

Maine Association for Pupil Transportation  
Board Retreat  
22 September 2007, 8-4 pm  
Governor's Restaurant, Waterville

Present: Harvey Boatman, Ronnie Deegan, Kevin Mallory, Mike Kelly, Lennie Goff, Dave Sowers, Peter Saucier, Jenny Chase, Sarah Firth (Facilitator).

The meeting opened with introductions and a review of the agenda. When the group was asked for additions to the agenda, Peter Saucier raised the concern that there wasn't a place in the MAPT monthly meetings for non Board members to share their ideas, questions and feedback. The group discussed this quite thoroughly and developed the following ways to fix the problem:

- establish, as a regular agenda item, an open forum for PT Directors and other members, to raise questions and concerns
- describe the process of the meeting at the beginning so that all those present or calling in will know that there will be the Board making decisions and an open forum for member input
- each meeting will begin with a roll call of Board members/Officers so every one can know who is who
- the Board will sit together at meetings so everyone present can clearly identify who is who
- those calling in will be advised to put their phones on mute so that background noise will not interfere with the meeting

Next, Lennie led the group in a review of the successes of 2006-2007. He articulated them as follows:

- Financial – MAPT has recovered from two lean years.
- Received \$20000. Grant from DOE.
- Regional Conferences were a great success.
- Annual Conference was a great success.
- Communication amongst board members was better.
- Director's forum involving regionalization/consolidation.
- New Mission Statement.
- Committees were filled easier, with members committing time to their committees.

Members added three more points:

- Connection to the DOE and the Governor had been solidified. MAPT is beginning to be recognized as experts and a prime resource in pupil transportation in the state. This is evidenced by the DOE's decision to use MAPT's RFP for routing software rather than their own.

- The State Police Inspection Team has now become a working partner of Directors and MAPT, operating in a collaborative rather than strictly enforcement/hands off manner.
- Resource and information sharing between districts has increased exponentially. While it was acknowledged that it was driven by consolidation legislation, it was still a “good thing” and would further the goals of MAPT.

At this point, Harvey suggested a review of the mission of MAPT both as a preface to the rest of the day’s discussions and to judge whether it might need to be adjusted in response to state mandate about regionalization /consolidation of school districts. The mission of MAPT is as follows:

**The Maine Association for Pupil Transportation is a statewide organization which represents an essential component of effective educational programs. MAPT**

- ❖ **Promotes safe and efficient travel for school age children to schools and school related events.**
- ❖ **Supports and encourages professional growth**
- ❖ **Acts as a conduit to all involved in pupil transportation and**
- ❖ **Advocates uniform safety standards and procedures.**

Much discussion followed and some disagreement about whether identified changes belonged in the mission statement, the vision statement or should be reflected in the MAPT Statement of Beliefs. In the end, after a review of all three documents, the group decided that the Statement of Beliefs was the appropriate place to articulate these ideas; Harvey, Ronnie and Kevin agreed to present a draft to the rest of the Board for its next monthly meeting. The key points that emerged from the discussion were:

1. MAPT’s main mission continues to be ensuring that pupil transportation is still seen as an essential component of effective educational programs especially in the current environment of consolidation and regionalization.
2. There was also strong support for the idea that MAPT should act not just as a conduit but also as a catalyst for members; that with information, resources and collaborative support, individual members could develop a broader perspective and become involved on the state level.
3. Along these same lines, those present saw that MAPT could help its members lead, respond to or at least adjust to the changes coming with consolidation and regionalization. One of the important responses to change that MAPT could model both internally and externally is collaboration. It could also help its members understand and implement all the necessary components to make the upcoming changes successful.

4. Finally, in a slightly different version of #2, MAPT will be inclusive of all its members. It will be a source of information, ideas, and inspiration. It will encourage involvement at all levels.

At this point, the group turned its attention to developing goals for 2008. It began by reviewing the work of last year's retreat. The first list they went over was a list of givens or things that need to be done on an ongoing basis:

- ❖ Regional conferences
- ❖ Annual conference
- ❖ Poster contest
- ❖ Bus Driver of the Year
- ❖ Annual School Bus Safety Week
- ❖ Develop and monitor budget
- ❖ Membership drive
- ❖ Website upgrade and maintenance
- ❖ *Quarterly newsletter preparation and distribution*
- ❖ Taxes
- ❖ Secure DOE funding and cement the relationship
- ❖ Memberships responsibilities for other organizations
- ❖ Board, committee and chapter meetings
- ❖ Skills competitions-national and state
- ❖ Chapter officer elections
- ❖ Maintaining health of chapters
- ❖ Mutual aid list maintenance
- ❖ *Brochure update and distribution*

Those items in italics were identified by the Board as non-existent and therefore could not be part of the ongoing work.

