



## J.X. Wilson Elementary School SRTS Walk Audit

Monday, February 26, 2024



**In attendance:** Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Alexander Oceguela (City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Planner), Mike Vanmidde (City of Santa Rosa Traffic Engineer), Sarah Hadler (SRTS Program Manager), Corina Rice (JX Wilson Principal), Jennifer Lopez (JX Wilson Office Manager & former crossing guard), Anna Cortez (JX Wilson Community Liaison & Parent), Mary Dengler (JX Wilson Librarian and crossing guard)

**Route:** Met at school entrance. Observed drop off from main entrance, then headed east toward Harvest Lane, stopping to observe the pathway east of the school that is a cut-through for families that live in those apartments/housing. We then headed north on the school driveway, that parallels Harvest Lane, to W. 3<sup>rd</sup>, then west on W. 3<sup>rd</sup> to Brittain Lane, then south on Brittain back to the school driveway.

**Pick up/Drop off:** Morning drop off and afternoon pick up for the elementary school takes place in both the main school parking lot off Brittain Lane, and in the back parking lot and driveway off Harvest Lane. We were not able to observe drop-off in the back parking lot and driveway before school was in session, but drop off in the main school parking lot appeared to operate smoothly without excessive congestion or conflict. Parent drivers and school buses enter the school driveway from Brittain Lane, and circle the parking lot in one direction, dropping off students in front of the school and exiting back onto Brittain.

There is convenient pedestrian access to the school from Leisure Home Mobile Home Park, the apartment complexes off Harvest Lane, and via an alleyway between the school driveway and Darek Drive. There is also a pedestrian gate and driveway gate at the school driveway entrance off Harvest Lane. These gates are closed and locked at 6pm and opened before school drop off (unless there is an evening school event).

There is a school staff crossing guard stationed at the crosswalk at Brittain Lane and also at the crosswalk at W 3<sup>rd</sup> and Harvest Lane. Crossing guards are equipped with signs with flashing lights. Corina mentioned that she modified a crossing guard handbook developed by (I believe) an SRTS program in Humboldt County, so she feels her staff crossing guards have been well trained.

JX Wilson has an established Walking School Bus, led by a teacher or teachers, that meets at Oliver’s Market and walks west on W. 3<sup>rd</sup> to Harvest Lane to the school driveway. The Walking School Bus currently operates once a month.

**School Information:**

Address	246 Brittain Lane, Santa Rosa, 95401
Morning Bell(s)	8:20am
Afternoon Bell(s)	M, T, Th-F: 1:15 (TK); 2:35 (1 <sup>st</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> ); 2:47 (4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> ) W: 11:30 (TK); 12:00 (1 <sup>st</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> ); 12:45 (4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	357
School type	Neighborhood
Student’s proximity to school	357 geocoded students 327 live within 2 miles of school (92%) 267 live within 1 mile of school (75%) 149 live within ½ mile of school (42%) 104 live within ¼ mile of school (29%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	Walk – 23% Bike – 1% Other – 1% Carpool – 4% School bus – 0% Transit – 0% Single Family Vehicle – 73%  <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

**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.*

**Pathway(s) east of School:  
Concern:**

- Parents/School staff expressed concerns about homeless and/or other vagrant activity on the dirt pathway east of the school that connects the school property with apartments/housing. Many students/parents travel to/from school on that pathway. School staff reported that recently, a stranger tried to grab a young girl who was walking on the path to or from school. Staff mentioned that homeless sometimes seek shelter in the tunnels and gulleys in that area, at least during the dry season. Other concerns were expressed about maintenance to the pathway, particularly in relation to the tunnels and gulleys and access to waterways which may be dangerous (someone asked if the culverts could be blocked off somehow), as well as the fact that the path can be muddy and slippery when wet.

#### **Ideas/Potential Solution(s):**

- City Transportation & Public Works (City TPW) staff has confirmed that the pathway east of the school is private property owned by Woodgate Oak LLC, which is the apartments in that area. The address the city has on record with the title is PO Box 1597, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. The paved path just to the north (which did not appear to be an issue but that the group did observe) is also privately owned by Woodgate Glen Owners Assn. The School/District may notify Woodgate Oak LLC re: concerns about the safety of the pathway and creek area.
- School/District/Parents should continue to notify law enforcement when a situation appears unsafe and/or situations occur. Corina indicated that law enforcement has been responsive when called, but by the time they arrive, the vagrants have left.
- Law Enforcement: It would be helpful to know if law enforcement patrols that area regularly or if they primarily respond to reports of concerns.
- School/District/Parents: For questions, concerns, or to report encampments on public property, please email [homeless@srcity.org](mailto:homeless@srcity.org), [Submit a Homeless Encampment Complaint](#), or call 707-543-3311.

