

Novato Unified School District

Safe Routes to School Task Force Meeting Notes

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Participants

- Leslie Benjamin – NUSD Director of Communications & Engagement
- Sarah Donelson – Novato HS parent
- Pat Eklund – Novato City Council
- Gwen Froh – SR2S/MCBC
- Alexis Fineman - SEI
- Officer Hlebakos – Novato Police Traffic Unit
- Wendi Kallins – SR2S
- Manijeh Larizadeh – Novato Public Works Engineering
- Monica Leifer – SR2S Bilingual Coordinator
- Natalie Levine – SR2S parent volunteer (Lu Sutton)
- Bob Mittelstaedt – SR2S volunteer
- Sgt. Pourfarhani – Novato Police Department
- Gretchen Schubeck – Sustainability Coordinator, City of Novato
- Ed Schulze – Representative at large
- Jen Shriber – SR2S/Parametrix
- Casey Ward – CSPOC, SR2S parent volunteer

Overlay mapping process (Jen Shriber & Wendi Kallins)

Jen introduced a new tool being developed to help prioritize improvement areas for each school. The tool, an internal overlay map, combines various data layers to better understand issues at schools. The maps will be created for each school and will show suggested routes to schools, student density, high crash rate intersections and segments, and issues identified by the task force, among other things.

Wendi led a discussion on new issues to add to the list. People can also email her (wkallins@igc.org) by the end of February with additions.

Casey noted that two of the roads that are up for repaving selected by the City could be redesigned to make them safer for students. These are Grant Avenue from Seventh Street to the bridge and Rowland Boulevard from Redwood Boulevard to Novato Boulevard.

School travel working group report (Gretchen Schubeck & Wendi Kallins)

Identify park and walk locations



The school travel working group has identified three pilot schools where volunteers will devote special energy to park and walk: Loma Verde, Rancho, San Ramon. The group created a Google Doc for people to identify potential park and walk locations near schools. Task force members should review and add any locations:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1dJ98lhldipn1iRUhNa6AfMRyp3vepEmGs_Qq1PGC6ng/edit?gid=0#gid=0.

Update on mapping

All maps for the elementary and middle schools are complete except for San Jose. Wendi has met with all the schools to review the route and overlay maps and get feedback. Wendi will review the overlay maps against the issues list to determine if the overlays are complete. A sub-group of the working group including DPW will then be created to review the completed overlay maps.

SR2S activities (Gwen Froh & Monica Leifer)

Encouragement

Gwen also introduced a new February contest called the "Have a Heart Challenge." The contest encourages students to track their trips to school, including walking, rolling, carpooling, or parking and walking partway. The top classroom in each school will win either a popsicle part or a scooter raffle. The contest is designed to give parent volunteers a respite as students' travel modes will be self-reported. All Novato elementary schools will participate.

The rest of the year's program will be rolled out at the volunteer meeting on February 13.

E-bikes

Gwen discussed the issue of e-motorcycles exceeding the 20 mile per hour limit. Education materials have been sent to principals and are available on the SR2S website. In a recent survey the number of these illegal devices was up at Novato High School; they were also present at the other middle and high schools. Super 73 is the most popular illegal device.

Officer Hlebakos notes that there was a massive influx of illegal devices and illegal behaviors on them about one to two years ago, but this has gotten better due to enforcement and education campaigns. He noted that it is difficult to discern illegal devices when students are pedaling them. The focus for enforcement has been on general safety: helmets, passengers, and general obedience of vehicle code.

Youth Leading Active Communities (YLAC) update (Alexis Fineman)

Alexis gave an update on the YLAC program's work with students at Olive, Lynwood, Lu Sutton, and Hamilton, focusing on active transportation, safety, and infrastructure. The YLAC curriculum is different from the standard, skills-based SR2S curriculum: it focuses on the bigger picture of what active transportation is and why it's important, and



develops student ambassadors. The program also involves students in identifying park and walk locations and conducting infrastructure audits with students to observe conditions and share their observations. Casey suggested that the CSPOC could offer support to the program.

New Issues

Crosswalk at Lu Sutton (Natalie Levine)

Nathalie raised the issue of a lack of a second crosswalk for TK/K students at Lu Sutton. There is currently one crosswalk in front of the school, in front of the main entrance (with a crossing guard). However, a smaller driveway to the west serves as the TK/K entrance, and more students are using this entrance as enrollment has increased.

The presence of one crosswalk means that TK/K families have to walk a long distance to reach their entrance; additionally, it leads to congestion and safety risks. The crossing guard is not present for TK/K release time, raising additional concerns. There is also concern for evenings and weekends, when people still cross for events or to use the fields but there is no crossing guard and no traffic calming

Nathalie has collected over 100 signatures supporting a second crosswalk and a flashing beacon at the Leland crosswalk. Pat noted that she can bring this issue to CPOC, and Casey will try to get it on the next meeting's agenda. He also suggested that traffic calming would be a good start to improve safety in the area.

Temporary bulb-out at San Ramon (Casey Ward)

Casey met with David Parisi (SR2S/Parametrix) to discuss quick-build traffic calming at locations based on the recent parent survey, with a focus on San Ramon. He had suggested painted bulb-outs to narrow the lanes and improve visibility at the pathway crossings on San Miguel Way, San Carlos, San Felipe, and San Benit. David noted that a walk audit would be needed to make any recommendations official. Wendi will schedule a walk audit for this area.

Next Steps

- Wendi will update the issues list and will coordinate with Officer Hlebakos.
- Task force members should email Wendi with additional issues by the end of February.
- Parametrix will update the Novato suggested route maps and overlay maps.
- Task force members should review and update the park and walk spreadsheet link.
- Gwen will follow up with Officer Hlebakos on e-bikes and illegal e-devices.
- Alexis and Casey will connect about YLAC.



- Natalie and Casey to connect about the Lu Sutton crosswalks.
- Wendi will organize a San Ramon walk audit.

Next Meeting Date

- May 7, 5 PM

