



School Safety Assessment Technical Memorandum - Revised

Sylvia Mendez Elementary School

Berkeley Unified School District

March 2018



The Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools Program is funded by the Alameda County Transportation Commission. Your transportation dollars at work!

SYLVIA MENDEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A School Safety Assessment was conducted at Sylvia Mendez Elementary School in Berkeley during the morning arrival on March 14, 2018. The assessment was attended by representatives from the City of Berkeley, Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools staff and Sylvia Mendez Elementary School staff, parents, and students.

Participants included:

- Leslie Lara-Enriquez, Alameda County SR2S coordinator
- Brett Hondorp, Alameda County SR2S planner
- Beth Martin, Alameda County SR2S planner
- Nick Bleich, Alameda County SR2S engineer
- Eric Anderson, City of Berkeley Associate Transportation Planner
- Peter Chun, City of Berkeley Associate Traffic Engineer
- Joshua Handel, City of Berkeley Pedestrian and Bicycle Program Assistant
- Ryan Evans, City of Berkeley Mobility Manager
- Sylvia Mendez Elementary School parents
- Sylvia Mendez Elementary School student

School Information

| | |
|---|--|
| Address | 2241 Russell St, Berkeley, CA 94705 |
| Morning Bell(s) | 8:07 am |
| Afternoon Bell(s) | TK & K: 1:25 1-3: 2:15 (Wed: 1:25) 4-5: 2:20 (Wed: 1:30) |
| Grade Levels | TK – 5 |
| Enrollment | 367. Sylvia Mendez is a Spanish/English immersion school and draws from the entire school district |
| Students' Proximity to School (Percentage of students) | School Estimate: Less than ¼ mile (5-minute walk): 5% Between ¼ and ½ mile (5-10-minute walk): 10% Between ½ and 1 mile (10 to 20-minute walk): 15% Greater than 1 mile (more than 20-minute walk): 70% |
| Student Travel Mode Info (Percentage of students) | School Estimate: Walking: 5% Biking: 5% School bus: 22% Transit: 1% Carpool: 2% Family Vehicle: 65% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Does the school have bike racks? What is the capacity? Is it secure bike parking? On a typical day, what percentage of racks are used? | Yes, multiple racks in the school yard and some dispersed around the school perimeter. Around 25% full on day of assessment. |
| How do school and transit buses interact with the school? | School buses drop off on Russell Street. A small number students use AC Transit to get to school. |
| Does the school have special pick-up/drop-off policies/procedures? | Before school starts, students congregate in the yard, which is accessible from a gate on both Oregon Street and Russell Street. |

Sylvia Mendez Elementary School is bounded by Oregon Street on the north, Russell Street on the south, Fulton Street on the west and Ellsworth Street on the east, all local residential streets. Russell Street is a designated Bicycle Boulevard. Shattuck Avenue, Ashby Avenue, and Telegraph Avenue are high volume major streets located within two blocks of the school.

Within a quarter mile of the school, there were 27 pedestrian collisions and 21 bicycle collisions between 2012 and 2017, mainly on Telegraph Avenue, Ashby Avenue, and Shattuck Avenue. Immediately surrounding the school, there was a bicycle collision at Russell Street and Ellsworth in 2014.

Existing Conditions

Participants observed and reported the following existing conditions during the school safety assessment (SSA).

1. Oregon Street School Frontage

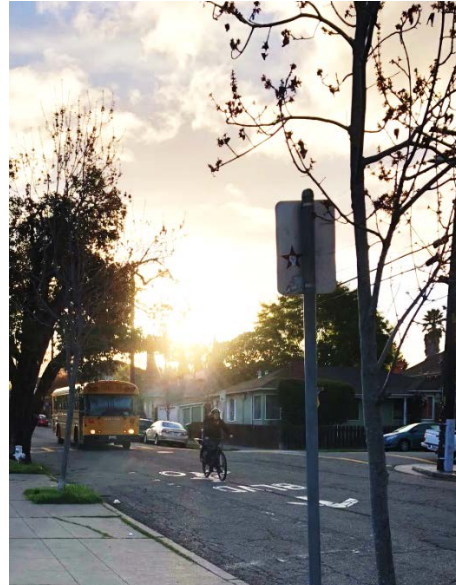
- ◆ Oregon Street is the designated and primary vehicular drop off area for the school. The school curb frontage is signed for active loading from 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Students dropped off on Oregon Street enter the school through a gate onto the blacktop area.
- ◆ Due to inefficient use of the curbside loading zone the team observed many cars double parking and dropping off in the travel lanes in both directions on Oregon Street. SSA participants observed vehicles who had used the school curb frontage reversing to attempt to parallel park or maneuver around double-parked cars. The team observed one car in reverse nearly hit a student crossing the street. In addition, SSA participants observed many vehicles doing three-point turns after drop-off to exit the school zone westbound on Oregon.

