

CITY OF ALBANY
PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ASSESSMENT
Issues, Opportunities, and Enhancement Strategies



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September 2012

This report was produced in cooperation with the City of Albany. Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Opinions, findings, and conclusions are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the University of California and/or the agencies supporting or contributing to this report

2. WALKING AUDIT RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Walking audits are typically conducted as an initial step to improve the pedestrian environment within the selected area. Many individuals can participate: residents, stakeholders, and affiliated individuals. During a walking audit, positive practices are observed and issues and opportunity areas are noted. Observations are based on how motorists behave around pedestrians and how pedestrians behave, especially at intersections (for example, if pedestrians are crossing at unmarked locations to avoid certain intersections). For each opportunity area, the group discusses possible suggestions to address pedestrian safety concerns. Walking audits are highly interactive, with many observations explored during the walk. They are a means to observing and learning how to “see through the eyes of the pedestrian.”

This chapter presents the observations and suggestions made during the walking audit conducted in Albany on Thursday, July 19, 2012. The suggestions are based on best practices and discussions with the participant group regarding local needs and feasibility. A glossary of pedestrian improvement measures is presented in Appendix A.

The evaluation team worked with City of Albany staff to select the focus areas for the walking audit. The City was most interested in looking at two areas. The first area was Washington Avenue between Pierce Street and Cerrito Street. The second area reviewed was the area around Albany High School.



4.1 WALKING AUDIT OVERVIEW

Participation in the Albany walking audit consisted of city staff, neighbors, safety commission members, police and the fire department. The two areas of interest for this walking audit were the neighborhood around Washington Avenue and the area around Albany High School. The Washington Avenue neighborhood was the first location visited.

The Washington Avenue neighborhood is located between I-80 and San Pablo Avenue, north of Buchanan Street. The City of Albany wanted to look at this neighborhood for a number of reasons. These reasons include:

- Complaints by neighbors of high vehicle volumes cutting through the neighborhood to reach San Pablo Avenue from I-80 southbound
- Vehicles parking on the sidewalk obstructing pedestrians

Albany High School was the second area of interest for this walking audit. This area experiences significant pedestrian activity and congestion before and after the high school hours. Given the large volumes of both vehicles and pedestrians, the City was looking to get ideas of how the pedestrian experience might be able to be improved.

Figure 4-1 and **Figure 4-2** show an overview of the two locations observed during the walking audit portion of Albany's Pedestrian Safety Assessment (PSA).

Figure 4-1: Neighborhood near Washington Avenue

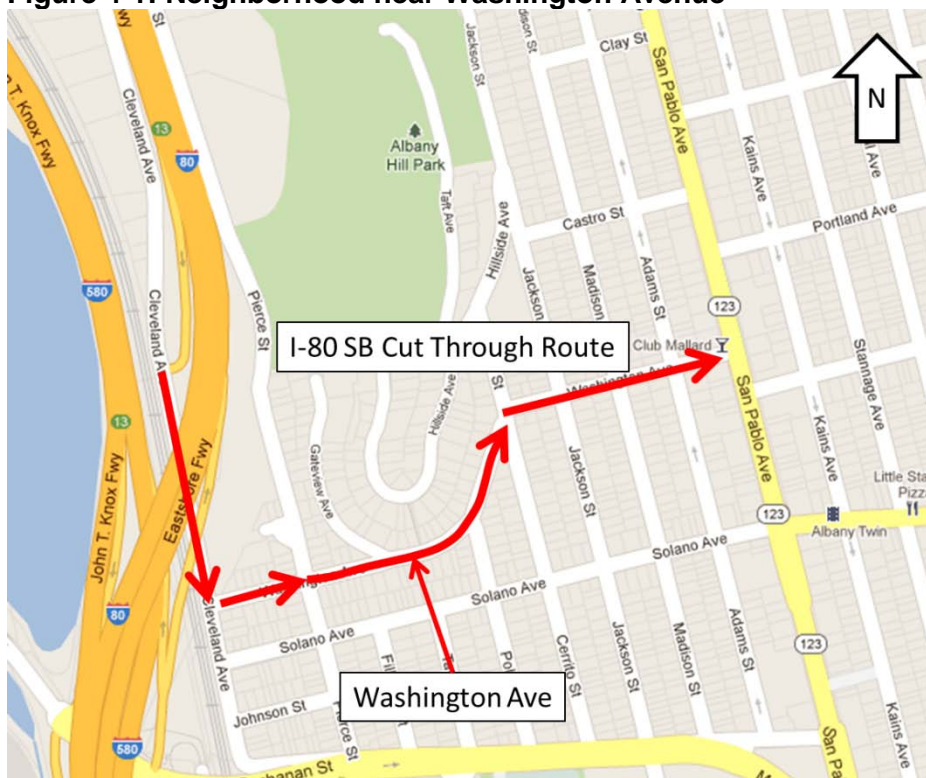
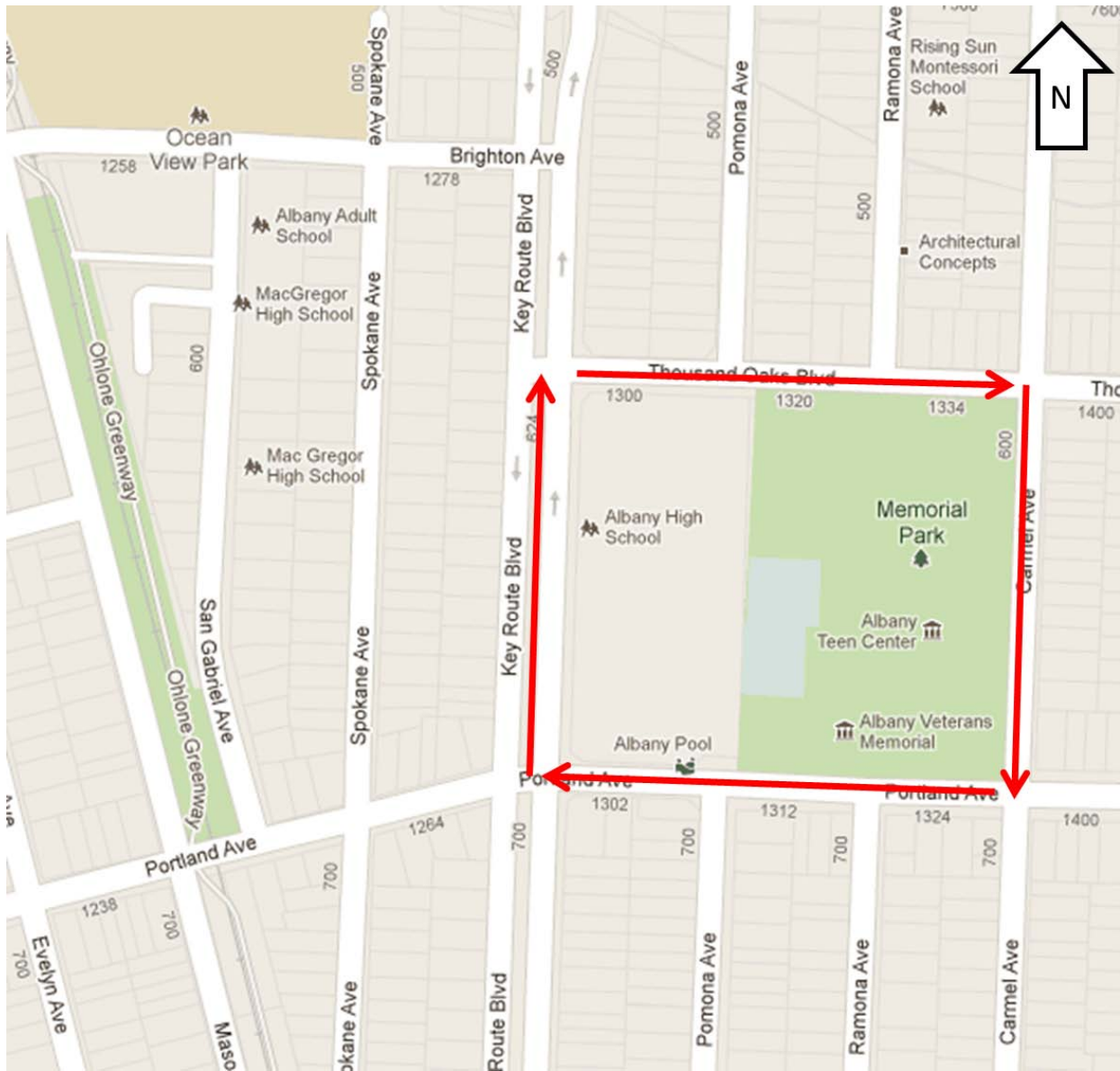


