



Safe Routes to School
Novato Task Force Notes
September 2, 2021

Attendance:

Wendi Kallins- Safe Routes to Schools- Program Coordinator, Gwen Froh- Safe Routes to Schools Program Director, Peggy Clark- Safe Routes to Schools, Leslie Benjamin- Novato School District, Mina Cosko- Olive School Parent, Mark Birnbaum- Novato BPAC, Cooper Miley- Volunteer Coordinator- Safe Routes to Schools, Kelly Zalewski-Marin Transit School Operations Analyst, Dan Cherrier- TAM SR2S and Crossing Guard Program Manager, Kelly Smith- Loma Verde Team leader, Leslie Benjamin - School District Communications Director, Maria Camacho- Resident and Former Team Leader, Diane Gasson - School Board Trustee, David Parisi- Parisi Engineering, Joakim Osthus - Parent and BPAC, Danielle Addleman- Lynwood & San Jose MS Parent, Robin Lee- Parent Hamilton School, Pat Eklund- Novato Mayor, Manijeh Larizadeh- City DPW Assistant Engineer, Rene de Bos-Parent Pleasant Valley, Stacey Pogorzelski - Parent Pleasant Valley, Matt Farber- Lead Instructor- Safe Routes to Schools, Monica Leifer Safe Routes Bi-lingual Coordinator, Dabney (DJ) Smith- Neighbor San Jose Middle School

Bus update

Marin Transit (MT) reported they are running the supplemental routes as they have in years past. There are no capacity limits on the buses currently; however, due to Senate Bill 328 that pushed back the start times

for middle and high schools, there are conflicts. In the past the bell schedule allowed MT to use busses for multiple trips. Now with so many schools starting at the same time (in the past it was a little staggered) and with the same number of buses, MT cannot provide all of the services they had in the past county wide. Some school districts lost a bus service route completely this fall. Funding is needed to purchase new vehicles; manufacturing of a bus can take up to 12-18 months then drivers need to be trained/hired.

MT is experiencing a shortage of drivers too; this has impacted all of the scheduled services. If a service is changed or reduced, schools are to be notified. MT had a rocky start to the school year and they are working to improve communications and provide the best services. They feel very bad when students cannot get the service they need to get to school.

MT has a School Coordinator that works with each school to provide information updates. MT relies on the schools to update the student/parent community. For more details go to: [Marin Transit Supplemental Routes](#) information site.

Task Force members expressed their gratitude to MT for all of their support during these challenging times.

Safe Routes Education and Encouragement for fall

Safe Routes to Schools- Back to School information packets were sent out to the schools in August. This comprehensive document provides information on walking, and bicycling to schools. The district sent this out district wide for all families to have for the start of the year. If anyone would like additional information please contact gwen@marinbike.org

[SR2S Walking Safety Tips 2021](#)

[SR2S Biking Safety Tips 2021](#)

International Walk and Roll to School Day is October 6, 2021. Nationally and locally this is the largest event to promote walking and rolling to school. SR2S volunteers typically host welcome tables at all schools. Small incentives are handed out to students to encourage walking and rolling

throughout the school year. Volunteers are needed for schools to participate this year. Please contact monica@marinbike.org and/or cooper@marinbike.org for more information.

Matt Farber- Lead Instructor- Safe Routes to Schools is new to the Safe Routes team and is looking forward to teaching at classes scheduled in Sinaloa already this fall. Safe Routes is anticipating that we will be very busy scheduling classes missed last year.

Novato Rec Dept in partnership with Safe Routes will be presenting [Bicycle Pedal Playground on Movie Night](#)- Saturday Oct 9th- downtown Novato. This is a fun area away from vehicles where students can learn and practice bike safety skills.

Safe Routes to Schools- Student Travel Survey

The fall travel survey will be conducted at all schools during the week of Sept 14 or Sept 20th. Save the date notices was emailed to all schools mid-August and survey instructions will be emailed 1 week prior to the scheduled week to conduct the survey. IMPORTANT- last year SR2S was not able to conduct the survey; therefore, we are really encouraging every school and classroom to collect the requested data this year- thank you!

