



Safe Routes to School Action Plan – Aberdeen, Idaho

Background

Aberdeen, Idaho is a largely agricultural community of nearly 2,000 people and is located in the southeast portion of the state on the western edge of American Falls Reservoir. The community has been in existence for nearly 120 years and has been recognized for its numerous contributions to agricultural research and for its rich harvests. State Highway 39 is Main Street and is composed of 4 travel lanes, one two-way left turn lane and on-street parking on both sides. The state highway sees approximately 3,000 vehicle trips per day, many of them agricultural trucks. Local streets were built in a grid fashion which provides excellent connectivity for local travel. Further, several street segments include sidewalks and many of the streets provide angled on-street parking. Recently, the city has also planned and completed segments of a pathways plan called the Gem Trail which once completed, provides for both walking and bicycling to residents and students.

The students of the city attend Aberdeen Elementary, Middle or High school which are all housed within the same general block and located between Central Ave. and Fremont Ave. and fronting on Washington Avenue and 4th West Street. The two schools at the focus of the Safe Routes to School effort were the elementary school which serves preschool through 5th grade, and Aberdeen Middle School which serves the 6th- 8th grades.

Walking conditions vary due to the presence and state of repair of sidewalks, the unfinished shoulders of most local roads, and the barrier effect of State Highway 39, which essentially divides the community into two halves with students prohibited from crossing by foot or bike to attend school.



Recommended Infrastructure Improvements

After reviewing conditions both in person and from afar, along with input provided by community stakeholders, a list of infrastructure improvements was created. Some can be completed more quickly at lower costs and others will take more time and money. Once implemented, the projects should help improve walking and bicycling conditions for students and the citizens of Aberdeen by heightening awareness, providing safe haven, and improving safety for both motorists and active transportation users.

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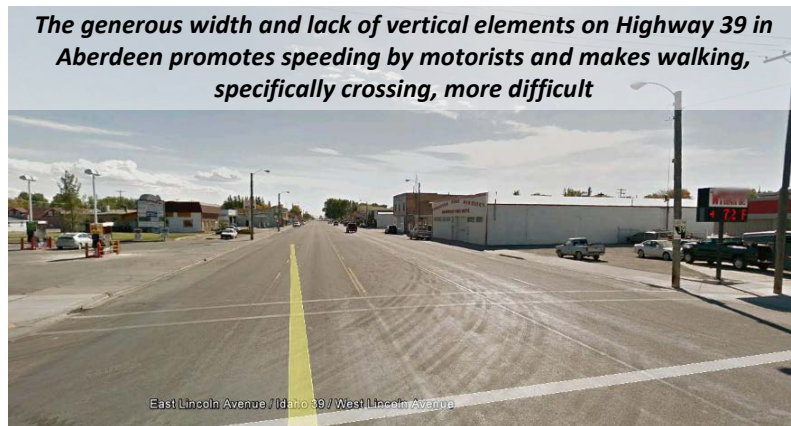
Create safer walking and biking conditions on Highway 39, especially at crossings, and better utilize the generous width. The width of the roadway contributes to higher than posted speeds. There is a desire by drivers from nearby rural areas who use the highway as a through route to keep speeds higher and a concern for serving the industry supporting truck traffic that uses the highway. Yet when a study was conducted of alternative highway bypass routes they were rejected by a large margin of the public who wanted to access downtown. Changed conditions suggest that strategies to calm (slow) traffic will help to revitalize downtown and will have economic benefits.

1. Immediate steps to make the highway safer include:

- More robust crosswalks to heighten motorists awareness, these should include in-pavement pedestals and ladder style crosswalk markings.
- Curb extensions, especially at Central Avenue can shorten crossing distances and replace the curb ramps that have created the trip hazards around building foundations.

