

CONCORD INTERNATIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WALKING AUDIT



**Please direct comments to:
Jen Cole, Safe Routes to School
Program Director, Feet First
jen@feetfirst.info**

Concord International Elementary School is located in the Southwest Seattle neighborhood of South Park. South Park is a neighborhood tucked in between industry that lies southwest of the Duwamish River, east of White Center and north of Tukwila. The two major freeways of W Marginal Way S. (SR -99) and SR-509 cut through South Park and border Concord International Elementary. The Concord Safe Routes to School Project (2009-2010) includes sidewalk improvements, pedestrian and bicycle education and encouragement efforts.

The walking audit started in front of the school at 7th Ave S and S Concord St and moved South on 7th Ave S to S Henderson, east to 8th Ave S, north to S Concord St, west to 5th Ave S, south to S Director St, east to 7th Ave S and ended in front of the school. (See map p. 2)

Participants:

This walking audit was joined by 16 adults and 9 children representing the following groups and stakeholders:

- Concord International Elementary School families, staff, and principal
- Local residents
- Seattle Department of Transportation
- Apple Corps
- Cascade Bicycle Club
- Feet First

Top Observations:

- The neighborhood is bisected by a major freeway with only two crossing options for pedestrians and cyclists, neither of which feels entirely pleasant or safe. This is especially pertinent as approximately 50% of households within the walking boundary live on the other side of SR-99.
- The renovated front entrance to the school is designed around the parking lot, emphasizing a cultural shift that prioritizes cars over people. The original entrance to the east on Concord Street is now blocked, a striking example of how schools were once built with pedestrians in mind.
- A recent improvement to the intersection at 7th Ave S and S Trenton St has significantly enhanced the safety of a major walk route to school.
- A separate grant from the Department of Neighborhoods will bring new landscaping to the playground and other parts of the school, providing potential for collaboration to leverage the Safe Routes to School Project.
- While S Trenton St. diverts truck traffic from immediately in front of the school, this area is along a route commonly used by trucks that poses issues for pedestrians, especially to the north and east of the school.

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Top Recommendations for Walkability:

1. Improve pedestrian access to the main entrance of the school by:
 - a. Extending the sidewalk at the corner of 7th Ave S and S Concord St to the front entrance of the school. (Item # 1)
 - b. Constructing a stairway following the desire line at the SW end of the school. (Item # 2)
2. Calm traffic in the area immediately around the school with stop signs and crosswalk installation and repair. (Item #3, 6)
3. Pedestrian/Bike access across SR-99 is currently **unacceptable and hostile** to walkers and cyclists. Create adequate access by:
 - a. Significantly cleaning up the pedestrian overpass on S. Henderson St and possibly installing art that would reinforce the school's presence and enhance the pedestrian experience. (Item # 7)
 - b. Rechannelizing Cloverdale. (Item # 14)
4. New sidewalk will be built along the north side between 7th Ave S and 5th Ave S on S Concord St. (Item # 18)



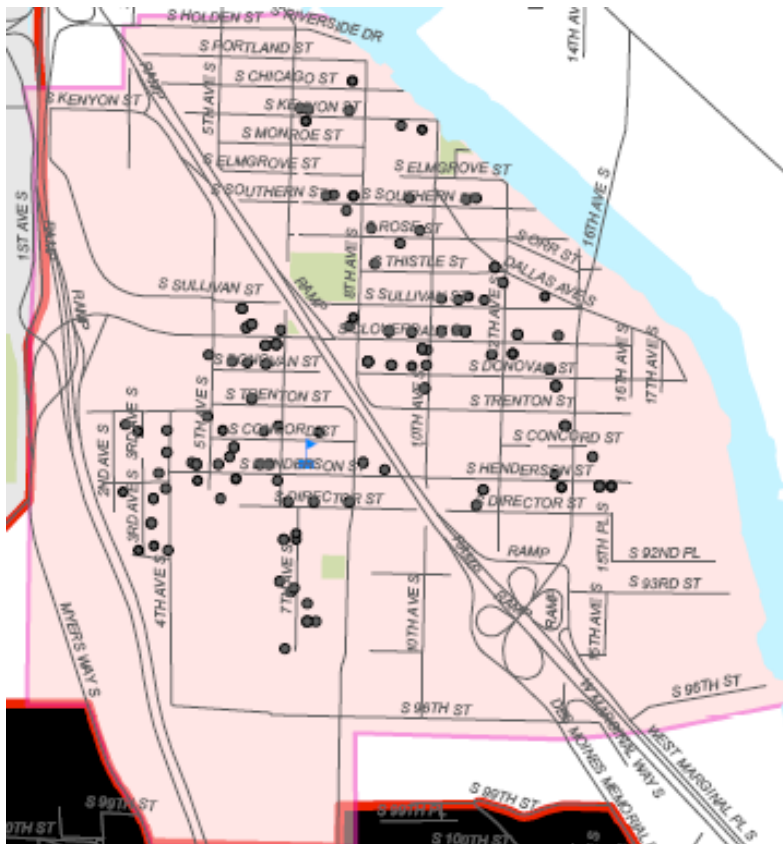
Organizers: Feet First
Audit Leader: Lisa Quinn
Write-up: Veronica Conti
Reviewed by: Parents: Ahlyshawndra Means, Jaime Cardenas, Kathleen Mongrain
Photo Credits: Youth audit participants
Audit Date: October 13th, 2009, 3:30 – 5pm

