

**9 May 2013
Meeting Minutes
APS Multi-Modal Transportation & Student Safety Special Committee
Sequoia Education Center**

Present:

Penny Everline	APS Staff
Jane S. Kim	Bob Laws
Kristin Haldeman	Cintia Johnson
Eric Goodman	Lionel White
Jack Owens	Ellen Y Smith
Erik Maskelony	
Gillian Burgess	Dennis Leach – Arlington County DOT
Lauren Hassel	
Tim Rosato	
Nancy Van Doren	Speakers:
Ronna Weber	David Green, Lt., Arlington County Police Dept. Special Operations Section
	Alice Bowers, Crossing Guard Supervisor, Arlington County Police Department
	Donna Owens, APS Parent

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., and the agenda dated 9 May 2013 was approved.

Minutes from the April 11 and April 25, 2013 meetings were approved.

It was agreed that going forward, committee members would take turns taking minutes. For tonight, Lauren Hassel volunteered to take notes.

Public Comment Period – Donna Owens

Ms. Owens acknowledged that development of the draft walk zone maps is hard work and one of the main reasons why this Committee was formed. She added that the Transportation Modernization Plan did not consider all students who need bus service. Efforts are also needed to ensure that walkers and cyclists are safe and active transportation options need to be more attractive. Efficient use of cars should also be a goal. She then offered the following two recommendations for the Committee to consider while looking at the maps: 1) look at who may NOT have bus service and 2) think about hazard zones. She added that the last maps were created more than 10 years ago and the process of updating them needs to be documented, including who's been involved and all the work that's been done.

Committee Chair Kristin Haldeman thanked Ms. Owens for her comments and added that, in looking at the maps, APS needs to be ready for questions about discrepancies between last fall's eligibility determinations and the new maps, e.g., no bus service last Fall vs. bus service per the new maps. APS needs to have good and thoughtful answers for these questions.

Introductions:

For the benefit of guests from the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD), Ms. Haldeman outlined the composition of the Committee, and introduced ACPD officers Alice Bowers, Crossing Guard Supervisor, and Lt David Green of the Special Operations Section

APS Transportation Staff Update

APS Director of Transportation Bob Laws updated members on the status of various transportation letters to be sent home in the coming weeks. All families will receive a letter about bus service, maps, and courtesy busing to be mailed on May 15. Cintia Johnson added that a summer school transportation letter will be mailed in June.

Mr. Laws also reported that the Call Center is up and running. Callers will get a reference number to track their issue through the system, if the employees answering the phones cannot resolve their question.

Summer school bus routes are in process and Mr. Laws has been meeting with Special Needs to make sure their concerns are addressed.

The group then turned to discussion of the two APS Transportation Staff Update Agenda items – *Criteria for Determining Impediments/Barriers in the Walk Zone* and *Maps: Next Steps (Review and Communications)*

Mr. Laws re-introduced Lionel White, a GIS Technology/Facilities Planner for Arlington Public Schools. Mr. White indicated that he has compiled information from various Arlington County sources to prepare the maps.

Mr. White showed a sample “Walk Zone Map” for discussion and explained that the layers of data and boundary information are based on Edulog. GIS is being used as a tool to identify barriers. According to APS procedures, the distance from a home to the school for purposes of the “walk zone” runs from the edge of family’s property to edge of school property. Maps include parcels and levels of detail within each parcel. The red dots on the map indicate students who walk, while the green dots indicate students who are eligible for “regular” bus service.

Committee Vice Chair Gillian Burgess ask whether each red dot represents an actual walker. Mr. White indicated that is not the case. Ms. Burgess followed up by asking whether the survey asked if students who are designated walkers are actually walking. It did not. The Committee was also told that in terms of the fleet, Countywide and neighborhood school buses are the same.

Mr. White also noted that parks are not intended to be nor are they interpreted as impediments, but APS anticipates that some parents will disagree.

