

Class D Town Hall Meeting June 18, 2020 10:30AM

Organizer: Stacey Thompson, Program Administrator, Office of Driver Training

Attendees: Jason Ward, Professional Driving Systems

Melissa Riedl, 911 Driving School

Daniel Cox, Heights Driving School

Dana Goodwin, Advantage Driver Training

Ari Klarfeld, New Directions Driving School

Valerie Wald, State Administrator of Driver Training

Mike Belcoure, AAA-Allied Group, Inc.

Jim McDowell, Northridge Local Schools

Lisa Harris, Superior Driving School

Ruth Diehl, Ruth's Driving Academy

Sherri Caldwell, Professional Driving Systems

Esther Onyundo, 1st Choice Authorized Driving School

Sharon Fife, D&D Driving School

Lt. Herbert Homan, Ohio Traffic Safety Office

Julia Tipple, Administrative Professional, Office of Driver Training

Topic 1: Curriculum Content: what we require you to teach regarding 24 hours of classroom and 8 hours behind the wheel.

Jason: We would like to see more vehicle technology included in the curriculum training. For instance in the maps portion: GPS technology instead of paper maps. Videos: expensive to purchase and hard to find, could we look into some sort of group purchasing? Updating the signs and signals, these are lacking when compared to ODOT's updates to what is being used on the road. Interactions with law enforcement updates, there is currently legislation in the house for updates to interactions with law enforcement officers and that information and other information needs to be covered.

Dana: Along the lines of vehicle technologies, more on safety systems. Safety belts and safety systems in the cars needs to be covered more in depth.

Stacey: Does anyone else agree or disagree?

Valerie: Jason, do you have the bill number for the proposed law enforcement bill?

Jason: Not on hand, but I can get it to you guys.

Ruth: I agree, those areas need to be updated and added in. My understanding is the curriculum is a guideline but we can also add in information and update it as we see fit. I find it very helpful when I find information that I think needs added, I forward it to Stacey and Valerie for other schools to use as well. I think that we can update areas as we see fit, especially when new laws and information come out.

Jason: The curriculum currently touches some areas for law enforcement, but we want to see the state update the information so everyone is on the same page.

Melissa: Videos: if you go online to YouTube you can find a lot of the videos you need if you make an account. I can also share any videos I use with other schools. Law enforcement: we have law enforcement come in and speak to the students. It is very important that information on law enforcement is covered by everyone in the same way. Some schools teach things one way and others teach it another, there needs to be more consistency.

Stacey: Traffic laws and maneuverability were originally suggested. Do we need to update how maneuverability is taught? Do we have any issues?

Ari: The way I teach maneuverability is different for every student, but I also use the point card explaining where students are likely to have points taken off during a test. Some of the exam stations do not agree with how maneuverability is tested, some say stop and go is okay, and others say that they cannot stop.

Stacey: This is actually BMV jurisdiction not us. We can send out Michael Black's email and information for any exam station questions.

Jason: We talked about your office pushing out information when new laws are pushed out for traffic laws. Is this something you can make sure you keep a better eye on?

Stacey: We communicate when new information becomes available to us via bulletin board and now also through the new News and Information tab on our website that is available for everyone. We will take note of the communication factor and try to do our best to update you as we know anything new.

Topic 2: Instructor training requirements.

Mike: Current training in the current environment is extremely difficult, we have reached out to a lot of different municipalities and health departments, they are not allowing ride along, only the instructor and the student. This affects new instructors especially because we cannot get them trained in the car. Can we look at changing this rule for the time being?

Ruth: We cannot even pick up one student and then drop off the other because of these new rules.

Ari: Different health departments are giving different rulings, when I contacted the Columbus health department they told me as long as I had safety protocols in place we were allowed to have one extra person in the vehicle.

Stacey: Anything else relating to training processes, even before COVID?

Ruth: I think this is the smoothest that this has run in years, even the paperwork is easy to fill out now. The paperwork has been really streamlined.

Ari: Is there a way to get more behind the wheel hours for instructor trainees as a requirement? I think I do more like 30-40 hours.

Sharon: Ari, you can do more than the mandated. We just turn in the mandated hours.

Ari: I am suggesting that we have more behind the wheel hours than just 16 as a requirement.

Dan: I think the current system is fine. If you want to do more, then do more, but if you don't then do the mandated. I think the current process is long enough as it is, we have a lot of people who we lose at this point because the process is so long and costly. They are losing money.

