

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee Meeting held online

January 15, 2021 Minutes

STSC Attendees

- X Richard Staudt (SPS)
- 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 Lee Bruch (citizen-at-large)
- X Yvonne Carpenter (SPS transportation crossing guard manager)
- X Charlie Simpson (bicycle advocate)
- X Hunter Maltais (SPS Transportation Manager)
- X Peaches Thomas (safe streets advocate)
- X Richard Best

Other Presenters/Public

- X Brian Dougherty (SDOT, Pedestrian and Neighborhood Projects Program Manager)
- X Dani Hurula (KC Metro)
- X Christina Ghan (policy advisor in the Mayor's office)
- X Noah An (Works on Land Use Policy for Councilmember Dan Strauss)
- X Heidi Slater (school parent)

Public Comment

Dani Hurula is the temporary KC Metro liaison for this meeting. KC Metro is actively trying to find a person to be the official KC Metro liaison, which will hopefully be finalized by next month.

Last Month's Minutes

Approved.

The STSC meetings were decided to move to the third Friday of every month.

COS code requires excessive departures for school construction projects (Mary Ellen)

City code for public school development includes several sections that trigger habitually granted departures. These include and unrealistically high parking requirement, a requirement to go through departures to maintain on-street bus loading, building height even for necessary HVAC, and signage. The continuous departures are a process issue that has costs associated with it. It also significantly delays school construction. Avg. cost to SPS for departures is \$50,000 per project for consultant time. (Melissa Coan, SPS capital projects financial analyst) This cost does not factor in SPS staff time or project delay costs. Average MUP appeal delay costs 1% of project budget due to inflation. With an annual construction budget of approx. \$250 million, this issue has cost SPS around \$2.5 million every year for the past 5 years, or approx. \$12.5 million in total. STSC has met with DON and SDCI to talk about the

process for updating code to reflect the reality of how school projects are built. Maureen Sheehan and Mike Podowski both agreed that staff support making this change, it's just a question of direction from Council and the Mayor's office. **Christina says that she will bring this to the Mayor's office.** Noah says that this proposed change to eliminate parking requirements for schools is in line with the other changes that Noah and his team are working towards. **Noah will talk to his office about this issue.** This issue is a challenge amidst other challenging priorities currently and is potentially a capacity issue. The STSC is not proposing, at least in the more immediate term, a change to the entire departures process. The STSC proposed updating the part of the code related to Schools, specifically the parking and bus boarding requirements. (Although building height and signage are outside of STSC's purview they also trigger habitual departures and should be reviewed at the same time as parking and bus loading.)

ACTION: Mary Ellen will send a follow up email to continue the discussion in a couple of weeks to Christina and Noah.

Pre-K through 1 returning to in-person instruction March 1 (Brian Dougherty and Jennie

Meulenberg) Hunter says that the reopening plan is a 'moving target'. The plan is to reopen schools for March 1 for K1. Elementary and K8 schools are being considered for reopening.

Hunter says the preliminary survey will not be available until 1/22. Bus routes will be set after the survey results are collected. Stay Healthy Streets have been identified near schools. Brian will share that list of streets/routes with Richard and Hunter.

City Budget Update (Brian Dougherty and Jennie Meulenberg)

The school beacons / cameras have been turned off since March. The money from that is short. City Council moved \$9million to School Traffic Safety Fund. That is not for new projects, but to prevent funding/programs from being cut. Any projects that were already in the 'queue' will get built, but not new projects. The school beacons / cameras will be turned back on when schools reopen.

Crosswalk Rule Change Status (Brian Dougherty and Jennie Meulenberg)

The policy was drafted and circulated internally at SDOT. There is a meeting on February 2nd with the Director of Transportation Operations to discuss feedback on the new policy. This policy would formalize the ability to stripe crosswalks without having to meet a minimum threshold / warrant of pedestrians that already cross. It would also include new spacing requirements between crosswalks based upon the street types in the Streets Illustrated guide. This would include minimum spacing requirements between crosswalks.

Controlling intersections near schools, i.e. Hawthorne Elementary (Brian Dougherty and Jennie Meulenberg)

Stop signs at non-arterial intersections. The philosophy in Seattle, according to Brian, is to use stop signs on non-arterial intersections sparingly. The exceptions include for neighborhood greenways, where there have been collisions, where there are traffic circles, etc. Stop signs are not typically used for traffic calming purposes. Speed humps are the primary traffic calming measures used. These are guidelines and not a formal policy. Margaret proposes that perhaps stop signs should also be considered along Safe Routes to School. Mary Ellen suggested that SDOT doesn't seem to factor in proximity to schools when considering whether to control intersections. Corners at schools are treated the same as streets a few blocks away, even though they have much heavier peak traffic. Richard Staudt mentioned that he was

surprised to see that standards for stop signs require a minimum of 80 car, pedestrian, or bike crossings per hour at peak times. Intersections near schools always see more traffic than this threshold during drop-off time, but SDOT frequently says that they do not meet this standard. Brian has also been thinking about this and suggests that this issue could be a good topic for a subcommittee of the STSC to talk with Brian to help change this approach. The STSC wants an automatic recognition that the intersections adjacent to schools and/or school walking routes be approached differently from other non-arterial intersections. Possibly they should be treated similarly to neighborhood greenways. The STSC is also interested in a cheaper alternative to installing speed humps to more immediately make traffic calming improvements or finding ways to consistently get speed humps funded near schools. **ACTION:** The STSC will convene a meeting with Brian to discuss this.

Annual Report (Mary Ellen Russell)

We can update last year's annual report. We definitely want to make sure that the STSC can present it this year to City Council.

ACTION: Jennie will confirm information about the City Council's available meeting slots.

Future Topics

- Walk Boundary Subcommittee
- Seattle's climate change planning for transportation (when in-person meetings resume)
- Mode choice survey schedule (When in-person school is starting)
- Annual calendar lookahead
- Bus Stop Paddle Funds 2019-2020
- WA Statewide SRTS coalition

Next Meeting date: February 19th