



Strongsville Walkable Community Workshop Report

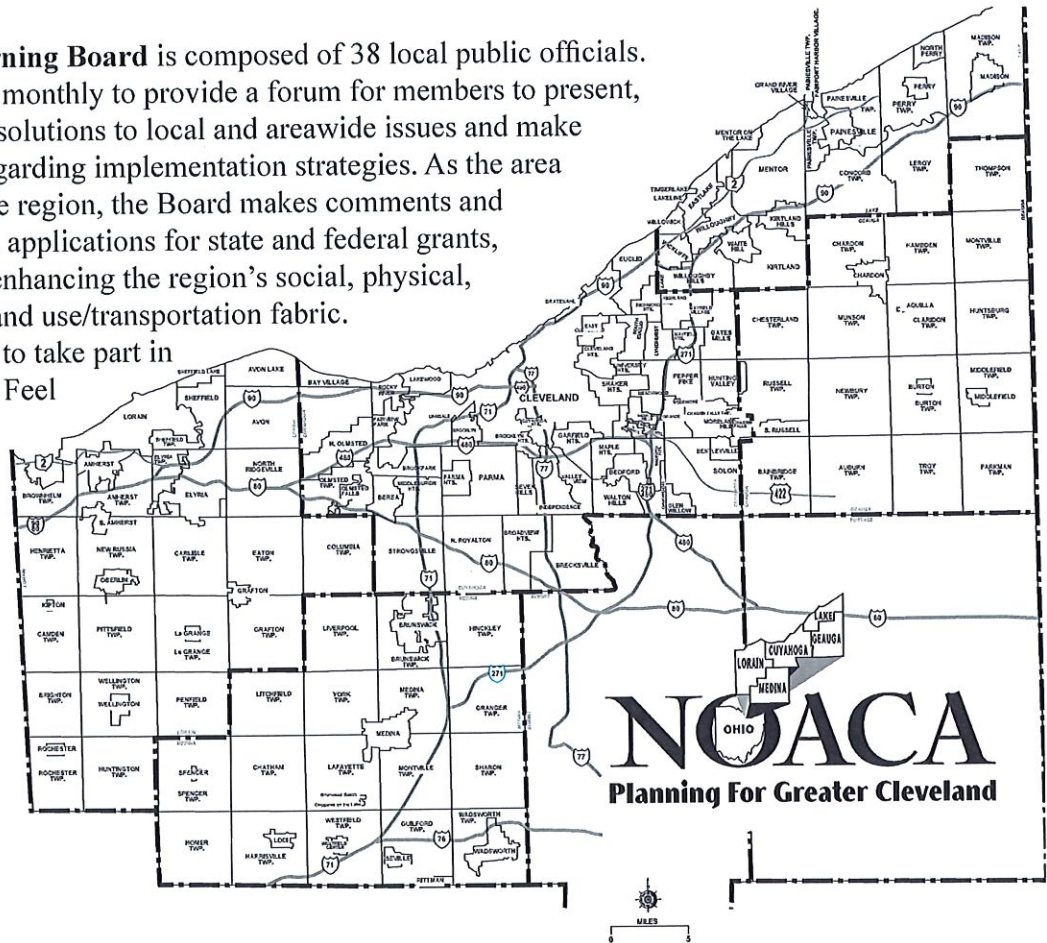


The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is a public organization serving the counties of and municipalities and townships within Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina (covering an area with 2.1 million people). NOACA is the agency designated or recognized to perform the following functions:

- Serve as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), with responsibility for comprehensive, cooperative and continuous planning for highways, public transit, and bikeways, as defined in the current transportation law.
- Perform continuous water quality, transportation-related air quality and other environmental planning functions.
- Administer the area clearinghouse function, which includes providing local government with the opportunity to review a wide variety of local or state applications for federal funds.
- Conduct transportation and environmental planning and related demographic, economic and land use research.
- Serve as an information center for transportation and environmental and related planning.
- At NOACA Governing Board direction, provide transportation and environmental planning assistance to the 172 units of local, general purpose government.

