



Brook Hill Elementary School SRTS Walk Audit

Wednesday, February 13th, 2024

In attendance: Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Alexander Oceguela (City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Planner), Shane Erickson (City of Santa Rosa Traffic Technician), Indy Monday (Brook Hill Principal), April Smotherson (Brook Hill Parent)

Route: Met at school entrance on Vallejo St. Buses had already left by the time we arrived at 7:30am. We discussed the bus & student drop off situation in front of the school (currently bus only, minimal parent drop off), then headed to the back entrance of the school to observe/discuss drop off on Mt. Olive Drive.

Pick up/Drop off:

There are currently two drop off zones for Brook Hill.

The front of the school on Vallejo is designated as “bus only” with yellow curb paint and school-district generated signage indicating “Bus only 7:30am-3pm”. Currently, there are three full size buses (40 feet long), which typically arrive/drop off students between 7:30am-7:55am (*SR City technicians who visited on 2/22 observed that buses arrived at 7:30, 7:35 & 7:55*). There are also four small “special ed” buses (25 feet long) that drop off students between 7:50-8:05am. The cafeteria is now open for students who arrive on the bus and school breakfast is served. Parents are instructed not to drop-off students in the bus zone, and generally they follow these instructions (although we did observe one or two parents who dropped off in the bus zone when buses were absent).

Parent drop-off/pick up takes place at the back entrance of the school, on Mt. Olive Drive. There is a designated loading zone (curb painted white, approximately 100 feet) with signage indicating 5 minute loading/unloading only, 7:45am-8:15am and 2:15pm-2:45pm. The school gate is locked except during pick up/drop off, and is opened at 7:50am for drop off.

School Information:

Address	1850 Vallejo Street, Santa Rosa
Morning Bell(s)	8:00am
Afternoon Bell(s)	M, T, W, Th, F: 1:06 (TK-K), 2:06 (K-6)
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	300 (approximately)
School type	Neighborhood
Student’s proximity to school	218 geocoded addresses (<i>students with same address may have been combined</i>) 178 addresses within 2 miles of school (82%) 84 within 1 mile of school (39%) 27 within ½ mile of school (12%)

	6 within ¼ mile of school (.03%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	not enrolled in 2023-24
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	not available for 2023-24
Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure Programming (2023-24)	n/a in 2023-24

CONCERNS &/or POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:

Please note that all recommendations on the following pages are meant to capture potential solutions to issues or ideas raised during the walk audit. Each of these recommendations are subject to additional design, analysis, outreach, funding, prioritization, and approval by the City and/or Santa Rosa City Schools prior to implementation.

Concerns expressed/observed:

- Parents sometimes drop off/pick up in the bus-only loading zone on Vallejo St. in front of the school, forcing buses to wait until the loading zone is cleared to park. Technicians who visited the site on 2/22 also observed three to four contractor or school district vehicles parked at the east end of the bus zone.
- Bus ridership has significantly declined post-COVID, which has contributed to traffic safety concerns at drop off. Prior to COVID, the # of students who took the bus to school was significantly higher than it is currently. Previously, there were 4 buses transporting Brook Hill students, now there are 3 buses. Post-COVID, a much larger portion of families have chosen to drive to school, which has obviously resulted in a significant increase in traffic at drop off/pick up. Possible reasons (unverified):
 - Bus schedule has changed, apparently due to low staffing (also a post-COVID issue?).
 - Routes/buses have been combined with Slater, so bus apparently leaves ½ hour earlier than it used to.
 - COVID may have made parents wary about not putting kids on bus initially, and kids/parents got used to driving and are still doing it...
- Indy expressed that parents “fly” down Mt. Olive Drive. Indy expressed that there is little to no speed enforcement or police presence.
- Parents traveling from South Park mostly travel east on Mt. Olive toward the back entrance of the school, which is on the north side of Mt. Olive. Therefore, in order to drop their students off in the loading zone on the north side of Mt. Olive, parents traveling eastbound either must make a u-turn somewhere on Mt. Olive to head back west and drop off on the north side of the street, or they must pull over to drop off on the south side. The result of this:
 - Numerous students crossed Mt. Olive at whatever location their parent stopped their vehicle. We observed several students crossing the street mid-block in an unsafe manner. Views may be obstructed with both parents parked on the street and stopped in the travel lane.
 - MANY parent drivers turned right onto Mt. Olive Way then immediately made a (legal?) u-turn in order to head west on Mt. Olive Drive and drop their students off in the loading zone to avoid having them cross the street.
 - Parents block residential driveways.

- Indy expressed that parents don't listen to school instructions and that parents and neighbors curse her/each other out regularly. A neighbor came out during our observation to express that he wished the city/district had notified neighbors of the plan to move drop-off/pick up to Mt. Olive, because they were not notified of the significant change in traffic. He expressed that the morning/afternoon traffic has been challenging for the neighborhood. SR City Technicians also reported that another neighbor at 2701 Mt. Olive Drive had a rude parent confrontation that blocked her from backing out of her driveway.
- Mt Olive Drive between Maple Avenue and Brook Hill does not have a safe, consistent walking path. This could be a viable drop off spot/walking school bus route if the route was improved.

