



Active Living Resource Center City Safe Routes to School Program

Post Workshop Report and Follow-up

Workshop Location
**5865 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, Illinois**

Focus School
**McCutcheon Elementary
School K-8**

Workshop Date
**Tuesday, November 28,
2006**

Workshop Time
9 am - noon

Local Coordinators
**Melody Geraci
Chicagoland Bicycle
Federation**

Background

McCutcheon Community School is K-8, located on the northeast side of Chicago. The school is adjacent to Sheridan Road--a major North/South commuter route into and out of downtown Chicago. Approximately 200 thousand vehicles pass through the neighborhood every day. The school is split between two campuses.

Motor vehicles were the primary threat identified for students and quality of life in the neighborhood. Traffic calming measures have already been taken on nearby streets. Street closures were used to limit cut-through traffic near the school.

Marine Drive, a two lane street parallel to Sheridan Road, had curb extensions and high visibility crosswalks (with textured pavement) added at numerous intersections. Neighborhood streets feature speed humps and on street parking in an effort to calm traffic.

At McCutcheon a substantial number of students are on free/reduced lunch. 40 percent of its students are homeless. Truly a neighborhood school, McCutcheon students are drawn from an 8 block radius around the school. Most come from high rise residential buildings. About a half mile from the school are million dollar homes adjacent to the parkland that abuts Lake Michigan.

The City of Chicago has been involved with SRTS for nearly 10 years. The consciousness of Chicagoans was first raised in 1997 when Mayor Daly began walking children to school in the Edgewater Neighborhood. The City has since partnered with Chicagoland Bicycle Federation on its Bicycle Ambassadors Program, and, more recently, on its Safe Routes to School ambassadors program.

Despite the institutional resources in Chicago, some schools are being missed. Part of this may be due to the sheer magnitude of the Chicago Public School system (600+ schools, 400+ thousand enrollment). One complicating factor for McCutcheon School is that it is located on the boundary between the 46th and 48th Aldermanic Wards. Information and resources must come from both districts and this requires coordination and an extra layer of consensus building.

Attendees

The workshop was held in the library of McCutcheon Community School. Approximately 20 people were in attendance. Present were: the homeless student liaison; Alderman Mary Anne Smith; the assistant from Alderman Smith's office; Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; members of the Local School Council; leaders of the Parent Patrol; the Assistant Principal of McCutcheon; two teachers; Chicago Bicycle Federation and; parents, grandparents, an uncle of McCutcheon students. (An interpreter was present as several parents were not fluent in English.)

Existing Conditions

Snow Removal from sidewalks is a problem. Some property owners do not clear the sidewalks in front of their homes in a timely fashion. Students walk in the street because that has been cleared of snow.

Dog Waste is a problem. Dogs are walked during the morning hours when children are walking to school. The dogs poop on the sidewalks and children step in the poop. The poop is then tracked into the school and into the classrooms. There is a dog park nearby, but not all the new residents in the neighborhood use the dog park.

The school's crossing guard has been struck by motor vehicles three times in 11 years. The incidents occurred because of motor vehicles turning right on red at the signalized intersection nearest the school.

The school has a parent patrol that monitors the area in front of the school. Attrition has been a problem: 15 parents began the program; only eight remain half way into the school year.

The school is bounded on the north side by a signalized intersection and a 3-way stop to the south. Few drivers were observed coming to a complete stop. Some drivers hardly slowed at all. Students cross at that intersection, and there is a city bus stop nearby that is used by students.

Parent behavior was identified as a problem. Parents walking their children to school do not always use the crosswalks. Many cross diagonally at intersections. The children observe this behavior, and then mimic it when they are alone. (This was the assertion of

the crossing guard and the parent patrol captain.) Pedestrian safety education needs to be a priority for students and, more importantly, the parents.

Better use should be made of the neighborhood senior citizens. The idea of making seniors into corner captains was previously discussed, and had been positively received. No action has yet been taken.

A nearby strip mall was identified as a problem. Traffic is a problem at the driveways. Persons loitering near the site present a threat to the students.



Above: On street parking along Sheridan Road makes crossing at the marked crosswalks hazardous. This photo was taken in front of the focus school.

Below: A simple solution is the addition of curb extensions and the striping of a high visibility crosswalk.



McCutcheon Quick Facts



McCutcheon student body

- African-American
- Asian
- Native American
- Hispanic



COMMITMENT TO ACTION

- ✓ Sheridan Avenue is slated for improvements. Among the changes will be curb extensions at many of the crosswalks near McCutcheon School.
- ✓ Call the Alderman's Office (Ward 48) to report problems with snow removal, and dog owners who do not clean up dog waste.
- ✓ Several people who attended the workshop agreed to work on a McCutcheon School Task Force to work through the issues that are creating unsafe (or less than desirable) conditions around the school and along the routes to school. A first step for the task force would be to organize a meeting with representatives from Ward 46 and 48, the Chicago Department Of Transportation, the crossing guards from the nearby schools, the Vietnamese Association, the Boys & Girls club, the Salvation Army, and any other neighborhood groups including business owners and resident associations. Pedestrian safety and Safe Routes to School will be the topic; the issues discussed at the workshop and listed in this report.
- ✓ A second step for the Task Force would be to identify all of the available and potential SRTS resources this would include technical and financial assistance available through local offices for example the alderman's office, Mayor's office, nonprofits like the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation and the Illinois Department of Transportation.

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/mcc.wmv>