

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

November 1, 2017

Approved minutes

In Attendance:

Reid Goldstein, Vice Chair, APS School Board

APS Appointees

Kristin Haldeman, Chair (MS)
CC Clark (HS)
Janeth Valenzuela (HS)
Josh Folb (SPED)
Catherine Frum (Teacher)
John Mickevics (APS-Comm)

County Appointees

John Armstrong, PAC
Gillian Burgess, BAC (ES)
John Carten, TAC

Staff

John Chadwick, APS-F&O
Debbie DeFranco, APS-SRTS
Angel Garcia-Ablanque, APS-T
Dennis Leach, AC-DOT
Jim Larson, AC-ACCS
Hui Wang, AC-TE&O

Minutes from the Sept. 25th meeting were approved with discussed edits.

No one signed up to speak during the Public Comment period.

1. Updates

Irving & 2nd Sts. Crossing: County staff installed stop signs, and 'stop sign ahead' warning signs (at the intersection ahead of the stop) as well as crosswalk striping this week. APS should alert school administrators that the new signs are in so they can alert parents. Hui Wang will send photos of the new signs. TE&O staff has met with Police and they know the new sign is in.

Action: Alert school administrators to new condition (J Chadwick)

Action: Send photos (H Wang)

Carlin Springs Pedestrian Safety Study: The County, working with APS staff, has scheduled a meeting at Kenmore with: Kenmore MS, Carlin Springs ES and Campbell ES principals; Kenmore's School Resource Officer (SRO), and Janeth Valenzuela representing parents of students attending the schools. The first half of the meeting will be in the school, then the group will go out and walk the area during dismissal. The Committee recommended someone from Parks & Rec be there as well to look at how improvements to the trail network could be used to move kids off Carlin Springs Rd for part of their trip. Both north and south Carlin Springs studies will look at sidewalks under the bridge. Study recommendations will be grouped into short/med/long-term strategies.

Action: Invite DPR rep to meeting (H Wang)

Where's the Bus App: APS has run into a snag with the app; need IT to help bridge the parent portal ID to the student ID, which must be solved before the app can be deployed. APS may need additional testers from select schools where we need better representation. Need to find out if students can test as well. CC Clark noted that households may need to have more than one sign-on. Mr. Garcia-Ablanque clarified that a parent can see more than one child and that each parent can access through their ParentVue account. Parents may need more than one account if the family situation warrants it.

Crossing Guard Placement: The Police department is reviewing its considerations for crossing guard placement. Cintia Johnson, Asst. Sup't for Administrative Services, is leading APS representation. APS would like to see the considerations be somewhat flexible.

TDM Updates: 195 employees signed up for this Fall's Walk/Bike to School day. Thirteen schools are signed up for the Champions program. Next Tues. (11/7,) Arlington Transportation Partners (ATP) will hold focus groups for all ATP clients, including schools, to review the Champions program and identify areas to improve, change or eliminate. The focus groups will consist of one group of current or former Champions and one group of never-been-Champions, for each program area (employer, multifamily residential, property developers and schools). Two-hundred thirty iRide cards have been sold to date since July. In the Nov/Dec edition of the Citizen, there will be a spread promoting student iRide cards. The Mobile Commuter Store (MCS) also travels to middle and high schools during lunch hours to facilitate sales, and has made appearances at other school events.

ART and ATP have teamed up to familiarize students with transit. In the Fall, they brought a bus to Campbell and taught kids about riding the bus. Ms. Clark said she grew up in NYC using transit and would like to see students trained to use it here. Ms. Haldeman added that the APS instruction should develop/include 'kid-friendly' travel training curriculum, with the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program a good place to start. (Noted by Ms. DeFranco.)

ATP has won an award from the Association for Commuter Transportation due to the program's unique outreach to schools.

2. APS Bus System Overview

To help the Committee understand the intricacies of bus service delivery, Mr. Garcia-Ablanque presented a deep dive into the APS bus system. The presentation is available on the ACTC website. <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/APS-transportation-ACTC-Nov-1-2017-Presentation.pdf>

The presentation began with some basic facts about the bus system (# of routes; fleet size; type of service provided), followed by a more in depth discussion of how service is delivered. Mr. Garcia-Ablanque clarified that one route is made up of several runs (to various schools) dictated by bell times, and pointed out to the Committee that APS has 178 buses to make 288 general education runs and 91 special education (SPED)runs, so buses are used several times over. The various bell times impact the efficiency of bus routing and scheduling.

Example: A Gunston bus starts @ 6:26am at Trades Ctr– ends at 9:05am. It picked up/dropped off Gunston students, then went on to pick up/drop off W-L students, then Key students – travelling 35 miles from start to finish.

Data is constantly collected from the on-board GPS on the time buses arrive and leave stops. If a bus is early – it must wait for its scheduled timepoint. The data is used to optimize routes and APS staff runs reports to look at chronically late routes. Staff tries to look at each route at least one time per year. APS has been included in discussions about major road construction projects that could impact bus operations. Scheduled projects do have times when they take lanes – usually it's off-peak. For last minute issues, APS uses the Arlington Alerts system to stay looped in.

