



Ashby Public School

Main St (County Rd 4)

Safe Routes to School Demonstration Project: Summary and Evaluation



DECEMBER 2021



OVERVIEW

Demonstration projects are temporary, low-cost roadway projects used to test potential long-term solutions to improve walking, bicycling, and public spaces. Projects can include bike lanes, crosswalk markings, curb extensions, and median safety islands.

The demonstration project at the Ashby Public School campus originated from a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan completed in 2016. In collaboration with school staff, MnDOT, Grant County, West Central Initiative, project consultants, and volunteers, the City of Ashby installed the demonstration project in the summer of 2021.

The goal of the project was to make it easier and safer for students to cross County Rd 4, where there were concerns about crossing distances and driver speeds, and to support walking along Birch Ave leading to County Rd 4 and the school campus.

After multiple draft designs, the SRTS team decided on curb extensions along County Rd 4 at Birch Ave and the western entrance to the school parking lot, as well as a pedestrian lane along Birch Ave. By narrowing lane widths and the distance to cross County Road 4, the design aimed to slow drivers and allow pedestrians to cross more quickly and safely, while the pedestrian lane created traffic-separated facilities for walking to school.



PROJECT SUMMARY

INSTALLATION DATE: August 2021

DAYS TO INSTALL: 1

MATERIAL COST: ~\$13,000 (including signs, posts and bases that can be reused on future projects)

FEATURED ELEMENTS INSTALLED:

- Curb extensions (6)
- Pedestrian lane (1)
- One way, do not enter, and no right-left turn signs (6)

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The SRTS team fielded a survey to capture feedback from the community about the project sites. A majority of survey respondents reported that the demonstration project made them more aware of people crossing the street and improved safety for everyone, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities. Many respondents who drove through the site reported frustration with the narrower lane widths, but also reported that they drove through the site more slowly. Over 40% of respondents would like to see the project become permanent.

DRIVER AWARENESS:

Most survey respondents reported that the project increased visibility and awareness

of pedestrians. While many respondents reported in open-ended comments that they felt that lanes were too narrow and the bollards were distracting, reports of increased awareness suggest these aspects of the installation are working as intended.

