

14 February 2013

Minutes

APS Multi-Modal Transportation & Student Safety Special Committee

Robert (Bob) Laws – Director, APS Transportation  
Cintia Johnson  
Ellen Smith  
Erik Maskelony  
Eric Goodman  
Gillian Burgess  
Jack Owens – Student Rep Freshman  
Jana Lynott  
Jane Kim  
John Chadwick  
Kristin Haldeman  
Lauren Hassel  
Linda Erdos  
Nancy Vandorn  
Penelope Everline  
Ronna Weber  
Rob Hindman  
Sally Baird  
Timothy Rosato  
Dennis Leach – Dep. Dir., Arlington County Transportation

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

It was noted that the minutes from the last meeting are posted on the Web as a PDF document. The meeting was recorded and the minutes were transcribed.

The minutes were approved without any changes presented.

**Public Comment:** Elizabeth Wirick – relayed a history of Arlington Public School bus issue.

Ms. Wirick noted that many attendees have heard her speech before, however she wanted to reiterate a sense of the original purpose of this committee. Ms. Wirick's family lost the ability to ride the school bus; they subsequently received courtesy bus access. She feels there is a need for better management of the system. 1500 families apparently also received "walker" letters. She believes that the policy is random and haphazard. Appeals were filed from families who are well outside the walk zone. Some of the streets approaching schools and in the walk zone apparently do not have sidewalks. It appeared to be a complete chaos from a parent's perspective. It was noted that some buses arriving at schools were not at full capacity. Students on buses noted drivers followed strange new routes. Most disturbing was the effect this had on families who do not have an ability to give their

children a ride to school, nor were they able to monitor their child's walk to school. She hoped that those children who need to ride a bus to school gain appropriate ability.

There were no other speakers present.

The Committee was given an opportunity to respond.

Penelope Everline thanked Ms. Wirick for coming out and encouraged others from the community to attend this meeting and voice their opinion.

It was noted that the agenda for the meeting will be posted on the APS Web page. Minutes are also posted on this page for the public to view, along with appropriate reports. It was noted that the public needs to be involved their concerns addressed.

Erik Maskelony requested that contact information be obtained for speakers so that committee members could follow-up with speakers if necessary.

Transportation staff was asked to provide any follow-up since the last meeting.

Bob Laws updated the committee. He noted that they are gearing up to summer school. There is a new server in place and they are ready to go live next week. There will be some staff changes in transportation. A newly revised routing system will be on-board March 15<sup>th</sup> as they gear up for the next school year.

All schools have Web assist system in place. When a new family goes to school to register their child/children, the staff member accepting the application can put their address into the Web system, and obtain the bus route available. The child/children will be immediately registered on the bus route. All children, except special needs children, can gain immediate access to a bus route. At that time, a temporary pass is issued in order to gain immediate access to the bus.

Erik Maskelony asked Bob Laws if key dates in the process of determining eligibility to ride a school bus and notifying families could be provided to the committee. In this way, the committee would understand the timeline and the committee's ability to influence that process for summer school and the coming regular school year.

John Chadwick stated that yes, staff is working on this and will post it shortly. Staff is currently working on glitches and expects to have the schedule posted on the Web in a few weeks time.

John Chadwick noted that staff is expecting to send out a general letter during Spring break in April and will include a bus mailer. Dates are currently being reviewed and revised.

Erik Maskelony re-emphasized that he was requesting internal planning dates, not public release dates of final documents and decisions.

John – we will get something out in a few weeks and send to all the committee members. (Note it will not be by the next meeting in 2 weeks time, however by the following meeting).

Bob Laws noted the new Route Planner position. The person taking on this position will be fully qualified and fully trained prior to taking on this role.

Gillian Burgess – In addition to timeline for bus, asked whether it could be possible to get an update on More Seats for More Students process.

John Chadwick noted that the information is currently on the school Web. This will be updated with recent new information.

Bob Laws noted that the walk zone maps are currently in the hands of the county. They require an update with crosswalks and unique hazards. We are currently waiting to see how the map will look with the additional information before the maps are released. Staff expects to receive the maps from the county in about a week

Bob Laws also noted that prior to rolling the maps out to the public, the school principals and staff will get a chance to review and comment prior to giving them a green light to move forward.

Erik Maskelony emphasized the importance of the safety factor on the maps, noting that safety is 100% at the heart of why this committee is in place. He emphasized the need to know the process that goes into evaluating the hazards, as well as the process to identify the hazards. He would like to see this issue on the next agenda so that the committee can understand the process as well as the decision making process.

Timothy Rosato noted that his family is considered to be a “walker”, although he considers that they are in a non-safe zone. He noted that he attended all PTA meetings and did not hear about the maps.

Bob Laws emphasized that the maps were sent to all the principals and they were asked to share them with the PTA and families.

Timothy Rosato suggested making a recommendation to the group to provide input.

Sally Baird suggested that PTA probably make a decision to NOT send out to all parents and get comments. She asked what is the mechanism by which a street is deemed busy or not busy?

Bob Laws noted that when he receives a call to say a particular bus stop is not safe, he physically goes out there to monitor it and provides his opinion and takes necessary action.

