



2011 PROPOSED STATEMENT: **SCHOOL ZONE SIGNAGE**

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that create consistent school speed zone and school warning signage across all school districts, counties and cities so that drivers routinely recognize them, reduce speed and watch out for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Context:

School zones should be safe zones for children, and should be clearly and consistently marked. But because state law allows school zones to be marked in a variety of ways,¹ instead we have confusing conditions for drivers and pedestrians.

County and city governments regularly adopt differing policies and ordinances. School districts have no authority or jurisdiction and must work with local governments. The inconsistent application of signage and speed limits at school locations from community to community and within communities often generates driver confusion that exposes children, parents, and educators to unnecessary dangers at their school.

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Why now?

Today, the risk of injury is increasing as more students must walk to school because of school transportation funding cuts.

In 2005, the Washington Safe Routes to School program was adopted and managed by the Washington State Department of Transportation. This group's main purpose was to address the impact of budget cuts to school districts that had to cut transportation, resulting in more students walking and biking to school. This did not address a uniformity of school zone signs. The Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee was formed in 2005. In 2009, the governor issued an executive order to eliminate boards and committees in Washington, which included the Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee.

Why is this issue important?

Speed kills. Statistics show that pedestrians are 8 times more likely to be killed if struck by a vehicle traveling 30 mph versus 20 mph. Too many of our schools are located on streets and roads where the speed limit is always 30 mph or higher. Uniform school signage and a consistent application of a 20 mph speed limit will help enhance safety at our schools and can save lives.

Parents, community members, and local PTAs attempt to address school speed zone issues individually and sometimes with multiple local jurisdictions only to find that results are sporadic and inconsistent. Local officials are slow to act until serious incidents or injuries occur. The use of flashing amber warning signs is increasing due to a voluntary grant program from the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission; however, this effort is making matters worse, not better. While these devices produce the

desired effect at a location where they are installed, they marginalize the effectiveness of signage at other locations and minimize driver awareness where they are not used, further compromising safety.

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Why PTA/PTSA?

Schools must provide a safe environment for all children without exception; however, school districts have no control or authority regarding school traffic zones. The lack of a statewide, uniform school traffic control approach coupled with diverging 'local control' priorities leads to confusion and hazardous conditions around our schools.

Washington State PTA advocates for the well-being of all children. This issue aligns with our Resolution 2.1 Safe Travel and with our Safe and Nurturing Environments for Children and Youth, which calls for traffic and pedestrian safety as well as safe schools.

Recommended WSPTA board action: Do pass

Issue submitted by: Dori Tate, of Ballou Jr. High PTA 5.7.85; Valerie Bennett, of Hunt Elementary PTA 5.7.17; Jack Markley, of Pope PTA 5.7.42; Donna Drumm, of Edgerton PTA 5.7.4

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Resources:

¹ WAC 392-151-035 and RCW 46-61-440.