



**Performance Audit**

**Department of Public Safety  
Bureau of Administration  
School Crossing Guards**

Report by the  
Office of City Controller

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**AUDITEE RESPONSE**



October 2022

To the Honorable Mayor Edward Gainey and  
Honorable Members of Pittsburgh City Council:

The Office of the City Controller is pleased to present this performance audit of the City of Pittsburgh's **Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Administration: School Crossing Guards**. The audit was conducted pursuant to the Controller's powers under Section 404(c) of the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter. This audit assesses the decision to move school crossing guards from the Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Police budget to the Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Administration budget. This audit also assesses the procedures, budgets, staffing, deployment, and safety record of the school crossing guards.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City of Pittsburgh school crossing guards help thousands of students and pedestrians cross busy intersections on a weekday basis. School crossing guards assist in emergency situations, help monitor intersections for dangerous activities, and report traffic violations among other position duties. Over the summer when school is not in session, guards may work with the Department of Parks and Recreation as pool cashiers or with the summer food program. In addition to their city-assigned duties, school crossing guards can also elect to work secondary employment assignments such as sporting events, community events and festivals, funeral services, parades, construction sites, and large city celebrations.

As of June 2022, there are 61 school crossing guards and one school crossing guard supervisor employed by the City of Pittsburgh, despite the city budgeting for 82 school crossing guards. The average age of school crossing guards in May 2022 is 59 years old and 90% are female. Crossing guards are awarded specific street crossings based on seniority. Street crossings are evaluated and assigned danger rankings, which are estimated based on specific criteria.

The City of Pittsburgh first created the school crossing guard division in 1947, after the tragic death of a 9-year-old student in Lawrenceville. From at least 1950 to 2020, school crossing guards were a part of the City of Pittsburgh's Bureau of Police (PBP). In 2021, school crossing guards were moved within the Department of Public Safety from the PBP to the Bureau of Administration.

The Department of Public Safety states that the reason behind moving the school crossing guards was due to the school crossing guards' independent reporting structure. Moving the school crossing guards from the Bureau of Police would make the division similar to the other independent reporting structures.

Pittsburgh school crossing guards have received guidance from the federal and local Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, although it does not provide funding for school crossing guards. The SRTS program funds infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks, as well as non-infrastructure projects, including SRTS awareness, support for safe walking and biking, and improving driver behaviors.

The auditors identified three main areas for improvement with the school crossing guards operations:

- An evaluation of all city intersections in proximity to schools needs to be completed to determine the highest volume and most dangerous, using a weighted ranking system (Recommendations 10, 11 & 12)
- Improvement to communications between schools and the school crossing guards needs to be implemented (Recommendations 5 & 6) and
- Hiring more guards is needed to improve operations (Recommendations 8,9,13,14 & 16)

Over the course of the audit, the auditors discovered that Pittsburgh Public Schools had helped fund school crossing guards during times of significant financial difficulty for the City of Pittsburgh. These payments in 2004, 2005, and 2008 represented significant support for the school crossing guards, but financial statements of payments were not easily discernible in city budgets and the amounts did not align with PPS's financial statements.

Our findings and recommendations are discussed in detail beginning on page 10. We believe our 22 recommendations will improve operational efficiency. We would like to thank the Department of Public Safety for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Lamb  
City Controller

## INTRODUCTION

This performance audit of the **Department of Public Safety’s Bureau of Administration: School Crossing Guards** was conducted pursuant to the City Controller’s powers under section 404(c) of Pittsburgh’s Home Rule Charter. This performance audit analyzes the decision to move school crossing guard positions within the Department of Public Safety, assesses the procedures of school crossing guards as well as school crossing guard budgets, staffing, deployment, and safety records.

This is the first performance audit of the Department of Public Safety’s school crossing guards. In 2021, crossing guard positions were moved from the Department of Public Safety’s Bureau of Police budget to the Public Safety’s Bureau of Administration budget. The Department of Public Safety contains five bureaus, two of which are the Bureau of Police and the Bureau of Administration.

## OVERVIEW

### **History of School Crossing Guards**

School safety patrols were implemented in the 1920s because of the increase in automobiles on the roads and rising concern from teachers, community members, and parents of students for the safety of children walking and biking to school. School safety patrols were first implemented in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1920, and Omaha, Nebraska, in 1923.

In the early twentieth century automobile travel became more accessible over the United States. Pedestrian travel was becoming more dangerous as governments had not developed laws and systems to keep them safe. Traffic police began to direct traffic and monitor intersections. School age children did not know the risks of moving cars and traffic, which increased the risk of injuries and fatalities.

#### First Crossing Guard

In St. Paul, Minnesota, the city raised awareness of the dangers of automobiles on the road. A City Council member designed a training program for “school police” where 750 students volunteered to participate. Several months were spent training the new recruits and deciding what the program would entail. The principal of the Cathedral of Saint Paul played a key role in recruiting eighth-grade boys who volunteered to help younger students cross the street. On February 17, 1921, the principal oversaw the first recorded instance of a monitored student crossing.

## AAA School Safety Patrol Program

About 380 miles away in Omaha, Nebraska, the successful implementation of school safety patrols resulted in a decrease in student injuries and deaths ultimately leading to the creation of the American Automobile Association (AAA) School Safety Patrol Program. This program was founded by Charles M. Hayes, who was the president of the Chicago Motor Club. Hayes created the infrastructure and provided funding for AAA clubs around the United States after witnessing the death of several students at a school crossing.

The AAA School Safety Patrol consisted of student volunteers, in upper elementary grades, middle, and high school, who were appointed by their teachers. In Pittsburgh, these students were usually male, and they would use a hand-held stop sign while wearing a yellow sash to stop traffic. They helped fellow students safely navigate busy intersections around the school, and routes to and from school. Initially, most roads were only two lanes around schools.

By the 1930s three national organizations (AAA, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, and the National Safety Council) collaborated on creating a manual of 'Standard Rules for the Operations of School Boy Patrols.'

Since 1935, the death rates of students aged 5 to 14 had decreased significantly, particularly due to the AAA Safety School Program. The program had been so successful it spread to 30 other countries, including England, France, and the Netherlands. AAA School Safety Patrol celebrated 100 years in 2020. Since the program was created, 35,000 schools with 670,000 student patrollers have participated.

Students are still being trained in the program on the importance of traffic safety but, more recently, assisting children coming and going to school is the responsibility of hired adult school crossing guards.

## Safe Routes to School Program

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federal program that evaluates a city's current capabilities for safe travel to and from school, educates school children to use active modes of transportation, including safe walking and biking practices, and provides engineering improvements around schools. The article "The Decline of Walking and Biking" published by the Safe Routes to School Guide says, "As motor vehicle traffic increases, parents become more convinced that it is unsafe for their children to walk or bicycle to school. They begin driving them to school, thereby adding even more traffic to the road and sustaining the cycle." To make walking and biking to school safer for children, the SRTS program was created. This program also aimed at improving physical infrastructures such as sidewalks, speed signage, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.



The SRTS program was first started in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, in 1997. Pilot programs were implemented in other states by August 2000. In 2005, Congress approved a \$612 million nationally funded program, called Safe Routes to School, with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, which expired in 2012. From 2005 until the SRTS program ended in 2012, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) committed nearly \$20 million for 34 improvement projects encouraging children to safely walk and bike to school.

City of Pittsburgh resolution number 348 enacted on May 28, 2019, authorized the City's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) to enter into an agreement with PennDOT to receive grant monies through the Transportation Set-Aside Program in order to implement a Safe Routes to School Program. The Transportation Set Aside Program is a competitive state grant program that provides assistance to municipalities for the purposes of creating safe and appealing alternatives to single occupant vehicle travel. The resolution authorizes DOMI to expend those grant monies, amounting to \$464,011, toward the completion of the SRTS project. The school crossing guard office works with DOMI to identify intersections and corners where school crossing guards might be needed.

DOMI integrated the SRTS program in Pittsburgh with four chosen schools for the 2020–2021 school year: Pittsburgh Public Schools Fasion K-5, Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-8, Pittsburgh King K-8, and Propel Schools – Hazelwood. In the 2021-2022 school year, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) updated their transportation policy and now require students in grades 9-12 to walk to school if they live two miles from school or closer. This is a deviation from the past policy that provided transportation to older students living 1.5 miles or further from school. Students in K-8 are still eligible for transportation if they are more than 1.5 miles from the school they attend. This change is compliant with the Pennsylvania school code. DOMI works with the school crossing guard office to help the families and students who have been affected by this change in policy, as PPS school bus routes are slated to focus on main routes, which will reduce the number of corners covered by school crossing guards and move the guards to cover more dangerous roads.

However, the SRTS federal funding does not support the cost of employing school crossing guards. Even though more children are walking and biking to school, the grant from SRTS does not cover any costs for hiring school crossing guards or equipment improvements. PennDOT funded a \$464,011 federal grant for SRTS to collaborate with DOMI focusing on infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements. The funding for SRTS was reoccurring in the city's operating budget for 2020, 2021, and 2022 in the amount of \$464,011. As Table 1 shows, while the grant is listed in the 2020 and 2021 operating budgets, the money was not spent. The 2022 budget shows that \$100,435 has been spent, leaving \$363,576.

**TABLE 1**  
**PennDOT's SRTS Funding**

Year	Sponsor	Grant	Amount Awarded	Amount Spent	Remaining Balance	Grant End Date
2020	PennDot	SRTS	\$464,011	-	\$464,011	N/A
2021	PennDot	SRTS	-	-	\$464,011	N/A
2022	PennDot	SRTS	-	\$100,435	\$363,576	N/A

Source: City of Pittsburgh's Annual Operating Budgets: 2021, 2021, 2022

In June 2012, Congress passed the Moving Ahead for Progress (MAP-21) Act, which combined SRTS with other bicycle and walking programs; the program expired in 2015. According to the Safe Routes Partnership MAP-21 reduced federal funding for SRTS by 30% for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. From 2015-2021, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) was passed for the continuation of combined funding for SRTS, walking, and biking. FAST expired in 2021, which shut down the SRTS program along with other bicycle and walking programs. While the city still has \$363,576 of unallocated SRTS grant funds as of May 2022, it is unclear if the program will continue or if DOMI will use the money for other projects. The grant does not expire.

## OBJECTIVES

- Report the history of the school crossing guards.
- Determine the reason for the school crossing guards' change of bureaus within the Department of Public Safety.
- Evaluate the procedures, funding, pay, and benefits of the school crossing guards.
- Determine school crossing guards' PA Act 153 Clearance Compliance
- Examine school crossing guard staffing levels and student-guard ratio.
- Assess deployment procedures of school crossing guards.
- Analyze the work-related incidents of school crossing guards and pedestrian traffic fatalities.
- Determine the impact of Covid-19 on school crossing guards.
- Make recommendations for improvement.

## SCOPE

The scope of this performance audit examines the policies, duties, and deployment of school crossing guards from January 2020 through June 2022. The history of school crossing guards' spans from 1947 through 2021. The operating budget from the Bureau of Police and

Bureau of Administration lists information from 1950 through 2020. Staffing levels include 2018 through 2022 information. The analysis of school crossing guards' work-related incidents is from 2019 through 2022. School crossing guards' PA Act 153 clearance compliance examined as of June 2022. The projected salaries of school crossing guards are through 2024.

## METHODOLOGY

The auditors had a Microsoft Teams meeting with the Director of the Department of Public Safety and the school crossing guard supervisor. Additional in-person meetings and Teams meetings were held with the school crossing guard supervisor along with numerous email correspondence.

The auditors conducted interviews with currently employed and retired school crossing guards and Pittsburgh Public School employees.

The auditors researched the national and local history of the school crossing guards through local articles and web searches.

The auditors requested and received actual staffing level data for school crossing guards from the City of Pittsburgh Department of Human Resources and Civil Service (HRCS) and copies of job announcements/questionnaire from July 2021.

The auditors reviewed the school crossing guards SEIU 192-B union contract with the City of Pittsburgh and *The Crossing Guard Study* (2015) from the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

The auditors researched the budget and history of the City of Pittsburgh's Bureau of Police and the Department of Public Safety from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1974, 1982, 1986, 1993-2022, as well as the 2021 amended operating budget.

The auditors assessed documentation on school crossing guard seniority, rankings, demographics, and intersection assignments and criteria developed to evaluate high-volume, dangerous intersections received by the school crossing guard supervisor.

The auditors reviewed Decennial Census and American Community Survey data on K-12 student enrollment for 2000, 2010, and 2020. Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) current and historic enrollment data was obtained from the PA State Department of Education, PPS reports, and news articles.

The auditors used Fiscal Focus to determine the monetary hourly value of the school crossing guard benefits package received.

The auditors reviewed the City of Pittsburgh Resolution No. 106, enacted March 3, 2020, authorizing the creation of the "Crossing Guards Special Events Trust Fund." JDEdwards data for the crossing guard trust fund and the police secondary employment trust fund were examined.

The auditors received a list of the 60 private, charter, and religious schools that Pittsburgh students attend from the crossing guard supervisor. The auditors researched the locations of the schools and eliminated the schools located outside the city limits. Each school inside of city limits was contacted to obtain the school's total enrollment as of May 2022. The auditors used this data to calculate the total number of non-PPS students in the city. This figure combined with PPS enrollment data was used to calculate the student-to-guard ratio for 2022.

The auditors contacted PPS's transportation department about AI software implemented in school buses to help with traffic violations.

The auditors inspected budgets reserved for school crossing guards from city governments across Pennsylvania and similarly sized city governments across the United States.

