



Santa Rosa Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Task Force

Focus Area: East Santa Rosa

Meeting Notes of Thursday, April 25, 2024

[You can view the recording of this meeting by clicking this link](#)

Members in attendance

Christina Panza	Director, Safe Routes to Schools & Education	Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
Sarah Hadler	Safe Routes to School Education/Encouragement Program Manager	Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
Alexander Ocegüera	Active Transportation Planner	City of Santa Rosa
Amy Jones	Superintendent	Rincon Valley Union School District
Lori O'Connor	Director of Student Services	Rincon Valley Union School District

Additional Attendees via Teleconference: Ana Horta (Community Engagement Manager, City of Santa Rosa); Hannah Bates (Principal, Spring Lake MS); Lon Peterson (Director of Communications, City of Santa Rosa); Cherie Barnett (Outreach and Event Coordinator, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition); Sarah Dal Porto (Parent/SRTS Champion, Santa Rosa French American Charter)

Notes on Agenda Items:

1. Introductions

(this item begins at [0:00](#) on the video recording)

- a. Christina welcomed everyone and then everyone went around and introduced themselves (see above for attendees).

2. Partner Updates

a. Safe Routes to School Program (Christina Panza)

(this item begins at [1:41](#) on the video recording)

(Powerpoint slides included in note packet)

- i. Christina said she will share some slides that she will be sharing at the Santa Rosa City School Board meeting in May. She'd also love to visit other School Boards (Rincon Valley, Bennett Valley) to share what we're doing and to put goals in context, to see the bigger picture. *(Slide 1)*

- ii. First, Christina shared the SRTS goals, (*this item begins at 3:20 on the video recording, Slide 2*) and said that she is glad that are some new people here (Ana and Lon) who might not be aware of all of this.
 - 1. We are here to encourage more families to walk and roll to school.
 - 2. To educate kids and families on how to be safe while doing so.
 - 3. This year, under our new contract with SCTA, we've strengthened our program in identifying barriers to active transportation and to identifying potential improvements to be made to eliminate those behaviors.
 - 4. We've also done a lot more work recently to strengthen the community connection aspect of SRTS.
- iii. Transportation in Sonoma County generates 60% of our annual Green House Gas emissions (*Slide 3*), more in some cities, 67% in Petaluma. Encouraging and enabling more families to walk and bike safely is a major way to have an impact on slowing the effects of climate change. A lot of our environmental education in schools focuses on ecology and recycling which are super important and worthy but we should also consider what we as individuals and communities can do to really make a difference and the fact that 60% of our GHG emissions are caused by transportation is critical food for thought on where to prioritize our efforts.
- iv. Another reason we are here and for us all to have a shared vision is health (*Slide 4*), community health and individual health, breathing clean air, getting enough exercise (at least 60 minutes a day for kids) and at the same time far fewer kids are walking/biking to school than they used to and that route to school could be 2/3 of their daily physical activity. Christina wants to make sure we are all communicating these messages to our school communities, parents/staff/school board.
- v. We really want our SRTS program to inspire kids and families to fit walking and biking into their daily routines (*Slide 5*). That's why we have our encouragement programs, our Walk/Roll Days that most schools do monthly, some schools do weekly. And we also have our monthly challenges so that we can get the message out there.
- vi. Part of the shared vision of SRTS is to understand that there are 3 Ps for Change (*Slide 6*). Christina and Sarah recently attended a training with a facilitator who does a lot of Walking Audits around the country and he shared this image/idea with us.
 - 1. Programs (the tip of the iceberg)—all of the things that the people in our SRTS world have experienced, all of our outreach, encouragement and education programming and this tends to be easier to implement, there are always challenges to getting these going.
 - 2. Physical Projects—this is a big piece that we haven't emphasized as much in previous contracts. These are changes to the built environment that encourage healthy behaviors, like a well connected network of walking/biking infrastructure, school signage, striped bike lanes, installing bike racks. This is a big piece and we need it for change to happen.
 - 3. Policies—these are things like school siting, arrival/dismissal policies, parking regulations, board and district policies around education or engaging with SRTS program, also city and state level policies like Complete Streets policies where cities are

required when they repave a road to make sure it is safe for all users. It's important to have all three of the P's and connect and engage with each other in this forum.

