

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

January 5, 2022
Minutes

In Attendance:

APS Appointees

Josh Folb- Sp.Ed. Parent,
Chair
Elizabeth Kiker, ES Parent,
Vice Chair
John Armstrong, ES/MS/HS
Parent
Janeth Valenzuela
Alistair Watson

County Appointees

Gillian Burgess (BAC)
John Carten (TAC)

Staff

Lauren Hassel, APS-SRTS
Dennis Leach, DOT, Dir.
Lynn Rivers, DOT-Transit
William Jones, DOT-Transit
Hui Wang, DOT-TE&O
Eric Balliet, DOT-ACCS
Zara Seastrunk, DOT-ACCS/ATP

Other attendees: Libby Garvey, County Board liaison; Cecilia Ciepiela-Kaelin, FAC liaison

1. Welcome and Administrative Items:

- The January 2022 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 and asked Committee members to introduce themselves.
- The Committee approved minutes from the November 2021 meeting.
- Ms. Hassel notified the Committee that Kristin Haldeman, most recently APS Director for Multimodal Transportation Planning, had resigned effective December 31, 2021.

2. Transportation Policy & PIP revisions

Mr. Folb summarized APS past work and background on the Transportation Policy & Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) revisions. The current policy was last revised in 2005; the PIP on student transportation was last updated in 2014. Thanks to input from multiple workgroups that focused on various aspects of APS-provided student transportation, draft revisions are ready for the six month feedback and approval process.

In summary, the Transportation Policy was renamed as part of the revision process to focus specifically on APS-provided student transportation and three PIPs emerged for the revised student transportation policy. [As FYI, the School Board does not adopt PIPs, but likes to see them with the associated policy revisions. The School Board approves policy. The Superintendent approves PIPs. Departments create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which describe the “how” of day to day operations based on policy and PIPs.]

The Transportation policy revisions focus on school bus eligibility, include the centralized stop approach for option schools, and retain the service delivery hierarchy, which places the top priority on getting students to and from school for the regular school day. However, this can and does disrupt some HS sports transportation needs, so schools have been hiring charters to cover these trips until school buses become available, usually after 4:30pm. This hierarchy then has budget implications.

The current schedule assumes policy adoption in April 2022, with a 30 day period for public comment built in starting after the winter break. ACTC and ASEAC/SEPTA are being asked to provide enhanced feedback before the public comment period begins. Before the winter break, Ms. Haldeman sent drafts of the documents for the Committee to review.

Mr. Folb asked for ACTC members to discuss and gather feedback on the drafts. John Carten suggested forming committees of people with students in a particular age group. John Armstrong and Gillian Burgess volunteered to coordinate ACTC comments and then craft a memo to the School Board with ACTC feedback. Mr. Folb offered to help with Sp.Ed. Transportation.

Ms. Burgess noted: This could be a good venue to discuss adding more standards on hub stop location and measuring success of hub stops by decreases in driving to school. Stating criteria for hub stops would help families understand and plan accordingly.

3. Bell time project Scope of Work (Slides prepared by Kristin Haldeman)

In Fall 2021, F&O gave a presentation to the School Board about operational efficiencies, which included a discussion of bell time challenges for transportation and a proposal to address these challenges. In total, APS has eight different bell times, which is impacting on time performance and our ability to serve HS athletic trips. Bus use is not balanced among the early, middle and late bell tiers. The time available between the two largest groups of buses – MS and HS – is severely constrained. The optimal time between tiers is 50 minutes. New School Board policy on bell times lays out a framework for review. The last comprehensive review was in late 1990s.

APS has procured a consultant, and internal kick-off for the Bell Time project is set to begin in January. APS will form a Technical Advisory Team to gather stakeholder group feedback during project. APS will be requesting ACTC representation on the Technical Advisory Team.

Six stakeholder events are planned. Discussion will include service rules (e.g., earliest pick-up/drop-off time), bell time constraints and performance measures for analysis. Internal results will be analyzed before external engagement begins.

Internal and external engagement will include virtual meetings with APS staff groups, advisory committees and school communities. Following are proposed objectives and performance measures:

- Improve overall routing efficiency, including limiting ride times on buses and routing students who attend Countywide choice programs.
- Reduce number of bell times and rationalize tiers
- Ensure time between tiers allows for most efficient use of buses per tier each morning and afternoon.
- Balance number of buses/drivers used for each tier.
- Reduce number of buses used in each tier
- Increase bus availability for after school High School athletic needs, potentially creating another tier
- Ensure High School start/end times align with Virginia High School League (VHSL) division sports schedule needs
- Create minimal disruption to families and staff through the change in start/end times.

Members discussed Objectives & Performance measures, service rules and impacts, and bell time constraints.

Ms. Burgess commented that instructional needs are a priority, as well as the needs of working families (e.g. how Extended Day works and is staffed). She noted that the team needs to think about businesses (e.g. dance, gymnastic, tutoring, aftercare) that base planning and operations on APS bell times. There is an “ecosystem of services” that depends on the bell time schedule to plan. With these factors in mind, Ms. Burgess and other members emphasized that any bell time changes would need to be finalized with enough lead time to communicate to all impacted community members well in advance. Timing of the study may need to wrap up *before* spring to ensure there is time to adapt before Fall 2022. If not, implementation should not begin until Fall 2023.

