Seattle Youth Commission
Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

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Safe Routes to School expansion proposal

City of Seattle
Mike McGinn, Mayor

BRIEFING MEMO

Date: **April 15, 2010**

To: Mayor Mike McGinn

From: Seattle Youth Commission, Department of Neighborhoods
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Subject: Safe Routes to School program expansion

What is the purpose of this briefing?
To outline the Seattle Youth Commission's proposal to increase pedestrian safety and comfort around Seattle's schools.

What are the overall policy/project objectives?
To expand the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Safe Routes to School program to include one middle school and one high school each year in addition to the current five elementary schools per year.

Analysis

Background - In 2007, the Seattle Department of Transportation started the Safe Routes to School program. This program works to improve safety and awareness of pedestrians and cyclists around schools by focusing on the "Five E's": Education, Engineering, Enforcement, Encouragement, and Evaluation. Their work includes instruction for second graders on how to cross the street safely, a focus by the Seattle Police on school zone enforcement, providing incentives for bike to school days, and the complex task of engineering improvements: Each year, SDOT chooses five elementary schools based on need and geography to receive engineering improvements, which can include new sidewalks; sidewalk repair; flashing school zone beacons; radar speed signs; traffic calming improvements, such as speed cushions or traffic circles; curb ramps; curb bulbs; and pedestrian median islands. The improvement plans are made during the school year through partnership between SDOT engineers, school staff, and parents. Construction of improvements occurs during the schools' summer vacation. SDOT then studies the impact the changes have created to evaluate their effectiveness. These programs are great, and greatly improve pedestrianism and cycling around the schools they

serve, but there's a problem: Safe Routes to School only helps elementary schools. In the Seattle Public Schools, 48.8% of students are in middle and high schools. The city needs to help these students bike and walk to school too.

Recommendations – We propose that Safe Routes to school be expanded to secondary schools, providing engineering improvements to one middle school and one high school per year, and the other four "E's" to as many secondary schools as possible. This would provide many benefits to students and citizens of Seattle, including increased safety, more opportunities for healthy and green lifestyles, and better streetscapes around schools.

Budget / Fiscal Implications – Safe Route to School's current engineering improvement program is funded largely through the Bridging the Gap Levy, but also through grants from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and other sources. Safe Routes to School Coordinator Brian Dougherty estimates that our proposed expansion of his program would cost $200,000 annually. We propose that this money could come from Safe Routes' current funding sources as well as fines from school zone speeding tickets, the Families and Education levy up for renewal in 2011, and the next phase of Bridging the Gap.

Customers/Constituency – The constituencies impacted by this proposal are students and faculty at the chosen schools as well as others who use secondary-school-area pedestrian facilities. They would enjoy improved infrastructure for biking and walking. Since many schools are located in residential areas, the improved sidewalks and bike facilities would benefit families as well as students.

RSJI – The expanded Safe Routes program would serve areas of the city equally by requiring schools assisted through the program to be chosen from areas all around the city. Currently, each of the five elementary schools assisted each year is in a different area of the city. Because the proposed expansion would only add two schools per year, spending would not be geographically equal each year, but it could be required to be equal over time.

Key Option/Alternatives Considered – Instead of one middle school and one high school per year, the expansion could be changed to involve only one secondary school per year, alternating between a middle school and high school. This would approximately halve the cost.

Communications

Generally, this program will rely on an expansion of SDOT's current outreach program already used for the elementary-school Safe Routes program.

Legislation – This proposal will require the expenditure of a new $200,000 per year, from the General Fund, state grants, and/or other sources.

Organization

SDOT is currently organized to plan and execute Safe Routes to School engineering improvements in elementary schools. They would use the same procedures to plan and execute the program in secondary schools.

Attachments: 1) Collision Data (Garfield HS and Washington MS area) 2) 2009 Pedestrian Collisions (Garfield HS/Washington MS area 3) Ingraham High School Map 4) Whitman Middle School Map 5) *Student Pedestrian Collisions Near Middle and High Schools During School Hours*