



## Report to School Board Concerning Transportation Operations 2015/2016

The 2015/2016 school year has presented unique challenges and opportunities. The following report looks to update School Board Members with the status of current operations, focus areas, and future needs of the Transportation Department.

### CURRENT OPERATIONS

#### Leadership

Jane Langlois, Administrator for Transportation, retired on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 after serving the Department in a number of responsibilities for over 20 years. Craig Beaver was brought on board on June 22, 2015 as her replacement. Craig has over 32 years of transportation management experience with 17 years in the private sector and 15 years in a school district environment.

#### Ridership

District enrollment increased by 4.2% versus last year while students eligible for transportation fell by 1.2% and total Regular Education students transported increased by 12.1% for the same period. These figures indicate new students to the District tend to live in areas contained within current Non-Transportation Zones but more students living outside those zones took advantage of bus services.

| Year  | BSD Enrollment | Eligible for Transportation | Percent Eligible for Transportation | Regular Education Students Transported | Percent Transported |
|-------|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 11/12 | 39,020         | 28,603                      | 73%                                 | 19,121                                 | 49%                 |
| 12/13 | 39,488         | 26,891                      | 68%                                 | 18,184                                 | 46%                 |
| 13/14 | 39,387         | 27,368                      | 69%                                 | 19,120                                 | 49%                 |
| 14/15 | 39,088         | 27,907                      | 71%                                 | 19,811                                 | 51%                 |
| 15/16 | 40,725         | 27,559                      | 68%                                 | 22,210                                 | 55%                 |

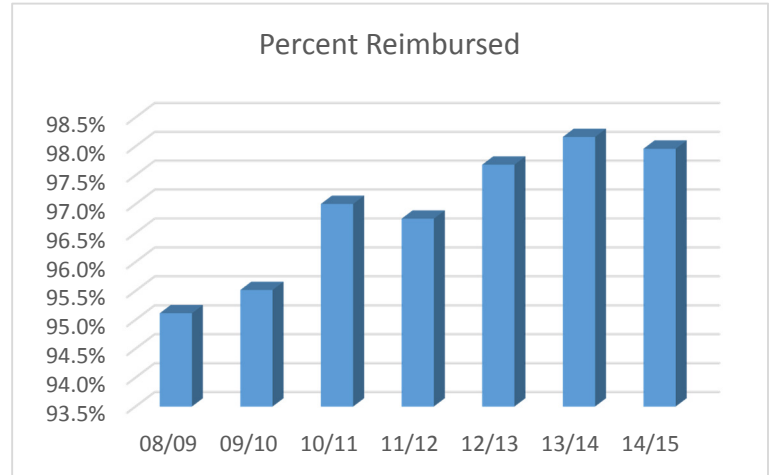
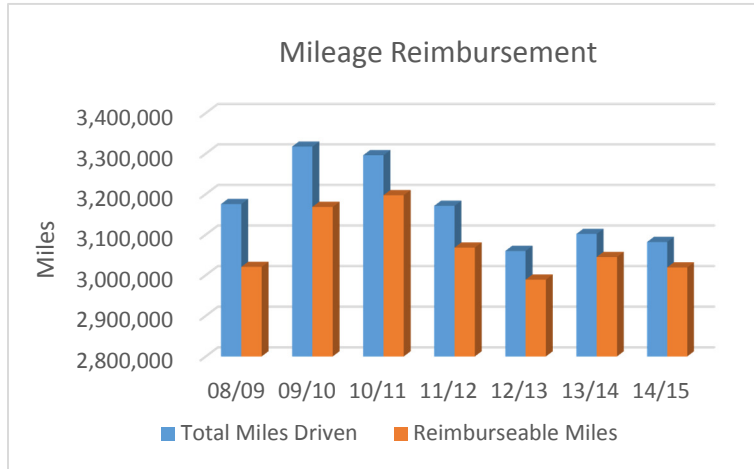
Special Education students transported fluctuates throughout the school year as IEP needs change. On average, the Department transports approximately 1,200 Special Needs students per year. This figure is historically consistent.

