

Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee
John Stanford Center, room 2765
December 13, 2019 Minutes

STSC Attendees

- ✓ Richard Staudt (SPS)
- ✓ Mary Ellen Russell, Chair (parent volunteer)
- ✓ Margaret McCauley (pedestrian safety advocate)
- ✓ Kevin O'Neill (SPD)
James Wells (Metro)
- ✓ 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)
Brian Dougherty (SDOT)
- ✓ Danny Bell
- ✓ Jeff Bronstein, SPS Transportation

Other Presenters/Public

- ✓ Elliot Helmbrecht, Mayor's office

Public Comment

No Public Comment.

Elliot Helmbrecht, Transportation Policy Advisor to Mayor's Office

15th & Columbian

When Elliot was at SDOT he worked on the project as it got selected for neighborhood street funds and went to a lot of public outreach meetings. Project changed substantially through the engineering process, to the point where it didn't really satisfy the original applicants, the school didn't support it as much either, and neighbors were upset about changes that happened after public engagement. The changes were due to increased detail in the engineering design. SDOT learned lesson to return to public outreach after design. This became problematic for the 3 year time horizon of NSF program, and also put SDOT in difficult position of having original NSF project sponsors withdraw.

Current PM (Adonis Ducksworth) will come discuss w/ committee in January. Project is now in funded in part by Safe Routes to School Program and coordinated through AAC (paving), starting a new community outreach phase with revised design that meets more of the goals of both sides. It would be really helpful to SDOT to have more community members show up in support of the project at upcoming openhouses.

ACTION_ Mary Ellen will send speed zone camera data to Elliot Helmbrecht.

Lowering speed limits on arterials to 25 miles per hour.

City is currently experiencing worst number of ped fatalities in years, 3 in the last month. The City is in the process of evaluating all arterials with the goal of reducing speed on almost all to 25mph. Currently most are 30mph, some higher. Also looking at engineering interventions to support this, because speed signs alone are generally not enough to reduce speeds. Also going to double the number of intersections with ped lead times on signals, from about 120 to about 250, about a quarter of the signals. Also installing 5 new school safety cameras.

Jeff Bronstein brought up the issue with more people using cell phones while driving, which leads to greater collision rates.

Kevin asks that new speed signs be clearly visible and more closely spaced. Also, WSDOT refuses to put up school zone signs on Aurora. Many community members have put signs on buildings, but if City could bring this up with them and take another look at it SPD and STSC would be grateful.

Impacts of 976 passing.

City funds ORCA opportunity program with car tabs. For this year those funds are secure. Revenue can still be collected during court process which is expected to take at least a year.

Active Transportation Coordinator Position.

Approved as part of the budget, mayor supports it. Stay in touch with Elliot to show progress through the end of the school year and keep in next year's budget. This doesn't give the Active Transportation Coordinator a lot of time to show progress. Good communication with Elliot and mayor's office is key.

Elliot will attend January meeting with Adonis Ducksworth to talk more about 15th & Columbian.

New STSC member

Danny Bell is in process of being appointed to STSC. Welcome Danny!

Last Month's Minutes

Richard forwarded walking school bus info from Ashley to Emerson staff so that someone on site will have it if a parent is up for leading it. This would be a good project for Active Transport Coordinator to jump on.

Jennie spoke to both Ashley and Brian asking about groups that wouldn't let kids walk because of liability as Mitchell Lloyd described to committee in reference to SDOT equity survey. Seems like Mitchell got this info from conversations, but it's not documented in the report, which leaves Jennie without any leads to follow.

Richard says Northgate will be the next design that's ready for review, it's not scheduled yet. Jeff Bronstein is being put onto all design teams, is going to be integrated into design process going forward.

ACTION_ Richard will follow up with Northgate team to make sure we get to review before 60% submittal, preferably at 30%.

Meeting w/ SDOT, SDCI, SPS Capital Projects re: street improvement requirements for schools at both permitting and inspection stages is scheduled for next Tuesday.

Kevin checked on the possibility of getting motorcycle police to do outreach at intersections where guards have been hit or had near misses. Captain is on board. Police won't go to intersections where crossing guards are missing, but happy to help where guards would like more police presence.