Figure 4-2: Walking Audit Route near Albany High School



4.2 FOCUS AREA 1: WASHINGTON AVENUE

The first part of the walking occurred on Washington Avenue between Pierce Street and Cerrito Street. This area was selected by the City of Albany staff because residents of Washington Avenue have been experiencing traffic problems derived from the physical configuration of the street and the hill terrain of the area. This has resulted in a number of issues including speeding, cut through traffic, and parking on the sidewalks.

An overview of the neighborhood around Washington Avenue is shown **Figure 4-3**. The rest of this section details the observations made during the walking audit and suggestions for potential improvement to Washington Avenue to improve pedestrian access.

Figure 4-3: Overview of Washington Avenue



Observations for Washington Avenue

The roadway cross section is 23 feet with parking allowed on both sides.

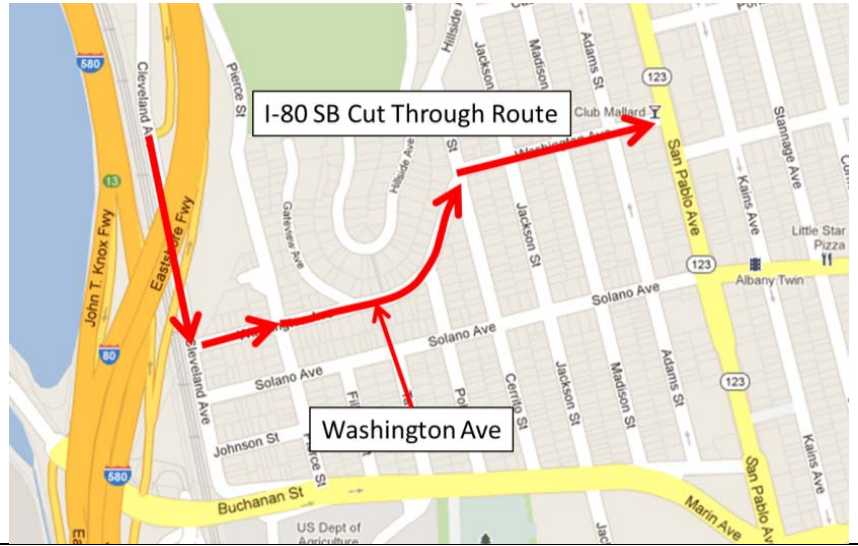


Many vehicles were observed to be parked on the sidewalk throughout the corridor.

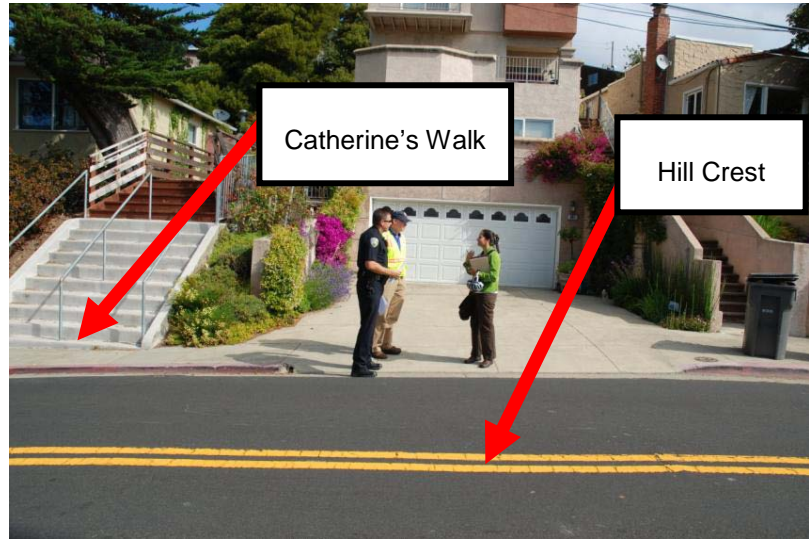


The speed limit on the street is 15 mph due to the hill between Gateview Avenue and Polk Street. However, neighbors complain of higher vehicular speeds through the corridor.

Washington Avenue residents feel their street receives a lot of cut through traffic from SB I-80 traffic trying to get to San Pablo Avenue.