**District Goal:** WE empower all students to achieve post-high school success.

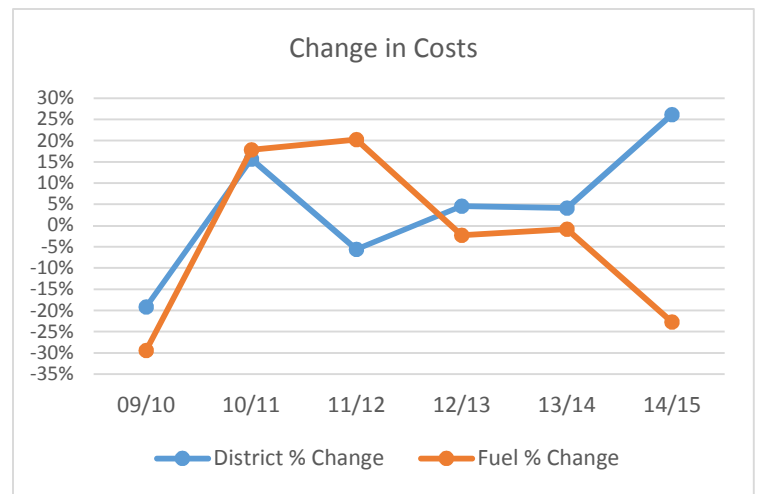
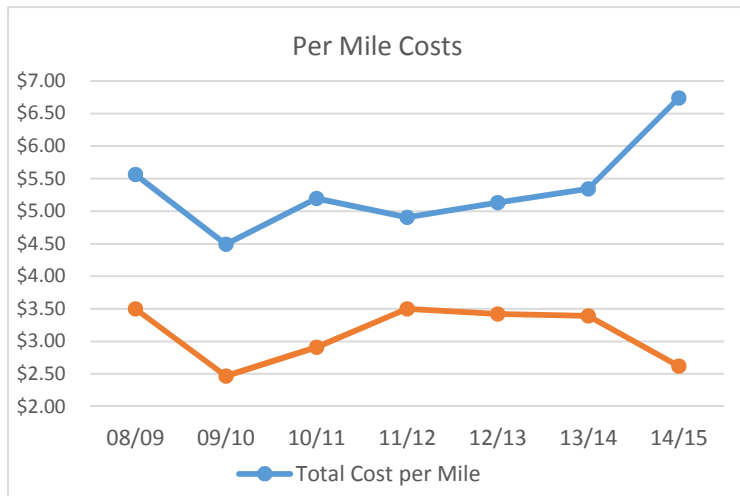
The Beaverton School District recognizes the diversity and worth of all individuals and groups. It is the policy of the Beaverton School District that there will be no discrimination or harassment of individuals or groups based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, marital status, age, veterans' status, genetic information or disability in any educational programs, activities or employment.

## Revenue & Expense

The District is reimbursed by the State of Oregon for 70% of all qualified transportation expenses. While total miles driven has been reduced in recent years, the percentage of reimbursable miles has risen significantly to nearly 98% in the past two school years. This indicates the District receives reimbursement for nearly every activity performed by the Department, minimizing encroachment on the General Fund.



Total Cost per Mile continues to rise year over year. Prior to 2012/2013, rising costs could be tied directly to increases in fuel costs. During 12/13 and 13/14, fuel prices and Cost per Mile stabilized. In 14/15, fuel prices declined over 20% but our cost increased by 26%. This divergence can be attributed to the implementation of the Bus Purchase Plan. The District spent \$8.75M to purchase 40 new school buses in the fall of 2014, replacing buses averaging over 18 years old. We anticipate this divergence to continue as annual bus replacement expenditures over the next 6 years are expected to be between \$4M and \$4.5M and will be reflected in total department expense figures while fuel prices continue to remain low due to global market conditions.

