



Santa Rosa Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Task Force

Focus Area: South/West Santa Rosa (City Council Districts 1 & 7)

Meeting Notes of Thursday, Sept. 28th, 2023

Members

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| Christina Panza | Director, Safe Routes to Schools & Education | Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition |
| Sarah Hadler | Safe Routes to School Education/Encouragement Program Manager | Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition |
| Alexander Ocegüera | Active Transportation Planner | City of Santa Rosa |
| Laurel Chambers | Healthy Eating, Active Living Coordinator | Sonoma County Department of Health Services; Public Health Division |
| Michael Kellison | Superintendent | Bellevue Union School District |
| Lisa Saxon | Superintendent | Wright School District |
| Jessica Peterson | Safety Coordinator | Roseland School District |
| Patricia Turner | Director of Risk Management | Santa Rosa City School District |

Additional Attendees: Chris Barney (Director of Planning, SCTA); Natalia Aguilar (Translator and Family Engagement Facilitator, Bellevue School District); Emily Shartin (Advocacy Director, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition); Araceli Valencia (Parent); Blanca Onozu (Parent); Angelica Galvan (Parent); Angel Gallardo (Wright Charter Grandparent); Jose SantaMaria (IT Coordinator, Bellevue School District)

Additional Attendees via Teleconference: Torina Wilson (Transportation Planner with City of Santa Rosa); Michael Jablonski (Biella Elementary School Principal)

Notes on Agenda Items:

1. Introductions & public comments for items not on agenda*

- a. Everyone introduced themselves (please see above for attendees)
- b. Christina Panza welcomed everyone saying that this Task Force is a collaboration between the Sonoma County Safe Routes to School program, all of the school districts within the City of Santa Rosa, City of SR Transportation and Public Works, SR Law Enforcement and the Dept of Health Services and members of the public; parents, teachers, principals are welcome to zoom in or be here in person. The purpose of the Task Force is to bring us all together to share what we are doing and to raise concerns or issues in our districts around infrastructure and to collaborate and identify opportunities for improvements, collaboration and funding. This is our second public meeting.

- a. There were no public comments.

2. **Safe Routes to School Program Report (Christina Panza, SRTS Director)**

(PowerPoint slides and corresponding handouts included in notes packet)

- a. Welcome back to the Santa Rosa SRTS Task Force. I'd like to update you on the status of the County Program in Santa Rosa at this point in time, as we begin the 23-24 school year. As you may be aware, The Safe Routes to School program's primary goal is to increase the number of families who safely utilize active and alternative transportation to and from school and in their neighborhoods. The Sonoma County Transportation Authority administers the program, which is funded through the One Bay Area Grant and the Go Sonoma/Measure M Transportation Tax, and my organization, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition, is the lead implementation agency. We serve more than 60 schools per year countywide. *(Slide 1)*
- b. The enrolled sites in the South SR focus area are: from the Bellevue School District--Meadowview Elem (newly enrolled), Kawana enrolled for the 2022-23 school year, but did not re-enroll for 2023-24; from the Roseland School District--Sheppard Accelerated School; from the Wright School District--JX Wilson; RL Stevens; Wright Charter (in the unincorporated area); from SR City Schools—Cesar Chavez Language Academy. Any school can opt in at any time but we do have an open enrollment in March/April and we prioritize services based on who is enrolled at that time. When schools enroll after open-enrollment, we work with the schools to assess our collaboration. *(Slide 2)*
- c. At Meadowview, the SRTS program will be teaching 2nd Grade pedestrian safety lessons, and we will be supporting Meadowview to hold International Walk & Roll to School Day and other monthly encouragement events.
- d. At Sheppard, all the Wright Dist schools and Cesar Chavez Language Academy, we will be teaching 2nd grade pedestrian safety lessons, 4th grade bike safety lessons, 5th gr mapping/communications lessons and each school will receive a 4th gr bike rodeo (all rodeos will be in the spring, except for JX Wilson which will be on Oct 12th). All of these schools will hold monthly Walk and Roll encouragement events and will promote our monthly Walk/Roll Challenges to their school communities.
- e. This past weekend, on Sat, 9/23, we supported the Wright School District with a Family Bike Ride. We met at JX Wilson and rode downtown on the SR Creek Trail/Prince Memorial Greenway to Juilliard Park and back. There were over 40 participants. *(Slide 3)*
- f. Every year, the SRTS program makes School Snapshots for the schools that they serve. Christina passed around packets with the 2022-23 School Snapshots for Cesar Chavez, Kawana Springs, Sheppard, JX Wilson, RL Stevens and Wright Charter. *(Slide 4 and attached School Snapshot handout)*
- g. The School Snapshot shows the level of engagement that each school has with the SRTS program. A lot of that has to do with the capacity that

