

# Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

## Meeting held online

### January 21, 2022, Minutes

#### STSC Attendees

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

#### Other attendees

- X Hunter Maltais (SPS Transportation Manager)  
Jeanne Suleiman, KC Metro (customer relationship manager in mobility division)
  
- X Caitlin Huertas: Parent from Stem K-8 School
- X Vivian Song Maritz: School Board Member

#### Public Comment:

None

#### Last Month's Minutes:

#### Review of Minutes and Action Item Updates:

1. Crossing Guard Map: **(ACTION) Jennie** is working on this with list of crossing guard positions that Yvonne sent. She has a request in to SDOT colleagues to get the GIS data layer updated and get the map soon.
  
2. The discussion about 4 way stops at Lawton & Madison was deferred to next month because SDOT does not have updated info ready. Have **(ACTION) Jennie** check in next meeting.
  
3. The 24<sup>th</sup> and Irving concern: **(ACTION) Jennie** will check further and advise us when analysis is finished and what they plan to do.
  
4. 14<sup>th</sup> and Henderson:  
**(ACTION) Robin** will contact David Shaw who is creating a trail for King County that borders this area. She will urge him to take protective measures to calm the traffic off the freeway and she may write a letter confirming this need.
  
5. Genessee and 19<sup>th</sup>: The New Crosswalk Policy has been signed! Schools will qualify for Tier 1 status, meaning they don't need warrants for crosswalks. There is a new crossing guard now at

21<sup>st</sup> and that guard will be moved to 19<sup>th</sup> as soon as the crosswalk is in. There were questions for Jennie on the process to get a crosswalk. (ACTION) Jennie will schedule someone to come in either February or March to discuss the new Crosswalk Policy with us, either David Burgesser with PDD (Project Development) or someone from TOD (Traffic Operations Division).

6. ACTION item: To review Walk Maps, a sub-committee is needed. Margaret and Marilyn volunteered. Mary Ellen will coordinate a time to begin in February or March.

### **Minutes were approved.**

#### **School Bus Update:**

Hunter reported that the uptick in Covid and sick drivers has delayed improvement in service. About 25 drivers are currently on quarantine. Training scheduled for the Winter Break hit a snag with the snow and ice and didn't happen. Even so there are two new drivers in the North and one in the South. Low ridership in some SPED buses prompted an attempt to move those students to vans and move some drivers to Gen Ed routes. This proved impossible because the bus driver's union contract gave SPED bus drivers the right to refuse the bigger, 74 student Gen Ed buses. These larger buses are difficult to maneuver through smaller streets and student behavior control can be a problem for some drivers. Regardless Hunter is hoping to restore more service by next month, full restoration within two months is the target.

Currently, Seattle retains 1 out of 3 drivers trained here. Neighboring school districts offer 7–8 hour days plus extra hours for field trips. We offer four-hour days with split shifts and because of the scheduling elementary school first the drivers cannot make extra money by driving buses for athletic and other special events.

The new RFP for yellow bus transportation is out now. In it SPS reserves the right to prioritize routes in the contract. This has been a problem in the past because of the way the drivers bid on routes. In the new contract the provider will have to fully cover priority routes before assigning drivers to lower priorities. The priorities are SPED students; then Schools of Promise; then 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Tier schools in that order.

“The system is broken” says Hunter. We have an issue with leadership. We can't fulfill our mission with the current model and at current prices. We cannot find 400 yellow school bus drivers. The problem has been consistent for at least several years. Unless we think outside the box nothing will change.

Vivian Song Maritz, school board member, asked about ridership. Discussion ensued about two- or three-tiered ridership. There are no yellow buses for High Schools where all students are eligible for free ORCA cards. There are still SPED buses needed however for high school students, and sped represents 63% of SPS's transportation fleet. The city has offered to provide ORCA cards for Middle School students but there is a question whether the city bus system could handle so many students at once. It would take planning with Metro and schools.

