



Active Living Resource Center City Safe Routes to School Program

Post Workshop Report and Follow-up

Workshop Location

**1920 N. Hamlin, Chicago,
Illinois**

Focus School

Ames Middle School

Workshop Date

**Wednesday, November
30, 2006**

Workshop Time

1 pm - 4 pm

Local Coordinators

**Melody Geraci
Chicagoland Bicycle
Federation**

Lucy Gomez-Feliciano

**Logan Square
Neighborhood Association**

Background

The Logan Square Neighborhood hosted the November 30 City Safe Routes to School workshop. The neighborhood is an older, high density residential district of single family detached homes. The streets are laid out on a grid pattern, with sidewalks and buffers on both sides of every street. The workshop was held in Ames Middle School, which draws its students from four nearby elementary schools which are within 1.5 miles.

The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation (Melody Geraci) and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (Lucy Gomez-Feliciano) served as the local organizers for this workshop. LSNA partners with AmeriCorps, the local schools, and

Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) to run several walking school buses. They also sponsor development programs for parents and youth.

Attendees

Parents from McAuliffe Elementary School, Mozart Elementary School, Funston Elementary School, Ames Middle School; the school liaison for the 35th Ward Alderman; representatives of the School Safety Council; Chicago Bicycle Federation; Chicago Metro Area Planning; Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago's Children (CLOCC); Chicago Public Schools (Bureau of Safety and Security); Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA); a parent mentor from LSNA; the social worker for Ames Middle School; and others.

Existing Conditions

Ames Middle School has an enrollment of 900 students. Its demographics as taken from the school's website are as follows: 93.5% Latino, 5.3% African American and 1% White. Additionally, about 10 percent of the students require bilingual education services. No students are bused; although some are presumed to take local buses (public transportation). A majority walk to and from school. A minority are dropped off and picked up by their parents.



Ames was chosen because it is a feeder school centrally located in the neighborhood. However, the workshop discussion included transportation and neighborhood conditions at all of the schools that feed Ames Middle School. Sharon Roerty and Mark Plotz visited Ames and nearby McAuliffe Elementary School on November 29 to observe dismissal. The conditions observed were documented in video and numerous photographs. It was apparent that a fair number of students make connections between these two schools, this could be due to siblings traveling together.

The Workshop

The workshop began with a brief introduction to the idea of City SRTS and the Active Living Resource Center.

Audience introductions followed. Approximately 30 people were in attendance. About five of the audience members were not fluent in English, so Lucy Gomez-Feliciano offered to serve as a translator. During introductions each person was encouraged to either note which organization she was representing (and what assets and programs it has to offer); or, if that person was a community member, what obstacles to walking she has noticed in the neighborhood. Several members of the parent patrol and walking school bus captains were present. Their experiences greatly enriched the discussion.

Throughout the workshops notes were made whenever problems or challenges were brought up. Also noted were programs and community assets able to address these challenges.

The last part of the workshop was Community Asset Mapping—the goal of which was to match programs and community assets to existing problems. If no solution was identified for a problem, the group attempted to identify the responsible organization. Based on the suggestion of the local organizer, we asked that remaining participants identify the highest priority problems to be addressed for which no current strategy or action was in place.

The highest priority problems as identified by participants:

- ✓ The adult book stores and liquor stores in the neighborhood.
- ✓ The heavy truck traffic near the school.
- ✓ The lack of respect for the parent patrols.



Pictured is the sidewalk in front of Ames Middle School. The existing sidewalks measures 48” in width. As the photo demonstrates the sidewalk width required is actually much greater.



In this rendering the sidewalk has been enlarged to a width of 8 feet, or a width that is more appropriate for a sidewalk adjacent to a middle school of this size.

A complete list of Problems, Solutions, and Community Assets follows:

PROBLEMS

- ✓ Drivers who do not have licenses and/or who are driving while high or drunk.
- ✓ Vacant houses that become magnets for gang activity, drugs, prostitution.
- ✓ Inadequate support for existing programs like parent patrol.
- ✓ Drugs and prostitution in nearby parks.
- ✓ Liquor stores, adult book stores in the neighborhood.
- ✓ Police jurisdiction boundaries can complicate response times.
- ✓ Truck traffic creates congestion and crashes.
- ✓ Open air markets crowd sidewalks and are locations for drug activity.
- ✓ Parents are speeding away from school pick-ups.
- ✓ Lack of respect for Parent Patrols.
- ✓ Lack of standing to request Safe Routes to School funding.
- ✓ Traffic safety is not being given the same weight as some of the other problems (gangs, drugs, violence) competing for alderman's attention and district resources.
- ✓ Trust and getting out the word about walking school buses, Safe Routes to School.

