



Comstock Middle School SRTS Walk Audit

Tuesday, August 27th, 2024



In attendance: Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Alexander Ocegüera (City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Planner), Mike Vanmidde (City of Santa Rosa Traffic Engineer), Yuri Koslan (Santa Rosa City Transit Planner), Cristina Kaplan (Comstock Assistant Principal), Officer Matt Crosbie (Santa Rosa Police Department) Sarah Hadler (SRTS Education/Encouragement Program Manager), Lacinda Moore (Comstock teacher/SRTS Champion), Robert Blystone (Comstock student)

Route: Met at school entrance. Observed drop off from main entrance and along the school frontage. Walked down the sidewalk that parallels the school driveway toward West Steele Lane, to the corner of West Steele and Apache St. Crossed W. Steele at Apache and observed traffic from the northeast corner of W. Steele & Apache. We then walked west on the north side of W. Steele Lane, crossed at the signalized crossing at W. Steele Lane/Comstock and Northwest Community Park, and observed issues at/near the bus stop on the south side of W. Steele next to that crossing. We then walked west on the south side of W. Steele to the pathway west of the baseball field, and followed that pathway back to campus.

Pick up/Drop off: Morning drop off and afternoon pick up for the middle school takes place in the school driveway loop, with the busiest period taking place between 8:00 am-8:15 am. One full size bus and 3 special ed buses drop off/pick up students in front of school. Parent drivers primarily drop off students in front of school, but also sometimes enter the staff parking lot to drop students off.

Painted curbs in loading zone are faded and signage is lacking.

There is a large parking lot on the south side of campus where parents can park, but there is no designated visitor parking in front of the school.

Students who walk or bicycle can enter campus from the south off of Ridley Ave and a gravel path that goes around the soccer field in the back of the school; they can enter campus from the west off of Marlow Rd through the multi-use paths in Northwest Community Park; they can enter from the north and walk/bike up the sidewalk that parallels the school driveway or on the multi-use paths in Northwest Community Park.

W. Steele Lane is a two lane road with class II bike lanes on both sides.

Crossing Guards are stationed at West Steele Lane & Apache Way, the Comstock/Northwest Community Park Driveway at W. Steele Lane, and Marlow Road & W. Steele Lane. Crossing Guards are on duty from 7:20 am to 8:15 am, and from 1:15 pm to 2:55 pm.

Teacher Lacinda Moore advocated for the City Bus Route 6 to be adjusted to accommodate Comstock students, and actively encouraged students to utilize the bus on their route(s) to/from school. She supported students in determining their bus stops, routes, and timing, and shared information about the benefits of riding the bus. As a result, a significant number of students at Comstock take the city bus either to or from school (a larger number take it from school).

School Information:

Address	2750 West Steele Lane
Morning Bell(s)	8:10am
Afternoon Bell(s)	2:10pm
Grade levels	7-8
Enrollment	441 (23-24)
School type	Traditional
Student's proximity to school	441 geocoded students in 2023-24 358 live within 2 miles of school (81%) 278 live within 1 mile of school (63%) 119 live within ½ mile of school (27%) 11 live within ¼ mile of school (2.5%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2024 student arrival/departure tally data)	TBD
Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure Programming (2024-25)	TBD

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 School District prior to implementation.

Active Transportation Observations and Concerns:

- Morning drop-off was relatively smooth, despite the volume of traffic. Parents drivers however, can be “impatient,” according to school staff, and were observed passing other vehicles unsafely. School staff reported that parent drivers sometimes block the bus-zone, forcing the bus to park on the other side of the parking lot to drop off students, resulting in students walking through moving traffic in the parking lot to get to the school entrance. Traffic can also be blocked when parents do not pull forward to drop off their students.
- Parent drivers were observed dropping off students in the staff parking lot on the north side of campus. Staff and the student in attendance reported that this results in difficulty and a lack of safety for students walking from the sidewalk along the west side of the school driveway to the front of the school. Those students must cross the entrance to the staff parking lot, to get to the sidewalk in front of the school.
- The curb-ramps are not ADA compliant, nor is there a painted crosswalk, across the driveway into the staff parking lot (mentioned above).
- There is no signage indicating that the staff parking lot is just for staff and that student drop-off is not permitted in that parking lot. In general, signage is lacking in the drop-off zone, and curb paint is faded.
- The pavement of the school driveway has significantly deteriorated, as have the speed humps in the school driveway, which are unpainted and difficult to see. Lacinda Moore reported that the school district did a “superficial paving” of the driveway, but it quickly washed away, and that the district is unable to repaint the speed humps until the driveway is repaved.
- Speeding along West Steele Lane is a general concern, and drivers often do not obey the 25mph “while children are present” speed limit in front of the school.
- The student in attendance expressed that when he rides his bicycle to school from Range Avenue to W. Steele Lane, that he mostly travels on the sidewalk, because it feels safer than bicycling along W. Steele Lane, due to the speed of traffic and the fact that the bicycle lanes are relatively narrow with no buffer between traffic and the bicycle lane. The student indicated that he once observed a driver crashing into a bicyclist who was riding down W. Steele Lane in the other direction.
- The Crossing Guard(s) stationed at the crosswalks at W. Steele Lane and Apache Street expressed that drivers often do not obey pedestrian right of way. They expressed that this location is one of the more difficult crosswalks in the area to safely monitor. We observed students primarily crossing West Steele on the western leg of that crosswalk. The Crossing Guard confirmed that this is the primary crossing that students utilize (although she supports crossing at all three legs).
- The Crossing Guard stationed at the signalized intersection at the Comstock driveway indicated that when it rains, the signal “beeping” mechanism does not work. She also shared that the asphalt on the north side of the crosswalk is “too high” and strollers get caught on it, and pedestrians stumble/trip on it.
- Students who are dropped off at the bus stop on the north side of W. Steele Lane, ½ a block west of Apache Street, or students walking/bicycling from Apache St. or from the neighborhoods to the east, primarily, as mentioned above, cross at the Apache St. crosswalk (west leg). Students then walk/bicycle to school across the northern parking lot and/or grassy

