

Transportation Task Force Minutes
February 26, 2018
Council Chambers
8:00 AM

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|----------|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Present: | L. Rodrigue | L. Cohagen (absent) | M. Ku |
| | J. Beaudry | R. Dufour | C. Moretti |
| | L. Brennan | J. Fonovic | T. Napolitano |
| | K. Burke | T. Galassi | T. Vadas |

Dr. Rodrigue welcomed the group and began the meeting with the issue of concerns about school bus ride times. She asked Ms. Vadas to share with the Task Force members the extensive work that Mr. Dufour and she did to put together the proposed plan to address the concerns.

Ms. Vadas handed out a summary sheet titled, "Summary of Proposed Busing Changes for the 2018-19 School Year", with proposed ride times for next year. Several Task Force members said that they had issues with receiving this document but it was determined that the issue may have been that it could be opened on the computer but sometimes not on the iPhone.

Ms. Vadas said that this summary is based on adjusting the Reed School start time and they reviewed all the routes for all the schools. She reviewed the current and proposed plan for 2018-19, using Hawley School as the example.

In summary for all the elementary schools, the Proposed A.M. Average Ride Time for elementary is estimated between 42- 44 minutes or 8 – 12 minutes longer than current ride times. The Proposed A.M. Average Ride Time for Reed is estimated between 31 – 35 minutes or 11 – 21 minutes less than current ride times. The current and proposed P.M. ride times will remain the same.

Therefore Ms. Vadas stated that these proposed busing changes for the 2018-19 school year are more equitable because currently the Reed students have the longest ride in BOTH the A.M. and P.M. With this proposed plan for 2018-19, elementary students will have the longer ride in the A.M. and Reed students will have the longer ride in the P.M.

Ms. Ku stated that we should be sure to be clear on what the "average" represents? Is it the average of the longest ride?

Mr. Dufour said that, "yes" it is the average based on the longest ride for all. Everyone felt that this was very important to clarify!

Ms. Ku also asked, "Isn't Sandy Hook the opposite of everyone this year?" Mr. Dufour said that, "yes, they are" as their bus run goes to Reed first and everyone will mirror Sandy Hook next year.

Dr. Rodrigue asked Mr. Dufour to speak about the shuttles. He said that right now we have 3 shuttles but he certainly could send 4 (which would reduce the number of students on the bus significantly). Originally he didn't want to have us wait for 4 buses if 3 could work because the teachers and the students would be waiting longer. However It should work out next year that the wait shouldn't happen with the 4 shuttle buses.

Ms. Galassi said that she loves the proposed plan but asked, "What is currently the longest bus ride?" Mr. Dufour stated that it is 50 minutes. Ms. Vadas said that in the proposed plan the longest bus ride is 48, and there is only one.

Dr. Rodrigue told the members that she received a call from Oxford regarding our bus ride time issues as they are working on this as well. She said that Oxford is much larger in geography and that many of their ride times are longer. Mr. Dufour said that it is also because they have a similar set-up with their elementary schools in different buildings. He feels that our ride times are reasonable.

Dr. Rodrigue feels that the proposed plan is much more equitable for all K-6 but understands that every group has its own issues and perspectives.

Mr. Dufour agreed and stated that the proposed plan is not perfect but it's more equitable and provides a better stress level for Reed. He is still working on reducing times but can't really do more until he knows about the kindergarteners coming in.

Ms. Beaudry told the Task Force members that a police officer has been stationed at their traffic light this week and it has made a huge difference with the buses. Dr. Rodrigue said that she wants to continue that for next year. Ms. Beaudry also stated that if the buses could come in Reed's back lot where there are no cars, it would be preferable. Dr. Rodrigue will be meeting with the town on this issue.

Ms. Burke stated that parents are concerned about the crowding on the buses and likes the fact that the shuttle could help with this. She also said that, from an elementary parent standpoint, she doesn't think that Dr. Rodrigue's statement that we've alleviated a lot of the issues with busing is going to resonate with them.

Dr. Rodrigue said that she believes when the whole picture is presented, it will come across in a more positive light.

Ms. Galassi said that as a parent of an elementary and Reed student, and as a teacher, kids never come off the bus complaining about the length of the bus route...

Ms. Fonovic feels the proposed plan is equitable for all (because elementary has longer rides in morning and shorter in afternoon, and Reed the reverse) and that it is the best plan for the District as a whole.

Mr. Moretti commented that solving one problem often creates another and that this plan shouldn't be looked at through an individual lens.

Ms. Brennan thanked Mr. Dufour and said that this plan has come so far.

Mr. Moretti said that the averages that have come down to 45 are terrific.

Ms. Burke pointed out that 8 buses are 8 minutes longer but we were able to alleviate the “first student on, last student off” syndrome. Dr. Rodrigue said that this was a good way to share it.

Ms. Brennan asked Mr. Dufour if he has data as to each student’s bus ride? She feels it would be helpful to get percentages. Mr. Dufour said that he does.

Mr. Napolitano said that, at Sandy Hook School, the buses leave at 3:52 pm and every child is off the bus by 4:31 pm.

Ms. Ku asked Mr. Dufour if it would be possible to do another shuttle now? Mr. Dufour said that it would but that it may cause more wait time. Ms. Ku said that it would still alleviate crowding...

Dr. Rodrigue told the Task Force members that Mr. Moretti has agreed to take the lead in the presentation to the Board of Education and that she will do an introduction.

The Task Force members broke into groups for discussion at 8:45 am.