



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION



Cool
Petaluma
2030



Petaluma Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Task Force

Meeting Minutes:

Date/Time: Thursday June 20th, 2024, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Location: Casa Grande High School, Multi-Purpose Room (MPR)
333 Casa Grande Rd, Petaluma 94954

Goals & Objectives:

1. 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.
2. Provide a venue for sharing of program initiatives and projects in the city of Petaluma, as well as inter-agency collaboration.

Agenda:

1. **Introductions** (see sign up list)

- a. Bjorn Gripenburg, Active Transportation Planner, City of Petaluma
- b. Deb Fox, Cool Petaluma
- c. Sarah Hadler, SRTS Program Manager
- d. Walt Spiller, Traffic Sergeant, Petaluma Police Dept
- e. Jared Hall, Transit Manager, City of Petaluma
- f. Drew Halter, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Petaluma
- g. Gina Benedetti, City of Petaluma Public Works
- h. Scott Wigert, Casa Teacher/Mountain Bike Coach
- i. Dan Ostermann, Petaluma City Schools District
- j. John Shribbs, City Council, Vice Mayor
- k. Jim Johnson, Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande
- l. Dale Evje, Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande
- m. GA Murray, Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande
- n. Bruce Monlon (sp?), Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande
- o. Carol Crabill, Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande
- p. Jo Ann Oss, Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande
- q. Ed Oss, Neighbor, Senior Housing across from Casa Grande

2. **Partner Announcements**

- a. Safe Routes to School Program update:
 - We are holding a Family Bike Workshop this Sat. 6/22, at Lucchesi Park. The workshop is currently full and we do have a waitlist. We are partnering with CHP to give out free helmets.
 - The September Challenge will be a Map Your Route to School with the addition of a Meet Up challenge. We will encourage families to connect and walk and bike to school together. More info to come!
- b. City of Petaluma (public works, transit, police)
 - Public Works

- Public engagement going on in the Riverfront neighborhood, presented and are advancing the design phase and looking for community input on the Caulfield Bridge and traffic impact. Requesting feedback on the look and feel of the bridge itself (<https://cityofpetaluma.org/caulfieldbridge/>)
- Study of ways to improve pedestrian/bike access across the 101 at 4 different places: the McKenzie overcrossing, the pedestrian overcrossing behind Target, the Lynch Creek trail; and the Rainier overcrossing. This is in the early stages, just working on initial ideas on how to improve these areas, will come back to the community in a couple of months to seek more feedback.
 - One of the Senior Apartments neighbors said he uses the Adobe Creek trail undercrossing but not when it's rainy and wet. Bjorn said they are looking at Lynch Creek Trail and it is too constrained to make an undercrossing there.
- There is a grant to look closely at Lakeville Hwy, which is owned and operated by CalTrans which makes it challenging. Lakeville Hwy accounts for 1/5th of all severe collisions in City of Petaluma, so the grant funding is good to see how Lakeville can be improved with local attention. John Shribbs mentioned that the crossing is very unsafe and traffic volume has tripled. The elected official to bring this up with is County Supervisor, David Rabbit.
- The Howard St paving project will start in 2025 and go from A St to West St. They will be replacing underground utilities and repaving the street, and this is an opportunity for redesign, to make it safer and more accessible.
- Maria Dr is under construction from Ranier Ave to S. McDowell Blvd and should be done by early fall.
- Ed, from the Senior Apts, noted that Western has improved paving but then it stops abruptly. Bjorn said that the paving stops at the city/county line and Gina said that the county should be phasing it in.
- Transit
 - The bus stop shelters have been completed bus here at Casa Grande and at Kenilworth,
 - School Tripper bus service is starting again for summer school here at Casa Grande on Monday 6/24 and going through 7/23--Rt 311 will provide that service.
 - There will be free fare for all on all routes starting on 7/1 and running indefinitely—
 - There is free fare today through the weekend for the Petaluma Fair.
- Petaluma Police Dept
 - Summer is busy, and the fair is here and there are a lot of special events on the schedule. With the fair, there is an Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) grant geared towards DUI impairment, with anti-DUI campaigns and operations.
 - The Petaluma PD has been awarded a grant through the CHP for anti-DUI messaging and they will be doing

education and film projects for both alcohol and drugs. This is funded through the cannabis tax. This will be a new program and the PD is using a film producer who did the Every 15-Minute program. It will be a year long project where there will be a lot of messaging and short films.

