

Manchester by the Sea
Mass in Motion Walk Audit, August 25, 2015

School Street Recommendations

Background

School Street connects Route 128 to Route 127, Manchester's "Main Street," and because it is one of the town's connecting streets it carries fairly heavy traffic traveling at speeds that make walking uncomfortable. Pedestrians crossing the street feel unsafe, and many of the people who attended the walk audit had stories of cars failing to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk or waiting to cross. **Because School Street provides walking access to the community's elementary, middle and high schools there is great interest in increasing pedestrian safety along the street.**¹

Setting and street characteristics

- School Street has (almost) continuous sidewalks from Bridge Street to Route 128.
- The street is characterized by single family homes with well maintained gardens.
- Parking is permitted on the west side of the street for most of its length, but in some areas cars are parked partially on the sidewalks in order to pull further off the road.
- The sidewalks are in largely reasonable condition although some curb ramps are missing.
- The curb-to-curb pavement width varies from a minimum of 25 feet (near Route 127) to about 27 – 28 feet in many locations.
- The posted speed limit for School Street is 25 mph.
- Stop signs already exist on all 4 corners of Pleasant/School. A blinking red light that formerly was cabled above the middle of the intersection has either been removed or is inactive at present.

Recommendations

The recommendations below are presented in two parts:

1. Several basic principles are described that provide the rationale for making changes to the built environment along School Street
2. Specific recommendations are described in approximate order of possible implementation with those that can be implemented soonest described first.

Basic Principles

- School Street should look, feel and operate like a street that serves local trips and is a safe place to walk and cross for people aged "8-80."

¹ Sidewalks from Pleasant Street north to Route 128 are primarily on the east side of School Street. Despite the fact that the street widens heading to Route 128 at approximately 50 yards past Pleasant, there is no parking on either side of School Street. Other than the introduction of traffic calming devices such as narrowing the travel lanes immediately upon exit from Route 128 onto School Street, we have chosen to focus our attention on School Street between Pleasant and the end of School Street at the Bridge/Central intersection.

- As a street that serves local users, including those people that live along the street, walk to school along the street, go to church on the street, etc., the streets should provide the basic services that are needed such as multiple safe places to cross, parking, and ease of exiting from driveways and small side streets.
- Slowing traffic to 25 mph or less will be the basic way in which the multiple uses and users of the street can be accommodated.
- The intersection of School Street and Route 127 should be modified to create safe places to cross both roadways and to create a sense of place and arrival.

Recommendations for the length of School Street

1. Install in-street “Yield to Pedestrian” signs in the crosswalks at Pleasant, Lincoln, Vine and Brook Streets to slow traffic and improve yielding behavior by drivers. (Already underway, congratulations!!)
2. At each crosswalk on School Street do not allow parking within 20 feet of the crosswalk on either side of the crosswalk. This “daylighting” of the crossing area will make pedestrians much more visible to drivers and will give pedestrians better sight lines to see approaching traffic. Painting pavement markings that show the no-parking zones can reinforce these setbacks.
3. Enforce no parking on sidewalk regulations along School Street.
4. Install stop signs at Pleasant, Lincoln, Vine and Brook Streets to slow traffic, improve yielding behavior by drivers, and discourage use of School Street by large trucks.
5. Re-stripe School Street by shifting the double yellow line to allow one 10-foot southbound lane, one 10-foot northbound lane, and a 7-foot striped parking lane on the west side of the street. In the few locations where the curb-to-curb dimension of the street does not accommodate these three lanes, parking should not be allowed but the two travel lanes should still be striped at 10-feet.
6. Fix curb ramps at each street crossing, tighten turning radius at each intersection and add bump outs at locations with crosswalks.
7. Add raised crosswalks, if still needed once previous improvements are in place
8. Install pedestrian scale lighting along School Street, which will add a visual cue to drivers that they are in a zone where walkers are expected.

Location Specific Recommendations

1. School/127 – Reconfigure the intersection to as tight an angle as possible to significantly reduce the crossing distance for both School Street and Route 127. This reconfiguration will add a large sidewalk area that could accommodate outdoor seating, landscaping or other town center amenities. Eliminate parking on School Street for approximately 150 feet north of Route 127, and along Route 127 from Church Street (east of the intersection) to 30 feet beyond the crosswalk west of the intersection. These changes may require MassDOT review.
2. Seek approval to use mid-block crossing sign on Route 127 at School Street (this apparently was refused a few years back, but the signs are now MUTCD compliant [MUTCD Mid-block sign example](#)).
3. School, near Route 127 – Reduce width of curb cut to make the sidewalk safer.
4. To improve the visibility of pedestrians move the mailboxes to a new location. The addition of a stop sign and in-street yield to pedestrian signs should make this crossing much safer without removal of the large tree just north of the intersection.
5. Complete sidewalk where it is missing at on the east side of School Street near Sawmill Brook.