Peach Street Issue/Update

This is a dead-end street that has an opening into the Olive campus. It can be a safer route for students to take vs Olive Ave.; they will often walk or ride in the roadway. Drivers are not supposed to use this as a drop off but they do anyway. They are known to speed and there are no continuous sidewalks on either side of the street. The school requests parents not drop-off/pick-up in this area. A sidewalk on at least one side of the road is needed.

The school is currently under construction; this is also causing traffic and may need to be addressed when it is finished regarding drop-off/pick up. The new office will be located on Olive Street.

Safe Routes did complete a Walk Audit in 2007. At that time SR2S requested the school designate Peach Street as a walk/bike route. The issues noted above were issues then too.

Neighbors understood from the city that when the road was repaved a few years back that the sidewalk would be completed- it never was. The sidewalk gap on Plum was completed but not Peach. Manijeh will check with Chris to determine the status. The DPW was requested to contact Mina the parent at Olive.

Education is needed for the community; many people have reported the drivers are very rude and yelling at parents and students walking to school. The school will be asked to message the school community regarding safe driving and being polite. The district does have North Bay security that may be able to enforce positive behavior.

Lynwood crossing guard

The following comments were provided by Danielle Addleman

A few years back the intersection in front of our school at Sunset Blvd. and Lynwood Dr. ranked too low for TAM to continue to fund a guard there. We rallied as a school community and the guard was funded.

At some point in the pandemic the crossing guard there was phased away and we are starting this new school year without one. I am highly concerned about the danger this poses to our families crossing in the morning and afternoon and would like to find out what solutions there are to help everyone stay safe.

The intersection at Sunset and Lynwood is seemingly a quiet intersection that shouldn't pose a problem if the school were more nestled into the neighborhood. The challenge this intersection faces is its proximity to South Novato Blvd. When traffic backs up on 101, South Novato Blvd., or the intersection of Rowland and South Novato, people use Sunset and Leafwood to cut around the traffic. If they are coming from Leafwood and

driving up to South Novato (to head south on South Novato) they get close to that intersection and see the light potentially changing on them and push to make it, completely unaware that 50 feet before that is a school crosswalk. Per all of the crossing guards that have worked there, it is an extremely dangerous crosswalk, and I have witnessed them coming close to being hit (stop sign up and in hand) on multiple occasions.

The intersection at Sunset and Lynwood is seemingly a quiet intersection that shouldn't pose a problem if the school were more nestled into the neighborhood. The challenge this intersection faces is its proximity to South Novato Blvd. When traffic backs up on 101, South Novato Blvd., or the intersection of Rowland and South Novato, people use Sunset and Leafwood to cut around the traffic. If they are coming from Leafwood and driving up to South Novato (to head south on South Novato) they get close to that intersection and see the light potentially changing on them and push to make it, completely unaware that 50 feet before that is a school crosswalk. Per all of the crossing guards that have worked there, it is an extremely dangerous crosswalk, and I have witnessed them coming close to being hit (stop sign up and in hand) on multiple occasions.

Right now, traffic isn't heavy and so this isn't as significant of an issue though that will likely soon end. However, we face a new issue which is that Lynwood has changed it's traffic circle, as it really needed to do, and all cars enter on Leafwood. This means that parents coming from South Novato to drop off or pick up, who used to turn before crossing over the crosswalk, now do cross over it. I would love to assume that all parents are perfect conscientious drivers when taking their children to school but that would be highly naive.

The combination of these two issues creates a very unsafe situation for our children. With traffic likely to pick up this will only escalate and this intersection needs a crossing guard so I am trying to figure out how to get one reinstated there. I would love to work with you to determine the best way to do that and find a solution that keeps our kids safe.

Somewhat related, the situation at South Novato and Sunset is atrocious and cars run red lights nonstop. This morning I watched a school bus run the red light, and I can't say that was the first time. The more I think of it, the more I think that South Novato and Sunset would be an ideal location for a round-about instead of a traffic light intersection. Roundabouts are proven ways to reduce driver speed, accidents, and increase pedestrian safety. Additionally, if this intersection were a roundabout instead of a light, it would actually increase the safety of the Lynwood/Sunset intersection as we wouldn't face those drivers racing to make the light. If you have any guidance on how one may go about advocating for that I would also greatly appreciate it.

