

Monroe Elementary School SRTS Walk Audit

Tuesday, May 7th, 2024



In attendance: Christina Panza (SRTS Director), Alexander Oceguela (City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Planner), Mike Vanmidde (City of Santa Rosa Traffic Engineer), Katheryne Stoural (Monroe Principal), Sarah Hadler (SRTS Education/Encouragement Program Manager), Liz Ramirez (Monroe parent), Kat Morton (Monroe Counselor), Armando Hernandez (Monroe Custodian). Also consulted with two drop-off monitors, Lorie Wilcox (School Restorative Specialist), and Maria Villagomez (Yard Duty).

Route: Met at school entrance at 2567 Marlow Rd. Observed drop off from main entrance and along the school frontage/driveway loop. Walked through the school parking lot to Marlow, and walked south on the west side of Marlow to Guerneville Rd. Crossed Guerneville Rd, and walked north on the east side of Marlow to Rochelle St, then turned around and walked back to the school, crossing Marlow at the crosswalk in front of the school.

Pick up/Drop off: Morning drop off and afternoon pick up for the elementary school takes place in the school driveway loop, beginning at ~7:30am. Drivers are instructed to enter from the north side of the loop and exit on the south side. That area is designated as a loading and bus zone only, and cars are not permitted to park there. Two small buses drop off special need/preschool students in front of the school main entrance between 7:50-8:00 am. The south driveway leads to a staff parking lot, and also to a larger parking area behind the school that is not utilized for drop off/pick up. Signage along the driveway loop clearly indicates that it is a bus and loading/unloading only zone.

Three staff were present in front of the school to monitor and support drop off. Lorie Wilcox, a school restorative specialist indicated that she is out there every day beginning at 7:20-7:30 am. Maria, a yard duty staff is also assigned to the drop-off queue. And typically, a third staff is out there (absent on the day of the audit), but the custodian Armando filled in for her between 7:45-8:05am. The staff reminds drivers to pull forward and they also keep their eyes on the children as they wait for the school doors to open.

Students enter the school from the front (main) entrance. Doors open at 7:45am. Some students (siblings of Monroe students) from Comstock are dropped off at Monroe.

A crossing guard is stationed at the crosswalk that goes across Marlow from the school driveway to the driveway for Northwest Community Park parking lot in both the morning and afternoon, where there is a pedestrian-activated traffic signal and dedicated left turn lane in both directions.

Parents also drop off on nearby neighborhood streets (Crosspoint Avenue & possibly Natasha Court) and in the parking lot for Northwest Community Park, and in the gravel city lot just south of the school near the corner of Marlow & Crosspoint.

Marlow Rd is a four lane arterial with class II bike lanes on both sides, and a median strip/island between the school driveway entrance and south of Hershey Ct, north of the school.

School Information:

Address	2567 Marlow Rd.
Morning Bell(s)	8:00 a.m.
Afternoon Bell(s)	M,T, Th-F: 1 st -6 th grade, 2:06 p.m.; Kinder, 1:00 p.m. W: (all grades) 11:50 a.m.
Grade levels	Tk-6
Enrollment	334 (according to GIS Map)
School type	Traditional
Student's proximity to school	334 geocoded students in 2023-24 299 live within 2 miles of school (90%) 261 live within 1 mile of school (78%) 77 live within ½ mile of school (23%) 18 live within ¼ mile of school (5%)
Participating School in Sonoma County SRTS program?	Yes
Student Travel Mode info (Sept 2023 student arrival/departure tally data)	Walk: 22% Bike: 2% (afternoon data) Other: 0% Carpool: 9% School Bus: 0% Transit: 0% Single Family Vehicle: 64%
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 and/or Santa Rosa City School District prior to implementation.

