

Safe Routes to School Action Plan for Webb Elementary

2019

Prepared for the City of Arlington and Arlington ISD
Prepared by the North Central Texas Council of Governments
Funding from the State Farm Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction 2**
 - Why Safe Routes to School? 2
 - What’s Included in This Action Plan? 2
 - Development of the Plan and Input Process 2
- Existing Conditions 3**
 - School Overview 3
 - School Context and Walk Zone 4
 - Crash History 4
 - Walking Safety Assessment 5
 - School Circulation 5
 - Existing Infrastructure 6
 - Key Issues 8
- Recommendations 9**
- Next Steps 11**

INTRODUCTION

Why Safe Routes to School?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a nationwide initiative with the goal of enabling and encouraging more students to walk and bicycle to school through **Engineering** infrastructure investments, and **Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation** programs—also known as the Five Es of SRTS.

SRTS initiatives are proven to improve safety and air quality, increase the number of students that walk and bike, contribute to children’s social and academic success, and provide a foundation for life-long healthful habits.

What’s Included in This Action Plan?

The plan includes an inventory and evaluation of **Existing Conditions** for walking and biking around Webb Elementary, as well as **Recommendations** for both infrastructure improvements and programming.

Engineering Recommendations include a range of improvements to the physical environment at and around a school to improve the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking and biking. This may include upgrading sidewalks or crossings, filling pedestrian and bicycle network gaps, or adding signage and signals.

Programmatic Recommendations include changes to school traffic management, enforcement of traffic laws, and fun and engaging programs for students and families to increase walking and biking to school. Programs can be relatively easy and inexpensive to implement, and can produce significant results even in the near-term.

Development of the Plan and Input Process

This plan was developed by staff with the North Central Texas Council of Governments, in coordination with the City of Arlington Public Works & Transportation Department, with funding from State Farm’s Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grant.

To gain input and involvement from local stakeholders, NCTCOG staff received feedback on issues from Donita James—a former Assistant Principal at Webb Elementary, now at nearby Speer Elementary—via phone; spoke with the school crossing guards during observations of school arrival on May 16, 2019; and received input from City staff following a walking assessment that afternoon.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

School Overview

Webb Elementary is located along N. Cooper Street, just north of Randol Mill Road. When the school opened in 1960 it housed Nichols Junior High, until Nichols moved to a new location in 1993.