The second step in developing the list of goals for 2007-08 was to evaluate progress on goals set for last year. The following is a list of the goals; evaluative comments by the group are in italics:

1. Develop framework and hire an Executive Director  
*Not done as the Board decided MAPT not in a financial position to do so, also needed clarity of expectations and how position to be managed*
2. Define roles and responsibilities of Officers, Comm Chairs and members  
*written draft completed, committee more populated and effective last year, work still to be done: members at large, board orientation*
3. Develop and implement publicity/marketing plan  
*not done as planned*
4. Secure DOE checks for last year and this year  
*done, seeking to become a regular budget item this year*
5. Mutual Aid list completion

*almost completed but not user-friendly, Brenda needs to be notified of changes for ongoing maintenance, also important to establish link to this list from MAPT website*

6. Committees up and running  
*done but still work to be done particularly with SSTC*
7. Code of Ethics completion-*done, in Policies and Procedures*
8. Newsletter development and distribution-*not done*
9. Driver Training program-*stalled, still important, particularly to update the handbook*
10. Final website development-*November 1<sup>st</sup> completion date---see discussion below*
11. Superintendent/Business manager presentation-*not done*

Following this review, the group moved on to thinking about the coming year and what they wanted to accomplish. They quickly faced the dilemmas of prioritizing all the tasks and projects they wanted to as well as who was going to do all the work required. The discussion started with an examination of Lennie's proposed 2008 goals for MAPT, as follows:

- Resolve the "Buster" issue.
- Web page and Newsletter resolution.
- Completion of the Mutual Aid List
- Increase Membership
- Finish Policy and Procedure Manual.
- Revamp Committee Structure.
- Leadership development for Directors and Supervisors.
- Legislation regarding conforming rates of pay for bus drivers.
- SSTC – resolve issues within.
- Contracted services for conferences.
- More chapter involvement on regional conferences.
- Making sure MAPT remains visible after Harvey's retirement from DOE.
- Promote grants from DOE become part of DOE's regular budget.
- MAPT's involvement with DOE on regionalization/consolidation.

As the discussion evolved, it became apparent that those present generally agreed that these were the important tasks for MAPT for the next year or two. Sarah suggested a slightly different framework for organizing the tasks; those in bold type were clearly identified as the three main priorities for 2008

#### Organizational development

1. ongoing development of the Policy and Procedure manual----*make a list of what's missing and assign committees to address the gaps. Updates will also be done as by-laws and other operating structures change*
2. mutual aid list completion----*send updates as indicated to Brenda*

3. **define and implement necessary support structure to meet goals--- contract services of hire Executive director? see notes below**
4. **increase membership---- see notes below**
5. increase chapter involvement in regional conferences
6. develop Board and Committee chair orientation, tighten communication and accountability of committees
7. resolve issues in SSTC---*issues resolved. Notes for next year: develop standard presentation for regional conferences so that message from drivers to kids is consistent across the state: The Ten Most Important Things for Kids to Know. Vary the travel team so all can participate, bring BUSTER*

Conduit: MAPT is an organization that makes information about pupil transportation available and accessible internally and externally.

8. **develop and implement marketing plan to include website and newsletter, see notes below**

Catalyst: MAPT is an organization that advocates internally and externally to improve pupil transportation in Maine.

9. legislation re: conforming rates for bus drivers
10. **leadership development/certification for PT Directors and supervisors**
11. cement relationships with outside partners, especially DOE, Maine State Police, MSTC, BMV
12. develop recognition, information, influence at MSMA conference: *Ronnie is developing a presentation for a break out session about MAPT proposal for routing software at the conference this year and using contacts to get a spot on the agenda. He will send his draft presentation to all Board members for comment; he also invited other Board members to present with him if they would like.*

For the rest of the day, those present concentrated on developing specific plans for the four top priorities. The first discussion dealt with how to structure the organization so that all the tasks could get completed. The group weighed the pros and cons of two structures, hiring an Executive Director or contracting out some of the work. In the end the group decided that it would contract out some specific pieces of work over the next year or two. They felt that this would be a good way to “off load” some of the work and gain some practice and experience in setting expectations/guidance/accountability for a staff person, whether he/she was under contract or an employee. this issue----setting expectations and creating accountability---was felt by most Board members to be the main reason that the Executive Director model had failed in the past. The group also wanted to ensure that MAPT was financially sound with a predictable income stream before committing to funding the salary of an employee. Possible tasks to

contract for included running the annual conference and/or the regional conferences as well as designing the leadership certification.

