

**Arlington Public Schools
Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee
Final Report to School Board
June 2014**

Committee Background and Purpose

In November 2012, the Arlington Public Schools (“APS”) School Board established the Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee (“Committee”) with an 18 month charge to provide advice to the School Board regarding the safe transport of students to and from schools by all modes of transportation. Committee members were appointed in December 2012 and the Committee began meeting biweekly in January 2013. This is the Committee’s second and final report to the School Board.

The Committee’s charge has been to provide advice to the School Board regarding the safe transport of students to and from schools by all modes of transportation. Its overarching goal is to: “ensure student health and safety for all forms of transportation, including but not limited to walking, bus transportation, bicycling, and driving.” The School Board laid out additional goals in the Committee’s charge, including: “to maximize efficient use of APS transportation resources; to provide for on-time bus service; to ensure a reasonable walk distance to schools; to support effective traffic management at school sites; to make informed decisions that reflect the APS dedication to environmental stewardship; and to consider and report budget implications for any Committee recommendations.”

Priorities and Recommendations

In February 2014, the Committee submitted two priority recommendations to the School Board for a transportation philosophy statement and for distances at which bus services should be provided. Additionally, in December 2013, the Committee offered recommendations for the 2014/15 budget discussion regarding institutional capacity building, improving transportation service delivery and planning for enrollment growth. These recommendations have been included in this final report (attached for reference in the appendix) as part of a recommended timeline for incorporation into APS policy and practice.

To help inform our work, over the last 18 months, the Committee has sought, recorded, and considered input received via a variety of channels. To solicit input, the Committee developed a public engagement plan, drafted speaking points for public presentations and meetings, set up a public yahoo group e-mail address, encouraged attendance at meetings, and allocated time at the start of every meeting for public comment. Members of the Committee also contacted PTAs at nearly all APS schools and programs, the County Council of PTAs and other APS committees; presented at meetings; solicited feedback; and reported comments to the Committee. Comments and inputs received through these channels (e-mail, public comment period, PTA meetings) are organized by theme, tallied by source, and presented in the summary chart as Appendix A.

Ultimately, the Committee has identified seven top transportation priorities, as described below, for APS over the immediate- and medium-term. Following the discussion below, the Committee provides a number of recommendations to the School Board that address these priorities in a manner that will benefit the school system over the long-term and achieve the goals that underpin the transportation philosophy statement the Committee recommended the School Board adopt in February 2014. These recommendations are made against the backdrop of growing enrollment and a fiscally-constrained environment.

- 1) **Develop and Maintain a Culture of Safety:** Safety must always be the first priority for APS Transportation. To that end, APS must intentionally develop a culture of transportation safety that respects families’

choices for school transportation. This culture must recognize the differences between the various APS sites and student ages and abilities. Every school needs to individually develop a culture of transportation safety. Through effective communication, APS and individual schools need to foster parent cooperation to achieve this goal. Parents and families, teachers and staff are role models for students and are in a prime position to demonstrate safe transportation practices.

- 2) **Hire and retain appropriate transportation staff:** In order to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of APS transportation, APS must develop the capability to actively engage in multimodal transportation planning and transportation demand management (“TDM”). This increase in capability requires adequate and appropriate staffing. Developing the institutional capacity now will yield operational efficiencies over the long-term, both in the ongoing delivery of transportation services and in the development of the APS capital improvement plan (“CIP”) and capacity development plan (“CDP”). In particular, APS needs a strong transportation director who can take a strategic long-term view of the system needs and collaborate with Arlington County staff to deliver services that meet the goals that underpin the recommended transportation philosophy.
- 3) **Improve School Bus service:** School bus service is the linchpin of the current APS transportation system. With improved school bus service, APS can encourage more students to take advantage of this efficient and safe transportation option and reduce transportation demand from family vehicles. Improved efficiency in school bus service can lead to cost savings, as well. In reviewing the current bus service network and structure, the Committee has noted that there are improvements that can be made to yield a more efficient and effective system.
- 4) **Invest in Safe Routes to Schools:** Active transportation has numerous benefits to the mental and physical health of students. Investing in a robust Safe Routes to Schools program can get more students walking and biking, improving their mental and physical health, and getting them to school ready to learn. SRTS can also reduce demand on our transportation infrastructure and on the school bus system, leading to cost savings. SRTS is an integral part of more sustainable and more efficient school transportation. Studies from around the country show that SRTS programs can have a significant, long-term impact, but often take time to show those gains. APS should invest in the program now, with the recognition that the payoffs will be realized over time.
- 5) **Integrate transportation planning in CIP/CDP decision making:** As APS works to create additional capacity to meet enrollment growth, it should ensure that both capital and non-capital options consider transportation impacts and the financial implications related to student, staff and visitor transportation, during all times that school buildings are in use. Every site with new construction should complete a transportation impact analysis as part of the alternatives development process. Siting and boundary determinations for specific programs should incorporate transportation impacts into the decision-making process, so realistic costs can be weighed as part of a life-cycle cost assessment of the project versus other alternatives. For example, bus eligibility zone hazard assessments should be conducted early in a site/program selection process to ascertain likely bus requirements and site impacts related to bus traffic. Programming for the Wilson site is a prime candidate for such evaluation. Hiring staff with appropriate planning expertise to complete this process is critical.
- 6) **Expand County collaboration and integration:** Arlington County is a leader in TDM and enabling smart and safe transportation choices. APS should utilize the resources and expertise of Arlington County to more efficiently and safely manage school related transportation. This past year the APS SRTS coordinator served as a valuable liaison and partner to County staff, helping to deliver several school area improvements. This level of collaboration has truly strengthened APS’ transportation program.

