



Safe Routes to School Committee Novato Task Force Meeting Notes

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

Attendance:

Hadar Albo- Parisi Associates, Christopher Blunk- Novato DPW, Tyler Cantley-Novato Police Department, Rene deBos-Novato School District, Pat Eklund- City of Novato, Dina Gibbons- Parent Sinaloa Middle School, Manijeh Larizadeh-Novato DPW, Shelly Scott-Novato School District Trustee, Mark Silva-Novato School District, Katie Slattery-Lynwood School, Andy Cline- Lynwood School, Dabney Smith- Resident, Wendi Kallina- Safe Routes to Schools, Monica Leifer- Safe Routes to Schools, Peggy Clark-Safe Routes to Schools, Elizabeth Ramos- Parent Lynwood School. [See more on attached sheet](#)

Lynwood Crosswalk

Letter: May 30, 2018 from Elizabeth Ramos of Novato to the Novato City Council

[Leafwood Letter to Novato City Council- Spanish pdf](#)

[Leafwood Letter to Novato City Council- English pdf](#)

Monica read the letter aloud in Spanish and English at the start of the meeting. Elizabeth Ramos is a friend of the mother of Lynwood student Wendi who was hit on May 14. She explained her daughter was crossing the street between two park vehicles; and the driver was going too fast and did not stop for her daughter. In the past couple of years three Lynwood students had been hit crossing Leafwood; these incidents had not been reported to the police. Residents are fearful of reporting incidents to the police.

Parents and residents are afraid to report unsafe road conditions to the police for many reasons. The parents from Lynwood have signed a petition and are attending this

meeting to demonstrate to the city they need safety improvements be made right away for their children. Elizabeth has lived in the area for 33 years. She has seen the city only place a few signs warning drivers of the school zone. Parents do not let their kids walk to school because of the unsafe street crossings during school drop-off/pick-up. Vehicle drivers have been seen not stopping for yellow bus “stop signals” too.

Pat Eklund reported in February of 2016 these safety concerns were brought to the attention of the Novato City Council, ninety residents talked about the safety concerns on Leafwood. At the time the City of Novato did not have a City Manager. A new manger started in October of 2016; soon after all requests by the residents were denied except for a red fire hydrant.

In 2016 the local community hosted a “clean/green day” on Leafwood with the hope the city would support their efforts and address the safety concerns.

One of the issues addressed and remains a concern is the street light missing near the bridge. Because of the overcrowding of parked vehicles on Leafwood and surrounding streets students/parents must walk a long way to get home. Homeless people live in the area; students are scared.

Safe Routes to Schools along with the DPW and Lynwood Principal Andy conducted a “walk audit” approximately 3 years ago. The school also hosted “coffee chats” with parents and learned more about the safety concerns near the school.

The DPW conducted a traffic study (Leafwood and Sunset). Information collected indicated vehicle drivers were not exceeding the speed limit.

The police and fire department have observed the overcrowding of parked vehicles as a safety concern for students crossing the street. Many homes have multiple vehicle permits per residences. A parked vehicle count was conducted by Elizabeth: approximately 408 vehicles are parked in only 200 designated parking spots and half of the permits were expired.

A recommendation was made to have residents present a lease when requesting a parking permit and the number of permits be limited.

Safe Routes to Schools requested the DPW evaluate installing a crosswalk on Leafwood at Lynwood School. The DPW had reported at the time it would be put on the crosswalk projects list. Later is was reported the crosswalk did not qualify. Additional issues listed:

1. The pros/cons of a mid block crossing
2. Flashing pedestrian beacon (specific request by school)
3. Raised crosswalk (specific request by school)
4. Mark red zones for no vehicle parking

Residents have expressed they do not like to drive on Leafwood because of the unsafe road condition for all users.

Tyler reported the Novato Police Department did investigate the incident on May 14 and reviewed the traffic complaint log for reported incidents and complaints. Officer observed driver behavior and did not observe vehicle code violations during rush hour (am & pm). Most of violations in the area are parking violations. Many vehicles are double parked; blocking the roadway.

Officers must attempt to find the owner of illegally parked vehicles, before issuing a citation, if they cannot locate the owner they issue a citation and tow the vehicle. If a vehicle is blocking a road way it will be towed as soon as possible.

Currently the police department issues parking citations when they have the staff resources. There are many parking issues throughout Novato.

The Novato Police Dept would like all community members to know they want all traffic incidents reported to the police. Each incident is recorded and this information is used to determine what road facilities need to be improved for safety. If residents do not file reports the City does not have any data. Officers are requesting open dialogue with residents in the Leafwood neighborhood. Officers will not report immigrant residents to ICE, they want residents to feel safe in Novato

Road safety issues are prioritized by the number of reported incidents, if problems are not reported the city cannot address the safety problems including improving road conditions. Historically no incidents had been reported to the police.