The auditors tested school crossing guard compliance with Pennsylvania Act 153 child abuse clearances and criminal background checks by visiting the guard office and compiling a list of guards in alphabetical order along with the criminal clearances and child abuse clearances on file.

The auditors reviewed school crossing guard job listings in Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis for comparable salary information, including hourly, daily, and yearly salaries, along with the standard hours paid per day.

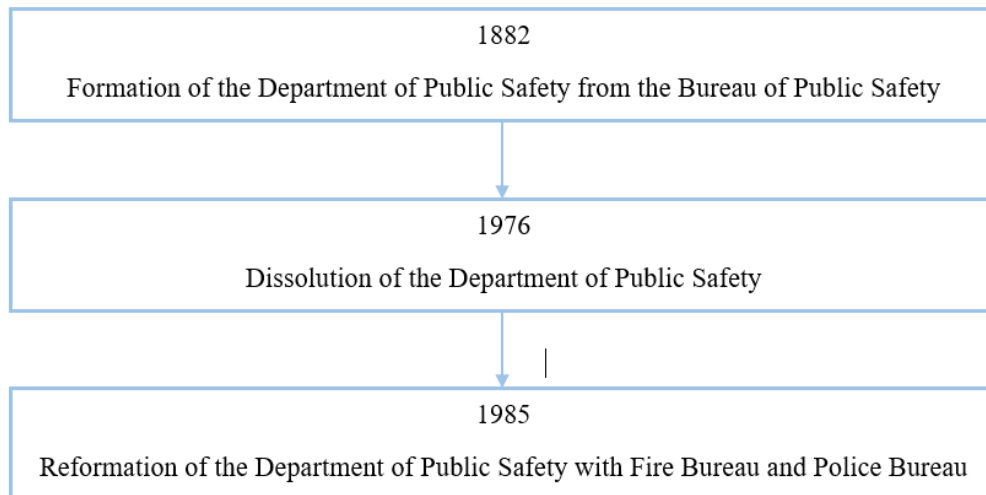
Also reviewed were the City of Pittsburgh's press release for the new contract with the Crossing Guards, City of Pittsburgh's website page City of Pittsburgh Code, PPS meeting minutes from 2003-2012 and July 27, 2022, PPS financial statements from 2003-2012, previous audits performed by the City Controller's office, SRTS website, AAA website, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website, DCED website, City of Pittsburgh municipal codes from 1882-1985, and official job descriptions related to the guard positions and guard supervisor.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **History and Establishment of Pittsburgh’s Department of Public Safety**

In 1976, the City of Pittsburgh’s Department of Public Safety was dissolved, and each Public Safety Bureau became its own department. In 1985, most of these departments were placed back under the re-established Department of Public Safety, starting with the Police and Fire Bureaus. Over time, the Department of Public Safety would also acquire the Department of Emergency Services and the Department of Animal Control under its purview and create the Bureau of Administration. These five bureaus (Police, Fire, Emergency Services, Animal Care & Control, and Administration) make up the current Department of Public Safety. Figure 1 shows the timeline of the Department of Public Safety.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Department of Public Safety Timeline**



Source: 1882-1985 City of Pittsburgh Municipal Codes

### **City of Pittsburgh’s School Crossing Guard History**

The first school crossing guard unit in Pittsburgh was established in 1947, a year after a 9-year-old student was fatally struck after getting off the bus in Lawrenceville. Since then, the City of Pittsburgh has always had school crossing guards.

#### Department of Public Safety

The City of Pittsburgh employed school crossing guards within the Bureau of Police from at least 1950, the first year with an available operating budget, to 2021. In 1950, school crossing guards were a part of the Police Bureau’s School Traffic Program. In 1960, the school crossing guards were changed to the Division of School Traffic program.

## Bureau of Police

The Bureau of Police has been reorganized several times since the 1980s and school crossing guards have repeatedly been moved within the bureau. In 1982, school crossing guards were located within the Administrative Branch of the Department of Police. In 1994, school crossing guards were a part of the Operations Division of the Bureau of Police. Three years later, school crossing guards were moved to the Special Deployment Division of the Bureau of Police.

**Finding:** The school crossing guards budgeted positions have been moved between the Bureau of Police and the Department of Public Safety several times over the last 40 years.

The first year the City of Pittsburgh included organizational charts in the budget was 2011. As shown in Figure 2, school crossing guards were consistently located in the Administration Branch of the Bureau of Police from at least 2011 until 2017. School crossing guards were moved from the Administration Branch to the Operations Branch of the Bureau of Police from 2018 until 2020. For the 2021 amended operating budget and the 2022 operating budget, school crossing guards were moved out of the Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Police and placed within its Bureau of Administration.

**FIGURE 2**  
**School Crossing Guards Budget Location**  
**Within the Department of Public Safety**  
**2021-Present**

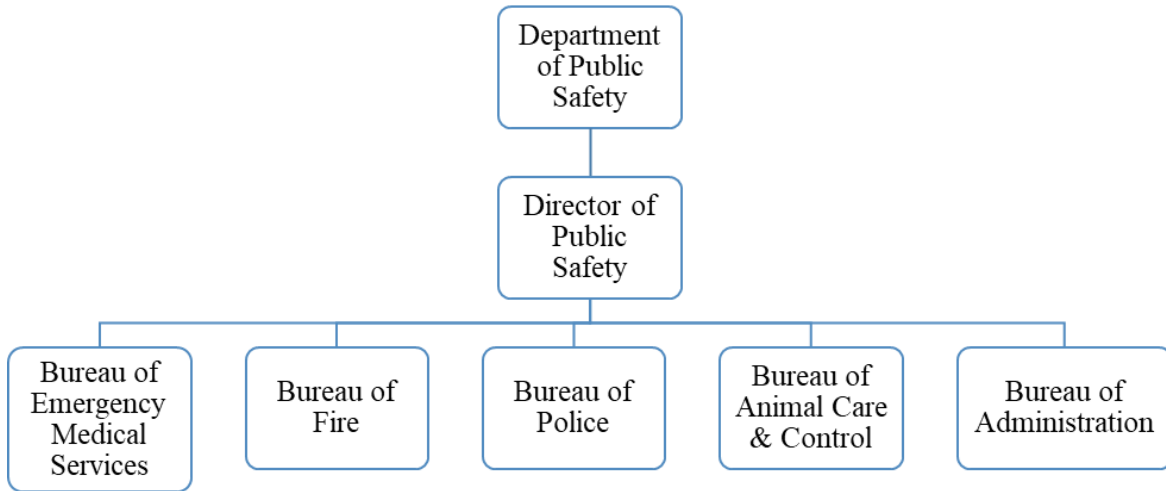


Source: 2011-2022 City of Pittsburgh Operating Budgets

Bureau of Administration

The following figures show the organizational chart for the Department of Public Safety and the location of school crossing guards from 2020-2022. Figure 3 shows the current 2022 Department of Public Safety’s organizational chart, including the five bureaus. School crossing guards are currently located in the Bureau of Administration.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Organizational Chart**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
**2022**



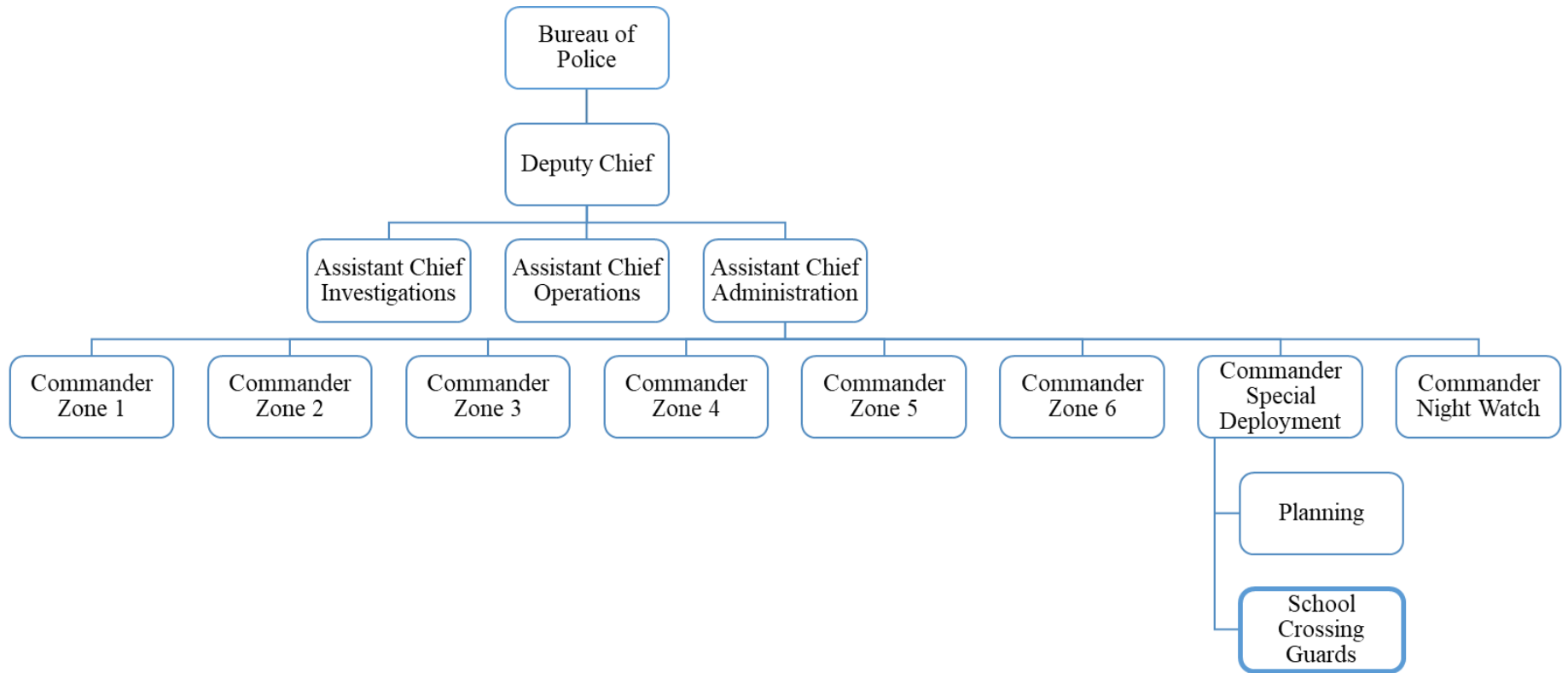
Source: 2022 City of Pittsburgh Operating Budget

In 2021, school crossing guards were not found in any organizational chart, even though they had been moved to the Bureau of Administration.

**Finding:** In 2021, school crossing guards were not shown in either the Bureau of Police or the Bureau of Administration organizational charts.

Figure 4 shows school crossing guards in the Bureau of Police organizational chart in 2020.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Organizational Chart**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
**Bureau of Police**  
**2020**

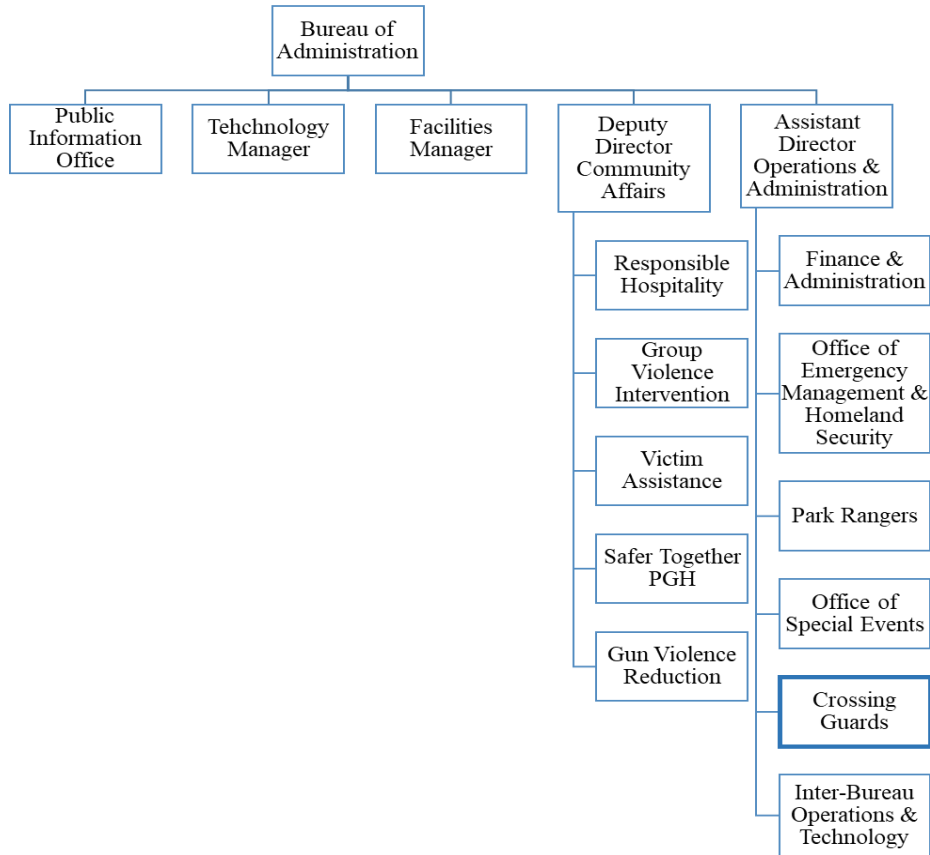


Source: 2020 City of Pittsburgh Operating Budget



Figure 5 shows school crossing guards under the Bureau of Administration in 2022.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Organizational Chart**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
**Bureau of Administration**  
**2022**



Source: 2022 City of Pittsburgh Operating Budget

**Finding:** In 2021, for the first time in the history of the School Crossing Guard Division, school crossing guards were moved out of the Bureau of Police to the Bureau of Administration. School crossing guards remain within the Department of Public Safety.

