

**ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM**

July 28, 2000

**TO:** William T. Donahue, County Manager  
Robert G. Smith, Superintendent, Arlington Public  
Schools

**FROM:** R. S. Kem, Director, Department of Public Works

**SUBJECT:** Safe Routes to Schools

Per your request this outlines work under the Safe Routes to Schools program initiative. Several departments (CMO, DPW, PD, FD, DCPHD) and schools staff participated in developing actions which would enhance the safety of Arlington school children en route to school.

The program is a further progression of actions from other programs especially the pedestrian initiative and the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program for residential streets.

Actions are listed under these categories of emphasis: EDUCATION, ENGINEERING (facilities), and ENFORCEMENT.

Resources will be a major factor. Important to the success of the programs are the already approved program change proposals in the FY 2001 budget to enhance sign shop operations and fund Wink-o-Matics and pedestrian sidewalks. Other items will need resources identified to include augmentation of the crossing guards program and education components.

Recommend that you approve this and forward it to the County Board and School Board for information.

**I) EDUCATION**

In order for the Safe Routes to Schools program to be successful, it is necessary to educate citizens, businesses, County employees, etc., concerning the details of the program. Not every audience, however, needs the same level or degree of education. For example, students who walk to school and their parents, especially the parents of younger children, need to have a full understanding of the program, an understanding that

will lead to behavior modification in how those children walk to school, what routes they take and the role that parents play in making sure that their children are and remain safe on their way to school each day. Businesses need to at least be aware of the requirement for snow removal from sidewalks in front of stores or office buildings and take appropriate steps to ensure they are in compliance with County ordinances and/or policy. County employees need to be cognizant of how their actions impact on the program, e.g., snow-clearing operations cannot clear streets at the expense of piling snow on sidewalks.

The Education Sub-Group considered a large number of audiences in preparing its plan for educating the public on the Safe Routes program, including the desired outcome of the education process by audience (Attachment A). The group also considered the "means" through which the information aimed at these audiences could be channeled (Attachment B). General summary messages were also identified to provide an umbrella communications framework for more specific communications associated with specific engineering projects, interviews, etc. (Attachment C).

Based upon the audiences, means and messages developed during the sub-group's examination of the issue, a timeline for communicating various aspects of the Safe Routes to Schools program was developed (Attachment D). The timeline provides for year-round presentation of the program along seasonal themes to keep reminders of the program and citizen obligations constantly before the audiences. Repetition enhances communication.

Major projects completed under the timeline include maps for elementary school walkers and bus riders, and middle school walkers to assist parents in charting "safe routes," a "safe routes" resource guide for teachers and a videotaped puppet show concerning pedestrian safety available for classroom use. In August the Superintendent will be mailing out a "safe routes" letter to all elementary and most middle school students and their parents along with individual school maps showing the walking areas and the bus stops for the schools. One side of the elementary school map will include stop signs, yield signs, marked crosswalks and crossing guard locations. The reverse side of the map will show the bus stops outside the walking area by route number to allow parents of bus riders to chart "safe routes" to bus stops. Middle school maps will include only signage information for the one-half mile walking zone, because of the size of the bus route area. Magnet middle schools were

not addressed. It has been suggested that teachers consider reusing these maps in the classroom during Oct. 2-6, "National Walk Your Student to School" week as part of the regular curriculum. Color versions of the maps are also available on the County's website.

Each teacher will be receiving a "safe routes" resource guide in August, and each principal will be receiving an accompanying resource packet with sample pamphlets, brochures, lesson plans, stickers, etc. Teachers will be encouraged to order these materials individually, which are typically available for free in small quantities, to use in the classroom and as backpack mail. The resource guide includes monthly suggestions for the school year, and the resource packet will be available for teachers to use in finalizing their individual programs. This means of distribution of materials was selected primarily because it is cost-free, but it also allows teachers to tailor individual safety programs in their classrooms.

The third project highlighted is a puppet show on pedestrian safety made available last fiscal year under a grant obtained by the Department of Human Services. To make the puppet show exportable and readily available on demand for individual teachers, a video is being produced by Info31 for distribution to Arlington schools. While not perhaps as entertaining as a live performance, the video can be used on demand by a teacher.