2. Russell Street School Frontage

- ◆ Because Sylvia Mendez is an immersion school and draws from the full BUSD enrollment zone, school busing is offered to families who live beyond the 1.5 mile BUSD designated “walk zone.” School buses use the school curb frontage on Russell Street to drop off students; SSA participants observed three full size and one shorter bus drop off along the curb. A large tree extending into the roadway prevents all but

one bus from being able to park within a foot of the curb. The lateral displacement of the buses makes students step into the roadway and then up again to the curb, and makes it so passing vehicles and bicyclists must go further into the center of the roadway to pass.

- ◆ Most of the school buses remain parked on Russell Street after dropping off students. SSA participants noted that the buses remain parked there until they are needed at another school site.
- ◆ The placement of the buses along Russell Street makes it difficult for students and families to enter the schoolyard on bike (where the student bike racks are located). There is no curb ramp directly adjacent to the entry gate – bicyclists ride up on the curb using the ramp at the Deakin Street crosswalk
- ◆ Some parents who are driving use Russell Street for morning drop-off, but fewer as compared to Oregon Street. SSA participants observed cars using both sides of the curb to park and walk with their student to school. Participants observed vehicles doing three-point turns near the intersection of Russell Street and Deakin Street.
- ◆ SSA participants highlighted the need for more accessible parking spaces around the perimeter of the Sylvia Mendez campus. The school currently has several students and several parents that need access to an accessible parking spaces. There is one accessible parking space on Russell Street, and since the assessment, the City has installed a new accessible spot on Ellsworth.
- ◆ Pedestrian visibility is challenging at the Deakin Street uncontrolled crosswalk. Vehicles were observed parking directly at the corner (there is no red curb), partially blocking the crosswalk.
- ◆ Russell Street is a designated Bike Boulevard, and SSA participants observed a steady stream of commuter bicyclists passing the school frontage during the assessment. Toward the later end of the drop off period when the school buses were parked along the curb, parents were observed double parking to drop off, creating conflicts with bicyclists riding through the school zone.

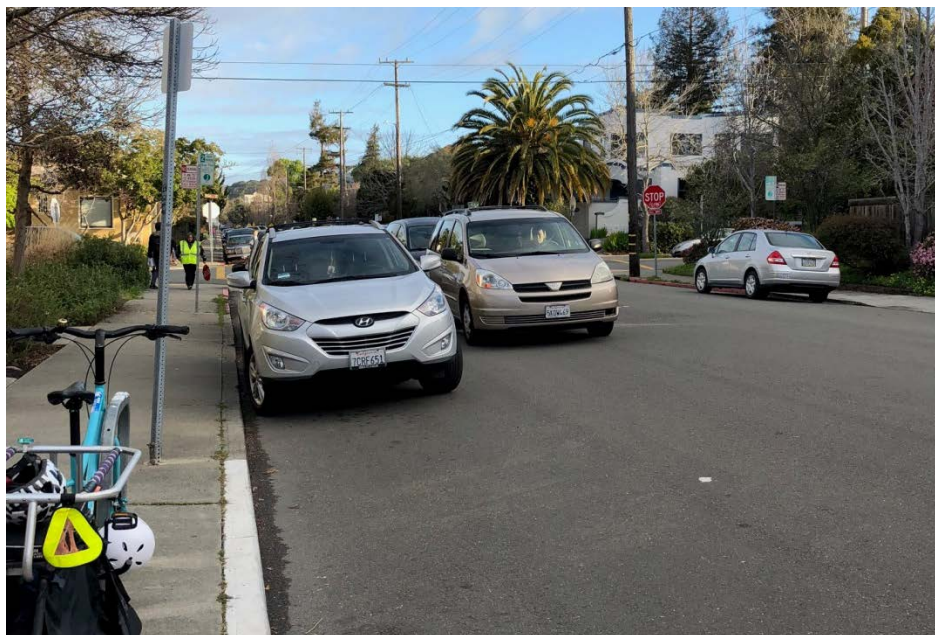


Left: Large tree prevents buses from being able to park against the school side curb

