

SRTS Carson MS Existing Conditions (Off-Campus)

Crosswalks and Crossing Guards

- King St and Richmond Ave to the north: the crosswalk across Richmond Ave at King St is by far the most heavily used at the school, but there is no crossing guard here; there is no crosswalk over King St at this point though it is the logical place to cross King St since most students arrive at this point by walking across the grass area and along the sidewalks; the lack of a crosswalk across King St forces students to continue east even though many of them are ultimately destined for locations south of King St

high hazard: there should be a crossing guard at an appropriately located crosswalk across King St as about one half of the students walking to and from school need to cross King St at some point

solution: install a crosswalk at King St and Richmond Ave to the north; it is not clear whether the sidewalk should be on the east or west side of the intersection - the east side currently has no wait area, whereas the west has plenty of space; whichever is chosen, Richmond should then be signed for right turn only or left turn only during arrival and departure so that these cars are not turning across the crosswalk; the crosswalk at King St and Richmond Ave to the south is close to this location, would no longer be needed, and should be removed

- Richmond Ave and Telegraph St: a lot of kids are crossing Telegraph St at Richmond Ave in the crosswalk, but then have nowhere to go because there is no crosswalk across Richmond Ave; there is a curb cut on Richmond just where the street bends, which may have once been a crosswalk but is not currently, and is not a good location for the crosswalk in any case because of the bend in Richmond Rd just north of the school boundary; at Richmond and Musser St there is an old crosswalk that is partially covered and faded, which no longer has curb cuts since reconstruction, but students walking up Musser and along Richmond are crossing here; there are no crosswalks over Richmond Ave between King St and well north of the campus, much too long a distance; the lack of a crosswalk in this area essentially cuts off the entire neighborhood northeast of the school from safe access to the school

high hazard: there must be a safe way for students northeast of the campus to reach the school via a crosswalk

solution: recreate a safe crosswalk with curb cuts somewhere between King St and Telegraph St, maybe at Musser St

- King St and Ormsby Blvd: there are crosswalks across Ormsby Blvd, but no crosswalk across King St at this intersection; there is relatively little walking traffic heading west on King St
- King St and Richmond Ave to the south: the crosswalk is signed westbound with a S1-1 sign but without the required W16-7P arrow, and has a yield line, but is not signed or marked eastbound; this sidewalk is little used
- King St and Tacoma Ave: the crosswalk is signed eastbound with a S1-1 sign but without the required W16-7P arrow, and has a yield line, but is not signed or marked westbound; this crosswalk is rarely used

Sidewalks and Bikeways

- student behavior on King St after school has been reported as a major problem, so I focused observations on students in this area: students are forced to walk in the parking lane heading east on the north side of King St because there is no sidewalk; once they are in the street, they tend to scatter and cross at random places, though the majority continued on the north side of King at least

as far as Mountain St; observed bicycles riding the wrong way in the bicycle lane; did not observe any students riding bikes or skateboards in travel lanes; did not observe any intentionally unsafe behavior or belligerence towards drivers

high hazard: walking in the parking and bicycle lane is unsafe, and students must be provide a sidewalk

solution: there must be a sidewalk constructed on the north side of King St between Richmond Ave and Iris St, either in the current front yards or better by replacing the parking lane with an five-foot or more sidewalk; it may be possible to reconfigure the width of King St to widen the crosswalk on the south side as well

- staff and parents pulling in and out of the informal parking area along the east side of Richmond Ave are endangering other drivers and students who are walking along this side looking for a safe place to cross (which doesn't exist)

hazard: this situation must be changed by removing the parking

solution: remove this parking and install a sidewalk and bike lane on the east side of Richmond, so that students may safety walk and bicycle here; the 10m approximate width of Richmond could contain two travel lanes of 3m and two bicycle lanes of 1.8m, with the narrower travel lanes serving to calm traffic; moving this staff parking to the main lot west of the school would have the added benefit of filling that lot and discouraging parents from using it for drop-off and pick-up

