

# Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

## Meeting held online

### March 19, 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 Yvonne Carpenter (SPS transportation crossing guard manager)
- X Charlie Simpson (bicycle advocate)
- X Hunter Maltais (SPS Transportation Manager)
- Peaches Thomas (safe streets advocate)
- Richard Best
- X Jeanne Suleiman, KC Metro customer relationship manager in mobility division, ORCA passport program, will be part of Metro's presence

#### Other Presenters/Public

- X Clara Cantor (Seattle Neighborhood Greenways)
- X Eleen Trang, SDOT
- X Patrick McLoughlin
- X Vinita Sidhu (Site Workshop)
- X Miranda Harrell
- X Abi Corneau
- X Tod McBryan
- X Sylvia Hendrickson
- X Virginia Betten
- X B. Biruk (Site Workshop)
- X Jean Stolzman, Bassetti Architects
- X Charlie Palmer AHBL
- X Abi Corneau
- X Monisha Harrell, community outreach

#### Public Comment

No comment.

#### Last Month's Minutes

Approved.

#### Old Business:

**Action:** SDOT will program flashing beacons near schools when Jennie hears from Hunter the final reopening plans. Tentative preschool, Headstart and Special Ed starting March 29<sup>th</sup>, Elementary April 5<sup>th</sup> and Middle and High School later.

### **Best Practices for School Site Design update**

This has been approved and is already in use by the District. Congratulations Margaret, Mary Ellen and helpers!

**School Busing:** There will be no busing this year except for children with IEP's that require busing. Elementary school students can choose to opt-in to in-person learning. SPS is still deciding the daily schedules.

**SDOT changing requirements Mid-construction:** Richard Best said they are too busy to talk right now. Will look at this issue before 2023 when many capital projects will take off.

### **Developing Standard Bike Shelters for SPS**

**ACTION:** Richard Best will ask consultant to get input on standard bike shelter design from STSC. This is still pending but not moving forward.

### **Annual Report**

**ACTION:** Jennie is lining up slot for annual agenda presentation, will let committee know.

### **SDOT Update: (Jennie Meulenberg)**

Jennie introduced Jeanne Suleiman who was representing Metro for this meeting. She has long experience with the schools prior to her work with Metro. It does not sound like Metro will be appointing an official liaison to the STSC but Jeanne and other Metro reps will drop in.

School Crosswalk policy is still moving forward, questions are best addressed to Brian Dougherty. It needs discussion with David Burgess who works on pedestrian improvements is working to address concerns raised by the SDOT Traffic Operations Division. The current concerns are around potential unfunded maintenance costs if the policy results in an extremely high number of new crosswalks. As written the policy would increase the number of crosswalks that are installed & need to be maintained. Maintenance is the sticking point. This issue is separate from installing crosswalks in advance of school opening. There are many conversations going on about how to move forward. SDOT will consider moving the crosswalk change for schools into a separate policy from the part that would increase the number of crosswalks so that it doesn't continue getting held up. Margaret suggested finding out the cost to first responders and to the city of accidents in relation to the cost of a new crosswalk appropriately placed.

Marilyn's current term is ending. She will apply for a second term.

When SPS moves forward with hiring the SRTS coordinator SDOT will be included on the interview panel.

**ACTION:** Hunter will coordinate with SDOT to include them on the SRTS coordinator interview panel.

### **School Streets**

SPS announced yesterday that there will be no general ed busing this spring. Presumably, there will be overwhelming car drop off/ pick up traffic at opening and closing of schools.

Ashley Rhead (SDOT) has been looking at a temporary permit for School Streets. It might make sense to do Stay Healthy Blocks around schools. Current permit for school street closure would require schools to pay for it, Ashley would like to eliminate fee.

Marilyn suggests that we need to support walking & biking groups. This wouldn't help families who live far from the school but could be a big help to families who live close enough to school to bike even if they might usually be eligible for busing.

Lee has been working on Stay Healthy Blocks and found that there are some pretty significant problems with permitting. He would prefer to keep School Streets out of the Stay Healthy program if possible. Jennie agrees with Lee that it makes sense not to use the Stay Healthy streets. It would be helpful to have more interest shown in the School Streets Program.

Richard points out that at Sanislo SDOT is removing a Stay Healthy street to provide better access to the school.

After discussion the way Safe Healthy Streets were permitted quickly for the emergency Covid situation should be also pushed for use with closures around schools in this no-bus period. If School Streets are still an interest a letter from the committee showing interest would be helpful. Schools will not likely have time to work on School Streets so it will need School Upper Management, City and or SDOT to fund and implement. If other groups like PTA's were interested this could be helpful too, and if interest comes from schools.

Ashley is pushing hard for this, is aware of the slow permit review times. We also need to find a way to get the permit done with minimal input from schools because they are already overwhelmed.