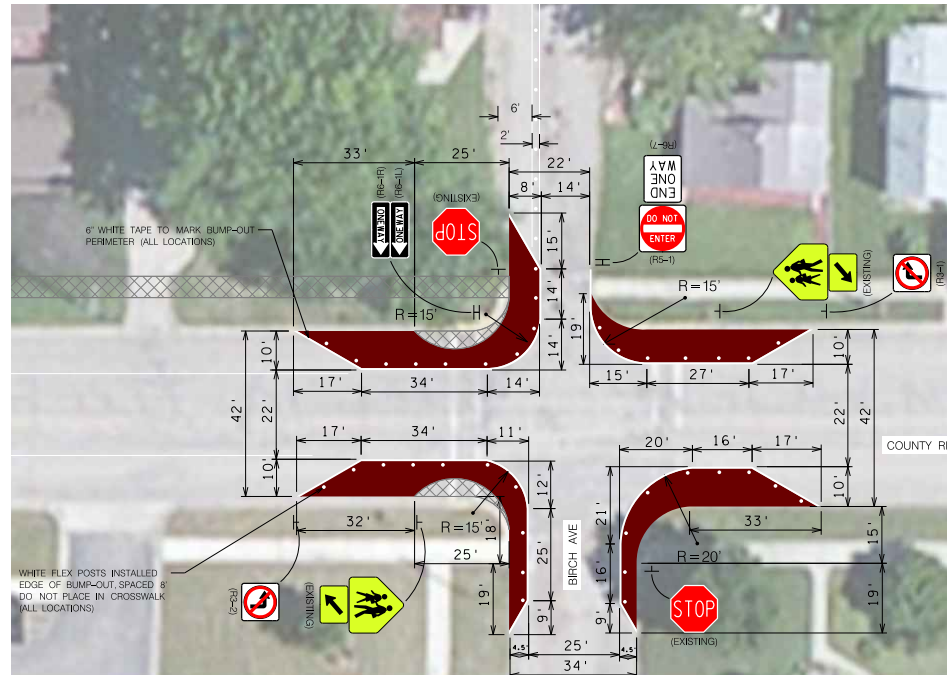
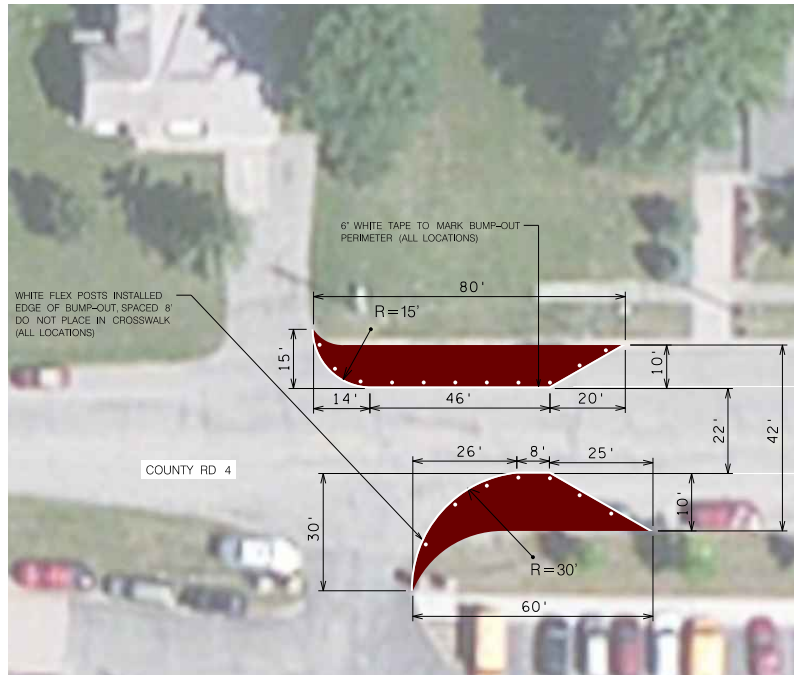
PEDESTRIAN COMFORT AND SAFETY:

Most survey respondents (95%) drove through the project site. Respondents who walked were positive about the project's impacts, though only 20% of all respondents reported the project was likely to make them walk there more frequently, suggesting that other street and policy improvements may be needed to support more widespread walking and biking.

SUGGESTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

Many respondents voiced concerns about turning and passing through the intersection of County Rd 4 and Birch Avenue, particularly in the context of school buses, farm equipment, and other large vehicles. Others had negative opinions about the visual appearance of the reflective bollards, and some criticized the bollards as distracting and worried that they made pedestrians difficult to see. As stakeholders evaluate permanent design opportunities, addressing oversized vehicles and communicating the appearance of permanent infrastructure may help to address the concerns of some community members.





DESIGN

The demonstration project at the Ashby Public School campus consisted of two pairs of curb extensions at the intersection of County Rd 4 and Birch Ave, as well as a pair of curb extensions on either side of County Rd 4 where it intersects with the School's western parking lot entrance / exit. A pedestrian lane was also added along the western side of Birch Ave between County Rd 4 and County Rd 82, which in turn was converted to a one-way road.

The curb extensions are intended to alert drivers to the presence of crossing pedestrians, reduce lane widths and thereby encourage drivers to slow down,