2. Longer-term, work with ITD to revise the corridor study and plan for the highway in light of the economic changes in Aberdeen. Utilize the considerable right-of-way space currently in place for a more robust people network to include:

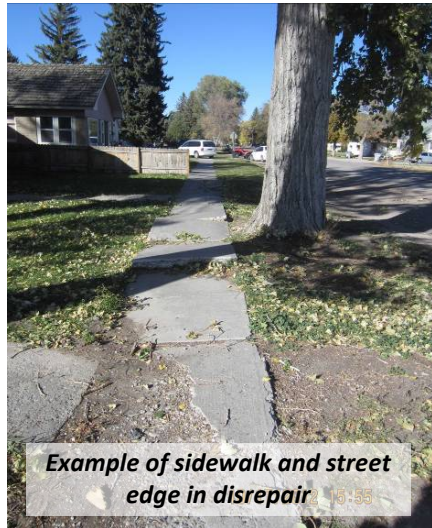
- Reducing section from five lanes to three lanes
- Short-term; add median island crossings in downtown – longer-term; construct boulevard medians to break up the visual landscape and act as traffic calming
- Landscaping for aesthetics and traffic calming, and
- Bicycle facilities to designate safe riding space.



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- 3. Repair Existing Sidewalk:** Fill gaps and extend segments to pavement at intersections. There are many sidewalk segments in disrepair west of Highway 39. To promote the use of these sidewalks and optimize each segment, the city should seek to work with property owners to repair existing sidewalks and fill the gaps where there are missing sidewalk segments. This could be done on a cost-share basis to encourage landowners to cooperate. Over time the city should also fund the extension of sidewalks to the pavement edge at intersections. Prioritize routes to the schools;

- Central Avenue – Main (Highway 39) to Washington
 - N 3rd W St - Custer to Central
 - N 3rd W St - Central to Cassia
- Central Ave. and 3rd W St. are principal local roads providing access to both the elementary and middle school campuses. Many segments on these roadways currently have sidewalks, though many of the sidewalk segments are in disrepair. By fixing these first the city can set the stage for students west of the highway to safely walk and bike to school.



- 4. Shared Lane Markings.** Place shared lane arrows or “sharrows.” The use of “sharrows” can heighten driver awareness and also encourage bicyclists. The current conditions of degraded asphalt shoulders makes bicycling unsafe outside of the currently paved road meaning motorists and bicyclists need to share the same space. Shared lane arrows will make that sharing official and provide wayfinding for bicyclists as well as indicate that on-street parking should be on the shoulder. Again, prioritize routes to schools to provide safety for students more quickly:



- Central Avenue - S 7th E St. to Washington St.
- 3rd W St – Ada to Boise Ave.

- 5. Develop On-Site Stormwater Retention Plan** to utilize the generous right-of-way for management and treatment of stormwater on site and to create a more aesthetic right-of-way. Conduct a demonstration project to construct a landscaped retention swale between the edge of the sidewalk and the maintained road edge. This treatment uses a combination of vegetated and engineered strategies to manage rain or melting snow (runoff), allowing it to soak into soil, filtering it, and reducing the amount of stormwater overflowing into the streets and making its way into storm sewer pipes. When landscaped they can also provide cooling, shade, and aesthetics.

- Central Avenue or S 3rd W St are prime candidates to test green street techniques for stormwater treatment.



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6. Stripe and sign crosswalks at intersections within the established school zone areas. The paint used to stripe many of the existing crosswalks has become faded or even rubbed away completely. To increase awareness of crossing pedestrians to motorists, it is essential to continue to maintain all paint schemes at crosswalks in intersections within the established school zone areas.

7. Introduce Back-in Diagonal Parking. Change parking paint scheme on Washington Avenue/4th Avenue to back-in angled parking. This allows the continuation of shared lane arrow use. To continue with a safer bicycling environment, design guidelines call for back-in angled parking rather than front in angled parking adjacent to bike lanes or sharrows. This is so that drivers can better see cyclists as they pull out and encourages passengers to walk toward sidewalks rather than the street.



7. Continue Pathway Implementation by prioritizing Gem Trail segments inside the city limits where no sidewalks currently exist. The northern part of the city west of Highway 39 has many sidewalks, though they are in disrepair. However, east of Highway 39 and to the south there are few sidewalks. The trail plan identifies Central Avenue and a trail south of the schools spanning to the eastern edge of the city. To provide safer



An existing crosswalk on Highway 39 and direct connection with the school make Fremont Ave. an appealing street for walking and bicycling.

walking and biking we recommend prioritizing and constructing these two segments by widening the asphalt in the existing right-of-way to create a shoulder pathway. Stripe or use an extruded curb to designate the pathway.