- 7) **Teach Transportation in the classroom:** Being able to travel around the community is a life skill that should be taught in APS. There are opportunities to work transportation into the curriculum at every age-level and in many different subjects. APS should teach students how to utilize every mode of transportation available to them – walking, biking, transit and, where applicable, driving – in safe and efficient ways, and should utilize Arlington County resources to do so. By teaching safe transportation practices in the classroom, APS can reinforce a culture of safety that students will take with them as the travel to and from schools, and can introduce students and their families to sustainable, efficient modes of transportation.

Future of the Committee

The Committee has worked extremely hard over the past 18 months, meeting twice per month and investing many hours of personal time to reach out to the public, to research matters of school transportation, to engage with APS staff, and to prepare materials for the School Board. APS Transportation has shown notable improvements and has dealt with some setbacks over that same time period. The Committee's involvement has helped APS staff both make those improvements and to deal with those setbacks in the best way possible, including by: providing and vetting new ideas with regard to transportation; funneling public comments to the appropriate staff in APS and in Arlington County; fostering appropriate discussion to improve new transportation projects; connecting appropriate APS and Arlington County staff with other resources in the area; and assisting with public outreach efforts.

The Committee recommends that the School Board convene a permanent Transportation Advisory Committee that will continue the work of this Committee. Continuing a dialog between APS staff and the committed members of the public around issues of school transportation will be key to continuing improvements in APS Transportation. The School Board should specifically instruct APS staff to consult with such a committee well in advance of any major changes to APS Transportation, to avoid another unfortunate situation such as occurred in Fall 2012. The committee should continue to include input from and access to Arlington County staff and to include members from Arlington who may not have children in APS. Finally, this committee should include a number of members in common with the current Committee as to ensure a smooth transition of both the relationships and expertise that this Committee has built over the past 18 months.

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank Assistant Superintendent John Chadwick and Transportation Director Bob Laws for working with us throughout this past year, and to Kyle Lukacs, Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator, for his hard work with us since October. We would also like to thank Sally Baird for serving as our liaison to the School Board. We extend much appreciation to Dennis Leach, Arlington County Director of Transportation, who has served as a consistent and helpful liaison from our Committee to Arlington County departments, staff and other resources. Finally, we would like to thank the many parents and families who provided input to the Committee over the past 18 months – helping us to better understand the transportation needs of their families.

Multimodal Transportation & Student Safety Special Committee

APS Parent, Student and Community Members (voting)

Kristin Haldeman, Chair
Gillian Burgess, Vice Chair
Eric Goodman
Lauren Hassel
Jane S. Kim
Erik Maskelony
Jack Owens, Student (Yorktown)
Tim Rosato
Aja Sae-Kung
Eli Spiliotopolous, Student (H.B. Woodlawn)
Nancy Van Doren
Ronna Weber

Jana Lynott, Arlington County Transportation Commission representative

APS Staff Members (Non-voting)

John Chadwick, Assistant Superintendent of Facilities & Operations
Cintia Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services
Linda Erdos, Assistant Superintendent School & Community Relations
Kyle Lukacs, Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator
Bob Laws, Director of Transportation
Robert Hindman, Principal, Taylor Elementary
Ellen Y. Smith, Assistant Principal, Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Arlington County Staff Liaison

Dennis Leach, Director of Transportation

Recommendations

Immediate actions (by or in Fall 2014)	Budget impact	Priority Areas Impacted						
		Safety	Staff	Improve Bus	Invest in SRTS	CIP/CDP	County	Class-room
<p>Adopt Transportation Philosophy - The School Board should align its philosophy and policies with Arlington County TDM principles. Specifically, the Committee recommends that the School Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the philosophy recommended by the Committee in February 2014; 2. Adopt a TDM policy that aligns with County; and 3. Develop a PIP to implement the philosophy. 		X		X	X	X	X	
<p>Prioritize hiring transportation director - The Committee recommends that the School Board make hiring a permanent director to be in place by the start of the 2014/15 school year a priority for summer 2014.</p>	In budget	X	X	X	X	X		
<p>Prioritize hiring SRTS position - This position is vacant as of June 30, 2014. The Committee recommends it be recruited for and filled this summer for the start of the 2014/15 school year.</p>	Grant-funded 2014/15		X		X			
<p>Establish and publish hazard criteria for bus eligibility zones - As these are the criteria used to develop the bus eligibility zones, they should be published for families to see and understand.</p>		X		X	X	X		
<p>Conduct hazard assessment for Middle and High Schools and publish results in multimodal maps - These have not yet been completed and are necessary to accurately capture bus eligibility, to plan for new construction and programs, and to be used by the SRTS program.</p>		X		X	X	X		

2014-2015 school year actions	Budget impact	Priority Areas Impacted						
		Safety	Staff	Improve Bus	Invest in SRTS	CIP/CDP	County	Class-room
<p>Develop school transportation safety and demand management plans - The Committee recommends that APS develop transportation safety and TDM plans for every school, to include after-hours transportation. These plans should identify safe circulation patterns for all modes of transportation for drop-off, pick up and other transportation. APS could develop the template, but must work with individual schools to tailor the plans to their specific circumstances.</p>		X	X	X	X	X	X	
<p>Identify Transportation Safety Coordinator - The Committee recommends that one person within APS administration have clear responsibility for transportation safety, reporting directly to the [Superintendent/School Board]. This position should be held accountable for safety with respect to all modes of school transportation and the development of a culture of safety.</p>		X	X					
<p>Teach students to use all modes of transportation safely - The Committee recommends that APS teach all students to navigate their community safely on foot, on a bicycle, via transit and on a school bus, partnering with other resources within Arlington County where possible. APS should consider giving students the opportunity to utilize various modes of transportation, for example, by utilizing transit for field trips, where possible.</p>	Cost: bikes, storage, maintenance	X		X	X			X
<p>Collaborate with families to nurture a culture of safety - The Committee recommends that APS make a dedicated effort to collaborate with families to establish and ingrain a safe transportation culture in the community, including utilizing previously developed safety resources, like Arlington County’s Predictable, Alert and Lawful (“PAL”) campaign.</p>		X		X	X		X	
<p>Create and fund a recruitment and retention plan for bus operators - The Committee understands that it is difficult to recruit for and retain these positions, and recommends that a plan be developed over the next year to address on-going issues with bus operator and attendant positions.</p>	One-time study	X	X	X				

