

14 March 2013
APS Multi-Modal Transportation & Student Safety Special Committee
Minutes

The New Syphax Education Center @ Sequoia Plaza
2110 Washington Boulevard – Room 101/103

Present:

Kristin Haldeman
Jack Owens
Eric Goodman
Jane S. Kim
Thomas Bruccoleri for Dennis Leach
Ronna Weber
Penny Everline
Nancy Van Doren
Lauren Hassel
Ellen Smith
Tim Rosato
Gillian Burgess

Public Comments:

Elizabeth Wirick, Oakridge Elementary parent
Marsha Veney-Baah, Campbell Elementary parent
Moley Evans, Campbell PTA Pres.

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

Acceptance of the agenda:

There was discussion on the agenda item title regarding the draft maps. The committee agreed that comments could be provided however it is not the responsibility of the committee to approve/deny the maps. It was agreed that the maps are presented to the committee for their comments and recommendations only. The motion to change the agenda item title to delete the words "Review of" was approved.

The minutes for the meeting dated 28 February 2013 were approved, subject to one change. The approved minutes will be put on the APS Website.

Public Comment Period

There were 3 parents present to discuss their concerns with the APS bus system.

Elizabeth Wirick

Ms. Wirick's family was initially denied the ability to ride the bus to school. Following an appeal, her family was granted courtesy busing. She spoke on behalf of

other parents whose children were denied access to the bus system, and who do not have the ability to walk to school with their children and so need to drive their children (their children are under the legal age to walk alone). She noted that not giving the children access to a bus creates complicated schedules for parents who work. Her message to the committee is to consider the children's safety and also to consider the environment and lessen the need for additional cars on the road.

- The committee asked for specific information on families whose schedules have been complicated as a result of school bus schedules.
- The committee asked about the county guidelines on the legal age of children allowed to be left alone at home unattended.
- Policy at APS – elementary walk zone is 1 mile – this applies to preschoolers as well, so if a family lives outside 1 mile, their children receive access to the school bus. Inside of the 1-mile zone, child is not bussed to school regardless of whether they are in pre-school or elementary school.

Marsha Veney-Baah

Ms. Veney-Baah noted the very complicated issues created as a result of being denied bus eligibility. Her children attend Campbell Elementary through the choice school program. After losing bus eligibility, her family struggled to get to Campbell. She does not own a car and her children are too young to walk alone. Due to work schedules, she was unable to walk with her children and due to the distance, the children's elderly grandmother was unable to walk them. She noted the major street in her area that needs to be crossed by walkers to school is extremely dangerous. As a result she moved her children to their neighborhood school, Carlin Springs, which was ultimately not a good move. Her children were unhappy at the new school and their academics suffered. They have now moved back to Campbell after receiving bus eligibility. She noted how hard it is for parents to walk their children to school from her area. Apparently there is only one crossing guard and very heavy traffic at high speeds. During the colder weather, her children with asthma suffer as a result of the long walk.

Molly Evans – PTA President at Campbell

Ms. Evans noted the complicated issues trying to coordinate with other parents to get children to school as a result of losing bus eligibility. At Campbell, about 77 children lost their bus eligibility, more than 50 of whom were pre-schoolers. She noted that it is an extremely long walk for these younger children. Additionally, she noted the extreme difficulty for families who do not have flexibility with their jobs. Some of the parents of these children lost their jobs because they now had to wait and walk their children a little less than a mile to school. In the end, bus eligibility was restored for these Campbell students.

Review draft maps and hazard identification criteria -

John Chadwick presented draft maps for Ashlawn and Long Branch Elementary Schools to the committee for their comments and recommendations.

The maps currently show boundaries for school bus eligibility areas; noting streets that APS does NOT recommend students walk/cross; walkable neighborhoods etc.

The maps are presented to the committee for their review and comments and will then be passed to school principals to work with their communities to 'ground truth' them.

The committee asked for the policies that led to the presented maps.

Question – what are you recommending by sending this out?

Response: APS is not recommending anything – this is to help parents figure out a safe route for their child to take to school.

Question: Why is this better than a regular county map?

Response: This shows walk zones.

Comment: Probably should be called something other than 'walk zone,' as not everyone will walk. Perhaps, 'no busing zone.'

The maps will be translated into Spanish, and possibly other languages.

