



## Loma Vista Immersion Academy SRTS Walk Audit

Thursday, March 14th, 2024



**In attendance:** Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Bjorn Gripenburg (Active Transportation Planner, City of Petaluma), Ken Eichstadt (Engineer, City of Petaluma), Paul Geoghegan (Project Manager, City of Petaluma), Sergeant Walt Spiller (Petaluma Police Department), Chris Miller (Principal, Loma Vista), Litsa Tanner (Parent & SRTS Champion), Amy Wise (Parent & 24-25 PTA President), William Yeager (Parent, cyclist), Kelly Bond (Petaluma Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee), Rebecca Hachmyer (Director of Child Development, Old Adobe School District), Riley Tanner (6<sup>th</sup> Grade student), Isaac Rivas (6<sup>th</sup> Grade student), Jessica Gutierrez (6<sup>th</sup> Grade students). Also joined by John Scribbs, City of Petaluma Vice-Mayor, for a period of time.

**Route:** Met at school entrance on Maria Drive. Observed drop off from the sidewalk in front of the school. Walked south on Maria to the intersection of Maria and East Madison Street. Then walked north on Maria to the intersection of Maria and Monroe Street. Continued east on Monroe to the intersection of Monroe & Tahola Lane, then headed back to the school for a debrief in the school courtyard.

**Pick up/Drop off:** Morning drop off and afternoon pick up for the elementary school takes place along Maria Drive and in the “drive up” area of the school parking lot loop, beginning at approximately 8:00am, with the busiest period occurring between 7:45-8:00am. One school bus drops off students on Maria Drive directly in front of the school (typically at ~8:15). After school, the bus picks up in the school “drive-up” area, immediately after entering the school parking lot. Traffic flows through the school parking lot in one direction, with vehicles entering from the south and exiting from the north. Vehicles are restricted from making left turns out of the school parking lot during school hours.

For safety reasons, a single entry/exit point for the school has been designated, and students enter/exit the school from the front of the school. Students can also enter campus through the cafeteria doors, which is on the drive-up side of the school, beginning at 7:45am, due to free breakfast service being offered. Students/families are no longer able to access the school from the side gate (on Monroe Street), however, drop off for the Bright Futures preschool begins at 8:45am and takes place on Monroe St. in front of the preschool. Currently there are no parking restrictions (at least none that are followed) on Monroe. However very few parents park beyond the parking lot entrance on Monroe. Instead, the majority of parents park on Maria, in the Boys & Girls club parking lot, or in the ball field parking lot.

There is a crosswalk directly in front of the school entrance, across Maria Drive. A crossing guard is currently stationed at that location between school drop-off and pick-up time. There is also a crossing guard stationed at the crosswalk on Monroe Street and Tahola Lane.

There are two campus aids stationed to monitor drop off/assist students on the drive-up side of the school.

A bike rack is located toward the front of the school inside the gates, and another is located near the Tk-Kinder area. Parents dropping off bikes in the Tk-Kinder area must walk through the school campus to park their bikes in that rack. This is true for the front bike rack as well as the only gate that is opened in the morning is the front gate.

## School Information:

Address	207 Maria Drive, Petaluma, 94954
Morning Bell(s)	8:30am (TK-6)
Afternoon Bell(s)	M,T, Th-F: (TK-3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade), 2:45 (4th-6 <sup>th</sup> grade), 3:00pm W: 1:45 (TK-6)
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	474
School type	Neighborhood
Student's proximity to school	474 geocoded students 272 live within 2 miles of school (57%) 135 live within 1 mile of school (28%) 59 live within ½ mile of school (12%) 18 live within ¼ mile of school (4%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	September 2023 Walk – 8% Bike – 2% Other – 2% Carpool – 7% School bus – 1% morning Single Family Vehicle – 82%  <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
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## **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 of Petaluma and/or Old Adobe School District prior to implementation.*

