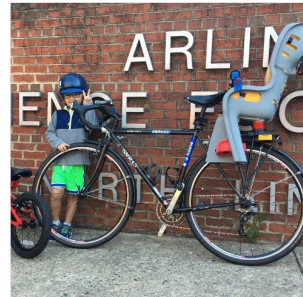


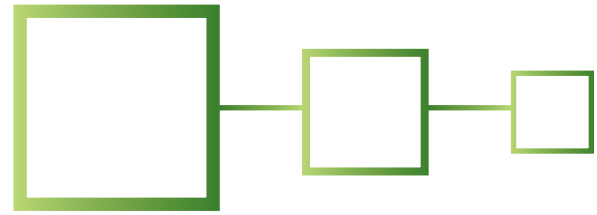
APS GO!

# BRIEFING REPORT

DECEMBER 2017



Arlington  
Public  
Schools



# APS GO!

Smart Routes, Smart Choices

APSGo! is a robust, district-wide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program that focuses on the transportation needs of all students and staff, while also considering the broader interests of the communities located around APS sites.

TDM involves a range of strategies designed to raise awareness and provide incentives, information and encouragement around active and green travel modes like walking, biking, transit, car/vanpooling and school buses.

TDM programs:

- encourage use of non-single-occupant vehicle and non-single-family vehicle modes of travel around schools to improve safety,
- increase active transportation,
- reduce congestion around schools, and
- improve the efficiency of the school bus transportation system, while also improving the level of service.

In Arlington County and elsewhere in the region, this toolkit of strategies has been effective in shifting travelers to travel modes other than single-occupant and single-family vehicles, and APS has started to see encouraging results of its own.

APS developed the APS Go! initiative as a comprehensive and long-term TDM plan for the district to dovetail with APS strategic planning efforts. APS Go! is a part of the school district's efforts to proactively assess the needs of the community, respond to growth and demand, and develop innovative, forward-thinking transportation programs. The program is designed to address student safety around, to

and from schools; reduce traffic congestion around schools; contribute to APS sustainability goals through promotion of "green" transportation options; and to encourage healthy transportation options.

### TRACKING PROGRESS THROUGH SURVEY DATA

Staff and students/families were surveyed about their transportation choices at the start of the program in 2013 and three years later in 2016. The next survey, scheduled to be conducted in 2019 when several new schools open, will provide yet more data to evaluate the program's growth and effectiveness.

### 2013 vs. 2016 Survey Results

Since the inception of the program, a comparison of the results by survey year shows that APS has made progress toward reducing single-occupant and single-family vehicle use and increasing travel by more sustainable modes of transportation.

### Student Travel

The graphs in Figures 1 and 2 tell a good news transportation story at all school levels.

Figure 1: Parent Survey Results (PreK-10)

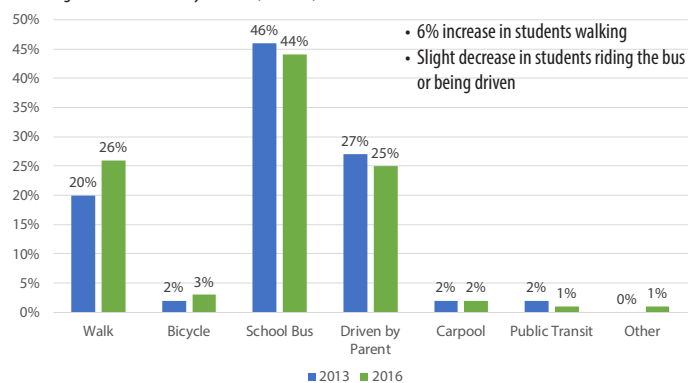
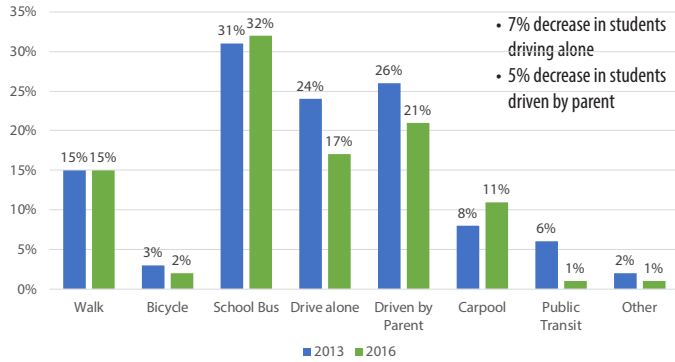


Figure 2: 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Survey Results



Breaking down the data a bit further, Table 1 details middle school progress in reducing drive-alone rates and increasing walk rates.

