR2S has used to encourage student/parent participation has been offering students rewards such pencils, eraser and bracelets to travel green to school. This pilot program will look at ways to influence participation without prizes. Parent surveys will be conducted and focus groups will be tasked to learn about new options.

Safe Routes is very excited about conducting this pilot at Rancho School. The school has a strong school administration and teaching staff and decent infrastructure around the school campus.

## **Crossing Guard Update**

Bernard reported that he does receive complaints when crossing guards do not direct traffic. The guards are not trained or responsible for directing traffic. Their job is to direct students while crossing the street not vehicle drivers. Some guards do direct traffic, and this is not part of their job description.

He has also noticed some students at Rancho School get dropped off on campus then walk off campus on Walk & Roll Wednesdays. It was pointed out that they may be leaving campus to join existing walking groups.

Bernard Johnson is stepping down from his position this month. All thanked him for his years of committed service to the program and students.

## **Team Leader Update**

Paul reported that Team Leaders are still needed at several of the Novato Schools. Hamilton, Lu Sutton and Pleasant Valley need support to identify SR2S Team Leaders. A request was made to the School District to support efforts for PTA support and recruitment.

Some of the challenges SR2S and schools encounter is parents cannot attend meetings due to work and family obligations. They do not learn about these needs/opportunities to support their school.

The School District representatives attending the meeting agreed to help. They will reach out to the principals to learn of potential recruitment options. The PTA programs are very active and should be a good resource.

It was agreed it would be best for Wendi to attend PTA meetings (be on agenda) to explain the role and need for Team Leader volunteers and how their efforts influence safe and green travel at schools. Wendi and Gwen have already done this.

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, April 15, 2020 from 10:00am to noon.