area west of the neighborhood fence, crossing the school driveway at various locations, before heading down the sidewalk to school. The student in attendance said that this parking lot often has a lot of broken glass in it, so when he bikes, he prefers to bike on the sidewalk along W. Steele Lane and come up on the sidewalk next to the school driveway. Some students do cross at the signalized crossing at the Comstock school driveway, but the majority appear to cross at Apache & W. Steele because it appears to be the “shortest path of travel” to/from school and the bus stop/neighborhood.

- We did not confirm the presence of adequate school zone & school speed limit signage on W. Steele Lane.
- Bike racks are located behind a fenced area in front of the school campus (east side of campus). This may not be the most convenient location for bicyclists traveling from the pathway west or south of the school, however, it has been determined to be the most secure location due to thefts that have occurred in other, less visible areas.

Active Transportation & Public Transportation Ideas and Potential Solutions:

District/School:

- Work closely and diligently with the City of Santa Rosa to finalize a logical solution to enable improvements to school district property negatively impacting active travel to/from school including:
 - Short term:
 - re-pave and repaint the school driveway
 - repair/repaint speed humps
 - Add ADA-compliant curb ramps with truncated domes, and paint a crosswalk across the driveway to the staff parking lot on the north side of campus.
 - Longer term, to enhance safety and convenience for walkers and bicyclists:
 - Convert the sidewalk on the west side of the school driveway to a wider, multi-use path, to enhance safety and convenience by both walkers and bicyclists.
 - Construct a paved pathway and designated crossing, from the crossing at W. Steele Lane & Apache way, along the grassy area west of the wooden fence, across school driveway (safest location TBD), to the sidewalk on the west side of the school driveway.
- Close the gate to the staff parking lot by 8am, to prevent parent drivers from dropping students off in the staff parking lot and to avoid conflicts with students trying to cross the entrance to the staff parking lot.
- Add signage to the gate at the entrance to the staff parking lot indicating that the lot is for staff only.
- Refresh or re-do curb paint in loading zones to align with loading procedures, and add signage where lacking.
- Convert some of the staff-only parking spaces in front of the school to “visitor parking” to enable parents who were parking in staff parking lot north of campus to park closer to the entrance.
- Communicate above information (& more) by developing clear English/Spanish drop off/pick up procedures & other travel recommendations and share with parents/students via Back-to-School Night, Parent Square, School newsletters, PFO, etc.

- Work with SRTS program staff to identify and promote convenient walking & bicycling routes and/or “student meet-up locations” to school, utilizing the SRTS Student Address GIS map to determine where clusters of students are traveling from and what those routes are.
- Continue to identify, promote, and encourage students to utilize public transportation, particularly the Santa Rosa City bus that serves a significant number of Comstock students.
- Promote Walk & Roll to School events to encourage students to walk or bicycle on their own or in groups, for fun, health, and community connection.
- Continue participating in the County SRTS program, to support continued collection of student arrival/departure tally data, to participate in Walk/Roll initiatives if capacity allows, and to be eligible to receive SRTS services such as bicycle and/or pedestrian safety lessons and/or on-bicycle education programming.
- Continue sharing the following SRTS tip-sheet(s) and videos to support safe walking, bicycling, drop-off, and parking and walking:
 - Walking Safety Tip Sheet [English](#) [Spanish](#)
 - Bike Safety Tip Sheet [English](#) [Spanish](#)
 - Driver Awareness for Safe Arrival/Dismissal [English](#) [Spanish](#)
 - E-Bicycles Tip Sheet [English](#) [Spanish](#)
- Report incidents to SRPD when they occur (i.e., if someone is hit in a crosswalk but not hurt, etc), as well as ongoing concerns, near misses, etc.

