



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Edgardo Garcia

**SUBJECT:** SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAM

**DATE:** May 26, 2017

Approved

*D. D. Syl*

Date

*5/26/17*

The purpose of the memorandum is to provide a program update on the Police Department's School Safety program.

## BACKGROUND

The School Safety and Education Unit (SSEU) is responsible for contributing to the safety of school age children as they travel to and from school. This is accomplished by providing adult crossing guards at designated intersections throughout the City, and providing training, guidance and supervision to the student safety patrols and their adult advisors. SSEU also provides safety education programs and presentations to schools and at community events. These presentations specifically address the topics of pedestrian and bicycle safety. SSEU provides departmental liaison between the Police Department, Department of Transportation, school districts and administrators, and other mutually concerned groups and organizations.

SSEU is currently authorized 1.0 Senior Analyst, 3.0 School Safety Supervisors, and approximately 300 part-time hourly crossing guards (37.42 FTE), which currently covers 121 intersections throughout the City for two hours each day (one hour in the morning and one in the afternoon). There are currently only 251 active crossing guards and 49 vacancies.

## ANALYSIS

As part of the Mayor's June Budget Message, as approved by City Council for 2016-2017, there was a one-time budget action of \$200,000 for additional crossing guards to supplement the base funding levels over a two-year period. This funding was originally intended to increase the number of intersections staffed within the program. However, there have been several operational issues hampering the Department's ability to meet this expectation, including employee recruitment and retention.

The primary issue facing the School Safety Program is the ability to recruit and retain the part-time, hourly crossing guards who staff the intersections. These recruiting issues include the split

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work schedule, a stronger economy, and the Police Department's lengthy background process. The work schedule required for the school crossing guard positions require a split schedule: one hour of work in the morning, as the children are on their way to school, and one hour in the afternoon, as the children are heading home for the day. The work hours are school specific and are not flexible. The strict split schedule makes it very difficult to attract and retain qualified employees as similar paying jobs typically offer a continuous daily work schedule with greater flexibility. The program is also challenged with fewer applications due to a stronger economy in which jobs with similar pay have been more readily available leading to fewer applications for this program. Crossing Guards are also typically interested in staffing intersections by their home given the limited work hours, which also limits the applicant pool. In addition, the background process takes approximately 2 months to complete, and during this time, some applicants seek other employment. In addition to the recruiting issues, retention of the part-time, hourly crossing guards is another issue due to a significant wave of crossing guards leaving City service for various reasons (e.g., retirements, moving out of the Bay Area).

To help alleviate this situation, in 2016-2017, the Department was approved for a temporary, full-time School Safety Supervisor position to assist with additional outreach, recruiting, and retention efforts. The candidate was recruited, hired, and seated in January 2017. The funding for this position was authorized by the City Manager's Budget Office to come from a portion of the approved 2016-2017 budget action that set aside funds to open additional intersections, since those funds were unlikely to be utilized given the large number of position vacancies.

The addition of the temporary School Safety Supervisor position has allowed the Department to streamline and expedite the front-end of the recruitment process for school crossing guards. All applicants are now contacted within one business day from submitting their application and if an applicant does not respond, supervisors are now able to follow up multiple times. The quicker response to applications helps maintain interest and aids in recruitment. The additional supervisor provides extra resources for attendance at recruitment events that SSEU was previously unable to attend, allowing the Department to reach a larger demographic pool of applicants. Continued support by the City Council has also helped SSEU reach out to the community by including postings for school crossing guards in their quarterly and monthly newsletters.

The additional supervisor has also had an impact on retention of current staff, as SSEU has been able to invest more time with the school crossing guard staff due to a smaller span of control. This additional supervision has increased morale and motivation, which results in a higher level of service. With the current four supervisors, there are a minimum of two supervisors every working day and the response time for a supervisor to reach staff or to get to a site when needed has improved. Another benefit of the additional supervisor is community relations and communications with stakeholders, such as schools and school districts, which has increased, as supervisors are able to better focus on their area of responsibility due to the smaller span of control.

While the new supervisor position has only been active since January, the position has helped SSEU hire 11 crossing guards. While this is an improvement, the new crossing guards have

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filled existing vacancies, except for the opening of one additional intersection. While the trend of additional hires is positive, it has only mitigated the attrition of staff. Also, school crossing guards now accrue sick leave and are utilizing that time, which requires additional staffing for coverage to meet daily staffing needs.

The 2017-2018 Proposed Operating Budget includes a recommendation to continue the School Safety Supervisor position for an additional year using the second year funds set aside in the 2016-2017 budget action since it remains unlikely that these funds would be used to staff additional intersections given the number of position vacancies. By having this position focus on recruitment and hiring, it is the expectation that a net increase in the number of filled crossing guard positions will be realized, which will improve the service delivery to the community. The ongoing need for this position will be evaluated as part of the 2018-2019 budget process.

As described above, funding is allocated to staff 121 intersections. However, due to vacancies, only 118 intersections are currently staffed or partially staffed due to vacancies. Before adding new crossing guard resources, it will be important to fill the existing vacancies to improve the overall program effectiveness.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

### **CONCLUSION**

SSEU will continue to focus on recruitment and retention to open two pending locations and staff up to the allocated positions. The unit will explore additional online resources and begin networking relationships with additional agencies. SSEU will continue to seek resource fairs, job fairs and tabling events to reach more demographics.

/s/

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Chief of Police

For questions, please contact Deputy Chief of Police, Anthony Mata, at (408) 277-5283.