Kevin told the group that coordination of the **annual conference** is a “cut and paste” job for him at this point and that he was willing to keep doing it. The busy part is the actual conference itself and he was always looking for more help with that part of the job.

As the group talked about **regional conferences**, it became clear that those present wanted the local chapters to participate as partners in the design and delivery of the conferences. Lennie is planning to visit each chapter this fall and will ask each of them what they would like to focus on in their conference.

Having made decisions about structure, the group moved on to a discussion about increasing membership. Membership has been declining over the past couple of years and may continue to drop as regionalization and consolidation plans materialize. There are currently 150 +/- members; historically members have been directors and supervisors but not bus drivers or maintenance staff. A number of specific ideas for increasing membership were suggested but the discussion finally focused on articulating and promoting the value of membership in MAPT. The group agreed that the value of MAPT to its current and prospective members is power, the power that comes with being able to advocate in great numbers for the best in pupil transportation in Maine. MAPT is able to speak for its members to the people and organizations it wants and needs to influence. It was suggested that MAPT reorganize its membership structure to offer RSU (Regional School Union) memberships that include drivers, maintenance staff, aides, directors and supervisors. Each RSU would purchase a membership that included all PT staff in the RSU. Each individual member would receive a membership card that would have benefits attached, i.e. punch out for attendance at trainings; attending a certain number of trainings would earn the member some other benefit. Each individual member would also receive a sew-on patch with the MAPT insignia. Vendors, contractors and agencies would pay a membership fee too. Other ideas included a reduced rate for attendance at trainings, compensation for time spent at trainings and conferences, requiring attendance at the regional training as a prerequisite to attending the annual conference.

The next discussion was about marketing and specifically the new website. The group agreed that MAPT needed to develop a comprehensive marketing plan which included a website and newsletter as well as other opportunities such as presentations at the MSMA conference. The audiences the Board wanted to reach included parents and other taxpayers, members, partners and the general public. Harvey suggested that David Connerty-Marin (I don't know if I got this name right 😊) from the DOE should be asked to advise in the development of any PSAs as he has expertise in this area and would be a great partner. The discussion quickly focused on the new website. Lennie has been working with a

website developer who has promised to have a sample site ready for the Board to look at for November 1<sup>st</sup>. There were a great number of specific ideas/desires for the website expressed from a listing to each Board members e-mail address to links to SAD websites. One member expressed a desire for the developer to query Board members as he constructs the website about their goals for the site as he is developing it rather than develop it and then let Board members react. Lennie asked Board members to e-mail him with their ideas about the website and he would forward them on to the developer.

The final discussion of the day was about designing and implementing professional development/certification for Pupil Transportation Directors and supervisors. This is a need the Board has clearly identified from their own experience as well as from feedback from pupil transportation staff across the state. It was clear that there were two main parts to this task, development of the curriculum being the first and delivery of the various components being the second. To address the first, someone pointed out that NAPT has a certification program but the group began to identify the key elements themselves. Two lists emerged as follows:

Human Relations	HR Issues
Organizational Development	Operational issues, i.e. routing
Operations	Safety
Maintenance	Maintenance
Asset management	Technology
PR/Customer Service	Leadership Skills
Student management	Rules and Regulations
	Student management

While the two lists appear quite similar, the group was getting tired and decided not to work on the specifics anymore in this meeting. Lennie agreed to merge the two lists and propose a combined list of topics to be addressed in a certification program at the next Board meeting. Also at the next meeting, the Board would finalize an RFP to go out to all members asking for bids to define all the details of the curriculum design and delivery model. Those present suggested that a model curriculum and delivery system would ideally be developed in time to present at the next annual conference; the group also agreed that they wanted to go ahead with plans for the certification without or without collaboration from the DOE.

One final note: As the group felt that Board representation and reporting was essential for all Committees, it was decided that all Committee chairs should be ad-hoc (non-voting) members of the Board---if they were not already voting members. This is a change that should be articulated in the next revision to the by-laws.