

**25 April 2013**  
**Minutes**  
**APS Multi-Modal Transportation & Student Special Committee**  
**Sequoia Education Center**

**Present:**

Eric Goodman	Ronna Weber
Erik Maskelony	Tim Rosato
Gillian Burgess	Rob Hindman
Jack Owens	Bob Laws –APS Transportation Dir.
Jana Lynott	Dennis Leach
Jane S. Kim	Ellen Y Smith
Lauren Hassel	John Chadwick -Asst. Sup't. Facilities & Ops.
Kristin Haldeman	Lionel White – APS Facilities Dir.
Nancy Van Dorn	

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The agenda dated 25 April 2013 was approved.

Approval of minutes from the previous meeting was tabled until the next meeting.

It was agreed that going forward, committee members would take turn taking minutes. For tonight, Gillian Burgess volunteered to take notes.

**Public Comment Period –Elizabeth Wirick**

Ms. Wirick: Came to thank the committee for our part in the letter about busing that went out to APS parents in April. She received the letter last week and knows we were instrumental. She thought the letter was more helpful than past letters. Also thanks to Mr. Chadwick and Mr. Laws. The transportation situation at APS has been improving since they got involved.

**APS Staff Update**

Mr. Chadwick introduced Lionel White, new APS Director of Facilities Planning, and a Geographic information systems (GIS) expert, who has had a role in the evaluation of boundary change options for the new space for new students. Mr. White joined APS staff in February after a normal search process. He has 20 + years experience with GIS, including experience with boundary and transportation planning. GIS is essentially maps with a spreadsheet behind them. There is a reference table for the data on the map. It is a powerful tool for spatial analysis and can be used for boundary and transportation planning. Mr. Chadwick expects that Mr. White's expertise will offer a more sophisticated and better approach to analysis at APS.

Mr. White gave a presentation on the boundary change process for the opening of the new elementary school on the Williamsburg site.

- The School Board gave staff 6 criteria to guide the boundary change process. Public input ranked the criteria in order of importance. Of those, the following impact transportation: proximity to the school students currently attend, which was ranked #1, contiguity of assignment zones, which was ranked #4, and efficiency, which was ranked #5. The other criteria were stability (#2), alignment (#3), and demographics (#6).
- A map shows the County divided into Planning Units (“PUs”), which planning units are currently assigned to which elementary school, and where they would be assigned under the recommendation. There is a map for each recommendation. PUs were established in the 1990s and may have been based on the population at that time. Over time, some PUs have changed because of changes to population and infrastructure (streets). Mr. Chadwick stated that a complete overhaul of the PUs was not feasible at this time because only so many things can change at once. It was stated that PUs should have something to do with the identified impediments. Micro-neighborhoods do change but larger neighborhoods don’t generally change. PUs do not line up with census units. PU boundaries generally line up with streets, so houses on opposite sides of a street may end up with different school assignments.
- Staff tried to move PUs on the periphery of current attendance zones. They also tried to move at least 2 PUs together.
- They heard from the community: don’t make current walkers into bus riders. Staff looked at whether a PU was a “walking PU”, determined by whether there was a bus stop anywhere in the PU, or a “bussing PU”. Staff did not look at how students actually get to school currently because of a lack of data and tools. Mr. Chadwick said that they now have some of the tools, and when they do this analysis, there is not much difference in result.
- Original staff recommendation:
  - In the first plan, PU 1510, which is currently a walking PU to Glebe, would be moved to a bussing PU to Taylor.
  - Under this plan, the new school will open with 98% capacity; others will drop in capacity, decreasing overcrowding.
  - Mr. Chadwick noted that the elementary schools are evenly spaced around the Northwest and Western boundaries of the County. These schools have 2 of their boundaries fixed by the boundary of Arlington County. Schools in the middle of the County will see the most changes. These schools are in the wrong places from a planning perspective. Taylor is also problematic because it is in the corner of the least dense and physically largest attendance area. There are also many local barriers: for example, a large golf course in the middle of the northern part of the County.
  - PU 1701 and 1792 are currently walking, and remain walking, just to the new school.
- Variation A:
  - Glebe Elementary would be less impacted.
  - Also achieves the goal of balancing enrollment and relieving overcrowding
  - There’s a better balance of capacity among elementary schools.
  - All PUs moved are “bussing” PUs.
  - PU 1701 and 1792 are currently walking, and remain walking, just to the new school.