The NOACA Governing Board is composed of 38 local public officials. The Board convenes monthly to provide a forum for members to present, discuss and develop solutions to local and areawide issues and make recommendations regarding implementation strategies. As the area clearinghouse for the region, the Board makes comments and recommendations on applications for state and federal grants, with the purpose of enhancing the region's social, physical, environmental and land use/transportation fabric. NOACA invites you to take part in its planning process. Feel free to participate, to ask questions and to learn more about areawide planning. For more information, call:

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Strongsville Walkable Community Workshop Report

February 2009

Prepared by

NORTHEAST OHIO AREA WIDE COORDINATING AGENCY

Principal Author: Sally Hanley

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About NOACA and this Document

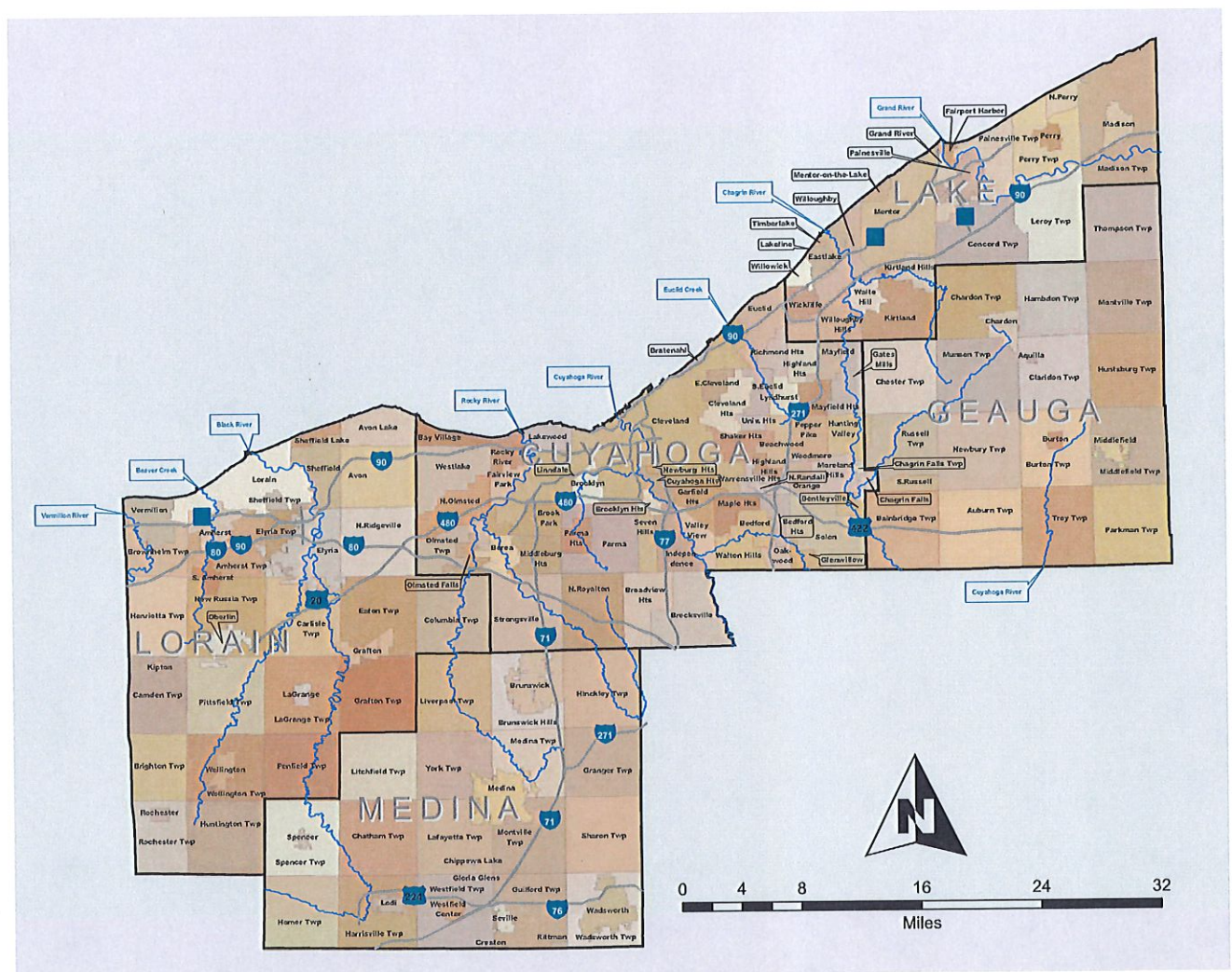
The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for five counties of Northeast Ohio, which include Greater Cleveland and the Lorain area. Its chief functions are to perform long- and short-range transportation planning, transportation-related air quality planning, and areawide water quality management planning, as defined by federal and Ohio mandates.

Along with fulfilling its metropolitan planning requirements, NOACA also serves Northeast Ohio

with special transportation studies and programs that address mobility for all of the region's residents. These planning efforts mesh well with the region's 10 transportation goals, as NOACA seeks to address traffic congestion, safety, the integration of transportation modes, and aesthetics.

More information about NOACA and its goals can be found at www.noaca.org.