Location: 1200 N. Cooper Street, Arlington, TX 76011

Number of Students:¹ 689

Grades Served:¹ PK-6

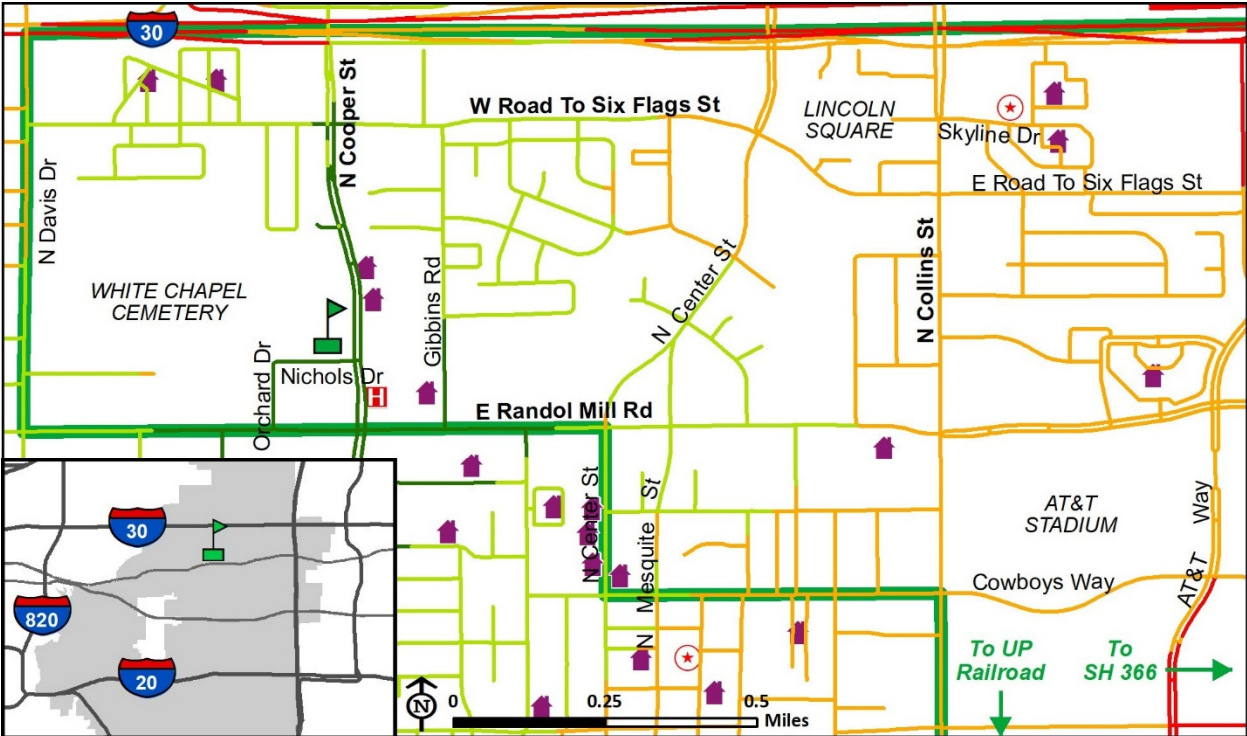
Student Demographics:¹

- Economically Disadvantaged: 93%
- English Learners: 62%
- Race/Ethnicity: 81% Hispanic, 12% African American, 4% White, 2% Asian, 1% Other

School Hours:

- Doors Open: 7:45 a.m.
- Class Starts: 8:20 a.m.
- Pre-K a.m. Dismissal: 11:20 a.m.
- Pre-K p.m. Begins: 12:35 p.m.
- Dismissal: 3:35 p.m.

Figure 1 - School Context and Walk Zone



Legend

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Webb Elementary | Distance From School | Land Use Features |
| Webb Attendance Zone | < 0.5 miles | Apartment |
| | 0.5 - 1 mile | Community Center |
| | 1 - 2 miles | Hospital |
| | > 2 miles | |

¹ Source: Texas Education Agency. 2017-2018 School Profile.

School Context and Walk Zone

Arlington ISD provides free bus service only to students that live more than two miles from school; all students that live less than two miles from school are expected to walk or be driven to school. Therefore, less than two miles is often considered to be the “walk zone” by school districts. However, most SRTS practitioners agree that students are most likely to walk one-half mile or less to school (Safe Routes Partnership, 2018).

Figure 1 shows attendance zone for Webb Elementary, travel distances from the school—one-half mile, one mile, and two miles—and the location of the apartments, community centers, and hospitals around the school.

Most of the students that attend Webb Elementary live in the various apartment complexes in the school’s attendance zone, including those across Cooper Street from Webb, north of W. Road to Six Flags Street, and the apartments east of Collins Street along Skyline Drive.

Challenges for Walking and Biking:

- Webb Elementary is located along Cooper Street, a 6-lane major arterial with high volumes and high speeds.
- The school is located at the southwestern edge of its attendance zone, which means more students live farther from the school
- The connectivity of the surrounding streets is limited, which increases walking distances and restricts access to the school
- The school is bordered by non-residential land uses to the west and south, adding to pedestrian safety challenges

Opportunities for Walking and Biking:

- A significant number of students already walk to school from the apartment complexes across Cooper Street from the school

Crash History and Road Volumes

The locations of crashes between a motor vehicle and a pedestrian or bicyclist between 2013 and 2017 were obtained from the Texas Department of Transportation. The location of the crashes around Webb Elementary is shown in **Figure 2**. There were no reported pedestrian or bicycle crashes immediately adjacent to the school, or along N Cooper Street inside the school’s attendance zone. There were 12 crashes along Collins Street. Students that live in the apartments on the east side of Collins must cross Collins Street to walk to Webb Elementary.

Figure 2 - Crash History (2013-2017)



Legend

- Pedestrian Crash
- Bicycle Crash
- ★ Annual Average Daily Traffic (Year)
(Source: TxDOT)

Walking Safety Assessment

On May 16, 2019, a walking assessment and arrival/dismissal observations were completed by NCTCOG staff. NCTCOG staff observed behaviors, student walking routes, and vehicular circulation patterns. Staff also inventoried and assessed the condition of pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb ramps, signs, and pavement markings. The results of these assessments are summarized in the following sections.

School Circulation

Traffic circulation and walking routes are shown in **Figure 3**. The main entrance of the school is located on Nichols Drive. Parent vehicles travel in a one-way direction, clockwise, on Orchard and Nichols to drop students off either on Nichols or using the driveway in front of the school entrance. Parent vehicles then exit by turning right onto Cooper Street.

