

**Fortuna Walkability Audit & Workshop Outcomes for
Redwood Preparatory Charter School
and Toddy Thomas Middle School, Fortuna, CA
June 4, 2012**

**Humboldt County Association of Governments &
Natural Resources Services Division of Redwood Community Action Agency**



Overview: A Walkability Audit and Workshop was held in Fortuna on Monday, June 4, 2012 to observe the peak student arrival time at two schools and identify concerns and solutions to safety issues. This area of Fortuna is home to several public, charter, and private schools including Redwood Preparatory Charter School (charter), Willowbrook Learning Center (charter), Fortuna Jr. Academy (private), and Toddy Thomas Middle School (public). Participants included neighbors, parents, school principals, California Highway Patrol, Fortuna Fire Chief, Fortuna planners and engineering department, Fortuna City Council, County Board of Supervisors, County engineering department, NRS/RCAA staff, and County Public Health. The Audit took place as the result of a County-Wide Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) Task Force effort funded through the Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG). HCAOG is working to increase capacity at local schools to develop and implement safety programs and encourage children to safely walk and bike to and from school.

Attendees:

The Audit helped forge strong relationships between city staff, school district personnel and community members. The Audit was attended by:

- Lisa Jager, principal of Redwood Preparatory Charter School
- Sharon Drumm, principal of Toddy Thomas Middle School
- Ken Zanzi, Fortuna City Councilmember
- Dennis Ryan, Fortuna City Engineer
- Kevin Carter, Fortuna Engineering Technician
- Mike Johnson, Fortuna General Services Superintendent
- Clif Clendenen, County Supervisor
- Stephen Avis, Fortuna Associate Planner
- Lon Winburn, Fortuna Fire Chief
- Paul Dahlen, CHP Public Information Officer
- Chris Whitworth, Humboldt County Deputy Director of Engineering
- Meghan Ryan, HCAOG Assistant Transportation Planner
- Joan Levy and Michelle Postman, Humboldt County DHHS Public Health staff
- Pedestrian and bicycling advocates, teachers, parents, and neighbors were also in attendance.

Visioning: At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked to share their vision for the workshop and the outcomes they would like to see:

- Safer routes for kids
- Expand relationships
- Improve intersection at Campton Heights store
- Work with parents
- Improve walking environment to fight obesity and improve community
- Lots of support
- Work together with shrinking resources
- Partner with bike park group
- Crosswalks and sidewalks
- Slow traffic
- Parents are key!
- Utilize opportunity of new development at Thelma and Ross Hill Rd.
- Coordinate with programmatic school zone study soon to be adopted (City Council meeting June 18)
- Get Walk Audit to Council before June 18
- Access for emergency response vehicles
- Lower demand on roads during pick up/drop off to school
- Attend workshop on designing for bicycle and pedestrian safety on June 20th at River Lodge

Background: Redwood Prep is a new charter school, located at a church which does not accommodate a typical drop-off zone. All but a few students arrive at school by private vehicle. The school was discouraged by the City to encourage children to walk or bike to school. There is a “Pedestrians and Bicyclists Prohibited” sign on the southbound lane of Ross Hill Road. Toddy Thomas has a high percentage of students who walk and bike to school. The City of Fortuna and the school district have improved the walking environment around Toddy Thomas to make it a walkable school. The city installed new pedestrian crossing infrastructure at Wood Street and School Street. The school district opened multiple access points to the school and supports teachers to be crossing guards on Wood Street. Toddy Thomas School does have transportation challenges including a congested drop-off area on Wood Street, an inefficient bus loading zone, and Ross Hill Road continue to be challenging for students. Both schools have hosted assemblies and events to encourage safe walking and biking behavior and the community would like to support these efforts.

Observation of School Environment: Participants first observed the main drop-off point in front of Redwood Preparatory Charter School for approximately 15 minutes. A section of the parking lot is off limits to parking; parents loop around to let their children out. The school has done a lot to educate students and parents for this drop-off protocol and it works well for them. Students are trained to walk immediately to the edge of the parking lot and walk along the sidewalk to the school entrance. The principal greets all students as they arrive and sees that they get inside the school safely.

