

Executive Summary: Transportation Fleet Lease Recommendation for FY28

Administration is reviewing transportation fleet replacement options for FY28 as eight full-size yellow route buses and two white activity buses come off the current lease schedule. Multiple vendors have provided pricing for lease and purchase options, and the information below is intended to help the Board compare cost, vehicle age, ownership structure, and overall financial impact. This review also considers current market uncertainty related to upcoming EPA heavy-duty vehicle emissions standards, which may affect the pricing and availability of new buses. Additionally, purchasing the white activity buses from Fund 10 would help reduce the number of non-reimbursable miles reported on the ISBE transportation claim form. Reducing the percentage of non-reimbursable miles would improve the district's transportation reimbursement calculation and result in the district netting more reimbursement revenue. For more information regarding the EPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards, please visit:

https://www.epa.gov/regulations-emissions-vehicles-and-engines/final-rule-greenhouse-gas-emissions-standards-heavy-duty?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Pricing Quotes and Options for Lease and Purchase - [All Quotes](#)

The Administration requested pricing options for both lease and purchase to determine the most financially sound strategy over the next 3 years. The quotes are shown in the tables below.

Yellow Route Buses - Lease - [3 Year Lease Quotes](#)

Company	Age	Passenger	Annual Lease Per Bus	Annual Cost for 8	3-Year Total
Midwest	3 years	72	\$28,995	\$231,960	\$695,880
Midwest	2 years	78	\$30,904	\$247,232	\$741,696
Central States	New	77	\$31,348	\$250,784	\$752,352
Midwest	New	72	\$32,687	\$261,496	\$784,488
Nelson	1 year	74	\$35,568	\$284,544	\$853,633

*Central States is a company that we have gone away from due to its customer service. Nelson is our current vendor. The buses quoted are being delivered to Byron CUSD #226 this summer and would come off their lot onto ours. Midwest offers International buses, which have improved significantly from the International models the district previously had in its fleet.

Yellow Route Buses - Outright Purchase - [Purchase Quotes](#)

Company	Age	Passenger	Outright Price Per Bus	Total for 8 Buses
Midwest Transit	3 years old	72	\$128,784	\$1,030,272
Midwest Transit	2 years old	78	\$137,853	\$1,102,824
Nelson	1 year old	74	\$139,973	\$1,119,784
Central States	New	77	Not provided	Not provided
Midwest Transit	New	72	\$147,168	\$1,177,344

*Purchasing outright may require us to hire a licensed bus mechanic.

White Bus - Lease - [3-Year Lease Quotes](#)

Company	Age	Passenger	Annual Lease Per Bus	Annual Cost for 2 Buses	3-Year Lease Total
Nelson	1 year old	14	\$26,722.96	\$53,445.92	\$160,337.76
Midwest Transit	New	14	\$26,958.00	\$53,916.00	\$161,748.00
Central States	New	14	\$28,668.68	\$57,337.36	\$172,012.08

*Nelson's white activity buses would be Byron's 1-year-old buses.

White Bus - Outright Purchase - [Purchase Quotes](#)

Company	Age	Passenger	Purchase Price Per Bus	Total for 2	Notes
Southern Mobility Base	New / need to be ordered	14	\$92,351	\$184,702	*Does not come with options, such as: vinyl seats, cruise control, heated mirrors, roof hatch, storage rack, activity seats, electric entrance door, child check, rear camera, or upgraded A/C - when these are added you are looking at \$98,000-99,000 or more
Nelson	1 year old	14	\$93,450	\$186,900	*Byron's 1-year activity buses = Vinyl seats, heated mirrors, rear tow hooks, driver step, child reminder, electric entrance door, Zonar/GPS, and a multi-camera Seon HD camera system
Southern Mobility Option 1	New / in-stock	14	\$98,711	\$197,422	*Vinyl seats, cruise control, rear tow hooks, heated rearview/crossview mirrors, stainless steel rear storage rack, driver's side step
Southern Mobility Option 2	New / in-stock	14	\$99,652	\$199,304	*All of the above, plus an emergency roof escape hatch; cloth seats instead of vinyl
Midwest Transit	New	14	\$112,905	\$225,810	

*Southern Mobility is under a state bid, but does not have used buses on the lot. We could also arrange a trade-in of our current white buses with Southern Mobility. Nelson's white activity buses would be Byron's 1-year-old buses.

**Estimated trade-in value for our current white buses = \$29,000 each (with current mileage/condition)

Recommendation

Administration recommends a split fleet replacement approach for FY28: leasing eight 2-year-old yellow route buses through Midwest Transit and purchasing two 1-year-old Thomas Minotour activity buses through Nelson's Bus Service.

The Midwest 2-year-old yellow bus lease option provides a strong balance of cost, capacity, and reliability while avoiding some of the pricing uncertainty tied to new bus manufacturing and upcoming EPA heavy-duty vehicle standards. Leasing the yellow route buses also helps preserve cash flow during ongoing Health, Life, Safety work.

For the white/activity buses, administration recommends outright purchase through Nelson's using Fund 10. Purchasing these buses from Fund 10 allows the district to reduce the number of non-reimbursable miles claimed with the state, particularly for after-school and activity trips. Reducing non-reimbursable miles lowers the district's overall non-reimbursable mileage percentage, improving the transportation reimbursement calculation and allowing the district to net more state reimbursement.

The Nelson activity buses also include several valuable features in the quoted price, including heated mirrors, an electric entrance door, a child reminder, Zonar/GPS, and a Seon camera system.

This approach supports safe and reliable transportation, limits exposure to uncertain new bus costs, improves transportation reimbursement strategy, and maintains financial flexibility.