A smaller number of parents also pick up and drop off students using the driveway on the north side of the school along Cooper. Most then exit the loading zone by turning right onto Cooper Street using the driveway just north of the school crosswalk. In the afternoon, cones are used to block off the right southbound lane just north of this driveway, to allow those cars in the loading zone to more easily exit onto Cooper Street.



Drop-off on Nichols Drive



Cones on Cooper Street

One school bus picks up and drops off students in the staff parking lot on the south side of the school.

Students were observed walking from the northwest, north, and east of the school. The number of students that walk to school, and the directions they walked to and from, are summarized below.

- Morning: 42 students—four walked from the north along the west side of Cooper Street, the remainder (38) crossed Cooper Street at the mid-block crosswalk, coming from the apartments across the street from Webb Elementary
- Afternoon: 76 students—at least 60 students crossed Cooper at the mid-block crosswalk heading toward the apartment buildings, 13 walked north along the west side of Cooper, and three students cut across the school recreation field walking to the northwest.



Students Walking North on Cooper



Students Crossing Cooper

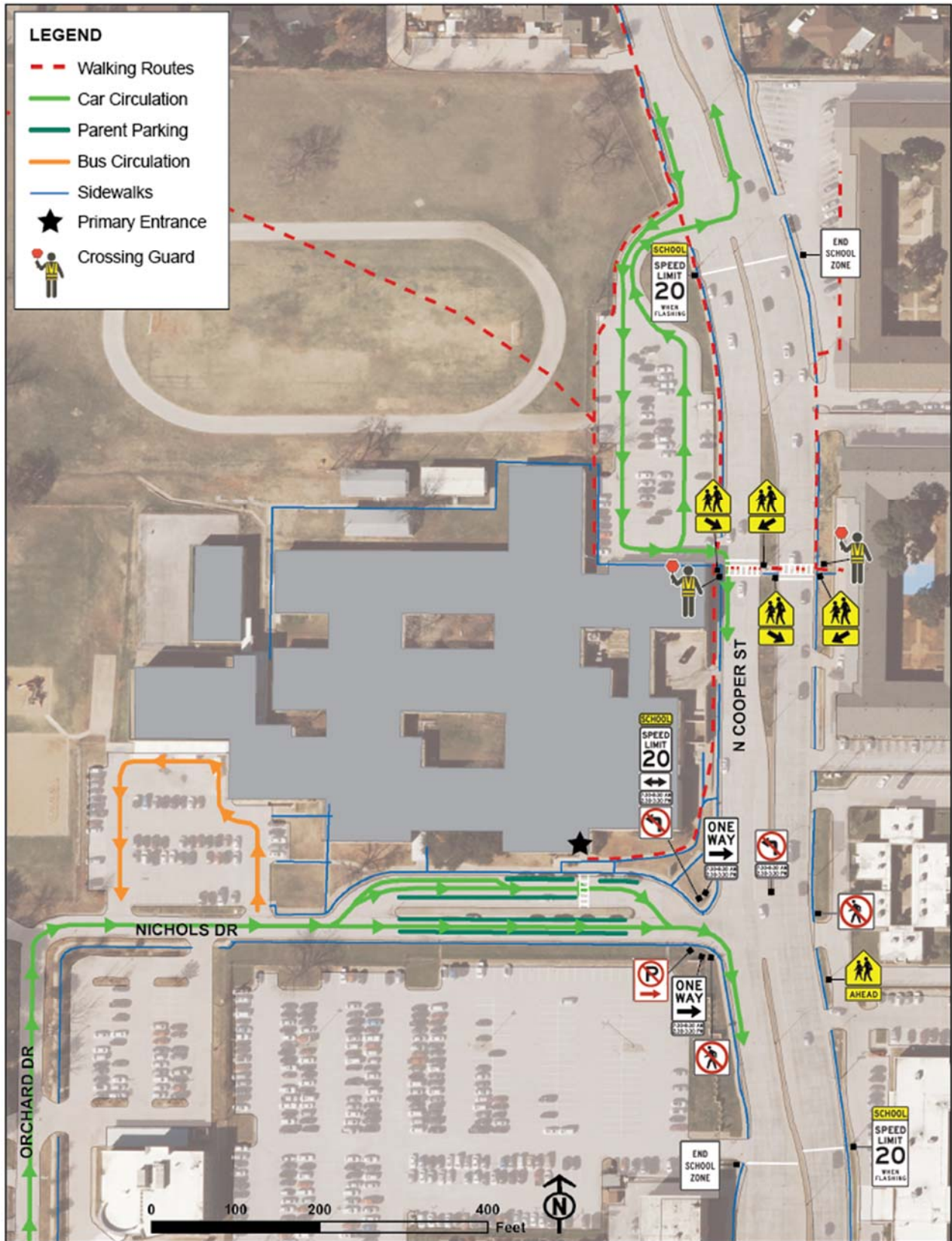


Students Crossing Cooper

Existing Infrastructure

The sidewalks along Cooper Street are wide and in good condition; however, they do not have buffers separating them from traffic. All corners feature curb ramps, though they do not meet ADA standards (e.g., lack truncated domes). The 20-mph school zone is marked with flashing beacons. The mid-block crosswalk on Cooper Street is marked with “Crossing Here” signs and stop lines, and there are crossing guards positioned on either side of