

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SCHOOL SAFETY REVIEW STUDY

WADSWORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PALM COAST, FLAGLER COUNTY, FL

Assessment & Implementation Report | June 2017

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River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study

Wadsworth Elementary School Palm Coast, Flagler County, FL

Assessment and Implementation Report

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Table of Contents

List of Figure	v
List of Tables.....	v
Appendices.....	v
Executive Summary.....	1
Purpose	1
Observations and Recommendations Summary Table	3
Introduction	5
Assessment Report	6
Existing Conditions Analysis	6
Summary of Coordination Meeting.....	14
Field Review Observations.....	16
Implementation Report	18
Walk Zone Related Recommendations	18
School Campus Related Recommendations	20
Recommended Priority Projects.....	20

List of Figures

1. School location map	5
2. School walk zone.....	7
3. Existing conditions	9
4. Existing land use within walk zone	11
5. School campus.....	13
6. Improvements map	21

List of Tables

1. Observations and recommendations summary	3
2. Constructibility matrix.....	23

Appendices

A. 2009 Florida Statutes Excerpts	
B. Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines Excerpts	
C. City of Palm Coast Zoning Map and Land Development Excerpts	
D. Letter and Questionnaire to Principal	
E. Letter and Questionnaire to Crossing Guard Supervisor	
F. Hazardous-Courtesy (09-10)	
G. FHWA Guidelines for New Sidewalk Installation	
H. Funding Sources	
I. Safety Programs	
J. Contact List	

Executive Summary

Kittelson and Associates, Inc. (KAI) was contracted by the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (R2CTPO) to prepare an Assessment and Implementation Report for the Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study for seven Flagler County schools. The Assessment Report for the Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study will enable the R2CTPO to make recommendations for projects that will improve the walkability and bikability of students living within the school walk zone. The Implementation Report for the Pedestrian and Bicycle School Safety Review Study is based on observations and recommendations of the Assessment Report and includes cost data, ranking criteria for the recommended improvements, and the best practices to follow on old and new developments. The subject of this report is Wadsworth Elementary School located at 1425 Wadsworth Dr, Palm Coast, FL 32164.

Purpose

The purpose of the Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study is to create a safe environment for students to walk or bicycle to school. The goal for the assessment phase of this study is to provide the R2CTPO with a comprehensive study that will identify each of the listed school's concerns, document the observed pedestrian and bicycle circulation routes adjacent to the school sites, and then make recommendations for improvements. The assessment includes the walk zone surrounding the school and it will evaluate safety issues that may affect students walking or bicycling to school. Another goal of the assessment report is to continue the coordination among the stakeholders to implement the recommendations of these studies. The purpose of the Implementation Report for the Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study is to conduct a constructibility review and develop a cost feasibility plan that is based upon the recommendations from Wadsworth Elementary School's Assessment Report. Ultimately, the recommendations within the Implementation Report should create a safer environment for children who live within the walk zone that choose to walk or bicycle to and from the school.

To make walking and bicycling a chosen mode of transportation for students at Wadsworth Elementary School, measures have been recommended that should make the school walk zone safer. Many local, state, and federal laws require transportation agencies to focus on walking and bicycling infrastructure as part of the overall transportation network. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 established the Safe Routes to School program that explicitly focused on funding projects to enhance pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure around schools. Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) of 2015 reinforces the Safe Routes to School program. The goal of this report is to create a safer environment along the streets connecting students to Wadsworth Elementary School and recommend best practices for a variety of settings.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention has determined that students are not as active as they were 10 years ago when physical activity was incorporated into each student's schedule (KidsWalk-to-School, CDC). Simultaneously, the percentage of overweight students from ages six to eleven years to double over the past 30 years. The CDC has determined that the following are benefits associated with students who walk or ride bicycle to school.

- Increased practice of safe bicycling, walking, and ability to navigate traffic
- Knowledge of their surrounding neighborhood environment
- Improved childhood health
- Improved sense of self-image and autonomy
- Reduce risk of childhood obesity
- Contributes to a healthy social and emotional development
- More alert students who do better in school
- Increased likelihood that students will grow up to lead a healthy lifestyle

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program and the CDC went on to say that not only does a safe walking and bicycling environment benefit students, but it also benefits the community in the following ways:

- Decline in traffic congestion
- Reduce the number of traffic crashes
- Improved air quality
- Improved community security
- Reduced fuel consumption
- Enhanced community accessibility
- Increased community involvement
- Improved partnerships among schools, parents, community groups, and local government leaders

Table 1 summarizes safety concerns observed within Wadsworth Elementary School's walk zone with recommendations documented in this report.

