

## APS Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee

January 28, 2014

**Present:** Jane Kim Guthrie, Kristin Haldeman, Ronna Weber, Lauren Hassel, Jack Owens, Gillian Burgess, Nancy Van Doren, Jana Lynott, Eric Goodman; Tim Rosato **APS:** John Chadwick, Meg Tucillo, Kyle Lukacs

**Absent:** Erik Maskelony, Aja Sae-Kung, Dennis Leach - Arlington County DOT.

### Staff Update:

John Chadwick provided an update on the budget. Regarding Transportation, 132 bus driver slots, 127 fixed runs, asking for 4 more bus drivers. The rest of the bus drivers are paid by the hour but are guaranteed 6 hours so there are over 10 of these. Budget is flat of 16 million. Regarding the buses, APS will replace 16 buses. Not requesting new buses. Not growing the fleet. If need more buses, will not retire the older buses. Budget will be released in mid-February.

John Chadwick updated the group on the situations at Jefferson and Kenmore. They are going to determine that Columbia Pike is a safety barrier for students. A letter will go to parents later this week. There will be 151 for Jefferson and 28 for Kenmore that live on the far side of Columbia Pike and will be notified they will be eligible for busing. Locating the bus stops has been difficult. Robo calls and letters will go in languages appropriate for each family. The service will begin on Feb. 6. There is also a piece of George Mason between 66 and the hospital that may be changed, as well. Still looking at this. Hopefully can do this too, if need to add a bus.

Agenda approved.

Minutes were accepted for the last meeting.

**Public Comment:** Elizabeth Wirick, who is a parent of an Oakridge student. She commented that there is a disparity in terms of how kids are bused across the county. Gillian Burgess noted that we need to talk about choice school busing and the admissions policies that drive that. Meg Tucillo noted that this discussion will come up with in the overall capacity discussion related to choice schools and admissions, whether there should be a neighborhood policy to these choice schools. Tim Rosato noted that we need to look at the choice programs and school walk zones, and team schools, and boundaries.

Donna Owens then spoke. She is a parent at Yorktown, Jamestown, and Williamsburg. She commented that the numbers John Chadwick noted were unclear. She questioned the designation of Columbia Pike as a safety barrier but questioned why Glebe and George Mason are not also designated as such. She suggests that we look at all maps and decide what are safe routes, what are unsafe roads to cross. She feels it is unfair to have parents have to actively advocate for safe routes but that it is more difficult for some parents than others.

Kristin then noted that Bob Laws would like a small group of people to work with him on criteria for barriers and hazards for walk routes. Kristin asked Jane, Lauren, and Erik M. to serve on this group. Kyle would serve on the group. Eric Goodman offered to work on this. Jana Lynott also offered to be on this group. This group would come up with proposed safety criteria for routes to school. Tim Rosato suggested that we also look at national standards and safety standards and what other districts have. Also tie in to what Toole has done.

## Policy Discussion

Kristin directed the committee to review Policy 50-5 regarding walk zones. Gillian proposed doing away with walk zones, and rather putting bus stops beginning at a certain distance from school and allowing anyone to get on the buses at those points by choice, regardless of where they live. She suggests having APS recognize that student transportation is like public transportation with set end-points and plan routes in a similar fashion. Routes would be planned around attendance zones, and would end at a school, then the routes and stops would be announced to families. Families could choose the stop that works best for them. This system would allow APS to free up the resources that are currently used to determine bus eligibility. Bus eligibility and courtesy busing have had high administrative costs to APS. These newly-freed administrative resources could be dedicated to encouraging other mode choices, like walking and biking. Lauren noted that parents want to know where kids are so there has to be a system for technology to track kids on the bus. Kristin is advocating for having good planning and referred to the MPS study.

Comments made:

Eric Goodman: Encourage more people to walk and bike. Believes can provide people with choice to allow people different modes at different times.

Ronna: Choice is most important. Protecting home to school bus transportation is very important. Gillian and Ronna discussed if this could be a hybrid of school bus vs. public transportation bus. Gillian described the Charlotte Mecklenburg system that has a plotted system for magnet schools, established bus stops, and kids can chose which bus stop they get on. The kids then chose the stop. Routed like a public bus but is a school bus. Everyone agreed this is good but need the tracking technology. Jana noted the variations that are due to weather and wondered if the system could plan and put on bus capacity to address that.

Kyle suggests we could consider walking school bus coordinators. This would help the kids navigate across the street. The cost for this would be less than a bus driver. Jana commented that AARP has volunteers who are walking school bus volunteers. The reality of it as a working Mom is hard.

Jane Kim Guthrie: She noted that when she grew up the bus stops were printed in the paper.

Note to find out if in state law buses can be overcrowded on an emergency bases.

Lauren: Addressed the options issues. She believes we should follow the options that the County provides. She believes the schools should take some of this experience and do a similar thing. She recommends a car free diet for APS.

Kristin mentioned that she is glad to hear we are emphasizing choice.

Jana – Agrees we need to provide choices. We need to have an impact on reducing the amount of private vehicle trips to school. Provide adequate bus services and good choices for walking and biking to school. Commented on Gillian's new framed suggestion. (She noted a situation where kids are not on the Ashlawn site bus because they have to walk back.)

This operationalizes what we have been talking about. She thinks kids at elementary level – it takes a long time to get those kids to walk a mile. She thinks it's a mixed bag at middle. And she thinks the high school kids should take public transportation.

Tim Rosato – different modes different times. Timing of buses is important. Look at total time for the transport. He then went back to choice. Should look at bell times and what time kids have to get on the bus. He also thinks we should consider on line classes at middle and high school, which might align the family schedule with the school and work schedule. Have a two period flex at beginning and end of school day.

Nancy commented on the need for high school kids to get to school quickly because they are pressed for time.

Kristin mentioned that we need to incentivize non-car modes.

Jana is looking for data regarding transportation to help us make decisions.

Kristin, regarding the presentation next week, we will have Toole design data survey. The survey data was fairly representative of the school system. We will get the presentation ahead of time. They will go through the entire presentation and then we will have questions. Kristin would like the group to consider the data in light of the policy creation mission that we have without going into the weeds. So – ask – what are the potential policy implications that we should come up with. We should edit 50-5 when we get the data next week.

The next policy to be considered is the countywide/choice busing policy discussion. Nancy suggested we understand the history behind choice busing. Gillian suggested we also hear about pre-K, special ed, Montessori, and VPI busing. Need to understand the transfer and choice busing on enrollment numbers.

Kristin discussed the June report and suggested we take a part at each meeting and get it done, based on the framework laid out in our interim report and using Kyle's Safe Routes report.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00.

Submitted,

Nancy Van Doren