



Walkabout Summary

On October 4, 2013 four participants met at Enderly Heights Elementary School in Buena Vista, Virginia to take a closer look at the walking and biking network around the school. Participants included representation from the Buena Vista City Schools, Enderly Heights Elementary School, the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, and Buena Vista city council. The team observed the student dismissal procedure, walked a potential student walking route around the school, examined the nearby streets, and discussed the potential barriers to safely walking and bicycling to school.

Walkabout date: October 4, 2013

Location: Enderly Heights Elementary School, Buena Vista Virginia

Local Project Lead: Mary Holm

LTAC: Katie Mencarini, Central & Hampton Roads; Bryan Barnett-Woods, Southern & Western Virginia

The team walked along Woodland Avenue to 3rd Street, west to Magnolia Avenue and back along the same route. The team evaluated intersections along the route Woodland Avenue and 2nd Street, Woodland Avenue and 3rd Street, and Magnolia and 3rd Street. The list below summarizes the findings and identifies key barriers to walking and bicycling in the area. The information provided in this summary can be used to guide future discussion for Safe Routes to School projects.

Walkabout Streets

Road Name	Lanes in each direction	Speed limit	Road Width	Sidewalk Width
Woodland Avenue	1	25 mph	32 ft.	4 ft., western side only, ends at 3 rd Street
Magnolia Avenue	1	35 mph	48 ft.	5 ft., both sides
2 nd Street	1	25 mph	36 ft.	4.5 ft., northern side only, ends mid-block
3 rd Street	1	25 mph	26 ft.	5 ft., southern side, ends mid-block



Existing Conditions

Enderly heights elementary school serves grades 2-5 and is located in southern Buena Vista. Although the Elementary School is in a residential area, most students do not regularly walk or ride their bicycles to school. The entire town is laid out in a traditional grid pattern with excellent connectivity within the road network. Thus, there is potential to increase the number of students who walk or bike to school. The school administration is interested in promoting walking and biking when improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle network are made. Gaps in the sidewalk, absence of designated bicycle facilities, and lack of pedestrian crossing facilities and key intersections create barriers for students who would be able to walk or bike to school. Enderly Heights Elementary School is located half mile southwest of the high school, which serves grades 8-12. The team appreciates that any improvements made to the elementary school walking and biking routes will also directly benefit the high school students.

The team observed afternoon dismissal prior to the walkabout. The afternoon dismissal process efficiently connects students with the correct vehicle (family vehicle or school bus). School buses are boarded by students and leave first. Most of the students arrive and leave school in a family vehicle as there are only two buses serving the school. After the buses leave, parents are allowed to pick-up their children. To pick up their children, most parents stay in their vehicles and line up along the parking lot where teachers lead students to their parents. Other parents park on 1st Street, across from the school, and walk across Woodland Avenue to pick up their children. A teacher from the school wears a neon-colored vest and acts as a crossing guard on Woodland Avenue to help students and their parents cross the street during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal. The walkabout team did not observe any students walking or riding biking home.



2nd Street, looking west. There are no cross walks on the intersection of 2nd Street and Woodland Avenue

Walkabout Observations

During the walkabout the team walked along Woodland Avenue, between the school and 3rd Street. The school zone is identified with a "School Zone" pavement marking on Woodland Avenue. There is a 4ft sidewalk on the west side of Woodland Avenue, but the sidewalk does



not continue north of 3rd Street. Pedestrian crossing facilities such as marked crosswalks, school crossing signs, and curb ramps are absent at the intersection of 2nd Street and Woodland Ave (marked as "A" on the map). Additionally, there are no stop bars on Woodland Avenue. The team observed that the higher grade on 2nd Street to the west of the intersection limits visibility for all users. The team said that the neighborhood would be receptive to traffic calming measures along Woodland Avenue and at the intersections to make walking and biking more comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.

Similar issues were noted at the intersection of Woodland Avenue and 3rd Street (marked as "B" on the Map). Traffic is stop controlled on Woodland Avenue but not on 3rd Street. Although 3rd Street is a residential road, it is the most direct connection between Magnolia Avenue and the high school. For this reason 3rd Street experiences significantly higher traffic volumes than other east-west roads in the grid. Because of the limited sidewalk network and pedestrian improvements located one intersection west (Magnolia Avenue and 3rd Street), most students living north and west of the school will be entering this intersection to get to school.

