

*Reference Document Note: This document was drafted by Walk to School Day event community volunteer William Schroeer and Betsy Buckheit and distributed to officials attending this meeting. This document has not been approved as official record by meeting participants but is rather one perspective shared. Mr. Schroeer and Mrs. Buckheit also serve as a Northfield Planning Commissioners.*

## **NOTES FROM OCTOBER 2, 2021 MEETING REGARDING SAFETY ON LINCOLN PARKWAY**

### ***Background and purpose***

In late September, Principal Sam Richardson, CEC Director Erin Bailey, City Public Works Director Dave Bennett, Betsey Buckheit, and Will Schroeer met to talk about safety on Lincoln Parkway. All agreed that a good next step would be a small meeting with parents. Two (2) meetings were then held on October 2. Principal Richardson invited several parents to participate in a conversation; others joined through word of mouth and walking by. We met to begin with on the boulevard in front of Greenvale Elementary School, where we were able to look at various aspects of traffic operations while we were discussing them. Later the meeting moved to the playground in back so the children could play.

The goals were to learn more about the challenges that parents and children experience in getting to the schools and the playing fields and playgrounds around the schools; and after that to explore some possible approaches to addressing those challenges, as input to next steps.

### **Notes**

#### ***Problem identification:***

- Snow and ice closes the sidewalk at the east end of the parking lot from Lincoln Parkway to Greenvale. Qs: Does the District use the sidewalk for snow storage? Why does the District not plow it?
- Parents said several times that they were “terrified” crossing the street. Drivers
  - o often do not stop for crossing guards,
  - o drive through crosswalks while parents and children are in the crosswalks.
- Drivers get impatient and lay on their horn.
- On-street parked cars reduce visibility / the ability to see children beginning to cross.
- Saw a Benjamin Bus van pulled over by police, assumed for speeding. But “not enough police” or enforcement.
- There are now two crosswalks on the west end of Lincoln Pkwy: a ‘new’ one was added, which has crossing guards. However, many children still cross at the ‘old’ one further west, which is not guarded.

- Many children walk—or would like to walk—to school outside peak arrival and departure times. Example: band at 7:15 am, and Community School. No crossing guards at these times.
- Described recent crashes
  - 3-car crash a week ago at Linden and Spring Street/Lincoln Parkway. “Children were right there.” “Family on bikes were almost hit.”
  - Kindergarten teacher rear-ended while waiting to turn in. “If drivers can’t see a car in front of them, how can they see a child?”
  - Dog hit by driver on Lincoln Parkway.
- Children are supposed to walk their bikes starting at the edge of school property, but the sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate children walking bikes and children walking. Children end up walking in the driveway.
- Not just a bike/walk problem. Traffic flow doesn’t work:
  - The combination of buses and cars entering and exiting, cars just stopping on Lincoln Parkway to drop off/pick up, and people walking and biking, creates a situation that is at best hard to read and navigate. Turning movements in particular are dangerous, with drivers quickly accelerating to use a gap in car traffic.
  - “Terrifying” and “chaotic.”
  - Drivers accelerate through gaps in traffic: “It’s a game of Frogger.” “Not sustainable.”
- Sun in the morning means drivers “literally can’t see”. Evening sun an issue for after-school uses.
- Crossing guards sometimes arrive late, or leave early. When a kid runs late, no crossing guard.
  - Some children won’t cross without a crossing guard, and if guard is gone, will just stand there. Parent shared story of ‘rescuing’ a kid who was stuck by the lack of a crossing guard.
  - Not all parents can accompany their children.
- Community School lets out after guards are gone.
- Drivers speeding
  - Lincoln Parkway is wide and the block is long; both lead to speeding.
  - The problem includes Spring Street and Lincoln Avenue, since “people start speeding there,” and both have broad curves without stop signs into Lincoln Parkway.
- Children’s input included:
  - “I’m always nervous” crossing.
  - “Even with the crosswalk lady, people don’t stop.”

- Discussion about children who walk on Juniper (whether starting there or further south)
  - o Where to cross? No stop sign.
  - o Corner means drivers cannot see children crossing. “Cars are going really fast.”
- Walking and biking from Viking Terrace: the only sidewalk is not lit or plowed.

*Discussion of possible solutions:*

- Lower speed limits, & speed sensor and flashers such as on St. Olaf Ave. right now. Parents noted that:
  - o the City has set a 10-mph speed limit on St. Olaf Ave.
  - o placed this sensor there,
  - o which works to slow drivers.
  - o Red+blue flashing lights are better than orange.
- Narrowing Lincoln Parkway: visual cues for drivers, and shorter crossings for children
  - o Curb extensions. Q: How are the bump outs at the HS working?
  - o Islands.
  - o Discussed pros and cons of each.
  - o Crosswalk treatments: raised (not a speed bump), painted (geckos!), etc.
- Flashers such as in front of the High School.
  - o Then discussion of whether during peak arrival/ departure times, or longer.
  - o What about children coming and going at other times?
- Bike routes on Lincoln Parkway
  - o Nowhere to bike now
  - o Also narrows street -> slower driving
- Stop signs. Discussed:
  - o Warrants
  - o Stop sign efficacy

*Concluding discussion:*

We ended with a discussion of possible next steps. We reiterated that these small meetings were not a substitute for broader and more representative conversations, but served to gather some initial sense of the problems.