Interim Transportation Team Final Report
11/1/06
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Transportation costs are affected by the number of students in the district, number of buses in use, and total distance buses need to travel. The scenarios that we are exploring will change neither the student time-on-bus requirement (currently 1-hour maximum per trip) nor number of students. We found modeling of alternative routes using the transponder software difficult due to lack of accurate data and incompatible programs. This made it difficult to assess whether any scenario would significantly reduce total distance for bus routes or number of buses in use. Our working estimate is that total route miles will not change significantly between scenarios. We also did not find many cases in which number of buses in use could be reduced. Due to these constraints, we did not find significant transportation cost reductions in any of the scenarios we studied. We have done our research from the point of view of reducing student time-on-bus or keeping to time-on-bus mandates and not *increasing* costs.

The transportation budget should be <u>fully</u> funded by the state. It is our responsibility to make sure we are running an efficient operation; however, we need to continue to push the state to keep its commitment to paying our transportation budget 100%.

Since 2003 Special Education Transportation has received no reimbursement from the state.

Facts / Data collected:

- Total Students 06-07 = 1,409.
- Current Budget = $1,514,464 (expected additional expenses $64,000).
- Estimated 15% increase with new contract negotiations for 07 – 08 school year.
- District is 253 square miles.
- 530 miles of road (40% are dirt roads).
- Our total morning and afternoon runs add up to 2,184 miles.
- Our shortest run is 13 miles.
- Our longest run is 44 miles.
- 72% of students live further than 1.5 miles from school therefore requiring bussing.
- We have 18 yellow buses. (seat 83 elementary students, 56 high school students)
- We have 8 feeder vans.
- 39 students currently require SPED transportation.
- SPED students represent 3.8% of the population.
- SPED expenses account for 17% of the transportation budget.
- The cost of a large yellow bus and small feeder van is almost the same, approximately $40,000. The cost to operate a feeder bus is similar to a large bus due to salaries being the same and the bus travels more miles therefore adding time and fuel.
- District policy states that elementary students' time on bus will be no more than 60 minutes. Currently, the longest elementary student time on bus is 75 minutes.
- District policy states that high school students' time on bus will be no more than 75 minutes.
- Bus stops can be up to 1 mile from the student's home. (Current policy supports requiring students to travel up to one mile to consolidated stops that reduce transportation distance, number of stops and cost. However, we have been providing door to door stops for Kindergarten aged children.)
- We are not required by state to have a bus seat available for all students.
- Any changes made to transportation routes, policy, or procedure will also affect Hawlemont and Rowe.

Potential Cost-Saving Policy Change Options:

a) Combined Runs: We explored the option of combining high school and elementary school bus routes into a single combined run, with all age groups on one bus. However, we found it difficult to combine routes to save on the number of busses. As long as students reside on the outskirts of the district, the routes will remain long and costly. Fewer students do not necessarily lead to fewer busses or less time on the bus. The only way to decrease busses or time on bus is to greatly increase the time and distance for some students.

b) Consolidated Stops: We looked at the option of further consolidating bus stops to reduce time on bus by increasing pick-up efficiency and reducing route miles. However, we found that many stops had already been consolidated within the one mile from home policy limit. As long as this limit is in place, significant route mile reductions through "mainlining" (parents bringing students to stops along major roads) will not be possible. We also expect that requiring parent transportation would not be viewed positively by many.

c) SPED Students on Regular Buses: We explored the option of saving money in SPED transportation costs by requiring some SPED students to travel on regular buses. However, recognizing that many would likely need an aide to accompany them would limit savings from this option, and employing aides in this way might prove difficult. This option would not be possible for students needing wheelchair transportation.

d) Paying Parents a Stipend to Transport Students: This is perhaps the most promising option for reducing bus route miles, particularly if it can be implemented with student on the most outlying roads. However, it will require changes in state policy that have not yet been implemented.

e) Switching to Smaller Buses or Vans: Although many of our buses are currently under used, we discovered that switching to smaller vehicles will not significantly reduce costs, as the costs for a van and a bus are approximately equal.

Appendix 1

Bus Routes

Take students from BSE move ½ to Sanderson

Route 11 Elm Street / Dungarvine Drive / Bray Rd / Hog Hollow 1 hr 15min
MEAN TIME Now 40min Projected 60 min

Route 18B Mechanic St / North St /Upper Buckland / Clesson Bk 1 hr 8 min
MEAN TIME Now 50 min Projected 60 min

Take other ½ students to CCS

Route 15 Mohawk Trail / Shelburne Center / Patton District 1 hr 23 min
MEAN TIME Now 45 min Projected 70min

Route 16 South Shelburne / Little Mohawk / Taylor 1 hr 10min
MEAN TIME Now 45 min Projected 60 min

There are 33 students that walk to BSE on the Shelburne side of the river that we would have to either add another route on or incorporate into present routes.

If it is not possible to incorporate the walkers into the present bus routes and we have to add a bus it would be at a cost of $48,581.00. The mean time would be in the neighborhood of 40 minutes. I would have to design a new route.

Take students from Colrain Central and move to Heath and BSE

Route 13C Jacksonville Rd / Thompson / Christian Hill / Heath Rd to Heath 1 hr-12min
MEAN TIME Now 40 min Projected 55 min

Route 13C Jacksonville Rd/ Thompson/Christian Hill/Heath Rd to BSE 1 hr-28min
MEAN TIME Now 40 min Projected 65 min

Route 12C Call Rd/ Main Rd/ Foundry Village/ Main Commons to BSE 57 min
MEAN TIME Now 40 min Projected 50 min

Route 14 Fort Lucas / W Leyden / E Colrain / Van Nyes / Greenfield to BSE 1hr-15min
MEAN TIME Now 50 min Projected 65 min

To take students from Heath to CCS

Route 3 East Oxbow / Avery Brook/ S Heath / Long Hill / Number 9 to CCS 1 hr 28min
MEAN TIME Now 50 min Projected 65 min

Route 4 Taylor Brook / Shawnee Drive / Dwight Cross / Sadoga to CCS 1 hr 15 min
MEAN TIME Now 40 min Projected 60 min

Appendix 1 (cont.)

To take Sanderson students to BSE

Route9 Baptist Corner / Conway Rd / Main Street Ashfield/ South Street
MEAN TIME Now 40 min Projected 60 min

Route 8 Creamery Rd / Ludwig Rd / Williamsburg Rd / Hill Rd
MEAN TIME Now 45 min Projected 80 min

Route 6 Plainfield / Rt 116/ John Ford Rd/ Spruce Corner Rd
MEAN TIME Now 50 min Projected 85 min

Route 7 Cape St./ Steady Lane/ Hawley Rd / Apple Valley Rd
MEAN TIME Now 45 min Projected 70 min

The students are so far apart that it makes the mean times longer than one would think. Some students will be on the buses well over the hour limit and some will be well under.
The thing that will have to happen is the start and dismissal times of both the High School and the Elementary Schools will have to change. The busses will need more time to get to their destinations to start the routes. We will need ½ hour **more** between times.