

**Safe Routes to School Novato Task Force Committee**  
**Wednesday, January 10, 2018**  
**Meeting Notes**

**Attendance**

Wendi Kallins- Safe Routes to Schools, Peggy Clark- Safe Routes to Schools, Monica Leifer- Safe Routes to Schools, Penelope Amuyunzu-Parisit Associates, Mark Birnbaum-Novato BPAC, Chris Blunk-Novato DPW Deputy Director/City Engineer, Tyler Cantley- Novato Police Dept., Barb Curtice-Parent San Marin High, Dina Gibbons-Parent Pleasant Valley, Sinaloa MS, Paul LaPerrier- Neighbor San Marin High, Manijeh Larizadeh-Novato DPW Engineer, Greg Mack-Novato School District, Nestor Schnasse-Parent & Novato BPAC, Mark Silva-Novato School District, Cindy Leonard-Parent San Marin High, \*\*Ashley Leonard- Student San Marin High, DJ Smith- Merritt Drive resident.

\*\* Ashley Leonard- has volunteered to assist with representing San Marin High School students. She is working on her "Gold Girl Scout Badge". The issue of the intersection at San Marin and Novato Blvd. is the focus of her project. Paul LaPerrier is her volunteer advisor.

**Mapping routes and issues**

**Park and Walk options for schools**

The City of Novato and Safe Routes to School Task Force have agreed to collaborate and develop suggested safe routes to schools maps for each school in Novato.

City engineers will be developing school area maps that will include all road and sidewalk facilities that currently exist. Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) Task Force will meet with school representatives and parents to identify routes currently being used by students/families and issues along each route. SR2S and the city engineers will also be working with the Novato Bicycle and pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the cities advisory committee to evaluate and recommend future city projects to support additional preferred routes to schools to the Novato City Council.

Once the maps are developed the residents of Novato will have a better understanding of the projects/facilities that have been completed by the city during the past several years. City engineers can then use the maps and issues collected by SR2S to plan for future capital improvements and funding requests. Maps will help to identify gaps in routes to schools such as bike lanes and sidewalks. The issues lists will identify how students travel to school and the challenges they encounter from traffic, roadway, and sidewalk conditions. These could include

the need for more carpool opportunities, school drop-off traffic, speeding and/or illegal parking in bicycle lanes.

The schools that have Safe Routes to School representatives including parent Team Leaders, middle and high school teacher advisors and student leadership and green team groups will be selected first for the map and issues identification projects. The schools identified are Olive, San Ramon, Lynwood, San Jose and San Marin High. These volunteers are needed to support the efforts needed for these big project.

SR2S has developed maps for other school districts including Tiburon and Mill Valley. Developing them is a complex process however the resources collected and developed are well worth the effort for years to come. The city intends to share the maps of the current preferred pathways with NUSD schools as well as on the city's website as a resource for parents.

### **Infrastructure updates**

Safe Routes to School, Novato DPW, residents and parents conducted two Walk Audits this past October for Vineyard Road and the Charter School.. A Walk Audit is an information gathering meeting conducted to collect data about environmental conditions that affect walking and bicycling. The objective of this audit was to observe and document factors that help or hinder safe walking and bicycling. These factors include, but are not limited to, street lighting, parking lots, sidewalk width and condition, traffic volume, presence of bicycle lanes. SR2S engineers will develop an issues list that will be present to the DPW for review.

### **Report on Vineyard Road Walk Audit and community meeting**

Chris reported on the community meeting regarding the Vineyard Road Project. The meeting was attending by residents representing different viewpoints of the project. Approximately half of the residents wanted to see safety improvements of the bike lanes and sidewalks and the other half expressed support for maintaining the rural character of the neighborhood. A majority of those at the meeting agreed the sidewalk gap between Eucalyptus and Trumbull should be included with the scope of work of the upcoming resurfacing project..

Sidewalk and bike lane improvements to Vineyard Rd. have been debated by Novatans since at least 2004, but city staff believe they may have found some common ground that could be implemented with the resurfacing project later this year. Engineers are reviewing options for the sidewalk gap closure and hope to present options and cost estimates to the Novato City Council in late January or early February for consideration. .

City Council meetings with Vineyard Rd. topics will be announced on the City's website, via various social media, and as mailers to residents within the vicinity of Vineyard Rd. SR2S will email notices too. Notices will go out at least 2weeks in advance. A request was made not to schedule the meeting during "winter break" for Novato schools.

The gap in the sidewalk could be completed on either the north side of the street or south side of the street, where most of the current path of travel exists. There are “pros” and “cons” of each option that will be presented to the public and City Council. Safe Routes to Schools and the city would prefer to close the sidewalk gap along the south side of Vineyard Rd., however drainage issues may make this option cost-prohibitive to include with the resurfacing work.

Safe Routes to Schools has worked with many school districts and observed that students will take the path of least resistance. If it is faster to walk in the road and not cross to a sidewalk to reduce the distance, they will do it. If the sidewalk gap is removed on the northside of the street, students will need to cross the road (back and forth) to make use of the sidewalks. City engineers are researching several different options for midblock crossings to be included with the Vineyard Rd. sidewalk gap closure options.