Table 1: Observations and Recommendations Summary

Location	Responsible Agency	Observation	Recommendation(s)
Belle Terre Parkway	Flagler County Schools	Drop-off and pick-up queues spilling into turn lane	Consider changes to drop-off and pick-up path to shorten queue. Increase programming to encourage walking and biking to school to reduce number of parents/guardians driving students to and from school.
		Students cross the street at the intersection closer to Buddy Taylor Middle School instead of at Parkview Drive	Provide additional crossing guards so both intersections near the school have crossing guards
	City of Palm Coast/ Flagler County Sherrif's Department	Speeding observed in school zone	Periodically place speed monitoring trailers to remind drivers that they are driving over the posted speed limit; law enforcement officers should periodically monitor the school walk zone to ensure that motorists are following the rules.
Whippoorwill Drive, Parkview Drive, Pritchard Drive	City of Palm Coast	Incomplete or nonexistent sidewalks coupled with high pedestrian demand and higher motor vehicle speeds	Perform Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Studies for these streets*
Plainview Drive and Pebble Beach Drive	City of Palm Coast	Incomplete or nonexistent sidewalks	Assess the feasibility of an advisory shoulder pilot project to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety on low speed, low volume neighborhood streets
Parkview Drive	Flagler County Schools	Parents avoiding drop-off and pick-up queues	Consider changes to drop-off and pick-up path to shorten queue.
			Increase programming to encourage walking and biking to school to reduce number of parents/guardians driving students to and from school.

**Where Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Studies are recommended, the goal is to identify a feasible exclusive pedestrian facility. Preferably, the facility will provide physical separation in the form of a curb, landscaped strip, or other physical element between the roadway and an ADA compliant pedestrian facility. These studies should identify the costs, right of way, and takings implications of various approaches, and may also recommend spot improvements, crossing treatments, and traffic calming. Interim solutions can be implemented as long as these do not compromise the ultimate goal of providing an exclusive pedestrian facility.*

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Introduction

In the winter of 2016/2017, a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian safety review was performed for Wadsworth Elementary School in Palm Coast, Flagler County. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the walk zone of Wadsworth Elementary School for any safety issues that students might encounter if they choose to walk or ride their bicycles to school. This review included an information-gathering and coordination meeting with the School, Flagler County School Board representatives, City of Palm Coast, Flagler County, and R2CTPO officials. The coordination meeting was followed by a field review by the consultants. The review also included analysis of mapped conditions including infrastructure mapping and crash reports. The results of this review have been synthesized into the following existing conditions and safety improvement recommendations report.

Background on Wadsworth Elementary School

Wadsworth Elementary School is located at 4550 Belle Terre Parkway in Palm Coast, FL. The School currently has 970 enrolled students. The school serves suburban neighborhoods consisting of mostly single family residential houses. Figure 1 shows the school campus on an aerial; the northern campus building is shared with Buddy Taylor Middle School.



Figure 1: School Location

Assessment Report

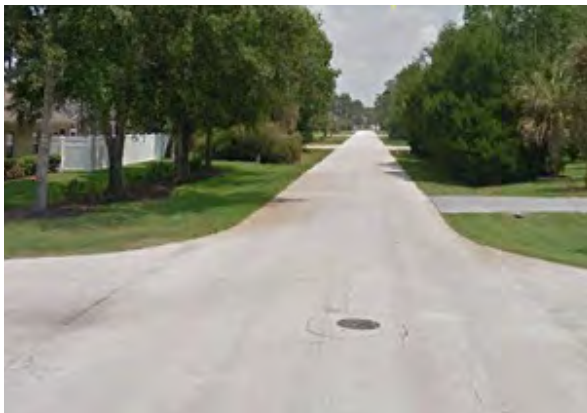
This section of the report will document existing conditions within the Wadsworth Elementary School walk zone, summarize the coordination meeting, and observations from the field review. The walk zone is a two mile radius around middle schools and a one mile radius around elementary schools, constrained by major obstacles such as highways. No school bus service is provided within the walk zones. In practice, most students within the walk zone are driven to and from school.

The Assessment Report for the Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study will enable the R2CTPO to make recommendations for projects that will improve the walkability and bikability of students living within the school walk zone. The Hazardous Conditions Statutes are attached to this report as an appendix and guided field and map observations.

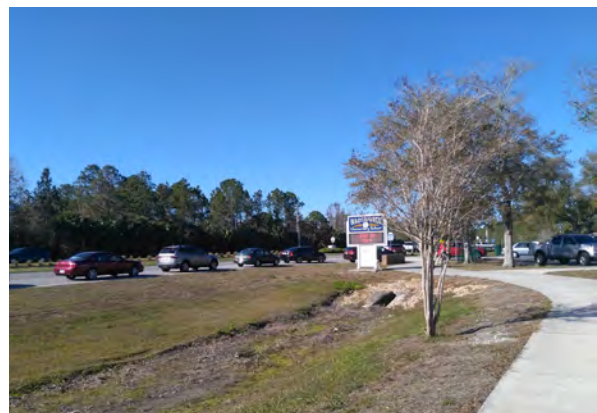
Existing Conditions Analysis

The existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, safety conditions, and surrounding land uses at each school were evaluated through map review, administrator and school safety officer inputs, and field visits. The field visits included observation of the drop-off and pick-up periods, and complete review of the presence, absence, and condition of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within the walk zone.

