



WOODRIDGE
SCHOOL DISTRICT 68

memo

To: The Board of Education and Dr. Patrick Broncato, Superintendent
From: Curt Saindon, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services/CSBO
Date: January 10, 2025
Subject: Regular Student Transportation Services Update

Just a quick update on our progress in preparing and letting a bid for regular education student transportation services. As you know, we have partnered with School District 58 and School District 99 for many years and have been using First Student Transportation Services, through their Westmont Terminal for the past 12 years. Overall, we have received good service from First Student, and while there have been some challenges and issues from time to time, especially related to the persistent driver shortages and staffing challenges that have affected the industry as a whole during the past two decades, First Student has been a good and responsible partner over that time. Prior to that, we briefly used Westway Transportation Services as an alternative to First Student, but their inability to properly staff our account and set up a terminal in close proximity to the school districts caused massive delays and scheduling problems, and they were removed mid-year due to these major issues. At that time, we returned to First Student mid-year on an “emergency assignment,” and then re-bid the service that spring, eventually selecting First Student and approving a five year contract back in 2013. After the expiration of the five year contract, we have continued to approve year to year contract extensions with First Student since that time (seven have been approved over the years), as allowed by law.

Last year, the General Assembly passed a law that allowed for increased flexibility in bidding, evaluating, approving, and contracting for student transportation services, including the ability to contract for 10 years at a time (15 years if a significant portion of the fleet is electric school buses). They did, however, eliminate the provision that allowed for ongoing year to year contract extensions after the expiration of the initial contract, so we are now forced to go out to bid and start a new ten year cycle (we can’t do 15 years yet, as we don’t have any electric school buses as part of our fleet currently... Hopefully that will change in the near future ☺). We are therefore developing and letting a Bid/RFP for regular education student transportation services (we have three years left with Sunrise on our special education student transportation services contract before we hit the 10 year mark, and I expect to bring a recommendation to the Board for that three year contract extension in February or March).



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Our plan is to finalize and let the Bid/RFP on January 14th-15th, put an ad in the paper on January 15th, conduct a mandatory pre-bid meeting on January 21st, and then open the bid responses in late January (probably on 1/28, 1/29 or 1/30). That would allow us to review the proposals received in early February and hopefully select a recommended Regular Education Student Transportation Services provider for our regular education student transportation needs in mid February. My plan right now is to bring a recommendation to the Board on February 24th, with a fallback date of March 17th if finalization and selection of a contractor drags on. With Board's approval of a recommended contractor, we would finalize the contract and then begin preparing for the 2025-2026 school year accordingly. Jeree Ethridge and Tammy Maksa from District 99 and Todd Drafall and Michelle Kovar from District 58 have been working with me and Michelle Swanson from District 68 to complete this process, with all three Boards being provided a recommendation in February or March, accordingly. All three school districts would need to approve individual transportation contracts with the selected service provider in order for the overall proposals and the cost structure to be valid (as we all share buses and resources collectively). As always, if you have any questions, please let me know. Thanks!