- vii. One of our programs is our monthly challenges and (*this item begins at 7:35 on the video recording, Slide 7*), we are in the midst of our April Challenge and we share it with all of our schools. A lot of our schools have a Walk/Roll Day in the beginning of April and also share our challenges. It would be great for the principals that are here to talk about what works and what doesn't work in implementing and sharing our encouragement program. We meet with our principals and schools 3x a year, so we do talk about this individually, but we also want to provide a venue for sharing with each other so we can help each other.
- viii. Let's take one minute to share the drawings from our Art Contest winners from Santa Rosa Schools (*Slide 8*). These will go in our annual SRTS Calendar. The top left is a student from Sequoia, the top right is a JX Wilson student, the bottom left is an RL Stevens student and the bottom right is a Monroe student. And because we are in Rincon Valley, this one is a Whited student (*Slide 9*). This type of activity only works when schools engage with their students and share this offering. We have been struggling a bit with how we can get more participation/engagement around our challenges and what we can do better as well.
- ix. This slide shows where we've been in Santa Rosa with our SRTS Education for March/April (*Slide 10*). We are also in Petaluma, Healdsburg, Sonoma, Sebastopol and we are out there doing education, in-class and on-bike, we do Family Rides, we do outreach at events, we'll be at the Healthy Kids Day event on 4/27. We'll be at the Bike Block party in May so we are out there in the community and we love to talk with anybody about engaging with SRTS.
- x. As I mentioned before, one of the Ps is Projects and that's where Site Assessments and Walk Audits come in (*Slide 11*). We need improvements in infrastructure to change our behavior. The City of Santa Rosa has been super supportive, Alexander is here today, and we are engaging with schools to identify the barriers to walking/biking. We visited Sequoia, Wright Charter, Austin Creek, Lincoln and Brook Hill in the fall/winter by request. Then Alexander and Torina from the City made a methodical priority list of schools based on a number of factors including demographics/traffic volume, major arterials, etc, and they made a list that we have here and is also a living document on our website that is updated as they happen. These are the schools we visited or will visit this year. JX Wilson, Helen Lehman, Kawana Spring, Steele Lane and Monroe. We will pick up in August with Comstock, Slater, etc; and we may switch the list dependent on certain factors but will try to keep this order as best we can for equity purposes. It will take a while to go through all of the 55 schools in Santa Rosa, but the intent is to continue to connect and start over and keep having connections. You do not have to wait for an audit to share a concern with the SRTS program or the City, you can always email Christina or have a parent email Christina, go on the MySantaRosa ap, and we will find out what is going on and check in with the City.
- xi. Bike To School Day is on Wed. 5/8 (*Slide 12*). We encourage kids to walk/roll when they can and especially on monthly Walk/Roll Days and

they are greeted by a sticker or small prize, but with bigger events like International Walk and Roll to School Day and Bike to School Day, we really encourage schools to set up Walking School Buses and Bike Trains (this item starts at [14:20](#) on the video recording) and we have been working hard to increase that. That is really a Community Engagement effort, it helps parents and school staff connect with each other. There is a principal that leads a Bike Train in Windsor once a month and teachers that lead Walking School Buses and they tell us they love it. Not every school has the capacity to do this but many do.

- xii.** This is what Santa Rosa schools are doing on Bike To School Day (*Slide 13*) and of all that are registered, four of them do have either Walking School Buses or Bike Trains or both and some are school staff led. SR French American Charter has a teacher leading their Bike Train and James Monroe has a principal and teacher leading their Walking School Bus and Bike Train and Cesar Chavez has staff leading the Walking School Bus and a parent leading the Bike Train. This can happen and it's just a matter of sharing the vision and doing outreach.
- xiii.** We also have Bike To School Day resources that we share with our schools to educate their students/community about bike safety (*Slide 14*), whether it's bike safety tips or PSAs or an infographic.
- xiv.** We also want to share for anyone that is new that we do have a Task Force (this item begins at [16:25](#) on the video recording, *Slide 14*). This year is a pilot year and we had two meetings per focus area. We split SR into three focus areas, East, South/West, Central and its been great to have this venue but we want to think about what makes sense next year for our school partners to make it meaningful. We want to have an opportunity for connecting and sharing about what the City is doing and Christina will be reaching out to each principal and superintendent about what makes the most sense.
- xv.** Questions/Comments? Christina noted that a parent from SR French American Charter joined and Zoom and suggested that she could talk about their Bike Train (this item begins at [18:18](#) on the video recording).
 - 1.** Lori O'Connor said that when she looks at attendance, she sees that the walk/roll days are higher attending days and she wants to encourage principals to do more walk/roll days because it definitely makes a difference. She anecdotally thinks that kids are excited to come to school this day and she wants to think about adding funds from the budget to support the walk/roll days more and do bigger events and draw in more kids to participate. Christina suggested that extra money could go towards a stipend for teacher champion, or more incentives for giveaways. We are now serving 60 schools and we don't have enough \$ for all the incentives for all the walk/roll days.
- xvi.** Amy Jones said that she is proud of her district that all school sites participate (this item begins at [19:59](#) on the video recording). There will always be areas of concern about traffic and their district pays for services for crossing guards which is a priority, the crossing guards need to be out there and they do a great job with their colorful vests and the relationships they make with families. She mentioned that near where she lives is the Steele Lane pilot project with the delineators and she sees it as making it safer for families to cross. She asked if it will be permanent