Safe Routes to School Concord International Elementary School / South Park

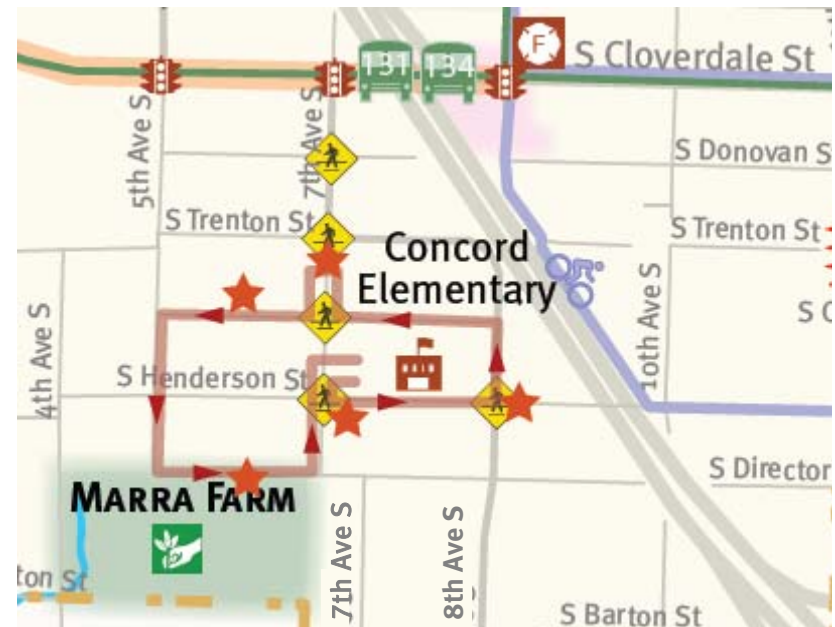
Safe Routes to School is a growing movement to encourage and support “active commuting” on the part of school children and families. At the intersection of public health, public safety, education and transportation, Safe Routes to School helps communities counterbalance the effects of an increasingly car-centered society.

In 2009, Seattle-based nonprofit Feet First teamed up with Concord International Elementary School to apply for Safe Routes to School federal funds through the Washington State Department of Transportation. The grant, in the amount of \$315,150, was awarded to fund the Concord Safe Routes to School project. The project spans the “5 E’s” of Safe Routes to School: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation. This walking audit, conducted at the start of Concord Safe Routes to School project, will be used to identify and prioritize the best uses of program energy and funds. Additionally the walking audit will serve as a baseline assessment by which to measure and recognize the changes that happen as a result of the Concord Safe Routes to School project.

School Walk Boundary Map ('09-10)



Map of Walking Audit Route



Walking Audit Field Notes

The Feet First audit process involves identifying problems that exist as they are experienced by the people who live or work in this space. We include direct participant comments along with our broader recommendations to acknowledge the importance of community input while leaving room for open discussion on the best solution to our collective observations.

Item Key

Issues and action items are labeled with four color-coded icons to identify what action is recommended to make improvements. Each item includes a specification for the category area that can facilitate coordination with or by the appropriate local or state agency.



