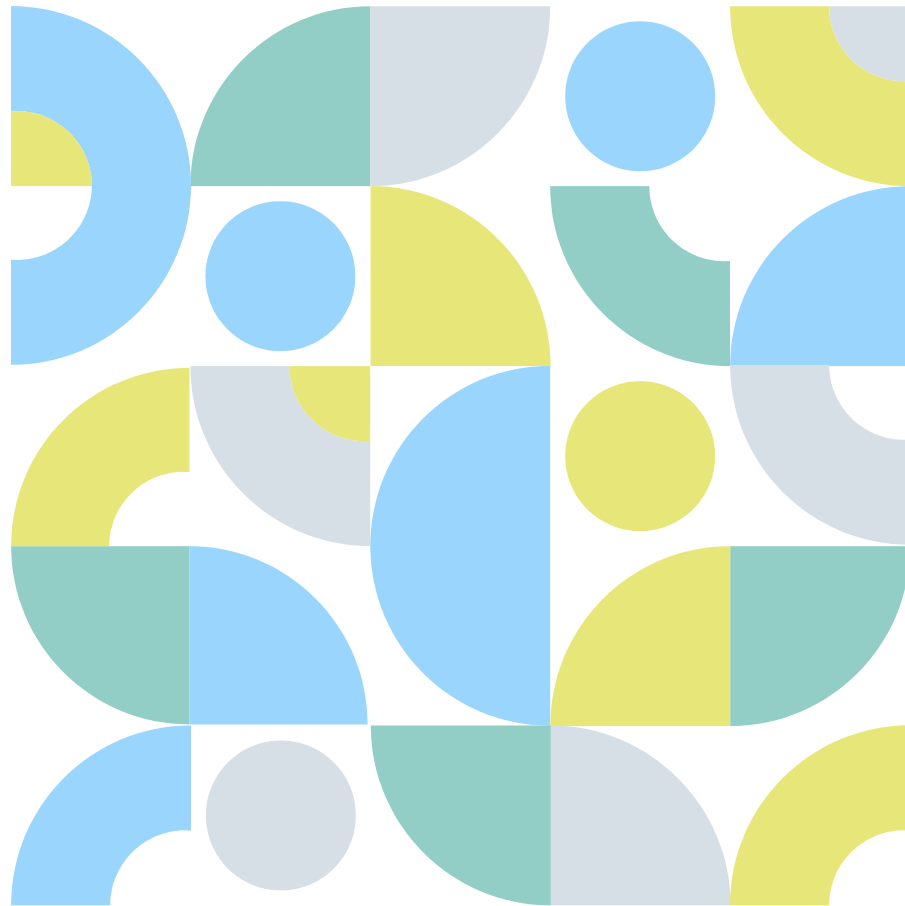




Routing & Operations Review

Menahga Public Schools ISD #281
October 19th, 2026





About CESO

CESO Transportation Consulting partners with school districts to improve transportation efficiency, reduce costs, and build systems that work better for students and families. Our team brings decades of hands-on experience in routing analysis, operations assessments, RFP development, and vendor management. We don't just identify problems — we help you solve them.

- Specialized in K-12 transportation consulting
- Experience across districts of all sizes
- Expertise in routing platforms: Versatrans, Traversa, Edulog, EZRouting, Transfinder
- End-to-end RFP support from development through contract negotiation
- Committed to transparency, accountability, and results



Operations at a glance

Based on the district's route sheets

15

regular-ed routes

314

total stops

941

rider assignments

59

will-call stops

Three opportunities

Where the efficiency actually lives

1

Will-call consolidation

59 on-demand stops across every route create empty runs and driver uncertainty. Converting these to scheduled or opt-in pickups is the fastest mileage reduction available.

2

Town-cluster stop merging

Dozens of in-town stops share a single pickup minute on the same block. Combining them into corner stops trims wait time and shortens runs — no technology required.