and Alexander said that the project will be up until the end of the school year and then a survey will go out so that people can give feedback on how it is going. The intention is to slow speeds down and give protection for school drop off. In the future, they will come up with proposals internally, and then come back to the community with solutions that can be successful in that area. Christina commented that they did a site audit at Steele Lane this week, and the principal said that there was overwhelming positive support from the school community. When we do the walking audits, we try to think outside the box about what other things we can do to make it safer for kids to walk/bike. One of the things that came up that may be “pie in the sky” but there is a back field entrance and if the district builds a pathway where the back entrance could be accessed then this would be a viable entrance and take kids off of Steele Lane. We need the school and district to read the report and engage with the results. Amy said that it’s so good to see the different initiatives around the county.

b. **City of Santa Rosa Transportation & Public Works (Alexander Ocegueda)**

(this item begins at [24:03](#) on the video recording, Slide 1)

(Powerpoint slides included in note packet)

- i. We have two Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) installed in the district area *(this item begins at [24:44](#) on the video recording; Slide 2)*. These are pedestrian activated and the flashing yellow lights are meant to warn drivers that someone is crossing the street and they need to stop.
 1. Hoen Ave and Sierra Creek Lane—there are ramp improvements there as well.
 2. Summerfield and Parktrail Dr—Sarah mentioned that there is a teacher leading a Bike Train from Strawberry on Bike To School Day that is meeting there and they can use the crosswalk to get across Summerfield to the other side.
- ii. Sequoia Elementary Walking Audit *(this item begins at [25:46](#) on the video recording; Slides 3, 4)*—these audits are very helpful in community engagement and connecting with the school specifically to see what concerns are brought up around active transportation in getting to school or even in their daily circulation.
 1. Pedestrian vehicle conflict from Dupont onto Calistoga Rd where a traffic signal light aisle and people turning right take the corner sharp and turn when people are in the crosswalk. The solution is an LPI (Leading Pedestrian Interval) and there was already an LPI at this location, but they can perhaps make this a protected intersection and use delineators at corners, so drivers have to make wider turns. They have to check the turning radius for busses.
 2. Crossing Calistoga Rd feels dangerous. The school/principal can encourage students/parents to use the crossing with the signal to cross and really promote the best/safest places to cross.
 3. Sight distance at Calistoga Rd and Merit needs improvement. There are parked cars leading up to the crosswalk and block visibility so people can’t see when their crossing, so red curbs leading up to crossing were implemented to open the sight distance.

4. Unsafe for bicyclists on Calistoga Rd. Things that we can do to fix that are to add protected bike lanes. Alexander said more later on this as there is a project with potential to change lane configurations on Calistoga Rd.
 5. School Parking lot—there is a need for bumper blocks so cars don't encroach on the sidewalk. Alexander said they need to circle back to the principal to see if anything was done there to protect the sidewalk where car can encroach.
 6. Speeding on Calistoga—through another future project, we may be able to slow speeds down through traffic calming measures.
 - a. Christina mentioned that for every audit we do, a report is created and we track the solutions on the city side, but we do not track school district solutions, like the school bumper block solution just mentioned, but we would love to hear about the improvements on the school/district side. Amy said that a school bond was just passed and that safety measures are always a priority, and we will see if that can help fund this.
- iii. Calistoga Road Pavement Rehabilitation Project (*this item begins at [31:32](#) on the video recording, Slide 5*)
1. This is slated to go to Council in May for approval, and then submitted to State SB 1 funding potentially in July. Then tentative construction would be in summer of 2025/26 and we would do community engagement to ask for feedback. When we redo a roadway, we have ability to restripe it in a way that adds protection for people crossing the roadway and bicyclists and reduce collisions as well. It's a community wide benefit to make improvements.
 2. The limits are from Hwy 12 to Montecito Blvd—a potential to narrow lanes, add buffered/protected bike lanes when feasible. The project may be pushed back a year due to funding.
 - a. Amy asked about the new development coming in slated to be open mid-August. Alexander said it does not necessarily make it a priority but they have looked at the development plans to help schedule improvements as we have funding. Hopefully, they've gotten things right but can reassess if new things are brought up.
- iv. Active Transportation Plan Update (*this item begins at [34:25](#) on the video recording, Slides 6, 7*). We do this every 5 years and we do engagement to help us better understand walking/biking/rolling throughout Santa Rosa and what are the pitfalls, how we can improve it and connect to transit as well, not only busses but the SMART train as well. We want to find the barriers and make improvements.
1. Community Engagement opportunities where you can come out and visit our booths/workshops:
 - a. Cinco De Mayo (May 5), 3-9pm, Mitote Food Park, 771 Sebastopol Rd
 - b. Santa Rosa Pride (June 1), 12-5pm, Old Courthouse Sq
 - c. Bike-In Block Party (May 16), 5-8pm, 4th ST will be closed between B St and 4th St, it's on Bike to Work Day and we want to celebrate and give thanks to folks who use bikes to

