



Safe Routes to School Action Plan – Menan, Idaho

Background

Menan, population 741, is located in Jefferson County near Rigby. Jefferson School District has one elementary school, Midway, in Menan located on the west side of Highway 48 which runs north/south. A county route, the Menan/Lorenzo Highway, runs east and west, intersects Highway 48 north of the school and is the Main Street for Menan. Midway Elementary School is located just south of the intersection on high speed continuous right turn curve on Hwy 48.

Local businesses include an agricultural co-op, and a large potato warehouse and distribution operation. The co-op has two sites on Main St.; a market/restaurant/gas station in the middle of town and equipment supply store at the intersection with Highway 48. It is proposing to consolidate to one site at the northwest corner of the Main St./Highway 48 intersection. The warehouse and other industrial buildings are east of Highway 48 across from the school. A railroad track runs behind those buildings parallel to the highway. All of the residences in Menan are located on the east side of Highway 48 and the railroad tracks.

Menan proactively planned and built a pathway system with funding secured to connect the pathway to a larger greenbelt. It runs south of and parallel to Main St. and a canal from the east edge to the west side of town. It crosses the canal on the east and just before it reaches the railroad tracks on the west it turns south through a park to 630N, the street that leads to the school. Students on foot or bike are encouraged to use this route to reach a crossing on Highway 48 in front of the school.

The students must cross both the railroad and the highway to reach the school. The school district buses all of the students in Menan due to the safety hazard presented by the railroad track and the highway. The parents have organized a 'Pacers' walking program at lunch time at the school due to the unsafe walking conditions to school. They annually celebrate the Pacers program with a community-wide Fun Run.



Recommended Infrastructure Improvements

Highway 48 Crossing The Highway 48 crossing at the school has seen important improvements in the last year. A sidewalk was built from the west side of the highway into the school grounds so that students don't have to walk in the pavement where the buses are pulling into the parking lot. Another sidewalk segment was built on the east side of the highway to the south of a warehouse to the railroad track. Landings were added on both sidewalk segments. Flags were constructed by a community member and are now posted on both sides of the crossing for pedestrians to carry. Walker Warehouse has asked employees not to park on the south of the building where it interferes with the vision triangle of drivers and where it can force pedestrians into the roadway. They have also built steps from the warehouse to the new sidewalk.



Hwy 48 crossing improvements

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The school district continues to safety-bus the students in Menan because of the railroad track and the speed on the highway. The improvements at the crossing have made it safer to access the school. However, additional improvements are recommended.

1. **Install a pedestrian-activated signal.** A pedestrian-activated signal at the highway crossing adjacent to Midway School would alert drivers when pedestrians are present.



The truck traffic on this route suggests that a signal on mast arms such as a HAWK may be most effective. The team could also consider a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB). In addition more robust roadway paint markings indicating SCHOOL X-ING are recommended. A crossing guard would be helpful at this location. The school district (potentially in partnership with the city) could consider supporting a crossing guard and compare the cost of that with the costs of safety-busing students at this location. A regular maintenance schedule should be developed for the crosswalk paint and any additional pavement markings.

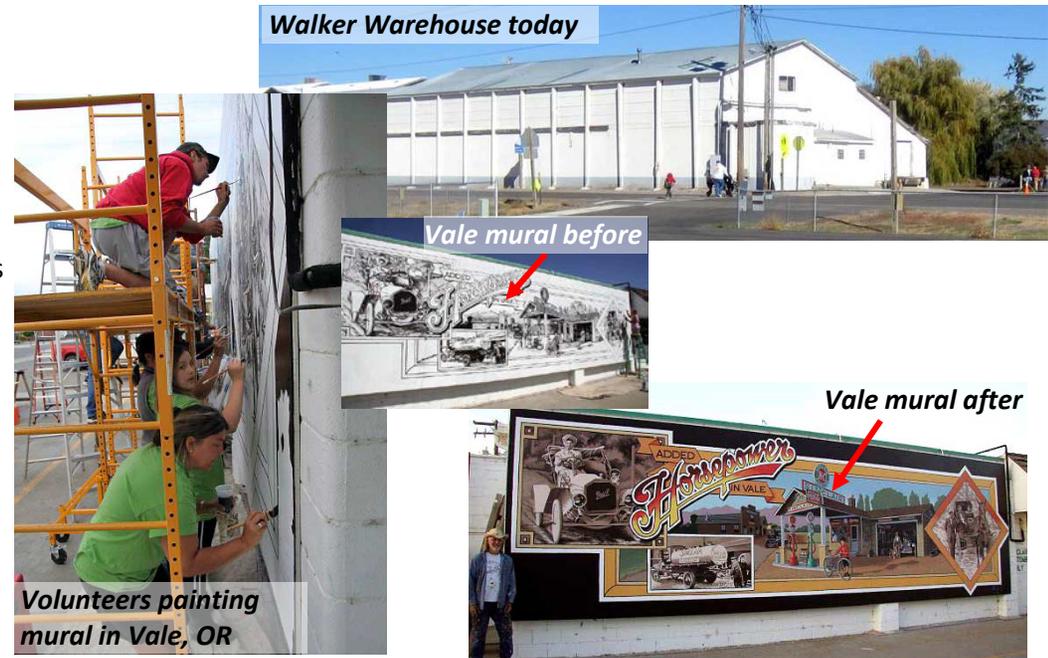
2. **Improve school zone strategies.** There are a number of other strategies to explore in the vicinity of the crossing. Currently there are flashing signs warning drivers of the upcoming school speed zone. The signs are presently over 500 feet from the crossing and when coming from the north the crossing is not visible at the flasher location due to the curve of the highway.



