

Agenda: Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee Special Meeting

January 7, 2022

Brief overview of SDOT Traffic Engineer's Role (10 minutes)

Venu Nemani, SDOT Traffic Engineer

- Please explain more about your job description. We want to make sure we are only bugging you about issues in your purview.

Overview of work the STSC does with SPS (10 minutes)

Mary Ellen Russell, chairperson

- Best Practices Guide
- Walk zones & crossing guard placement
- Specific traffic concerns

Gaps/issues STSC has observed in SDOT processes around schools (30 minutes)

- 1) **We need a category for streets adjacent to schools.** Streets designated as Neighborhood Greenways are allowed to have a variety of traffic calming measure implemented. Streets around schools aren't allowed to be treated any differently than nearby streets despite having distinct traffic patterns and high pedestrian volumes. STSC has repeatedly seen that intersections in front of schools have traffic issues that can't be addressed under SDOT's current guidelines, and multiple times been told by SDOT representatives that this would be different if the street was a greenway. Streets adjacent to schools need a designation similar to Neighborhood Greenways to allow more flexibility to install appropriate pedestrian amenities and traffic calming.
- 2) **We need a consistent standard for basic pedestrian facilities around every school and a mechanism to install them.** Pedestrian facilities around schools are funded through a variety of programs at SDOT. STSC has observed cases where this patchwork has functioned very well and provided opportunities for responsive pedestrian improvements around newly built or renovated schools, such as Wing Luke Elementary. However at other times the most basic features, like crosswalk striping at the main entrance to a school, have no funding mechanism through SDOT. Worse, though SPS is open to installing these items themselves, SDOT's SIP process is rigid, protracted, and inflexible, making SPS unwilling to add any street improvement items beyond the minimum required for permit, and making permitting items like crosswalk striping separately from building construction infeasible. This has resulted in Queen Anne Elementary opening and operating without crosswalk striping at its main entrance, much less other intersections leading to the entrance. At the Cascadia/Robert Eaglestaff campus it took activists (including Lee Bruch) multiple years of work after the schools opened to get basic pedestrian facilities installed immediately adjacent to the schools. Unless this gap is corrected schools will continue to open without basic, inexpensive pedestrian amenities like crosswalk striping in place. Whether SDOT takes on this work itself or creates a non-onerous permitting mechanism to allow SPS to do it, we need a standard to ensure that basic pedestrian amenities are installed at every school prior to schools opening. Previous communication from SDOT has been that SPS needs to correct this, however SDOT controls both the permitting process and

street improvement processes that have created this issue; it cannot be corrected without SDOT acknowledging the problem and taking action.

3) Pedestrian lights

STSC applauds SDOT's program to install leading pedestrian intervals and eliminate beg buttons in urban villages. These changes have made walking much less frustrating! But there is still more work to do. Many beg buttons remain, and many lights have short pedestrian signals that don't match much longer green car signals. Teaching kids to use and respect crosswalk lights is easier when those lights respond to pedestrian needs. STSC would like to work with SDOT to continue eliminating frustrating and confusing lights that don't give pedestrians equal access to intersections.

4) School zone signage

State law only allows school zone signage in the immediate vicinity of schools. State legislators are considering a change that would expand where signage can be placed so that schools just off of major arterials and state highways can have signage on those busy streets (such as Bagley & Robert Eaglestaff near Aurora). What are Venu's thoughts on this change? Are there options SDOT could implement without needing a change to state law?

5) On-street bus load and unload zones efficiently use existing circulation infrastructure and preserve school land for instructional uses

STSC has observed SDOT pushing for bus circulation to be moved on-site during early reviews for new/rebuilt school project. School land is very valuable and bus circulation takes a lot of space; duplicate circulation is not the best use of limited educational resources.

Wrap up & next steps (10 minutes)

- Opportunities for STSC to support Venu's work at SDOT
- Action items coming out of this meeting