commute and helping us reduce our GHG Emissions; 2 bands, SRTS and SCBC with a bike blender; partnering with Bikeable SR and Latino Services on this project. It will be a fun, community and family friendly event, and promoting the local restaurants in this area.

- i. Hannah requested a flier for the May 16 event so she can share with the parent community. Christina said we can send a flier and it will need to be translated into Spanish. Hannah said she could do the translation.
 - d. Public Workshop (May 23), 6-8pm, Advanced Energy Center, 741 4th St—this will be interactive, maps displaying different part of Santa Rosa, we want to know where you go and where are the places of concern.
 - e. We did our first event on Earth Day and it was very successful.
 - f. Active Transportation Plan website—you can google City of Santa Rosa active transportation plan. We have our existing conditions report on there, our interactive map and survey (in English and Spanish), it takes you to a map and you can put down destinations, barriers to walking/biking, routes that work well, or routes you'd like but have barriers.
- c. Christina mentioned that she got an email from Lisa Christopherson, Principal of Austin Creek, that there will be a bike train on Bike To School Day that will go from Sky Hawk Market to the school (*this item begins at [40:55](#) on the video recording*). And also, Christina was in communication with Beth Acosta from Whited who was also interested in having a bike train and there is a great park nearby with a lot of students who live in some apartments near by and there is a path/trail that connects to Middle Rincon Rd, so we can provide support for a bike train, but we need someone from the school for trust/community reasons.
 - d. Ana said that she has a flier for the Bike Block Party and will put it in the chat. They are working on a Spanish version but they do have the English version.

3. 23-24 Walk & Roll Encouragement Initiatives: successes and areas of improvement

(this item begins at [43:25](#) on the video recording)

- a. We want to have some engagement between school principals or school champions who have been implementing encouragement programs and sharing what they have done and what their successes and challenges have been. We have Hannah Bates, principal of Spring Lake MS, and parent Sarah Dal Porto, who is a parent champion at SR French American Charter.
- b. Hannah said that the past two years working specifically with Sarah Hadler have been the most successful in partnership with SRTS. They are realizing just how many kids in middle school have had very limited access or practice and actual instruction around bike riding and part of that is a pandemic effect. Our current 7th graders did not have any 4th grade bike instruction because they weren't in classes and missed out on some earlier opportunities. We had our bike training days in mid-March and they were highly successful. Fifteen students learned to ride, and there were many repairs made on bikes. We are seeing an uptick in students riding their bikes to school and reporting more ability to ride outside because of that education. Challenges have been around organizing Walk/Roll

Days, and people's capacity for organizing things. She doesn't always have a parent to help. We tried a Bike Train at the beginning of the year and it wasn't super well attended. Middle School is a challenge for attending things that are adult led as they prefer to walk or bike to school with friend. How do we make it more enticing, the rewards have been helpful and she'd love to offer different kind of awards that appeal to Middle School kids, like treat rewards (In and Out/Yogurt Time). Even stickers for Middle School kids are exciting!