the school has to support the program. For example, when we look at the Cesar Chavez Snapshot, we see there are two Family Engagement Coordinators that Champion the SRTS Program, there is a chart that shows the Student Travel Modes for Fall 2022; active green trips (10%) include walk, bike, scoot, skate and Green Trips (19%) include all the active modes plus carpool and bus. We see that 40 Parents responded to the Spring SRTS Parent Survey and district wide, there were 271 responses. We see the engagement numbers for Int'l Walk and Roll to School Day and Bike To School Day, and on the lower half, we see the activities that Cesar Chavez engaged in, those are in bold print. We also see the number of low-cost helmets that were purchased, the number of bikes that were repaired and the number of 4th gr students who learned to ride. Lastly, we see a close up of the Student Address GIS map, as well as the percentages of how many students live with a ¼, ½, 1 mile and 2 mile radius of the school.

- h. We are currently in the midst of developing Student Address GIS maps for the schools enrolled in the program. These maps show how many and the % of students that live within a ¼, ½, 1, and 2 mile radius of the school— These maps give us a picture of how many students can potentially walk/bike to school and they are helpful for finding meet up locales for Walking School Buses and Bike Trains; they are also useful for prioritizing and identifying possible infrastructure improvements. (*Slide 5*)
- i. We are open to creating maps for schools who are not enrolled in the SRTS program. Maps should be completed by early November and definitely by the winter holidays.
- j. How are we collecting information from the school communities on barriers to walking/biking to school? This Task Force is one way to do that, hearing from schools and parents is important and it gives the City more feedback and information in creating plans and prioritizing infrastructure improvements. Another way to collect information is through a survey. Last spring, we put together a SRTS Parent Survey and we asked all of the schools and school districts to help us in getting the word out to parents. Once the surveys were in, we were able to pull out parent survey comments for each school, for example, at JX Wilson, ten different parents mentioned the W. 3rd St and Brittain crossing, which really highlights the need for this intersection to be looked at. The more feedback we get, the more we can see where the needs are. (*Slide 6*)
- k. Next week is Int'l Walk and Roll to School Day, in which students/families are encouraged to walk/roll to and from school! We have 61 schools that are participating county-wide. Most schools celebrate on Wed. 10/4, and the Wright District schools celebrate on Fri. 10/6. (*Slide 7*)
- l. The October Monthly Challenge is an activity tracker to school or anywhere. We ask our schools to distribute it to families and we love it when teachers assign the challenge to the students in the classroom. Each month, we choose a handful of raffle prize winners from the students who have turned in challenges. (*Slide 8*)

- m. A heads up that in November, we have Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day and many of our schools have signed up through AAA. If you have a question about whether your school is signed up for Ruby Bridges, you can always reach out to us. The November Challenge will be a Bingo sheet that has info about Ruby Bridges as well as being safe while walking/biking. *(Slides 9 and 10)*
- n. We have produced a number of Public Service Announcement Videos to help educate the community about various topics related Safe Routes to School. We are continually creating videos and adding them to our Sonoma County Safe Routes to School YouTube Channel, and we encourage our partners to share them when and where appropriate. This month, we're highlighting a PSA on parking and walking to school. It is in English and Spanish and there are long and short versions. This PSA is directed towards parents to communicate the idea that you even if you can't walk/bike from home, you can park and walk from a few blocks away. This gets more traffic out of the school zone and encourages families to be healthy and active. *(Slide 11)*
- o. The next SR Task Force meeting will be on Thu. 10/26, 10:30-noon and the focus will be on East SR schools. The meeting will be at the Rincon Valley Union School District (1000 Yulupa Ave). The next meeting after that will be on Fri. 12/1, 10:30-noon and the focus will be on Central and NW SR schools. It will be held at the SR City School District. *(Slide 12)*

3. Community Based Transportation Plan Program (Chris Barney, Director of Planning, SCTA)

(PowerPoint slides included in notes packet)

