



Alberto M. Carvalho
Superintendent

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April 10, 2023

Los Angeles City Council
200 N Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: REQUEST TO SUPPORT MOTION (MCOSKER – KREKORIAN) RELATIVE TO THE
CROSSING GUARD PROGRAM
File No. 23-0304**

Dear Los Angeles City Council Members,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Unified School District (Los Angeles Unified), I would first like to thank you for the long-standing partnership with the District to provide complimentary services that enhance the quality of education and the safety of our students and families. I look forward to speaking before you later this month to share the status of exemplary initiatives Los Angeles Unified is undertaking and to explore additional opportunities for collaboration. While Los Angeles Unified operates over 1,300 schools and centers across more than 700 square miles in a diverse set of communities and geographies, close to 80 percent of our student population attend schools within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles alone.

In 2022, I wrote a letter applauding the City's proposed continued funding and one-time funding in the Salaries As-Needed Account for 104 additional crossing guards. Since then, our staff has engaged in conversations with representatives at the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to offer support with filling these additional positions to secure student safety and safe passages for students, families, and school staff. It is for this reason that I write with disappointment to express concerns with the Crossing Guard program as it relates to the inefficiencies of the hiring process. I am aware that while the number of crossing guard requests will always outnumber the available guards, this issue is unique given that the City of Los Angeles has over 150 crossing guard vacancies. Therefore, I strongly urge your support of the motion introduced by Councilmember McOsker to better understand how the City can expedite the hiring of these much needed crossing guard positions and ensure effective coordination efforts with Los Angeles Unified. The following outlines key factors that my staff has identified as systemic barriers hindering the Crossing Guard program from fulfilling its end goal of enhancing the safety of our students and families in the City. As LADOT prepares the requested report on the status of the Crossing Guard program, I also urge you to consider these factors and how the District can contribute to the success of the program. While the motion does not have a timeline for the submission of this report, it would be ideal if LADOT could complete this assessment and take the necessary steps to update the existing process within the next 60 days, with the goal of improving the recruitment and hiring process by the time the 2023-24 school year gets underway in mid-August.

Application Requirements

Some of these obstacles include application requirements requesting applicants list 10 years of experience, applicants not guaranteed to be hired in their preferred school or in the immediate community where they live, and applicants required to commit to both the morning and afternoon shifts making it difficult for them to pair this job with a different part/full time position.

The job description in the current application states the following as the Work Schedule:

- The work schedule is based on the assigned school's bell schedule. Hours are Monday through Friday between the hours of 6:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Shifts are split to provide coverage prior to the start of school and following the end of the school day at the same location. Some shifts may begin earlier than 6:30 AM. Crossing Guards may work up to 3.5 hours a day.
- Crossing Guards work outdoors in all types of weather.
- As a Crossing Guard, you are assigned to a Crossing Guard Area. You will then be assigned to any corner within that Area. Having reliable transportation is a must, as you will be expected to report to work on time every day.

To underscore this point, it is an inefficiency and a major barrier to expect applicants for a part-time position (3.5-hour maximum day) to have to commute to a job where qualified applicants could be applying and requesting to work at their neighborhood school. With the common traffic and lack of transportation for many low-income Angelenos, it is counterproductive and an inequity to expect crossing guards to have access to reliable transportation if qualified applicants could be stay-at-home parents, grandparents, college students, or others who have flexibility in their schedule and could work within walking distance from where they live and where their neighborhood school is located.

Recruitment

Los Angeles Unified is on standby ready to support the City's efforts to recruit crossing guards by sharing job postings with parent volunteers and the school community as a whole. At a recent meeting I had with principals from our 100 Priority Schools, several principals indicated they are aware of parents who have either applied (and have yet to be called for an interview) or are interested in applying for a crossing guard position. One of the repeated requests that our District staff has made to the LADOT is to share a list of the highest ranked schools, so that we can ensure targeted and effective outreach efforts. While there may be legitimate reasons why the LADOT staff does not want to share that information with Los Angeles Unified, I can guarantee that we can better support your City's outreach efforts if we could do it in a more targeted and collaborative way. Our students' safety is on the line, and sharing with our District the school locations identified where a crossing guard would provide the greatest benefit to children crossing, while reducing risk of collisions, would help expedite the City's outreach and hiring process.

Ranking System

With regards to the LADOT's intersection ranking system, it is our understanding that the engineers consider factors such as traffic control type, speed limit, number of vehicle lanes, presence of left turning movements, and number of students crossing specific intersections. The recent prioritization methodology did focus on the Top 50 LAUSD schools, however, a full reassessment has only happened twice according to LADOT; once initially years ago and another occurred in the last 2-3 years. To our knowledge, LADOT refreshes the rank order of intersections requested for crossing guards at the end of each school year to inform guard deployment assignments for the following school year. Throughout the year, the Los Angeles Unified Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) staff immediately contacts LADOT staff when there are safety concerns or when traffic surveys are conducted because

of traffic safety concerns. Once informed, LADOT does not reassess the prioritization list during the review of crossing guard requests.

To support students' and their families' safety, I would like to request that the LADOT engineers also consider traffic-related incidents throughout the year as a key factor in adjusting the intersections' ranking. It would be helpful to have intersections' ranking reconsidered as the District reports any traffic-related incident near a school. Student safety should not be put on hold for a whole year, and instead should be reconsidered as new information is communicated to LADOT, especially around traffic-related incidents where our students, parents or staff have been impacted. Since August of 2022, OEHS has completed 170 Traffic Safety Surveys in response to complaints, concerns, and incidents, and has identified a number of pedestrians versus vehicle incidents near District schools where the ranking of school is unknown.

Processes and Communication Systems

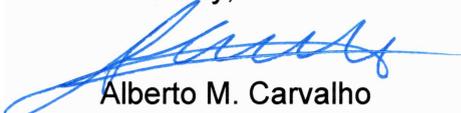
There has been a lot of confusion about the processes to apply for a crossing guard, as well as when OEHS should expect to receive updates from LADOT. While the initial crossing guard request comes from OEHS, it is not clear why two separate result letters are sent from the City, one from the Crossing Guard program and another from the LADOT engineer. In addition, it is also necessary to determine the level of communication that LADOT has with individual principals and when District staff can better serve as the liaisons.

Recommendations for Improvement

- Update application to allow applicants to specify specific schools as top preference.
- Provide Los Angeles Unified with a list of prioritized school locations eligible for a crossing guard to enable school principals and others to amplify job opportunities with parents and school community.
- Request that the LADOT engineers also consider traffic-related incidents throughout the year as a key factor in adjusting the intersection's ranking.
- Improve communication between LADOT and OEHS by consolidating the letters into one and outlining a clear process for which reassessment of a school can be pursued.
- Expedite the hiring of a crossing guard and commit to the hiring of qualified individuals within four weeks of an application being received.
- Establish a goal of crossing guard vacancies that will be filled within the first 60 days of the 2023-24 school year.

In closing, on behalf of the students and families of Los Angeles Unified, I would like to respectfully request that the issues around the Crossing Guard program, ranking system, recruitment efforts and processes be considered when this motion comes before you. The District will make itself available to the City and LADOT to support in any way possible to make this program more efficient. Thank you for your time and effort to ensure student safety across our communities.

Sincerely,



Alberto M. Carvalho
Superintendent of Schools

c: Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Members
Los Angeles City Mayor Karen Bass
Interim General Manager Connie Llanos, Los Angeles Department of Transportation