



MEETING MINUTES

Lake~Sumter MPO

Safe Access Study

Stakeholder Meeting – Umatilla Area Schools

December 11, 2012

SCHOOL(S) STUDIED:

**Umatilla Elementary School
Umatilla Middle School
Umatilla High School**

MEETING LOCATION:

Lake County Schools Maintenance-North Facility
220 North Central Avenue
Umatilla, FL 32784

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

ATTENDEES:

Mike Woods, Lake~Sumter MPO, Project Manager
Dawn McDonald, Lake County School District
David Solomon, Lake County School District
Ross Pluta, Engineer III, Lake County Public Works
Richard Hatfield, City of Umatilla
Kelly Sanders, Principal, Umatilla Elementary School
William Gagnon, Asst. Principal, Umatilla Elementary School
Greg Beliveau, LPG Urban and Regional Planners, Inc. (City Planner)
Doug Lynch, TranSystems, Consultant Project Manager
Eric Wooley, TranSystems, Consultant Engineer
Ginger Hoke, Hoke Design, Inc., Consultant

Meeting Purpose

The Safe Access Study will provide an assessment of the pedestrian, bicycle, and school transportation conditions for Sumter and Lake County schools.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (Lake~Sumter MPO) Safe Access Study (SAS) to identify the scope and purpose of the SAS, and gather data from the Umatilla Elementary principals, Umatilla Middle School principals, and Umatilla High School principals., Lake County School District, City, and County representatives.

Meeting Discussion

Mike Woods (Lake~Sumter MPO) opened the meeting. Mr. Woods introduced the project team and reviewed the project. Mr. Woods highlighted the intent of the SAS to document existing conditions while working with the schools rather than duplicating their existing efforts. He stated the goal of the SAS is to create holistic solutions to mediate problems within a 2-mile walk zone surrounding each school in the LSMPO SAS project area, as well as develop holistic solutions for transportation and bicycle-pedestrian issues affecting Lake and Sumter County schools. Mr. Woods thanked all for their attendance and handed the rest of the meeting presentation over to Doug. Lynch (Consultant Project Manager).

Mr. Lynch described the format of the presentation which included a project overview, findings, recommendations and identification of priority projects for the SAS for each of the three schools. Mr. Lynch explained that the Umatilla Elementary School was previewed on 11/7/2012, and Umatilla Middle and Umatilla High were previewed on 11/16/2012. Mr. Lynch went through a powerpoint presentation detailing the findings from the field observations. Each section presented for each school consisted of identifying school statistics collected from the intake forms, school hours, 2-mile Radius "Walk Zone", Campus Access Overview, Bus Access, Parent Drop-off/Pickup, Existing Signage and Markings, and Bicycle/Pedestrian "Walkers" Access, and SR 19 Crossing Guards. Mr. Lynch discussed the following highlight of findings/school:

Umatilla Elementary School

- In the Fall 2011, Umatilla Elementary switched the then bus loop for the current parent drop-off/pickup due to increasing concern over the car line queue lines on Lake Street from Umatilla Police Department. Asst. Principal Gagnon described that the transition has moved smoothly and parents have "bought in" to the idea. Mr. Lynch described that there is a lack of signage along Lake Street (both directions) at the entrance to the Parent drop-off/pick-up entrance. Mr. Lynch showed a before and after graphic rendering of how a dual-side sign directing cars to this entrance, which would improve driver knowledge/sight distance.
- The bus loop has a tight turning radius. Currently there are cones being placed at the east end turn radius for busses to make the turns after dropping and picking up students. Mr. Lynch suggested that the asphalt be expanded to eliminate this problem.
- The bus loop stop sign before exiting onto Lake Street is severely faded and worn and should be replaced.
- Mr. Lynch suggested repainting the school zone paint marking along Lake Street.
- Mr. Lynch reported no real issues with bicyclists and walkers. Some bicyclists had helmets with them that were brought into the school, but no helmets were with the bicycles at the bicycle racks in front of the school.
- Mr. Lynch indicated there were no real issues/concerns with walkers, including adjacent school sidewalks, etc observed. Students crossed with a designated school staff person in the morning and afternoon.

Umatilla Middle School

- The current bus entrance is located at the four-way intersection (Lake Street/Oak Avenue). This is a busy location for walkers and bicyclists to access the designated entrance locations. Principal Sanders has initiated a "go to bus when called" approach for students taking the bus to eliminate extra students around the bus loading area. Additionally, Mr. Lynch stated that approximately 80 walkers were observed walking from Oak Avenue and 20 from Lake Street in the morning.