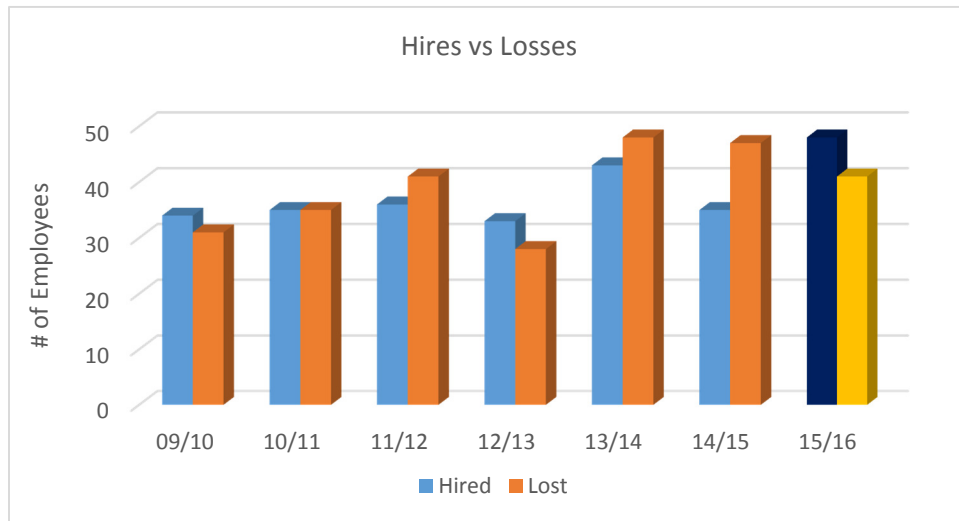


We expect further reduction in our overall fuel expense since bringing 12 propane powered buses on line in February 2016. Propane fuel costs are approximately 45% to 55% less per gallon than diesel fuel. If this technology continues to meet our expectations, we plan to expand our investment in propane powered school buses in the future.

## FOCUS AREAS

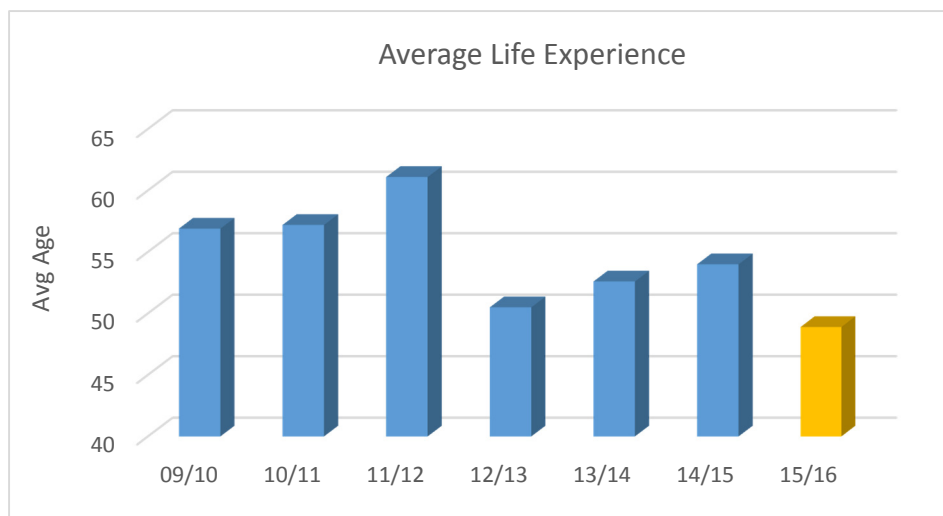
### Employee Hiring

The most important area of focus this year has been hiring and retaining school bus drivers. Between 09/10 and 14/15, the district averaged 38 driver departures and 36 driver hires. This year through March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the Department has lost 41 drivers and hired 48. This represents a 7% increase in the number of departed drivers but a 33% increase in the number of drivers added.



This trend shift is attributed to a change in our targeted demographic. As stated in last years' Report to the Board, the ideal candidate was: *"Retired professionals who are either bored in retirement or looking for supplemental income; currently employed part time employees looking to supplement income or gain benefits (realtors, contractors, etc.); stay at home spouses looking to re-enter the workforce once their children are in school"*.

In 2015/2016, our focus has shifted to hiring individuals who are the primary bread winner in their family; want to work as much as possible to maximize income; are motivated to make BSD their career; and anticipate remaining with the District through retirement age to take advantage of PERS benefits. As a result, the average life experience of our new hires has fallen by 6.5 years (11.7%) giving us the potential to take advantage of their services for a longer period of time.