#### **Harvest Lane & W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street between Harvest & Brittain Concerns:**

- Many students/families cross at this location. It is the primary crossing for students/families who live on the north side of W. 3<sup>rd</sup>, even for those who live west of Brittain Lane, because it has a pedestrian activated overhead warning device (aka crosswalk warning flasher). and a school crossing guard is present during drop off-pick up. A few years ago, a student walking his bike across this crosswalk was hit by a car (hit and run).
- Drivers often speed down W. 3<sup>rd</sup>. The speed limit is 40mph at this location, and 45mph farther west on W. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Therefore, even drivers who are \*not\* speeding are traveling extremely fast for a location where a large number of students are crossing. School staff inquired about whether this section of W. 3<sup>rd</sup> could be a designated 25mph school zone. City staff responded that unfortunately, it cannot, due to specific rules that designate which areas may be considered "school frontage". Although the school property line goes to W. 3<sup>rd</sup>, this area of the school property is not considered "school frontage" and therefore, the 25mph speed limit cannot be applied to this location. *Staff/participants did note that converting W. 3<sup>rd</sup> to one travel lane, with buffered bicycle lanes on each side, has helped calm traffic, shorten crossing distances, and provide a safer route for bicyclists; however, they feel that more needs to be done to calm traffic further.*
- Despite the presence of the crosswalk warning flasher, crossing at this location is still dangerous. Drivers often appear to speed and do not respect pedestrian right-of-way, and pedestrians are in the roadway for a significant amount time due to the width of the street. Drivers also make u-turns at this location. Even though this is legal, it can result in conflicts with other road users.
- Whenever there is a power outage, the crosswalk warning flasher stops working and needs to be manually reset by city staff. School staff reported that one time last year, it took 3 months

for a repair to be made (*note: city staff clarified that this was due to a part that was on backorder, not due to slow response*). However, recently, the crossing guard Mary learned of the correct phone number to call to notify re: outages, and noted that city staff repaired/reset the signal within hours of her reporting the problem.

- Sometimes grass and/or trees in the median obscure sightlines for crossing pedestrians.
- Staff expressed the desire for a crosswalk across Harvest Lane at W. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Drivers often roll through this intersection and do not look out for pedestrians crossing, including students on the JX Wilson walking school bus. This location is private property, essentially the driveway for the housing complexes off Harvest Lane.
- At #1820 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> between Harvest & Brittain, there is damage to the sidewalk that is a tripping hazard.

### **Ideas & Potential Solutions:**

- City Transportation & Public Works to consider converting existing crosswalk warning flasher to a High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (aka HAWK). The HAWK is a traffic control device with a signal sequence that includes a solid red light indicating that car drivers need to STOP for pedestrians who are crossing. The existing crosswalk warning flasher uses rapid flashing amber LED lights to supplement pedestrian warning signs, therefore it alerts drivers to pedestrian presence but does not indicate for drivers to stop. City staff to look into feasibility of conversion to a HAWK via the city maintenance budget, or alternatively, determine whether outside funding could be pursued to complete this project.
- Regarding the U-Turns at Harvest Ln, since there is a westbound turn pocket, City TPW indicated that they will keep left and U-turns for westbound traffic, but they are able to prohibit left turns and U-turns for eastbound traffic at that location. Although posting signs may not affect driver behavior, City TPW indicated that they can put in a work order to get those signs posted.
- 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. City TPW 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 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> to 35mph, but this process and timeline is TBD.
- Santa Rosa Police Department to consider rotating their Radar Speed Trailer on W. 3<sup>rd</sup> between Harvest Ln. and Carina Dr., to assist with calming traffic before drivers approach this busy intersection. *Note: City staff have already requested the radar speed feedback trailer get deployed on W. 3<sup>rd</sup> eastbound, west of the Harvest Ln intersection and requested that it happen before school lets out for the summer, and not during spring break week.*
- School staff to notify Santa Rosa City Transportation & Public Works at 707-543-3801 to report any issues with the signal this intersection, as well as for maintenance requests to trim the grass/trees in the median. City staff will prioritize the repair of a designated school crossing and typically address these concerns as quickly as possible. Mike Vanmidde also provided school staff with his business card/direct line, in case school staff wishes to follow up re: a request that has been made but has not yet been completed.
- School or District staff to consider contacting the HOA of the housing complex off of Harvest Lane to inquire about the possibility of painting a crosswalk across Harvest Lane at W. 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Sidewalk repairs are the homeowners responsibility. However, City TPW can notify homeowner of need for repair (if they have not been notified), and put in a work order to patch (i.e. smooth out) damage to the sidewalk. *City staff has already started the process to get that addressed through their sidewalk program.*

