

DRAFT NOTES: Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force: February 9, 2017 Conference Call on Proposed Walkability Preference

Date & Time: Thursday, February 9, 2017, 12:00-12:45pm

Facilitator: Co-chair Deputy Mayor Jennifer Niles

DME Staff Members: Jennifer Comey, Rebecca Lee, Amy Lerman, Taneka Miller, Aaron Parrott, Cat Peretti, Ahnna Smith, Aurora Steinle

Note-takers: Hannah Holliday, Richelle Russell

Task Force Members: Amanda Alexander, Shanita Burney, John Davis, Caryn Ernst, Faith Gibson Hubbard, Erika Harrell, Irene Holtzman, Mary Levy, Bethany Little, Claudia Luján, Jim Sandman, Alejandra Vallejo, Karen Williams, Darren Woodruff

Members of the public: 10

Call Notes

Deputy Mayor Niles began the call by noting that the Task Force had not been provided with information on the proposal prior to the announcement of the proposed walkability preference last Monday. She reviewed key details regarding the proposed policy and legislation:

- Legislation will be introduced at the end of March.
 - There will be another opportunity for another conference call next week to further discuss the content of the walkability preference.
 - There will be a public meeting before it is introduced as well.
 - Will be doing another analysis once we talk with charter schools to assess interest.
- Once it is in Council, there will be another public hearing before it is voted on.

Deputy Mayor Niles outlined the intent and criteria* for the preference, in addition to the analysis her office conducted prior to the introduction of the preference:

*Please see the document "Analysis of the Proposed Charter Walkability Preference for more details.

- Criteria:
 - Elementary students would qualify for a walkability preference for charter enrollment if their DCPS elementary zoned school is greater than .5 miles away from their home (walkable distance) and if there is a participating charter elementary school within .5 miles (walkable distance).
 - Only applied to eligible students if:
 - The charter elementary school that is within .5 miles opts in to participate.
 - The student would have to apply in the lottery process and rank the walkable charter.
- Analysis:
 - The office ran a mock lottery on the 10,600 students that would be eligible.
 - This resulted in only about 250 new matches.
 - This did not decrease the enrollment in either sector – the mock lottery does not predict who accepts matches.

- The analysis focused on whether there were disproportionate effects on particular wards, sectors, or on at-risk students:
 - The analysis did not show any of these negative effects.
 - The heat map does show areas where there would be more students qualifying for the preference

Deputy Mayor Niles opened the floor for questions from Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force members:

- Q: What will mean for students that couldn't use the preference? Or for at-risk students?
 - A: We did focus on at-risk students and did not see many adverse effects.
 - More at-risk students actually got higher matches.
- Q: Could there be clarification that the 254 students is the number of students who could have taken advantage of the preference?
 - A: Yes.
- Q: That 254 works out to less than 1% of charter school students. As we're considering preferences, shouldn't we focus on a preference that would have a greater impact? (i.e. an at-risk preference)
 - A: The Mayor asked DME to solve this specific issue of walkability because of what she heard during the campaign.
 - We can look at other preferences; we have looked into an at-risk preference and a neighborhood preference, but neither showed huge benefits.
- A Task Force member voiced that they would be in favor of comparing this preference to other possible preference options to see how it affected the hierarchy of preferences.
- Q: There are over 10,000 elementary school students that don't have a walkable DCPS, and only 254 students can go to a walkable charter under this preference. Doesn't seem like a big impact. Why aren't we talking about creating by-right schools in areas of need?
 - A: The 254 students are those that would have gotten different results in the lottery (DCPS and PCS)
 - In terms of walkability, this is what the Mayor heard that people wanted.
- A Task Force member commented that they have heard from parents concerned about walkability a lot over the last few years. They noted that walkability is a huge benefit to parents, particularly parents with small children and that while it does not solve all the issues, it is a good step in the right direction.
- Another Task Force member commented that the city is already racially segregated and that studies show that integration is beneficial to students and that school choice increases integration. They expressed concern that this approach could increase segregation.
- A Task Force member expressed concern that the walkability preference isn't addressing the competition between DCPS and charters and noted that they are also concerned about school segregation.
- Q: What is the decision making process around the walkability preference?
 - A: The DME is collecting public input, getting feedback from Council, and then putting in legislation at the end of March.

- There will be two opportunities for this group to provide feedback: another conference call next week, and then a public meeting that Task Force members can attend (2-3 weeks from now).

Deputy Mayor Niles raised the point that perhaps there should be a hearing on school segregation and how it could affect future plans for different school building use. She also highlighted the need to ensure that the walkability preference could not be inadvertently “gamed.”

- A Task Force member said that they would like to also see which charter schools are affected and what percentage of students they’re already serving are from that .5 mile radius
 - A: Future analysis will be conducted to look into the effects on individual charters and the percentage of kids at charter schools who live within a .5 mile radius.
- A Task Force member commented that this walkability preference could really help some families that travel far to take their kids to school. It may not affect a lot of students, but the impact on those that it does affect is great.
- Another Task Force member commented that some families travel by choice because their neighborhood schools aren’t desirable and that there should be more focus on providing quality choices to schools in all neighborhoods.
- One Task Force member asked another Task Force member: What charter schools do you know of that families want, but that they are shut out of in their neighborhoods?
 - The Task Force member responded with a few charter schools (KIPP Arts & Tech; DC Prep Benning; Friendship Tech) and noted that part of the benefit of the preference is that it adds a level of reassurance to families that there is some chance to get into one of these schools.
- A Task Force member expressed concern that there are some families that have the means to relocate near a high-demand charter schools (i.e. Washington Latin)
 - A: Washington Latin would not be part of this preference because it is not an elementary school, but that it we will need to see what charter elementary schools would opt in.

Deputy Mayor Niles reiterated that there will be a follow-up call next week but that Task Force members should feel free to email any questions that come up before the next call. She also reminded the Task Force about the upcoming public meeting and noted that at some point there will also be a meeting for charter leaders who think they might want their schools to opt-in.

The call ended at 12:44pm.