

### **1. *Why do parents/guardians take appeals to the Safe Walk Committee?***

Appeals are usually taken to seek a change in District transportation services (bus stop or route change) because of perceived unsafe walking conditions children may encounter walking to school.

### **2. *What is an unsafe condition?***

Unsafe conditions are defined as potential hazards (i.e. traffic speed, excessive traffic volume, lack of a walking path, lack of a stop light to cross a road, small width of road, etc.) that may occur walking on or along a roadway or crossing a roadway or railroad tracks. Other unsafe conditions may include walking in areas with poor social conditions such as drug/alcohol, sex offender/predator/street violence. Other conditions may qualify for review such as instances of significant student harassment and potentially dangerous animals.

### **3. *How does the Safe Walk appeal process work?***

\* Parents/guardians consult with the schools Principal first. The Principal should explain the process, consult transportation policy, and discuss the issue with the Transportation Department if needed.

\* If no solution is found, a "Request for Review of Safe Walking Conditions" appeal form is initiated at the school and signed by the Principal. Forms are available at the school.

\* After review by the Principal, the formal appeal is sent to the Transportation Department for investigation. A review is made of the Safe Walk, which includes driving to the location and verifying distances, traffic patterns, lighting, walking paths, etc. State guidelines are used to perform the investigation. In some cases the Transportation Department may resolve the appeal by making a route adjustment or conferring with the parent/guardian on alternative transportation services which may currently be available.

\* The Safe Walk Committee meets and is presented the factual data based upon the investigation from a representative of the Transportation Department. Parents/guardians are advised of the time, date and place of the Safe Walk Committee meeting and are afforded an opportunity to state their case and circumstances in person.

\* The Safe Walk Committee makes a decision and the parents/guardians are informed via letter.

### **4. *Who sits on the Safe Walk Committee?***

The Safe Walk Committee is made up of independent members who are not part of the District Transportation Department. It includes members of the Bellevue Police Department, a District safety representative, a City of Bellevue traffic engineer, and two Bellevue School District parents from the community at large. It is currently chaired by a retired District school principal who has significant experience in District community relations and transportation services.

### **5. *What are the state guidelines for a Safe Walk?***

The state guidelines use a point system for determining a Safe Walk for crossing or walking on a roadway or for crossing railroad tracks. Points are assigned based upon

such factors as grade of student, location of walkways, traffic speed, traffic volume and length of a hazardous section. Judgment points can also be assigned for other hazards along the walk such as a ditch along a roadway. High point totals signify a possible unsafe walk condition. Some conditions result in an automatic determination of an unsafe walk condition regardless of the points.

***6. Does the Safe Walk Committee have to abide by the State guidelines for determining an unsafe walk?***

No. Although the presence of an unsafe walk as determined by state guidelines can, and normally would, result in the Committee's determining the walk as unsafe, the Committee will still review all appeals on a case-by-case basis including unique situations concerning social hazards.

***7. Can I expect the Safe Walk Committee to add a bus stop or change a bus route if I feel that the current transportation service is too far away, that my child walks too far, or that the stop is inconvenient for my child?***

The Safe Walk Committee will only consider appeals for safe walks. If you desire a change in District transportation services for other reasons, the request must be made through your children's school Principal or directly to the District Transportation Department.

***8. What can I do if my appeal is denied by the Safe Walk Committee?***

The School Board will only consider overturning a decision of the Safe Walk Committee in the event that there was a significant error in the implementation of the Safe Walk procedures or that new and compelling evidence has been discovered since the Committee's decision. The School Board has directed the Safe Walk Committee to provide a fair, balanced, and thorough review of these appeals; and, therefore, the Board relies upon the greater experience and knowledge of the members of that Committee.

***9. What options do I have if I am turned down on my appeal by the Committee and by the School Board?***

Aside from allowing your child to walk to the nearest stop, as permitted under current transportation policy, or providing your own transportation, many parents work successfully within their school community to find answers to these concerns. The effort may result in a neighborhood car pool, in an older child accompanying a younger one to school, or in other solutions. We would encourage you to work through the Principal, the PTA or other appropriate means to communicate with other families in the school.

***10. Why should I have to find alternatives for assuring my children are provided a ride to school or the walk is supervised? Isn't that the responsibility of the School District?***

The state currently provides funding for walks outside one radial mile (as the crow flies) from the schools flag pole. The state also provides funding for walks less than one radial mile for mid-day kindergartners, special education students and certain hazardous conditions.

The School Board has gone beyond the state guidelines in certain areas in order to provide better overall service at considerable additional cost to the District. Elementary children are only required to have a one mile walk versus a one "radial" mile walk. Students are allowed to walk outside specified walking distances to designated stops and to ride buses on a space-available basis.

**11. *Last year my children were in elementary school and got transportation to school but this year they are in middle school and have to walk, about the same distance or farther, to school. Shouldn't they get bus transportation if they got it last year?***

The Transportation Department and Safe Walk Committee apply a different standard for elementary versus middle school students. The presence of a major thoroughfare may very well result in transportation for elementary students. However, middle school children are expected to have a level of maturity that enables them to walk longer distances in more difficult circumstances, such as crossing some major thoroughfares.

**12. *If there is a bus going past my neighborhood to my child's school with seats available, why can't it stop to pick up my children, even if my child's walk is considered safe and within the prescribed walking distance?***

We know that this can happen and that at times a bus may have some space. It is not just the addition of one more stop for your child that causes the problem, however. The District must endeavor to treat all children fairly and equitably, so if we add one stop for your child, we must consider all similarly situated children. To do that across the District would cost significant time and expense. In addition to the issue of consistency and equitable treatment, there would be major issues of how to determine which of the remaining children should be allowed to fill the spaces, how to determine the space available, when space is available, and what criteria to use.

**13. *How much does the Districts bus service cost?***

Current District transportation service costs approximately \$3 million per year. This District is reimbursed by the state for approximately 65% of this cost. The remainder comes out of the Districts General Fund which pays for teachers, books, and programs. Dollars not spent on transportation remain available for direct school support.

**14. *With whom can I discuss these policies?***

Feel free to discuss any of these issues with the Transportation Department, by calling 425-456-4512.