Figure 2 shows the walk zone for Wadsworth Elementary School. The walk zone primarily serves residential neighborhoods accessed by Parkview Drive to the east of the School and the trail spur to the east of the school.



Typical residential street within the walk zone



Queue of cars near school entrance on Belle Terre Parkway



Figure 2: School walk zone

Existing Conditions Analysis

Pedestrian Infrastructure: Belle Terre Parkway has a wide trail including a pedestrian bridge across the canal south of the campus on the east side of the street and a wide sidewalk on the west side. Parkview Drive has a standard width sidewalk on its south side between Belle Terre Parkway and Persimmon Drive. Additionally, a trail spur connects Wainbush Place to Belle Terre Parkway, allowing a more direct pedestrian connection between residential neighborhoods to the west of Belle Terre Parkway and Wadsworth Elementary.

Most of the streets within the walk zone are two lane residential street with open drainage ditches on each side. Students and other pedestrians would generally walk in the street. However, it was observed during the field visit that pedestrians had to move on to the grass shoulder and open drainage areas whenever cars were passing them.

Additionally, the walk zone includes local connector streets such as Whippoorwill Drive, Parkview Drive, Pritchard Drive and Wynnfield Drive. These streets have yellow painted centerlines a 30 mile per hour speed limit, and adjacent drainage ditches. Whippoorwill Drive had a worn, unpaved demand-path on its south side.

There are marked crosswalks at the intersection of Parkview Drive and Belle Terre Parkway and at the driveway into the adjacent Buddy Taylor Middle School. During the AM and PM drop-off and pick-up periods the crossing guards are posted at the intersection of Belle Terre Parkway and Parkview Drive. This crosswalk is lightly used by school students; most students who walk and bike enter the campus from the neighborhoods to the east, through the adjacent park.

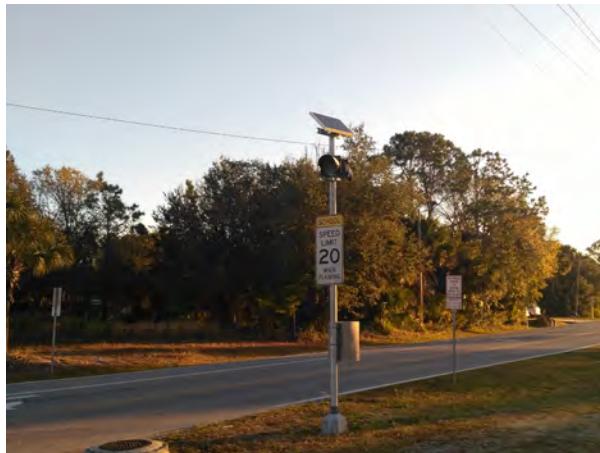
Bicycle Infrastructure: Belle Terre Parkway has a wide trail including a pedestrian bridge across the canal south of the campus on the east side of the street and a wide sidewalk on the west side; bicyclists were observed using both the trail and the sidewalk. Additionally, a trail spur connects Wainbush Place to Belle Terre Parkway, allowing a more direct pedestrian connection between residential neighborhoods to the west of Belle Terre Parkway and Wadsworth Elementary. Apart from these two trails, there is no dedicated separated bicycle infrastructure within the school's walk zone.

Crash Analysis: There were 11 reported pedestrian and bicycle crashes within the walk zone in last six years (2010 - 2015). A crossing guard also mentioned that he had witnessed many 'near misses' at the crosswalk at Belle Terre Parkway and Parkview Drive due to drivers failing to yield to his directions.

Figure 3 maps the existing conditions described above.



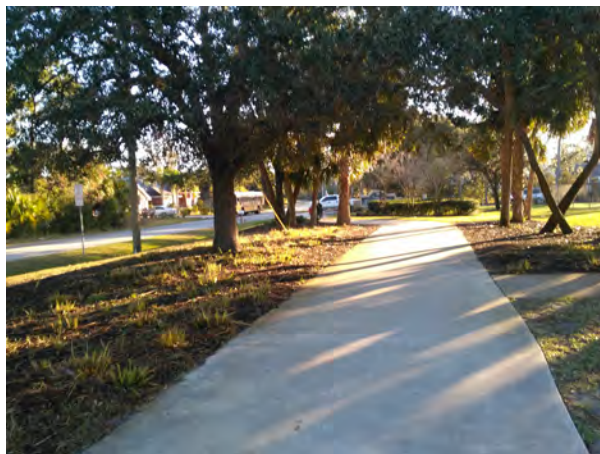
Figure 3: Existing conditions



Flashing school zone speed sign.