2014-2015 school year actions	Budget	Priority Areas Impacted						
<p>Fund a transportation planning position - The Committee recommends this position be included in the APS budget beginning with the 2015/16 school year. This support is critical to strategic planning for the department.</p>	FTE	X	X	X	X	X		
<p>Stabilize/Ensure funding for SRTS through grants or operating budget - Ensuring the long-term funding of the SRTS position within Instruction and funding the SRTS program beyond the coordinator position are key to APS more fully developing a multi-modal transportation program, reducing school transportation demand and addressing County TDM requirements. The SRTS coordinator position currently is grant funded; long-term resources must be identified and planned for in the next budget cycles.</p>	FTE beyond 2015	X	X		X		X	
<p>Increase Bus Eligibility Zones: The Committee recommends the School Board amend Policy 50-5 to provide bus service beginning at the following distances from the school starting in the 2015/16 school year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Schools: ½ mile • Middle Schools: ¾ mile • High Schools: 1 mile 	Capital and operating costs associated with increased busing	X		X				
<p>Conduct Bus Network Efficiency Study - The Committee recommends that over the 2014/15 school year APS conduct a study evaluating each of its bus services – neighborhood, countywide/choice, special education – to better understand the requirements of each type of service, the cost drivers for each, and develop recommendations for improvements.</p>	One-time study	X	X	X	X			
<p>Implement the RFID/GPS system and acquire new bus routing software – The ability to track APS students riding school buses as soon as possible is key to student safety and bus system management, as recommended in our February 2014 Memo to the School Board (Appendix C). A data security plan as well as a privacy policy should be in place and communicated to families prior to implementation, with consideration regarding an opt-out policy.</p>	In budgets	X		X				

2014-2015 school year actions	Budget	Priority Areas Impacted						
<p>Examine bell times – As recommended by the 2011 MPS study, the Committee recommends that APS consider adjusting bell times to allow APS buses more time to pick up students in order to operate at higher use rates.</p>	One-time study	X		X				
<p>Explore new approach to delivering bus service - The Committee recommends that over the next school year, APS study contract management of the bus service. Many school systems do not manage their own service and an industry review of the concept could yield service improvements over the long-term. Pros and cons should be examined as part of the process, and a completed study ready for Spring 2015 discussion.</p>	One-time study		X	X				
<p>Provide sufficient resources for the SRTS program - Resources for the SRTS program should be coordinated with the County, and should include funding for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & Coordination (Cooperative identification of safe walking school bus and bike train routes by APS school and transportation staff, County planning staff, and families and resources to assist implementation) • Encouragement (Promotion, Outreach, Events) • Education (Curriculum, Teacher Trainings, Bicycles, Helmets, Trainers) • Evaluation (Metrics, Surveys, Reporting) • Stipend for Staff/Volunteer Service (SRTS Committee Leaders, Walking School Bus Coordinators, etc.) 	Funding for program expenses	X			X		X	

2014-2015 school year actions	Budget	Priority Areas Impacted						
<p>Establish Joint County/APS Safe Routes to School Task Force - The Committee recommends that the APS Safe Routes to School Program and Arlington County collaborate, coordinate, and communicate on issues such as infrastructure, enforcement, and encouragement. Specifically, the Committee recommends the development of a joint County-APS SRTS Task Force to help utilize the transportation planning, urban planning, enforcement, and commuting expertise housed within the Arlington County Department of Environmental Services (including Transportation Engineering and Operations Bureau), Commuter Services, Department of Parks & Recreation, and Arlington County Police Department with the insight and knowledge of APS staff.</p>		X			X		X	
<p>Utilize Arlington County expertise and resources. The Committee recommends that APS draw on County planning expertise, TDM resources (such as the Master Transportation Plan), and ongoing outreach (such as the PAL safety campaign) to inform both staff TDM and student transportation planning. The Committee further recommends that APS coordinate with County to offer free County (ART bus) transit for students and to align County transit services with APS locations and school schedules.</p>	Savings from effective TDM		X		X		X	
<p>Transportation in the curriculum - The Committee recommends that the School Board recognize that transportation is a life skill and integrate it into the curriculum in an age-appropriate way throughout primary and secondary education, emphasizing safety for all modes. Students should be taught how to use all modes of transportation, including walk, bicycle, public transportation and school bus. The Extended Day, Enrichment and other extracurricular programs should be considered a resource for extending the impact of transportation education.</p>	Cost: curriculum (though much available for free); materials (also much is available for free)	X			X			X