**Finding:** According to the Director of the Department of Public Safety, the school crossing guard division was moved to the Bureau of Administration for reasons pertaining to the reporting structure. Because school crossing guards have an independent reporting structure, similar to groups like animal control or park rangers, it did not make sense to have them report to the Bureau of Police.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Department of Public Safety administration should update the school crossing guards' job description to reflect that school crossing guards have been moved from the Police Bureau to the Administration Bureau within Public Safety.

### School Crossing Guard Supervisor Application

The school crossing guard office is located on the second floor of Police Zone 5 in Highland Park where the school crossing guard supervisor is also stationed. The current school crossing guard supervisor has been in the position since August 30, 2021. The previous supervisor retired after holding the position for 40 years. The City of Pittsburgh's job description lists the work experience of the crossing guard supervisor as:

**WORK EXPERIENCE:** The application must clearly show three (3) years of full-time experience as a School Crossing Guard with at least one (1) year of general supervisory experience. The application must also show one (1) year of administrative experience maintaining records, preparing reports and other related administrative duties.

**EQUIVALENCY:** None permitted for this position. Therefore, no education/training and/or work experience may be substituted toward the qualifying requirements listed above.

However, a questionnaire on the job announcement application asks the following question: "Do you have three (3) years of full-time experience as a School Crossing Guard or three (3) years of full-time related experience?"

## **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should update the job description for the school crossing guard supervisor to eliminate the equivalency statement. The application is inconsistent with the requirements for the position.

### **Duties**

School crossing guards assist pedestrians crossing at intersections to which they are assigned. According to the official job description obtained from the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Human Resources & Civil Service, a City of Pittsburgh's school crossing guard "... escorts children, persons with disabilities, elderly persons and other citizens across busy

intersections [and] directs traffic as necessary to prevent accidents.” Position duties are as follows:

1. Assists children and other members of the general public to cross streets at intersections.
2. Directs traffic to allow emergency vehicles to proceed through intersections; controls movement of traffic when traffic signals are inoperative.
3. Provides directions to motorists or pedestrians as requested.
4. Reports traffic violations to the City's Magistrates Court; testifies in court as required.
5. Monitors assigned intersections for criminal activity, traffic hazards or other dangers to children using the intersection and notifies or reports information to supervisor.
6. Submits accurate written reports for all accidents or other emergencies.
7. Assists and directs children who may be lost or injured.
8. Assists in training new school crossing guards.
9. May instruct children, either informally or in a classroom setting on pedestrian safety.
10. Performs activities and functions of related lower-level personnel, and such other related tasks and duties that are assigned or required.

Source: City of Pittsburgh School Crossing Guard Job Description

**Finding:** In the job description for school crossing guards identified by the City of Pittsburgh’s job announcements, newly hired school crossing guards are classified under, “Public Safety/Police Bureau/School Crossing Guard Section.”

Each year, guards bid on a specific intersection post. The school crossing guard supervisor assigns guards to posts based on bidding preference and seniority. Guards work at their post for six hours per day, five days per week. Shift times are 6:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. and afternoon shifts are 2:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Once assigned, guards are to report to their assigned post daily during the school year.

The first and last days for guard work are determined by school calendars and are different for each guard depending on which schools are nearest to their assigned intersection. Each year, the school crossing guard office gathers the calendars of every school that city students attend to determine when each intersection will require a school crossing guard. For example, for the 2022-2023 school year, charter schools will start the third week of August, private schools will start the fourth week of August, and PPS will start on August 29.

Some school crossing guards work posts that have public school children only, some have private school children only, and other are a mix of public and private school children. Over the 2021-2022 school year, there were three intersection posts where only private school children were crossing.

The school crossing guards' union contract stipulates that in the event there are more regular, full-time guards than available posts, the lowest-seniority guards without assigned crossings will instead be substitute guards. Over the scope of this audit, the school crossing guards have been significantly understaffed in comparison to available intersections and budgeted positions.

Especially when staffing levels are low, guards are assigned two intersections to cover during one shift—referred to as a 'split'. The guard will start their shift at one intersection near a school with an earlier start time, then move to another intersection near a school with a later start time and repeat the process in the afternoon. Split intersections accommodate PPS's three-tiered start times. All high schools and 6-12 schools have a start time of 7:15 a.m. PPS neighborhood schools start at 8:25 a.m. and magnet and English as a Second Language (ESL) schools start at 9:25 a.m.

Although not specifically required by their job description, according to the school crossing guard supervisor, guards often care for the children they see at their posts every day. Guards have brought coats to children without adequate winter clothing and waited at their posts for late buses to ensure that every child gets home safely. Guards also teach children about pedestrian safety and show them how to use pedestrian infrastructure, such as walk signal buttons. Because crossing guard posts are assigned based on seniority, most guards request and are assigned the same post every year. Children become familiar with their crossing guard and look forward to seeing them every day. In this way, the guards are also mentors and positive role models for schoolchildren.

## Secondary and Summer Employment

For additional pay, school crossing guards can provide pedestrian assistance for special events. These events include, but are not limited to, sporting events, concerts, community events and festivals, funeral services, parades, construction sites, and large city celebrations. Secondary employment is optional, and positions are awarded based on seniority. According to the crossing guard supervisor, about 26-27 guards work special events and the crossing guard division staffs 10-12 special events per month. There is no maximum number of special events that school crossing guards can work.

Special event employment was previously managed through an online software called Cover Your Assets (CYA); a company based in North Carolina with which the city had a contract. Police secondary employment was also managed through CYA. In November 2020, Rollkall, a Texas-based company, acquired CYA to merge the two companies. As of April 2022, the City of Pittsburgh has implemented RollKall. The company has an app that school crossing guards must download. School crossing guards use the app to check for open jobs and bid on special events, find out whether they have been awarded the position they bid on, and to clock in when they arrive at their corner for the event and clock out when they leave. Guards are paid for special events through the Special Events Trust Fund, which is discussed below.

School crossing guards work at least 180 days per year as crossing guards at their assigned post to accommodate PPS's school operations calendar, which dictates at least 180

school days of instructional learning per school year. Over the summer when school is not in session, guards have the option of working with the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Parks and Recreation as pool cashiers or with the summer food program. Parks and Recreation staff reach out to guards to see if they are interested in these positions, but guards must interview for them. According to the guard supervisor, five guards worked over the summer in 2021 and about 10 guards have expressed interest in working summer positions in 2022.

### **Crossing Guards Special Events Trust Fund**

City of Pittsburgh Resolution No. 106, enacted March 3, 2020, authorized and directed the City Controller to create the "Crossing Guards Special Events Trust Fund." According to the authorizing legislation, the fund is for school crossing guards' special events cost recovery, to cover premium pay reimbursement for school crossing guard personnel, and for administrative costs related to crossing guard secondary employment at special events. This fund is intended to provide a more efficient means for paying premium pay to school crossing guards working events as secondary employment and for other related administrative costs.

Prior to the creation of this trust fund, school crossing guards were paid out of the Police Secondary Employment Trust Fund when they worked secondary employment assignments at special events. Crossing guard special event pay transitioned from the Police Secondary Employment Trust Fund to the Crossing Guards Special Events Trust Fund in 2020 with the first payment made on October 23, 2020. Early in 2022, crossing guards were mistakenly paid out of the Police Secondary Employment Fund. However, Public Safety administration reported that the confusion regarding which Trust Fund the school crossing guards should be paid from was resolved. JDEdwards records show that in 2021, \$85,134.66 was expended through the Crossing Guards Special Events Trust Fund. Records also show that \$5,175.00 was expended in 2020 from the crossing guard trust fund.

### **Reporting Traffic Violations and Other Incidents**

When school crossing guards are at their assigned posts, they are responsible for monitoring the intersection for dangers to children and pedestrians and reporting traffic violations and criminal activity. All incidents are recorded in writing either at the time of the incident or after the guards' shift. Reports are filed in the school crossing guard office to be used if documentation is required for further investigation of an incident, accident, or emergency.

Guards report minor traffic violations, including a description of the incident and the car (make and model, license plate number, and driver description), to the crossing guard supervisor by phone. Sometimes the guard will take a written description at the scene and sometimes reports are accompanied by photos taken by bystanders. If the traffic violation is a moving violation (speeding in a school zone or running traffic lights or stop signs), the guard supervisor contacts the police traffic division to request motorcycle officers to the incident location. If the traffic violation is a car failing to stop for red flashing school bus lights, the school crossing guard supervisor also reports the description of the car to the police traffic division. Reports taken by

the crossing guard supervisor via phone are also filed in the school crossing guard office to be used if documentation is required for further investigation of an incident, accident, or emergency.

For more serious incidents requiring emergency response, such as traffic accidents or gunshots, school guards are provided a radio to communicate directly with police dispatch. Guards use the radios to quickly contact police, and police use the radios to keep guards informed during emergencies occurring near their intersections.

PPS entered into an agreement with a company called BusPatrol on March 23, 2022, to pilot a program to put cameras with artificial intelligence (AI) software on 20 school buses that will automatically ticket drivers who illegally pass stopped school buses. The three-month pilot program ran from March 31 through June 30, 2022, at no cost to the district. Between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 12<sup>th</sup>, there were 553 violations recorded with cameras on 19 of the buses.

It should be noted that on July 27, 2022, the PPS School Board voted to enter into a formal, five-year agreement with BusPatrol for the installation of AI cameras onto district buses. The agreement includes the installation, operation, and maintenance of the AI camera systems throughout the duration of the contract, which runs from July 28, 2022, through July 31, 2027. According to minutes from the July 27, 2022, School Board meeting, the costs associated with the agreement will be offset by ticketed revenue collected.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

The school crossing guard supervisor should implement a standardized accident report for crossing guards to use to document accidents and other incidents. Follow up protocols should also be written down to ensure compliance. Reports are currently kept on file at the crossing guard office in Zone 5. The school crossing guard supervisor should scan all reports that are being filed into a computer folder each day to keep a digital record. This folder should also be shared with Public Safety and the police.

Guards are sometimes required to testify in court about incidents that occur at or near their posts. The school crossing guard supervisor reported that the traffic police will have the school bus driver testify instead of the school crossing guard for incidents involving school buses. No guard was required to testify in court during the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Equipment**

School crossing guards are provided uniforms and equipment as follows: two shirts, two pairs of pants, one sweater, two caps (one winter and one summer), one parka, one raincoat, one high-visibility safety vest, one pair of boots, and two pairs of safety gloves (one winter and one summer). The crossing guard supervisor told the auditors that a whistle and a pair of white gloves adds an extra level of safety in the performance of their job duties. School crossing guards

are not provided either a whistle or a pair of white gloves. After two years of service, school crossing guards are provided with new uniforms to replace old ones.

**Finding:** School crossing guards are not provided either a whistle or a pair of white gloves which would improve job performance.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should provide school crossing guards with complete uniforms and all necessary equipment, including white gloves and whistle, to maximize their job performance.

In 2015, the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development published *The Crossing Guard Study*, which noted the protocol for a guard to respond to an emergency at their posted intersection was to contact 9-1-1 and then the guard supervisor. The supervisor would contact the needed resources and utilize a telephone tree to communicate the message to other guards. The study reported that the supervisor was often out working intersections and was not readily available to answer these calls.

School crossing guards are now provided Motorola radios for access to police dispatch in case of an emergency or criminal activities at their crossing. Crossing guards are assigned a police radio, extra battery, and a base charger after they become a regular guard. Guards keep the radio the whole year and return them at the end of each school year. Inventory was done in March 2022, and it was discovered that there had only been one radio not returned after a guard quit, and two radios that were not assigned could not be accounted for in the office.

**Finding:** Guards are provided radios to communicate with police dispatch in case of an emergency. This is a beneficial practice that promotes communication between school crossing guards and police, who are both responsible for public safety, and increases the safety of guards and pedestrians.

The crossing guard's union contract, discussed later in this audit, specifies that the city "will endeavor to establish an electronic communication system by which [guards] shall be notified of school-related emergencies which would be of importance to the safety of school children." The crossing guard supervisor stated that there is currently not an automated electronic communication system in place. Guards are made aware of weather-related emergencies via local news media. The school crossing guard supervisor is made aware of school closures by checking the PPS website and creating a list. According to the crossing guard supervisor, some private schools are particularly hard to get in contact with, as they are sometimes open when other schools are closed, either due to weather or holidays.

**Finding:** Per the guards' union contract, the city is responsible for establishing an electronic communication system to notify guards of school-related emergencies. The system has not been established.

**Finding:** Guards must monitor the news to be made aware of weather-related emergencies, and school websites for closures.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should work with the Department of Innovation and Performance to establish an electronic communication system as required by the guards' union contract.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should coordinate with local schools to add school crossing guards to the PPS automated electronic communication system and all private schools' electronic notification systems so that guards will receive real-time call and/or text updates regarding school closures, weather delays, or emergency situations. Mobile numbers can be entered by the schools.

**Training**

School Crossing Guards must be 18 years of age or older and possess a valid class C Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Operator's license. School Crossing Guards are responsible for maintaining residency within the City of Pittsburgh and all new hires must provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19.

