



Governing Board Agenda Item

Meeting Date: September 11, 2025

From: Mark Goligoski, Assistant Superintendent

Subject: Transportation Department Systems Review by Gauge Precision Consulting

Priority: To plan for future needs in a proactive, accountable manner

Consent ☐ Action ☒ Discussion ☐

Background:

The Marana Unified School District (MUSD) continues to seek to identify ways to improve efficiency, compliance, and service delivery within its transportation operations. District leadership has engaged in conversations with Transportation Department representatives and determined that due to the complexity of routing, staffing, and fleet management, a review by an independent agency would help improve operations.

Gauge Precision Consulting, represented by Mr. Paul Novak, has extensive experience in comprehensive transportation system analyses for school districts. They have proposed a detailed project plan to evaluate all aspects of MUSD's transportation program and provide actionable recommendations for improvement.

Gauge Precision Consulting will conduct a study, requiring frequent on-site engagement, and dedicate the majority of the 2025–2026 fiscal year exclusively to:

- Efficiency and Routing: Review of general education routes, walking and busing boundaries, self-contained program boundaries, and optimization of bus stops.
- Data and Analysis: Student counts, eligibility verification, route/run tabulation, and staffing FTE analysis.
- Budget and Fleet: Review of current and prior years' budgets, fleet size, utilization, and maintenance.
- Staffing and Training: Determination of appropriate staffing levels, evaluation of driver/monitor training compliance, and effectiveness.
- Policy and Communications: Review of internal/external communication practices, departmental handbooks, ADE reporting, and data collection.

- Bell Time Analysis: Examination of bell times in relation to transportation efficiency.

The cost to secure the services provided by Mr. Novak and Gauge Precision Consulting will be \$82,500. M&O funds will be used to cover the cost.

Recommended Motion:

I move that the Governing Board approve contracting with Gauge Precision Consulting to perform a comprehensive transportation study and provide recommendations that will help improve operations within the Marana Unified School District Transportation Department.

Approved for transmittal to the Governing Board:



Dr. Daniel Streeter, Superintendent

*Questions should be directed to: Mark Goligoski, Assistant Superintendent
Phone: (520) 682-4757*

"A safe school for every child in America"

July 7, 2025

Mr. Mark Goligoski
Assistant Superintendent, Operations
Marana Unified School District
11279 W. Grier Rd.
Marana, Arizona 85653

SUBJECT: Student Transportation Consulting Proposal

Dear Mr. Goligoski:

We are pleased to submit this proposal and scope of work to perform an assessment of your student transportation operations. Our firm has extensive and successful consulting experience evaluating existing operations, delivering recommendations, and applying changes in order to achieve strategic and financial improvements.

INTRODUCTION

Marana Unified School District seeks an experienced student transportation consulting firm to review the full scope of its student transportation operations. During our introductory meeting, many areas of concern and interest were discussed by MUSD leadership and Paul Novak.

This engagement will, at a minimum, include:

- Development of general and special education optimized bus routes
- An assessment of the current staffing levels throughout the department and the FTE assigned to driver, monitor and relief driver positions
- A review of self-contained program locations and a summary of the financial benefits of developing boundaries for these programs
- Analysis of absenteeism patterns, to include no call/no show experiences
- Trends in recruitment, retention and attrition
- Review of all training to ensure compliance with mandates, training effectiveness, and post training evaluation performance
- A bell time analysis to determine if changes would have a significant positive economic impact on the transportation operations and delivery of service to families and schools
- Analysis of the purpose, value, and execution of the relief driver program in its current state
- A study of fleet size appropriateness, usage, and maintenance
- An assessment of department organizational leadership, its effectiveness, and the culture and morale throughout the department either through passive onsite observations over an extended period or through organized small group sessions.

The Scope of Work on page 4 details our proposed strategy for analyzing the stated areas of operation, which we consider necessary to gain a full understanding of every aspect of your student transportation operation. This approach will be refined once we have an opportunity to gather more information in a kickoff meeting with appropriate District leadership.

Our student transportation engagements vary widely from district to district, but suffice it to say, of all areas where student transportation programs save money, such as staffing, fuel cost controls, fleet maintenance, and others, none have the sizeable impact that effective routing will produce. The calculus here is simple, if not the implementation; to safely transport, on time, as many students as possible with as few fleet and human resources as possible.

Our Understanding

Marana Unified School District has 18 schools serving about 13,000 students, covering 550 square miles. The District transportation operation provides transportation support for approximately 4,400 students.

The District would like to reduce operational expenses, with an eye on closing the \$2.6MM gap between the annual department expenditures and State Equalization Assistance (Transportation Revenue Control Limit). The District is also concerned with buses running late, failing to pick up students, excessive driver absences and turnover, and other impactful matters.

Our preliminary review indicates that MUSD's student transportation expenses have increased at a very high rate over the past few years. With most of our engagements, we find student transportation programs that have evolved into very inefficient operations over time; something that we can correct and reset, because of our ability to devote uninterrupted time and objective analysis to your program.

A recent survey conducted by Mr. Goligoski, and reviewed by Mr. Novak, raises significant concerns about the operational effectiveness of the entire operation. This is an area that should receive significant attention; something we are well equipped to address.

Why Gauge Consulting?

Gauge Consulting is uniquely positioned to complete this important work for Marana Unified School District, given our experience in transforming district transportation operations into efficient operations that also provide exceptional service to families and schools.

