|  |
| --- |
| Memorial Elementary School |
| Pickup and Dropoff Recomendations |
|  |
| April 2018, Safe Routes to School Massachusetts |
|  |

## Introduction

Memorial Elementary School conducted an Active Transportation Infrastructure Audit on November 21st 2017. From this assessment, several recommendations were made regarding infrastructure improvements for the neighborhood. Given the observed nature of the walking environment around the school, it was no surprise that parent drop-offs are viewed as a necessary method of transportation for students.

As a follow up to this audit, Safe Routes to School performed a parking lot utilization and arrival/dismissal observation on April 5th in order to make short term procedural recommendations to improve pedestrian safety during high traffic periods. Recommendations here include reassigning parking lot use, re-routing parents during dropoff and pickup, dismissal procedure updates, and increasing walking to school via a walking school bus program.

## Methods

Three Safe Routes to School staff members and one Mass in Motion Coordinator observed 4 separate aspects of the arrival/dismissal procedures at the Memorial School, including:

* **Parking lot utilization and arrival times** – A SRTS Outreach coordinator observed the parking lot between 8:00 and 8:30. The coordinator noted at what time each parking space became occupied and, when appropriate, what time is was vacated.
* **Number of riders per bus** – Rough counts of riders per bus were observed and estimated with help of staff on hand
* **Parent dropoff locations** –The location that parents dropped off kids, both in the school bus area and in the parking lot was noted
* **Assisted crossings** – The number of times the crossing guard was utilized by groups of students was noted in the morning, and the total number of students was also noted in the afternoon
* **Number of parent pickups –** The number of parents utilizing cars for pickup after school was recorded

## Findings & Recommendations

Parking Lot Utilization

The graphic below shows at what time parking spaces became occupied, and in some cases, when they were vacated. Key takeaways from this graphic include:

* Only 16 out of 32 spots remained occupied after observation ended.
* Spots near Norman Street were used for dropoff and then vacated, creating unnecessary risk as drivers are in reverse gear.
* Observers themselves also occupied 3 parking spaces and all spaces were not occupied at the end of observation, indicating that **there is an oversupply of parking** for staff.



**Recommendation**

Eliminate some parking spaces and utilize a portion of parking lot area for parent dropoff. Ideally spaces 15-22 should be repurposed and designated for dropoff area. This would consolidate parent dropoff into one location, reducing conflict with walkers and buses that arrive largely from River Road or via crosswalk intersection of Norman and Cold Spring Road.

**Mode Split**

*Parent dropoffs* varied in location, but most occurred in the bus dropoff area between 8:00 and 8:30. Of the 35 parents who dropped kids off via car:

* 13 dropped in the lot
* 16 dropped in the bus loading zone on Norman
* 6 dropped across from the bus loading zone on Norman

*Busses* were well utilized, with the following rough estimates of riders per bus:

* Bus 1: 25 Students
* Bus 2: 35 Students
* Bus 3: 50 Students

Attending staff also informed the observer of 2 additional vans that are utilized, which carry 10-12 students each.

*Walkers*were well represented considering the cold weather, with the following counts of walkers from various directions:

* River Rd: 10 Students
* Norman St: 17 Students
* Baldwin Rd: 3 Students

These 3 modes produce the following mode split chart

Significant delays and idling was observed at dismissal, with a total of 38 parents choosing to pick up students in cars. More students were observed walking at dismissal than at arrival. The increase in afternoon walkers and pickups is attributed to the fact that some children will walk to their afterschool activities and many parents are at work.

**Recommendation**

Begin process of forming a walking school bus on Cold Spring Road. By designating and promoting a walking route, walkers can be consolidated and supervised on the least accessible and safe portion of the road. A walking school bus will also have the effect of grouping walkers together so that fewer supervised crossings are necessary. More on this in the crossing guard section.

**Crossing Guard Utilization**

The two crossing guards (Cold Spring at Baldwin & Cold Spring at Norman) were utilized a total of 13 times at dropoff in the morning and 27 times at dismissal in the afternoon.

*Morning*: The crossing guard at Norman crossed students 10 times and the crossing guard at Norman crossed students 3 times.
*Afternoon*: The crossing guards at Norman assisted 27 kids total over 20 crossings

**Recommendation**

Dismiss walkers immediately before other students so that they can be separated temporally from parents picking up. Much of the delay in dismissal comes from frequent supervised crossings (20 crossings for 27 students). Very little lead time would be necessary for walkers, about 60 seconds would allow them to clear the intersections at Cold Spring.