The Walkability Audit group then crossed to the opposite side of Ross Hill Road. They walked along the shoulder as there are no through sidewalks on either side. Ross Hill Road turns into School Road and the group walked along School until they got to Wood Street. They crossed School and walked on Wood to Toddy Thomas where they observed the drop-off and school bus zone. They then walked along East Street to Thelma Street, and back along Ross Hill Road to Redwood Prep.

Route Map

The map shows a residential area with a red and blue route marked. The route starts at a red star on the left, goes south on Ross Hill Rd, then east on School St, then south on Wood St, and ends at a red star on the bottom right. Various streets and landmarks are labeled, including Church of the Nazarene, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Ross Hill Rd. The map is titled "Route Map" in large blue letters at the top.



Ross Hill Road sign prohibits pedestrians and bicyclists and encourages wrong-way riding.



Ross Hill Road between Redwood Prep and Toddy Thomas lacks bike lanes.



Ross Hill Road near Redwood Prep lacks crosswalks.



Cars speed on Ross Hill Road, a 40mph zone.



Sidewalks on Ross Hill Road are missing or not connected



Pedestrians don't feel safe when cars drive quickly around this curve on Ross Hill Rd.



Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians need safety education. (This car is stopped in the middle of a crosswalk.)



Parents need education about being good role models and teaching proper riding behavior. (This family is riding on the wrong side of the road).



Vegetation is encroaching upon the sidewalk on Wood Street.



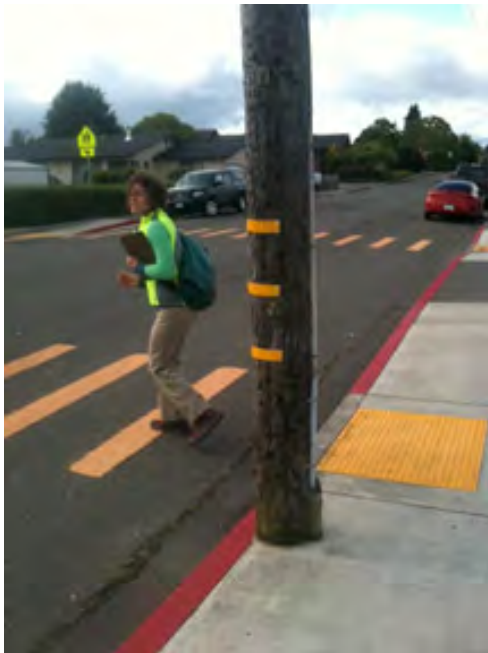
This fence location results in poor visibility next to the crosswalk on Wood and Thomas Streets.



These cars are forced to pull onto the crosswalk in order to see around the fence.



There is poor visibility at this crosswalk on Wood Street in front of Toddy Thomas.





Google Street view photo



Parked car completely blocks view of child crossing the street.



Extending the red curb (No Parking Zone) could increase visibility at this crosswalk.



A pedestrian crossing sign in the middle of the road could cause cars to slow and make the crosswalk more visible in front of Toddy Thomas.



Identifying Concerns and Solutions: After the observation walk around the two schools, participants viewed a presentation highlighting different SR2S engineering, education, and encouragement strategies that could potentially help solve some of the safety concerns encountered on the walk.