- i. Christina said that we have super cool water bottle stickers for Bike To School Day. We know that gift cards for food are super appealing but we cannot buy gift cards for schools with our SRTS funding unless we get a special grant. Hannah applies for donations to IN and Out and Mary's Pizza for donations, and we use those to augment.
- c. Hannah also wants to submit Spring Lake for a walking audit and looking at the multiple crosswalks around the schools and it can get complex getting in and out of the school. That will be a really good next step for our site to look at traffic patterns for our site and encourage students to walk and bike especially as we are seeing an increase in students who live closer to the school, neighborhood, so we want to encourage and reinforce that opportunity as much as possible.
 - i. Christina said that Spring Lake is 22 on the Walking Audit list, so if we follow that it would likely but not next school year, but the following.
- d. Sarah Dal Porto (SR French American Charter) (this item begins at [72:55](#) on the zoom recording) reported that they have an established Green Committee within the Parent PTA and within that group, there is a Bike Committee with a parent, Kevin Anderson, who is the bike champion. There is also a Garden Committee, and they all have meetings together to swap ideas. It makes a huge difference to have the bike committee help on Walk/Roll Days to help with promotion and handing out incentives at the welcome table and bike trains. This year, there is a teacher leading a bike train, which is super exciting and they are hoping for more teacher involvement in the future. SRFAC does not have a lot of time during the day because there are two curriculums so they are working on getting the teachers involved to do more of the challenges. They hand out 15-30 challenge sheets on any Walk/Roll Day, but they are not getting a lot back and are trying to improve on that. There are other issues with finding routes that parents feel safe with. She said that crossing 4th St is really hairy sometimes, people just don't pay attention even to the flashing lights. She hopes to start a Walking School Bus in her neighborhood. There is also some bike theft with the older kids' bikes so they had to move the bike rack to the interior of the school but then kids don't like to go all the way across campus to get bikes, so they are trying to work through that. We'd like to get more Bike Trains and Walking Buses. They've had monthly Walk/Roll days throughout the school year, even in January, right after break, and two in May. Sarah said the reduction of giveaways hasn't been a problem, they still have a stash, and the kids love the color changing pencils.
 - i. Christina said that we won't always have that back stash because we have more schools and less money, and we'll be giving fewer incentives to schools in the future because we have more schools applying to be in the program. Sarah says that she has framed the challenge sheets as an incentive; they did chalk/art day as their first Walk/Roll Day and let them know they had completed one of the challenges. Christina said the SRFAC has strong PTA involvement and parent support but mentioned that sometimes it's about schools finding that parent who bikes/walks to school and maybe they can become a champion. Sarah said Kevin, who

is their bike champion, and when they recently did an earth day event, Kevin brought his bike with a cart and biked the kids around and brought extra bikes and put on a bike rodeo—he does a really awesome job.

4. District/site/parent SRTS issues, concerns & opportunities—N/A

5. Other Business & Announcements

- a. Christina invited Cherie to talk about Bike to Work Day on Thu. 5/16 (this item begins at [57:59](#) on the video recording). Bike To Work Day, which is not a Safe Routes to School program, but is a county wide event and there are energizer stations spread out all over the county. There are multiple stations in Santa Rosa, sponsored by the City or Kaiser, that gives out food and swag bags. This might be fun to share with your staff. Alexander said that the City will be at the Prince Memorial Greenway and the entrance to SR Creek Trail and they have added new infrastructure, a cycle track, to Santa Rosa Ave, between Sonoma and 1st St. They have partnered with Sports Basement and there will be snacks.
 - i. Sarah H. said that she and her son bike to climbing and he was really happy with the new infrastructure on Santa Rosa Ave.
- b. Hannah asked about the headway on the Greenway development (this item begins at [1:00:50](#) on the video recording) and she said that they may have students participating in the Landpaths summer program and is wondering about opportunities in the coming school year as it progresses to either give input or be involved in the development of biking and walking areas in the Greenway.
 - i. Alexander said that the City's Parks and Rec dept is leading that project in general and they are partnering with them about connecting that area with the Santa Rosa Creek Path/Prince Memorial Greenway, SMART Path, and working on getting community engagement for that area. We hope to help bring funding to the planning stages for connection and giving input through community engagement and events. Christina asked if there are upcoming events, please share them and we can share with the schools.

6. Scheduling Next Meeting(s) & Adjournment

(this item begins at [1:03:17](#) on the video recording)

- a. Christina encourages everyone to attend our last Task Force meeting of the school year so that we can plan for the future of the Task Force meetings. We really want to get feedback on what is the best way forward for continuing our Task Force meetings and hope that everyone can attend and share.

The next meeting of the Santa Rosa Safe Routes to School Task Force is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22nd from 10:30am-12:00pm at the Santa Rosa City School District.

**District site issues, concerns & opportunities may also be emailed pre- or post-meeting to Christina Panza, SRTS Director & Task Force Facilitator at christina@bikesonoma.org*