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Additional flashers should be considered nearer the crossing; standards allow them to be placed at a distance of 150-210 feet. Furthermore, the flashers are currently only active during morning and afternoon school start and release hours which doesn't cover the time during kindergarten release and during the day as parents, volunteers and others come and go. The speed limit should be slowed during all times when children are present. The district should request that ITD turn on the flashers for additional time(s) such as during lunch hour, as that is the time of kindergarten release, with continued support from the sheriff on enforcement.

3. **Calm traffic on Highway 48.** Other elements that alert drivers to the presence of the school should be considered. Roadside signs with information about the school or other visual elements such as flags or banners that indicate the school presence would add visual cues to drivers that they are near a destination where people will likely be present, which slows speeds. The community could also work to paint a mural on the side of the Walker Warehouse building.



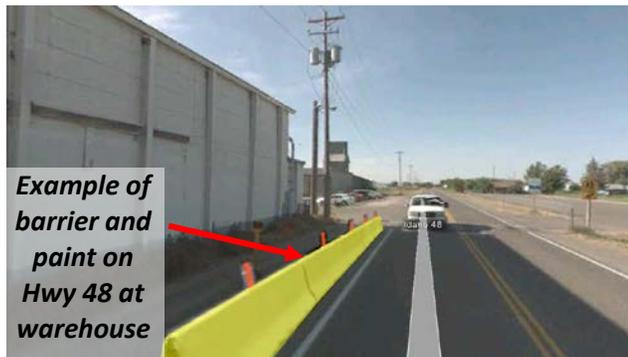
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Co-op Access The Valleywide Co-op will continue to be one of Menan’s most important destinations, even more so if rebuilt at a consolidated site. The team should review access from the school site to the new co-op site. Students are currently encouraged to use the pathway route by crossing both the highway and railroad tracks, proceeding north on a pathway through the park then re-crossing the railroad and highway. A more direct route crosses the highway, travels along the edge of the highway and the Walker Warehouse, then re-crosses. There are challenges with both routes. The pathway crosses/re-crosses the highway and rail road, has an open canal section at the northern crossing and is slightly longer. The more direct route travels along a high-speed highway with little separation or protection for pedestrians/bikes. It also crosses an open driveway heavily used by trucks at the Walker Warehouse with no designated pedestrian facilities then re-crosses the highway at the northern intersection.



Example of wayfinding at pathway entrance

4. **Wayfinding for the pathway route** If the pathway is the preferred route the team should pursue promotional and way-finding signage at the school crossing pointing to the pathway and destinations that can be reached from it to encourage pedestrians and bicyclists to use the pathway rather than the highway to reach the Co-op and other destinations. It also offers the community an opportunity to brand itself.



Example of barrier and paint on Hwy 48 at warehouse

5. **Make the highway route safer** by placing jersey barriers along the road edge to provide a safe walking zone. These are unattractive and the community could work to get volunteers to paint the barriers with brightly colored scenes. This provides another cue to drivers they’re near an important destination and should slow down. We recommend painting a **pedestrian way** along the driveway to the warehouse to designate where pedestrians should walk as they cross the driveway and where drivers should look for them.



