
ImpACT Leadership

Project presented by

Brittany Barrett

Marie-France Laurin

David Zyck

October 5th, 2020

Impact Project Objective

ACT currently works with various groups, such as Employers, Public Transit Authorities, Providers, Governments, Universities and many more.

When working on our ImpACT Leadership program, we wanted to bring TDM to a needed environment: school districts.

Given the current COVID situation, TDM information is particularly focused on safety and well-being. Our team members developed the “Safe return to the workplace” handbook to help the identified target groups. School districts, and K-12 schools are not represented within ACT. Including them in TDM planning has several important advantages:

- Reach a new segment of the population that need to commute (work from home is not always possible for them)
- Increase the ACT membership, and create a new council
- Lead by example and showing students, our next generation of commuter, that there are efficient and sustainable solutions to minimize SOV

That last point could lead to more initiative with students to increase education and attractiveness of TDM to those future commuters.

Schools, and school districts, were never included in that initiative, and never got the relevant information to help them plan the return to school. Every region and district had its own approach but did not have access to an informational document to support them. Most of their efforts were targeted to the return of the students, but there was no analysis or support for the school district employees.

The report shows what could be done with School Districts, in general, based on the demonstration of what was done with Arlington School District.

Contents

Executive summary: 4

Introduction 5

Result of the Survey..... 6

Recommendations to the Arlington School District: 10

Commuting Resources for Employees:..... 11

Other mobility options to consider 12

 Public Transit:..... 12

 Carpooling..... 13

Conclusion..... 14

Executive summary:

School districts are facing a challenging situation, with the students but also with their employees. The objective of this report is to outline options and make recommendations that not only apply to this specific school district but can also be replicated to similar organizations across the country.

For the ImpACT leadership project, our team considered how the current pandemic situation will impact commuting going forward. Prior to COVID-19, traffic was a major contributor to schools. Peak commuting times exacerbated road and parking demand on limited school facilities and budgets. The Arlington School District (APS) conducted research examining how their constituents' commuting patterns might change based on new COVID protocols upon the return to school sites. We combined the APS study insights in conjunction with the ACT COVID handbook to offer commuting resources for APS employees. Our efforts were focused on the employees as they already have plans in place for the students.

Our goals for working with school district are to:

- Provide alternative solution to SOV for employees
- Tackle the parking challenge that school are facing
- Prepare a document with best practices
- Reinforce employees to lead by examples for their students and the community

Outcomes we anticipate for this project are:

- Promoting TDM to other school boards
- Increasing visibility and outreach for TDM in a sector that is underrepresented
- Developing a template for more initiatives with the next generation

Introduction

Arlington Public School (APS) represents 23 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, 4 high schools, 1 secondary (grade 6-12), 7 other programs. In recent months, APS focus has been on student transportation upon school sites reopening. The school district has tried to provide parents and students the best commuting options based on public health recommendations.

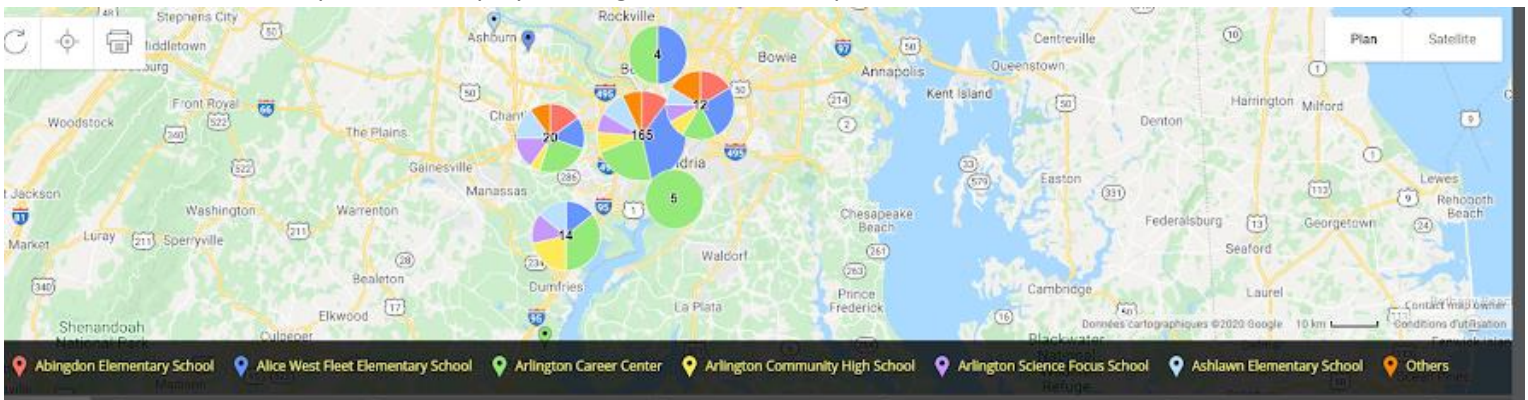
When we had a conversation with the APS, they wanted to make sure they add all the resources available to provide some guidance to their employees.

