

ATTACHMENT C:

CROSSING GUARD PROGRAMS: GENERAL OVERVIEW AND PROGRAM COSTS

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

To: Lonnie Burklund, PE, PTOE, Mark Lutjeharms, PE, PTOE (City of Lincoln)

From: Emily Koehle, PE, Jennifer Hefferan, PLA, (Toole Design Group)

Date: September 27, 2019

Project: Lincoln School Zone Study

Subject: Attachment C: Crossing Guard Programs: General Overview and Program Costs

INTRODUCTION

Adult crossing guards play an important role in keeping children safe as they cross the street in key locations. There are two main categories of program types: programs with volunteer crossing guards and programs with paid crossing guards. Programs that utilize paid crossing guards are either managed by a public sector entity (city or school district) or contracted out to a private firm. This memorandum discusses the general considerations and tradeoffs for each program type as well as details on funding and cost. To create this resource, several peer-city interviews were conducted. Further details on these interviews are included in the Appendix.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations will be important for any school crossing guard program, regardless of its management structure.

- 1. Contracting out crossing guard services has varying benefits.** Some cities found cost savings and/or relief from time-consuming administrative duties, but other cities found private management resulted in cost increases and felt proposals fell short on staffing plans. All City Management Services, Inc. (ACMS) is the largest provider of crossing guard services. They typically charge cities between \$20-25 per hour per guard, based on crossing guard wages of \$14-15, though this can vary based on program size. In most cases, city-run programs cannot be easily broken down into an hourly rate because of the diffuse nature of administrative responsibilities and softer costs that may include staff members taken away from standard duties to cover for absences.
- 2. Hiring and retaining employees is a widespread problem.** Due to the very part-time nature, split-shifts, and minimal benefits typically provided for crossing guards, cities often report difficulties hiring guards and experience high turnover. This was found to be a widespread problem throughout the country. Younger parents as well as retired people commonly work as crossing guards.
- 3. Background checks are required.** Because a core-component of a crossing guards' job is to interface with school-aged children, most communities conduct background checks on guards, whether they are paid or volunteer. One city interviewed also requires a physical and drug screening.

4. **Training is important for effective crossing guard programs.** In addition to an initial training at hiring, guards should be trained at the beginning of each new school year. Even when there is not turnover, crossing guards benefit from a review of expectations.
5. **Liability is a key consideration both for volunteer and paid crossing guard programs.** Volunteer programs will need to ensure that insurance adequately covers volunteer guards. For both volunteer and paid programs, adequate training and screening, clarity about crossing guard locations and hours, and protocols to cover crossing guard absences are important for managing risk.

VOLUNTEER CROSSING GUARD PROGRAMS

CONSIDERATIONS

- It is critical to develop a system that ensures volunteers are adequately trained and equipped.
 - To support the many communities in Minnesota that use volunteer crossing guards, the Minnesota Department of Transportation developed an online training¹ to ensure that volunteer guards were properly and consistently trained.
- Liability concerns are particularly important for volunteer programs, as guards do not fall under the auspices of city employees or private-management firm employees and may not share similar rights and responsibilities (including insurance coverage).
 - Some communities partner with a volunteer service agency to ensure that volunteer crossing guards are covered by liability insurance.
 - In some communities, volunteers are covered by existing liability insurance policies. This is the case in the Boulder Valley School District, Colorado whose insurance policy covers all authorized volunteers in the performance of their assigned duties.
 - Humboldt County, California addresses liability concerns for volunteer programs by ensuring each volunteer is properly trained and developing backup plans to make sure every location has a guard both morning and afternoon in the event of an unscheduled absence. They felt that their biggest liability risk was for any times when a crossing guard was absent, so they made sure that had two back-up crossing guards available in case of an absence.
 - ChangeLab Solutions provides the following strategies for managing risk²:
 - Clearly specify when and where crossing guards will operate,
 - Properly screen, train, and equip crossing guards,
 - Prepare for crossing guard absences and changes in school schedules,
 - Educate teachers, school staff, students, and families about the program,
 - Verify adequate insurance: One option might include extending workers' compensation to cover crossing guard volunteers in addition to the public entity.

