

**Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee  
John Stanford Center, Room 2765  
March 1, 2019 Minutes**

**STSC Attendees**

- ✓ Richard Staudt (SPS)
- ✓ Mary Ellen Russell, Chair (parent volunteer)  
Shanti Breznau, Secretary (citizen-at-large)
- ✓ Margaret McCauley (pedestrian safety advocate)  
Kevin O'Neill (SPD)  
James Wells (Metro)  
Mitchell Lloyd (SDOT)
- ✓ Marilyn Firman
- ✓ Lee Bruch
- ✓ Yvonne Carpenter (SPS transportation crossing guard manager)
- ✓ Stephen Jones (SPS transportation bus manager)
- ✓ Brian Dougherty
  
- ✓ Heidi Groover, Seattle Times

**Other Presenters/Public**

None.

**Public comment**

None.

**January 2019 Minutes: Approved**

Yvonne now has spare laminated flyers for every elementary.

Council of Great City Schools Audit is still outstanding. Will be available in approximately one week.

Richard mentioned that one of the auditors said all kids should be riding buses to be safer than walking biking (in his opinion). Auditors came in and did work and left with very little discussion with Stephen, he was disappointed that he didn't get more discussion time, particularly with the representative from Denver.

**Action:** \_ Stephen will forward Council of Great City Schools report from to the committee when it is available.

Mitchell has passed committee's input about traffic signage at Lincoln to Brian Dougherty. He is aware, and making it a higher priority, but emphasized that while all improvements will eventually be made, not all improvements will be completed before school starts.

Brian wasn't aware of the committee's recommendation that the one-way roads be reversed, will take a look at that and see why decision was made, if it could be changed.

Brian says that currently all SDOT website info is handled by an intern who works 10 hours a week. They have a lot of trouble getting things posted/released. He doesn't know when we can get the annual report posted, or whether we can get access to the SCTC email. We would also like to make sure the PDF is ADA accessible.

**Action:** \_ Brian Dougherty will check into getting us access to the STSC email for sending.

**Action:** \_ Mary Ellen will follow up with Rachel and committee about wider distribution after official copies are sent.

**Action:** \_ Mary Ellen will coordinate with Mitchell to get name cards prior to the next meeting.

#### **New Member recruitment update**

Rachel Osias introduced to the committee. She is with Cascade Bicycle club as the education director. She has been there 2 years, has a teaching credential and background in environmental education. Cascade works with SPS in Let's Go program, works with OSPI on middle school safety. They have the after school Major Taylor program for bicycling club with historically marginalized youth.

Shanti is leaving after March, which will leave one empty position.

**Action:** \_ All committee members will spread the word about the open committee position.

#### **Crossing guard update**

Yvonne updated the crossing guard flyers. The rate has been increased to \$16/hour as of January. New guards at Broadview Thompson at Greenwood & 130<sup>th</sup>. South Shore: new guard at Rainier S and S Henderson, moved old guard to 46<sup>th</sup> and Henderson, new guard PM at 50<sup>th</sup> & Henderson. All but one covered at South Shore Dunlap. The open position doesn't get a lot of kids. Viewlands: new guard at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Holman. A couple of more were supposed to onboard, but didn't show up to training, will try again this month.

Lee would like to post flyers at senior centers.

**Action:** \_ Yvonne will send flyer to Lee to print and post.

### **Traffic study Director's Rule update**

Lee has not been able to get any information about where the process is. He suspects that the change in leadership at SDOT is slowing things down. The draft that was sent to City Council does seem to imply that traffic studies would be required to include more looking at peds & bikes.

Public notice will be in the Journal of Commerce, possibly other publications.

**Action:** \_Mary Ellen to watch Journal of Commerce for public notices.

**Action:** \_Lee will keep watching for any updates and forward on to committee.

### **SDOT Update – Brian Dougherty**

Brian Dougherty oversees Traffic Calming (tiny program), Neighborhood Greenways, Safe Routes to School program (Ashley), Pedestrian Crossing Improvements (which also prioritizes connections to transit, Mitchell), Sidewalk Development Program (prioritizes schools and transit connections). There are also projects and programs that do school related stuff outside of his group, such as Your Voice Your Choice (funding divided by district) and Neighborhood Street Fund. Different projects are divided into silos by funding source. Sometimes different programs match funds for high priority improvements, such as those around Robert Eagle Staff.

