



**Benicia Safe Routes to School Community Task Force**  
**City of Benicia Commission Room**  
**January 15, 2020, 1:30-3 pm**

**Members**

Christina Strawbridge	Vice-Mayor	City of Benicia
Diane Ferrucci	Board President	Benicia Unified School District
Alfredo Romero	Supervisor of Maintenance/Operations	Benicia Unified School District
Nouae Vue	Sr. Civil Engineer	City of Benicia
Edward Criado	Lieutenant	City of Benicia Police Dept
Diane Dooley	STA Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Benicia Representative
Nancy Lund	STA Bicycle Advisory Committee	Benicia Representative
Mandi Renshaw	Program Analyst	SolTrans
Shantel Livingston	Health Education Specialist	Solano Public Health
Lloyd Nadal	Program Services Division Manager	SR2S/STA
Karin Bloesch	Senior SR2S Program Coordinator	SR2S/STA
Betsy Beavers	SR2S Program Coordinator	SR2S/STA

Additional Members in contact but unable to attend: Christina Strawbridge, Vice Mayor (City of Benicia), Lt. Edward Criado (Benicia Police Department), Shantel Livingston (Solano Public Health)

**Additional Attendees**

Amanda Hale	Parent	Joe Henderson Elementary
Ann Brooner	Parent	Mary Farmar Elementary
Elisa Delatorre	Community Services Officer	Benicia Police Department
Kenyatta Nathaniel	School Resource Officer	Benicia Police Department
Erika McLitus	Project Assistant	STA
Mellissa Harley	Principal	Mary Farmar Elementary
Lionel Largaespada	Councilmember	City of Benicia
Meredith Passaris	Parent	Mary Farmar Elementary
Stephen Slater	Principal	Matthew Turner Elementary
Sean Thomson	Vice-Principal/Safety Officer	Benicia High School/BUSD

**Meeting Goals**

1. Seek input from the Community Task Force in order to set priorities for future infrastructure projects to include in the Safe Routes to School Plan Update.
2. Provide an update on current program initiatives and projects in the city of Benicia.

**Agenda**

<b>I. Introductions and Overview</b>
The meeting attendees introduced themselves, and Lloyd Nadal (STA) gave a brief overview of the Community Task Force mission, the Active Transportation Plan, and the goal of bringing the group together to find strategies to make it safer for students walking and biking to school.
<b>II. Safe Passage to School Collaborative Update</b>

Mellissa Harley, Mary Farmar Elementary principal, gave an introduction on the Safe Passage Coalition at the school. The coalition is a team of parents and city, school, and Benicia Police Department staff that work to develop long and short-term solutions to the safety issues at the school. She also explained that the school is in the beginning process of modernization and redesign. One challenge to traffic safety and students' safety is that Mary Farmar has two entrance points to the school, something that will be addressed in the new design. This causes traffic issues on both Benicia USD and City of Benicia roads.

Ms. Harley also reported on the continuing success of the Walking Wednesday program that began in January 2019. The weekly event has an average of 30-40 students that meet at 9<sup>th</sup> Street Park to walk to school with assistance from BPD; there is also great participation on rainy days.

### **III. Police Department Update**

Elisa Delatorre, Community Services Officer is assigned to work within the SR2S Enforcement Grant awarded to the BPD in June 2018. CSO Delatorre reported that parents have expressed concerns about traffic during drop-off and pick-up times, the Benicia PD Traffic unit is aware of the issues and does what it can with the two traffic officers assigned to the unit. CSO Delatorre also informed the group that the BPD has trained crossing guards, but that crossing guard vacancies remain at schools. She mentioned that BPD may be able to deploy the Radar Feedback trailer around schools as a deterrent for speeding, and that the department is developing a drop-off and pick-up video for safe driving around schools.

Diane Dooley asked the reason for the crossing guard vacancies. The group reported that there is funding available, but positions are hard to fill based on the number of hours and timing for the positions. The group discussed ideas to encourage applicants, including the idea of adding crossing guard duties to current supervisory staff (yard monitors) already employed.

During the discussion, Diane Ferrucci asked about installing lighted crosswalks in front of Benicia High and Benicia Middle schools. Nancy Lund explained that she has researched and found that those types of treatments are obsolete due to maintenance and longevity of the lights. Nouae Vue explained that the preferred high visibility treatment is a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) for crosswalks.

The crosswalk at Hastings Dr/Sweetbrier was mentioned and the request was made for some advanced signage near the crosswalk. A SR2S Micro Grant Application was submitted for a solar RRFB at this location.

