

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

January 14, 2021
Approved Minutes

In Attendance:

APS Appointees

Josh Folb- Sp.Ed. Parent,
Chair
Elizabeth Kiker, ES parent,
Vice Chair
Catherine Frum, Teacher
Dave McBride, APS Principal

County Appointees

Gillian Burgess (BAC)
John Carten (Transit Cmtee)

Staff

Kristin Haldeman, APS-MMTP
Lauren Hassel, APS-SRTS
Dennis Leach, DOT, Dir.
Hui Wang, DOT-TE&O
Jim Larsen, DOT - ACCS
Kim Wilks, APS – TS
Zara Seastrunk, DOT- ACCS/ATP
Cathy Lin, APS F&O

Other attendees: Adam Rasmussen, APS FAC Liaison, Paine Gronemeyer (Guest); Gianmaria Davide Vanzulli (incoming ACTC member); Patrick Kenny (incoming ACTC member); David Priddy (incoming School Board member and ACTC liaison)

The January 2021 ACTC meeting was held via MS Teams due to the COVID-19 emergency. The meeting was recorded.

Chair Folb opened the meeting with some housekeeping items related to meeting virtually, introduced new additions to the Committee, and called roll to facilitate introductions.

The ACTC approved minutes from the November 2020 meeting.

1. Updates

SRTS – APS partnered with a number of groups to offer 12 days of active winter break. Held a zoom call to introduce a new outdoor active activity for each day of winter break. Well received.

Good news from VDOT that they will have some grant funds available for SRTS non-infrastructure grant. APS will submit for funding.

TDM – Jim Larsen introduced Zara Seastrunk who will be the new APS TDM liaison from the County. Ms. Seastrunk then outlined her goals for her work with APS.

Transit update – ART operating all-day routes; no peak routes. Fares and front door boarding re-instituted as of Jan 3 on ART & Metrobus. Peak routes may not be back until late Spring or summer. Capacity is limited to 11-12 people per bus. Masks required. Ridership slowly creeping back up. Weekend ridership looking close to pre-Covid levels. Transit services will be limited around the inauguration for security issues.

2. Return to School Transportation Planning

Kristin Haldeman & Kim Wilks reviewed a document shared with APS Executive Leadership that APS F&O developed to identify all activities needed for bus transportation to be delivered when schools open with a timeline for completion.

Highlights: Some students already being transported – Level 1 (special ed) and some HS students who come to school to study. Four school sites open for instructional support; no transportation provided. Buses helping with food distribution MWF. Bus transportation requested for language testing for students who are in distance learning. Special Ed office would like for special ed students to maintain their 4-day in-person when hybrid students return for 2-days/week. Career and Technical Ed students in need of hands-on work part of Level 2 return. Level 3 (MS & HS) data still in clean-up mode.

Ms. Haldeman updated the Committee on the bus routing with Dynamic Ideas (DI). Data set handed off on 12/18 for analysis. First cut showed that we are able to meet service needs with the available fleet. Driving factor is that many students are remaining virtual. After final data set is ready, staff will review routes/stops/eligibility. Drivers will have a week to practice new routes. All levels are being routed together given the limited time between return phases. APS asked DI to look at routing both 11 and 23 passengers for information purposes. As expected, having 23 students on a bus makes things look a lot better. Routing also includes earlier dismissal times for elementary schools, which impacts pick up times at MS & HS. ES students may walk up to .5 mi to a stop and MS/HS students up to .75 mile. Also sought to keep drop-off at school no earlier than 25 minutes before bell.

On HR side, John Chadwick working with HR to unfreeze some budgeted positions to allow for more drivers and attendants. Drivers and attendants contracted to work 6 hours/day 5 days/week. During pandemic their hours have been adjusted to e 7.5 hours/day for 4 days. May need to revisit due to the requests for testing transportation. Trying to manage overtime as well. Working with HR to hire about 130 bus attendants (only have 67 to date) so we can have an attendant on every bus to check in students and conduct health screening. Are having some issues with thermometers. Call center manager doing double-duty with Call Center and assist with routing. All drivers and attendants must have new or re-fresher training.

Q re: health information on buses – A: per request of special education families to provide limited health info available to drivers in the event of an emergency.

