



Memorandum

Date: March 12, 2018
To: Transportation Authority Board
From: Anna LaForte – Deputy Director for Policy and Programming
Subject: 03/20/18 Board Meeting: Update on the Adult School Crossing Guard Program

<p>RECOMMENDATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Action</p> <p>None. This is an information item.</p> <p>SUMMARY</p> <p>At its January 9, 2018 meeting, the Board approved \$2,813,264 in One Bay Area Grant Cycle 2 (OBAG 2) funds for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Non-Infrastructure Project. This action was conditioned upon the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) presenting a proposal to the Board by March 30, 2018 for potential changes to the adult crossing guard program to improve recruitment and retention, guard assignment policies, and selection of participating schools. To fulfill this condition, the SFMTA staff has provided a memorandum (Attachment 1) that will be presented at the March 20 Transportation Authority Board meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Allocation <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Programming <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/Legislation <input type="checkbox"/> Plan/Study <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Project Oversight/Delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Budget/Finance <input type="checkbox"/> Contract/Agreement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Condition of One Bay Area Grant Cycle 2 Funding Recommendation
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DISCUSSION

Background.

As Congestion Management Agency for San Francisco, the Transportation Authority was responsible for programming \$42.286 million in OBAG 2 funds from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), including funding for SRTS. During discussion related to one of the staff recommended OBAG 2 projects, the SRTS Non-Infrastructure Project, several Board members expressed concern over the effectiveness of the project and a desire for better coordination among the various safe routes to school programs such as school crossing guards and capital safety improvements near schools. In addition, Board members expressed a strong desire for the SRTS program to better respond to the unique needs of every school.

At Chair Peskin’s request, we supported staff from Chair Peskin’s and Commissioner Tang’s offices in convening staff from the DPH, SFMTA, and the San Francisco Unified School District to review the current structure of the SRTS program and consider opportunities for improvements. As an outcome of those discussions, at its January 9, 2018 meeting the Board approved programming \$2,813,264 to the SFMTA for the SRTS Non-Infrastructure project, conditioned upon the SFMTA providing the following items to the Transportation Authority Board:

- **By March 31, 2018: A proposal for modifying the crossing guard program.** This timing allows for recommendations to be implemented prior to the start of the 2018 school year. Specifically, SFMTA will consider how it can improve recruitment and retention, guard assignment policies, and selection of participating schools.
- **By June 30, 2018: A report on the transition of the SRTS non-infrastructure project from DPH to SFMTA** including an evaluation of the scope, budget and funding plan, and updated goals and metrics to measure the effectiveness of the project.
- **By June 30, 2018: A proposal for re-establishing the capital program for school area projects,** including how the identification, prioritization, and implementation of capital improvements near schools will be coordinated with the non-infrastructure work.
- **Annually: Provide progress reports** on how the SRTS Non-Infrastructure project is doing with respect to achieving the established goals based on the approved metrics.

The first condition above is the subject of this memorandum. Attachment 1 provides an overview of the SFMTA's school crossing guard program, describes some of the challenges associated with administering the program, and outlines next steps to improve the program and effectively use limited resources.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None. This is an information item.

CAC POSITION

None. This is an information item. The CAC will be briefed on this item at its March 28, 2018 meeting.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Attachment 1 – Memorandum from SFMTA: Crossing Guard Program Overview, Challenges & Next Steps



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 1, 2018

TO: San Francisco County Transportation Authority Commissioners

FROM: SFMTA Adult School Crossing Guard Program

SUBJECT: Crossing Guard Program Overview, Challenges & Next Steps

This memorandum gives an overview of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Adult School Crossing Guard Program, describes some of the challenges associated with administering the program, and outlines next steps to improve the program and effectively use limited resources.

OVERVIEW

The SFMTA Adult School Crossing Guard Program (the “Program”) employs 195 adult crossing guards (“Guards”) to assist students in safely getting to and from public and private schools. It focuses on providing services to over 100 elementary and middle schools but does not provide Guards for preschools or high schools. Guards focus on crossing children but will also help seniors and disabled pedestrians when needed. They are encouraged to cross all pedestrians when children are not present.

While there are enough Guards on hand to handle over 100 schools, there is currently a waiting list for nineteen intersections that currently qualify for a Guard but for which hiring enough Guards has not been possible. When a school applies for a Guard, counts of children walking and vehicles passing through the intersection are taken and compiled with other information about the location to determine if the location qualifies for a Guard. Each qualifying location is given a score and ranked among other locations that qualify for a Guard.

Guards work part time over a split shift - approximately 1 hour 15 minutes in the morning when children are going to school and 1 hour 15 minutes in the afternoon when school is dismissed. Guards only work during the school year and do not work during the summer or holiday breaks. They are Temporary Exempt employees and do not work over 1040 hours in a calendar year. They earn \$17.96 per hour (only about \$9,000 per year), do not receive medical, dental or pension benefits but are able to accumulate sick pay, vacation and floating holidays. SEIU Local 1021 represents them.