According to Title 8 statute of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Bureau of Police is responsible for training school crossing guards. The Police Training Academy provides a CPR course, a course to help defuse drivers who do not obey the law, and observational skills training. Guards do not receive CPR certification from the course and are not required to retake it once completed. School crossing guards are trained how to be assertive in order to get cars to stop, especially in areas where cars may speed. School crossing guards are also trained on how to handle child luring issues, take descriptions of perpetrators in the event of an incident, and report traffic violations. Upon completion of the training, guards are provided with safety equipment by the Department of Public Safety.



## PA Act 153 Clearances Compliance Test

According to the February 2022 school crossing guards' job description, they are required to have a PA Class C driver's license and PA Act 153 clearance, both of which must be maintained throughout employment. This PA Act 153 clearance includes the following three background checks: Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History (PATCH) through the Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania Child Abuse History (PACA) through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and an FBI Criminal History Background Check (FBI fingerprint screening). These clearances require updating every 60 months (five years). According to the crossing guard supervisor, all school crossing guards have received their PA Act 153 certification and all clearances are current.

In order to verify that all guards meet these requirements, the auditors visited the guard office and conducted a compliance test for these PA Act 153 certifications and clearances with all 61 current school crossing guards and the one school crossing guard supervisor, as of June 2022. Upon review, the auditors found that 11 child abuse history clearances are not up to date: six clearances are missing and another five are outdated. Twelve PATCH criminal background checks are not up to date: ten are missing and two are outdated. Of the missing clearances, two PATCH clearances and three child abuse history clearances are for school crossing guards who have been recently hired and are still obtaining clearances. Seven school crossing guards (including two new hires) are missing or have expired clearances for both the PATCH and child abuse history check. No guards have completed FBI Criminal History Background Checks. The school crossing guard supervisor reported that guards have not been required to receive the FBI Criminal History clearance.

**Finding:** Eleven guards do not have current child abuse clearances and 12 guards do not have current criminal background checks.

**Finding:** City of Pittsburgh school crossing guards have not been systematically receiving and maintaining FBI Criminal History Background Checks, as required by Act 153.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should require school crossing guards to receive and keep current FBI Criminal History Background Checks, including fingerprinting, to comply with PA Act 153. The cost of the background check should be reimbursed by the City of Pittsburgh.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should track school crossing guards' clearance expiration dates and ensure that guards apply for renewed clearances at least 90 days prior to the expiration date. This practice will prevent outdated clearances and ensure all clearances are current.

According to the guards' union contract, the city has agreed to "cover the cost, either up front or through reimbursements, for all clearances and background checks guards are required by law to obtain as a condition of their employment." The crossing guard supervisor reported that school crossing guards are covering the cost of their own PA Act 153 clearances without reimbursement from the city.

**Finding:** School crossing guards are absorbing the fee to obtain or renew their PA Act 153 clearances.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should reimburse school crossing guards for all costs associated with receiving clearances and background checks as required under PA Act 153 as a condition of their employment and as stipulated by their union contract.

#### Staff Meetings

School crossing guards last held an in-person department-wide meeting in 2018. The department also held a more recent, virtual professional development seminar for all school crossing guards in 2021 to foster comradery between seasoned school crossing guards and new hires. This meeting was part of the City of Pittsburgh's SRTS program. There was also a professional development meeting on May 6, 2022, that focused on radio training, school guard procedures, school guard best practices, and team building exercises.

**Finding:** In interviews with current school crossing guards, it is evident that there is a high level of confusion and miscommunication regarding the benefits of the position. There is also uncertainty among school crossing guards regarding who they claim as their employer when filing for unemployment and when they are eligible for unemployment benefits. School crossing guards are ineligible for unemployment benefits over the summer if they are reasonably sure to be able to return to work the following fall.

## **RECOMMENDATION 10:**

At a minimum, an annual meeting for all school crossing guards should be held to update guards on any changes to work-related policies, benefits and procedures. This meeting could also be used for continuing professional development.

### School Crossing Guard Union

School crossing guards have been a part of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 192-B, since 1969. Prior to joining the union, school crossing guards were allowed to join the police union. The most recent contract between SEIU 192-B and the City of Pittsburgh, took effect January 1, 2020, and will remain in effect until December 31, 2024.

Union positions currently filled include a union president, vice president, secretary/treasurer, and one union steward. The current union president has been in the position since 2002. According to the union contract, the union has the right to appoint up to six union stewards. The crossing guard supervisor reported that the most recent crossing guard union meeting took place in person on Tuesday, June 14, 2022, during which several guards expressed interest in leadership positions.

The City Controller's Office did not have a copy of the union contract because the City Controller does not countersign union contracts. The auditors requested a copy of the contract from the City of Pittsburgh's Law Department but did not receive a response. The contract was ultimately provided by the Department of Public Safety.

### **Staffing**

The 2022 City of Pittsburgh Operating Budget allots for 81 regular, full-time school crossing guards and one guard supervisor. However, the number of positions budgeted is not necessarily reflective of actual staffing levels. As of June 2022, there are 61 school crossing guards and one school crossing guard supervisor. One of the school crossing guards works in the guard office and assists the guard supervisor with administrative tasks.

## **RECOMMENDATION 11:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should explore the need to reinstate the assistant crossing guard supervisor position to improve overall operations and efficiency of the crossing guard division.

Table 2 shows the number of crossing guard positions and actual staffing levels, including the guard supervisor, and the amount budgeted for school crossing guards over the past five years, from 2018 to 2022.

**TABLE 2**  
**Guard Positions and Salary Budget**  
**2018-2022**

Year	Actual Number of Guards Employed	Budgeted Number of Guard Positions	Percentage of Positions Filled	Total Budget
2018	86	104	82.7%	\$1,749,615
2019	89	103	86.4%	\$1,729,875
2020	79	103	76.7%	\$1,884,774
2021	75	82	91.5%	\$1,401,177
2022	62	82	75.6%	\$1,566,812

Source: Pittsburgh Operating Budgets 2018-2022; Department of Human Resources and Civil Service

The amount budgeted for school crossing guard salaries has declined by 10.4%, from \$1,749,615 in 2018 to \$1,566,812 in 2022. Over the same period, the total number of school crossing guard positions declined by 21.2%, from 104 guards in 2018 to 82 guards in 2022. In the 2021-2022 school year, five guards have retired.

Actual staffing levels of school crossing guards have also seen a decrease, from 86 school crossing guards in 2018 to 62 school crossing guards in 2022. This represents a 28% decrease in school crossing guards over the same time period.

**Finding:** At no point over the past five years, from 2018 to 2022, has the crossing guard division been fully staffed. Only 75.6% of school crossing guard positions are filled as of April 2022. Low staffing levels combined with a reduction in the number of crossing guard positions represents a significant threat to public safety.

#### School Guards Demographics

Of the 61 school crossing guards and one school crossing guard supervisor, 56 (90.3%) are female, six (9.7%) are male, 42 (67.7%) are white, and 20 (32.3%) are Black. Of the 56 female guards, 40 are white and 16 are Black. Of the six male guards, two are white and four are Black. As of May 2022, the average age of the school crossing guards is 59 years old.

Table 3 shows a breakdown of the number of years of service for the school crossing guards as of April 2022.

**TABLE 3  
Crossing Guard Staff Years of Service**

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>Number of Guards</b>
>1 - 4	13
5 - 9	16
10 - 19	11
20 - 29	17
30 - 40	5

Source: Department of Public Safety

Of the 61 school crossing guards and one school crossing guard supervisor, 22 (35.5%) have logged 20 or more years with the crossing guard division; 25.8% of guards have between 5 and 9 years of service and 20.1% of guards have four or fewer years of service.

**Finding:** The average age of school crossing guards is 59 years old and 35.5% of school crossing guards have logged 20 or more years of service, which indicates that a significant number of guards may be nearing retirement.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should make a concerted effort to hire additional school crossing guards. It could be beneficial to increase advertising for position openings at PPS school functions and with other audiences who might consider part-time work. It could also be beneficial to give high school guidance counselors job postings for school crossing guards since the minimum age requirement is 18 years old, as well as advertise to college students studying relevant fields such as early childhood education or social work. Additionally, instructions on how to apply for open school crossing guard positions should be posted on the Department of Public Safety’s website.

**Benefits and Pay Rates**

Benefits

The benefits for school crossing guards are as follows: life, health, dental, and vision insurance, becoming eligible for membership of the city’s municipal pension, tuition reimbursement, paid holidays, paid vacation, and personal days.

Guards are eligible for healthcare benefits after 90 days and can qualify for pension benefits by working at least 200 days per calendar year, as required by the Municipal Pension

Act of 1975. Guards work a minimum of 180 days over the school year; they can easily fulfill the extra 20 days needed for pension benefits with summer employment through the Department of Parks and Recreation. Working special events as secondary employment does not count towards the 200-day work requirement to qualify for pension benefits. According to the guard supervisor, five guards qualified for pension benefits in 2021. Guards earn three hours of personal time per month.

While it is rare, school crossing guards can receive paid overtime. Only two guards have worked more than the normal six-hour shift on three separate occasions because PPS had three ½ days in the schedule.

In the event of which schools are closed due to emergencies or weather conditions, guards are paid for that day and compensation is classified as a holiday payment. Guards have a minimum of 15 holiday compensation days. In the event the days are not exhausted, options are available to receive the monetary value of the remaining days or to take the days off.

According to Section 402.1(4) of the Unemployment Code of Pennsylvania, school crossing guards are ineligible for unemployment benefits during the period when schools are closed for summer, if they are reasonably assured that they will be able to return to work the following fall.

**Finding:** A 2006 case decision of the City of Pittsburgh, Department of Public Safety vs Unemployment Compensation, Board of Review established that City of Pittsburgh school crossing guards are employed by the City of Pittsburgh and not PPS. It also ruled that Pittsburgh school crossing guards were not employed by an educational service agency.

### Pay Rates

Guards are paid a daily rate, except for the crossing guard supervisor who is paid a yearly salary. All guards are paid every two weeks. Regular guards are probationary for the first six months of employment and are paid at an entry guard rate for the first 90 days, which is 6% less than the regular rate.

Currently, in 2022, school crossing guard daily pay rates range from \$87.45 to \$92.70 per day based on seniority, which is equivalent to \$14.58 to \$15.45 per hour. In 2022, the school crossing guard supervisor salary is \$65,072 annually and there are no assistant supervisors.

Table 4 shows the daily pay rates and yearly wage increases for regular and entry school crossing guards from 2020 to 2024 as described in the 2020-2024 SEIU 192-B contract.

**TABLE 4**  
**School Crossing Guard**  
**Daily Pay Rates and Wage Increases**  
**2020-2024**

Year	Daily Wage Rate Regular/Entry	Percentage Wage Increase
2020	\$80.70*/\$76.13	5%
2021	\$90.00/\$84.91	11.5%
2022	\$92.70/ \$87.45	3%
2023	\$95.48/\$90.08	3%
2024	\$98.35/\$92.78	3%

Source: SEIU 192-B Union Contract 2020-2024

\*Regular, guards hired before 1/1/05 were paid \$86.63 in 2020.

School crossing guards received a 5% raise in 2020. For 2021, the base wage for regular guards increased such that the daily rate was equivalent to \$15 per hour, an increase of 11.5%. In 2022, daily pay rates increased by 3%. Guards will also receive a 3% raise in 2023 and 2024, bringing the daily rate to the equivalent of \$16.39 per hour by 2024.

**Finding:** School crossing guard daily pay rates will increase by 22.9% from 2020 to 2024.

Although guard pay is increasing, it is low in comparison with other positions in the Department of Public Safety Bureau of Administration. The hourly rate for school crossing guards is \$15.45 per hour, while delivery drivers are paid \$23.90 per hour, laborers are paid \$21.97 per hour, and administrative assistants are paid a salary equivalent to \$18.63 per hour. All four positions qualify for benefits; these rates do not include the value of the benefits packages.

**Finding:** School crossing guard is one of the lowest paid permanent positions in the Department of Public Safety Bureau of Administration.

For similarity purposes, the auditors compared the approximate average total compensation of school crossing guards and lifeguards. School crossing guards and lifeguards are both responsible for the lives of others in the course of their jobs. Both positions are seasonal and have similar job qualifications and similarly rigorous training/certification requirements. School crossing guards qualify for benefits, but lifeguards do not. The city’s benefits department could not provide a breakdown of hourly benefits paid to school crossing guards. In order to calculate an estimated hourly value of the benefits package for school crossing guards, auditors obtained information from the Controller’s office Fiscal Focus database. School crossing guards are paid for six hours a day.

According to information available to the auditors, in 2020, the most recent year for which the information was available, the guards’ benefits package had an approximate hourly

value of \$4.03. The crossing guards' average hourly pay rate in 2020 was \$13.53, bringing school crossing guards' total average approximate hourly compensation in 2020 to \$17.56. In 2020, lifeguards made an average of \$11.95 per hour.

School crossing guards' average hourly pay rate in 2022 is \$15.01. Using the value of the benefits package in 2020, the crossing guards' total average hourly compensation in 2022 is approximately \$19.04. In response to a staffing shortage, in 2022, lifeguard hourly pay was increased to an average rate of \$17.25 per hour.

**Finding:** Between 2020 and 2022, lifeguard average total compensation has increased by 44.4% while crossing guard average total compensation has increased by 8.4%.

According to salary information provided by the Law Department, the median base salary for part-time and full-time city-employed men in 2021 was 35% higher than the median for part-time and full-time city-employed women. However, among city employees outside of public safety, the median base salary for women was \$1,094.70, or 2.3%, higher than that of men. This indicates that the city-wide gender pay gap is being driven by a gender pay gap in public safety. In the Department of Public Safety, the median base salary for men is 7.7% higher than the median base salary for women. Given that 90.3% of the crossing guard staff are women, low crossing guard pay is a contributor to the public safety and city-wide gender pay gap.

