

Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force – Meeting Minutes: 28 May 2013 (Page 1)

In attendance: Tracy Bull (Chair), Principal Emilie Carter (MES), Katie Cleasby, Assistant Principal Jay Gratton (MES), Rick Greenier, Officer Rob Kelleher, Principal Marsha McGill (JMUES), Sarah Ruffell, Matt Waitkins

Excused members: Leslie Rothman

Mrs. Bull welcomed committee members and called the meeting to order at 2:40pm.

She noted the first order of business was the approval of draft meeting minutes from January, February, and April 2013.

Mrs. Bull requested a motion to accept the meeting minutes from January 22nd, 2013, which was made by Mr. Gratton and seconded by Mrs. Ruffell. She made a request for any corrections or clarifications to the minutes. Seeing none, the minutes were approved by a vote of 6-0-3, with committee members Bull, Cleasby, Gratton, McGill, Ruffell and Waitkins in favor, and with committee members Carter, Greenier and Kelleher abstaining.

Mrs. Bull requested a motion to accept the meeting minutes from February 19th, 2013, which was made by Mr. Waitkins and seconded by Mr. Gratton. She made a request for any corrections or clarifications to the minutes. Seeing none, the minutes were approved by a vote of 4-0-5, with committee members Bull, Cleasby, McGill, and Ruffell in favor, and with committee members Carter, Gratton, Greenier, Kelleher and Waitkins abstaining.

Mrs. Bull requested a motion to accept the meeting minutes from February 19th, 2013, which was made by Mr. Waitkins and seconded by Mr. Gratton. She made a request for any corrections or clarifications to the minutes. Seeing none, the minutes were approved by a vote of 4-0-5, with committee members Bull, Carter, Cleasby, and Waitkins in favor, and with committee members Gratton, Greenier, Kelleher, McGill and Ruffell abstaining.

Mrs. Bull shared that the formal “notice to proceed” with the work comprising the travel plan project was received from the NH DOT on April 19th, 2013. The Merrimack School District (MSD) and Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) have formally entered into a contract to conduct the work in the amount of \$13,200.

Mrs. Bull explained that on May 6th, 2013, she and Mr. Waitkins successfully presented before the Merrimack School Board with a request to conduct the student and parent surveys as well as the mapping exercise necessary to gather data relevant to composing the travel plan. Approval was unanimous and in the interest of timing, the Board waived their customary two-week approval process so surveying could be conducted prior to the end of the 2012/13 school year.

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Since that time, Mrs. Bull and Mr. Waitkins have been working alongside Principals Carter (MES) and McGill (JMUES) to finalize the survey pieces and select survey dates. Student surveys will be conducted in the classroom with Grades 2-6 participating in the written survey, and Grades 4-6 participating in the mapping exercise. Grade 3 will participate in the mapping exercise on a modified basis, under more guided direction from classroom teachers. The parent survey will be primarily conducted online via a survey monkey format set up by Mr. Waitkins, with written notification being sent home by Principals Carter and McGill for their respective buildings. Printed copies of the parent surveys will also be available to anyone preferring to take a written approach. Additional parent survey notification will be provided via the email notification systems of each respective parent/teacher organization at MES and JMUES, and will be posted on each school's website homepage. All surveying is expected to occur during the week beginning June 3rd, 2013. Parent survey completion is due no later than June 7th, 2013.

Mrs. Bull indicated that she and Mr. Waitkins have also met with the respective parent/teacher organizations of each school (JMUES-PFA, MES-PATT) to provide background on the SRTS project, notification of the upcoming survey pieces, and invitation towards increased parent input/participation during data review and project composition over the summer.

Mrs. Bull noted the successful first observance of National Bike to School Day on May 8th, 2013 by the Upper Elementary, inviting Principal McGill and Mr. Greenier to speak to the event. They shared that approximately two dozen students and four parents met on O'Gara Drive under beautiful weather conditions in the morning. Escorted by members of the Merrimack Police Department, including Officer Kelleher and Merrimack High School Resource Officer Mike Murray, the group proceeded down O'Gara Drive to the high school, around the bend and onto McElwain Street, then down Bishop Street and into the parking lot between MES and JMUES. Success of the event was supported in advance by the local Girl Scout Troop who had met with the SRTS committee back in November 2012. They provided posters advertising the event as well as clean up in and around the bicycle racks, earning badges in the process. Mrs. Bull further noted the success of the event in advance of composing the travel plan, thanking Mr. Greenier, Mrs. McGill and Officer Kelleher for their initiative and support. The event was positive and participants enthusiastic. Mrs. Bull also shared that an article about the event and the committee's SRTS initiative appeared in the Nashua Telegraph on May 11th, 2013, and passed a copy around to members.

Mrs. Bull stated that the committee would not need to meet during June 2013, as that would be the time period during which the NRPC would be busy compiling data from the various survey pieces. Meetings are expected to occur during the months of July and August 2013 to review data and travel plan composition. To that end, Mrs. Bull requested committee members forward her their information regarding summer availability to meet, including times members expect to

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be unavailable, any preferred meeting times, days of the week, etc. Mrs. Bull stated that she expects to put forward some suggested meeting dates and times, but that she would like to do so maximizing member availability. Input from members unavailable to attend the summer meetings can be submitted electronically in advance, and it will be read into meeting records. All committee members are encouraged to watch for information regarding summer meeting times and locations via email.

Mrs. Bull asked members for any comments or questions they may have.

Officer Kelleher inquired who or what entity would be in charge of putting infrastructure, such as sidewalks, into place? Mr. Waitkins explained that the travel plan process would help the committee, and thereby the community, better identify what sort of improvements would best enable students in the Masticola Complex in walking and biking to school. Once the travel plan report is composed, recommendations could be taken up from there by various entities, such as the Town Center Committee (TCC), School Board, etc., which could opt to write for one of the large infrastructure grants (reimbursable up to \$250,000) or seek other funding sources. If a proposed infrastructure improvement would be made on school district property, the Merrimack School District would need to be the grant applicant. Similarly, if the proposed improvement is to be made on town property, the Town would serve as grant applicant. He noted that the SRTS infrastructure grants are offered competitively, and the next round is expected to open to applications in the Fall of 2013, approximately in October.

Mrs. Bull noted that, under the SRTS program, the process of creating a local travel plan was a necessary step in becoming eligible to eventually apply for the larger infrastructure grant.

Mrs. Bull stated that she would make arrangements with Principals Carter and McGill following completion of the survey pieces to collect materials from each respective building.

Ms. Cleasby shared this would be her final meeting, pending the end of the 2012/13 school year. Fellow committee members wished her well, thanking her for her valuable participation to date.

Mrs. Bull entertained a motion to adjourn, made by Mr. Waitkins, seconded by Mrs. Carter. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 3:02pm.