- Central Ave. east of Highway 39. There is currently no sidewalk or paved shoulder, it serves as a primary connection to the school from the east side of town and it can utilize an improved crossing on Highway 39.
- Fremont Ave. – Consider placing the trail on the south side of the city on Fremont rather than Custer Ave. Fremont already has a designated crossing at the south of the general school zone. Fremont can provide a safer highway crossing as it is further from the highway curve and has an existing designated highway crossing. It is also a more direct route to the schools. If this route is chosen extend trail to S2800W (N Powerline Road) through the school grounds.

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Policy Recommendations

The consultants reviewed planning and policy for the city and school district. Recommendations are below.

City Recommendations

1. **Update and Enforce Sidewalk Repair Ordinance.** The sidewalks in Aberdeen are in disrepair in many locations. Repairing them will require collaborative effort by the city and the adjacent landowners. The city currently has an ordinance requiring adjacent landowners to keep sidewalks in good repair. It is not consistently enforced or understood. The city should review its ordinance and determine how to enforce or motivate landowners to partner in sidewalk repair (Infrastructure #2).
2. **Promote Replanting and Maintenance of Street Trees** by developing a program to encourage the planting and replanting of street trees along road edges. Trees offer many benefits from cooling and wind protection to aesthetics. The program should seek to cost share or offer another incentive to homeowners who might plant trees.
3. **Encourage Low Impact Development Stormwater Policy.** The city public works and transportation planning have identified the need for improvements in stormwater drainage. Emerging best practice in storm drainage utilizes natural processes to filter and manage drainage in bioswales along road edges. Adopting a policy in support of this strategy will allow the city to



New street trees provide many benefits

begin planning and looking for funding to implement these strategies (Infrastructure #4).

4. **Prioritize Pathway Improvements.** Consider budgeting Roadway funds to expand shoulders on designated trail routes for bicycle pedestrian use (Infrastructure #7).
5. **Develop Standard Crossing treatments.** Clearly spell out expectations in city road standards for pedestrian crossings such as signage, pavement markings and curb extensions to support city initiated changes on local streets and especially for requests to ITD for changes on Highway 39 crossings.

School District Recommendations

1. Adopt a general policy promoting regular physical activity by students.
2. Recognize physical and academic benefits of physical activity
 - Add promoting healthy lifestyles to general policies.
 - Develop active transportation goal (to promote walking and biking when safe) in wellness policy.
3. Support active transportation/Safe Routes to School program
 - Add subpolicy in Transportation Policy encouraging kids to walk and bike to school when safe.
 - Provide hazard bussing on unsafe routes, add goal to fix hazards and promote walking/biking.
 - Develop policy to share facilities as a means to make most efficient use of tax dollars. Consider policy to collaborate regularly with the city on joint use of facilities and planning.

Joint City/School District Recommendations

1. Develop policy to share facilities as a means to make most efficient use of tax dollars. Consider policy to collaborate regularly with the city on joint use of facilities and planning.

Note: Model language for policy and ordinance recommendations are include in the resources link.

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Non-Infrastructure Recommendations

1. Plan and conduct a spring and fall clean-up day to encourage sidewalk and street tree maintenance.
2. **Develop a Sidewalk Location and Condition Inventory** and conduct assessment regularly. Include sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, and general concrete/pavement conditions to inform continual efforts and determine priorities. The city has sidewalks in more areas than currently recognized in its transportation plan. Developing a good inventory of sidewalk location and condition as well as a list of needed improvements is the first action needed to support an updated sidewalk and maintenance policy and enforcement program. Use the sidewalk inventory to identify key sidewalk gaps and prioritize improvements in plans and budgets.
3. **Conduct School Surveys and Tallies Annually.** Use annual survey findings to continually help identify the locations for needed crossings on local streets. In addition surveys can inform the city where sharrows or other pavement markings may be useful on local streets as walking and bicycling rates increase.
4. Continue **Walk to School/Walk at School Day.** This event encourages walking and can be used to teach safe habits. Work toward making this a more regular event, perhaps once a month or more often if volunteers can be found to help.
5. Consider conducting an **Annual Bike Rodeo**, perhaps partnering with American Falls.
6. With school district support, the team should explore a **Walking School Bus** in Aberdeen to ensure that kids use the designated

routes and have an adult present to help at crossings, specifically Highway 39.

Note: *The Bonneville School District has a great deal of experience with this concept and may be a resource as well.*



Note: Model and sample policies and other tools are available at: <http://www.idahosmartgrowth.org/index.php/resources/> – go to Best Practices

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