Main Street/Local Roads The other key roadway in Menan is Main Street. Main currently has no marked crosswalks and the landings at the intersections are not improved for pedestrians. The city council is pursuing marked crosswalks at some intersections. A transportation study is being pursued for the intersection of Main Street/Highway 48. It will look at traffic and design features such as the free right-turn curve, a potential roundabout or returning to a four-leg intersection. It will also consider the possibility of changing the highway designation from the current Highway 48 to Main Street. Recommendations for Main Street include:

6. Continue to develop and implement a plan to **mark crossings on Main Street** at key points. Add pavement markings, improved landings (even if they are initially only gravel – eliminate puddles) and signage. The city should consider adding centerline pedestal signs to these crossings. In addition the roadway should be striped with a centerline and shoulder line to remind drivers that they are in town and should slow down. Narrowing the lanes to 11’ or less is recommended.

Note: These strategies will become even more important if the highway designation is changed from its current alignment to a Main Street alignment. Discussion of the possibilities around that change should include speed limits, pavement markings crosswalk markings and signage and paint maintenance.



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7. A full traffic study will be needed to inform the decision on how the **intersection of Highway 48 and Main Street** can be reconfigured after the Co-op moves. It will be important to ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists be well served and not merely accommodated at the intersection. In any design the intersection should have painted crosswalk markings on **all four legs of the intersection** and the curb radius should be narrowed on the legs where that is possible to shorten crossing distance. Add appropriate signs and pavement markings. If the intersection is rebuilt as a roundabout, design it for pedestrian crossing and safety.
8. **Add sharrows.** Local roads designated as school bus routes, and/or routes to the most used destinations can be marked with shared lane arrows (sharrows) to remind drivers to watch for pedestrians and bicyclists. Other local roads are generally low in volume and speed and don't require further improvements at this time.



Policy Recommendations:

The consultants reviewed planning and policy documents for the city and school district.

City Recommendations

1. To meet the **Comprehensive Plan goals** of increasing the opportunity for affordable housing and housing for seniors; 1) **Allow Accessory Dwelling Units** as an administrative approval if they meet standards. 2) Consider a small **Neighborhood Marketplace zone** in the village center. In addition the city should change the requirements to shield and buffer uses from each other and pursue design strategies to make neighboring uses compatible. Model ordinances that outline those standards and strategies are included in the resource link.
2. **Prioritize pathway network** in transportation capital improvement planning, looking at all funding sources including perhaps STP rural funding. This strategy will require coordination and cooperation from surrounding jurisdictions and agencies such as the highway district.

3. Use the **conditions inventory** to identify key barriers to walking and help to identify improvements such as locations for crossings on Main Street and sharrow markings.

School District Recommendations

Every school that accepts federal funding for school lunches is mandated to have wellness policies that include goals for physical activity. In addition every school district in Idaho is required to have a transportation policy to support busing. These two policy areas provide an opportunity to adopt policies that support walking and biking to school. Model policy language in each of the following areas is included in the resource link.

4. **A general policy** promoting regular physical activity.
5. **Wellness policies** that support walking and biking to school and recognizing the academic benefits for active students.
6. **A general transportation policy** that supports active transportation (walking and biking) when it's safe.
7. **Specific transportation policies** as appropriate to support a Safe Routes to School program, data collection on walking and biking, support for organizing adults to supervise students walking and biking (i.e. a walking school bus) and support for crossing guards.
8. Review school district policies on **school site size**; consider criteria that would allow smaller size, such as sharing fields and other facilities, compact site design, savings on existing infrastructure, etc.

Joint City/School District Recommendations

Develop policy and process to meet regularly, collaborate on facility planning and share facilities as a means to make most efficient use of tax dollars.

Non-Infrastructure Recommendations

Conditions Inventory, Bike/Ped Counts:

1. **Continue conditions inventories.** Utilize the information from the conditions inventory to inform improvements at the crossings on Main Street any barriers to walking and biking found on local streets.

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Surveys:

2. **Use survey findings** to help identify the locations that need crossings on Main Street. In addition the surveys can inform the city where sharrows or other pavement markings may be useful on local streets.
3. **Implement a walking school bus.** With school district support, the team should explore a walking school bus in Menan to ensure that kids use the designated routes and have an adult present to help at crossings. Information about walking school bus is included in the resource link. The Bonneville School District has a great deal of experience with this concept and may be a resource as well.

Events

4. **Continue the Pacers program** to get students walking. It provides a great opportunity for students to be physically active regardless of barriers to safe active transportation.
5. **Hold safety assemblies** annually or integrate the information shared during the assembly into the Health or PE curriculum.
6. **Continue an annual Fun Run** to celebrate the Pacers program. Consider adding a **Bike Rodeo** on the day of the Fun Run in partnership with the sheriff's department to teach safe biking skills. Information about organizing a Bike Rodeo is in the resource link.



Bike Rodeos can be fun and educational

This project was conducted by Idaho Smart Growth and Vitruvian Planning with support from the Idaho Transportation Department



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