



## Helen Lehman Elementary School SRTS Walk Audit

Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024



**In attendance:** Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Alexander Oceguela (City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Planner), Mike Vanmidde (City of Santa Rosa Traffic Engineer), Mercedes (City of Santa Rosa Engineering Tech), Zoe Unruh (Senior Planner, SMART) Ashley Gerhardt (Helen Lehman Student Engagement Coordinator), Lucy Padilla, (Helen Lehman Parent), Christina Cena (Principal),

**Route:** Met at school entrance on Jennings Avenue. Observed drop off from main entrance, crossed Jennings at the crosswalk in front of the school, headed east on the North side of Jennings Avenue to Dutton Avenue, observing intersections at Clover Drive, Lance Drive, and Guaymas Street along the way, ending at Dutton Ave. & Jennings Ave. Returned to school on north side of Jennings, with a short detour to walk south on Lance Avenue until sidewalk on west side ended, then returned to Jennings Ave. and back to the school.

**Pick up/Drop off:** Morning drop off and afternoon pick up for the elementary school takes place along Jennings Avenue and through the school driveway loop, beginning at approximately 7:35am, with the busiest period occurring between 7:45-8:00am. One school bus drops off students on Jennings directly in front of the school (observe bus drop-off between 7:30-7:40am), and two school buses pick up in the afternoon.

Students generally enter/exit the school from the front of the school, although some parents/students may access the school from the neighborhood(s) behind Jennings Park, crossing through the park.

There is a crosswalk directly in front of the school entrance, across Jennings west of Dudley Place. A crossing guard is currently stationed at that location at school drop-off and pick-up time. The cost of the crossing guard is shared 50/50 between the school district and the city of Santa Rosa. There is typically a school staff crossing guard stationed at the raised crosswalk across the school driveway.

## School Information:

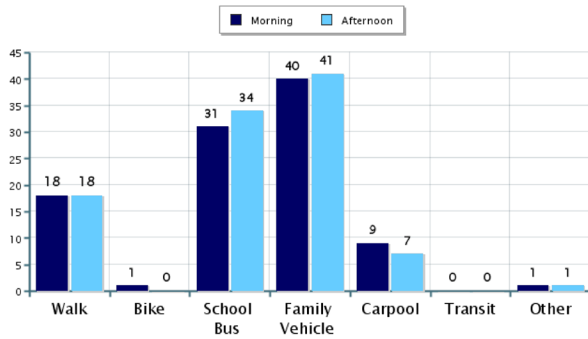
Address	1700 Jennings Avenue, Santa Rosa, 95401
Morning Bell(s)	8:00am
Afternoon Bell(s)	M, T, Th-F: 1:15 (TK), 2:20 (K-6) W: 1:15 (TK-6)
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	384
School type	Neighborhood
Student's proximity to school	384 geocoded students 359 live within 2 miles of school (93%) 331 live within 1 mile of school (86%) 97 live within ½ mile of school (25%) 37 live within ¼ mile of school (10%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	September 2023 Walk – 10% Bike – 0% Other – 0% Carpool – 4% School bus – 13% morning, 19% afternoon Single Family Vehicle – 73% morning, 67% afternoon  <i>*totals do not equal 100% due to rounding</i>
Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure Programming (2023-24)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Pedestrian safety lessons 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Bicycle Basics Lessons, Bike Rodeo 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Mapping & Communication lessons Monthly Walk/Roll to School Events

## RELEVANT TRAVEL HISTORY

In the past 10 years, active and alternative travel to Helen Lehman Elementary School has significantly decreased, which is not typical of schools in the Santa Rosa City School district (*or any district where catchment areas have not significantly changed*). In 2013, approximately 40% of students were driven in single family vehicles, ~18% walked, and >30% rode the bus to school. In September 2023, ~70% of students are driven in single family vehicles, between 13-19% ride the bus, and 10% or less walk. The reason for this change in behavior is unconfirmed, but may be related to the closure of the Jennings Railroad crossing, changes in bus service, or declining enrollment. School staff indicated that there are fewer bus routes than in the past, however, it is unclear which came first: fewer students available to take the bus due to declining enrollment (or habits formed during COVID), or fewer available buses/bus stops (which could be a deterrent if bus service is not convenient to residents).