Right: Buses and people biking share the road on Russell Street by Sylvia Mendez Elementary

3. Ellsworth Street School Frontage

- ◆ Vehicles use Ellsworth Street for student drop off, and parents park on both sides of Ellsworth. The Ellsworth Street school frontage has a smaller number of cars dropping off in the morning before school starts, as it is further away from the school yard access points. After school starts the Oregon Street and Russel Street gates are locked, and Ellsworth Street becomes congested as students who are late must sign into the main office accessed through the Ellsworth Street main entrance. Between 8:10 AM and 8:15 AM, SSA participants observed cars double parking and dropping off in the travel lanes in both directions.
- ◆ Two inverted-U bicycle racks on the sidewalk provide convenient parking for parents or other school visitors on bicycles, however they are placed directly in the passenger loading zone and were observed interfering with parents fully opening passenger side car doors. Several parents at Sylvia Mendez ride longtail cargo bikes which can be 7-8' in length and block a portion of the loading space when parked parallel on an inverted-U rack.



Cars double park on Ellsworth after school starts to drop off students by Ellsworth Street entrance.

4. Ellsworth Street / Oregon Street

- ◆ The intersection of Ellsworth and Russel Street has a crossing guard in the morning. SSA participants observed that even with the crossing guard present, cars did not always come to a complete stop at the 4-way stop.

5. Ellsworth Street / Russell Street

- ◆ SSA participants observed that vehicles failed to slow down for bicyclists when going around the traffic circle at Ellsworth Street and Russel Street. In addition, some

bicyclists would cut directly across the intersection when turning left, rather than circulating counterclockwise with the flow of traffic, placing them in potential conflict with vehicles traveling the opposite direction.

- ♦ Ford GoBike recently installed a bike share station on Ellsworth Street near the intersection of Russell Street. Parents observed that the placement of the bike station removed the space for one parking / loading spot along the curb.

6. Shattuck Avenue / Russell Street

- ♦ The unsignalized intersection of Russell Street at Shattuck Avenue has two high visibility crosswalks across Shattuck Avenue that are used by many parents trying to walk and bike to Sylvia Mendez Elementary. The crosswalk paint is partially faded. This intersection is also used by many bicyclists on the Russell Street Bike Boulevard. SSA participants observed several families having difficulty crossing with the higher speed traffic and noted that vehicles do not always yield to crossing pedestrians on Shattuck Avenue. One family in attendance noted that they bike along Russell Street to school most days, and always dismount and walk across the crosswalk at Shattuck Avenue as motorists will not yield to a bicyclist.

7. Shattuck Avenue / Oregon Street

- ♦ SSA participants observed a handful of families crossing on foot at the intersection of Shattuck Avenue and Oregon Street which has push-button actuated Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons on the uncontrolled Shattuck Avenue approaches. High visibility yellow crosswalks are installed, but the paint is partially faded. There is currently a crossing guard stationed at this intersection.

8. Telegraph Avenue / Russell Street

- ♦ The signalized intersection of Telegraph Avenue and Russell Street as another intersection that SSA participants noted was difficult for walking and biking families to cross. Participants highlighted that vehicles turning at this intersection did not always yield to crossing students and families.

9. Fulton Street/ Oregon Street Intersection

- The intersection of Fulton and Oregon Streets is all-way stop controlled, with transverse yellow crosswalks on all legs. Substantial student pedestrians travel through this intersection, and a crossing guard is stationed at the southeast corner.

Recommendations

Recommendations to improve infrastructure or operations surrounding Sylvia Mendez Elementary School are shown on the conceptual improvement plan found on the following page.

The following improvements are recommendations for policy and program implementation at Sylvia Mendez Elementary School to increase safety and active commutes to school.

Policy & Program Recommendations

- ◆ Implement a rolling drop off beginning in the 2018-19 school year on Oregon Street to streamline drop off and pick up for Sylvia Mendez Elementary.
- ◆ Distribute Recommended Walk/Bike Maps to students and their families in an effort to promote walking and biking to school on suggested routes. Safety tips are also included on these maps to promote good behavior among bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. SR2S resources would be very useful in creating these documents.
- ◆ Work with parents to connect them with others who live nearby to increase the number of students carpooling, which may reduce the number of vehicles coming to campus.
- ◆ Sylvia Mendez Elementary is located off of the Bike Boulevard on Russell Street and is a bike-friendly destination for organizing a Bike Train among students and parents. Likewise, students and families should consider organizing Walking School Buses to promote walking to school, and to increase visibility at some of the more challenging crossings at Shattuck Avenue and Telegraph Avenue.
- ◆ Participate in more SR2S events, including Bike Rodeos, Pedestrian Safety Rodeos, and the Rock the Block Assembly.
- ◆ Participate in SR2S evaluations each fall and spring to monitor progress on mode shift goals.