Relatively well-utilized bike parking at Wadsworth Elementary School



Ample sidewalk adjacent to park on Parkview Drive. Sidewalk narrows to standard width past the park.



Trail bridge south of campus

Existing Land Use: Most of the existing land uses within the school's walk zone consists of single family detached residential houses. Some properties do have multifamily units in form of duplexes or twins. Figure 4 maps the existing land uses.

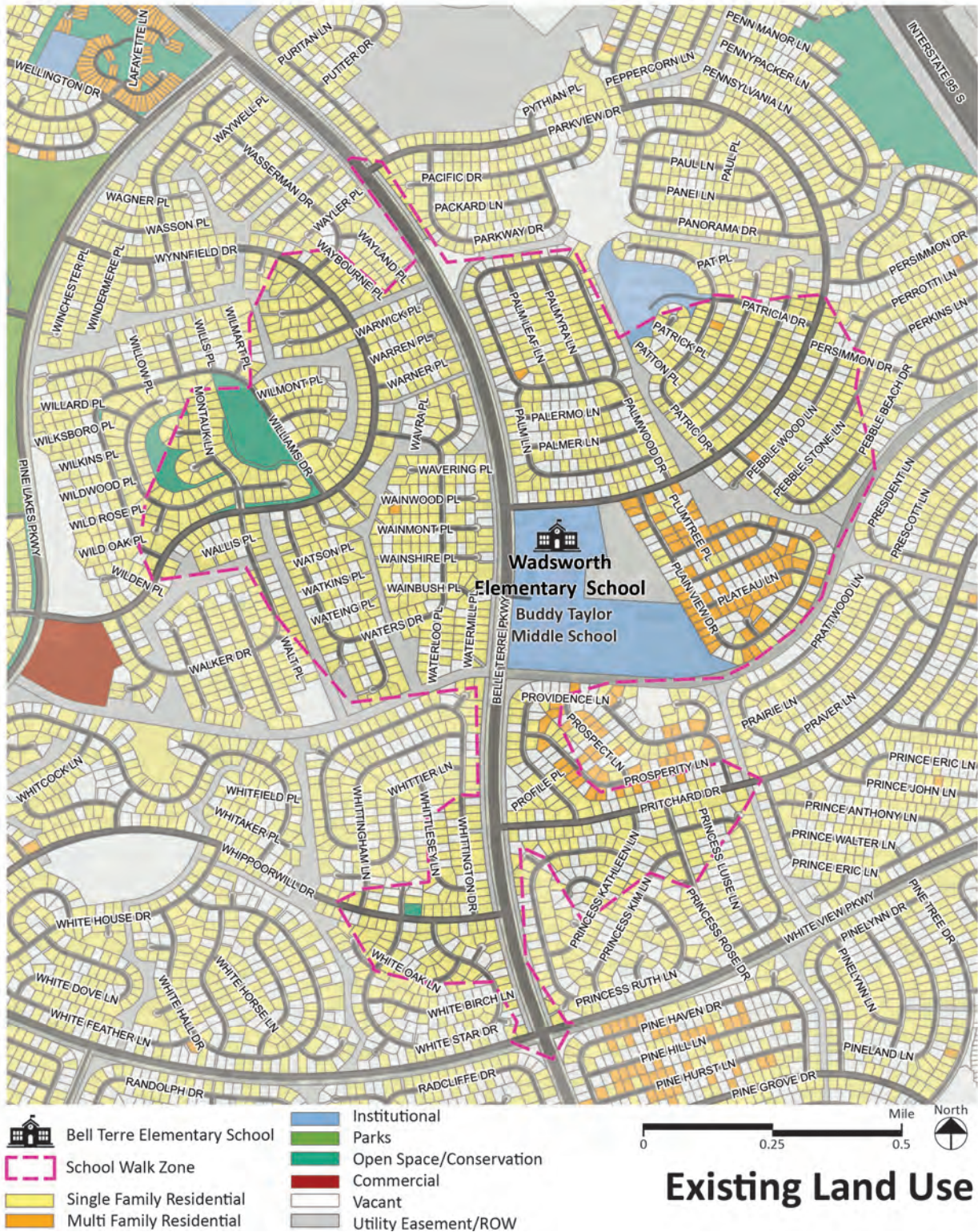


Figure 4: Existing land use

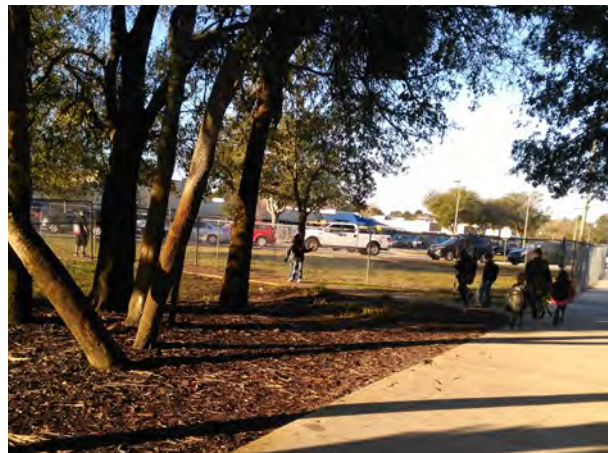
School Campus: The school campus has two entrances, one on Parkview Drive and one on Belle Terre Parkway; the Parkview Drive entrance is closed, to limit parents to one set queue path through the campus and out past the park. The queue path is shown in Figure 5, at right.

