



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: MARIN COUNTY



## **Novato Task Force Meeting Notes November 2, 2010**

### **Present (15)**

Wendi Kallins – Program Director for Safe Routes to Schools; Laura Kelly –Volunteer Liaison for Safe Routes to Schools; Jason Nutt – Novato Public Works Director/City Engineer; David Harlan – Novato Principal Civil Engineer (Private Projects); Mark Silva – Director of Maintenance Operations for the Novato Unified School District; Jim Berg – Operations Captain for the Novato Police Department; Terry Brown – Grant Writer for Novato Police Department; Oliver Collins – Novato Police Department; Pat Eklund – Novato Town Council; Michelle Camicia – Loma Verde School Team Leader; Anne Trowbridge – Olive School Team Leader; Melissa Perry – Pleasant Valley School Team Leader; Shari Nemerovski – San Ramon School Team Leader; Nathan Hirsch – Lynwood School Team Leader; Dereck Knell – Novato Unified School District.

### **Travel Plans for Elementary Schools**

Prior to the start of the meeting, Wendi distributed Travel Plans, which included project lists to each school.

### **Infrastructure Updates**

#### Lynwood School

Our new SR2S Team Leader Nathan Hirsch shared that the Leafwood apartments area is an unsafe area for children to cross the street due to heavy traffic and a crosswalk that is located on the outskirts of the apartment complex. Nathan shared that the Principal is open to discussing new ideas to improve traffic flow and possibly install a crosswalk closer to the middle area of the Leafwood apartments. Some children do not even use the Leafwood crosswalk, and instead just cross wherever. Wendi said that giving the children clear guidance on where they can cross is one immediate solution to help resolve safety issues.

Oliver said the school district wants a pedestrian lane placed on the North side of the parking lot of Leafwood. The lot on Leafwood is a City Permit lot. Oliver also reported that the police department has met with the fire department and discussed the concerns that Nathan shared regarding children crossing the busy street. One solution that has been discussed is adding left and right turns on Sunset Parkway, similar to what they have done in the Hamilton School area. Wendi suggested scheduling a walking audit this month to clearly identify the issues. Wendi will set a date for the Lynwood Principal, Nathan Hirsch, David Paris, David Harlan, Mark Silva, Oliver Collins and the local fire department to meet and scope out the area.

Wendi said that the Lynwood Principal, Rick Van Adelsberg would probably have the most insight regarding the problems, and have parent feedback to share at the walking audit. Nathan will gather information prior to the walking audit from the PTA and the school's Site Leadership group.

### Loma Verde School

Michelle shared that there is a cut through path off of Ignacio Boulevard that is problematic for walkers and bikers en route to Loma Verde. 1) There are many thorns, which cause flat tires 2) The surface is uneven for strollers and anyone traveling on wheels (bikes, scooter, and rollerblades). Michelle also mentioned that the landscape is overgrown and needs to be manicured. Michelle would like to know what the options are to improve the conditions of the path. Pat added that installing lighting on the path would also be beneficial. Pat reinforced that it is an active path for children and the hill area of the path gets very muddy making it easy to slip.

David said that the path has been identified by the city as an area for improvement, and that the name of the street, which connects the path, is Calla de La Hente. The engineering plan is to improve and correct the path alignment.

Wendi said that the thorns on the path are a maintenance issue because they need to be swept. Anne said the thorns are Star Thistles which are common in rural areas and that they need to be weed wacked. The Star Thistles are also a problem in the Olive School area because they cause many flat tires. Wendi suggested recruiting neighborhood volunteers to cut back the bushes. Michelle said that getting volunteers is a good short-term solution to the problem.

Jason said it is not a hard job from a from a labor maintenance standpoint. He said it is also not clear if the city is responsible to keep up the maintenance, or the County. The area is outside city limits; Loma Verde is geographically a county island. Jason said it's a multi-jurisdictional issue. Michelle expressed concern that this city/county issue will cause delay in getting the problems with the path corrected. The main issue is the front entrance from Ignacio Boulevard, which is city property. Wendi asked if there are any liability issues to weed whack the area. Jason responded "no." Dave said that Bill Johnson is the Park Islands and General

Landscape supervisor for the city and that she should collaborate with Bill. Bill's phone number is 899-8280. Michelle said she will contact Bill to collaborate on landscape maintenance.

### Olive School

Anne is the new Team Leader for Olive School. She shared that there is need for a better route all the way to Black Point. A path needs to be installed on Atherton by the county and this will help to significantly increase the number of walkers and bikers to Olive School. Star Thistle is also a problem. If it's addressed, then we can increase the number of walkers and bikers.

Dave said that the City does want to widen the shoulder on Olive Avenue and add bike lanes. A Class 1 bike route was installed. The widening of Olive Avenue is a project in the works, but it is a county/city joint project so the process is slow. Jason said that it's difficult to widen the road to add the desired bike lane because of wetland issues. Wendi suggested contacting the Audubon Society to help work through the wetland issues. The different class levels for bike lanes are as follows:

Class 1 Bike Lane parallels the road, but is separate from the road  
Class 2 A painted bike lane with signage, which shares the road  
Class 3 Bike routes signage but no lane - mixed in with the cars

### Lu Sutton

Bike Lanes on Center Boulevard are an ongoing request. Wendi said it would be highly beneficial if we could get larger studies done because the area impacts the middle and high schools too.