The crest of the hill between Gateview Avenue and Polk Street is located at the bottom of the Catherine's walk staircase. There is currently no striped crosswalk and visibility can be limited due to Washington Avenue's horizontal curvature.



Large trucks such as garbage trucks and fire trucks have a difficult time maneuvering down Washington Avenue due to parked cars on both sides of the 23 foot wide street



Trash cans were observed placed on the sidewalk further reducing the sidewalk clear width



The intersection of Cerrito Street and Washington Avenue has a layout that may be confusing for both pedestrians and motorists



Polk Street comes into Washington Avenue at an angle leading to a wide opening. This results in a long crossing distance for pedestrians crossing Polk Street.



Gateview Avenue also comes into Washington Avenue at an angle, leaving a wide street opening for pedestrians to cross.



The sidewalks on Washington Avenue are narrow and neighbors at the walking audit indicated it was sometimes difficult to navigate with strollers or wheelchairs



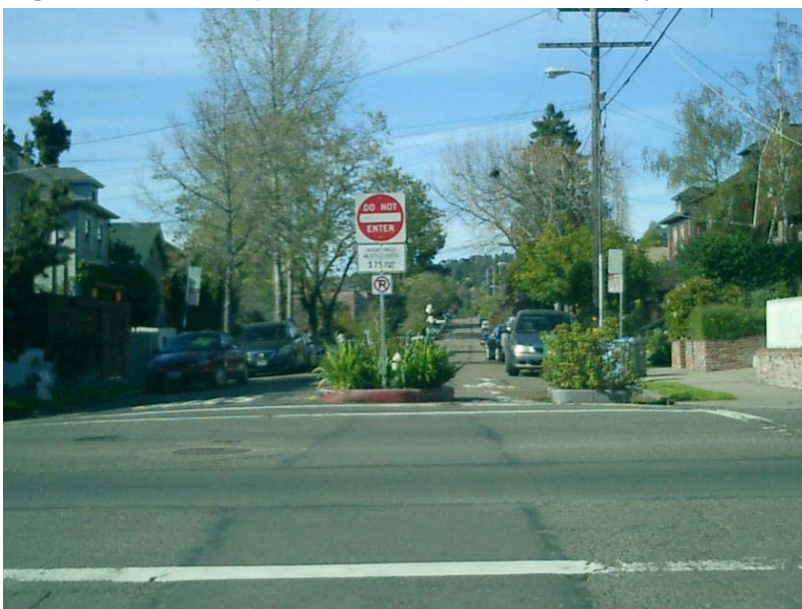
The trees and shrubbery on the northwest corner of the intersection of Washington Avenue and Cerrito Street are overgrown and can make it difficult to navigate the sidewalk and for vehicles to see pedestrians crossing Washington Avenue on the west side of Cerrito Street.



Suggestions for Potential Improvement on Washington Avenue

1. Consider adding half barriers on Washington Street at Pierce Street and Cerrito Street. Half barriers at these locations would allow vehicles to exit Washington Avenue but not to enter at these two locations. Residents living on Washington and Gateview Avenues would need to enter these roadways from Polk Street to enter the neighborhood but would be able to exit at both Cerrito and Pierce Streets. This may create additional incoming traffic on Polk Street that would need to be quantified. These half-barriers may eliminate cut through traffic while not impeding emergency access as fire trucks will be able to drive around the half barriers if needed. An example of a half barrier implementation that allows for bicycle access is shown in **Figure 4-4** below.

Figure 4-4 – Example of a Half-barrier with Bicycle Access



Source: Kittelson & Associates

2. Adding a curb extension on Gateview Avenue could be considered as it will narrow the opening of Gateview Avenue making it easier to cross. Additionally, it is suggested to consider striping the crosswalks at the intersection of Gateview Avenue and Washington Avenue to reinforce pedestrian right of way.
3. Consider adding a raised crosswalk at the crest of the hill on Washington Avenue. The raised crosswalk could provide additional traffic calming and enhance visibility of pedestrians crossing the street at the bottom of the Catherine's Walk Staircase. An example implementation is shown in **Figure 4-5**.

Figure 4-5 – Example of a Raised Crosswalk



Source: Kittelson & Associates

4. A curb extension on the southeast corner of Polk Street and Washington Avenue is suggested for consideration if the driveway for 854 Washington Avenue can be accommodated. A curb extension at this location will shorten the crossing distance for Polk Street, provide a bigger circulation area for pedestrians, and better align Polk Street with Washington Avenue at the intersection.
5. The stop sign on eastbound Washington Avenue at Polk Street is awkwardly placed as driver expectations are likely that Polk Street would be stop controlled rather than the eastbound direction of Washington Avenue. It is therefore suggested that the City of Albany consider moving the stop controlled leg of the Washington Avenue and Polk Street intersection to be the northbound Polk Street approach leg.
6. It is also suggested that a striped crosswalks be implemented at the intersections where Washington Avenue intersects Polk Street and Gateview Avenue to improve pedestrian right of way compliance. The legs that are uncontrolled may have a high visibility crosswalk.

7. Installation of a curb extension on the northwest corner of the Cerrito Street and Washington Avenue intersection is suggested since it could improve the available space for pedestrian circulation, better align Washington Avenue with Cerrito Street, and shorten the pedestrian crossing distance.
8. If the curb extension is implemented as Cerrito Street and Washington Avenue, it is likely a stop sign will still be needed for northbound Cerrito Street midway between the offset "T" intersections formed by Washington Avenue. This is due to sight distance limitations for the approaches. An investigation into whether this stop sign can be removed is suggested.
9. Many neighborhood residents park on the sidewalk due to experience with car mirrors being damaged by passing vehicles. With parking allowed on both sides and only 23 feet of roadway width, there is not much room for moving vehicles. Therefore, it is suggested that parking be restricted to one side of the street. Assuming an 8 foot parking lane, this will leave 15 feet (one foot wider than minimums needed by the fire department) of clear space to accommodate two-way traffic, which may result in motorists needing to pull over on occasion to let opposing traffic pass. While the graphical description shows parking on only one side of the street, the City may want to consider alternating the on-street parking areas in order to create a chicane effect.
10. In addition to restricting parking to one side of the street, it is suggested that tree wells be considered along Washington Avenue on the side of the street with parking, as shown in **Figure 3-3** in the previous chapter. The tree wells could be implemented in locations not large enough to accommodate parking. The tree wells would better define the parking area for vehicles and provide a form of traffic calming as the roadway would visually be narrower.
11. Consider trimming back the trees and shrubbery on the northwest corner of the intersection of Washington Avenue and Cerrito Street. This will improve the clear sidewalk width for pedestrians and make them easier for vehicles to see when crossing Washington Avenue on the west side of Cerrito Street.
12. Conduct a neighborhood outreach campaign to encourage residents to put their trash and recycling bins on the roadway rather than on the sidewalk.

