

## Safe Routes to School Novato Task Force

Thursday, November 5, 2015

### Meeting Notes

**Attendance:** Wendi Kallins- Safe Routes to Schools, Peggy Clark- Safe Routes to Schools, Ashley Tam – Parisi & Assoc., Mark Birnbaum- Novato BPAC, Michael Hanlon- Novato DPW, Pat Eklund-Council Member City of Novato, Elaine Hannah- Parent Volunteer Sinaloa Middle School, Derek Knell- Novato School District, Hank Ryan- Novato BPAC, Mark Silva- Novato School District, Kelly Smith- Team Leader Loma Verde School, Dabney Smith- Neighbor of San Jose Middle School, Noemi Mejia- Parent Lynwood School, Andy Cline- Principal Lynwood School, Sharen March- Neighbor of San Jose Middle School, Eric Riddell- Novato Police

#### Infrastructure issues

##### Vineyard Road

Mark Birnbaum has lived in the area for 28 years; he is very interested in seeing bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the road.

One of the challenges students have when cycling on Vineyard Rd are the trash bins that are placed in the road. Students must cycle out into the street/vehicle traffic to avoid the bins. When a bike lane is installed, cyclists would have a defined place to ride and this would reduce the confusion for all road users including students.

Students also tend to ride against the flow of traffic, another very unsafe maneuver. Sinaloa School Principal has posted a sign at the bike racks encouraging students to cycle in the same direction as traffic “Go with the Flow”.

Michael Hanlon explained the City is looking into rebuilding the road; this has been on the Safe Routes to Schools Project List for a long time. This would be a bigger project than just the usual overlay. The project is now planned for the summer of 2017. The road will have bike lanes and other improvements. Once the technical and funding issues are resolved workshop dates will be announced. The City’s Public Outreach Coordinator will use all possible resources to notify the public about meeting dates. There will probably be 2-4 meetings and they will be held in 2016. It is too soon to make any announcements.

Wendi requested parents of the local schools be invited to be part of the community workshops too. It would be very helpful if the workshop dates and project information is posted in the school newsletters and other social media resources. It would be most effective if the meetings were held in the community, possibly at the school. It is also important to invite the Student Council and have the students address the safety challenges they experience.

## **Funded Crosswalk improvements**

### **Lynwood parking lot and crosswalk**

Andy Cline explained that the school has a three phase plan for improvements. The first is to improve parking and traffic flow. The circle at the school will be reduced in size to provide more parking spaces. They are also considering redirecting traffic to one way. Currently there is not enough parking at the school for staff which is required by the district. Residents are parking in the school lot. Staff will be issued passes for parking and violators will be towed. The new signage and support by the police has been effective. The police have been issuing parking tickets for vehicles parked in red zones.

There is a great deal of pedestrian activity in the school neighborhood largely due to the number of apartment buildings. Many vehicles are parked on street corners blocking the site line for students and adults crossing the road at Leafwood Rd. Many pedestrians cross the street mid-block. It would be very helpful to have a flashing beacon installed to warn vehicle drivers of pedestrians crossing.

A resident and parent of Lynwood School explained in Spanish (translated by Andy Kline) how dangerous it is for her children to walk to school from Leafwood Dr. There are a number of community members including parents supporting safety improvements on campus in the neighborhood. Cars travel very fast and her 9 year old son was almost hit this month.

Her son Kevin reported "he was trying to cross the street; he had to go out into the road to see around parked cars. A car was driving very fast and he was almost hit."

Officer Riddle explained it is legal for vehicles to park on corners but not to block crosswalks. The corner could be painted red. There would be a loss of at least 4 parking spots if marked red.

Currently there are no crosswalks at Sunset and Leafwood; the corners are now painted red to prevent vehicles from parking. There are stop signs for traffic crossing over Sunset from Leafwood Dr. Pedestrians tend to cross Sunset mid-block and not at the intersection.

There is a new crosswalk policy to determine how crosswalks are ranked in the City Of Novato. A few of the factors that influence how a crosswalk is ranked: traffic volume, pedestrian volume, pedestrian injuries and if in a school zone.

In a month or more Michael will have new data on this intersection and it will be determine if a crosswalk is approved based on the new criteria. A pedestrian flashing light could be another safety solution or a raised sidewalk with road striping to enable drivers to see pedestrians /students entering crosswalk. There will be flashing beacons installed in Novato in January and Feb 2016. There may be a possible grant to apply for 7 additional flashing beacons from a MTC grant

The average recorded speed is 28 mph; however it can seem as though vehicles are moving faster especially when children are present and trying to cross a road. Distracted drivers also create issues along with pedestrians not paying attention when crossing a road.