Prioritization of all projects is based on pedestrian master plan, to a lesser extent bicycle master plan. This is equity focused, so targeting investments around schools that have a high proportion of students of color. Broadview Thompson and Bailey Gatzert are consistently highest priority for traffic improvements. There is currently a project to do sidewalks on Greenwood 136<sup>th</sup> to 145<sup>th</sup>. East side is complete, West side just about to start. Working south from there is next.

There is a 1,000 year backlog of sidewalk improvements in Seattle. The citizen driven improvements are a way to prioritize projects that don't rise to the top for schools or transit.

Margaret asked Brian if there is a chart, info, etc. we could point to when we speak to City Council.

Brian always thinks about Aki Kurose when it comes to equity. They don't have an engaged community group to advocate for students, and SDOT doesn't hear from them. On the other hand, SDOT frequently hears from places like Laurelhurst, which has much more substantial infrastructure already.

Rachel asked for more information about how the equity lens is applied. Brian says they look both at equity and things like faster speeds, collision history. Equity is overlay on that.

Lee asked about the process when a new school is being developed. Brian said they look at school district's plans for new schools and then apply the same equity lens. They have made large investments at Northgate Elementary, Mercer Middle School is high on the list.

Corridor projects go through complete streets process; PM identifies unmet needs that could be included as part of the project. For example, Green Lake project will include protected bike lanes, improvements for Lincoln High School to connect Lincoln to play fields at Woodlawn. Every big project includes complete streets process, smaller projects don't go through complete streets process.

Lee said in his experience the SDOT project manager for smaller street projects has a lot of impact on how much ped improvements get included.

Is the routing of the Greenways driven by desire to improve school access (Richard)? Brian says yes, generally. Also routing them near makes them politically palatable, few people will oppose kids walking and biking, but standalone biking projects often get more friction.

SDOT is primarily an engineering department. They do have an education component, and do partner with Cascade and SPS for Let's Go program in elementary schools, are working to expand to middle schools and have pilot program launching this fall. The plan is to expand to every middle school in SPS.

Brian shared current list of Safe Routes to School projects SDOT is working on. Mini-grants program has funded walkie talkies at South Shore, Bryant Elem did bike to school day activity with doughnuts, etc.

Lee brought up the WSDOT grant process, that Seattle doesn't engage in. We had previously asked Ashley Rhead about these and she said SDOT generally doesn't pursue them because they aren't worth the time. Richard shared that SPS did once directly apply for a grant for flashing beacons, but the admin time made it way more costly than just paying for the flashing beacon.

Brian says most useful input to him from Committee is walking audits. He asks that we prioritize doing 2 a year and giving input to SDOT. Margaret brought up that we would like to be able to post results on the website and make them publicly available.

Richard mentioned that we will also be looped in on upcoming SPS projects soon, so will include walking audits for those.

Lee suggested that a quarterly newsletter distributed to schools to help them know about upcoming opportunities like Your Voice Your Choice would be helpful.

Brian would like to know if there is anything they can do to help support the hands up tally. The year they had the best participation was when they partnered with schools to add an incentive. Some previous years SDOT had given Starbucks cards to teachers at schools with highest compliance. Mary Ellen suggested small grants for library resources. SDOT says they will commit to \$1000 or under total, and asks that we recommend a strategy to get better compliance.

Lee suggested it might be more helpful if it was near the beginning of the year rather than in May or June. Brian would like to continue with doing it in the spring to try to keep the data continuous.