A graphical depiction what Washington Avenue might look like if these suggestions are implemented is shown in **Figure 4-6**, **Figure 4-7**, and **Figure 4-8**.

Figure 4-6: Suggestions for Washington Avenue – Pierce Street to Gateview Avenue (Sheet 1 of 3)

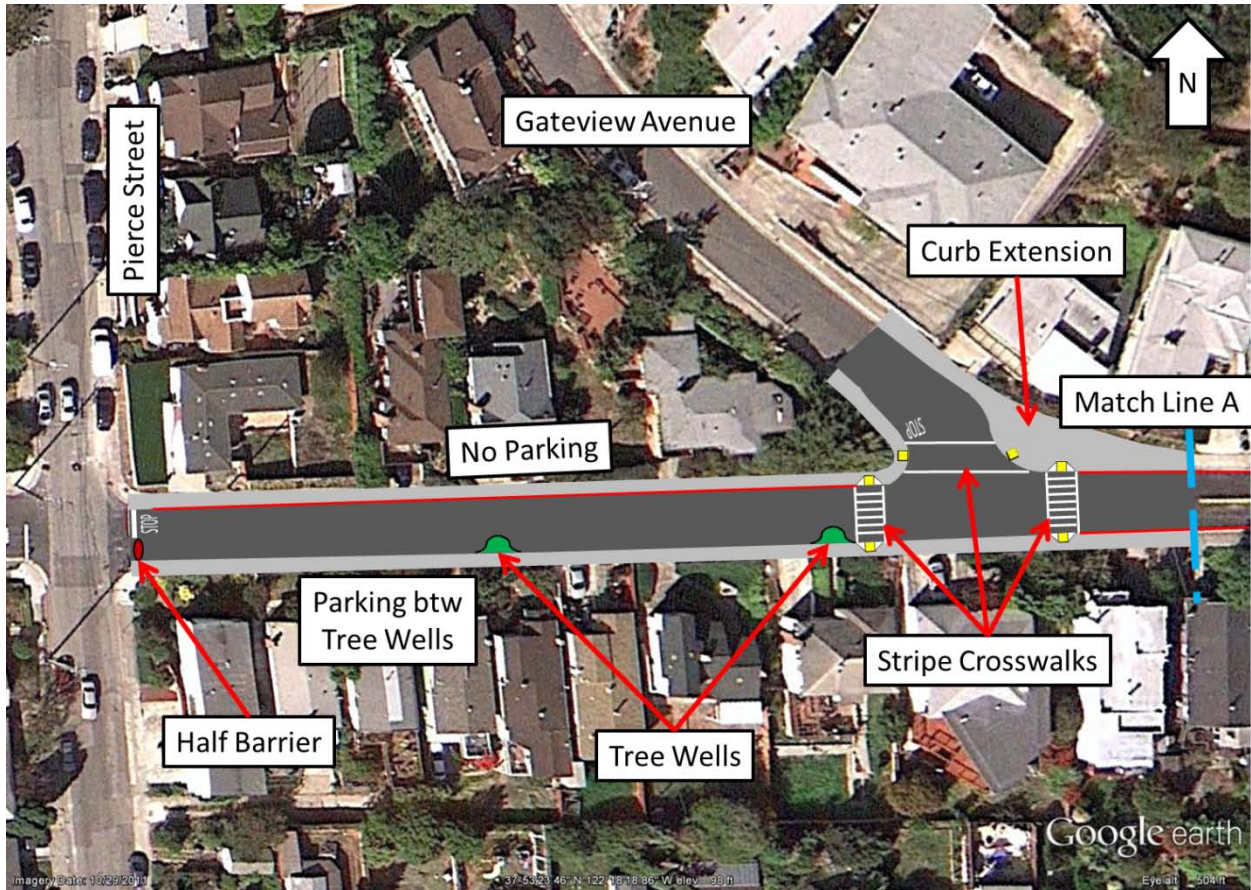


Figure 4-7: Suggestions for Washington Avenue – Gateview Avenue to Polk Street (Sheet 2 of 3)