On-going	Budget impact	Priority Areas Impacted						
		Safety	Staff	Improve Bus	Invest in SRTS	CIP/CDP	County	Class-room
<p>Conduct preliminary transportation impact studies for all new construction and program location evaluations - School sites generate significant transportation activity. In order to effectively gauge construction needs and operational requirements for a project or program, APS should conduct transportation impact analyses during the alternatives development phase of planning and programming.</p>	Include in project budget	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<p>Effectively collect and utilize data related to transportation –The Committee recommends that APS effectively collect and utilize data related to school transportation. In particular, the Committee recommends that APS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate feedback and lessons learned from the APSGo! survey process to improve those surveys, and repeat the surveys at least biannually to develop a picture of APS transportation over time; • Use the data gathered from APSGo! and the RFID/GPS system in developing TDM plans for students, staff and visitors and in developing projections for CDP and transportation planning; • Ensure that APS staff have adequate expertise to both collect and utilize transportation data; and • Develop both a data security plan and a privacy policy, taking into consideration a potential opt-out policy, and communicate those policies clearly to APS families. 	Operating costs for data collection	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Appendix A: Summary of Public Outreach

Number of PTAs Contacted by MMTSSSC Members: 28 + County Council of PTAs

Number of PTA Meetings Attended/Presentations Delivered: 24 + County Council of PTAs

Number of In-person Public Comments at MMTSSSC Meetings: 14

Number of Individuals Sharing comments by e-mail or via word of mouth: 17

Committee members contacted PTAs from a total of 28 schools, as well as the County Council of PTAs. Members were able to attend meetings at the majority of those schools. Additionally, 14 persons attended and spoke at regularly scheduled Committee meetings, and the Committee received 17 emails capturing comments from members of the public. The comments, concerns, ideas, and suggestions received by the Committee are summarized below, grouped into broad themes: Safety, School Bus, Active Transportation, Public Transportation, Outreach/Awareness/Education and Encouragement, Ideas (Transportation-Related Suggestions from Comments), and General Comments.

Safety

- Concerns about staff (principal, assistant principals, teachers) directing traffic/crossing in a.m. and p.m.
- Speeding in school zones
- Cut-through traffic
- Walking routes not well-lit (especially for middle school students walking to school in winter); trails not lit
- Parks not safe to walk through
- Trails not safe in morning due to rush hour bike commuter traffic
- Hazards not identified on walk maps
- Need additional school zone signage
- Need more crosswalks
- Need more crossing guards / need parent input on placement of crossing guards
- Questions about allocation of crossing guards/how determined
- Choice and/or countywide schools also need crosswalks and support for walkers and bicyclists for those students who live close enough to walk/bike
- What is the role of student safety patrols (5th graders)– can they do more, such as leading walking school buses?
- What are some other no-cost supports for safety – parents, seniors, older students?
- APS should use County's PAL (Predictable/Alert/Lawful) safety campaign to teach students
- Multimodal maps need to factor in and note hazards
- Each school should do a safety evaluation and update annually
- Some students who bike aren't biking safely - need instruction in safe biking
- If students are being asked to walk on busy Arlington streets, they need instruction in pedestrian safety

Single Occupant Vehicles

- Need analysis of and guidance re: flow/safety of drop-off and pick-up traffic (one-way streets, routes/ street markings, etc.)
- Need enforcement of vehicle drop-off and pick-up traffic
- Need clear signage about parking near schools – where allowed, when allowed – and rules need to be enforced
- Parents are often a major source of safety issues – especially those dropping off/picking up kids in cars, cutting through neighborhoods, parking illegally, pulling over/dropping kids off on busy streets (like Route 50 at rush hour)

- Vehicle traffic increases in winter, dark, inclement weather

Construction

- Concerns about construction in general and at schools – traffic patterns, closed sidewalks, disruptions to walking and biking routes, visibility
- Concerns about construction vehicles operating in school zones (esp Williamsburg and Wakefield with more to come)
- Students who bike aren't biking safely - need instruction in safe biking

Infrastructure/TDM

- County and Schools need to coordinate/prioritize
- APS needs to consult and align with County Master Transportation Plan
- Narrow sidewalks on busy streets (Carlin Springs, Washington Blvd)
- Missing sidewalks/broken links
- Sidewalks closed due to construction
- Traffic light length insufficient for younger walkers
- Exits/entrances/right turns are dangerous for walkers (cars turn without looking for pedestrians/bikes)
- Four Mile Run and George Mason Dr intersection is dangerous
- School speed limit at Gunston and Oakridge – signs flash only for Gunston school hours, not for Oakridge arrival and departure times

Special Circumstances

- Kids with late schedules - kids who participate in sports and walk home after games/practice and families walking home from extended day do not benefit from reduced school zone speeds, crossing guards, etc. and are often walking in dark with small kids, sports equipment etc.
- Students who bike aren't biking safely - need instruction in safe biking
- We (elementary family) want to walk/bike" but don't feel safe because paths aren't monitored, there aren't enough crossing guards, traffic speeds are too great)

School Buses

- School Bus needs to be more attractive than cars or people will choose to drive
- "When buses and walking are inconvenient, people will drive"
- To reduce car trips, APS must continue and expand busing
- School bus inefficiencies are putting more cars on the road
- Safe Busing Now (see remarks to School Board submitted as e-mail to MMTSSSC on January 24 2014)

Schedules/Timing

- Bus pick-up too early in a.m.
- Bus pick-up times inconsistent in morning
- Bus too late to school in a.m. – students late for breakfast/ Kids who get breakfast at school and arrive late have to eat in classroom
- Special Education buses often late
- Special Education bus rides/routes longer than non-SPED buses (45 min- 1 hour)
- Choice schools have longer bus rides that could be optimized with parent input
- No bus support for early (8:20 a.m.) classes at HB
- Late buses for HB athletes travelling to home school are not on time
- Career Center buses pick up too early-many Arlington Mill students dropped out because of the early pick-up
- Career Center buses drop off too late for students to participate in sports at home schools