The workshop described in this document was conducted with the assistance of the National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW).



2008 Walkable Community Workshops



About the National Center for Bicycling & Walking (NCBW)

The mission of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking (NCBW) is to help create bicycle-friendly and walkable communities across North America by encouraging and supporting the efforts of individuals, organizations, and agencies.

NCBW believes communities should be planned, designed and managed to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can walk and bike easily, safely, and regularly. NCBW believes that the changes needed to make communities more physically active and livable places will be achieved only through sustained action at the local level – in each community – supported by positive national, state, and local policies and programs.

To this end, the NCBW provides bicycle and pedestrian advocates and professionals, transportation engineers and planners, public health specialists, and others with easy access to the information, training, tools, and experts they need to foster active living through community design.

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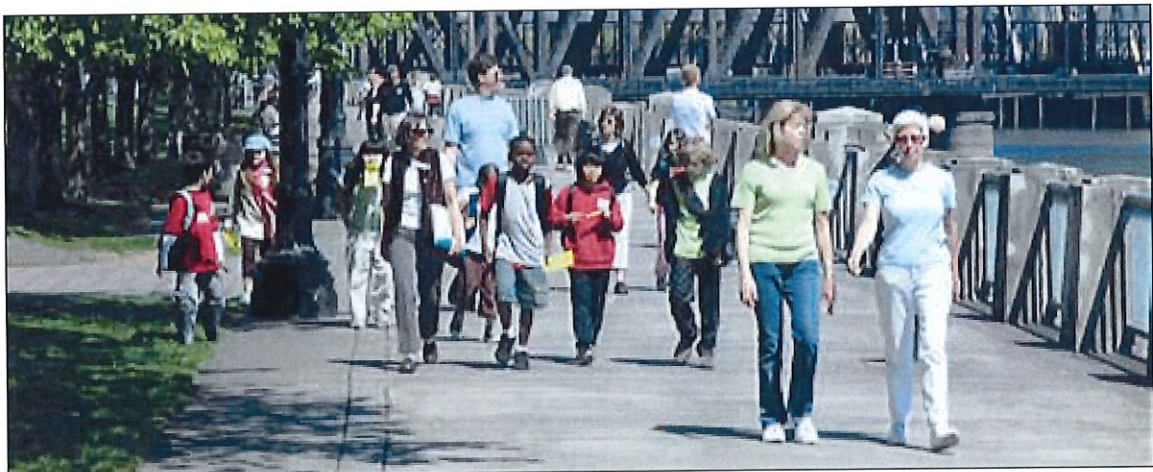


Photo courtesy of the National Center for Bicycling and Walking.

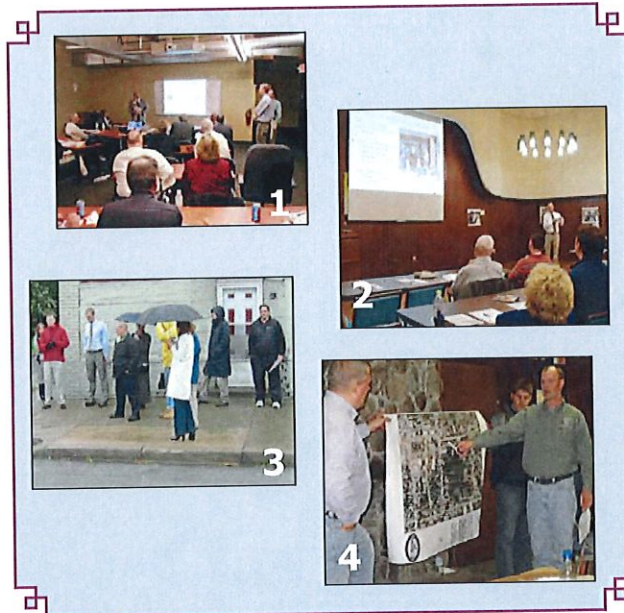


What is a Walkable Community Workshop?

The workshops are designed to teach advocates, residents, and professionals to identify barriers to walking and improve pedestrian safety in communities. Each workshop consists of four parts:

- 1) An initial briefing of the consultants by local stakeholders;
- 2) A presentation by the consultants on best practices of walkable communities;
- 3) A guided walking audit of a study area identified by the local host; and
- 4) Small group sessions from which recommendations for improvements are made.

The goal of each workshop is to identify and prioritize specific improvements that will increase safety and accessibility for pedestrians. It is hoped that the community's involvement in identifying these improvements will serve as a catalyst for communities to implement the improvements.



NOACA coordinated with local representatives to identify and invite a broad range of stakeholders, including local leaders, planners, engineers, interested business owners, residents and others to make the workshops successful.