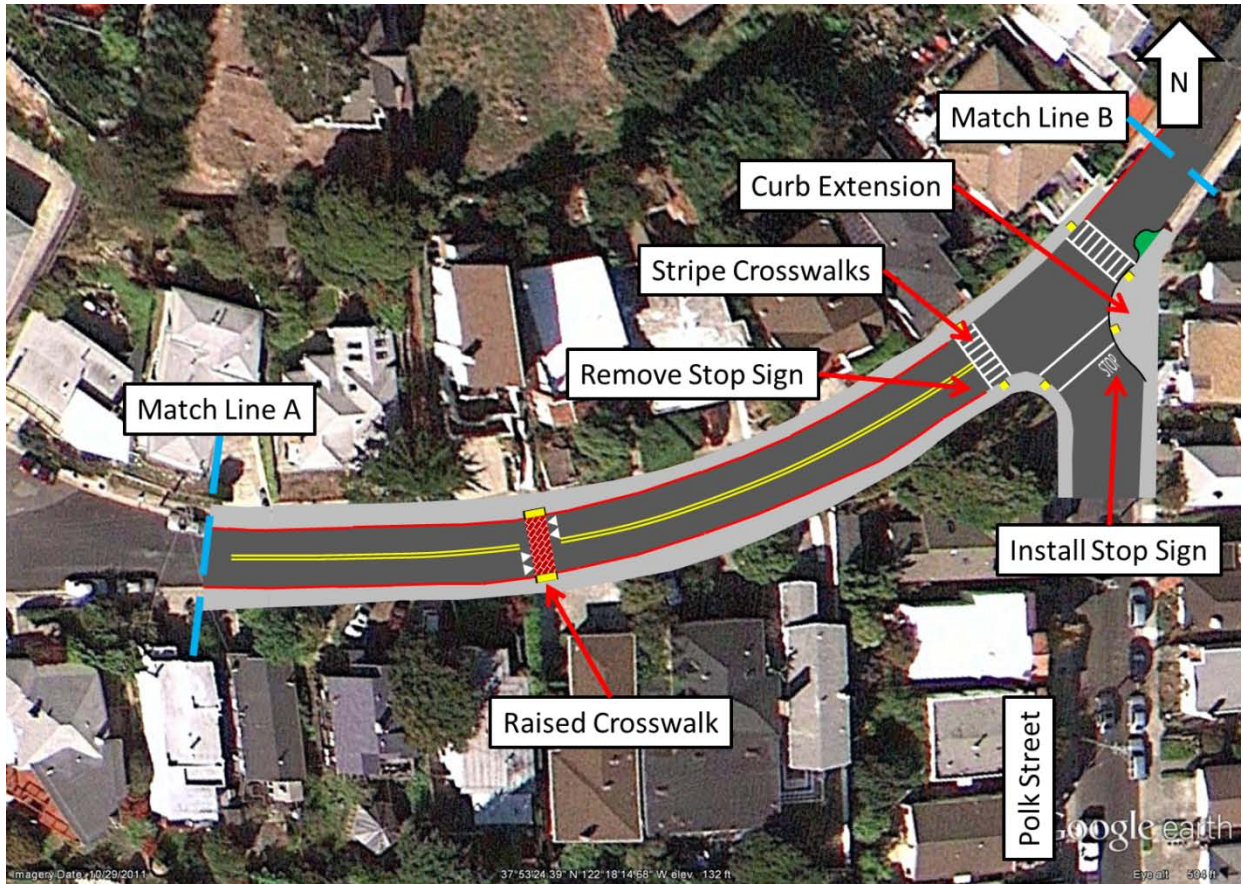
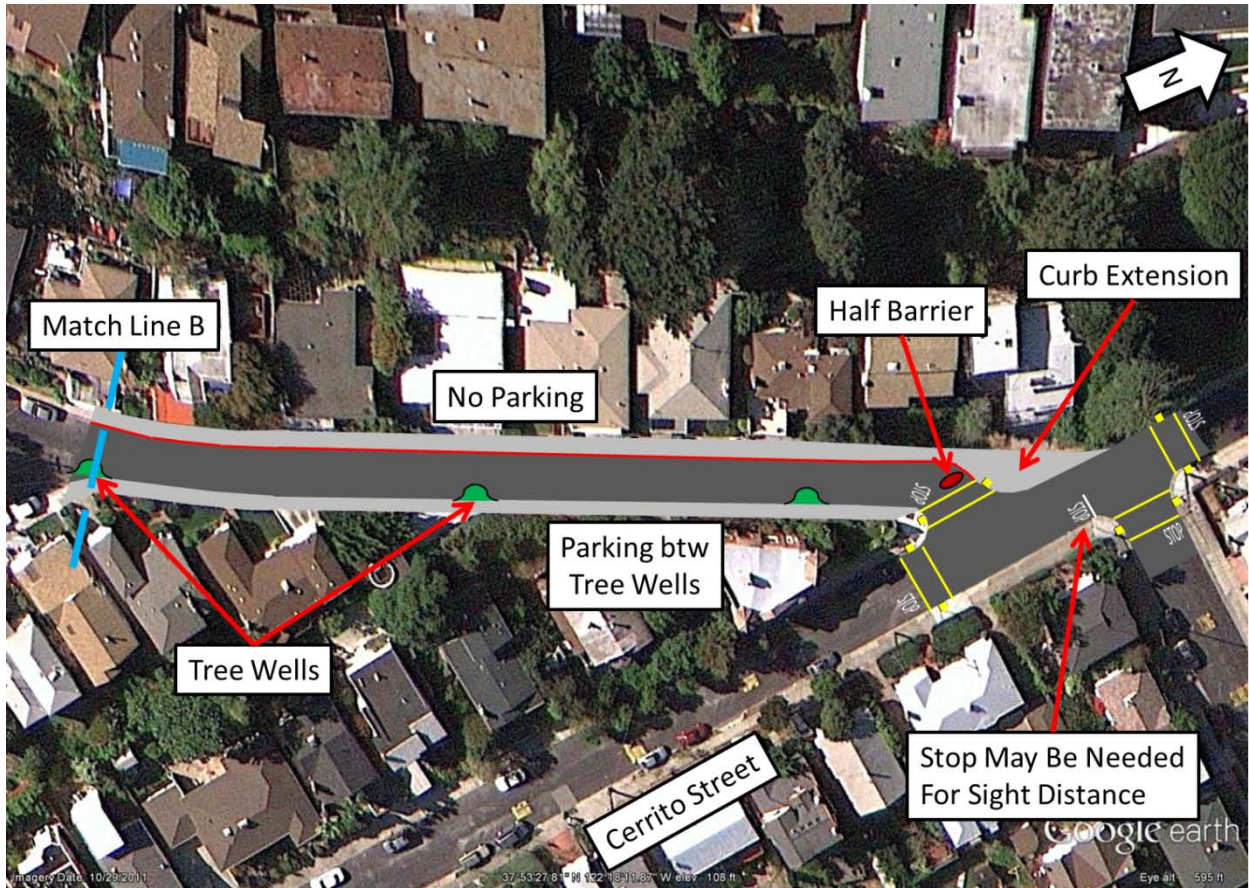


Figure 4-8: Suggestions for Washington Avenue – Polk Street to Cerrito Street (Sheet 3 of 3)

