

Transportation Issues Study Committee The 177th Meeting September 22, 2010

Next Meeting: October 27, 2010 9:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m.

Minnesota Department of Education, Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2

Present:

Keith Paulson, Anoka-Hennepin Schools

Kelly Wosika, MDE Program Finance/Transportation

Jan Vanderwall, Roseville Schools

John Thomas, Eastern Carver County Schools

Dave Peterson, St. Paul Schools

Sergeant Chad Dauffenbach, Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS)

Ethan Hofschulte, DPS

Sergeant Jim Senenfelder, DPS

Melissa Jobe, St. Paul Schools

Becky Hicks, St. Paul Schools

Ryan Strack, Maplewood/North St. Paul Schools

Tamiko Thomas, Osseo Area Schools

Jamie Halpern, Hennepin County

Deb Jenson, Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)

Maxie Rockymore, DHS

Patricia Avery, Hennepin County

Shelly Jonas, Minnesota School Bus Operators Association (MSBOA)

Randy Dukek, Rosemount Schools

Dean Krause, St. Francis Schools

Kristin Johnson, Robbinsdale Area Schools

Derrick Agate, Hopkins Schools

Matt Toburen, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 279

Denny Coughlin, School Bus Training Company

Harry Kenerson, Osseo Area Schools

Ray Kroll, Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation (MAPT)

Superintendent Michael Kelley, Randolph School District

Dave Johnson, White Bear Lake Area Schools

Brad Lundell, MAPT Lobbyist

Summary: The summary of the July Transportation Issues meeting was approved.

Special Education Transportation Committee: Nothing to report.

Minnesota Department of Education: Kelly Wosika announced that the third Safe Routes to School (SRTS) National Conference will be held in the City of Minneapolis. The conference will take place August 16-18, 2011. SRTS is a national and international movement to create safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools. The conference is being hosted by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Miscellaneous: Dave Peterson explained that there is a report by Minnesota 2020 posted on their website. View the article titled "The Wrong Way: Minnesota School Transportation Disparities". The author, John Fitzgerald finds that some school's transportation appropriations are short changed and other districts have transportation surpluses. The article recommends that transportation be funded as a special categorical funding source rather than part of the general fund as it currently is.

Dave explained that the article does not consider other expenditures that are included in the overall calculation of student transportation such as nonpublic transportation, desegregation, afterschool activity and noon kindergarten. The article portrays St. Paul Schools as a winner when it comes to student transportation funding, while in actuality St. Paul Schools is underfunded. St. Paul Schools has asked MN 2020 to pull the article from their website.

The article's message has some merit; however, the numbers presented are questionable.

It was mentioned that the article says in a number of places that districts are responsible for transporting secondary students who live two miles or more from school and elementary students who live one mile or more from school.

However, according to Minnesota laws, a district is responsible to provide transportation for all students who live two miles or more from school. The law does not differentiate between grade levels. The confusion may come from the fact that the students are coded differently in their MARSS enrollment records. The Transportation Category is coded depending on grade level and distance. The MARSS coding does not have anything to do with whether transportation must be provided or not.

The majority of the meeting was a discussion of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. Maxie Rockymore, Supervisor, Family Support and Placement Services, Child Safety and Permanency Division, DHS, provided statistics on students in foster care and a summary of the legislation. She explained that education is one of the eight factors a case worker considers when placing a student in a foster home. Case workers need to work with school districts so that the best interest of the child is taken into consideration. Decisions on placement are made on a case-by-case basis. Most times, it is best if the student continues to attend the school of origin. However, when a student is placed outside the school's boundaries and the student continues to attend the district of origin, the student may need transportation assistance.

When a student is placed in a foster home, the welfare agency (county) takes the place of the parent. If additional school transportation costs are necessary to retain a child in his/her school of origin prior to placement in foster care, it may now be possible to seek federal Title IVE reimbursement to help defray some of these costs. School districts and county governments will need to work together to develop written agreements and procedures to permit this reimbursement to occur. Since the act went into effect is 2008, it may be possible to make retroactive claims.

There was a discussion proposing that a standard method of determining the costs should be established and that agreement between the district and the county may need to be in writing. Also there was a discussion about when a student is considered homeless and how it applies to this legislation.

Kelly and Maxie will work on forming a workgroup of school districts, MDE, county social services, and DHS to see if some state-wide guidance can be achieved on this subject.

Office of Student Transportation Safety: The Office of Pupil Transportation Safety held a meeting prior to the Issues Committee Meeting. Nothing to report.

Legislative: Brad Lundell stated that there will be a new regime when the 2011 Legislative Session takes place this year. DPS has stated that they are not going forward with anything legislatively this year. It is up to the associations to make initiatives. There will be a Legislative Committee Meeting after the Issues Study Committee Meeting. One topic that will be discussed is how legislation should be introduced regarding the state specifications that are not entirely in sync with the new National Student Transportation Specifications and Procedures (NCST).

New Business: The School Bus Safety Committee and Special Education Transportation Committee have scheduled their meetings on the same day and location for the year so that individuals are able to attend both meetings. It was mentioned that the southern tier of the state needs to get more knowledgeable about student transportation, especial in the area of public safety. John Thomas is arranging a School Bus Safety and Special Education Transportation meeting in Mankato in November in hopes to have representatives in that area attend and become better informed.

MAPT Regional Meetings will be held October 21, 2010 at various locations around the state. View the MAPT Website for times and locations.

MSBOA has started a state billboard campaign with the motto "Stop on red, kids ahead".

Future Meetings: Future meeting dates are:

October 27, 2010 Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. November 24, 2010 Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Adjourn: 12:25 p.m.