

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 4



City and County of San Francisco

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 12, 2017

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**** PRESS RELEASE ****

SFCTA VOTES UNANIMOUSLY TO REFORM & RESTRUCTURE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Program to improve safety around schools and encourage mode shifts to be managed by SFMTA

Today, the San Francisco County Transportation Commission (SFCTA) approved \$2.8 million in funding to continue the Safe Routes to School Program contingent upon a reform and restructuring of the program, spearheaded by Supervisors Katy Tang and Aaron Peskin in their role as members of the SFCTA. The restructured program would be led by the SFMTA starting in 2019.

Safe Routes to School is an education and outreach program within SFUSD that has historically been housed under the Department of Public Health (DPH), with capital safety projects and other transportation-related programming falling separately within SFMTA. The program's centerpiece is the annual "Walk & Roll To School Day" with nearly 95 participating schools promoting safe and accessible alternatives to personal vehicle school transport.

SFCTA Commissioners outlined concerns regarding the Safe Routes to School program at their July meeting, and subsequently convened a series of interagency meetings to determine how the Safe Routes to School program could be more effective in providing safety measures around school zones, as well as encourage shifts in transportation modes.

Since then, SFCTA Commissioners Tang and Peskin worked with the Department of Public Health (DPH), SFMTA, SFCTA and SFUSD to reform the program. The restructuring is result of months of stakeholder meetings to respond to concerns that the current Safe Routes to School program is not responding to the safety needs of schools.

By 2019, the entire program will be managed by the SFMTA, centralizing both the education and capital safety elements under one agency. The new Safe Routes to School structure can be found on the SFCTA website. Additional conditions included crossing guard prioritization changes, tailored capital safety programs, and progress reporting benchmarks.

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“I interact with parents, teachers and principals on school safety issues on a regular basis and wanted to ensure that the Safe Routes to School program is adequately responding to the safety requests I often hear about, such as the need for additional crossing guards, speed limit signs, and speed bumps,” said Commissioner Tang. “The existing structure of the program consists of too much bureaucracy and not enough safety improvements nor communication between city agencies and schools.”

“Commissioner Tang has long championed the cause of parents and families throughout the city, and she immediately dug into how to address the concerns raised by her colleagues and constituents,” said SFCTA Chair Peskin. “The move to restructure the Safe Routes to School program ensures that this critical safety & educational program will be centralized under one agency that operates like programs, whether its crossing guards or bus transport. It’s a more efficient use of city resources, with the necessary evaluation tools to help us continue to improve the program over time.”

Original staff recommendations proposed transferring educational funds to the capital infrastructure program, in response to feedback from some school communities that speed bumps were a more effective investment than pedestrian safety education. The Commissioners’ compromise preserves funding for both sides of the program (including grants to non-profit partners) while ensuring schools will have greater agency in program investments.

“I’m excited we were able to achieve this new structure while still supporting community partners who continue to build relations with parents and schools to encourage walking and riding to school,” said Supervisor Tang.

The item was approved unanimously at the San Francisco County Authority Board on December 12, 2017 and the SFMTA will come back to the SFCTA before June 30, 2017 with a fully scoped plan.

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