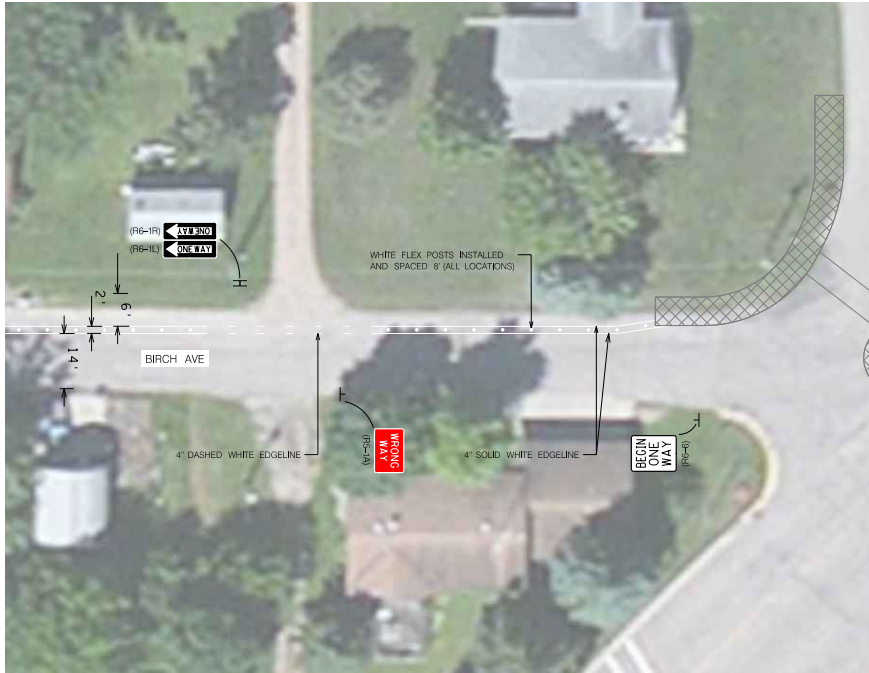
and to shorten pedestrian crossing distances so that people walking and rolling have to spend less time in unprotected portions of the road. When successful, these temporary curb extensions can be made permanent with simple concrete curbs that connect with existing pedestrian facilities.

The temporary pedestrian lane, which is the demonstration project equivalent of a sidewalk, helps to separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic while making them more visible to drivers, increasing both pedestrian safety and comfort along a key connection leading to the school campus.

EVALUATION

Safe Routes to School staff worked with the community to collect feedback about the demonstration project. This feedback helps describe the effects of the project and to identify opportunities to modify and improve the design if and when the project is constructed with permanent materials.

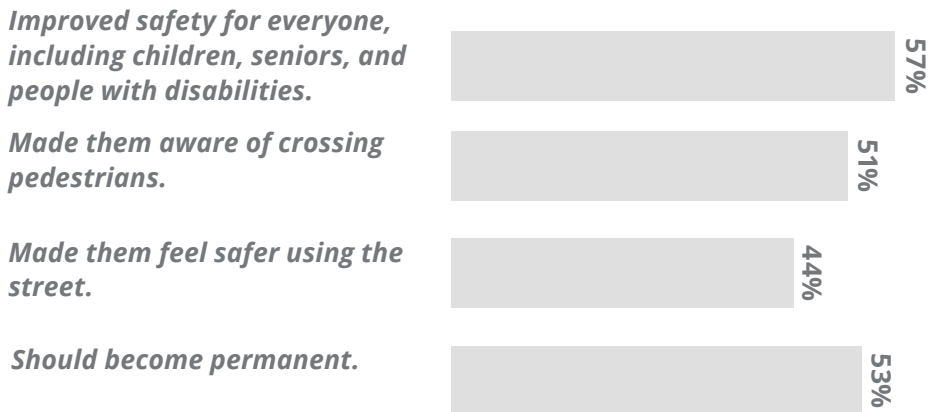
Speed data were collected before the project was installed and while it was in place in order to measure whether the project helped to reduce dangerous vehicle speeds. The project staff and community also fielded an online survey to collect input about how pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers felt about the project and to solicit ideas for improving the project in the future.



RESULTS

Positive feedback from community members and speed data demonstrate the effects of the project. The 85th percentile speed decreased from 34 MPH to 32 MPH, and enforceable violations--those five or more MPH over the speed limit--from 16% to 10%.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT THE PROJECT...



85TH PERCENTILE SPEEDS DROPPED

