

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

September 8, 2021
Approved

In Attendance: Libby Garvey, County Board liaison

APS Appointees

Josh Folb- Sp.Ed. Parent,
Chair
John Armstrong, APS Parent
Catherine Frum, APS Teacher
Dave McBride, APS Principal
Gianmaria Davide Vanzulli,
APS Appointee

County Appointees

Gillian Burgess (BAC)
John Carten (TAC)

Staff

Kristin Haldeman, APS-MMTP
Lauren Hassel, APS-SRTS
Dennis Leach, DOT, Dir.
Hui Wang, DOT, TE&O
Dab Nabors, DOT, TE&O
Christine Baker, DOT, TE&O
Zara Seastrunk, DOT, ACCS/ATP

Other attendees:

1. Administrative Items:

- The September 2021 ACTC meeting was held via MS Teams due to the COVID-19 emergency. The meeting was recorded.
- Chair Folb opened the meeting at 7:09 pm with some housekeeping items related to meeting virtually and attendees introduced themselves.
- The Committee approved minutes from the June meeting.

2. Start of School transportation update

Bus

- Driver shortages – Chair Folb noted APS is not the only one experiencing this.
- First week of school – 151 routes; vs 159 in SY19-20
- 14,197 gen ed assigned riders; 494 special education riders vs about 17000 in total in SY19-20 (special education riders near 800 then)
- Riders are down; but some students are attending the virtual academy
- There are no capacity constraints on the buses – we are able to use full capacity on buses.
- First few weeks are a ‘settling in period’ and staff will adjust routes to balance buses and address any crowding on buses
- We are down about 26 drivers right now – meaning all routes are not covered with an assigned driver; Our safety leads, swing driver and cluster leads are all driving buses – it’s all hands on deck.
- The 26 does not include daily call-outs (sick esp)
- Relative to our peers (e.g. Prince Georges down about 190 drivers); Fairfax and Montgomery County also down 100/200. Means we are competing with our peers for drivers.
- Shortage means buses not getting to schools on time and students not getting home on time. Routes are getting cut up and combined to cover.
- Have 5 persons interested.
- ART – able to cover all routes with drivers they have; have increased wages for entry level.

- It would help to increase driver wages. Driver position is a tough schedule – 3 hours in AM and 3 hours in PM; can pick up some overtime. Many drivers also live outside Arlington as they cannot afford to live here.
- Boston example – drivers either ‘retire or expire’ because the pay package is so good.
- APS driver contracts are 30 hours – paid overtime after 40.
- Anything we can do to reduce the demand on buses through student transit uptake would help. Transit availability in less dense areas is the challenge and system isn’t ‘sized’ to handle peak with both students and commuters.
- Transit pilot with HBW was a good partnership. APS & County will continue to work together on transit access for students with strong Committee support.
- Is the reason we don’t have drivers the pay? Certainly the better the pay, the easier it is to attract applicants, though there are other factors as well. APS’s new COO is aware of this as an issue.

Call Center – APS established a Family Call Center through School & Community Relations to address a host of ‘hot topic’ issues; more than 700 calls on first day of school along with many emails.

Walk/Bike – biggest issue is lack of crossing guards. Down 5 since 2019-20; 18 in rotation with one more in training. 8 locations ACPD was unable to cover.

Dismissal conflicts – several schools calling about ‘car chaos’ – traffic backing up onto streets. Recognize that we are in a strange space with COVID concerns still out there. Collectively we need to do something to curb the driving to school habit at schools.

- Ms. Burgess – hearing that buses serving hub stops are getting caught in dismissal traffic. Some are driving due to lack of clarity about contact tracing on buses. Some are driving because they have concerns about their hub stops – distance, crossings.
- Ms. Frum – Messaging needs to come from Principals to discourage driving.
- Chair Folb – gather photos of the traffic problems.
- Mr. Armstrong – need a campaign to discourage driving as this is a safety issue. Bus stops near schools at their arrival time are problematic as there is a lot of car activity.
- Principal McBride – contact tracing should be same as school protocols. Traffic at Kenmore has been crazy.

Pedestrian Call buttons – About 20/90 buttons will remain in auto mode. Most are on busy corridors, particularly in Metro corridors. Those reverting to pedestrian call mode are on neighborhood streets. Columbia Pike & Lee Hwy (Langston Blvd) still under evaluation.

- Ms. Burgess – Concerned that messaging said the change back was due to students going back to school. Mr. Nabors responded that the decision to roll back locations was based on seeing increases in traffic and a return to pre-pandemic levels; not so much that schools were back per se, rather that there may be more traffic related to that. Mr. Leach noted that school staff have requested call buttons remain in auto mode near schools. Ms. Burgess asked that access to hub stops also be included.