**Finding:** Low crossing guard pay is contributing to the gender pay gap in the Department of Public Safety.

### **RECOMMENDATION 13:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should explore increasing school crossing guards' daily pay rates to help close the gender pay gap and increase hiring and retention of school crossing guards. This may help alleviate the low staffing levels and boost the coverage of school crossing guards, increasing public safety.

When school crossing guards work over the summer, they are paid \$14 per hour as pool cashiers or \$10-\$12 per hour with the summer food program. When guards work special events, they are paid \$30 per hour for a minimum of four hours.

### **Deployment of School Crossing Guards**

According to the Safe Roads to School (SRTS) national organization, there are no federal criteria for identifying which street crossings in a community require a school crossing guard but does provide guidance. Pennsylvania has no state law governing the placement of school crossing guards. The auditors requested information from the City of Pittsburgh's Law



Department regarding laws pertaining to school crossing guards but did not receive a reply. The only legislation governing school crossing guards of which the Department of Public Safety is aware is City of Pittsburgh Resolution 106 of 2020, which created the Crossing Guards Special Events Trust Fund, discussed later in this audit.

The current list of intersections where school crossing guards are stationed was determined by the previous crossing guard supervisor. There are 67 intersections where guards are stationed, of which six are split, meaning that a guard works one intersection then commutes to a second intersection. There are 19 additional intersections identified as needing a guard but where a guard is not stationed due to low staffing levels. Currently there are three non-public school crossings: S. Dallas/Forbes Ave, Forbes Ave/Denniston St and Hobart/Wightman St.

**Finding:** Low staffing levels prevent the crossing guard division from fully staffing all intersections identified as needing a crossing guard.

### Intersection Danger Rankings

The previous school crossing guard supervisor had 40 years of experience and used their judgment to determine which intersections throughout the city needed a school crossing guard. The current supervisor, hired in 2021, was advised to reevaluate all stationed intersections.

The current school crossing guard supervisor and her clerical assistant (a school crossing guard assigned in the office) worked with the SRTS coordinator in DOMI to evaluate and construct a criterion for determining which corners the school crossing guards need to patrol. Important criteria were developed to determine which city intersections require a crossing guard. According to the school crossing guard supervisor, the following elements align with SRTS guidelines, and make up the criteria:

- Traffic Signals
- Stop Signs
- High Volume of Traffic
- Divided Road
- Blind Bend
- Crest of a Hill
- Cross Walks
- Stop Signs
- Speed Limit
- School Zone
- Walk Signs
- Business or Residential
- 4- or 5-Way Intersection
- Multiple Lanes
- Pedestrian Traffic
- Truck Traffic
- Turning Lanes
- Fire, Medic, & Police Traffic
- 311 Data

### **RECOMMENDATION 14:**

The school crossing guard supervisor should consider additional criteria to the SRTS guidelines in evaluating intersections including: the number of students, pedestrians and buses

that drop off/pick up, the number of vehicle accidents, and the number of incident reports on file at intersections.

The auditors discovered that there is no standardization for determining which intersections constitute as a one (1) most dangerous versus a three (3) least dangerous danger ranking. Presently, intersections are stationed according to personal knowledge from the current supervisor, as the supervisor has worked at every crossing. It is important to note that every corner is different, and has multiple factors determining the danger ranking, and if a crossing guard will need to be stationed there.

**Finding:** The current school crossing guard supervisor has developed a new list of criteria for determining where school crossing guards should be stationed but has not implemented it yet due to it being unclear how to determine the danger ranking.

**Finding:** The volume of vehicle accidents is not one of the criteria to determine the danger ranking of an intersection.

### **RECOMMENDATION 15:**

The new criteria for evaluating intersections should be weighted to determine a ranking system to create a list of all high-volume, dangerous city intersections where school crossing guards should be stationed. This would create a more consistent evaluation of where school crossing guards are needed throughout the city.

The crossing guard supervisor's last updated map was in 2015 detailing where school crossing guards are stationed. This has made it difficult to determine where school crossing guards should be placed, as there is no updated data of where school crossing guards are already stationed.

In the supervisor's reevaluation of different streets, Glennwood and Mansion, in Homewood, was listed as a three (3) danger ranking, but it was found particularly dangerous and was reevaluated to a one (1) danger ranking. A crossing guard retired, leaving Homewood with only one crossing guard. The school crossing guard supervisor has been in contact with PPS to change the school bus stop from the retired guard's stop to the stop where there is still a school crossing guard.

There has been more of an effort to change bus stop locations to crossings with guards, as the staffing shortage will not allow all guards to be at all bus stops. The supervisor has also been in contact with DOMI to install a guardrail at one intersection where a lot of students are picked up. The crossing guard supervisor told the auditors an option for Homewood's crossing guard

vacancy is to create a triangle of guards in the neighborhood. This solution would only be possible with more school crossing guards hired.

With many guards retiring, street crossings have not been covered. One corner near a Catholic school was listed as a covered corner, but the guard retired. The principal filled in as a temporary guard, wearing a bright vest, but cars were not stopping for them. Guards are trained to be assertive with traffic, and therefore need to be assigned to crossings like this.

**Finding:** The crossing guard supervisor does not have an updated map to determine where school crossing guards are stationed.

**RECOMMENDATION 16:**

A map detailing where school crossing guards are stationed, the danger ranking, and volume of traffic should be created, published, and updated every year. The map should be on the Department of Public Safety’s website and shared with all Pittsburgh schools for their distribution as well.

School crossing guards record the activity at their crossing at the beginning of the school year and update if any activity changes throughout the year. Based on this data provided by the school crossing guard supervisor, the auditors estimated that 5,000 students use 67 intersections stationed with school crossing guards for the school year 2021-2022. Table 5 shows the distribution of school crossing guard posts to dangerous intersections, as well as the estimated average total number of students who cross intersections with each danger ranking. The number of crossings that are ranked ‘2’ has 1,119 students at 15 crossings and crossings ranked ‘3’ or the least dangerous have 250 students crossing at 9 intersections.

**TABLE 5**  
**Total Number of Crossing Guard Posts**  
**Per Danger Ranking**  
**2021-2022**

Danger Rating	Total Number of Crossings	Total Number of Students
1	43	3,621*
2	15	1,119*
3	9	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>4,990*</b>

Source: Department of Public Safety

\*Estimated based on averages

The auditors received a list of street names and crossings with the highest volume of students at intersections from the current crossing guard supervisor. Many of these streets and intersections are in Squirrel Hill.

Table 6 shows the intersections where 100+ students cross. Of those crossings, 43 are ranked '1' for most dangerous, with 3,621 students crossing those intersections. The full table is listed in the appendix.

**TABLE 6**  
**Highest Volume of Student Crossing**  
**Intersections in Pittsburgh**  
**2021-2022**

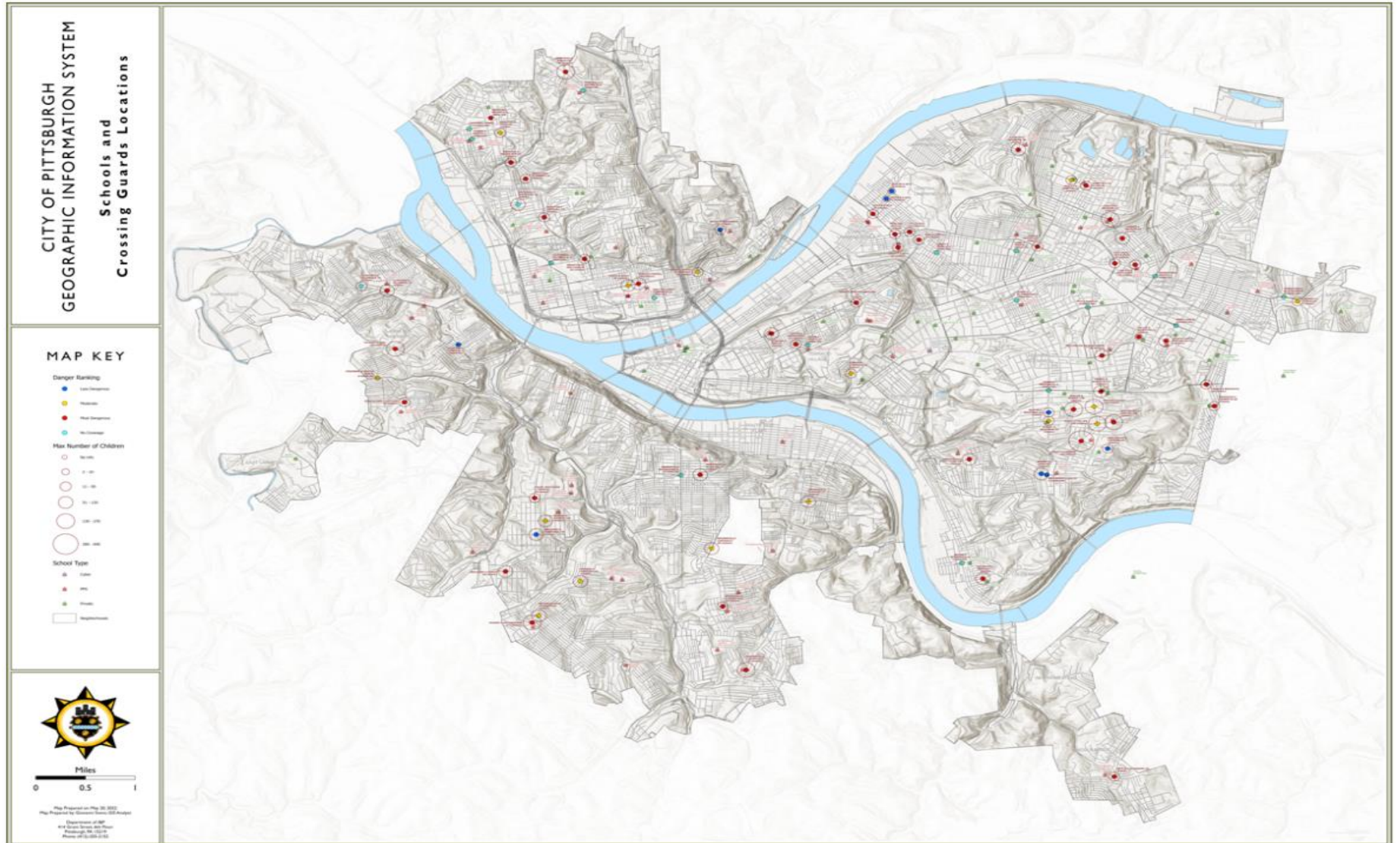
Street Names/Crossings	Danger Rank	Number of Students who use the Intersection
Shady and Forward	1	836
Brownsville and Becks Run	1	256+
Pioneer and Woodburn	1	215
Beechwood and Phillips	1	200
Beacon and Murray	1	196+
Stanton and Meadow	1	167
Steuban and Obey	1	167
Perrysville and Bascom	1	166
North and Federal	1	100
Shay and Phillips	2	265
Beacon and Shady (PM Only)	2	150/160
Pioneer and Dunster	2	105
Sebring and Dagmar	2	100/200
Waltz-Homer and Damas	3	100
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>*3,078</b>

Source: Department of Public Safety

\*Estimated based on averages

The current guard posts are in the process of being evaluated by the crossing guard supervisor to ensure that intersections are prioritized according to the newly developed criteria. Figure 6 is a map of the current guard postings created by the auditors showing the danger ranking and volume of students crossing at each intersection.

**FIGURE 6**  
**Map of School Crossing Guard Postings**  
**By Danger Rank and Volume of Student Crossing**



Source: City of Pittsburgh Department of Innovation and Performance

## Pittsburgh Schools and Enrollment

Pittsburgh Public Schools is the only school district that the City of Pittsburgh school crossing guards serve. However, PPS is responsible for transporting students who are city residents to the nonpublic or charter school of their choice located within a 10-mile radius of the city limits, and school crossing guards are responsible for anyone crossing their assigned intersection. Children attending school in the city, whether it be public, private, charter, or religious, have access to city school crossing guards. A full list of the 60 non-PPS schools serviced by school crossing guards is included in the appendix.

For the years 2000, 2010, and 2020, the auditors obtained information on the total number of K-12 students in the city from the Decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS). The number of non-PPS students was calculated by subtracting the number of PPS students from the total number of K-12 students.

For 2022 data, the auditors requested and received a list of non-PPS schools that Pittsburgh children attend from the crossing guard supervisor. The auditors conducted research and identified the schools located within the city limits. Each school was contacted to provide student enrollment figures as of May 2022. PPS enrollment for 2022 was added to the total non-PPS student enrollment to calculate the total number of K-12 students in 2022.

Table 7 shows the number of students enrolled in PPS schools and non-PPS schools alongside the total number of city students enrolled in any school from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**TABLE 7**  
**Total Number of K-12 Students and**  
**Number of Students Enrolled in PPS and Non-PPS**  
**in the City of Pittsburgh**

Year	All K-12 Students	PPS Students	Percentage of PPS Students	Non-PPS Students	Percentage of Non-PPS Students
2000	50,034	38,560	77.1%	11,474	22.9%
2010	37,742	27,982	74.1%	9,760	25.9%
2020	29,880	21,407	71.6%	8,473	28.4%
2022	31,867	20,350	63.9%	11,517	36.1%

Source: Decennial Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 and 2020; PPS

**Finding:** In 2022, there are 31,867 K-12 students in Pittsburgh; 63.9% of students were enrolled in PPS schools and 36.1% were enrolled in other schools.

