

# SEATTLE SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE



2023 | Annual Report

# WHAT IS THE SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE?

- Created by Ordinance in 1975.
- 11 members including:
  - Seattle Public Schools (SPS)
  - Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)
  - Seattle Police Department (SPD)
  - King County Metro
- 5 volunteer positions filled by pedestrian advocates, bicycle advocates, parents, grandparents, and neighbors
- All meetings are open to the public. Please come and join us!



# WHAT DOES THE COMMITTEE DO?

- Provides a forum for any community member to raise school traffic safety issues.
- Helps connect community members with staff at SDOT, SPS, Metro, and SPD in order to wholistically respond to specific school traffic safety concerns.
- Uses SDOT data to review and update elementary school walk boundary maps.
- Recommends new school crosswalk and crossing guard locations based on consistently applied standards.
- Reviews 30% site circulation plans for new and renovated school buildings to ensure that problem safety conditions aren't repeated at new schools.
- Works to improve crossing guard recruitment.
- Connects SDOT, SPD, King County Metro, and SPS to improve collaboration on traffic safety issues.

Community  
Members, School  
Staff, & Families



**Seattle**  
Department of  
Transportation



**SEATTLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**



 **King County  
METRO**

*We'll Get You There*

# CELEBRATIONS FOR 2023

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## CITY OF SEATTLE

1. City Council and the Mayor's office are supporting SDCI revising City code for school construction.
2. The City-funded Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator did great things!
3. SDOT and SPS have identified concrete steps each will take to improve the SIP process for future public school construction projects.

## WA STATE LEGISLATORS & KING COUNTY METRO

1. Public transportation is free for all students since September 2022!



## SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. New & renovated schools all have substantial bike parking.
2. All SPS elementary schools & some middle schools fantastic bike education in PE.
3. In 22-23, all school bus routes consistently ran with reliable service that families could trust.

# TOP NEEDS FOR 2023

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## CITY OF SEATTLE

1. Continue support for updating City of Seattle code for school construction.
2. Decouple funding for SRTS projects from tickets.
3. Finalize agreements for bus stop-paddle ticket support.
4. Create an internal accountability & tracking system for SDOT's Street Improvement Permit program.

## WA STATE LEGISLATORS & KING COUNTY METRO

1. Fund school crossing guards.
2. Fund McKinney-Vento costs for transporting students without secure housing.
3. Expand who can review automated tickets.
4. Optimize bus routes to serve students.



## SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. Reduce crossing guard vacancies 40% → ZERO.
2. Create a clear path for existing schools to add bike parking.
3. Update SPS Transportation Service Standards to include all students and all transportation modes.

# SEATTLE CITY LAND USE CODE FOR SCHOOLS IS OUT OF DATE, BUT SDCI IS ON THE CASE!

Code requirements for schools are dinosaurs. They require massive parking lots & forbid installing modern HVAC systems on roofs.

SPS gets around this by seeking departures via an extended public process on nearly every project.

Departures cost time and money.

Worse, they are habitually challenged in court by neighbors whose goal is to delay school construction.

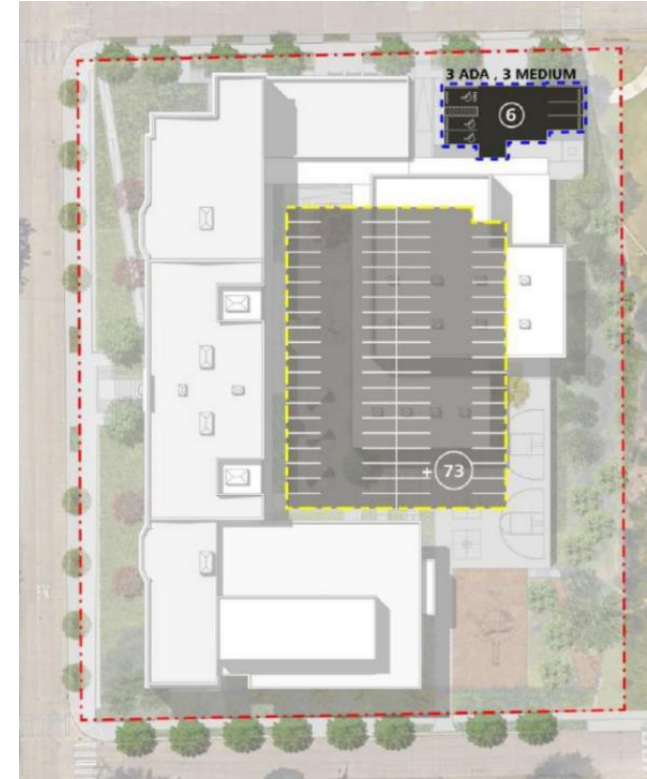
**Fixing this problem will save \$2.5 million in school construction \$'s each year.**

SDCI staff are initiating the process to revise City code for school construction with public outreach in summer of 2023.

