July 5, 2017

Arthur R. Ware, Jr.
Elementary School 2017
Safe Routes to School
Walkabout Report
Walkabout Report

Introduction

On April 28, 2017, City, School, and SAWMPO staff met to conduct a Safe Routes to School Walkabout at the Arthur R. Ware, Jr Elementary School (Ware ES) in Staunton, Virginia. The Walkabout examined the existing walking and bicycling network around the school, and identified potential pedestrian and bicycle improvements to create a safer and more inviting walking and bicycling environment for students and parents. Ware ES is one of three elementary schools serving the City, with an enrollment of 433 students.

The two-hour Walkabout session included a pre-Walkabout meeting, observation of school dismissal, and a debriefing session for the observation teams to discuss their observations of dismissal and network deficiencies. Observation Teams were positioned at key locations along 5th Street to observe student dismissal procedures.

Table 1 summarizes the streets adjacent to Ware ES; Map 1 shows the school’s location and identifies the streets summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Streets – Ware ES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Speed limit</th>
<th>Road Width¹</th>
<th>No. lanes each direction</th>
<th>Sidewalk width and continuity, if present¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grubert Avenue</td>
<td>25 mph</td>
<td>38 ft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Partial (approximately 285 ft. on the western side of the road extending north from 3rd St. towards 5th St. Sidewalk stops in the middle of the block approximately 285 ft.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Street</td>
<td>25 mph</td>
<td>35 ft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Street</td>
<td>25 mph</td>
<td>27 ft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Street</td>
<td>25 mph</td>
<td>25 ft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Street and sidewalk widths are approximate
Map 1: Ware Elementary School

Map Key

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Grubert Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5th Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5th Street Crosswalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3rd Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>West Beverly Street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Existing Conditions

School Location
Ware ES is located at 330 Grubert Avenue in the Staunton Park District in the western portion of the City of Staunton. The School is situated atop a steep hill on Grubert Avenue and 5th Street, and is adjacent to Shelburne Middle School (Figure 2).

Surrounding Neighborhood
Ware ES is located in the Staunton Park District, a residential area in the western region of the City of Staunton consisting of small- to medium- sized single-family homes, small apartment buildings, and the Gypsy Hill Park and Golf Course. Streets in the Staunton Park District are narrow and permit on-street parking. Residential lots in the Staunton Park District are small, and many lack frontage depth, or have other topographical challenges that make it difficult to accommodate sidewalks and bike facilities (Figure 3).

Street Network
The main streets that connect to Ware ES are Grubert Avenue and 5th Street.

Grubert Avenue is located at the front of the school, and runs in a north/south direction. Grubert Avenue is classified as a major collector, and is accessed by West Beverly Street, a minor arterial street approximately ½-mile to the south of the campus.

5th Street is classified as a minor collect, and runs in an east-west direction. It is adjacent to the northern side of the school, and connects to Grubert Avenue to the east and Devon Road to the west.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
Pedestrian and bicycling facilities connecting Ware ES to surrounding neighborhoods consist of sidewalks on Grubert Avenue, two crosswalks on Grubert Avenue, and a crosswalk mid-block on 5th Street. The sidewalk on Grubert Avenue in front of the school is located on the western side of Grubert Avenue and begins at the 3rd Street intersection heading in a northern direction. The sidewalk terminates mid-block and connects to two asphalt paths that lead up to the school. Other sidewalks on Grubert Avenue are located on the eastern side of Grubert Avenue, immediately north and south of the school.
crosswalks located at 3rd Street and at 5th Street. Sidewalks are not present on 3rd Street, 5th Street, F Street, G Street or in the surrounding neighborhoods.

The crosswalks on Grubert Avenue are located at the intersections of 3rd Street, and at 5th Street. These crosswalks are signalized with ladder striping. A crosswalk is also located mid-block on 5th Street at the intersection with G Street (Figure 4). This crosswalk is zebra striped and unsignalized. Crossing guards are posted at each of the crosswalk locations during school arrival and dismissal time. There are no pedestrian or bike facilities located to the west of the school, or in the surrounding neighborhood.