Participants then broke into small groups to identify and discuss their concerns and using street view maps, they came up with potential engineering, education, enforcement, and encouragement strategies which they drew onto their maps. The following are the identified concerns of participants and recommendations:

AREAS OF PRIMARY CONCERN:

Redwood Prep:

- No clear signage for “Drop-Off Zone” and “No Parking”
- School sign not very visible to show this is a school
- Behavior for walking across parking lot
- High speed on Ross Hill Road
- No school zone in front of school
- No sidewalks, bike lanes or crosswalks on Ross Hill Road
- “Peds/Bikes Prohibited” sign on east bound Ross Hill Road

Toddy Thomas:

- Poor visibility on Wood Street crosswalk in front of school
- Parking along Wood in front of school impeding visibility of kids in crosswalks
- Speeding through school zone on Wood
- Lack of regulatory “School Zone” signs on School Street
- Poor visibility pulling out of Toddy Thomas parking lot
- Lack of crosswalks on Ross Hill Road
- Vegetation impeding sidewalks and visibility of school zone signage on Thelma Street and Wood Street
- Gaps in sidewalks in neighborhoods around Toddy Thomas
- Speeding on Ross Hill Road without adequate walking or biking infrastructure
- Poor connectivity for bikes and pedestrians throughout Fortuna

Recommendations and Action Items: Groups reported out on what concerns they identified and which engineering, education and encouragement strategies they propose to solve the issues. The workshop participants then worked together to group recommendations into short term, mid term and long term categories. Participants have committed to taking on actions to move forward short term recommendations to improving safety at the two schools.

Next Steps - Short term plans

	Action	Who	Timeline
1.	Encourage completion of SR2S parent surveys	Lisa , Jenny, Joan	Fall 2012
2.	Talk to property owner re: fence on Thomas and Wood	Dennis	Summer 2012
3.	Parent education re: drop-off/pick-up, safety for peds/bikes, benefits of walking/biking	Lisa & Jenny, Sharon	Fall 2012
4.	Remove "Pedestrians/Bicyclists Prohibited" sign	Mike	Complete
5.	Encourage City Council to attend June 20 ped/bike safety workshop	Emily	Complete
6.	Remove "Bus Loading" sign on Wood at Toddy Thomas	Sharon (& Mike)	Summer 2012
7.	Educate students on ped/bike safety; award kids "doing the right thing" with incentives	Lisa, Melanie, Michelle, Lareesa	Now,Summer,Fall
8.	Cones at Toddy Thomas to extend to center median in bus zone	Joan	Summer 2012
9.	Support Redwood Prep kids at June 18 Council meeting	Jenny, Emily, Lisa	Complete
10.	Register Fortuna schools on SR2S websites	Jenny, Lisa	Complete
11.	Work with neighbors to clear sidewalks of vegetation on Wood Street, Ross Hill Road and in front of school zone sign on Thelma Street	Sharon, Dennis	Complete
12.	Kick off safety program at beginning of school year: parent pledge for students who walk or bike, write safe articles for school newsletters	Lisa, Sharon	Fall 2012

Next Steps – Mid term plans

	Action	Who	Timeline
1.	Extend red curb no-parking	Mike	Complete
2.	Install regulatory “Loading Only” signage at Toddy Thomas drop off zone	Mike	Fall 2012
3.	Add regulatory No Parking signage at Toddy Thomas drop off zone	Sharon, School District	Mid-term goal
4.	Install drop off zone signage at Redwood Prep	Lisa	Mid-term goal
5.	Install larger sign out front Redwood Prep	Lisa	Mid-term goal
6.	Attend public meetings to advocate for ped/bike facilities	All	Ongoing
7.	Establish right-turn only out of Toddy Thomas driveway	Sharon, School District	Mid-term goal
8.	Work with Police Dept to have presence at beginning of school year	Lisa and Sharon	Fall 2012
9.	Involve schools in new Crossing Guard training program	Joan, Michelle	Spring 2013
10.	Define roles and responsibilities between City and school districts	Lisa, Sharon, Dennis	Fall 2012
11.	Adopt lower speed school zone on Ross Hill Road and Wood Street	City	Complete
12.	Install regulatory School Zone speed limit signage and pavement markings	City	Mid-term goal
13.	Add center striping on Wood Street	City	Mid-term goal
14.	Install mobile radar speed sign on Ross Hill Road	City	Mid-term goal