The timeline to complete the code change is 1.5 - 2 years.

SDCI will bring this issue back to Council in winter of 2024.

Please support moving forward with this important code update!



Code says we should have a parking lot instead of classrooms at Magnolia Elementary.

# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COORDINATOR



**A BIG WIN:** STSC is grateful to the Council for funding this position at SPS!

In just one year on the job SPS's Safe Routes to School Coordinator:

- Worked intensively with 3 top tier equity schools to develop programs including Walking Wednesdays, Bike to Books art design, and Bike-Bus and Walk Groups.
- Developed a model curriculum that brings City staff into classrooms to listen to students' input on street design.
- Procured a \$.5 M grant that will bring balance bike fleets to all Kindergarten P.E. classes in the district.
- Developed templates with language translation for events including Love Your Route, Earth Day, Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, Walk and Roll to School day, and Bike to School Month.
- Led events including a Walk & Roll to School Day with the Mayor and the district's first Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day.



SDOT workshop at Eckstein Middle School, September 2022. These kids have great ideas for safer streets!

# TICKET REVENUES LEAVE SCHOOL SAFETY PROJECTS HANGING

A temporary staffing snafu at SPD = \$6.5 million deficit for SDOT's pedestrian safety and Safe Routes to School projects over the next 2 years.

This deficit is a quarter of the anticipated budget.

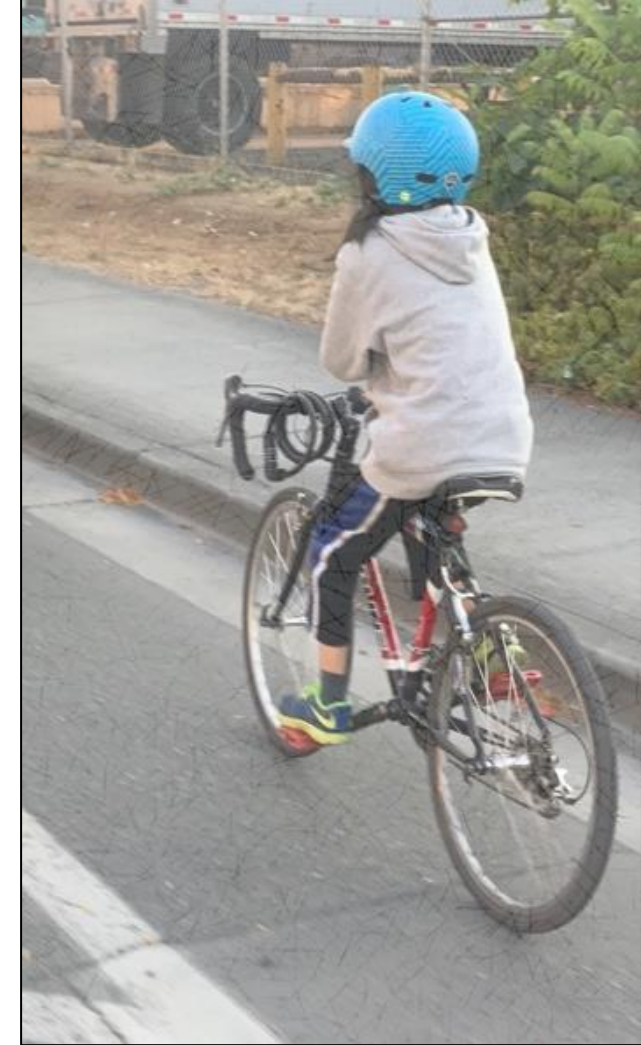
This is the second unexpected loss of revenue in just the last three years.

Automated cameras generate large numbers of tickets soon after installation, and when they are working tickets and ticket revenue shrink over time.

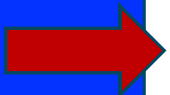
This is exactly as it should be!

Safe Routes to School projects are critical safety projects. They need a stable funding source.

Please robustly fund Safe Routes to School projects with a stable source. Unreliable ticket revenues should be supplementary only.



This kid loves biking on safe routes!





# KING COUNTY STOPPED REVIEWING BUS STOP PADDLE TICKETS

King County dropped support for bus stop-paddle automated tickets without having an alternative set up.

This has left SPS without a funding stream to pay crossing guard salaries.

(The state the state continues to ignore its statutory requirement to pay for them.)

This has also eliminated enforcement for very dangerous driver behavior.