**IV. School District Update**

Alfredo Romero reported on the improvements made on the Mary Farmar campus by community groups (PTA, Benicia Girl Scouts) for students using the pedestrian bridge and walkway to enter the school from the southwest side. Mr. Romero also explained that in 2018-19 the District performed a safety overview of all BUSD schools. The findings from the review will be taken into consideration for upcoming modernization and construction projects at schools. Mr. Romero also updated the group on school site modernization efforts by the district. The completion of the Benicia High School stadium has raised a dilemma for students that used to walk through the school, as access is now limited. The district is working with the school to find a solution for access from the southeast side. At Benicia Middle School, Phase 1 of the school's modernization projects have been completed (they include a new front entrance and reopening of the parking lot); with Phase 2 starting soon. Mary Farmar projects are set to begin this summer. During the discussion the dirt path above Mary Farmar was briefly discussed as a walkway for students and the challenge of monitoring the walkway as an access point.

Nouae Vue informed the group about refreshed striping and additional signage for school zones.

Lloyd Nadal offered to send Mr. Romero and the group the STA Safety Plan link so that it may provide additional data and help with planning efforts for the district safety and modernization upgrades.

BUSD has developed a new Safety Coordinator position, held by Sean Thompson, Vice Principal at Benicia High School. Mr. Thompson explained that the schools are working on multiple emergency evacuation spots, but that the schools will only have one access point for arrival/entrance.

**V. SolTrans Update**

Mandi Renshaw gave a brief description of available services through SolTrans the local transit (bus) operator. Ms. Renshaw informed the group that the Yellow Line (SolanoExpress) connects Benicia to the Pleasant Hill/Walnut Creek BART stations (with service times expanded to after 9pm). A new Lyft/SolTrans partnership provides door to door service within Benicia (replacing previous Dial-a-Ride service). For students, Routes 15 and 17 provide service to the Benicia schools, with one morning drop-off and two afternoon pick-up routes. A newly-launched APP allows the purchase of SolTrans passes for students on their mobile phones. SolTrans is working towards an all-electric fleet, adding 2 new electric busses in February 2020.

**VI. City Update – Projects**

Nouae Vue, updated the group on the Active Transportation Program Cycle 2 (ATP2) projects at five Benicia schools. The project lead agency is the City of Vallejo. The projects have been delayed because bids for the project came in over budget in 2019. The cities decided to re-bid in early 2020 with the hope the bids will be in line with the funding available. The design for the improvements is completed, the pre-bid information has been released, and the project package will go to bid in late January/early February. Construction is planned to begin this summer. Diane Dooley expressed her concerns regarding the construction of a high visibility crosswalk on Panorama Dr/James Ct. Mr. Vue, explained the site distance requirements for crosswalks and that the project location is the best alternative for students that already cross Panorama without a crosswalk. Ms. Dooley asked Mr. Vue to check to make sure the RRFB planned at this location is included in the bid request. Mr. Vue said that he will review the documents and work with the City of Vallejo on any addendum, if needed.

**VII. Active Transportation Plan Process**

- a. School Prioritization
- b. Potential for Funding

Lloyd Nadal explained how STA’s current Active Transportation Plan (ATP) intersects with the update of the latest (2013) Safe Routes to School Master Plan. Mr. Nadal explained that to secure project funding, projects must be previously identified in a plan i.e. City General or Specific plans, Safe Routes to School, ATP, etc.

Erika McLitus explained the process by STA to develop a countywide Active Transportation Plan (Bike and Pedestrian Projects). Ms. McLitus pointed out the 7<sup>th</sup> and Southampton corridor is a “ranked corridor” in response to a question by Ann Brooner (Mary Farmer parent). The STA Countywide ATP will be adopted and each city will have the opportunity to adopt its own city ATP list of potential projects. The ATP was developed using a data-driven approach, taking into account facility gaps and safety data. The identified projects were ranked based on each city’s community needs or concerns. There were two outreach events in Benicia where community members offered input on locations of concern/need within their city. The draft of the ATP will be presented to the STA Board in February, then released for public comment. Mr. Vue explained that a group of Benicia staff and community members have been meeting to develop a Benicia list and will be presenting it to the Benicia City Council for approval.

Ms. Ferrucci asked about identifying future SR2S projects and what the process was to apply for smaller projects (crossing improvements). Mr. Nadal suggested working directly with the city to identify the needs and develop a list of projects. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Street crossing near Robert Semple and Kearney St. crossing near Matthew Turner were brought up as concerns and possible locations for future projects.

Ms. McLitus also explained that many of the funding programs require a local match (Bay Area requires 11% fund match) and that leveraging partnerships is important. She also explained that the main source of funding for large SR2S and infrastructure projects (Active Transportation Program funds) are highly competitive. Nancy Lund explained the importance of statistics and metrics for project applications. The group was encouraged to work with the existing Benicia ATP group to identify potential SR2S projects or concerns.

**VIII. Next Steps**

1. Send link to the STA Safety Plan
2. Plan Follow Up meeting after ATP draft is out (2-3 months)
3. Develop an update to the 2013 SR2S Plan - Using the list of ATP projects, prioritize those around schools, these can then be added to the SR2S Master Plan, along with additional projects.
4. Mr. Romero can take the ATP list to the district and schools affected to help with prioritization.
5. Work with the Benicia ATP sub-group to meet and include BUSD, and the Police Department.