

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

June 27, 2018
Approved minutes

In Attendance:

Nancy Van Doren, School Board

APS Appointees

John Armstrong, Chair
Janeth Valenzuela, V. Chair
CC Clark, APS Parent
David McBride, MS Principal

County Appointees

Gillian Burgess (BAC)
John Carten (TC)

Staff

John Chadwick, APS – F&O
Angel Garcia-Ablanque, APS-Transp.
Kristin Haldeman, APS-MMTP
Paul Jamelske, APS-Special Ed.
Hui Wang, AC-DOT/TE&O

Guest Speaker:

Tauna Szymanski,
ASEAC/SEPTA/AITF

Special Education PTA Representatives:

Janna Dressel, SEPTA
Caroline Levy, SEPTA

Public: Lois Koontz, APS parent

Due to low attendance of voting members, minutes from the March 7 & May 2 meetings will be approved at the Sept. 5 meeting. Draft minutes are posted on the ACTC website.

Public comment – There were no public comments

1. Updates

- a. **Carlin Springs Study** – See slides on ACTC website for status on these elements of the plan. County DOT held its coordination meeting with ACPD - ACPD aware of crossing issues at 7th and will pay more attention to that location. In proposed CIP budget, CS is the one project outside commercial corridors that did not take a hit in the budget.

ACTC members had several comments and questions:

- 1) If construction projects occur during school hours how is pedestrian safety maintained? The County will set up detours. The walk may be a little longer, but the detour will be short in duration. They are trying to do as much as possible in summer, though Ms. Wang noted that due to some construction set-backs, she is not optimistic that the projects can get underway this summer. Ms. Clark said that is concerning as there really is no good alternative route.
- 2) Residents near Campbell are having difficulties with the bollards at cross streets without signalized intersections (e.g., 7th Place). Cars trying to exit onto Carlin Springs are blocking right turns from the side street and to the side street from Carlin Springs. Ms. Wang noted that this is a frequent conflict, but to maintain pedestrian safety we have to slow traffic. 7th St. has a signal but is very short. The County will look at signal timing there. Ms. Burgess asked if the signals could be customized so that whenever the light is green the pedestrian signal goes on for the cross street. Ms. Wang said that the County does have simulation software that can test scenarios.

Ms. Burgess suggested using 'don't block the box' type paint markings as they do in DC to show cars where NOT to park. Ms Wang replied that Arlington uses MUTCD standards and tries to be creative and while not violating standards.

If the community has more comments, send them to Mr. Armstrong who will pass them on to County staff.

- b. **Safe Routes to School Grant** – We received the grant which fully funds the coordinator position and activities outlined in the SRTS Action Plan. At the request of Arlington County Police (ACPD), we also applied for additional funds to purchase a variable messaging sign for ACPD, which was funded at about 70% of the requested amount. APS will work with ACPD to place the signs around schools needing additional safety messaging.
- c. **Policies and PIPs** – The School Board has adopted a new policy numbering system that organizes all policies by category instead of by department. This change allows students, families and community members to easily access policies related to specific topics. It does involve a whole-scale review of all policies, and the Board will take them up a few at a time. This changes the originally projected timeline for the transportation policy and PIP revisions. Ms. Haldeman will report back as the schedule evolves.
- d. **Summer School Stop pilot** – Stops are close to set. There may be a few tweaks as final enrollment figures come in. APS sent a SchoolTalk communication district-wide in mid-June and will send another the week of July 2, when the summer school packets go out. Students' stop/route assignments are included in the packet. This year we added an iRide flyer to the packet and the Mobile Commuter Store will visit both Kenmore and Wakefield just after summer school begins.

Ms. Haldeman also introduced the metrics ([see slide](#)) APS will use to evaluate the pilot. These measures include: how full buses are (aka bus productivity), travel time and customer feedback. APS will use last year's travel times as a baseline. Committee members suggested also evaluating MS/HS bus travel times against ES summer school bus travel time to compare routes that meander through neighborhoods to those with centralized stops. Mr. Garcia-Ablanque noted that, for the most part, there is one stop per route as there are so many students per stop that they fill a bus. Current calculations suggest that APS will use about 20 fewer buses this year to serve the same number of destinations. (*That may change as final enrollment figures come in.) Each school decides what time they want the students to arrive. Some schools serve breakfast so want to be sure students have time to eat before class begins.

- e. **Bus Stop Working group** – The BSTWG has basically completed its work to clarify stop siting and distance from home guidelines and ensure consistency with walk zone working group guidance for the designation of 'no-cross roads' for elementary students. These two documents will be brought to ACTC for review in Sept. The stop guidelines are already in practice, but not posted on the APS website. Posting them will provide greater clarity to families about the rationale behind stop locations. With respect to walk zones, when safety improvements are made, walk zones will be revisited.
- f. **TDM Updates:**
 - i. **Summer school Mobile Commuter Store (MCS) visits & iRide mailout** – Currently working on summer school plans to promote iRide at Wakefield and Kenmore. iRide flyers included in summer school mailouts. Mobile Commuter Store will visit both locations during the first week of summer school. Will send out APS SchoolTalk.
 - ii. **Changes to Champions program-** Removing student activities to focus on staff commutes (grant related).
 - Held the first Syphax transportation fair on May 23. Spoke with 32 staff and adult students. Hope to make an annual event.
 - Video featuring staff from three schools should be released in August in time for back to school. ATP plans to be at New Hire Orientation.

