

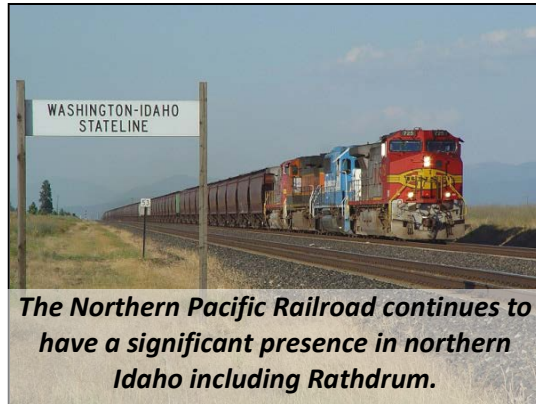
Safe Routes to School Plan – Rathdrum, Idaho



Background

Rathdrum is a town of 6,826 that is located in the middle of the Rathdrum Prairie north of Coeur d'Alene in Idaho's panhandle and is one of the oldest cities in Idaho. The Northern Pacific Railroad helped put the town on the map as an industry hub. The current economy is supported by construction, retail and some manufacturing. In recent years, the four-season climate, scenery and proximity to Idaho's and eastern Washington's attractions have helped increase the community's population by nearly 50% since 2000. With a steady influx of new residents, area schools continue to grow.

The Rathdrum project began by looking at access issues at John Brown Elementary School. The project team expanded the scope to include Lakeland Junior High School as the schools are co-located on the north of Rathdrum and share common issues.



Main Street forms the northern boundary of both school grounds with the active rail corridor running north of Main Street. John Brown Elementary is on the western side of the property and Washington Street runs along its west edge; the school administration building and middle school track are to the south. Highway 41 forms the southern boundary of the property and fronts the junior high while Main Street swings south to intersect with Highway 41 on the eastern edge. Most of the students who attend John Brown Elementary live south of the campus, while a smaller contingent live northwest of the rail line; all within walking distance. The middle school boundaries are larger, but many students also live within walking distance. The section of Main Street near the schools is lightly used. Highway 53 intersects Highway 41 in a T intersection just east of the campus.

Highway 41, is 3-lanes directly in front of the schools changing to two lanes as it reaches Washington St. The road is planned to be 3 lanes all the way through Rathdrum in the future. Rather than on-pavement bicycle lanes or sidewalks, 10' multi-use pathways were constructed on both sides of the highway providing a great beginning for a pedestrian/bicycle network in

Rathdrum. The northern pathway spans from Meyer Road at the east near the city baseball fields, to the campus, crossing Highway 53 on the way. It is slated to continue further west in the future by another 500'. On the south side of the highway the pathway runs from Westwood St. at the east to the southern edge of town at Boekel Street. Some pathway sections south of Stevens are shoulder running and south of Crenshaw Street are on-sidewalk.

The speed limit on the highway is 35 mph, few signs inform motorists. There are four crosswalks spanning Highway 41 and one at the intersection of the two highways; two cross 2-lane sections and three cross 3-lane sections. None of the crosswalks have pedestrian lighting. Signs noting the crosswalks are either located incorrectly or missing altogether. There are no signs giving drivers warning of approaching crosswalks, such as "Crosswalk Ahead" signs. The community has taken the impressive step of a city/school district collaboration to fund crossing guards in front of the schools in the morning and afternoon to improve safety in crossing the highway.

Access to the junior high is congested. Parents drop off students in the same space as pedestrians and bicyclists arriving. Bike racks are located near the roadway close to the entrance being used by cars and are not covered. Elementary school access has been much improved by a new one-way section on Washington that routes parents so that drop-off is on the right side. They have also established a routine of pick-up at the back of the school on Main Street.



