



Miwok Valley Charter School SRTS Walk Audit

Tuesday, April 30th, 2024



In attendance: Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Bjorn Gripenburg (Active Transportation Planner, City of Petaluma), Sergeant Walt Spiller (Petaluma Police Department), Julio Villolobos (Principal, Miwok), Rebecca Shippert (parent), Meagan Nguyen (parent), Janine Barthol (parent), Sarah Harmon (parent), Anna Embree (parent), Deb Fox (Cool Petaluma) (*all parents are Miwok parents*)

Route: Met at school entrance at 1010 St. Francis Drive. Observed drop off from main entrance and along the school frontage, then headed north on St. Francis to the intersection of St. Francis and Baywood Drive. Then, continued north down St. Francis to the intersection of St. Francis and Ponderosa Drive before heading back to school along the same route.

Pick up/Drop off:

School breakfast is served outside (weather permitting), in front of the school main entrance, beginning at 7:30am. Students start trickling in slowly around 7:40 am, and traffic gets increasingly busier between 7:50-8:00 am, with the most traffic & congestion between 8:00-8:15 am. Students collect in front of the school near the main entrance until the campus opens at 8:10am. *In rainy or very cold weather, breakfast is served in the cafeteria, so students are allowed to enter campus after 7:30am for that purpose.*

For safety/security reasons, a single entry/exit point for the school has been designated, and students/families enter from the front (main) entrance. This is school district policy.

Miwok Valley Elementary School has two parking lots/driveway loops.

The lot/loop on the north side of the school is designated for buses and staff parking only. One full-size bus drops students off at approximately 7:45 am, and one small bus drops students off at approximately 8:00 am. Parents were not observed dropping off in that loop during the audit (although

participants commented that tardy parents occasionally disobey school policy and drop off in that area).

The lot/loop on the south side of the school is designated for parent drop off. The curb is painted red and parents are not supposed to park there, but numerous parents were observed parking and leaving their cars to accompany their children into school. Parents also drop off/park along St. Francis Drive in front of the school, where the curb is painted green and designated as short term (12 minute) parking. Parents may also drop off/park and walk from between Beechwood Dr. and St. Andrew Court and from close-by neighborhood side streets, but the vast majority appear to drop off on St. Francis and in the north driveway loop.

There is currently no school crossing guard, due to the fact that open positions have not been filled. However, the school/district ideally would like to have a crossing guard stationed at St. Francis Drive and Beechwood Drive, and also at St. Francis Drive & Baywood Drive.

School Information:

Address	1010 St. Francis Drive
Morning Bell(s)	8:15am
Afternoon Bell(s)	M,T, Th-F: 2:40pm (TK-3 rd), 2:45pm (4 th -6 th) W: 1:25pm (TK-3 rd), 1:30pm (4 th -6 th)
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	295
School type	Neighborhood
Student's proximity to school	295 geocoded students in 2023-24 247 live within 2 miles of school (84%) 190 live within 1 mile of school (64%) 147 live within ½ mile of school (50%) 103 live within ¼ mile of school (35%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	Walk – 23% Bike – 1% Other active – 1% Carpool – 2% School Bus – 9% Transit – 0% Single Family Vehicle – 66%
Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure Programming (2023-24)	2 nd Grade Pedestrian safety lessons 4 th Grade Bicycle Basics Lessons, Bike Rodeo 5 th 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 Old Adobe School District prior to implementation.

Concerns and observations:

- Drop off along St. Francis Drive and in the north driveway loop was relatively chaotic in terms of traffic volume and driver behavior. The following concerns were observed:
 - Parents parked in the north driveway loop instead of loading/unloading, preventing traffic from flowing in what is intended to be a loading/unloading zone. This, along with the high volume of traffic, resulted in increased congestion that backed up onto St. Francis Drive from the north driveway loop, often blocking the intersection of St. Francis and Beechwood Drive.
 - Congestion resulted in parent drivers becoming impatient and making unsafe maneuvers both on St. Francis and in the north driveway loop, including but not limited to
 - double parking on St. Francis
 - passing on the left
 - cutting off traffic to exit the drop-off line
 - dropping children off in the middle of the street while their car is stopped.
 - Illegal U-turns
 - Although parents do not appear to intentionally disobey pedestrian right-of-way, as mentioned, the volume of traffic & congestion causes parent drivers to block the crosswalk, and also makes it difficult to see pedestrians crossing St. Francis at Beechwood Drive. “Near miss” conflicts have occurred at that intersection.
- The lack of a crossing guard was a major concern expressed by parents.
- Parents do not obey the “12 minute parking” restriction along the designated green-painted curb front of the school (they park for longer period).
- The lack of curb-ramps along many intersections along St. Francis makes walking challenging for students/parents with disabilities, parents with strollers, etc. It also prevents bicycling on the sidewalk to/from school for younger students who do not have the skills/confidence to bicycle on the street. Lack of curb-ramps at the following intersections were specifically mentioned during the audit:
 - Beechwood & St. Francis
 - Ponderosa & St. Francis
 - Lombardi & St. Francis
- The intersection of St. Francis & Baywood Drive is very wide, busy, unsafe to cross, and a barrier for walking/bicycling to school from the neighborhood north of Baywood.
- Vehicles parked near the intersection of Lombardi & St. Francis block sightlines for pedestrians. This may be an issue at other intersections along St. Francis. Although we did not walk as far as Lombardi, it was specifically mentioned by a parent who lives in the neighborhood and experiences issues with this.
- Parents expressed that they do not feel safe bicycling on St. Francis or Baywood Drive.
- Speeding on St. Francis and Baywood is also a concern.