TRADEOFFS

- Volunteer programs offer a cost-savings when compared to paid programs, but have bigger issues retaining guards when compared to paid programs.

¹ Minnesota Safe Routes to School, "Minnesota Crossing Guard Training." <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/training/mncrossing%20guard%20training/index.html>

² ChangeLab Solutions, "Crossing with Confidence." https://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/SRTS_Crossing-Guard-Programs_FINAL_20140926.pdf

- Volunteer guard positions provide an opportunity for community members to give back to their communities. Based on the interviews conducted, it is unclear if volunteer crossing guards are more vested in the safety of children when compared to paid guards. The interviews highlighted that many paid guards are parents or grandparents who are likely to be invested in children safety.

COST

- Costs are primarily related to administrative costs surrounding program management as well as training and equipment costs.

PAID CROSSING GUARD PROGRAMS

PUBLIC SECTOR PROGRAMS

Considerations

- Generally, paid public sector programs tend to be the most common type of crossing guard program. The programs are most commonly administered through the police department or transportation/public works department, though they are sometimes administered through the school district.
- The city department or school district is responsible for hiring, paying, equipping, training, scheduling, and otherwise managing crossing guards.
- In the communities interviewed, the public sector agency responsible for managing the program determined the locations of crossing guards. However, it does appear that in at least some communities, the private management company determines the crossing guard locations.
- One program indicated that they do not assign school staff to cover crossing locations due to potential union issues. Some programs do report using school staff members to cover crossing guard locations, but consideration must be paid to teacher contracts in these instances. Tucson typically uses existing campus monitors or other office staff to cover for absences—teachers are generally not asked to monitor crossings, as this would be considered an additional duty beyond normal assignment, with additional compensation as prescribed by contract.

Tradeoffs

- Compared to volunteers, paid guards are more reliable than volunteer guards, and paid programs have less retention issues, though retention is still an issue.
- It can be difficult to find replacement crossing guards in time when someone calls in sick, and oftentimes other staff members may be pulled away from regular duties to cover absences. For instance, in Denver, Colorado it is common for many crossing guards to leave over the course of a year. The Denver School District often replaces these guards by assigning employees (including part-time para-professionals as well as full-time teachers) to cover shifts.

Costs and Funding

- Paid crossing guard programs are generally funded with general municipal/law enforcement funds although they are less commonly funded with school district funds, or a combination of municipal and school district funds.
- In California, local jurisdictions are entitled to utilize fines and forfeitures in their local Traffic Safety Fund to compensate crossing guards who are not full-time members of the police department.³ Similarly, the Seattle Public School District is authorized to use revenue from school bus arm camera citations.

³ The Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center, "California School Crossing Guard Training Guidelines," May 2015. http://caatpresources.org/docs/crossingGuardTraining/California-School-Crossing-Guard-Training-Guidelines_4-29-2015_final.pdf

- **Denver, CO** - Denver's program is operated by Denver Public School's Department of Safety but is funded by the City and County of Denver. The City and County of Denver's budget appropriated \$177,800 to the crossing guard program in FY2018, but little additional details are available on exactly how this funding is used.⁴
- **Tucson, AZ** – Program costs include:
 - **Salaries** –
 - **Crossing Guards:** Guards make \$11/hour (Arizona's current minimum wage) and earn sick and personal days. Guards working two hours per day will earn \$4,738 per year, while guards working 3.75 hours a day will earn \$8,025 per year. The contact interviewed estimated that they spend about \$600,000 per year on salaries.
 - **Administrators:**
 - There are four full-time supervisors, who spend one-quarter of their time on crossing guard functions. The starting salary for supervisors is \$53,292.84, meaning that the salary attributable to the crossing guard program is \$13,323.86 for each supervisor.
 - There is one full time crossing guard coordinator that coordinates placement, absences, hiring/records, etc. The annual salary for the coordinator is \$42,723,20.
 - **Other costs** –
 - Hiring is handled through the School District's Human Resources Department, and the costs are unknown.
 - A physical and drug screening is required for each applicant. These cost \$119 each and are covered by the School District. \$10,000 is budgeted for this annually.
 - A background check is required for each applicant—this cost is covered by the applicant at a cost of \$30.
 - Equipment replacement costs approximately \$2,000 - \$4,000 each year. The largest expense comes in the form of school zone signage and vests.

