

**TO:** Panelists, Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety  
**FROM:** Marissa Roy, Chief Consultant to the Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety  
**RE:** Minutes from the May 6th Public Hearing

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The fourth Blue Ribbon Panel hearing took place on May 6th from 2 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. at the Marvin Braude San Fernando Valley Constituent Service Center in LAUSD District 6, represented by LAUSD Board Member Kelly Gonez. Panel Co-Chair Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer opened the meeting by emphasizing the need to ensure that students are safe not only at school, but in the communities surrounding schools. City Attorney Feuer then introduced Board Member Kelly Gonez. Board Member Gonez reaffirmed her deep commitment to school safety, noting that even though every school has its own safe school plan, it is always important to keep asking what more the district and other community partners can do to make students safer. After this address, City Attorney Feuer summarized the previous Blue Ribbon Panel meetings and noted that this fourth meeting would focus on student safety in the neighborhoods surrounding schools, realizing that student safety is not simply confined to school campuses. City Attorney Feuer then introduced members of the Panel.

The fourth Blue Ribbon Panel hearing focused on “Keeping Students Safe from Threats Surrounding Schools.” The hearing featured presentations from the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office Neighborhood School Safety Program, Urban Peace Institute’s Safe Passages Program, Los Angeles Department of Transportation’s Safe Routes to School Program, and Los Angeles School Police Department.

Los Angeles Deputy City Attorneys Jacquelyn Lawson and Sharee Sanders Gordon gave the first presentation to the panel. Ms. Lawson and Ms. Sanders Gordon explained that the way improve safety at schools is by improving safety around schools. Ms. Lawson and Ms. Sanders Gordon provided an overview of the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office’s Neighborhood School Safety Program (NSSP). NSSP works with individual school sites to coordinate city resources and improve the area in a one-block radius around schools. NSSP begins its work by touring the school and surrounding neighborhood with a principal and then developing a tailored plan to improve the area around the school. NSSP will then coordinate with other city departments—such as the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, and Los Angeles Police Department—to introduce these improvements. NSSP has coordinated new area lighting for 100 schools, helped plan traffic safety improvements for 50 schools, cleaned up waste from homeless encampments around schools, and in some cases coordinated vertical prosecution with the City Attorney’s Neighborhood Prosecutor Program or City Nuisance Abatement Program to address persistent crime. NSSP is currently in 150 schools. Schools come to NSSP through referrals from principals, city council members, and law enforcement.

Following Ms. Lawson’s and Ms. Sanders Gordon’s presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question them in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **Greig Smith, former Los Angeles City Councilmember, opened questioning by noting that years ago NSSP had civilian participation and asking if that was still the case.** Ms. Sanders Gordon noted that the Mayor’s office had taken over the civilian

participation portion of NSSP, Kids Watch LA, but the program had since disappeared. However, Ms. Sanders Gordon noted that NSSP will train parent volunteers at a school site's parent center.

- **Laura Chick, former Los Angeles City Controller, followed up by asking for clarification on what a parent center is.** Ms. Sanders Gordon clarified that each school site has a parent center where parents can speak with principals about issues at school.
- **Los Angeles School Police Department Chief Steve Zipperman commended NSSP for making a difference at schools and asked how gang injunctions can continue to be used to keep neighborhoods safe in light of a recent ruling limiting how these injunctions can be applied.** City Attorney Feuer responded that the court's limitation on gang injunctions applied to injunctions based on past activity where an individual did not have the opportunity to challenge the injunction. City Attorney Feuer noted that his office was working with LAPD to identify ways that the injunctions can be enforced prospectively.
- **Dr. Marleen Wong, Senior Vice Dean at USC's Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, asked how NSSP updates its data given high rates of turnover in school leadership.** Ms. Lawson noted that NSSP only began its work a year ago, expanding from 12 to 150 schools, so that data is limited. However, she noted that both she and Ms. Sanders Gordon present regularly at principal's meetings and can engage with new principals that way. Ms. Lawson also noted that many schools proactively reach out to NSSP. One school in particular reached out to NSSP for help cleaning up residue from a homeless encampment that was blocking school exits; NSSP worked with the Department of Sanitation to remove two tons of trash, three gallons of feces, and thirty needles.
- **Michael Pinto, an architect and education expert, asked to what degree NSSP was coordinating with urban designers to establish safe routes to schools through design.** Ms. Sanders Gordon noted that subsequent speakers would likely be able to speak to that point more in-depth and emphasized that NSSP takes an individualized approach with each school.
- **Rocio Ramirez, a parent leader and PTA vice president, asked for a description of the referral process and if NSSP reached out to parent groups.** Ms. Lawson said that all any school has to do is call NSSP; there is no process, and every school qualifies to work with NSSP. Ms. Gordon Sanders added that parents could reach NSSP through the My LA 311 app.
- **Julia Macias, President of the LAUSD Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, noted that there are some students who feel disconnected from law enforcement and asked how NSSP helps students feel connected with those figures.** Ms. Sanders Gordon clarified that NSSP's main points of contact are parents and principals, but stated that NSSP does appear at career day programs to explain what a prosecutor does.
- **Juan Flecha, President of the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, offered to publicize NSSP in a weekly newsletter that reaches administrators.**
- **Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, Dean at the Charles R. Drew University School of Medicine, asked what it would take for NSSP to reach all LAUSD schools and how NSSP selected the schools it worked at.** Ms. Sanders Gordon said that there were no criteria for picking the 150 schools, but rather that NSSP would go to any school that