**ACTION:** Charlie will follow-up with Ashley Rhead about School Streets and send letter of support if that's helpful.

### **Rainier Beach High School**

The RHBS design team presented the initial plan for the new school scheduled to begin construction in 2022 and to be completed for opening Fall 2025. The school will have open enrollment, 1600 students (up from 1200) including a Skills Center for Construction and Aerospace. Because the property is in an Urban Village parking is not required. The community has a desire for more parking for events, open enrollment students. They currently have parking for 165, but the new plan has parking for 200. Needs for parking: open enrollment, skills center (which draws students from other schools for part of the day), athletic events, theater which is also used for community productions. Metro RapidRide has been placed on an indefinite hold due to COVID. Street conditions are not always safe in the neighborhood around the school.

There will be no yellow buses except for SPED students and field trips so there is a limited bus entry. There is an elevated main entry to the proposed 4 story school. The entry is also access to the bleachers for a sports field.

The plan has covered bike parking for 160 bikes and short-term parking for 50 more bicycles. The bike parking is off of the main plaza, access has been moved to be more central. There is a mid-block crossing

to a pedestrian path, striped with good signage but not signalized. This seems to be safer than most mid-block crossings because it is across from a walkway. Currently the sidewalk on the school side is planned for 10 feet except for one pinch point. The team isn't proposing to widen the sidewalk along Henderson. The school frontage is changing to be oriented toward Henderson street, not Seward Park as it currently is. Existing 53<sup>rd</sup> Access is not currently used much, the plan is to improve that and encourage more access from that street. Metro bus service is on Henderson. School buses are used for field trips. The main source of transportation is Metro. Existing Metro bus services is the 7 on Henderson St. This is going to be changed, soon there will likely not be a bus along this stretch of Henderson.

School will continue to be occupied site as construction is completed in phases.

There's a question about how students who ride Metro buses will be getting off the bus. Monisha says that the likeliest intersection for students to catch the bus is Henderson & Rainier. The sidewalk along Henderson should be wide enough to handle a lot of students at the same time. The design is showing some wider areas along Henderson where people can step aside, sit down. It would be good to see this zone beefed up and those step-off areas widened to keep kids from spilling off the sidewalk after school as they all head to the bus stop at the same time.

The school will continue to be occupied site as construction is completed in phases.

Comments from the STSC: please consider where the new Metro bus stop will be, and ensure there is space for students to walk from the school entrance to the bus stop.

**Return to School/ Crossing Guards:** Yvonne, Margaret, Jeanne

1. Question is whether more Orca cards can be given to more middle school students. Jeanne says that all middle schoolers are now eligible. The district should ensure there is messaging letting students know that they are all eligible. This might be especially important for students at K-8 schools.
2. Yvonne: Currently there are 19 crossing guards at lunch sites. There are 65 guards on the books and 3 subs. 3 say they are not coming back this year. 8 have not replied. There are 35 open posts. There are at least 10 people waiting for training. Until the Districts plans are finalized it is not possible for Yvonne to plan. They went recently from planning full days to half-day splits and are currently meeting to decide.

Richard wonders if working from home might make it easier for people to be guards.

SPS has paper crossing guard applications available now. Crossing guards need to pay for their own background check upfront. Monitors can have it come out of their first check, but that hasn't been set up for guards. If this was set up for guards too it would take a barrier out of the way to filling more positions. It's not clear who has the power to approve setting up the deferred background fee for crossing guards, but Hunter Maltais is a good place to start. Yvonne will check in with Hunter first, the committee might get involved to push this forward without taking up transportation's time.

**ACTION:** Yvonne will contact Hunter and try to improve payment options for fingerprint payment to make it more equitable and attractive to apply. Margaret willing to help if necessary.

## **ANNUAL REPORT:**

**ACTION:** Margaret will continue to head up annual report with more help, including blurb about continuing remote meetings permanently and getting new SPD member.

**ACTION:** Mary Ellen will write about successes, especially Best Practices for School Site Design.

**ACTION:** Charlie will include language about streets and departure issues.

**ACTION:** Lee will consult w/ Jennie on crosswalk warrant rule change and write up status for report.

**ACTION:** Richard will check with Hunter on Active Transportation Coordinator status and write up for report.

## **SPD Representative**

With in-person school resuming and limited busing traffic around schools may be pretty bad this spring. It would be great to get another police liaison. We have not been able to contact Kevin, his email has been bouncing back.

## **Reaching out to SPD now that school is restarting in-person**

**ACTION:** Margaret will walk into local police headquarters and ask about a representative on STSC.

**ACTION:** Mary Ellen will try reaching out to Kevin.

## **Future Topics**

- Revisit School reopening
- School Streets progress
- Review draft annual report
- Crossing guard application fee status
- 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), survey of what mode would be preferred? Maybe SDOT can look at this.
- Annual calendar lookahead
- Bus Stop Paddle Funds 2019-2020

**Next Meeting date: April 16th**