the crosswalk. The signs and pavement markings are all in good condition. The location of all sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic control signs serving the school is shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3 - School Circulation and Existing Conditions



Key Issues

1. Many cars did not stop for the school crossing guards, or they stopped right up against the crosswalk, putting the crossing guards and the students crossing in serious risk.
2. Many cars were observed speeding in the school speed zone, even though a crossing guard reported that police conduct speed enforcement along the corridor every few weeks.
3. Cars exiting the school driveway on the north side of the school turned right in front of students preparing to enter the crosswalk.
4. The sidewalks along Cooper are not buffered from traffic, making them very uncomfortable to walk along. Though they are relatively wide, they are not wide enough to support peak demand, forcing students to walk in the grass or dangerously close to passing cars,
5. Students that live in the apartments east of Collins near Skyline Drive live just under two miles from school, and therefore do not receive free busing. Students that walk to and from these apartments must cross Collins, Road to Six Flags Street, and Cooper to get to Webb Elementary.
6. Due to the limited street connectivity in the surrounding area, relatively few students live within easy walking distance (less than one-half mile).

RECOMMENDATIONS

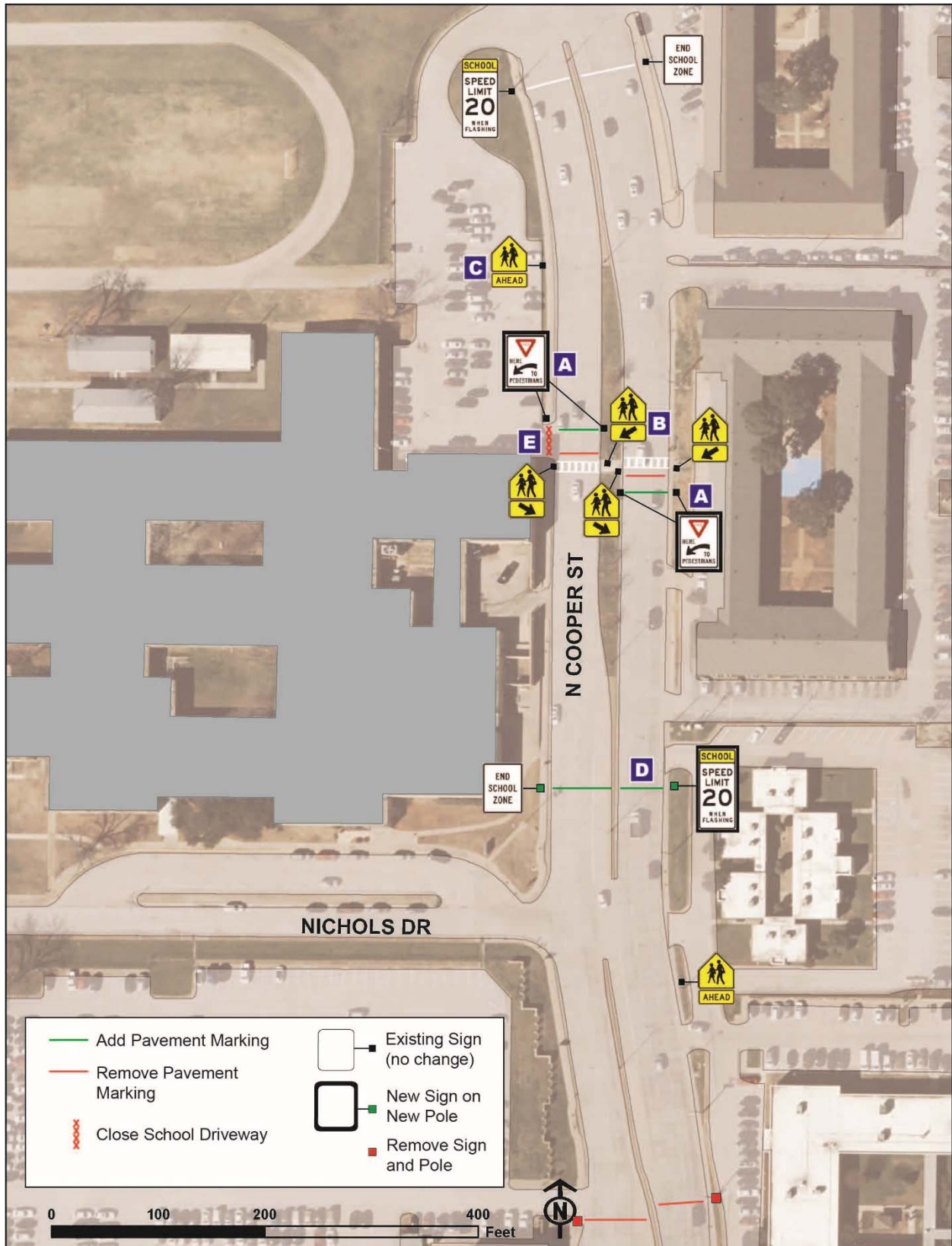
Effective Safe Routes to School initiatives include both infrastructure and non-infrastructure components. The recommendations listed here offer a selection of ideas that can be implemented in and near the vicinity of the school. Please refer to the table below and the map on the following page for more details.

