

## **2026 Transportation Report to School Board 10/26/2026**

We started the school year with a driver on every route, 1 full time unassigned and 1 morning unassigned to fill in where needed. We had an EA for all of our SPED routes and 3 extras to fill in as needed. We eliminated 2 routes this year to make routing more efficient and to even out the number of students on our routes. Things have gone well so far with the office staff filling in as needed. The last couple of weeks have been filled with time off and many illnesses. We've been jockeying drivers and EA's to cover where necessary. I am anticipating 5 drivers retiring before February 1, 2027 so the hiring and training continues. We are continuing to pursue the option of having a contractor partner with us to alleviate the strain we experience in covering routes, field trips and activity trips as well as the constraints on our fleet and facility.

Our 5 new buses have arrived and the new camera systems are installed. The new Transportant camera system gives us a very clear view of what is happening on the buses and we are able to view activity in real time when necessary. The buses are all on the road and the drivers are happy with them so far. We are working on a 10 year plan with Business Services to rotate the fleet and reduce the number and frequency of costly repairs and to get the best trade in value. The long term plan should help us to make our decisions and purchases in a timely manner to take delivery of the new buses and be able to outfit them with little extras like garbage cans and brooms in time for the start of the school year.

Our fleet continues to age. We currently have 23 Thomas buses which are facing their 12th winter on the road. Six of them have new motors and 1 of the 6 will have a new transmission before this week is through. The seventh motor has been rebuilt and is waiting for its new home when the next bus is ready. Our highly skilled mechanics work hard to troubleshoot and maintain our fleet to the standards required by law and the expectations our employees and families are used to. We will be launching a new fleet management software soon to track mileage, repairs, services and body work. This is a much needed update to our current software. Air conditioning was added to our shop. The working conditions for the mechanic staff is greatly improved

Behaviors continue to take a lot of time. The biggest problems have been vaping, bullying and some property damage. We give warnings, suspend and bill parents for torn and damaged seats. Our Safety Manager and Route Specialists spend hours daily to review video, identify the involved parties and contact parents. It's always refreshing to have a parent who is willing to work with us to change behavior. Our drivers started right away at the beginning of the year to reinforce good behavior, write up bad behavior and make changes to their seating arrangements to cut down on and eliminate

incidents. Getting an early start on this eliminates frustration down the road. Behaviors distract the drivers, take their eyes off the road and can create dangerous situations for our students and others. We work in partnership with the building principals when needed. They will help us in identifying students, determining consequences and resolving conflict between students before they board the bus in the afternoon.

Many districts across the country are dealing with the high cost of diesel fuel. We have a propane powered fleet and are currently locked in a 3 year contract for \$.95 cents a gallon. We are hoping to extend this contract and we will continue working with Dehn Energy on the timing.

Fall turns to winter, winter turns to spring and another school year will be in the books. Each year we make strides in upgrading our fleet and our technology, improving training to reflect the law changes and new requirements and to retrain where improvement is needed, improving relationships with and between our employees and cultivating relationships with our vendors old and new.

Transportation is a busy place. Everyday we move over 4000 students from ages 3 to 22. We get them from home to school and back again. We transport them between buildings and we take them on field trips and to their sporting events and activities. We put 1 million miles on our vehicles each year and our department makes it look easy.

I'm proud of the team we have. We work together to accomplish our goals each day and most of the team has been together for many years. Getting our students safely to all of the places they need to be is our #1 priority!