

Board Special Meeting



2445 – 3rd Avenue South, Seattle WA 98134

Public Hearing; Oversight Work Session: Transportation
Thursday, June 23, 2016, 4:30-6:15pm *
Auditorium, John Stanford Center

Minutes

The Board Special Meeting was called to order at 4:35pm. Directors Geary, Harris, Peters, Pinkham were present. Director Patu was absent. Director Blanford arrived at 4:37pm. Director Burke arrived at 5:22pm.

Public Hearing: 2016-2017 Recommended Budgets

The following members of the public gave testimony:

- Ian Golash, Teacher, General Fund.
- Paul Fischburn, Teacher, General Fund.
- Melissa Westbrook, Community Member, General fund.
- Precious Manning, Student, General Fund.
- Jason Glover, Teacher/Parent, General Fund.
- Melissa Westbrook, Community Member, Capital Fund.
- Noah Zeichner, Teacher, General Fund.
- Chris Jackins, Community Member, General Fund.
- Chris Jackins, Community Member, ASB Fund.
- Chris Jackins, Community Member, Capital Fund.
- Chris Jackins, Community Member, Debt Service Fund.
- Eric Blumhagen, Parent, General Fund.
- Michael Godfred, Parent, General Fund.
- Kristin Aroidson, Parent, General Fund.
- Melissa Westbrook, Community Member, Debt Service Fund.

Director Pinkham left at 5:13pm.

- Emily Richards, Student, General Fund.
- Joe Schultz, Teacher, General Fund.
- Julie Brown, Teacher, General Fund.

Director Burke arrived at 5:22pm.

- Lynn Ogdon-Perrine, Parent, General Fund.
- Vicki Schmitz-Block, Community Member, General Fund.

Director Peters noted the last speaker on the testimony sign-up sheet had spoken and asked if anyone else would like to sign up to give testimony.

- Raeanne Tegan, Student, General Fund.
- Isabel Lafley, Student, General Fund.

- Carolyn Autenrieth, Teacher and Parent, General Fund.
- Anna Marra de LaFuente, Teacher, General Fund.
- Amy Do, Student, General Fund.
- Alanna McCorkle, Teacher, General Fund.
- Aida Freser-Hamner, Principal, General Fund.

Director Peters announced a recess at 5:55 pm.

Oversight Work Session: Transportation

Due to the length of the public hearing on the budget, Operations Committee Chair Stephan Blanford called the oversight session to order at 6:02pm. Directors Rick Burke, Jill Geary, Leslie Harris, and Sue Peters were also in attendance. Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Pegi McEvoy, staffed the meeting, along with Director of Logistics Kathy Katterhagen.

Pegi McEvoy made some introductory remarks about the work Transportation has been doing to support the Board's direction on bell times changes and Kathy's leadership with the department. Kathy Katterhagen reviewed the agenda for the oversight session and discussed the Transportation Department's functions.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis:

In the SWOT Analysis, Kathy noted the strengths of the department: now being process- and data-driven to measure how well the department is performing and where they can do better; they have implemented practices that focus on strong customer service. The department has been working with an old infrastructure and equipment and needs to improve trainings for staff. The Transportation Manager position is currently vacant; the position has been advertised and scheduling interviews has been a challenge. They are updating the Control Center, including software support from the current contractor that will demonstrate planned vs. actual routing. Upcoming opportunities include the upcoming competitive Request For Proposal (RFP) process for contracted bus services and upgrading route management systems to improve on-time performance and communication with families. The growing demand for specialized transportation requests and curb-to-curb transportation driven by Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and the shortage of bus drivers continue to be challenges.

Accomplishments:

Kathy noted the tremendous work Transportation staff did developing a cost neutral busing system for the new bell times schedule, accommodating most of the schools' requests within the adopted times. She said that the department is now up to 97-98% on-time delivery. The communication with First Student has improved, and the contractor has sent staff in to work alongside district staff during the work day. She described the Daily Huddle, where the big whiteboards are updated in real time to tell staff every day how they are doing, how on-time buses are, how many minutes' late routes might be, how many calls the department is getting, and ultimately what the cost per day is for a student to ride a bus; the focus is on what the department does and why they do it.

As she reviewed the department's organization, Kathy talked specifically about the work of the Intervention Specialists, who will go into the field to address issues like student management, students needing extra care, and any issues with bus drivers.

