

Ross School District
Safe Routes to School Task Force Meeting Notes

Monday, August 12, 2024
1:30 – 2:30 PM

Participants

- Todd Bickel – Branson School
- Wendi Kallins – SR2S
- Gwen Froh – SR2S/MCBC
- Misty Gibbs – Ross School parent & PTO member
- Maria Lubamersky – Middle School Principal
- Raffaello Pata – Ross Police Chief
- David Rice – Ross Schools Superintendent
- Matthew Salter – Ross Town Council Liaison to Safe Routes Task Force
- Mira Schwirtz – SR2S Volunteer Coordinator
- Jen Shriber – SR2S/Parametrix
- Richard Simonitch – Ross DPW

Safe Pathways Projects (Richard Simonitch)

The call for Safe Pathways projects is coming up in the fall. Rich let the group know that Ross will be applying for funding for the continuation of the Laurel Grove pathway from Canyon Rd to the town limits at Macon Grade. This will complete the pedestrian pathway from Sir Francis Drake to Macon Grade. The decision to apply for this project was approved by Town Council and has been met with good preliminary feedback so far.

Current Project Phase Update

Rich updated the group on the current phase of this project. Construction around Canyon Road has been delayed by a few weeks and is expected to start either this week or next week and will unfortunately be ongoing for 4-5 weeks once school is back in session. During the first day of school, construction will hold for a few hours in the morning to avoid congestion.

David has received many questions from parents about whether students can still walk and roll to school during construction. Rich said the Town will try to keep a pedestrian/bicycle lane open during construction, when the road will otherwise be narrowed to one access lane. He will know more about whether this is feasible once construction starts. If it is not possible to have a separate lane, biking to school will be possible but not advised as students would have to share one narrowed lane with traffic through the construction zone. Misty suggested that the school should hold off on encouragement events during this time, and she offered to spread the word to parents about what to expect during construction.



Street Smarts Communications (Wendi Kallins, Jen Shiber)

Street Smarts, an annual road user behavior education campaign, will have its next rollout September 23-November 15. The rollout will include banners and signs with safety messaging throughout the county, as well as a social media campaign. Social media components include downloadable images, email signatures, and newsletter content that will be made available through the [Street Smarts website](#). (note: the social media page is being rebuilt and we will let you know when it is live)

Wendi asked the group how they could share Street Smarts messaging through social media. Rich noted that the Town doesn't have a social media presence but could add messaging to the Town's website or promote it through the Public Works monthly newsletter. Chief Pata added that the police department does have social media and participated last year; they can post Street Smarts content again this year. Misty mentioned that the Ross School PTO has Instagram. The PTO likes rolling out messages in connection with events, so something similar could be done for Street Smarts. David stated that the Ross School has Instagram and Twitter and sends an "e-pocket" every Sunday night. Additionally, the school hung banners on a fence last year and can continue to do so this year. Todd said that the Branson School could spread the messages via their social media channels and newsletter.

Rich mentioned that he could give David extra signs to display at the school. The Town typically discourages the use of lawn signs on private property and the use of banners around town. Wendi suggested that perhaps signs could be deployed temporarily along walking school bus routes.

David noted that the school is taking on cell phones and e-bikes this year. He would want to promote Street Smarts messages that are in line with these topics so the messaging isn't spread too thin.

Chief Pata mentioned that it would be helpful to have decals to put on squad cars. During Walk and Roll to School days parents could display yard signs and the police escort could have one on their vehicle.

Engagement & Education/Student Surveys (Gwen Froh, Mira Schwartz)

Gwen described the SR2S back-to-school information packet, which provides information for families to walk and roll to school. It also includes a link to the Ross suggested route map.

Gwen noted that the Buddy Up contest will be back this year. This countywide program is very popular as it allows students to share stories and photos of how they get to school with friends.

Participants described efforts around e-bike safety at the schools. David and Chief Pata recently emailed the community with manufacturers' age recommendations for e-bikes. Due to the school's small size, the Ross School has not instituted a bike registration program. However, the student handbook states that only Class I e-bikes are allowed on campus, and this is being enforced on a case-by-case basis as the need arises. Todd shared that the Branson School also does not have a bike registration program but monitors cyclists to ensure that students aren't bringing out-of-class e-bikes to school.



Gwen announced that student tally surveys usually go out to schools in mid-September. However, this year it may be postponed to October owing to the construction and its likely effects on students walking and biking to school.

Ross-Specific Activities (Misty Gibbs)

Misty described ongoing encouragement efforts at the Ross School. There has been good momentum over the past 2 years, and the program has honed in more on neighborhood engagement while continuing annual events. Moving forward, Misty would like to focus on implementing educational events, finding content that resonates with certain age groups (for example, e-bike education for the middle grades), and consistently using existing SR2S tools. Education for parents around the physiological benefits of walking and biking in the morning would also help encourage parents to do what's possible. With all their programming, Ross volunteers are focusing on "light lift, high reward" activities.

Branson Report Out (Todd Bickel)

Todd described the Branson School's transportation demand management strategies. The school is charged by its conditional use permit to manage transportation demand and mitigate traffic in and around the school and neighborhood. They do this in a number of ways. First, the school's bussing and shuttle system serves students in the East Bay, San Francisco, and northern Marin. The school has an MOU with the College of Marin for satellite drop-offs, and shuttles bring students from the College to the school in the morning. The school offers partial bicycle reimbursements for students who commit to riding their bikes to school 90% of the time. Carpools are highly encouraged, and students can only park on campus if they drive a carpool.

At the beginning of each year, Todd conducts safety orientations for the students and parents. Freshman topics cover pedestrian and bicycle safety, while the older grades also get an orientation on safe driving. Parent orientation includes an explanation of the school's transportation demand management strategies.

When necessary, the school gives citations for infractions such as speeding, dropping students off in unsafe places, and parking in the wrong place. Neighbors, cameras, and school staff monitors all help identify infractions.

An additional strategy could be to use AB-43 to help lower speed limits around both Branson and the Ross School. Rich can get more information from Sean Condry at San Anselmo, which recently took advantage of this new law to lower speed limits near schools.

Crossing Guard (Matthew Salter)

There have been issues with the crossing guard at Bolinas and Sir Francis Drake not showing up for duty. This has resulted in several close calls with students, and the police have had to fill in on occasion. This crossing guard is funded by the Town and the school, not by TAM. David has communicated on multiple occasions about this issue with the organization that coordinates



the crossing guards. While they have been responsive, the situation has not improved. Going forward, a different crossing guard should be requested from the vendor.

Matthew mentioned that updating the traffic signal, such as adding a leading pedestrian interval (LPI), would help improve safety, particularly when the crossing guard is not there. The signal is shared with San Anselmo; Rich had previously reached out to the town about this, and they have no issue with adding an LPI. Misty mentioned that most of the problem is coming from the Winship side crossing to Bolinas.

Next Steps

- Misty will update parents on expected walking and biking conditions to the Ross School during the construction period.
- SR2S to update downloads and make them available on the [Street Smarts website](#). Wendi will update Task Force members once the materials are available. Anyone who posts Street Smarts materials should let Wendi know when/where the message is publicized.
- Wendi will share information on AB-43 with Rich. Rich can contact Sean Condry at San Anselmo for more information about implementation.
- Town/School should request another crossing guard at Bolinas/Sir Francis Drake.
- Rich will reach out to Parametrix about operationalizing a leading pedestrian interval at Bolinas/Sir Francis Drake and any additional infrastructure improvements.
- Misty and Todd should contact David about any future crossing guard issues.

Next Meeting

- January 13, 10-11 AM