- One hour bus ride is too long, especially for youngest kids
- Transportation needs to coordinate driver schedules/shifts better - when they have three routes to run, one problem can disrupt an entire morning or afternoon

Route Optimization

- Bus stop placement poor (too far between stops, locations without sidewalks, insufficient lighting)
- Long walk to bus stop location and impact on timing (earlier wake-up)
- Bus rides/routes could be optimized with parent input
- TJHSST transportation / bus routes need improvement – can be planned well in advance since all students are known in spring
- Some buses are crowded so families decide to drive
- School bus routing and timing is often inefficient, so many parents drive kids instead
- Inefficiencies cause more inefficiencies and more cars on the road – for example, if buses are picking kids up too early, some families will choose to drive. If the bus keeps same schedule with fewer kids boarding, it starts to arrive at school too early. Existing riders then arrive early and have to wait at school when they could be sleeping / or at least when they could have gotten on the bus later. This makes more riders drop bus, start to get driven, and so on.
- Big data needed to inform route planning
- Routes need to be revised each year but they don't seem to be - same mistakes are made/don't learn from mistakes
- Transportation needs to coordinate driver schedules/shifts better - when they have three routes to run, one problem can disrupt an entire morning or afternoon

Communication

- Texts regarding morning bus delays reach parents too late to be useful/find options
- Texts/calls from Transportation notifying parents when buses are late *in the afternoon* would be helpful
- What is status of RFID system? Need to communicate with parents before operational
- Are bus routes posted anywhere? Parents should know where buses are going
- It's helpful to know locations of later stops in case your child misses the bus and you have time to catch up with it.
- Transportation should advise parents of ways to deal with day-to-day problems like missed buses, etc.

Culture/Behavior on Buses

- Bullying a problem
- Do drivers need to enforce behavior? What is their role/what are their responsibilities?
- Could parents volunteer as assistants on buses?
- Could bus/public transit behavior be part of transportation curriculum? Teach that riding bus is a privilege.

Bus Safety/Safety on Board Buses

- Buses need seat belts
- Buses should have cameras
- Buses need to understand bikes, bike lanes, bike parking, etc. (in reference to APS field trip bus parked in bike lanes in DC)
- Buses in motion before all students seated - this is dangerous
- Buses need to signal, use stop signs more consistently

Driver Qualifications

- Many new drivers throughout the year – insufficient continuity – too much turnover, especially on some special education routes
- Some drivers not familiar with routes; ask kids for directions (at beginning of year)
- Field trip drivers often get lost
- APS should provide all drivers/buses with paper maps in absence of technology/familiarity
- When is GPS coming to buses?

"Courtesy Busing"

- Must be eliminated – unfair, squeaky wheel system
- Causes confusion and anxiety
- Unfairly allocated
- No outreach about it/those in the know have advantage
- North Arlington families seemed to get preferential treatment/more courtesy busing

Policies

- Special programs at neighborhood schools (IB, etc.) include busing for students who live outside of neighborhood. This limits seats available for students requesting bus service/courtesy busing (report from parent of W-L student who lives just outside the 1.5 mile walk zone)
- What is the policy for friends who do not have a bus pass to ride bus home with friends who do ride the bus? A note? Nothing? Is there a standard?
- APS needs to look at bell times/late start times/more time between school openings to improve efficiency of bus service

Active Transportation

- “When buses and walking are inconvenient, people will drive”
- Walk zones are too far
- 1.5 miles is too far for middle school, especially with early start time
- 1 mile is too far for elementary – especially for youngest kids (ages 4/5 – 8/9)
- Need to consider what kids are carrying, daylight/seasons (winter walking)
- Rolling backpacks would help but don't fit in lockers
- Parent schedules are a factor – many cannot walk with younger kids because they need to be at work
- What can families do when a "gated community" blocks walking route to school? Students must walk around and it takes more time/forces them onto busy Columbia Pike
- Parent challenges APS staff to walk 1.5 miles carrying heavy backpack, instrument and/or sports gear in cold, dark, rain, etc.
- It's the little things that add up to make walking and biking harder – heavy backpacks, instruments, sports equipment, cold, dark, EXTRA TIME, early morning start times

Public Transit

- ART bus on school routes crowded (Wakefield, TJ, Kenmore), especially in a.m.
- Not safe for 11-year-old to ride public transit alone
- Who pays for this? Why should some families have to pay for bus service while others ride school buses for free?
- Student SmarTrip cards are a great idea but not enough people know about them.
- Wilson School should be kept – perfect setting for high-density urban school, well-served by transit -ideal way to promote student use of public transit
- Some student riders experiencing resistance from bus drivers
- Some students not behaving well on ART

- Many parents don't know about reduced fare vs. regular - .75 fare/ if \$1, no change given -- availability of/how to get SmarTrip cards
- Middle and High Schools should sell SmarTrip cards
- ART bus routing could help Arlington Mill students get to Career Center
- Student fares need to be FREE!/ART needs to be free for students

Outreach/Awareness/Education and Encouragement

- Lack of knowledge about courtesy busing
- Lack of knowledge about Transportation Call Center – both parents and staff
- Lack of awareness about multimodal maps – that they exist, what their purpose is, and how to find them
- Lack of input from families and schools on multimodal maps
- Need more information on ART/iRIDE/Student transit fares
- APS Communications/School and Community Relations needs to make sure families know all transportation options.
- Call Center response took too long (one reported instance)
- APS staff (administrative, teachers, etc.) need to know about APS Transportation resources (such as Call Center and reduced fares/SmarTrip card) and refer students and families accordingly