Engineering



Enforcement













Education/Encouragement




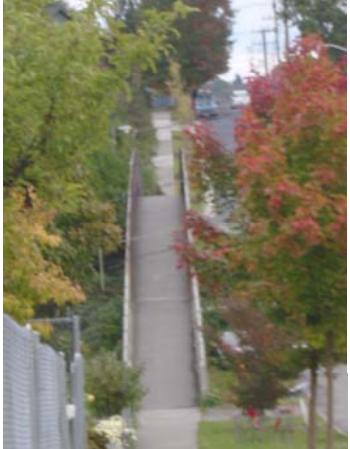










Community Asset

Issues and Action Items












Item	Location	Description	Photo
1	 West entrance to school (7 th Ave S) Top Recommendation # 1a	There is no safe, direct walking route to the school from the west side along 7 th Ave S between S Concord St and S Henderson St. Students often walk to school through the traffic-congested parking lot. There is a sidewalk that leaves the school heading west but discontinues after parking ends. <i>Recommendation: The school district needs to be aware of the need to extend the path leading from the parking lot to the sidewalk. This might be done with as part of the Concord Outdoor Renovation project. The general purpose of the project being to convert an underutilized outdoor area and create within it a multi-purpose, multi-functioning space that provides enhanced outdoor recreation and education for use by the Concord International Elementary School and its immediate neighborhood.</i>	
2	 7 th Ave S and S Henderson St (facing school) Top Recommendation #1b	There's no safe, direct walking route to the school from the southeast side of the school. Pedestrians have worn a desire path to enter the school through the SE side of the parking lot. <i>Recommendation: Construct a walkway or set of stairs leading to a sidewalk towards the school. This might also be addressed as part of the Concord Outdoor Renovation project.</i>	

Item	Location	Description	Photo
<p>3</p> 	<p>7th Ave S and S Henderson St (facing away from school)</p>	<p>This intersection is very busy with truck traffic and lacks pedestrian facilities across two of the four crosses. Several participants noted that cars drive fast through this intersection, and that the slope of 7th Ave S compromises visibility. The corners lack curb cuts, making this inaccessible to people with wheelchairs, strollers, and children on bicycles.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: There is a need for traffic calming here, possibly in the form of a four way stop with crosswalks. Also install curb cuts for greater access and safety.</i></p>	
<p>4</p> 	<p>Between 7th Ave and 8th Ave on S Henderson St</p>	<p>Trees lining sidewalk combined with nice landscaping, flowers, and upkeep of front yards make the walk along S Henderson St more inviting.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: There's an opportunity for incentive programming connecting students to their neighbors by having students reward those with yards that they enjoy seeing on their walk to school. There also exists the opportunity to collaborate with the Concord Outdoor Renovation project to improve the landscaping behind the school to make it more pleasing to pedestrians.</i></p> <p><i>Direct Participant Input: Improve landscaping behind the school to include more flowers. Put in a bike lane for cyclists.</i></p>	
<p>5</p> 	<p>Between 7th Ave S and 8th Ave S on S Henderson St</p>	<p>The gate along the east side of the school on S Henderson St is locked during school hours. Students must walk around the school to enter the play area in the mornings.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: With a staff or volunteer present, open the gate in the morning to provide a direct route to school in the mornings and serve as further incentive for students to walk to school. To maintain the community fabric of parent picking up children after school, we advise continued use of the main entrance.</i></p>	






Item	Location	Description	Photo
<p>6</p> 	<p>8th Ave S and S Henderson St</p>	<p>This intersection is labeled as a safe route from the school district; it is the only option for families living east of the school that cross SR-99 on the footbridge. The crosswalk is difficult to see and the curb does not allow for children bicyclists to cross safely. Large trucks speed on 8th Ave, posing a danger to young pedestrians who are more difficult for truck drivers see.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: Repaint existing crosswalk and paint remaining crosswalks at intersection. Install stop signs on 8th Ave S to calm traffic.</i></p> <p><i>Direct Participant Input: Explore installing speed bumps to slow traffic along 8th Ave S.</i></p>	
<p>7</p>  <p>Top Recommendation #3a</p>	<p>I-99 Pedestrian overpass on S Henderson St</p>	<p>The pedestrian overpass on S Henderson St is one of only two ways pedestrians can cross the freeway towards the school. Paths on the east side leading to the overpass are overgrown with weeds and are not maintained. The overpass and paths leading up to the overpass are littered with garbage and broken glass. The trash gives the path a feeling of being forgotten or uncared for. This discourages people from feeling pride about the area, investing energy, or feeling safe in the space. The frequent homeless encampment under the overpass contributes to the feeling of being unsafe.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: Businesses, community members, and the City should work together to tame encroaching plants and clean up litter. Taking pride in the area, improved lighting and more eyes on the street will help counteract some of the current problems here.</i></p>	
<p>8</p> 	<p>8th Ave S and S Concord St</p>	<p>Trucks are diverted from passing in front of the school to behind the school here on 8th Ave. Parents were concerned about this intersection but acknowledged that the greater problem exists when speeding trucks cross labeled routes to school further south. There is also a lot of noise pollution from the east side of the school due to I-99.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: Ensure that traffic is prepared to slow down when it approaches the intersection at S Henderson St. The Duwamish Transportation Management Association has received a grant which they might use to educate truck drivers about pedestrian safety issues.</i></p> <p><i>Direct Parent Input: Strategically install speed bumps along 8th Ave S to slow speeds and protect students crossing at intersections along 8th Ave S.</i></p>	








