

June 10, 2010

Brad Mellor

Acting Chair of Transportation Safety Committee (TSC)

TSC Attendees

Midwestern Consulting (appointed Traffic Engineer)

AAPS Board of Education

All Community members interested in Student Safety

We in the Thurston Community recognize and rejected the existing conditions of the Parking lot Spring of 2008. We requested postponement of planned resurfacing in order to address our safety concerns. We appreciate AAPS and the Facility personnel, especially Randy Trent for approving the postponement and reserving those funds for the use and implementation of a public process achieve the current approved plan scheduled this Summer, 2010.

Since the existing plan was probably built with the school (1964), population and lifestyle trends and newly constructed classroom preschool space have added to the congestion and vehicle load/drop-offs such as:

- two income families have become prevalent
- We have a recent preschool addition (included in 2004 Bond) with added personnel, students, and vehicle drop-offs.
- The district has remapped the geographic area of Thurston and includes many families and neighborhoods across US 23 in Dixboro and beyond who use the bussing provided and also the convenience of drop-off.
- AAPS supports schools of choice, which can also bring students via car from areas outside present bussing routes. (TSC members identified this in their review)
- There are many student/vehicle conflicts, including backing cars as students are currently are drop-off in the parking lot. We have simply outgrown the existing 1964 conditions with additional vehicles, bussing, and personnel.
- We have one way traffic in our small parking lot. And because of an appropriate left hand turn only at the exit, many mornings we experience gridlock on Prairie Street, inconveniencing bussing and parents alike.
- We are adding to student capacity for the 2010/2011 school year by one full classroom. The current Thurston 5th grade class is just two classrooms, next year all grades are expected to have three full classrooms, plus along with the established preschool addition.

Since Spring 2008, we have worked with parents, staff, school principal, administrators and facility staff, county health department, neighbors, condominium associations within walking distance of the school, city engineers, and traffic engineers to reach a current plan for the parking lot and identify other areas off-site improvements in the neighborhood through the AAPS sponsorship of Safe Routes to School.

- We developed the current plan addressing many of our concerns including our preference to have a designated bus lane to the front of the school for loading and unloading at close to the school as possible. This came through our public comment process through PTO meetings, newsletters, flyers, parent and staff surveys, and invitations to neighbors. We have followed the recommended development of a Safe Routes to School process. We included meetings to discuss possible problems and solutions with an AAPS designated Traffic Engineer.

- We still have today a difficult existing site and infrastructure plan to work with constructed during the 1960's. For a solution within the existing footprint these are some of our consideration:
 - During our process we looked at several scenarios, including busses unloading/loading in a different location, a shared bus/car vehicle lane, switching the buses and cars on the designated lane closest to the building.
 - We discussed in our process and attempted to include as many environmental concerns such as impervious pavement (a greater expense & excluded from the current plan); oil separation grates at entrance/exit drives (also additional expense and infrastructure excluded from the plan); saving a mature pine tree at the vehicle drop-off lane.
 - We discussed the misalignment of the exit driveway with the Aurora/Prairie intersection and proposed a three-way stop
 - We discussed in our process and chose to add a fence to direct students to an elevated, colored crossing point where trained bus drivers, Principal and Staff, and safeties are present over aesthetics and curb appeal.
 - We discussed in our process four different parking layouts, including rotating spaces/direction by ninety degrees.
 - We discussed in our process if changing to two-way flow would improve the congestion. (Switching the entrance and exit of one way flow does not work with bus doors unloading curbside)
- The community suggested solutions have been reviewed by an experience Traffic Engineer, very familiar with the Thurston site and existing site restrictions.
- The State Authority DELEG has also reviewed the current plan and oversees all major school improvement projects.
- The Board of Education has heard of our process to incorporate comments from parents in PTO meetings, staff meetings, neighbors, and facility & school administrators, engineers both City and Traffic, and neighbors to the school. The Board has approved and funded these proposed improvements May 26, 2010 and we support them a decision to act and improve the existing conditions.
- The Transportation Safety Committee reviewed the current solution and existing conditions June 8th. A long time fifteen year committee member and past school board member, Kathy Grizwald has expressed comments that validate and share the concerns the Thurston parents and staff about the "very dangerous" and "extremely unsafe conditions that exist now at Thurston".