The intersection design and operation of Woodland Avenue and 3rd Street creates some challenges for pedestrians. Sidewalk is only present on the southwest corner. Students traveling southbound do not have a sidewalk and they do not have anywhere to queue off-road before crossing 3rd Street. There are no marked crosswalks at this intersection. Additionally stop bars are absent on either approach on Woodland Avenue. Curb ramps and other ADA facilities are absent at all four corners of the intersection. The wide streets and wide corners of the intersection allows cars to make turns at relatively high speeds.

3rd Street connects Magnolia Avenue, one of the main arterial roads in Buena Vista, with the high school, which is why it experiences relatively a higher volume of traffic when compared other residential streets in the neighborhood. This is the only intersection on Magnolia Avenue that has pedestrian crossing facilities (marked on the map as intersection "C"). It has high visibility crosswalks on three approaches.



Magnolia Avenue, looking south. The intersection of Magnolia Avenue and 3rd Street is the only intersection on Magnolia Avenue near the school with crosswalks.



3rd Street has one sidewalk on the south side of the road between Woodland Avenue and Magnolia Avenue, however the sidewalk ends mid-block. The team also observed that while 3rd Street experiences relatively higher traffic volumes, this crossing and this route are the most direct for students at both the high school and the elementary school.

One of the closest intersections to the elementary school is on Magnolia Avenue at 2nd Street, however this intersection is not an ideal location for promoting walking and bicycling (marked on the map as intersection "D"). The sidewalk on the south side of 2nd Street ends just prior to the intersection, and the sidewalks on Magnolia do not continue south of the intersection with 2nd Street. Additionally, Magnolia Avenue curves south of the intersection, making it difficult to see oncoming traffic.

Although few students currently walk and none bike to school, the walkabout team is aware of both more students' desire to walk or bike to school and parents' comfort with them doing so if improvements were made. The locations where improvements would be most effective are along Woodland Avenue and at the intersections of 2nd Street and 3rd Street.

Issues/Barriers to Walking and Biking to School

Inadequate sidewalks

Based on the proximity to the school, the level of traffic volume, and the direction towards the center of town, Woodland Avenue is an ideal street for walking and bicycling, however the lack of sidewalks beyond 3rd Street leave students to walk or ride in the street or on private property. Additionally, the limited sidewalks on 3rd Street cannot direct students to the safer crosswalk at 3rd Street and Magnolia Avenue. Finally, the existing sidewalks are narrow and broken up in many places, vegetation encroachment narrowing their functional widths. Curb ramps are absent at many key intersections.



2nd Street, looking west. Streets that lack sidewalks can discourage students and community members from walking.

Crossing Magnolia Avenue is challenging

Magnolia Avenue is difficult to cross because of the high volumes of motor vehicle traffic, and the lack of pedestrian infrastructure at intersections. Magnolia Avenue is the main thoroughfare through town and is a common route for truck freight. The team mentioned that parents are concerned about



Magnolia Avenue, looking north. Magnolia Avenue is often used a common route through Buena Vista.

students crossing the road amongst large vehicles. The team recognizes that a significant number of students live west of Magnolia Avenue and would need to cross the road to walk or bike to school. The team believes that when pedestrian improvements are made at 3rd Street and Magnolia Avenue, students would be more comfortable and more likely to walk or bike to and from school.

Lack of Traffic Calming Measures

The residential streets near Enderly Heights Elementary School have relatively wide travel lanes, limited sidewalks and curbs, and uncontrolled intersections which allow motorists to travel at speeds that appear to be higher than posted limits. The walkabout team observed motorists crossing Woodland Avenue at both 2nd and 3rd Streets at seemingly higher speeds than 25mph. Additionally, motorists traveling faster than residential neighborhood speed limits on Magnolia Avenue, are not reminded to slow down when they turn on to 2nd and 3rd Streets. This can create potential conflicts between motor vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists.

The attached map shows the walkabout route and the locations of the observed streets.

All of the walkabout photos are geo-tagged and available online at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/minrz1903vnwbpp/2vMuxFkw-R>.



**Enderly Heights Elementary School,
Buena Vista, VA Walkabout**

 1/4 Mile Radius

 Walkabout Route

 Enderly Heights Elementary School

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