Ms. Haldeman asked how hazard attributes will be attached to the table and how they will display. Mr. Laws was then asked to provide a full list of criteria for hazards/impediments that impact walking vs. bus service. He responded that the criteria for defining elementary, middle and high school impediments will be posted on the website. They’ve started establishing general categories and should be finished by the end of the month [May] and will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

Ms. Haldeman followed up by asking whether data that shows features as barriers has been added to the boundary file. She wants to make sure it's clear where the boundary is and what the criteria are.

Ms. Haldeman asked how Mr. White's information matches up with Edulog and then the discussion turned back to map review. Mr. Laws announced that they will have maps ready for Committee review at the May 23rd meeting and noted that they can post the hazards list later, after the maps go out.

Ms. Haldeman asked why there can't be a list of hazards/impediments now if the maps and walking routes are based on these impediments. Mr. Laws indicated that the list is being refined.

At this point, the group turned to discussion of the map for Ashlawn Elementary and Ms. Haldeman asked how this year's breakdowns of modes align with last year.

Mr. Laws indicated that no one who is receiving bus service now will be denied service next year. Ms. Burgess asked if this means there will be no new riders. Staff stated that the maps shown indicated whether students were eligible for bus service this year (based on data from Edulog), as opposed to eligibility based on a review of hazards.

Nancy Van Doren asked whether in the future, parents will be able to check the maps to see impediments, and understand who walks, who doesn't and why.

Lt. Green verified that the red dots on the map indicating residences of actual students will not be made public.

Ms. Haldeman asked what the difference will be between 2012-13 and 2013-14 in terms of bus assignment. Mr. Laws indicated that the May 15 letter will indicate that all current bus riders will remain but that some service might be added after the 15th based on the final criteria. Ms. Haldeman reminded staff that for planning purposes, all of the specifics on hazards, impediments, etc. need to be available before fall.

Arlington County Director of Transportation Dennis Leach reiterated his desire to see the APS maps so that his staff in the County Transportation Department can look at them before they are posted. A County/APS review work session could be held to go over the maps.

Ms. Haldeman asked whether ACPD would be included in such a work session as well. Mr. Leach advised including the topic in the next monthly coordination meeting with ACPD.

Ms. Haldeman requested that APS furnish maps to Mr. Leach for County Transportation staff to review and that this action be taken immediately

Ms. Burgess noted that there are two basic types of impediments to walking/biking – those that should make someone eligible for bus service who would normally be ineligible, and those that impede those eligible for bus service from instead walking/biking – and added that GIS should be able to help prioritize and mitigate impediments to actually walking and biking. Data on what each family actually chooses to do and why will help to maximize use of GIS data.

Nancy Van Doren asked whether the individual school PTAs have had a chance to look at the maps and provide comments. Mr. Laws indicated that APS Director of Facilities and Operations John Chadwick is working to make that happen, but he was not at the meeting to elaborate.

Ms. Haldeman reiterated that local PTA input is essential, for hazards and other factors that don't show up via data, such as a boarded-up house or other localized areas of concern. She also noted that staff will need to know the correct numbers of bus riders for service and capacity planning.

Eric Maskelony reinforced the need for APS to coordinate and collaborate with the County because there is a direct tie between impediments and projects getting requested and done.

Ms. Van Doren pointed out that Dennis Leach had asked at least three times to see the draft APS walk zone maps and now there's very little time left for that review. She also noted that we need a mechanism for input from families to the Committee.

Mr. Leach noted that there are 33 schools and suggested field testing 5 or so maps to gauge needs. Field work would also be useful.

Ms. Haldeman thanked Mr. White for his work on the maps. Ms. Burgess followed up by asking whether the one-mile (or 1.5 mile for middle and high school) elementary school walk zone boundary is binding. Ms. Cintia Johnson reported that Mr. Chadwick has information that shows for most schools, the farthest kids who are not eligible for the bus are about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away from the school.

Committee members noted that if the one-mile walk zone policy is moot because there's always a safety issue (de facto vs de jure) then it's not really a policy.

Ms. Haldeman asked if there is any way to tie "who is doing what" in terms of transportation to student IDs? If so, it would allow a way to account for walking and biking vs. parent drop-offs vs. assigned bus service.