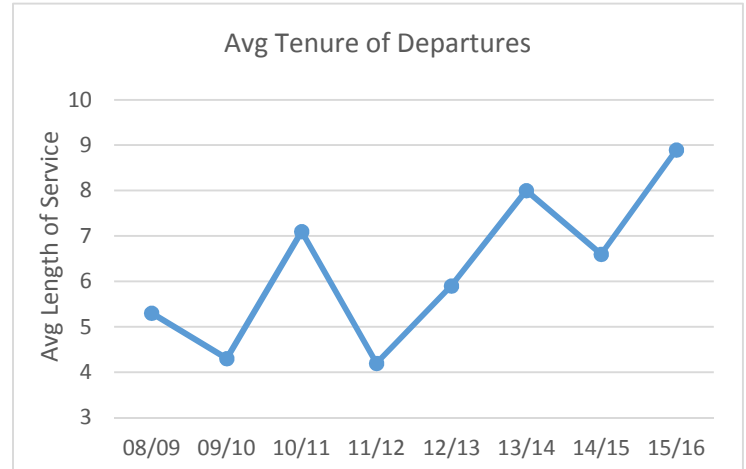
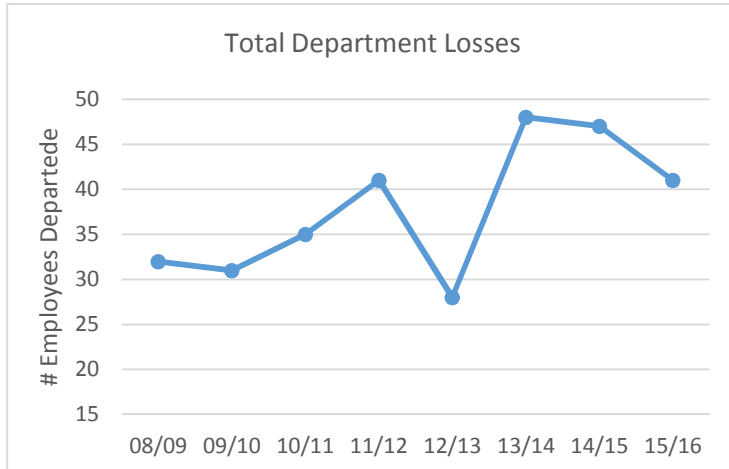
We expanded our advertising budget and target audience by placing bi-monthly advertisements in the Oregonian and Oregonian On-Line; weekly advertisements in Craigs' List – Portland, and periodic regional advertisements in Vancouver, Salem, and Eugene. Additionally, we employ fence signage at every District school on a major thoroughfare (for example: Beaver Acres ES – 170<sup>th</sup> St; McKinley ES – 185<sup>th</sup> St; Sunset HS – Cornell St; Beaverton HS – Farmington Rd, Etc), Lunch-Boards posted at major intersections, and school buses with signage parked at key public locations during the summer months. The Transportation Page on the District website has been upgraded with a solicitation for new drivers as the primary focus on the home page. The Communications and Community Involvement Department produced a 2 minute YouTube video advertising the features and benefits of becoming a BSD Bus Driver. This video is featured prominently on both the Jobs page of the District website and the Transportation Webpage.



YouTube video advertising BSD  
driving careers

## **Employee Retention**

Of equal importance to hiring drivers is keeping them once they are trained and integrated into the Department. While the number of drivers leaving the department has declined over the past 3 years, the average length of employment of these departing employees has continually risen. This trend indicates turnover is slowing and the people leaving are longer-term employees who are choosing to retire.



Beginning in September through November 2015, the Transportation Administrator met with over 120 employees in 10 small Focus Group sessions to learn the priorities of the drivers, discuss problem areas and potential solutions, solicit input regarding current departmental policies and suggestions for changes, and to begin to establish a personal relationship with employees. Some issues were large in scope and will need to be addressed over time, however, there were several issues in which driver-based solutions were implemented immediately. Bus Yard lighting, radio communications, school facility access, administrator communication, and substitute driver recognition are just a few examples of changes implemented quickly based on Focus Group feedback.

## **Technology**

### **Global Positioning System (GPS)**

The \$680M Beaverton School District Bond passed by voters in 2014 contained provisions to purchase up to 20 new school buses per year to replace existing, obsolete equipment. In 2014, Year 1 and Year 8 expenditures were combined to enable the Department to purchase 40 new buses. Each of these buses came equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) technology supplied by Zonar Systems, a Seattle, WA based company and a national leader in GPS technologies.

The success of this initial implementation revealed the pressing need to modernize the entire fleet. As of 3/25/16, the Department has installed GPS technology in 265 of the 313 buses in the fleet representing 85% implementation. The remaining 48 buses will be equipped with this technology by 9/1/16. The total cost equip and install the GPS units was \$128,300.

Existing computer-based routing software (VersaTrans OnScreen) was upgraded to take advantage of the GPS technology on these buses enabling dispatch, routing, and management staff real-time views of bus location and speed. This technology improves the level of student safety tremendously by allowing us to pinpoint the location of any bus at any time and allows us to share information with local law enforcement and public safety agencies to help quickly guide them to a bus.