Ideas & Potential Solutions:

District/School:

- Consider implementing improvements to the north driveway loop to clearly designate it as a loading/unloading zone that parents should not be stopping or parking in:
 - Paint the curb white
 - Add “no parking” and/or other signage designating the area as a drop off/pick up area only.
 - 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.
- Consider a policy that enables Tk-K parents and parents of students with special needs to drop off in the south parking loop and enter the school closer to the Tk-K area, to offset some of the traffic congestion in the north parking loop.
- Consider establishing & promoting “Walking School Bus” (WSB) meet up spots, to encourage parents & students to walk 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 on the Walking School Bus 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. Walking School Buses 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.
 - Identify a parent or team of 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.
 - The following potential WSB “meet up spots” were discussed during the SRTS audit and are a 5-10 minute walk to school (depending on size/ages/speed of group), but others may be identified based on parent interest:
 - **Corner of Ponderosa Dr. & St. Francis Drive (.2 miles)**
 - **Corner of San Jose Way & St. Francis Drive (.3 miles)**
 - **Baywood Apartments (.3 miles)**
 - 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](#)

City of Petaluma Public Works:

- “Daylight” all crosswalks along St. Francis Way, including but not limited to Lombardi Avenue & St. Francis Way. Daylighting involves creating a buffer “no parking” zone within 20 feet of

crosswalks. Note: a new California state law prohibiting parking near crosswalks became effective on January 1st, 2024. The law gives drivers a 12-month grace period before citations are issued. Cities also are required to remove parking spots within 20 feet of a crosswalk.

- Consider converting the curb in front of the school between the entrance and exit of the south driveway loop to a restricted loading/unloading zone (white curb & signage) during school drop off and pick up time(s).
- Consider median crosswalk signs for the intersection of St. Francis and Beechwood
- Calm traffic & improve safety for bicyclists & pedestrians on Baywood Drive between Lakeville Hwy and S. McDowell with “a road diet” that may include some or all of the following:
 - reducing/narrowing travel lanes (eliminating center left turn lane)
 - a protected bicycle lane
 - bulb outs at intersections to shorten crossing distances.
 - consider converting the all-way stop at Baywood & St. Francis to a traffic circle
- Calm traffic and improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians on St. Francis Drive, when implementing the St. Francis repaving project (projected for 2026). Consider converting to a “neighborhood greenway” with the following improvements:
 - Install ADA-compliant curb ramps at all crossings
 - Painting edge-line stripes along St. Francis as a safety feature to provide road users with guidance re: where they should be traveling, induce them to lower speeds, etc.
 - Other possible traffic calming measures:
 - Speed tables
 - Median island(s) at uncontrolled crosswalks across St. Francis Dr
- Consider improvements to other routes of travel to/from Miwok and to facilitate connection to Miwok from areas outside of the ¼ mile zone, and also from the neighborhood to the river and green space south of Lakeville Hwy.
 - Improve bicycling route from the neighborhood near Del Oro Park, north of Sartori Drive between Frates Rd. and Casa Grande (where a significant cluster of Miwok families live) to Miwok.
 - Infrastructure improvements (road diets, etc) to Casa Grande Rd, Ely Blvd, and South McDowell Blvd. and intersections along those roads will facilitate safer travel to Miwok.
 - To enable families from the neighborhood south of Lakeville Hwy and 101, continue to pursue funding for the River Trail/US 101 undercrossing project

Petaluma Police Department:

- Enforce speed and other moving violations along St. Francis and Baywood Drive.
- 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 30th 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. To request to receive our SRTS E-Newsletter directly, email christina@bikeosnoma.org

Appendix: Walk Audit Pictures:



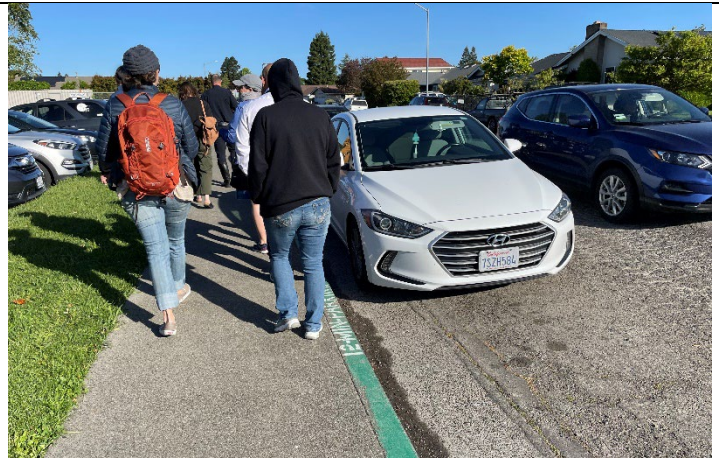
Crosswalk at Beechwood & St. Francis (no curb ramps)



Congestion in south driveway loop – many of the cars toward the front were empty



Parent double parked on St. Francis south of south driveway loop entrance – another driver went into the other travel lane to pass.



15 minute parking zone in front of the school (not obeyed by parents)



Baywood & St. Francis – huge intersection, difficult to cross safely!



Safety in numbers crossing Baywood as a Walk Audit group.



St. Francis Drive – candidate for a neighborhood greenway?



Intersection of Ponderosa Drive & St. Francis – no curb ramps (or painted crosswalks for that matter)



Debrief with audit participants