

Transportation Task Force Minutes  
January 3, 2018  
Council Chambers  
8:00 AM

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

Copies of the surveys were shared with the members. Dr. Rodrigue asked for comments on the remarks for grades 7-12.

Ms. Fonovic: Majority of people seem happy at Reed – not on bus in the dark, getting more sleep, not having advisory every day

Ms. Beaudry: Many comments about less stress in the household in the morning – would like to know why many wrote “nothing” as their comment.

Ms. Vadas: Students have more of a mixed review but parents seem to like it.

Mr. Dufour: There were more positives than negatives.

Ms. Cohagen: Comments that we weren't preparing them for real life.

Ms. Burke felt that grades 7-12 got a total benefit. We will see no benefit to families with elementary and Reed students.

Dr. Rodrigue said the goal of this start time change was for students in grades 7-12. She doesn't want to diminish the comments as we need to hear all voices. The bigger issue with the elementary schools is ride time.

Big themes on the elementary responses were:

- Eliminating the shuttle system – separate buses for reed and elementary students
- Bus stopping at front door
- Sandy Hook shuttle buses going to Reed have a longer ride
- Ride length

Ms. Burke referred to hers and Mrs. Kortze's suggestion of three tiers with perimeter buses.

Mr. Dufour said this was address over the last two years. The three-tier system didn't work.

Dr. Rodrigue said the first task force committee spent a year going through similar scenarios. It was all about the timing.

Ms. Burke said that some high school students would like to get out earlier. Having a 7:55 start time will appease a broader population getting out five minutes earlier.

Mr. Dufour said we had a three-tier system for the last 15 years. There is no perimeter road that goes around the outside of town.

Other themes included crowding on buses, behavior, and down time on buses and in classrooms.

Mr. Moretti and Ms. Beaudry noted that there were no additional behavior problems on the buses.

Ms. Ku: Parents work schedule and before and after school activities at Reed.

Ms. Burke: Children home so late and problems going to activities – going to bed later.

Ms. Beaudry: Suggested having a conversation with the community at large to change activity on time.

Ms. Burke: Previously students could take the bus to activities. Is there any way to incorporate this practice to help parents?

Dr. Rodrigue: Prior to this time change buses were not as full. This year we couldn't because buses were at capacity. It is also difficult to monitor.

Dr. Rodrigue asked for priority items.

Mr. Moretti: Arriving to school on time

Ms. Ku: The five minute reduction in the Reed day

Ms. Burke: Survey results should make the decision – look at the cost also with a possible bus system for Reed.

Mrs. Ku: Important to have the cost also. Transportation is a huge issue in the budget. Buses are being used at capacity.

Dr. Rodrigue said we aren't going to fix everything. We need to decide what the burden is and try to fix that. We have the rest of the year to do that and look at the entire system.

Ms. Beaudry feels we have to make a decision as early as possible to inform stakeholders and talk about what is non-negotiable and what we are happy with.

Dr. Rodrigue said that one was that more sleep was better, no children will be waiting for buses in the dark, it has been cost neutral and the ride time is less than an hour although we are hearing that 45 minutes is long.

Mr. Dufour stated that most of New Milford bus rides are 60 minutes which is the State guideline.

Mr. Moretti said that both committees agreed that staggered start time in the morning going to Reed addresses 90% of what is on list. Ride time is the issue so we need to fix the longer rides.

Dr. Rodrigue said we have express buses now which could possibly be expanded.

Ms. Burke thought we should consider that Reed is centrally located and it might be better to drop off at the other schools first.

Ms. Beaudry felt that if we change the Reed time, work on the traffic light and use the extra driveway we will get students in faster.

Ms. Burke said that for working parents a coordinated drop off would be better because of the long ride for elementary students.

Dr. Rodrigue stated that ride times were sent to the committee.

Discussion Items:

- Staggered time
- Reed first – then elementary schools
- No waiting time at the elementary schools
- Communication – range of time: light at Reed  
buses into back drive
- Shuttle/ridership
- Ride length
- Arrival to school
- Crowding
- Down time – behavior
- Parent work schedule
- Before and after school at Reed

The next meeting is January 22 at 8 AM in the Council Chambers.