Comment: consider color-blind users in shading

Response: Yes, they can be provided in black and white and APS will consider other adjustments.

Comment: Provide larger maps.

Response: Yes, this can be done. They will also be on-line so individuals can print them. The on-line tool will be more sophisticated and show all signs, with layers so users can choose what is displayed.

Comment: This is a great tool for parents considering purchasing a home and can see ahead of time the bus access and safe walk to neighborhood schools.

Comment: Put a date on the map and have it updated regularly.

Comment: Sidewalks are difficult to identify in some areas. This will be reviewed further.

Comment: Some trails are not shown on the maps because APS does not consider them safe for children to use. Safe speeds on trails should be enforced.

Question: Include the hours of the crossing guards on the map.

Response: The school does have the crossing guard schedules so these will be included on the maps. There are 28 crossing guards currently, each of whom serves two schools per day.

Comment: Recommendation to put copies of the maps in the school library and county libraries.

Questions – What is the map indicating? Recommendation to think through carefully what message the school board tells the parents.

Response: There will be a policy with a disclaimer added to the maps, noting that parents are responsible for taking their children to the bus stop or school safely. The maps show the hazards that contribute to safety and lack of safety. The maps are merely provided to help parents determine the best route to make smart decisions for their kids.

Comment: Address the school zone speed limits and what times are they enforced

Comment: Would like to know how many schools are providing staff to help with crossing (in addition to crossing guards).

Question – what speed limit is OK for street crossings?

Answer –under 35 – 40 miles an hour; over these speeds incidence of pedestrian fatality in a collision rises to 90%

Question: Is there someone on the APS staff who is responsible for safety and reports directly to the school board?

Response: There is an APS Security position in the Superintendent's budget. It will be the point person the police always call upon.

Question: The County has crosswalks and sidewalk data available for the maps; can they be incorporated in these maps as well?

John Chadwick thanked the committee for their comments noting they are very useful as the maps are completed.

John Chadwick announced to the committee that busing would be provided for middle and high school students who only take one class during the summer. There will now be two runs of buses. He noted that the routes are complicated and in the future the school might address this issue with another solution.

Hazard Identification Criteria

Bob Laws discussed the criteria APS is using for hazard identification. It is based on National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) standards. Staff

will recommend a PIP to establish these criteria as standard practice. Elementary criteria are more stringent than middle/high school.

Criteria include:

- *Sidewalks*: missing, too narrow or too close to street
- Significant driveways crossing sidewalk (e.g. multi-family or commercial entries)
- Poor lighting
- No crossing guard
- No traffic light
- Presence of a pedestrian signal (walk/don't walk)
- Too many lanes of traffic to cross (i.e., 4 lanes)
- Abandoned/boarded up bldgs
- Area of know/suspected crime

These are not “bright line” rules.

Priorities Planning and Schedule

Committee discussed putting together an interim report for the school board.

The framework should note short, medium and long-term goals.

Suggestion to provide short-term recommendations – e.g. bike/walk to school day – May 8th.

Note there is also a bike/walk to school day in October as well.
Board will provide resources for posters etc. for May bike/walk day....

Note that collecting data on these events is important.

There was concern that the committee provide comprehensive recommendations at one time regarding all aspects of its charge and not rush recommendations in any one area. Given the problems that occurred with busing earlier in the school year, it was noted that recommendations regarding bike/walk to school day should not be rushed and should be in tandem with other recommendations so as not to appear to support one form of transportation over another.

Discussion of On-Line Documents:

Suggestions to use Google docs to collaborate on documents. Noting the following as a potential framework for the Committee's work:

- Goals
- Objectives
- Strategies

- Actions
- Recommendations

Public Engagement Ideas/plan

There was discussion on using tools to obtain feedback from the public. Suggestions on a useful process are welcome.

Discussion on ways to document and account for all comments.

The committee does not hold the responsibility to track each individual response however it is available to listen to all comments.

Discussion on receiving and sorting through input. Noted that the committee needs to reach out to get comments and suggestions. An on-line method needs to be considered and agreed upon. Need to reach out and find the best way to get serious input from all groups, noting the difficulty and need for resources. Discussion on a community survey and consider adding to systems that are already in place.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

As many members will be away during the Spring Break week, the Committee will meet the following week instead.