- a. The Community Based Transportation Plan is about identifying transportation issues at the local level and coming up with solutions. This year, we are focusing on the Santa Rosa Avenue corridor. *(Slide 1)*
- b. Who are we? The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) acts as the countywide planning and fund programming agency for transportation and performs a variety of important functions related to advocacy, project management, planning, finance, grant administration and research. *(Slide 2)*
- c. The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) coordinates countywide climate protection efforts among Sonoma County's nine cities and multiple agencies. These efforts are focused on efficient buildings, clean energy, clean and healthy transportation, and conservation/adaptation.
- d. What do we do? We maximize transportation funding, we make long range plans, we collaborate and communicate, and we do analysis and forecasting.
- e. What is the Community Based Transportation Planning (CBTP) Program? This program seeks to improve access and mobility for underserved and marginalized communities. The geographic focus is data driven and based on Equity Priority Communities. We will engage the communities and residents to identify barriers and transportation issues in their communities

and collaborate on coming up with solutions and potential improvements such as filling in sidewalk gaps, putting in new crosswalks, and creating new bus routes and/or stops. The goal is a list of community identified transportation projects and solutions that we can then prioritize, fund and implement. (*Slide 3*)

- f. Map of Equity Priority Communities—you can see the communities along the South Santa Rosa corridor. (*Slide 4*)
- g. Previous Sonoma County CBTPs focused on four other areas in the county: Roseland in Santa Rosa (where the need for the local City Bus 19 was identified and implemented); the Russian River area; the Sonoma Valley Springs Area; and Central Healdsburg. (*Slide 5*)
- h. The types of projects that were identified included: new transit routes and stops; improved transit headways; bicycle and pedestrian improvements; improved sidewalk connections; improved traveler information; and safety improvements like identifying where the dangerous locations are and making them safer especially for pedestrians and bicyclists. (*Slide 6*)
- i. The area of focus for this CBTP is South Santa Rosa on the Santa Rosa Ave corridor. See the blue triangular shape area on the map. Basically, it stretches from approximately HWY 12 in the north to Mountainview Ave in the south; it includes both incorporated city and unincorporated areas; there are over 10,000 people and over 3,550 households; over 50% of these households have incomes with less than 200% of the federal poverty level; there is an over 60% minority population; a mix of housing and commercial/industrial land uses; and fragmented connections between where people live and where they want to go (jobs, schools, recreation, shopping, etc.) (*Slide 7*)
- j. Developing the South Santa Rosa CPTP: we are kicking off the project in Jan 2024 and we will be finding our stakeholder community of which schools will be an important part. With our stakeholders and consultants, we will then be developing our community outreach strategy, like making a meeting schedule, planning a timeline and identifying where the best place for outreach are (stores, parks, schools, etc), we will include virtual and pop-up meetings We will identify transportation gaps and barriers and then work with community members and stakeholders to identify, prioritize and recommend solutions. The final product will be a Community Based Transportation Plan. This plan will be presented to stakeholders, community groups and elected officials. (*Slide 8*)
- k. The Project Outcomes will be a list of community identified projects, identified access issues and barriers, potential funding sources for these projects and a final report and summary. (*Slide 9*)
- l. How can you participate? Come to the community meetings of which there will be a variety, there will be virtual meetings and pop-up meetings and public hearings. There will be a project website where you can go to provide info and feedback. And you can also comment on reports and documents. (*Slide 10*)

- m. We are kicking off the project in January and are working on finding a consultant. The bulk of the work will be in March/April 2024 and we welcome feedback via email/website, etc. We really want to identify projects that people from these communities really need and want. Contact info for Chris Barney: chris.barney@scta.ca.gov; website is: www.scta.ca.gov (Slide 11)
- n. Questions?
- i. Jessica Peterson asked: what is the capacity to look ahead to other projects/areas of concerns? Chris said that every 3-4 years, there is funding to look at other areas of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. Also, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan is also being updated next year so you can always reach out if you have any feedback.
 - ii. Emily Shartin asked —how does this plan dovetail with other plans? Chris answered that it is challenging to line up all the plans, but that having combined meetings, like this one, will be helpful. Also, sharing info between groups working on projects, like from the SRTS parent surveys that were collected last spring/summer, and the updating of the Active Transportation Plan in SR, hearing about what is already out there, is very useful. Christina said that this Task Force helps to educate the communities and share information about these plans, it's a place where we can work together and make sure our feedback and priorities are being heard. The more we can share information through our networks, the more people will see it and be able to respond.
 - iii. Angel Gallardo asked when the parent survey was completed. Christina said May and Angel said that it would be good if the results had been shared earlier. Christina agreed and said that the survey responses should be shared out to the right people as soon as possible. *(Note: the parent survey actually closed on June 30, and then the SRTS team worked on compiling the information from the surveys during August and shared out much of the information with the corresponding Cities and schools).*
 - iv. Michael Ellison said that the Bellevue Union School District schools on the South Santa Rosa corridor would be glad to host community meetings so that families can be directly heard.
 - v. Laurel Chambers asked if the older CBT plans were available on the SCTA website? They are linked on the SCTA website here: <https://scta.ca.gov/community-based-transportation-plans/>. Chris answered that Dana Turrey, from SCTA, went through all of the older plans, noted the status of projects identified in the plans and included those in the current Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