SPS is negotiating with the City of Seattle for SPD & the City Attorney's office to take over reviewing stop paddle tickets.

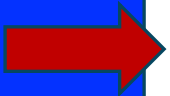
The costs associated with this work are paid out of ticket revenues.

Please prioritize completing agreements for SPD and the City Attorney's office to support bus stop paddle tickets.



Stop Paddle

Blowing past this without stopping is really dangerous.



# STREET IMPROVEMENT PERMITS: SLOW TIMELINES, INCONSISTENT GUIDANCE

Street Improvement Permit (SIP) timelines for school projects are far longer than SDOT's targets, **often more than 2 years**.

At times SDOT's guidance has not matched its ultimate requirements, leading to late changes and expensive change orders.

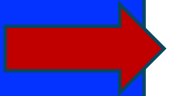
This is not a good use of our public school construction money.

SPS and SDOT agree that using public school construction \$ is a shared goal.



**A BIG WIN:** SPS capital projects, the School Traffic Safety Committee, and SDOT street use met in December of 2022 to discuss issues & seek solutions.

Staff at both SDOT and SPS have identified concrete steps each will take to improve the SIP process for future public school projects.



STSC asks the Mayor's office to direct SDOT to create an internal accountability mechanism to track street use permit timelines and outcomes.



## CROSSING GUARDS: THE NEED CONTINUES

As of June 2023, 46 out of 114 crossing guard positions (40%) were vacant.

Crossing guard is a tough job & SPS has long struggled to fill crossing guard positions.

Prior to the pandemic SPS made real strides in filling crossing guard roles through more active advertisement. In winter of 2020 the vacancy rate was 30% and falling.

Many crossing guards were lost during the year-long pandemic hiatus, and recruitment remained tough in 22-23.

The crossing guard program needs to be better linked into existing SPS networks for additional support.

STSC asks SPS to increase support for crossing guard recruitment by better communicating with schools to post ads & spread the word.



SPS's heroic crossing guard manager posts job ads with a smile.

# CREATE A CLEAR PATH FOR EXISTING SCHOOLS TO ADD BIKE PARKING

**A BIG WIN:** New & renovated schools all have bike parking thanks to city code & SPS policy.

SPS elementary schools & some middle schools have fantastic bike education in PE.

Together these make a great environment for kids biking to schools that are newly renovated/rebuilt!

Sadly, kids at older school buildings often don't have a place to park their bikes.

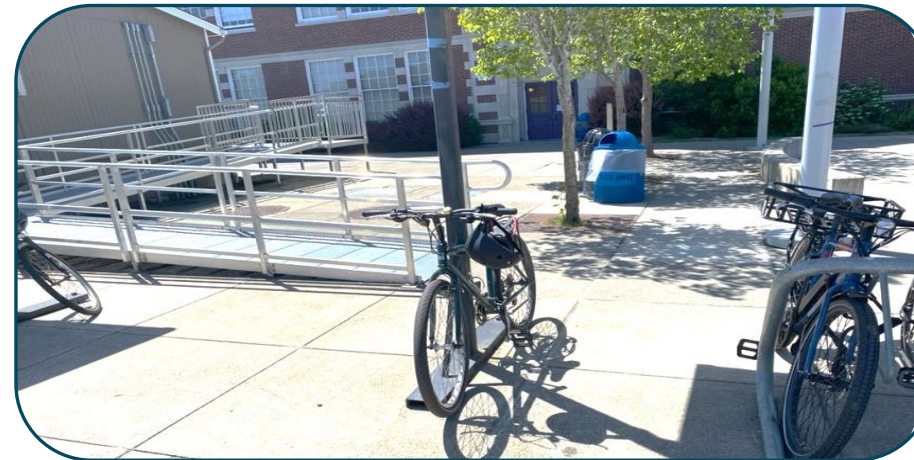
**SDOT mini-grants can help pay the costs of installing bike parking.**

SPS's internal process to approve & install bike parking is too dependent on overburdened school admin staff.

STSC asks SPS to implement a straightforward path to install bike parking at schools, and proactively reach out to schools to help them get started.



Kindergarteners learning to balance in PE. Soon they will be ready to hit the road!



At schools without much bike parking the bikes end up everywhere.

## SPS BUS SERVICE IS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED



**A BIG WIN:** Contracting with two transportation providers allowed SPS to run all school bus routes during 22-23 with reliable service that families can trust!

**SPS is following this win by improving efficiency.**

SPS is making targeted changes in 23-24 to improve efficiency: changing tiers for 12 schools will save \$4.5 million next year.

Even better, next year Special Education students will be included on general ed buses when possible, allowing them to be transported with their peers while saving money, a long-awaited-for win-win.