The intersection of Author and Cambridge Streets is also a very challenging location and without a guard and the new school start times; there is a good deal of chaos.

TAM reported they developed a ranking system for crossing guard locations during the following years 2006, 2010, 2014, 2017. The next analysis will take place in 2022 (roll out in 2023) due to some students still attending school remotely (not walking or biking to school). In the past this intersection did qualify for a guard in subsequent years the ranking changed and a guard was not funded. Novato Unified did fund four guards' locations that TAM could not at the time (the full cost of a guard was paid to TAM). Unfortunately, they could not continue to fund all of these locations in 2020.

The school district representative will look into the district's current position on funding guards and reach out to TAM and Safe Routes for either a new evaluation and funding options.

TAM Options for guards

Change of Condition Policy- if conditions significantly change, they will re-evaluate the location. If the score is 61 or less it will be funded by TAM.

There is a shortage of guards this year and two positions do not have guards now: Hamilton- front of school and one at San Ramon School.

TAM will be re-evaluating the intersection of Sunset and Lynwood in the next month.

TAM Guard Volunteer Program

TAM would carry the insurance for the trained guard and the school district would need to find the person and pay the management cost of the guard. \$6,000.00 per guard annually.

Novato DPW Updates

[Safe Routes to Schools Issue List](#)

[Novato SR2S List - City Updates for 09-02-21 Meeting](#)

Listed below is the issue #, location, SR2S issue and comments provided by Novato DPW

N-1, Bolling Circle and Randolph Drive-Speeding cars, no dedicated space for bikes

All-way stop controls were added at Bolling Dr./Bolling Circle and Bolling Cir./March Field Court in early 2021. This neighborhood has very high parking demand that is not compatible with the loss of parking on one side of the street to accommodate bike lanes. City is looking at other traffic calming measures. New stop signs have been well-received.

The DPW reported that traffic calming facilities had been added at March Field Crt, Bolling Circle and Randolph Dr in early 2021.

Ten Foot travel lanes and parking on one side is not possible; there is so much demand for parking on one side only.

N-2 Ignacio Blvd to Calle de la Mesa- Needs connectivity between pathway and crosswalk

This location is within unincorporated Marin County, not City of Novato

Jurisdiction.

N-3 Alameda de la Loma- No bike path leading to the school

This location is within unincorporated Marin County, not City of Novato Jurisdiction.

Meeting comments: *Michelle I became involved with starting the SR2S program at Loma Verde because of the lack of a bike path on Alameda de la Loma. Since SR2S is a county-funded program it seems there is someplace that belongs in the scope of the program. It is very dangerous.*

SR2S never conducted a Walk Audit for this location. The next step is to conduct an audit with the Safe Routes and County engineers to determine what is feasible; short- and long-term options. Then the issue needs to be prioritized on the SR2S list. If this location could be funded by Safe Pathway funds that would not be until 2023.

N-4 Alameda De La Loma & Via Del Plano -Plants are overgrown along pathway and have sharp needles; the pathway floods

This location is within unincorporated Marin County, not City of Novato Jurisdiction. This pathway belongs to all the home owners.

N-5 Bel Marin Keys freeway crossing -Challenging to get through intersection: cars turning right onto the freeway don't look for cyclists and pedestrians.

The BMK-Ignacio/Northbound US101 Interchange is within Caltrans' right-of-way. TAM is working on a countywide interchange study which includes this location. Bicycle and pedestrian movements are being considered as a part of the study, which will eventually recommend future improvements. The study is about ½ way completed

Comments made during the meeting:

The study for 12 interchanges will include this location. There will be a blueprint for long- and short-range options when the study is completed.

There will be three projects funded by TAM. SR2S, City of Novato and Caltrans engineers will be in communication on this issue for potential short term improvements.