Throughout the school year the Office of Public Affairs will also take advantage of engineering projects starting or being completed by the Department of Public Works. Local media, especially television stations, have been very receptive to covering these projects in the past. Contract award news releases for the projects have also been in demand with the print and radio media. These "targets of opportunity" will help to keep the program in the eyes of the public and keep a general awareness alive during the entire year.

## **II) ENGINEERING (Facilities)**

A task force of staff from the Schools, Police, Public Works and Community Planning, Housing and Development departments conducted a series of site visits and interviews this spring to evaluate pedestrian conditions at 11 County schools. The schools visited were those chosen by the Schools administration as those most in need of attention during the

first year of this program. It is anticipated that similar site visits and interviews will be conducted at all of the remaining County schools during the 2000 to 2001 school year.

The task force members visited the schools to observe conditions for students on school property and along the primary school walking routes and to identify potential actions for improving student safety. Of particular concern are the heavily trafficked primary roads that students often must cross or walk along to reach their schools. Students were observed crossing many of the County's busiest streets including Glebe Road, Carlin Springs Road, Washington Boulevard and George Mason Drive. A number of safety concerns were also observed at the locations where parents drop-off and pick-up their children. In some cases the actions of the parents placed children and other motorists in danger.

The objective of the effort is to identify physical measures that can be undertaken to make permanent safety improvements for the students. Attached is a listing of actions that have been identified for the 11 schools (Attachment E). Those actions range from the relatively simple and easy to implement measures, such as replacing or installing signs and crosswalks to measures which require a significant amount of engineering and expense such as the construction of new sidewalks and installation of flashing school zone signals. The proposed actions have been divided into four lists. Three lists are categorized by the timeframes in which the actions are expected to be undertaken; either immediate, short term (prior to the end of the year) or long term (beyond the year 2000 and dependent upon funding allocations). The final list is of actions that require some further evaluation and hopefully will be added to the other three lists after additional consideration.

Funding to implement the long-term actions is being planned for in the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The recently approved FY2001-2006 CIP includes \$1,090,000 for the Safe Routes to Schools program in the FY 2001 Transportation Bond. A list of construction projects for new sidewalks, street modifications and flashing school zone signals has been developed for improvements at schools across the County. The attached list (Attachment F), which currently includes 16 new sidewalk projects, eight street modification projects (mostly medians and curb extensions) and several school zone flashing signal installations, would cost approximately \$2,765,000 to

fully implement. Since the FY2001 Safe Routes to Schools appropriation will not be able to fund all of the identified projects, additional sources of funding such as the Neighborhood Conservation and the Pedestrian Systems programs will need to be utilized. Several projects will likely not be funded until FY 2003 or later. The County Board chairman has requested an evaluation of all types of improvements that currently appear in the CIP under multiple programs. To the extent capital improvements for Safe Routes to Schools fit this category, they will be included in this analyses.

Department of Public Works staff have worked with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee to develop criteria for use in prioritizing the projects for funding. Listed below are the sidewalk and street modification projects that are included in the bond proposed for the voters to consider in November.

1. S. Highland Street (2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> streets) sidewalk
2. N. Longfellow Street (McKinley to Washington Blvd) sidewalk
3. 25<sup>th</sup> Street North (Stuart to Taylor streets) sidewalk
4. 19<sup>th</sup> Street North (Glebe Road to Utah Street) sidewalk
5. S. Kent Street (18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> streets) sidewalk
6. S. Carlin Springs Road median extension
7. Patrick Henry Drive median
8. Washington Blvd/Patrick Henry Drive curb extensions

### **III) ENFORCEMENT**

The Police Department, in cooperation with the Arlington County Board, the Arlington County School System, and the Department of Public Works, has developed the Safe Routes to Schools Program. In years past the Police Department has participated in regional back-to-school programs that have focused on speeders in school-zones and drivers who pass stopped school busses. We are in the process of initiating a new approach to school zone safety. In addition to the regional programs, the department wants to focus on specific problems at specific locations. The Safe Routes to Schools Program was designed to accomplish this goal.

The safety of students travelling to and from school has been identified as the primary concern of all of the partners in this project. The Police Department has developed three methods to promote student safety around each school. The first method will be traffic monitoring. An officer will be assigned to a

particular school to monitor the traffic flow around that school. Unsafe traffic patterns will be documented and possible solutions will be forwarded to the Department of Public Works for consideration.

