



September 2016

To: Atlanta Public Schools, City of Atlanta, Georgia Department of Transportation, Atlanta Department of Public Works, Atlanta School Board, and Atlanta Police Department Officials

From: Springdale Park Elementary School Governance Team Chair, Nicole Horn, on behalf of Springdale Park Elementary School Governance Team and Parent Teacher Organization

CC: Terry Harness (Principal), Dawn Stoner (Assistant Principal), Springdale Park PTO Presidents – Karin Greeson and Jeff Anderson, Springdale Park Governance Team Members – Mark Rebillot, Sara Zeigler, Meredith Smith, Mindy Mailman, Joel Alvaredo, Mary Thurman, Jennifer Lockwood, Virginia Highlands Civic Association, Druid Hills Civic Association, Poncey Highland Neighborhood Association

Subject: Safety Concerns on Briarcliff Road (between Virginia Avenue and Ponce De Leon Ave.) and on Ponce de Leon Avenue

We thought it important to bring attention to a critical safety concern at Springdale Park Elementary School (SPARK). The following memorandum outlines a series of requests that the SPARK community would like to be addressed immediately regarding the dangerous conditions that exist on Briarcliff Road (SR 42) between Ponce de Leon Avenue and Virginia Avenue and the school border on Ponce de Leon (SR 78). **Please note that these requests are being made after countless efforts have been attempted by school administration and community members to have the problems addressed since 2009.** While at times, the community thought that progress would happen, to date none of the issues have been resolved. SPARK has new school leadership, we would like to ensure that they are fully supported and will not be burdened by a problem that should have been resolved many years ago.

1. Replace/Install 3 signs that provide instructions on stopping for the HAWK signal at Briarcliff Road. (2 signs were run over by a car in September 2015)
2. Post School Zone Speed Limit signs at the appropriate locations to reduce the speed limit from 35 to 25 MPH. The school zone is reduced from 35 to 25 mph on SR 78/Ponce for Springdale Park Elementary, SR 42 for Briarlake Elementary, SR 78 for Westchester Elementary and SR 10 (SR 278/College Ave.) for Renfro Middle School.
3. Install flashing yellow lights indicating the start of the school zone on the north and south side of SPARK's Briarcliff entrance. These lights already exist on SR 42 for Briarlake Elementary, SR 78 for Westchester Elementary, Inman Park Middle School and on SR 78/Ponce for Springdale Park Elementary.
4. Paint Briarcliff Road with "School Zone" to indicate the beginning and end of the SPARK school zone to correspond with the signs and light signals.
5. Regularly assign Atlanta Police Department motorcycle or traffic citation personnel to ticket vehicle drivers that do not heed the "Red" HAWK signal to improve compliance. (SPARK community members have cited weekly examples of driver's lack of compliance to the stop signal when pedestrians – including children – are in the cross walk or entering cross walk.)



SPRINGDALE PARK
ELEMENTARY

6. Establish a fence or barrier along SPARK property with Ponce de Leon to deter non-school community members from accessing the property and to create a barrier to protect children from inadvertently entering Ponce de Leon Avenue. The APS Safety Security Department's audit (Nov. 2015) noted this security concern and recommended this fix.
7. APS funding for traffic officer Monday - Friday, during arrival and dismissal times, located at carpool entrance on Briarcliff Road. Pedestrians on Briarcliff north of SPARK must cross over a dangerous intersection of cars entering/exiting carpool line to walk to SPARK. SPARK administration and parents also request a hiring process for the officer that is efficient, transparent and consistent across APS schools. We request a clear reporting structure for the officer (e.g. if she/he is late, or gives notice to quit, who tracks that) and for training for SPARK administration to onboard officer (payroll procedure).
8. Ensure that crossing guards are assigned and in attendance Monday – Friday on Briarcliff Road at the HAWK signal and at the light at Briarcliff Place in the morning and afternoon. If the crossing guard is to be absent, provide school leadership information on a substitute.

Background:

- SPARK local school leadership and community leaders, such as parents, have made multiple efforts to gain attention and support to resolve these issues with various officials in the Atlanta Public School system, 311, Georgia Department of Transportation, the Atlanta's Mayor's Office, and Atlanta Police Department and neighborhood civic associations.
- Multiple emails were sent to officials seeking assistance including specific dates noting dangerous incidents. In January 2016, Dr. Dawn Stoner, SPARK Assistant Principal, met with Marquenta Sands Hall (APS Safety/Security) and Atlanta Police Officers. PTO leadership met Matt Westmoreland on Feb. 11 and then with Missy Mullinax, Sr. Advisor to Mayor Reed, on Feb. 25. The SPARK community was hopeful that the problems would be addressed.
- The lack of response to the requests seem to stem from a lack of ownership for Briarcliff Road and what entity is responsible for ensuring the safety of Briarcliff Road for SPARK students. Briarcliff Road is a state highway and on the border of the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and Dekalb County.
- In August 2015, SPARK administration requested a safety/security audit from APS Safety-Security Department to address Briarcliff Road safety concerns. It was performed in November 2015 by Mr. Rollins/Rawlins. Parent leads got a verbal report on the audit findings from SPARK admin in January/February 2016. However, the report only included information on campus security issues and no support was ever provided by the Department to address Briarcliff Safety issues.
- SPARK has a Safe Routes to School Plan that was completed with grant resources in 2013. See attached plan which indicated that the items requested were to be addressed immediately.
- See attached APS minutes from a 2009 meeting with GDOT, APS and SPARK leadership indicating that a number of the items requested should be implemented.

We, respectfully, request that **the Atlanta Public Schools provide an action plan indicating who will be responsible for completing the necessary safety measures with specific timelines/deadlines to SPARK's Governance Team and PTO leadership within 30 days** of receiving this memorandum.