Approximately 16,205 APS students in all levels are eligible for bus transportation. About 718 of those are SPED students. About 6,000 students ride the bus in the AM and 6,000 in the PM. About, 2,700 bus eligible students are in the extended day program so not taking the bus in either the AM or the PM. The total APS plans for then is ~16,000-2700. ACTC would like to see usage by school level.

The timepoints slide shows that time is crunched for buses. One change to the schedule can impact buses down the line. For example, if a child is not picked up at the stop, he/she must be brought back to the school, which adds to the bus run time. This is an everyday occurrence with some students experiencing this issue often. APS has developed a couple stop-gap measures to avoid having to send a bus back to the school and penalize the next riders.

Driver absences are also a big issue, and APS is currently short 9 drivers to start. Absents can be 'call-outs' – contractors who simply call in sick; vacations; drivers not fit for duty. On average, APS is short about 20 drivers per day. About ½ of APS' current drivers live in Arlington and ½ do not. Inclement weather and traffic can make it difficult (and sometimes not possible) for those who live farther away to get to work at the hour they are needed. APS has no program that allows drivers to stay overnight if weather in the outer regions looks bad, but it's not predicted to be bad in Arlington.

Recruitment is an issue too. Obtaining a commercial driver's license (CDL) permit is probably the toughest piece of the process and all vehicles – except 3 – require a CDL. Some of the key elements of the licensing (standing airbrake and pre-trip sequencing) are particularly difficult to master. Training and testing do not take place locally, rather trainees must go to the DMV in Manassas. APS does provide training pay to recruits, but they are not considered an APS employee until all requirements/processes are met. For every 10 that apply APS gets 4. One issue is that people will come, get paid to get their CDL, then leave to make more money at a better job. On average attrition is about 20%. Additionally, there is a national shortage of bus drivers; schools poach from each other.

Many drivers are family members as APS often gets drivers by word of mouth. This is helpful, but if there is a family event, it can mean several drivers are out and subs may not be available.

Bus parking constraints are another issue APS is dealing with. Currently some buses are stored in an overflow lot on the edge of Shirlington, but this location must be vacated in summer 2018. At present, APA is juggling some of the of white/admin vehicles to make space. APS added 10 routes this year; but in the long run, APS must try to reduce the number of routes to reduce the fleet needs (or at least keep it from growing) because we are out of space.

Lastly, with respect to Safety, all buses have internal cameras (most have 3; about 20 have 5) and about 20 have stop-arm cameras that are catching drivers who go around a bus when its stop sign is out. However, it appears drivers have figured out how to 'skirt' the cameras, so APS is installing decoy cameras to deal with this. Of the 375 violations for which citations have been issued, about 180 occurred at the intersection of Columbia Pike & Greenbrier. Mr. Garcia-Ablanque feels we need a public safety campaign reminding drivers of the driving rules concerning school buses.

3. County Transportation CIP

Mr. Leach gave a high-level overview of the transportation capital planning process. The presentation is available on the ACTC website: <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Transportation-CIP-Implementation-Progress-ACTC-Presentation-110117.pdf>

The first part of the presentation highlighted Arlington's smart growth success along with success in achieving significant levels of multimodal travel in the County. Of note is that while the county is steadily growing, both traffic volumes on major arterials and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) are declining on average. Transportation safety is improving. The number of collisions resulting in injury has declined by 52% since 2006 (based on reported data). The data does not include interstate roads nor does it include trails data.

Mr. Leach then reviewed the link between the County's Master Transportation Plan and project development, highlighting several accomplishments achieved through the planning and capital project development process. He also reviewed funding sources and how dollars are allocated over the program areas.

Over the next 10 years, investments will be made in these areas:

- Complete street projects to enhance multimodal accessibility in neighborhoods
- Metrorail station projects to improve accessibility, safety for riders
- A new Premium Transit Network for Columbia Pike, Pentagon City, Crystal City, Potomac Yard
- Maintenance and reconstruction of County bridges and roads
- Improvements to street lights and signals
- Enhancements to the pedestrian and bicycle network and parking

There are four main investment program areas: Route 1; Columbia Pike, Rosslyn-Ballston and a broad 'County-wide' category. Investment areas are mostly Metro corridors. School opportunities fall in the broader 'county-wide area.'

The Transportation CIP spans 10 years, though is updated every 2 years. It is informed by County Board adopted plans and policies and shaped by available funding sources. The next update is in 2018 and the process started with staff this Fall. The County Manager presents a proposed CIP to the County Board in late Spring 2018, followed by commission/community briefings. County Board hearings and CIP adoption is scheduled for Summer 2018.

Mr. Leach said this is a good time for the ACTC to discuss inputs to the CIP. Committee members were interested in knowing how projects are prioritized or whether an existing project with a less urgent need could have its schedule adjusted to fund a project that bubbles up as an urgent need.

Next meeting: January 3

Future Topics:

- Standing updates: Carlin Springs Rd Ped Safety Study; Where's the Bus app
- CIP Inputs
- JCTC 2018 Work Plan
- ART Bus system
- Policy & PIP review