APS GO! Survey

- APS GO! Survey had serious issues and flaws
- Not enough opportunity to explain responses
- No meaningful input
- Inconsistent input /redirected depending on how certain questions were answered
- Survey needs to be in Arabic, Amharic, Urdu and other languages common in Arlington
- Arlington Mill not included in survey

Ideas (Transportation-Related Suggestions from Comments)

- Hold a Transportation Summit/Assembly with kids and parents at each school to cover all topics – traffic laws, pedestrian/bike/transit safety; managing heavy backpacks/equipment/instruments; role of Call Center
- Develop transportation “tip sheet” for each school (PTA project or with PTA support?)
- Provide **multi-modal** transportation resources CUSTOMIZED BY SCHOOL at Back to School Night and/or fall conferences
- APS/SRTS should have each school do a transportation safety audit based on consistent criteria and updated annually
- Treat school buses like public transportation/empower younger kids to learn the right way to ride the bus and later they'll be comfortable on ART buses, Metro and other modes
- Celebrate school buses as green transportation
- Hold a forum on Special Education Transportation
- Look at BUS DATA for A.M.. vs P.M. to determine inefficiencies / problem areas
- Are Transportation Call Center records accessible/can they be analyzed for strengths / weaknesses?

General Comments/Observations

Single Occupant Vehicles

- School Bus needs to be more attractive than cars or people will choose to drive
- “When buses and walking are inconvenient, people will drive”

- To reduce car trips, APS must continue and expand busing
- School bus inefficiencies are putting more cars on the road

Equity

- NEED STANDARDIZED CRITERIA FOR SAFETY AND EQUITY
- Arlington families include two populations – those with choices and those with no choice. Safe school transportation is a basic need for all, but especially for those with no choice/alternative
- Single parent with non-traditional work schedule reported she had to get older child to walk younger children to school when bus service taken away – older child then late to his school?
- There is or there is a perception of disparity of services between north and south Arlington schools/families – some are “more equal than others” when it comes to interpretation of safe routes, allocation of courtesy busing, “being heard”

Public Perception

- APS families are still feeling the pain of the 2012 bus debacle and aren’t ready to trust APS Transportation to serve their needs equitably and transparently
- APS boasts that there were fewer complaints to the Call Center in Fall 2013 than in Fall 2012. Of course there were because there wasn’t a crisis in 2013– people had adapted, received courtesy busing or just given up

APS Staff Transportation

- APS staff not encouraged/incentivized to use alternative transportation (walk/bike/transit where possible)
- Teacher parking is an issue – some neighborhoods are zoned; many school lots are too small – NOT all teachers have options (don't live near transit, etc.)
- Staff request secure bike parking

County Cooperation/Coordination

- County and APS need to work together to solve problems created by influx of population (capacity), development (construction), increased density, and resulting strains on infrastructure.
- County needs to bear more of the burden - County approves development that increases school population, density and traffic
- If County keeps approving more development, they need to cover more of the costs associated with capacity issues like new school construction, additions, buses, etc.

Appendix B: Budget Memo

Memorandum

To: APS School Board Members
CC: Patrick Murphy, Superintendent; John Chadwick, Asst. Superintendent -
Facilities
From: Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee
Date: 12/13/13
Re: 2014/15 Budget Guidance

The APS Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee (“Committee”) offers the following recommendations for School Board consideration as it provides budget guidance to the Superintendent for the 2014-15 school year. These recommendations are made with the intent to build a sustainable APS transportation program that will use resources more effectively and efficiently and that can adequately coordinate with County staff to maximize available resources.

To ensure a transportation program that meets the needs of the APS community and addresses APS strategic goals, the Committee has identified three areas of focus for these near-term budget recommendations: **institutional capacity building, improving transportation service delivery, and planning for enrollment growth**. Each of these focus areas is supported by the recommendations outlined in our June 2013 report. The specific recommendations below seek to support the foundation for these key areas.

1) **Staffing:**

In order to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of APS transportation, APS needs to not only improve bus operations but also develop the capability to actively engage in multimodal transportation planning and demand management. This increase in capability requires adequate staffing.

- a. Increase the responsibility of the current Director of Transportation position to also include multimodal transportation planning and demand management. The Superintendent should consider making the Director position a direct report. Salary should be commensurate for a position with this level of responsibility and similar to that of other senior Director positions (e.g. position moved to P-Scale Classification like Dir. of Employee Relations, Dir. of Planning & Evaluation). Active recruiting for this position should begin in earnest, with a goal of filling it with a highly-qualified candidate as soon as possible.
- b. Fund a new Assistant Director of Transportation that will support the addition of multimodal transportation planning and demand management as well as bus operations.

- c. Fund a new Transportation Demand Management position responsible for using data to help support long-term multimodal transportation goals.
- d. Ensure permanent funding for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator that includes a competitive salary and funding for SRTS related events and communication. This position is critical to making walking and biking safe and attractive transportation options at each school as well as ensuring that walk/bike access needs and programs are identified and supported by APS and the County.
- e. Continue to address bus driver shortages.

2) Maximize and plan for internal resources:

In order to plan for and promote an integrated multimodal transportation program, APS should align the budget and work programs for departments such as IT and Communications with the Transportation department to:

- a. Ensure sufficient web and mobile application resources to combine information related to SRTS, bus transportation, transit, walk/bike/bus statistics, safety and other related concepts for parent and student one-stop shopping.
- b. Conduct surveys and data collection efforts
- c. Provide communications materials in a variety formats (e.g. brochures, newsletters)

3) Studies:

APS should undertake the following studies to help address and resolve the continued concerns with the bus system to improve school bus transportation safety and efficiency:

- a. Evaluate the school bus program from its various levels including neighborhood schools, choice schools and special education. The study should evaluate the effectiveness of the program from each level, but also combined.
- b. Evaluate school bell times. The 2011 study of the transportation system notes several inefficiencies resulting from school bell times.