The Program is funded primarily by the SFMTA’s general fund and has a budget of just over \$2.2 million per fiscal year, with about \$1.7 million going towards Guards’ salaries. The remaining funds cover office staff salaries, Guard uniforms and gear, overhead and other expenses. The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) contributes \$250,000 every year, which was negotiated in a 1997 MOU between the SFMTA and the SFUSD.

Guards represent the diverse population of San Francisco. They are seniors, retirees, parents, grandparents, and college students, many of whom are immigrants grateful for this employment opportunity. For more than half of Guards, English is not their primary language. However our office and training staff provide translation in Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese. Many are wonderful and caring employees that are highly valued by the community they serve. While many Guards stay with the job for years, a large percentage also quickly tire of the split shift and minimal hours and move on, sometimes after only a few days or a couple of weeks.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Staffing is the number one challenge facing the Program. It is difficult to maintain our current optimal number of 195 and it has not been possible to reach a staffing level of 215+ to handle all locations that qualify for a Guard. Interviewing, hiring and training takes place throughout the year but Guards sometimes leave as fast as they are hired. Through increased community outreach and collaboration with our Human Resources (HR) division, progress has been made on the hiring front but reaching full staffing levels has been elusive.

Related to this hiring challenge is the ongoing and growing demand for this popular program. Requests for Guards easily exceed the supply, so placement and assignment of Guards is dependent on a number of criteria to ensure they are placed at intersections where they are needed the most.

Current Placement Procedure:

Applications are accepted from the school principal only. Once received they are logged in for a survey to determine eligibility for a Guard. The four criteria that must be met in order to receive a Guard are:

1. The school must be K - 8th grades or some combination thereof;
2. The corner must be a designated school crossing (having a yellow ladder crosswalk);
3. During school arrival or dismissal there must be a minimum of 300 vehicles per hour traveling through the intersection;
4. During school arrival or dismissal there must be a minimum of 10 children crossing the intersection over a 10 minute period.

If a Guard is warranted at the intersection, it is placed on a ranked priority list according to a variety of factors including pedestrian-related collision history, number of students using the crosswalk, vehicular volume, intersection geometry, school enrollment, presence of MUNI route(s), and any special circumstances. This step places Guards at locations where safety benefits are expected to be the greatest.

There is currently a waiting list of nineteen intersections that qualify for a Guard, with seven applications awaiting surveys. Expanding the Program to include more Guards for more schools will require additional funding, as well as other reforms to make the jobs more attractive and increase retention. While the Program is not eligible for most grants, increasing funding for the Program could be considered as part of any potential new local revenue source aimed at funding transportation improvements and operations. With more funding, the SFMTA could pursue strategies such as increasing pay or hours for Guards to improve retention, or even hiring contractors to expand the number of Guards the program deploys.

RECENT PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

The goal of the Program is to serve schools and communities to the best of its ability and resources. In response to feedback about the Program and review of its resources and hiring challenges, a number of improvements have been made in the past two-three years:

- Close collaboration with the SFMTA HR division to improve the hiring process and keep it ongoing throughout the year via a regularly updated list of potential applicants.
- Assignment of Guards to work two schools when scheduling allows, and reduction of intersections with two Guards to one when safety allows, to cover more locations.
- Review of our current survey guidelines to be sure important criteria such as turn movements that conflict with pedestrians and High Injury Network locations are suitably assessed.
- Identification of funding to resurvey all intersections and ensure that staff resources are used at the locations where they are most needed given possible changes to travel patterns.

NEXT STEPS

In the next year, the Program plans to resurvey all locations. Periodic refreshes of data and locations that qualify for Guards is a practice for other model Programs, such as in Marin County, and allows us to better align Guards with locations that need them on a regular basis. This will provide an opportunity to redistribute Guards on a two to five year basis (depending on available funding).

Warrants will be updated to be more context sensitive by better reflecting existing traffic control conditions and will include points for streets on the High Injury Network in San Francisco, where 75% of all fatal and severe injury collisions take place on just 13% of the city's streets.

Combining the refreshed data with updated warrants, the rankings of school locations that have applied for Guards will be updated. Depending on the magnitude of possible changes, which are not expected to be large, outreach to affected schools and principals will take place while working closely with the SFUSD (and district Supervisor, if requested).

Lastly, ongoing efforts to improve hiring processes and retention will continue to find more qualified applicants and make the job more attractive for Guards to stay with it. If more funding is identified, additional steps will be taken to improve retention and expand the Program.

CONCLUSION

The SFMTA Crossing Guard Program is very popular and in high demand. Recent and planned improvements to the Program will allow it to maximize its resources and address as many locations as possible. Every day, rain or shine, an average of 180 Guards work every day to keep the children of San Francisco safe while on their way to and from school.