reached out. Ms. Lawson said that the only limitation on how many schools NSSP reached was the two deputies' bandwidth.

- **Joey Hernandez, Policy and Mobilization Manager at the Los Angeles LGBT Center, asked what offenses NSSP prosecutes.** Ms. Lawson provided an example in which a household across from a school had been linked to 35 crime reports including trafficking and prostitution, so the City Attorney's Office initiated a nuisance abatement action against that address.

This concluded the panelists' questions for Ms. Lawson and Ms. Sanders Gordon. After the presentation, City Attorney Feuer invited public comment on the topics raised by the presentation:

- **Two members of the public** noted that traffic safety was crucial to ensuring student safety in neighborhoods surrounding schools. One member of the public, a school crossing guard, noted that students were much more at risk of being killed by an inattentive driver than gun violence.
- **One member of the public** urged the panel to look at historical programs on school safety that had been since abandoned.

This concluded public comment on the presentation from the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office Neighborhood School Safety Program.

Next, Gilberto Espinoza of the Urban Peace institute spoke about the organization's safe passages programs in Los Angeles. Mr. Espinoza stated that safe passage programs aim to provide students safety on their journey to and from school. Mr. Espinoza explained that there are many variations of safe passages programs: In areas with more criminal activity, safe passages programs may involve professionals who are prepared to intervene and de-escalate confrontations while in other areas, parent volunteers may be adequate to patrol and guide students safely to schools. The Urban Peace Institute operates two safe passages collaborative in Watts and Harbor City—both areas afflicted by high violent crime rates—and coordinates with local agencies and foundations, such as LAPD and Gang Reduction & Youth Development (GRYD), to provide greater street patrolling and intervene with gang members and connect them to local resources.

Following Mr. Espinoza's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question them in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by asking how many LAUSD schools currently have safe passages programs.** Mr. Espinoza could not provide a concrete answer as definitions of safe passages programs vary.
- **City Attorney Feuer followed up by noting that many students bring weapons to school not to threaten schools, but to protect themselves on the way to and from school. City Attorney Feuer asked how the schools with the most need can be prioritized for safe passages programs and how these programs can be assessed.** Mr. Espinoza noted that the City could use existing information: the Mayor's office knows which schools have the greatest need and could connect them with resources like GRYD.

- **Chief Zipperman noted that safe passage programs can imply a variety of services and that LASPD officers are already patrolling main thoroughfares around schools in the mornings and evenings.**
- **Ms. Ramirez asked for further examples of safe passage workers.** Mr. Espinoza said that beyond the parent with the walkie-talkie, there are professionals who are trained in gang intervention. Mr. Espinoza advised that every safe passage worker be connected with gang intervention resources like GRYD.
- **Dr. Prothrow-Stith asked for further clarification on the information that Mr. Espinoza mentioned that the City already has on unsafe areas around schools.** Mr. Espinoza said that he would find that information later.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked if the most significant safety issue related to going to and from school was gang activity.** Mr. Espinoza said that gang activity and traffic conditions were the largest contributors to danger around schools.
- **Mr. Hernandez asked how many personnel would be needed to fully implement a safe passage programs in areas of high need.** Mr. Espinoza said that it would depend on the community.
- **City Attorney Feuer noted that in majority immigrant populations, people might feel reticent to volunteer for safe passages programs and asked if Mr. Espinoza had seen such reticence.** Mr. Espinoza responded that he had not seen a drop in participation from parents and noted that the Urban Peace Institute relies on personnel who speak Spanish and thus builds trust in these communities.
- **Dr. Prothrow-Stith asked how different safe passages programs can be connected and brought to scale for LAUSD.** Mr. Espinoza responded that schools and communities need to invest in neighborhood safety.
- **Gloria Martinez, United Teachers Los Angeles Elementary Vice President, commented that school budgets are always contentious because when one need is met, another needs to be sacrifice. Additionally, when schools are ranked based on certain characteristics, neighborhood safety might not be prioritized.**

This concluded the panelists' questions for Mr. Espinoza. Upon invitation from City Attorney Feuer for public comment related to the presentation, **one member of the public** commented that updated information on neighborhood safety needs to be made more widely available. This concluded public comment.