- Parks and Recreation
 - Movies in the park is returning this Friday, 6/21 at Lucchesi Park. It is a family friendly event, with food vendors, and the movie “Sing” will be showing.
 - 4th of July Event during the day at Lucchesi Park is Stars, Stripes, Dogs and Bikes. There will be a bike route from Prince Park at 10am that goes to Lucchesi Park. There will be vendors, bike decoration, and a dog costume contest, and it will culminate with a high altitude fireworks display. Note that the Fair property will be closed, so people should not go to the fairgrounds. Parks and Rec will update and post maps as to where the best viewing of the fireworks will be. People are encouraged to stay closer to their neighborhoods.
 - The Park Access and Capital Improvement Project is underway at McDowell Park and La Tercera Park. The interior pathways have been improved and this will also happen at McNear Park.
 - Question about the skateboard park—when will it be started? Aiming for construction in spring of 2025 at Lucchesi Park. Drew said they looked at all of the various parks to see where would be the best place that had 23,000 square feet and could accommodate the skatepark, knowing there is a lot of growth in the sport. Kenilworth was in top four and they did community engagement there but it wasn’t large enough and did not have the necessary infrastructure around it to support the skatepark. They are looking at redoing Kenilworth Park because it doesn’t have good connectivity, there are drainage issues, the playground is in rough shape and they have lost trees there. There will be a presentation about the skatepark to City Council on 8/5.

3. Site Assessment(s)

- a. Casa Grande/Sonoma Mountain High School: Post site assessment report & school/community feedback
 - The Walking Audit group meets before school starts to observe the school drop off hour together, people are stationed at different locations and then the group walks the full perimeter of the campus to talk about other issues people see and know of and these issues can happen outside or during school drop off/pick up hours. After the walk, the group meets up to make sure everything was captured and then Bjorn presents findings at the next Task Force meeting so that people can give feedback and raise anything that was missed. Christina (from SRTS) will also write/distribute a report that captures the audit participants, concerns addressed, and potential solutions.

- b. Audit notes/slides: This audit took place on Mon. 6/3 and it happened to be Senior Ditch Day, so the Casa student body was reduced to about 75% of its normal student body (*Slide 2*). This was not a typical drop off day, but the group did get a sense of the issues around the school. SRTS, Cool Petaluma, several staff from Cas Grande, the Petaluma Police Dept and Public Works were represented at this walking audit.
- The audit group divided into two, one to watch drop off on Casa Grande Rd and one on Ely Blvd.
- c. There are 4 campus access points (*Slide 3*): Casa Grande Rd; the student parking lot on Ely Blvd S (note: this lot is not intended for parent drop offs, but it does happen); Juliet Dr (note: this area is being used more and more over the years, parents are dropping off and students are parking here); and Crinella Dr.
- There has been an overall growth of cars since the pandemic. Deb asked if there were more bike riders before the pandemic and school staff thought there were more bikes in the racks pre-2020.
 - Also, noted that there is very high bus ridership on Transit—the Casa Grande stop is the 3rd busiest stop in the City.
- d. Casa Grande Rd issues and observations (*Slide 4*):
- East Petaluma was designed at a time when traffic engineering was anticipating lots of vehicle traffic through Petaluma. Casa Grande Rd is a 5 lane road with 2 lanes in each direction. 20-30,000 cars/day is expected on a road this size but is actually only used by 8-9000 cars each day so it is way under-used, it encourages speeding and is not bike/pedestrian friendly. It is challenging to cross whether on foot, car, bike because you are relying on multiple drivers in each direction to stop for you. There is limited room for people who are biking: a narrow bike lane is on the east-bound side, and on the west-bound side, the bike lane is shared with parking.
 - During drop off and pick up, there is double-parking, u-turns and congestion along Casa Grande Rd.
 - The driveway loop during drop off is congested and becomes chaotic.
 - There is also the challenge of the 4-way stop and multiple lanes of traffic at the Casa Grande and S. McDowell intersection, which was not observed during the audit, but was discussed.
 - There is an opportunity to reduce lanes on Casa Grande and make better use of the space to improve safety, accessibility and attractiveness (*see reconfiguration slides 6-8*).
 - The Casa Grande Rd Complete Streets Project (*Slide 9*) paving project is currently scheduled for construction in 2027 and Community Engagement would take place in 2025-26. Some initial ideas of reimagining Casa Grande Rd are narrower car lanes, protected bike lanes, parking lanes out further in the street and bike lanes closer to the sidewalk.
 - The neighbors from the Senior Apartments mentioned they need more on-street parking for guests on their side of the street.
 - Question about increase in traffic with the upcoming Development projects? Development projects are required to

do traffic studies to look at the number of trips that the development will generate, then they apply it to a model that factors in all the planned developments to capture cumulative conditions. These studies show impacts and mitigation measures that get tied back to environmental work as well. Gina said that all projects can be conditioned when they go through the entitlement process, some changes are required and some are discretionary. She also said that some housing projects are fast-tracked to address housing shortage and do not allow any discretionary restrictions. With all of these development considerations, traffic is projected to be way lower than 29-30,000 a day.