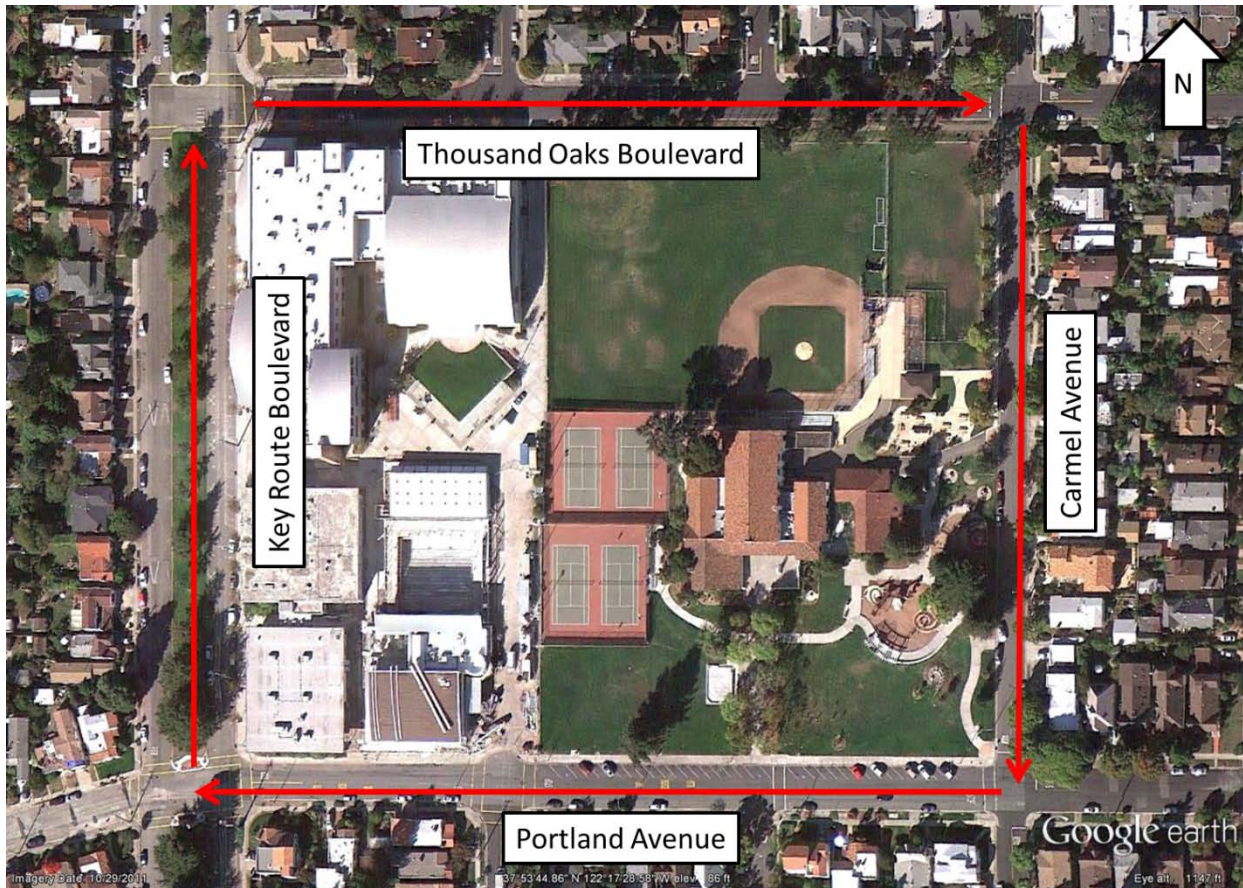


4.3 FOCUS AREA 2: ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

The area around Albany High School was the second and final location for the pedestrian walking audit. This area was of interest to the City of Albany because of the high pedestrian activity generated by Albany High School and the heavy traffic congestions before and after school hours. The high school also borders Memorial Park and a community swimming pool which also generate pedestrian volumes. The walking audit in this area walked around the border of the high school, park, and pool which are defined by Thousand Oaks Boulevard, Carmel Avenue, Portland Avenue, and Key Route Boulevard.

An overview of this corridor is shown and the walking audit route is shown in **Figure 4-9**.

Figure 4-9: Overview of Area Around Albany High School



Observations for Thousand Oaks Boulevard

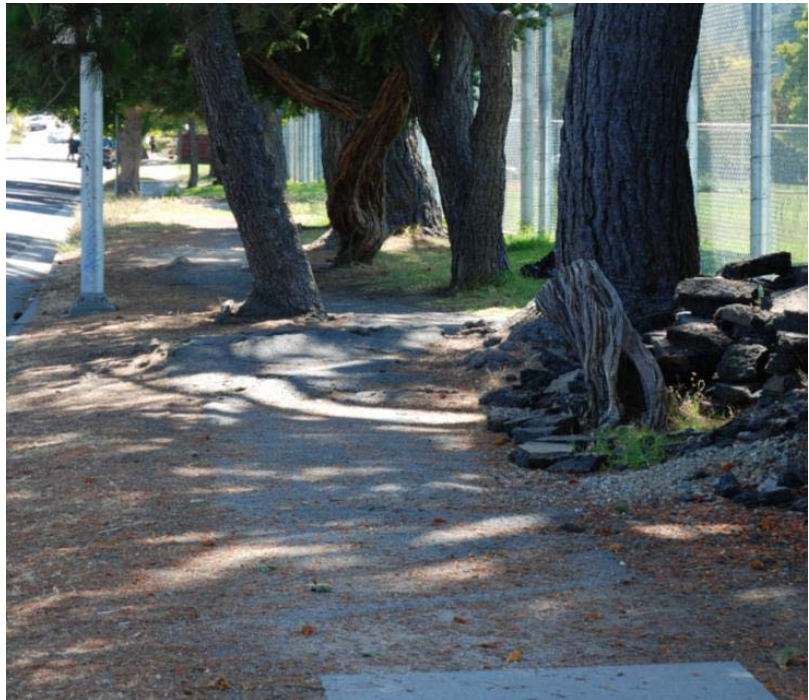
<p>The intersection of Thousand Oaks Boulevard-Pomona Avenue was reported to have a lot of pick-ups and drop-offs before and after school.</p>	
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The intersection of Pomona Avenue-Thousand Oaks Boulevard was also reported to have a high volume of U-turning vehicles after students had been dropped off or picked up.

There are currently no striped crosswalks at Pomona Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard.



The sidewalk on Thousand Oaks Boulevard is made of asphalt and has been damaged over time by tree roots making it inaccessible for wheelchairs and walking aids.



