

**Flip Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 1, 2007**

Attendees: Laurie Baker (Chair), Robin Carroll, Sandy Evans, Jill Jakulski, Laurie Lindberg, Bruce Stuebner, Carol Vennergrund, Jan Auerbach

Sandy Evans gave the committee some background on previous transportation studies, and answered questions regarding the most promising scenarios, any feedback from the School Board on potentially realistic cost ranges, and the reasons why HS ended up in Tier 2 rather than Tier 3 in several scenarios.

Sandy said the MPS 1 attempted to meet the objectives of bus run times of less than 60 minutes, no pickups in the dark, and sufficient time for HS activities and after-school jobs, among others. The community advisory committee for that study concluded that starting HS at 9 or 9:10 might not allow enough time for activities and jobs, and thus put HS in Tier 2 rather than Tier 3. Some committee members also suggested that a HS change to starting at 9:10 from the current 7:20 was too great a change. At the time the report was issued, transportation cost FCPS \$89 million; thus, the bell schedule price tag of \$44 million represented a 50% increase in costs. Now the transportation costs have risen to \$109 million, due largely to higher driver salaries and gasoline prices.

Sandy said that, informally, some School Board members have indicated that bell schedule change costs of less than \$10 million may be doable.

Sandy said the \$44 million cost was high in large part to avoid the civil twilight issue. If the analysis showed that one bus pickup would occur before civil twilight, the report assumed an extra bus would be added. MPS said that sliding the scenario to avoid civil twilight problems could reduce the cost by about 40 percent, or \$17 million. MPS stated that costs could be further reduced by lengthening the elementary school day to be more commensurate with the length of the HS day. (At the time of the study, the ES school day was 6 hours, 30 minutes. Today, the ES school day is typically 6 hours, 40 minutes due to transportation considerations.) **NOTE: The committee would like information on state requirements for length of the ES, MS, and HS school days. The committee would also like to know what () and * mean in the current bell schedule handout.**

Sandy said that the School Board issued a Scope of Work for MPS 2 that asked the contractor to put as many ES at 8 AM as possible, put HS on Tier 2, and model their proposal for a cluster of three HS pyramids. This scenario was not analyzed in the Phase 2 study. MPS did note that the FCPS transportation system is currently so strapped that a major collapse is very likely. They recommended that the entire system be re-engineered. FCPS staff has indicated that a major re-engineering would be highly complex and difficult. Flip Committee members thought staff concerns could be met through piloting a change, providing a lot of time to implement the change, or both.

Sandy distributed a handout entitled “Some Basics for Considering a Bell Schedule Scenario” that included some assumptions on which changes could be based, and several sample bell schedule scenarios. Through discussion, the committee revised the assumptions to include:

- A successful flip scenario would generally be consistent with the biology of the students,
- Three flexible tiers would maximize efficiency,
- Tiers should be at least 45 minutes apart,
- Elementary children delivered to their base school shouldn’t be picked up before or dropped off after civil twilight,
- ES should be on at least two tiers to balance transportation workload, and
- Costs can be lowered by lengthening the window between earliest and latest start time.

As part of the civil twilight discussion, Robin Carroll suggested that children in special programs, such as GT or magnets, could be picked up in civil twilight in return for the privilege of receiving transportation to these elective programs. She also mentioned that one way of getting support for the funding needed to implement a new transportation system might be to recognize the costs and complexity associated with the mandated transportation of special ed students and No Child Left Behind opt out programs.

The committee discussed transportation of special ed students. Jill Jakulski asked that the committee be mindful of the often long commutes (in distance and time) that special education students require. Laurie Baker noted that, if ES started at 8 AM, 85% of ES runs would start after 7 AM. **NOTE: The committee requests information on the percentage of special ed student who receive door-to-door transportation, as compared to bus stop service.**

The committee discussed the possibility of having HS in Tier 3. Robin Carroll suggested that all HS should start at the same time, and it would be preferable to have HS not in the middle tier so there would be sufficient time either before or after school for activities and sports practices. Jan Auerbach said that, if HS started at 9:30, clubs and sports could meet before school rather than after, and there could be early activity buses rather than the current late activity buses. It might actually be easier to recruit coaches if practices were in the morning rather than in the middle of the afternoon since half or more of all coaches do not work at the school at which they coach. **NOTE: The committee requests information on start times for athletic games in each school-sponsored sport. The committee also requests information on the earliest and latest start time for practices in each sport (a sample would be sufficient). The committee also requests information on why practices currently often start considerably after the end of the school day.**

At its next meeting on Thursday, October 4 at 7 PM, the committee will focus on Scenarios 1 and 2 on Sandy’s handout. The difference between the two scenarios is the flip of HS and MS between Tier 2 and Tier 3. The committee will consider how late HS

can start, and consider possible ways to address the key objections to having HS in Tier 3. To address civil twilight issues, Robin suggested looking at 30 minutes maximum travel times for ES in the morning rather than the current 45 minutes; this change would mean more buses in the morning, but runs could be combined in the afternoon when longer travel times are less of a concern. Laurie Baker scoped out a matrix the committee could consider completing as part of its report. The committee could present five scenarios: the current base case, the major recommendation in MPS Phase 1, the major recommendation in MPS Phase 2, Flip Committee scenario 1, and Flip Committee scenario 2. For each scenario, the committee could consider issues such as civil twilight, consistency with children's biological clock, impact on after school activities and work, and operational difficulty. For each issue, each scenario could be rated as weak, strong, or neutral.