



**GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM
AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10**

DATE OF MEETING: **May 25, 2021**

TITLE: **Approval of Modification to Compensation Rate for Transportation Employees**

BACKGROUND:

District schools will follow a new bell schedule beginning School Year 2021-2022. Administration made the decision to implement the new bell schedule to resolve a transportation crisis – a severe shortage of bus drivers. The new bell schedule will enable the Transportation Department to make necessary changes to address the bus driver shortage without reducing service to children.

The current bell schedule requires 78 bus drivers to complete daily routes and support extracurricular activities and field trips. Presently, the District employs the equivalent of 54 bus drivers and has maintained more than 20 driver vacancies consistently for more than 2 years. The Transportation Department must pull other staff members who are properly licensed to help run routes, including office staff and mechanics, who then are not available to perform their normal duties.

Administration has made substantial attempts to recruit bus drivers, including holding multiple transportation job fairs, advertising the positions, posting flyers in the community, and sending recruitment materials to families in hopes someone may be looking for a job, to avoid continuing to affect these other positions to be able to maintain service for students. In fact, the Transportation Department even attempted to recruit special education teaching assistants for training to obtain their CDL, to enable them to add work hours, by driving the students who they serve to and from school on a District school bus. Starting this week, the Transportation Department also held pop-up job fairs at schools around the District. Despite these efforts, the Transportation Department has not been able to fill driver vacancies.

The three-tiered bell schedule provides another solution to enable the Transportation Department to resolve the concern. Because this alternative requires fewer employees to complete existing routes and have drivers available for athletics and field trips, it also creates a combined savings for the Transportation Department through the reduction of current vacancies. This savings can be used to increase driver wages by \$2.38 per hour to a new level of \$16.50 per hour, which will enable the Amphitheater District to remain competitive for hiring bus drivers while also addressing the wage compression issues within the Transportation Department created through the state’s mandatory annual minimum wage increases.

Currently, Amphitheater bus drivers are placed on the Classified Placement Schedule at Level L which starts at \$14.12 per hour. Neighboring school districts, as well as private employers, start CDL drivers at rates that exceed \$16.00 an hour. By raising bus driver wages to a higher placement level, Amphitheater will be able to remain competitive in hiring. Wages for the Transportation Dispatcher, Routing Coordinator, Driver Trainer, Auto Mechanics, and Training and Safety Coordinator would also require similar adjustments to avoid maintain current compensation placement distinctions and avoid additional compression in the Transportation Department. It is important to note that only hourly staff would benefit from these wage increases, and they would not negatively impact on the overall District budget.

Since 2017 with the start of the minimum wage increases in Arizona, wage compression has been a challenge. Bus Attendants have had starting wages increase from \$8.96 to the current wage rate of \$12.24 in 2021, a wage increase of \$3.28 in four years. Bus drivers during that same time have seen starting wages increase from \$13.55 to \$14.12, an increase of only \$0.61 per hour. This is a bold example of wage compression, and this plan being proposed in this agenda item addresses driver pay and wage compression entirely within the Transportation

Department. If additional wage increase were provided to bus attendants through this agenda item, the compression issue would continue¹.

It is also important to note that Transportation is primarily a self-funding reimbursement system based on the number of miles driven. The savings generated through these adjustments will be used in part to address any reduction in mileage reimbursement that may result in the implementation of the plan. However, the State funding formula limits this impact as the funding is based on the higher of the last years funding or current years funding. Using this mileage formula, little if any change is expected.

As a result, Administration recommends that the minimum salary placement level for the following positions in the Transportation Department be modified as follows:

	Placement	New Placement	Base Change	Assigned
Transportation Dispatcher	H	L	\$ 2.48	2 FTE
Routing Coordinator	I	M	\$ 2.82	2 FTE
Bus Driver	J	M	\$ 2.38	60 FTE
Driver Trainers	J	M	\$ 2.38	2 FTE
Auto Mechanic I	J	L	\$ 1.49	3 FTE
Auto Mechanic II	K	M	\$ 1.80	5 FTE
Auto Mechanic Lead	K	N	\$ 3.06	1 FTE
Chief Mechanic	L	O	\$ 3.77	1 FTE
Training and Safety Coord	M	N	\$ 1.26	1 FTE

Administration further recommends that the hourly wage for all employees in these classifications be adjusted similarly to avoid further compression in the Transportation Department. These modifications do not affect the overall budget for the Transportation Department. They also do not require reductions for any current transportation employees, and they do not impact the District’s ability to fund the salary increases for employees that were approved by the Governing Board on March 23, 2021 and April 13, 2021.

Administration pulled together a group of parents, staff and principals from the schools most affected by the bell schedule change to review the plan and help identify problems or concerns. This included all three high schools, the K-8 schools, and some of the middle and elementary schools. An AEA representative served on the committee as well. The committee discussions included the proposed wage change and was overall supportive of the proposed changes.

RECOMMENDATION:

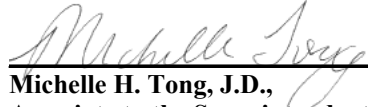
The Administration recommends that the Governing Board approve the following placement level adjustments for the below classifications to become effective in Fiscal Year 2021-2022 which begins July 1, 2021.

	Placement	New Placement	Base Change	Assigned
Transportation Dispatcher	H	L	\$ 2.48	2 FTE
Routing Coordinator	I	M	\$ 2.82	2 FTE
Bus Driver	J	M	\$ 2.38	60 FTE
Driver Trainers	J	M	\$ 2.38	2 FTE
Auto Mechanic I	J	L	\$ 1.49	3 FTE
Auto Mechanic II	K	M	\$ 1.80	5 FTE
Auto Mechanic Lead	K	N	\$ 3.06	1 FTE
Chief Mechanic	L	O	\$ 3.77	1 FTE
Training and Safety Coord	M	N	\$ 1.26	1 FTE

¹ Another factor is the increases to attendant pay and other minimum wage positions that have already or are planned to occur within the next 12 months. Attendants received a 1.22% increase with the minimum wage in January 2021. They will be receiving a 1.5% increase in July 2021 per the Board’s approved pay increase. They will be receiving the 3% retention stipend over the next two years, and they will likely receive another increase due to minimum wage in January 2022. All combined, Bus Attendants will receive at least a combined 5.72% pay increase for School Year 2021/22, plus any increase as a result of the 2022 minimum wage increase.

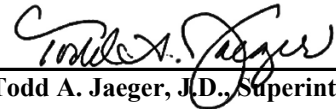
Administration further recommends that the Governing Board approve the same hourly wage increase for employees currently in each of the above positions to likewise become effective in Fiscal Year 2021-2022 which begins July 1 2021.

INITIATED BY:



Michelle H. Tong, J.D.,
Associate to the Superintendent and General Counsel

Date: May 17, 2021



Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent