



Austin Creek Elementary School SRTS Walk Audit

Monday, December 4, 2023

In attendance: Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Alexander Ocegüera (City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Planner), Mike Vanmidde (City of Santa Rosa Traffic Engineer), Lt. Jason Brandt (SRPD Traffic Officer), Lisa Christopherson (Austin Creek Principal), Candy Weitzel (parent), Shaun Moldowan (parent), Josh Metz (parent).

Route: Met at school entrance on Snowy Egret Drive. Exited school parking lot on the south to Great Heron Dr. Walked east on Great Heron to intersection of Snowy Egret Dr. and Great Heron Dr to observe/discuss intersection. Proceeded west on Great Heron to Mountain Hawk Drive to observe/discuss that intersection. Headed east up Great Heron to return to the school.

Pick up/Drop off: Morning drop off and afternoon pick up for the elementary school takes place along Great Heron and Snowy Egret. Vehicles/walkers/bicyclists enter the parking lot from Snowy Egret and exit at Great Heron Dr.

School Information:

Address	1480 Snowy Egret Drive, Santa Rosa
Morning Bell(s)	8:25am
Afternoon Bell(s)	M, T, Th-F: 1:52 (TK), 2:50 (K-6) W: 1:52 (TK-6)
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	356
School type	Neighborhood
Student's proximity to school	356 geocoded students 273 live within 2 miles of school (77%) 241 live within 1 mile of school (68%) 179 live within ½ mile of school (50%) 75 live within ¼ mile of school (21%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	25% walk 2% bike 1% other (scoot/skate) 6% carpool 2% school bus 0 % public transit 65% single family vehicle <i>*totals do not equal 100% due to rounding</i>
Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure Programming (2023-24)	2 nd Grade Pedestrian safety lessons 4 th Grade Bicycle Basics Lessons, Bike Rodeo

CONCERNS &/or POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:

Concerns:

- Parents have observed numerous “near miss” conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles in the intersection of Snowy Egret Dr. and Great Heron Dr. Shaun has personally been hit in the crosswalk by a driver who was not paying attention. Parents said, “everyone is in a hurry.” There is no crossing guard at this or any intersection in the vicinity of Austin Creek.
- Speeding is a concern on Great Heron, particularly parents who pick up speed as they are traveling west, down the hill, on Great Heron. Parents expressed interest in collecting data on how fast drivers are traveling. Mike indicated that past studies have shown that the “average” speed on Santa Rosa neighborhood streets (with 25mph speed limits) is ~32mph.
- There is a speed limit sign on the south side of Great Heron east of Mountain Hawk for drivers traveling east, but not on the north side of Great Heron for drivers traveling west. A possible location mentioned for a new speed limit sign was on/near the green streetlight pole pictured to the left. Or a bit further down where cars begin gathering speed (before the solar panels)
- Parents park on the south side of Great Heron and Snowy Egret to drop off/pick up their kids, and both kids and parents dash across the street.
- Parents/kids walking down the hill on the pathway off Great Heron west of the school sometimes cross unsafely, mid-block, at that location, rather than walking to a nearby marked crosswalk.
- Drivers entering/exiting the school driveway from/to Great Heron may not see other road users crossing or traveling on the sidewalk due to the bright morning sun and also due to the bushes both west and east of the school driveway that may block sightlines.
- The principal has proactively installed “school safety zone” banners on the fence surrounding the solar panels on Great Heron, and has also installed “Stay Safe, Hawks! Cross the Street at the Crosswalk!” banners on either side of the pathway west of the school, however, many parents/students do not follow those rules.
- Although the intersection of Great Heron & Mountain Hawk is “less dense” in terms of pedestrian traffic during drop-off/pick up times, it is still a concern. One parent said that “nobody stops” at the stop sign at Great Heron/Mountain Hawk. Parents & Lisa believe that an elderly woman was hit by a vehicle at that crosswalk recently, around 8:25am in the morning.
- The speed limit/bike route sign on Mountain Hawk south of Great Heron is partially obscured by trees.