At this juncture two weeks before expected construction:

Based on the existing condition, we agree with Kathy Grizwald's comment the construction should start and be completed this summer. We do not want to have the existing condition remain for another school year. Our current plan, uses the restricted space available in similar flow to the present lot, eliminating backing cars where students drop-off. The current plan is recognized (outside of our process) as a safety improvement over the existing condition by Ms. Grizwald, though it may not be ideal.

- We welcome any support to continue the Safety discussion through the start of construction this summer.

- We can address the question of an operational issue of closing the drop off lane once busses leave the site. We could add an inexpensive gate, personnel responsibilities, or simply place cones described in our June 8th meeting a strategy used successfully by personnel and safeties in the existing condition and congestion. We can submit again a more formal procedure for the expert review of the Transportation Safety Committee and Traffic Engineer and AAPS Operations.
- We all want the best solution for the safety of our students and those in the future and support improvements to the existing condition this summer, 2010. We made efforts to be fiscally responsible, are favorably pleased with the entire two year process, working with school officials resulting in the current plan, including the checks and balances of this latest June 8th meeting.

For information, the alternatives considered were:

1) Additional drive through or cul-de-sac from Renfrew to Georgetown to separate car and bus traffic. The negative effect is not only resurfacing the existing lot but creating additional facility infrastructure expense at least doubling the paved footprint of the site, pedestrian crossing points, impacts to the Thurston Prairie and greater potential to tree removal including our most recent planting of an Oak Savannah by the Thurston Nature Committee on our PTO. Additional maintenance costs will also burden the district from the educational focus.

2) We considered a more formal school response of alternate park and walk locations at three points where parking volume may raise objections for the City from residents in the neighborhood. No formal plan was available from the AAPS. We will support Kathy Griswolds request to update and identify official offsite parking and walking locations through a comprehensive safety plan with additional input. Safe Routes can help accomplish this and encourage public engagement. The district currently has no official street designated for walkers (or park and walk) as a preferred route from offsite locations. This has been identified while developing our Safe Routes program. We have encouraged through PTO sponsored Walk to School Days and Bike Rodeo many impromptu discussions and awareness among our parents, staff, and community. This alternative only has weak hopes of diverting some of the traffic congestion away from the front of school, especially on rainy days when everyone attempts to get close to the door. It is at best a partial solution and does not directly the existing parking lot configuration. A few parents already informally use this approach and is viewed as supplement to any parking lot improvement, not a centerpiece.

3) Recently, we again visited the least cost alternative (a do nothing approach) of eliminating cars as a policy change, other than staff/visitor parking. We firmly believe the general public expects the schools to allow them to drop-off their children at the front of the school, especially in bad weather situations. We consider this an unrealistic and very unpopular approach and eliminate it as an alternate considered. It did get mention, and no support or discussion in the Transportation Safety Committee meeting June 8th.

4) At the other end of possible solution spectrum considered is an expensive and certainly time consuming alternative, i.e. at least into next building season and maybe more realistically a possible long term goal; add more space to the school property at the front of the school; i.e. purchase or swap property with one or two adjacent residential lots to create the ideal car/bus separation and curbside drop-off zones. This option simply requires more time and planning (we don't have, risking dangerous existing conditions) and the potential for much greater

expense in property acquisitions, public discussion, design and implementation, and maintenance costs. It may create a public relations problem away from the districts educational focus. We respect we are working with public funding.

We differ to the expertise of our Team Traffic Engineer, the State DELEG Approving authority and anyone who can reasonably create this bus/car separation within the existing footprint allowing incorporation via change order by the start of 2011 school year. We do not wish to postpone construction for this uncertainty, whose creation and administration and resolution may not be concluded this building season. We view the current parking lot safety conditions and use as a greater risk while spending time and monies seeking a solution not produced with open user input and interface along with experienced engineering and oversight. We will welcome a second path to continue the search for a relatively small financial impact of an ideal bus/car solution within the existing footprint. If an ideal solution is found this building season and supported financially, great, we're for it.