Department of Public Work Report

Chris reported the cities traffic engineer conducted a similar study that the police department conducted after May 14. The observed the flow and speed of traffic and how residents including students crossed the street in the AM and PM. They also interviewed residents. Engineers observed many students crossing Leafwood at the north, south and middle of the street. The street is not designed to be one big crosswalk.

Students and parent need to be provided “safe crossing” tips. The DPW is seeking creative ways that will encourage students to use a designated crosswalk. Chris presented creative options currently being used in City of San Jose. One option is to paint a crosswalk with color flowers or stripes representing the school mascot. The goal is to increase the awareness/interest for students to want to use the crosswalk vs making random crossing.

Engineers would like to see how a raised and painted crosswalk would attract students keeping them from making mid-blocking crossings. The painted crosswalk would also attract driver; increase awareness. Drivers can tend to ignore signs; physical road facilities prove to have a greater influence; such as roundabouts or appropriately located speed bumps.

The DPW will continue to evaluate criteria for a pedestrian flashing beacon on Leafwood. They are installed on streets with very specific criteria. The DPW concern is if there are too many flashing beacons, drivers tend not to pay attention after a while.

A request was made to reduce the speed limit from 25 to 15 mph. Residents feel 25 mph feels unsafe with the number of vehicles parked on both sides of the street. The City Engineer does have the power to reduce a speed limit; however Leafwood is signed for 25 mph; enforcement is an issue in this neighborhood.

The DPW’s next step is to understand the changes the School District is considering for the entrance for Lynwood School. They do not want to install a crosswalk if the entrance to the school will change. Both groups need to plan together on changes that affect the entire community of the school. The DPW must also evaluate cost effective solutions that will work in the coming years budget.

In the meantime the DPW can look into painting a crosswalk (not raised at this time) and additional road signs. The city must obtain ADA approval before installing a raised crosswalk.

Safe Routes to School and Lynwood administration were requested to provide student education on safe crossing behavior in English and Spanish.

Pat offered to present this issue to the City Council again and request the needed funds. There maybe one time funds that have not been called for yet this year.

Elizabeth expressed her concern on how long it is taking to getting safe improvements completed. These issues were presented in 2016; they do not want to wait any longer and potentially have another student hit on Leafwood.

Wendi summarized comments: The police departments will increase enforcement, the DPW will consider installing a crosswalk (not raised); add additional signage and other creative solutions. Funding options will be explored with the city council and TAM “call for projects”. Safe Routes to Schools will reach out to the school and provide pedestrian education next school year.

Wendi recognized community members want to see change “happen yesterday”; however when issues are presented as they are during this meeting movement is happening. With the people attending this meeting and the police awareness increased and the DPW thinking of creative ways to increase safety; improvements will come to Leafwood.

San Marin High (SMH): pilot Safe Routes Education curriculum

Gwen reported SMH students meet with the principal requesting to work with teacher Cory Boyd to create a “safe crossing video” for students. The theme of the video would be “people behaving badly”.

Students would learn the correct behavior when crossing and then be shown the video. The second phase of the project would be to video student’s behaving correctly and rewarding them for that behavior- positive reinforcement. Students would be given rewards such as a Starbucks card. On International Walk to School Day (fall encouragement) and Bike to School Day (spring encouragement) students would host welcome tables on campus.

San Marin High Multi-Use Path

Pat requested the school board provide an update on the potential hazards caused of the poor condition of the path. She understood that Russ Thomson had submitted a letter explaining how the issues would be resolved. The path is no longer safe for students and requires ADA features. The City Council has never received a letter from Russ Thomson.

Update on San Marin Dr./Novato Blvd.

Task Force members requested an update on safety issues that were identified after the death of Haley in 2013 and the danger of tree branches falling on paths where students walk to and from school in 2016.

These issues have been presented to the city and they feel there has not been any action taken.

Pat explained the city did not have a City Manager for a long time and many issues were not addressed. The City Manager and the City Council work together on city issues. The DPW Director reports to the City Manager. Without a City Manager many issues are not addressed.

Gratitude was expressed for efforts made with Chris leading the DPW now. They look forward to understanding how and when the DPW will be able to address these long term issues. The city lost 5 years of time to resolve the safety issues with the law suit pending after the death of Haley.