3

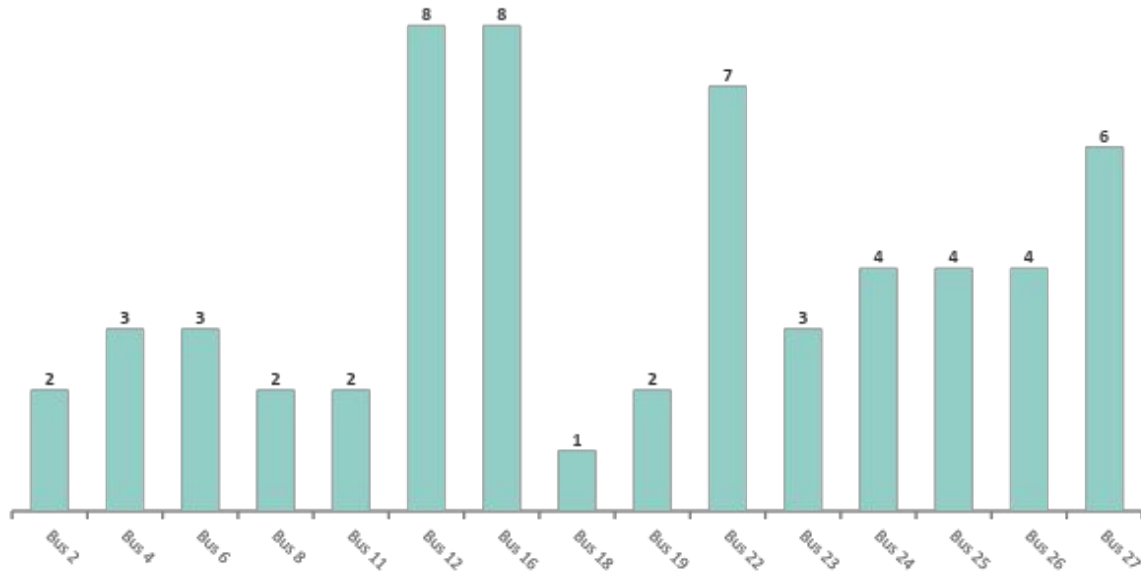
Shared service with Sebeká

The districts already share buses for FFA/Activity trips and split trip costs, and Bus 11 already runs the Sebeká–Nimrod corridor. Route-level coordination is the largest structural cost-saving opportunity.

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Opportunity 1 — Will-call load by route

Will-Call- a stop where a student rides only when the family calls in that day, so the bus often makes the stop with no one there.



Top targets

Bus 12 & Bus 16

8 will-call stops each

Bus 22 — 7 • Bus 27 — 6

112

rider-assignments sit at will-call stops
— roughly 1 in 8 of all assignments



Opportunity 2 — Town-cluster merging

Town Clustering- combining several close-together in-town stops into one shared corner stop, so the bus stops fewer times.

Today — Bus 16, Main St SW

7:45 AM · 418 Main St SW

7:46 AM · 332 Main St SW

7:46 AM · 318 Main St SW

7:47 AM · 229 Main St SW

7:45 AM · 34 Juniper Ave NW

7:44 AM · 736 1st St NW

7:44 AM · Corner 6th Ln & Larch

7 stops clustered within ~3 minutes and a few blocks



After — corner-stop consolidation

2–3 designated corner stops

families walk to a shared pickup point

- Shorter wait time
- Fewer stop-start cycles per run
- Easier for substitute drivers
- *Applies to Buses 6, 16, 22, 24, 25 town legs*

Opportunity 3 — Shared service with Sebek

The largest structural opportunity — and the groundwork is already laid



Already shared

Buses for FFA/Activity trips are already shared, with trip costs split between the two districts.



Already routed

Bus 11 already serves the Sebek / Nimrod corridor — a live proof point for coordinated coverage.



Already resourced

Sebek operates two garages and a part-time mechanic — complementary maintenance capacity.