The number of school crossing guards has declined at a faster rate than the number of students in the city. Table 8 shows the number of crossing guard positions budgeted in 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2022 alongside the total number of children in Pittsburgh enrolled in public or private schools from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**TABLE 8**  
**Budgeted Crossing Guard Positions and Number of K-12 Students**  
**2000-March 2022**

Year	Number of Guard Positions	Guard Positions Percentage Change	Total Number of K-12 Students	Student Percentage Change	Student-to-Guard Ratio
2000	208	-	50,034	-	241:1
2010	134	-35.6%	37,742	-25.6%	282:1
2020	103	-23.1%	29,880	-20.8%	290:1
2022	82	-20.2%	31,867	6.24	389:1

Source: Decennial Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010 and 2020; City of Pittsburgh Office of the City Controller; City of Pittsburgh Operating Budgets 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2022; PPS Administration

Between 2000 and 2022, the number of budgeted school crossing guards declined by 60.6%, while the number of K-12 students declined by 36.3%. The student-to-guard ratio increased from one crossing guard for every 241 students in 2000 to one crossing guard for every 389 students in 2022.

**Finding:** Between 2020 and 2022, the number of budgeted school crossing guards declined by 20.2%, from 103 guards in 2020 to 82 guards in 2022. The student-to-crossing guard ratio increased from one guard for every 290 students in 2020 to one guard for every 389 students in 2022.

**RECOMMENDATION 17:**

The student-to-guard ratio is a good indicator of whether staffing levels are sufficient to protect children walking to school. The Public Safety Bureau of Administration should identify an ideal ratio and increase the number of guards hired to ensure full post coverage and utilize the allocated budget.

PPS does not employ crossing guards or provide crossing guard services. Because PPS does not provide crossing guards, municipalities in or serviced by the PPS school district must either provide their own crossing guards or go without crossing guards. The City of Pittsburgh,



which houses the majority of the PPS school district, and the Borough of Wilkinsburg, whose middle and high school students attend PPS schools, provide their own crossing guards. Mt. Oliver Borough, which has a contract with the PPS school district, does not provide crossing guard services. The auditors were unable to review a copy of the contract between Mt. Oliver Borough and PPS because PPS was unable to produce a copy.

The City of Pittsburgh provides Emergency Medical Service to Mt. Oliver Borough via a shared services agreement. To the extent that the city has an interest in the opportunity to continue this intergovernmental cooperation and regionalization of municipal services, the city could extend an offer of crossing guard services to Mount Oliver via a similar shared services agreement.

### **RECOMMENDATION 18:**

The Public Safety administration should work with the City of Pittsburgh's Law Department to consider offering school crossing guard services to the Borough of Mt. Oliver. This could be done via a shared services agreement similar to the agreement for EMS already in place.

### **Pittsburgh Public School Funding**

PPS does not currently contribute to the cost of the school crossing guards provided by the city; however, it has done so in the past when it appeared the city would no longer provide crossing guards. The City of Pittsburgh filed for Act 47 in December 2003, which formally declared the city financially distressed. Financially distressed municipalities are eligible to receive resources and funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and are subject to various restrictions, such as a decreased capacity to incur debt and oversight board(s). The city remained in Act 47 until February 2018.

The DCED created a five-year plan for economic recovery for the city. Having Act 47 in place, school crossing guards hired after 2005 were considered part-time employees and experienced reductions in pay, benefit, and retirement benefits.

Some school crossing guards were laid off in 2003 as part of a larger package of budget cuts driven by Pittsburgh entering Act 47. As noted in a 2003 Pittsburgh Tribune-Review article by Maggi Newhouse, Pittsburgh was one of only four municipalities in Pennsylvania that paid the entire share of costs for school crossing guards. "Of the 54 other municipalities with school crossing guards, 38 municipalities and school districts share the cost, and 16 school districts alone pay the cost."



After the City entered Act 47, the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education provided partial funding for school crossing guards. The PPS school board passed a resolution on June 22, 2004, directing PPS to share 50% of the costs of school crossing guards with the city for the period of August 2004 through December 31, 2004. Without such an agreement, due to Act 47, the city would have eliminated the entire school crossing guard department.

In the 2004 city operating budget, \$2,097,313 was budgeted for school crossing guard salaries. The calculation for PPS’s portion of the costs for the five months between August and December of 2004 is not clear. A review of available PPS Financial Statements by the auditors revealed three payments for school crossing guards under the expenditure category “Purchased Professional Services”: \$1,226,417.81 in 2004, \$766,349.38 in 2005, and \$500,000 in 2008. The three payments totaled \$2,492,767.19, as seen in Table 9.

The City’s operating budgets show that payments were received from PPS for school crossing guards in 2005 in the amount of \$766,349 and 2008 in the amount of \$278,900 for a total of \$1,045,249. This was \$1,447,518.19 less than the total payments for school crossing guards reflected in PPS financial statements during the same period. The auditors were unable to locate the remaining \$1,447,518.19 in city records from the budgets, financial statements, Finance Department, or JDEdwards accounting system. JDEdwards accounting system was implemented in 2011 and would not contain this information from 2004, 2005, or 2008. According to the Director of Finance, these payments also could not be verified in the current accounting system. It is unclear whether the payments were sent to the city.

**TABLE 9**  
**Budgeted and Actual Payments**  
**from Pittsburgh Public Schools District**  
**for School Crossing Guards**  
**2004-2013**

Year	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	
	City Operating Budget- PPS Projected Payments	City Operating Budget-Payments Received from PPS	PPS Financial Statements- Recorded Payments to the City
2004	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$1,226,417.81
2005	\$1,750,000	\$766,349	\$766,349.38
2006	\$0	\$0	\$0
2007	\$1,750,000	\$0	\$0
2008	\$500,000	\$278,900	\$500,000
2009	\$500,000	\$0	\$0
2010	\$500,000	\$0	\$0
2011	\$1,813,700	\$0	\$0
2012	\$500,000	\$0	\$0
2013	\$500,000	\$0	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,813,700</b>	<b>\$1,045,249</b>	<b>\$2,492,767.19</b>

Source: 2004-2013 City of Pittsburgh Operating Budgets; PPS Financial Statements 2004-2013

**Finding:** It is unclear from the city operating budget and available records whether these funds were applied to school crossing guard costs, as they are recorded in general fund revenues but not in the Bureau of Police operating budgets.

**RECOMMENDATION 19:**

The City of Pittsburgh should consider sharing funding of school crossing guards with PPS and private schools serviced by school crossing guards.

**Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities**

A 2021 report conducted by the Governors Highway Safety Association includes national pedestrian fatalities from data provided by each state. There has been a steady increase in traffic accidents involving pedestrian fatalities from 2010 – 2021. Pennsylvania saw an increase in pedestrian fatalities from 146 in 2020 to 186 in 2021 or an increase of 24.4%. Pennsylvania also ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the difference between pedestrian fatalities between 2020 – 2021. According to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 2021 could be the largest reported increase in pedestrian fatalities across the nation in 40 years.

The City of Pittsburgh conducted a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan in 2021, which details that most pedestrian crashes occurred near a signalized intersection, where there is more pedestrian activity overall. The report advises the city to improve sidewalk, crossings, and educate the neighborhoods and communities.

Speeding related pedestrian fatalities among children ages 15 and younger have more than doubled from 5.8% in 2018 to 11.9% in 2020. These fatalities have happened mostly on weekdays during daylight hours. This suggests that these fatalities happened when children were traveling to and from school and after-school programs. While many schools were in lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and children were learning remotely, this also implies that children were going outside not in controlled environments, increasing the chances of traffic accidents.

**Finding:** The City did not consider school crossing guards in the pedestrian safety action plan. School crossing guards would cost less than implement capital projects.

**RECOMMENDATION 20:**

Increasing the size of the school crossing guard staff and posting them at high-traffic intersections may decrease the number of pedestrian injuries and fatalities. School crossing

guards could be stationed at dangerous intersections as a stopgap measure before traffic calming capital projects can be undertaken to help decrease pedestrian fatalities.

### **School Crossing Guard Injuries**

Information detailing school crossing guards' injuries from 2017-2022 was received from the school crossing guard supervisor. There are currently 14 closed and 1 open crossing guard work-related injury cases from 2019 to date.

Most injuries are caused by falls. The causes of the falls vary, including slipping on ice, wet leaves, tripping over a cone, slipping on wet bricks, falling into a hole, and losing footing. According to the crossing guard supervisor, ice is the guards' biggest challenge. Sidewalks at posts are sometimes icy and snowplows leave large piles of snow that freeze before guards arrive at their posts in the morning. The guard supervisor must call 311 to have snow and ice cleared by the Department of Public Works.

**Finding:** The guard supervisor must call 311 to have snow and ice at guard posts cleared by public works.

The workers' compensation program of the crossing guard division is self-insured based on necessity funds are paid to the claimant in indemnity payments or to medical providers for their services. Five of the fifteen injury cases required workers' compensation; those amounts are as follows: \$1,056.53, \$7,015.69, \$4,971.70, and \$4,413.45. There have been no work-related fatalities.

One claim was made in 2017 totaling \$127,135.07 which was an outlier from all the other claims. (The full list of injuries from 2017 – 2022 is listed in the appendix.) Consequently, the auditors decided to exclude the years 2017 and 2018 and only examine school crossing guards' injuries reported for the past three years (January 2019-March 2022). Table 10 shows school crossing guards reported work-related incidents from 2019 to March 2022, including, dates, descriptions, and workers' compensation allocations or payments. The second column specifies the workers' compensation claim and the abbreviations are as follows: IN = Incident Only (no medical treatment, no indemnity paid), M = Medical Only (medical treatment received but no restrictions to returning to full-duty), R = Restricted/Transitional Duty (medical treatment received but an employee can be accommodated with those restrictions, thus no indemnity paid in most cases), and LT = Lost Time (medical treatment received and medical restrictions are too severe for them to return to full duty thus the employees surpassed the 7-day off work period, initiating indemnity payments).

**TABLE 10**  
**School Crossing Guard Injuries**  
**2019-March 2022**

<b>Date of Injury</b>	<b>Claim Type</b>	<b>Injury Description</b>	<b>Status Of Claim</b>	<b>Claim Payment Via Workers' Compensation</b>
02/13/2019	IN	L knee, hip contusion/struck by motor vehicle	closed	\$0.00
08/21/2019	M	L forearm bee sting/crossing students	closed	\$1,056.53
09/18/2019	LT	R ankle fracture/at crosswalk, lost footing-fell	closed	\$7,015.69
10/06/2019	IN	Headache-sick/Crossing pedestrian's-football game	closed	\$0.00
10/10/2019	IN	R hand, arm contusion/Stopping traffic-bumped by car	closed	\$0.00
12/17/2019	IN	R elbow, R hip contusion/Slip-fell on wet bricks	closed	\$0.00
01/17/2020	LT	Low back contusion/slipped and fell on ice	closed	\$4,971.70
02/26/2020	LT	R/L hand, knee contusions/stepped into hole-fell	closed	\$4,413.45
11/9/2020	IN	No physical injuries/ (confidential incident)	closed	\$0.00
09/16/2021	IN	Back contusion, R elbow abrasion/dizzy fell, hit bench	closed	\$0.00
09/17/2021	IN	R arm puncture/Bee stings to arm	closed	\$0.00
09/21/2021	IN	R elbow, R knee, L ankle contusion/trip-fell over cone	closed	\$0.00
11/05/2021	IN	R knee, R leg strain/Slip-fell on leaves	closed	\$0.00
01/20/2022	LT	L knee, R side of body contusion/Slip-fall on ice	open	\$2,148.19
3/7/2022	IN	R knee strain/rushing to stop oncoming car	closed	\$0.00
			<b>Total</b>	<b>\$19,605.56</b>

Source: Department of Public Safety Crossing Guard Division

**Finding:** Seven of those closed injury cases were due to slips and falls while at the post. The total worker’s compensation was \$19,605.56 from 2019 – 2022. There is one open injury case in which \$2,148.19 has been paid out to date, with \$4,000 reserved.

**RECOMMENDATION 21:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should work with the Department of Public Works to prioritize crossing guard posts for salting/snow removal and providing other services to well-traveled city intersections. Laborer workers should be able to service school crossing guard posts corresponding to the neighborhood/Public Works Division to which they are already assigned.

**311 Response Center**

The 311 Response Center communication system is a hotline for City of Pittsburgh residents to call about non-emergency questions and concerns. People can call and talk to a live operator, fill out an online request form, or use the myBurgh app, to report problems and ask questions about the community. According to the City’s 311 website, there is an older option called the 311 TeleTypeWriter. This device is used for community members who are hard of hearing or have a speech impairment. The device is rarely used, as those with disabilities can send emails to the 311 Center. Occasionally, community members put in requests for school crossing guards to be stationed at certain crossings. The 311 Response Center sends ‘crossing guard-related’ 311 calls directly to the school crossing guard supervisor.

The Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center records 311 calls from the City of Pittsburgh; there were 66 requests in 2017 and 44 requests in 2018 for school crossing guards. The Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center does not specify why the requests were called in and has not been updated since 2018. The City of Pittsburgh has a website logging the top 50 311 service requests. In 2022 all requests have increased 35.24% from 2021.

The School Crossing Guard office has logged 311 school crossing guard request calls from August 2015–April 2022. There have been nine calls logged for 2022 and 43 calls for 2021. Table 11 below lists the number of calls per zip code in 2021–2022. A list of 311 calls per neighborhood can be found in the appendix.