- Ms. Denton working with Eleanor Hodges of Eco Action Arlington to put together a session at Festival of the Minds to talk about clean air, idling, ways to reduce vehicle traffic to schools.
- ATP recognized Champions at the 5/31 School Board meeting and presented on Champions program at June (staff) Admin Council mtg.

2. Transportation for Students with Disabilities

a. Identifying Specialized Student Transportation Needs *(Paul Jamelske, APS Special Education Office)*

Identifying whether a student requires specialized transportation begins at the school with the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Note that not all students with an IEP require specialized transportation. Students whose homes are near school also may not need (or want) specialized transportation. For those who do, APS often provides these students with a special bus. If Special Transportation is considered in an IEP meeting, the IEP Team (school staff and parents) will consider the Special Transportation Evaluation checklist. An IEP Team may also consult with the Transportation Office. ([See handout](#)). Some parents and students prefer for specialized transportation services to be provided on a regular school bus instead of a separate special bus.

Mr. Jamelske noted that the transportation evaluation should be revisited each year as developmental maturation may occur with the student. Or, perhaps as the student progresses to a new school it is farther away and the student will now require specialized transport. Also, a student may live in a location where a typical special transport vehicle cannot get to (e.g. a cul-de-sac where even a mini-bus cannot turn), so other vehicle accommodations may need to be made.

To date, the transportation evaluation form is only brought to IEP meetings when it appears as though specialized transportation might be required. In response to a question, Mr. Jamelske said that this is not included in the operating procedures manual, although the manual is currently being revised. Ms. Szymanski suggested that it be added to the Appendix.

b. Delivering Specialized Transportation *(Angel Garcia-Ablanque, Dir., APS Transportation Services)*

Mr. Garcia-Ablanque shared that the commonly understood meaning of ‘specialized transportation’ is a the vehicle with special equipment to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, specialized transportation is mandated by law (whereas transportation for students without disabilities is not). ([See slides for fleet and ridership stats](#)) (As clarification, Mr. Garcia-Ablanque noted that Pre-K students always get an attendant on their bus.) Of 57 specialized vehicles, 38 are assigned to a daily route. The rest are spares. APS needs so many spares because we must be able to deliver a specialized spare in the event of a breakdown. Ms. Szymanski noted that “specialized transportation” is not just about equipment or special vehicles but can include staff support on a regular bus if that is appropriate.

A student with a disability must have an IEP or 504 plan to be eligible for special transportation services. Mr. Jamelske noted that many parents opt out of special transport. However, because a student is eligible, parents can opt back in at any time. But, it is difficult to plan for that. Ms. Szymanski noted that it appears that the Transportation Office is not being informed when students are opting out of specialized transportation, which typically takes place months before the beginning of the school year. This is area for improvement, as one change to a route will affect all students on the bus. As shown in the slides, while there are more than 700 students who are eligible for transportation service, only about 400 are using it. APS Transportation needs help with route planning from parents especially with respect to whether they plan to use it.

Answers to questions:

- APS does not accommodate *parents* with a disability whose student resides in a walk zone.
- To date, only 'exchange' teachers can ride buses, but APS would like to explore the idea further as having another adult on a bus would help. Would need to review vis a vis teacher contracts.
- We do transport nurses for students who need it.

c. Parent Perspectives

Ms. Szymanski presented information that she and other special education parents developed from information APS provided to the FAC and through the budget process about specialized transportation. See slides [here](#). When parents started looking at the APS budget they were surprised at how much specialized transportation costs per pupil (\$10,627). While many parents of students with disabilities have long been interested in ensuring their children are better integrated with students without disabilities, they also realized there are potential cost efficiencies in the Department overall.

To Mr. Garcia-Ablanque's earlier point about knowing early on when a student will not use specialized transportation, Ms. Szymanski noted that some parents have experienced being overly encouraged to use specialized transportation even when they feel they don't need it. By allowing parents to feel free to opt-out, there are savings and efficiencies to be gained and APS can plan better.

Finally, it was noted that APS pays for some students to attend special schools in locations outside Arlington.

Mr. Garcia-Ablanque noted that the industry is moving toward inclusion, though there are challenges. Parents and committee members added that it seems like we should be able to find ways to integrate and be more efficient.

Ms. Clark said she would like to see some financial modeling to see what we can save. How duplicative is our model?

Of note is that the IEP and 504 process will be integrated into Synergy, APS' student information system, though staff will still need to work on the process to ensure transportation receives the information it needs in a timely manner. A "How To" manual outlining process steps/implementation for both parents and APS would be helpful. The Section 504 manual and the Special Education procedure manual are both in the process of being revised.

In terms of challenges parents face, for example, bus drivers are unfortunately not made aware of a particular student's disability-related needs, including even when they have the potential to have a seizure on the bus. This is apparently due to a misunderstanding that IEPs and 504s cannot be shared with bus drivers. Need to address this. Ms. Van Doren noted that teachers need to sign off on a student's accommodation plan and asked whether a child's driver could be included in that process as a 'services provider' who needs to know the student's medical issue. Should there be a substitute, transportation could keep something like the teacher's substitute folders. **Need to clarify that bus drivers constitute a service provider. Special Transportation is considered a "Related Service" on an IEP, thus drivers and aides are effectively Related Service Providers and they should have access to IEPs.

Mr. Garcia-Ablanque told the Committee that his drivers get very attached to the students – some driving them for their entire student career. They are devoted to them.

Ms. Haldeman said that she would convene a working group to identify short term actions that can be taken to improve the process. At least one meeting will be held over the summer to help plan for Sept.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10p

Next ACTC meeting = Sept. 5, 2018 @ *Syphax Room 456/58*