

School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup



Final Report and Recommendations

December 2024

Arian Albear, Director
Education and Workforce Development
Committee



Purpose

- *“The School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup was formed to respond to the growing needs of our community in the areas of walkability and pedestrian safety around public schools. Prince George’s County has faced the heartbreaking loss of students and community members' lives in pedestrian fatalities. This workgroup will provide our County with a strategic plan around schools to address the issues of safety, crossing guards, infrastructure and more to improve the lives of our students and school communities for Prince George’s County.”*
- **- Prince George's County Council Member
Wanika B. Fisher, Esq.**



Background Information

- The Children's Safety Network calculates an average of 67,124 child pedestrian injuries each year between 2005-2010 nationwide. Prince George's County had among the highest number of crashes reporting in fatalities in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan areas.
- In 2019, the County established a Vision Zero Program, which seeks to achieve a reduction in the number of fatal and serious injury crashes to zero by 2040. Regionally, the District of Columbia, the City of Alexandria, Montgomery County, and the State of Maryland have their own Vision Zero program. Vision Zero relies on data-driven approaches to improve road engineering, conduct targeted education and enforcement, and change laws to improve driver behavior and increase penalties for dangerous conduct on the roads. The Program utilizes a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, collaborative, and data-driven approach to ending pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist fatalities and serious injuries. According to a presentation given by Vision Zero to the Prince George's County Council in 2019, between 2014 and 2018, there were over 15,000 car crashes per year in the County between 2014 and 2018, with 470 people killed.
- An impetus for the establishment of this workgroup was the tragic deaths of Sky Sosa and Shalom Mbah, two children on their way to school at Riverdale Elementary School on Riverdale Road in November of 2023 when they were struck by a van while crossing the street at a crosswalk.

Legislation

CR-009-2024 – Establishing legislation

Tasked the Workgroup with studying and identifying contributing factors to the increased number of student pedestrian accidents in the County.



CR-078-2024 – Extension of deadline for final report and recommendations

Increased the Workgroup period from two months from March to December 2024.

Workgroup Membership

**Wanika B. Fisher,
Esq.**

- Council Member, District 2

Eric C. Olson

- Council Member, District 3

Timothy Meyer

- PTO President and Parent Representative

Emily Shea

- Parent Representative

**Pamela Boozer-
Strother**

- Board of Education
Member, D 3

Kenneth D. Harris

- Board of Education
Member, D 7

Levi Carson

- Assistant Deputy Chief,
Police Department

Marcus Monroe

- Council Member, Town of
Brentwood

Troy Lilly

- Mayor, Town of Forest
Heights

**Charoscar
Coleman**

- Chief Operating Officer,
Prince George's County
Public Schools

**Michael D.
Johnson**

- Director, Department of
Public Works &
Transportation (DPW&T)

Kate Mazzara

- Association Director, Office
of Engineering and Project
Management, DPW&T

Erv Beckert

- Chief, Highway and Bridge
Design Division, DPW&T

**Olaoluwa
Adeleke-Wales**

- Student Representative

Leo Davidson

- Student Representative

Final Recommendations

I. Ensure Pedestrian Safety Infrastructure at the Time of School Construction

Level of Government

State of Maryland, Interagency Commission on School Construction, State Highway Administration, Prince George's County, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Medium- to long-term.

Description/Justification

For future school construction, the Workgroup recommends that pedestrian safety infrastructure around the school be planned in conjunction with the school building. This would eliminate the need to retrofit and improve this infrastructure in the future. PGCPS can be included as part of the mandatory referral process for new constructions in the County. PGCPS should be an active participant in the planning phase of development projects to include pedestrian safety requirements that result from the planning phase. Developers would not be able to receive building permits until they meet the conditions of the mandatory referral process.

Final Recommendations

II. Initiate an Overall Evaluation of Accessibility Around PGCPS Schools

Level of Government

Prince George's County, Prince George's County Public Schools, Municipalities.

Timeframe

Long-term.

Description/Justification

An objective assessment of accessibility and prioritization process around PGCPS schools will help with equitable and long-term planning for future pedestrian safety infrastructure. This would identify where concerns lie and set up a process to address them. It is also recommended that government have a strategic plan to address any concerns identified.

Final Recommendations

III. Establish a Unified “Walk Audit” Template for Prince George’s County

Level of Government

Prince George’s County, Prince George’s County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short- to medium-term.

Description/Justification

Establishing a unified "walk audit" so all Prince George's County agencies can standardize the data and help the Department of Public Works and Transportation in establishing safety benchmarks and zones for future pedestrian safety improvements. The walk audit would help gather data before implementing any solutions.

Final Recommendations

IV. Set Up Proactive Agency Coordination Meetings

Level of Government

State of Maryland, Prince George's County, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short-term.