We kept in mind the missions of our project, to promote TDM, and having the chance to work with organizations such as the School district, opened a brand new option to put TDM front and center in the planning of those organizations.

The first step to provide that analysis was to get a clear picture from the employee's standpoint. APS provided us with Zip Code and workplace information for their employees. Putting it on a map was our first step to gaining a solid understanding of the origin and destination (OD) of employees.

As an example, we have put the employee's information on a map to see where they are coming from. That helped us look at the different options to commute to their workplace.

This is an example of the employee's origin, for the 7 workplaces mentioned.



<https://batchgeo.com/map/9c01f26a215aca53b877dd0e9cffb0e>

You can see how it is represented for the other locations by looking at these maps:

APS 2 <https://batchgeo.com/map/f9184f126e74be0a76656d66a92ca8af>

APS 3 <https://batchgeo.com/map/aff3665e429fba1bdd7efa6f75de89d0>

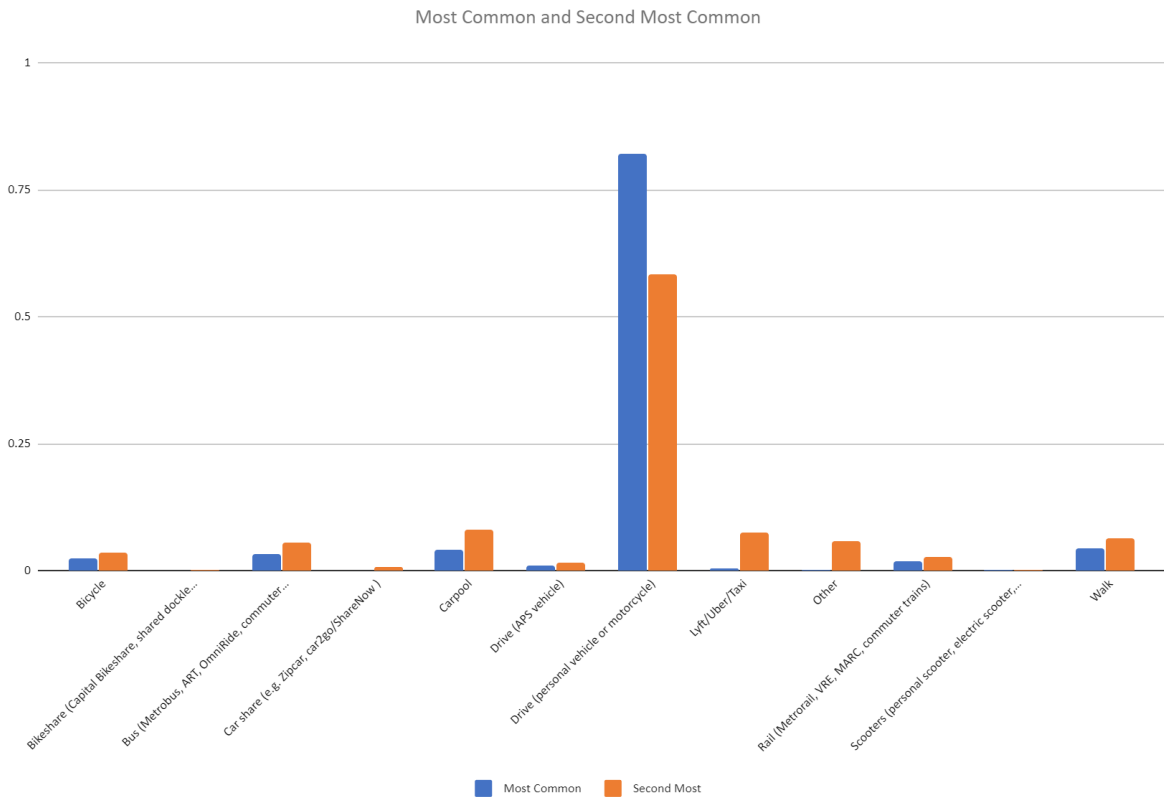
APS 4 <https://batchgeo.com/map/8e723f90e7a15380f166b4d5d8b62878>