4) Equipment/Technology:

- a. Ensure there are a sufficient number of buses and the right type of buses to address current bus riders and growth from new riders.
- b. Licenses for effective school bus routing and management software should be maintained, or obtained if the current software is not effective.
- c. Equip every bus with the ability to accurately track both buses and students and improve bus efficiency (utilization rates). The system must be sophisticated enough to address safety, security, route optimization, data collection and efficiency the first time.

5) Capacity Planning: As APS works to create additional capacity to meet enrollment growth, it should ensure that both capital and non-capital options consider transportation impacts and the financial implications for students and faculty.

Appendix C: February Memo

MEMORANDUM	
To:	APS School Board Members
From:	Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee
Cc:	Patrick Murphy, Superintendent; John Chadwick, Asst. Superintendent – Facilities
Date:	February 27, 2014
Re:	Transportation Philosophy and Bus Service Recommendations

The School Board has asked the Multimodal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee (“Committee”) to provide recommendations on (1) an APS philosophy for transportation services; and (2) the reasonable distance from school to begin bus services.

APS philosophy for transportation services

The Committee recommends that the School Board adopt the following statement as the philosophy for APS transportation services:

APS will provide safe, efficient, and convenient transportation choices, which recognize the diverse needs of families and staff, strive to reduce traffic congestion and emissions around schools and their neighborhoods, and promote healthy living.

The Committee has built consensus around the following principles: safety; choice (in mode selection); efficiency; equity; promoting health; and reducing traffic congestion, and believes that these principles must be embodied in an APS transportation philosophy statement. The philosophy statement above has been designed to address each of these principles.

Provision of Bus Services

For the 2014-2015 school year, the Committee recommends the following five actions:

1. The School Board amend Policy 50-5 to provide bus service beginning at the following distances from the school:
 - Elementary Schools: ½ mile
 - Middle Schools: ¾ mile
 - High Schools: 1 mile

2. APS place bus stops at locations that meet APS bus stop safety criteria along school bus routes developed through the APS school bus route planning process.

3. APS continue to measure the “walk zone distances [...] along the shortest safe walk path” as specified in Policy Implementation Procedure 50-5.1 Pupil Transportation and provide bus service as needed per this assessment.

4. Contingent upon adoption of the Committee's first recommendation above, APS eliminate courtesy busing. APS staff should remain responsive to parents who request bus service for their students for safety or other reasons.

5. APS prioritize implementing the radio-frequency identification (RFID)/GPS system to track APS students riding school buses as soon as possible as it is key to student safety and bus system management.

Rationale

These recommendations are consistent with the transportation philosophy the Committee has proposed above, as well as the safety assessments completed by APS to date. A review of staff-supplied data (Attachment A) on the current number of students eligible for *regular* (i.e. non-courtesy) bus service shows that once safety is taken into account, many children within the current "policy walk zones" in Policy 50-5 have bus service. At this time, the bus eligibility distances are effectively close to the distances the Committee is recommending, because safety concerns have reduced the current "policy walk zones" to these distances for elementary schools and high schools.¹ In other words, APS is already operating close to these levels of service for those schools.

For middle schools, the Committee was particularly aware of the fact that safety assessments have not been completed. Complete safety assessments will certainly deem more students eligible for bus service under the current policy: after a recent safety assessment, more than 200 children were deemed eligible for regular bus service to Jefferson Middle School.² Moreover, considering the age of middle school students, the early start time for middle schools and anecdotal experiences with those students, the Committee thought that starting bus eligibility at $\frac{3}{4}$ mile was reasonable. Based on the APS GO! Survey data (Attachment B), the Committee believed this change in policy would significantly reduce traffic from family vehicles at middle schools, making these neighborhoods safer for everyone. The Committee notes that the "effective 'walk' distance" shown in Attachment A for Middle Schools, based on October 2013 data, is already one mile. If the recommendation above is not adopted, the Committee strongly recommends that APS provide bus service to all middle school students more than one mile from school.

Additional data from the APS GO! survey supports the Committee's recommendation, as the data show that walking to school begins to decline at about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Use of bus begins an upsurge at this point as well, indicating that many families are, in fact, being provided bus service starting at $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. It is reasonable to surmise that if bus service were not offered at that distance, use of single-family vehicles would increase.

The Committee has developed a consensus that minimizing the use of single-family vehicles decreases traffic congestion at the schools, makes all routes to schools safer, and aligns with County smart growth policies. The Committee believes that the bus service recommendation specified above supports the ability of families to choose the best transportation mode for their

¹ Importantly, the Committee understands that the safety assessments have not been completed for all middle and high schools.

² These students are not reflected as "eligible for busing" in Attachment A, which is based on October 2013 data.

circumstances, while minimizing the use of single-family vehicles. Committee members have met with many of the PTA groups at individual schools, a number of whom have reported that traffic from family vehicles during student drop-off and pick-up times has caused safety issues at and around the school.

The Committee has observed that an inordinate amount of APS resources are currently dedicated to determining whether students are eligible for school bus service – regular and courtesy – and managing the system. At the same time, the Committee has observed that students who have asked for and been denied courtesy bus service may be in unsafe situations, such as crossing busy roads without adult supervision, or may instead be getting to and from school in single-family vehicles.

