

Dear Woodcliffe Park Parents/Guardians of Current and Future Kingsview MS students:

Earlier this year, you may have seen correspondence regarding the planned Kingsview MS bus route elimination that will affect some families living in the Woodcliffe Park Community. MCPS is planning to implement a Board of Education policy which states that if 'safe' walking routes are deemed to be provided, then students residing within 1.5 miles of Middle Schools will not be entitled to bus service. Over the summer, Woodcliffe Park community members attempted to inform as many residences in this community as possible about this planned action and residents were offered a chance to sign a petition opposing this planned bus elimination. If you signed the petition opposing this action, we thank you for your support. The current situation is that the buses ARE slated to be eliminated next year. The bus route slated to be eliminated affects ALL residences within a 1.5 mile radius of Kingsview MS (except for those on the Vistas side of Richter Farm Road) that live within the boundaries of Clopper Road, Schaeffer Road up to Richter Farm Road, and Richter Farm Road. Mr. Todd Watkins from MCPS Transportation is willing to hold a meeting (or a series of meetings) to answer questions, concerns, etc. If you are interested in attending this meeting then please send an email to nhoffpaur@hotmail.com with any specific concerns and/or issues that you would like addressed related to this proposed bus elimination. We are compiling a list of these concerns and issues and will submit them to Mr. Watkins in advance of the meeting so that he is prepared to respond adequately.

It is our position that the elimination of this bus route is premature and cannot move forward because it lacks various studies. Furthermore, it has been discovered that to date, MCPS has not followed their own policies regarding notice to the community, and it is our opinion that the basis for which they have concluded that 'safe' walking routes have been provided is not supported with proper documentation. In addition, it is our opinion that the decision maker at MCPS who determined which areas were to be affected based that decision on a grossly inadequate survey of the locations by using a google map as the sole source of his research. This google map which was presented at a PTA meeting last Spring contained incorrect street information. It has also come to our attention that contrary to MCPS's position that this 1.5 mile policy must be applied 'fairly' across the county, they have nevertheless decided to spare some residents that reside WITHIN the 1.5 miles of Kingsview by subjectively and arbitrarily using Richter Farm Road as the boundary for the planned elimination. Clearly, they are NOT planning to apply this BOE policy 'fairly'. Finally, we are not proposing safe walking alternatives until we are definite that they (MCPS) are legally allowed to proceed with this bus route elimination.

Please feel free to read the below correspondence from Norma Hoffpaur to Mr. Watkins regarding the immediate concerns Ms. Hoffpaur (and members of the community) have with MCPS proceeding with this action. Ms. Hoffpaur has done a superb job of conducting research into MCPS policies that relate to the legality of the implementation of the Montgomery County Board of Education mandate.

From: Todd_Watkins@mcpsmd.org
To: nhoffpaur@hotmail.com
CC: salgadon@nei.nih.gov; fourcolberts@comcast.net
Date: Wed, 12 Oct 2011 17:03:42 -0400
Subject: RE: Kingsview MS Bus Route

Norma,

You are welcome. I agree that dialogue is important.

I will be contacting you and others who expressed interest in the next few weeks to schedule a date for a first meeting. I am planning to discuss many of the issues below when we meet.

Thanks,

Todd

From: Norma Hoffpaur [<mailto:nhoffpaur@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2011 12:33 AM
To: Watkins, Todd
Cc: salgadon@nei.nih.gov; fourcolberts@comcast.net
Subject: RE: Kingsview MS Bus Route

Good evening Todd! First and foremost, thank you for coming to the PTA meeting for the NW Cluster. It is important to keep the dialogue going and have an open discussion. I do understand that your office has undergone a "decision making process....to eliminate the bus routes" but the community is not informed of this process and was not allowed to give any input. Mr. Bowers had indicated to Mrs. Salgado that he wants his staff to go back and seek input from the community. I agree with you that it would be very helpful if you host a meeting at Kingsview or venue of your choice to elaborate on the process. It would be also helpful to know your office's position on some of the concerns regarding the proposed elimination of bus route as noted below. I have provided reference below to the policy pages that appear to mandate additional current safety studies:

- (1) Right to transportation in a non-discriminatory manner: The proposed elimination of bus route creates 2 distinct sets of Montgomery County tax paying residents--one set that lives within 1.5 miles of the school and will be forced to walk; and another set that also lives within 1.5 miles of the school but will retain the right and privilege of riding the Montgomery County school bus. Before your office moves forward with this proposed action, I would like to know

the legal basis on which you have created the boundary lines that dictate continuation of bus service for example for residents of "Vistas" but not for those who live on the proposed bus elimination route, all within the 1.5 mile radius of school.

- (2) Proof of Required Timely and Current Vehicular Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Studies: EA-RA on page 4 indicates that walking routes are established "through analysis that include the following: (2) Onsite visits by DOT staff trained in student safety; (3) Review of comparable walking routes in other neighborhoods; (4) **Existing safety features as well as impediments to safety**; and Observed pedestrian/**vehicular use of the walking area.**"

Emphasis added. The proposed elimination of bus route by its very nature establishes new walking routes, requiring studies as mandated by EA-RA. Please provide proof of current studies conducted to support your position that walking routes created by the proposed bus route elimination meet the written guidelines mandated by EA-RA.