3. APS Budget Update

F&O budget efficiency proposals for FY22 (Cathy Lin)– F&O asked to cut \$3.2-3.7 M; offered 4 frozen transportation positions (3 routers; 1 dispatcher) = \$713k; also offered elimination of discretionary field trips and after school activities buses. Tier 1 (meaning will go first) are positions. Others are Tier 2 & 3 – least desirable cut. Evaluated walk zone expansions as well; did not go forward as it would not save much and would result in more cars around schools.

Josh Folb – note that Countywide programs create additional transportation costs – including maintenance, bus purchase. APS spends a significant amount on maintenance. Increase in bus fleet = increase in maintenance.

Paine Gronemeyer – are we consolidating TJHSST buses? Typically, we have two buses that stop in Arlington (N+S), then meet, consolidate and send only one bus to Annandale.

Re: costs for non-core service and maintenance - one way to off-set could be to charge activity fees on a sliding scale. Maintenance costs have increased because our bus fleet increased.

Funds for the transit pilot were removed from the baseline budget. TDM funds were thought not to be in the budget but investigation showed they remain in the baseline budget.

County/Metro budget impacts/Outlook with CARES ACT II (Dennis Leach)

County seeing major revenue loss. Metro budget looking dire and includes draconian cuts. Good news is that new CARES Act includes about \$640M for Metro and another \$240M for local transit.

4. Transportation Core Principles statement and IPP

The Committee discussed the following transportation principles that should be included in discussions around instructional pathways, which will guide decisions about option programs. "Transportation matters because if you can't get there, nothing else matters."

- Proximity matters
- Transportation is fundamental to access
- Location matters
- Options should be accessible to all students/families--equity matters -for all school activities
- Safety in transportation matters...balance between having crosswalks and safe routes for other transportation forms.
- Environmental concerns
- Combine "Transportation is fundamental to access, and options should be accessible to all students/families."
- Include some notion that "transportation" includes the entire transportation network - transit, the safe bike network, etc.
- Transportation should include all modes
- Those with the most transportation challenges (or the fewer transportation options – all modes of transportation) and greatest need for transportation - should be prioritized
- Have programs in many places (i.e., at neighborhood schools) so families are near them already
- Transportation should support educational quality and equitable access to education options.

Chat question: Where does a choice school stand among legality of requiring transportation to and from school? For example, could we say that "there is no school bus provided for choice students" (much like how if you transfer to another neighborhood school; transportation is on you) but provide funds for public transit to/from school as a whole? I am thinking of this in terms of budget, is this even feasible? Not necessarily something to add to the list but I am wondering if anyone knows if places have done this in the past - Langston came to mind with Smartrip cards.

5. Improving Major Crossings to increase Walk/Bike Access to School

Ms. Wang asked if this this approach to reviewing intersections is best use of ACTC time, or should ACTC come up with list, then send it to TE&O who can review to see if any work has been done? Chair Folb would like ACTC to review the intersections to discuss all potential options, some of which may require a non-engineering solution. Would like to shine a light on issues through the Committee.

Vision Zero calls for coordination between APS and County to address safe routes, so this work fits within that framework.

The Committee discussed the mid-block crossing of Kirkwood Road at 17th St, across from the Science Focus ES stairs. Of imminent interest as many students from Taylor have been redistricted to ASFS and will start there in Fall 2021.

Mr Leach – agrees that there are few connections to Kirkwood from Lyon Village. Both stairs and 13th St crossing well used. 14th is very steep. Speed study underway on Kirkwood in part due to location of ASFS and changing boundaries. Current speed limit is 30 mph. ACTC supports reducing speed.

Mr. Priddy joins and noted that in the 1990s there were speed traps on Kirkwood for good reason. Mr Leach – there is a DOT capital project underway at 13th St crossing to improve ped access. Also a redevelopment that will include upgraded sidewalks.

Ms. Wang notes that through Vision Zero DOT will be opening up traffic control device assessment to include more student safety.

Ms. Burgess - can this stretch be a school zone? Then it could have a lower speed limit and speed cameras. Ms. Wang said code says school zone is defined as 600 ft from edge of school boundary. Does not think you need to designate as a school zone to enforce. Legal would need to weigh in. Ms. Burgess noted in the chat that the authority to add speed cameras in school zones is new - added in July 2020.

In closing, Ms Haldeman apprised the Committee that John Chadwick had announced his retirement as of March 1.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55p