- there is a bicycle lane along King St from Ormsby Blvd to Division St, which is well marked and close to current standards; there is a bicycle lane on Ormsby Blvd as far as Calaveras Dr but then the street narrow considerably; Mountain St to the east of school is a recognized north-south travel route but does not have lanes
- observed students trying to ride along Richmond Ave to access the bicycle parking area at the northeast corner of the campus, however, they were threatened by the narrow street width, vehicles pulling into and out of the informal parking spaces in Richmond Ave, including both parents and staff, and vehicles stopping in the travel lane to drop off and pick up students along Richmond; I observed several students almost being hit by vehicles

hazard: this is an unacceptable endangerment of bicycle riders and must be changed

solution: see the solution presented above for sidewalks

- there are two pedestrian exits from the school in the rear fence, to Ormsby Blvd, but don't know how much these are used
- sidewalks are scarce in the neighborhoods surrounding the school, either being present on only one side of the street in many cases or completely absent in a few cases, however, traffic seems to fall off rapidly when getting away from King St and Richmond Ave, so it is probably still possible to create safe routes for bicyclists and walkers even without sidewalks; my observation of traffic in the neighborhoods indicates that it is much more attentive and within speed limits than is the traffic around the school, which tend to be neither

Drop-off and Pick-up

- drop-off is occurring all along Richmond, with parents stopping at various random places; since Richmond is narrow, vehicles stopping here block traffic flow and encourage vehicles to pass each other on this narrow road; see identification of hazard to pedestrians and bicyclist documented above; Richmond could be made either temporarily or permanently one way
- solution:** there must either be a drop-off/pick-up lane created on Richmond, or drop-off/pick-up prohibited, since allowing the situation to continue is hazardous to students

- St Theresa school, which is to the south on Richmond Ave, contributes some students and traffic to the middle school area, but not much, and it seems to have a different arrival and dismissal schedule
- red curbs are mostly painted correctly and used correctly, though Richmond should probably be red the entire length; observed a few cars doing drop-off and pick-up on the faded red curb on Richmond just north King St
- need to add 20 foot crosswalk and 5 foot driveway red curbs at all locations on streets adjacent to the school (though this is the law and drivers should know, there is a low level of awareness and a strong benefit to student safety from making these laws visible)
- there are cars randomly parked along the north side of King St, which is legal at the moment, but makes use of King St north side as a drop-off/pick-up zone inefficient; recommend that the entire length of King St from Richmond to the district office be painted yellow and signed for drop-off/pick-up to remove some pressure from the drop-off/pick-up loop; pushing parking to the south side of King St will have the added benefit of reducing drop-off/pick-up on that side which otherwise encourages students to cross directly from and to vehicles without using crosswalks

School Zone Signing and Times

- the school zone times are insufficient: though students are not supposed to be on campus before 7:30AM, which is the signed time, there are nevertheless many students who arrive earlier or who are validly traveling to school through the zones before 7:30; the purpose of the school zone is to protect students, not for the convenience of the school, so times should match when students are present regardless of school rules; therefore, the posted times should be changed to 7:15 or 7:00
- it is clear from looking at the school zone sign posts that there used to be flashing lights installed on King St, but I have not found anyone who remembers when or why they were removed
- students going to Bordewich Bray ES in the morning are within the Carson MS school zone and between the two zones on King St after the posted time for the middle school (8:15AM), and in the afternoon students going home from Carson MS are between the two zones; drivers are clearly confused by the start and stop of the each school zone and the supporting signage, as evidenced by going the speed limit for a portion of the distance but exceeding the limit for others
- the crossing guard recommended, as have many other people, that there be a single school zone on King St all the way from the beginning on the east at Minnesota to the end on the west at Ormsby, and that flashing lights be installed with a schedule that spans both the elementary school schedule and the middle school schedule
- school zone on west side should be shortened to start at Carville Cir rather than at Ormsby since there is no crosswalk over King St at Ormsby, would remove the need signs on Carville Cir and Pittman Pl, but would still protect the crosswalk over King St at Tacoma Ave

The Upshot

I was told by administrators and many others that the problems at Carson MS were primarily ones of unsafe student behavior and secondarily of unsafe driver behavior. However, my analysis of the physical environmental and observation of student and driver behavior indicates that most of the problems are actually design problems rather than behavior problems. There are old problems such as the lack of sidewalks along King St north side and in the adjacent neighborhoods, and new problems which were created by or exacerbated by reconstruction at the middle school.

I'm sure it will be controversial to suggest that major changes be made to the parking areas, bus lanes and drop-off/pick-up areas at the school, when the construction was just recently completed, but the fact is that traffic flow was either not considered or was mis-designed in the reconstruction, and it needs to be changed now before bad habits are established and students are injured.