The second method employed to promote safety will be education. School Resource Officers will be utilized to educate students in pedestrian safety. Officers monitoring traffic patterns will distribute school zone safety brochures to commuters that travel through areas around schools. Also, officers may elect to issue warning tickets to motor vehicle operators who have been observed violating traffic laws in school zones in order to educate them on the importance of school zone safety.

The last method that will be employed by the Police Department will progress to a "zero tolerance" enforcement policy towards motor vehicle operators observed violating traffic laws in school zones. Based on previous experience, traffic problems at several areas located in school zones have not been corrected through educating motor vehicle operators. These areas will be targeted as "zero tolerance" areas where all violators will be ticketed in an effort to reduce the problem.

The administration of the Police Department effort towards the Safe Routes Program will be coordinated through the Special Operations Section. A Traffic Sergeant will be assigned to supervise the department's response and provide reports when necessary. Special Operations Traffic Officers will be assigned individual schools for which they will be responsible. Each Police District will also be responsible for providing an officer to assist in this effort at each location. Sergeant Dan Callahan of the Arlington Sheriff's Office has indicated that Deputies would assist in enforcement efforts when requested. The cooperative effort between Special Operations, the Police Districts and the Sheriff's Department will promote better coverage of the targeted locations. This team approach will facilitate information sharing that will prove valuable to effectively reducing the problems identified at each school zone.

The Crossing Guard Unit of the Special Operations Section will play a large role in the Safe Routes Program. Crossing Guards are in the best position to monitor the activities in and around school zones. They will continue to monitor their crossings for traffic violations and other unsafe conditions

that could compromise pedestrian safety. These conditions will be reported to the officers assigned to their specific school. In order to facilitate this process, all Crossing Guards will be issued cellular phones so that they can contact the Emergency Communications Center in the event of an emergency or an unsafe act is observed. They will also be issued new hand-held stop signs to increase their visibility when stopping traffic. Crossing Guards will also continue to educate students and adults in pedestrian safety.

School Crossing Guards are currently present only at elementary school crossings. The Safe Routes to Schools Committee and the Crossing Guard Supervisor together with requests from the School Board and various middle school principals are requesting Crossing Guards at the middle school locations listed below:

Thomas Jefferson - Post Crossing Guard at South Second Street

Kenmore - Post a Crossing Guard at Carlin Springs Road in front of the school.

Swanson - Post Crossing Guards on Patrick Henry Drive (middle of the block) and at the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Patrick Henry Drive.

Williamsburg - Post Crossing Guards at the intersections of Williamsburg Boulevard and North Harrison Street, and Yorktown Boulevard and North Harrison Street.

Six Crossing Guards additional to authorized strength would be needed to fill these crossings. Currently, the Crossing Guard Unit has four vacancies. Eight Public Service Aides are used Tuesday through Friday to insure that every school crossing presently assigned is covered. On Mondays, the number of Public Service Aides used to cover crossings increases to 13. The current configuration of this process has a negative effect on the ticket production of the Public Service Aides assigned to cover crossings. Each PSA loses three hours of enforcement activity each day they are required to cover school crossings. The salary of a new crossing guard including benefits is \$7,297 per school year.

The need to recruit new Crossing Guards and to retain the current group of employees has been identified as a priority of both the Police Department and the School Board. The Crossing

Guard Unit has a very difficult time hiring new crossing guards due to the nature and schedule of the job. Individuals who are initially interested in the job indicate that the work schedule is fragmented and that the job does not offer enough hours. Crossing Guard Supervisor Alice Morris is working with Meg Tuccillo, Director of Administrative Services for Arlington Public Schools, to offer crossing guards positions in the schools to bridge the schedule gap and to provide more work hours.

The Safe Routes to Schools Task Force has identified nine locations that are in need of Police attention. These locations are listed below along with some of the actions that will be taken by officers assigned to each location:

#### **Barrett Elementary**

- Place Police Department and DPW Smart Sets in median on North George Mason Drive
- Monitor morning traffic for "failure to yield to pedestrian" violations (education, warnings and strict enforcement)
- Assign Traffic and District Officers along with Sheriff's Deputies to monitor and enforce against violations (speeding and failure to yield to pedestrian) on a regular basis

#### **Jefferson Middle**

- Display both Smart Sets on South Second Street
- Assign Traffic Officers and District Officers to monitor traffic and enforce against violations at South Second Street and Old Glebe Road, i.e., failure to yield to pedestrians, violation of stop sign and speeding. Sheriff's Deputies will assist with monitoring traffic and enforcing against violations.