Next Steps – Long term plans

	Action	Timeline
1.	Add sidewalks to Ross Hill Road, Thelma Street and, College Street	Long-term goal
2.	Adopt road diet on Ross Hill Rd (narrow to one driving lane each way, add bike lanes)	Long-term goal
3.	Cooperatively pursue grants between the City and School Districts	Long-term goal
4.	Include controlled intersection at Thelma Street and Ross Hill Road with new development	Long-term goal
5.	Integrate options for walking and biking in plans and designs while preserving rural character of Fortuna	Long-term goal
6.	Develop more robust mitigation for walking/biking connectivity in new developments	Long-term goal
7.	Ensure connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between Fortuna neighborhoods	Long-term goal
8.	Install bulbouts and better signage at crosswalk in front of school on Wood Street to shorten crossing distance and increase visibility	Long-term goal
9.	Create controlled intersection for new development at Thelma and Ross Hill Road with crosswalk	Long-term goal
10.	Rework bus loading zone at Toddy Thomas. Move bus loading to far end to drop off closer to gym. Paint crosswalk and walking paths on pavement in parking lot.	Long-term goal
11.	Install crosswalk on Ross Hill Road in front of Redwood Prep.	Long-term goal

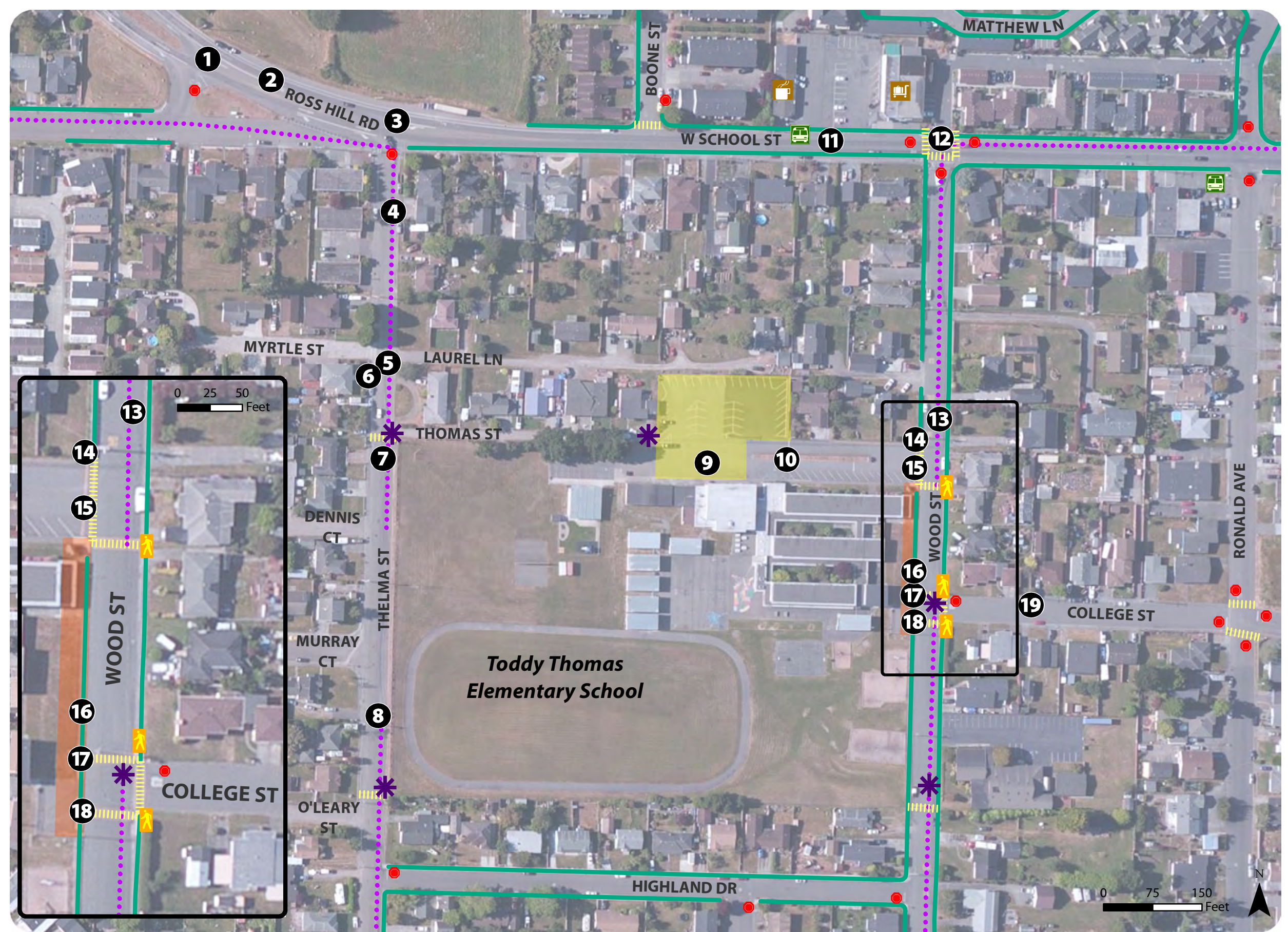
The following safety concerns are the main priorities:

