

Safe Routes to School Task Force
Meeting minutes
Oct 18, 2019

Attendees: Doug Greenfield, (Newton GIS), Dana Hanson (Mayor's Office), Jenn Martin (Zervas/Chair Newton SRTS), Margaret Albright (School Committee), David Koses (City of Newton Transportation Coordinator), Dawn Fleming (Newton Police), James Farrow (Angier), Melanie Hildebrandt (Bowen), Ali Dunn (Cabot), Barry Elliot (Countryside/Brown), Mike Halle (Franklin), Anne Cedrone (Horace Mann), Barbara Nestle (Mason Rice), Kirsten Smith (Mem Spaulding), Cove Davis (Mem Spaulding), Caitlin Cusick (Ward), Sarah Hirzel (Ward/Bigelow), Joana Canedo (Bigelow/Chair Green Newton School Connections), Adam Peller (Oak Hill/Newton South), Lucia Dolan (Newton South), Alicia Bowman (NNHS/president Bike Newton).

Mapping Safe Routes (Doug Greenfield)

Doug Greenfield, the City of Newton GIS Administrator, demonstrated Newton's GIS browser, software, and showed helpful layers for school mapping. The GIS browser is found here: <http://gis.newtonma.gov/browser.html>. The online data dictionary is available on the [GIS city website](#); anything in the dictionary can be added to a map.

Most features were originally built for Newton's building inspectors. The aerial photography is from 2015; the state took aerial photos in 2019 so those should be in the database soon. Doug uses ArcGIS, which is expensive; QGIS is free and works well.

NPS consultant Carol Chafetz worked with each school's SRTS representative and Doug Greenfield to create "**Park & Walk**" maps that will go on the new NPS transportation website [map page](#). The maps include bus areas, van areas, blue zones, crossing guards, and purple "Park & Walk" zones. We had originally wanted these in light blue but purple worked better to separate them from the true Blue Zones.

David Koses pointed out that there was no public process, like Traffic Council, to decide on the park and walk areas while everything else on the map has gone through the proper process. In particular, neighbors may complain if their street is identified as a "Park & Walk" area. Also, what if things change and the maps aren't updated? Does the City of Newton need to add a disclaimer? SRTS reps designated "Park & Walk" areas to highlight their suggestions for where parents could park. The suggestion was made to highlight where you can't park instead, though this changes over time as well. The original goal was to show parents where to park out of the fray.

It was decided that the Transportation Steering Group will discuss how to create a process for public input or approval of the Park & Walk maps at the next meeting. The City and NPS need to collaborate on Park and Walk areas.

NNHS students get Tiger permits and a [map](#) of places students can park and walk. Map is very popular, clear and color coded. Create something similar for other schools? Have only done parking study needed for the map in a couple of areas, like Angier.

Layers helpful for school maps may include traffic signals, bus stops, snow routes and crossing guards. Most everything is updated except around the newest schools. The GIS database was originally for city departments so also includes details on utilities, etc.

Jenn showed a [map of the Zervas catchment](#) area with routes to school color coded by distance, and all crossing guard locations and bus stops on the same map. The hope is to create this for schools with preferred paths, plowed routes, crossing guards, and bike routes, MBTA routes, for middle and high schools. A large posted version can serve as a motivational tool within a school building, and the online and paper versions can serve as information tools to help make transportation decisions. Adam Peller mentioned that Bowen used to mark these distances directly on sidewalks. Those at the edge of school catchment areas would be most interested in these maps to see their options.

Safe Routes would also like to indicate the “Walking Super Highway” that services are already and will continue to be built around - parking, snow plowing, crossing guard locations, crosswalks, etc. to encourage more walking. These are the spots where you run into other families walking. Suggestion to use Mike Halle’s heat map of routes to schools to help with this project.

Transportation Steering Group Updates (Adam Peller)

- They would like the Park & Walk maps finalized to go up on the NPS Transportation website soon.
- New Blue Zone signs went up at all the schools with Blue Zones, including “No Idling” information.
- Newton South’s Trial Safety Improvement project is successful so far; they will see how it does in the winter with snow removal.
- The group discussed student parking price discrepancies between the two high schools and discussed removing the bus fee. The city collects \$500k in bus fees.
- Options for better using buses for private schools.
- Nicole Freedman (City of Newton Director of Transportation Planning) is interested in exploring charging people to use Blue Zones.

Campus Safety Improvement Projects (James Farrow)

Liam Hurley (NPS Assistant Superintendent for Operations) asked us for recommendations for safety improvements similar to the [pilot at Newton South](#) this fall. James Farrow offered to collect and categorize concerns. Send suggested projects or concerns to newtonsaferoutes@gmail.com. It will be helpful to include the number of students impacted. Jenn will resend the email asking for this information.

This database of identified school problems will also be helpful for new SRTS reps, who can see past concerns. The 2014 SRTS survey raw data will be helpful as well; Alicia Bowman will send it to Jenn to send out by school. Discussion of if we should update the 2014 SRTS survey since schools are no longer collecting data in house. Some of the big changes since 2014 include full day kindergarten, and parents not allowed in schools. It would be helpful to go through the Transportation Steering Group.

Encouragement ideas (Caitlin Cusick & Group)

Caitlin Cusick reported on Ward's activities.

- Last year kids collected monthly charms for walking to school.
- This year on walk to school day Landry's donated a bike lock and they raffled it off
- November plan is that each child who walks or takes the bus will bring a craft feather and tape it onto a large pumpkin.

Other ideas

- The Zervas Thanksgiving Turkey walk to school add a feather event is very popular.
- Years ago some schools did monthly walking days with a hidden golden sneaker kids could find on their walk to school.
- For International Walk to School Day, the METCO Director reached out to schools to see if they could participate by having someone meet the bus offsite and having kids walk over.
- For anyone holding an event before November 5, be sure to channel all invitations to anyone running through office through Jenn Martin who will make sure all candidates are invited.
- Mason Rice used to have a walk for health event around Crystal Lake, which is over a ½ mile walk; it showed parents (and kids) that ½ mile was achievable.
- Parents and principals are requesting less "stuff" to hand out to kids.

Upload your walk to school day ideas and templates to this folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18fRwG4vAujXi7P1GNRBXyOOODi48PoYH?usp=sharing>

Upcoming

Shane Mark, DPW, is coming in to the Safe Routes November meeting to discuss snow. In December we will have more time to discuss specific school concerns.

Upcoming Meetings: Nov 15, Dec 13, Jan 10, Feb 7, Mar 13, Apr 3, May 8, and June 5.

All meetings are on Fridays at 9:30 a.m. at the Waban Library