Concerns and observations:

- The staff assigned to the drop-off area did not have reflective vests to visibly highlight their role as monitors. They were relatively successful in reminding parents to pull forward and to keep the traffic moving, but could have been more proactive or assertive at times. Two of the three staff were positioned toward the south end of the loop, but it may have been more effective for one of the two to wave traffic along from the north end.
- Morning drop-off was relatively smooth, despite the volume of traffic. Parents were not observed parking and blocking traffic in the driveway loop, and students primarily exited their vehicles from the passenger side of the vehicle to the curb (one student was observed exiting from the drivers side of a vehicle). Some parents exited or entered the drop-off line in a less than safe manner, sometimes exiting at a slightly higher speed than felt comfortable to observers.
- However, a parent in attendance at the audit observed that on days where staff are unable to monitor traffic in the driveway loop, behavior amongst parent drivers and students is significantly worse. On those days, she indicated that many parents do not pull forward, traffic congests, and students exit vehicles in unsafe manners, such as from the driver's side of the vehicle, or from a vehicle stopped in the passing lane rather than at the curb. Clearly, staff assigned to drop-off are making a difference and enhancing safety at drop-off.
- Traffic does become backed up at the crosswalk in front of the school, particularly in the afternoons when parents arrive earlier and wait in the driveway loop and along Marlow. Staff/parents observed that afternoons are "much worse" with stacked vehicles, honking and unsafe maneuvers. One parent described afternoons as "a mess."
- A parent shared that a lot of parents drop off and pick up on Crosspoint, and that double parking and letting students out away from the curb can be an issue.
- One parent heading south on Marlow from the left travel lane was observed making a right turn in front of the right-travel lane, and almost hitting a school bus, in order to enter the school driveway, presumably because they weren't able to enter the right travel lane due to congestion.
- Crosswalks in the school driveway, at north driveway entrance, south exit, and at the entrance to the staff parking lot, are very faded.
- Left turn only/right turn only arrows in the school driveway exit are very faded and difficult to see.
- There is a "Do Not Enter" sign at the exit to the school driveway, but it is only visible to drivers heading north on Marlow. Drivers heading south on Marlow were observed making a right into

the school driveway exit (including school staff), rather than entering the driveway loop from the south.

- Speeding along Marlow is a general concern, and drivers often do not obey the 25mph “while children are present” speed limit in front of the school.
- Participants expressed that they do not feel safe bicycling along Marlow Road in either direction, due to the speed of traffic and the fact that the bicycle lanes are relatively narrow with no buffer between traffic and the bicycle lane. In our Spring 2023 parent survey, one parent suggested that “painting the bike lanes green may encourage some more people to ride bikes/scooters, the extra color distinction makes drivers subconsciously pay more attention to the painted lane.”
- In our Spring 2023 parent survey, parents shared that they would love to see safer crossings (and specifically more crosswalk flashers) in the W Steele Ln vicinity, given the amount of children they see walking in the area daily.
- In our Spring 2023 parent survey, numerous parents expressed concerns about homeless people in the neighborhood and in NW Community Park, feelings that the neighborhood is “dangerous” due to too many homeless people.
- School zone & school speed limit signage on Marlow heading north is partially obscured by trees, and is faded and cracked.
- School zone & school speed limit signage on Marlow heading south is also partially obscured by trees. We did not note condition of signage in that direction.
- At this time, there is no school bus service to Monroe.
- Bike racks are located (on the north side of the school through a side gate that is supposed to be unlocked and locked each morning and afternoon. Students will sometimes leave their bikes outside of the gate if it is locked and then the bikes are not secure. There has been discussion over the years to move the bike racks to a more central location and we will discuss this at our SRTS end of year meeting.

Ideas and Potential Solutions:

District/School:

- Require drop-off monitors to wear safety vests, and provide guidance to support monitors in being more proactive and assertive in moving vehicles along.
- Consider enrolling with AAA to establish a student [AAA School Safety Patrol](#) to support staff with 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.
- Repaint crosswalks and pavement markings in school driveway loop & entrance to the parking lot. Consider utilizing thermoplastic rather than epoxy paint on blacktop/pavement, for longer

lasting results. Note: thermoplastic cannot be used on the concrete of the driveway entrance/exit.