This area has been a safety issue for 20 years; people have been hit and killed. Caltrans came out years ago to observe the safety issues and nothing has been improved. Business is growing in this area; pedestrian use is going to increase. There are up to four schools that are impacted by these unsafe conditions at this interchange. It is not a safe place for pedestrians or cyclists. If a study was conducted to observe student use they would not see them because parents will not permit their kids to use this area.

Drivers turning right out of Bell Marin Keys going onto the freeway going north, they tend to look left not right. A recommendation was made to install a turn arrow for vehicles; separate from the red, green, yellow traffic light. This would help pedestrians know when they can/cannot cross. Drivers would have a red or green arrow for the right turn. Do not have a green light for drivers and a green walk for pedestrians at the same time.

N-6 Peach Street and Plum Street Missing sidewalks. Plum Street is used more than Peach Street

Gaps in these sidewalks were closed as a part of a 2017 SR2S Grant Funded capital project (see notes on discussion during meeting above)

N-7 San Marin and Novato Blvd - Intersections lack complete crosswalks, and four-way stops with multiple travel lanes are confusing for all users. Sidewalks needed along Sutro

The City of Novato has an approved CIP Project to close the sidewalk gap along Sutro Ave. and improve the intersection of San Marin/Sutro/Novato Blvd. The City has applied for two grants to fund the project, but have been unsuccessful to date. The City continues to seek funding for environmental documentation, design, and construction work.

N-8 Between 101 and train tracks- Route to Olive School needed between Highway 101 and train tracks

Added scope of Olive Ave. Widening Project - Construction in 2-3 years pending environmental permitting.

N-9 Sutro Ave between Vineyard and Center- Missing sidewalk along eastern side of Sutro approaching Center and western side south of Pleasant Valley Elementary

This will be added to the City Bike and Ped Master plan

N-10 (# N-30 on DPW list/spreadsheet) Sunset Parkway across from the school- Sidewalk on eastern side of Sunset Parkway is buckling
Repaired Spring/Summer 2021

N-11 (# N-31 on DPW list/spreadsheet) School site- Better circulation needed through drop-off zones. There is still congestion during drop off times.

SJMS has new principal again--need to outreach and explain past traffic patterns, best practice recommendations. NUSD needs to push walk/bike to school and bussing options to that drop-off & pick-up are less vehicle dependant

N-18 (DPW list/spreadsheet) Between Redwood and Train Tracks - Route to Olive School between Redwood and Train tracks

Added to scope of Olive Ave. Widening Project - Construction in 2-3 years pending environmental permitting.

N-19 (DPW list/spreadsheet) Between Vineyard and Center Missing Sidewalk Pleasant Valley

Duly noted--will add to Bike/Ped Master Plan

New Issue:

> On the north side of Vineyard near Surto there is a sidewalk gap. This would help students walking to/from school.

> Miwok Park Crosswalk at Eucalyptus- comment sent to Wendi- *I wanted to let someone know that it would be a good idea to get crosswalk lines painted on Eucalyptus off Mendocino by Miwok Park. This morning a girl crossed and the cars did not recognize it was a crosswalk.*

Safe Routes is not aware of a painted crosswalk at this location. There is no clear way to cross Mendocino as well for students.

Safe Routes does have a suggested route map that will be reviewed by task force members to identify facilities and routes that may need to be updated.

> Pathway to Hamilton- located on the eastern border of Pacheco Pond that connects to the Hamilton Restoration Project.

This is a way to avoid the Bel Marin Keys dangerous intersection; however, this pathway has very loose stones. This was the result of a levee repair and no one has identified funds to make the pathway more user friendly. It is part of the Bay Trail and would be a great funding opportunity. The Marin County Flood Control does not consider this a pathway currently and would probably close it altogether for liability issues if it was brought to their attention. Best to work with Bay Trail to get it improved when funds become available.

Review BPAC lists and coordinate with SR2S lists.

[Novato BPAC Ranked Bike Projects](#)

[Novato BPAC Ranked Pedestrian Projects](#)

Safe Routes to Schools would like to have the issues relating to schools added to the SR2S current issues list and have the SR2S issues that are not on the BPAC list added. A separate meeting will be scheduled with BPAC members.

Next Zoom Meeting

February 3, 2022 at 5:00pm