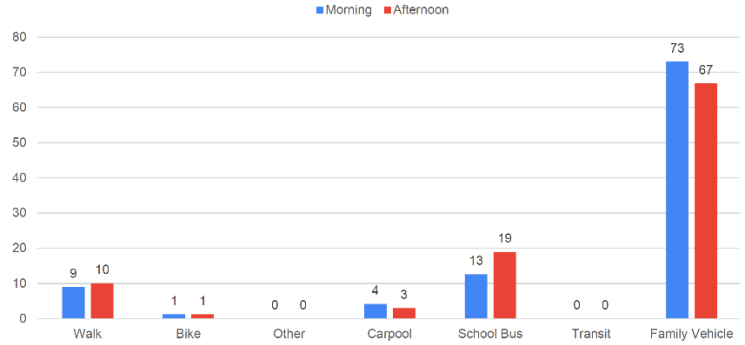
## September 2013

Morning and Afternoon Travel Mode Comparison



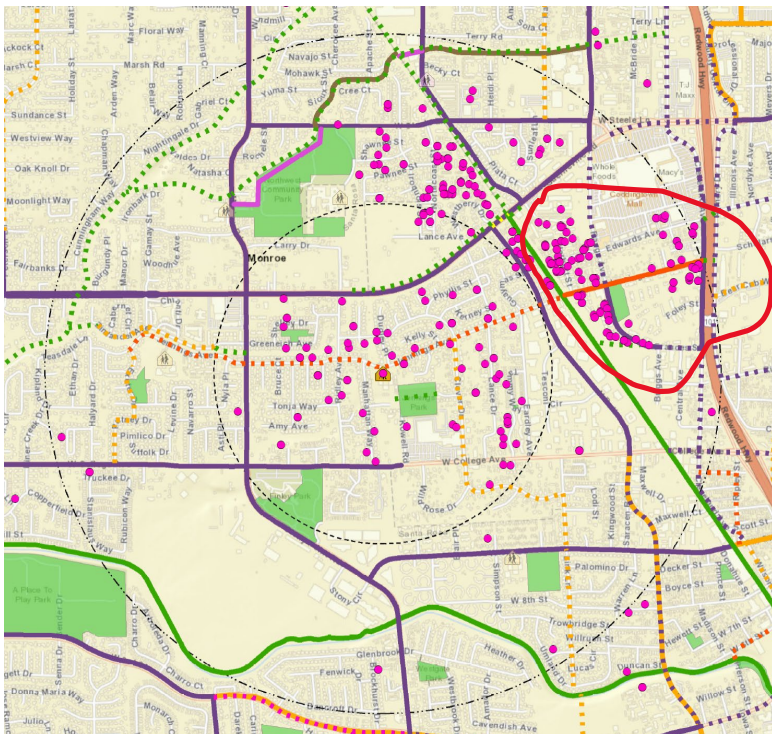
## September 2023

Morning and Afternoon Travel Mode Comparison



It is important to note that a large number of students/families live in the housing east of the (closed) railroad crossing at Jennings Avenue. Traveling to Helen Lehman from the corner of Dutton and Jennings is approximately 1/2 mile, or about a 10 minute walk to school. In order to walk to school, those families must travel via a detour that adds at least 15-20 minutes to their walking route. The detour still requires that students/families cross the railroad tracks at Guerneville Rd, as well crossing Dutton Ave, and is at least .6 miles farther to school, and a 35-40 minute walk.

There is a school bus that serves this neighborhood, with 5 stops in the morning and afternoon on/near Herbert St. & Jennings, Edwards Ave & Raccoon Lane, and an additional stop in the afternoon at Jennings Ave & Cleveland Ave.



2023-24 Student Address GIS Map – 1/2 & 1 mile radius Displayed. Blocked neighborhood circled in red.