- There are complex issues with PU 2303 walking to Taylor because there is a park with trails between the PU and Taylor. This PU has many students who walk now.
- Variation B: Superintendent's recommendation to the School Board
  - Similar in terms of capacity break down to the others
  - Mild adjustment as far as who gets moved.
- All three plans are basically "net zero" for transportation. There has not been an analysis of how many current bus riders become walkers under the variations.
- Walk Zones
  - There was also a discussion of the walk zone policy (defines the distance at which a student is eligible for bus service). The zone analysis conducted for the start of the 2013 school year measured from the edge of a student's home's property to the edge of the school property. Those within a mile were not eligible for bus service. Looking at the hazards identified in the mapping process, all distances are substantially less than 1 mile. Staff will report back on this analysis once it has progressed further. With the GIS tools, staff can create hypothetical walk zones within hazards and find a site for a school within that walk zone (neighborhoods are often defined by these zones).
  - Mr. Leach pointed out that this is not a static picture because the goal is to eliminate as many barriers as possible. Mr. Chadwick asserted that some hazards, like a park, cannot be removed as barriers from the APS process, as it is not for APS to determine if the walk is safe. Mr. Leach stated that the County does not see parks as impediments to walking.
  - Ms. Burgess asked if the system is set up to produce a list of what impediments have been identified and how many "walkers" removing them would create.
  - Mr. Rosato pointed out that this committee has discussed issues relating to County Parks at a number of meetings, and asked if we could get County Parks staff involved at meetings.
  - Ms. Haldeman noted that a different set of issues is presented when analyzing how kids get around.
  - Ms. Kim stated that we can't control who is in a park.
  - Ms. Lynott wonders if a walking school bus, organized and supported by the school, would be a reasonable substitute for a bus. Mr. Chadwick stated that he supports walking school buses but that the schools can't take on that liability. APS is currently insured to cover students on school buses. Mr. Chadwick will look into current and possible insurance issue relating to walking school buses. Mr. Goodman pointed out that the Committee could recommend to the School Board that APS support walking school buses.
  - It was stated that such walking school buses could be a seasonal occurrence.
  - Ms. Van Dorn suggested we start capturing some of these points as possible recommendations to the School Board: for example, identifying and mitigating impediments. She also suggested that there needs to be an overall strategy, with a joint effort from APS and the County. In her experience, the County only focuses on adults with respect to transportation issues.
  - Mr. Leach stated that, from the County's perspective, they have gone further with Ashlawn to get more kids to walk and bike to school, for example, by having County

engineers look at the Toole Design TDM Report. The County sits down with each school to see how to jointly implement recommendations.

- Mr. Chadwick pointed out the importance of encouraging walking v. requiring walking by denying bus service.
- APS staff has projected the number of students reassigned under each variation (see presentation). These are based on APS projections, and don't exclude kindergarten students. APS has back checked their projection, though not by PU. APS has done well with its forecasts overall at the systemwide level. APS planning does take into account new developments, but only once they are approved by the County.
- Grandfathering recommendations
  - These are optional.
  - There was a discussion of whether any grandfathering was necessary. Mr. White pointed out that APS heard from some families that wanted grandfathering and from some that didn't. Ms. Lynott pointed out that keeping peers together was more important than having students attached to a place.
- Role of GIS
  - GIS will help map impediments. The map will be available on the web in layers. Bus stops will not be on public maps. It is taking time to differentiate between roads with and without sidewalks.
- Other Recommendations
  - Students assigned to the new elementary school would be in the Key immersion group, but those currently at Claremont would be grandfathered.

There was a discussion of the April transportation letter. Ms. Weber stated she did not receive it, and asked that the next letter state that there was an April letter and point parents to the website where they can see its text. Ms. Van Dorn pointed out the envelope was labeled with the return address of Student Services, which some families may discount the importance of.

Mr. Chadwick stated that there will be a discussion of middle school boundaries after the current CIP process is completed because the middle schools also need new capacity. The School Board has indicated a possible high school boundary change before the 2014 school year because Wakefield has capacity and W&L is scheduled to get relocatable. Other high school proposals may come out of the current CIP process.

Update from Bob Laws:

- APS completed an exercise with the Public Health Department using its school buses.
- He has seen 5 of the new buses ordered: 7 large and 3 small buses were ordered.
- Quantum installed GPS on 5 buses last weekend. All student data from the GPS system will be controlled by APS IT. A bus operator has to sign on for a pre and post trip inspection. That inspection is currently done on paper and has to be entered into a computer afterwards. In the future it will be paperless.
- APS has information about new technology in electric buses. It was recommended that Mr. Laws speak with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) about their electric bus experience. The advantage for APS is that Arlington is a small county so the mileage for school trips is low, and the buses can generate revenue by frequency balancing the power grid.

- APS is on target for the summer school buses. Special needs was rough last year, but this year there are weekly planning meetings regarding special needs.
- The next letter to parents is scheduled for May 15, which will indicate whether the family will receive bus service. The maps should be ready by the end of May; staff hopes to have them done by the next MMTSSSC meeting. The website will have the availability to take comments from the public.
- The phone bank will be ready May 1, with 3 full time staff and 3 more available to be added if lines are full.
- Mr. Leach asked for the County to be provided the maps as they're available. County transportation staff will review.

The committee broke into small groups to discuss school buses. Notes from those small group discussions have been scanned.

Prior to the break out, Ms. Van Dorn requested that the committee start writing the report. Ms. Burgess noted that she had put a version of the report outline up for comment on the Yahoo groups website, and that it had been touched on at a previous meeting, but that no comments had been received. Additionally, Ms. Haldeman and Ms. Burgess planned to ask the group how they would like to write the report: at regular Thursday night meetings, at a weekend work session or over email. A few members stated a preference for weeknight meetings and email collaboration. The School Board has requested a presentation from the committee on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

After the break outs, Ms. Burgess committed to putting a revised report outline on the Yahoo groups site, and asked the committee members to send it comments or edits.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m