APS 5 <https://batchgeo.com/map/c691f8ed2d12342d6a5f67b98396e181>

Information at the end of the document if we want to include the overlay of where people are from (working with the data we have)

Result of the Survey¹

Trends



¹ Staff final Export for ACT, document provided by APS, Kristin Haldeman, on September 15th

Analysis

- As many people are still using personal vehicles, it is important to focus on alternative modes of transportation.
- The possibility to use other modes of transportation, to shift those SOV to other TDM options is high.
- Communication on alternative options has to be put forefront because:
 - o Parking is a challenge at and around the school. Not every location has a parking that can accommodate all the SOV coming to the workplace.
 - o It creates traffic around the school which has a significant impact on the security of walkers, students, or employees, around the location.
 - o We are teaching students about sustainability and responsible ways to protect the environment; employees should lead by example.

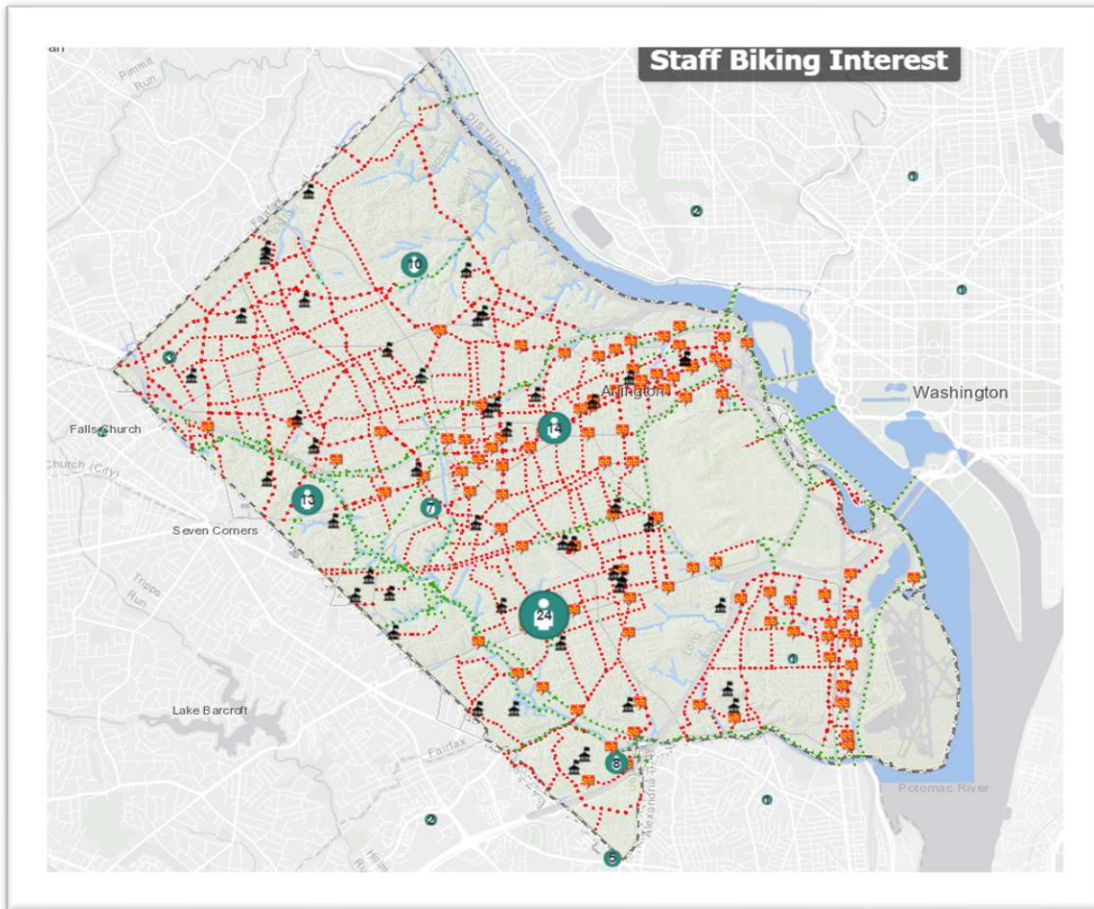
Focus on biking

- Why now?
 - o COVID created more interest (safety perception traveling outdoors)
The current health situation forces people to look at the way they are doing things and re-evaluate the different options. We understand that some people will be nervous to use public transit or to commute with someone. The situation of APS also shows us that 65% have easy access to bike paths from their house to the workplace.

Biking is easy, cost effective and a real sustainable solution for those employees. Accommodation to park those bikes can be added to make sure to support the increase of the demand.
 - o When questioned on the reason why employees do not use biking to get to the workplace, rebuttals to perceived pushback
 - Too far/ takes too long -> reference map and infrastructure
 - Need car for travel before/after work -> reference handbook
 - Too many things to carry around
 - Weather
 - Traffic safety concerns
 - Health Issue, disabilities