#### **Swanson Middle**

- Monitor morning traffic for "failure to yield to pedestrian" violations on Washington Boulevard and Patrick Henry Drive.



- Assign Traffic and District Officers along with Sheriff's Deputies to monitor and enforce against violations on a regular basis.

#### **Glebe Elementary**

- Assign Traffic Officers and District Officers along with Sheriff's Deputies to enforce speed limits in both directions on North Glebe Road when flashing lights are turned on.
- Have School Resource Officers pass out informational flyers to parents picking up their children about violations of Parking Laws. This will be followed by enforcement action.

#### **Glencarlyn Elementary**

- Assign an Officer (beginning of school year) to pass out informational flyer about illegal parking and illegal left turns at the school.
- Enforce regularly for illegal left turn and parking violations

#### **Washington-Lee High School**

- Respond to requests for traffic enforcement from the school administration, PTA, Civic Association and others.
- Have Traffic and District Officers monitor traffic around the school as time permits.

#### **Randolph Elementary**

- Assign an Officer (beginning of school year) to pass out informational flyer about illegal parking and speeding in the area of the school.
- Enforce regularly against speeding and parking violations.

#### **Yorktown High School**

- Respond to requests for traffic enforcement from the school administration, PTA, Civic Association and others.

- Have Traffic and District Officers monitor traffic around the school as time permits.

#### **Kenmore Middle**

- Monitor morning traffic for vehicles not yielding to pedestrians in crosswalk.
- Enforce regularly against speeding violations.

#### **Tuckahoe Elementary**

- Have Traffic and District Officers along with Sheriff's Deputies monitor traffic and enforce against violations on a regular basis.
- Place Smart Set on North 26<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Monitor morning traffic for "failure to yield to pedestrian" violations (education, warnings and strict enforcement)

#### **Hoffman-Boston Elementary**

- Respond to requests for traffic enforcement from the school administration, PTA, Civic Association and others.

The Safe Routes to Schools Program is a proactive effort to keep students safe and to promote school zone safety. The cooperative effort of several county agencies will be utilized to make this program a success. The Police Department has designated Captain Roy Austin, Commander of the Special Operations Section at 703-228-4045, as the lead Police official for this program.

#### **IV) SNOW**

There were several snow storms in early 2000 that prompted snow removal. Most winters have a few days when accumulated snow hinders travel. Snow on sidewalks is a major impediment to children walking to school. In a separate action, snow operations last winter are being evaluated and staff is preparing recommendations to the manager to address operations for the coming winter. The Manager will then be able to make recommendations on snow removal to the County Board.

**V) RESOURCES**

Funding for the Safe Routes to Schools Program comes from funding already provided by present operating budgets, and the adopted CIP in terms of appropriated FY 2001 funding, bond funding if approved by the voters, capital funding proposed for FY 2002 and beyond, if approved. Also, funding is needed for more sidewalks, school crossing guards and enhanced overtime enforcement. Resources needed for individual elements are described below.

As usual, resources not budgeted for in past or current budgets will be considered by the County Board during its annual budget deliberations in the context of competing budget priorities.

**1. Education**

- a. Research, development, production and acquisition of materials from within current County and Schools operating budgets.
- b. Printing and postage for copying and mailing maps - \$5,000 (Schools' budget).

**2. Engineering (Facilities)**

- a. Signs and markings in DPW operating budget.
- b. Enhancing school ground illumination and relocating fencing within school operating budget.
- c. \$800,000 in 2001 bond for sidewalks and other street modifications.
- d. \$290,000 in 2001 bond for School flashers.
- e. \$830,000 in 2002-2006 CIP for sidewalks and other modifications.
- f. Beyond current 2001-2006 CIP, need \$845,000 for sidewalks and other street modifications.

### 3. Enforcement

- a. Cellphones for crossing guards from within Police operating budget.
- b. Handheld high visibility stop signs for each crossing guard within Police operating budget.
- c. Enforcement with current school resource officers, district officers and traffic officers from within Police Department operating budget.
- d. Six additional crossing guards requires \$40,000 per year (not funded).
- e. Enhanced overtime enforcement program would require \$50,000 per year (not funded).

### 4. Snow

To be determined following snow recommendation.  
Resources needed may be sizeable.

### Attachments

c: John Mausert-Mooney, Assistant County Manager  
Members of Task Force