Description/Justification

Proactive meetings between Prince George's County Public Schools and State and County agencies may identify potential problems before they occur and allow time to work toward solutions. These meetings can include PGCPS, PGPD, DPW&T, State Highway Administration, and any other relevant agency.

Final Recommendations

V. Establish Safe Passage Coordinators

Level of Government

Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short-term.

Description/Justification

Safe Passage Coordinators are individuals who work and have in-depth knowledge of a school and surrounding areas. Coordinators would identify areas for improvement and relate their information to PGCPS and County staff.

Final Recommendations

VI. Create a Pedestrian Safety Risk Measure of Schools

Level of Government

Prince George's County (Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement, Department of Public Works and Transportation), Municipalities, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Medium to long-term.

Description/Justification

Creating objective criteria to assess pedestrian safety risk for all schools would establish a data-based approach to equitable prioritization of which schools receive safety upgrades first. The criteria should inform the traffic calming or mitigation features that the road is required to possess.

Final Recommendations

VII. PGCPS Set Internal Goals and Timelines to Complete Walk Audits in Their Schools

Level of Government

Prince George's County Office of Community Relations, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short-term.

Description/Justification

PGCPS administration can establish internal goals and timelines for completing walk audits in all schools. This can be done in conjunction with Safe Passage Coordinators and other available staff, with input from PTOs, PTAs, and civic organizations. Students participating in walk audits could earn service-learning hours.

Final Recommendations

VIII. Board of Education Members Engage and Educate the School Community on Pedestrian Safety Work

Level of Government

Prince George's County Board of Education, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short-term, ongoing.

Description/Justification

As part of parent and community engagement, Board of Education members can proactively educate the school community about pedestrian safety work and grassroots activism to improve infrastructure around schools. Board members would first work with PGCPS and DPW&T to create pedestrian safety education materials.

Final Recommendations

IX. Lower Speed Limits Around Schools

Level of Government

State of Maryland, Prince George's County, Municipalities.

Timeframe

Medium to long-term.

Description/Justification

All levels of government and civil society can come together to advocate for school safety and lower speed limits in school zones. This work would require State authorization, County and municipal coordination, and community activism.

Final Recommendations

X. Improve Educational Campaign Around School Pedestrian Safety

Level of Government

State of Maryland, Prince George's County, Prince George's County Office of Community Relations, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short-term, ongoing.

Description/Justification

All levels of government and civil society can come together to improve education around school pedestrian safety. This can be expanded to become a County-wide education campaign in partnership with the County's Office of Community Relations.

Final Recommendations

XI. Organize “Walking School Buses” to Reduce the Number of Families Driving Their Children to School

Level of Government

Prince George’s County Department of the Environment, Municipalities.

Timeframe

Short-term.

Description/Justification

Walking school buses create visibility around pedestrian safety and engage the community around issues facing students and families walking to and from school. These groups also reduce the overall number of families driving their children to school and the risk of car-pedestrian accidents as a result.

These initiatives can include State and County officials, civic organizations, and other interested parties. PGCPs may consider a stipend for parents who lead or organize the walking school buses.

Final Recommendations

XII. Establish Traffic Calming Infrastructure and/or Temporary Street Restrictions Around Schools During Drop-Off and Pick-Up Times

Level of Government

State of Maryland, Prince George's County, Prince George's County Police Department, Municipalities, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short- to medium-term.

Description/Justification

Closing off, or restricting traffic on streets around schools would reduce car traffic and thus reduce the possibility of accidents caused by parents dropping off or picking up their students. A nearby designated parking lot can be used as a drop-off location, and students and families can walk from there to the school.

Individual schools could develop a temporary "road diet" or traffic calming infrastructure (temporary modal filters, planter boxes, artwork) for schools to set up each morning that would be in place during the school day to slow traffic.

The Prince George's County Arts and Humanities Council and other civic organizations could be engaged to create movable or temporary traffic-calming infrastructure.

Final Recommendations

XIII. Actively Encourage School Principals to Innovate Ways to Reduce the Number of Drivers to Schools

Level of Government

Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short- to medium-term, ongoing.

Description/Justification

School principals and school communities can innovate ways to reduce car traffic around schools during drop-off and pick-up times. Principals can share ideas during monthly principal meetings.

Final Recommendations

XIV. Launch Annual PGCPS Youth Transportation Safety Summit in April 2025

Level of Government

Prince George's County Board of Education, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Short- to medium-term, ongoing.

Description/Justification

The Event's goal is to educate Prince George's County high school students (14-18) on the critical need for achieving Vision Zero in the County and empower students to become Vision Zero advocates in their own schools and home communities. In 2024, PGCPS student leaders piloted a convening of peers. To prepare for the event, WABA's four youth leaders developed a toolkit of resources related to vulnerable road user safety [here](#).

