



AL COUNCILMAN
8TH DISTRICT
AUSTIN

R-29

Date: June 21, 2022
To: Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Al Austin II, Eighth District
Subject: Feasibility of Establishing a Safe Passage Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Recommendation to request the City Manager to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Safe Passage Plan in collaboration with the Long Beach Police Department, other appropriate City departments, Long Beach Unified School District, and relevant local organizations, and report back to the City Council in 60 days.

BACKGROUND:

After school on May 12, 2022, a student walking from Jordan High School to Colin Powell Elementary School was brutally attacked near the 6100 block of Long Beach Boulevard. The perpetrator has since been arrested for this act of violence. While this is an isolated incident, every student in Long Beach deserves a consistently safe path to and from their schools daily. Children are the most vulnerable members of our society, and it must be our communal duty to protect them.

Safe passage programs, or safe passages, post trusted volunteers or for-pay community members along student's paths to and from schools to ensure each student is kept from harm and arrives safely. These programs help deter many of the dangers children face while walking before and after the school day, including abduction, bullying, harassment, and physical assault. The Safe Passage Program in South Los Angeles, which is administered by the nonprofit Community Build, Inc., has served over 30,000 students since its inception in 2019, working with 24 schools and patrolling 13 nearby parks as well. Their efforts led to an 8% decrease in violent crime in and around parks served by the program in 2019. Chicago's Safe Passage Program has resulted in a 20% decline in criminal incidents around schools served, a 27% drop in bullying incidents among students, and a 7% increase in attendance in local high schools over a 2-year-period. Further, the community involvement spurred by these programs benefits residents too, as more engaged constituents are more likely to collaborate to resolve neighborhood issues.

Multiple Safe Passage programs, both community-based and City-operated, have existed in Long Beach. The Long Beach Police Department previously utilized Operation Safe Passage,

which assigned two patrol cars to five local high schools before and after the school day. This program is no longer in use. Following the stabbing of a Cabrillo High School student in 2015, the City of Long Beach hosted a Public Safety Fair and Safe Passage Workshop in West Long Beach, which included 20 public safety information booths, interactive displays, first aid kits, and a presentation on soliciting public participation to deter criminal activity. The following year, the community organization Centro CHA successfully launched its Safe Passages program to serve West Long Beach students and empower residents to take responsibility for the safety of their communities. The upcoming Long Beach Advancing Peace (Safe Passage) Program, one of the Long Beach Recovery Act's "Healthy and Safe Community" initiatives, will provide funding for city-wide community engagement events and grant Cabrillo, Poly, and Millikan High School students safe passages to and from their schools.

However, there are currently no City resources to guide neighborhood associations and communities interested in developing their own safe passage programs for middle and high school students not included in the aforementioned initiative. As the LBPD has supported a Safe Passage program in the past, it would be beneficial for LBPD and other appropriate departments, Long Beach Unified School District, community groups, and qualified local organizations to contribute their existing knowledge toward a best-practices manual for establishing safe passage programs, allowing residents the ability to directly mitigate crime for students in their communities. For these reasons, I am requesting a report investigating the feasibility of establishing a Safe Passage Plan. The report should include different frameworks for implementation and possible fiscal impacts of establishing such a plan.

This matter has been reviewed by Grace H. Yoon on June 13, 2022.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This recommendation requests the City Manager to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Safe Passage Plan, including frameworks for implementation and fiscal impacts, and report back to City Council in 60 days. The requested action is anticipated to have a moderate impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and a moderate impact on existing City Council priorities. The potential financial impacts of any implementation of a plan will be discussed in the feasibility study. There is no local job impact associated with the recommendation.