

Feb 13, 2020

To **Kate Riley and Patty Nolan** Thank you Kate for sending the presentation in advance for the Vassal-Tobin School project. I looked it over before the meeting and decided that enough progress had been made that there was little that I could add by attending. When I saw that Transportation issues would be addressed at a later stage, I tried to look ahead to the bigger picture. And thank you Patty for summarizing in your email the issues that were raised at the meeting.

I read the Controlled Choice Policy and realized that **we simply have to assume that some students will be coming from every part of Cambridge to every school**. With respect to Tobin and to Vassal, I would like to know how many students at each school come from each of the city's 13 neighborhoods. Surely someone has gathered this data so that the design team has it for their transportation studies. How geographically localized is the present situation? Are equity or population density concerns going to be pushing for the geographical spread to evolve? [Patty, has the school board ever looked at a matrix like this for all the schools?]

Next, **walking vs. parents driving vs. school buses**. The Eligibility Criteria for bus transportation are based on how far the students presumably can walk. **Is that based on radial distance from the school?** Or on a real consideration of how best to walk there from each child's address? In either case, 1.0 miles for a pre-kindergartner (JK) seems designed to maximize the number of parents who will drive. Those with low SES (qualifying for Free Lunch) may have parents without cars, who hold multiple jobs, and so the young child may have to rely on other parents or older children to take them. **How is that working out now?**

The preferred design has all car and bus entrances on southbound Vassal Lane, same as now. So why do so many people pick up and drop off on Alpine or Chilton Streets? 1) They are safer than dropping kids off on the wrong side of Concord Avenue and having the kids cross the park. 2) They don't require people to be going northbound on Fresh Pond Parkway so as to turn on Vassal, or to come up Lakeview and negotiate the sharp turn into the Vassal Lane traffic from Fresh Pond Parkway. These problems will still be there for underground drop off and pickup from Vassal Lane. So **there still will be a lot of school parents waiting on Alpine!**

Finally I realized that the swing schools are on the opposite side of Cambridge. In particular the Upper School being on Fulkerson/(aka Spring Street) will mean that everyone west of the adjacent railroad tracks will either have to walk along Cambridge Street, or through the ever-changing Binney-Street, Kendall-Square construction zone. **I suggest that all such students should be given a chance to take a school bus.** Of course the bus drivers will have the same headaches.

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[Aside: It is really interesting that certain criteria count for an increment of 1 or 2 MILLION to the random number in the school assignment algorithm, but nowhere did I ever find the range (smallest to largest) of the random numbers to which it is added. If they are evenly distributed from 1 to 100, a million added on would be totally determinative. If they are evenly distributed from 1 to 1 billion (= 1,000 million) the increments would be totally negligible. But I digress.]