

WESTCHESTER ELEMENTARY SLT SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

SUMMARY

Current walking conditions along Scott Boulevard pose a threat to the safety to students walking to and from Westchester Elementary School.

Currently, there are no safe routes to Westchester Elementary for students and parents that must cross and walk along Scott Boulevard to access the school. Parents are scared to walk with students to the school for fear of serious injury, despite numerous programs sponsored by the school system to encourage walking.

It is imperative that the City of Decatur prioritize a plan-of-action for improving the pedestrian safety along the Scott Boulevard traffic corridor.

Improving the safety of walking conditions along and across Scott Boulevard will protect parents and students currently using Scott Boulevard from motor vehicle incidents. Moreover, these improvements will promote walking to school and further Decatur's initiative to become a more walkable city.

The unsafe conditions along Scott Boulevard are an issue for everyone in the community not just the parents and students at Westchester Elementary.

Safety improvements will also help reconnect the businesses, neighborhoods, and parks separated from the heart of Decatur by Scott Boulevard.

FACTS

Westchester Elementary School, K-3, opened in 2014 to relieve overcrowding at other City of Decatur elementary schools. The current enrollment at Westchester Elementary is 250 students plus staff, parents, and visitors.

Westchester Elementary is separated from the walkable core of the City of Decatur by Scott Boulevard, which runs directly in front of the school. Scott Boulevard is a major 4 lane east/west connector from Atlanta to I-285, with posted speed limits of 40 MPH that are the highest within Decatur city limits.

Recognizing the safety issues along Scott Boulevard, the Westchester School Leadership Team (SLT) formed an SLT Safety Committee. The Safety Committee has met routinely during the 2014-2015 school year to develop a set of recommendations that, once implemented, will improve the safety of parents and students walking to and from Westchester Elementary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Safety Committee has met with numerous public transportation experts both at the city and statewide level, including the Georgia Department of Transportation, Decatur Active Living, City of Decatur, and the Atlanta Regional Commission. Based upon these discussions, the committee has developed a set of recommendations for short-term and long-term safety improvements.

The SLT Safety Committee respectfully requests the School Superintendent and Board to work with the appropriate city agencies to carry out a concept design study covering the recommendations listed below.

A concept design study, as discussed by the Safety Committee, is one that comprehensively looks at the full costs of each recommendation, ease of implementation, and implementation strategies. The intent is that such a study could be undertaken by staff at the appropriate agency and would consist of a compilation of existing data coupled with feasible implementation strategies and timelines.

The SLT Safety Committee further requests the support of the School Superintendent and Board to move forward with a petition among the community showing the extent of the support and desire for pedestrian safety improvements along Scott Boulevard.

The need for safety improvements is high, but the availability for funding is low. It will take the combined voices of the School Superintendent, Board, Westchester Elementary parents and students, and concerned community members to raise the alarm and draw sufficient attention to these important safety issues.

WESTCHESTER ELEMENTARY SLT SAFETY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM PLANS

1. Improvements to the crosswalks and intersections of Clairemont Road/Scott Boulevard and Coventry Road/Scott Boulevard, including but not limited to:

- Provide for adequate room for pedestrians to safely wait for the crosswalk light;
- Implement easements where necessary in order to provide adequate standing room while waiting to cross Scott Boulevard;
- Install pedestrian walking signs on the side streets leading to the intersections;
- Provide adequate time to safely walk across Scott Boulevard;
- Adjust the crosswalk signals so that they are automatically change with the traffic light;
- Widen the crosswalk marking to ensure adequate room for parents and children; and
- Complete sidewalks on both sides of neighborhood roads leading to the intersections.

2. The addition of a crosswalk with a hawk light in front of the school located mid-block of Scott Boulevard between Clairemont Road and Coventry Road.

Currently, the only crossing points are Clairemont Road and Coventry Road. An additional crosswalk would enable students to use the sidewalks on the opposite of Scott Boulevard which were built immediately prior to the school opening. These sidewalks are wider and have a raised edge separating them from Scott Boulevard. However, they are not widely used due to the lack of an additional crossing point to the school.