PRIVATELY MANAGED PROGRAMS

Considerations

- Generally, the private management company hires and trains guards. They also conduct background checks, and each city's contracts determines the depth of background checks. The private management company handles most administrative matters and oversees scheduling and payroll. The company will also insure the guards and will provide equipment and uniforms.
- Some cities found it helpful to provide a staff member to manage the private management company. Complaints about crossing guards generally go to that staff member. This staff member should expect to receive complaints about crossing guards occasionally and should also expect to go out to locations from time to time to observe crossing guard behavior. A staff member from the private management company does respond to complaints, but one community interviewed felt that the city needed to play a role in monitoring any complaints.
- If someone calls in sick, the private company is responsible for securing a substitute. However, some communities reported that on occasion locations were left vacant temporarily.
- Communities that utilize private management companies recommend that private management companies be required to train crossing guards at the beginning of each new school year. Even when

⁴ City and County of Denver, "2019 Mayor's Proposed Budget – October Draft," October 2018. <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/344/documents/Budget/2019/2019OctoberDraft.pdf>

there is not turnover, crossing guards benefit from a review of expectations. Communities have also found it helpful for City staff to attend these trainings each year.

- Typically, when private contractors take over, they give existing crossing guards the opportunity to continue working under the private company.
- In most cases, cities are responsible for determining which street crossings need to be guarded.

Tradeoffs

- Contracting out crossing guard programs minimizes the responsibility for the city to hire, train, and outfit crossing guards.
- Contracting out crossing guard program management to a private company occasionally offers direct cost-savings compared to a public sector-run program, but this can vary. Cities may opt to contract out to a private firm even if direct costs are higher because it alleviates soft costs and/or ensures that other police or school staff are not pulled away from their regular duties.
- The City of Appleton, Wisconsin, recently contracted crossing guard services to ACMS. There were no cost savings associated with the switch, rather, it reflected a 43% cost increase. However, the program was placing strains on the Police Department, who had previously managed the program. In particular, the Police Department cited relief from the management hours required to hire guards. In addition, community service officers were often previously responsible for covering unfilled absences, pulling them away from their typical duties including parking enforcement and animal control.⁵ Additional details on the costs for this program are provided below, in the *Costs and Funding* section.
- Tucson considered privatizing their crossing guard program, but not only found the quotes received to be significantly higher than their own costs, they also felt the proposals did not offer adequate staffing options.

Cost and Funding

- ACMS' costs are primarily based on wages paid, with an additional 40-45% of costs on top of that for overhead. Overhead will include employer payroll taxes, workers compensation, equipment costs, and liability insurance. The contact interviewed at ACMS also referred to budgeting for the "cost of accidents". Supervisory staff, another overhead cost, will vary based on the size of the program. A general estimate of \$20-25 per hour per guard was provided, based on wages of \$14-15 an hour.
- **Appleton, WI**⁶ – Costs are provided for the program when it was managed by the City as well as when it was managed by ACMS:
 - 2017/2018 Program Cost (City-run):
 - \$175,790 for salaries
 - 11,336 hours at an average pay rate of \$14.42/hr
 - \$12,325 in benefits (guards were paid for holidays and snow days)
 - 2018/2019 Program Cost (Privately-run):
 - \$251,674, including 10,071 hours of service at a rate of \$24.99/hr
 - Pay for guards on non-school days was eliminated.
- **Frederick, MA**⁷ - The City of Frederick signed a \$78,057 contract with ACMS in August of 2017. This contract, which breaks down to \$20.65 per hour per guard, reflected a cost savings for the City. Crossing

⁵ Behnke, Duke. "Appleton hires California company to manage school crossing guard program," *Post Crescent*, February 2019.

