


**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

TO: Parking and Public Improvements Commission

FROM: Richard Thompson, Director of Community Development
Ana Stevenson, Management Analyst 

BY: Erik Zandvliet, Traffic Engineer

DATE: July 24, 2008

**SUBJECT: American Martyrs School Area Study
Initial Recommendations**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission recommend implementation of the following initial mitigation measures:

1. Replace missing and outdated school area traffic signs and street name signs.
2. Concentrate traffic and parking enforcement around the school campus on a regular basis.
3. Paint school crosswalks and markings on an annual basis.
4. Update the existing loading zone signs and markings on the west side of Laurel Avenue.
5. Post school crossing signs at the existing school crosswalk on 18th Street at Flournoy Road.
6. Paint new school crosswalk at the stopped intersection of Laurel Avenue and 15th Street on the north leg.
7. Paint new school crosswalk at the stopped intersection of Laurel Avenue and 18th Street on the east leg.
8. Prohibit left turns into and out of the campus loading zone driveway on 15th Street during school loading hours.
9. Prohibit left turns from westbound 15th Street into parking structure during school loading hours.
10. Paint 40 feet of red curb in advance of the school crosswalk on 18th Street at Agnes Road in both directions.
11. Encourage the school to implement a formal student car-pool and walking incentive program for both parents and students.
12. Prepare Suggested Routes to School map for distribution to parents.
13. Encourage the school to distribute traffic safety handouts regularly throughout the school year.
14. Increase the crossing guard hours at Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Pacific Avenue on Fridays for early dismissal.
15. Modify street sweeping hours on Fridays to avoid conflicts with dismissal at 12:30pm.

BACKGROUND:

On November 19, 2002, the City Council approved the City-Wide Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP). This Program established a set of procedures to evaluate neighborhoods in an effort to improve livability of neighborhood streets. The NTMP created a consistent way for the City to evaluate traffic requests, so that a comprehensive plan can be implemented that will minimize adverse impacts both before and after implementation of traffic calming measures. On March 18, 2003 and during the Work Plan discussions, the City Council prioritized several areas of the City for further analysis. At that meeting, the City Council identified the neighborhoods immediately around the elementary and middle schools as one of these priority areas. Since each school area has unique conditions and issues, each school is being evaluated separately.

The NTMP Program has been followed in developing possible vehicular and pedestrian improvements for each school area. This report is an evaluation of traffic circulation and pedestrian safety surrounding American Martyrs School. It presents a list of initial recommendations to begin addressing school and resident concerns in the neighborhood surrounding the school from a traffic engineering perspective. The recommendations made by the PPIC will be forwarded to the City Council for their approval on a trial basis.

DISCUSSION:

American Martyrs Elementary School is located on Laurel Avenue in the northwest quadrant of the city, just north of Manhattan Beach Boulevard. School attendance includes students living in the City as well as the surrounding communities. There are approximately 620 students in Grades K through 8, and additional 180 preschool students in 2-3 sessions seasonally. There are approximately 40 staff and 20-25 part-time employees. School begins at 8am with dismissal at 3pm (12:35pm on Fridays). Pre-school and Kindergarten have different dismissal schedules. There is a large parking structure on the south side of 15th Street adjacent to the school campus for school staff and visitors. Crossing guards are provided at crosswalks at Laurel Avenue/18th Street and Laurel Avenue/15th Street. The crossing guard at Manhattan Beach Boulevard/Pacific Avenue assists students from both Pacific Elementary School and American Martyrs.

Circulation around American Martyrs School is primarily via Laurel Avenue in front of the school, 15th Street and 18th Street along the sides of the school. Laurel Avenue and 15th Street are generally congested at arrival and dismissal times on school days, often blocking local residential traffic. An extensive on-campus loading zone is provided on the playground in which multiple queue lines are formed and directed through the pick-up/drop-off zone by school staff. This off-street loading zone is accessed via a driveway on 15th Street just west of Laurel Avenue. There are pedestrian access gates along Laurel Avenue, and at the corner of Laurel Avenue and 15th Street. Parking is prohibited along the west side of Laurel Avenue during school hours, and the other surrounding streets have street sweeping restrictions. Parking is also prohibited on south side of 15th Street west of the school.