Our Thurston School Community parents and staff are willing to meet and discuss directly experiences witnessed over the last two years of existing conditions and our process to resolve them with committee members or Board Members who may need further clarification of this response.

From the Thurston School Community, we again emphasize the AAPS should continue to act to change the existing parking lot conditions at Thurston this summer, 2010 as a prudent measure of safety improvement.

Thank for your considerations and thanks to all the participants who expressed concern and have moved our project closer to implementation, including those from outside the Thurston Community. We very much appreciate the support and shared commitment from all for the safety of our students

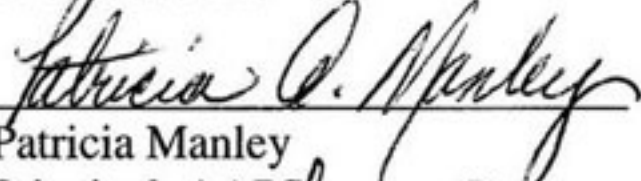
Thurston Response June 10th, 2010.

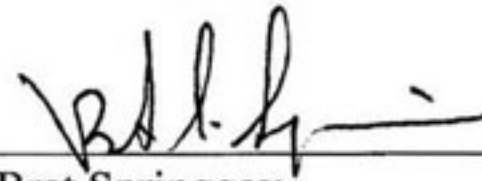
Supporting Signatures

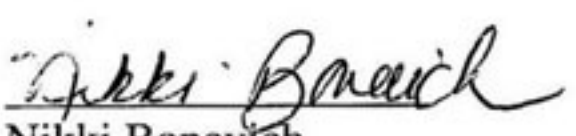
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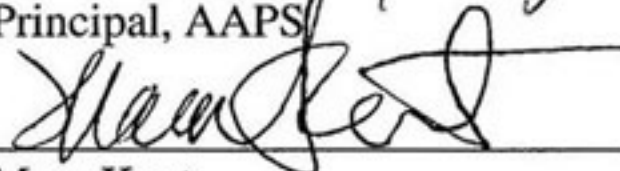
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Patricia Manley
Principal, AAPS


Bret Springgay
PTO Volunteer, SR2S

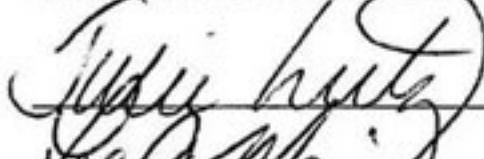
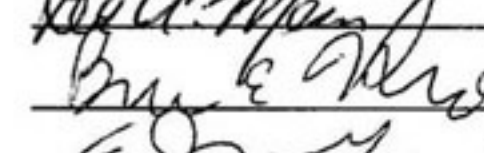

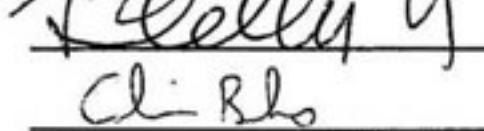

Nikki Bonevich
Current PTO President

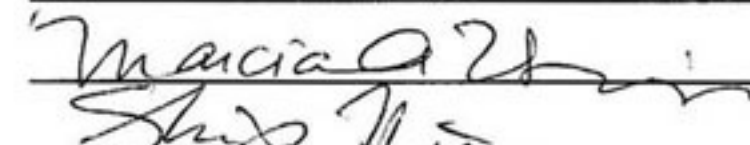
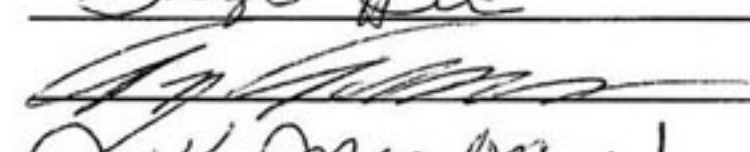
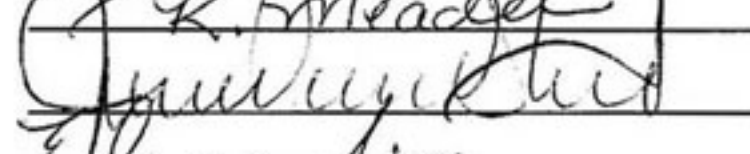
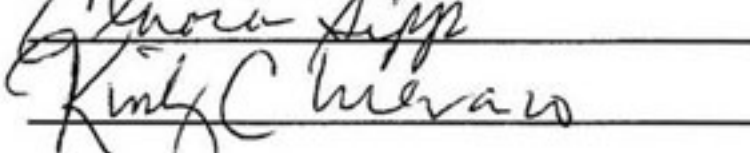