- Consider relocating bike racks to a more central location to make them easier to access.
- Consider moving the dismissal queue to a location on the school campus, rather than on Marlow Road (*we discussed the possibility of directing parents who arrive early to the parking lot behind the school*).
- Consider offering bus service from the neighborhood east of the school (Apple Valley). The vast majority of Monroe students live in that neighborhood, but only 22% of students are walking to school. According to parent surveys, reasons Santa Rosa parents drive to school include concerns about road safety, neighborhood safety, and inability to walk due to work commitments.
- Continue to promote **alternative drop-off/pick up locations** i.e. **“Park & Walk”**. An **alternative drop-off/pick up location** is simply an alternative location where parents are encouraged to drop off/pick up to divert traffic from the normal school loading/unloading zone.
 - Northwest Community Park parking lot
 - Crosspoint Avenue
 - City gravel lot at Crosspoint & Marlow
 - The parking lot for the Comstock baseball fields (off Steele Lane)

Utilize the SRTS Park & Walk Video to share the benefits of parking & walking [English](#) [Spanish](#)

- Continue leading your established **“Walking School Bus”** (WSB) or **Bike Train** (BT) meet up spot, and consider engaging parents in leading groups from both the established location as well as additional location(s) in their own neighborhoods.

A Walking School Bus or Bike Train is an adult-led group that walks or bicycles from a designated location to school. School staff, a parent, or a team that includes both must be identified to facilitate promotion and build community participation & engagement. School administration, teacher(s), or even parents may lead the bus/train in the morning on special event days, model safe walking/bicycling behavior, and enable safety in numbers. Walking School Buses can operate a couple times a year, once a month, or even once a week or more during certain months, depending on capacity.

The following WSB/BT “meet up spot” has already been established. School staff lead students and parents from this location school on International Walk & Roll to School Day, Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, and Bike to School Day:

- **Comstock Bus Stop:** 7:30am meet up, walk through Northwest Community Park on the path, crossing the Marlow crosswalk to the school, about a ½ mile

Additional WSB/BT “meet up spots” could be considered for the future, if a parent leader or group of parents can be identified and engaged to walk together from a location in the neighborhood they live in. Some possible locations could be:

- **A location on/off Apple Valley Lane** where parents/students living along that street could meet up and walk to Northwest Community Park together (from Rockwood Ct, in the middle of Apple Valley Lane, to Monroe Elem is .7 miles).
- **Paulin Creek Trailhead** off Apache St. south of Mohawk, or the corner of Apache St. & Mohawk, to Northwest Community Park (.7 miles, mostly trails)

- **A corner** (*near a parent leader's home*) **in the neighborhood northeast of the school** (streets include Yuma St, Mohawk St, Navajo St, Comanche St, Cherokee Ave & Apache St)
- Activate families to get excited about walking together in groups, for fun, health, and community connection. Utilize (currently unfilled) Family Engagement Facilitator position to engage more parents & students to form walking school bus groups for that purpose. Consider meeting parents “where they are at” by holding a social/meeting at apartment complex(es) where many families live.
- Develop (or continue utilizing) clear English/Spanish drop off/pick up procedures & other travel recommendations (i.e. walking school buses, alternative drop off) and share with parents/students via Back-to-School Night, Parent Square, School newsletters, PFO, etc.
- Continue participating in the County SRTS program, to support continued collection of student arrival/departure tally data, to participate in Walk/Roll initiatives if capacity allows, and to be eligible to receive SRTS services such as bicycle and/or pedestrian safety lessons and/or on-bicycle education programming.
- Continue sharing the following SRTS tip-sheet(s) and videos to support safe walking, bicycling, drop-off, and parking and walking:
 - Walking Safety Tip Sheet [English](#) [Spanish](#)
 - Bike Safety Tip Sheet [English](#) [Spanish](#)
 - Driver Awareness for Safe Arrival/Dismissal [English](#) [Spanish](#)
- Report incidents to SRPD when they occur (i.e., if someone is hit in a crosswalk but not hurt, etc), as well as ongoing concerns, near misses, etc.

City of Santa Rosa Public Works:

- Reach out to the Santa Rosa Police Department Traffic Bureau to request that SRPD speed trailer be rotated on Marlow Rd. A potential location was identified on Marlow heading southbound, on the north side of Santa Rosa Creek.
- Trim trees obscuring school zone signage both north and south of the school. Replace faded or cracked signage.
- Consider the following traffic calming/safety measures on Marlow Road between Larry Drive and Valdes Drive. These measures can slow traffic, enhance safety for cyclists, and shorten crossing distances for pedestrians:
 - A “road diet” that entails reducing one of the travel lanes, if feasible.
 - A protected bicycle lane and/or a green bicycle lane.
- Review crossings on West Steele Ln. to determine if additional “crosswalk flashers” (RRFB’s) are feasible.

