



Public Transportation Task Force Meeting Minutes

September 25th, 2023 (10:00 AM - 1:00 PM)

[Link to Live Stream Meeting |](#)

Task Force Members Present: - Amy Lloyd, Brenda Dickhoner, Casey Ungs, Chad Miller, Dave Slothower, David Werner, Debra Johnson, Erin Camper, Jana Schleusner, Jen Douglas, Jessica Morrison, Joel Newton, Jon Hanover, Kaycee Headrick, Kevin Vick, Leiton Powell, Michael Madden, Michelle Exstrom, Morgan Judge, Nicholas Martinez, Robert DiPietro, Sarah Swanson, Stephanie Hansen, Steve McCracken, Trevor Byrne

Task Force Members Absent: - Albert Samora, Diane Shiele

Guest Observers: Facilitator & Support: Kate McDonald and Katie Tartaglia – Dillinger Research & Applied Data, Susan Miller and Jennifer Okes- Colorado Department of Education

Welcome and Norms Review

- Susan Miller began the meeting at 10:01am by welcoming the members and public. She reviewed contact information to enable the public to ask questions or share comments. (Slide 1)
- Each participant of the Task Force made a quick introduction of themselves to the group.
- Kate McDonald reviewed the agenda for the meeting. (Slide 4)

Agenda Item #1- Review of Open Meetings/Reports and Code of Ethics

- Jennifer Okes reviewed the following with the Task Force
 - Open meeting requirements- Colorado Sunshine Law (Slides 6-12)
 - Open records requirements- Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) (Slides 13-15)
 - Code of Ethics (Slides 16-19)
- There were no questions from the Task Force. Kate McDonald encouraged the group to reach out to Jennifer Okes in the future if questions arise.

Agenda Item #2- Review Design Thinking and Consensus Decision Making

- **Design Thinking (10:27)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the components of Design Thinking (Slide 21)
 - Debra Johnson and Nicholas reiterated importance/support of **Design Thinking**
 - Debra- process empathetic to end users
 - Nicholas emphasized importance of deep understanding of problem- to achieve a collective baseline of understanding to make recommendations
- **Consensus Decision Making (10:40)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the steps of Consensus Decision Making and asked the Task Force members to discuss whether they wanted to utilize this method for decision making or a different approach. (Slide 22)
 - Kevin Vick asked a clarifying question about the different types of Consensus Decision Making
 - Jessica Morrison talked about her experience with the Fist of Five method
 - Fist to Five Method– 3-5 fingers indicates approval, 1 or 2 indicates concern to be addressed and more discussion needed and fist indicated a full block of the proposal
 - Jen Douglas asks about a protocol to address when the group is stuck
 - Robert DiPietro agreed that a protocol to addressing block should be determined
 - Trevor Bryne suggested that a Task Force member that was blocking a proposal

- should have a solution to back up the block
 - Nicholas Martinez suggested that it was unrealistic expectation of those who would block to come up with alternate solutions—instead he suggested that they should articulate what their issue is to help the Task Force find a solution.
- The Task Force came to consensus on the following method for decision making. Consensus Decision Making utilizing **Fist to Five** for decision making to agree on recommendations. Task Force members who use 1,2 or fist are asked to please articulate their issue with the proposal to provide a path forward.

Agenda Item #3- Reviewing and Finalizing Norms and Goals with the Group

- **Reviewing Norms (10:57)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the Norms that had been collected in the Pre-Survey administered to the Task Force Members. Members were given time to review the Norms before discussing. Guidelines for Interaction, Deliberation and Collaboration (Slide 23)
 - Key Norm Areas:
 - Decision Making Norm
 - Equality of Process
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Brenda Dickhoner emphasizes personal/professional experiences can enrich the Task Force’s understanding of the problem and help create the best solution. Personal/professional motive delineation. Norms adopted as written in Slide 23 (11:06)
- **Goals For Measuring Success (1:07)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the Goals for Measuring Success that had been collected in the Pre-Survey administered to the Task Force Members. Members were given time to review the Goal before discussing. Areas covered included the following. (Slide 24)
 - **For Students**
 - **For Drivers**
 - **For Fleet and Funding**
 - Jana Schleusner stated that she believed the Task Force should consider equitable access, to and from school, **but also** activities and athletics. She said those forms of transportation tend to be easily cut when funding issues arise.
 - Michelle Exstrom stated that she believes the goal should be to address the needs of the family as a whole, not just the students. Transportation issues lead to hardship not just for the student.
 - Nicholas Martinez shared Michelle’s sentiment and encouraged the Task Force to ensure flexibility was considered.
 - Debra Johnson emphasized the need to create a strategy to support retention of drivers.
 - Susan Miller commented from the workers point of view and encouraged a change in the perception of transportation personnel to highlight the importance of their work.
 - Leiton Powell discussed efficiency of transportation and noted geographic challenges that exist across the state.
 - Dave Slothower noted that the term “reasonable transportation” would be hard to tackle because of the complex and encumbered ecosystem of Colorado transportation. He emphasized focusing on is possible
 - Trevor Byrne mentioned that retention is a struggle because many applicants see district transportation positions as stepping stones. He also discussed the fact that drivers are often looked down on and they need to build these positions as a career not just a job.
 - Michelle Exstrom thought the Task Force should create definitions to some of those listed terms and saw value in defining what the Task Force felt was the minimum level of service Colorado should offer to students.
 - Nicholas Martinez also suggested that the Task Force should make sure there was a

- shared understanding and definition of the scope of the work.
- Erin Camper noted that terms can have different definitions in different context and gave the example of "reasonable" with regards to children with disabilities, and noted that the term would have a very individualized definition depending on the specific disabilities and specific laws.
- Dave Slothower commented that the Task Force would need to find a level of comfort specific for district needs etc. and there may need to be more than one definition for terms like "reasonable".
- Stephanie Hansen acknowledged the importance of defining minimal levels of service and terms like reasonable but encouraged the group to be aspirational in the development of their recommendations. Consider what is possible especially with regards to equity.

5 Minute Break (11:33)

Agenda Item #4- Review Task Force Requirements: Purpose, Data to Consider, and Report Recommendation Requirements

- **Task Force Purpose** (11:40)
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the Purpose of the Task Force. (Slide 26)
 - Kate McDonald informed Task Force members that slides would be available on the CDE website following the meeting.
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/transportation/schooltransportationtaskforce>
 - Susan Miller was asked to share the CDE-40 link with the Task Force members.
 - Stephanie Hanson asked who the public should contact with questions. Susan Miller shared contact information.
- **Required Data to Consider** (11:48)
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the Required Data to Consider based on the bill. (Slide 27) Members were given time to review the required data. Data areas included the following.
 - **Student Eligibility**
 - **Student utilization**
 - **Driver Staffing levels**
 - **Fleet diversification**
 - **Service gaps**
 - Kaycee Headrick asked about the inclusion of career pathways programs in the student eligibility section. It was noted that additional items are listed in other sections of the bill and data would be collected as stated.
 - Brenda Dickhoner agreed with Kaycee and identified external providers as additional areas that would need data collection.
 - Michelle Exstrom agreed with Kaycee and Brenda.
 - Debra Johnson stressed the importance of understanding qualifying language concerning violation of charter provision around driving staffing levels.
 - Michelle Exstrom stated that she could offer insight into other transportation opportunities, ideas, and solutions from other states/legislation.
 - Kate McDonald noted that an Innovation Fund is discussed in the bill and opens the possibility of exploring other state solutions
 - Jon Hanover commented on the existence of data that highlights the difference between student eligibility and utilization. He also mentioned that reports show a lot of information can "get lost" in averages due to the variability in the state. Lastly he emphasized the need to try to collect data on unmet demands, including what do families want from transportation and how does it align or not align with demand vs policy.
 - Kate McDonald agreed with Jon that this is huge variability in Colorado and averages can

- skew the data. She commented that there is a plan to administer a survey specific to parents and families to address unmet needs.
- Nicholas Martinez inquired how we could make the survey more accessible so that more students and parents could complete it.
- Kate McDonald mentioned that the Task Force would be consulted ahead of the distribution of each survey to get their feedback.
- **Required Recommendations for Final Report (11:58)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the Required Recommendations for the Final Report based on the bill. (Slide 28) Members were given time to review the required data. Data areas included the following.
 - Simplified reimbursement process
 - Sustainable funding mechanism
 - Transportation innovation fund
 - Facilitating partnerships
 - Pathways and talent pipelines
 - Competitive salaries and benefits
 - Legislation or rules that improve transportation
 - Debra Johnson commented that she would like to see maintenance data addressed in the final report.

Agenda Item #5- Review Task Force Approach: Project Plan/General Topics of Task Force Meetings, Expectation of Members, and Identified Priorities.

- **Project Plan (12:01)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the general meeting topics to be covered over the life of the Task Force. (Slide 29) She emphasized that the fact that the plan would be fluid and task force meeting topics could and likely would change as the work progressed. She also stated the importance of members staying up to date on pre-reads, resource materials, and surveys that would go out in between Task Force meetings. She also noted that due to how the bill was written the Task Force could not meet in person between January 2024 and May 2024.
 - Brenda Dickhoner commented that she had worked on legislation that created the bill and explained to the group what she saw as the sponsor's intent behind the meeting timeline as a means of providing sufficient time for data collection.
 - Kate McDonald commented that there was a large amount of data collection that was required by the bill and complete data collection would likely take place through the beginning of the New Year. She also emphasized the importance of feedback from the Task Force members regarding data collection.
 - Susan Miller stressed the importance of Task Force members sharing contact information for districts and other transportation entities to ensure expansive data collection.
 - Sarah Swanson asked what would be happening between now and the next meeting which was scheduled for the beginning of December?
 - Kate McDonald shared that a post meeting survey would be shared with the Task Force members soon to get feedback on types of data to collect from stakeholders and collect information and resources from members regarding background information on various transportation topics. Data collection would get underway and collected and compiled information would be shared with the Task Force in the form of pre reads.
 - Michelle Exstrom asked if the Task Force members would be able to review parent/ survey in advance of distribution?
 - Kate McDonald indicated that draft surveys on all topics would be shared with Task Force members ahead of distribution.
 - Michelle Exstrom mentioned that pay-per-ride exists in some districts and she would be curious to see how common it is across the state. She also was interested in the timing of the family survey and how it would line up with local election
 - Brenda Dickhoner asked for clarification on the process to collect information/data from the districts. She stated that she felt it was important to frame questions to districts etc, to

- show the importance of providing the requested information.
- Kate McDonald noted that in designing the survey significant effort was being made to ensure that data requests were necessary and information was not available elsewhere if asked for.
- **Identified Barriers from Pre-Survey (12:18)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the barriers that were identified by Task Force members as being most significant to the current challenges of school transportation in Colorado. (Slide 30) She emphasized the importance of regularly stepping back and reassessing goals and priorities and whether those align with the barriers identified and agreed upon.
 - Nicholas Martinez emphasized the importance of data collection but also stressed the importance of not making the process burdensome for those providing the data. He also asked about the possibility of meeting sooner than december.
 - Kate McDonald indicated that careful consideration was going into creating surveys based on what was required by the bill but there was also attention paid to whether the data was already available. She also indicated that the Task Force could agree to meet ahead of the proposed December meeting however there would need to be a clear understanding of the purpose of the meeting if they were to meet.
 - Brenda Dickhoner stressed concern about the gap in meeting cadence in the fall.
 - Kate McDonald emphasized that the Task Force did have the flexibility to be in communication outside of Task Force meetings.
 - Michelle Exstrom expressed concern regarding time lost since no meetings could be scheduled between January and May.
 - Kate McDonald indicated that Task Force meetings had originally been scheduled for the spring but had subsequently been removed from the schedule as a result of the bill restrictions.
 - Susan Miller assured the group that there would be regular activity between meetings, just no actual meetings would be held.
 - Stephanie Hansen asked if there would be additional methods for collecting feedback outside of surveys.
 - Kate McDonald indicated that additional methods could be utilized and stated that they could seek suggestions in the post meeting survey.
 - Jen Douglas asked why the bill prevented Task Force meetings from being held between January and May.
 - Susan Miller indicated that January through May represented the duration of the legislative session.
 - Brenda Dickhoner stated that it was her understanding that the block of those months was a result of the need for data collection.

5 Minute Break (12:37)

Agenda Item #6- Level-Set Around Basic Information

- **Background Information (Student Population and Distribution) (12:43)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the collected background information on student populations and distribution. (Slides 32-39). Information covered the following topics.
 - General student population information
 - Rural/Small Rural classification
 - Minority population
 - FRL population
 - Geographic distribution of above mentioned classifications and populations.
 - Chad Miller asked whether the data including charter or CSI schools.
 - Kate McDonald stated that the data shown was collected through CDE so if only represented schools covered by CDE.
- **Background Information (Drivers) (12:53)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the collected background information on school transportation drivers. (Slide 40). Information covered the following topics.
 - Average salaries
 - Need to enhance driver pipelines
 - Issues resulting from Covid

- Issues resulting from split shifts
- Issues resulting from federal health requirements
- **Background Information (Fleet and Funding) (12:54)**
 - Kate McDonald reviewed the collected background information on school transportation fleet and funding. (Slide 41) Information covered the following topics.
 - Mileage variation across the state
 - Expenditure variation across the state
 - Entitlement variation across the state

Next Steps (12:57)

- Kate McDonald indicated that the questions (Slide 42) not covered in the meeting would be added to the post-meeting survey. She also emphasized the importance of completing the post-survey to provide information to help move the work forward.
- Jon Hanover emphasized the importance of collecting data regarding the difference between the number of students scheduled for transportation vs the number of students actually riding the bus to and from school. He estimated it to be one half or one third.
- Kate McDonald thanked the Tack Force members for attending and closed the meeting at 1:02 p.m..