Dennis Leach added that bell times impact ability of students to take transit. William Jones noted that there may be some opportunities to align transit and schools; but for now, frequencies and times for transit are essentially set between 6 am and 9am. Bell times are not the only factor; also relevant is where students are starting from

Ms. Burgess added that the age of students/physiological needs of different ages need to be considered in relation to bell times. Recent research suggests that the youngest students should start first. APS should broaden the analysis to look at these possibilities.

Members discussed other objectives/performance measures that should be considered, including:

- Fact-based, linear measures such as efficiencies, distances, time and numbers
- Mental health needs of students
- Efficient delivery of services that does NOT lead to driving to school
- Minimizing disruption – clear, advance communication is essential for this

Cecelia Ciepiela-Kaeling asked if Ms. Haldeman did a study before this process kicked off. She wondered if the weighting/hierarchy of factors approach used for hub stops is applicable here.

John Carten suggested a literature search of best practices to see what other communities have done.

Lauren Hassel indicated that this preliminary ACTC feedback will be consolidated and provided to Director of APS Transportation Services and Director of Facilities and Operations.

4.Coordinated Countywide Transportation Safety Campaign

Mr. Leach reported that County staff are developing a transportation safety communications campaign as part of Vision Zero, based on feedback about need for more assertive communication about safety around schools. Staff are looking at materials from the 2013-14 ACCS PAL (Predictable, Alert, & Lawful) campaign - videos and written materials will be updated and messaging refined for 2022. The goal is to launch campaign in late Winter or early Spring 2022. We need everyone to put up their best behavior when getting around.

Hui Wang added that the number of crashes has been on the increase and the situation is becoming more urgent.

Ms. Hassel indicated that APS will be working with Frank Bellavia in School and Community Relations to coordinate messaging and dissemination through APS communication channels and partners.

Ms. Burgess suggested getting students involved in messaging through contests at school and/or PTA level. Ms. Hassel added that APS SRTS created a public service announcement contest in 2018, with print and video entries from ES, MS and HS students responding to the theme “Heads Up!” These PSAs were then posted online for schools to use.

5. Free Transit Fare Initiative for Students - Update (Lynn Rivers, slide presentation)

Lynn Rivers and William Jones updated the Committee on the County's plans for a student "fare-less" transit pilot using funds from the American Rescue Plan. This pilot will begin six with middle and high schools. Students who attend Gunston Middle School, Wakefield High School, Washington-Liberty High School, Arlington Career Center and H-B Woodlawn who are assigned to hub stops and Kenmore students in the school's walk zone who live more than 1 mile from school are eligible to participate in the pilot. This pilot will be about 10 times larger than the 2019-20 APS transit pilot. The 2022 pilot will seek to understand the impact that a fare-less program would have on current resources and the level of administration required to implement.

The plan is to use the iRide card, which is already acknowledged by the fare system and thus will not require any back-end work, with funds loaded by the County. This is the first step in the process as we look at how to roll this out for all students.

Mr. Carten commented that he is excited about the program and interested in seeing how ridership changes over time.

Ms. Burgess emphasized the need to be inclusive, understanding that the number of participants needs to be limited, there is still a need in the larger community beyond students assigned to hub stops. She mentioned elementary school, in-boundary students who work after school, etc.

Ms. Rivers noted that this is a pilot and, as such, it will be tweaked along the way.

Elizabeth Kiker thanked the County Transit team and commended them on their thoughtful approach.

6. Updates (Hui Wang)

Pilot Updates

a. Nelly Custis & Military Road –

TEO staff are continuing to gather feedback on the roundabout and are interested in APS feedback. Some aspects of the design that cannot be addressed in the temporary configuration will be addressed in the permanent configuration. Staff is seeing improved user behavior over time and is considering transition to permanent in summer.

Program Updates

b. SRTS (Lauren Hassel) –

Schools completed annual student travel tally counts in November. Data was uploaded in December. Reports should be available in February. Staff gathered data for County Bike Element report and provided content for Walk Friendly Community application. SRTS is partnering with County programs to organize a senior citizen-led walking school bus program to be piloted at Oakridge ES, bike trains to be piloted at Innovation and

Barcroft ES and MWCOG-grant-funded Traffic Garden templates to be used around the region. APS will celebrate Crossing Guard Appreciation Week February 7-11.

c. Vision Zero (Hui Wang) –

School slow zones are now being implemented. Utility checks are under way. Signs will be installed first, followed by pavement marking once conditions are warmer. They are coordinating with Project Director to collect data post implementation

Speed cameras are on the agenda for the January County Board meeting and will move forward with PD for implementation. TEO is looking at locations and equitable guidance under the MWCOG grant.

d. TDM Update (Eric Balliet, Zara Seastrunk)

There was no TDM update, Arlington Transportation Partners is working on staff survey for Escuela Key.

7.Improving Major Crossings to Increase Bike/Walk Access to School:

Washington Blvd & N Quincy St.

Comments included:

- DES returned this signal to recall during am and pm school times; school asked to extend flashing beacon time
- no right turns on red for Quincy are good
- NE corner problematic with utility constraints & catch basin
- NW corner could have better curb ramps
- need to revisit protected bike lane on Quincy north of this intersection; suggest green striping through intersection
- need to refresh paint
- bad road condition on Quincy

b. Follow-up from previously discussed projects

There was no follow up discussion. Staff offered to take suggestions on other intersections to discuss at the next meeting.

John Carten moved to adjourn

Elizabeth Kiker seconded

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm

Next meeting: March 2, 2022