MOUNT VERNON ELEMENTARY WALKABOUT: Existing Conditions, Findings and Recommendations

July 2017
MOUNT VERNON ELEMENTARY WALKABOUT DETAILS

- Date: May 23, 2017
- Observation: Arrival
- Participants:
  - Toole Design Group staff
  - City of Alexandria Transportation Planning staff
  - Alexandria Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee members
  - Mount Vernon Teachers and Administrators
  - Alexandria Police Officer and Crossing Guard Supervisor
- Purpose:
  - Observe school arrival process
  - Evaluate school-zone infrastructure
  - Assess existing Safe Routes to School programming
OVERVIEW OF MOUNT VERNON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

STUDENT DISTANCE FROM SCHOOL
As reported in 2014 Parent Survey (n= 375).

- 75% within 1 mile
- 25% >1 mile

824 Total students*

Average of “to school” and “from school” modes as reported in 2016 Student Travel Tallies.

STUDENT TRAVEL MODES

- 56% Walk
- 18% Bicycle
- 26% Car

* Includes all students eligible for reduced lunch program.
## STUDENT DISTANCE FROM SCHOOL DETAIL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¼ mile</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ mile</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 miles</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2 miles</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As reported in 2014 Parent Survey (n= 375)

The hollow circle on the map represents a direct distance buffer from the school. The colored polygons show the distance along the road network.
EXISTING CONDITIONS
Morning and Afternoon Travel Mode Comparison

Fall 2016 Student Travel Tallies
Issues reported to affect the decision to not allow a child to walk or bike to/from school by parents of children who do not walk or bike to/from school.

Top 3 issues are:
- Distance (66%)
- Safety of Intersections and Crossings (48%)
- Speed of traffic along route (45%)

Fall 2014 Parent Survey
(n= 375)
Sidewalks – Most sidewalks are 4’ wide with a small landscaped buffer between the roadway.

Crosswalks – Crosswalks are present at stop- or signal-controlled intersections along Mt. Vernon Ave and are present across intersecting streets, but there are gaps between stop- and signal-controlled intersections.

Curb ramps – Curb ramps are either absent or not ADA-compliant for most intersections.
Commonwealth Ave –
Bicycle lanes run along Commonwealth Avenue from W Mason Av to the Four Mile Run Trail.

Shared Lane Markings –
Many streets including Windsor Ave, Mt. Vernon Ave, and Russell Rd are recommended to receive sharrow according to the Bike/Ped Master Plan.

Topography –
Hills located west of Commonwealth Ave are a potential barrier to bicycling.
Arrival
- School starts at 8:00 AM.

Walkers
- Walkers enter through the main entrance on the west side of the building adjacent to the drop-off loop.

Bus Drop-off
- Buses arrive as early as 7:20 AM and drop off students on Mt. Vernon Ave.
- Bus riders enter the school through the entrance on Mt. Vernon Ave.

Parent Drop-off
- Parents drop off students along the parking lot between the James M. Duncan Branch Library and the school’s main entrance.
- Staff assist with unloading vehicles and managing traffic along E Uhler Ave between 7:30-8:00 AM. Many parents drop off students before 7:30 AM.
- The entrance to the school drop-off lane has limited visibility due to the width of the intersection of Clyde Ave and E Uhler Ave.

Crossing Guards
- There are two crossing guards as shown on the map above.
- The Mt. Vernon crossing guard was previously struck by a car.
ARRIVAL OBSERVATIONS

Car Drop-off (Before 7:30 AM)

Bus Drop-off on Mt. Vernon Ave

Car Drop-off (After 7:30 AM)
ENGINEERING RECOMMENDATIONS
### Recommendations

- Upgrade curb ramps to meet ADA-compliance
- Add marked crosswalks where feasible
INTERSECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Infrastructure Recommendations
Mt. Vernon Elementary School
Alexandria, Virginia

- Intersection Recommendations
- Mid-Block Recommendations
- School Zone Signage Recommendations
- Signalized Intersection Recommendations
- Other Recommendations
- Schools

Network Buffers
1/4 Mile
1/2 Mile
1 Mile
2 Miles
1/4 Mile Buffer
Sidewalks
### INTERSECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map ID</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Timeframe*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sight lines are limited due to the offset nature and length of the intersection. Many drivers are unsure who has the right of way or quickly accelerate to enter the drop-off area</td>
<td>Remove parking on the south side of Uhler Ave between Commonwealth Ave and Clyde Ave during school hours (7:00 AM – 4:00 PM)</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incoming traffic at the Clyde Ave entrance accelerates quickly to exit queue</td>
<td>Convert high visibility crosswalk to raised crosswalk to slow traffic</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of marked crosswalks across Commonwealth Avenue between Del Ray Avenue and Mt. Ida Avenue</td>
<td>Install marked crosswalk along with curb bump outs to provide access across Commonwealth Ave</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of marked crosswalks across Commonwealth Avenue between Mt. Ida Avenue and Mt. Vernon Avenue</td>
<td>Install marked crosswalk, curb bump outs, and median refuge island to provide access across Commonwealth Ave</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Short = within 1 year, Medium = within 3 years, Long = 3 or more years*
INTERSECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed Parking Removal

Clyde Ave Entrance
# SCHOOL ZONE SIGNAGE

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>School zone flashing beacons operate before 7:00 AM</td>
<td>Review and adjust timing of school zone flashing beacons</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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School zone signage along Mt. Vernon Ave and Commonwealth Ave
<table>
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<th>Timeframe*</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Insufficient time for pedestrians to cross Commonwealth Ave</td>
<td>Add pedestrian only phase during school hours to allow for the safe crossing of Commonwealth Ave, and consider adding diagonal crossing</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No pedestrian signal for the Clyde Ave crossing</td>
<td>Add pedestrian signal for the Clyde Ave crossing</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curb ramps are not properly aligned to crosswalks</td>
<td>Reconstruct curb ramps so that they adequately align with existing crosswalks</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pedestrians have difficulty crossing Mt. Vernon Ave within allotted pedestrian time</td>
<td>Lengthen time for pedestrian phase during school hours; consider adding diagonal crossing</td>
<td>Short</td>
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PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS
**Recommendation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrate pedestrian and bicycle safety education into the school curriculum.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct a bicycle rodeo to teach the skills and precautions to ride a bike safely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporate information about walking and bicycling to school in communications with parents.</td>
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<td>Provide parents and guardians with safe driving information that stresses the importance of driving safely in school zones and being alert for pedestrians and bicyclists during arrival and dismissal.</td>
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**Continue Existing**  

**Start New**
## ENcouragement

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Continue Existing</th>
<th>Start New</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in International Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day.</td>
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<td>Help organize and support walking schools buses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help organize and support bike trains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish a frequent walker / bicyclist program.</td>
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## ENFORCEMENT

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<th>Start New</th>
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<td>Establish a driver pledge program.</td>
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<td>Celebrate Virginia Crossing Guard Appreciation Day.</td>
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<td>Work with the police department to provide periodic parking and traffic enforcement near the school.</td>
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## Recommendation

| Conduct Student Travel Tallies to get baseline data for student travel patterns. |
| Administer Parent Surveys to collect information on parents’ attitudes towards walking and bicycling and reasons why they may or may not allow their children to walk or bike to school. |

*Travel Tallies were last collected in the fall of 2010 and Parent Surveys were conducted in the fall of 2016 at Mount Vernon Elementary School. Up to date information is required to monitor program success and apply for federal SRTS funding.*