■ - Recommendation is shown in Figure 4

Table 1 - Recommendations for Webb Elementary

ID	Recommendation	Reason	Time-frame	Responsible Agency
ENGINEERING				
A	At the mid-block crosswalk, move the stop lines farther back from the crosswalk and install “Yield Here to Pedestrians” signs	Improve visibility of pedestrians in the crosswalk and bring greater attention to the crosswalk	Short	City
B	Install yellow-green sign post reflectors on the “School Crossing Here” sign posts	Bring greater attention to the presence of the school crosswalk	Short	City
C	Install a School Crossing Ahead sign to the north of the crosswalk	Bring greater attention to the presence of the school crosswalk	Short	City
D	Move the southern limits of the school zone closer to the crosswalk	Improve compliance of school speeds as vehicles near the crosswalk	Medium	City
E	Close the school driveway on the north side of the school crosswalk	Cars turning right out of that driveway risk hitting students in the crosswalk	Medium	Arlington ISD
F	Conduct a warrant study for the installation of pedestrian-activated flashing signs, rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB), or pedestrian hybrid beacon at the mid-block crosswalk	Further enhance the safety of pedestrians using the crosswalk	Medium	City
G	As future opportunities arise (e.g., if Webb Elementary is reconstructed or if Cooper Street is reconstructed in the future), assess the feasibility of widening the sidewalks along Cooper Street and moving the sidewalks back away from the road	Improve the comfort and safety of pedestrians walking along Cooper Street; provide sidewalks that are wide enough to meet student demand	Long	City Arlington ISD
PROGRAMMATIC				
H	Assign crossing guards to be present at the Cooper Street mid-block crosswalk when Pre-K dismisses.	Crossing guards are not present when students are crossing at these times	Short	City
I	The Police Department should continue to conduct periodic traffic enforcement during school arrival/dismissal (e.g., stopping for crossing guards and speeding)	Improve the safety of students walking along Cooper Street and crossing at the mid-block crosswalk	Short	City
J	Initiate discussions with Arlington ISD about the creation of a hazardous busing policy for students living east of Collins.	Students that live east of Collins walk nearly two miles and cross two 6-lane roads to get to school	Medium	City Arlington ISD

Figure 4 – Map of Recommendations for Webb Elementary



Infrastructure Recommendations for Webb Elementary:



Retroreflective Sign Post Cover



Advance Yield Line and Sign

Photo 1 courtesy of Mike Cynecki (guide.saferoutesinfo.org), photo 2 courtesy of Toole Design Group (pedbikesafe.org).

NEXT STEPS

Here are some short-term action items to help get the implementation of the Safe Routes to School Action Plan started:

Task	Lead Agency	Timeframe
Identify funding sources for infrastructure improvements.	City of Arlington	2020
Assign crossing guards to be present at the crosswalk when morning Pre-K dismisses at 11:20 a.m. and when afternoon Pre-K begins at 12:35 p.m.	City of Arlington	2020
Install the Yield Line and “Yield Here to Pedestrians” sign at the mid-block crosswalk.	City of Arlington	2020-2021
Conduct a warrant study for the installation of pedestrian-activated flashing signs, RRFB, or pedestrian hybrid beacon at the mid-block crosswalk	City of Arlington	2020-2021