Other improvements to be implemented during the resurfacing include:

- One small tree on Vineyard at Sutro will be removed to install a new and crosswalk.
- Options are also being designed to add more sidewalk at the “porkchop” island at Vineyard & Mill Road to better serve pedestrians.
- Current crosswalks will receive enhanced signing & striping packages.
- A new enhanced crosswalk is proposed at “Vineyard Way,” which serves students walking to the south from Dominic Drive and surrounding area.

### **Report on Charter School Walk Audit**

The Walk Audit conducted last fall was well attended by SR2S representatives and engineer, DPW and school representatives. A report including issues will also be presented to the city for review and consideration.

### **Update on San Marin Drive/Novato Blvd**

Chris reported that four of the eight recommendations presented at the last meeting have been completed or are in-progress. These include

- the speed limit reduction from 45mph to 40mph,
- addition of new centerline reflective markers,
- installation of a new roadway sign package, and
- upcoming tree trimming/tree removal based on an independent arborist’s recommendations.

Other recommendations will be phased in with future capital improvement projects, such as the potential addition of a signalized intersection or roundabout at Novato Blvd. and San Marin/Sutro.

Task Force members expressed gratitude to the DPW and recommend that safety improvements be announced to Novato residents.

The police department’s radar recording devices were deployed to monitoring speeds; results showed that less than 2% of drivers are speeding through the new 40mph zone.

- Also discussed: The intersection at San Marin/Surto/Novato Blvd is very complicated and could require multiple crossing guards. TAM does not provide crossing guards for high schools. The school district is researching options to hire current employee(s) and identify funding for guards. TAM does have a volunteer crossing guard program. The budgeted cost is \$18,000.00 for a paid TAM guard, the volunteer program reduces the cost to 4,000.00 and the guard is trained, insured, and managed by TAM. They are not paid staff, they are volunteers.

Engineers are also reviewing options for a traffic signal or a roundabout at this intersection. Roundabout can be very effective traffic mitigation options but they do not always meet specific needs. This intersection sees heavy traffic during specific times of the day and the flow of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles must be calculated correctly. A study is needed along with outreach in the community. Highway traffic uses this road as a shortcut to bypass 101 congestion. This could be a 5 year process; therefore cost efficient safety improvements like lane striping and curb ramps can be helpful in the short term.

Illegal parking in bike lanes, blocking driveways and making U-turns on residential side streets is a safety concern near San Jose Middle School. The DPW is evaluating restriping Sunset Blvd near San Jose Middle School to provide a bike lane and on-street parking for drop-off/pick up at the school.

Chris invited Ashley to meet at San Marin High School to discuss similar restriping options and to gain the perspectives from students to see if there are other short-term improvements that could be made.

## **Other updates**

Merritt drive residents have been requesting relief from cut through traffic since 2013 (When Hill Middle School was closed).

Tyler provided updates on the number of patrol officers available during drop off/pick-up at all schools in Novato. There are 3 enforcement officers, with only one on a motorcycle. The primary focus is to monitor the illegal behavior. They will continue to monitor Merritt Drive and understand the issues the residents are dealing with for some time now. Tyler is confident the restriping proposed by the DPW will reduce the issues on Merritt Drive. The U-turns are also creating safety issues and the police are aware of them too.

The DPW has received all the letters including the one read aloud from the Merritt Drive residents. The issues on Merritt Drive stem from traffic during school and south bound commute hours. The DPW is researching options to address the bigger issues throughout the city from 7:00am to 9:00am weekly. One option is to change and enforce turn restrictions, this in turn will influence the online mapping drivers use to avoid traffic on 101.

The DPW and NUSD District office are evaluating the entrance/exit of the school and campus parking. The restriping mentioned earlier is intended to reduce the number of drivers that go to Merritt Drive to park or that [park illegally in the current bike lane., The proposal may not eliminate all the illegal parking and unsafe driving but it should reduce them. These re-design options will be presented to the City Council for consideration in February. If the striping redesign is approved, the work could be implemented during summer of 2018.

Any on-campus improvements would be subject to NUSD review and approval, but city staff are working closely with NUSD staff to present and evaluate options.

Safe Routes to Schools is focused on increasing the options students/families can use to get to school to reduce traffic, encourage good healthy habits like walking and rolling and carpooling. San Jose Middle School once had the highest percentage of students carpooling until recently when the school parent managing the process students graduated.

#### **Other Issues**

Police enforcement was requested at Novato High at the back entrance to the school on Washington Road. During drop-off and pick-up parents are blocking the road and vehicles leaving the school are driving too fast given the traffic conditions. Officer Tyler suggested the radar recorder be moved to this street to collect data for the best enforcement times.

#### **Updates from SR2S**

##### **Class schedules**

The schools that have not hosted SR2S pedestrian and bicycle safety class this year are Pleasant Valley. San Jose Middle, Lu Sutton and Olive.

##### **Bike to school Day**

May 9th, 2018

##### **Contests and events**

Lynwood School is conducting the SR2S Green Sneaker Challenge with support from the Health Dept . The number of students walking is increasing and the contest and parent support is helping.

##### **Schedule next meeting**

Safe Routes to Schools will meet during the next BPAC meeting on March 14 at 7:00pm. The mapping projects will begin at this meeting.