

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

March 7, 2018
Approved minutes

In Attendance:

APS Appointees

Rose Breyault (ES Parent)

CC Clark (HS Parent)

Josh Folb (SPED Parent)

Catherine Frum (Teacher)

David McBride (Principal)

John Mickevics (APS
Commuter)

Angela Ramirez (Student)

County Appointees

John Armstrong, Chair, PAC
(ES/MS)

John Carten, TAC

Staff

Gladis Bourdouane, APS P&E

Angel Garcia-Ablanque, APS-T

Kristin Haldeman, APS-MMTP

Lauren Hassel, APS-SRTS

Elizabeth Denton, AC-ACCS

Jim Larsen, AC-ACCS

Dennis Leach, AC-DOT

Ritch Viola, AC-TPLAN

Hui Wang, AC-TE&O

Public: Draken Garfinkel, W-L Student

Minutes from the January 3rd meeting were approved with discussed edits.

1. Public Comment

Draken Garfinkel, a HS Student at W-L, representing his social anthropology class raised concerns about bus crowding and offered suggestions to reduce crowding such as increasing the bus eligibility zone or adding more buses. Mr. Garcia-Ablanque noted that often at the start of the year buses can be overcrowded while students and Transportation services adjust routes and stops, but had not been contacted about this issue at W-L recently. He suggested Mr. Garfinkel send in the bus routes and days where students are experiencing over-crowding (more than 2 to a seat) so staff could evaluate ridership data for the dates/times in question.

2. Updates

- a. **Carlin Springs Study** - Hui Wang, Arlington County's Traffic Engineering & Operations bureau chief, updated the Committee on the Carlin Springs Pedestrian Safety study. She and her staff have developed an implementation plan to address safety issues along Carlin Springs Rd. Strategies range from short-term (i.e., likely able to address this school year and summer;) to long-term (i.e., 5 years or more as they require a capital planning process and may include right of way acquisition from residents). Short term projects include sidewalk maintenance plans to eliminate overgrowth; improved safety signage; bus stop relocations. She also noted that just because projects are labeled 'long-term' does not mean staff waits to work on them. They begin working now on the issues that will take time (i.e., right-of way acquisition/easements).

Mr. Armstrong asked if the speed feedback displays would be temporary or permanent installations. Ms. Wang said they could be permanent but right now staff is working through how the changing speed limits can be accommodated (i.e., one speed when school is in session; another when it is out). If permanent, though, enforcement will be necessary to ensure it remains effective. Ms. Clark asked if the daytime crash analysis yielded any trends. Ms. Wang said no, but they are focusing on reducing speed generally which should help with overall crash reduction including those involving turning cars.

ACTC members were asked to submit feedback on the implementation plan. APS and County staff meet on March 8 for an in-depth review and discussion of the recommendations.

****ACTC feedback deadline is April 6.**

- b. **Summer School Stop pilot** - Angel Garcia-Ablanque provided a brief update on the summer school bus stop pilot. MS and HS students will be picked up at their home elementary site. This information has been posted on the summer school website in the Q&A section. Though enrollment is essentially rolling, APS has conducted a spatial analysis of where current MS and HS students live relative to their home ESes and most are within 1 mi. Ms. Clark raised a concern that students may not know they need summer school until the last minute; Ms. Ramirez replied that most students know they are failing by the 3rd quarter. Committee members noted that this type of arrangement may be acceptable to parents – option schools in particular - for regular session as well, especially if it means a later morning pick up. Mr. Folb said he thinks people will love it if it means tradeoffs in travel time and hour of pick up

ACTC members suggested that summer school packets include information about multi modal options for choices for getting to the bus stop – as well as option for getting to the summer school location generally. Ms. Haldeman will work with Ms. Denton and Ms. Hassel to provide for summer school as well as regular session first day packets.

- c. **Where's the Bus app:** Mr. Garcia-Ablanque next provided an update on the “Where's the Bus” app. IS continues to work on a plan to keep data secure, but Bus Transportation staff can now get into the system to evaluate its features. The latest update with the vendor on capabilities shows that they will be able to push out text messages about bus delays, etc. We are not paying for this yet. Funds will not be released until it works. APS does have the budget to pay for it (per user); the plan is to beta test in first half of next school year and launch in Jan 2019.
- d. **Safe Routes to School:** Lauren Hassel, APS Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator, updated the ACTC on the status of this year's grant submittal. APS applying again this year for the 6th year in a row, but this year through Transportation (vs. Teaching and Learning). Many of the well-known SRTS activities (walk/bike to school days) have become institutionalized at the schools, so the grant will now focus on the transportation side of SRTS rather than instruction. Arlington and Fairfax SRTS programs are the largest in Virginia – touching the most schools. Ms. Hassel is launching a safety PSA (public service announcement) contest for students with a March 22 deadline. ACTC members should spread the word.
- e. **Bus Stop Working group:** Kristin Haldeman updated the committee on the work of the bus stop working group, a subcommittee of the JCTC. The working group has been vetting guidelines on where to locate stops and at what distance they should be placed with the intent to post on the Transportation website. Mr. Folb noted that APS must publicize a clear process for what to do if someone has an issue with a school bus stop. Ms. Clark recommended that APS also should address darkness as a safety factor in stop siting.

Committee members noted that APS should be consistent in its application of walk safety considerations for both bus riders and walkers (i.e. no-cross roads should apply to bus riders accessing stops as well as walkers). They also asked if APS was addressing other barriers to walking/biking such as the need for students to carry so much material back and forth to school each day. Mr. Armstrong asked if APS could consider ways to help students by making their backpacks lighter. Ms. Frum said that teachers have put a lot of materials on line so students do not have to carry textbooks around. Ms. Ramirez added that there are

paper and folder management issues at play too - sifting through them to determine what comes home takes time; by the time you do it you miss your bus. Mr. Garfinkel said that students are not allowed to take notes on their iPads, which contributes to the paper problem.