Historical data has already proved useful in route planning, on-time service issues, route timing, and customer complaints concerning bus speed and pickup/drop off times.

## Parent Communication

Implementation of School Messenger by the District this year has allowed the Department to introduce a process to notify parents/guardians quickly and efficiently if a bus is severely delayed and running behind schedule. Previously, when such a situation occurred, responsibility for notifying families fell to individual schools. A staff member would have to look up each student on the affected bus and phone each family individually with information regarding the delay and the expected delivery or pickup time.

The new system allows a Dispatcher to access School Messenger, choose the route affected (AM or PM) and send an email, text and voice message to the designated parent in under one minute.

**LIST CONTENT - USE RULES TO SELECT YOUR CONTACT RECORDS**

List Rules

Enter a value

Field

Bus Runs

Criteria

☒ is  
☐ is NOT

Value

Check All

☐ Highland Park Middle OUT 936p 5  
☐ Highland Park Middle OUT 962p 3  
☐ Highland Park Middle OUT 968p 5  
☐ Highland Park Middle OUT 973p 1  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 091a 1  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 103a 2  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 118a 2  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 913a 1  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 966a 1  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 974a 1  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch IN 977a 1  
☐ Hiteon Elementary Sch OUT 091a 1

Clear

Add

School  
Messenger  
Selection Screen

School, Route  
Number and  
AM/PM Info

## Student System Information

SYNERGY, the District's Student Information System, was upgraded during Winter Break this year to include student bus route, bus stop time, and bus stop location information for all authorized users. This information can be accessed through the Transportation Tab in the SYNERGY System. Previously, school personnel were only able to determine if a student was eligible for bus service. This change improves customer service by allowing school staff to apprise families of transportation information in addition to Department personnel.

Transportation Memo

Transport Code

Both Pick Up and Drop Off

SYNERGY  
Transportation  
Tab

Student Bus Information

| Line | Eligibility | Stop Type | Route     | Stop Time | Stop                                   |
|------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1    | R           | Pickup    | 935 (651) | 8:50 AM   | NW DESERT CANYON DR@NW LEGEND TRAIL PL |
| 2    | R           | Dropoff   | 919 (708) | 4:10 PM   | NW DESERT CANYON DR@NW LEGEND TRAIL PL |

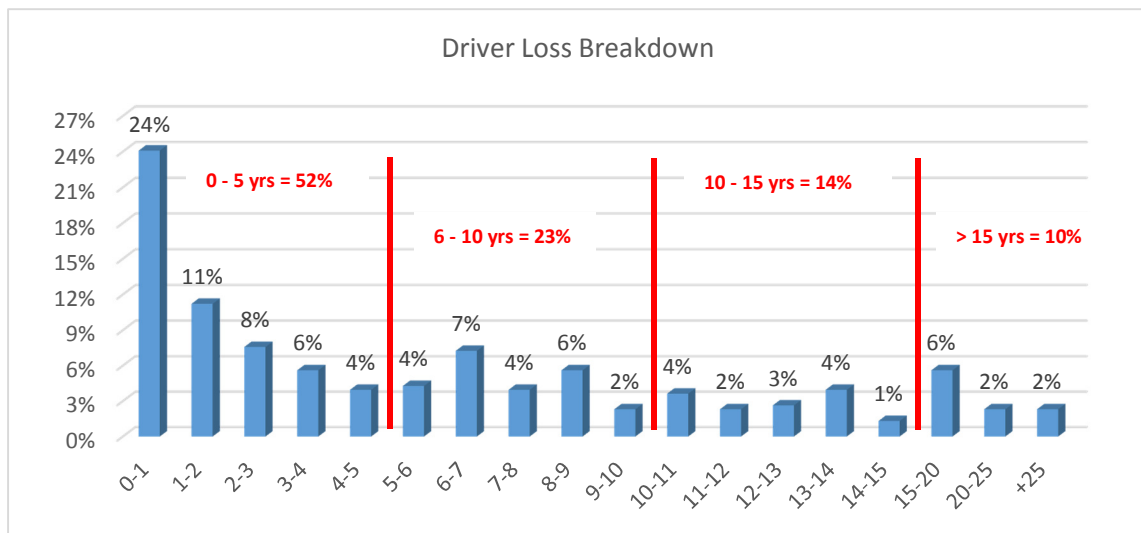
Bus Route #, Bus Stop Time,  
and Bus Stop Location

## FUTURE NEEDS

### Driver Hiring & Retention

The most important future need of the Department is a continual supply of new drivers. As reported previously, the Department has averaged a loss of more than 35 drivers per year over the past 6 years, with 15/16 on pace to set an all-time record of over 50 drivers lost in a single year.

