

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee Meeting held online

July 10, 2020 Minutes

STSC Attendees

- ✓ Richard Staudt (SPS)
- ✓ Mary Ellen Russell, Chair (parent volunteer)
- ✓ Margaret McCauley (pedestrian safety advocate)
Kevin O'Neill (SPD)
- ✓ Jennie Meulenberg (SDOT, corridors and Ped transportation planner)
Marilyn Firman (citizen-at-large)
- ✓ Lee Bruch (citizen-at-large)
- ✓ Yvonne Carpenter (SPS transportation crossing guard manager)
- ✓ Charlie Simpson (bicycle advocate)
Danny Bell
Dani Hurula, KC Metro

Other Presenters/Public

Alex Phillips White, member of public
Belen Herrera, SDOT Safe Routes To School
Meredith Hall, Bicycle Advisory Board
Ben Estes, Bicycle Advisory Board

Public Comment

No public comment.

Last Month's Minutes

Jennie wrote a blog post for SDOT's blog about the 2020 STSC annual report. It will be published this week. Jennie will let us know when it gets published. Annual Report is up on STSC website now.

Marilyn's term expires March 2021.

Bell schedules for school next year are still not set. The school board and superintendent indicated a preference for regular school days with kids alternating days, which would not require a change to beacon times, but it isn't final.

ACTION_ When the decision is made about school schedules for fall Richard will coordinate flashing beacon times with Jennie. Jennie will let Polly Membrino know to block off time for flashing beacon changes.

Mary Ellen will sent the draft School Site Design Guidance document to Richard Best, Vince Gonzales, and Jennie. Jennie forwarded it to Brian and others at SDOT.

Richard Best asked if we could pick this back up in the fall after their busy time.

Richard confirmed that summer meal distribution is continuing unchanged.

Last month's minutes approved.

SDOT update

SDOT is developing School Streets guidance for schools who want to temporarily close off and use the street space immediately in front of schools. This would be COVID related and closures would be longer term, not necessarily for portions of the day like the existing school streets examples. The idea is to provide more pick-up/drop-off area, more room for social distancing. This program is through SDOT and would not require street use fees.

SDOT has been working with SPS on this. SPS is considering which schools would be good candidates for this. The goal is for this to be live for this fall. In SPS survey 80% of families said they don't need transportation, which suggests more parents who live outside the walk zone are planning to drive kids this year out of fears of virus transmission. Using street space in front of schools could help prevent traffic issues.

SDOT is transitioning to WebX for the next meeting.

Belen Herrera works in the Ped & Neighborhood team. She will lead the SRTS Racial Equity Recommendations implementation.

Stay Healthy streets were a mayor's initiative taken on very quickly. Now the program is being considered through a racial equity lens.

Jennie did see some communication between SDOT and SPS regarding Stay Healthy streets dead ending at schools. Summer Dawson is the coordinator for that project.

ACTION_Jennie will check in with Summer regarding how Stay Healthy Streets planning is coordinating with SRTS and communicate the concern that parents dropping off at school might consider themselves 'local access'. Jennie will also confirm that SPS is being notified as new Stay Healthy Streets are designated so that SPS can factor that into bus routing.

Tracey Twitchell has been in touch with Jennie to locate Stay Healthy Streets that have already been designated so that SPS can avoid routing buses down them.

Margaret brought up the need to have someone identified as 'flak catcher' for neighbor complaints about changes to local streets and to just know that neighbors will be very vocal regarding any change.

West Seattle Bridge Closure & Walk Routes

Richard has gotten out to look at traffic patterns around affected schools. People coming out of West Seattle are Coming down Morgan/Sylvan, they cross Delridge, take Orchard to 18th, very close to Sanislo elementary. There is a crosswalk there but there are no breaks in traffic anymore, it would be very difficult for peds to cross there. There is a lot of traffic on 16th SW and 9th SW between Holden and Roxbury, but it's not nearly as impacted as the Morgan, Sylvan, Orchard route. Affected schools are West Seattle Elementary, Sanislo. Richard expects that buses will be needed between High Point residential area and West Seattle Elementary.

Margaret asked if controlled crossing lights could be installed at these locations since families are not wanting to put kids on buses right now. Jennie said SDOT would prefer to do improvements rather than emergency busing.

ACTION_Jennie will take problem locations near West Seattle and Sanislo to SDOT team and look at what kind of improvements could be made to avoid the need for emergency busing.

Committee Housekeeping

ME brought up question of whether others would be interested in taking on Chair role. Mary Ellen will continue as chair for now but is willing to let another member take it on if there is a desire.

Meredith Hall suggested that SDOT liaison could take notes.

ACTION_Jennie and Mary Ellen will talk about the possibility of Jennie taking notes during meetings.

Other boards and commissions are writing a letter advocating for online meetings continuing after meetings go back in person.

ACTION_Margaret will share the google doc letter advocating for support for continued online access to meetings.

Meredith Hall said Bike board uses Teams which has been great because members of the public can comment in the chat.

Lee said that his Neighborhood Greenways group has gotten a lot more participation with online meetings than they had with in-person.

Jennie said that making meeting links is not too much work, and once the City starts using WebX meetings can be set up with a recurring link permanently posted on the website. If we do

meetings with an online component we need to make sure that we are in a room that has internet capability at John Stanford, where sometimes we have trouble connecting to the internet.

Richard asked whether this group could use Teams since SPS and the Bike Board use it. Jennie said the City has limited licenses for Teams and the boards that are using it will be transitioning to WebX.