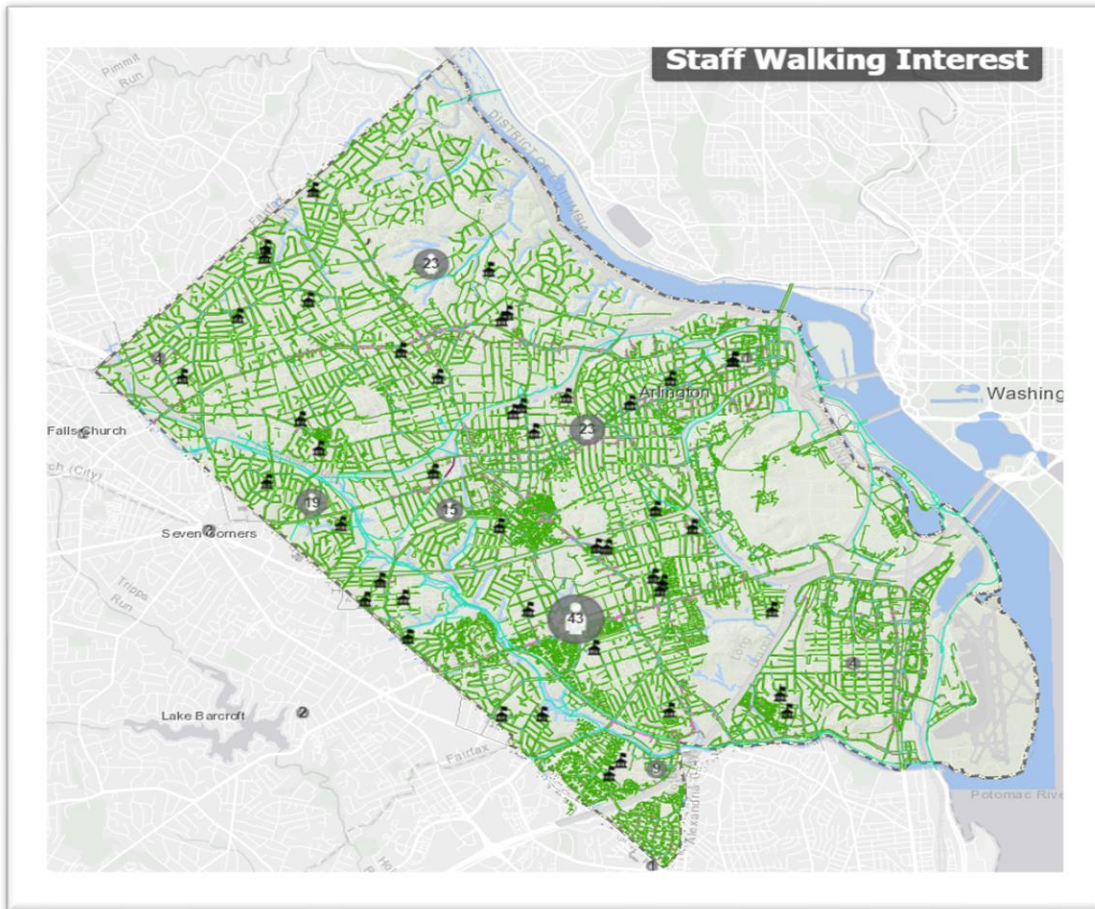
Overview of existing infrastructure

To provide appropriate recommendation, analysis was done based on the origin of the employees and their destination, overlaid with the different walking and biking options that the Arlington district is proposing to its population.



Based on that map:

- 107 (17%) of the 617 employees who signed up for Commuter Benefits did so for the Bike Benefit. About 65% of bike benefit respondents have close access to infrastructure (trails, bikeshare stations).
- Employees in the Northern and Northwestern areas of Arlington county (Williamsburg, Yorktown, Rock Spring) expressed fewer staff bike interest per capita despite a strong bike trail network. **The demand disconnect is an opportunity to communicate bicycle benefits to this staff population more vocally. These areas are also underserved by shared bike access.** Another recommendation for this part of the county is to encourage Capital Bikeshare to add more stations. **There is a pocket of several schools along the northern county border without any bike share access.**
- The Glencarlyn neighborhood in the western portion of the county has four schools within close proximity but no access to Capital Bikeshare. This is another opportunity to add more stations, particularly along the **Four Mile Run Trail corridor.**



Based on that map:

- 151 (25%) of the 617 employees who signed up for Commuter Benefits did so for the Walk Benefit. Sidewalk infrastructure throughout the County is pretty robust as indicated by the extensive coverage of green lines. Despite the amenities, some employees might be deterred from walking due to inclement weather conditions.

Consider increased promotion of the Guaranteed Ride Home if it is not already explicitly promoted to staff. Another idea to consider is a parking cash out program to incentivize more walking.

Recommendations to the Arlington School District:

- **Increased Communication:** it is essential to increase awareness of options. APS is promoting all commute options, but as a part of a clear message to all employees, communication should include a [Bike Map](#) of the options for the Arlington region.