Recommended next step: a joint boundary-and-corridor study with Sebek to identify overlapping coverage, quantify combined cost-per-student, and model a coordinated schedule. Projected estimate could be up to 3-5 combined routes with a projected savings of **\$270,000 to the general fund.**

Fleet schedule — 2025-26

One school, one bell time — all routes arrive together

Bus	Stops	Riders	Will-Call	Span	Cap.	Util.
16	36	89	8	34	82	109%
25	29	68	4	48	77	88%
22	25	66	7	53	77	86%
8	23	69	2	40	77	90%
6	22	50	3	56	65	77%
12	22	67	8	62	77	87%
2	20	59	2	76	77	77%
23	20	67	3	46	77	87%
24	20	66	4	56	77	86%
4	18	68	3	52	71	96%
11	17	60	2	56	77	78%
26	17	53	4	44	63	84%
19	16	55	2	51	77	71%
27	16	48	6	46	71	68%
18	13	56	1	35	77	73%
15 rt	314	941	59	50	—	~84%

Reading the schedule

Span — minutes from first to last AM pickup

Util. — riders ÷ assigned bus capacity

Two flags

Bus 16 runs over capacity (109%) — a candidate to split or offload.

Bus 27 is lightest (68%) with 6 will-call — a candidate to absorb elsewhere.



A note on the fleet

23 buses; 15 on numbered routes, 8 held as spare / SPED-van / activity

23

buses in fleet

~11

yrs average age

2

units $\geq$ 15 yrs old

8

held off numbered routes

Conservative buying saves taxpayers

~\$80,000 a low-mileage 2-yr-old used bus

vs. \$150,000–\$180,000 for a brand-new bus

The district prioritizes low-mileage used buses over new purchases.

In- House garage saves on repairs

1 full-time mechanic, plus a qualified driver who covers the summer months.

Average rate of pay for in house is \$40/hr vs a \$120 outside shop rate and keeping work in-house also removes transport costs.



What it costs to run

Two headline metrics, computed from the district's FY23–FY26 general ledger

~\$1,250

cost per student

net cost ÷ ~1,000 students served

~\$490

daily cost per bus

net cost ÷ 15 routes ÷ 174 school days

How Menahga compares

	Menahga	MN avg
Cost / student	~\$1,250	~\$1,000
Daily / bus	~\$490	\$400–600

Daily cost per bus is favorable; per-student cost is typical for a rural district

Both metrics sit where you'd expect for a rural district — per-student cost runs above the ~\$1,000 Minnesota average because long, thin routes spread fixed cost over fewer riders, while daily cost per bus lands comfortably in the normal \$400–600 range.



Fuel strategy: moving away from DEF

Due to high DEF maintenance problems, moving to gas and propane is the better option going forward.

The DEF problem

DEF systems break down constantly and drive excessive repair costs and downtime.

What DEF is:

Diesel Exhaust Fluid — a urea-and-water fluid injected into the exhaust to meet emissions rules on diesel engines.

- Consumed as you drive; must be refilled like a second fuel
- Required on diesel engines since ~2010 — and the SCR hardware is what keeps failing

The direction forward

Gas and propane over DEF/diesel engines

- **Simpler engines** — no DEF/SCR system to fail
- **Lower repair burden** and less downtime
- **More technicians** familiar with gas engines
- **Propane** is the district-scale option worth a closer study

Recommendation: Favor gas and propane over diesel/DEF on future acquisitions, and pair it with the used-bus strategy — buying low-mileage used vehicles rather than new keeps acquisition costs down.

Recommendations

Sequenced so early wins fund and de-risk the structural moves

DO NOW

0–3 months

- Route the 59 will-call stops through the Infinite Campus opt-in process
- Consolidate same-minute town clusters into corner stops (start with Bus 16)
- Rebalance load on Bus 16 (over capacity) and Bus 27 (lightest)

DO SOON

3–9 months

- Geocode all 314 stops; map runs to expose backtracking & overlap
- Establish a fuel-price lock to hedge fuel- cost increases.
- Pilot turn-by-turn tablets for substitute drivers

DO LATER

9–18 months

- Launch a joint boundary-and-corridor study with Sebeko - projected to cut up to 3-5 buses and save \$270k
- Explore a shared-mechanic / reciprocal-repair agreement with Sebeko
- Evaluate propane feasibility as a long-term alternative.
- Add parent notification system