**Signage**

School Zone signs and flashing beacons are located on Grubert Avenue just north and south of the campus to alert drivers of the crosswalks located at the intersections of Grubert Avenue and 3rd and 5th Streets and to be aware students may be in the area. School crosswalk signs are present on 5th Street, approximately 290 feet to the east and west of the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk to alert motorists to the crosswalks atop the 5th Street hill (Figure 6).

**Dismissal Procedures**

School dismissal is 3:30 p.m. The bus pick-up location is at the front of the school. Students not riding the bus are required to wait for their rides in the school cafeteria.

The designated student pick-up area is located in the school’s cafeteria parking lot on 5th Street (Figure 7). 5th Street is accessed by Grubert Avenue to the east and Devon Road to the west. Cones are set up on 5th Street to provide traffic control and guide vehicles into the designated pick-up area; pick-up in the cafeteria parking lot is supervised by school faculty. Students being picked-up in the designated pick up area must wait to be dismissed from campus in the school’s cafeteria when their ride arrives.
A school parking lot is located at the front of the school on F Street; two church parking lots located across 5th Street on G Street (Figure 8) are also used as student drop-off/pick-up locations. These locations are not supervised by school staff. Parents typically escort students to and from campus when using these locations (Figure 9).

Students living within a ½ mile of the school and walk are required to arrive promptly and use routes that do not represent a hazardous situation for them. Students are permitted to ride a bicycle to school only if parents have provided written permission to the school.

**Walkabout Summary**

During the Walkabout session, participants discussed existing issues, observed school dismissal procedures, and examined bike and pedestrian improvements that were made based on recommendations provided by the 2009 Shelburne MS/Ware ES School Travel Plan and a 2010 SRTS grant award.

After the pre-Walkabout meeting, participants were divided into three Observation Teams. Team 1 observed the dismissal process at the Grubert Avenue at 5th Street crosswalk. Team 2 observed dismissal from the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk (adjacent to the school and connecting to G Street). Team 3 was posted to the rear of the school at the corner of 5th Street and Surry Road (located between the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk location and Devon Road).

**Walkabout Observations**

The majority of students were observed leaving campus either by bus or by a family vehicle. The bus loading area is located at the front of the school with buses exiting school grounds via 3rd Street to Grubert Avenue. Walkabout participants noted that the dismissal process ran efficiently and is well supervised by faculty.

Vehicles’ picking up students using the school’s designated pick-up area in the cafeteria parking lot queue up on 5th Street. Traffic queues on 5th Street were observed to extend past F Street to the east (Figure 10), and Surry Road to the west. Vehicles exiting the
designated pick-up area loop around the parking lot and exit the school via 5th Street. Vehicle and pedestrian conflicts are possible at the designated pick-up area between vehicles exiting and tuning right onto 5th Street and pedestrians using the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk (Figure 9).

Sixty-eight students and parents were counted using the mid-block crosswalk on 5th Street. This crosswalk connects the School to two church parking lots located on G Street that is used by parents as a drop-off and pick-up location to avoid sitting in traffic queued on 5th Street. Parents using the church parking lots were observed crossing at the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk to meet students at the school’s main entrance, and escorting them to their vehicles.

A visibility and conflict issue between pedestrians and motorists exists at the 5th Street at the mid-block due to the topography of the site and the crosswalk location at the apex of the hill (Figure 11). There are no crosswalk warning signals on 5th Street to alert motorists when the crosswalk is in use. The sidewalk on the school side of 5th Street mid-block crosswalk is unfinished, and the curb and pavement at the crosswalk is in poor condition (Figure 13).

Two vehicles were observed using the F Street parking lot as a student pick-up location. One student was observed leaving campus on a bike. Ten students were observed walking with an adult escort using the asphalt paths that connect to Grubert Avenue. Two students were observed walking down the asphalt path to the Grubert Avenue at 5th Street crosswalk without an adult escort.