- **More bike paths:** knowing where the people are coming from and where they are going, we encourage the APS to contact the local authorities and see if there is a possibility to increase the bike path in some region. By demonstrating the need with the map and the results of the survey, local governments will be able to see the positive impact that this could have on the citizens commuting.

Different routes can be used by the bikes, it is important to make sure that employees are aware of their options. Awareness will have a positive impact on the number of users. The easier it is for them, the more chance the options will have to increase adopters.

Having the opportunity to extend that type of survey with local business or other organizations in the region could also be a great way to increase valuable data for the authorities in place and support the project.

- **More bike racks:** having valuable data that demonstrate the interest of APS employees to use their bikes, on a school by school approach, will help APS planning the infrastructures needed to support the employees commuting.

When referring to bike infrastructure we are including all those elements such as bike rooms, cages, shelters, and outdoor racks.

Options of biking program

- **Bikeshare options:** Capital bikeshare, shared dockless bicycles

Based on the results of the survey, to facilitate adoption of bikes as a mode of transportation, discussion, and planning with bikeshare programs would be a good option. There is already a system in place in the region, it is just a matter of making sure that the docks are located close to the workplace, based on the interest of using these bikes.

- **Micromobility:** Think of integrating other micromobility options into the biking plan, such as scooter. The more options proposed to your

employees, the more chance they have to find a mobility solution that fits their needs.

- Bike commuter benefits: APS proposes a Bike commuter benefit to its employees. Knowing exactly how you can benefit from it can help increase the interest and adhesion of employees biking to their workplace.