- a. One of the Senior Apt Neighbors went to a recent development meeting and said that they are putting in 3-story buildings that will impact their Senior Apartment Housing, as it will add 59 units and 175 cars. The Seniors are worried about emergency/evacuation situations as they can only turn right from their apartments and there will be a lot of people ahead of them. They are asking the City to address that. Bjorn said that the best forum for feedback on the Development Project are those meetings that directly focus on those specific projects as those are coordinated efforts and collaboration between the Planning Dept and Public Works.
 - b. Another Senior brought up that residents who have passed away who didn't have cars are then replaced with residents that have cars and there is very limited parking, and they would like more parking available close by. Bjorn said it is very helpful to hear about the parking challenges as there will be an opportunity to reconfigure the road.
 - c. Gina asked that the group focuses on the conversation around SRTS at Casa Grande and the issues around students getting to/from school safely. She said that the issues that the Seniors are bringing up are very important and should be brought up at a planning meeting.
- Some other ideas for the Casa Grande Rd Repaving Project are:
- a. To put in a roundabout at the intersection of Casa Grande and S. McDowell.
 - b. Really looking at where it makes sense to provide on-street parking and where it doesn't.
 - c. At Crinella, the suggestion would be for a 2-way protected bike lane, and Crinella is a great bike route especially for students, because they don't have to cross Casa Grande Rd.
 - d. Closer to campus, there could be a bus island which would improve driver visibility exiting the loop. This island could be for a transit bus or a bus for special needs students and/or rural students.

- e. There is only the one crosswalk across Casa Grande Rd and another location should be considered for a crosswalk to help all community members cross safely, and to figure out where it makes sense to put in another crosswalk with lights and an island in the middle.
- e. Ely Blvd S issues and observations (*Slide 10,11*):
 - Four-lane road encourages speeding and is not bike/pedestrian friendly
 - During drop-off and pick-up, drivers cueing in the southbound bike lane and inner northbound vehicle lane (for left turns); this can interfere with buses as well;
 - Heading towards Caulfield Ln, there is no 2-way left turn, so a big line of cars waits to make a left turn
 - Ely Blvd S is similar to Casa Grande Rd in that it is a street designed for 20-30,000 vehicles, and in reality, there are 8-9000 a day)
 - Potential proposal for Ely Blvd South (*Slide 12*)—this reconfiguration of Ely could happen in 2027-28, as there are no current projects scheduled
 - The intersection at Ely/Caulfield is a multi-lane all way stop which is not a good configuration, a roundabout would be much better. There is a paving project scheduled on Caulfield for 2026.
- f. Campus Access Improvements (*Slide 12*)
 - Overall, clear paths of travel are not well defined if you're not driving a car.
 - It would be good to create a pathway to campus off of Ely, the fences that are there don't really do anything and you can't get a bike through a double fence. This would create a direct, welcoming way on to campus.
 - There are opportunities for improvements on Juliet. The school driveway could potentially be turned into a one-way, but this is really up to the school.
 - There is a nice potential access point off of Crinella, and for students living west of Crinella, that would be their quickest way on to campus, but there is a need for an accessible pathway. Christina Bridges, Casa Grande principal, said this pathway could be a possible candidate for bond funds in the future.
 - John said that the short road, Leslie Way, that bridges Crinella to Juliet has a 3-way stop at the Leslie Way/Crinella intersection and a lot of cars don't stop, students can be late for school and moving pretty fast. Is there a way to modify the intersection so cars go more slowly? Walt mentioned bulb-outs as a possibility. Bjorn mentioned that Crinella is a good candidate for a neighborhood greenway.
 - Scott said that the pocket park is not very inviting on Crinella and needs an accessible path to campus and it is like a bog in the winter time. Drew said there are basically no amenities at the park on Crinella, and confirmed that it is a City Park. Drew said he'd be open to make the park more inviting and paving it if/when the path is paved on the school district side.

- The dirt path through the park is well travelled and shows a desire line that students already walk on. It would be a good entrance to campus.
- Dan thanked the Senior neighbors for coming to the meeting and said that the overarching goal is the same for both the seniors and the school community—to slow traffic down in the area around the school, make it more inviting to all who walk/bike and make the crossings of the main streets easier and safer.

4. Other SRTS issues, concerns & opportunities

- a. Deb summed the meeting up and stated part of the solution is to use less cars and more biking and transit. It's important to teach biking safety in the younger grades, so that hopefully they will walk/bike more in their later years and when kids get on bikes, their parents often do as well. A mode shift campaign is important to get people to think about making other choices rather than always getting in their cars. Deb reminded the group that Petaluma had the highest number of bicyclists on May's Bike To School Day.
- b. Dan said to have a net reduction in cars is going to make everything safer for everyone.
- c. John said that shifts to biking world-wide is in the older demographic, parents on cargo bikes and seniors getting e-bikes. Parents on cargo bikes.

5. Next Meeting & adjournment

The next meeting of the Petaluma Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, August 15th from 4-5:30 pm at City Hall.

**SRTS issues and concerns may also be emailed pre- or post-meeting to Christina Panza, SRTS Director & Task Force Facilitator at christina@bikesonoma.org*