ACTION_ Yvonne will follow up with Kevin about specific locations where crossing guards have been hit or had near misses and would appreciate police presence.

Richard looked back through emails to find out which school responded as interested in police walk for Walk to School Day. No luck finding this.

14th and Henderson – King County and WSDOT own land leading to intersection, Brian is coordinating with King County to consider options for reducing speeds prior to the intersection. Kevin added this location to hot spots list, traffic was out there this month.

SDOT has been to 29 locations missing crossing guards, 28 of them don't have signs up.

ACTION_ Jennie will print and laminate crossing guard flyer and post at any locations where they are missing.

ACTION_ Richard will check with accounting that using stop paddle funds on crossing guard background checks is allowable. Is board action needed to do this, or is an internal policy change adequate?

Jennie checked with Brian about status of change to crosswalk warrant rule, and about ADA parking in front of schools. Current policy is that ADA signs are placed only in residential areas. Both of these rules are being reconsidered now, may be finished within a couple of weeks.

ACTION_ Richard will re-send list of upcoming projects to Mary Ellen & Jennie.

ACTION_ Mary Ellen will reach out to Brian and Ashley about incorporating upcoming school projects into SRTS and Vision Zero selection criteria.

Jennie Brian and Ashley about getting ADA parking signage at Loyal Heights. It's against policy, however policy may change soon.

SDOT Update

STSC website is updated, there are also meeting agendas & minutes on SDOT website, and it would be possible to send people updates and invites. People can have Jennie add them to the list serve for just this commission. Brian and Jenny are beta testing this. The website can now be updated somewhat more quickly for things like minutes or announcements, but other updates still take time.

SDOT got a request for a crossing guard at E Green Lake Way and Ravenna (Kevin Durrell). SDOT assessed this intersection and it came out as a 13. Mary Ellen and Lee communicated with Kevin about crossing guard placement considerations and SDOT mini-grants for flags.

ACTION_ Mary Ellen will send crossing guard poster to Jennie.

Crossing Guards & Bus Meeting,

Mary Ellen met with Stephen Richard to look at locations the Walk Boundary Subcommittee had flagged as places where additional crossing guards would allow expanding the walk boundary. It looks like a handful of bus routes could be eliminated or consolidated this way, although since drivers typically drive 1 elementary route followed by 1 middle school route, this wouldn't necessarily cut down on the number of drivers required. Still, it would provide more flexibility in staffing.

Stephen and Mary Ellen agreed that this will be watched as Walk Boundaries are updated going forward, and that any potential route reductions will be forwarded to Stephen Richard.

Bailey Gatzert Walk,

Mary Ellen and Charlie attended the Bailey Gatzert walk hosted by Neighborhood Greenways. While the school is on a busy street, the biggest safety issue there is crime. A nearby homeless encampment and drug users behind the community center have had negative interactions with students walking to & from school. The principal said that twice this year the school has called the police to respond to people harassing or assaulting students on their way to school.

At the principal's request Mary Ellen asked Kevin to add Bailey Gatzert to the hotspots list, which he did.

Kevin suggested that precinct captain should directly coordinate with Bailey Gatzert. This is a crime issue more than a traffic issue.

ACTION_ Kevin will reach out to precinct captain.

ACTION_ Mary Ellen will follow up with neighborhood Greenways re: engaging police support.

Catherine Blaine requested 2 new crossing guards

Richard looked into Smith & 32nd and Smith and 34th. STSC has previously looked at 32nd and Smith. SDOT put in improvements, there is a curb bulb now. 34th has a painted crosswalk. 32nd & Smith came in at 13, 34th & Smith came in at 14. Jennie i going to order counts for 32nd and Smith. Assuming it meets warrant, a crosswalk could be ordered. There is currently a crossing guard at 32nd and Raye.

Currently there should be a crossing guard at 34th and Raye, but Yvonne has never been able to fill that position. The locations at 32nd and Smith and 34th and Smith are not recommended for crossing guards due to their comparatively low scores and the nearby recommended crossing guard locations on Raye. The locations at Smith would be eligible for student patrol/

ACTION_ Richard will communicate with principal.

ACTION_ Jennie will follow up w/ counts and crosswalk installation at 32nd & Smith.