Potential Solutions/Ideas:

School/District:

- Since the Cafeteria is already open/staffed at 7:30am to accommodate kids who ride the bus, consider opening the back gate/campus as a whole at 7:30am, rather than waiting until 7:50am to open the back gate. This would allow more time for parent drop off and potentially would have the greatest impact in easing congestion and potential conflicts on Mt. Olive during drop off time.
- Continue to inform parents about expected pick-up/drop off procedures, reminders to be respectful to neighbors, etc; utilize multiple distribution channels to do so (i.e. back-to-school night, school newsletter, letters sent home, etc). Parents who leave their vehicles to go into the school make the conditions worse on Vallejo. Encourage parents who are dropping off on Vallejo to park a few blocks away from the school; it's better exercise and enhances safety.
- Consider partnering with AAA to establish a student [AAA School Safety Patrol](#) (or alternatively assigning school staff if feasible) to support a smoother, safer drop off. Student Safety Patrols (or staff) can help kids exit vehicles, enable parent drivers to move along more quickly, and even help kids who require support to get to/from class.
- Consider establishing a walking school bus meet-up spot or two, led by parents or school/district staff. A successful walking school bus could potentially reduce the traffic on Mt. Olive and/or Vallejo on the days it operates, build community connections, and motivate students to get exercise and arrive to school on time. A couple of potential Walking School Bus meet-up spots:
 - Doyle Park Baseball Field: for parents traveling from South Park, driving to a Doyle Park baseball field drop-off spot would be approximately .3 miles farther than if they dropped off in front of the school on Vallejo, and ~.8 miles farther than dropping off on Mt. Olive. The walk from the baseball field is approximately .3 miles from the school. A walking school bus at this location is an approximate 6 minute walk to school. Students could be dropped off at the Walking School Bus meet up spot between 7:35-7:45, depart at 7:45am and arrive at school before 8am. Parents could also park in the lot and join the walking school bus.
 - The Pathway connecting Mt. Olive Dr & Green Way: For parents who normally drop off at the back of the school on Mt. Olive, this drop off spot would shorten their driving trip by ~.25 miles, and for parents who travel down Brookwood to Vallejo to drop off at the front of the school, this drop off spot would shorten their driving trip by ~.45 miles, give students an opportunity to get some exercise/fresh air, and reduce the number of vehicles dropping off in the other two locations. The students would walk on a pleasant .34 mile walk to school from Green Way to Solano Drive to Morton Way, to Vallejo. A walking school bus at this location would take between 6-8 minutes. Students could be dropped off at the pathway entrance between 7:35-7:45, depart at 7:45am and arrive at

school before 8am. *Note: students would need to cross Mt. Olive if parents dropped off on the south side of the street. There is a grassy area on the south side of Mt. Olive where the Walking School Bus leader(s) could potentially wait, then cross together in a group with students, once ready to walk.*

- School/District consider researching reasons why bus ridership has declined so precipitously in recent years (online school-wide survey, surveying parents at drop off/pick up). Based on research outcomes, determine if any actions could successfully incentivize bus riding.
- *During the audit, we discussed the idea of possibly relocating bus drop-off/pick-up area to the back of the school, however, after further visits and observations by Santa Rosa City Public Works technicians on 2/22 & 2/26, it was determined that this is not a recommended solution.*

City of Santa Rosa Public Works:

- Vallejo: Consider modifying a portion of the loading zone to allow for parent drop off, improve safety, and prevent delays in bus drop-off. There is currently about 215' of yellow curb along the school frontage. Consider possibility of converting 40' on the west end near the crosswalk, to a timed 5 minute passenger loading zone, with attended vehicles only. Corresponding signage could also be changed to better reflect the restricted zone; i.e. 7:30 to 8:30am and 12:30 to 2:30pm MON to FRI (with black text verses red text).
- Mt. Olive: Consider lengthening the loading zone on Mt. Olive Drive to the west a couple of parking spaces, to allow more room for drivers to pick up/drop off students. *Note: City technician indicated that this may be more beneficial at afternoon pick up than at morning drop off.*
- If school decides to open the back gate earlier in the morning, create new signage for drop-off zone on Mt. Olive to indicate new, earlier parking restrictions. Also recommend to change language from “school days” to “Monday-Friday”
- SR City technician who visited site on 2/22 & 2/26 recommended refreshing center-line pavement markers on Mt. Olive, possibly changing from single yellow to double yellow. This is intended to help prevent parents from impatiently passing on the left (when a child is obstructed from view and crossing the street), when another parent is stopped in the travel lane to drop off their child.
- Consider feasibility of improving walkability on Mt. Olive Drive between Brook Hill and Maple Avenue.

Santa Rosa Police Department:

- Visit Mt. Olive during drop off/pick up time to potentially enforce speeding and/or other unsafe/illegal behaviors.

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 meetings currently take place approximately 8x per year (Aug-Dec, Jan-May) 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

Appendix:

Morning & afternoon drop off on Vallejo (depicting vehicles in bus drop off zone). First 4 pictures are morning, 2nd 4 pictures are afternoon.





Pictured above: Red car parked in bus zone.



Pictured above: Because the driver of the red car (parked in the bus zone) and went into the school for a minimum of five minutes, the 2nd school bus couldn't park. This caused the bus driver to block the travel lane (obstructing pedestrians in the crosswalk from view). Then, the black SUV passed on the left where they shouldn't have. The 2nd bus driver then pulled forward to load children between the back of the first bus and the front of the red car.



Drop/pick up off zone on Mt. Olive Drive

