

San Rafael School District

Safe Routes to School Task Force Meeting Notes

Tuesday, September 12

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Next meeting dates

- Miller Creek: October 2 at 3:30 PM
- January 24 at 5 PM
- May 1 at 5 PM

Recording available on request jshriber@parametrix.com

Participants

Safe Routes presentation (Jen Shriber, SR2S/Parametrix & Gwen Froh, SR2S/MCBC)

[See the attached presentation.](#)

The presentation included excerpts from the 2023 evaluation report showing progress countywide in maintaining and increasing active and shared trips to school. It then showed results from San Rafael, comparing the percentage of students walking and biking to the percentage of students that live within walking and biking distance. Overall, the district had 52% green trips and 26% active green trips during the 2021/2022 school year.

Bahia Vista leads the district, with 72% green trips and 69% active green trips; 72% of students live within one mile of school. At all the elementary schools, the percentage of active green trips exceeds the percentage of students living within a half mile of school. The challenge will be to encourage more students who live within one half and one mile to walk or bike. There is also room for improvement at Davidson, San Rafael, and Terra Linda, where older students can walk or bike further distances. Green modes at these schools are typically led by school bus (Davidson), transit, and carpooling.

Discussion (Wendi Kallins, SR2S)

Strategies to maintain and/or increase green trips

Carpooling

Parents and students are less likely to choose to carpool with people they don't know. Students may not want to carpool with certain other students (younger students, etc.)

Some schools have used strategies to successfully encourage carpooling. Edna Maguire once held a mixer for parents to get to know each other and followed up by pairing up families. To be successful, carpooling needs at least one volunteer who can



match up families and make introductions. Carpooling often works well with private schools, which send out directories of families living in the same neighborhood. At Mark Day, the school sends communications to let parents know where others live within their neighborhoods and to encourage bus use before the school year starts. Responsibility for these strategies lays with principals and volunteers for messaging, encouragement, and support.

Park and Walk

We'd like to see families take the effort to walk at least one block with first graders 2 blocks for 2nd graders, 3 blocks for 3rd graders, so on and so forth. Messaging has been sent to all principals to incorporate in their back-to-school notices. We ask that communities identify Park and Walk locations, where parents can safely park and walk with their kids, or safely let older kids out on their own. Permission is needed for private lots.

Walking and Biking

It is important to consider how to enhance the walking and biking experience, which is not always pleasant even if it's the most convenient option for those who live close to schools. The "school street" concept could be considered.

The San Rafael Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan will be updated in the next few years (anticipated completion in mid-2024); top priorities are safety and connectivity. SR2S will coordinate to identify priority areas to include in the plan based on walk audits and concept plans.

It is a priority to develop suggested route maps for schools that don't yet have them. Phil Chapman and Pilar Sanchez can assist with Laurel Dell's map. Venetia Valley also needs a map as well as Glenwood.

Canal Neighborhood

There have been recent active transportation projects to the north, such as the Francisco bike improvements, to improve connectivity. The City recently won a grant to pursue a bridge over the Canal. Towards the south, TAM is planning a project along Bellam Boulevard that would include Class IV bikeways from the Canal to Woodland Ave. as part of the 580 project.

Bus

Are the buses full? There may be an affordability issue for students in equity priority communities, serving as a barrier to bus use.



General comments from Geoff Rubendall:

1. percentages are great, but would be good to have the numbers OF KIDS here too, for totals.
2. Not all trips are equal - i suggest looking at the barriers such as the freeway, 2nd/3rd couplet, and other physical barriers.
3. Layer in the equity priority communities - students and families in EPC are typically overly affected by lack of safe walking and biking infrastructure.
4. Sharing successes from school to school about how effective the communication and programmatic pieces have been would be helpful
5. Lastly, overlay the routes for schools that overlap. Bet there are corridors that, if upgraded, provide improved routes to multiple schools

Updates*Street Smarts (Jen Shriber, SR2S/Parametrix)*

The next Street Smarts rollout will be from October 2 through November and will feature educational messaging on banners, signs, and social media to promote safe driving, walking, and cycling behaviors. Visit www.streetsmartsmarin.org to download materials or learn where to get a yard sign.

Venetia Valley & Sun Valley Updates (David Parisi, Parametrix)

The Venetia Valley pathway would connect Merrydale with Civic Center Drive via a formal path on the south side of the SMART tracks and under Highway 101. A concept plan has been developed, and Parametrix is working with the City to apply for a federal Reconnecting Communities & Neighborhoods grant for further design and construction.

A concept plan has been developed considering several options for multimodal improvements along Fifth Avenue from Sun Valley Elementary School to California. One long-term option would widen the northern sidewalk into the street to provide a multi-use pathway; this would impact parking. Another consideration would be to widen the sidewalk to the north, which would retain parking but would have impacts on driveways, landscaping, and utilities. Short-term improvements include traffic calming, curb extensions, and tightening up large intersections. Cyclists would share the road with vehicles as a bicycle boulevard under the short-term plan. The options was presented to the BPAC in June. There was some disagreement among its member whether to implement the short-term solutions or to go full board and get funding for the long term solutions. Next steps will be to consider implementing a bicycle boulevard and to hand off longer-term ideas for future development as part of the upcoming Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan update,

Upcoming events

- September 13 - First walk and roll Wednesday of the school year
- October 4 - International Walk and Roll to School Day
- Buddy Up contest

Next steps

- Consider school street concept where feasible
- Share success stories from different schools around communications, encouragement, etc.
- Identify park-and-walk locations for each school
- Invite TAM to present on Bellam project at next task force meeting
- Look into availability on school buses and any affordability issues
- Coordinate with the City on the future bike and ped master plan update
- Develop suggested route maps for schools that don't yet have them, prioritizing elementary schools – next up Laurel Del.

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