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9 	North side of school (S Concord St)	<p>The new bike racks on the north side of the school are designed well but rarely used and poorly placed. At the side of the school, there are no eyes directly on the racks leaving them isolated and prone to theft. Bicycles have been stolen here, even when locked.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: Provide a safe place inside the school, perhaps on the gated black top for children to store their bicycles.</i></p>	
10  	7 th Ave S between S Concord St and S Trenton St	<p>With a lack of a defined curb many vehicles park illegally on the grass near or on the sidewalk. This is an obstacle for pedestrians and contributes to feelings of being unsafe. There is also trash and overgrown vegetation including ivy and low branches obstructing the sidewalk on both sides.</p> <p><i>Recommendation: Complete the sidewalk with a curb and planting strip, and enforce proper parking through fines. Illegal street parking can be reported at 206-625-5011.</i></p>	
11 	7 th Ave S and S Trenton St	<p>The pedestrian facilities and overall safety of this intersection has been greatly improved since summer 2009 construction. The NE corner was extended to decrease the distance pedestrians have to cross the street. Curbs allow for safe passage of cyclists, strollers, and wheelchairs. There are stop signs and pedestrian crossing signs on all corners. South-bound truck traffic is diverted at this point so that it travels behind rather than in front of the school.</p>	
12 	7 th Ave S and S Cloverdale St*	<p>There have been improvements at the intersection of 7th Ave S with repainted crosswalks and pedestrian crossing indicators.</p>	

* These places were not physically visited on the day of the walking audit but encompass comments from the Concord International Elementary community.

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13 	Cesar Chavez Park*	This open space near the school adds to the atmosphere of the walk and presents opportunity for collaboration and use.	
14    	S Cloverdale St between 5 th Ave S and 7 th Ave S* Top Recommendation #3b	Half of all families within the school walk boundary live on the other side of I-99. The S. Cloverdale St underpass is just one of two pedestrian crossing options. While many students and parents walk this route to school every day, others tell us they drive to school explicitly to avoid walking here. Traffic, including large trucks, travel quickly between freeway entrances and exits. Lack of visual or structural traffic calming devices make pedestrians feel unprotected. The mural painted on the I-99 underpass shows an effort to improve walkability. However, there is insufficient lighting for the long and dark tunnel. <i>Recommendation: Engineering improvements to calm the traffic are urgently needed, i.e. a buffer zone between traffic and pedestrians. Increase the amount of lighting in the I-99 underpass to make it a safer feeling space and increase visibility of pedestrians and cyclists.</i>	
15 	S Trenton St going East	The sidewalk on the north side of S Trenton St is overgrown, almost disappearing into greenery. The front yards of some of the houses have vegetation that almost completely covers the sidewalk. The sidewalk does not continue consistently. Recommendation: The extended vegetation from front lawns is in violation of transportation code and should be trimmed. Weeds and overgrowth are the responsibility of the adjacent homeowner. Violations should be reported by calling 206-615-0808.	
16 	7 th Ave S and S Concord St	At this intersection there are two marked crosswalks and two high visibility signs. However, the map of safe routes to school shows that children can cross from three sides. The student patrol team works at this intersection in the mornings. At many places the sidewalk has been overgrown with vegetation and broken up. Recommendation: Replace broken sidewalk with new sidewalk. Paint crosswalks to comply with safe routes map.	

* These places were not physically visited on the day of the walking audit but encompass comments from the Concord International Elementary community.