EXISTING PROGRAMS, RESOURCES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

- ✓ Red light runner cameras
- ✓ Parent Patrols to increase awareness of who they are and what they are; and how others could get involved.
- ✓ Traffic Calming
- ✓ Safe School plan (currently does not include traffic safety)
- ✓ Crosswalk stings to increase police enforcement
- ✓ Ames School moved bicycle parking to the interior courtyard of the school (bikes parked outside had been vandalized); required students to use locks (there is a lock library at the office and students can check out locks for a week) and; students must register bikes.
- ✓ Partial street closures
- ✓ Crossing Guards
- ✓ Enforce loitering laws
- ✓ In street pedestrian crossing signs
- ✓ Get the engineers from CDOT involved.
- ✓ Calls to Alderman's office to request improvement. Request a traffic study.
- ✓ More parent involvement in LSC.
- ✓ Have coffee sessions with the principal and parents.
- ✓ Walking School Buses
- ✓ Chicago Safe Streets unit (new initiative)
- ✓ Get the principal to come out once a week to visit illegally parked parents. Get some orange cones from Streets and Sanitation Department.
- ✓ Parents are on the corner of Armitage & Hamlin
- ✓ Restrict truck traffic on select streets surrounding Ames and the other schools where student foot traffic is heaviest. Restrictions must be through a legal ordinance and posted.
- ✓ AmeriCorps person at Logan Square Neighborhood Association
- ✓ Get Safe Routes Ambassadors to talk to parents, do training
- ✓ Go to CAPS meeting, get your problem on their list. Go to their next meeting one month later to hear on progress.
- ✓ Parent mentors at Logan Square Neighborhood Association
- ✓ Use the wooden police horses to close or partially close the street
- ✓ Paint for crosswalks and street marking
- ✓ Signs for No Parking
- ✓ Kids Patrols to enlist the middle school students to help manage the safety of the younger students
- ✓ Corner Captains
- ✓ May is Crossing Guard appreciation month
- ✓ Bicycle Ambassadors

It was pointed out that some measures will affect traffic safety and crime. Improving street lighting will reduce criminal activity after dark. Improving street lighting also will benefit pedestrian safety. It was thought that the dual benefits should be promoted.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

- ✓ FedEx is a Safe Kids sponsor.
- ✓ Chicago is a Complete Streets city.
- ✓ 311
- ✓ Tom from the factory is a point of contact regarding the truck traffic.
- ✓ Safe School Team.
- ✓ Streets and Sanitation Department.
- ✓ Parents are required on Emergency Management Team.
- ✓ Logan Square Neighborhood Association.
- ✓ Safety Summit group is meeting next week. (The week of December 4)
- ✓ Chicago Bicycle Federation.
- ✓ AmeriCorps and Senior Corps.
- ✓ CLOCC.net: Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago's Children. 4 years old, has ability to give micro grants of \$2k and more, 1300 members and volunteers, quarterly meetings that are open to the public.
- ✓ Chicago Public School's parent involvement conference December 6 & 7.



Recommendations from the Active Living Resource Center / National Center for Bicycling and Walking

The concern and priority placed on posing some controls on truck traffic on the primary school routes especially those streets that serve the front door of the schools is properly placed. Meetings between the school safety committee or whatever group is going to take the lead on school safety issues and the appropriate alderman's office should concentrate on minimizing this serious hazard immediately; street closings, partial closings, restricted truck access during certain times are all options to be considered.

A uniform template of school zone treatments to include but not be limited to high visibility crosswalk markings should be applied to all of the Logan Square schools. Uniform design will reinforce the message and driver behavior.

Immediate action should be taken to establish better / safer pedestrian connections between Ames and McCauliffe Schools. The foot traffic between these two schools warrants high visibility crosswalks and additional signage at a minimum.

Every opportunity should be taken to create a greater awareness of and respect for the parent patrols and the other safety measures that are either in place or that will be put in place as the SRTS plan unfolds. Potential opportunities include: parent patrol members explaining what they do at school and community meetings and gatherings; school and local newspaper stories; communications through the alderman's office. Get the police and community leaders involved.

Workshop Facilitators

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Internet Resources

The Active Living Resource Center supports a web site that includes valuable SRTS information on it
<http://www.activelivingresources.org>

Video footage of dismissal at Ames Middle School can be viewed at the following URL:
<http://www.bikewalk.net/srts/Ames.wmv>