The drop-off loop is a single lane wide and the full queue path is approximately .65 miles in length. It was observed that some parents pulled up to the gate on Parkview Drive to avoid waiting in this queue. Relatively few students were observed crossing at the Parkview Drive and Belle Terre Parkway intersection. The crossing guard noted that 8 to 12 students cross at the intersection each morning and afternoon. It appears that the majority of the students who walk and bike to school enter the campus from the west, via Parkview Drive and the park at the school's west edge. Given the length of the pick-up and drop-off queue, and based on anecdotal reports, parents may be dropping their kids off on Parkview Drive and having them walk to the campus from there.

Once bicycle rack was observed on campus, holding about 20 bicycles.



A line of cars exiting the drop-off queue adjacent to the park



A group of students leaving Wadsworth Elementary School through the park



Parents avoiding drop-off queue by pulling up on Parkview Drive



Students waiting to cross Belle Terre Parkway



Figure 5: School Campus

Coordination Meeting

The coordination meeting for Wadsworth Elementary school was held at the school on January 31st, 2017. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Flagler County School Board, Wadsworth Elementary School, City of Palm Coast, Flagler County Sheriff's Office, River to Sea TPO, and Kittelson & Associates.

- Adam Burghdoff, Kittelson & Associates
- Sean Castello, City of Palm Coast
- John Fanelli, Wadsworth Elementary School
- Liz Gordon, Kittelson & Associates
- Stephan Harris, River to Sea TPO
- Denise Harshberger, Buddy Taylor Middle School
- Wendy Hickey, Flagler County
- William Lowe, Sheriff's Office
- Nathan Lovelette, Buddy Taylor Middle School
- Winnie Oden, Flagler County School Board
- Jose Papa, City of Palm Coast
- Alexander Spiller, Flagler County

Stephan Harris and Adam Burghdoff introduced the purpose and explained the study background. This introduction was followed up a group discussion. Following were the main points of the follow up discussion:

- Wadsworth Elementary School hours were confirmed to be from 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM
- Site review periods for arrival/dismissal was decided as follows:
 - Arrival field review period- 8:00 AM – 9:15 AM
 - Dismissal field review period- 3:00 PM – 3:45 PM
- Major pick-up and drop-off concerns were mostly related to
- Students will cross Belle Terre Parkway at either of the signalized intersections and do not limit themselves to the one that is staffed by crossing guards
- Many parents wait for students at various places off campus
- Some parents drop their students west of the park and let them walk into school from there
- The school enforces a single line drop-off and pick-up.

- There is one crossing guard in AM and PM at the intersection of Belle Terre Parkway and Parkview Drive
- A queue to enter the school drop-off and pick-up line often spills into the turn lane south of the school entrance.
- Approximately 20 bikes were observed in a school bike rack
- Crossing guards report eight to 12 bicyclist and pedestrians during each drop-off and pick-up period
- There is a 20MPH school zone with flashing yellow signal on Belle Terre Parkway
- The trail that connects neighborhoods west of the school to Belle Terre Parkway is an important bicycle and pedestrian connection for the student
- Getting parents to obey the stated pick-up and drop-off protocol is challenging for school administrators
- School administrators open the gate between the school and the park to allow students to enter and exit this way
- The gate from the school onto Parkview Drive is closed to force parents to use the drop-off queue as intended
- Some parents arrive very early to pick up students after school
- A complete trip through the pick-up or drop-off queue can take over an hour under some circumstances

Field Review Observations

The field review for Wadsworth Elementary school was conducted on January 31st, 2017 by Kittelson and Associates. The field review observed the drop-off activity from 8:00 to 9:00 AM and pick-up activity from 3:00 to 4:00PM. The field review also included interacting with the crossing guards and observing and documenting conditions within the school's walk zone.

Following are the observations from the field review.