4. City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation Update (Alexander Ocegüera, Active Transportation Planner, City of SR)

(PowerPoint slides included in notes packet)

- a. The City of Santa Rosa Active Transportation update includes current and upcoming projects/improvements and opportunities for collaboration. *(Slide 1)*
- b. The Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) highlight that someone is crossing the road and helps drivers be more aware of pedestrians crossing the street. This helps to lessen crashes and help with visibility at crosswalks. *(Slide 2)*
- c. An RRFB project at Sebastopol Road and Laurel Grove Circle, in front of Cesar Chavez Language Academy, is almost completed. There will also be pedestrian ramps, making it accessible for everyone. An RRFB will be installed at Dutton Ave and Funston Dr, which connects neighborhoods to Bayer Park. It is funded but dependent on the timing of in-house crews to be constructed. *(Slide 3)*
- d. There will be future traffic light signals installed at three potential locations:
 - i. Santa Rosa Ave and Bellevue Avenue, where there is funding for the design phase.
 - ii. Hearn Avenue and Burbank Avenue, this is funded and waiting on design features.
 - iii. Santa Rosa Ave and Court Street is the site of a potential signal location and was identified at one of our earlier SRTS Task Force meetings because of the development that is going in on Court St. *(Slides 4/5)*
- e. Removing Barriers (both Hwy 12 and Hwy 101 are barriers to walking and biking)
 - i. The plan for the Hearn Overcrossing: there will be protected bike lanes on both sides, on the south side, there will be a 2-way cycle track, and on the north side, a protected bike lane, there will be more room on the sidewalks on both sides and the plan also adds vehicle capacity. *(Slides 6/7)*
- f. Active Transportation Plan Update provides opportunities for feedback. We're looking at places to decrease crossing distances like the long crossing distance on Santa Rosa Ave between Bellevue Ave and Court St. A plan for a potential road diet for Santa Rosa Ave would add bike lanes, which means pedestrians would cross only three lanes of traffic which is more comfortable for them. The vehicle threshold for a road diet like this is 20,000 vehicles which is right around where it is at.
- g. The Active Transportation Plan Update is basically redoing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master plan. It is a community based solution that will give the City the ability to go get grants and justify what we are doing, and to implement future changes.
- h. Questions?
 - i. Patty Turner asked if reducing car lanes to three would create more vehicle traffic? Alexander answered that is why we look at vehicle thresholds in considering a project but we have to look at other impacts as well, like the numbers of pedestrians walking and

people biking and the pros and cons of both. In general, road diets slow speeds down and make streets safer for everyone.

- ii. Michael Ellison said that he is very excited about the future signal going in at Santa Rosa Ave and Bellevue Ave.
- iii. Laurel Chambers asked about the timeline for the Hearn Overcrossing improvements? Torina Wilson said that the estimated start of construction is Spring 2024 and the estimated completion date is Spring 2026.
- iv. Jessica Peterson asked about the timing of the signal going in at Hearn Ave and Burbank Ave. Torina said that she is not sure but there can be news on the srcity.org webpage that lists capital improvement projects. Christina said that you can always reach out to her if you have a question and she will do her very best to find an answer. Please use her as a resource!