City of Santa Rosa Public Works:

- Work closely and diligently with the Santa Rosa City School District to finalize a logical solution to enable improvements to school district property negatively impacting active travel to/from school (*as referenced in School District section above*)
- Improve the safety of the crossing at West Steele Lane & Apache Lane by installing an RRFB at the western leg of that crosswalk, where the majority of students are known to cross. Although the eastern leg of that crosswalk has a shorter crossing distance, the western leg is the logical leg to improve because of predominant usage. Consider bulb-outs to shorten crossing distance as well.
- Despite not having enough road width to add protected bicycle lanes, determine whether any additional traffic calming or safety measures along West Steele Lane would be feasible to add to the Active Transportation Plan for future consideration, such as:
 - Green bicycle lanes
 - Bulb-outs to shorten crossing distance at crosswalks and make pedestrians more visible to drivers.
 - Reconfiguring the sidewalk to create a buffer between the bicycle lane and West Steele Lane.
- Determine why the audio signal at the signalized crossing at the Comstock/Northwest Community Park Driveway does not work when it rains, and, if possible, repair that issue.
- Repair asphalt on sidewalk at the following locations:
 - Crosswalk at Comstock driveway
 - Patch asphalt to the east of the bus stop on the south side of West Steele Lane

- Repair large cracks in pavement on the multi-use pathway west of the school near the play structures and pump track

Public Transportation information, observations & potential improvements:

CityBus, Sonoma County Transit and SMART allow youth to ride free.

The transit routes directly serving the school from bus stops, less than a ¼ mile distance to the campus include:

- Route 6 – on West Steel Lane
 - Bus stop # 80288 - westbound – average daily boardings, alighting's – 10/15
 - Bench is currently at bus stop.
 - At this level of boardings a bus-shelter is NOT considered warranted, but if the school staff see a need for a shelter please bring the request to the Transit Divisions.
 - Bus stop # 80281 – eastbound – average daily boardings, alighting's – 25/15
 - Bench is currently at bus stop.
 - **Asphalt patch needed on sidewalk to prevent tripping hazard.**
 - At this level of boardings a bus-shelter is recommended if the school staff are supportive.
- Route 15 – on Guerneville Rd
 - Bus stop # 80203 - westbound – average daily boardings, alighting's – 1/2
 - Bench is currently at bus stop.
 - At this level of boardings a bench nor bus-shelter is NOT considered warranted.
 - Bus stop # 80227 – eastbound – average daily boardings, alighting's – 1/1
 - At this level of boardings a bench nor bus-shelter is NOT considered warranted.
- Sonoma County Transit and CityBus have additional routes that depart Coddington Transit Center. Comstock Middle School students can catch Route 6 on West Steel Lane and be at Coddington in 7 minutes.
- SMART train is within a ½ mile walk (note: it is unclear whether any students utilize SMART on their way to/from school).

Santa Rosa Police Department:

- Enforce speed and other moving violations along West Steele Lane during morning and afternoon commute times.
- Deploy speed radar trailer at feasible locations and times on West Steele Lane.

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 Santa Rosa.
 - Provide a venue for sharing of program initiatives and projects in the city of Santa Rosa, as well as inter-agency collaboration.

Santa Rosa Task Force 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 April each year (deadline is April 30th). 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.sonomasaferroutes.org. To request to receive our SRTS E-Newsletter directly, email christina@bikeosnoma.org

Appendix: Walk Audit Pictures:



Morning traffic traveling down school driveway; entrance to staff driveway on left of picture



Traffic cue in and sidewalk in front of school, staff only parking on left could have a few spaces converted to visitor



Crossing across entrance to staff driveway; recommend to install crosswalk & ADA accessible curb ramps



Looking across field toward school from crossing at Apache Lane & West Steele Lane – students walk across this grassy area/parking lot and across the school driveway for the “shortest path” to school.



Crossing at Apache St. & West Steele Lane – recommend RRFB for West leg of this crossing



View of West Steele Lane facing west, at Apache St. crossing. Consider feasibility of improvements to bike lane (green?) or sidewalk reconfiguration to put bike lane in-between the sidewalk & refuge area.



Sidewalk east of bus stop on north side of West Steele, recommend patch repair



Recommend repair of curb here (sidewalk in vicinity of bus stop on north side of West Steele, near school driveway entrance).



Multi-use pathway in park west of school/baseball fields	Another view of multi-use pathway that continues west of school to Marlow Road (repairs where pathway has deteriorated farther west are needed)