Workshop Methodology

The National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW) begins its workshops with an initial briefing by select local stakeholders. Typically, these are mayors, police chiefs, city planning directors, or knowledgeable neighborhood representatives.

During this briefing the facilitators from the NCBW are alerted to existing pedestrian safety hazards, locations of walkable destinations (such as libraries, schools, municipal buildings, shopping, employment centers, and parks), existing plans for infrastructure improvements,

and any other considerations relevant to the outcome of the workshop.

The consultants also have the opportunity to ask questions of the local representatives during this informal briefing.

Approximately one hour of the workshop is devoted to a PowerPoint presentation of the elements of a walkable community. The presentation begins with an overview of typical barriers to walking. Also discussed are the reasons people commonly cite for not walking.



A small group presents recommendations for improved walkability on an aerial map of the focus area.



The public health rationale for increasing physical activity, the economic benefits to the individual and the community for becoming more walkable, and the relationship between walkability and improved quality of life are presented.

Those reasons form the basis of the second part of the presentation in which best practices of walkable communities are described. The practices range from the easy and inexpensive to implement, to longer-range solutions, and to novel ideas that can add character to a neighborhood. The final portion of the PowerPoint presentation is dedicated to implementation strategies.

A guided walking audit follows the presentation. The walk follows a route designated by the local coordinator and varies from an individual intersection to a one-mile-long corridor or more. Participants are asked to record observations and ideas during the walk. The purpose of the audit is to observe specific problem spots, as well as to point out features of the study area that are pedestrian friendly. The NCBW facilitator stops at various points along the route and asks the group to make observations and suggest remedies. Attention is paid to ease of crossing the road, the quality of the walking experience, driver behavior, and connectivity between destinations, among other indicators.

The third part of the workshop is devoted to a 30-minute group mapping exercise. The participants divide into small groups and gather around aerial photos of the study area. The groups are challenged to denote the location of specific problems and to develop solutions. The groups are not constrained in the scope of their suggestions, nor are they asked to worry about jurisdictional boundaries, or cost of improvements. The groups are challenged to think beyond infrastructure improvements. A program that encourages more children to walk to school might be one example. Aiding in this exercise are the notes taken during the Walking Audit.

Finally, each group is asked to present its recommendations to the group at large. This is an interactive portion of the workshop and other participants are encouraged to comment on the suggestions presented. Once the groups have presented, the facilitator encourages the participants to identify the highest priority improvements of those discussed. Lastly, these priorities are recorded and each participant is challenged to offer what she/he will do to advance these initiatives.



Workshop participants identify safety issues during the walking audit.



A group discusses possible solutions to improve pedestrian access and safety.



Workshop participants share their recommendations.



Walkable Workshop Facilitators

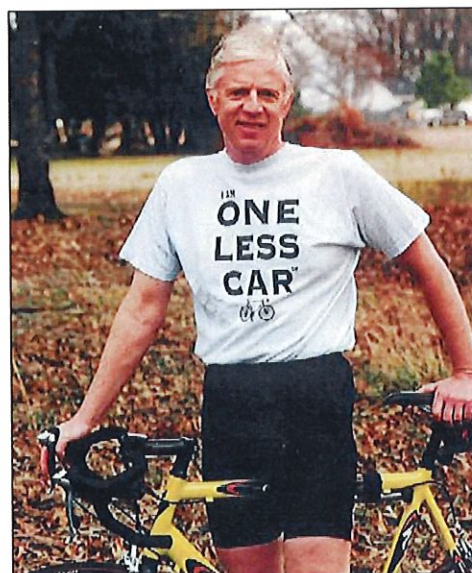


Mark Plotz

Mark Plotz works for the National Center for Bicycling and Walking, based in Washington, D.C., as Program Manager for the Walkable Community Workshop series. He also serves as a lead instructor in the program, having delivered workshops in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Alabama in 2006.

Mark is a year-round bicycle commuter, logging in thousands of miles per year. He brings a public health/active living perspective to the Walkable Community Workshops. In addition to his work at the NCBW, Mark informally advises bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups in the Washington, D.C. area.

Bob Chauncey has been a sociologist, a teacher, a human resources professional, and a management consultant for several business units. He eventually became a bicycle and pedestrian advocate and became the first paid executive director of Maryland's statewide bike-ped advocacy group. After a year as an independent consultant and bike shop mechanic, he joined the National Center for Bicycling and Walking. He coauthored a report on state departments of transportation, a primer on conducting bike and ped audits, and a study of metropolitan planning organizations. As the head of NCBW's Walkable Communities Workshop program, he conducted hundreds of workshops and now leads NCBW's new Traffic Justice Initiative, focusing on different ways to approach the problem of highway deaths and injuries.