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

- Parents expressed concerns about numerous bumps and cracks in sidewalks along Maria Drive that make walking, bicycling, scooting on the sidewalk challenging.
- The sidewalk/pathway between Maria Drive and E. Madison Street is particularly challenging despite its width, because a portion is pavement, a portion is asphalt and the surface is uneven. The sidewalk/pathway also narrows when the pavement portion ends, due to trees taking up some of that space.
- Currently, there are no parking restrictions along Maria Drive on the school frontage, with the exception of a red no-parking zones that extend from either side of the crosswalk in front of the school. Parents often drop kids off while in the travel lane on Maria Drive, because there was no space for them to pull over and let their students off on the curb, due to the parked cars. The majority of parents who park and walk their students into school park on Maria Drive, in the Boys & Girls Club parking lot, or in the ball field parking lot. A very small number of parents park on Monroe St. beyond the parking lot entrance.
- Parents expressed concerns about safety at the intersection of E. Madison & Maria Drive; drivers not fully stopping, obeying pedestrian right of way, etc.
- Although we did not walk this far, a parent expressed that crossing E. Washington at Maria Drive is the most challenging part of their walking or bicycling trip to school. This concern was corroborated via numerous comments on our Spring 2023 “Safe Streets for All” parent survey, a few are bulleted below:
  - *Dangerous intersection at East Washington Blvd and Maria Dr. East Washington is very busy. Maria is one lane and north/southbound vehicles often illegally pass on right side of cars waiting to turn left.*
  - *Our primary concern is the large intersection at E. Washington & Maria*
  - *Dangerous intersection East Washington/Maria. No usable bike lane on Maria Dr. Between East Washington and School.*
  - *Maria Drive is a huge hazard. Crossing major roads like Washington or Lakeville is also unacceptably dangerous. Speed limits are too high and too many lanes of vehicle traffic create serious hazards.*
- Parents, both at the walking audit and in our Spring 2023 parent survey, expressed concerns about the safety of walking/bicycling on/across Maria Drive during drop off/pick up time in general; the lack of safe crossings combined with inattentive drivers, narrow roadway, and lack of a bike lane was mentioned by all parents in attendance at the audit, as well as numerous parents who completed our 2023 survey. Parents who bicycle to school with their children generally “take the lane” but that can be challenging to navigate with the volume of traffic on Maria. One parent expressed the desire to restrict parking along Maria to prioritize bicycle/pedestrian travel and encourage drivers to walk, bicycle, bus, carpool, or park a distance away from school to keep the school zone clear. Another parent, via our Spring parent

survey, expressed *“The most concerning area is near the campus on Maria where the road is narrow & there is not safe space or a bike lane for my son to ride on the busiest block of the route.”*

- Some of the curbs on Maria do not have ADA-compliant curb ramps, including the curbs on the sidewalk bordering the school driveway. The dips on Maria, while great for calming traffic, are not well marked and require maintenance. Parents also mentioned “driveway conflicts” with pedestrians along Maria.
- Parents would like to see improvements to the crossing at Maria and the Lynch Creek trailhead.
- Although we did not walk as far as Ranier Avenue, a parent expressed that this is a “large intersection” that drivers sometimes do not pay attention at.
- Parents shared that, prior to COVID, the safety & congestion issues on Maria Drive were not as pronounced as they are currently. They attributed this to the fact that, prior to 2020, the school allowed students to enter at both the front (Maria Drive) and the TK-K side entrance (Monroe St.) to the school. At that time, parking was restricted on Monroe St. Parents dropping off students at the side entrance would primarily park in the neighborhoods and walk a short distance to the side entrance. Parents expressed that this was “very nice for the littles” and that it diverted a significant amount of traffic from Maria drive. During COVID, the curb along the TK-K entrance on Monroe (that was formerly a red no parking zone) was changed to a drop off lane/loading zone (white) to accommodate car drop off since parents were not allowed on campus. After the campus re-opened to parents the parking restrictions on Monroe in front of the TK-K entrance were not reinstated. As a result parents began parking in the area that was the loading/drop off zone and other parents continued to use the area in the street as a drop off/loading zone causing issues with “double parking”. In 2023 it was determined by school personnel that the TK-K gates would no longer be opened for drop off due to the double parking issues as well as other safety concerns with the entrance. Parents expressed the desire to have access to the campus from the side entrance again, both to relieve traffic on Maria drive, as well as provide a safe and pleasant walking route to school for families traveling from that direction. Principal Miller expressed concerns about re-opening the side-gate, presumably due to district policy/security/staff capacity.