Commuting Resources for Employees:

Arlington Transportation Partners Resources:

<https://arlingtontransportationpartners.com/programs/schools/#resources>

Find a Carpool Partner: <https://info.arlingtontransportationpartners.com/join-carpool?hsCtaTracking=0385bcfa-0973-42a8-9207-d8f58aabfe21%7C70af340b-5b17-4f95-af00-a21b8963362f#jointhecarpoolcommunity>

Bike Discounts: <https://arlingtontransportationpartners.com/services/corporate-capital-bikeshare/>

Guaranteed Ride Home: <https://arlingtontransportationpartners.com/services/guaranteed-ride-home/>

Customized Commute Plans: <https://info.arlingtontransportationpartners.com/commute-planner>

A relatively easy and effective way to increase trying a commute alternative would be to proactively send customized commute plans to employees based on their home address. Messaging could be adjusted randomly to determine the best intervention to motivate people. These messages could be determined based on the greatest obstacles listed in the survey. For example:

- Flexibility
 - Drive when you need to but bike/walk when the weather is nice
 - Carpool with a buddy when it is convenient
- Financial gain/loss
 - Calculate money saved on vehicle miles
 - based on AAA costs
- Stress
 - Driving in traffic
 - Finding parking
- Fresh start
 - Used at the beginning of a school year or semester

Other mobility options to consider

The objective to minimize the return to school for employees using a single occupancy vehicle needs to include other modes of transportations.

The first approach is targeted to the School district communication team:

- **Communication:** Over communicate! When it is time to talk about the return to the workplace, everyone has a lot on their mind. These are recommendations to make it easier for all employees.
- **Package:** Based on the information we received, there are different ways used to communicate. We recommend preparing a package with everything in it: options, cost, benefit, etc. It is important to have a clear go to place to get the information and that will make it clear for everyone.
- **Point of contact:** A dedicated resource to be named as the “go to person”. It is temporarily but that will bring a high level of confidence and make it easy for everyone to reach out.

The school district as an important variety of options, communicated in various ways:

Public Transit:

For the School district:

- **Share:** Communicate your return to the workplace plan and information. It is important that your Public Transit agencies are fully aware of your plan.
- **Synergies:** See with them if there are synergies, elements that you can put in place together to discuss the challenge that you might be facing for your employees, who need public transit to get to their workplace, have a way to do so.

For Commuters

- **Familiarize Yourself with the Schedule:** Visit your transit agency’s website or contact customer service to determine if there are any changes to your route or schedule.
- **Follow Signs and Regulations:** Vehicles may have restricted seating to ensure physical distancing. Be sure to adhere to those guidelines.
- **Be Flexible and Patient.** Because of the requirements for social distancing, you may not be able to ride or board a bus. Be mindful of that when making your commute. ²

²https://www.actweb.org/files/ACT/Publications/Supporting_Commuters_Version_2_FINAL.pdf

Carpooling

When referring to carpooling, we are talking about a program organized by the School District. Having something structured will maximize the number of participants and will optimize the success of such a program. The objective with that is to make it easy and flexible for your employees.

For Employers:

1. **Ask your employees:** Before taking part into a program or putting a program together with your TMA, make sure you know what your employees would like to have (app, cost, OD, etc.)
2. **Consider Organized Carpooling:** Explore working with a carpooling organization that may provide ride matching, contactless payment options, and traceability to maximize the program's impacts.

3

Tips for Commuters:

- **Protect Yourself and Others:** Wear face coverings while in the vehicle.
- **Limit Carpool Size:** Limit carpools to no more than one person per row of seats to create as much physical distance as possible in the car.
- **Reduce Exposure:** Efforts should be made to ride with the same people each day and avoid "drop-in" riders.
- **Limit Physical Contact:** Carpoolers should not have any physical contact with one another and should maintain appropriate physical distancing when entering and exiting the vehicle. Require passengers to sit diagonally from each other.⁴

³ https://www.actweb.org/files/ACT/Publications/Supporting_Commuters_Version_2_FINAL.pdf

⁴ idem

Conclusion

The report highlights those elements:

- The demand disconnect is an opportunity to communicate bicycle benefits to this staff population more vocally. These areas are also underserved by shared bike access.
- There is a pocket of several schools along the northern county border without any bike share access.
- Consider increased promotion of the Guaranteed Ride Home if it is not already explicitly promoted to staff. Another idea to consider is a parking cash out program to incentivize more walking.

Based on the ACT mission and members, it is now clear to us that ACT as a great opportunity to provide guidance and support with School District.

ACT now has the opportunity to increase membership and to bring the School TDM challenge front and center.