After Mr. Espinoza's presentation, Margot Ocañas—Program Coordinator of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation's (LADOT) Safe Routes to School initiative—spoke about local efforts to improve traffic safety around schools. Ms. Ocañas explained that Safe Routes to School is a collaborative partnership between LAUSD and LADOT that brings street improvements and traffic safety education to school communities with the ultimate goal of enabling and encouraging students to walk to school. Currently, the city of Los Angeles ranks second in the nation for pedestrian fatalities, and people under 18 account for 20% of fatal pedestrian incidents; traffic fatalities are the leading cause of death for children 5-14 in Los Angeles. Consistent with Mayor Garcetti's Vision Zero initiative, LADOT has examined traffic data on neighborhoods surrounding the 800 LAUSD schools in Los Angeles, examining which neighborhoods feature the highest pedestrian and bike collisions, highest density of students living in the neighborhood, and highest low-income student population measured by enrollment

in the free meals program. Based on these indicators, LADOT ranks schools to prioritize them for the Safe Routes to School Program. Currently, Safe Routes to School is focusing on the top 50 schools with the greatest need for traffic safety improvements; LADOT has already installed \$23 million of street improvements in nine schools, and Safe Routes to School will complete engineering plans for the other 41 schools. Over the next four years, LADOT will complete engineering plans for schools 51-100. Ms. Ocañas noted that LADOT needed to build greater awareness of the Safe Routes to School program as well as traffic safety generally and that city departments in general need to streamline the school-based data capture process.

Following Ms. Ocañas's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question them in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by noting that Vision Zero has created both opportunity and controversy and asked if Safe Routes to School has encountered resistance.** Ms. Ocañas noted that one advantage of Safe Routes to School is that LAUSD had adopted the Safe Routes to School resolution and was thus an active partner. Ms. Ocañas noted that Safe Routes to Schools solicits feedback from the school community on engineering plans so there is broader participation and support from the community.
- **Jessica Lall, President and CEO of the Central City Association, noted that Vision Zero is extremely important and asked how Safe Routes to School engages with businesses.** Ms. Lall also noted that while most Vision Zero campaigns focus on cyclists, the statistic about students was powerful and should be made the center of future appeals to the business community. Ms. Ocañas responded that Safe Routes to School was planning to do more demonstrations and pop-up events (for example, using bales of straw to represent lanes being closed) so that the community can participate and ask questions about street-level changes. Ms. Ocañas admitted that outreach is not a program strength and needs to be improved.
- **Mr. Smith asked whether there is a specific line item in the city budget for traffic improvements around schools.** Ms. Ocañas said that there was no specific line item.
- **Chief Zipperman asked if in the top 50 schools identified by Safe Routes to School, there was a correlation between pedestrian fatalities and loss of a crossing guard.** Ms. Ocañas responded that the presence or absence of crossing guards was not used as an indicator.
- **Mr. Hernandez asked if Safe Routes to School has identified any legislative priorities to further its goals.** Ms. Ocañas said that legislative priorities were still in the formative stage, but that the LADOT was open to exploring bringing back driver's education classes in schools.
- **Ms. Chick asked if the school district has looked into the correlation between pedestrian fatalities and the presence or absence of crossing guards.** Ms. Ocañas said that LADOT and LAUSD should push in that direction and refresh their indicators.
- **Mr. Pinto noted that crosswalks and curb extensions improve student safety and bring life to areas around schools, but in light of recent school shootings, there has been an emphasis on barricading schools. Mr. Pinto asked how we should bring life to neighborhoods around schools in this climate.** Ms. Ocañas recommended pedestrian plazas and using art installations, such as intersection murals, to brighten neighborhoods.

