

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

March 16, 2017

Approved Meeting minutes

In Attendance:

Nancy Van Doren, Chair APS School Board

APS Appointees

Kristin Haldeman, Chair (MS)
CC Clark (MS)
Yaneth Valenzuala (HS)
Josh Folb (SPED)
Margaret Chung (Principal)
Catherine Frum (Teacher)
John Mickevica (APS
Commuter)

County Appointees

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

Staff

John Chadwick, APS-F&O
Angel Garcia-Ablanque, APS-T
Lauren Hassel, APS –SRTS
Zach Larnard, APS-Planning
Dennis Leach, AC-DOT
Steve Yaffe, AC-Transit
Elizabeth Denton, AC-ATP

APS Students: Angela Ramírez – Yorktown, Ronin Sunderland – Wakefield

Other attendees: Antelmo DeLeon – W-L parent, Rob Vandermark – Discovery Parent

- I. **Welcome:** Nancy Van Doren greeted the members and provided introductory remarks and background. She noted that this Committee follows and will continue the work of a previous special transportation committee that the School Board convened in 2013 to address issues that had arisen with the bus service.

- II. **Committee Member Introductions:** Attendees introduced themselves.

Mr. Vandermark, an observing parent, noted that he has been trying to get stop signs installed at a heavily used bus stop, but a) had a difficult time reaching County staff, and b) when he did meet with someone, he was told the stop did not meet the warrant, though a student was hit nearby.

- III. **Background, Purpose, and Charge:** The ACTC will advise a joint committee of APS and County staff (JCTC) that are working together to improve transportation choices for students, families and staff. The ACTC will advise the JCTC on strategies and plans of action that will develop and promote transportation choice for those groups. The ACTC will review and advise the JCTC on annual goals for joint collaboration. Focus areas of the JCTC's work program will be presented later in the agenda. The ACTC also will help schools raise transportation issues to the attention of County and APS staff. The ACTC also will report annually to both the Schools and County boards on JCTC progress.

- IV. **Presentations:**

- *APS Go!* - John Chadwick presented information about APS' transportation demand management (TDM) program. Key to the program is understanding how APS students and staff arrive to school each day, as well as the barriers they face

to trying other modes, so as to focus efforts on improving safe, reliable and convenient non-single occupant vehicle (SOV) travel options.

- *Safe Routes to School (SRTS)* - Lauren Hassel, APS' SRTS Coordinator, spoke about the APS Safe Routes to School program.
- *Current JCTC Work Program Elements* - John Chadwick described work of the JCTC and reviewed current work program activity on APS walk zones. Staff are currently compiling a list of considerations to be used in refining the walk zone boundaries.¹ These considerations will be used to develop multi-modal maps for parent use in transportation decision-making.
- Dennis Leach reviewed some of the County program areas focused on improving the transportation network, including pedestrian facilities, which can be implemented on routes to schools. The [Neighborhood Conservation](#) program is a small-scale program that comes up via neighborhoods focusing on local streets; the [Complete Streets](#) program involves larger scale street redesigns on non-neighborhood arterial streets (e.g. Columbia Pike).
- Regarding transit integration, Mr. Chadwick and Mr. Leach discussed coordination between County and APS staff on bus routing and fares. Eligibility for the student [iRide](#) program is being extended to elementary students. Staff also is evaluating bell times as a way to give buses a little more time to make runs.
- Elizabeth Denton provided information on the ATP Champions program, which is focusing on staff TDM. In the two years since the program's inception, there has been significant progress on shifting staff travel to non-SOV modes.
- John Chadwick showcased Discovery Elementary School's creative efforts to ingrain a sustainability focus at the school, including a daily count by class of how students arrived to school each day.

V. Discussion/Q&A:

Ms. Burgess noted that little information had been provided about the School bus service and requested staff update the group on the status of actions to improve service. APS staff discussed several issues impacting service delivery, including a shortage of drivers. On the plus side, cameras have been installed on the buses and vehicles ignoring the school bus stop arm are recorded and fined. However, running the 'arm' has been a serious issue.

Ms. Clark told the group that her child who attends Thomas Jefferson out of neighborhood, must be at the stop to catch a bus at 6:30 in the morning for a 7:50 am bell time. She and the rest of the parents on the route have written letters to

¹ Note that parents should be engaged once a draft list has been compiled to weigh in on staff recommendations.

APS over the course of several years saying they would be happy to go to a bus stop farther away if it meant the bus comes later and the ride is shorter. She received responses and had initial phone calls but then no follow up and no change.

Ms. Haldeman noted that the issue of bus productivity has been on-going, and something the previous APS transportation special committee addressed with staff a couple years ago. Many buses serving the choice schools are not even half full for a number of reasons, including length of ride, early departure, and the fact that there are fewer students on the routes.

Ms. Valenzuela added that Kenmore students who are in the walk zone are walking in unsafe conditions particularly along Carlin Springs Rd. and the parents have requested additional buses to transport them. However, staff has said they do not have buses to offer them. There is an ART bus that serves Kenmore. Many students do use it, but the bus is packed. The County does not have another bus to add to the route. This also raises an issue of equity as students must pay for the ART bus, though at half the regular fare, and school buses are free. Some students are not able to afford the fares every day.

Mr. Folb asked about kids ride free type programs as found in Montgomery County and the District of Columbia. Ms. Haldeman noted that these programs are funded by the local governments. Mr. Leach added that the County is in a difficult financial situation as its share of Metro funding is increasing substantially, making a County funded program like that a challenge.

The Committee expressed interest in examining how bus routes could be made more productive, potentially reducing the need for as many drivers, and freeing up some buses to handle issues like Kenmore's.

Ms. Clark asked for clarification about the overall purpose of the transportation planning work. Discussion focused on a number of reasons: safety, financial impact, enrollment growth.

The two student attendees discuss their school travel choices. Ms. Ramirez takes the bus and is fine with that option. Mr. Sunderland is at the edge of the walk zone, so does not have a bus, but the walk is long. He could get to an ART bus, but does not have the funds to pay for it every day. He may soon drive.

In wrapping up, Ms. Haldeman noted that over the past couple months since the ACTC's charge was established, she has been advised of a variety of school transportation issues, each coming from a different channel/POC. This must be rationalized, with a single point of entry and an established process for follow-up. In 2012, with the bus issues, APS established the call-center as a means to capture information about bus transportation issues. The JCTC should discuss a point of entry/process as well as a plan to publicize it to school communities.

As part of the process, the ACTC will establish a public comment period at the start of each meeting, where issues can be raised and elevated as needed.

- VI. **Future meetings:** Meetings are planned to be held quarterly. Next meeting will be scheduled for late May or early June. Kristin Haldeman will send out some dates for the Committee to review.

Meeting Adjourned.