STSC applauds SPS for these dramatic student-centered improvements!




These buses are serving kids better than ever before. Way to go SPS Transportation!

# SPS TRANSPORTATION SERVICE STANDARDS FOR 2024

The SPS Transportation Service Standards need a comprehensive update. opportunities include:

- *Addressing all Modes* - Students who bus are already addressed in the standards. With the Safe Routes to School Coordinator on the job there has never been a better time to include students who walk, roll, and carpool in the service standards!
- *Busing as a Learning Support* - Setting parameters for this type of busing would allow SPS to make these decisions in a way that is equitable and consistently applied, and to be reimbursed by the state for these costs.
- *Using best practices in place in peer districts* - including a check box in the enrollment forms to indicate whether students will use the bus will make route planning easier and more efficient. (This would be paired with easily locatable ways to opt back in when circumstances change.)



STSC asks SPS to prioritize a comprehensive update to the transportation service standards that is in line with SPS's equity framework and student-centered vision.

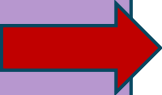


# FOLLOW THE LAW: FUND SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS

WA state and OSPI continue not to fund crossing guard salaries, in defiance of the plain language in state law.

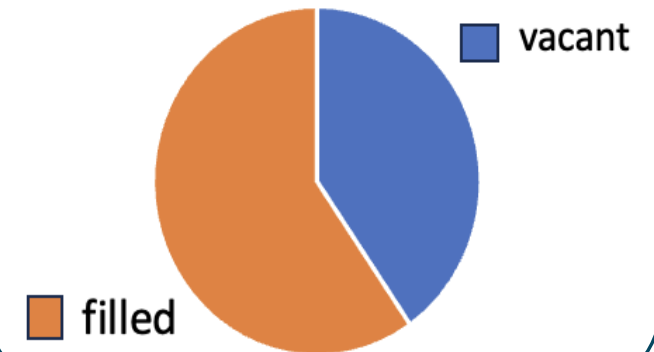
RCW 28A.160.150 states that transportation services funding shall be provided for students living within the walk zone.

*“Transportation services” for students living within the walk area includes the coordination of walk-to-school programs, **the funding of crossing guards**, and matching funds for local and state transportation projects intended to mitigate hazardous walking conditions.*



STSC asks legislators to allocate funding for crossing guards in compliance with existing state law, and to direct the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to revise reimbursement formulas to include crossing guard costs.

Crossing Guard Positions 2023



# FUND TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS WITHOUT SECURE HOUSING

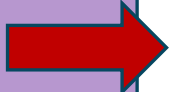
SPS transports students experiencing housing to the same school throughout the year no matter how far afield they may move.

Schools are required to provide this critical service by the federal McKinney-Vento law, but the Washington state legislature has chosen not to fund it.

**McKinney-Vento costs are SPS's biggest transportation deficit.**

581 SPS students qualify for transportation under the McKinney-Vento Act. That's more than 1% of the students enrolled in Seattle Public Schools.

On average it costs \$14,000 per student each year to comply with this mandate, which means pulling **\$8.1 million** out of the general education budget.



STSC asks our state legislators to pass transportation funding reform that supports the needs of students experiencing homelessness.





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# REVISE TRAFFIC TICKET LAW TO EXPAND POOL OF ELIGIBLE OFFICERS

Law Enforcement Agencies across the state are short staffed.

When officers aren't available to review school speed zone tickets we lose both enforcement and funding for safety projects.

In 2023 both Seattle Department of Transportation and SPS experienced interruptions in their automated ticket programs due to staffing shortages.



STSC asks state legislators to pass a law expanding who can review automated traffic tickets.



Making it easier to staff automated ticket review will help keep kids safe.

# ALL PUBLIC TRANSIT IS FREE FOR KIDS BUT BUS SERVICE TO SCHOOLS NEEDS WORK



**A BIG WIN:** Washington State made all public transit free for 18 & under in fall of 2022.

STSC applauds this fantastic step that is increasing transit use for students!

Metro is building on this by actively working to ensure that routes serving schools have enough capacity for students, another big win.

Much of the existing bus service is not optimized for students.

Some families report lack of convenient service to schools, lack of service near their house, or route schedules that won't get students to school on time.

**King County Metro has begun actively coordinating with SPS to improve bus service for students.** There is still a lot of work to do.

STSC asks King County Metro to prioritize bus service around schools, especially middle & high schools, and to actively work with SPS to ensure that every school community is well served

Free Youth Fare is turning school kids into transit pros!



# SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

We appreciate the opportunity to serve on this committee.

In 2023-2024 we look forward to continuing collaboration to help students get safely to school!