Dana: I agree, if you want to do more hours then fine, but we have a hard enough time finding people now. They come in and say that they can make more at McDonalds with shorter training.

Topic 3: Splitting licenses. Splitting into just classroom or just behind the wheel licenses. Keep in mind the role of the training manager and the rules around the licenses. Would this be hurtful or beneficial?

Jason: We would like to see it split because we only have a few classroom instructors, but a ton of behind the wheel, so they spend a ton of time in the classroom for no reason at all.

Stacey: Do you still think that the instructors should still be trained in classroom and behind the wheel, so they can take the classroom to the car?

Esther: I think that it is important for the classroom to still be taught so that the instructors can take the classroom behind the wheel.

Ruth: I remember when it was split, and I don't think it worked as well. I am a smaller operation and I don't have as many instructors, so I need everyone trained in both classroom and behind the wheel in case anyone would get sick. That way I can pull any instructor in to teach because they are already certified to teach both. I am not in favor of splitting it out, if it would be mandatory to do one or the other. If that would be an optional thing that would be ok.

Dan: The old system we did not have to put them in the class. What would it look like if we did this? Would the only piece of the training coming out be them taking the class?

Jason: No, we would only take out the part where they teach in the classroom and evaluate them.

Dan: So what we are saying is that they would still observe the entire classroom, but that the only part taken out would be teaching and evaluating.

Stacey: I just want to make sure I am understanding. If they are behind the wheel only, they would still need to observe the classroom, they just wouldn't need to teach and be assessed.

Jason and Dan: Yes.

Sharon: I agree with this. They still need to see the classroom because some of these instructors have never taken drivers education or took it so long ago they don't remember.

Mike: I agree that the theory training is important and the classroom training is necessary, but with online becoming so much larger the need for behind the wheel only is becoming so high. I would like to recommend seeing if schools that cannot afford to have a classroom, can the training manager teach the 24 hours of curriculum to an instructor instead of them sitting through a classroom? Especially with everything going on with the schools situations and requirements, as well as safety concerns.

Stacey: What about reversing the roles, what would classroom only instructors look like?

Mike: There is not a classroom only product out there. These kids need to drive.

Stacey: How does that look potentially, administratively? How does that look for our rules with the requirement for having a classroom?

Mike: I think this is where the online has become so popular, because of the current situations. We are looking at entities who are going to only do driving and not any classroom. We need to think about this because of the current shift in education as a whole.

Ruth: I understand what Mike is saying, but myself I would be very much opposed to allowing traditional brick and mortar schools to be able to eliminate the classrooms. I don't think they should be able to switch to not having a classroom. I think people will attempt to get away with things and that it is not fair to traditional brick and mortar schools who still have classrooms. I think you will see driver's education end up all online because it costs more to have the classroom settings. If you switch to behind the wheel only they would be allowed to have offices only because it is so much cheaper. I think it would be a very big can of worms, and a lot of really hard core crunching numbers.

Jason: Currently under the rules now, I only have to do one evaluation either behind the wheel or classroom. We are currently half way there now.

Mike: In no way am I abdicating for getting rid of the classroom. I am talking about loosening some of the training requirements so that we can meet the demand for those students who need only driving hours. There should be a dual license or a behind the wheel only license for instructors, not enterprises. I fully support the classroom. I am not abdicating that we allow behind the wheel only schools. I think the schools should still have to offer both, but some leeway here would be nice so we can meet demand.

Esther: Only thing I have noticed since we have gone back into business, there is a lack of knowledge from the students when they go through the online programs. I don't know if there could be a rule change when you are training behind the wheel only instructors.

Melissa: Maybe we should allow the instructors to do online as well, like the kids. They should be able to take an online just like the students, since we allow the students to take these courses.

Stacey: How do you feel about that? What if the online companies make you pay?

Jim: I am a one man show in a high school. Kids are being told they cannot take classroom anymore, by the high schools, private is different. Kids are more and more going to online because they are busier and it is much easier for them to access. I agree with everyone, at some point why can't I get online and still teach those students. I still am not allowed to drive students. We are still waiting for the superintendent to decide. I just see the online becoming a bigger and bigger trend because of the COVID situation. I just think I should be able to go online and teach and not need to worry about classrooms.