Bob Chauncey



Strongsville Workshop

Local Coordinator:

Jennifer Milbrandt – Coordinator of Natural Resources, City of Strongsville

Date and Location:

June 3, 2008 at the Strongsville Communications Center, 13213 Pearl Road

Introduction

The Strongsville Walkable Community Workshop focused on the town center, located around the intersection of US-42 (Pearl Road) and SR-82 (Royalton Road). This intersection experiences a high volume of traffic¹ and the general locale is dominated by motorized vehicles and strip commercial uses. The City Hall is on the northeast corner. In general, the workshop participants would like to promote a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, and a more aesthetically pleasant and inviting town center.

They had particular concerns about 55 students who are not transported by school bus to the Center Middle School, located at Pearl and Westwood Roads. The children have been observed to cross Pearl Road, across as many as five lanes of traffic in some spots, where there are no crosswalks. Also, traffic problems are sometimes caused by many parents dropping their children off at the school.



The Pearl/Royalton Road intersection is dominated by motorized vehicles.



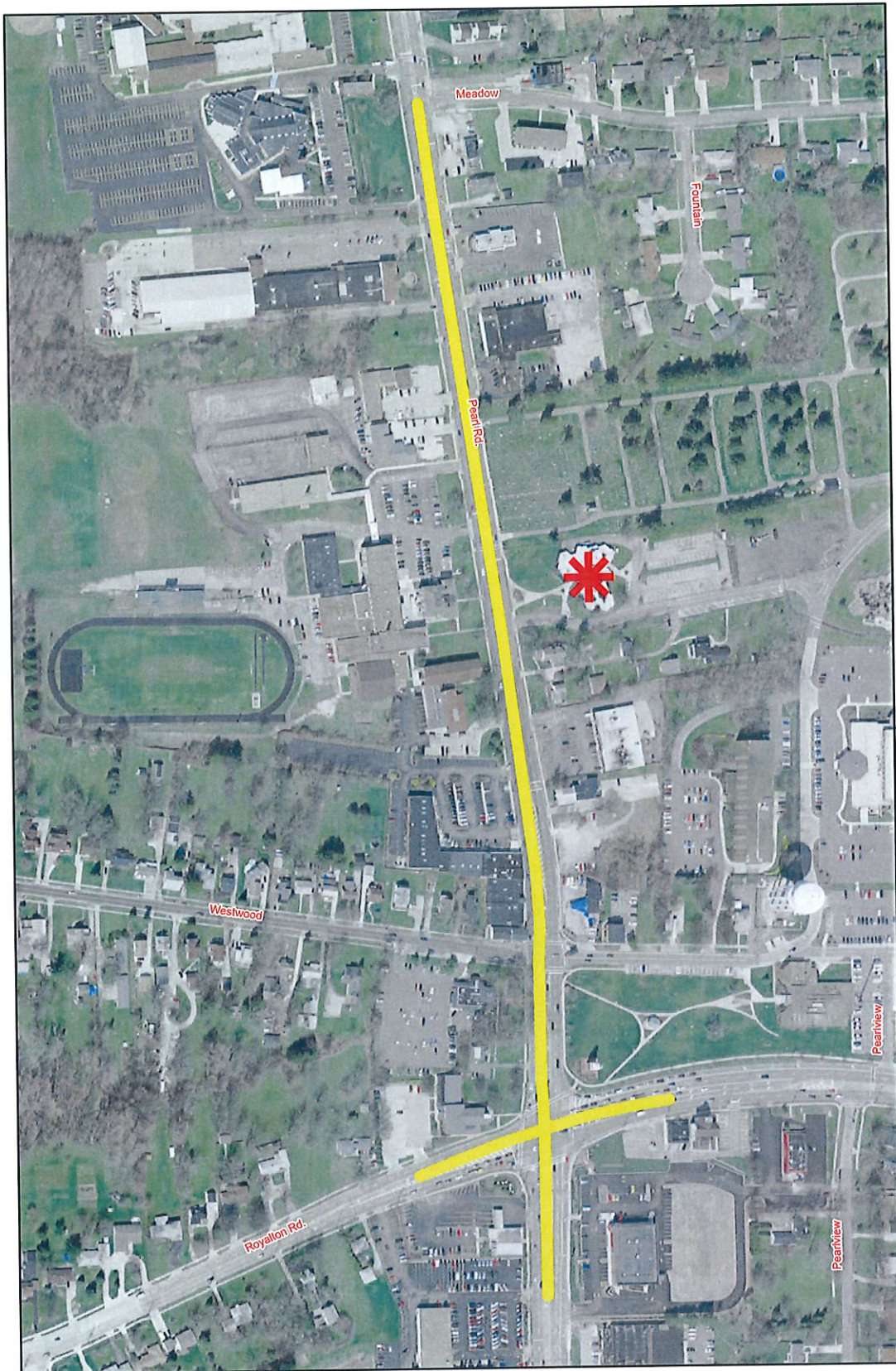
Pearl Road near Center Middle School. Some children cross these five lanes of traffic to reach the school.