Dismissal took approximately thirty-minutes, during which time the Observation Teams noticed several vehicles illegally parked in the designated pick-up area, left-turn difficulties for vehicles exiting the designated pick-up area, a vehicle entering the pick-up area through the exit, a vehicle jumping out of the 5th Street queue and passing queued traffic on the wrong side of the road (Figure 12), and parents using the two church parking lots across 5th Street from the school to park and pick-up students. No vehicle/pedestrian conflicts were observed at the crosswalk located at the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk during the Walkabout Observation.
Findings: Barriers, Issues, & Opportunities

Barriers
- Topography: Ware ES is located atop a steep hill that presents a challenge to young students that desire to walk or bicycle to school;
- Lack of Sidewalks: The Staunton Park District lacks pedestrian and bicycle facilities that link the school with surrounding neighborhoods;
- Inadequate Frontage: Property frontage in the surrounding neighborhoods in many places lacks the adequate depth to accommodate sidewalks in much of the Staunton Park District;
- Narrow Streets: Many streets in the Staunton Park District lack the adequate width to accommodate sidewalks, bike lanes or other bicycling sharing facilities. Additionally, street parking is allowed in much of the Staunton Park District that may interfere with pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Issues
- Current Staunton School District policy does not encourage students to walk or bicycle to school;
- Incomplete sidewalk and broken curb pavement at the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk (Figure 13);
- Pedestrian/vehicle conflicts at designated pick-up area exit;
- No sidewalks or other pedestrian/bicycling facilities in adjacent neighborhoods;
- Vehicle congestion on 5th Street at student dismissal;
- Older school zone signage;
- The incline on 5th Street creates a blind spot for motorists that may impair their ability to see pedestrians using the 5th Street mid-block crosswalk (Figure 11)

Opportunities
- Develop new School District policy to encourage students to bike and walk to school;
- Encourage parents to use the school’s lower F Street parking lot when dropping-off and picking-up students to decrease queuing on 5th Street;
- Improve existing school zone signage;
- Complete sidewalk, restripe crosswalk, and repair broken curb at the mid-block 5th Street crosswalk;
- Install new school zone and crossing signs;
- Work with the City and property owners to develop a sidewalk network in and around Ware Elementary. Sidewalks should be considered for Grubert Avenue, 3rd Street, and Gray Avenue to connect these roads to Beverly Street.

Figure 13: Broken curb pavement and incomplete sidewalk at the mid-block crosswalk on 5th Street
Recommendations

Strategies to increase the number of students walking and/or bicycling to school include improving existing infrastructure to develop a safer and more convenient pedestrian and bicycling environment; and revising existing school district policy to encourage students to walk and bicycle to school.

Infrastructure Improvements

Sidewalks/Crosswalks
The sidewalk at the 5th Street and G Street crosswalk is incomplete, and the curb pavement is in poor condition. Improvement recommendations include completing the sidewalk, replacing broken pavement at the crosswalk, restriping the crosswalk, and installing crosswalk signals. Completing the sidewalk at this location should be done following ADA guidelines. Figure 13 provides a view of the pavement conditions at the crosswalk. A cost estimate for the recommended improvements to the 5th Street and G Street crosswalk is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Cost Estimate: 5th Street Mid-block Crosswalk & Sidewalk Improvements at Ware ES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Est. Qty.</th>
<th>Unit Price</th>
<th>Total Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concrete Sidewalk</td>
<td>SY</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$ 200.00</td>
<td>$ 8,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asphalt Repair</td>
<td>SY</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$ 200.00</td>
<td>$ 6,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Painted Crosswalk</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$ 500.00</td>
<td>$ 500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pedestrian Yield Sign</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$ 150.00</td>
<td>$ 300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RRFB Crosswalk Signal</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$ 11,500.00</td>
<td>$ 23,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Handicap Ramp</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$ 1,500.00</td>
<td>$ 1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CG-6 Curb and Gutter</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>$ 50.00</td>
<td>$ 3,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sub Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$ 43,200.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimate provided by the City of Staunton Engineering Department

Parking Lots/Access
- Consider installing movable gates to replace the current cone system used to direct traffic into the designated drop-off/pick-up area in the cafeteria parking lot. A barrier of this type would discourage parents from entering through the wrong entrance and cutting vehicles off.
- Encourage more parents to use the F Street parking lot to reduce queuing issues and vehicle conflicts on 5th Street.
- Place someone at the designated pick-up area exit to direct traffic exiting the pick-up area.
- Work with the churches to improve parking visibility and restrripe parking area.
Programmatic Recommendations

Programmatic recommendations are designed to work in conjunction with each other to instill safe walking, bicycling, and driving practices. The recommendations are organized according to the “E’s” of Safe Routes to School: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation. (1)

Education
Incorporate information on walking and bicycling to school in communications with parents. At the beginning of and throughout the school year, provide parents with information to clarify that Ware ES and the Staunton City School District supports walking and bicycling to school. This communication can also be used to suggest ways that parents can support safe walking and bicycling, and promote the social and health benefits of walking and biking.