Crossing guard update

4 new hires: Bailey Gatzert, Madrona (full up now), West Seattle (almost full), Greenwood at Greenwood & 80th. 2 more fingerprinted, waiting for approval at HR.

Yvonne read a very nice thank you email from a Madrona parent (MLK & Union). There has been consistent progress on recruiting crossing guards for several months. Great work Yvonne!

Up 4 on the month, 2 in process.

Jeff suggested that principals and PTA's take more of an active role in recruiting crossing guards when needed. He is going to be making this point to meeting with all 134 principals.

Jeff Bronstein

Been with SPS for 2 months, been in public administration (health care) for many years. Was in NY/NJ, then moved to New Mexico and was a school traffic administrator there. When in NM, transportation was abysmal, "worse than here", converted bus system from contractor to school owned and operated. He did this by reaching out to communities, getting them on board in advance. He has been going out to PTA groups here to build awareness and support.

Transportation is the front door to the school. For a huge portion of families it's the only interface parents will see. It's not just transportation, it is services. He has lived in Seattle for 10 years, has been at UW Harborview. Was campus administrator at Friday Harbor Campus. This is his preferred job, like the NM job that was hardest but also the most rewarding. He is at SPS at director level, not manager level.

His view is that transportation includes all modes. Everyone gets to school, everyone is part of transportation services.

First Student just re-signed their contract, and knows that Jeff has a history of converting a school district to self-owned buses. So they are on notice. Jeff has also been working on alternate service providers to replace taxis so that now drivers have background checks and there is a contract providing accountability. There is a transition plan to use only alternate providers and no more taxis by end of school year. This will improve safety and quality, it's not clear how costs will be impacted, but the safety and reliability are more important.

Richard asked whether Jeff sees an opportunity to ask OSPI to provide funding for more than just buses. Jeff sees the opportunity in building relationships with other transportation departments who are moving in a similar direction to Seattle.

Transportation isn't just getting kids from place to place, it's a service. Bus drivers can be mentors for students. Margaret brought up the School Traffic Safety Service Standards, which are heavily focused on buses, and suggested that these standards should be re-aligned to include more support for students who don't receive busing.

New transportation service standards will go to board next month. Good news is that Director Mack and Fred Podesta agreed that the standards were too limited. As a result the title of the document has been changed to Transportation Service Standards For Bus Eligibility, opening up room for general standards to be developed for all students. Jeff would also like to develop a student transportation handbook for families.

Marilyn brought up the fact that exercise improves academic performance, so walking and biking can really help prepare students to learn. Jeff is also looking into getting filtered wifi on buses to allow students to access school materials on buses for kids with longer rides. Previous implementations of this have been successful in other districts.

Transportation is part of the educational process. That is the whole mindset change he is working on.

OSPI transportation lead is retiring, a new person will be coming online this school year. Jeff will reach out then. Jeff is hoping to reduce bus routes through consolidation of routes and efficiency, and then plug the money into other staff positions. He's working to maximize counts to ensure maximum state funding under current system.

Jeff is working on an organizational restructuring. A new position to support Yvonne may not happen, but more resources may come from other positions. One option might be to have crossing guards interact more directly with staff at each school.

Next Meeting:

January 10th is next meeting. Meetings through May will be in room 2765.

Future Topics:

- Mercer Middle School (15th & Columbia) shelved safety project – invite middle school reps and SDOT rep. from capital projects group (January, Elliot Helmbrecht and Adonis Ducksworth)
- School staff training as crossing guards for backup – discuss this possibility with Jeff Bronstein
- Follow up on coordination meeting w/ SDOT, SDCI, Schools Capital Projects to avoid future box truck turnarounds on school property (January)
- Circulation Plan Reviews – Northgate Elementary
- Annual Report - brainstorm (January)
- Update on crossing guard warrant and ADA parking rules (Jennie, January)
- Jeff will come back next month to give us an update.

Additional Meetings/Items

- Schedule annual report to City Council for April (Jennie, please help with this)
- Schedule Walk Boundary Subcommittee – initial and follow up meetings
- Schedule meeting to talk more with Jeff Bronstein about issues that STSC has observed.