Signage at closed Jennings crossing

## **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.*

### **Walk Audit Observations & Concerns:**

- A crossing guard is typically stationed at the crosswalk in front of the school. However, there is no notification process in place for mornings or afternoons when the crossing guard is unable to be there. School staff expressed that if there was a process in place for notification, they could proactively attempt to assign a school staff-person to monitor this location on mornings when the crossing guard cannot make it.
- The crosswalk in front of the school does not have any “additional” features to alert drivers that students may be present; i.e. flashing beacons, in-roadway signage, etc. Principal Cena inquired about whether those improvements could be prioritized, and expressed concern that the school/district has discussed the possibility of eliminating crossing guards in the future as a cost-savings measure. She and other school staff would like additional safety measures at this crosswalk, not only to protect students, but also school staff who may be monitoring the location if a crossing guard is not present.
- The exit of the school driveway loop onto Jennings is designated as “right turn only,” however, parents often turn left out of the driveway. Ashley indicated that they did reach out to law enforcement about this issue at least once, and law enforcement responded, visited, and ticketed “a couple of” parents. However, this behavior continues to occur.
- School staff expressed that Jennings often becomes quite congested in front of the school during drop off and/or pick up, which can result in unsafe behaviors such as drivers passing other drivers and/or not seeing pedestrians or respecting right of way. Drivers traveling west on Jennings who must stop and wait to turn left into the school driveway loop, as well as drivers who illegally turn left out of the school parking lot, may contribute to congestion.
- Speed limit on Jennings is 25mph, but drivers regularly travel down Jennings at what appear to be excessive speeds. Ashley observed that drivers appear to go even faster in the sections of Jennings where there are sidewalk gaps.
- Lucy, who lives on Clover Avenue, indicated that she and her kids often cut through Jennings Park to get to school, rather than walking down Clover to Jennings. However, Jennings Park can be a gathering for homeless/vagrants, and often feels unsafe.
- There is no crosswalk linking the pedestrian pathway along the east side of Clover across Jennings to the north, or across Clover to the west. There is a crosswalk across the south leg of Clover at Jennings, and across Jennings on the west side of Clover, however, there is no sidewalk or pathway along the west side of Clover. The existing crosswalks accommodate pedestrians traveling east on Jennings, who cross Jennings from south to north. The current configuration makes it difficult for pedestrians traveling north on Clover then west on Jennings to safely cross the road.
- There is no crosswalk on Lance (north side) at Jennings.
- There is no crosswalk across Guaymas at Jennings. Many students live in housing on/off Guaymas, according to the GIS map.
- Numerous sidewalk gaps were identified in the neighborhood surrounding the school:
  - Jennings Ave.: south side Clover Dr. and Eardley Ave.
  - Clover Dr.: west side between Jennings Ave & College Ave
  - Lance Dr.: between Jennings Ave & College Ave. If traveling south on Lance from Jennings, there is a pathway with a concrete berm for the first few hundred feet, then

sidewalks for about a block (on the west side). However, the majority of Lance does not have sidewalks on either side of the street.

- Lance Dr: between Jennings & Guerneville Rd: single parcel; appears to be at 1532 Lance.
- Eardley Ave: between Jennings & College Ave: A few sidewalk gaps on the west side between Jennings Ave & College Ave (appears to be 1625 & 1695 Eardley, as well as the parcel on the corner of Jennings & Eardley at 1202 Jennings). The east side of Eardley does not have sidewalks, but appears to be mostly industrial.
- Ridley Ave: A section of the east side of Ridley Ave between Jennings Ave & Longship Ln. (concrete berm, not sidewalk), and another sidewalk gap (no berm) about a ½ block south of Longship Ln. on the east side of Ridley, to about Tonja Ln. Sidewalk appears again on the east side between Tonja Ln. and Brooklyn Drive, and then disappears from Brooklyn Drive to College Ave. Sidewalks are also missing on the west side of Ridley between Tonja Lane and College Ave.
- The intersection of Jennings Avenue & Dutton Avenue has an overhead pedestrian activated warning beacon to facilitate safer crossings. However, it feels extremely unsafe to cross due to the width and speed of traffic.
- The intersection of Guerneville Road and Lance Drive, despite having a traffic signal with pedestrian-activated pushbuttons, also feels extremely unsafe to cross due to the width and speed of traffic. Many students live in apartments & housing north of Guerneville Road off Lance Drive, on or near Northcoast St., Iroquois St, West Steele Ln., etc. There appears to be only one bus stop in that neighborhood in the morning, at Northcoast St. & Pawnee Street. In the afternoon, there are two bus stops to that neighborhood, one at 2600 Northcoast St (R/L), and the other at W. Steele Lane & Apache St.