A detailed study of this issue reveals 52% of our losses are by employees with 5 years or less tenure; almost ½ of those employees (24%) leave within the first year! Employees with 6 – 10 years of tenure make up 23% of those departing and the remaining 25% are employees with over 10 years' experience.



Hourly pay appears to be the greatest issue attributing to voluntary resignations. While BSD starting wages are above neighboring school districts, historically we have found resigning employees are taking positions with private-sector transportation companies. This year, a proposal was submitted to Human Resources to compress the Wage Steps for Bus Driver from 9 to 5 and move the starting hourly wage to Step 4 (\$16.76/hr). This would bring our wages within 6% of the average starting wage of Portland-area private transportation companies. This competitive starting wage, along with our outstanding benefit program, should have considerable effect on applicant flow, employee hiring and retention.

|      | Current Hourly Wage |                    |      |  | Proposed Hourly Wage |                    |      |
|------|---------------------|--------------------|------|--|----------------------|--------------------|------|
|      | BSD                 | Private Sector Avg | Diff |  | BSD                  | Private Sector Avg | Diff |
| Low  | \$15.11             | \$17.88            | -15% |  | \$16.76              | \$17.88            | -6%  |
| High | \$19.47             | \$24.60            | -21% |  | \$19.47              | \$24.60            | -21% |

We believe accelerating the pay schedule so employees achieve the top hourly rate within 5 years will improve employee retention. While hourly wages and benefit expense will rise, the cost of hiring and training will decrease as well as reducing operational costs by having a trained and stable workforce.



### **Bus Video Equipment**

Much of the existing video camera and recording equipment installed on District buses is obsolete. Over 60% of all cameras and nearly 40% of all recording devices are 10 – 15 years old. Video storage capacity is limited to 48 hours in most cases causing loss of data when requests for video are received beyond that time frame. Current technology enables districts to download video remotely or view in real-time via the internet. This will be the next major area of investment once GPS installation is completed during the summer of 2016.

### **Bus Replacement and Addition**

As stated earlier, the Department is preparing to enter Year 3 of a 7 year bus replacement program. The vendor research and selection process has already started and the Department will be evaluating the performance of the 12 propane buses recently added to the fleet once this school year has ended. We look forward to increasing our investment in these clean-fuel buses as they are environmentally friendly and require less maintenance than diesel buses. We expect to enjoy reduced cost not only from fuel prices but also reduced scheduled maintenance requirements.

Pending the outcome of policy decisions regarding high school student walk zones and intersection crossings, we may have to retain a number of buses which were originally slated to be sent for disposal. This would be necessary to maintain a minimum number of spare buses if additional routes are needed to accommodate the new high school boundaries.

### **High School Walk Zones & Intersection Crossings**

The changes to the District high school boundaries have the potential to add a significant number of bus routes if the current high school walk zone guidelines remain in place. Current Board Administrative Regulation EEA-AR, implemented in 1991 and last updated in 2006, gives a *guideline* for high school students to walk no more than 5 blocks to a bus stop. Portland Public Schools has no published guideline for high school students and Hillsboro School District's guideline is ½ to 1 mile for certain segments of this population. The Department feels part of our duty to prepare high school students for adulthood is to empower them to take advantage of city infrastructure by increasing the walk guideline to 8 blocks (8/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile) when safe to do so.

Another internal policy the Department has historically followed is the prohibition of high school students crossing railroad tracks and high volume intersections when traffic control devices and pavement markings are in use. Hillsboro School District allows their high school students to traverse these areas as long as they are controlled and marked. Portland Public Schools has no guidelines as their students use TriMet for transportation services. In Fall 2016, BSD implemented crossings for Southridge HS students at Scholls Ferry Rd @ 125<sup>th</sup> St and Scholls Ferry Road @ 130<sup>th</sup> St after considerable review. This implementation was driven primarily by low bus ridership due to students crossing these intersections already. There have been no reported safety-related incidents at either of these crossings this year.

The Department would like to evaluate other selected intersections and crossing which meet Safe Routes to School criteria and are already traversed by District high school students. This will allow implementation of the new boundaries with minimal or no need for additional routes and may also create needed capacity on some existing high school routes.