Sylvia Mendez Elementary, BERKELEY

Safe Routes to Schools Improvement Plan

Site Assessment held MARCH 2018

- 1 Oregon Street School Frontage**
 - 1a. Implement attended rolling drop off for 2018-19 school year on school-side curb of Oregon Street to streamline drop-off and pick-up. Align start of drop off with gate access to the school yard. Loading zone should be painted white
 - 1b. Install speed humps on Oregon Street
 - 1c. Encourage parents driving to use Oregon Street instead of Russell Street
- 2 Oregon Street / Ellsworth Street**
 - 2a. Install high visibility crosswalks on all approaches of Oregon Street and Ellsworth Street intersection
- 3 Ellsworth Street School Frontage**
 - 3a. Move sidewalk u-racks to new location on Ellsworth Street where it does not conflict with passenger loading zone
 - 3b. Consider changing street sweeping times to be distinct from morning drop off times
 - 3d. Install accessible parking space on Ellsworth Street
- 4 Russell Street / Ellsworth Street**
 - 4a. Ensure vegetation stays trimmed in traffic circle to increase visibility of people walking, biking and driving through the intersection
 - 4b. The City should work with local bicycle education programs to teach appropriate bicycle travel through traffic circles
- 5 Telegraph Avenue / Russell Street**
 - 5a. Consider signal modification to reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. Improvements are subject to traffic analysis
- 6 Russell Street / Deakin Street**
 - 6a. Install high visibility crosswalk across Deakin Street
 - 6b. Install curb extension at existing crosswalk. In short-term, stripe southeast corner as red curb for 20 feet from corner to increase crosswalk visibility
 - 6c. Conduct a stop sign warrant study for the intersection of Russell Street and Deakin Street
- 7 Russell Street School Frontage**
 - 7a. Work with City of Berkeley to determine new locations for buses to stage after dropping off students, potentially on Fulton Street
- 8 Russell Street School Frontage**
 - 8a. Work with Berkeley Unified to explore if buses can stage elsewhere after dropping off students
 - 8b. Have buses pull as close to the beginning of the bus loading zone as possible. Consider extending bus loading zone 50 feet west on Russell Street to reduce conflict with tree
 - 8c. Install curb ramp at Russell Street gate entrance to provide better access for bikes to on campus bike parking
- 9 Shattuck Avenue / Russell Street**
 - 9a. Install Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon and bulb-outs on the northeast and southeast corners as proposed in the City of Berkeley Bicycle Plan to increase visibility of people crossing Shattuck Avenue at Russell Street

| Existing Conditions | | LEGEND | |
|---|--|--------|---|
| | Stop Sign | | Red Curb |
| | Bus Stop | | White Curb / Passenger Loading Zone |
| | Traffic Signal | | Blue Curb |
| | Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon** | | Green Curb |
| | Crossing Guard Location | | Bicycle Boulevard |
| | | | School Access Point |
| | | | Bike Parking |
| | | | Bulb-out or Curb Extension |
| 2017 Berkeley Bike Plan Recommendations | | | |
| | Bicycle Boulevard | | Cycletrack |
| | Primary Transit Route - Study Cycletrack | | |
| Recommendations | | | |
| | Blue Curb | | Red Curb |
| | High Visibility Crosswalk | | Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon |
| | Signal Modifications* | | Speed Humps |
| | Rolling Drop Off | | Crossing Guard Location |
| | Curb Extension | | Stop Sign |
| | Curb Ramp | | Berkeley Unified School District Recommendation |
| | White Curb / Passenger Loading Zone | | |
| | City of Berkeley Recommendation | | |



9 9b. Consider assigning crossing guard at this intersection

The above items are recommendations only and based on Safe Routes to Schools site assessment best practices. Feasibility determination, final design, accessibility, funding, and implementation of any recommended improvements is the responsibility of the appropriate governing agency.

*Subject to turn movement conflict analysis.

**Grayed out icon indicates existing RFFB

0 200 ft



Improvements not to scale

