

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

Meeting held online

August 20, 2021 Minutes

STSC Attendees

- X Richard Staudt (SPS)
Lee Bruch
- X Mary Ellen Russell, Chair (parent volunteer)
- X Margaret McCauley (pedestrian safety advocate)
- X Jennie Meulenberg (SDOT, corridors and Ped transportation planner)
Marilyn Firman (citizen-at-large)
- X Yvonne Carpenter (SPS transportation crossing guard manager)
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)

Public Comment

No comment.

Last Month's Minutes

June and July meeting minutes approved.

CONTINUED ACTION: Peaches will write a letter to the City requesting a similar analysis (to the one she reported on in June) here in Seattle. Also she will request the City carry it out by funding groups who are already working in this space. Moved to September.

CONTINUED ACTION: Richard Staudt will inquire about who would/could write a curriculum piece for SDOT about the mode choice survey that ties in info about how this impacts students and schools. It could make sense for this to be connected to Earth Day activities.

SDOT UPDATE:

Jennie reached out to SDOT folks regarding who would be best person to come talk about street crime issues.

The 4-way stop analysis is still moving, will be finished November/December.

ACTION: Jennie will keep tabs on 4-way stop sat Lawton, Madison, John Hay, and loop in committee this winter as finalized.

Richard was contacted by a woman who is volunteering to help train school patrol. School patrol teacher stipend has to come out of each school's budget which makes fewer schools inclined to have a school patrol.

ACTION: Jennie will reach out to Ashley Rhead on whether school patrol stipend could be funded by SDOT mini-grants or similar program.

School Pool has developed materials to support walking and biking events including customizable fliers and posters and info packets. Julie Burrell is point person for School Pool and KC Metro.

julie.burrell@kingcounty.gov. Those resources are located here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSHSNjBirAcEVVMjHgMQxlTAnGa0xdGEXDxtw1sMyFhmtJRw/viewform>

CROSSING GUARD UPDATE:

The new segment went out last week on KIRO 7. Yvonne got 26 calls from that in a week. Some applicants want more full-time hours. This year food services needs lots of people. Yvonne will point applicants in that direction. Richard pointed out that with spaced-out lunches this year and extra lunch periods more lunch monitors will be needed.

Currently there are 45 open positions with 3 pending to be filled once trained.

Social distancing requirements are slowing down crossing guard training and in-service.

BUSING UPDATE:

SPS is anticipating with 1st student that they are right on the razor's edge of having enough drivers but they don't have any cushion for alternative drivers.

They are getting on average about 30 applicants each week. Anticipated end of federal benefits seems to be pushing interest.

SPS is working to use HopSkipDrive as backup to provide transportation to students. SPS is also doing a transportation pilot to reduce absenteeism with McKinney Vento and foster kids.

Active Transportation Coordinator position has been posted and has had 70 applicants. The posting will close next week and interviews will begin. SEA training (that would let committee members be on the interview committee) happens next week. SDOT would like to participate in interview panel. Jennie wants to confirm that MOA has been signed. Hunter will go back and double check that. SDOT has signed it but SPS has been delayed in signing by turnover in legal department.

SPS is cautiously optimistic about fall busing. After putting together routes they need slightly fewer than anticipated, meaning the driver shortage is not as high as expected.

Hunter is planning to put together a proposal for the school board to transition back to a 3-tier system. This would require fewer drivers, fewer buses, reduce costs, provide a higher level of service and allow higher density on buses (which reduces emissions because fewer buses are needed).

Transportation services are not limited this year. The level of driver shortage is similar to previous years. This is not going to be anywhere near when First Student had its strike. They are anticipating that there will be some delays in the order of 15 to 20 minutes. First Student expects to have enough standby drivers in place by mid-October.

If there are delays parents would be notified by text or email.

If families have moved or changed schools prior to August 8th that info should be automatically included in bus planning. Changes since August 8th have not been incorporated. Those families should reach out to transportation department.

SPS did not switch to opt-in bus routing this year. One of the hurdles to this is that SPS needs to make some technology investments to make this possible. SPS is hoping to add these in and have them embedded in their transportation model by the end of this school year or prior to 22-23 school year. With ongoing COVID issues and going back to school for the first time in 18 months other issues have taken precedence over transportation changes.

SPS will put out RFP for another 5 year bus contract this year. They are laying out the groundwork to transition from diesel to electric. When they put the RFP out other companies than First Student may bid. SPS wants to be careful that whatever technology they do invest in can migrate to another provider.

SPS is looking at a lot of different models to transition to electric vehicles (EV's). Yellow buses, white fleet, in-house and contractor drivers, SPS owned vehicles, working with Seattle City Light for maintenance & charging, etc. Hunter will present options to school board and they will consider options. The requirement to re-bid every 5 years limits how much third party providers are willing to invest. San Francisco has 10 year contracts, which provide a longer time horizon for vendors to recoup investments.

The state requirement for vaccination is curveball, particularly with vendors like HopSkipDrive in terms of verifying vaccine status, but they are working to meet it.

RFP will be written with understanding that SPS may do things to reduce reliance on vendor such as bring some drivers in-house or go to 3-tier bus system.

White fleet idea sounds similar to existing King County dial-a-ride. Hunter would love for the white fleet if possible to be an extension of an existing transit program like Metro. Hunter reached out to Jeanne about this. She approached Metro leadership who are interested in exploring the idea. Metro has put together 2 meetings to explore a partnership in this arena in September and October.

King County has Via-To-Transit which would be the program utilized for this. This program is already available to any youth who have an Orca card, although it has a limited service area.
<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/on-demand/via-to-transit.aspx>

Hunter pointed out that SPS spends \$7 million a year on alternate transit. He would much rather spend this with Metro. This would also help students learn to use transit services.

Richard brought up that several years ago SPS explored whether moving drivers in-house would save money and found that it would not. Since then SPS has dramatically increased pay and benefits for First Student drivers which likely means that the savings from a 3rd party vendor are no longer there. The current model has drawbacks in terms of responsiveness and having buffer layers between SPS and bus drivers in terms of management. First Student makes a substantial profit, suggesting that SPS could at least match costs by bringing it in-house.

ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTATION TO OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Margaret felt that the presentation was well-received. Capital projects has asked STSC to come and present to them as well.

This week Richard Best said via email that the school board had directed capital projects to include 100% of bike parking on future projects including Rainier Beach High School. This is great news.

CM Pederson is coming to September meeting. Mary Ellen will present annual report slide deck. Margaret will be out of town for that meeting.

Richard said thank you to everyone who collaborated about a proposed bus-stop location. SPS, Metro, and SDOT worked together to prevent a bus stop from being located in a busy spot with poor visibility and get it located in a spot that will work better.

Future Topics

- Annual report with CM Pedersen (September)
- SDOT transportation equity work group (September)
- PMP prioritization process (David Burgesser SDOT October)
- School zone camera funds, hands up tally (Ashley Rhead, October)
- Sand Point Elementary walkthrough (November)
- 4-way stops (December)
- Walk Boundary Subcommittee
- Seattle's climate change planning for transportation (November?)
- Annual calendar lookahead
- Bus Stop Paddle Funds 2019-2020, 20-21, and going forward
- Possible grants to buy electric white fleet vehicles (Mary Ellen to research)

Next Meeting date: September 17, 2021