

Advisory Committee on Transportation Choices (ACTC)

November 4, 2020
Approved Minutes

In Attendance: Nancy Van Doren, School Board liaison

APS Appointees

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

County Appointees

Gillian Burgess (BAC)
John Carten (Transit Cmtee)

Staff

John Chadwick, APS F&O
Kristin Haldeman, APS-MMTP
Lauren Hassel, APS-SRTS
Dennis Leach, DOT, Dir.
Hui Wang, DOT-TE&O

Other attendees: Juan Gordon, APS BAC Liaison; Adam Rasmussen, APS FAC Liaison, Paine Gronemeyer (Guest)

The November 2020 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 called roll to facilitate introductions.

The ACTC approved minutes from the September 2020 meeting.

1. Updates

SRTS – Lauren Hassel updated the Committee on SRTS ‘Walktober’ events, which replaced the usual ‘Walk/Bike/Roll’ day. APS SRTS tweeted out various activities during the month of October for students to do outside and prepare for getting back to school– e.g. map your route, evaluate your route, and safety messages related to Halloween and daylight savings. All tweets were captured on the SRTS website. Ms. Hassel also has been developing walking school bus resources for schools to use. Lastly, APS helped support a new traffic garden on the parking lot of the Women’s club in Arlington. It has been well-received. Ms. Burgess asked the Committee to think about other locations where a traffic garden might go.

Vision Zero – Hui Wang updated the Committee on the Action Planning process for Vision Zero (see slides). To date, the County has completed two rounds of public engagement, the second round being virtual. The five focus areas are: policy, data evaluation, process & organization, engagement & partnerships. Ms. Wang reiterated that Vision Zero is a community plan, not a TE&O only plan. Program fundamentals focus on equity and funding for safety projects and programs. On the data side, they are focusing on improving and integrating relevant data sources in such a way as to present a fuller picture of transportation safety needs. Plan to host an annual benchmark to show progress on safety and equity measures. Looking to reduce speeds holistically and develop a TE&O toolbox to deploy in appropriate circumstances. In the realm of Public Engagement, the action plan calls for more robust outreach to communities that may not typically engage. Will broaden transportation safety education in the community – traffic gardens are a great example of one way to educate. Want to streamline communications and activities with VODT, as well as adjacent jurisdictions, and collaborate with APS and other stakeholders as well as contractors and TNCs to coordinate policies

and operations. Action plan is underway, with a goal to complete by year end, after which there will be a third round of public engagement with adoption in May 2021.

Comments;

From Ms. Burgess:

On enforcement, are we thinking about the intersection here between overpolicing of minority populations and the disproportionate impact of traffic dangers on those same populations?

On data and analysis, are we only analyzing data gathered within Arlington, or are we looking more broadly at research in the field of traffic safety? For example, recent studies have found that SUVs with high front bumpers are involved in more crashes that result in death or serious injury, particularly of children. But there may not be enough of those crashes in Arlington alone to be able to study that trend.

On education, staff working on the Missing Middle Study have done an excellent job in compiling relevant information relevant to their work and getting that information out to the public. Vision Zero staff could look at that as a model for public education.

On the subject of contractors, is the Vision Zero team coming up with educational materials they could share with APS to use with their contractors? And is Vision Zero working with the utilities, whose work often creates dangers?

Mr. Carten: Kudos to staff for what they've done thus far. Important to get into the Community to understand on the ground safety issues. Underscores importance of reaching contractors/vendors to ensure they are not creating safety hazards by blocking sidewalks or bus stops. Will require some enforcement as well.

Carlin Springs – To begin, Ms. Wang confirmed that the Carlin Springs school zone area is a \$200 speeding fine zone. With respect to narrow sidewalks, Ms. Wang does not have a solution at this time, but noted that there has been sidewalk expansion in front of Campbell. Another completed project is the two-phase flasher crossing at 8th road. Regarding the idea of taking a lane on Carlin Springs for pedestrians, County staff are concerned about the current volume on the road.

Comments:

Ms. Valenzuela asked about installing a flasher near the VA Hospital Center, which is closer to where students start to cross for Kenmore. She realizes widening sidewalk there is a challenge but would like to know what can happen and when. She would like to see this as a priority. Ms. Wang said the County is very aware of the need, but this would be a fairly large project and needs funding. It is on the list. Mr. Leach added that there are 3 signalized intersection capital improvements that have not yet been completed, some have been held up due to easements. When they are completed, the sidewalks leading up to those intersections are reconstructed.

Principal McBride noted that George Mason Drive in Lacey Woods seems to have had some significant sidewalk improvements, which would be nice along Carlin Springs. Mr. Leach noted that those improvements involved a land negotiation with the developer, so the County was able to get the extra width.

Ms. Burgess suggested some tactical urbanism solutions on Carlin Springs while traffic volumes are lower. Ms. Van Doren added her concern about many students walking along Carlin Springs since the ART bus would be less available. Couldn't we consider two lanes going with rush am and pm

with one lane closed alternating sides for bike or walk? During COVID try it? We cannot put all the kids we need on our buses or in ART buses.

Ms. Wang said that while they have not counted traffic on Carlin Springs during the pandemic, overall we are seeing about 70-75% of typically volumes. She added that the County can look at what a 70-75% volume on Carlin Springs would be and whether two lanes could handle it.