	Drive to school ▼	Walk to school ▲
2016	13%	32%
2013	25%	22%

In 2016, in the larger K-10th grade cohort, 30% of the students not eligible for bus transportation reported they are usually driven, which is down from 36% in 2013.

Barriers to change remain, however, and may take some innovative thinking to address.

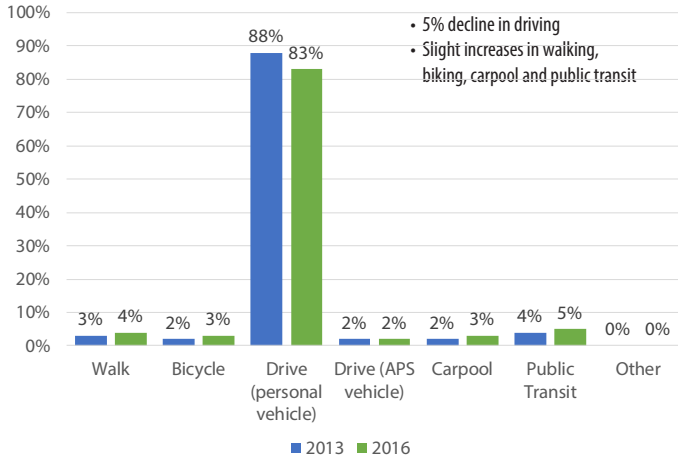
For example:

- 42% of middle school parents and 52% of 9th and 10th grade parents responded that heavy, bulky items to carry is a barrier to walking and biking.
- At the elementary level, 42% of parents surveyed said they felt their child was too young to walk or bike (versus 7% of middle school parents who felt that way).
- For middle school students who are eligible for school bus service, 70% of parents said their children are not riding because the bus picks up too early or drops off too late.

### Staff Travel

APS staff was surveyed at the same time as parents and students. Highlights of the results are shown in Figure 3. Some schools are seeing as much as a 10% decrease in the drive-alone rate overall.

Figure 3: Staff Survey Results



Contributing to these successes are incentives and benefits that are available to staff through the APS Benefits program.

- Free Capital Bikeshare (CaBi) memberships
  - in 2016, 46% of respondents were aware of the benefit, and 23% of those use it.
- All staff is eligible for a public transit subsidy.
  - 38% of staff members were aware of the public transit subsidy, and 30% of them use it.
- Staff who do not drive their own vehicle are encouraged to sign up for the free Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program offered through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (MWCOG) Commuter Connections program.
  - 21% of staff said they are aware of GRH and 7% said they signed up for it.

Though this information is encouraging, there are still hurdles to overcome. About 68% of staff said they had not yet tried another mode of transportation, and 41% of staff said needing a car for travel before/after work is barrier to riding public transit to/from work. In that same vein, 37% of staff said needing a car for travel before/after work is a barrier to walking and biking. 36% of staff said that increasing the monthly transit subsidy would encourage them to use transit, while 28% of staff said they would take advantage of free or discounted car share memberships. This suggests there are opportunities to shift more staff to greener modes of transportation.

### TDM STRATEGIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Findings from the first round of data collection in 2013 helped to develop goals, objectives, performance measures and ultimately, short-, medium- and long-term TDM strategies. Some strategies specifically focus on staff and include providing incentives (e.g., reserved carpool spaces) and benefits (e.g., free CaBi membership and pre-tax transit benefits). Others focus on students and families (e.g., reduced ART fares for students; Mobile Commuter Store visits to middle and high schools to facilitate iRide (student transit card) purchases; Safe Routes to Schools programs).

### APS & County Collaboration

To facilitate implementation of these strategies, APS and Arlington County began to take a more formal approach to collaborating on transportation matters with APS leveraging the long-standing expertise of Arlington County's transit and TDM programs through Arlington County's Transportation Champions Program, the Joint Committee on Transportation Choices (JCTC) and the Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)..

### Transportation Champions Program

In 2015, Arlington Transportation Partners (ATP) – a division of Arlington County Commuter Services – began working directly with schools to enroll them in their new Schools Transportation Champions program and help them to improve their status in the program. The program recognizes employers/schools at various levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum) based on the type of enhanced transportation programs and amenities they offer.





Yorktown Bike Club

In the 2015-16 school year, 15 schools enrolled in the Champions Program, with several more schools joining the program in the following two years. At present, six schools have achieved Bronze status; six have achieved Silver status; and three have achieved Gold status. In addition, Oakridge and Ashlawn elementary schools have earned "bicycle-friendly business" designations.

