



## McNear Elementary School SRTS Walk Audit

Friday, September 13th, 2024



**In attendance:** Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Bjorn Gripenburg (Active Transportation Planner, City of Petaluma), Dylan Frisbee (Senior Traffic Engineering Technician), Sergeant Walt Spiller (Petaluma Police Department), Deb Fox (City of Petaluma Climate Manager), Melissa Becker (Principal, McNear), David Felix (parent), Gabriel Kleinman (parent), Molly Dickens (parent), Lily Verdone (parent)

**Route:** Met at Grant Ave & Kelly Ln, per the request of a group of parents who live in that neighborhood. Walked down Grant Ave toward I Street. Headed east on I St, to Sunnyslope Ave, to McNear Elementary. Observed drop off at school frontage, then continued north on Sunnyslope to G St. Headed east on G street to back entrance of McNear.

### **Pick up/Drop off:**

Drop off occurs in front of the school, on Sunnyslope Avenue, and also on G Street, near the back entrance. We were only able to observe drop off in front of the school, and driver's were likely "on good behavior" due to the presence of a PPD motorcycle in the drop-off loop in front of the school, which is a coned off area of what normally comprises the parking spaces along the school frontage (cars may park there after drop-off).

Both Sunnyslope Avenue and the driveway loop is quite congested and parents back up the lane on both sides of the street.

Bike racks are located on the south side of the school frontage, and in back of the school. However, parents would like to see additional racks installed to accommodate the number of students who bike at Grant, or would potentially bike if more racks were available. A suggestion was made to move the picnic tables that are currently next to the front bike racks, level the ground, and install additional racks in that location, as well as in back of the school.

## School Information:

Address	605 Sunnyslope Avenue
Morning Bell(s)	8:20am
Afternoon Bell(s)	M, T, Th-F: 2:00pm (TK/K) 2:30pm (1 <sup>st</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> ), 2:50pm (4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> ) W: 12:00pm (TK), 1:00pm (1 <sup>st</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	TBD
School type	Neighborhood
Student's proximity to school	333 geocoded students in 2023-24 274 live within 2 miles of school (82%) 193 live within 1 mile of school (58%) 121 live within ½ mile of school (36%) 25 live within ¼ mile of school (8%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	Walk – 22% Bike – 3% Other active – 3% Carpool – 3% School Bus – 1% Transit – 0% Single Family Vehicle – 69%
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 of Petaluma and/or Petaluma City School District prior to implementation.*

### Grant Ave., and intersection of Grant Ave. and I Street

#### Concerns and observations:

- Where Grant Avenue curves between Grant Elementary School & I St., it is difficult for drivers to see bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Bushes and/or trees at 49 Grant Avenue obstruct visibility as well.
- Grant Street has no sidewalk on the North side approaching I St. People walk there, which is very dangerous as cars whip around that corner driving away from Grant toward the I street stop sign.

- Approaching the I street stop sign from Grant, drivers can't see around the corner to I Street, so they creep WAY up over the crosswalk without looking left for pedestrians, and simply don't stop at the stop sign where they are supposed to.
- Turning left onto Grant from I Street poses a major threat to people crossing from the South side of Grant to the North side, at the I street crosswalk - it's a blind spot given the sun is glaring most mornings.
- Crosswalk at Grant Ave. & I Street is faded.
- Bush on SE corner of Grant Ave. & I street needs trimming.

### **Potential Solutions:**

- Paint edge lines along Grant Ave. to better define the curb & provide a traffic calming element.
- Consider removing parking on Grant Ave. where the road curves (between 104-108 Grant).
- Contact homeowners re: trimming bushes/trees.
- Consider converting the intersection of Grant Ave. and I St. to an all-way stop.
- Repaint crosswalk, trim bush.

### **I Street between Grant Ave. & Sunnyslope Ave.:**

#### **Concerns**

- Speeding along I Street is a major concern.
- Drivers also often "fly over" the hill on I Street. Parents expressed concern about the location of a 30 MPH speed limit sign located on the approach to the stop sign at Sunnyslope Avenue and I Street, indicating that drivers accelerate when they see it.
- The flashing light on I St approaching Grant Ave from the north only appears to work intermittently
- Sidewalks along I street are narrow, can be uneven in places, and obstructed by numerous street signs that have been installed on the sidewalk. Travel along the sidewalk is even more difficult on garbage days, and in the Fall due to debris that accumulates on the sidewalk, making it even more narrow. Due to all these factors, parents often have to walk in the street with their children to get to school.
- Sharrows on I St. are confusing for both bicyclists and drivers. Parents would feel safer with a bicycle lane or separated path for bicycling.
- Crosswalk at I Street and Sunnyslope is missing paint, and is a crosswalk on the east side of Sunnyslope at I, but not at the west side of Sunnyslope at I.
- Drivers frequently roll through or do not obey pedestrian right-of-way at the crosswalk at I St. and Sunnyslope.

### **Potential Solutions:**

- Consider implementation of shorter term traffic calming/safety measures on I Street such as
  - Shifting center line and narrow travel lanes to 10 feet, giving remaining space to shoulders.
  - Formalizing a bike lane (get community feedback re: whether a bike lane should be on one side or both sides)
  - Repair/consistently maintain the flashing school speed limit sign on I St. on the southbound approach to Grant Ave.
- Long term: Repair and widen the sidewalk on I Street & convert to a multi-use path

- Review all signage on I Street between Sunnyslope Rd. and Sunnyslope Ave. to determine what signage is critical and look for opportunities to remove or relocate signage (particularly signs that are installed on/obstructing the sidewalk).
  - Add signage to encourage drivers to respect bicyclists: 3 Foot Minimum Passing, Bicyclists May Use Full Lane
- Repaint existing crosswalks at Sunnyslope and I St.
- Install crosswalk & curb ramp across I St. on the west side of Sunnyslope Ave.