**TABLE 11**  
**311 Phone Call Requests**  
**per Zip Code**  
**2021–March 2022**

Zip Code	Number of Calls
15206	10
15205	9
15216	6
15217	4
15203	3
15208	3
15220	3
15201	2
15204	2
15211	2
15212	2
15219	2
15226	2
15227	2
15112	1
15210	1
15224	1
15232	1
15234	1
15235	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>

Source: School Crossing Guards Office

The auditors were contacted by a private school located in the city about the lack of a school crossing guard near the school. The school official indicated that the school had previously attempted to request school crossing guard services but had not been successful. According to the school crossing guard supervisor, no 311 data or other records exist to indicate that a school crossing guard had been requested for intersections near the private school.

**Finding:** A private school in the city attempted to have a school crossing guard stationed near the school, but no relevant 311 requests could be located.

**Finding:** Information relating to requests for school crossing guards has been inconsistently logged.

**RECOMMENDATION 22:**

Annually, the Public Safety administration should notify all schools in Pittsburgh that requests for a school crossing guard can be made via a 311 phone call. Additionally, instructions for parents and city residents on how to request a school crossing guard should be posted on the Department of Public Safety’s website along with an online submission form.

**Bureau of Police Budget**

The Bureau of Police’s total operating budget in 2020 was \$114,787,000 and \$120,361,227 in 2022. In two years, the police budget increased by \$5,574,227 (4.86%) despite the elimination of all 82 crossing guard positions, as shown in Table 12.

**TABLE 12**  
**Bureau of Police and Bureau of Administration**  
**Operating Budget Totals**  
**2012-2022**

<b>Budget Year</b>	<b>Bureau of Police Total Operating Budget</b>	<b>Bureau of Administration Total Operating Budget</b>
<b>2012</b>	\$70,199,937	\$2,498,401
<b>2013</b>	\$71,543,006	\$2,538,513
<b>2014</b>	\$72,346,870	\$2,881,941
<b>2015</b>	\$76,815,050	\$2,877,539
<b>2016</b>	\$93,423,344	\$2,171,165
<b>2017</b>	\$98,453,963	\$6,660,104
<b>2018</b>	\$100,261,932	\$8,974,297
<b>2019</b>	\$104,545,326	\$9,503,808
<b>2020</b>	\$114,787,000	\$11,820,429
<b>2021</b>	\$115,132,994	\$17,320,925
<b>2022</b>	\$120,361,227	\$11,881,226

Source: City of Pittsburgh Operating Budgets 2012-2020 and 2022;  
2021 Amended Operating Budget

**Finding:** Moving the school crossing guards to the Bureau of Administration did not decrease the Bureau of Police budget.

**Finding:** It is unlikely that an attempt to create a perception of defunding the Bureau of Police was the sole consideration of moving the budget for school crossing guards.

## **Impact of COVID-19**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) appeared in the United States in January 2020 in the northeast. As the increase in cases caused public health concerns, the U.S. Department of Education had to determine if it was safe for schools across the country to stay open. On March 13, 2020, Pittsburgh Public Schools discontinued in class instruction, and initiated the virtual learning model. On April 9, 2020, Pennsylvania's Governor ordered the suspension of all in-person classes for the remainder of the school year, and, instead, classes were to be completed virtually.

The spring and summer of 2020 did not see a decrease in COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and left teachers, parents, and the public, concerned with the reopening of schools nationally. Pittsburgh Public Schools remained closed, and students attended virtual learning for the remainder of calendar year 2020. An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for the prevention of coronavirus was issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for children ages 16 years and older on December 11, 2020. The option of receiving the vaccines were left to the discretion of the parents and were not mandated for students to return to in person learning once it became available.

During this time, school crossing guards were paid from March 19, 2020, until June 19, 2020, and school crossing guards who normally worked over the course of the summer were eligible for unemployment benefits from June 2020 until August of 2020. By the fall of 2020, school crossing guards returned to working their posts as normal due the start of in-person classes for some private schools.

Pittsburgh Public Schools were slated to reopen on January 4, 2021, once students returned from their winter break. However, the number of elevated cases remained a concern, and this prevented schools from reopening for in person instruction during the third quarter, which is January through March of the 2020-2021 school year. The authorization for the COVID vaccine was expanded to children ages 12–15 on May 10, 2021.

When Pittsburgh's restrictions began to ease in the spring of 2021, many teachers and academic administrators expected to return to in-person teaching; however, a deficit in transportation prevented full in person attendance. Hybrid learning became necessary among school districts across the country and was adopted by PPS as an option for students. Pittsburgh Public Schools utilized a cohort scheduling model to divide student groups for in person or virtual learning based off comfortability on April 6, 2021.

Pittsburgh Public Schools made the decision to change the start date for the 2021–2022 school year, as the bus driver shortage was still hurting the schools, and to lessen the strain of wearing masks on hot days. The district changed the start date to September 3, 2021, and the school year concluded on June 16, 2022. This did not affect school crossing guards, as charter and private schools in the city started in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August. PPS were some of the last schools to start and finish the school year.



School crossing guards have had some issues with the changes to the school start time system that were made due to COVID and bus driver shortages. Before COVID, start times for schools were generally 7:15 a.m. for high schools, 8:25 a.m. for middle schools, and 9:25 a.m. for elementary schools. This system allowed school crossing guards to cover multiple stops for different schools during a single shift, as intersections that were busy for one level of school might not be busy for another. The guard's morning shift time before COVID was 6:45 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. and afternoon shift time was 2:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Due to COVID and bus driver shortages, for the start of the 2021 – 2022 school year, PPS changed school start times to a three-tier system: 7:15 a.m. for high, middle, and special schools; 8:25 a.m. for neighborhood schools; and 9:25 a.m. for English as a Second Language (ESL) and magnet schools. These changes have made it more difficult for school crossing guards to cover split intersections per shift. This year's start times are 6:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. and afternoon times are 2:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

### **Other City Comparisons**

Across the U.S., school crossing guards are placed in a variety of departments or are not included in local government at all. Outside of Pennsylvania, the City of Baltimore places school crossing guards in the Department of Transportation and St. Louis has school crossing guards in the Department of Streets. The hiring and deployment of school crossing guards are controlled by the police in Cleveland and Buffalo.

The City of Cleveland deals with chronic shortages of school crossing guards. An August 30, 2021, article reported that Cleveland was still looking to fill 108 school crossing guard positions out of 355 total budgeted positions. In Cincinnati, school crossing guards are hired by both the police department and Cincinnati Public Schools. Cincinnati also allows schools to bring in volunteer school crossing guards, along with the paid school crossing guard positions. As of June 6, 2022, they are still dealing with a shortage of 44 school crossing guard positions out of 150 budgeted school crossing guard positions.

Table 13 shows school crossing guards' compensation in comparable cities to Pittsburgh by hourly, daily, and yearly salary, along with number of hours per day they are paid.

**TABLE 13**  
**School Crossing Guard Compensation**  
**in Comparable Cities**  
**2021**

City	Hourly Salary	Daily Salary	Yearly Salary (180 Day School year)	Standard Hours Paid per Day
Pittsburgh	\$14.15	\$84.91	\$15,284	6
Cleveland	\$10.25	\$20.50	\$3,690	2
Cincinnati	\$15.00	\$45.00	\$8,100	3
Buffalo	\$10.15	\$40.60	\$7,308	4
St. Louis	\$12.98	\$25.95	\$4,671	2

Source: 2021 Job Descriptions for School Crossing Guards from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Buffalo and St. Louis

The City of Baltimore pays \$13.97/hour but has purely part time positions with no standard hours. The City of Pittsburgh pays almost double, yearly, for each school crossing guard when compared to the next highest paid similarly sized city. This discrepancy, in large part, stems from the City of Pittsburgh's higher standard hours paid per day, as other cities had similar hourly wages, but significantly lower standard hours, which led to the lower daily and yearly salaries.

**APPENDIX**

**Intersections School Crossing Guards are Posted  
by Danger Ranking and Volume of Student Walkers  
2022**

<b>Street Names/Crossings</b>	<b>Danger Ranking</b>	<b>Number of Students who use Intersection</b>
Stanton & Meadow	1	167
Glenwood & Mansion	1	71
Crane, Tropical, Beechview	1	20
North & Federal	1	100
Dallas & Edgerton	1	10
Forbes & Denniston	1	50-75
Pioneer & Woodburn	1	215
Penn & Negley	1	25
Steuban & Obey	1	167
Forbes & Braddock	1	28/30
Shady & Foward	1	836
Mifflin & Interboro	1	26
Butler & 40 <sup>th</sup>	1	16
Centre & Kirkpatrick	1	23
Warrington & Allen	1	54
Beechwood & Phillips	1	200
Brighton & California	1	36
Larimer & Meadow	1	60
Lincoln & Mayflower	1	35
Beacon & Murray	1	196+
Beechwood – Wilkins - Linden	1	50/60
Brighton & Woods Run	1	34
Liberty & 40 <sup>th</sup>	1	20
Greenfield & Lydia	1	78
Stanton & Oranmore	1	59
Perrysville & Bascom	1	166
Webster- Herron - Bedford	1	40
Henrietta & S. Braddock	1	29
East Liberty & Broad	1	20
Brownsville & Cherry Hill	1	32
Hampton & N. St Clair	1	40
Noblestown & Guyland	1	40
Broadway & Shiras	1	94
Chartiers & Hillsboro	1	75
Brownsville & Becks Run	1	256+

**Intersections School Crossing Guards are Posted  
by Danger Ranking and Volume of Student Walkers  
2022 (continued)**

Street Names/Crossings	Danger Ranking	Number of Students who Use Intersections
S. Lang & Reynolds	1	78
Penn & 40 <sup>th</sup>	1	20
Bedford & Erin	1	63
Brighton & Marshall	1	18
Main & Howley	1	30
Brighton & Westborn	1	26
Penn & Main	1	21
Woodland & Shadeland	No Crossing	55
Chartiers & Allendale	No Crossing	35
Pioneer & Dunster	2	105
Brookline & Pioneer	2	64
North & Arch	2	59
Brownsville & McKInley	2	80
Hobart & Wightman	2	30
Negley & Hampton	2	40
Bennett & Tokay	2	26
Robinson & Terrace	2	22
Sebring & Dagmar	2	100/200
Arlington & Eleanor	2	75
Beacon & Shady (PM Only)	2	150/160
Shady & Phillips	2	265
Brighton & Davis	2	38
Spring Garden & Chestnut	2	50
Butler & 46th	3	8
Butler & 44th	3	2
Murray & Lilac	3	55
Beacon & Wightman	3	22
Beechwood & Forward	3	43
Waltz- Homer - Damas	3	20
Broadway & Hampshire	3	100

Source: Department of Public Safety: School Crossing Guard Division

**Number of 311 Calls Regarding School Crossing Guards  
Per Neighborhood  
2017-2018**

Neighborhood	Number of Calls
Squirrel Hill South	19
Brighton Heights	6
Perry South	5
Squirrel Hill North	5
Bloomfield	4
Carrick	4
East Liberty	4
Garfield	4
Allegheny Center	3
Homewood North	3
Homewood South	3
Knoxville	3
Middle Hill	3
Mount Washington	3
Overbrook	3
Beechview	2
Brookline	2
Central Oakland	2
Crafton Heights	2
East Hills	2
North Oakland	2
Point Breeze	2
Sheraden	2
Allentown	1
Central Business District	1
Central Lawrenceville	1
Central Northside	1
East Allegheny	1
Friendship	1
Greenfield	1
Homewood West	1
Lincoln Place	1
Lower Lawrenceville	1
Morningside	1
Mt. Oliver	1

**Number of 311 Calls Regarding School Crossing Guards  
Per Neighborhood  
2017-2018 (continued)**

<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Number of Calls</b>
Perry North	1
Point Breeze North	1
Regent Square	1
South Oakland	1
South Side Flats	1
Spring Hill-City View	1
Stanton Heights	1
Terrace Village	1

Source: Department of Public Safety: School Crossing Guard Division

**List of Pittsburgh Public School Closures  
2001-2022**

Name of School	Year Closed
Beltzhoover Elementary	2005
Bon Air Elementary	2008
Burgwin Elementary	2008
Columbus Middle	2004
Crescent Elementary	2008
East Hills Elementary	2008
Fort Pitt Elementary	2013
Gladstone Middle	2001
Knoxville Middle	2008
Lemington Elementary	2008
Madison Elementary	2008
Mann Elementary	2008
McCleary Elementary	2008
Miller Elementary	2008
Morningside Elementary	2008
Overbrook Elementary	2002
Peabody High	2012
Prospect Middle	2008
Reizenstein Middle	2006
Rogers Middle	2009
Rooney Middle	2011
Schaeffer Intermediate	2013
Schenley High School	2012
South Vo Tech High	2008
Vann Elementary	2011
Washington Polytechnic	2008

Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools Meeting Minutes



## Non-PPS Schools Attended by Pittsburgh Students 2022

- Aquinas Academy
- Archangel Gabriel Catholic School
- Ave Maria Academy
- Bishop Canevin
- Blessed Trinity
- Carlow Campus School
- Catalyst academy Charter
- Central Catholic
- Cheswick Christian Academy
- Christ Divine
- Community Day School
- City Charter High
- Cornerstone Christian
- Eden Christian Academy
- Ellis School
- Environmental Charter School
- Falk Laboratory School
- Guardian Angels Academy
- Hillcrest Christian Academy
- Hillel
- Holy Cross
- Imani Christian Academy
- Jubilee Christian
- Kentucky Ave. School
- Manchester Academic Charter
- Mother of Mercy academy
- Nazareth Prep
- Neighborhood Academy
- North Catholic
- North Hills Regional Catholic School
- Northside Catholic Assumption Academy
- Oakland Catholic
- OLSH
- Penn Hills Charter School
- Pittsburgh Urban Christian school
- Propel Charter Schools
- Providence Heights
- Provident Charter
- Redeemer Lutheran
- Renaissance Academy Charter
- Robinson Christian
- Sacred Heart Elementary
- Serra Catholic
- Seton LaSalle
- Shadyside Academy
- Sister Thea Bowman Catholic Academy
- St. Bede's
- South Hills Catholic
- St. Benedict the Moor School
- St. Edmund's Academy
- St. Therese
- Trinity Christian School
- Universal Academy
- Urban Academy
- Urban Pathways K-5
- Urban Pathways 6-12
- Waldorf School
- Winchester Thurston
- Yeshiva
- Young Scholars

Source: Department of Public Safety: School Crossing Guard Division

**Reported School Crossing Guard Injuries  
2017-March 2022**

<b>Date of Injury</b>	<b>Claim Type</b>	<b>Injury Description</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Amount</b>
01/11/2017	LT	R elbow, wrist strain/crossing child, slip-fell	Closed	\$127,135.07
02/06/2017	IN	L knee contusion/tripped-fell on curb	Closed	\$0.00
06/25/2017	IN	R hip, knee contusion/trip-fell-street ctr island	Closed	\$0.00
09/11/2017	IN	No physical injuries/crossing kids, hit by car	Closed	\$0.00
09/22/2017	LT	Back strain/crossing people-stepped in hole-fell	Closed	\$4,193.57
10/11/2017	IN	R eyelid-bee sting/Crossing pedestrians	Closed	\$0.00
10/12/2017	M	L arm contusion/struck by car mirror	Closed	\$334.79
10/22/2017	IN	L shoulder contusion/struck by car	Closed	\$0.00
10/27/2017	R	R finger fracture, R eye contusion, neck strain/altercation	Closed	\$321.84
11/25/2017	M	L knee, L hand contusion/Trip-fell on curb	Closed	\$1,089.63
12/06/2017	M	R shoulder strain/while stopping moving car	Closed	\$1,791.60
1/16/2018	IN	R/L knee contusion/slipped-fell on knees	Closed	\$0.00
1/31/2018	IN	R/L knee contusion/Trip-fell approaching sidewalk	Closed	\$0.00
02/02/2018	R	L knee, ankle contusion/fell in lot on ice	Closed	\$949.04
02/02/2018	R	L shoulder, leg contusion/slipped and fell on ice	Closed	\$997.52
02/02/2018	R	Lower back, buttocks contusion/slipped, fell on ice	Closed	\$3,047.71
2/13/2018	IN	L ankle, L knee, R wrist contusion/Slip-fell-ice	Closed	\$0.00
03/05/2018	M	R hand laceration/fell off curb	Closed	\$751.52
3/22/2018	IN	R knee, R hand, back/Slip-fell on ice	Closed	\$0.00
04/12/2018	R	R knee strain/stopping traffic-stepped off curb	Closed	\$1,354.29
5/22/2018	IN	R thumb strain/Walked to sidewalk-trip, fell	Closed	\$0.00
09/18/2018	M	R wrist-bee sting/On school cross guard duty	Closed	\$21.44
11/10/2018	R	R shoulder strain/directing traffic at Pitt game	Closed	\$613.69
02/13/2019	IN	L knee, hip contusion/struck by motor vehicle	Closed	\$0.00
08/21/2019	M	L forearm bee sting/crossing students	Closed	\$1,056.53

**Reported School Crossing Guard Injuries  
2017-March 2022 (continued)**

<b>Date of Injury</b>	<b>Claim Type</b>	<b>Injury Description</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Amount</b>
09/18/2019	LT	R ankle fracture/at crosswalk, lost footing-fell	Closed	\$7,015.69
10/06/2019	IN	Headache-sick/Crossing pedestrian's-football game	Closed	\$0.00
10/10/2019	IN	R hand, arm contusion/Stopping traffic-bumped by car	Closed	\$0.00
12/17/2019	IN	R elbow, R hip contusion/Slip-fell on wet bricks	Closed	\$0.00
1/17/2020	LT	Low back contusion/slipped and fell on ice	Closed	\$4,971.70
2/26/2020	LT	R/L hand, knee contusions/stepped into hole-fell	Closed	\$4,413.45
11/9/2020	IN	No physical injuries/witness to shooting while at work	Closed	\$0.00
09/16/2021	IN	Back contusion, R elbow abrasion/dizzy fell, hit bench	Closed	\$0.00
09/17/2021	IN	R arm puncture/Bee stings to arm	Closed	\$0.00
09/21/2021	IN	R elbow, R knee, L ankle contusion/trip-fell over cone	Closed	\$0.00
11/05/2021	IN	R knee, R leg strain/Slip-fell on leaves	Closed	\$4,000.00 (Reserved)
01/20/2022	LT	L knee, R side of body contusion/Slip-fall on ice	Open	\$2,148.19
3/7/2022	IN	R knee strain/rushing to stop oncoming car	Closed	\$0.00
			<b>Total</b>	<b>\$166,207.27</b>

Source: Department of Public Safety: School Crossing Guard Division

## Auditee Response

EDWARD C. GAINNEY  
MAYOR



LEE C. SCHMIDT  
DIRECTOR

CITY OF PITTSBURGH  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**  
CITY-COUNTY BUILDING

September 23, 2022

Michael E. Lamb, City Controller  
Office of the City Controller  
414 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

RE: Performance Audit on Public Safety, School Crossing Guards

Dear Controller Lamb,

Thank you for sharing the results from your performance audit of the School Crossing Guards and providing the Department of Public Safety with the opportunity to respond to your recommendations. Please find these responses below. As you are aware, achieving some of these goals would entail the cooperation of outside entities, and as such may be outside of our control. Nonetheless, we will continue to strive towards providing more efficient, responsive, and capable service to the citizens of Pittsburgh.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should update the school crossing guards' job description to reflect that school crossing guards have been moved from the Police Bureau to the Administration Bureau within Public Safety.

Response: Agree. We will discuss this and all other recommendations regarding job postings and recruitment with the Department of Human Resources & Civil Service.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should update the job description for the school crossing guard supervisor to eliminate the equivalency statement. The application is inconsistent with the requirements for the position.

Response: Agree, per Recommendation 1.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

The school crossing guard supervisor should implement a standardized accident report for crossing guards to use to document accidents and other incidents. Follow up protocols should also be written down to ensure compliance. Reports are currently kept on file at the crossing guard office in Zone 5. The school

crossing guard supervisor should scan all reports that are being filed into a computer folder each day to keep a digital record. This folder should also be shared with Public Safety and the police.

Response: Agree. We will review our accident reporting policies and collaborate with other City stakeholders to determine appropriate standards.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should provide school crossing guards with complete uniforms and all necessary equipment, including white gloves and whistle, to maximize their job performance.

Response: Partially agree and in process. Public Safety provides uniforms and equipment per contractual obligations. However, we have determined that yellow gloves are more effective for promoting safety and now issue yellow gloves.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should work with the Department of Innovation and Performance to establish an electronic communication system as required by the guards' union contract.

Response: Partially agree. We concur that this would be an extremely useful tool and will endeavor to implement it, however, there are certain technological hurdles still to be overcome, such as determining a communication method that would be easily accessible to all staff.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should coordinate with local schools to add school crossing guards to the PPS automated electronic communication system and all private schools' electronic notification systems so that guards will receive real-time call and/or text updates regarding school closures, weather delays, or emergency situations. Mobile numbers can be entered by the schools.

Response: Agree. As with Recommendation 5, there may not be a perfect solution, but automatic notification would be helpful in changing daily assignments based on need.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should require school crossing guards to receive and keep current FBI Criminal History Background Checks, including fingerprinting, to comply with PA Act 153. The cost of the background check should be reimbursed by the City of Pittsburgh.

Response: Agree. In addition, the City will investigate the possibility of paying for such checks directly, rather than require personnel to request reimbursement.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should track school crossing guards' clearance expiration dates and ensure that guards apply for renewed clearances at least 90 days prior to the expiration date. This practice will prevent outdated clearances and ensure all clearances are current.

Response: Agree.



**RECOMMENDATION 9:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should reimburse school crossing guards for all costs associated with receiving clearances and background checks as required under PA Act 153 as a condition of their employment and as stipulated by their union contract.

Response: Agree, per Recommendation 7.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:**

At a minimum, an annual meeting for all school crossing guards should be held to update guards on any changes to work-related policies, benefits and procedures. This meeting could also be used for continuing professional development.

Response: Agree. Public Safety concurs that improved communication and professional development opportunities are key to the success of the program, and will work to implement high standards for both.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should explore the need to reinstate the assistant crossing guard supervisor position to improve overall operations and efficiency of the crossing guard division.

Response: Agree and in progress. Public Safety has already begun to implement this recommendation prior to the audit and intends to fill this position within 30 days.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should make a concerted effort to hire additional school crossing guards. It could be beneficial to increase advertising for position openings at PPS school functions and with other audiences who might consider part-time work. It could also be beneficial to give high school guidance counselors job postings for school crossing guards since the minimum age requirement is 18 years old, as well as advertise to college students studying relevant fields such as early childhood education or social work. Additionally, instructions on how to apply for open school crossing guard positions should be posted on the Department of Public Safety's website.

Response: Agree, per Recommendation 1.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should explore increasing school crossing guards' daily pay rates to help close the gender pay gap and increase hiring and retention of school crossing guards. This may help alleviate the low staffing levels and boost the coverage of school crossing guards, increasing public safety.

Response: Agree. Public Safety concurs that increased pay will help achieve these goals. Pay rates are ultimately determined by the results of collective bargaining, however.

**RECOMMENDATION 14:**

The school crossing guard supervisor should consider additional criteria to the SRTS guidelines in evaluating intersections including: the number of students, pedestrians and buses that drop off/pick up, the number of vehicle accidents, and the number of incident reports on file at intersections.

Response: Agree and in progress. As noted by the auditors, Public Safety is attempting to reevaluate both crossings and the crossing evaluation process itself, and will consider adopting these factors moving forward.

**RECOMMENDATION 15:**

The new criteria for evaluating intersections should be weighted to determine a ranking system to create a list of all high-volume, dangerous city intersections where school crossing guards should be stationed. This would create a more consistent evaluation of where school crossing guards are needed throughout the city.

Response: Agree, per Recommendation 14.

**RECOMMENDATION 16:**

A map detailing where school crossing guards are stationed, the danger ranking, and volume of traffic should be created, published, and updated every year. The map should be on the Department of Public Safety's website and shared with all Pittsburgh schools for their distribution as well.

Response: Agree. Public Safety will consult with Innovation & Performance to complete this project.

**RECOMMENDATION 17:**

The student-to-guard ratio is a good indicator of whether staffing levels are sufficient to protect children walking to school. The Public Safety Bureau of Administration should identify an ideal ratio and increase the number of guards hired to ensure full post coverage and utilize the allocated budget.

Response: Agree. As it is throughout the City, budgetary considerations and recruitment success will be the ultimate determinant of our ability to reach staffing goals, but Public Safety agrees that this metric is an appropriate factor in deciding how many guards are required.

**RECOMMENDATION 18:**

The Public Safety administration should work with the City of Pittsburgh's Law Department to consider offering school crossing guard services to the Borough of Mt. Oliver. This could be done via a shared services agreement similar to the agreement for EMS already in place.

Response: Agree. Public Safety can explore this option. There are various stakeholders involved in approving such an agreement, and as previously noted, crossing guard staffing may be simply too low at this time to add services. However, we are open to the idea.

**RECOMMENDATION 19:**

The City of Pittsburgh should consider sharing funding of school crossing guards with PPS and private schools serviced by school crossing guards.

Response: Agree.

**RECOMMENDATION 20:**

Increasing the size of the school crossing guard staff and posting them at high-traffic intersections may decrease the number of pedestrian injuries or fatalities. School crossing guards could be stationed at dangerous intersections as a stopgap measure before traffic calming capital projects can be undertaken to help decrease pedestrian fatalities.

Response: Agree. As discussed elsewhere, Public Safety is striving to employ additional crossing guard staff. Public Safety will also discuss with Mobility & Infrastructure regarding potential coordination of crossing guard deployment and traffic calming projects.

**RECOMMENDATION 21:**

The Department of Public Safety administration should work with the Department of Public Works to prioritize crossing guard posts for salting/snow removal and providing other services to well-traveled city intersections. Laborer workers should be able to service school crossing guard posts corresponding to the neighborhood/Public Works Division to which they are already assigned.

Response: Agree. Public Safety will contact Public Works to determine feasibility and procedure for such work.

**RECOMMENDATION 22:**

Annually, the Public Safety administration should notify all schools in Pittsburgh that requests for a school crossing guard can be made via a 311 phone call. Additionally, instructions for parents and city residents on how to request a school crossing guard should be posted on the Department of Public Safety's website along with an online submission form.

Response: Agree. Public Safety will endeavor to increase public awareness of the crossing guard request process.

This concludes our responses. Again, we appreciate the opportunity for improvement presented by this audit and invite your office to continue evaluating our progress in providing enhanced service to the City of Pittsburgh.

Sincerely,



Lee C. Schmidt  
Director

cc: Donna McManus, Crossing Guard Supervisor  
Charles Showers, Department Business Administrator