<https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/local/2019/01/18/appleton-outsources-management-school-crossing-guard-program/2570129002/>

⁶ Behnke, Duke. "Appleton hires California company to manage school crossing guard program," *Post Crescent*, February 2019.

<https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/local/2019/01/18/appleton-outsources-management-school-crossing-guard-program/2570129002/>

⁷ Dodd, Cameron. "School crossing guards in Frederick County privatized," *The Frederick-News Post*, August 2017.

https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/crime_and_justice/cops_and_crime/school-crossing-guards-in-frederick-county-privatized/article_0a48c92a-5f12-53fe-bc47-bee867dfded1.html

guard duties were previously performed by Police Department officers, whose wages range from \$21-\$45 per hour. Not only did the privatization offer a cost savings, it freed up officer time to focus on other assignments. It is unclear how many crossing guards are included in this contract.

- **McPherson, KS**⁸ - McPherson recently contracted with ACMS to provide eight crossing guards. The cost of the annual service is estimated to be \$70,671 based on 2,736 hours at an hourly rate of \$25.83. The City and School District each contribute half of the total contract amount.
- **Palo Alto, CA**⁹ - In 2018, the hourly rate budgeted for ACMS for crossing guard duties was \$23.02 for 31 crossing guards working 4 hours a day for 180 days. The total amount came to \$513,806.40. The hourly rate is slated to increase each subsequent school year.

⁸ "City, USD 418 Splitting Crossing Guard Expenses," December 2018. <http://midkansasonline.com/news/?id=22772>

⁹ City Council Staff Report, City of Palo Alto, June 25, 2018. <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/65503>

APPENDIX – PEER CITY INTERVIEW DETAILS

DENVER

ANDREA GARCIA

Denver Public Schools
Department of Safety
School Crossing Guard Coordinator

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- The program is funded by the City and County of Denver and is based out of Denver Public School's Department of Safety. The program has been around since the 1990s.
- Crossing guard positions are very part time (2 hours a day, Monday through Friday) and are ideal for retired people or moms with small children. Some work as little as 30 minutes a day. Para-professionals within the district often work as guards if they are currently working under 8-hours.
- DPS has 92 grade schools, but not all schools use a paid crossing guard. At the beginning of the year, they start with 65 crossing guards, but this typically drops off mid-year to about 42 or 45 by the holidays. At that point, a DPS employee will get "voluntold" by their school to work as a crossing guard.
- Guards make \$12/hour.
- There are 5 or 6 crossing guards who have been with the program for 10-15 years.
- Some schools may not merit a paid crossing guard because they are more residential in nature. Some of these schools use volunteer guards, who are required to go through the same background checks and training protocols as paid staff.
- As far as hiring staff, Andrea spends a lot of time networking with the community—she is usually only at her desk 35-40% of the time. Word of mouth has also been an important part of recruitment.

TRAINING

- In addition to regular trainings, they recently hosted a paid four-hour training. This included presentations from Denver Police, CPR certification, and presentations on how to manage stress.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

- Thorough background checks are required for paid guards as well as volunteer guards. This includes fingerprinting as well as state and national checks.

LIABILITY

- The volunteers aren't insured, it is unclear how the school would handle an incident. Paid guards are covered by insurance.

CHALLENGES

- Dangerous driving near schools.

SUCCESSSES

- They have received awards for customer service and excellency in service and are one of the top trained districts for safety and security.
- They have a strong relationship with the Denver Police Department.