## **Sunnyslope Ave:**

### **Concerns:**

- There is a 30 MPH speed limit sign on the first block of Sunnyslope after I Street, soon before it converts to a (currently) 25 MPH school zone.
- Drivers travel too fast on Sunnyslope when it is not congested.
- Crosswalk at Sunnyslope and Sunnyhill is faded, and parents asked if it could be a candidate for a bulb out to shorten crossing distance.
- Many parents & students cross Sunnyslope at Deer Valley, where there is no painted crosswalk, and it feels unsafe.
- It feels unsafe to bicycle on Sunnyslope as there is no designated space for bicyclists, and no curb ramp from the sidewalk to enter campus from the street.
- Crosswalk in front of the school is faded, and the beacons are not very bright.

### **Potential Solutions:**

- Reduce speed limit from 25 to 15 in school zone and consider lowering 30 MPH speed limit on Sunnyslope Ave.
- Refresh crosswalk at Sunnyslope & Sunny Hill and consider replacing the flashing beacon.
- Install Class II bike lanes and refresh center lines (solid double-yellow lines) along Sunnyslope, and add buffered bike lanes where feasible.
- Consider conflicts between loading zone and future bike lane – advise school/district re: how to direct the bus and delivery vehicles.

## **G Street between Sunnyslope & school back entrance:**

### **Concerns:**

- Property at the SE corner of G St. & Sunnyslope has a large bush that blocks visibility for road users turning right onto G St. from Sunnyslope and for road users turning left from G St. to Sunnyslope.
- Cars parked near intersection of Sunnyslope and G impede visibility for road users.
- Drivers frequently do not stop or obey pedestrian right-of-way at the stop sign on G St.
- G Street can get “hectic” near the back entrance, between drivers traveling too fast, and just “too many cars”. There is a desire for more traffic calming on G.
- The flashing beacons at G & the school back entrance are the “old style” – although they work, they are not as “bright” as the newer ones, and the signage is cracked and faded. The in-pavement lights no longer work.

### **Potential Solutions:**

- Notify homeowner at SW corner of G & Sunnyslope to trim bush
- Daylight curbs at Sunnyslope & G street (and all curbs at intersections along Sunnyslope)
- Consider installing a double yellow line 50 feet in advance of the stop sign on G street
- Lower speed limit to 15 MPH

- Add bulb-outs to crosswalk at rear school entrance and consider replacing the flashing beacons.

**Misc:**

**District/School:**

- Assign staff to the loading/unloading area to support compliance
- Consider enrolling 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.
- Develop (or continue to share if already developed) clear English/Spanish drop off/pick up procedures, including demonstration videos, and share with parents/students via Back-to-School Night, Parent Square, School newsletters, PTA, etc.
- Continue promoting “Walking School Bus” (WSB) and/or “Bike Train” meet up spots, to encourage parents & students to walk or bicycle to school together, model safe behavior, create safety in numbers, and facilitate community connections. School administration, teacher(s), or parents may lead a group of students in the morning on special event days, and also encourage students & parents to walk together together on non-event days. Parents & Students who live in the vicinity may walk to the meet-up spots, and parents of kids who live farther away can park in the neighborhood and join the walking school bus to relieve traffic and congestion in the school zone. These can operate a couple times a year, once a month, or even once a week or more, depending on capacity and who is involved in leading.
  - Continue to support parents/staff to facilitate promotion and community participation.
  - Utilize the gathering at Back to School Night and all school communication channels to notify parents about the meet up spots and encourage participation.
  - Request support from SRTS program staff for identification of additional meet-up spots, routes, timing, creation of a promotional flyer, or parent/staff presentations.
- Report incidents to Petaluma Police Department when they occur (i.e., if someone is hit in a crosswalk but not hurt, etc), as well as ongoing concerns, such as parents parking in loading/unloading zones on city property, etc. The non-emergency phone number is 707-778-4372.
- Continue enrolling/participating in the County SRTS program, to support continued collection of student arrival/departure tally data, to participate in Walk/Roll initiatives, and to be eligible to receive SRTS services such as bicycle and/or pedestrian safety lessons and/or on-bicycle education programming.
- Share or continue sharing the following SRTS tip-sheet(s) and videos to support safe walking, bicycling, drop-off, and parking & walking:
  - Walking Safety Tip Sheet [English Spanish](#)
  - Bike Safety Tip Sheet [English Spanish](#)
  - Driver Awareness for Safe Arrival/Dismissal [English Spanish](#)
  - Park & Walk Video [English Spanish](#)

**Petaluma Police Department:**

- Support school requests to enforce continued violations.

**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.

Petaluma 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 30<sup>th</sup> of 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:



Blind curve and narrow sidewalks on Grant – edgelines?



Crosswalk at Grant & I St – convert to all-way stop? Trim bush on SE corner.





Signs installed on sidewalk on I-street



Sidewalks on I Street are narrow, garbage pails, debris, and signage can block path for pedestrians.



Intersection of I and Sunnyslope – refresh existing crosswalks, add another crosswalk



Flags in bucket to support crossing at I and Sunnyslope



Drop off congestion in front of McNear



Suggestion to move picnic tables to grass and add additional bike racks to this location





Crosswalk in front of school needs refreshing



Corner of Sunnyslope & G – drivers “fly around” – daylighting of curbs needed



Consider anything that can be done to improve driver compliance at stop at G & Sunnyslope



Traffic calming on G – edgelines?



Replace signage at crosswalk on G street at school entrance



Consider additional bike parking for back entrance (or improved racks)