- (3) Defective Measurements: The proposed elimination of bus route is based on measurements conducted by your office representative whose only stated goal was to eliminate bus routes and therefore are very subjective and self-serving measurements. Moreover, they are inaccurate. Earlier this year, Mr. Punturiero of your office indicated that he conducted a study and he found that both Google and his own personal measurements showed that affected bus stops are within 1.5 mile radius of the school. He showed his "study" consisting of one page of map from Google, indicating google miles and his metered miles' measurements. His one page map contains "Hoyles Mill Road" which no longer exists off of Schaeffer Road; Luvie Lane, which the undersigned could not find by driving on Leaman Farm Road; and Black Kettle Road on the opposite side of where it is actually located. The study done by Mr. Punturiero appears defective for it measures distances on roads that do not exist.

It is my understanding from reading the relevant transportation policy that your department provides transportation to those middle school students who "reside" more than 1.5 mile from the school. Mr. Punturiero's study measures distance from the bus stops to the school and therefore, is inaccurate. The distance measured should be from students' residence not the bus stop. Moreover, it is not clear if he is considered "staff trained in student safety" because he repeatedly indicated that he was there to implement the board's policy of 1.5 mile rule. Can you provide us with his credentials if he is to conduct any studies or if you will be relying on the study that he conducted? Do

you have other independent, objective measurement studies that cover the entire 1.5 mile radius so that the residents of Kingsview Middle School community can assess the accurate reach of the 1.5 rule and see who is impacted and who is not impacted by your proposal?

In addition, it would be helpful to provide to the community an analysis of why certain communities have been exempted from the 1.5 rule with legal reasons for same.

It is my understanding that distance from the school is not the only measuring factor in determining whether a bus route should be eliminated because the EEA-RA policy, at II (A) (1) regarding Student Transportation also indicates on page 2 of 11 that "Transportation may be provided to students who live within the prescribed distances established by the Board if the director of transportation determines that an appropriate walking route does not exist." In responding to the reasons for continuing bus service to a selected set of residents even though they live within 1.5 mile of the school, please provide the factors that the director of transportation considered in concluding that an appropriate walking route does not exist for this select group of Montgomery County residents that reside in the Vistas.

(4) Proof of Current Series of Field Observations: Maryland Highway Safety Office has provided funding to improve access to schools. On its website "Safe Routes to School" lists the procedure for improving access: "MCDOT staff meets with the schools administrators, principals, teachers, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) representatives. **Critical needs are identified in these meetings.** Then a series of field **observations are made during school operations to define potential conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular movements that pose potential risks.**" When asked earlier this year for these observations, Mr. Punturiero failed to provide any observations other than a one-page map consisting of roads that don't exist and how much 1.5 mile is from the school. For the proposed bus route elimination, please provide proof of "series of field observations... made during school operations" that support your department's position that the new walking routes that will be created will not pose "potential risks" for the children.

(5) Studies by Mont. Co. Engineering Department: It is imperative for our community to be aware of the decision makers in this action,

which department is conducting the studies and the credentials of those conducting the studies, as well as names of county employees who are providing information to support the proposed route elimination. For example, who in the Montgomery County Engineering Department has concluded that Clopper Road is safe with new cross walk, new ramps, and new post with pedestrian signal at the intersection of Clopper Road and Kingsview Road. Who from any other county agency has determined that it is unsafe to cross Richter Farm Road but it is safe to cross Clopper Road. Since these types of information have formed the basis for the proposed route elimination, it is important for the community to know how these conclusions were reached and by whom.

(6) Budget: It is my understanding that the buses that service the routes that are proposed for elimination run double routes ("double back"), i.e., they transport kids to school then go back and pick up another set of kids. Therefore, the buses or their drivers will not be eliminated but they will run 2 less routes. Please advise of the total savings you expect from eliminating this bus route and where will these savings be applied.

In the MCPS Fiscal Year 2012 Operating Budget, Revised Summary of Potential Budget Reductions, I did not find any proposed reduction in the budget for school bus service. Moreover, I have learned that the Clarksburg Depot provided bus service for a summer program this past summer, unrelated to school activity, for Korean nationals. In this case Korean embassy provided funding which was used disparately for the benefit of one nationality. Is there a budget shortfall that your office is attempting to cover from this route elimination?

In my opinion, funding is available to continue bus service. As you may know, public school system reported a surplus of \$14.5 million which was discovered in the final days of budget negotiations. This is currently under investigation. In addition, county employees are driving cars that are purchased and operated using tax money yet your office is searching for ways to deplete services for our children. Surely, there is a disconnect here. The 1.5 mile policy echoes the concern for child safety and mandates analysis to study vehicular use on Clopper Road, Schaeffer Road, Richter Farm Road and surrounding communities. This policy mandates careful analysis of hazards that exist on the proposed walking routes before these

new walking routes are established as a result of your proposed elimination of bus routes. The transportation policy must be applied while looking at totality of circumstances. This policy dictates "Student Safety" studies before applying this policy blindly based on wrongly calculated mileage.

I look forward to your response. Kindly keep a copy of this email as part of record in opposition to your department's proposal for elimination of bus route and send a copy to all interested agencies as you deem appropriate. Thank you.

Regards,

Norma Briscoe Hoffpauir
14104 Schaeffer Road
Germantown, MD 20874
(301) 972-0684