Through public comment and correspondence received since its inception, the Committee has observed that courtesy busing has been a particular source of stress for APS families and APS transportation staff. Families of APS students whose bus transportation has been classified as “courtesy” are in limbo, worried that their families’ schedules will be thrown into chaos if their children are not provided bus service in the future. Further, the Committee has a variety of concerns about the equity of the current courtesy busing system, including its first-come-first-served allocation process.

Ultimately, the recommendations made herein are largely consistent with APS current practice and the effective ‘walk’ zones that have been established. The data shown in Attachment A, “Bus Eligibility,” strongly suggests that any increase in capacity that APS will need to provide to implement these recommendations is marginal.

Need for Information on Bus Ridership

The Committee recommends that APS prioritize the implementation of the RFID/GPS program as a means of simultaneously and consistently identifying/accounting for students on buses and providing a data source to be used in bus route planning and management. APS staff and the community have identified a number of concerns regarding the ability to tell which students are in fact riding which school bus and when. Bus ridership information is important to student safety, parent peace of mind, and effective transportation planning, as data enables APS to use school buses more efficiently. This data will allow APS to better plan and optimize routes and to ascertain when and where ‘back-up’ or ‘overflow’ buses might be needed, for example when loads may increase due to the weather.

The Committee will continue to develop its final recommendations to the School Board, aimed at fulfilling the philosophy described above. Importantly, the Committee sees many opportunities to increase the percentage of students biking, walking, taking transit and riding buses to school and looks forward to presenting these as part of our final recommendations in June.

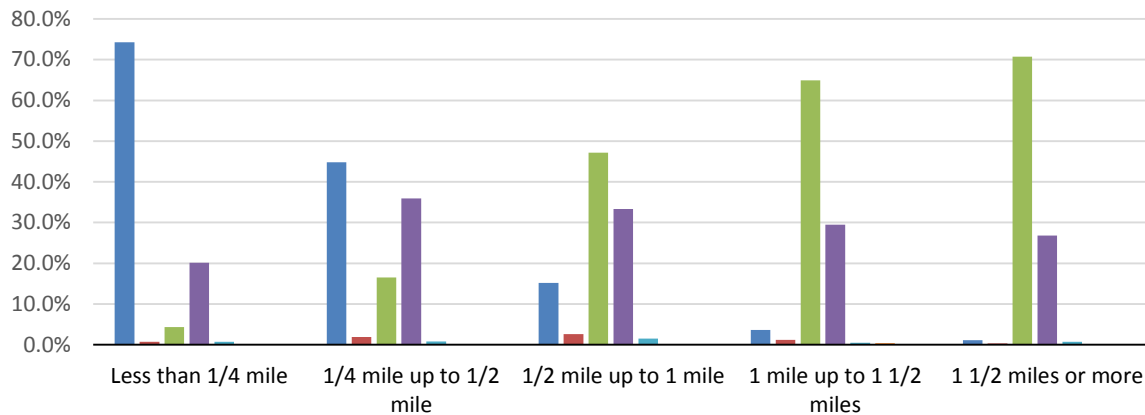
Attachment A: Bus Eligibility

		Elementary School	Middle School	High School
1	Eligible for busing	7,992	2,420	3,418
2	Total Enrollment	12,780	4,421	5,742
3	% Eligible of Total	62.54%	54.74%	59.53%
	Distance from School:	<i>Percentage of families, self-reported</i>		
4	At least 1/2 mile	56.0%	86.0%	91.5%
5	At least 1 mile	25.0%	54.0%	67.5%
6	At least 1.5 miles		31.0%	41.5%
7	Effective "walk" distance	<1/2 mile	1 mile	1-1.5 miles
8	Courtesy bussed	177	29	114
9	Safety assessment completed	Most	Some	Little

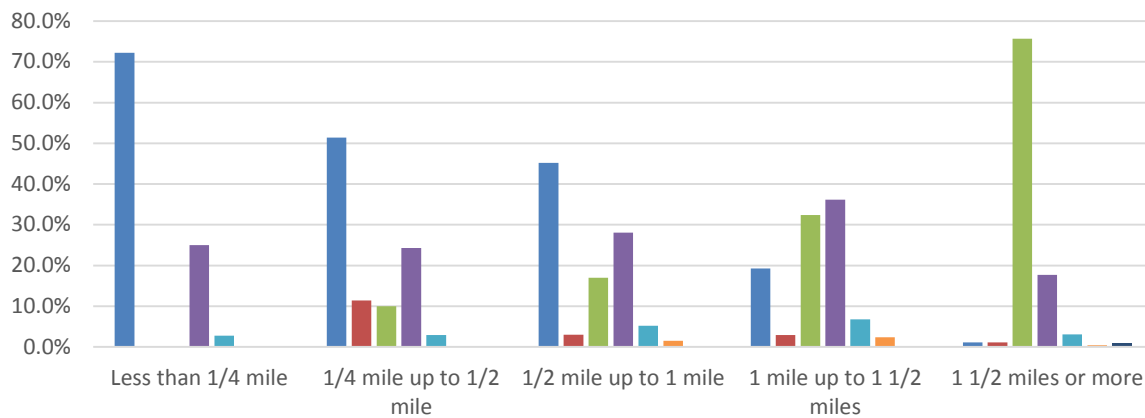
Sources: APS staff data – Sept. 2013 (lines 1, 8)
 APS website – Oct. 2013 (line 2)
 APS Go! Survey (lines 4-6)

Attachment B: APS Go! Student Travel Parent Survey

Parent Reported Mode by Distance - Elementary School



Parent Reported Mode by Distance - Middle School



Parent Reported Mode by Distance - High School

