

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee

Meeting held online

September 17, 2021 Minutes

STSC Attendees

- X Richard Staudt (SPS)
- X Lee Bruch
- X Mary Ellen Russell, Chair (parent volunteer)
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)
Charlie Simpson (bicycle advocate)
- X Hunter Maltais (SPS Transportation Manager)
Peaches Thomas (safe streets advocate)
Richard Best (SPS Capital Projects)
- X Jeanne Suleiman, KC Metro (customer relationship manager in mobility division)

Other attendees

Brian Dougherty (SDOT)
Perry Lee, SPS, Lincoln High
Annya Pintak, SDOT transportation equity work group
CM Alex Pedersen

Public Comment

No comment.

Last Month's Minutes

August 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. **Check in again.**

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. **Check in again.**

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

ACTION: Jennie will reach out to Ashley Rhead on whether school patrol stipend could be funded by SDOT mini-grants or similar program. **In the Past they haven't done this but it's a possibility. Jennie will follow up next month.**

School Pool - Mary Ellen talked to Jeanne about the fact that SPS doesn't support School Pool. Jeanne offered to check in with Julie Burrell, School Pool at KC Metro julie.burrell@kingcounty.gov, and try to find out where the problem is.

Hunter is interested in setting this up, particularly in advance of vaccination mandate for drivers.

ACTION: Mary Ellen will connect Hunter, Jeanne, and Julie Burrell to try to get School Pool working for SPS families.

The vaccination requirement for all SPS staff is likely to result in fewer bus drivers, but will also mean SPS can't work with yellow cabs or any provider who doesn't verify vaccination. This is going to make transportation more chaotic than it already is.

The Safe Routes to School Coordinator position has had some excellent applicants. Hunter is still trying to get verification that SPS has signed the MOU. Getting positions authorized takes a huge amount of time at SPS, in some cases 6 months.

Richard said that JoLynn Berge would not allow the position to be posted until it was signed, so since it has been posted it has been signed.

BUSING UPDATE:

This year SPS got the routes built later than usual, then found that there were fewer drivers available at First Student than they had been told. They had been told they would be 10 drivers short without standby drivers, but they were actually 40 drivers short without standby drivers.

First Student's internal processes are not supporting consistency or communication with families. SPS is working for First Student to change their processes. Hunter is not satisfied with the mitigation protocols that First Student has put in place.

Right now it looks like 10% of drivers will quit over the vaccine mandate. One possible recommendation would be to change bell times at some schools and create a third tier. SPS and the teacher's union would need to negotiate this.

First Student is not consistently giving SPS information about which bus routes are late, or even which don't have a driver.

Current communication with parents has huge challenges. Parents can't always get through to the transportation department to ask why a bus didn't show up. The phone system has glitches that put parents on hold and then dump them into voicemail. Staff are overwhelmed and not consistently responding to parent emails. First Student isn't always reporting to SPS when a bus is late or doesn't have a driver even if they know in advance, which means parents don't get notified and kids are stranded. This increases the volume of parent calls and emails to SPS transportation further, stressing the phone system and overwhelming staff.

SPS is working with tech dept to get a drop-down menu reporting mechanism set up, but this will take time.

CROSSING GUARD UPDATE:

Yvonne got one new guard trained, but lost one for medical reasons. Yvonne is also losing applicants because of the vaccination mandate. She got a wave of inquiries from the news spot that are continuing to come in.

Establishing a bus loading zone at Lincoln:

Lincoln High has no fields so needs to transport students for athletics. Parking lot and gym are both under construction. The 1st year they opened buses could use the parking lot and pull through. This year buses have to back out.

Before it reopened as a high school buses would load in front of school on 43rd. Campers are parked on both sides of NE 43rd which makes it too tight for buses to make the turn. This is not a permanent issue, just for the next 12 months until construction is complete.

Richard said that he has been working with Lydig (the contractor) to allow buses through. His understanding is that Lydig is using the driveway for staging and they could possibly let buses through. Lydig is trying to get a street use permit, Perry isn't sure whether this is for staging or for bus access.

ACTION: Richard and Perry will figure out preferred strategy for Lincoln Bus loading and follow up with Brian and Jennie. If the driveway is preferred, Richard will follow up on the street use permit when the application goes in. He will send the permit number and street use contact to Brian Dougherty. Brian will contact the reviewer to speed review of the permit. If a temporary on-street bus loading zone is preferred Richard will contact Brian to get signs installed.

Stay healthy street signs make bus turning difficult, these could be pulled back from corner.

7th and McGraw background (Brian Dougherty):

Located near Coe Elementary. Recently there was a hit and run at this intersection involving a Coe family loading up younger kids after school drop-off. Fortunately no one was hurt this time.

In 2014 there was strong community interest in making improvements to the intersection. 7th Ave has stop signs but McGraw does not. The crossing distance is huge. The intersection has sweeping curves that were built as a scenic driving route. This is a great opportunity to shorten crossing distances and convert the intersection to an all-way stop. The all-way stop can only be done if the turn radius is shortened.

The street is owned by the parks department as a boulevard. Anything that is touched on all 4 corners of the intersection is part of the landmarked parks boulevard. Any changes need approval from landmarks board and parks department. In 2014 SDOT presented 3 alternative proposals to the landmarks preservation board and all three were rejected.

SDOT completed some small changes including removing overgrown vegetation. A year ago the community group reached out again. They are applying for a community grant to make an existing paint curb bulb into concrete in a zone just outside the landmarked area.

The alternatives SDOT developed are still valid and could be taken back to the landmarks board, although the money set aside to build the improvements is no longer allocated. The landmarks board has likely had turnover and may weigh safety considerations as important on a second hearing.

ACTION: Lee will ask contacts if anyone is interested in championing changes at 7th and McGraw and then circle back with Brian.

ACTION: Brian will explore any changes that could be made at 7th and McGraw without landmarks, possibly painting slimmer lanes.

SDOT transportation equity work group (Annya Pintak):

Program started in 2017 in transit mobility division. The initial focus was on affordability programming. In 2020 transitioned to Equity. Have been building trust with communities of color.

Transportation Equity Framework development was launched in April 2019, is expected to be complete by end of 2021.

Three equity topics she wants to highlight:

1) Landuse housing displacement has been identified as a key equity issue. After displacement transportation is key to access community and resources.

2) Safety is a key issue. One key recommendation is to consider qualitative issues when considering safety.

3) Transportation justice: look for opportunities to re-think laws and penalties so that we don't cause harm to disadvantaged groups.

Annya will share the draft transportation equity work group report with committee members via email.

Annual Report Presentation with CM Pedersen:

Alex Pedersen, CM, worked on school safety issues and red light cameras when he was legislative aid for Time Burgess.

Send powerpoint to Pedersen's office with Willa.Hevly@seattle.gov

Schedule follow-up meeting with Pedersen's office. Strategize with Willa on how to approach different people. Have Willa Hevly and Noah An connect about it. Calvin Chow works on transportation.

Alex Pedersen just met with Chandra Hampson to talk about utility costs.

Alex has good relationships with state legislators, could send letters asking for state to fund crossing guards as required by law.

Send crossing guard application info to Pedersen's office, he can push it out in newsletter.

ACTION: Mary Ellen will schedule a follow-up meeting with Willa Hevly in Alex Pedersen's office to talk about next steps for moving goals forward.

Future Topics

- 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: October 15, 2021