## Ideas & Potential Solutions:

### District/School:

- Consider providing crossing guard(s) with “light-up” stop signs to increase visibility.
- Re: parents disobeying signage & turning left out of the school driveway: Currently the school driveway exit has two lanes. To prohibit left turns out of the driveway, consider reducing the exit to one lane and providing signs that indicate right turn only (or left turns prohibited). The current two lane configuration indicates to drivers that the left lane is allowed to turn left and the right lane is allowed to turn right. This could be accomplished in the short term by posting [no left turn signs](#) on cones prohibiting the left turn movement, while also blocking the left lane with cones (during arrival/dismissal time only).
- Consider prohibiting left turns into the school parking lot for vehicles traveling west on Jennings. Again, a [no left turn sign](#) can be placed on any typical 28” cone, and placed and removed as needed by school staff.
- Contact [Santa Rosa City Traffic Engineering Division](#) at any time if changes in bus or parent drop-off/parking locations are made, so the city can make adjustments to curb-paint (red, yellow, white, etc) on Jennings Ave.
- Continue to notify [SRPD Traffic Bureau](#) to express ongoing concerns and request enforcement patrols.
- Continue to [enroll](#) & participate in the County Safe Routes to School program, to support continued collection of travel data, to participate in Walk/Roll initiatives, and to continue to receive SRTS education services, including but not limited to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade pedestrian safety education and 4<sup>th</sup> grade bicycle basics education.
- Reach out to the [Operation Lifesaver Rail Safety Education program](#) to request a safety presentation and or materials for students or parents.

- If eliminating funding for crossing guards (or even if not?), consider allotting funds for the crosswalk improvement(s) in front of the school on Jennings Avenue, to enable improvements to be expedited. The city estimates that the concrete & electrical work required to convert that crossing to a flashing beacon would cost approximately 10-15K.

### **City of Santa Rosa Public Works:**

- Consider improving crosswalk on Jennings in front of the school with additional features such as a pedestrian-activated flashing beacon, bulb-out to shorten distance, and/or in-roadway signage. City engineering tech to measure/review area to determine whether in-roadway signs or bulb-outs could be feasible in this location given turning radius requirements, etc.
- Consider additional traffic calming measures (speed tables, bulb-outs where feasible, etc) along Jennings between Marlow Rd & North Dutton Ave. Jennings is identified as a proposed “bicycle boulevard” in the city active transportation plan, therefore may qualify for certain traffic calming measures that are not feasible on roadways with higher traffic volumes & average speeds, including but not limited to speed tables.
- Consider painting the curb red on the northeast corner of Jennings at Dudley Ave. A vehicle parked in that location may block view of students crossing Dudley at Jennings for vehicles traveling west down Jennings.
- Consider improving crosswalks (from 2-way to 4-way) at intersection of Clover Dr. and Jennings Ave.
- Consider improving the crosswalk across Jennings at the South leg of Lance, adding a curb ramp to the south side of the crosswalk.
- Consider adding a crosswalk across the north leg of Lance, at Jennings.
- Consider adding crosswalk across Guaymas at Jennings.
- City is already planning a “road diet” on Dutton Ave. between College Ave. & Guerneville Rd. that would address many concerns at that intersection. The road diet would include reducing the travel lanes to one lane in each direction, adding a two-way left turn pocket, and adding either buffered or protected bike lanes. These improvements would result in shortening the crossing distance for pedestrians as well as slowing down traffic. Improvements will take place when the next “slurry seal” (roadway coating improvements) is done, which is expected to happen by Summer of 2025, barring unforeseen circumstances.
- City to continue to work with SMART & the CPUC to determine feasibility of installing Jennings Avenue at grade crossing to improve the bicycle and pedestrian network and remove barriers to neighborhoods and create a more connected community.
- Should the at-grade railroad crossing be constructed at Jennings, city to consider upgrading the current pedestrian warning beacon traffic control device to a HAWK signal (High Intensity Activated Crosswalk)
- Document all sidewalk gaps that hinder active travel, and consider pursuing funding & establishing a program to make improvements, where and when feasible.
- 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 Jennings Ave to 20mph, but this process and timeline is TBD.
- To calm traffic at Guerneville Road & Lance Drive and create a refuge for pedestrians, City to consider the following:
  - Westbound: shift the bike lane north two feet and add a protected bike at the intersection
  - Eastbound: add a protected bike lane at the intersection and narrow the lanes.

## **Santa Rosa Police Department:**

- Respond to requests for patrols as able.