The local neighborhood streets surrounding American Martyrs Elementary School are built in a grid network with several terminating streets. Pacific Avenue, one block east of the school, is a

local collector street and is signalized at Manhattan Beach Boulevard. Primary east-west access is via 15th Street and supplemented by 18th Street. 15th Street terminates at Laurel Avenue to the east and Ardmore Avenue to the west. The streets surrounding the school are improved with curbs, gutters and some sidewalks. Very few changes have been made regarding school area circulation measures in recent years, with the exception of crosswalk warning signs and markings on 15th Street at Deegan Place.

PUBLIC AND SCHOOL CONCERNS

City Staff met with Dr. Kevin Baxter, Principal of American Martyrs Elementary School, and other school staff on May 20, 2008, to listen and discuss school related traffic safety concerns. In addition, staff has discussed school area concerns with individual residents on various occasions. These comments have been incorporated into the evaluation. Notices of this meeting were mailed to the surrounding neighborhood, as well as to those who had previously expressed interest. The identified concerns have fallen into the following categories:

1. Need for Suggested Routes to School to show preferred pedestrian routes,
2. Congestion at student loading zone entrances on 15th Street caused by conflicting turns,
3. Parking violations adjacent to school, particularly blocking driveways,
4. Stop and speeding violations,
5. Shortage of public (visitor) parking on Laurel Avenue,
6. Need for better signs and markings at school and at crosswalks, especially at 18th Street / Flournoy Road,
7. Need for more police enforcement, and
8. Crossing guard coverage for Friday early dismissal.

In addition to the above concerns, staff has inventoried existing school signs and markings in the area, and observed general traffic and parking conditions during both school and non-school days in preparation of this NTMP. Field observations during typical school days and non-school days were made to help determine the potential impact of any initial recommendations.

A review of the collision history within the neighborhood was conducted for the period between January 1, 2004 and September 30, 2007. The review reveals that there are no locations with elevated collision rates or pedestrian collisions within the neighborhood surrounding these school campuses.

FINDINGS:

1. Many existing school area signs and markings are outdated and/or missing.
2. Student loading occurs primarily in the off-street playground and in the parking structure, which helps distribute traffic flow, but vehicle conflicts at access driveways increase congestion and exposure between cars and pedestrians.
3. Double parking and staff parking along 18th Street causes unnecessary congestion and decreases pedestrian safety.
4. Recurrent speeding during school times was not evident on any surrounding streets. Therefore, speed humps on streets near the school were not considered at this time.

5. Additional ridesharing efforts by both staff and students would help alleviate some congestion issues.
6. School area congestion occurs for a limited time in the morning and afternoon of school days only. Therefore, permanent changes to traffic circulation should be implemented only after careful consideration of potential impacts during the summer and on weekends.
7. There is no current “suggested routes to school” plan for this school.
8. There appears to be sufficient parking for school staff in the school parking areas.
9. The number of designated visitor parking spaces near the school office is insufficient and visitors often park in residential areas.
10. There is short term parking demand for some school users, particularly for sign-in/sign-out and attendance for individual classes.
11. Parking and right-of-way violations are common and cause additional congestion.
12. The existing loading zone in front of the school is an unused asset that can be used for visitor parking in off-peak times.
13. Several school crosswalks are missing at the corners of the school grounds.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a list of initial recommendations intended to improve traffic and pedestrian safety around the American Martyrs School campus. Some actions are to be initiated by the City, while others are recommendations for the school administrators to implement. All the actions are meant to work together as a system and complement each other.