Ideas & Potential Solutions:

School/Parents:

- Capitalize on the strengths of your engaged community and strong parent network to improve upon the culture of driver awareness, safety and responsibility at Austin Creek.
- Consider forming a “Safety Committee” of parent(s)/school staff who can support identification and communication of ongoing SRTS issues and support education/enforcement/encouragement programming and initiatives. Possible activities:
 - Reach out to active neighborhood group “Skyhawk United” to gain support/volunteers for potential activities.
 - Fundraise for a stand-alone speed feedback unit to be installed on Great Heron (average cost ~\$4500.00, city can install & maintain once purchased)
 - If obtained, utilize data from speed feedback unit to share information with parents re: behavior problems or improvements.

- Recruit and organize volunteer crossing guards for intersection of Snowy Egret/Great Heron.
- Support SRTS encouragement initiatives, such as volunteering to coordinate or spread the word about monthly themed walk & roll to school days.
- Consider additional creative ways to build a culture of safety & transportation responsibility, such as conducting outreach at school events, inviting SRTS or the city to present at PTA, coming up with a catchy campaign slogan, etc.
 - *This was not mentioned during our audit, but in Petaluma, they are implementing a campaign with the slogan “Slow the Fast Down”) and they’ve printed yard signs and bumper stickers. Another site in Santa Rosa implemented a “S.T.E.P.s to Safety” campaign in 2022, where they had parents and students sign safety pledges, created & hung banners, and more.*
- School/District to trim bushes on either side of school driveway on Great Heron.
- School/District/parents to consider purchasing a barrier (two cones with a bar between them) to deter people from crossing at the location at the end of the pathway west of the school on Great Heron.
- Lisa to consider utilizing a future whole-school gathering (i.e., Back-to-School Night) to emphasize safety, in addition to continuing to inform parents re: safety procedures & expectations via normal school channels (i.e. newsletter, etc)
- Lisa to look into the AAA School Safety Patrol program to determine if it could be a good fit for the site & involving students in some elements of safety at drop off/pick up.
- Consider creating/printing “bigger versions” of current school safety zone banners for the fence on Great Heron.
- Utilize the school message board to remind parents to stop at stop signs, cross at the crosswalk, etc.
- Report incidents to SRPD when they occur (i.e., if a parent is hit in a crosswalk but not hurt, etc), as well as ongoing concerns.
- Continue to enroll in/participate in the County SRTS program, to support continued collection of travel data, to participate in Walk/Roll initiatives, and to be eligible to receive SRTS education services.

City of Santa Rosa Public Works:

- Provide school/parents with information/links for appropriate speed feedback signs that they may purchase. If school is successful in purchasing signs, city to install and maintain them.
- Provide school/parents with information/link to purchase barrier to deter crossing at location mentioned above.
- Review current school zone/speed limit signage to determine if/where improvements can be made.
- https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bn0pl5NCSwmvo38qk_Lu7FptMAYIR9hns4J_v8rpANc/edit?usp=sharing Review road widths along Great Heron and Mountain Hawk to determine if edge-lines (striping the parking lane so road is perceived to be narrower) could be a feasible traffic calming measure.
- Consider converting the crosswalk at Great Heron & Mountain Hawk to a “higher visibility” crosswalk, if warranted given documented safety issues. *Note: this is not a typical location for a high visibility crosswalk. Such crosswalks are usually reserved for locations where there are no stop signs/controls.*
- If PTA/school/district is successful in purchasing speed feedback unit, City of Santa Rosa will install and maintain.
- The State of California has passed a law that changes the rules for lowering speed limits. The new rules do not go into effect until July 2024. The City of Santa Rosa will be going through a process of determining which roads may warrant consideration to lower speed limits, beginning

with arterial roads. There may be a possibility in the future of lowering speed limits on identified neighborhood streets to 20mph, but this process and timeline is TBD.