Integrate pedestrian and bicycling safety education into the school curriculum. Pedestrian and bicycle safety education will ideally occur in advance of major walk or bike to school events, so that children are adequately prepared and have an opportunity to practice the skills they have learned. The Child Pedestrian Safety Curriculum produced by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is an example a curriculum that might be used for this instruction.

Provide parents and parents with safe driving information and materials that stress the importance of driving safely in school zones and being alert for pedestrians and bicyclists during arrival and dismissal. These materials can be provided during back-to-school nights, health and safety fairs, and Safe Routes to School events, among others.

Encouragement
Participate in statewide walking and biking to school events. Events like International Walk to School Day, held in October, and National Bike to School Day, held in May, are used to celebrate walking and bicycling to school. These events provide an excellent opportunity to not only get students walking and bicycling, but also to teach them the benefits of an active lifestyle.

Establish a park-and-walk system for student pick up and drop off. Recommend that parents park their vehicles at the F Street parking lot on campus and walk to pick up or drop off their children. Parents who park and walk at this location will likely save time compared to those waiting in the vehicle queue.

Hold monthly or weekly walk or bike to school days. Formalized walking and biking events once a month will carry over the momentum from International Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day. Participate in Crossing Guard Appreciation Month. In Virginia, Crossing Guard Appreciation Month takes place in February and gives schools, students, parents, and the community the opportunity to recognize their school’s crossing guard and to thank them for the service that they provide. Schools can hold events

1 The fifth E is Engineering, included in this report under Infrastructure Recommendations
recognizing their crossing guards and parents can nominate their crossing guard as one of Virginia’s Most Outstanding Crossing Guards of the Year.

These events will also provide opportunities to for the School to partner with different stakeholder groups and community associations throughout the school year.

**Enforcement**
Develop new policies for parents and parents picking up and dropping off their children. Policies can include restricted parking during pick-up and drop-off, carpooling, and restricting vehicles from entering student drop-off and pick-up locations from the wrong direction.

**Evaluation**
Conduct Student Travel Tallies. Student Travel Tallies are an effective way to get baseline data for student travel patterns. In Virginia, Student Travel Tally Week is in September and schools across the state record how students are getting to school. This data can then be used to identify trends and help guide the types of projects that a school’s Safe Routes program should develop.

Administer Parent Surveys. Parent surveys are similar to student travel tallies in that they help a school get a better sense of how students are getting to and from school, but the parent surveys also help collect information on parents’ attitudes towards walking and bicycling and reasons why they may or may not allow their children to walk or bike to school. Administering parent surveys at least once a year can help determine whether Safe Routes to School efforts are changing parent’s attitudes towards walking and bicycling to school.

Additionally, the Staunton City School District should consider applying for a SRTS Division Coordinator. Division coordinators are funded through VDOT SRTS Non-Infrastructure grants and can initiate and support various activities for a year-long, comprehensive SRTS program. Note: In order to be eligible for a SRTS Division Coordinator, at least three schools from the division must participate in the program.
Appendix A: Walkabout Photographs

Walkabout participants took photographs to document the Walkabout as well as supplement the Walkabout project recommendations.

Photo 1: Asphalt Path from School to Grubert Avenue

![Photo 1: Asphalt Path from School to Grubert Avenue](image1)

Photo 2: 5th Street Crosswalk on Grubert Avenue looking west towards the mid-block crosswalk

![Photo 2: 5th Street Crosswalk on Grubert Avenue looking west towards the mid-block crosswalk](image2)
Photo 3: Vehicles Queued on 5th Street for to enter designated student pick-up area

![Photo 3](image1.jpg)

Photo 4: Broken pavement at 5th Street mid-block crosswalk & parents escorting students to vehicles parked in the G Street church parking lots

![Photo 4](image2.jpg)
Photo 5: Uphill View of Ware ES from Grubert Street

Photo 6: View of 5th Street heading west from Grubert Avenue