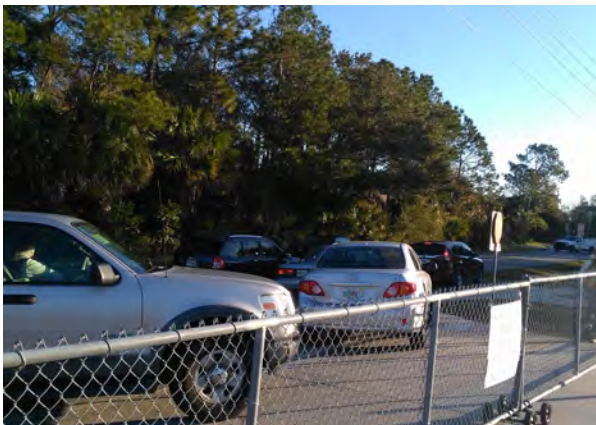
General Observations:

Eastern School Entrance on Belle Terre Parkway

- There is a crossing guard posted at Belle Terre Parkway and Parkview Drive.
- There is another legal, signalized crossing of Belle Terre Parkway to the south, and this crossing does not have crossing guards posted.
- A few students were observed using the crossing without crossing guards posted.

Informal School Entrance Adjacent to Park

- Most students observed walking and biking to school used this route.
- School officials allow students to enter from this side, but it is not encouraged.
- The sidewalk immediately adjacent to the park is wide and in new condition, but it narrows to the east of the park.
- The crossing guards reported speeding issues on Belle Terre Parkway during school hours



Parents pulling up adjacent to gate on Parkview Drive to avoid queue on school property.



Trail spur and sidewalk on West side of Belle Terre Parkway and Parkview Drive intersection

Drop-Off Observations:**Eastern School Entrance on Belle Terre Parkway**

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- There is another legal, signalized crossing of Belle Terre Parkway to the south, and this crossing does not have crossing guards posted.
- A few students were observed using the crossing without crossing guards posted.

Informal School Entrance Adjacent to Park

- Most students observed walking and biking to school used this route.
- School officials allow students to enter from this side, but it is not encouraged.
- The sidewalk immediately adjacent to the park is wide and in new condition, but it narrows to the east of the park.

Pick-Up Observations:

- Some parents picked up students at unsanctioned locations such as the Parkview Drive gate
- The queue to enter the campus spilled back into the turn lane south of the school entrance
- Most students observed leaving campus on foot or by bike went east

Walk Zone Observations:

- Only Belle Terre Parkway and Parkview Drive have sidewalks
- Belle Terre Drive also has a trail on the east side
- Whippoorwill Drive, Pritchard Drive, and Wynnfield Drive are a potentially dangerous combination of higher speed and volume vehicle traffic with a lack of sidewalks



Median pedestrian refuge on Belle Terre Parkway



Line of buses near Wadsworth Elementary School

Implementation Report

This section of the report will build on analysis and observations documented in the Assessment Report to make recommendations. The purpose of the Implementation Report for the Bicycle and Pedestrian School Safety Review Study is to conduct a constructibility review and develop a cost feasibility plan. While only a relatively small subset of the students living within the Wadsworth Elementary School's walk zone walk or bike to school, there are opportunities to improve their safety, and also to make walking and biking a more inviting option for more students. Location specific recommendations are listed below.

Walk Zone Related Recommendations:

Locations: Parkview Drive and the east side of Belle Terre Parkway

Observation: Parents are parking on grass shoulders to drop-off and pick-up students to avoid waiting in the queue within the school campus.

Recommendation: Install no parking signs along these sections of Parkview Drive and Belle Terre Parkway and enforce no parking regulation by periodically issuing tickets.

Observation: It was mentioned several times by the crossing guard, and school staff members that motorists are driving over the posted speed limit of 20 MPH during flashing yellow signal.

Recommendation: Periodically place speed monitoring trailers to remind drivers that they are driving over the posted speed limit; law enforcement officers should periodically monitor the school walk zone to ensure that motorists are following the rules; if it is found that motorists are driving over the posted speed limit then the Flagler County Sheriff's Office should consider issuing fines during school arrival and dismissal times.



Pedestrian desire path on the south side of Whippoorwill Drive

Location: Whippoorwill Drive, Parkview Drive, Pritchard Drive

Observation: There is limited sidewalk present on these three through streets that loop around to connect the neighborhoods. Pedestrians, including students, walk in the street, and on grass shoulders where available. The recent pedestrian fatality on Whippoorwill Drive is an indication of the safety concern in these locations.

Recommendation: Perform a Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Study for these streets. The dangerous combination of higher vehicle traffic volumes and speeds and pedestrian demand justify a detailed study of these locations.