Goals and Objectives discussion included:

- Improved start of school for 2016-17, with the target of 98% and above for on-time performance, even with the changes to bell times. In response to questions, Kathy said there are 750 routes, and she wants to have no more than 16 routes ten minutes late.
- The district wants to have a finalized contract in place by fall 2016 to allow the bus contractor(s) up to a year to set up shop and prepare for the 2017-18 school year.
- Improving customer service, with leadership and oversight so staff can be more responsive to families and schools. The Control Center is being restructured to improve triage of transportation issues, with data and efficiencies in management a necessary component in getting to the 98%. She said a necessary improvement is how we respond to the public. The performance measures used for supervision of current staff include staff responsiveness to telephone calls, and data for timeliness, accuracy of response and quality (how staff respond). To have consistent messaging, administrative staff has developed scripts to use when a call/issue comes in so that best customer services practices are maintained by the Call Center. Responding to Board member comments on quality control and efficiency of messaging being an important focus for improvement, Kathy agreed, saying a Call Center staff member is the only person a customer hears from, so we need to be able to respond properly.

Key Performance Indicator discussion:

On-time performance has a target of 98% and above. Currently the district is at 97%, and earlier in the year it was less than that. Board members questioned the 10-minute on-time standard and whether that is an industry standard. Kathy said this was an SPS standard, taking into account Seattle traffic issues. Board members wondered whether these were measured daily, weekly, or monthly, and how it breaks out and suggested that in looking at the variation, a scatter measure is almost as important as the deviation. They would like to see that added in the future as data is brought forward.

Board members wondered if the district is bumping up against 100% if more efficiency could be found if you shortened the window (i.e., 8 minutes, 5 minutes). Kathy noted that Seattle traffic patterns impact on-time delivery. The previous "on time" standard was defined as 15 minutes for "on time service delivery," but the team reduced the variance by five minutes at the beginning of the year to reflect a higher standard. It is something staff is sensitive to because of the impact to the amount of time available for students to eat breakfast. She said consistency is the goal here for family predictability. Board members suggested that this extraordinary performance should be shared with the whole community.

The number of students per bus led to discussion about how many students are allowed in buses and how many students are allowed in a seat. They noted they hear from the community about buses that drive by empty. Kathy responded that the district

actually overbooks the number of students per bus since there are students who never ride buses. The change in the student assignment plan has allowed the district to be more efficient. When buses have loads that consistently seat three students per seat, they will look at adding a second bus.

Budget, Staffing:

Kathy said these numbers include encumbrances for the remainder of the year. In response to questions, she said that the district pays for gas. Board members questioned whether gas savings should just go back into the General Fund or whether it should be used for transportation improvements. Kathy reported that Transportation will be providing transportation services for the enhanced Summer Staircase program which has created an additional burden on staff. This summer, 107 buses completing 362 routes is estimated, and everyone agreed that this is a good problem to have. She reviewed the next slides on budget that showed the percent of transportation costs declining when compared to the total General Fund. Budget slides also showed that as special education demands have increased, they offset the savings realized in general education transportation.

Response to questions submitted for the oversight session:

Board members were able to review data Kathy had put together in response to the question “How much money was really saved by the neighborhood schools student assignment plan change?” Kathy pulled data by year from 2008-9 forward; while the student assignment plan phased in over a period of years starting around that time, she was able to show a savings of at least \$12+ million up until 2014-15. The data was disaggregated based upon the type of buses required. Because of the increasing enrollment numbers and the increase in demand for SpEd bus service, it was discussed that the GenEd transportation changes most closely reflect the cost savings due to the change in the student assignment plan. Board members appreciated the question, as it is out in the community and was one of the benefits cited for going to neighborhood schools. The Board asked for additional “cost per student” analysis if possible, as the data would help the community conversations about the student assignment plan.

In response to “How much would it cost to get all K-5s and K-8s on a first tier schedule?” the data showed approximately \$9.9 million.

Discussion followed regarding the McKinney-Vento homeless program and the cost of providing transportation between districts. Kathy said SPS is working to collect more of the funds due to the district from surrounding districts and the McKinney-Vento program is working to make sure students are properly registered in the appropriate district. Board members expressed an interest in seeing the McKinney-Vento data in the future.

Kathy reviewed the policies and procedures that guide transportation work, the key internal and external controls, major outside service contracts, and information technology systems that support Transportation.

In the emerging trends, everyone discussed the pros and cons of having bus drivers use electronic tablets rather than the notebooks that are difficult to keep up to date and maintain. While efficiencies might be realized, safety regulations may prohibit this

move. In response to a question about electric school buses for schools (like Metro is using), Kathy said she was not aware of any move toward this technology.

This meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Director Blanford announced that the Board was going into a closed session, as allowed by RCW 42.30.140.