Strongsville Workshop Participants

- Ben Stankewicz – Assistant to the Mayor, City of Strongsville
- Jennifer Milbrandt – Coordinator of Natural Resources, City of Strongsville
- Joy Smith – School Crossing Guard, City of Strongsville
- Ray Haseley – Strongsville City Council
- Mike Daymut – Strongsville City Council
- Sue Glenn – Shade Tree Commission, City of Strongsville
- Thomas P. Perciak – Strongsville Mayor and Safety Director
- Ken Mikula – City Engineer, City of Strongsville

¹ On Royalton Road, the average daily traffic (ADT) is from approximately 17,000 from the west and 33,000 from the east. On Pearl, the ADT is approximately 21,000 from the north and 32,000 from the south.





* Meeting Location

Strongsville Walkable Community Workshop

2008 Walkable Community Workshops

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BICYCLING & WALKING
bikewalk
 BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES



June 2, 2008



Another concern of the workshop participants was regarding senior citizens in the vicinity. There are senior housing and a senior center located near this intersection, but it is an especially difficult area to walk in for the elderly due to very long crosswalks traversing many lanes of traffic and the inadequate amount of time allotted by the current signalization to cross.

The Workshop

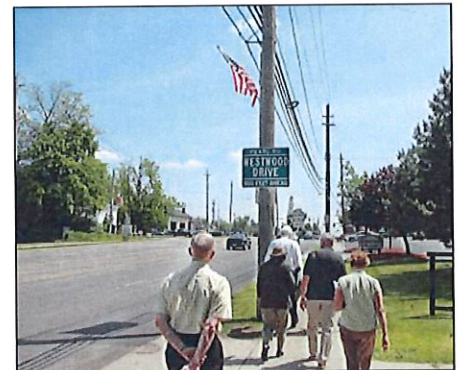
The workshop was attended by eight people, six of whom serve in various capacities with the city, including the mayor, the city engineer, city councilmen, and the natural resources coordinator. Two residents, who serve in the capacities of a school crossing guard and a member of the Strongsville Shade Tree Commission, were also in attendance. The instructors from the National Center for Bicycling and Walking gave a slide presentation that showed many examples of best practices for making communities bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly, as well as examples of poor practices. After this, the group set out on the walking audit. After exiting the workshop location, the group proceeded north on Pearl Road (US-42) to Meadow Road, then turned around and went south to the intersection of US-42 and SR-82. (See the walking audit route map on page 7.)

When the workshop participants returned to the meeting room they discussed issues that had been identified during the walk. In addition to the problems for pedestrians at the intersection of US-42 and SR-82, which are commented on below by the workshop facilitators, the group had some other ideas of how to make this area more pedestrian-friendly.

- It was noted that the buildings on Pearl and Royalton Roads are set too far back, with parking lots separating the pedestrians from the commercial uses. A set back ordinance could be adopted to move businesses up closer to the street, although this would be a very long-term strategy.
- Another long-term strategy would be to adopt a town center development zone to concentrate the commercial uses in one area and create a denser, recognizable, and walkable town center.
- More trees could be planted, in particular in the open space in front of the City Hall at the northeast corner of the intersection.
- More events could be conducted in the open space in front of City Hall to create a community feel, such as weekly farmers markets in the growing season.



Very long crosswalks such as this one crossing Royalton Road are difficult for everyone, especially the elderly.



The workshop participants walk north on Pearl Road.



The CVS at the Pearl/Royalton Road intersection is set back from both roads, typical of the commercial buildings in the area.



Recommendations by the NCBW Professionals for Strongsville

The recommendations that follow were developed by Mark Plotz and Bob Chauncey, the workshop facilitators, based on recommendations made by attendees of the June 3, 2008 Strongsville Walkable Community Workshop.

US-42/SR-82 Intersection

It is commendable that the intersection features pedestrian countdown signals and crossing guards for students during school hours and prohibits right turns on red. However, there are several problems with the intersection.