Initial Recommendations

1. Replace missing traffic signs and street name signs.
This action will reinforce driver compliance of the rules-of-the-road, as well as raise awareness of pedestrians and discourage speeding in the school area.
2. Concentrate traffic and parking enforcement around the school campus on a regular basis.
This action will help reduce congestion by penalizing illegal speeding and parking practices such as blocking driveways, red curbs and double parking.
3. Paint school crosswalks and markings on an annual basis.
This action will encourage compliance of pedestrian right-of-way rules and raise awareness of pedestrians in the school area.
4. Update the existing loading zone signs and markings on the west side of Laurel Avenue.
This measure would clarify the proper parking rules in front of the school.
5. Post school crossing signs at the existing school crosswalk on 18th Street at Flournoy Road.
This measure would raise driver awareness of the uncontrolled school crosswalk and the proximity of the school.
6. Paint new school crosswalk at the stopped intersection of Laurel Avenue and 15th Street on the north leg.

This action will provide a pedestrian connection east of the school and improve pedestrian safety at this intersection.

7. Paint new school crosswalk at the stopped intersection of Laurel Avenue and 18th Street on the north leg.

This action will complete the pedestrian connections and improve pedestrian safety at this intersection.

8. Prohibit left turns into and out of the campus loading zone driveway on 15th Street during school loading hours.

This action will reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and improve school area circulation.

9. Prohibit left turns from westbound 15th Street into parking structure during school loading hours.

This action will reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and improve school area circulation.

10. Paint 40 feet of red curb in advance of the school crosswalk on 18th Street at Agnes Road in both directions.

This action will improve visibility of pedestrians crossing in the crosswalk and prevent vehicles from parking in the crosswalk.

11. Encourage the school to implement a formal student car-pool and walking incentive program for both parents and students.

This action will help reduce the number of vehicles near the school during drop-off/pick-up times. It will also reduce the time that drivers spent in the loading zone line.

12. Prepare Suggested Routes to School map for distribution to parents.

This action will help educate parents and students of the preferred routes when walking or biking to school. It can be used to encourage more walking to school, thereby reducing traffic congestion on streets surrounding the school.

13. Encourage the school to distribute traffic safety handouts regularly throughout the school year.

This action will remind school staff, students, parents and other users to follow the recommended driving, walking and parking practices in order to reduce potential residential impacts.

14. Increase the crossing guard hours at Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Pacific Avenue on Fridays for early dismissal.

This action will provide additional crossing supervision for early dismissal.

15. Modify street sweeping hours on Fridays to avoid conflicts with dismissal at 12:30pm.

This action will alleviate the need for visitors and others to find alternate parking in the neighborhood on Fridays.

By way of mailed notices, the residents and affected parties surrounding the school campus have been invited to the PPIC meeting. American Martyrs School has also been encouraged to distribute the meeting notice to all school parents.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Commission conduct a public hearing and consider the above initial recommendations for the area surrounding the American Martyrs School campus.