3. Implement additional measures to slow traffic on Scott Boulevard between the intersections of Clairemont Road and Coventry Road, including but not limited to the following:

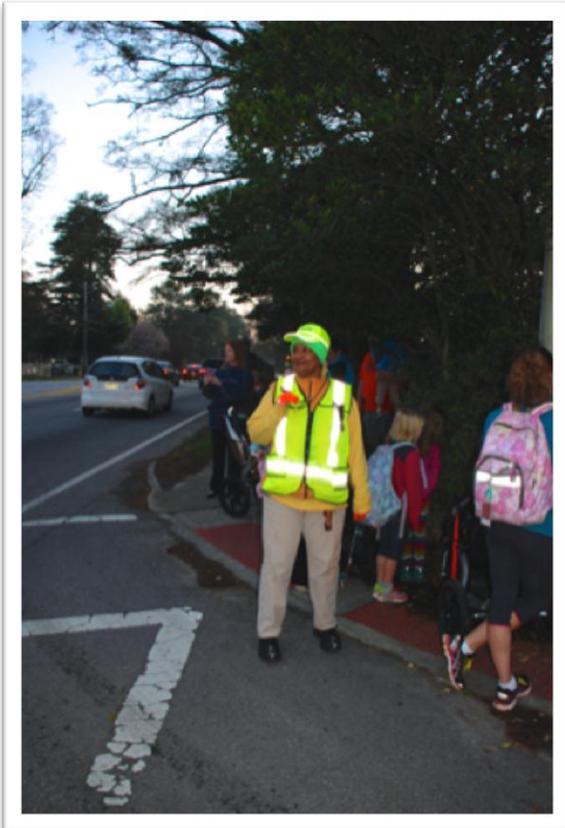
- Increase the area along Scott Boulevard covered by the school speed zone;
- Place signs outside of the school speed zone alerting drivers that they are approaching an elementary school;
- Place signs alerting drivers that students are actively using the crosswalks during school hours;
- Paint “*School Zone*” across Scott Boulevard within the school zone area; and
- Place radar speed signs along Scott Boulevard.

- 4. Provide a dedicated funding source to direct traffic and monitor speeds at Westchester Elementary during times when students are normally arriving and departing the school.**

These resources would not only help pedestrians but also improve the flow of traffic on Scott Boulevard when buses and cars are coming in and out of the school with students.

LONG-TERM PLANS

- 1. Widen the sidewalks and create a clear zone along Scott Boulevard between Coventry Road and Clairemont Road.**
- 2. Commission a pedestrian walkability study for the Westchester Elementary school district that identifies safety issues and recommends specific improvements.**



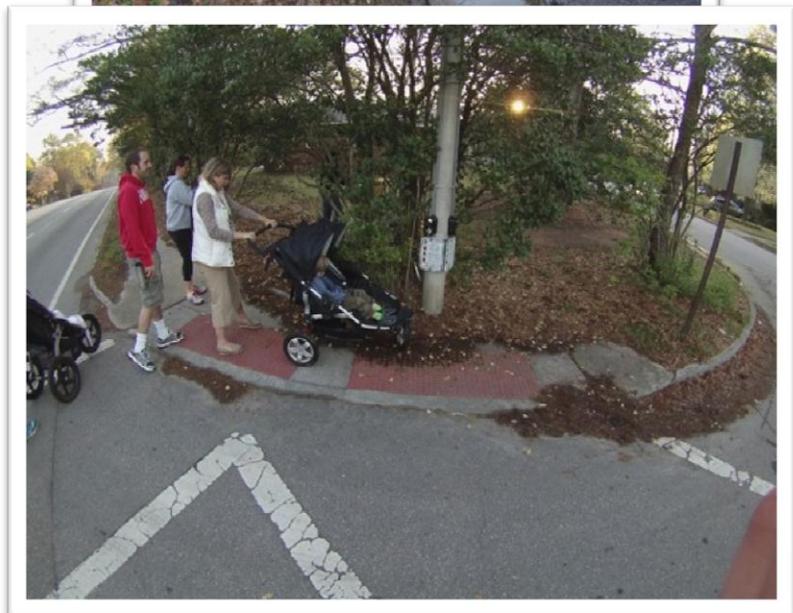
Intersection of Coventry Road and Scott Boulevard

Note that parents and students are standing in the yard adjacent to the crosswalk due to inadequate room to stand. The owners of the property, do not wish for pedestrians to stand in this area as it has created a dirt path through the front yard. But there is no other place to stand and be a safe distance from Scott Boulevard.



Corner of Coventry Road and Scott Boulevard

Coventry Road in the Ponce de Leon Heights neighborhood leading to the standing area to cross Scott Boulevard. Currently there are no sidewalks on the east side of Coventry Road from 231 Coventry westward to Scott Boulevard. In the mornings, there are cars lined up using Coventry Road as a cut through to the Emory area, in addition to cars parked on the street.



Existing Conditions along Scott Boulevard for Pedestrians

These pictures show the walking conditions along Scott Boulevard on the same side as Westchester Elementary. Note the narrow sidewalks and the lack of a clear zone or buffer between the sidewalk and Scott Boulevard. There is inadequate room for more than 2 people side by side and not enough room for people to pass in opposite directions. Many parents typically walk to school with strollers and children walking alongside. The current sidewalk is not wide enough to accommodate this typical type of usage.