### **W. 3<sup>rd</sup> & Brittain Lane**

## Concerns

- This is a very wide, uncontrolled crossing on a busy thoroughfare. School staff inquired re: why it was not a designated school crossing. City staff indicated that the expectation is that students would utilize the crosswalk at W. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Harvest Lane to cross West 3<sup>rd</sup> on their route to school. This is encouraged because it is pedestrian controlled, a crossing guard is present at this location, and it is not a significant increase in travel distance given the “tucked away” location of the school campus.
- School staff indicated that they do not \*believe\* many students cross at this location, if any. One staff indicated that she believes some students do cross there because it seems like a “shorter distance” but she is uncertain. Principal Rice indicated that she drives that way to school and has not observed students crossing there.
- Although students may not cross at this location often to travel to/from school, the crossing does connect to the creek path and may be utilized by residents who live off Britain Lane.

## Ideas/Potential Solutions

- City Transportation & Public Works to determine if improvements to the crossing at this location, such as installation of an RRFB, bulb-outs, etc. may be prioritized, based on a number of factors including frequency of usage by bicylists/pedestrians, vehicular traffic, speeds, status of other nearby crossings, etc.
- School/District to continue to educate students and parents re: safe behavior and to utilize the pedestrian-controlled/crossing guard-staffed crossing at Harvest and W. 3<sup>rd</sup>, rather than the crosswalk at Brittain and W. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Utilize all available channels including 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). Other options include student assemblies, or pedestrian safety lessons (either via the SRTS program or having teachers teach lessons themselves).

## Brittain Lane between W. 3<sup>rd</sup> & Occidental

### Concerns:

- There is a sidewalk gap on the east side of Brittain Lane, north of the school driveway, at 222 Brittain.
- Participants expressed concerns about the condition of the crosswalk (two types of striping), bicycle lane pavement markings, school zone pavement markings, and signage at Brittain and the school driveway.
- There is another sidewalk gap south of the school driveway on Brittain Lane. This portion of sidewalk is not frequently utilized by students/families traveling to/from school because there is pedestrian access to/from Leisure Mobile Home Park during school hours. However, residents, including students and parents, likely utilize that sidewalk outside of school hours when access through the school parking lot is closed.
- There has been an increase in people either parking vehicles for excessive periods of time (sometimes occupied, resulting in safety concerns for students/residents), or just leaving vehicles there as a “dumping spot.” At times, when law enforcement has moved a vehicle dweller out of the area, the dweller dumps their debris on the street, leaving a big mess that needs to be cleaned up.

### Ideas/Potential Solutions

- Participants observed that it appears that the residents of 222 Brittain are constructing a large ADU on their property. If this is the case, the city requires that if a resident builds on their property, they must also make improvements to the frontage. *City staff have already followed up on this issue and have determined that the sidewalk gap at 222 Brittain Ln will be*

*addressed as part of the construction at that property. They do not have a timeline, but did confirm that the plan calls for sidewalks along the frontage.*