3. Program Updates

- a. SRTS – many parents came by pop-ups we held at the new school locations to get the scoop on their transportation. Worked with ACPD to deploy VMS signs to show safety

messages near schools. APS put out more See Me Flags. Prepping for Walk/Bike/Roll To School day in early October as well as annual student travel tallies. Working with County and Prince George's County to submit a grant to develop traffic garden guidelines. Ms. Hassel has received public comments and would like to ensure they make it into the record, which will be included with the minutes.

- b. TDM Update – Ms. Seastrunk has been working on updating the transit maps at schools where things have changed.

Couple upcoming event announcements:

- “Our Shared Street” pop-up in Rosslyn next week – lots of fun activities planned.
- Inn'l Car Free Day on 9/22 – please promote to families and let them know they have many options.

Ms. Haldeman and County staff putting finishing touches on master sets of TDM Use Permit Conditions.

- c. Vision Zero - Working on School Slow Zones (see [presentation](#)) demonstration with APS staff. Requesting to advertise bringing to the County Board in Oct with adoption in Nov. Priority is to create safer roads for most vulnerable populations by reducing speeds near schools. Speed reduced from 25 mph to 20 mph at all times on non-arterial/neighborhood roads within 600' of a school entrance. Having conversations with VDOT about slowing speeds on their roads. Zones will have new signage and markings. Eleven APS schools (and one private school) in demonstration, chosen for one of three reasons: beacons need upgrade; located in a MWCOG equity emphasis area; or, is a new APS school or school location. Ms. Baker reviewed several of the school maps with the Committee and described the data collection and feedback processes. ACPD will assist with speed collection data and giving out warnings, then ultimately enforcing speeds.

- Decided to start with 20 mph so they could start program quickly and see if it's effective.
- Doing some small infrastructure improvements like ensuring high visibility crosswalks and updated/visible signage.
- Longer process on VDOT roads as they require a speed study to make changes to speed limits.
- Asking ACPD to enforce to the 20 mph (not 5 or 10 mph above).
- TE&O team and APS team met with most Principals about the project and are on some PTA agendas for Oct. Will help with messaging to their communities.
- Will ask ACPD to help with messaging via VMS.
- Speed camera project near schools information coming soon.

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

a. 18th St N & N Patrick Henry

The Committee reviewed this intersection located in the Cardinal ES walk zone and about which the community has raised concerns. Mr. Leach provided some background on recent projects to improve the safety of the intersection. Almost all of it has been rebuilt and re-signed. Still have some driving behavior issues, however. Intersection is the subject of an active TE&O investigation looking at

speeding. Ms. Hassel noted that she has been out to observe and the lack of visibility over the rise is daunting. APS has put out some See Me Flags and we have asked ACPD to locate a VMS there at the top of the rise. She observed about 7-8 families (25 people) crossing there in the morning. The investigation will include evaluation of intersection for four-way stop. The Slow Zone project at Cardinal has extended over to Patrick Henry.

Mr. Nabors updated the Committee about some improvements at two intersections the Committee has reviewed and discussed: 18th Rd N & N Ohio – signage and marking improvements, and Wilson Blvd & George Mason Dr. – reducing travel lanes and extending bicycle lanes to George Mason Dr.

Mr. Leach added that another area of Committee discussion, Kirkwood Rd., has had the speeds on it reduced to 25 mph. Important for Arlington Science Focus walk zone expansion.

Chair Folb asked Committee members to help recruit new members.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.

* NEXT MEETING: November 3

Public Comments received via Engage:

From: Jennifer Meder

Sent: Wednesday, September 8, 2021 4:46 PM

To: engage@apsva.us

Cc: lauren.hassel at apsva.us; Eddie Meder

Subject: Transportation Committee Comment

Greetings. We are parents of a middle schooler at Dorothy Hamm who walks to/from school each day. We are writing to share feedback for the Sept. 8 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices.

We have observed when walking with our daughter that cars go fast along Lee Highway and do not always stop when kids are in the crosswalks at Stafford Street, Taylor Street, and Thomas Street. There are a significant number of children walking to/from Dorothy Hamm from the Waverly Hills and Ballston neighborhoods and these are the crosswalks that are in their direct path to the school. We'd like to ask that the Committee work to install a stop sign at the street intersections with crosswalks as we believe this would be the safest option. Alternatively, a flashing yellow crosswalk signal or the stand-up crosswalk road signs in the center of the road at all the applicable crosswalks along Lee Highway would be the next safest options, respectively. For the last option, we'd also like to see the flags installed so kids can wave a flag when crossing at the crosswalk and alert drivers to their crossing.

We are willing to help in any way we can to make this happen, including mobilizing either the PTSA or neighborhood for funding if that is an issue, and improve the safety of the route for our middle school walkers.

Many thanks,

Jennifer & Eddie Meder