

Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee
Minutes
October 16, 2013

Attendees: Jack Owens, Robert Hindman, Erik Maskelony, Lauren Hassel, Kristin Haldeman, John Chadwick, Eric Goodman, Kyle Lukacs, Jane Kim, Ellen Smith, Aja Sae-Kung, Tim Rosato, Gillian Burgess, Nancy Van Doren, Cintia Johnson, Robert Laws.

Guests: Abby Raphael, Sally Baird, James Lander, Steven Yaffe – County DOT, Linda Limo, Donna Owens.

Agenda, Minutes: The Agenda was approved. The minutes from the October 2 meeting were approved.

School Board Member Comments

Abby Raphael discussed the school system 2014 priorities and the areas in which the MMTSSSC could assist the board. The Board members just came from a joint County Board/School Board meeting that discussed several building projects that included planning for transportation. The 2014 priorities are aligned with the strategic plan. Priorities include Student Safety, Student Achievement, Accountability, Communication, and More Seats for More Students. Regarding transportation, she stressed the need to focus on options and choices with an emphasis on safety. She requested that there be a focus from the entire list of recommendations included in our interim report. Overall transportation philosophy input is needed and the Board would like input from MMTSSSC on this, including safety, minimizing use of vehicles to and from school, and choice. This is foundational and all will flow from the overall philosophy.

Policy recommendations are also requested, including recommendations such as changes to walk zones. Ms. Raphael emphasized choice, depending on time of year, schedule, etc. and how that should be incorporated into a policy but also include a goal of reducing vehicle traffic. Board Member Sally Baird mentioned a need for a road map going into the future so that budgeting and planning can be done on a regular cycle. She clarified that a road map means that in each category/part (staffing, culture change, transportation by high school students other than buses, etc.) there be time frames and goals that have specific benchmarks. They are looking for budget issues, such as infrastructure improvements, and policy changes.

Ms. Raphael said the Board is looking for a simple, short philosophy statement. Mr. Lander stressed the need for asking parents and community members to provide feedback to the school system so they can continuously improve transportation. He would like us to urge families to stay connected, stay involved, and communicate regarding transportation. The more communication they have, the better the transportation system will be. Ms. Baird noted that the Board is not getting many complaints because staff is handling the issues. She stressed that it will be very helpful to have the MMTSSSC members visiting all the schools and getting feedback regarding transportation. The Board is hoping that each school has a central contact point for transportation. This advisory committee is an advisory committee

to the school board and we should focus on philosophy, budget, and long term planning. There are budget meetings coming up and to the extent that we have recommendations ready, we should try to contribute those to the budget discussion in the coming months.

Ms. Raphael then discussed how the budget process works. First there is a broad look at budget in November. Superintendent will propose his budget at the end of February. If we have something we need to propose, it would be good to have it in the Superintendent's budget.

Gillian Burgess asked about other committees that have overlap. How are we to work with those committees? How do we fit in to the larger vision and how do we ensure we are not being duplicative. Ms. Baird suggested we outreach to the other committees of the school board, but stated that no committees of the school board directly overlap with the MMTSSSC. Kristin attends a meeting held by Abby Raphael that includes all the chairs of all the various APS advisory committees. Jane Kim is liaison to FAC and Ronna Weber to CCPTA. Our 2nd Weds. meetings overlap with the Budget Committee, but one of their members will attend our 1st Weds. meeting of the month.

Public Comment

Donna Owens spoke about the need by the committee to hear real world examples. She described a family with five children who used to have busing but now do not and the challenges they now have to get to school. The woman did not know about Courtesy Busing and she did not know about the walk maps. Ms. Owens feels this still happens. Secondly, she commented on the school board's decision to not focus on boundary changes regarding high schools. Ms. Owen emphasized the need for a good transportation system to handle the criss-cross of the County if we move kids around to better distribute the kids in existing schools.

Eric Goodman noted the need to somehow incorporate the situations we hear about in public comments and written comments into our work. Kristin Haldeman asked Committee members to write a summary of the meetings each of us has with the PTAs at each school. She asked us to highlight the major issues brought up. Tim Rosato asked if we could get a report on a regular basis from Bob Laws regarding the categories by type of call that are captured by Transportation in the Call Center. Sally Baird suggested that there be set questions to be used at each PTA meeting to solicit comments.

