School Start Times Task Force
Meeting 7 – June 25th, 2014
Minutes

Members Attending: M. McMahon, K. Lane, W. McIntire, C. Truffer, D. Batten, F. Chaney, K. Chandler, W. Meyers, C. Streeter, J. Horstkamp; T. Tudor, K. Snyder
Absent Members: H. MacIntosh (pre-arranged), P. Bukowksi (pre-arranged)
Also in Attendance: L. Grey-Hawkins (recorder),

Kathy welcomed the group and reminded the Task Force that there were only two meetings before the group was scheduled to present their findings and recommended options to the Board of Education. Over the next few months, the focus of the group will shift from examining the large issues to considering specific options for bell times to pursue.

Kathy also shared the results of the transportation survey (seeking feedback) that we sent out to Task Force members following Meeting#5 where we listened to transportation software providers. Overall, the team seemed interested with the options presented by the speakers, but the ultimate question would be to determine if the benefit that the software may provide justifies the cost. The team also mentioned that many further conversations with each company would be needed before determining if/how the program could benefit our county. In addition, conversations with surrounding LEAs who use transportation software are warranted. Both companies made it clear that the quality of the software depends on the quality of the maps in our county. Several additional questions arose from this survey, as well:

- Who bears the cost for updating the equipment (GPS and tracking equipment) in the busses and how would that fit into our existing bus contracts? Do we lease or purchase the equipment? Once the legality of this is determined, is there a need/demand for these technologies?
- What is the condition of the maps in the county? Are we ready to use transportation software now or is there work to be done on maps in coordination with Anne Arundel County government?
- Are there other options we could consider that may not be as "flashy" as the vendors we interviewed, but that provide us with the basic requirements needed to possibly improve our routing efficiencies?

With these questions in mind, Maureen asked Wanda to work with Mr. Despenza to determine what it would take to clean up the maps used in the county (CountyView, organized by Planning and Zoning). If he could provide information about the required staff, hours, pay rates, and overall timeline, then the Task Force could comment/recommend to the Board what steps would be needed, if any, to clean up the maps in preparation for implementing transportation software in the future.

The Task Force requested that both the June Transportation internal task force survey (seeking feedback) and May After-School/Sports internal surveys become available again to give everyone on the Task Force an additional opportunity to complete. The following links will be live until Tuesday, July 22 (the day before the next Task Force Meeting):

- After School Activities/Sports: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WD9LJMM
- Transportation: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WV5WKSY

The Task Force also reviewed the major points of the June 23 Task Force Day Care teleconference. Throughout the group, one of the biggest "take-away" points from the conversation was that child care centers operate as a business and, as a business, they will adapt to the need of the market. In addition, most of the money coming into child care centers is with students aged pre-K and below. It is these students who are there 'all day' that truly support the revenue for the private organizations as opposed to the elementary school-aged children who spend limited morning or afternoon time at the day care centers. Franklin Chaney from Rec & Parks also mentioned that regulations for child care are becoming much more rigorous, so child care centers should already be adapting to meet those needs. Privately owned organizations, also only represent a fraction of the before and after school care seats compared to what Recreation and Parks supports every year. With 32 sites, Recs and Parks bring in $5 million each year and cares for thousands of students. Pam Bukowksi also mentioned the importance of considering and keeping informed private day care providers who operate out of their home (of which there are 623 registered providers in AA County). These groups—often moms—work around their own student's schedule. The Task Force agreed that once

they present options to the Board, if the Board elects to move forward to seek public feedback, this should include reaching out to all daycare provider-stakeholders to gather more focused feedback.

Kathy said that if anyone has additional topics that they would like the Task Force to discuss in more detail, let her or Maureen know and they can set up a future teleconference to get feedback on the subject.

While not framed as a specific teleconference, Wanda McIntire reminded the team that moving high schools to later in the day would result in having buses traveling from the school to communities during rush hour. Currently, because High School buses service a broad area, their run is designed to be off of the major roads (32, 295, 97, and 100) before rush hour. Even though elementary school busses are out during rush hour, they are servicing routes within smaller areas and are able to avoid the areas of major traffic. If more buses are traveling along major roads during rush hour, then there will be more students sitting in traffic and the likelihood of accidents will increase. This will result in an increased need for equipment to replace damaged busses and provide backup buses. In addition, Wanda reiterated the potential difficulty in finding drivers for more busses, which is already a concern with the bus contractors who service AACPS. As a whole, the Task Force agreed that what is considered "rush hour" changes over time and so the group must think beyond what is currently considered rush hour now. The Task Force agreed that this may be a conversation topic worthy of future discussion.

Maureen then introduced the task for the evening: explore the four bell time options offered by Fairfax County—consider the serious pros and cons to each option and recommendations about the option as a possibility for Anne Arundel County. We are using Fairfax models as straw horse models to begin our bell-time pros and cons discussion. The Task Force worked in groups of 4 or 5 for 15-20 minutes to each examine two different start time schedules.

Below is a summary of the main Task Force's thoughts/concerns discussed:
- All options allowed students to have more sleep by starting high schools anywhere from 8:00 to 9:15 a.m., which was viewed as a significant benefit of all Fairfax options.
- Some Fairfax options had elementary schools beginning as early as 7:40 a.m., which raised safety concerns about young children walking to the bus stop in the dark (some students would need to be at the bus stop as early as 6:50am)—this did not seem reasonable to the Task Force.
- Some options placed middle school as early as 7:20 a.m., which raised two issues: first, you will have some sixth grade students walking to school in the dark; second, you have middle school students who have hit puberty who will then feel the same negative effects of less sleep that high school students currently experience, shifting the problem to middle school instead of solving it for both high school and middle school.

Overall, the Task Force agreed that while it is easy to start high school later, addressing the safety and logistic concerns of moving middle and elementary schools earlier is much more difficult.

Looking forward, Kathy proposed a teleconference to discuss a fifth, alternative option in which the Task Force may consider a hybrid solution to start high schools later without adjusting middle or elementary schools. Under this option, perhaps the school system may be able to use money that would otherwise go towards shifting the start times of all schools (transportation costs) to purchasing technology for high school student to create a schedule whereby 1-2 classes occur online. There are a lot of issues and considerations that need to be tossed around, discussed, and thoroughly worked out with this option, but Kathy asked that the team consider ways this may work to discuss during the next teleconference. This hybrid learning option would offer a late start time linked to an instructional option which may be preferable to some stakeholders. Whereas Fairfax County offers concrete examples of sliding and flipping the start times, this hybrid model will provide another option that we want bring to the board to discuss. Kathy iterated that because we are in the 21st century, we should be considering 21st century solutions to meet the health demands of our students; technology may be able to play a more significant role in our options/solutions.

Details with the date and time of this next teleconference will be sent through email.

<u>Next meeting</u>:
July 28, 2014
5:00-7:00 pm
Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Center III
2644 Riva Rd
Annapolis, MD 21401.