

School Start Time Ad Hoc Committee Minutes

June 11, 2015

Attendees: Deirdre d'Albertis, Diane Lyons, Laura Schulkind, Joe Phelan, Tom Burnell

Invited Guest: Larry Fiber, Fiber Fundamentals

Larry Fiber is a School Transportation Consultant and one of the developers of the computer program RCSD uses to develop transportation routes - TransFinder. Larry was engaged to:

- optimize bus routes without overloading the number of students on each bus
- determine timely arrival and departure times for both sets of runs (RHS/BMS vs. CLS)
- how these elements affect our ability to alter the school start times for RHS/BMS

Current Transportation Structure

Larry found that there is plenty of time built in between dropping students at RHS/BMS and beginning the CLS runs in the morning. The challenge occurs during the afternoon runs in getting the buses back to CLS in time to pick-up the elementary kids.

We use 13 buses to perform the runs at both schools. In the afternoon, we have 14 minutes built in the schedule to get kids from the last bell onto the bus and rolling. Older students get themselves to the appropriate bus. At CLS, each teacher delivers her/his students to individual buses, and all buses need to be in the CLS parking lot at dismissal time. All K students are delivered to their driveway unless their road is inaccessible by a bus. Generally speaking, most of our students experience "door to door" stops.

First Draft Optimized Routes (without start time shift)

Assumptions for optimization of routes were based on keeping all students and their locations the same. Timing on routes was based on drivers going 25-30 MPH (unlikely for most buses on faster roads). The biggest unknowns are the locations of the incoming Kindergarten class and new students to the District, but these are unknowns every year and are part of the annual route review. It is important to note that this was a draft scenario and hadn't been vetted with Sue McCormack or Diane at Durham.

We have the potential to use as few as 11 buses at RHS/BMS (1 less than budgeted for) and 9 buses for CLS. In this scenario, the longest bus route in the afternoon is 55 minutes round trip from RHS to the furthest stop and returning to CLS (with buses traveling at 25 MPH). The timing between returning to CLS, loading the bus and pulling away by 3:30 is a critical factor and every 5 minutes saved would help.

Larry suggested ways in which to shorten the time it takes from the final bell to buses pulling out. At RHS/BMS, students could be given 9 minutes from final bell to pull out. (During our meeting, we noted that the buses were gone by 2:25 rather than 2:30 as scheduled, a positive sign). At CLS, we could potentially organize the students in the Gym by bus number rather than having each classroom teacher or aide deliver students to each bus. When Bus #26 pulls into CLS, those students could be escorted to that bus. If for any reason a bus is late in getting to CLS, the students would be kept together in a central location until the bus arrived.

We then looked at how far students had to walk to their bus stop. Elementary students are allowed to walk up to .3 miles from their driveway to a pick-up point. The reality is that about 50% of students walk less than .1 miles to their bus stop. We could condense bus stops, thus saving time, but imagine that there will be parents concerned that they won't be able to see their child from their house. This will need to be a point of discussion in open forum.

Optimized Routes (with altered start time)

Even with the potential efficiencies we identified, would they be enough to allow shifting the RHS/BMS start time by 30 minutes? The biggest concern is getting buses back to CLS in the afternoon, loaded and pulling out at the normal 3:30 pm time. It seems unlikely at this point.

How would we support students participating in after school clubs? Currently, clubs meet for about 45 minutes depending on down time before the start. If school ended at 2:45 pm, clubs would only have time to meet for 30 minutes before taking the 3:15 "late bus" to CLS. The committee wondered if it would be possible for clubs to meet more frequently for less time, for instance, twice per month.

How would the early morning CLS clubs be affected? Currently, students are dropped off at 7:30 am if they take the high school bus and wait in the cafeteria until 8:00 am for their elective to begin. Some students take advantage of breakfast being served, but not all. If the start time shifted, students could still take the high school bus and get to CLS in time for an 8:00 am elective start.

With so many potential scenarios, Larry requested that the committee provide some parameters within which to work. We asked that he run a transportation scenario with a 30 minute shift in RHS/BMS start time. The routing could not cost any more than it currently does, and if we could realize cost savings, all the better. He expressed his concern about getting to CLS in time to leave with the elementary kids by 3:30 pm, so we asked that he look at possibly moving the time for CLS by 15 minutes.

Would the BoE consider shifting the CLS start/end time 15 minutes later?

Next Steps

The committee realizes that there is still much work to be done. This school year has been spent collecting concrete facts about the potential shift in timing. We propose that the 2015-16 school year become an education and outreach year. It will also be a year that we can assess the effects of the optimized routes without a change in schedule.

We would like to engage the community, parents, teachers, custodial staff, coaches and students. It is important to address the issues of Health and Wellness while educating our constituents about the impacts on students' school experience, transportation and logistical issues.

At this point, the committee is no longer pursuing the idea of "single tripping," i.e. all students K-12 riding the bus to school at the same time. More buses than the 13 we currently use would be required, thus costing the District more money. "Flip-Flopping" the schedule to allow for a late HS/MS start and an early CLS start directly impacts sports schedules, clubs would be

affected and there would no longer be an afternoon “late bus.” For this reason, we have eliminated Flip-Flopping as an option as well.

Bus re-routing will occur for the 2015-16 school year. As always, we will experience some hiccups during the first few days. Some traditional pick up spots may change, and lengths of routes may change. Larry will continue to work on finding the best solutions moving forward and will fine-tune his routing with Sue and Diane. Over the summer, the Committee will meet to plan for the coming year. We will generate a list of Pros vs. Cons about changing the time, develop a timeline for constituent engagement and develop separate Survey Monkey surveys for parents and students to collect information about their opinions on the topic.

Summer Meeting

- Generate Pro/Con list for all 3 scenarios
- Develop timeline for 2015-16 community engagement
- Develop surveys for parents and students

Respectfully Submitted: Laura Schulkind