Ms. Haldeman noted that the maps will not be using radius but property line to property line along the network (or walk route) per GIS' "Network Analyst" tool.

Ms. Van Doren asked if families know they can request a courtesy bus service. She also noted that some families might choose to walk even if they're in a bus zone while those in the walk zone don't have that choice.

Lt. David Green, who served as a School Resource Officer for several years earlier in his career, noted that "every school has a traffic problem." Lt. Green observed that drivers need to be mitigated because cars create more hazards for walkers and cyclists than other factors.

Mr. Leach added that neighborhood schools are traffic generators, creating a mini-rush hour in the morning and afternoon five days a week. Hazards are created by parent drop-off, and these hazards are often addressed by requests for police support and County transportation response. This situation creates a considerable workload for ACPD and County Transportation and Traffic Engineering staff and it needs to be figured out, both for existing schools and expansion schools.

Mr. White noted that on the Ashlawn map, the Network Analyst calculation of one mile from the school boundary is very refined, with computers usually dividing a street down the middle. These issues need to be worked out on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Haldeman asked that the Committee review the map and discussion points and send questions to Mr. White, Mr. Laws and Mr. Chadwick. She reviewed the following action items:

Action Item 1: Mr. White, Mr. Laws and Mr. Chadwick set up a work session with Mr. Leach and County Transportation staff to review the maps. (Ms. Haldeman)

Action Item 2: APS needs to figure out a mechanism by which to allow PTAs at each school to review these maps and provide input. (Ms. Van Doren)

Ms. Haldeman suggested that APS consider a public comment period on the maps and that the maps be posted as DRAFTs rather than being presented as final.

Ms. Haldeman then turned to the presentation from Arlington County Police on School Safety issues.

Presentation: Arlington County Police – School Safety Issues

Lt. Green introduced himself as an 18-year veteran of the Arlington County police force. He was a School Resource Officer from 2001-4 and currently serves as the ACPD Evening Watch Commander in Special Operations. Ms. Alice Bowers, Crossing Guard Supervisor, oversees ACPD crossing guards. Lt. Green explained that Special Operations' responsibilities include motorcycle officers, sign boards, speed trailers, and traffic classifiers.

Lt. Green then proceeded to respond to questions that had been provided to ACPD in advance. The questions were grouped into general themes and are included in italics here:

ACPD's Role in Education

- 1. What role does ACPD see itself having with respect to educating children on safe transportation? Would officers go to schools to talk about safe bicycling, walking and using transit? Does ACPD include age-appropriate outreach to school children as part of their awareness campaigns, and if not, would it be willing to?*
- 2. At what age does ACPD think it is safe for students to walk alone or unaccompanied by an adult? Before or after dark? Biking alone or unaccompanied by an adult? Riding transit alone or unaccompanied by an adult?*
- 3. Are there any ACPD public education efforts for students and families pertaining to safety getting to and from school on foot/by bike? If so, please describe what kind of outreach is being done.*
 - a. How would you encourage students to stay safe while travelling to school on foot or by bike? What would you tell parents to do?*

4. *What is the role of the School Resource Officer in relation to transportation?*

a. *How many SROs are there?*

b. *Who is in charge of the SROs?*

5. *Who is the key ACPD contact for schools?*

Question 1:

School Resource Officers (SROs) are the main conduit to schools. There are 10 SROs Countywide, based at high schools and middle schools and assigned to elementary feeder schools. They have no real role at the elementary school level but respond at the request of the school to do safety talks, canine demonstrations, and so on.

There is also an auxiliary police contingent composed of volunteers who do bike safety clinics, bike registration, bike rodeos and similar activities on request.

Officers do their best to accommodate requests but resources are limited. For example, at the time of this meeting, there are only 12-20 police on the street.

Question 2:

The Special Victims division doesn't give specific recommendations but Child Protective Services suggests that ages 8 and under be supervised and that ages 9 and 10 may walk alone depending on the individual child, the child's confidence, and the parent's comfort level.