- Mr. Lynch stated that there is an issue with morning student congregation in front of the school. Consultants observed over 100 children waiting to be let into the school by a school staff member. Students were observed congregating near the parent drop-off/pick-up location door and visitor parking area. Mr. Lynch described an opportunity to develop a sidewalk that connects Lake Street to the main building, without causing students to cross the current visitor parking lot. Principal Sanders stated he was in favor of this type of improvement in order to ensure the safety of his students. Principal Sanders inquired if this type of improvement could potentially be made as part of the upcoming utility updating project planned for summer 2013? David Solomon suggested that many of the planned utility improvements will be within the main school building that it should be looked into.
- While on site, the consultants observed parents dropping students off in non-designated areas including particularly in the grassy area of the east end of the school on Lake Street and at the intersection of Lake Street/Oak Avenue
- Mr. Lynch discussed that there are a few school sign marking areas near the school that should be repainted and a school zone sign on Oak Ave that should be repaired. Mr. Lynch suggested the blind curve on Lake Street from Pine Ave causes a sight-distance issue for kids and cars. He suggested a flashing beacon school zone be implemented to increase awareness. This type of improvement would also include construction of a new sidewalk for students to walk/bike safely on the sidewalk coming from Pine Avenue.
- Several students were noticed walking in the grass or parts of the road on the north side of Lake Street trying to access the school crossing area in front the school between the visitor parking lot and the exit for the parent drop-off and pick-up exit at Lake Street.
- Mr. Lynch described the afternoon part-time closure of traffic on Lake Street to allow for the car line to move accordingly. This operation is a manual operation that involves setting up a makeshift barricade and “Do Not Enter” and “Stop” signage.

Umatilla High School

- Mr. Lynch discussed the safety concern for students crossing SR 19/Ocala St/Bulldog Ln during the morning and afternoon. Many students were observed having to walk in the road or on dangerous side grassy areas or in the street in non-designated areas to get to and from the destination. These and other priority recommendations were later discussed at the end of the presentation.
- Many students congregate before and after school at the McDonald’s on Bulldog Ln. Students were observed crossing Trowell Avenue and Bulldog Lane in a “fastest path” format, often in groups.
- The parent drop-off and pick-up carline does not conflict with other through traffic along Trowell Avenue, however, there are concerns over parents dropping off students in non-designated areas causing conflict with drop-off and pick-up traffic and potential “near miss” accidents with students. Several parents avoid the car-line by parking in non-designated areas along Bulldog Ln on the north side of the school property grass area. Some students were also observed being picked up at the Umatilla Library parking lot located off Trowell Ave.
- No students were observed taking LakeXpress (Route 4: Altoona to Zellwood) transit in the morning or afternoon located on west side of SR 19 north of Ocala St/Bulldog Ln intersection.
- Mr. Lynch described the efficiency of the Umatilla High School’s bus loop. The bus drop-off and pick-up is well marked and has an extra-wide driveway. School staff were present to observe students in the parking lot and to ensure safety for students entering the school. Mr. Lynch reported that Asst. Principal Strem had indicated there have been no known issues or concerns/incidents that have occurred in the student parking lot or bus loop area involving students.

- On 11/16/2012, only two bicycles were observed at the bike racks located in the rear of the school on the north end of the student parking lot. No helmets were present with the bicycles.

Based on the findings, a total of six Safe Access Study priority projects are recommended. The projects are as follows:

- Priority Project #1: Ocala Street Sidewalk (South Side) – From Kentucky Ave to SR 19
- Priority Project #2: Bulldog Lane Wide (8') Sidewalk (South Side) – Existing to Trowell Ave with crosswalks
- Priority Project #3: E. Lake Street (North Side) – Trowell Ave. to Pine Ave.
- Priority Project #4: N. Pine Avenue (West Side) – E. Lake St to Skyline Dr.
- Priority Project #5: Orange Avenue Sidewalk (West Side) – Bulldog Ln to E. Collins St.
- Priority Project #6: E. Collins Street Sidewalk (North Side) – Orange Ave to W. Ninth Ave

Mr. Lynch explained the projects identified and their rationale for justification for serving multiple schools and to better connect the existing sidewalk network within the City of Umatilla in an effort to increase walking and bicycling conditions for students getting to and from school. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on the upcoming findings and recommendations report. Mr. Woods suggested that the Lake~Sumter MPO will be able to host the documents and allow for document download. Mr. Lynch discussed the status of the project website and how, when final, all final reports will be posted on the project website, www.lakesumtersafeschool.com

At the conclusion of the main presentation, Mr. Wooley described some potential improvement options at SR 19 and Ocala St/Bulldog Ln intersection including reviewing two board exhibits developed by TranSystems. Mr. Beliveau and Mr. Pluta explained that a current plan is in place for SR 19 improvements. Mr. Lynch suggested that all SAS recommended priority projects should dovetail with existing plans, where possible.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 am.

For questions or comments regarding these meeting minutes, please contact Doug Lynch, Project Manager at (407) 875-8938 or dwlynch@transystems.com