### **Gap closure Plum and Arthur (See attached DPW drawings)**

The project is moving forward, the plans are almost completed and it will go to bid very soon. The improvements will be scheduled when school is not in session; during the summer of 2016.

There will be several public workshops for the neighbors. There are several issues that need to be addressed including front yards and drive way approaches.

Olive School's parking lot has been improved. It is now only for special education busses. Improvements have been very helpful to the school community. Olive Ave is getting bike lanes installed soon.

### **San Jose Middle School issues**

Neighbors attending the meeting addressed several safety concerns they have for the students attending San Jose Middle School. They have witnessed a significant increase in traffic that prevents emergency vehicles to pass during drop-off.

Many of the homeowners attending live on Merit Drive which is a dead-end street across from the front of the school. Parents regularly park in homeowners driveways, blocking them for exiting or entering their property when school is in session. Vehicles are also parked blocking pedestrians from walking on the sidewalk, forcing them to walk in the street. Traffic seems to have increased during school hours because many drivers avoid traffic backups on Hwy 101.

Michael reported that the "no left" signs at the front of the school is not working. The school administration, Novato Police Department and DPW thought it could be an improvement. It is not, it is just encouraging drivers up Merit and making unsafe driver maneuver to turn around. Another possible solution would be to have vehicles exit on to Ignacio Blvd. This would be a bigger project and currently Novato does not have any SR2S grant funds available.

If this project could be viewed with a blank slate, a redesign of the campus could be a long term solution. Vehicles would enter at the upper end of the campus and possibly exit onto Ignacio Blvd. This redesign would reduce traffic congestion on the street.

Novato School Board will work with the city to develop a possible redesign and research how much it would cost.

Michael reported that Ignacio Blvd at Fairway Drive did not qualify for the SR2S grant. The city was concerned that the issues on Ignacio would prohibit the grant application. The street does not line-up and it needs additional review by the city. The ranking for this intersection is a #8 by the city. The issues on Fairview have been on the radar of the City Council and Safe Routes to Schools Task Force for a long time. It is recommended the City Council address them.

There is a pathway through a neighborhood by the Nugget Market leading to Loma Verde School. There are safety issues along that path that prevent many people from using it. The ownership of the path is still a question but it is believed to be partly on private property and city and/or county property.

### **Add and Prioritize issues list**

This agenda item was not addressed during meeting. Wendi will review the issues addressed in this meeting and determine how they will be incorporate into the Issue List.

This will be the first item on the next meeting's agenda.

### **Safety issues**

#### **Police updates**

Officer Riddell reported the Novato PD submitted for a grant and it was not awarded. The funds the PD currently has cannot be used for crosswalks. It must be directed to speeding and seat belt enforcement. The PD will meet with the DPW to learn how they can support the city on issues that are not engineering related. There have been less safety calls from schools this year. The schools do appreciate learning of safety concerns expressed by the PD and act on them when possible. The schools were designed with students being bused to school; the current traffic issues were not considering in the past.

There is currently a Yellow Bus program being piloted in Tiburon and Ross Valley. The results on the program are planned to be announced in December. This will be a valuable resource for many Marin School Districts to review for possible implementation and funding in the future. A representative from Marin Transit will be invited to present at the next Task Force meeting

The police continue to receive calls regarding speeding vehicles near Hamilton School and they will continue to respond to the calls. Another repeated safety concerning for students attending Hamilton are the residents in the apartment building on Bolling Drive.

### **Other safety issues**

#### **Safe Routes Activities**

Safe Routes would like to coordinate with a Novato school to host a free Family Biking workshop after school in the spring of 2016. The School District is supportive and will help once SR2S staff have a plan.

Several schools are hosting Walk & Roll Wednesdays: Olive, Loma Verde, and Lynwood.

The Sinaloa Travel Maps have been developed with support from the school's teen club. The first map has been presented to the school.

SMART has not presented any train education in the school district yet. The district would like to hear from SMART's Community Relations Coordinator to schedule safety information. Wendi understands they have reached out to San Rafael schools and she will make contact requesting they contact Novato soon.

SMART representative will be invited to the next meeting

**Schedule next meeting**

Evening meetings seem to be the best time for many members to attend. The next meeting may be held at City Hall in January or February. A Doodle Poll will be distributed to determine the best date.