Currently we are averaging 1.7 routes/bus. If we had a 3-tier system, we could average 2.5 routes /bus and only need 248 buses. Redistributing elementary students between first and 2nd tier could help a lot with staffing.

As long as high school is in latest tier then yellow buses just can't do after school events because it conflicts with regular routes, so charter buses for after school stuff is the only option.

Hunter says the goal is "consistent, reliable service" now and by next fall. Unless something changes, we are not and will not be able to do that.

**Active Transportation Coordinator:**

They have 12 qualified applicants. Next week (ACTION) Hunter will get the interview team together and begin the interview process. Hopefully, we will have the position filled soon.

**Crossing Guard Update:**

Yvonne reported she has one trained and at 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Genessee. This guard will be moved to 19<sup>th</sup> and Genessee as soon as the crosswalk is in. 2 more applicants have been hired but not trained. No guards have been lost.

Yvonne asked about a dangerous intersection at 25<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup>. (ACTION) Jennie will score this intersection.

**Louisa Boren STEM K-8 Parking Lot Safety Improvements:**

Caitlin Huertas, the parent of Stem Kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students presented a well-researched presentation of the difficulties at this school's parking lot. The pictures of traffic conditions were graphic and frightening. She also brought 2 different proposals for improvements by using signage and painting i.e., not terribly expensive options. Richard reported that he had worked on that same problem about 8 years ago and her second option was close to what they had done then with a lot of school enforcement. Members of the committee will receive copies of Ms. Huertas presentation to study for discussion next month.

**ACTION item:** Jennie will share with Ashley to see what she recommends. Jennie thinks there might be mini-grants available for painting a walking zone around the parking lot. She will investigate this.

Richard will reach out to STEM K-8 to check on status of previous plan, ask about doing more parent education on procedures, check on whether physical improvements need refreshing.

**Special Meeting:**

Because of the conflict with spring break the regular April meeting scheduled for the 15<sup>th</sup> is cancelled. There will be a special meeting instead on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Safe Route to School Update:**

Ashley Rhead would like to share the completed draft of The Safe Routes To School Plan with this committee. (ACTION) Jennie will schedule Ashley Rhead and Safe Routes to School for one month and David with the Crosswalk Process for another. One will be in February and one in March. Brian will cover for Jennie who will be gone in February.

**Meeting with Venu:**

Venu Nemani is SDOT Traffic Engineer. This meeting took place on January 7<sup>th</sup> without a quorum. He appeared supportive of all things we would like to do but seemed not to understand the need for a

process in place for when future unsupportive engineers were in charge. Minutes were taken by Mary Ellen.

**Intersection Scoring Rubrics:**

This discussion focused on fine-tuning the current rubric. We all viewed the rubric. Changes in reweighting the distance to school; and adding a category of ‘nearness to freeway off-ramp’ were suggested. Reweighting collisions to include all collisions including car, bicycle and pedestrian collisions near intersections was suggested. Currently with only pedestrian accidents included, one accident can heavily weight an intersection as dangerous for three years and then the intersection will be ‘safe’. Also, to correct this flaw we wondered if we could go back 10 years for data. (ACTION) Jennie will check and see if it is easy to get data from 10-years-back, otherwise we will go with the readily available 3-years-back data as before. Are curb bulbs, median islands, slip lanes important to consider? Another possibility is including actual speeds rather than posted speeds, but this could make scoring take longer. Richard pointed out that we can play around with weighting in addition to new categories to find a formula that does a better job differentiating intersections. (ACTION) Mary Ellen will put together a plan for improved categories for further discussion next month.

**Police Representative and Metro Representative:** These positions are vacant. Kevin, our former police representative, has retired. (ACTION) Jennie will talk to Brian about how to fill these spots. The partnership with Metro and King County Vans is up and running. This is a holdover item from last month.

**Future Topics**

- 4-way stops
- Seattle’s climate change planning for transportation (February?)
- Annual calendar lookahead
- Bus Stop Paddle Funds through Pandemic (March?)

**Next Meeting date: February 18, 2022**