Santa Rosa Police Department:

- Enforce speed and other moving violations along Marlow Road during morning and afternoon commute times.
- Deploy speed radar trailer at designated feasible location.

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.
 Santa Rosa 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). 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:



Drop off queue in driveway loop



Signage in driveway loop (Bus zone only, no parking, no stopping)



Faded crosswalk at entrance of staff parking lot across school driveway. Can use thermoplastic here, if able.



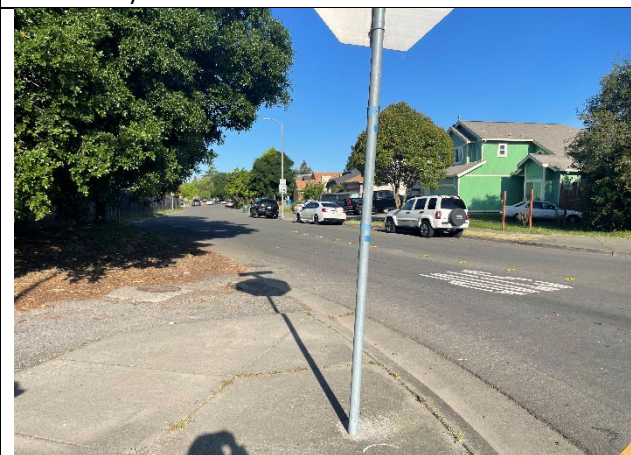
Do not enter sign at school driveway (facing northbound traffic only). Also, faded crosswalk (on concrete, so thermoplastic not feasible in this location)



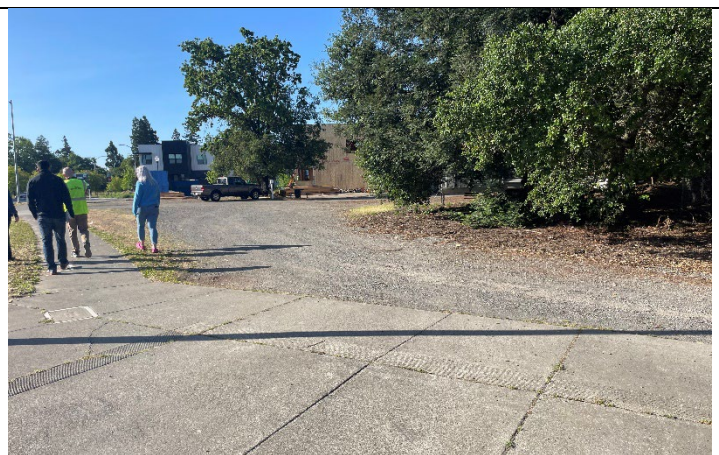
Faded left turn only and right turn only lane markings at school driveway exit (and faded crosswalk)



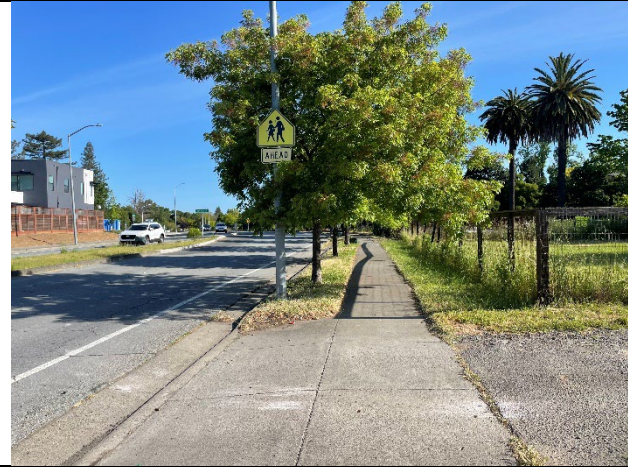
School crossing guard at crosswalk in front of school (and note faded crosswalk at school driveway entrance)



Crosspoint Ave, looking west (parents park/drop off/pick up along Crosspoint and in gravel lot at corner)



Gravel (city) lot at Crosspoint, alternative drop-off location.



School zone sign (northbound on Marlow)– faded, cracked, blends in with tree.



School speed limit sign (southbound on Marlow) partially obscured by trees



Marlow road bicycle lane & 35mph speed limit (extreme trepidation re: bicycling along this corridor)