Following the keynote speakers, WABA's four youth leaders facilitated a training session for the youth audience on transportation safety and advocacy, sharing the toolkit linked in the paragraph above. Concurrently, community partners hosted a 'transportation safety fair,' tabling and educating students on vulnerable road user safety, and heard feedback from students on their lived experiences in terms of multimodal transportation in Prince George's County.

The Annual Summit can be hosted by PGCPS in the model of other systemwide summit events.

Final Recommendations

XV. For School Crossing Guard Coverage, Establish Subcontracting of Municipal Police Departments by the Prince George's County Police Department

Level of Government

Prince George's County Police Department and Municipal Police Departments

Timeframe

Ongoing.

Description/Justification

The Prince George's County Police Department does not currently utilize the school crossing guard budget to subcontract to local municipal police departments. This has meant that budget dollars have gone unspent for years due to the division's understaffing. Many PGCPD schools that require crossing guards are in municipalities with their own police departments. These departments have the flexibility to hire residents who are connected to the community of students and parents and know traffic flow the best. Training could be accomplished via a Memorandum of Understanding.

Final Recommendations

XVI. Establish Walk, Bike & Roll to School Days and Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day (November 14th) as Official County & PGCPS Events

Level of Government

Prince George's County, Prince George's County Public Schools, Prince George's County Memorial Library System.

Timeframe

Ongoing.

Description/Justification

Establishing safe walking routes between home and school can be accelerated through preparations for annual "Walk Days." The County-designated days will raise the profile of the shared priority for safe passages for students. The County Executive, County Councilmembers, Board of Education Members, and Municipal Elected Leaders will generate participation and directly engage with families. Partnerships can be achieved by reaching out to African American, African, and religious communities. Establish Walk, Ride & Roll to School Days as official County and PGCPS days. Establish Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day as an official County and PGCPS day.

Final Recommendations

XVII. Collaborate with Prince George's County Arts & Humanities Council to Create Walking Safety Signs and Artwork for Street Crosswalks

Level of Government

Prince George's County, DPW&T, Prince George's County Public Schools, Prince George's County Arts & Humanities Council.

Timeframe

Ongoing.

Description/Justification

The Prince George's County Arts & Humanities Council could expand on its current work with individual schools by partnering with local elementary art classes to create pedestrian safety signs and crosswalk art.

Final Recommendations

XVIII. Create Bilingual (English-Spanish) Pedestrian Safety Education in the Most Dangerous Areas in the County for Pedestrians

Level of Government

Prince George's County, Office of Community Relations, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Prince George's County Public Schools.

Timeframe

Ongoing.

Description/Justification

Bilingual pedestrian safety education in the most dangerous areas of the County for pedestrians would ensure that the more vulnerable members of the community receive adequate education on pedestrian safety.

Useful Resources For Pedestrian Safety

AARP, [Bike Audit Tool Kit](#).

AARP, [Walk Audit Tool Kit](#).

City of Hyattsville, [Multimodal Toolkit, Part 1](#).

City of Hyattsville, [Multimodal Toolkit, Part 2](#).

City of Hyattsville, [Multimodal Toolkit, Part 3](#).

[Coalition for Smarter Growth](#).

Maryland Department of Transportation, [Complete Streets Initiative](#).

Maryland Department of Transportation, [Safe Routes to School Grant Program](#).

Maryland Department of Transportation, [Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#).

National Association of City Transportation Officials, [Urban Street Design Guide](#).

[National Center for Safe Routes to School](#).

[National Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day](#) – October 9, 2024.

The Neighborhood Design Center, [Walk Audit Tool](#).

Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation, [Urban Design Standards 2024](#).

[Safe Routes Partnership](#).

Smart Growth America, [What Are Complete Streets?](#)

Streets MN, [The Critical Ten](#).

Strong Towns, Case Study – [Ager Road: Where Complete Streets Fell Short](#).

Strong Towns: [An Introduction](#).

Tactical Urbanist's [Guide to Materials and Design](#).

US Department of Transportation, [Bikeway Selection Guide](#).

US Department of Transportation, [Fact Sheet: Bolstering Daily School Attendance Through Transportation](#).

US Department of Transportation, [Road Diet Tech Sheet](#).

US Department of Transportation, [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SSFA\) Grant Program](#).

Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, [Be Street Smart, Spring 2024 Public Education Campaign](#).

Acknowledgments

Strong Towns

Coalition for Smarter Growth

U.S. Department of Education

Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Prince George's County Arts and Humanities Council

Prince George's County Police Department

Prince George's County Council Staff

The General Public for providing their support, suggestions, and service

Questions /
Comments