- We are confident that we can offer significant efficiencies, which will reduce your transportation expenses, closing the gap between your transportation budget and your Transportation Revenue Control Limit (TRCL), allowing M&O funds to be used more effectively elsewhere in the District.
- In a recent engagement with Gilbert Public Schools, we managed to save their district 32 FTE. Additionally, this recent engagement required transforming most aspects of the department and its operation, including addressing and improving the morale, climate, and leadership performance and effectiveness. That engagement is a model for what we feel we can do for Marana Unified School District.

- Mr. Novak will be the project principal for the entire engagement. He has ten years as the Founder and CEO of Gauge Precision Consulting; a strategic consulting firm specializing in student transportation operations and school safety and security. Prior to that, he served 21 years as a director of student transportation and school safety in public education and prior to his public education role, he served for 20 years on active duty in the U.S. Army as a logistician.
- We are headquartered here in Arizona, allowing for frequent and extensive onsite work in Marana and in-person updates and presentations to leadership as requested or needed.
- Mr. Novak served under a Gubernatorial appointment as the chairman of the Arizona School Bus Advisory Council for four years. He also serves as a student transportation subject matter expert (SME) on several contracts with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
- We have an extensive project history with Arizona public school districts, and are very knowledgeable with AZ minimum standards, funding formulas, DPS requirements, ADE reporting, and State and National best-practices in the field of student transportation.
- We have successfully performed boundary studies to help districts balance enrollments and create logical, contiguous boundaries that support efficient transportation.
- We are frequently asked to conduct bell-time studies with an eye on creating efficiency which results in both significant cost savings and fewer human and fleet resources.
- Gauge Consulting is under contract with both 1 Government Procurement Alliance (1GPA) and Mohave Educational Services (MESOC), offering strategic consulting on student transportation. We are the only student transportation consulting firm with awards from either of these cooperative agencies.
 - 1GPA Contract # **1GPA-23-02-04**
 - MESOC Contract # **22J-GPC-1216**

SCOPE OF WORK

If awarded, Mr. Novak recommends a project kickoff meeting with Marana Unified leadership to review and confirm the scope, objectives, desired outcomes, and project timeline. The steps identified below are not all inclusive but identify the major elements of the project scope.

The complexity and length of time needed to conduct a broad and comprehensive study and to formulate recommendations and changes, will require significant and frequent on-site work by Gauge personnel. This project is estimated to take approximately eight to ten months and Mr. Novak will be with MUSD and solely on this project for most of the 25/26 fiscal year.

Below is a draft sequencing plan for this project:

- Project kickoff meeting
- Collection of information and data needed for our preliminary study. This information will be the basis upon which we develop a strategic outline and timeline to carry us through the project
- Review of general ed routes for efficiency and optimization
- Review of all walking and busing boundaries
- Review of self-contained program boundary benefits
- Review of the number and frequency of every bus stop in the District
- Collection of student counts for every bus stop and every bus route
- Comparison of confirmed student counts against eligible student riders
- Tabulation of every bus on every run and every route to compare drivers' and monitors' time on routes, time with students onboard, and time on the clock (total FTE)
- Review of current and prior years' budgets and spending practices
- Review of internal and external communications practices (directions and policies and updates given to staff as well as communications to families and schools)
- Staffing analysis to determine the correct staffing levels for the current operational configuration and new levels once the efficient transformation is completed
- Driver and monitor training compliance, quality, effectiveness, and frequency
- Review of department handbook(s) to ensure it's an effective and practiced tool
- Review and analyses of past ADE reporting and data collection practices
- Review of fleet size, usage, and maintenance practices
- Bell time analysis as it relates to efficient transportation operations

We will make ourselves available for periodic if not frequent check-ins and meetings with leadership as requested. We will confer with leadership before executing any logistical changes and walk through recommendations with various groups within the District as requested.

FINANCIAL DETAILS

This project is expected to take approximately eight to ten months. Fulfillment of the entire Scope of Work will require the equivalent of 22 weeks of full-time staff hours. Our engagement throughout this fiscal year will take about 880 production hours. Both the 1GPA and Mohave contracted hourly rate for Student Transportation Professional Consulting Services is \$175.

Gauge Precision Consulting will discount 410 hours for a total of 470 hours over the duration of this project. Therefore, Gauge agrees to complete the entire project Scope of Work in the time specified, unless changes are requested by Marana Unified School District, for a firm-fixed price of \$82,500.00.

Our projects have always delivered operational savings that far exceed the project costs, and because of the source of these savings, they recur year after year. We are confident that there are significant savings opportunities, which will bring your expenses closer to your TRCL, while still delivering exceptional service to your families and schools. This confidence is based upon the geographic size of the District, the number and location of your schools, and the number of students transported to and from school each day, as well as our past engagements.

Student Transportation Program Assessment

Payment Milestones	Contract %	Total
Project kickoff and initial information & data collection	25%	\$20,625.00
Completion of general ed routing optimization	25%	\$20,625.00
Delivery of written progress report at halfway point	25%	\$20,625.00
Submission and presentation of final engagement report with recommendations	25%	\$20,625.00
Ongoing consultation access via email, phone, virtual arrangements throughout the 2026-2027 school year	N/C	N/C
Total Cost of All Project Work	100%	\$82,500.00

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to your request for a SOW and cost proposal and am available to discuss this project further or to answer any questions you may have. I look forward to partnering with you and your transportation team to bring significant transformative changes to your transportation department.

Sincerely,



Paul M. Novak
Gauge Precision Consulting, LLC
President/CEO