



School Transportation Task Force Agenda

June 11th, 2024 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

[SB23-094](#)

Task Force Members Present: Chad Miller, Leiton Powell, Dustin Kress, Morgan Judge, Robert DiPietro, Micheal Madden, Michelle Exstrom, Jen Douglas, Sarah Swanson, Albert Samora, Daine Shiele

Task Force Members Absent: Erin Camper, Kevin Vick, Casey Ungs, Brenda Dickhoner, Stephanie Hansen, Jana Schleusner, Steve McCracken, Dave Slothower, Nicholas Martinez, Amy Lloyd, Joel Newton, Jessica Morrison, Kaycee Headrick, David Werner, Trevor Byrne

Facilitator, & Support: *Dillinger Research and Applied Data*- Kate McDonald, Sarah Sullivan, *Colorado Department of Education*- Susan Miller

Attendees: Allison Nicotera

Welcome and Agenda Review

- Meeting started at 10:02.
- Kate reviewed the agenda items (slide 3), guidelines for interactions, deliberation, and collaboration (slide 4), and design thinking (slide 5).
- Kate reminded the group that today's meeting was focused on determining the components of the recommendations, not specific wording. Finalized wording would be addressed in September.

Agenda Item #1- Data Collection Updates

- Kate reviewed with the group current data collection and analysis.
 - 106 districts completed the utilization survey, results will be reviewed at the July meeting.
 - Fleet data provided by the districts is also being analyzed and will be shared at next month's meeting.
- Kate reviewed the project plan as it stands right now and reviewed with the group the overarching charge of the task force as it is stated in the bill. (slides 7&8)
- Kate reviewed the Minimum Requirements Model Venn Diagram with the group. (slides 9&10)
 - The diagram organizes all the minimum requirements the group has come to consensus on over the past several months and shows how they are related to each other across the four core areas discussed to date.
- Kate reminded the group that over the coming months they would be making decisions regarding the content of final recommendations to be put forth in the final report.
 - In September the wording of all recommendations would be reviewed and finalized, today the group would only be voting on the specific components that would make up the recommendations.
 - Recommendations do not need to be stand alone, each recommendation can provide support to other areas within the Venn diagram.

Agenda Item #2- Transportation Talent Pipelines

- Kate reviewed the Transportation Innovation Grant recommendation requirements spelled out in the bill. (slide 11)
- Kate reviewed the minimum requirements the group had come to consensus on during the March task force meeting. (slide 12)
 - Sector partnerships
 - Short-term Credential Pipelines
 - Leveraging existing infrastructure
- Kate reviewed the material covered during the March Task Force meeting as well as the specifics of the bills and executive orders relevant to the work. (slide 13-23)
 - Currently there is a high demand for CDL drivers across the state.
 - HB21-1264 uses ARPA funds to support sector partnerships, not including transportation

- needs.
 - HB22-1215 created the Big Blur Task Force and aimed to support skill-based hiring and work-force learning through internships, apprenticeship, and fellowships.
- Sarah mentioned that the Holyoke school district looked into local skill needs in their economy and now provided classes to enable high school students to earn their CDL license before they graduate.
- Susan mentioned that there are additional districts within the state that are doing similar things.
- Michelle mentioned that there are other states that are implementing legislation to address these types of issues and transportation challenges. She specifically called out Ohio as a state that had passed legislation in this realm.
- Kate reviewed two executive orders 2215 which looks at skill-based hiring and 2316 that looks at work-based learning.
- Michael asked if there was a minimum age for higher bus drivers in the state.
- Susan and Albert both indicated that the minimum age by law is 18, however many districts will not hire drivers under the age of 21.
- Michael also mentioned that there may be CDOT regulations that limit the age to 21.
- Leiton mentioned that some insurance companies have limitations on ages of drivers.
- Kate mentioned that in a previous meeting the group had reviewed collaborations happening in Minneapolis, in which community colleges and technical schools were providing short term training programs for certificates such as CDL licenses.
- Kate reviewed some of the recommendations put forth by the Big Blur 1215 Task Force.
 - Creating an Innovation fund to cover postsecondary workforce readiness programs. Grant recipients would fund start programs.
 - Define and invest in regional partnerships- create readiness programs and partnerships -expand number of drivers and other employees (mechanics etc)
 - Expand investment in Sector partnerships
 - Support employee engagement in workplace learning opportunities
- Michelle felt that the Task Force should piggy back off all the momentum of the work reviewed, but suggested that the group might benefit from hearing more from members of the 1215 implementation team to better understand how recommendations could align.
- Sarah mentioned that she was involved in some of the work and one challenge had been to determine who “owns” the work moving forward. She felt that it would be important to discuss that so that there was cohesion and collaboration from all stakeholders.
- Kate asked Sarah if she felt it would be important for the Task Force to address the notion of who should be at the table once the transportation recommendations begin to be implemented.
- Sarah felt that could be helpful and mentioned that the more voices the better.
- Michele mentioned that she has been involved in career pathways in Colorado and while industries have been pushing for them across the state, legislators have been less eager. She feels that this work will require a whole new vision but it will be critical to get legislators involved.
- Kate reviewed HB23-1246, Care Advance Colorado which was implemented in August of 2023 and funded zero-cost training programs that cover tuition, fees, and course materials for in-demand fields. Currently, transportation is not included in the program but could be a recommendation.
- Kate opened discussion regarding the proposed recommendations regarding talent pipelines.
- Sarah mentioned that talent pipelines are supported by the education system but often the education system doesn't benefit from their creation.
- Chad mentioned to the group that often when students are trained in programs like this they don't stay in the education sector because they can make higher pay in other jobs.
- Michelle asked how to engage different sectors and reduce the risk of having trained drivers move to other areas of the workforce.
- Daine asked the group if there was a way that recommendations could help to bring more drivers on by providing things like increased pay and benefits.
- Kate encouraged the group to think about all the recommendations in concert and think about how each could work to support others.
- Daine said that he knows a lot of drivers are concerned about their safety and finding ways to support them may help bring more drivers in and keep those that were working.
- Albert mentioned to the group that his district had increased pay to align with RTD because many drivers were leaving for better jobs elsewhere.

- Leiton mentioned that in his district it is hard to increase pay due to financial limitations. He also mentioned that they have been hesitant to bring in unskilled workers and train them because in the past when they have done that the worker then leaves for a higher paying job once the training is over. Discussions have taken place to consider minimum work commitments for workers that are trained if these training programs happen in the future.
- Susan said that she feels that there is an overall lack of value in the transportation sector.
- Robert said that his district has outsourced transportation for years and was wondering where workers are typically trained.
- Susan said that most organizations train their employees.
- Daine mentioned that RDT trained their employees but if a potential employee comes in already trained it increases their opportunity for job growth.
- Susan said that she feels that driver shortages and retention are really the biggest challenge for school transportation.
- Michelle commented that these are the same challenges that school districts face with hiring and retaining teachers. A general lack of respect and feeling of worth makes it difficult to maintain a workforce.
- Susan suggested that the group may want to recommend the state produce a PSA campaign to help show the value of the transportation system for public education.
- Michael mentioned that lack of funding would need to be addressed.
- Chad questioned whether the issue was that potential employees don't know about opportunities or do they choose not to explore opportunities. If they aren't exploring due to lack of pay then the root cause is compensation and building sector partnerships or talent pipelines won't solve the problem.
- Sarah mentioned that due to the fact that transportation is categorical means that even if a recommendation is made that supports increased funding, it doesn't necessarily mean that the funding will find its way to the transportation sector.
- Kate mentioned that funding and reimbursement issues would be discussed in August so the group could consider making a recommendation to move transportation out of categorical funding.
- Michelle said that she echoes what everyone has been saying and connections between recommendations could help address needs.
- Susan also mentioned that the group should consider technical training for employees like mechanics, not just drivers.
- Michelle said that she fully agreed with Susan.
- Kate reviewed all the components put forth for the final recommendations for Talent Pipelines ahead of a Task Force vote. (slides 24 & 25)
 - Piggyback on any viable legislation to ensure that existing legislation encompasses transportation when possible.
 - Acknowledging that in order for pipeline recommendations to be most effective, a larger focus on improving recruitment, training, and retention through more competitive compensation will be needed.
 - Ensuring that this work addresses all employees in the school transportation sector, not just drivers (mechanics, etc).
- No further comments were made by any Task Force members so a vote was taken. The components of the final recommendation for Talent Pipelines were passed with all votes being 4s.

TEN MINUTE BREAK (11:37AM)

Discussion resumed at 11:47 AM

Agenda Item #3- Driver Salaries and Benefits

- Kate reviewed the Transportation Collaboration recommendation requirements spelled out in the bill. (slide 27)
- Kate reviewed the minimum requirements the group had come to consensus on during the March task force meeting regarding driver salaries and benefits. (slides 28)
- Kate mentioned to the group that the bill specifically talks about drivers, however, based on the conversation that took place before the break it seemed as though the consensus was that recommendations should extend beyond drivers to all staff within school transportation.
- Kate reviewed data from the driver survey and district data request that spoke to questions that

- were raised during the March meeting (slides 29-51). Questions included the following:
- What are the key components to bringing in new drivers and retaining current drivers?
 - What are the current pay rates and incentives for drivers?
 - How are hours and schedules for drivers determined?
 - Are current benefit packages affordable and are drivers taking advantage of them?
- Jen asked what percentage of driver survey respondents indicated that they were likely to leave their current position.
 - Kate indicated that the survey in total had approximately 450 respondents and a little more than 60 indicated they were considering leaving their current position.
 - Michael mentioned that he felt there may be a generational shift over the coming years. He felt that the current older generation has the luxury to pick and choose jobs that fit their schedule and don't need a full time job, while the new generation coming up may not be as financially stable and may need to secure a more full time position.
 - Michael also mentioned to the group that when we are looking at the data we need to keep in mind that things may have changed and the data may be lagging.
 - Kate said that was a good point and the group should definitely keep that in mind when making decisions.
 - Susan asked if there was any information about how much benefits cost?
 - Kate indicated that information wasn't collected but there was a large variation with regards to who districts were offering benefits to, so there was probably large variation in cost.
 - Michelle mentioned to the group that while it is important to ensure fair wages for transportation staff she felt that it was important to consider the hours worked when determining the need for a livable wage. If an employee is only working 20 hours a week, there should not be an expectation of a livable wage being provided. She said that this is challenging because these types of jobs have traditionally been thought of as part-time.
 - Kate mentioned to the group that a recommendation could look to address that point and encourage districts to think about how they could provide hours for all transportation staff to help them meet the 40 hours.
 - Michelle suggested that maybe instead of thinking of the positions as hourly, they should be thought of as a percentage of an FTE and districts should create ways for staff to become a complete FTE through multiple roles.
 - Sarah felt that districts across the state could be sharing out best practices to provide others with information.
 - Michelle mentioned that by referring to the positions in terms of FTEs it would provide more professionalization to the position.
 - Susan mentioned that scheduling is typically based on need and that extracurricular routes will always be removed if needed to ensure regular routes can be covered.
 - Michelle asked the group if anyone knew whether some positions, depending on pay schedules, were exempt from federal labor guidance with regards to overtime. She was concerned that if some drivers moved to FTE positions that could result in additional work expectations without additional compensation.
 - Albert said that he wasn't aware of any district that doesn't provide overtime, regardless of federal guidance. He did mention that he felt it would be important to consider recommendations that address increased funding and dedicated funding to this type of an initiative.
 - Sarah mentioned that it might be helpful to hold off on any conversation regarding state funding until August so that all components could be considered.
 - Kate reviewed all the components put forth for the final recommendations for driver salaries and benefits ahead of a Task Force vote. (slides 52 & 53)
 - Recommend the availability of benefits by a district, however acknowledge that districts would not necessarily cover the entire cost, staff may need to pay a difference.
 - These recommendations would address all staff in the transportation realm, not just drivers.
 - Wages should be competitive within the industry or other public sector drives/transportation jobs for their region. An assessment of the regional cost of living should be included.
 - Encourage districts to utilize transportation staff to fill additional positions within the district for those staff that are looking for more hours/full FTE positions.
 - Encourage districts to evaluate their methods for assigning extra routes to ensure fair

- and equitable practices.
- *In August the group would discuss Increased funding at the state level to help pay for these increases with dedicated funding for transportation.*
- No further comments were made by any Task Force members so a vote was taken. The components of the final recommendation for drivers salaries and benefits were passed with one 3 vote and the rest being 4s.

Agenda Item #4- Next Steps

- Kate reminded the group that the next meeting would be on July 9th at 10AM.
- Kate indicated that the agenda and pre-reads for the meeting would be sent out the week before the meeting and encouraged Task Force members.
- Kate reminded the group that if anyone materials or additional data that they wished to share with the group that they be forwarded to herself and/or Susan.
- Kate thanked the Task Force members for attending and closed the meeting at 1:08pm