Lisa: From what I hear from parents, some don't want their kids to learn online and some do. In my business people like to come to our classroom, because of how we teach the classroom. I like the idea of a split license because it allows people to pick and choose what they want to teach, either classroom or behind the wheel. We are losing good quality people because of the current requirements we have for training. They don't want to teach classroom if they are a teacher, or behind the wheel if they were police officers. They want something different. I don't think we should take away the classroom, because we have so many parents who say they want them to attend the classroom. I don't think you are going to see the classroom disappear, as long as schools are teaching good quality classroom.

Sharon: I concur with Lisa. You can tell when students have taken online or even Zoom classroom. Since this COVID situation we have started Zoom, and you can tell that they are even better traditional online. A lot of people do not want to do Zoom because they have to be accountable, whereas with traditional online it is just click and go. We still have about 40% of people asking for traditional classroom because they learn better that way.

Jim: I agree with Sharon, the kids I take out that have taken online classroom aren't necessarily bad, but they definitely are not as good as the kids who sit in my class.

Topic 4: Transferring students between schools. A student does classroom at one school and now they want to go to another school for behind the wheel. Currently our rules do not prevent this, your contracts do. How do you feel about sharing records, or releasing contracts?

Ruth: What we are finding is that the reasoning behind people wanting to switch is that they think they can get done faster somewhere else. We need to, as an industry, put out there that there are two different kinds of schools, ones that can finish students in three weeks and other ones that take their time and really train their students. The slower schools are what the GDL process is all about. There are people all over that are waiting a long time for their drive time and are wanting to switch. I do not have a problem with transferring students if there is a legitimate reason, but transferring just if they are upset because they are waiting a long time isn't something I want to do.

Lisa: I agree with Ruth, there are people who have been waiting a long time because of various reasons. We do our best to advertise and really lay out the process for parents and students who come in. I want

to be able to start putting our information in the place that parents and students can really see it, the BMV. We have to really explain to students and parents, especially online students, that the process takes time. They think that because they are done with the classroom that we should be able to get the students in immediately and done within one week. I think if we could advertise in the BMV it would make it easier to explain it takes two to three months and the contract says we have six months to finish them, but they don't read and understand that.

Sharon: I totally agree with both Ruth and Lisa, we have students who call all the time that say they are signed up with one school and it's going to be a while so they call and ask if we can drive them sooner. I just explain everyone is behind and they need to wait their turn. I think the system we have just now is fine.

Mike: I agree with everyone. To me, in our area, we are seeing this a lot because of the COVID situation. I have a lot of people who want to transfer right now because we are one of the last to reopen. I also don't have as much staff as I did before. I have no problem with them transferring schools because of the current situations. In a few months, you are going to see this drop off a bit. I am all for it if the school who they are transferring from is willing to send out records, or if we could create a certificate for classroom only.

Esther: I think if you make it so that they can transfer, it will be a whole new headache. A lot of us are busy and we don't have time to pay attention to where the students are coming or going from. I think if it is extreme circumstances then yes, that is allowed, but also people will bend the truth to be able to transfer as well. I have also wondered why online can be allowed to just do the classroom and then the schools can say do you want both or just behind the wheel. I think we should be able to look the students up and see and make sure they have completed their classroom.

Topic 5: Observation hours for students behind the wheel.

Melissa: We have always had these hours, but we are getting away from this due to the current situation. It would be really hard to do this in the current climate, but down the road maybe.

Sharon: I think that this is a scheduling nightmare, there is higher liability with more people, and there are more distractions.

Ruth: I would assume since observation hours cannot be counted, they are doing more than 8 hours in the car so to speak?

Stacey: Yes

Ruth: With the current situation, student observation isn't possible. When we can get back to the normal situation then we can get back to teaching students in the 10-20 minutes between dropping off one and picking up the other, but I wouldn't want to see adding observation time on top of the current 8 hours of in car.

Dana: We advertise it as a private lesson, but we are totally uninterested in having an extra person. Our insurance will not allow for that extra person.

Topic 6: Difficulties completing the requirements for annual renewal and regular requirements:

Jason: Our health department has said absolutely no more than two in the car.

Esther: I just had a telemedicine visit, and most physicians are not allowing in person visits.

Mike: I agree with both Jason and Esther. Also, with the doctors, some people do not want to go near the doctor's offices because of immune compromised situations.

Lisa: I am struggling because I do not have any abbreviated adult classroom right now because of the current situations. I think we should be allowed to not have that extra assessment this year.

Sharon: I agree. We are almost liable if someone were to go into the doctor's office and catch something.

Mike: Background checks may also be an issue because certain places are currently closed for that sort of thing.