### **Grant Applications**

David and Jason shared that the TAM grant was received for \$250,000, but we didn't receive the Cycle 9 grant. The TAM grant will be applied towards a bicycle lane/sidewalk on Indian Valley road south of Hill. The project will include a ramp and drainage improvements too. Work will commence next summer.

Jason said that an application to the Highway Safety Improvement Fund is in the works. This fund will mostly benefit Olive School. The application is prepared and ready to be submitted.

It was noted that the crossing guard program was recently revised. However, Jason shared that Novato was the only jurisdiction not to lose any crossing guards this school year because the city/school district helps to fund the extra guards. Some locations were changed however.

Pat asked if Center Boulevard part of the CHP budget. Jason said no, and that it's not included in the current project list. Wendi added that Center Boulevard is a political issue so it's complicated. Residents could lose their parking spaces so it involves community meeting and discussions. Jason also mentioned that Novato does not have a traffic calming program.

### **Police Updates**

Terry said that the police department was recently awarded a grant to purchase of bike/pedestrian supplies. He said that the department would like to coordinate with SR2S and SchoolFuel to possibly implement bicycle rodeos. He would like to partner with Safe Routes to Schools on a high attendance school bicycle event and giveaway free bicycle helmets. The police budget is for only three schools.

Wendi shared that our bicycle rodeos designed for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students only take place during PE class time. Terry said that they are presenting ideas on November 19<sup>th</sup> and that he and Wendi can talk about suggestions prior to the meeting. He also said that they need a place to store 400 bicycle helmets. Mark said that he will check into a storage facility. Jason said he will check with Tom Adams.

Terry shared that he has been in communications with 19 Novato schools about bicycle safety issues. Students not wearing bicycle helmets are reported as a widespread concern in Novato. There is a need to educate children about helmets and bicycle safety. Issuing citations to attend traffic court has been suggested, as well as teaching training sessions and promoting bicycle safety. Distributing free helmets when a child shows up to class will become part of the process. Creating awareness of the importance of wearing a helmet though is the top priority to achieve change in the Novato biking culture and assist schools is developing bicycle policy.

Terry also shared that a press release will be prepared. Wendi suggested sending it to Safe Routes to Schools to assist in disseminating the release.

### **New speed radar signs**

Jim shared that \$20,000 has now been set aside from an OTS grant to purchase 4 new feedback signs to be ordered. The speed radar signs provide immediate feedback to drivers regarding how fast they are driving in a residential area by flashing their speed on a radar sign, which is on a trailer. Jim is open to receiving a recommended list of locations for the additional feedback signs from Task Force members. Suggestions should be forward to Dave or Jason who will be involved in the rotating list of Novato locations for the radar signs. Pat said that areas near schools should be a priority location for the new radar signs. Placing a sign on Center road near Lu Sutton was suggested as an immediate location.

Melissa Perry, our new SR2S Team Leader at Pleasant Valley, said that a radar sign on Vineyard road near Eucalyptus would help to make drivers slow down. Oliver shared that asking residents or parents to place a phone call to the traffic department to complain about speeders in that area helps to document speeding issues, and expedite the process of getting a speed radar sign setup for the trouble area.

### **Declaring every Wednesday to be a 'Walk and Roll' to school day for all Novato Elementary Schools**

Laura shared that a top goal this year for Safe Routes to Schools in Novato is to establish every Wednesday as a regular Walk and Roll to School Day for all Novato elementary schools. This year there are many new parent Team Leaders to help implement our program and working closely together to declare Wednesdays as a green travel day in Novato – walk/bike or carpool – will help to decrease traffic and teach children a lifelong lesson of the importance of traveling green.

Laura will work with all Team Leaders to set up a welcome table every Wednesday to greet students who arrive to school but foot, bike, carpool or bus. A guidebook was distributed at the meeting to Team Leaders regarding the process of how to start and embed a regular Walk and Roll to School Day at their school. The timeline to launch the effort will be January 1, 2011. Part of getting started is seeking Principal approval, scheduling parents to volunteer a weekly shift at the welcome table. SR2S is also offering free Poster Art sign making sessions to be completed in advance of the launch.

### **SchoolPool grant applications**

Applications through the National SR2S Center for a \$1000 mini grant are due on Friday, November 19.

### **Web Site Under Construction**

Wendi mentioned that the Safe Routes to Schools' website is being redesigned updated. The goal is to let enable every district in Marin to have their own web page to post photographs and share program highlights. Please let Wendi know if you have any specific needs. Safe Routes to Schools will also be adding Facebook to its marketing outreach program as a way to share ideas, events and build a stronger sense of community between our Marin County volunteer parent leaders.