### Joint Committee on Transportation Choices (JCTC)

In August 2016, APS and County staff convened the JCTC to create a standing forum for staff-to-staff collaboration on TDM strategies. The Committee meets monthly to discuss progress on an established work plan. The 2017 JCTC work plan included the following elements:

1. Expand coordination between APS school bus transportation & Arlington Transit (ART, STAR, Metro) on service planning including walk zones, routes and stops
2. Expand eligibility for and use of the discounted fare student iRide program
3. Expand APS-wide walk/bike education programs
4. Identify opportunities for staff to bike, walk, carpool, vanpool or to use public transit
5. Establish a multimodal information center at each school

The JCTC has made good progress on its work program, with all schools evaluated for proximity to public transit options, as well as the capacity available on nearby ART and Metrobus routes. JCTC staff also established a smaller working group to evaluate the school walk zones to ensure that the roads students cross are deemed safe for their age group. Student iRide cards are now made more widely available via Mobile Commuter Store visits to schools and, in June 2017, elementary students became eligible for the half-priced student iRide fares, so that all APS students now qualify. The APS Safe Routes to Schools program continues to work closely with the County's Walk- and BikeArlington offices on outreach, promotion, coordination, on-site support for Walk/Bike to School day in the fall and Bike/Walk to School day in the spring. All middle and high schools now have multimodal kiosks at their schools.



### Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

To advise the JCTC, the APS School Board and Arlington County Board appointed members to a joint citizen advisory committee, the ACTC, whose charge is to advise the JCTC on strategies and plans of action that will develop and promote transportation choice for APS students, families and staff. The ACTC will also monitor JCTC activities, and will communicate and engage schools and community stakeholders on these efforts. The ACTC will report to both Boards annually on progress toward achieving the JCTC's goals. The ACTC met first in March 2017, and continues to meet every other month. The annual schedule, agendas, minutes and materials are posted on the Committee's website: [apsva.us/facilities-operations/advisory-committee-transportation-choices-actc](http://apsva.us/facilities-operations/advisory-committee-transportation-choices-actc).

### Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

The APS SRTS program began with state grant funding in 2013. The program helps schools with:

- student travel tallies;
- developing pedestrian and bicycle safety education;
- Walk & Bike to School Day events and celebrations;
- Crossing Guard Appreciation Week;
- evaluating student arrival and dismissal procedures and walking/biking conditions at schools; and
- recommending approaches to working with APS/Arlington County on infrastructure concerns and requests for pedestrian access improvements on or near school grounds.



In fall 2016, using an SRTS grant to fund the project, SRTS introduced the Elementary Health/PE Bicycle Safety Curriculum. It was initially developed for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, but some schools have expanded to other grades (typically 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>) based on scheduling and other factors. Seven schools participated last year and 12 are hosting this year. Equipment includes a fleet of 26 bikes plus six Striders (bikes with no wheels that help kids learn balance), helmets, equipment, supplies and a trailer to hold supplies. This year, the program plans to add one or two adaptive bikes - bikes that are modified for students with special needs. SRTS coordinates program delivery with Health/PE teachers. In the 2016-17 school year, almost 1,400 students participated in the bicycle unit.

### Progress with New School Bus Transportation Software

Two years ago staff purchased new bus routing and scheduling software using the same underlying platform as that used by Metro and Arlington County's STAR paratransit service. The system is now fully migrated, and the GIS-based tablets that provide drivers with paperless route information is about 88% deployed. Lastly, staff is working with the vendor to customize the field trip software module to make it more user-friendly. Once complete and tested, school staff will be trained on its use. Full deployment should be complete by the end of March 2018.

### MOVING FORWARD

APS continues to grow along with the Arlington community as a whole. Strains on the school bus system have been evident, growth in travel to school sites by car has led to congestion around schools, and safety concerns around drop-off times have become particularly acute in many places. Survey results show there are still barriers to walking/biking and taking the school bus or transit for students and staff. The time has come to take a step back from the day-to-day challenges and review the school transportation system more holistically and as part of the greater countywide transportation system to integrate where possible and re-envision where necessary to provide better service more efficiently. This will include large-scale transportation planning efforts covering infrastructure needs associated with pedestrian and bicycle access that will result in a project list that can be incorporated into the County's transportation CIP program, as well as an in-depth study of the APS bus system. Each of these efforts will involve the APS community and will allow for all stakeholders to engage in the decision-making process.