2. APS Budget Update

Chair Folb and Juan Gordon, BAC liaison to the ACTC, updated the Committee on the latest Budget projections. Latest projections for FY2021 show a budget shortfall of appx \$19M-26M; for FY2022, the shortfall is much greater with a projected shortfall of appx \$67M-74M. He posed three questions for ACTC discussion:

- What priorities should be considered for the FY 2022 budget?
- What are the main services and resources in APS that need to be preserved?
- Are there new areas of investment we should consider?

The Committee responded with the following budget recommendations:

- Ensure transportation planning function is retained as it has allowed implementation of route efficiencies such as hub stops.
- Implement 'where's the bus' type application.
- Continue to work with transportation to see if more special ed served students could be served on general busses (with support) (or vice versa)
- With the pandemic, transportation behaviors are changing and we should capitalize on that and work on projects that improve walkability.

3. Return to School Transportation Planning

Ms. Haldeman next presented an update to the Committee on work occurring around transportation planning for return to school. (see slides)

Level 1 students started back to school today; about 150 assigned to special ed transportation. Level 2 projected return is now January; we will take some lessons learned from Level 1 for Level 2 bus planning.

About 7,400 Level 2 students are planning to come back for the hybrid model, 2,400 will use APS transportation. Our MIT consultants are now on board to conduct actual routing for us.

In October, Ms. Haldeman updated the CCPTA on walk zone expansions and the availability of navigation maps. Two supportive infrastructure projects are underway within the Hoffman Boston and Taylor expanded walk zones improving walk safety for students. Continuing to work with ACPD on crossing guard deployment. Ms. Hassel and County Walk/Bike staff are finalizing walking school bus and bike train materials. Still need to address the policy on parent escort to school.

Completed all ES site transportation management reviews; plans sent to Principals for final review and use in communications plans. Starting on MS and HS sites.

Comments:

Ms. Burgess – can we have more students on the bus? Is APS being too conservative on the parent escort. If it is easier to drop off by car, we will likely see more driving.

Ms. Haldeman noted that many schools are using the car lines to manage their drivers because there is a door immediately adjacent to the car line and students can be screened and enter right from there. It's a site management issue. It also ensures that the driver stays with their student until screening is complete and if a student does not pass the screening, they can leave from there.

The parent escort policy is still be fleshed out as APS does realize that some students will arrive without their parent/guardian and we need a plan to ensure their safe return home if need be.

Ms. Valenzuela – ensure that communications around this issue are short and clear to address language and technology barriers. Mom's groups are meeting again and we can use that venue to help communicate.

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

Starting with the crossing list compiled as part of the elementary walk zone expansions, Ms. Haldeman walked the Committee through some of the issues with each of those as a starting point to begin a Committee deep dive into an intersection to look for opportunities to improve.

Mr. Rasmussen noted that there are improvements underway at Pershing & Filmore, so maybe not a priority right now.

Ms. Burgess offered that she'd like to see the pedestrian call buttons turned off at intersections as they have been in places during the pandemic, at least during certain times (eg school arrival and dismissal).

Mr Carten – could we add the number of students affected by the crossing. A: Yes.

Lorcom & Military discussion:

The Committee reviewed an arial image of the intersection.

- Probably ripe for the curb extension treatment like on Carlin Springs
- Also has a hilly approach which makes it hard to see cars coming.
- Could this be a place for a Barnes dance (ped phase in all directions) treatment?
- Signal timing here is strange with the multiple approaches.
- Ms. Wang will take the signal timing question back to staff.
- As school times could we do a Barnes Dance? Ms. Wang – not sure if that is something we can turn on and off during the day. Could also be a safety issue, as you are 'challenging' driver expectations, e.g., drivers expect to 'go' when cars in cross direction has a red. Will bring back.
- Curb cuts – all four corners have issues. NW corner is a driveway; NE /SE corner – curb cut points you toward the middle of the intersection rather than straight across. Difficult to manage with strollers, bikes or other wheeled devices. SW – going through the 'porkchop' to stay on Lorcom. Could the slip lane be eliminated?

Ms. Haldeman suggested Committee members go out and take a look at the intersection and send any additional ideas back. Chair Folb added that this will be a recurring item on agendas. The Committee will review intersections, offer thoughts to staff, who can take back to their teams and offer follow-up at subsequent meetings.

Ms. Van Doren suggested conducting these reviews with the community as well — invite people for a social distance brainstorm with people who live there

Ms. Wang asked if these improvements are for return to school or long term? Likely more long-term, but if there are short-term fixes that could be implemented sooner, that would be great. Ms. Wang will add these to County list of projects and ultimately look to include in capital planning.

Mr. Gronemeyer asked if we are erring more on the side of safety improvements to intersections or increasing walk shed spaces? For example, I can't name any, but if you had an intersection that was considered unsafe but did not extend any walk sheds, is that part of what we are looking for or is eliminating buses a larger focus. I see a good balance thus far.

5. Closing

The Committee then thanked Nancy Van Doren for her service as ACTC School Board liaison and transportation champion and invited her to continue to join meetings. Ms. Van Doren said she has enjoyed these meetings and is proud of the collaboration between APS and County staff.

Meeting adjourned at 8:58pm