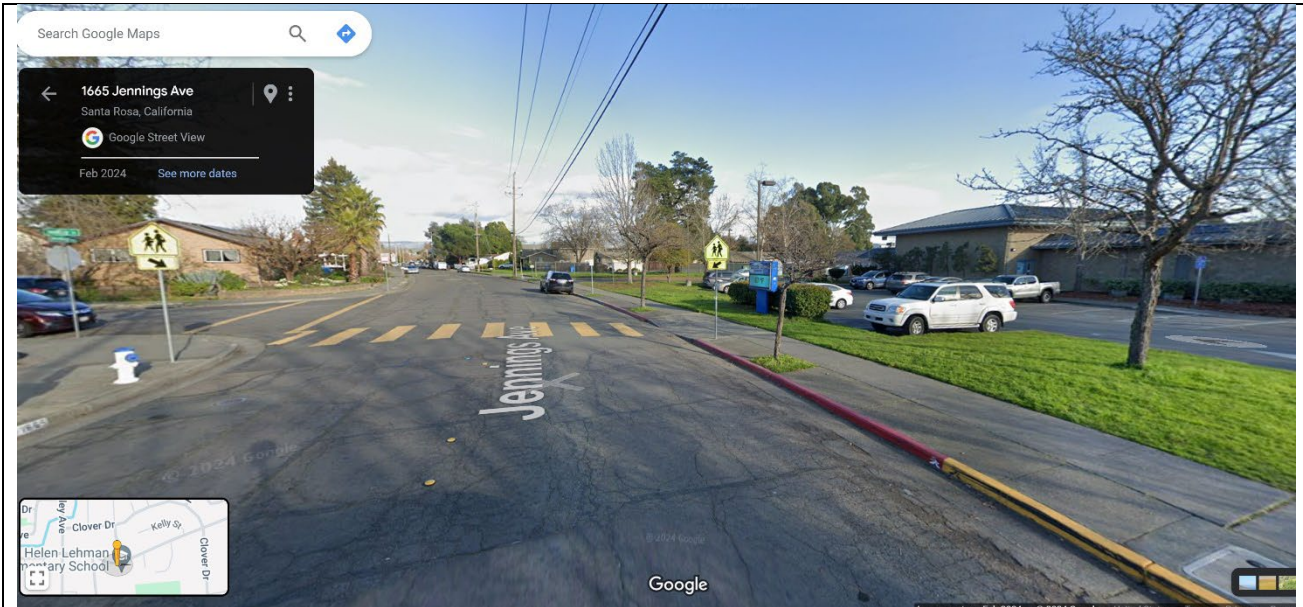
## **Safe Routes to School Program Information**

- 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.

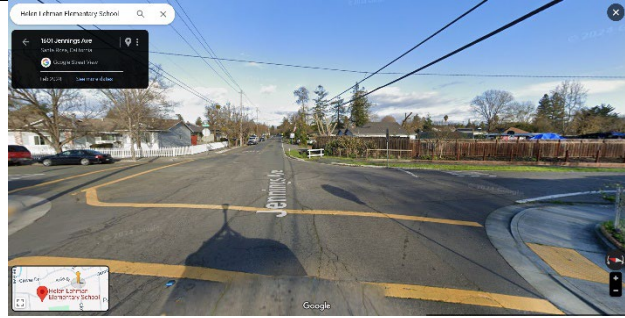
Task Force Meeting notices, agendas, and meeting notes & handouts can be found on our SRTS Task Force page [HERE](#).

- Enrollment for participation in the SRTS program takes place in April each year. 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](http://www.sonomasaferoutes.org). To request to receive our SRTS E-Newsletter directly, email [christina@bikeosnoma.org](mailto:christina@bikeosnoma.org)

**Appendix: Walk Audit Pictures:**



Crossing in front of school, Jennings at Dudley – improve with flashing beacons, in-roadway signs, etc?



Jennings Ave. at Clover Dr. – add crosswalks to south and east side



Clover Drive – close up of entrance to roadway with no crosswalk



Lance (south side) at Jennings crosswalk – missing ADA ramp



Lance (north side) at Jennings – add crosswalk?





Jennings Avenue – traffic calming measures? Picture displaying sidewalk gaps east of Lance Ave.



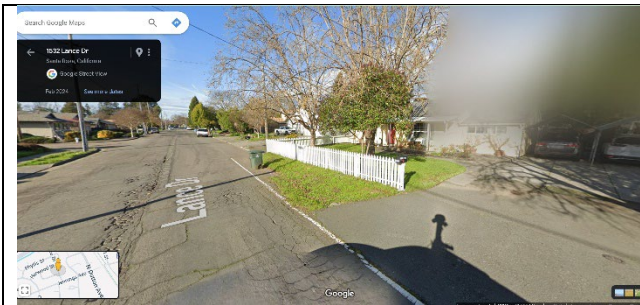
Jennings & Guaymas – add crosswalk?



Clover Drive, missing sidewalks, west side



Lance between Jennings & College, missing sidewalks, both sides



Lance between Jennings & Guerneville sidewalk gap



One of sidewalk gaps on west side of Eardley



Ridley, one of the sidewalk gap sections



Entrance to Jennings Park, shortcut to school, but safety concerns



Dutton Avenue at Jennings – future road diet on Dutton between College & Guerneville