

North Richland Hills Safe Routes to School

December 2016 / Planning & Zoning Commission

Introduction

- ▶ The purpose of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is to improve the health and well-being of families by enabling and encouraging students to walk and bike to and from school
- ▶ Areas of observation and study:
 - Learn how students commute
 - Identify infrastructure improvements to improve safety
 - Identify non-infrastructure improvements to encourage walkability
- ▶ NRH recruited a team of Master's of Public Administration students from the University of North Texas to complete walkability assessments and recommend policy and infrastructure improvements for the three selected pilot campuses—Mullendore Elementary, the Academy at C.F. Thomas and Smithfield Elementary—and for future projects.

SRTS Background & Funding

- ▶ Federal creation of SRTS by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- ▶ Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) replaced by Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act
 - The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion in federal funding for fiscal years 2016-2020 through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)
 - SRTS programs will compete with other transportation projects for funding through STBG
- ▶ North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) navigates the funding and application processes for interested municipalities
 - "Call for Projects" is expected to open in mid-December for the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) program
 - Allocated about \$23 million in TA Set-Aside Program funds, which will be awarded in 2017
 - Also incorporated SRTS into long-term transportation plan, Mobility 2040

The 5 E's*

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Encouragement
- ▶ Enforcement
- ▶ Engineering
- ▶ Evaluation

*Recently, some programs have begun incorporating a sixth "E" for equity.

Keys for Success

A successful SRTS program depends on several factors:

- ▶ Sidewalk or pedestrian path availability in a two-mile radius of campus
- ▶ Traffic conditions during arrivals and dismissals
- ▶ Availability of crossing guards
- ▶ Clearly marked pick-up and drop-off zones
- ▶ Obstructions or hazards near or on sidewalks or paths
- ▶ Commuting behaviors to and from identified schools
- ▶ Traffic control measures and devices
- ▶ School policies

Walkability Assessments

The SRTS team conducted site audits at the three pilot schools during peak hours of morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up, using TxDOT's site audit checklist to evaluate six areas:

1. Student drop-off and pick-up locations
2. Bus loading zones
3. Sidewalks and bicycle routes
4. Adjacent intersections
5. Visibility distances
6. Traffic control measures

General Recommendations

Type 1 Improvements

For improvements to infrastructure—street, sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, repairing or adding signage, and complying with ADA standards—the city should:

- ▶ Consider adding bike lanes as part of the Davis/Mid-Cities street reconstruction
- ▶ Conduct traffic studies to determine if smart streets are a viable option
- ▶ Review the BISD busing policy

Type 2 Improvements

For non-infrastructure improvements, the SRTS team recommends:

- ▶ Developing a rigorous public education campaign
- ▶ Incorporating TEKS benchmarks related to health and traffic safety

School Recommendations

Mullendore Elementary School

The JoAnn Johnson Trail is ideal for families walking or biking to school, and administrators should encourage its use. However, once pedestrians leave the trail, the route to campus is unclear because almost every street lacks sidewalks, including Vance Rd., Turner Terrace, and Cummings Dr. Pedestrians can access a crosswalk at Steven St. and Manor Dr., but the crosswalk does not connect to a sidewalk on the east side of Steven St., forcing pedestrians to walk in the street or residents' yards upon leaving campus.

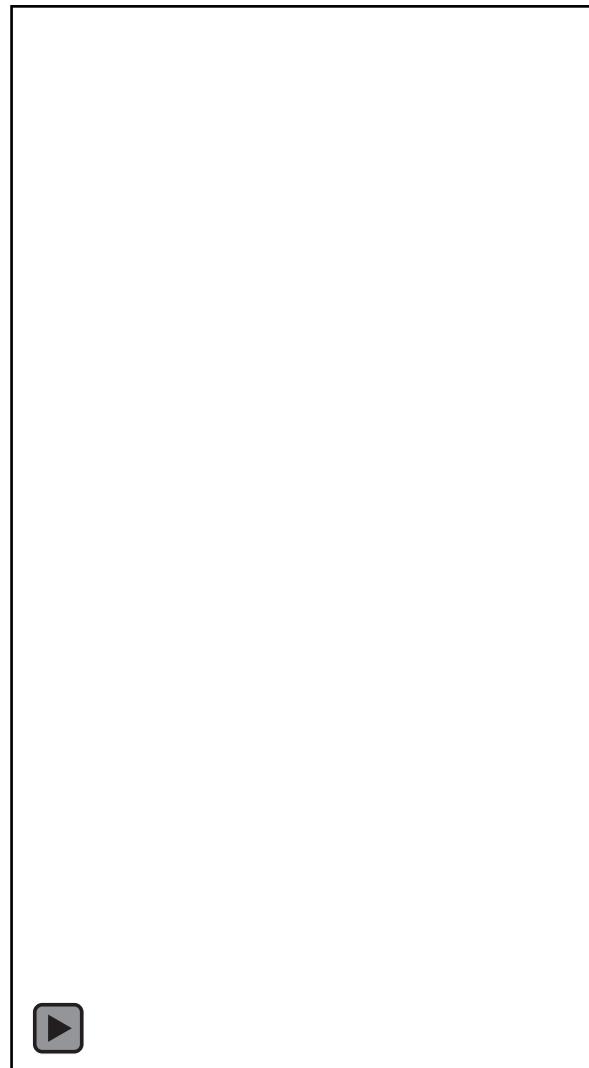


School Recommendations

Mullendore Elementary, cont.

The SRTS team took many photos and videos, such as this one, as part of their walkability assessments.

All photos and video footage will be provided to the NRH Planning Department for reference and archive purposes.



School Recommendations

Academy at C.F. Thomas

There are several major thoroughfares that do not have adequate sidewalks or crosswalks:

- ▶ The sidewalks on the south side of Emerald Hills Way are very narrow due to a brick wall along its length. These might be considered for expansion in the future (1).
- ▶ Addition of sidewalks at the intersection at SH 26 and Emerald Hills Way would allow full utilization of the crosswalk (2).



School Recommendations

Smithfield Middle School

- ▶ Trim trees and remove other obstructions from signage, sidewalks and pedestrian paths (1).
- ▶ Consider the construction of sidewalks along Martin Rd., Simmons Rd. and Main St. (2).
- ▶ Hire and utilize more crossing guards.

*A comprehensive list of recommendations is found in the full report.



Next Steps

- ▶ Get people involved
- ▶ Get people together
- ▶ Gather information
- ▶ Identify solutions
- ▶ Prioritize
- ▶ Apply
- ▶ Fund an early win