- Slow traffic speeds on Ross Hill Road by narrowing to one lane each direction.
- Add bike lanes on Ross Hill Road.
- Install crosswalks on Ross Hill Road near Redwood Prep and at Thelma Street.
- Create controlled intersection at Thelma Street and Ross Hill Road.
- Create connectivity from new developments to Ross Hill Road by installing bike/ped path.
- Extend red curb near crosswalk in front of Toddy Thomas School.

Recommended Improvements

Toddy Thomas Elementary School

- 1** Change angle of curve to allow greater visibility and encourage slower driving speeds
- 2** Add bike lanes on Ross Hill Road
- 3** Install controlled intersection (stop signs, crosswalks, etc.) to make it safer for pedestrians to cross
- 4** Install 'School Zone' signage
- 5** Repaint crosswalks or install speed tables
- 6** Fill in sidewalk gaps on Thelma Street
- 7** Repaint pavement
- 8** Install 'School Zone' signage
- 9** Re-design bus-loading zone so that buses are loaded and unloaded in rear of parking area and cars can drop off in front
- 10** Paint pavement in parking lot with clear crosswalk/walking path
- 11** Add bike lanes on School Road
- 12** Add ped-activated lighted crosswalk
- 13** Paint center striping on Wood Street
- 14** Work with home owner to lower fence and improve visibility on corner next to crosswalk
- 15** Create 'right-turn only' for cars traveling in and out of parking lot
- 16** Designate 'loading zone' by painting curb white and installing signage
- 17** Install stopsigns on both sides of crosswalks
- 18** Install bulbouts at crosswalk to shorten crossing distance
- 19** Add sidewalks on College Ave



- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| School Access Points | Stop light Controlled Intersection | RTS | Bus loading zone |
| Walking Route | Stop Sign | Cafe | Car drop-off zone |
| Sidewalk | Crossing Guard | Market | |
| | Crosswalk | | |

Suggested Walking and Biking Routes to School

Toddy Thomas Elementary School (Draft)

Points of Interest

- Cafe
- Market

Public Transportation

- RTS
- School Bus Stop

Traffic Control

- Stop Sign
- Crosswalk

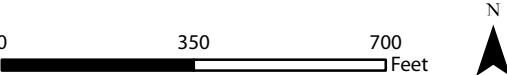
Walkways, Streets and Rail

- Walking Route
- Sidewalk
- Street 35 MPH or Higher
- Railroad
- School Access Points