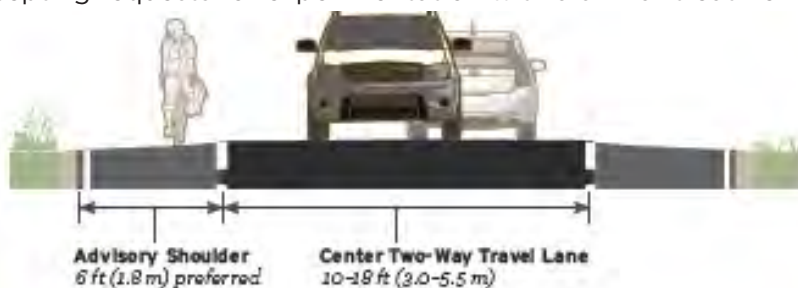
Location: Pebble Beach Drive and Plainview Drive

While completing sidewalks for all local streets in the walk zone may not be feasible, a low cost alternative option is to stripe advisory shoulders. Based on the FHWA's *Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks* report, roads with advisory shoulder accommodate low to moderate volumes of two-way motor vehicle traffic and provide a prioritized space for bicyclists and pedestrians with little or no widening of the paved roadway surface. Plainview Drive and Pebble Beach Drive are good locations to conduct a cost benefit comparison between this approach and sidewalks. . Potential signs include:

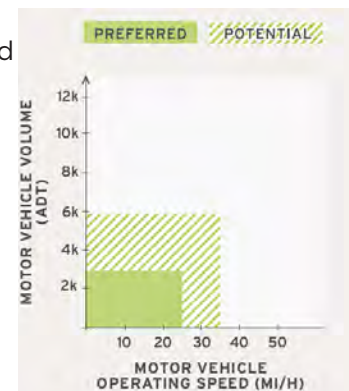
- A pedestrian (W11-2) warning sign with ON ROADWAY legend plaque.
- Use a Two-Way Traffic warning sign (W6-3) to clarify two-way operation of the road if any confusion exists.



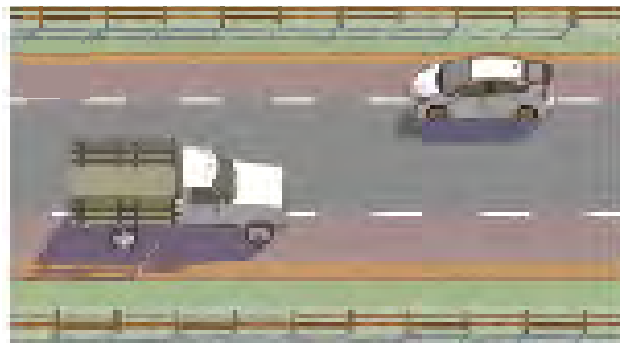
In order to install advisory shoulders, an approved request to experiment is required as detailed in the MUTCD 2009, Sec. 1A.10. FHWA is also accepting requests for experimentation with a similar treatment called "d:



The advisory shoulder space is a visually distinct area on the edge of the roadway, offering a prioritized space for people to bicycle and walk. The preferred width of the advisory shoulder space is 6 feet. Absolute minimum width is 4 feet when no curb and gutter is present.



Preferred and potential traffic volumes and speed limits for advisory shoulder treatment.



Unlike a conventional shoulder, an advisory shoulder is a part of the traveled way, and it is expected that vehicles will regularly encounter meeting or passing situations where driving in the advisory shoulder is necessary and safe. When vehicles traveling in opposite directions meet, motorists may need to enter the advisory shoulder for clear passage.

Location: Entrance to campus on Belle Terre Parkway

Observation: Some cars spill onto Belle Terre Parkway when attempting to enter the school grounds.

Recommendation: Attempt to shorten the pick-up and drop-off queues.

Other Programmatic Recommendations:

Observation: Based on the observation of the drop-off and pick-up periods, school officials and crossing guards proactively manage a queue of cars as well as students and adults who are walking or riding bikes to ensure the safety of all. To the extent that dangerous situations were observed during these times, they occurred at school driveways as vehicles turning into or out of the campus rushed to take advantage of a gap in traffic on Wadsworth Drive.

Recommendation: Reducing the number of students dropped off and picked up each day is one way to reduce these conflicts and overall congestion during drop-off and pick-up periods.

Programs that could reduce the number of students driven to school include:

- Station additional crossing guards at the Buddy Taylor Middle School driveway. This is a legal, signalized crossing and students will continue to use it.
- A walking school bus program. Walking school buses provide some supervision and “safety in numbers” to students who choose to walk, reducing safety concerns associated with allowing students to walk by themselves. Best practices for walking school bus programs are well established, and the National Center for Safe Routes to School offers online training modules for schools seeking to start one. http://apps.saferoutesinfo.org/training/walking_school_bus/modules.cfm
- Increased frequency of walk and bike to school days.

School Campus Related Recommendations:

Look for opportunities to shorten the drop-off and pick-up queues. Some unsafe behavior is due to parents pulling up adjacent to the school campus to avoid this queue. One possibility is to use the middle school bus loop as the drop-off loop, with cars in a double line, operating as a right-in, right-out.

Recommended Priority Projects:

This section lists all the recommended priority engineering and construction projects that address the observations and recommendations noted in the earlier section. However, it does not list educational, enforcement, and policy changes which are also recommended in the earlier section.

