

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

Meeting held online

February 18, 2022, Minutes

STSC Attendees

- X Richard Staudt (SPS)
- X Lee Bruch
- X Mary Ellen Russell, Chair (parent volunteer)
- X Margaret McCauley (pedestrian safety advocate)
Jennie Meulenberg (SDOT, corridors and Ped transportation planner)
- X Marilyn Firman (citizen-at-large)
- X Yvonne Carpenter (SPS transportation crossing guard manager)
- X Hunter Maltais (SPS Transportation Manager)
- X Robin Schwartz

Other attendees

- Ryan Packer: Urbanist Reporter
- Brian Dougherty: SDOT manager representing SDOT in Jennie's place.
- Vivian Song Maritz: School Board Member
- David Bergesser: City Pedestrian Projects Team
- Venu Nemani: City Traffic Engineer

Last Month's Minutes:

Review of Minutes and Action Item Updates:

1. Crossing Guard Map is underway. Jennie was trying to get an intern to build a map which would be easily updateable and show staffed and unstaffed recommended Crossing Guard locations. **ACTION: Jennie or Brian** will follow up on the crossing guard map for next time.
2. The discussion of 4-way-stops at Lawton and Madison was deferred again because SDOT does not have updated information ready. **ACTION: Brian or Jennie** will follow up on 4-way stops at Lawton and Madison.
3. The 24th and Irving concern: Jennie wrote that analysis is in the works. **ACTION: Check with Brian or Jennie** on 24th and Irving status next month.
4. 14th and Henderson: Robin talked with David Shaw and there are currently no plans in place. He would need data verifying a need to go forward. **ACTION: Brian** said he could get collision data near 14th and Henderson. **Robin** could then recontact David Shaw.
5. Stem K-8 parking lot plan: Richard could not find the plans for the improvements made 7-8 years ago. Brian said he knows where SODT' plan is and will bring them to the next meeting. Brian shared this info via email after the meeting.

6. Intersection Scoring Rubric will be carried forward. **ACTION: Mary Ellen** will make a shared document containing previously discussed scoring rubric criteria so we could think about it before the next meeting.
7. Police Representative: We badly need a police representative again. Hunter spoke of two incidents in the last two weeks where the buses needed police help. In one case someone had a firearm on the bus and in another a driver was assaulted. In both cases they could get no one to come. Additionally, they have had problems with unsheltered people getting on the bus thinking perhaps it was city transit. They really need a liaison officer.

Brian said he was in contact with Chris Steele, photo enforcement at SPD but didn't think he would be the right person for our committee. Mary Ellen said we have not gotten data from the police cameras in a year where we used to get it every month. **ACTION: Brian** said he would get the SPD school ticket data and contact information to Mary Ellen.

8. A King County Metro Member is also needed. Jeannie Suleimann who came to meeting for a while is not an official representative. More children are riding on city buses and parents contact us with concerns. Also, we need their council when designing traffic modifications around school.

Active Transportation Coordinator:

Hunter reported that have two excellent finalists and all he needs to do is verify references. He will be offering the job to somebody on Tuesday.

Jennie Muelenberg promoted

Congratulations to Jennie on her new permanent job at SDOT! Sadly we will need a new SDOT representative. Brian says he and Ashley Rhead will split working with the committee in the short term.

Walk Maps Review:

A Boundary Subcommittee will begin meeting on the first Friday of the month at 10:00 AM at the John Stanford Center. Included will be Mary Ellen, Margaret, Marilyn, Paula Smith and possibly Richard and a representative from SDOT. This work should also help us with the scoring rubric we are updating. Richard asked us to consider slip lanes as he feels they are especially hazardous for children.

Crossing Guard Update:

Yvonne reported that it had been a discouraging month. She has been actively recruiting but getting no shows. Jennie sent report that 25th and 80th had been scored at 13 which makes it eligible for a crossing guard. Currently 24th and 80th is also eligible but they have no crossing guard. **ACTION: Mary Ellen** will drive by to check whether recruiting signs are still posted at Loyal Heights and **Yvonne** will send out flyers to the school to advertise. There was discussion as to where to put a guard if we only get one. Yvonne said let the school decide. They apparently do not have a school safety patrol program as the 24th and 80th intersection would be eligible for a school patrol as it is adjacent to the school. Vivian Song Maritz was asked to consider making crossing guards eligible to have background check costs covered as SPS does for culinary workers. This would speed up the process and make it easier for poorer people to apply.