- The intersection of US-42/SR-82 does not adequately serve the needs of pedestrians. The high number of travel lanes and the intersection's truck-friendly geometry makes crossing on foot challenging and hazardous. While observing the intersection, it was noted that nearly every pedestrian had to run to finish crossing in the time allotted. The pedestrian clearance phase for crossing US-42 is only 20 seconds to cover an estimated distance of 120 feet. This is not realistic for any pedestrian, and does not adhere to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidance on clearance time:

“The pedestrian clearance time should be sufficient to allow a pedestrian crossing in the crosswalk who left the curb or shoulder during the WALKING PERSON (symbolizing WALK) signal indication to travel at a walking speed of 1.2 m (4 ft) per second, to at least the far side of the traveled way or to a median of sufficient width for pedestrians to wait. Where pedestrians who walk slower than 1.2 m (4 ft) per second, or pedestrians who use wheelchairs, routinely use the crosswalk, a walking speed of less than 1.2 m (4 ft) per second should be considered in determining the pedestrian clearance time.”²

²This section can be found at <http://muted.fhwa.dot.gov/HTM/2003r1/part4/part4e.htm>.



A pedestrian makes his way across Royalton Road (SR-82) at its intersection with Pearl Road (US-42).



Pedestrians and trucks both use the US-42/SR-82 intersection and their needs must be balanced.



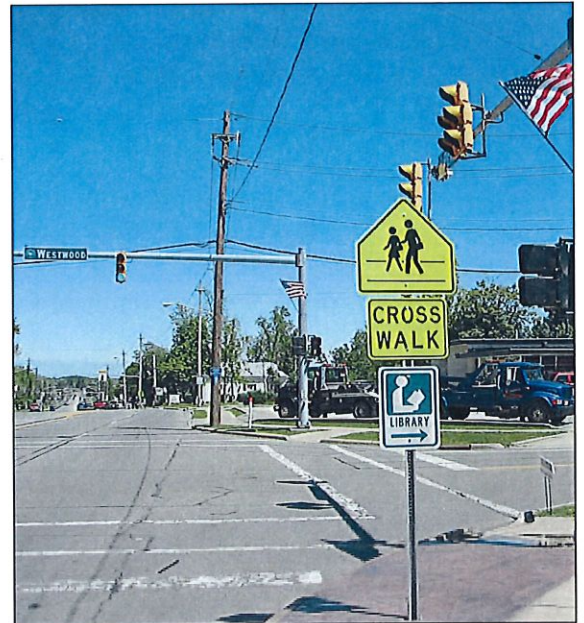
NCBW Recommendations (continued)

This guidance was issued in 2003; the walking speed is expected to be revised downward in the next MUTCD revision to reflect a more realistic speed for the average pedestrian. Localities with aging populations are experimenting with pedestrian call buttons that can be depressed to add time to the pedestrian clearance phase.

Additionally, the crosswalks are not well-marked, and the large turning radii at all four corners allow excessive entry/exit speed for right turning vehicles.

Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Strongsville request the Ohio Department of Transportation to make the following modifications to the intersection:

- o At a minimum, retime the pedestrian clearance phase to match MUTCD standards. It is recommended that additional consideration be given to the proximity of the school and the presence of seniors in the vicinity when retiming the clearance phase.
- o Repaint the faded crosswalks to match the high visibility continental-style ("ladder") currently in use in other localities.
- o Adjust the intersection's geometry to slow entry/exit speeds for right turning traffic. This could be accomplished by painting "curb extensions" and/or other treatments that are compatible with the truck traffic.



Crosswalk at Pearl Road (US-42) and Westwood Road.



The US-42/SR-82 intersection features large turning radii at all four corners.



NCBW Recommendations (continued)

Roadway Connectivity

- The City of Strongsville should move forward on proposed improvements identified in its 2002 Master Plan for Recreation Services³ which called for trails and walkways that link parks, schools, the library, and the recreation and senior centers. Another proposal was for the development of a Bike/Hike Trail Master Plan that links parks, schools and neighborhoods.

The challenge posed by Strongsville's low degree of connectivity for pedestrians is vividly illustrated on the "Safe Walking Routes" for the city's schools that are available on the city's Web site.⁴ The "safe walking route" for the Center Middle School is reprinted on the next page. As can be seen, for many students, the distances they must travel to school are lengthened, sometimes quite a bit, due to the non-grid character of the local streets.



During the walking audit, workshop participants saw many students bicycling to school.

School transportation would be a major beneficiary of any improvements made to neighborhood connectivity. Center Middle School has 55 students, approximately 10 percent of the student body, that do not arrive by bus. While a number of students were observed walking and bicycling home from the middle school on the day of the workshop, those numbers would likely increase by connecting neighborhood cul-de-sacs to create more convenient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.

