

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

November 6, 2019
Approved minutes

In Attendance:

APS Appointees

John Armstrong, Chair
CC Clark, Parent
Josh Folb- Sp.Ed. Parent
Catherine Frum, Teacher
Paine Gronemeyer, Student
Chenda Lee, ES Parent
Dave McBride, Principal
John Mickevice, APS
Commuter
Janeth Valenzuela, Parent

County Appointees

Gillian Burgess (BAC)
John Carten (TAC)
Eric Goodman (PAC)

Staff

Kristin Haldeman, APS-MMTP
Lauren Hassel, APS - SRTS
Elizabeth Denton, ACCS -ATP
Hui Wang, DOT-TE&O

Other: Jeff Elkner, APS Staff, Career Center & future Committee member; Adam Rasmussen, FAC Liaison

The Committee welcomed new member, Chenda Lee and future member, Jeff Elkner then approved the September minutes with corrections. The Committee also approved the ACTC annual report to the School Board.

No members of the public came to speak.

1. APS Transportation - Lessons Learned From School Opening

Ms. Haldeman reviewed [transportation lessons learned](#) from the start of the 2019-20 school year. In short, with so many changes at one time, the call center was inundated with email and phone calls that they could not keep up with, and many families were left frustrated at a lack of response. Staff met in October to debrief on the start of school issues and discussed ways to improve, including:

- increase communication about all changes to affected families via all available school channels and begin communication in Spring of previous year;
- deliver bus assignments via ParentVue to get them to families earlier;
- implement a real-time bus locator for families to find out when buses will arrive;
- early and frequent internal communication on changes in Spring and Summer to ensure all transportation needs are met;
- improve processes with Special Education office to ensure specialized transportation needs are met;
- increase transportation routing staff; and
- implement a more robust customer contact system.

One aspect of the process that did work well was the collaboration between APS staff – Facilities (Transportation, Design & Construction) and new school administrators, and County Transportation staff on the new school sites. Starting in Spring, a new school opening working

group met every other week to discuss outstanding transportation issues at the new sites so they could be resolved/addressed before the start of school. This working group was critical to the school opening process and success. APS is grateful for the support of County DOT staff.

Committee members said they would like to see the bus planning process for the coming school year started earlier so families would receive bus assignments earlier. Currently, the limited time between summer school and start of school make it difficult for the routing team to plan SY routes much earlier. The Committee supported the implementation of a real-time bus app, as well as additional staff for the routing team.

2. APS Boundary Planning

Dr. Sarah Johnson with APS' Planning & Evaluation office presented on the [pre-boundary planning](#) effort just underway. Current APS enrollment figures and out-year projections show a significant neighborhood elementary seat deficit in three areas of the County: Rosslyn-Ballston corridor (greatest deficit), Pentagon City/Crystal City, West end of Columbia Pike. While APS will open the new school at Reed, those seats will not address the deficits in these areas. With land expensive and scarce to build upon, APS is taking a strategic look at all its existing facility locations to determine how they can be used to address the deficits. Conducting this part of the process early will inform staff of the locations for which boundaries must be drawn in Fall 2020. The location of Key Elementary makes it a ripe site for a neighborhood school, and staff has put forward two proposals that would allow that site to be used for neighborhood seats; move the immersion program community currently sited there to a new location; and, set the stage for reasonable boundaries when Reed comes on-line.

Dr. Johnson first shared a scenario where no program moves are made and boundaries are drawn only for neighborhood schools. Using the six board-approved boundary considerations, the resulting map shows resulting boundaries that are long and thin. Under that scenario, a significant number of students who could walk to their home school are turned into bus riders, requiring additional buses. Additionally, Ashlawn's boundary is cut into two pieces and Carlin Springs will sit *outside* its boundary. The two proposals involving program moves reduce the number of addition students that would require busing and reduce the number of students who would be moved out of their school communities. Under both proposals, students attending any countywide program that moves would have the option to move with their school community.

Dr. Johnson then shared the community engagement and School Board timeline and invited Committee members to comment on the transportation aspects of the proposals and ask questions, and to write down any other comments/questions in the event they could not be answered this evening and she would collect them.

Comments/questions from committee members included:

- Taking holistic look at sites is a good idea.
- Would like to see number of students in option school walk zones.
- For infographic/materials, include actual #s of students moving or shifting from walk to bus, rather than %, as actual numbers are used to calculate bus need.
- If immersion moves to Carlin Springs, what is the impact on Claremont/feeder schools?
- Why is ATS not going to Reed? Dr. Johnson noted that the School Board decided during the BLPC process that Reed would be a neighborhood school.
- Costs – what are the \$s specific to schools (e.g., turtle pond at Campbell).
- Could be very costly - need \$\$ estimates to understand Scope & Scale.

- Process – change/move all at once and rip band-aid off vs. 1-2 at a time.
- Could “sell” this idea by articulating the goal of eliminating or reducing buses/increasing walkers.
- Families need to know option school trade-offs (e.g. transportation costs/consequences)
- Projected seat deficit near Key – also see in other parts of the County; feel this is moving deck chairs on Titanic.
- Concerns that if school become higher poverty/more minority, could impact instructional side.

Dr. Johnson also offered the following insights with respect to the proposals:

- Campbell could be all walkers, like Randolph.
- With options schools, population future is unknown vs. neighborhood schools where population is more predictable (can use historical data and evaluate relative to walk zones). You never know if option students will come from walk zone.
- In these options, APS is looking at multiple things – move/build/combo; as well as trade-offs b/t disrupting families and doing what is best for all students.
- Addressing demographics is challenging due to zoning/housing patterns.

3. APS Transportation Needs FY21 and Beyond

Ms. Haldeman provided a review of the current budget projections for FY21. At this time, expenditures are expected to exceed revenues by about \$26M. Staff are typically asked to propose budget cuts and/or efficiencies to help close the gap, but also may propose increases where needed. Last year transportation proposed several cuts/efficiencies, but most were not needed. Mr. Mickevics commented that APS could recommend eliminating bus service for option programs.

Over the course of the budget season these proposals will be evaluated and numbers refined, and the Interim Superintendent will present her proposed budget on February 27, 2020. After that will be a series of work sessions with the School Board to develop the final budget, which will be adopted in May.

Referring back to the first item on the evening’s agenda about needs for the transportation office, the Committee discussed developing a resolution in support of providing budget for additional staffing, a more robust customer contact system and a real-time bus app. The committee also agreed to support funding to continue the student transit pilot, and funding to support TDM benefits at current or higher levels, and voted unanimously to put forward a resolution in support of additional transportation funding needs to send to the School Board.

Chair Armstrong said he would draft the resolution and send it out for review.

4. Updates Q&A

Committee members received updates on the County’s Vision Zero action plan, Safe Routes to School and ATP TDM activities via email prior to the meeting. There were no requests for additional information.

Next Meeting January 8, 2020 – Syphax, room 354/356

Happy New Year!