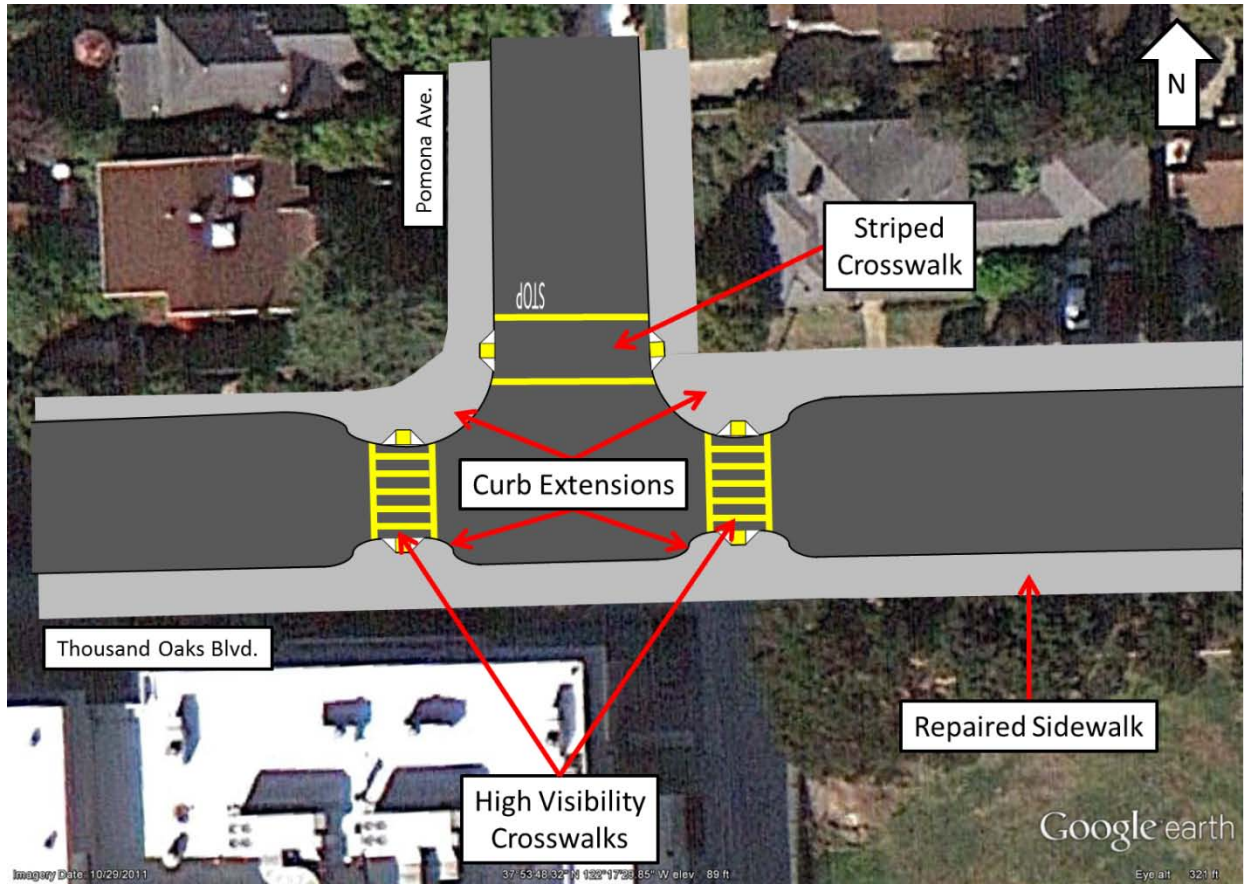
Many Albany High School students reportedly park back in the neighborhoods during school hours creating a lot of pedestrian activity along Thousand Oaks Boulevard	
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Suggestions for Potential Improvement on Thousand Oaks Boulevard

1. Consider installing curb extensions at the corners of Pomona Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard. Curb extensions will make pedestrians easier to spot increasing the safety of crossing at this intersection. Additionally, the curb extension will eliminate the ability to make U-turns at this intersection improving both intersection operations and safety for pedestrians.
2. Implementation of striped crosswalks is also suggested at Pomona Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard. Crosswalks will guide pedestrians and alert drivers to a crossing location. The legs that are uncontrolled (EB/WB) may have high visibility crosswalks.
3. It is suggested to also replace the sidewalk that is currently on the side of the street closest to the park and school. The existing sidewalk is made of asphalt and would be impassable to pedestrians with disabilities. Yet numerous pedestrians use this area for walking. Given that extensive tree roots are located in the pedestrian right-of-way, it is suggested to work with the City’s arborist to determine a method of sidewalk implementation that will not conflict with these tree roots or weaken the trees. Methods could include excavating beneath the tree roots, installing a walkway that serves as a root bridge, reinforcing sidewalk concrete slabs with rebar, installing sidewalk over a geogrid and gravel base, installing a meandering walkway, or other measures.

Figure 4-10 provides a graphical overview of what the intersection at Pomona Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard may look like with the implementation of the suggested improvements.

Figure 4-10: Suggestions for Pedestrian Improvements at Pomona Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard



Observations for Carmel Avenue

A small section of sidewalk near the intersection at Thousand Oaks Boulevard and Carmel Avenue is missing on the west side (side closest to the park)



The sidewalk on the west side of the street near the Albany Teen Center offsets from the street about 60 feet with no signage to indicate this diversion. While walking down the sidewalk it appears the sidewalk disappears



Suggestions for Potential Improvements on Carmel Avenue

1. Consider completing the sidewalk on the west side of the road near the intersection of Thousand Oaks Boulevard and Carmel Avenue. This sidewalk will improve pedestrian access, especially for wheelchair and sight-impaired pedestrians.
2. It is also suggested that a sidewalk on the west side near the Albany Teen Center be constructed closer to the street. A sidewalk closer to the street would better accommodate pedestrian desire lines as seen in the trampled grass close to the street.
3. If a sidewalk adjacent to the street is not be constructed, it is suggested to place signs indicating the sidewalk moves away from the street around the Albany Teen Center. This will provide additional guidance to pedestrians so they will know of an alternative to walking on the grass close to the street.

Observations for Portland Avenue

There is currently front-in angled parking along Portland Avenue along the side of the street closest to Memorial Park



The Albany Pool is located at Pomona Avenue and Portland Avenue which generates pedestrian activity at the intersection.