Timothy Rosato – There is a RFP out for consultancy to come in to do an analysis on transportation. How is it progressing along?

John Chadwick updated the group on the progress. He noted ACS had 7 firms submitting their qualifications. 2 firms were selected. Contracts will be negotiated in the next week or so.

#### 7.35 – Dennis Leach – County Master Transportation Plan MTP

Mr. Leach gave 2 presentations:

1. Meeting Community Sustainability Goals Through Coordinated Development and Transportation Strategies
2. Arlington's Master Transportation Plan

Following the presentation there was an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Street accessibility is a big issue. The County wants everyone to be able to live independently, and be able to travel safely. All crosswalks should be safe. Time signals are set at 3 ½ feet per second, so slow walk speeds are accommodated.

He noted a research and analysis group does the projection and they have just completed their last round in September and ultimately they do break it down by age and look at the overall geographic spread. They are seeing many more people choose to live in the center of region in order to be more accessible.

The County is also looking at housing development, broken down by school, and has the capability to see what percentages from apartments go to school. They note the numbers are increasing.

John Chadwick noted that APS is about to get that data noting that they are not seeing the high number increases that are being seen in Brooklyn and Queens, however expect it to happen within time.

Sally Baird asked how it will grow farther out in the corridors and are maps available? And whether certain neighborhoods are becoming less dependent on transportation, asking whether it is projected and how it will affect the school zones.

Dennis Leach responded by stating that the country is reviewing numbers block by block.

Kristin noted the time and ended the question and answer session. She stated that any further questions could be sent to the committee and will be added to the next agenda for review and answers.

### **Philosophy and Governance Framework**

The committee received information prior to the meeting to review.

Gillian Burgess noted that the philosophy discussion from previous meetings seems to fit well within the governance framework; and to fit what school board has sent out in their charge to the committee.

There was discussion regarding the goals of the committee. The group expects the school board to adopt a similar set of goals. It was suggested that the goals are categorized and given sub-bullets. The group will then adopt the government framework and purposeful goals, and then massage them into an acceptable order. They will be in draft format for the next few meetings as a working philosophy until ready for approval.

Gillian Burgess noted that it is essential to be governed by Roberts Rules if there is ever a conflict. There were no objections, so the framework document will be put up as an agreed document under Robert's Rules.

Gillian Burgess asked about the list of liaisons to different groups in the draft Governance document. The committee agreed to have liaisons to the superintendent's committee on sustainability to the School Health Advisory Board.

The following committee members agreed to be the liaisons to the following other groups:

Ronna Weber: County Council of PTAs

Kristin Haldeman: Budget Advisory Committee

Jane Kim – Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs

Nancy van Doren: Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee

Nancy van Doren: Special Education Parent Resource Center Parent Liaison Group

Tim Rosato: Superintendent's Committee on Sustainability

Rob Hindman: School Health Advisory Board

Sally will assist Kristin with the contact information for those groups.

Budget Committee & Liaison Issue: Is it possible to discuss the issues with the chair of the committee so that the liaison does not need to attend every meeting? There is a need to systematically inquire about information and what can be obtained without the liaison attending every meeting.

Gillian Burgess responded by confirming that the liaison does not need to attend every meeting, rather that the liaison should communicate with the committee. There will be discussion with the budget chair prior to moving forward with a decision.

The group was asked whether they are interested in having a Facebook page.

Linda Erdos noted that APS has a Facebook page, and would not want to integrate this group's page into APS Facebook page. There was discussion on the need to have a List Serve page as a mechanism to allow people to communicate. It was noted that a lot of parents do not like Facebook. Facebook however would be a way to get more students to comment. Further discussion noted the need to explore the different ways to gain public opinion, noting that this is a charge of the group. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

### **Short Versus Long-term Committee Priorities**

Short versus long-term committee priorities were discussed.

The bus/transportation issue is the immediate issue that needs to be tackled. The overall plan needs to be put in place however implementing the infrastructure will take time, noting that the plans being made now are for several years ahead.

It is important to note where the group stands on the transportation issue; where the parents and students stand; and where the school stands. The group's role is to make recommendations to the School Board, including recommendations on policy, but not to make policy itself. It was also noted that much of the transportation data presented had to do with commuter and weekend traffic, but that the committee's responsibilities are centered on school transportation issues.

It was noted that APS communications are not very good, and that transparency needs to be improved.

Gillian Burgess noted that reports are due this June and next June. She recommended that as a take-home assignment, the group thinks about the process and note what should be on this June's report, and what should be on next June's report.

It is also a recommendation to make sure what expectations are of this group.

Gillian Burgess noted the school board policy regarding speaking outside of the school board. She noted the need to "speak your opinion" as everyone reaches out to the community. The public piece is very important.

It is important to have the correct data on school children's transportation methods.

Dennis Leach noted that from a County perspective the school community is not small. The county is improving the infrastructure as it is from the 50's and 60's. Noting there will be new additions.

Liaisons are needed on other committees to keep the information flowing. There is a need to figure out what the best method to approach this need.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.