SEATTLE

YVONNE CARPENTER

Field Staff Lead
Seattle Public Schools
206-252-0907

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

From 1948 until about ten years ago, the program was operated by the Seattle Police Department. At that point, the Seattle School District took the program over. The program has 75 crossing guards, Yvonne coordinates all of the guards as well as 50 bus monitors. The program is primarily for elementary schools, but there are also a couple of K-8 schools and one middle school in the program.

FUNDING/PROGRAM COSTS

- Yvonne noted that the City of Seattle originally indicated they would continue to provide funding assistance, but ultimately funding has been left up to the School District, who takes it out of their general fund.
- For the last couple of years, funding has been supplemented by fines from cameras on school bus stop arms. Yvonne mentioned it took a long time to get the camera program up and running. In the long term, this revenue will likely decrease as compliance with the school bus stop arms increase. Citations for illegally passing a school bus are \$419 each, but no further details could be found on how much revenue is allocated specifically to the crossing guard program.¹⁰
- Guards are paid \$16/hour and on average work two hours a day.
- As of last January, they began offering sick leave to guards. For every 40 hours worked, one hour of sick leave is offered.
- In addition to providing a flag and vest, they also provide each crossing guard with a uniform, winter coat, raincoat, gloves, and hat. They budget \$10,000 for that each year.
 - Please note, the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) requires crossing guards to use stop paddles. Comments made during the interview suggest that Seattle's guards may not be using MUTCD-compliant equipment.

TRAINING

- Yvonne uses Florida's training program as a model as well as other best practices from the country. They offer a 5-hour in-class training, and then go out at train at the crosswalk. Each guard will shadow another guard for a whole day.

HIRING/RETENTION/ABSENCES

- This is a constant issue, right now they have 39 vacant posts, which are usually unguarded.
- They leave it up to the school to handle absences, sometimes Yvonne will cover these vacancies herself. One particular school has trained secretaries and other staff members.
- Some schools will have a student patrol the area right in front of the school with a staff member monitoring.

They've tried advertising, but much of their hires come from word of mouth.

¹⁰ Seattle Public Schools, "Student Safety Stop Arm Camera Program."
https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/transportation/student_safety_stop_arm_camera_program

TUCSON

MIKE BREITENBECHER

Tucson Unified School District
Department of School Safety
Traffic Safety & Training Manager

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- The program is operated out of the school district, and the program extends out into the county, beyond the city boundary.
- They have between 130-140 crossing guards covering 100-105 crossings (some locations require two guards).
- The state mandates crossing guard programs. These are provided at elementary and middle schools.
- Guards are located at schools that are more residential in nature. Those that do not have adequate walking facilities don't qualify. This is based on speed limits and the shoulder width.
- This is primarily a paid program, though some schools that have trouble retaining a guard use volunteers or staff members.

FUNDING/PROGRAM COSTS

- This is funded through state funds. About eight or nine years ago they faced big budget cuts.
- Mike estimated that the budget for salaries was around \$600,000.
- Guards make \$11/hour (current AZ minimum wage), they also earn sick and personal days. A crossing guard working 2 hours per day will earn \$4,738 per year, while a crossing guard working 3.75 hours a day will earn \$8,025 per year.
- Additional costs include:
 - Hiring: Done through HR, costs unknown.
 - Physical and drug screening: The School District covers this cost. Screenings are \$119 each, and \$10,000 per year is budgeted for screenings.
 - Mileage: \$6,000 per year is allocated to cover mileage for those crossing guards who cover more than one site in a day.
 - Background check: The applicant covers this cost of \$30.
 - Administrative salaries:
 - Supervisors: The starting salary of a supervisor is \$53,292.84 including benefits. ¼ of their time is spent on crossing guard functions/supervising, so the cost for them would be \$13,323.96 each, and there are four full-time supervisors.
 - Crossing guard coordinator: The annual salary for the coordinator is \$42,723.20. This person coordinates placement, absences, hiring/records, etc.
 - Equipment replacement (\$2,000-\$4,000 per year). The largest expense comes in the form of school zone signage and vests.
 - This includes an average of three school zone signs per crossing. Signs are \$85 per sign plus a stand made by Tucson's internal shops.
 - Please note, it is not typical for crossing guard programs to include school zone signage in their costs. This is a requirement unique to Arizona law, which requires "stop when children are in crosswalk" signs to be placed at each crossing during the hours that each school crossing is in effect.¹¹