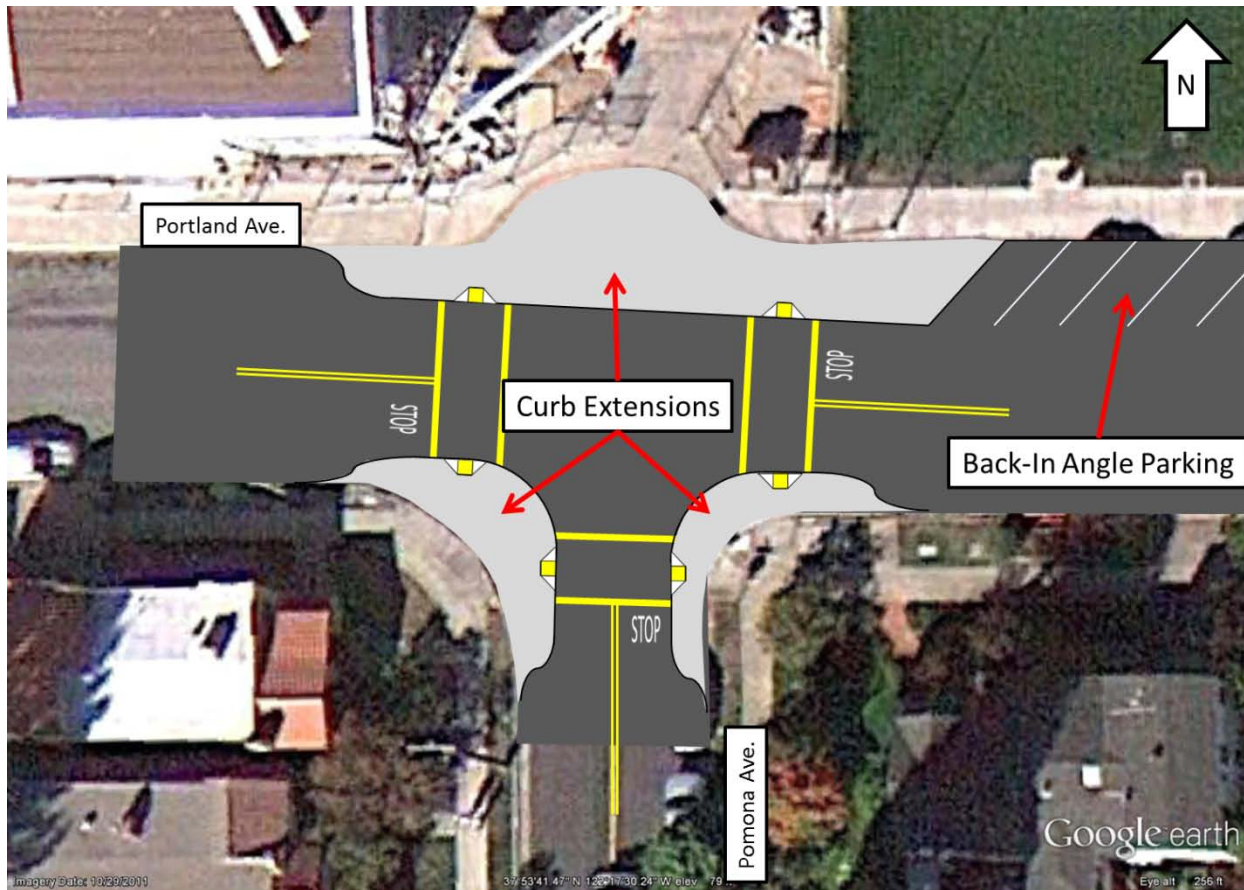
Albany High School is an open campus and many students head to Solano Avenue for lunch. Pomona Avenue and Portland Avenue is a key intersection for pedestrians accessing Solano Avenue from Albany High School

Suggestions for Potential Improvements on Portland Avenue

1. The City of Albany is currently planning on realigning the angled parking on Portland Avenue to be back-in angled parking. It is suggested that this realignment be completed as it will provide enhanced safety for bicyclists and improved visibility of any pedestrians near the parked vehicles
2. The implementation of curb extensions is also suggested at the intersection of Pomona Avenue and Portland Avenue. Curb extensions at this intersection will improve the pedestrian experience by reducing the crossing distance, minimize the time pedestrians are in the street, and improve the ability of motorists and pedestrians to see each other.

Figure 4-11 provides a graphical overview of what the intersection of Portland Avenue and Pomona Avenue may look like with the implementation of the suggested improvements.

Figure 4-11: Suggestions for Pedestrian Improvements at Portland & Pomona Avenues



Observations for Key Route Boulevard

Vehicles are allowed to park along the median in addition to the side of the street on Key Route Boulevard. City staff indicated that students cross all along the length of Key Route Boulevard from Portland Avenue to Thousand Oaks Boulevard in order to access the high school after parking or to access their vehicles.



Speed tables are located along the southbound direction of Key Route Boulevard but not the northbound. They are not well marked or indicated.



There is no crosswalk between Portland Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard, even though the main entrance to the school is located at approximately midblock.

Key Route Boulevard's intersections with Portland Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard also have a wide median, around 36 feet. Other locations on Key Route Boulevard have stop signs in the median as well as at the cross streets.



There is a speed hump located at the median on Thousand Oaks Boulevard west of the northbound Key Route Boulevard roadway.



None of the curb ramps at Portland Avenue or Thousand Oaks Boulevard have truncated domes.



Suggestions for Potential Improvement on Key Route Boulevard

1. Consider installing curb extensions at Key Route Boulevard's intersections with Portland Avenue and Thousand Oaks Boulevard. Curb extensions at these intersections may improve the pedestrian experience by reducing the crossing distance, minimizing the time pedestrians are in the street, and improve the ability of motorists and pedestrians to see each other.
2. The existing median opening at both of these intersections is around 40 feet. It is suggested that this be narrowed to provide additional buffer between vehicles and pedestrians crossing at the intersection
3. Adding stop signs to the median opening is suggested similar to the intersection of Brighton Avenue and Key Route Boulevard. The 40 foot wide median can be confusing to both drivers and pedestrians in the current configuration without stop signs.
4. Remove speed tables installed for southbound traffic on Key Route Boulevard. If removal not possible or desired, install proper pavement markings and signage at the speed tables.
5. Remove the speed hump for eastbound traffic at the median of Thousand Oaks Boulevard near Key Route Boulevard.
6. There is currently no midblock crossing near the entrance to Albany High School. It is therefore suggested that a high visibility crosswalk with curb extensions be considered at this location. The high visibility crosswalk would better channelize pedestrians crossing the street while alerting motorists to a crossing location. Crosswalk signage is also suggested as this location is at a school which will have a lot of pedestrian and vehicle activity when school starts or finishes.
7. Consider implementing back-in angle parking along Key Route Boulevard. Back-in angle parking will improve the ability of motorists to see conflicts with both other motor vehicles and bicyclists when pulling out into the travel lanes. Additionally, by moving the

parking to the side of the street the high school is on will reduce the number of students crossing the street in the morning. Students parking along the southbound direction of Key Route Boulevard can access the median and the suggested midblock crosswalk if implemented.

Figure 4-12 provides a graphical overview of what the Key Route Boulevard corridor between Thousand Oaks Boulevard and Albany High School's front entrance might look like if these suggestions are implemented. The section between Albany High School's front entrance and Portland Avenue would be almost a mirror image of this and is therefore not depicted.

Figure 4-12: Suggestions for Pedestrian Improvements at Oak Street & 7th Street

