



City Safe Routes to School Workshop Sanders-Clyde Elementary/Middle School, Charleston, SC

**January 16, 2009
9 am to 12:30 pm**

The City Safe Routes to School workshop was open to the general public, and invitations were issued to specific individuals, as well as groups and organizations. The workshops were arranged by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG), and facilitated by Mark Plotz and Gary MacFadden from the Active Living Resource Center (ALRC).



The following are recommendations for improving student safety at Sander-Clyde Elementary/Middle School. The primary beneficiaries of the suggested safety improvements are the walkers and bikers at Sander-Clyde; neighborhood residents will also enjoy the safety and livability benefits created by the recommended traffic calming and infrastructure improvements.

The workshop was divided into four parts:

1. Welcome and audience member introductions.
2. A PowerPoint presentation by Mark Plotz on Safe Routes to School best practices and common barriers.
3. A walking audit of the neighborhood led by Mark Plotz and Gary MacFadden.
4. A discussion of next steps towards starting a Safe Routes to School program at Sanders-Clyde.

The goal of the workshop was to identify steps that can be taken to improve safety for Sander-Clyde's walkers and bikers. The recommendations that follow are based on the observations and suggestions of the workshop participants.

Recommendations

1) Register for Walk to School Day. Nearly every student lives within walking distance. A Walk to School event could be an opportunity to reach parents, and encourage them to walk to

school with their children. Walk to School Day will be celebrated on October 8, 2009.

2) Continue the Charleston County Sheriff Crossing Guard program. It is commendable that crossing guards are available throughout the school district. Once the new school opens, the Principal should meet with the Crossing Guard Supervisor (in attendance at the workshop) to review and make adjustments to crossing guard locations.

3) Prepare for the opening of the new school.

A) Conduct a walking audit of the neighborhood surrounding the school. Students should be enlisted to help with the audit. The National Safe Routes to School Clearinghouse has student-friendly walking checklists available on its website. The Berkley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, which has expertise in conducting walking audits, and help facilitate the audits.

The findings of our cursory walking audit are as follows:

i) Sidewalks in the neighborhood are covered with lots of broken glass. In several locations, vegetation had overgrown the sidewalk, forcing pedestrians into the street.

ii) The neighborhood beyond the new school should be evaluated for missing links in the walking infrastructure. For example, there is no sidewalk along Morrison Drive on the block immediately north of the school. A well-worn desire line identifies this corridor as a well-used walking route.

iii) The neighborhood around the school contains a large number of Two Way Stop intersections. This configuration allows thru traffic to build considerable speed, thus presenting a safety hazard to pedestrians. School staff noted that there have been several recent crashes in the area, including one in which the driver struck a temporary classrooms. (Fortunately no students were hurt.)

iv) Though it was out of our audit area, the railroad crossing at Brigade Street—off Morrison Drive—was identified as a hazard to students.

B) Prepare a traffic management plan for the new school. While (relatively) few students are driven to the current school, it is likely that this will change once the move is made to the new building. The new school will draw students from a larger geographic area than the current school (beyond the neighborhood). Some of the new students will be bussed; most will be driven. The school should identify car drop off locations that will separate motor vehicles from the buses and the walkers. An off site drop off location is the best option.

4) Collaborate with the City of Charleston Police Department to review the new school's design. The Police Department should review the plans for the new school, and make recommendations on ways to mitigate or eliminate risks by using the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design.

A) The neighborhood for several blocks beyond the school should be evaluated for environmental design/crime prevention considerations. It was noted at the workshop that during school events and PTA meetings, people often park several blocks from the school.

B) The School District and the Police Department should evaluate and make recommendations on safe walking routes for Sanders-Clyde students.

5) Review the school zone markings around the new building. Will the new school's school zone be refreshed with overhead warning beacons, pavement markings, and other warning signs? The school zone around the new school (extant because the new school is being built on the location of the previous school) is inadequate and in need of upgrading.

6) Increase parental interest in physical activity. During our workshop it was mentioned by The Lean Team that the childhood obesity rate in neighborhoods like Sanders-Clyde is approaching a 50 percent. In the Charleston area, there is a considerable amount of expertise on improving nutrition for children and adults. The school should:

A) Engage the PTA on the issues of childhood obesity, physical activity, and Safe Routes to School.

B) Outreach to parents. Pedestrian and bicycle safety should be addressed through the school newsletter and student handbook. Other opportunities to reach parents should be identified.

C) Host a broader neighborhood discussion about making the neighborhood kid-friendly.

D) Start a Neighborhood Pace Car program. See PEDS—Atlanta's pedestrian advocacy organization—for more information: http://www.peds.org/kw_pace.shtml



Recommendations on Next Steps

The School District or BCDCOG should sponsor a wider discussion about Safe Routes to School. Currently, the School District is in the throes of a School Redesign Initiative that will impact (significantly) the transportation needs of students. The needs of walkers and bikers should factor into any future consolidation/reorganization plans.

There is an unusually high concentration of Safe Routes to School expertise and projects within the Charleston area. Additionally, BCDCOG has been assisting three communities with obtaining bicycle-friendly community status. A community wide discussion would give practitioners the opportunity to share their SRTS experiences and expertise.

In the near term, the Police Department and the Sanders-Clyde Elementary/Middle School staff should meet to discuss potential safety concerns around the new school.