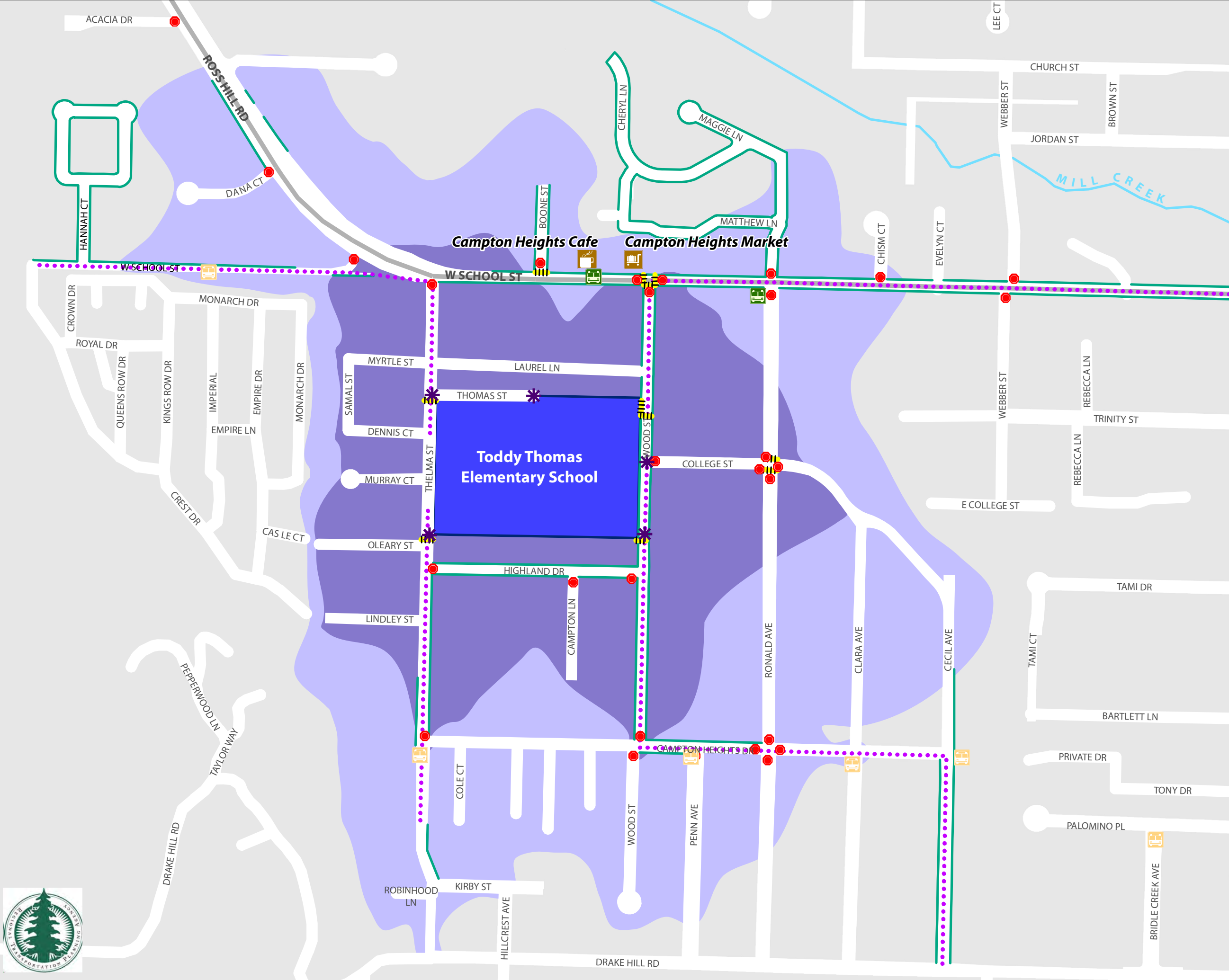
Walking and Biking Distances to School

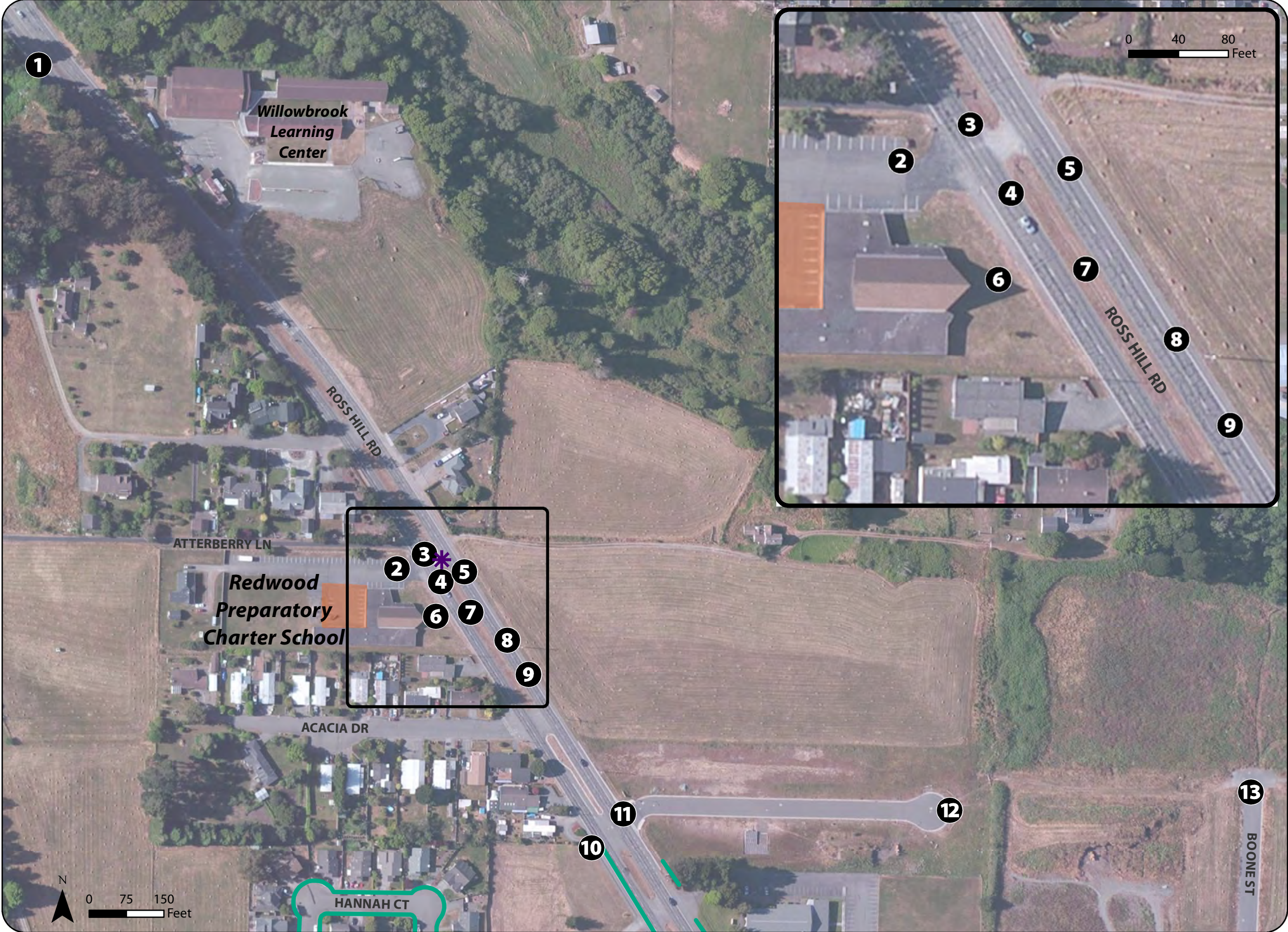
- 5 Minute Walk
- 10 Minute Walk, 4 Minute Bike Ride
- School Ground

HCAOG and the School Districts cannot guarantee the safety of the suggested routes. All parents are encouraged to inspect the routes on their own to ensure that the routes are as safe as possible.