5. Santa Rosa Police Department Enforcement Update ((N/A—representatives from SRPD were invited to attend but none were able to make it)

6. District/site SRTS issues, concerns & opportunities (open up to public and schools to share)

- a. Angel Gallardo said that he lives off of S. Wright Rd/Price Ave. near Wright Charter School, where his grandchildren go, and he's had a concern for a few years about the volume and speed of traffic on the road. He said that he feels like nothing happens or changes until someone gets hurt or dies and people have been hurt and killed crossing S. Wright Rd. People come in from Hwy 12, they drag race at night, bus drivers go down the wrong side of the street where his grandkids are crossing, Little League and school parents are in a hurry and speeding and there are a lot of drug addicts on the corner of the street as kids are walking the pathway to/from school. The road is on the line between city and county and when he has complained to the school, they have suggested he go to the county and the county suggests he goes to the city. He said that he needs the right person to hear him and make improvements on the road, maybe speed bumps, he said he'll even pay for the asphalt. Lisa Saxon thanked Angel for coming to this meeting as they had met last spring and got on a phone call and texting basis and she suggested that he come and voice his concerns at this meeting. Christina said that it would be beneficial to do a site visit/Walking Audit of the S. Wright Rd/Price Ave with the county and other invested stakeholders, including Angel and Lisa. Alexander mentioned that the Bicycle Coalition recently got a tactical urbanism grant that could be used for the materials for a temporary pop up at this site. Sarah mentioned that in her last SRTS site meeting at Wright Charter, a few teachers mentioned speeding on Price Ave and S. Wright Rd and thought that a speed trailer would be useful here.

- b. Alexander said that he can also check with the homeless shelter that is located nearby and invite someone from there to come to these meetings and also the future Walking Audit.
- c. Jessica Peterson said that she polled the Roseland school sites and the highest priority is for having a safe way for students to cross from Roseland Elementary on the south side of Sebastopol Rd to get to the new Boys and Girls Club on the north side of Sebastopol Rd. There was a recent pedestrian death on Sebastopol Rd and there are hundreds crossing every day. There is a traffic light at West Ave and Sebastopol Road but it is not user friendly as you have to cross the street three times to get to the other side. Burbank Ave is also under construction and there is a need for crosswalks as there are 1500 students in schools (RAMS/Roseland Creek) around there and heavily use those areas. There is also speeding on Burbank Ave and overgrown vegetation and she'd like to have a Walking Audit to further assist in identifying issues.
- d. Christina said that we'll have to set priorities for having Walking Audits at schools that request them. The purpose of Walking Audits is to bring together parents, school staff, the City and any other stakeholders to talk about and document concerns/issues and to discuss short term solutions and long term solutions. Walking Audits are not always a quick fix, but the issues that arise from these can be incorporated into plans.
- e. Patty Turner said that she surveyed the Santa Rosa City Schools and seven of the schools said they would be interested in having a Walking Audit. Those schools are Lincoln, Brook Hill, Luther Burbank, SR High School, SR Charter School for the Arts, Proctor Terrace and Steele Lane. She also mentioned that at Brook Hill, there is a problem of parents dropping off their kids at the back of the school in a residential area where drivers are opening doors into the street and children are running across the street. The principal has reminded the parents about safe drop off and pick up practices. Christina wondered if this was more of a behavior problem or if there were infrastructure improvements that could be identified to help the problem.
- f. Michael Ellison said that part of the Bellevue Union School District is within the City of SR and part is in the County. This poses challenges as the County is a little more nebulous to respond. Christina said that she did invited County representatives to the meeting today, but she is not sure if County staff have the capacity to attend meetings at this time. She will continue to reach out to County staff to determine if this is a possibility for the future.
- g. Christina asked who else should be here? Are there other stakeholders that are not here that we'd like to have here? Boys and Girls Club; other community stakeholders that work with transporting kids; we'd like to see more parents showing up to voice their concerns. Christina said that SRTS provides notice of these Task Force meetings to all of the Principals so that they can share with their school communities. If they can't make a

meeting, parents are always welcome to share their concerns via phone calls/emails.

- h. Jose SantaMaria said that many parents do not have emails and they don't hear about the meetings and that language can be a barrier. He also suggested that as many parents work, the meetings should be held at the end of the school day.
- i. Araceli Valencia mentioned that speed on Santa Rosa Ave is a big safety concern of hers.
- j. Christina said that road diets can really reduce speeds on roads and make it safer for all road users. There is often resistance to reducing travel lanes and concerns about parking and such, but when we narrow roads and lower speeds, everyone is safer.

7. Other Business & Announcements

- a. There were no other announcements.
- 8. Next Meeting & Adjournment**—The next meeting of the Santa Rosa Safe Routes to School Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, October 26th, at 10:30am, at the Rincon Valley School District Office (1000 Yulupa Ave) with a focus on the East Santa Rosa area schools in City Council Districts 2 and 3. All are welcome to attend. There will be a Zoom-in option.