



GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10

DATE OF MEETING: December 11, 2018

TITLE: Pilot Program – Bus Driver Attendance Bonus

BACKGROUND:

The Transportation Department continually reviews its operations in an effort to achieve outstanding customer service for our students and parents. Transportation knows that for many families, the first impression of the District is their interaction with the Transportation Department, which on a daily basis is often the only interaction parents have with District staff. Based on the number of parent phone calls and emails to the Transportation Department, the key concern or issue parents face is the ability, and unfortunately, an all too frequent inability, of the department to operate bus routes on time.

Central to the Transportation Departments issue in this regard, is the number of vacant Bus Driver positions. As of December 6, 2018 the District had 28 of 116 bus driver positions vacant. To adjust for the shortage of drivers, bus routes are extended in length and time to accommodate the additional bus stops being added to the routes. This routing is accomplished just as school begins and adds to the confusion in transportation and our parents' experience. Transportation does not know how many bus drivers will return to work from the summer until approximately a week before school starts. To compound the issue, few qualified candidates have applied for the position and even with aggressive marketing at job fairs and using Pima One Stop, we have been unable to hire enough qualified staff to relieve the situation. For the drivers we have successfully hired there is an approximately 6 week long training and certification process required before a new driver can start driving a route.

Currently, the Transportation Department is staffed based on the number of routes scheduled to service our students and does not have an available pool of substitute drivers. To respond to driver absences, the Transportation Department merges the absent driver's routes with other routes that serve the same school. To compensate for the absence, four or five additional stops are added to other bus routes. Often and consequently, all of the routes for that school end up arriving late to school. In addition, with a very limited transportation staff, it is not possible to call all of the affected parents to inform them of the delay. Transportation informs the school of the delay, but realistically as the school day begins, site staff is not able to make the number of calls to inform the parents of the delay, and the parents would likely already be standing at the bus stop with their child before any such call could be made.

Another strategy Transportation attempts to mitigate driver absence is to assign the entire route to a driver with sufficient time in their schedule to complete the additional route within their normal duty day. This is usually attempted with drivers who have a high workload during the middle of the day to serve our half day programs but who have some flexibility early in the morning or late in the afternoon. The challenge with this approach is that they do not know the route or the students on the route, so they generally run the route slower than the experienced driver because of this unfamiliarity.

Transportation has collected data on the absence rate for transportation staff. The data revealed an average absentee rate of 8%. This rate is not unusual; by national standards used for work planning, a 10% absenteeism rate should be used when calculating staffing levels. For additional comparison, the District's

teacher staff is averaging an absenteeism rate of approximately 9%. The critical difference being that there are no substitutes available for bus drivers.

Two solutions to improve this situation were presented. The first was to authorize transportation to hire eight substitute bus drivers. These drivers would be placed on a standard eight hour work schedule and fill in as needed to cover routes caused by absenteeism. If they were not required to drive, they would act as bus monitors on any route available to improve their route knowledge for future assignments during an absence. For planning purposes, these positions were called “Relief Drivers” in the data analysis below. This solution was determined to be unworkable considering our inability to hire bus drivers.

The second option discussed was to provide bus drivers with a bonus for perfect attendance in an effort to encourage our existing drivers to reduce their use of personal leave and sick leave. Additional information would be provided to ensure drivers understood that acclimated sick leave is bought back from the employee at retirement or separation when over seven years of service to the District has been achieved. In order for the bonus to be significant enough to make the difference in the driver’s use of leave, an amount of \$150.00 per school quarter or \$600.00 per year was selected for this pilot program. This represents approximately one week’s pay for a bus driver.

A cost breakdown between these two suggestions, hiring eight substitute drivers or paying all drivers (worst case) \$600.00 per year bonus is shown below:

Relief Drivers	8
FTE Hourly Cost w/benefits	\$19.50
Avg daily hours	8
Avg Daily Cost	\$156.00
No. of School Days	178
Annual projected cost per employee	<u>\$27,612.00</u>
Annual projected cost for 8 employees	<u>\$220,896.00</u>

No. of Bus Drivers	100
Avg Contracts Hours	35
Proposed Incentive Bonus	<u>\$150</u>
Bonus Quarterly Cost	<u>\$15,000</u>
Bonus Yearly Cost	\$60,000

The cost breakdown above demonstrated that the option of providing an attendance bonus to bus drivers would be the most cost effective way to address this issue in the short term. This plan was then presented to the District’s Human Resource Department for review and to assist in crafting the guidelines in the attachment to ensure all appropriate legal issues could be addressed for a fair and equitable implementation of this pilot program.

Based on internal discussions, this solution would only be a stop-gap measure used to increase attendance during this critical period of driver vacancies. Once a solution for the District’s inability to hire bus drivers has been found and staffing has return to a normal, this program would be discontinued. Please see the attachment for the implementation guidelines.

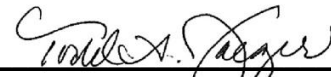
RECOMMENDATION:

The Administration recommends that the Governing Board authorize a pilot program to pay bus drivers an attendance bonus of \$150.00 per school quarter up to a maximum of \$600.00 per year only for the 2018/19 school year using the attached guidance for qualification and implementation.

INITIATED BY:

Jim Burns, Executive Manager, Operational Support

Date: November 16, 2018



Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent