



School Transportation Task Force Agenda

September 30, 2024 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

[SB23-094](#)

Task Force Members Present: Leiton Powell, Jana Schleusner, Erin Camper, Chad Miller, Michelle Exstrom, Robert DiPietro, Michael Madden, Morgan Judge, Brenda Dickhoner, Casey Unga, David Werner, Dustin Kress, Jen Douglas, Kevin Vick, Sarah Swanson, Stephanie Hansen, Diane Shiele, Nicholas Martinez, Rich Hull, Albert Samora, Amy Lloyd

Task Force Members Absent: Dave Slothower, Debra Johnson, Jessica Morrison, Joel Newton, Jon Hanover, Kaycee Headrick, , Steve McCracken, Trevor Byrne

Guest Observers: Facilitator & Support: Kate McDonald and Sarah Sullivan – Dillinger Research & Applied Data, Susan Miller, Yolanda Lucero, Rebecca Sykes, and Jennifer Okes- Colorado Department of Education, Fred Stewart, Meghan MacKilop

Welcome and Agenda Review

- Meeting started at 10:03 because the group was waiting for quorum.
- Kate reviewed the agenda items (slide 3), guidelines for interactions, deliberation, and collaboration (slide 4), and design thinking (slide 5).
- Kate reviewed the project plan (slide 6), the overall charge of the Task Force (slide 7), and the minimum requirements agreed upon by the group during past meetings (slides 8-10).
- Kate informed the group that during today's meeting they would be reviewing and approving the recommendations for the final report. The group would have the opportunity to review each in depth and make edits to content but they would not be focused on wordsmithing the final language.
- Kate also mentioned to the group that at the October 8th meeting the group would have an opportunity to review the final report and also make comments and suggested changes with regards to content of the report.
 - Brenda asked when they could expect to see the final report
 - Kate said that she hoped it would be shared with the group the following day but that any decisions made during the meeting would need to be incorporated into the document so that would need to be done ahead of sharing the report out.
 - Brenda asked if the Task Force members would have access to a google doc to make edits and comments.
 - Kate said that the Attorney General's office had indicated that shared documents would not be in line with FOIA, as a result Task Force members would have an opportunity to provide feedback and input on the report during the October 8th Task Force meeting.

Agenda Item- Final Recommendations

- Kate reviewed recommendation 1 (slide 10) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content. Kate mentioned that all recommendation language was written based on information collected during the previous Task Force meeting.
 - No one had any comments
- Kate reviewed recommendation 2 (slide 11) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Jennifer Oakes asked the group if in bullet point C the word more should be removed. She mentioned that could imply that currently districts were not being equitable. She also mentioned that bullet points A, B, and D didn't have the same implication.
 - Jana said that she agreed with Jennifer and would be open to removing the word more from the bullet point.
 - Kate asked the group if anyone was opposed to removing the word more from bullet point C.

- No one was opposed so Kate noted that the word more would be removed from bullet point C.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 2.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 3 (slide 12) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Jennifer asked the group if they felt bullet point A needed the addition of “and other initiatives” since there are other things such as policies and executive orders that could be relevant in this case.
 - Susan said that she agreed with Jennifer and felt the addition would be appropriate.
 - Michelle asked the group if there was a need for bullet point A at all. She said that she felt that the wording was a little redundant relative to the main recommendation.
 - Kate said that the bullet point could be absorbed into the full recommendation and that A had been included only to specifically address existing legislation.
 - Brenda asked if this recommendation potentially had a missed opportunity and/or comment regarding the state addressing federal requirements.
 - Michelle said that she felt that Brenda made a good point and would be in favor of adding an additional component around addressing federal requirements.
 - Susan mentioned to the group that federal requirements are already being addressed and in some cases fought, however this is typically not done at the state level but instead on through national associations. As a result, Susan didn’t think that the recommendation needed to specifically address that since it was already happening.
 - Jennifer also mentioned that every five years the National Council on School Transportation conveys to look at proposed regulations.
 - Kate proposed that perhaps a bullet point could be added to call on the state to “support the continuation of the state’s strong voice on federal regulations for transportation”.
 - There were no objections so Kate noted that the addition would be made.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 3.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 4 (slide 14) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Jen Douglas mentioned to the group that she thought they had discussed including language around projects being scalable or transferable.
 - Kate stated that it had been discussed but ultimately the group decided to remove that language because they felt that the requirement might prevent certain initiatives from being proposed if a plan for how to make the project scalable was not in place.
 - Brenda mentioned to the group that the additional details provided in the full document addressed that very issue under bullet point C.
 - Kate mentioned to the group that the full list of additional solution strategies that the group had come up with was also detailed out in the full document and all that language would be included in the final report.
 - Brenda asked the group about changing the word grant to fund. She felt this would help address the long term nature of their request and she also highlighted the fact that given that the CDE is working currently to streamline their grants process this could help safeguard this recommendation.
 - Michelle said that she agreed with Brenda.
 - Kate asked the group if there were any objections to changing the word grant to fund. There were none so Kate noted that the word grant would be changed to fund.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 4.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 5 (slide 15) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - No one had any comments.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 6 (slide 16), including the suggested additional bullet point that had been proposed by a Task Force member ahead of the meeting, and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Jana said that she was not opposed to the suggested addition but would like to consider changing the word “should” to “may” in the suggested addition.

- Nicholas said that he was actually thinking about suggesting that the word “should” in the suggested edit be changed to “must”.
- Jana said that her concern was that not all districts may have the capacity to include all of those stakeholders and depending on their focus in a given region, including all of those stakeholders may not make sense.
- Michelle said that she supported sticking with the word “should”.
- Kevin proposed to the group the addition of transportation employees to the suggested addition. He felt that the group should be specifically called out and included.
- Sarah said that she agreed with Michelle regarding keeping the word “should” and that including more people at the table would help create the solution that is needed.
- Jana stated that she felt “may” would be a diverse group of stakeholders to the table but would not be as forceful.
- Jen Douglas said that she supported the use of “should” and she also liked Kevin’s idea of including transportation employees in the list.
- Casey said that he would support the use of the word “should”.
- Susan mentioned to the group that the list currently included industry experts but said nothing specifically about the Department of Education.
- Kate mentioned to the group that it appeared there were two discussions currently happening around the suggested addition. The first was whether to keep should or change it to something else and then second was around the list of stakeholders included. Kate suggested the group take a vote on the language and then move onto the question of the list of stakeholders.
- Kate called for a vote regarding keeping the language as “should” in the suggested addition. The vote was taken and passed. Kate noted that the language would stay as “should”
- Following the vote Kate refocused by reviewing the list of stakeholders that had currently been discussed as possible additions including transportation employees and the CDE.
- Brenda asked about the addition of before and after school providers.
- Michelle asked whether or not the recommendation should also address who would convene these groups and whether a specific group or entity should be called out in the recommendation.
- Stephanie said that she liked the idea of adding before and after school providers but didn’t know if the list was becoming too burdensome.
- Michelle mentioned that since the intent of this recommendation was to create regional collaboration to solve regional problems she was wondering whether the recommendation should say that school transportation directors should take the lead on this work.
- Stephanie said that she liked the idea of including a convener but she felt that it should be someone above the district level.
- Morgan said that she thought it was worthwhile to include additional stakeholder groups.
- Nicholas said that he felt parents should be included in the list of stakeholders.
- Brenda felt that the recommendation should be more active and suggested that it could say something like, “the state should encourage regional partnerships”/
- Jana said that she was concerned about the laundry list of stakeholders included and worried that it would be hard for all of the stakeholders to be at the table because depending on what the focus of the work was, not all stakeholders might be appropriate.
- Brenda said that the recommendation was meant to address the unique arrangements of the transportation needs of a given region based on their needs so stakeholders would benefit from being broad.
- Michelle said that she thought the recommendation should say something like, the state should encourage and support, but there shouldn’t be a focus on funding.
- Kate asked the group if they wanted to assign the work to districts and call for support from the state or just support from the state.
- Stephanie said that she felt the language needed to be stronger than encourage, perhaps including support or be responsible for.
- Kate suggested to the group the language “State should encourage and support regional
- There were no objections to that language.
- Kate also revisited the list of additional stakeholders that would be added to the new

- bullet point including transportation employees, After-school providers, alternative school providers, public and private sector industry experts.
 - There were no objections to these additions so Kate noted the change.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 6.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 7 (slide 18) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - No one had any comments.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 8 (slide 19) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Susan asked the group if the word “support” implies funding.
 - Nicholas said that the state could simply negotiate on behalf of the districts to get a better deal.
 - Brenda mentioned that those specifics were covered in the full document and that exact situation was suggested.
 - Kate asked the group if they were happy with the current content. No one objected with the current recommendation.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 8.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 9 (slide 20) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Michelle said that she didn’t like the use of “work towards” because she felt this made the recommendation weak. She felt the recommendation should call for more direct policy because some might already be doing things that would apply and it would leave room for districts to do very little.
 - Kevin said he was opposed to removing the wording because without hearing from district personnel it was unclear whether the “ask” would be too much of a burden on districts.
 - Michael said that if the language was too strong it could push districts that were already doing work around this recommendation to struggle to make additional changes.
 - Nicholas said that he felt in reality every district could be doing better, no matter what they were currently doing.
 - Sarah said that for some this could simply be a call to re-evaluate their communication efforts if they were already doing work around this recommendation.
 - Robert said that from his perspective he didn’t see any issue with the current wording.
 - Brenda asked the group if they should consider removing “work towards” from other recommendations as well to keep the language more consistent.
 - Susan said that she felt that in some cases having the wording “work towards” was important but in other cases it wasn’t. She said that she would be fine removing the wording from this recommendation but would keep it elsewhere.
 - Kate called for a vote on removing the words “work towards” from this recommendation.
 - The vote was taken and it was determined that the words “work towards” would be removed from this recommendation.
- The group then went back and reviewed the use of the words “work towards” in other recommendations.
 - The wording “work towards” was reviewed in recommendation 2.
 - Michelle stated to the group that she believed it should remain in this recommendation.
 - No one from the group was opposed to keeping the wording in recommendation 2.
 - The wording “work towards” was reviewed in recommendation 5.
 - Jana stated to the group that she preferred to keep the wording in this recommendation.
 - No one from the group was opposed to keeping the wording in recommendation 5.
 - The wording “work towards” and “work to” was reviewed in recommendation 7.
 - Brenda said that she felt that the wording “as possible” created a caveat and should be removed.

- Kate pointed out that the same wording was used in bullet point D.
 - Michelle agreed that both should be removed because there should be a minimum expectation from school districts.
 - Kate called for a vote to strike the wording “work towards” and “work to” from recommendation 7. The vote passed.
 - The group returned to recommendation 9 and a vote was taken to remove the wording “work towards” from the recommendation. The vote passed.
- Kate made a note to remove wording voted on throughout the listed recommendations.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 10 (slide 22) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Michelle said that she was struggling with the wording “transportation must be addressed” because she felt it was vague and didn’t clearly indicate what was being recommended. She said she thought it would be beneficial to change it to specifically recommend the increase in transportation funding.
 - Jana mentioned that additionally the wording should make it clear that it was a different kind of funding.
 - Jennifer asked Michelle if she was in favor of wording like “transportation funding should be increased as it is a critical component...”
 - Michelle said that she was in favor of that.
 - Kate asked the group if they were happy with that change. No one objected to the change in the recommendation. Kate noted the change.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 10.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 11 (slide 23) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - Jana mentioned to the group that she had been part of the subcommittee and wondered if the \$10 million originally proposed was still the appropriate amount.
 - Kate said that the CDE had rerun the numbers based on up to date information and the \$10 million was still sufficient to address district needs.
 - No additional comments were made by Task Force members regarding recommendation 11.
- Kate reviewed recommendation 12 (slide 24) and asked the members if they had any comments concerns, and/or suggested changes on the content.
 - No one had any comments.
- Albert asked if all the recommendations with corresponding changes could be reviewed ahead of a final vote.
- Kate reviewed all twelve recommendations in addition to the proposed changes.
- Kate then called for a vote on the twelve recommendations that had been reviewed.
- Brenda said that she would like to discuss access to school choice first and then vote on all the recommendations.
- Jana said that she felt this would disrupt the progress that had been made and they should vote now before the access to school choice topic was addressed.
- Nicholas said that he felt it was weird to separate the original twelve from access to school choice.
- Michelle said that she was struggling to understand why access to school choice was a separate conversation since all the other recommendations are tied together.
- Jana asked if a conversation regarding access to school choice had already taken place.
- Kate stated that access to school choice had been discussed at a previous meeting but the group ran out of time and did not come to consensus on a recommendation.
- Jana said that since all the other recommendations had been discussed and finalized she felt a separate vote was in order before access to school choice was discussed.
- Susan said that as chair of the group she felt that there had been indications that an agreement may not be reached on the topic and as a result she would like to vote on the existing twelve recommendations and discuss access to school choice after.
- Robert said that he agreed with Susan and would like to vote then discuss.
- Kate called for a vote from the group regarding voting on the twelve existing recommendations now and then discussing access to school choice after. The vote was vetoed.
- Kate moved to reviewing the three proposed recommendations around access to school choice.

- Kate reviewed the language for proposal 1.
 - Jennifer stated to the group that they would provide more information regarding the 40% of students portion of the proposal.
 - 25% choice into schools within their district.
 - 9% choice into another district, including CSIs
 - 12.1% choice into another district
 - Casey stated that he believed that the real issue to be addressed was ensuring that all schools are quality schools. He stated that he didn't feel it was the responsibility of the district to transport to other schools.
 - Nicholas said that he agreed with Casey that ultimately every school should be high quality but that was not the charge of this particular group and as a result providing transportation was a way to currently address the inequity of different schools.
 - Jana stated that she felt this was a political hot potato and it wasn't the job of the Task Force to solve this particular problem through changes to transportation.
 - Michelle said that given the number of students that were not attending neighborhood schools the group needed to find a creative solution to the transportation problem. She said this was an opportunity to ask the state to solve the problem.
- Kate reviewed the language for proposal 2.
 - Stephanie said that she wanted to clarify and ensure that everyone on the Task Force was aware of the fact that if a student is currently attending a low performing school there are in-district transportation options. The Title 1 Compact allowed for transportation within the district to a different school but across districts was not an option.
 - Jen Douglas asked if these proposals were in the access to school choice document that had been shared with the group.
 - Kate stated that these three options were actually suggestions made by Task Force members.
 - Daine stated that he felt that transportation to a choice school was necessary, particularly in the metro area. He also stated that in some cases kids might benefit from going to school in two different districts depending on their needs and as a result that should be allowed as well.
- Kate reviewed the language for proposal 3.
 - Michelle said that she was in favor of this recommendation because it would be important for Colorado to look to other states for creative solutions.
 - Robert stated that addressing access to school choice was something that he felt could be delayed and a focus should instead be placed on addressing transportation within the district.
 - Albert said that he felt the problem boiled down to resources and money. Without both he felt that there was no viable solution to transportation to choice schools, especially out of district.
 - Jen Douglas stated that she felt the group needed to recognize the hardship on the families and figure out a solution that could benefit everyone.
 - Brenda stated that all of the proposals were meant to help improve the situation for all students.
 - Kevin said that he believed it was a question of opportunity cost. He said that if the group was going to recommend that transportation to choice schools be addressed then other things would need to "give" and could result in other changes such as increases in walk zones. He stated that he felt there were limits to resources and he felt that focusing on things like lowering walk-zone radii would be more helpful.
 - Brenda stated that given the high percentage of students that choice-out of their neighborhood schools, she felt it was important to address the transportation issues here.
 - Robert stated that while he recognizes the population represents a lot of students, making a recommendation to address school choice would be a large burden on the districts.
 - Nicholas said that while he agreed with what Robert stated he felt that they couldn't ignore one problem because of the other. He felt that these recommendations were about expanding transportation for the state and he believed the Task Force should "dream big" when developing them.
 - Robert suggested that the bullet points from proposal 2 be added to proposal 1. No one

- o opposed so the addition was made to proposal 1.
- o Michael said that he felt that the 40% was not an appropriate figure because there was no clear understanding regarding why students had choiced out. They said there was no sense of scope with regards to that percentage.
- o Sarah stated that if families were choosing other schools for reasons such as the parent's working in different schools, the families would likely be providing transportation already.
- o Michelle stated that in situations like that kids choosing schools other than their neighborhood school would not be a burden on anyone.
- o Albert stated that he felt that the 40% was misleading and felt that a more accurate need should be determined.
- o Daine asked if there was a way to get statistics regarding what parents are choosing what schools outside of the boundaries to help determine the best mode of transportation.
- o Susan said that those statistics could probably be determined but not before a vote was needed.
- o Susan stated that she was concerned about the inclusion of a specific % in proposal 1.
- o Jennifer suggested that the percentage be changed to "recognizing that school choice is allowed in Colorado". No one opposed the edit so the change was made to proposal 1.
- Kate called for a vote on each of the three proposed recommendations.
 - o All three proposals were voted on and vetoed.
- Following the vote Kate said that the group could review the three original components emailed out the previous week and have a yea or nay vote on each, or the existing proposals and votes could be reviewed in the final report.
 - o Kate called for a vote to review the existing proposals and votes in the final report. The vote passed.
- Kate stated that the proposals and votes would be covered in the final report.
 - o Brenda stated that she believed the report should include a review of who voted what in each of the proposals because she believed it was important for the reader to know that Jana was the only veto vote for proposal 1.
 - o Jana said that she felt this was a very politically charged topic and it didn't truly address the charge of finding solutions that help students without creating more burden for districts. She stated that she had been told that Brenda was texting staff within Jana's district in an attempt to pressure Jana to not veto the proposals but she felt it was important to safeguard against political pressure.
- Kate called a vote on the original twelve proposals with the proposed changes discussed at the beginning of the meeting.
 - o A vote was taken and all twelve recommendations passed with the proposed changes.

Agenda Item- Next Steps

- Kate reminded the group that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday October 8th.
- Kate stated that the group would be shared on the final report as soon as additions from today's meeting were made.
- Kate said that at the next meeting the Task Force would have an opportunity to provide input on the consent of the final report.
- Kate thanked the Task Force members for attending today's meeting and for the great conversation that took place.
- The meeting closed 12:57pm