TDM Survey Update

John Chadwick made a presentation on the status of the TDM Survey. He presented the APSGo! logo, described the multimodal assessment, the process for the TDM. He explained the survey schedule, consideration regarding the survey, and specifically the parent and staff surveys. The logo is "APSGo!, Smart Routes, Smart Choices." This will go on into the future, at least 15 years. This was created with a PR consultant and in-house team. It will be rolled out soon. There are talking points to be used around this. This was presented at the joint County Board/APS Board meeting earlier today. This is not just about school bus transportation; it is about everything, including vehicles. The surveys are branded as a part of this. This is integrated with County goals for smart growth. It will encourage sustainable, healthy, multimodal transportation.

Multimodal access assessment is being done by the consultants, Toole Design Group, in late October, early November, to evaluate opportunities and barriers for various transportation options for each APS location (immediate vicinity – immediate facility, not road around it.) Basic question: how accessible is the school and what further studies do we need to pursue. Principals and staff have been notified. It will feed into the TDM master planning effort. PTAs are not being contacted on this. Safe Routes to School is not connected to this. Ms. Haldeman suggested Kyle Lukacs be brought into this process.

The APS Go Survey was presented to the Board on August 8. Toole and Transportation worked with Linda Erdos on the communications plan as well as Planning and Evaluation. MMTSSSC has had two meetings with Toole on the survey. A schedule has been issued internally and externally about the survey. A coordinator for the survey has been identified at each school. Principals will be communicating to parents about the survey. On the 21st, principals and department heads will communicate about the survey to staff. The staff survey and student tallies are being done internally.

On Oct. 14 the student travel tally went live. October 21 – 25 is the high school student travel survey. Parent survey will be Oct. 21 to Nov. 1 and the staff survey will be Oct. 21 to Nov. 1.

The parent survey will mostly be conducted on-line with paper copies available at schools. Staff surveys in paper will be made available to those employees who may not have computers readily available like cafeteria workers and drivers. There will be a smart phone app that links the to the survey . Some computers will be available at schools if parents wish to go there to take the survey. The schools will have paper surveys for parents who request them and those who the school thinks do not have access. There will be back pack fliers sent out, as well.

Transportation is monitoring this in real time. They will match the responses per school and their demographic info to ensure they have valid response rates. The time line will be extended and specific outreach planned if they are not satisfied with the results. There will be a budget item to survey the same way each year or every two years.

High school students will take the survey in the Virginia History class or the English class. Kyle Lukacs talked about the student tally surveys. Pk-10 is being done in gym Tue through Thur. 11-12 graders are done per the choice of each school. Staff surveys are being done as administered by principals. Parent surveys will be distributed through an email from principals and reinforced with newsletter and backpack fliers.

John Chadwick addressed committee concerns regarding special education information and family income questions. The survey broadly addresses the income question and number of vehicles in household issue. Special education is not being addressed in the survey. There is a question that asks if a child has a special need that impacts transportation.

Kristin Haldeman asked for information regarding how many students are walking at ½ miles, 1 mile, and 1 ½ mile and matching up the results from the survey to be sure we have input from all these categories of students. She also stressed the need to be making sure the responses are consistent with the demographics at each school. Other recommendations included:

1) Make the survey available at events where parents gather, esp. any events specifically geared toward limited english speaking and/or lower-income families. Surveyors/staff should be available to assist parents with on-line or paper. Have appropriate language resource staff available to assist as well, esp. for non-Spanish languages. Seek this information from PTAs.

2) Promote the survey by as many mechanisms as possible.

3) If an option (not prohibited), seek ways to drum up responses through non-monetary incentives that are meaningful to students/parents.

4) Use 1st day packet information regarding transportation for emergencies to validate response rates.

John will distribute all the materials for the APS Go! plan and its communication strategy to the committee.

Gillian asked for an update on this project before the end of the survey via email. John Chadwick agreed to update the committee.

Discussion ensued regarding a memo to the Board regarding our concerns on the survey. Given the fact that the parent and staff surveys were set to begin next week, the committee did not choose to send a memo to the Board outlining those concerns at this time.

The committee adjourned at 9:00 p.m.