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Recommended Infrastructure Improvements

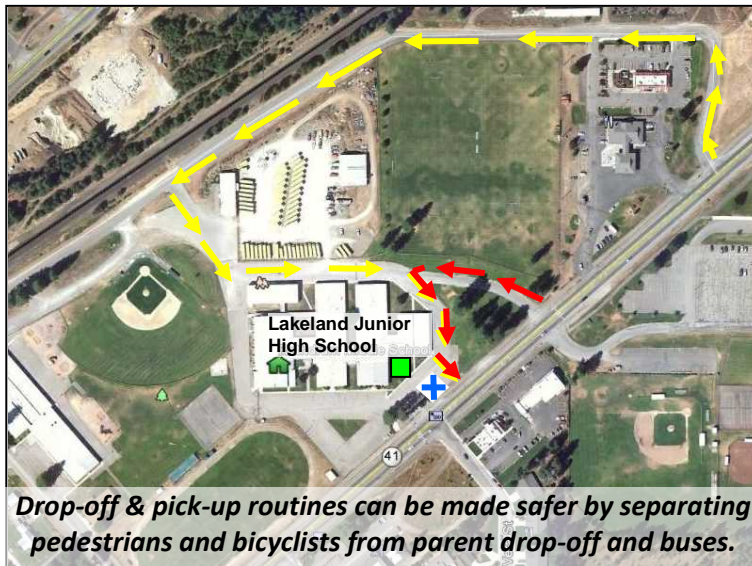
Highway 41 – Clearly the Highway 41 corridor is of paramount importance to students, parents and citizens of Rathdrum. The road is an ITD facility and needs their approval for any prospective project. The pathway system and the crossing guards help students walk or bicycle safely. Other improvements may further enhance safety for all.

1. Examine the crossings of Highway 41/53 in front of the schools
 - Check signage compliance with MUTCD; add signs if needed.
 - Determine if lighting is sufficient.
 - Consider thermoplastic crosswalk markings for longevity.
 - Determine if RRFBs curb extensions could improve safety.

Start at the crosswalk at Washington/Hwy 41. Consider a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon, ADA landings, and a streetlight positioned above the crosswalk.

2. Change junior high access pattern – Changes to the access pattern at the entrance to the junior high school would remove some pedestrian/motorists conflict, provide for better bicycle facilities and improve circulation and safety for everyone.
 - Close access to southern half of driveway in front of school eliminating conflict between drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists (blue).
 - Require drivers to use northern access (current bus drive) for ingress and northern half of front access for egress with one-way pattern (red).

- Require buses to use Main street entrance north of school for ingress and design a one-way drop-off route (yellow).
- Move bike racks to near school entrance, cover if possible (green).



Drop-off & pick-up routines can be made safer by separating pedestrians and bicyclists from parent drop-off and buses.

Stevens Street – Stevens provides an attractive route for a significant number of students living south of the school as it links with numerous residential streets. The configuration between Stevens Street and Highway 41 is skewed and the landing is absent. Once pedestrians cross the highway toward Stevens, they are immediately placed in the traffic lane of right turning cars. This is exacerbated as pedestrians continue south where they are then at risk of motorists turning right into the gas station. To mitigate this risk, slow-turning drivers and improve the overall condition at the crosswalk, we recommend that the trail be extended to this terminus and that this intersection be reconfigured.

3. Complete the pathway system on Highway 41 as called for in the Transportation Plan.
 - Complete trail on the north side to Stevens.
 - Stripe crosswalk with the ladder style scheme at Stevens, pursue Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon or street-light above crosswalk.
 - Add ADA landings, potentially redesign gas station planter area by extending the planter space, extending curb and placing a sidewalk in the middle towards Stevens Street
 - Place striping, sidewalks or an asphalt pathway on Stevens, connecting to the crosswalk.



With a modest redesign, the Stevens crosswalk can be improved for safety and efficiency.