Coordination with Bicycle Advisory Board, Meredith Hall, Ben Estes

Mary Ellen explained the issue STSC has seen that remodeling/rebuilding schools often have different traffic patterns after construction due to moved front entrances and parking but isn't any existing SDOT response mechanism. As a result SPS puts in ped improvements immediately adjacent to the school but SDOT doesn't respond with even simple things like crosswalk striping opposite the new main entrance. This occurred at Queen Anne Elementary last year despite extensive STSC coordination with SDOT through 3+ years. Street improvements around Robert Eaglestaff & Cascadia also were not initiated prior to the schools opening despite years of advocacy by neighborhood groups, and it took multiple years of advocacy after the schools opened to get crosswalks, flashing beacons, etc.

Meredith Hall asked whether SPS goes through the SIP process. They do, although typically improvements are limited to the block immediately touching the school.

Meredith said that last year was the last time that Bike board got to review and select projects because Move Seattle levy money has all been allocated. When that was happening SDOT would generate a list of prioritized projects, the Bike Board would review and re-prioritize it.

The Bike Board would support the sort of spot improvements that we are suggesting and could add a more general statement of support into the bike plan but couldn't promote specific locations. Also the Bike Board is more typically looking at larger corridor improvements. They could add language supporting the need to respond to changed conditions around schools to their plan, but it really seems like this is a problem with the process.

Director Zimbabwe is looking for a way to get the Bike and Ped plan to work together as one big coordinated plan. The Policy and Operations Advisory Group (POAG) will have members from different boards to help each coordinate planning. It would make sense for STSC to have a member on the POAG group.

ACTION_Jennie will set up a presentation by SDOT POAG rep for STSC.

Lee would like to see City require concurrency from developers to make them responsible for changes to pedestrian traffic patterns.

Ashley Rhead is on leave. Months ago Mary Ellen asked Ashley if SRTS program would incorporate remodeled schools into the allocation process and Ashley said she had no interest in doing that. She suggested that it should be SPS's responsibility to make all improvements in the vicinity of schools that will have changed traffic patterns. Mary Ellen asked if SPS would be allowed to install things like crosswalks, bike corrals, painted curb bulbs, etc., in the vicinity of schools. Ashley said she didn't know but would find out. In response to follow-up inquiries she said she had reached out to street use but hadn't heard back yet. Now Ashley is out on leave.

ACTION_Mary Ellen will forward question about whether SPS is allowed to paint crosswalks etc. to Jennie to look into.

Ben Estes is a teacher who bikes to school. He saw students get bikes as quarantine hit. Richard was reviewing OVA site plans last week and saw that they are required to have nearly 200 bike space and they are putting them in. Richard said this is a big jump from previous requirements and is out ahead of demand. Margaret sent out a study to the committee this month which shows that the presence of bike parking on site is a major factor in promoting biking to school. Lee said that the new requirement is for 3 spaces per classroom.

Meredith pointed out that secure parking is important for low income students and doesn't exist at her kid's school where racks are outside the fence in a location without eyes on them. Teachers take their bikes inside the building rather than parking them at the racks.

Meredith suggested that for SPS it would make sense for departures that allow for more compact bike parking spaces for kids bikes but the total number of spaces could still be provided.

Lee brought up the issue of traffic studies not including ped & bike information. STSC will bring this issue up with SDCI when meetings around code changes continue.

Northgate and Kimball

There is still time for comments on Northgate and Kimball departures. The committee could put in a statement on both. Comment period for both closes next Wednesday.

ACTION_Lee will write letters on bike parking at Northgate and Kimball and send to committee for review.

Planning for 2020-2021 School Year

Next year the plan is likely younger elementary full-time and everyone else 2 days per week. The teacher's union is negotiating because the union would like to have everyone 100% online. SPS has asked the union to identify people who are in a vulnerable category and should not be coming to school.

There are still discussions about getting as much classroom time as possible based on the availability of space and teachers. Space available and number of teachers are both limiting

factors with different limitations at different schools depending on how crowded the school is and how many teachers have underlying conditions that make it unsafe for them to go to school. The district is asking teachers to be more flexible about which schools they end up working at to provide more ability to staff schools evenly.

Based on the survey more families than usual won't use busing, likely out of concerns around social distancing. Since these families live far enough away from schools to be bused there will likely be more cars dropping kids off. One way to reduce cars could be to encourage carpooling with a consistent family. Doing School Streets in front of schools could also help reorient parents' expectations about dropping kids right in front of schools. Jennie will keep STSC in the loop around the School Streets pilot. STSC could potentially help act as a release valve for any parent complaints around changed street conditions and would be happy to do that.

Next Meeting:

August 14th. Meeting will be via WebX

Future Topics:

- Northgate contractor circulation (August or September)
- Flip Your Trip presentations at additional schools (August)
- Mode choice survey schedule (August)
- Annual calendar check-in (every meeting)
- Van Asselt Plan (August)
- Draft Circulation Design Guidance Document (October)

Additional Meetings/Items

- Schedule Walk Boundary Subcommittee – need to reschedule once in-person meetings are held again. This meeting would be hard to do remotely because there is so much toggling back and forth between Versatrans and street view.
- Follow up on coordination meeting w/ SDOT, SDCI, Schools Capital Projects to avoid future box truck turnarounds on school property (TBD – once in-person meetings are held again), reduce parking requirements, ask City to require that school traffic studies focus on bike and ped issues around schools.