

Date: October 14, 2022

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager



From: Wally Hebeish, Chief of Police
Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services



For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Safe Passage Program

On June 21, 2022, the City Council directed the City Manager to work with the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD) and other City of Long Beach (City) departments to explore the feasibility of establishing a Safe Passage plan.

Historical Program Background – Police Department

The LBPD prioritizes the safety and security of our community's youth through a variety of concepts, such as the Safe Passage Program (SPP). The LBPD has utilized this program for nearly two decades, supporting local area school sites via public safety efforts that provide enforcement and engagement opportunities with students, community members, school staff, and other City Partners such as the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The mission of the SPP is to provide a proactive presence near schools, maintain order, and decrease the chances of acts of violence against youth traveling to and from school. Historically, these efforts have primarily focused in and around local high schools due to the higher frequency of reported activity (i.e., gang activity, after-school fights) at these sites compared to middle and elementary schools.

Additionally, in the past, the LBPD has staffed SPP efforts to mitigate the fiscal impact through various methods. In some instances, the SPP was staffed through shift adjustments, which is not sustainable over long operational periods. In other cases, overtime was utilized to fund the cost of personnel.

Historical Program Background – Department of Health and Humans Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (Health Department) is conducting and planning for additional Safe Passage programming at local area school sites as part of its advancing peace portfolio. At this time, there is one Health Department Safe Passage Program in the Washington area neighborhood, with six additional sites being planned to utilize two funding sources.

The Health Department has contracted a third-party vendor to hire Peacekeepers who provide an SPP at Washington Middle School. This program will expand to two other schools (Lindbergh and Franklin Middle Schools) through limited grant funding provided by the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) for the California Violence Prevention and Intervention Grant Program (CalVIP).

In addition to engaging parents and volunteers in the current SPP and developing programming in other neighborhoods, the Health Department is utilizing one-time funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to expand the SPP to two high schools, Poly and Jordan, as well as two additional middle schools that will be identified based on community listening sessions and crime and pedestrian injury data. This program expansion includes community engagement efforts that create safe, walkable environments for students to get to and from school. The expected timeline to implement the ARPA funded SPP is January 2023.

These SPP's not only promote safety, but also increases attendance at community events, builds youth skills as well as relationship, connection, and belonging between youth and community volunteers and businesses and encourages school attendance for students. These are core to the Health Department's violence prevention strategies. Together, the Health and Police Departments propose three potential Safe Passage models to be considered for expansion beyond those currently planned.

Police Department Model

Operation Safe Passage is designed to establish safe routes in and around schools, including parks, recreation areas, businesses, and other places where youth congregate. The operation will provide a safe environment for students, parents, and staff by suppressing criminal activity and reducing the likelihood of youth involvement in gang activities.

Each high school will be monitored by one officer from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. in the morning and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the afternoon – these times can be adjusted to accommodate changes occurring with school start and end times. Officers will provide a visible presence that is conducive to engagement with students and school staff. Officers assigned to Safe Passage will be paid overtime and the estimated overall cost for coverage at five schools for 180 days is \$154,421.

Health and Human Services Model

The SPP public health model has four key components: 1) securing an entity to coordinate SPP site partnership, 2) identifying, training, and recognizing program volunteers, 3) providing students with after-school activities and supports to ensure their well-being, and 4) identifying, collecting and analyzing program data to determine program effectiveness. The program outcomes are to: 1) increase safe passage to and from school for students; 2) reduce the involvement of at-risk youth in gangs, 3) increase perceptions of safety for youth and community members, and 4) develop a violence prevention and pedestrian injury model through an intradepartmental city collaboration.

Housed within the Health Department's Collective Impact Bureau, Community Impact Division, the City's Advancing Peace Coordinator (APC) will provide direction and oversight to all Safe Passage sites. The APC will coordinate interdepartmental collaboration and engage various stakeholders, including the LBUSD, to support youth and promote safety.

The Health Department will contract with a third-party vendor, known as the coordinating agency, to work with the APC and host quarterly SPP convenings for all partners and site leads across communities to share best practices, review data to ensure program fidelity, and ensure volunteers are properly trained and recognized. The third-party vendor can subcontract with local neighborhood leaders to ensure on-the-ground engagement of resident leaders. The coordinating agency will also oversee the day-to-day operations of identified school sites. This agency will have at least one full-time employee to coordinate site-specific partner meetings and training, collect data, outreach to the community, identify businesses along the Safe Passage route to provide safe havens for youth, and disperse each school site volunteer stipends. The coordinating agency is also responsible for creating and maintaining partnerships with community members, neighborhood associations, and other organizations serving in those neighborhoods.

Within this model, paid community volunteers are stationed along the Safe Passage route before and after school. Each school will have four to six adult volunteers who are responsible for two-hour shifts before and after school and work with school administrators and the site lead to identify hotspots. All volunteers are required to participate in SPP trainings, sign up for at least two shifts twice a week, and assist with perception of safety data collection efforts. Volunteer support is critical to increasing social connectedness across the community.

Each Safe Passage route will be operational for the duration of the school year, and each site will host summer and winter events to keep the community and participants engaged. The estimated cost per site is \$242,389.

Hybrid Model

The proposed hybrid model for Safe Passage integrates the public health and the Police Department's approach. Using this collaborative model, law enforcement, LBUSD, place-based community organizations, City departments, students and their families, and community members would meet regularly to ensure the program's efficacy and address challenges. Data and community input would be used as a guide for implementing Safe Passage by identifying schools most impacted by violence.

The Health Department, Police Department, and city partners will work together in choosing site locations based on available resources and data.

Utilizing the hybrid model will allow paid volunteers to walk the school routes while having a police officer monitor the Safe Passage location before and after school. In addition to enforcement, this model includes opportunities for police officers, Health Department staff, and volunteers to engage with community members, students, and school staff through scheduled meetings and community events hosted by the SPP and focused on relationship building.

Within this model, the estimated cost per site is \$396,810.

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Now that the potential models have been identified, Council direction and additional identified funding would be needed to initiate implementation. As the City is facing a large projected deficit next year, it is recommended that a structural offset be identified, or one-time dollars provided for a one year pilot if Council wishes to proceed.

If you have any questions, please contact me or my Chief of Staff, Commander Michael Solomita, at (562) 570-7301.

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