¹¹Arizona Department of Transportation, *Traffic Safety for School Areas Guidelines*, 2006. <https://www.azdot.gov/docs/business/adot-traffic-safety-for-school-area-guidelines.pdf>

- Vests are \$10.24 each.
- Stop paddles are \$19.95 each, and safety flags are \$3.98 each.

TRAINING

- They offer a refresher course at the beginning of each school year. If supervisors notice problems throughout the year, they will have that guard back in for additional training or provide more training in the field.

LIABILITY

- Mike didn't have the details on this, the School District's Risk Management department would know more. He believes volunteers would be covered by typical volunteer insurance.

SUPERVISORS

- Four supervisors monitor crossing guards during all crossing guard hours.

STAFFING/RETENTION

- They typically hire retirees or stay-at-home parents.
- They look at school schedules and proximity. If an elementary and middle school are near each other, this enables guards to work two shifts in a row due to staggered school times. This ends up being 3 ½ or 4 hours a day instead of two. He would like to try to work with part time positions to make combination positions that include crossing guard duties.
- The way they handle absences varies based on location. If the location is high volume or abutting a school, sometimes the school will send out a trained staff member. Another option is to borrow a guard from a location that has two guards. As a last resort, they may send out a supervisor. Some days there are crossings that go uncovered.
 - Teachers are not typically used to cover crossings, as this would need to be compensated as a duty outside of normal assignment and paid at a rate of \$25 per hour, per teacher contracts. More commonly, an existing campus monitor, office staff, or in some instances, the principal is used.

PRIVATIZATION

- They looked into privatizing the program in 2012-2013. Beyond costs savings, they were hoping privatization would offer better staffing options. If the private companies could staff better, they would be less at risk of lawsuits for unmanned crossings. The quotes they received were significantly higher than their own costs and did not offer great staffing options, so they continue to manage the program themselves.

OTHER CHALLENGES

- Finding individuals to hire has always been a challenge.
- Finding funding for equipment is also a challenge, as this comes from a different budget line item and has perpetually been underfunded. It's difficult to keep equipment in stock, and by the time the budget is available and equipment has been ordered often the schoolyear has already started.

ACMS

HARLAN SIMS

Director of Marketing

COSTS

The primary expense reflected in contracts is the labor for crossing guards and supervision. Other factors that could cause pricing to vary include: employer payroll taxes, workers compensation, equipment costs, the “cost of accidents”, liability and exposure insurance. The cost of supervision will vary by the size of the program. A profit margin is also incorporated into the fee charged to cities.

The typical cost for cities is between \$20-25 per hour per guard, based on crossing guard wages of \$14-15. If wages are higher, then the costs will increase to reflect that. A general rule of thumb is that 40-45% is added on top of guard wages for overhead.

RESPONSIBILITIES

ACMS will cover all responsibilities related to staffing, including sourcing, background clearance, hiring, training, and ongoing operation. They generally attract an older demographic or younger college-age kids. To handle absences, they usually hire a team of substitute guards. They will also handle unemployment claims and liability claims.

The city is responsible for telling ACMS where guards should serve, however ACMS might provide recommendations based on observations—for instance, if one location seems underserved.

ACMS also covers training, they provide an initial training for newly hired guards as well as refresher trainings at the beginning of the school year.

BENEFITS TO CITIES

Sometime cities see a direct cost savings, other times the savings are primarily on soft costs such as another staff person’s time, administrative burdens, etc.