Mara Kent
PTO President 2007/2008

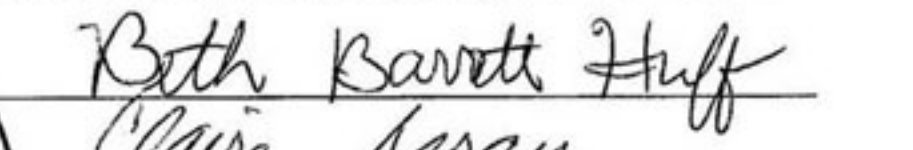
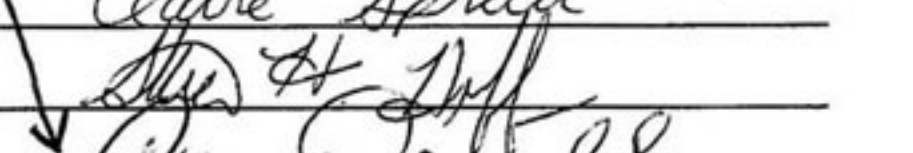
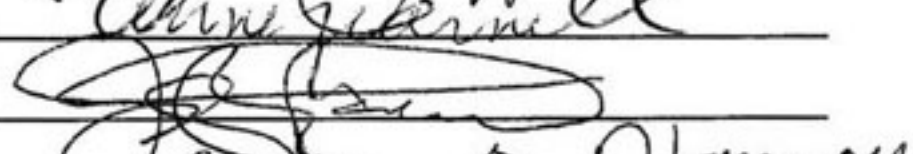
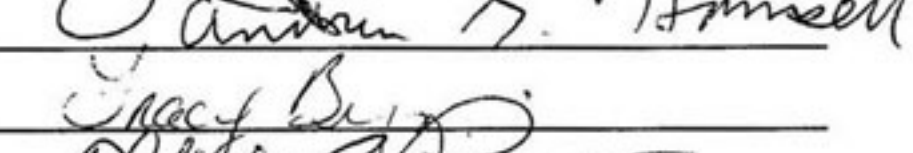
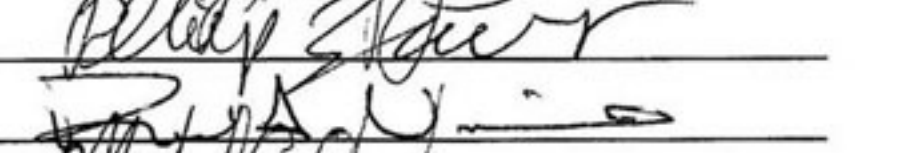
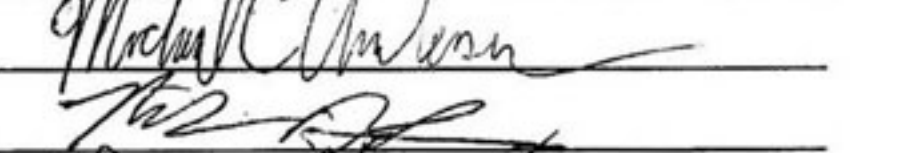

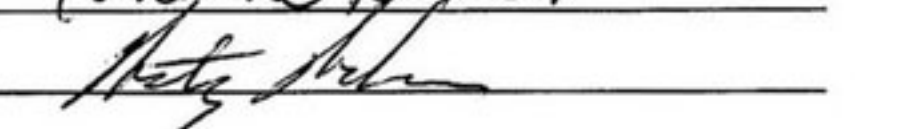
Signed below
Anne Darnell
PTO President 2008/2009


Current Teaching Staff Representative

Other PTO Committee Members and concerned parents and staff available for signature this date.





Ch. Blo





Kathy Chervano









Kathy Chervano