SR-82 Corridor

The posted speed limit is 25 mph, though observed vehicle speeds were much higher. The roadway is four lanes with a center turn lane and no bicycle facilities. There are sidewalks on both sides of the street, but there is little separation from traffic, and in places, the sidewalks are too narrow to safely accommodate the bicycle traffic observed on the walking audit. Land use throughout the corridor is auto-intensive, with large parking lots between the street and the buildings. This land use further exacerbates any speeding problems.

³ This document can be found at http://www.strongsville.org/Master_Plan_Executive_Summary.pdf.

⁴ The "safe walking routes" can be found at [http://www.strongsville.org/content/UserFiles/File/SHS%20\(Safe%20Walking%20Route\).jpg](http://www.strongsville.org/content/UserFiles/File/SHS%20(Safe%20Walking%20Route).jpg) and [http://www.strongsville.org/content/UserFiles/File/Center%20Middle%20School%20\(Safe%20Walking%20Route\).jpg](http://www.strongsville.org/content/UserFiles/File/Center%20Middle%20School%20(Safe%20Walking%20Route).jpg)



Walking Route

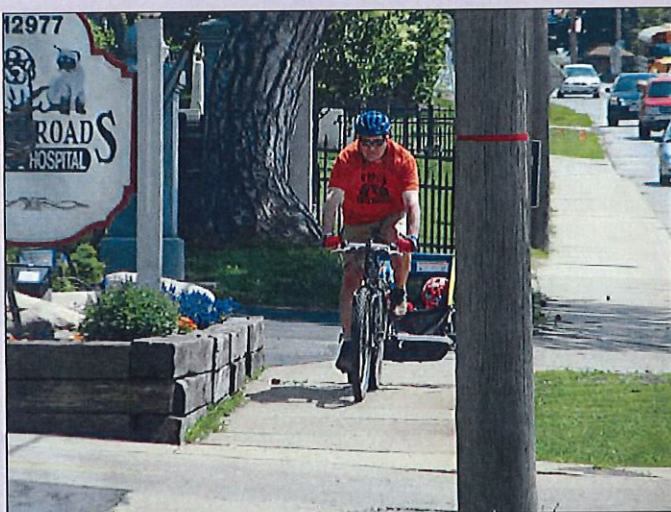
NCWB Recommendations (continued)

The following recommendations will help alleviate problems in the SR-82 corridor:

- The school zone is well marked with overhead flashing beacons, advance warning signs, an appropriate speed limit of 25 mph, and SCHOOL ZONE pavement markings. The pavement markings need to be refreshed and traffic calmed or the speed limit enforced.
- Create on street bicycle facilities on SR-82 by narrowing the travel lanes to 11 feet. Narrower lanes will produce a traffic-calming effect. Pedestrians will benefit from reduced conflicts

with bicyclists, as a certain number of bicyclists can be expected to opt for an on-street facility. The residents will benefit from having a more economical transportation choice.

- It is somewhat doubtful that the section of SR-82 included in this study area will ever become a truly pedestrian friendly environment. However, by making adjustments to building setbacks, downsizing the minimum parking requirements, and adding pedestrian amenities (wider sidewalks, shade trees, benches, etc.) the corridor will become a more walkable environment.



Quite a few bicyclists were observed during the walking audit.

APPENDIX A

Notes from the Strongsville Walkable Community Workshop

- SR 82/US 42 intersection: wider striping on crosswalks/wider crosswalks
- The walk cross signals at the Pearl/Royalton Road intersection don't give people enough time to cross, especially the seniors who live nearby. Could change signalization by adding a crossing push button that activates a longer crossing time
- Could tighten turning radii at this intersection, but leave enough room for trucks, use paint to narrow lane, with rumble material that trucks can go over
- Plant more trees. More trees would be good in the community park on the northeast corner of Pearl and Royalton Roads, although this has not been allowed in the past
- Adopt a set back ordinance to move commercial uses on Pearl and Royalton Roads closer to streets
- Create a town center development zone to concentrate commercial uses in a town center
- Find out what is happening with signal timing in adjoining communities (some neighboring communities have traffic signalization on Pearl)
- There are walkable parts of town, but they're not promoted
- People can bike and walk within their subdivisions, but they can't get from their subdivisions to the commercial areas, library, metropark, etc.
- Could pass open space preservation ordinance
- Hold weekly farmers markets
- Install reflectors on the sidewalk by the cemetery
- Make the pedestrian crosswalks more visible
- Also, longer times for crossing that can only be activated when button is pushed