The same age recommendations apply to transit use (ART buses and the like).

Question 3:

Walk in groups, use recommended routes. Brochures available from the Virginia Dept of Transportation and the American Automobile Association offer good tips.

Lt. Green noted that for specific questions about SROs, the contact is Lt. Kim Babcock, the head of ACPD SROs, and he can be reached at 703-228-7462.

Question 4:

The SRO has a limited role in relation to transportation. ACPD was out in force last fall to respond to the many concerns raised by the new transportation policies. Sixteen additional school crossing guards were added to evaluate and minimize issues at the start of the school year. Crossing guards are supported by parking aides and police officers as needed.

Since the beginning of the year, six new crossings were added, but those have been reduced to three because all six were not being used consistently.

ACPD and Safety Hazards

5. *Is ACPD available to help APS evaluate and mitigate safety hazards on the County's roads, trails and sidewalks? How? Does ACPD do that now or have they in the past?*

a. *How does ACPD identify those hazards?*

- b. *Would APS be able to identify hazards that would be priorities for ACPD to address?*
- c. *What (if any) specific improvements in specific locations would ACPD recommend to make walking and biking to school safer for our kids (i.e., we need a crossing guard here and here but don't have the funds for that yet; we need speed limits to be 15 mph in all school zones, but don't have that yet; we need this facility improvement at this intersection, etc.)?*

6. *Who determines how many crossing guards are assigned to a school? On what basis is that determination made? (are they increased with the size of the school population? in cases of construction or other temporary changes to the school environment? why not assigned to county-wide schools?)*

7. *What is the best way for students and families to report safety concerns?*

Question 5:

To mitigate safety hazards, ACPD usually works with DES Transportation, then DES evaluates. Lt. Green noted that ACPD officers are not engineers but they see the problems close up. Service requests are handled on an emergency basis (signal outage, ped sign malfunction, etc.) and ACPD meets monthly with DES.

Question 6:

Ms. Bowers responded that there are 1-3 crossing guards per school, except at ATS and HB-Woodlawn, which are County-wide schools where no assistance is provided. Crossing guard locations depend on how traffic flows. There are established crossings and crossing guards count the number of students at each crossing at the beginning and end of the school year and make changes according to usage.

ACPD usually also observes particular locations before making changes, adding or taking away crossing guards.

Ms. Bowers noted that her office was overwhelmed last fall with the APS transportation changes and some crosswalks were established on a temporary basis until the number of walkers began to decrease.

Question 7:

The number of crossing guards is not determined by school population but Ms. Bowers noted that new construction/expansion is a reason why crossing guards would be added to a particular location. They adapt to the situation.

A member asked why there are no crossing guards at Arlington Traditional School, which serves VPI through 5th grade but is a Countywide school, when other countywide/magnet schools (Key, Claremont, and Drew) do have crossing guards.

No one had an answer to this question. The officers did note that elementary schools are the priority but there are more problems at middle schools. High school students don't like being told what to do but cars need to pay attention, especially at busy intersections (ex, Washington-Lee High School at Quincy Street and 14th St)

Crossing guard assignments are prioritized according to need and if kids aren't there every day or on nice days only, they can't continue to assign guards to that location.

There are 11.5 full-time crossing guard positions and most of these individuals are retired rather than career people. There is a lot of turnover and background checks and polygraphs are required, so it can take at least 120 days to hire someone. Parking aides/public service aides fill in as needed.

On a related note, Eric Goodman asked about the role of officers in relation to traffic direction and when/where officers would be assigned (whether or not near schools). Lt. Green indicated that unless lights are out or there is a regular problem at a particular intersection (such as Lynn St and Wilson in Rosslyn), ACPD officers do not routinely direct traffic.

Question 8:

Mr. White asked how parents report safety concerns. Typically, problems are reported through the DES Call Center (street lights, stop signs, signal crossings, graffiti) but there is no intake channel specifically for schools.

Tim Rosato praised the work of and responsiveness of ACPD and DES. He noted that the County needs to budget for more crossing guards year-round to encourage walking, rather than just as fixes at the beginning of the year. Safe walking routes will help make walking a habit.

