

Section 1

The Hartford/Yale neighborhood and the South Boulder communities associated with Mesa Elementary, Bear Creek Elementary and Community Montessori Schools, Southern Hills Middle School, Summit Charter Middle School, and Bixby private school propose to establish a safe crossing of Table Mesa Dr. in the vicinity of Yale and/or Gillaspie roads, in South Boulder.

South Boulder is dominated by two main feeder streets, Broadway and Table Mesa Dr. The former has numerous stop lights and under-ground tunnels for crossing. The latter, however, poses a significant challenge for pedestrians and bike-riders (young and old, able-bodied and mobility-challenged) to cross west of Broadway. The lack of a safe crossing has been identified by the community (and the City of Boulder) for more than 5 years.

Risks and Obstacles:

1. Heavy traffic. As Table Mesa Drive is one of the primary outlets out of South Boulder (designated a minor arterial roadway”), it experiences very heavy traffic during commute-times (see Attachment 1), especially during school-in-session months. Auto-commuters include adults driving to work, but also adults dropping students off at area schools and then hurrying to get to their places of work.
2. No traffic “quiet times”. The nearest traffic lights (on Lehigh at Emerson, on Table Mesa at upper Ithaca, uphill from Bear Creek Elementary, and on Table Mesa near the George Reynolds Branch Library) are pedestrian- or vehicle- triggered, not on regular cycles. The traffic light at Table Mesa/Broadway has no traffic-flow regulation for cars turning from south-bound Broadway onto west-bound Table Mesa. Thus, there are no regular “periods of calm” available during which pedestrians and cyclists could expect to safely cross. Waiting a full 5 minutes for a traffic-gap to cross Table Mesa at Yale is not uncommon.
3. Limited sight-lines. Table Mesa Dr. bends at two critical places, near Miami/Lower Ithaca, and just east of Gillaspie (see Attachment 1). The Bear Creek ditch/median has foliage and large trees which exacerbate the visibility afforded at Yale and at Gillaspie for pedestrians for at least half the year, including 4-5 months when school is in session (see Attachment 2). The speed limit is 35mph; roughly, this allows a pedestrian or bike-rider less than 5 seconds to complete a crossing of the east-bound Table Mesa at Yale, less than 2 seconds to complete a crossing of west-bound Table Mesa at Gillaspie. A child needs to get started walking or on their bicycle (sometimes a slow or wobbly proposition) and safely complete the crossing in that time.
4. No good alternatives. Crossing Table Mesa at the George Reynolds Branch Library provides crossing-lights, however involves a notoriously slippery wooden bridge and navigating multiple heavily-used parking-lot entrances/exits which are dangerous areas for pedestrians and bikes, especially children on bicycles during heavy traffic times (*bicyclinginfo.org*). In order to get to/from that crossing to begin with, it's unavoidable for students to travel the wrong direction on one side of the road or the other, which necessitates them biking on the narrow sidewalks instead of on the street. Crossing at Broadway also involves a raised – but-busy – right-hand-turn lane, and again multiple heavily-used parking-lot entrances/exits. Venturing to the light at upper Ithaca, uphill from Bear Creek Elementary, involves a significant detour for most of the students going to the neighborhood middle schools. The new striped crossing at Lehigh/Table Mesa is routinely ignored by motorists coming down the steep Table Mesa hill, and there is no 'refuge' between the lanes.

Pedestrian/Bicycle need, Present and Future:

1. Catchment areas span Table Mesa. Both Mesa and Bear Creek Elementary catchment areas span both sides of Table Mesa, as does the “neighborhood” for Southern Hills Middle School (see Attachment 3). Community Montessori and Summit Charter Middle School both have a significant population from South Boulder. The Southern Hills Walk/Bike Map (see Attachment 1) shows no way to cross Table Mesa near the designated bike route at Gillaspie Dr.
2. Increased school-age population. South Boulder has enjoyed a marked increase in kids walking and biking to school, in part due to an increase number of school-age kids in the neighborhood, and in part due to the efforts of the schools themselves and the City of Boulder to promote alternative transportation. There are an increasing number of biking and walking school-commuters due to awareness of health and environmental benefits.
3. Other Community Resources. The George Reynolds Branch Library is popular for residents of South Boulder, but the pedestrian crossing located there can be dangerous (see above). The proposed Mesa Memorial Park¹ will hopefully be widely used by families in the area, but will only fulfill that vision if a safe crossing at Table Mesa/Yale exists.

1(see http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10306&Itemid=3170)

Section 2

We propose that a safe crossing of Table Mesa Road be established in the vicinity of Yale and/or Gillaspie, in accordance with the requirements for such a major road. This may comprise striping, on-demand signals, speed mitigation, or an overpass or underpass, as appropriate. We recognize that the specific manner in which the project will impact the local infrastructure will be determined by the City of Boulder.

An overpass or underpass would be the safest for pedestrians and bicycles and least disrupt the traffic flow, however are obviously the most expensive options. We request that more than simple striping put in place, as the speed of traffic and limited sight-lines makes it unlikely that solely striping would be effective (*c.f.* the striped crossing at Lehigh/Table Mesa, which is not effective at providing the feeling of a safe crossing). If there are no visible on-demand lights or an above- or below- street-level option, then we request *at a minimum* that striping be accompanied by a time-of-day speed-limit reduction *and enforcement*, as has been instituted on Lehigh. While such an option would address school-commuting specifically, it would not address the crossing challenges at other times of day or on weekends, as needed for support of the new park.

This request has extremely high community support (see Attachment 4). The neighborhood brought the crossing problem to the City's attention in 2007 ², then submitted a petition requesting crossing lights in 2011 (Attachment 5). The City has identified the area as needing attention (see Attachment 5), but advised more study during the summer (to which it was requested that the study take place during days when school is in session, not the lonelier summer months, and that suggestion was agreed to). We sincerely hope that this latest effort is successful.

In conjunction with events such as Bike-to-School days, flyers announcing the new crossings will be distributed to area students, and (depending on whether school is in session), a before- or after-school ribbon-cutting ceremony could be held. Bear Creek Elementary and Southern Hills Middle school both already participate in Safe Routes to School Programs, and relevant data-collection is on-going. Summit Charter Middle school's new principal, Jim Eagan, is interested in making that school more bike-friendly. Bike- and Pedestrian-education programs are on-going, and the specific issues which may be raised by whatever infrastructure is put in place on Table Mesa (navigating an overpass, correctly and safely using an on-demand signal, etc.) will be incorporated into the curriculum as appropriate. As an infrastructure project, however, word-of-mouth and neighborhood usage will also provide sustainable information. A new crossing option there will be obviously visible at the new Mesa Memorial Park, and incorporated into the opening and public relations surrounding it.

As the letters of support show (see Attachment 4), area families presently see the lack of a safe crossing of Table Mesa at Yale and/or Gillaspie as an *impediment* for their children to bike/walk to school safely. Removing the impediment will, in and of itself, provide encouragement needed for others to bike/walk and feel safer doing so.

2 Correspondence available upon request.