- **Ms. Ramirez asked what we can do now to inform parents of traffic safety and dangers to students in an effort to encourage them to be smarter pedestrians and drivers.** Ms. Ocañas said that Safe Routes to School would be doing a monthly safety campaign with newsletters and themes that aim to educate parents and students about traffic safety.
- **Ben Holtzman, the student member of the LAUSD Board, asked if there is an interest in training crossing guards to do gang intervention work.** Ms. Ocañas responded that in the push for crossing guards there could be a professional or a volunteer model depending on need.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked if the main limitation on expanding Safe Routes to Schools was financial or practical.** Ms. Ocañas said that from an engineering perspective, designing and implementing these changes is a four to five year cycle.
- **Dr. Prothrow-Stith asked for details on that cycle.** Ms. Ocañas said that first Safe Routes to School will submit an application for funding. Six months later the project would get funded. It would take 1-2 years to receive the funds and then 1-2 years to complete the engineering and design plans. Then a contractor would have to implement the plan.
- **Mr. Pinto asked if LADOT creates the design plans in house or relies on outside consultants.** Ms. Ocañas said that the LADOT partners with the Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering.
- **Mr. Smith noted that the Panel needed to consider coordination between the city of Los Angeles and other cities within LAUSD.**

This concluded the panelists' questions for Ms. Ocañas. No member of the public had a comment on this presentation.

Los Angeles School Police Department Deputy Chief Jose Santome gave the final presentation to the panel. Making a quick note about safe passages, Deputy Chief Santome told the panel that the his department had been able to build collaborative safe passages and gang intervention programs with community organizations through grants from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its state equivalent, but that such grants have since disappeared. Deputy Chief Santome suggested bringing back these grants at the state level. Turning to his presentation on how LASPD maintains and shares safety data on neighborhoods surrounding schools, Deputy Chief Santome said that LASPD captures data on crime in neighborhood surrounding schools in collaboration with the city of Los Angeles through COMPSTAT. LASPD determines which school neighborhoods are most in need of law enforcement resources by looking at the following indicators: crimes against persons, crimes against property, and frequency of calls from school administrators to LASPD. Based on these metrics, LASPD decides how to allocate its patrols and resources, though there is always a competition for resources.

Following Deputy Chief Santome's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question them in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by asking if there was further room for LASPD, LAPD, and other community agencies to assemble, evaluate crime data on**

**neighborhoods surrounding schools, and direct greater resources toward those schools.** Deputy Chief Santome responded that right now that conversation is having largely in the reactive context after instances of violence, but more needs to be done to encourage those conversations proactively to prevent violence.

- **Ms. Chick followed up by noting that there used to be greater collaboration and coordination and asked if that has continued.** Deputy Chief Santome responded that LASPD still includes LAPD in conversations concerning schools, but that there is more room to engage in data-based preventative efforts.
- **Dr. Prothrow-Stith noted that data-based preventative efforts could also focus on initiatives beyond the policing function and asked how Deputy Chief Santome would grade the department's data-informed decisionmaking around prevention.** Deputy Chief Santome said that he would give the efforts a C. Because of competition for resources, LASPD often must expend resources to react to situations that demand their attention. Preventative efforts would require greater data analysis. Deputy Chief Santome also cautioned that any preventative efforts should be implemented with a respect for civil liberties in mind.
- **Dr. Prothrow-Stith followed up by commenting that the public health department should be brought to the table in these discussions as well.**
- **City Attorney Feuer asked if Deputy Chief Santome was aware of a preventative data-driven model that has brought together public health and public safety.** Deputy Chief Santome said in a way the wellness centers at high school have this interdisciplinary model, but that these wellness centers do not address community safety in the neighborhoods surrounding schools.
- **Chief Zipperman added that LASPD looks at three factors to deploy resources: people, locations, and incidents. He noted that COMPSTAT has allowed for information sharing, but that greater collaboration would be helpful for data-driven preventative efforts. He said the assets of neighborhood prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, mental health providers, and social workers should be taken advantage of in a larger collaborative model driven by neighborhoods not a zero tolerance model.**

This concluded the panelists' questions of Deputy Chief Santome.

After questioning had ended, City Attorney Feuer opened the floor for members of the audience—most of whom were current and former LAUSD students, parents, teachers, and employees—to give general public comments:

- **Three members of the public** commented that mental health services need to be integrated into both safe passage programs—since students are exposed to violence in neighborhoods—and in schools where the ratio of students to counselors is too high.
- **Three members of the public** emphasized the important role of trust between law enforcement and students. These commenters suggested involving school police officers at school community events like open houses and ending random metal detector searches.
- **One member of the public** noted that school design and infrastructure also needed to protect students from community violence while on-campus.

- **One member of the public** urged the panel to take an intersectional approach and be cognizant of issues that specific youth face, like youth in the LGBTQIA community.
- **One member of the public** shared a personal story to emphasize that while students need to be kept safe at schools, LAUSD employees also need to be kept safe from some violent students.
- Commenting on a point raised earlier about the climate around immigration, a representative from Board Member Kelly Gonez's office informed the audience about LAUSD's We Are One Campaign, which provides informational meetings across the district to inform immigrant families of their rights and provide assistance to immigrant families.

After the audience had given comments, the meeting closed with information about the panel hearing on May 12th.