

## Warren Street Walk-Audit Notes

The City of Helena, members of the Helena Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Committee and Bike Walk Helena jointly sponsored an inclusive walk audit from the intersection of Warren/Lawrence to Warren/8<sup>th</sup>. It was held on October 29, 2020 from 8:00 to 9:00 am. The following were observations made and recorded by Doug Habermann, Executive Director of Bike Walk Montana/Helena.

- There is substantial non-school related pedestrian traffic in this location in addition to school traffic. It is a common route for travelling from residential areas back and forth to downtown. There are also many out of town visitors use in this area as well, particularly visiting and being photographed by the cathedral.
- There was a great deal of inappropriate or even illegal parking is being done by parents trying to drop their children off safely. A lot of vehicles were stopping or parking in the bus unloading zone. This blocks both bus travel and often pedestrians as well. A participant shared that they felt drivers didn't see that pedestrians had a place in this area without a marked crosswalk. It is highly congested and heavily used at times by both children and their parents, walking and driving. Due to the heavy snow present, there was no bicycle traffic but it can be imagined what adding bicyclists must do, with limited provision for them as well.
- The school buses that we saw coming to school came up Warren although routes to school may vary from day to day. COVID scheduling has reduced the level of use and it's impossible to see how truly congested this location may be when all (approximately 300) students and their parents are trying to get to and from school.
- Pedestrians, non-school, regularly cross directly from 10<sup>th</sup> (the eastern cathedral parking lot by hydrant) across the 3 way to Lawrence. We both observed and participants experience as well is that very few pedestrians utilize the existing infra-structure correctly or legally.
- For bicyclists, the Lawrence/9<sup>th</sup> street intersection is very challenging to use and feels very unsafe. 9<sup>th</sup> is a Helena city designated bike route but there is no protected bike lanes or clear, safe route designated.
- The boulevards and trees are an attractive feature of this location.
- Parking/drop off space is very limited. A suggestion was made that Central School work with the City to create additional parking and access options on Cruse Avenue. The City is doing a visioning study of Cruse Avenue right now so this would be a good time to consider this option.
- Although the 'shadow' of the old crossing remains at 9th, the School District, with the City's approval, removed all marking and signage to consider it a crosswalk. As pointed out, the theory, concept and practice differ widely. The vast majority of parents and students crossing Warren St. to access Central School did so at 9th Ave.
- In the morning most students enter school property at the North end of the building adjacent to 9th Ave. and a majority cross Warren St at 9th Ave. In the afternoon Kindergarten students leave school property adjacent to 9th Ave. but other students exit through the main exit adjacent to 8th Ave. In the afternoon Warren St. is crossed at both 8th Ave and 9th Ave.
- 8<sup>th</sup> street intersection has older ADA ramps that are not compliant with current guidelines. Several participants felt that it needs a better curb cut and updated ADA accessibility. This is not part of the current city project.
- There are snow removal challenges all through this section and at the school entrances. Places to put snow are limited and resources to do the sidewalk clearing are limited and challenged by major snow events like on October 24th (17" overnight).

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- There is a light pole immediately adjacent to the 9<sup>th</sup> street driveway into the school. It was suggested that the light source is needed but possibly it could be moved onto school property (across the sidewalk). This would improve motorists and bus drivers line of sight, make snow removal easier and provide for more crossing options.
- The group felt that this is the best current opportunity to make changes that we will have to live with for the foreseen future. Good discussion and collaboration is needed between the school, school district, city and parents.
- It was mentioned that having school and district representatives would have enriched the conversation. Hearing all parties in a face to face situation always seems to end in better results. Past decisions and opinions can be set aside while reacting to both the new building and COVID ramifications to work together to make this high traffic and high priority location safer for all, particularly our vulnerable school children.
- The school zone sign, coming from the south, could be moved to the intersection of Warren and 7<sup>th</sup>, where it is now, it can be missed by anyone turning from 7<sup>th</sup> and is a hard to see location even when coming from 6<sup>th</sup>. A stop sign on Warren at 7<sup>th</sup> would be an additional, low cost way to slow traffic.

Invited participants: Those who were able to participate are highlighted.

Greg Wirth	MNTAC member
Wilbur Rehmann	MNTAC Chair
Andres Haladay	Helena City Commission
Doug Habermann	Bike Walk Helena
Mark Young	City of Helena Transportation Engineer
David Knoepke	City of Helena Transportation Systems Director
Ryan Leland	City of Helena Engineer
Louie Gloege	Cathedral/Catholic Diocese of Helena
John Stilson - Principal	Central Elementary School
Kalli Kind	Helena School District
Sara Sandau	Lewis and Clark County Health
Jacqueline Isaly	Lewis and Clark County Health
Joel Peden	Montana Independent Living Project
Micky Zurcher	Helena BID
Chelsea Hillman	Central Elementary School PTO
J Cort Herrington	Frequent pedestrian

Other participants:

Tony Prothero	Engineering design contractor – J Bar T Engineers
Dennis McCahon	NMTAC member