



WalkBoston

Walkability Assessment Report Lincoln Elementary School, Melrose June 14, 2012

WalkBoston conducted a walkability assessment in the area of Melrose, Massachusetts near Lincoln Elementary School. After a brief discussion on pedestrian safety issues near the school and an explanation of how the assessment would be conducted, a group carried out an on-the-street audit of the pedestrian facilities in the area, with an emphasis on the routes students use to walk to and from the school grounds.

One WalkBoston staff member, plus Lincoln school nurse Gail McCarthy, Melrose-Wakefield Mass In Motion Coordinator Kara Showers and Mass in Motion intern Elise Macdonald participated in the assessment. Showers organized the event.

Lincoln Elementary School and Wyoming Avenue

Lincoln Elementary School is located on the western edge of the Wyoming Hill business district, a small commercial corridor that stretches along West Wyoming Avenue for less than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, with an MBTA Commuter Rail Station (Wyoming Hill) at its center. Vehicular traffic volumes are highest during the beginning and end of the school day, and this section of Wyoming Avenue can be dangerous for children going to or coming from Lincoln Elementary School.

Overall Assessment:

The pedestrian accommodations along the areas covered in this assessment are generally adequate for a local business district and neighborhood school. There are sidewalks along the entire route, and there are crosswalks and button-activated pedestrian signals at the major intersections. There are, however, some concerns about traffic speeds along West Wyoming Avenue and some problematic pedestrian connections to the school grounds.

1. Observation: Vehicle speeds along Wyoming Avenue are too fast

West Wyoming Avenue in western Melrose (from the Fellsway in Stoneham) is a .9 mile two-lane, two-way straightaway with no points of “friction” (such as stop signs or traffic signals). Drivers can see a great distance ahead from any point on the roadway, and therefore feel more comfortable driving at speeds greater than what is desirable for a thickly settled neighborhood. This is especially problematic when there are high pedestrian volumes going to/coming from Lincoln Elementary and the MBTA station. When the group waited to cross at crosswalks along West Wyoming Avenue, many vehicles were traveling too quickly to stop safely (and therefore did not stop).

Recommendations:

- Place pedestrian crossing signage in the center of the roadway more often – not just when students are walking to and from the school – to remind drivers that this is an

area to expect pedestrians crossing. Many of the crosswalks that cross West Wyoming Avenue have “yield to pedestrians” signs placed outside of the crosswalks on the curbs (Figure 1). This type of sign is most effective when located in the center of a roadway, where it is most visible to drivers.

- Calm traffic speeds by slightly raising the crosswalks (creating speed “tables”) adjacent to Lincoln Elementary, including the crosswalk immediately east of the school driveway (which also needs an ADA-compliant curb ramp) and the next crosswalk at the western edge of the school grounds. Install advance signage to alert drivers of the speed tables.
- Consider moving the crosswalk immediately east of the school driveway to the west of the school driveway. The current location forces pedestrians going to or coming from the school to cross over the school driveway, where vehicles may be coming and going.



2. Observation: Pleasant Street curb radii too long, allows fast turns at West Wyoming and Pleasant

The intersection of Pleasant Street and West Wyoming Avenue has turning radii that allow vehicles to make onto Pleasant at a relatively high speed (Figure 2).

Recommendations:

- Tighten the corners at Pleasant and West Wyoming. This not only slows the right turning movements, but it also shortens the crossing distance for pedestrians across both Pleasant Street and West Wyoming Street. The curbs can be extended into the intersection, forming more of a right angle, or placing barrels or bollards in the street can temporarily tighten the corners.



3. Observation: Crosswalk and curb ramps missing at Lincoln School field access on Pleasant Street

There is an access point to a walkway at the Lincoln School playing fields on Pleasant Street. This is a location where children are known to cross, despite the fact that there is no crosswalk (Figure 3). To the east of Pleasant Street, there is also what appears to be an informal “cut-through” to the platform at the Wyoming Hill MBTA station. The lack of a safe crossing here is especially problematic because this location is only 200 feet from the intersection of Pleasant Street and West Wyoming Avenue, where vehicles can turn onto Pleasant at high speeds.



Recommendations:

- Install curb ramps and pedestrian crossing signage, and mark a crosswalk that connects the gate to the Lincoln School fields on the west side of Pleasant Street to the walkway of the apartment building on the east side of Pleasant Street.

4. Observation: Crosswalk at Everett Street and Crescent Avenue is set back too far

Crescent Way, a residential local road many students use to access Lincoln Elementary, intersects with Everett Street just south of the rear driveway to the school. The crosswalk across Everett Street is set back about 15 feet from where a driver would realistically slow or stop to look for oncoming pedestrians or vehicles (Figure 4). This presents a safety hazard, especially during times when children are walking to or from the Lincoln School.



Recommendations:

- Install a STOP sign and paint a stop bar in advance of the existing crosswalk so drivers have to slow down before encountering pedestrians crossing Everett Street.

- Install additional signage and/or pavement markings reminding drivers they are entering an area where there are children walking to and from a school.

5. Observation: Water from Lincoln School storm water pipe collects on sidewalk beside school, freezes in winter

A storm water drainage pipe at the front of the school drops water on a steep grade (Figure 5). The runoff erodes a grassy area, and runs down to the walkway that leads to the school entrance. This can create muddy conditions, and in the winter, this water turns to ice and presents a safety hazard to students and faculty.

Recommendations:

- Re-direct the downspout so it doesn't drain onto a walkway or place a rain barrel beneath the downspout.



Figure 5