Map prepared by Alta Planning+Design, June 2012





Recommended Improvements

Redwood Preparatory Charter School

- 1** Remove 'Pedestrians/Bicyclists Prohibited' sign
- 2** Install clear signage in drop-off zone. Mark parking/no parking areas
- 3** Install crosswalk near Redwood Prep
- 4** Adopt road diet on Ross Hill Road and reduce Ross Hill Road to 1 driving lane each direction
- 5** Add bike lanes in each direction on Ross Hill Road
- 6** Install larger school sign to increase awareness
- 7** Create 25 mph 'School Zone' with signage, flashing lights, and pavement markings
- 8** Place mobile speed radar signs on Ross Hill Road
- 9** Add connected sidewalks on both sides of Ross Hill Road
- 10** Remove 'Pedestrians/Bicyclists Prohibited' sign
- 11** Install crosswalk
- 12** Provide walking/biking connectivity through new developments
- 13**



* School Access Points — Sidewalk Car Drop-off Zone

Suggested Walking and Biking Routes to School

Redwood Preparatory Charter School (Draft)

- Points of Interest**
 - Cafe
 - Market
- Public Transportation**
 - RTS
 - School Bus Stop
- Traffic Control**
 - Stop light Controlled Intersection
 - Stop Sign
 - Crosswalk
- Walkways, Streets and Rail**
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 - School Access Points

- Walking and Biking Distances to School**
 - 5 Minute Walk
 - 10 Minute Walk, 4 Minute Bike Ride
 - School Ground

HCAOG and the School Districts cannot guarantee the safety of the suggested routes. All parents are encouraged to inspect the routes on their own to ensure that the routes are as safe as possible.



SCHOOL SITE WALKABILITY AUDIT FORM

Date: _____ Day: _____ Time: _____ Weather Conditions: _____

1. Student Drop-Off Area

YES

NO

NA

- a. Are they designed so that students exiting or entering cars are protected from other vehicles?

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- b. Do they have a continuous raised curb separating vehicles from pedestrians?

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- c. Are there accessible curb ramps for wheel chair access?

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- d. Do the ramps have tactile warning strips or textured concrete?

5

5

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- e. Are there posted vehicular signs?

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1

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- f. Are there posted pedestrian signs?

7

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- g. Is the area lighted?

7

7

1

- h. Does traffic seem to move freely without congestion and backup?

7

7

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- i. Please describe additional problems within the student drop-off area in the space provided below. What improvements would alleviate the problems?





Let's WALK it out!



Neighborhoods
need to be safe to
encourage active
commuting to school ~
help us create strategies!

Monday, June 4, 2012

7:15am - 11am

Redwood Prep Charter School's Annex

1355 Ross Hill Road Fortuna

Please join parents, teachers, neighbors, and city and county officials for a school site walkability assessment and workshop to identify issues students face walking to Redwood Prep and Toddy Thomas schools. We will discuss the important connection between the built environment, student health, and walking. Please wear comfortable shoes. The event will take place **rain or shine**.

This project is made possible through the Humboldt County Association of Governments with coordination from the Redwood Community Action Agency.

For more information contact:
Jenny Weiss of RCAA at 269-2062 or weiss@nrsrcaa.org.



Vamos a caminar!



Barrios deben estar seguros para animar a todos a ir a la escuela de forma activa - ¡Ayúdenos a crear estrategias!

lunes 04 de junio 2012

7:15am - 11am

Redwood Preparatoria Charter School Anexo

1355 Ross Hill Road Fortuna

Por favor únase con padres, maestros, vecinos y funcionarios de la ciudad y del condado para realizar una evaluación de transitabilidad del sitio y un taller para identificar los problemas que enfrentan los niños caminando a las escuelas de Redwood Prep y Toddy Thomas.

Vamos a hablar de la importancia de hacer conexión entre nuestro ambiente, la salud de los estudiantes y caminar. Por favor use zapatos cómodos.

El evento se llevará a cabo llueve o truene.

Este proyecto es posible gracias a La Asociación de Gobiernos del condado de Humboldt (HCAOG), con la coordinación de la Redwood Coast Action Agency (RCAA).

Para más información comuníquese:
Jenny Weiss de la RCAA 707-269-2062 o weiss@nrsrcaa.org.