The DPW has 8 recommendations for moving forward with related projects:

1. The speed limit has been reduced to 40 mph from 45 mph.
2. Trees have been pruned and vegetation has been cut back.

An arborist has submitted a report on the trees. The DPW and the School District have been collaborating. In the next 3 weeks specific trees will be removed. The DPW crews will be removing additional trees once school is out for the summer. Consideration will be made regarding branches that are close to PGE power lines and branches that create shadows on the roads.

3. Reflective paint has been added -project complete.
4. The traffic signal evaluation has been completed
5. Road striping has been completed
6. A study for a traffic light or roundabout is in process for San Marin Drive. Ashley is working on this project with a city engineer.

Chris reported Ashley the student working toward her Girl Scout Golden Award has been working with one of the DPW engineers. They are grateful for having a student's perspective on projects related to the schools.

The two remaining recommendations are 2 year- long term projects.

7. West of the city limit resurfacing and striping will be completed after the road is repaved
8. A street light on the back side of the school is planned to be installed. The DPW needs to understand the scope of the project of a school building planned on the

backside of the school. This will influence the design and placement of a street light. There will also be increased activity in this area after school and at night. Traffic on Novato Blvd will increase too.

Chris proposed the DPW and the School District work together to address the best solution for the street light. There may be an opportunity to resolve this issue in a more cost effective way.

Novato Blvd changes will take time; a study is required to install a traffic light and the community needs to have the opportunity to provide feedback. Once environmental studies are completed the bidding process begins. This process can take up to 5 years.

Historically the school district has not always updated the city on planned projects. Changes on school campuses impact the city/local communities. The closure of Hill School is an example of how traffic changed due to students/parents traveling to San Jose Middle School.

Representatives from the School District and the DPW are invited to make reports of all projects planned at Safe Routes to Schools Task Force meetings. When reports are prepared and presented at each task force meeting there can be increased collaboration and better planning. Decision maker's need to be present to help facilitate movement on projects.

Wendi reported Safe Routes to Schools Task Force role is to facilitate a process to address local projects. If representatives and decision makers do not attend task force meeting progress is very slow. No one person makes a project move forward.

Crossing guards update

TAM will not be cutting any guard positions throughout the county this school year but some cuts could take place next school year. However, TAM will be funding 21 guards over and above the 58 in the last report. As many as 91 guards could be funded if the renewal of the Transportation Tax is approved. If the state gas tax was repealed, then local funds priorities will need to be evaluated. Under the TAM expenditure plan for the sales tax renewal, current funding for crossing guards will increase from 4.5 to 7% with the voter approval of the Transportation Sales Tax in the November 2018 ballot.

Crossing Guard Positions in Novato:
Retained:

San Benedito and San Ramon
Olive Ave in back of school
San Marin Dr. and San Ramon
Adams and Johnson
Cut
Hamilton at Main Gate (but is next in line and may be retained)
Center and Tamalpais
Wilson Ave. xwalk to field
S. Novato and Sunset Pkwy
Sunset and Lynwood

Mapping

not addressed during this meeting

Infrastructure updates

Report on Vineyard Road

A proposed sidewalk for the south side of the street has been presented to the city council. Once approved the design will be submitted to Caltrans, when right of way is authorized the project could start in September 2019. This will be a 1.8 million dollar project and will be under construction during the school year. The city has the funds for this project committed.

It is a very big project for the city; the sidewalk aspect is fairly straightforward; the drainage design is the biggest issue. The “pork chop” will be included in this project.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan

not addressed at this meeting

Merritt Drive update

Tylor reported officers have been monitoring traffic. One day 14 citations were issued for speeding. The parking issues on Merritt Drive have not been reflected correctly. Reports must be submitted to the police departments to collect the data. The last time a report was submitted was in 2017.

The “no left” turn is being enforced. Tyler has pulled over residents of Merritt Drive making a ‘no left” during the posted AM/PM hours. The police must enforce the law for residents and non residents.

Residents have noticed some improvement since the police have increased enforcement. Traffic does not backup on Merritt and drivers have not been parking in residential driveways. The efforts of the police are appreciated.

Chris reported the new road striping has been approved for Sunset. The road will be sealed and then the new striping will be in place in August; start of the school year. The new configuration provides drivers with more room to pull out of a space.

The crosswalk will be moved up the street. It will be striped "keep clear", the no left turn will remain. The city and school will look further into circulating options for vehicles during drop-off/pick up. The city and school are also looking into options for a driveway on the backside of the school. The police provided very helpful feedback to the DPW on this project.

New request- Thorsson Court and Novato Blvd.

The DPW has reviewed; however Chris did not know what the recommendations were for this meeting.

Next Meeting

Schedule for Oct 3, 2018