- f. **TDM Updates:** Elizabeth Denton from Arlington Transportation Partners provided highlights from Love the Bus week. From her perspective, it was very successful. In all, Ms. Denton instructed about 565 students (and several school staff) at HB Woodlawn, Patrick Henry and Key School on how to use the public bus, and the bike rack on the bus. She interviewed bus drivers and wrote a blog post with their stories. (<http://blog.arlingtontransportationpartners.com/arlington-celebrates-the-bus>). In other news, she noted that our Career Center students are building their own bikeshare system. APS also has three more schools interested in applying for Bicycle-Friendly business status (we currently have two). She is working with them on the application.
- g. **APS Budget concerns:** Dennis Leach brought the proposed elimination of APS TDM benefits in the Supt's budget to the Committee's attention. The proposal would eliminate the direct financial benefit that is available to staff who take transit, walk, bike, carpool or vanpool to work. The benefit varies slightly depending on mode, but generally amounts to \$60 per month per staff member, for a total annual cost of \$222,640. Ms. Denton said that from Jan 2017 through Nov 2017, APS saw a 66% increase in staff using the benefits.

Mr. Leach said that the County is very supportive of APS' focus on multi-modalism to decrease traffic and improve safety around schools and thus in the County. He also noted that the County also *requires* APS to offer incentives to discourage single-occupant vehicle travel to/fr school sites as a site plan/use permit condition in new school construction as part of the site's required TDM plan. He also noted that because all use permits for new construction include requirement for benefits, this could mean inequity in schools in terms of who has access to benefits and who does not. A robust TDM program also helps APS decrease the number of parking spaces required for a site. Mr. Leach noted that in Arlington it costs on average about \$45K per space for an above ground garage structure. Once you start digging, a below-ground parking structure can cost significantly more per space.

The members discussed their concerns and Mr. Folb put a motion on the floor to have the Committee give a position in support of the TDM benefit. Mr. Carten seconded the motion. The Committee discussed their approach and unanimously voted to approve the spirit of a resolution in support of maintaining the TDM program in the budget and charged Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Carten with drafting the resolution to be circulated for approval. The resolution will be sent to the School Board and read at the March 22 public hearing on the budget.

3. **ES boundary initiative**

Ms. Haldeman updated the ACTC on the progress of the ES boundary initiative, specifically on the walk zone review and community outreach. The presentation is posted on the ACTC website. Each school has a Task Force made up of school and civic reps. that have been asked to walk their school neighborhoods to identify potential expansions to the existing walk zones by planning unit, as well as to identify safety and other infrastructure needs that would help create a safer walk environment for students. The Task groups will reconvene the week before Spring break to review community input with staff and settle on recommended expansions. Suggested expansions will be put in two 'buckets': one for the 'low hanging fruit' where no major safety interventions are required for the expansion and that make practical sense in terms of distance; the other for areas that make sense from a proximity standpoint, but would require further analysis and safety interventions to expand into the planning unit. Any expansions will be used to identify the number of resident students in the walk zone as an input to

the next phase of the boundary development process, which is to identify potential strategic program siting moves (i.e., should an option school and a neighborhood school location be swapped). Ms. Clark raised the issue of schools trying to 'game the system' to keep their school as it is. Ms. Haldeman said she is aware that that could be an issue, but will be reviewing all suggested expansions with a focus on safety and practicality (i.e., will families actually walk).

4. County Bike Plan Update

Ritch Viola, with the County's Transportation & Capital Planning group, presented the framework for the update to the Bicycle element of the County's Master Transportation Plan. ACTC members were asked to review with a 'student lens' and participate in the next round of activity which will focus on infrastructure needs. The presentation is posted on the ACTC website.

The update has been underway for a while with staff finalizing the overall goals and framework soon. Early in the process, staff issued a survey to all residents to understand preferences and concerns with cycling in the County and conducted several outreach events to obtain feedback. Survey findings showed: the top reason why Arlingtonians don't bike more often is that they don't feel safe riding on street; and that the best way to address this is to add more separated bike lanes. Bike element goals and policies to address those goals have been update to reflect survey findings. Specific considerations for schools include:

- New emphasis is on making the bicycling environment work for all ages and abilities. Standard bike lanes may not be good enough for young persons on some streets.
- Plan will identify barriers and network gaps that discourage/prevent more bicycle travel (including bike-to-school). Bikeways network will be revised to achieve better coverage across Arlington.
- Plan will call for more low-traffic-stress routes to reach schools. Likely to involve enhancing local streets and improving crossings of arterial roads.
- Safety and on-bike education of students should be expanded.
- Continue to build encouragement efforts for students and staff to travel by bicycle
- Continue to expand and improve bicycle parking at schools as demand grows

Mr. Armstrong asked if the survey included any questions about schools. Mr. Viola said it asked parents about riding with their children but not specifically to schools. Ms. Clark noted that education is key – especially having cycling classes available for all levels of riders. Some parents do not know how to ride a bike, and sometimes their kids can bring them along.

Next steps are that during April and May, staff will begin next round of public outreach with a focus on identifying improvements needed for the existing bikeway network to achieve improved access for all. Mr. Viola will send the Committee information about next steps in the process and work with APS to engage parents, students and staff. Updates can be found here:

<https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/projects/mastertransportation-plan-bicycle-element-working-group>

Meeting adjourned at 9:10p.

Next ACTC meeting = May 2, 2018 - location Career Center