



Prospect Heights School District 23
Board Memorandum
Information Item

Date: February 9, 2022

Subject: Traffic Study

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There are many benefits to being a small District with most schools located on one campus, traffic congestion is NOT one of them. The historical problem of long lines for pick up and drop off of students, congested parking lots, and back-ups onto the streets ebbs and flows with the seasons, weather, and other conditions. With limited resources to make significant structural changes, we continue to preach and practice patience and understanding.

Decreased ridership of District-provided transportation due to COVID close contact concerns, as well as an investigation into fee implementation that might also result in increased car traffic, has raised the level of investigation into a higher priority position.

The Hazardous Routes approval that accompanies this report demonstrates our continued responsibility to provide free transportation to a significant portion of our community. Further, discussions of a transportation fee or “deposit” have been investigated and found not to be permissible or advisable. This left us with a need to think “outside of the box” to improve the traffic congestion issues.

In September 2021, District 23 Administration began a traffic study with support from First Student and the Prospect Heights Police Department. Observations and data collections were completed during the Fall to determine “typical” traffic flow and patterns. The following summary of that data led to strategies and an alternate pick-up/drop-off procedure being recommended for trial this Spring.

Summary of the Problem:

On average, roughly 40% of our students are dropped off and picked up via car at school. This number fluctuates based upon the weather, student activities, and recently due to COVID close contact concerns. The volume of traffic during the pick-up and drop-off periods starts low, with a consistent group of drivers lining up approximately 20 minutes prior to the start time. The majority of drivers arrive and move through the lot within the designated window of time. One positive to be noted is that despite the traffic congestion, our arrival and dismissal periods are both typically only 10-15 minutes long.

There are three major factors that negatively impact this issue and are targeted for resolution:

1. Overlapping traffic patterns

- a. Traffic, especially in the morning, consists of cars and buses, following different routes and patterns that overlap and require crossing and zipper merges. Early arriving drivers of Sullivan students (who may also have MacArthur students) are intermixed with the MacArthur lines as they wait to park in the area that is also used for the MacArthur buses.
2. Limited linear footage in parking lot for car traffic
 - a. Back ups onto Palatine Frontage and Schoenbeck Roads are a frequent problem and a significant safety concern. In order to move cars off the street, we obviously need to find a different place for them to wait. Some drivers will enter the lot and park in a designated space, causing a trickle down effect of limited parking for arriving staff. Some drivers will park on the streets adjacent to the school and walk to the parking lot causing hazardous traffic on crowded, narrow streets, increased foot traffic, and frustration to our neighbors.
3. Location of primary entrance and exit
 - a. The primary entrance and exit for MacArthur and Sullivan drivers and ALL of our buses is located at the northernmost portion of the Schoenbeck parking lot. This entrance is also closest to the very busy intersection of Palatine and Schoenbeck roads. During peak traffic, the intersection does not provide much time for Schoenbeck traffic to cross as well as providing limited opportunities for vehicles to enter and exit our lot.

Suggested Strategies:

Working with our partners at First Student and the Prospect Heights Police, we have investigated options and generated suggestions and strategies to improve our traffic issues. Administration recognizes that any strategies will require clear communication, practice, and time to rebuild the culture and patterns that have been ingrained over many years. We are recommending that we use February and March to articulate and advertise a new traffic pattern, with a trial period in early April. This would provide time to build awareness and understanding, facilitate increased presence and traffic guidance for implementation, and a period of evaluation prior to any final approval or changes.

The following strategies are described here and visually represented in the graphic below:

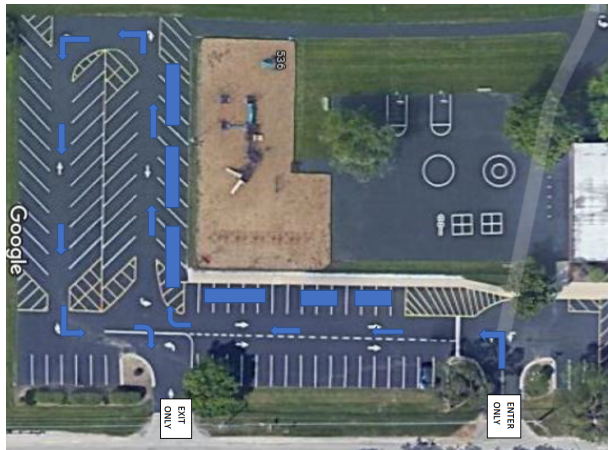
1. Relocate all Ross/Sullivan buses to the south end of the Ross parking lot
 - a. First Student has conducted trail runs of access and exit for the south end of the Ross parking lot off Schoenbeck. Providing this space and creating a dedicated entry/exit for buses only will significantly improve safety and eliminate overlap of traffic patterns.
2. Shift car traffic (drop-off/pick-up) for both Ross and Sullivan to the front of the schools
 - a. Relocating the Sullivan traffic to the front of the school will both eliminate the overlap of traffic patterns and reduce the volume of cars in the MacArthur lines. Using the sidewalk in front of Ross/Sullivan, parallel to Schoenbeck, provides significantly more linear feet of staging/parking. This results in more cars safely waiting in our lot and eliminates the back-up onto Schoenbeck. A designated

drop-off/pick-up area would be created and include a “passing” lane for drivers to exit safely.

3. Designate a new primary entrance and exit
 - a. By utilizing the middle entrance and exit off Schoenbeck we can divert traffic and congestion away from the Palatine intersection. This, paired with a designated bus entry/exit, will facilitate car traffic off of and onto Schoenbeck. The Frontage Road entrance would still be available for drivers to enter the lot, but all exiting traffic would be directed onto Schoenbeck.

From numerous conversations with parents, neighbors, bus drivers and the police department, I believe that any attempt to try and improve the traffic flow would be greatly appreciated. Testing this model in the Spring would provide us time for revisions or modifications prior to seal coating and new striping to be conducted this summer. It also provides adequate time to communicate this change to all families prior to the start of next school year. Following this trial and analysis, a formal proposal would be made through Buildings and Sites, and the full board in May.

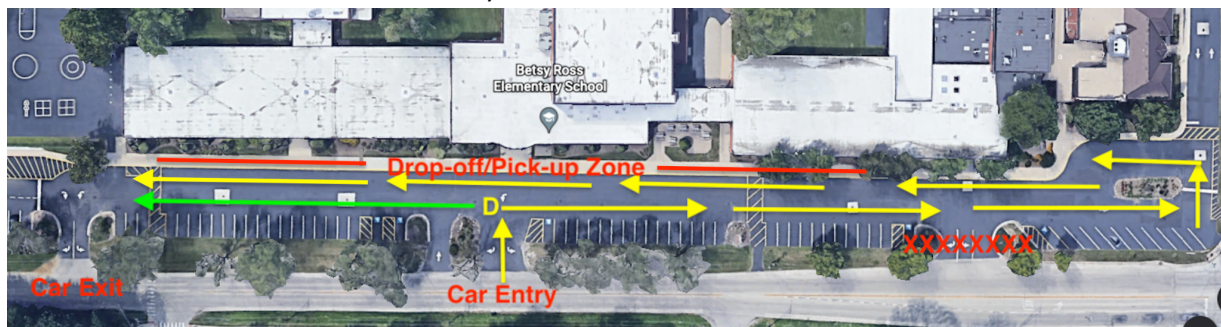
Ross/Sullivan Bus Arrival



Ross/Sullivan Bus Dismissal



Ross/Sullivan Car Traffic Flow



Combined Images