**Action:** \_Richard will ask about what kind of incentive might be most appreciated at schools.

**Action:** \_Brian will send a graphic showing missing sidewalks within 1/4 mile of a school for us to include in presentation to City Council

**Action:** \_Brian will send a list of SDOT's top priority schools for the committee to perform walk audits.

### **SPS Transportation Workshop**

Innovative Think Tank was scheduled for the 26<sup>th</sup>, but has been indefinitely rescheduled. The initial idea was to talk about the state of the transportation department and challenges they have faced around getting kids to schools on time and specific groups, special needs in particular. Superintendent Juneau has heard a lot about this in her listening tour and it's a high priority. The Think Tank is a group of shareholders including businesses, bike representatives, politicians. The goal was to think outside of the box in terms of transporting kids to school including other modes, technologies.

Fred Podesta just came on board at SPS Transportation, and felt that he wasn't fully on top of what the goal of this process was. Devin Cabanilla and Stephen wanted to make sure that the viewpoint of SPS transportation department was fully communicated. They haven't had many opportunities to share their input with higher ups, as opposed to having outside groups come and say what should be done. There is a lot of in house expertise that hasn't been listened to, their recommendations should be considered before bringing in more outside groups.

First Student has begun providing additional drivers in the past 6 weeks. Viadom went well with few delays.

Stephen and SPS transportation are hoping to continue having a dialogue about the front-line issues they have every day, are hoping to fully communicate that before the Innovative Think Tank occurs (possibly in Mid-March).

Brian asked whether the school district ever operated its own buses, and why they don't anymore. Richard said that while many do, it brings a lot of headaches with it. (SPS owns the buses, but 1<sup>st</sup> student operates.) Stephen thinks that to do it you would need to strategically locate bus lots. Where the maintenance lots are located has a big impact of efficiency. For such a large geographic area it brings a lot of challenges. The district did an analysis of cost/benefits for owning buses about 10 years ago, and found that the costs of worker's comp would be large, that owning buses doesn't pan out (Richard). (Margaret) Has the school district ever explored partnering with Metro for school busing? (Stephen) They have looked at that, but the buses would still pick up neighborhood residents rather than being dedicated for school kids. SPS wants routes dedicated for school kids but Metro won't commit to that.

(Stephen) Recently SPS partnered with Metro to share drivers who were ramping up to full time at Metro, but the period of part-time ramping up became so short that it wasn't effective.

Lee brought up the idea of having neighborhood pickup points where kids congregate to meet the bus in order to increase efficiency. Stephen says that is a discussion he wants to have with higher ups at SPS, particularly for snow routes. Several years ago they moved to stops that pick up multiple kids. SDOT got complaints about kids waiting on Lake City Way, other busy areas.

The idea of clustering pickups is worth exploring, especially to consider if it could shorten the time kids spend on buses. Some families drive kids rather than sending them on buses because the travel time is long. Some other families prefer longer travel times to allow parents to get to work earlier (Stephen).

### **Statewide Grant**

Margaret composed a draft WSDOT grant application to fund an Active Transportation Coordinator. She talked to rep at WSDOT about dates. Last year this program received 30 applications, they awarded 10. This year they have \$250k total to distribute.

Brian says he has had conversations w/ WSDOT in the past about reaching for the moon with applications, and they have said that as the largest City in the state it makes sense for Seattle to get some larger grants.

**Action:** \_Stephen and Margaret will get together to review grant application. Then Stephen will approach higher ups at SPS about moving forward.

### **Future Topics:**

- Move to 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month to avoid holiday disruptions?
- All year-daylight saving time – impacts on walking
- SDOT detailed survey results
- Crossing guard recruitment process – How to keep things from stalling when Yvonne is unavailable, increase pay to match bus monitors
- School staff training as crossing guards for backup
- Follow up with Lee regarding development of Director's Report
- Annual report presentation to City Council
- Open committee position
- Speed Camera update with year over year comparison
- Several schools have unqualified people directing traffic and crossing students. How to communicate with schools to prevent this?
- SDOT's complete assessment anticipated for early summer 2019. Dongho will return to give full assessment
- Pilot project for school road closure
- Follow up on Loyal Heights.
- Look through walk boundary decision spreadsheet for intersections that SDOT should review for improvements.
- Bishop Blanchett traffic concerns

Next meeting: **March 29<sup>th</sup>**.