



Newburyport Livable Streets

Low Street Audit Notes

Date of Audit -- Tuesday, December 12, 2023 3:15 pm-3:45 pm

Link to participant [📷 Notes and Photos](#)

General Concerns/Observations

- Sidewalk located only on one-side of street and lack of crossing locations creates an uncomfortable and unsafe environment for pedestrians traveling to and from destinations on the south side of the roadway
- No dedicated bicycle facilities and shoulder widths are inconsistent, sidewalk is too narrow for shared use by bicycles and pedestrians
- Wide, straight roadway is conducive to high traffic speeds
- Lack of signage about on-street parking regulations, yellow paint is faded in most places, not clear where it is or isn't permitted
- Drop off area in front of NMS occupies shoulder, which is too narrow for car traffic, no alternative route available for bicyclists
- Posted speed of 35mph seems too high for a heavy pedestrian/school zone

Sidewalks

- Toppans Ln to Johnson St
 - No parking – sidewalk abuts travel lane. Narrow shoulder (goes to nothing at Toppans)
 - New concrete sidewalk is in good shape, no condition issues
 - Sidewalk is continuous and has minimal interruptions from driveways (only driveways are for the NMS)
 - Is wide enough for two people to walk side by side or pass one another -- 7' to outside of curb at Toppans Lane; 5' to west of school entrance.
- Johnson St to Graf Rd
 - Sidewalk is in poor condition with cracks and grass/weeds
 - Is not wide enough for two people to walk side by side or pass one another comfortably (4.5' for most of the distance, less than 3' in some locations) and there is no buffer between the edge of sidewalk and roadway, dirt path next to sidewalk suggests that it is too narrow for the amount of foot traffic
 - Sidewalk is interrupted by a 35' wide curb cut at property between track and Johnson Street.

- Graf Rd to Rail Trail access
 - No buffer between edge of sidewalk and roadway, no shoulder on roadway
 - Generally 5' in width
 - Vegetation is growing into the sidewalk in some locations, reducing sidewalk width
 - Sidewalk condition is uneven, in some locations it is lower than the curb
 - Lack of pedestrian lighting along sidewalk
 - Sidewalk is interrupted by two driveways with wide entrances

Crosswalks

- Toppans Ln to Johnson St
 - Traffic signal at Toppans Lane has pedestrian phases for two legs. Other legs do not have crosswalks. Ped signals are outdated and not ADA compliant. See Toppans Lane walk audit notes for additional details.
 - Concern that signal box at intersection may block visibility of kids approaching crosswalk.
 - Crossings in this segment are sufficient width, provide a straight continuous travel path, and are high visibility.
 - Ramps are provided at all NMS driveways, with the exception of the Johnson Street crossing across Low St.
 - Crosswalk at NMS driveway exit (closest to Toppans Ln) is 8' wide, curb is not flush on one side
 - Crosswalk ramps at NMS driveway entrance and exits are oriented in the wrong direction (toward street not crosswalk)
 - Crosswalk at Johnson Street across Low Street has pedestrian activated signal (RRFB), but lacks a paved/accessible pedestrian route on the Charter School side.
 - Lack of pedestrian scale lighting -- street lighting is generally on far side of street from sidewalk, with exception of NMS driveways.
- Johnson St to Graf Rd
 - Crosswalk across Johnson Street ramp is not flush on one end and other end is deteriorated with no tactile strip
 - Crosswalk across Johnson Street is set too far back from the intersection
 - Insufficient lighting at Johnson Street crosswalk
- Graf Rd to Rail Trail access
 - No pedestrian crossing at Graf Rd despite potential high traffic pedestrian destinations on both sides (Bright Horizons, Track, Graf Rink, Rail Trail)
 - Curb ramp at driveway to Skating Rink is mis-aligned
 - Lack of tactile panels at Heritage House driveway
 - Lack of lighting at crossings

Signage

- Toppans Ln to Johnson St
 - Lack of signage alerting drivers to pedestrians crossing roadway.

- School zone reduced speed to 20 mph, doesn't seem like adequate notice given high speeds of traffic approaching from either direction

Recommendations

- Reduce speed limit from 35mph to match city-wide 25mph limit. This will make the school zone 20mph more attainable.
- This stretch of Low Street should have at minimum, crossings at new Youth Services, Johnson/Perry, and Graf Rd/ Bright Horizons. All should be pedestrian-operated signals with appropriate signage.
- The crossing at Perry Way should have appropriate ADA access to the RVC school.
- Pedestrian access to Commerce Park (Tinkerhaus, etc.) and Elks Club.
- Sidewalk upkeep needed especially needed between Heritage House driveway and Clipper City Rail Trail. Dense brush and low-hanging branches add to the obstacles of tripping hazards in the sidewalk, at times even sloping down into the street.
- Consider alternate dropoff routes for Nock/Molin school, so as not block Low Street shoulder/future bike lane.
- Better lighting needed at Johnson/Perry and near rail trail
- Repaving of sidewalk is likely needed between the track and Toppans Lane, as it is heavily walked/biked by students and is at times either too narrow or with obstacles, including driveways that are too wide to feel comfortable.
- When repaving/planning sidewalks or crossings on Low Street, please keep in mind the potential for a future major overhaul to the usability of Low Street, with sidewalks and protected bike lanes on both North and South sides of the street.