## **Ideas & Potential Solutions:**

### **District/School:**

- Coordinate with city to determine if loading zone modifications should be attempted
  - Consider reopening access on Monroe St (if not done, city should remove loading zone)
  - Consider converting Maria Drive frontage to loading zone (note: drivers pulling to and from curb could create safety concerns especially for people bicycling, may require staffing to ensure loading zone is properly used.
- Consider establishing a [AAA Student Safety Patrol](#) program to support drop off/pick up and other school AAA-sponsored school safety initiatives, and enhance safety at the school entrance(s). Student Safety Patrollers can support parents moving along (and being polite) in the drop off zone, help younger kids get to class, and more. The following resources are helpful for learning more about that program:
  - [At Your Post](#) Youtube Video: This is an older video and is a great way to show students (or teachers interested in taking on the program) how to be a Patroller. It’s 20 minutes long but one can get a good idea of the program in the first 5 minutes or so.
  - Safety Patrol ["Let's Go" Music Video](#): A fun way to learn about the program.
- Actively support & promote a “park and walk” and walking school bus program to divert traffic away from Maria drive, encourage healthy behaviors, and improve safety for all road users.



Five meet-up spots have already been established and promoted by the previous and current SRTS parent champion:

- Ranier Ave & Maria Drive
- Park Place Medical Center (1400 Professional Drive)
- Community Center (320 N McDowell Blvd)
- Starbucks (205 N McDowell Blvd)
- Wishkah Ln & Chehalis Drive.

It is strongly recommended that school staff/leadership engage in leading one or more walking school bus meet-up spots at least once per year, and ideally on walk/roll event days when they occur. Staff involvement and support inspires students to join, and is an effective community-connection opportunity. The Safe Routes to School program has created a Park & Walk PSA in [English](#) & [Spanish](#) and can support schools in developing materials for their own Park & Walk programs. (shorter versions of the Park & Walk PSA are also available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#))

- Encourage parents who bicycle to organize “Bicycle Trains” to/from school to support other parents and students in bicycling to school. The Safe Routes to School program staff may be available to provide safety training & route support. Bicycle trains can operate on Walk/Roll event days, or anytime. To learn from SRTS staff, a parent, and principal who have organized and/or led bike trains, view our “[How to Organize a Bike Train](#)” webinar recording.
- 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.

#### **City of Petaluma Public Works:**

- Coordinate with school/district to further discuss possible loading zone modifications (see district/school above)
- Add bulb-outs to improve crossing distance and improve visibility at the crosswalk in front of Loma Vista, on Maria Drive.
- Install accessible curb ramps at Loma Vista Driveways.
- Consider striping modifications along Maria Drive for additional traffic calming.
- Add flashing beacons to the crossing at the Lynch Creek Trailhead.
- Improve sidewalk and create one-way flow through the Lucchesi parking lot, with a new exit created east of the parking lot.
- Consider removing two parking spaces between the school driveways and installing a bicycle lane along the full length of the red curb.
- Consider extending bicycle lanes from Monroe to Madison (would require parking removal on one side of the street, likely the park (west) side.
- Look into feasibility of improvements to widen asphalt/concrete sidewalk between the school entrance and E. Madison. Consider improvements to intersection of E. Madison & Maria Drive to improve sight visibility, shorten crossing distances, and improve driver compliance at stops.

#### **Petaluma 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: Audit Pictures

### Issues and Challenges Observed or Raised

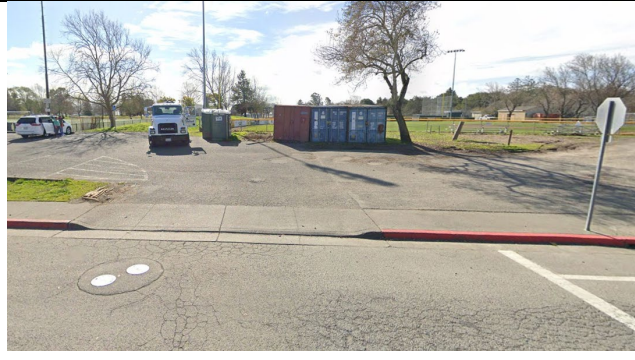
- 1) Lynch Creek Trail Crossing improvements
- 2) Monroe loading zone used for parking
- 3) Driveway conflicts with pedestrians
- 4) Congestion on Maria Drive
- 5) Poor sidewalk conditions
- 6) Stop sign compliance at E. Madison Street







Lynch Creek Trail crossing: Add flashing beacons



Lucchesi Parking Lot: Improve sidewalk and create one-way flow through parking lot, with new exit created east of parking lot



Loma Vista driveways (Install accessible curb ramps, remove two parking spaces between driveways and install bike lane along full length of red curb)



Loma Vista Crosswalk: Add bulbouts to improve visibility and shorten crossing distance



Bulbout example at Payran & Jefferson



Intersection of E. Madison & Maria – consider improvements to shorten crossing distances & improve sightlines