- City TPW should be able to put in a work order for refreshing bicycle lane and/or school zone pavement markings. However, refreshing the crosswalk at this time is challenging, because this would require repaving the road and rebuilding/painting the crosswalk. The faded diagonal striping is actually from an older crosswalk, and it's not faded, but rather it's an old crosswalk that shows through as pavement wears down. This crosswalk could potentially be slated for improvement when the road is repaved.
- City TPW to consider replacing the school crosswalk sign on the east side of Brittain Ln at the school driveway. The sign on the west side of Brittain is bright and appears fluorescent, whereas the sign on the right side is faded and doesn't appear fluorescent.
- City TPW to consider improvements to close the sidewalk gap south of the school driveway on Brittain Lane. This is a project the city has already been researching the feasibility of.
- School/District/Parents: A Community Services Officer (CSO) with the Santa Rosa Police Department manages the city's vehicle abatement program. This program enforces City and Vehicle Codes so that residents keep their neighborhoods free from the eyesore of abandoned and inoperable vehicles. To report a vehicle, call (707) 543-3594. For questions, concerns, or to report encampments on public property, please email [homeless@srcity.org](mailto:homeless@srcity.org), [Submit a Homeless Encampment Complaint](#), or call 707-543-3311.
- School/District/Parents: To report debris left on public property (along roadsides, trails, creeks, parks and around public buildings), please contact the City of Santa Rosa Debris Response Team by calling 707-543-3800 (extension 7), or [Submit a Debris Response Team Complaint](#).

### **Alley between School Driveway and Derek Lane**

- School staff expressed concerns that this alleyway has been a location for drug paraphernalia, graffiti, and vagrancy. However, it is a great, safe pedestrian/bike connection to school from Derek Drive.

### **Ideas/potential solutions:**

- City staff have indicated that the alley at Derek is privately owned by the property owner to the east, but there is likely an easement for the sidewalk. City staff is unaware of whether there is a maintenance agreement for the sidewalk or vegetation, but they do not believe the city is involved in that, if it exists. In any case, the School/District is responsible for contacting the property owner re: keeping the pathway well maintained (trim grass, etc).
- Lighting may be insufficient, although it did appear that one of the neighbors had a floodlight installed on their property. School/District to check with property owner re: the installation and/or continued maintenance of motion-controlled lighting to keep the area well lit and to deter vagrancy in that location.
- This was not discussed during the audit, but the School/District/Parents could also consider contacting the property owner to discuss the possibility of collaboration on a fence mural to deter graffiti activity and improve the area further. The City of Santa Rosa has a [Community Improvement Grant Program](#) that would be a great opportunity to fund that type of project. The next funding deadline is March 29, 2024, but there are 4 cycles per year so this could be planned for a future cycle.

### **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.

The next Task Force meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> from 4-5:30pm at the Bellevue Union School District Office. 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.sonomasaferroutes.org](http://www.sonomasaferroutes.org). To request to receive our SRTS E-Newsletter directly, email [christina@bikeosnoma.org](mailto:christina@bikeosnoma.org)

### Appendix: Walk Audit Pictures:



School driveway during drop off (relatively calm)



Pathway east of school off Harvest Lane



Example of one of the tunnels/culverts near walking path that participants expressed concern about.



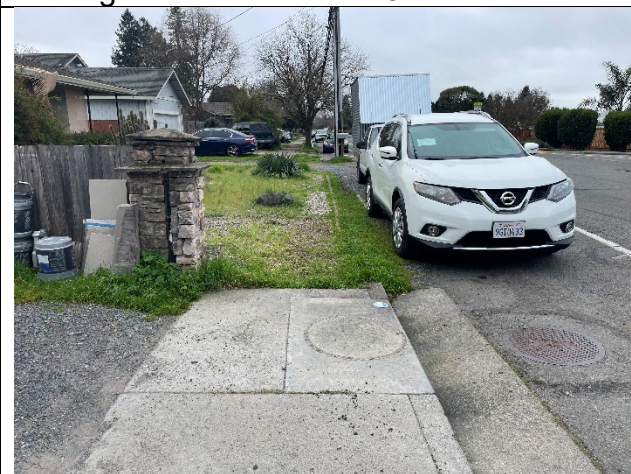
Eastbound approach to RRFB at W. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Harvest Lane.



Damaged sidewalk on W. 3<sup>rd</sup>



Brittain & W 3rd



Sidewalk gap at 222 Brittain



ADU being constructed behind 222 Brittain





Crosswalk at school driveway/Brittain



Mismatched signs at crosswalk



Possible sidewalk gap closure location on Brittain, south of school driveway, if determined feasible



Alleyway between Darek & school driveway