The following engineering and construction projects are recommended to be implemented as part of this Wadsworth elementary School Bicycle and Pedestrian school Safety Review study:

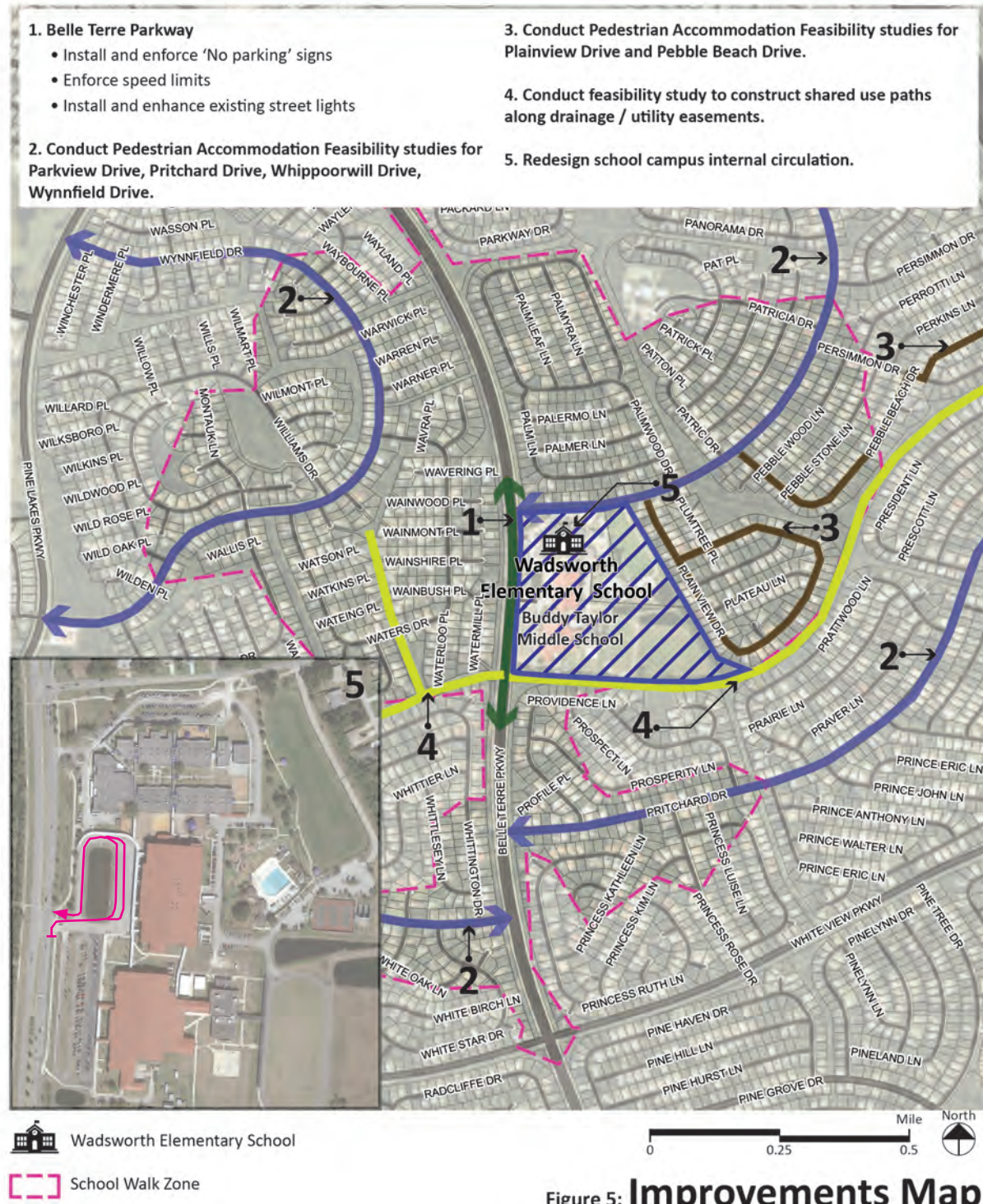


Figure 5: Improvements Map

Figure 4: Improvements map

Walk Zone Improvement Projects

- Perform a Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Study for Parkview Drive, and the lengths of Whippoorwill Drive and Pritchard Drive
- Assess the feasibility of an advisory shoulder pilot project to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety on low speed, low volume neighborhood streets, particularly Pebble Beach Drive and Plainview Drive

Campus Projects

- Prioritize measures to shorten the drop-off and pick-up queues; many other safety concerns stem from people avoiding these queues. This includes reorganizing the queue, possibly into the bus loop (if the bus loop can successfully be moved) and promoting walking and biking to school.
- Station crossing guards at both intersections with Belle Terre Parkway (Parkview Drive and the Buddy Taylor Middle School Driveway).
- Consider posting a crossing guard at the queue exit adjacent to the park

Priority Projects:

The recommended projects consist of programming, queue changes, and other non-engineering measures. Therefore, an engineering project cost matrix is not included.

Appendices