Item	Location	Description	Photo
17 	7 th Ave S and S Concord St	On the south side there is a neighborhood built fence which deters cars from parking on the grass. This type of buffer is inexpensive and efficient at separating pedestrians from vehicles and provides protection for a safer walking experience. This has the potential to be replicated elsewhere.	
18 	North side between 7 th Ave S and 5 th Ave S on S Concord St Top Recommendation #4	There is no consistent sidewalk on the north side of S Concord St. Cars park on the grass where there is no sidewalk. Where there is an existing sidewalk, closer to 7 th Ave S, the cars park on the sidewalk, forcing pedestrians walking on the north side into the road. <i>Recommendation: Build new sidewalk with curb and planting strip on the north side of S Concord between 7th Ave S and 5th Ave S. Illegal street parking can be reported at 206-625-5011.</i> Note – The engineering component of the Safe Routes to School Grant will fund construction of sidewalks along the north side of S Concord St between 5 th Ave S and 7 th Ave S during the summer of 2010 to be completed for the 2010-2011 school year. The sidewalk will be installed on a designated school walking route for students west of the school that will create a link to the school via marked school crosswalks on the north and east sides of the intersection of 7 th Ave S and S Concord St. The new sidewalk will improve safety by separating vehicles from pedestrians via curb and planter strips and by providing ADA accessible facilities at marked school crosswalks.	 
19 	5 th Ave S between S Concord St and S Director St	A wide sidewalk on the east side of 5 th Ave S approaching Marra Farms was constructed when the newer houses were built. There are some gaps in the passage, and there is no side walk on the west side. However, low traffic volumes enhance the pedestrian experience.	

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20  	Marra Farms at S. Director St between 5 th Ave S and 7 th Ave S	Marra Farms is managed by a coalition of city and community organizations including City of Seattle P-Patch, Lettuce Link, and Seattle Youth Garden Works. Concord International Elementary students learn how to garden here through a partnership with the farm, and much of the produce grown here is given to the South Park Food Bank. Open spaces like this provide access to nature, healthy foods, and outdoor education for students and the surrounding neighborhood.	
21 	7 th Ave S and S Director St	There is a gravel path on the periphery of Marra Farms that pedestrians can follow from the new sidewalk on 5th Ave. There is new sidewalk leading to the school on 7 th Ave S but there is no clear way to cross the street from Marra Farms. Recommendation: Paint a crosswalk connecting Marra Farms to the sidewalk on 7 th Ave S leading up to Concord International Elementary.	
22 	7 th Ave S between S Director St and S Henderson St	Newly built sidewalk with railing to help those with difficulty walking up the hill on the east side. The sidewalk leads to painted crosswalks to get to the school. There is no sidewalk on the west side. There were instances of dog stool along the route, but here it was especially pervasive. This presents a sanitary hazard and makes it especially difficult for strollers to maneuver. Recommendation: Install public doggie pick up bags and trash can to encourage removal.	

Next Steps and Priorities

This walking audit demonstrates the benefits and difficulties of living in a secluded, almost rural-feeling neighborhood surrounded by industry. There is beautiful and ample green space from Marra Farms and the large playing field behind Concord International Elementary School. However, many areas observed in this audit lack adequate sidewalks despite the volume and speed of traffic. Several short term actions can be taken along with laying the foundation for long term improvements. In moving forward from this walking audit, it is important to remain connected to the many concurrent projects happening at Concord International Elementary and South Park and finding ways to work together.

Elements to the Concord Safe Routes to School project which will promote safe walking and biking to school are outlined in five areas:

Education – Bicycle Education classes for all students during PE and for interested families on two weekends in the spring.

Encouragement – Walk/Bike to school events in Oct and May. Organizing “walking school buses” from parent volunteers.

Engineering – Sidewalk to be built on north side of S Concord St between 5th and 7th Ave. Partnership with the Outdoor Renovation Project may result in improvements to direct pedestrian access to the school.

Enforcement – The Seattle police will be helping enforce speed limits around the school. We will invite them to future events and perhaps to kick off new Walking School Buses.

Evaluation – Parent surveys on attitudes and behaviors towards walking and biking to school. Car counts in the parking lot. Surveying how children get to school before, during, and after the project.

There are also many immediate opportunities for small and focused beautification and clean up projects in the neighborhood. School community members, local residents, community volunteers, and City departments (SDOT, DON, SPU, and SPD) should work together to address these issues. These could take the form of an afternoon ‘walk and clean’, or a more focused landscaping endeavor to clear away impeding vegetation. Having some quick visual improvements will bolster the neighborhood pride and empower future activities.

Contacts & Project Information

For more information about this report, Safe Routes to Concord School, or Feet First, please contact:

Jen Cole, Safe Routes to School Program Director

Feet First

314 1st Avenue South

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206.652.2310

Email: jen@feetfirst.info

www.feetfirst.info

Feet First is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Feet First promotes walkable communities through advocacy, community organizing, research and education.