Enforcement

9. What is the most difficult aspect of enforcement in school zones?

10. How does ACPD decide where to focus traffic enforcement efforts?

- a. Can APS request ACPD to focus traffic enforcement efforts on particular areas important to student safety? How? Is there a central point of contact within ACPD for APS? If so, does that person have responsibility for traffic enforcement? If not, how does that person communicate with traffic enforcement?*
 - i. Can the County request ACPD to focus traffic enforcement efforts on certain areas? Anyone else? How does that work?*
 - ii. Could ACPD target some tough intersections near schools as part of the Street Smart awareness campaign?*
- b. We've heard instances of increased traffic enforcement of certain areas (having police monitor frequently for the 30 days and putting in a temporary unit to display drivers' speed). How are those areas chosen?*
- c. The County has data showing that vehicles travel on average 17MPH over the speed limit on arterial roads. What is ACPD's reaction to that data? Has ACPD used that*

data to target enforcement? Is it true that speeding tickets aren't given for anyone driving 10MPH or less over the speed limit?

d. Does ACPD target enforcement in school zones as a matter of course? What laws (speeding, right of way, etc) does this enforcement focus on?

11. How does the ACPD enforce the law about crosswalks and giving pedestrians right of way? What is the actual law? How often do they write up people for not abiding by it?

12. What data is kept on accidents involving bikes or pedestrians (on the trails, in crosswalks, on sidewalks and on streets) and where can it be obtained?

13. What speed limit would be too high for kids (elementary school, middle school and high school) to be expected to cross the street on their own? In marked crosswalks? At lights?

d. Would ACPD support a 15 MPH speed limit in school zones?

Question 9:

Motorcycles are ideal to help with enforcement but ACPD always needs a safe place to observe and pull people over as needed.

Question 10:

There is an operating procedure for where to focus traffic enforcement efforts. The focus is typically on School Zones, bus routes, and high accident areas (TARP = traffic accident reduction program). Citizen complaint areas and area with a high volume of violations are also targeted.

All people, including parents and school staff, may make special requests by using non-emergency police number – 703-228-4141. Lt. Green outlined the process when a call like this comes in and noted that increased enforcement will usually be applied for 30 days.

September is the heaviest time for use of officers at/near schools.

The priority is not arterial roads but more the neighborhood and secondary roads. ACPD uses DES technology, including traffic classifiers, which track the number of cars, time of day, types of vehicle and speed, for seven day intervals. There was discussion of the existence of a threshold for ticketing, but the speed limit is the law. Lt. Green indicated that it was “not inconsistent” with ACPD policy to not ticket drivers for driving less than 10 MPH over the speed limit, depending on the facts and circumstances. Mr. Leach pointed out that the County engineers plan for drivers to drive the speed limit for planning purposes.

Question 11:

Laws about crosswalks and right of way are difficult to interpret.

Lt. Green did not have the number of pedestrian citations issued but from May 1, 2012 – May 1, 2013 the number of drivers ticketed for failure to yield to a pedestrian was 276.

According to state law, pedestrians are prohibited from crossing “with disregard to vehicles” in a 35 mph zone or lower. ACPD interprets the law to say pedestrians should cross at a “natural break in traffic.” In these cases, the pedestrian should have the right of way.

Lt. Green described pedestrian laws as “murky.” As a result, tickets are given out only in cases of clear right and wrong.

Ms. Van Doren asked about impediments for kids crossing vs. impediments for adults because there are different issues involved – including height and visibility.

Mr. Leach noted that Arlington has tried to put forth state legislation that enforces pedestrian rights and crosswalks but nothing has gone through.

Mr. Goodman brought up the matter of distracted drivers and the need to engage drivers. Lt. Green indicated that the name of the violation associated with distracted driving is “Failure to pay attention,” and is specific to the Arlington county code.

As of July 1, 2013, texting will become a primary offense in Virginia – currently it is a secondary offense that can be charged only if pulled over or stopped on a primary offense. Reckless driving is a 6-point offense in Virginia – the highest number of points one can get.

Question 12:

Data is available through Records Management/GIS/Crime reports, etc. From May 1 2012-May 1 2013, the following citations were issued:

- 276 citations for Failure to Yield to a Pedestrian
- 364 traffic accidents
- 76 bike accidents
- 140 pedestrian accidents
- 178 incidents in parks/trails

Question 13:

In relation to school speed limits, ACPD’s role is strictly enforcement – they do not make recommendations.

Parks and Trails

14. Do the police patrol parks and trails in the same way that they do streets?

- a. Do they patrol parks, such as Quincy or Bluemont, particularly at the time students are commuting to school?*
- b. Do police patrol trails like the Custis Trail or W & OD Trail? During school commuting times?*

15. What is the incidence of crime in parks and on trails?

16. Does the police department think that students commuting to school should cross through existing parks and on trails alone? At what age? Accompanied by an adult?

17. What safety tips would the police provide to students and families regarding the use of parks and trails as commuting routes to school?

Question 14:

Arlington police do patrol parks and trails as they do streets but mostly on motorcycles and Segways.

Students are advised to walk with a buddy on trails and through parks.

Ms. Burgess asked whether there are ACPD bike patrols. Lt. Green indicated that when there is a specific need, they will send auxiliary officers to do community policing.

He noted that ACPD is divided into three districts and community policing captains are the liaisons in each district.

ACPD full-time employees have been reduced overall, making it even harder to cover everything.

Ms. Van Doren asked if crime data is accessible to parents. Lt Green indicated he would need to check to find out what is public information and what cannot be shared.

Ms. Owens asked about Child Protective Services' suggestion that children 8 and under need to be supervised when walking to school. She wondered if that supervision could be provided by older kids – particularly those 9 and 10 year olds who are also in elementary but are considered old enough to walk alone. She felt there is a disconnect because the youngest age for a babysitter is 13.

Lt. Green indicated that such decisions are really up to the parent and their confidence in the child. He added that these are guidelines and not the law.

Ms. Haldeman noted that this is an important distinction.

Officer Training

18. What training to ACPD officers receive on:

- a. Safe Routes to Schools/children moving to and from schools*
- b. Laws related to bikes*
- c. Laws related to pedestrians*
- d. Laws related to school buses*
- e. New traffic-related infrastructure installed on Arlington streets and trails(e.g. green painted bike lanes)*

Police officers are required to complete 800 hours of training at the training center in Leesburg, 640 hours with ACPD and in the field, plus 80 additional hours of training every two years.

General Safety

19. If you had sufficient funds and staff, what would you do to improve transportation to and from schools? To improve safety of all modes around schools?

Lt. Green had no comment on this question as such decisions are up to DES.

Ms. Haldeman noted that this part of the meeting had gone over time and there was still much more to cover but that they needed to reserve time to discuss report development. At 8:40 p.m., Ms. Haldeman thanked Lt. Green and Ms. Bowers for their time and useful presentations and turned to the final agenda item.

Report Development

Ms. Haldeman introduced the final agenda item noting that the June 18th deadline for the Committee's first report is drawing near. She indicated that the Committee is not looking for a "novella" and recommended that the report be kept brief and include a discussion of all the Committee has learned the first four months of its existence.

Mr. Goodman had recommended that the June 2013 report be considered an interim report, and Ms. Burgess suggested breaking the topics up.

Ms. Haldeman noted that the guiding principles and framework need to be addressed as well. She also urged the Committee to consider the "take-aways" from public comments and presentations that have been heard, the Committee's recommendations so far, and anticipation of what's to come.

In other words, the June 2013 report should focus on immediate and short-term findings and recommendations while the 2014 report will address long-term.

At 8:45, the Committee broke into small groups to discuss report-related topics.

After the break outs, Ms. Burgess asked members to consolidate group input by Sunday, May 19. She committed to posting the Report Outline Worksheet used in this meeting and developed for this purpose.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 p.m.