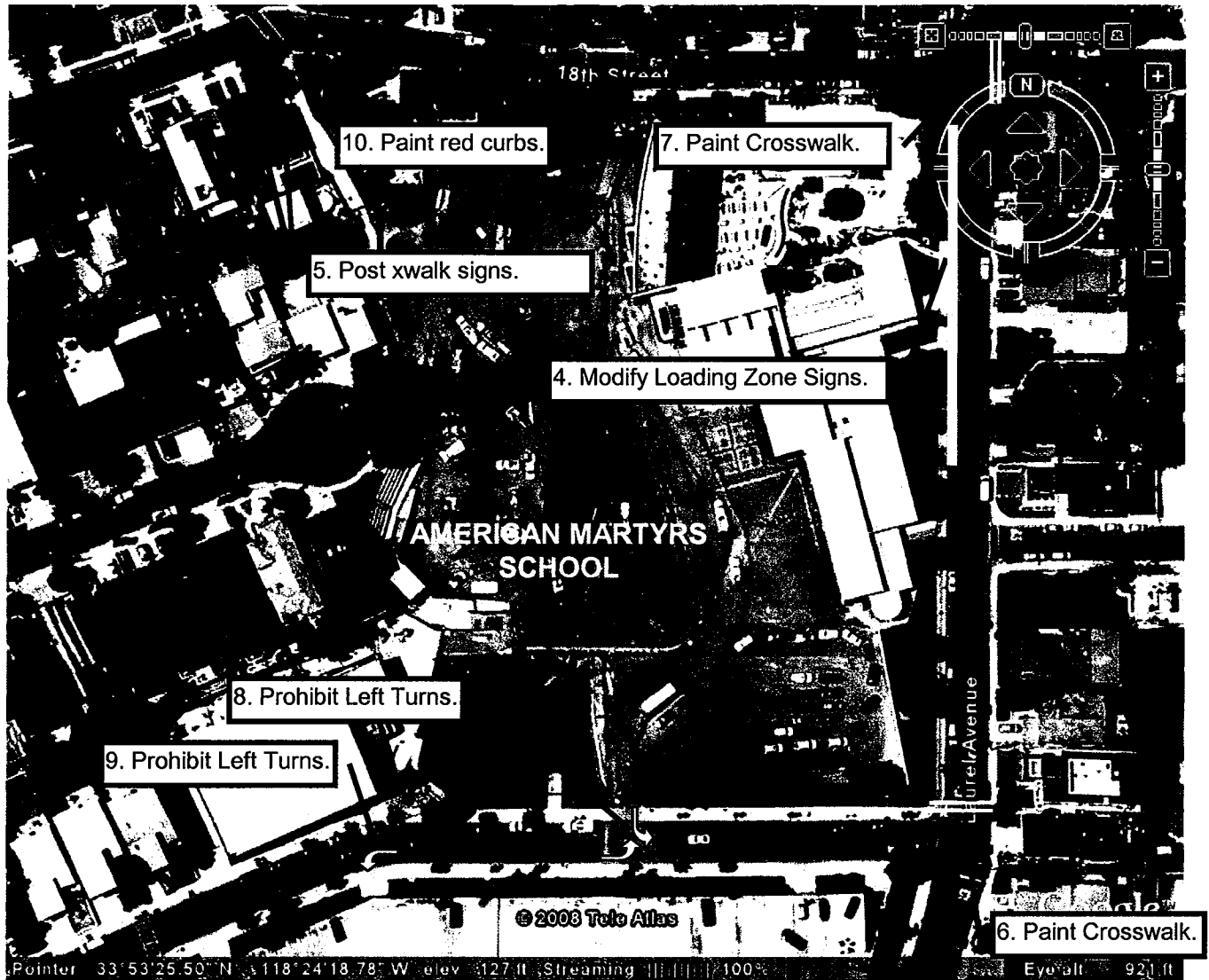
Exhibits:

1. Proposed School Area Improvements Sketch and School Area Map
2. Meeting Notice for 7/10/08 PPIC meeting

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EXHIBIT 1

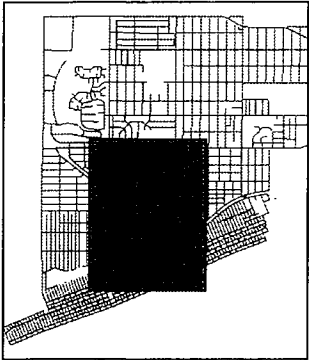
AMERICAN MARTYRS SCHOOL INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS



GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

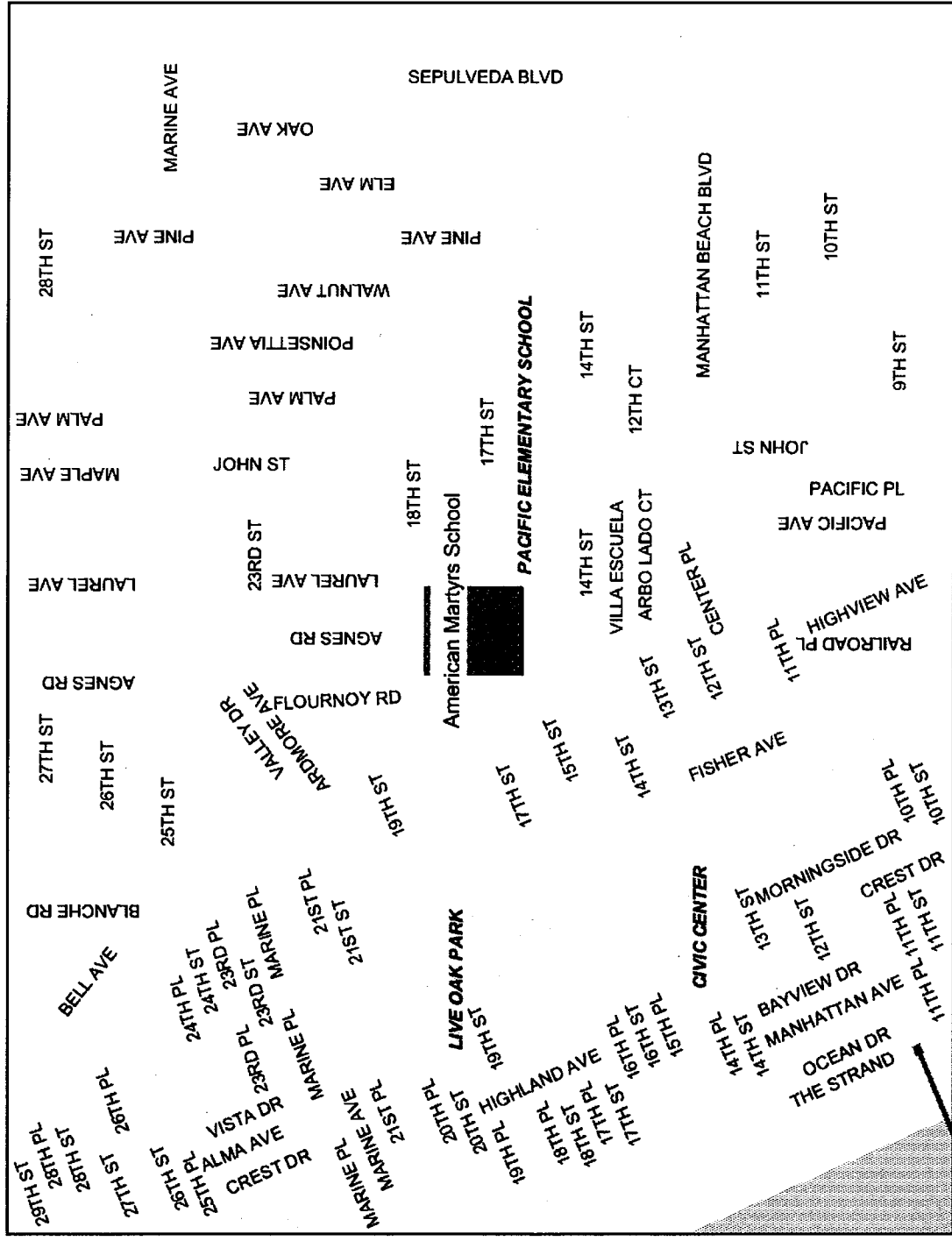
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American Martyrs School - Area Map



- Legend**
- Basemap
 - BEACH
 - BLOCK
 - DEADEND
 - PARK
 - PIER
 - PRIVATE STREET
 - SCHOOL
 - STREET
 - WALK STREET

Scale: 1:9,965



This map is a user-generated static output from the "MB GIS Info" Intranet mapping site and is for general reference only. Data layers that appear on this map may or may not be accurate, current, or otherwise reliable.



EXHIBIT
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City Hall

1400 Highland Avenue

Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Telephone (310) 802-5000

FAX (310) 802-5001

July 9, 2008

******* PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE *******

Re: American Martyrs School Traffic Study

Dear Property Owner/Resident:

The Manhattan Beach City Council has directed City staff to conduct a study of traffic and parking conditions in the area surrounding American Martyrs School. The City's Traffic Engineer has completed an analysis and will present findings and recommendations to the Parking and Public Improvements Commission at a public meeting on July 24, 2008.

The meeting will be held in the City Council Chamber, 1400 Highland Avenue, and will begin at 6:30 p.m. Interested parties are encouraged to attend the meeting and provide comments.

If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please call (310) 802-5540 or email astevenson@citymb.info.

Sincerely,

Ana Stevenson
Management Analyst
Community Development Department