Minutes Approved: Margaret moved, and Richard seconded. All were in favor.

School Bus Update: Hunter reported SPS is finishing bargaining for new contract and they have more than one company bidding. This contract is up in August and the next contract will be for 3 years with two more optional. They are negotiating for a 6-hour guaranteed day, not the 4-hour guaranteed day in the current contract. This will be cheaper in the long run because the average use is nearly 6 hours anyway.

First student is restoring service at about the rate of 2-4 routes a week. They were down 152 routes in October and more than half these routes have been restored. The goal is to have all routes restored before summer vacation. If they can get a stable bus crew the goal of building relationships between driver and students will be facilitated. Currently the strategy is "RECRUIT, TRAIN, RETAIN".

One of the problems in retaining is that First Student pays during training and most other districts and Metro do not. Currently we need 400 drivers and have 320. 350 of those are for special needs and we need 10-12 on standby. If we don't get enough drivers by June, we may have to give 'outside the box' incentives over the summer. We don't like poaching from other districts.

They are currently doing a study on attrition of drivers. There is a seniority-based bid process when bus routes are distributed. High needs schools seem to have the highest turnover. Hunter thinks these routes will become more attractive when the 6-hour salary guarantee is in place. Many of these routes currently have fewer hours, so are less attractive to drivers. When the 6 hour minimum is in place they should be more attractive because they would still require somewhat fewer hours to complete. Hunter's top focus is to build relationships between students and drivers which can only be done with stable routes.

Policy Update: SDOT Pedestrian Crossing Location Guidelines:

David Burgesser and Venu Nemani from the City/SDOT presented the new guidelines. The goal is to encourage pedestrian and have enough crosswalks so they will be used instead of other options. Goals are:

1. Proactive Installation.
2. Predictable and intuitive pedestrian network
3. Encourage the use of more protected crossing locations.

SDOT will not rely so much on counting current pedestrian traffic as proactive installation i.e., Situations like the lack of a needed Queen Ann Elementary crosswalk could be easily remedied in the future. SDOT now believes that marking a crosswalk at a school should be a given, it won't be based on data counts. For us this is an exciting success as we have been advocating for proactive crosswalk placement for years.

Richard asked about who pays, the school district or SDOT? That will need further discussion between parties but crosswalks themselves are inexpensive. For situations like QAES this should solve the problem. SPS will include the crosswalk in the SIP process and the striping will go in. Since crosswalks themselves are very inexpensive this will not be onerous for SPS.

Other pedestrian improvements including traffic humps, RFB's (Rectangular Flashing Beacons) etc. are possibly a problem financially if SDOT requires SPS to install them. If a curb ramp is built on the city or the school side that triggers a response on the other side who pays? This new policy will be a big shift in the policy process.

Mary Ellen said our goal is consistent treatment around every school. Lee said that one important thing is that it takes years to get a budget established so planning should be for 5-6 years down the road, to make sure the budget is available when needed.

Richard spoke about the major issues at the Mercer School that we will review next month. The need to move a bus shelter, or make an elevated bike path ... This will make the policy timely and hopefully smooth the process, making things more predictable and enabling SPS to deliver good schools within the budget they give.

Brian says it would be helpful to take a look at some real-world examples of how this will play out. The timing is convenient because SPS plans to review 4 new school designs at the next two STSC meetings. Brian will attend these meetings to consider this issue. Venu will come to next meeting as well.

Scoring Rubric:

Weights given to categories were discussed. Scores were lower the farther away from the school for instance. **Action: Richard** spoke of the state law that weights locations and volunteered to send Mary Ellen a copy in email. Lee brought up Senate Bill 5974, Section 419 which has passed in the Senate and is going to the House. This has changes that will effect school cameras and school zone signs.

The meeting was adjourned early at 10:20 AM because The Denny Middle School delegation did not come.

Future Topics

- 4-way stops
- Review/reassess SDOT intersection scoring criteria
- Committee By-laws needed
- Seattle's climate change planning for transportation
- Annual calendar look ahead
- Bus Stop Paddle Funds through Pandemic (March?)

Next Meeting date: March 18th