Santa Rosa Police Department:

- Now that the SRPD “VIP’s” (volunteer police) are back in action, SRPD is able to respond to requests to deploy radar speed trailer to different locations in the city. Will add Austin Creek to rotation.
- SRPD has two traffic units in the morning, therefore patrols are limited. That said, they do keep a maintain a “beat report” of concerns and respond to complaints or ongoing traffic as best they can, whether it is with in-view patrols or other forms of enforcement like issuing tickets. Parents/school staff can/should log complaints with the SRPD so they have them on record and can respond to them.

Safe Routes to School Program Information

- The SRTS program coordinates a Safe Routes to School Task Force to bring together representatives from schools/school districts (school administration, staff and/or parents), city planning/engineering, law enforcement, and SRTS program staff. The goal of the Task Force is to:
 - Seek input from Task Force members and the public, in order to identify barriers to active transportation, opportunities for improvement and collaboration, and set priorities for future infrastructure projects within the city of Petaluma.
 - Provide a venue for sharing of program initiatives and projects in the city of Petaluma, as well as inter-agency collaboration.

The next Task Force meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 31st from 4-5:30pm at the Sonoma County Transportation Authority. Meeting notices, agendas, and meeting notes & handouts can be found on our SRTS Task Force page [HERE](#).

- Enrollment for participation in the SRTS program takes place in March-April each year. Schools must enroll each year to be eligible to receive visiting education services & ongoing technical support. Enrolled, comprehensive sites agree to:
 - Meet with SRTS program staff 3x per year to discuss/plan programming
 - Collect student travel tally data in September
 - Provide data for the SRTS program to enable creation of an annual SRTS “study map” showing where students live in relation to the school
 - Engage with/implement a minimum of 5 walk/roll encouragement initiatives per year.
 - Support scheduling & implementation of education programming.
- SRTS encouragement “Walk/Roll” initiatives and promotional materials are emailed to enrolled school contacts every month via our SRTS E-Newsletter, and may also be accessed at www.sonomasaferoutes.org. To request to receive our SRTS E-Newsletter directly, email christina@bikeosnoma.org

Walk Audit Pictures:



Intersection of Great Heron & Snowy Egret



Bushes blocking driveway sightlines



Bushes blocking driveway sightlines



Pathway west of school site



Existing signage (end of pathway)



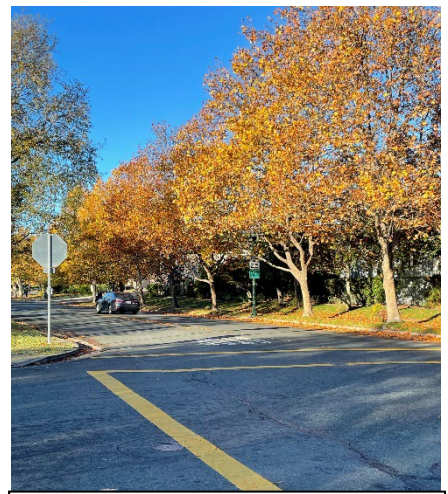
Existing signage (Great Heron, west of site)



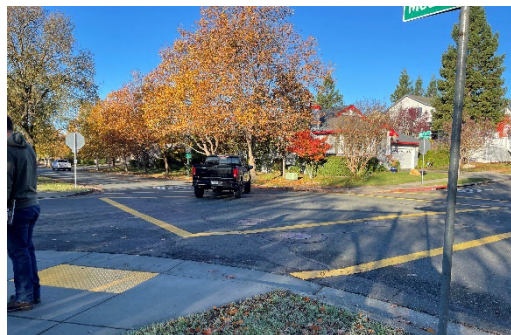
Possible location of speed limit sign (Great Heron, heading west)?



Existing speed limit sign (Great Heron, heading east)



Partially obscured speed limit sign, Mountain Hawk at Great Heron



Intersection, Great Heron & Mountain Hawk