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Highway 53/41 Area – The crossing at Highway 53 today is lengthy due to wide curb radius at the intersection. ITD is currently studying plans to improve the intersection. In addition, several well-used dirt trails have been carved into the landscape on the northwest corner of the Highway 53/41 confluence. The trails currently serve as an unofficial connection for students who live in the adjacent subdivision.

4. Engage in the process of redesigning the intersection of highways 41 and 53 to ensure safe access for pedestrians as a primary outcome. At very least narrow curb radii to shorten crossing distance. Consider a signal at least for pedestrians.
5. Formalize and pave (or compacted gravel) the most prominent current goat trail into neighborhood to north.

Highway 53 Tunnel crosswalk – To the north of both schools there is a tunnel under the Northern Pacific Railroad line that provides a safe rail crossing. However, north of the rail line is Highway 53; the barrier effect of the railroad and highway virtually isolates this area as an entirely separate community despite the safe rail crossing. To improve the connection between residents and students living in the area and to access both schools, a more substantial crossing of the highway is needed. The crossing can be much more prominent translating into a higher compliance rate by drivers and safer conditions for students and residents. Examine crossing on Highway 53 at Logan/Kootenai that accesses the pedestrian tunnel under the train tracks for safety improvements.

6. Add new paint with ladder type crosswalk markings.
7. To shorten crossing distances consider a pedestrian refuge island in roadway middle (check that shoulder is up to roadway standards). The refuge should have a vertical element such as a pedestal sign or candle. Post no parking on the south near the crossing to improve sight distance;
OR Add curb extensions in the shoulder area on the south to shorten crossing distance and improve sight distance. Add vertical elements, such as candles, on the curb extension and an in-pavement pedestal on the centerline. The curb extensions could be created with candles or with extruded curbs in the short term (see example).
8. Consider adding an RRFB or other pedestrian activated signal in the long term.



The crossing located near the access tunnel and Highway 53 can be greatly enhanced using simple low cost methods in the short term that could be replaced long-term with curbing and more substantial treatments.



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Policy Recommendations

City

1. Amend Zoning Code to strengthen Mixed Use in appropriate areas with standards.
2. Adopt a connectivity standard.
3. Plan to introduce additional connections across rail right-of-way and the highways where possible.
4. Implement Transportation Plan and Bikeways Plan for sidewalks, pathways and bicycle networks that address non-motorized connectivity. Prioritize the design development and implementation through the CIP process.
5. Consider narrower lane widths on all roadways; examine principal arterials/commercial service case by case.
6. Develop checklist of treatments to consider at all improvements for bicycle facilities, ADA standards on sidewalks, and school crossings.

School District

1. Recognize benefits of physical activity, such as;
 - Benefits of active transportation.
 - Academic benefits for active students.
2. Develop goals within wellness policy to promote walking and biking as healthy lifestyle choice.
3. Develop safety guidelines and educational programs for walking and biking in transportation policies and plan.
4. Support active transportation/Safe Routes to School program.
 - Conduct regular walking and biking travel surveys as part of transportation procedures.
 - Utilize data in identifying individual walking and biking routes and routes for walking school bus and bike trains.
 - Support walking school bus and bike trains as strategies.
5. Continue to support crossing guards.
6. Formally recognize the partnership with city for crossing guards and to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities so it can have a lasting effect.

Joint City/School District

1. Develop goal to support sharing of facilities with city to maximize efficient use of tax dollars.
2. 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

1. Continue to conduct travel surveys. Use survey findings to inform infrastructure improvements.
2. Consider conducting bike/ped counts to inform infrastructure decisions.
3. Continue supporting crossings guards as conditions mandate.
4. Continue Walk to School Day and encouragement activities.
5. Consider a walking school bus for students traveling from west side of Highway 53 (see resources).
6. Explore creation of bike-to-school programs, perhaps with the help of the junior high students. This could include an after-school program for the 5th or 6th graders such as mountain biking club or a road bike club using a teacher or volunteer as an advisor. (The school district should explore insurance issues and instructor certification.)



Resources: 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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