



February 15, 2018

Dr. Alicia Evans
Assistant Superintendent
Oak Park Elementary School District #97
260 Madison Street
Oak Park, IL 60302

Dear Dr. Evans:

Education Logistics, Inc. (Edulog) is pleased to submit the following assessment of the Oak Park Elementary School District #97's student transportation. The objective was to review the current transportation operation and identify opportunities that would reduce cost. We hope that this assessment will be used as a guide to identify cost saving opportunities—both short and long range.

We would like thank you for your on-site interviews as well as the information you have provided us to accomplish this report. The results of this assessment are based on information obtained from those on-site interviews and documentation.

Edulog is excited for you to review of this document, and we also looks forward to providing continued assistance as you further consider the recommendations and suggestions for improvement. Our fundamental principle in working with school districts is to further a partnership whereby if you succeed, we succeed. Thank you again for providing Edulog this opportunity, and please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,

Patrick Starcken
Edulog Consultant



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Executive Summary

Transportation is a large expense for school districts. Currently at Oak Park each bus costs \$212 per day per bus. With 176 student school days, the total cost for the year will be \$522,368. However, it is possible to reduce this expense so that money can be put back into the classroom.

For example, there appears to be many students receiving transportation that normally would not qualify for busing. The Oak Park Elementary School District should evaluate their current policies on transportation and make some changes.

In review of the elementary schools' transportation it is apparent that unnecessary hazards are causing the busing of elementary students. It is possible that changes may have occurred over the years without there being an in-depth review of each of the locations. Without these hazards, no elementary school students would qualify for busing.

By definition, hazards are areas where students would not be able to walk through safely. An example of this would be on a street with a 45 MPH speed limit and no sidewalks. Generally, if sidewalks exist there is a safe walk path. Another hazard may be the configuration of a crosswalk or how a pedestrian might cross a street. If the intersection is not controlled or it is not clearly marked, this could create a hazard, but a controlled intersection does not necessarily constitute a hazard.

The district's middle school boundaries were created many years ago. The intent of these boundaries was to balance the enrollment of the middle schools—and also the ethnic distribution. The configuration of these boundaries has resulted in making additional students eligible for transportation base on the district's policy of providing transportation for students who live more than 1.5 miles from school.

Realigning the middle school boundaries would reduce the number of students receiving transportation. This in turn will reduce transportation costs. It also would be beneficial to evaluate the school start times for the middle schools because additional savings could be realized with a change to the start times.

I believe that immediately after the review of this assessment an RFP (Request for Proposal) for transportation services should be published. It will be imperative for the Oak Park Elementary School District to immediately work on an RFP because the current contract expires in June 2018, and it would benefit the contractors that would like to respond to an RFP to have as much time as possible to prepare an offering.



It should be noted that a carefully crafted RFP can be used to further reduce transportation costs, and that Edulog has staff with experience writing an RFP.

Transportation Costs

This year, transportation costs for the Oak Park Elementary School District 97 will exceed \$500,000. This expense can be reduced. Each hazard location has been evaluated in depth in the following pages, and removing these locations from the hazard classification would mean that no elementary students would qualify for busing based on policy of busing for students living 1.5 miles or more from school. Therefore, changes need to take place with regards to the hazards.

Hazards do not affect the middle school students. However, the current boundaries allow for students to receive transportation based on distance. If the boundaries were adjusted, additional savings would exist. Moreover, realignment in bell times for the middle schools would create the greatest savings for the District.

Current cost: 14 buses, \$212 cost per bus per day, 176 days of school equals \$522,386.

Adjust bell times, no elementary busing: 8 buses, \$212/day, 176 days equals \$298,496.

Bell time change, no elementary busing and adjust middle school boundaries: 6 buses, \$212/day, 176 days equals \$223,872.

Hazard Areas

Oak Park Elementary School District hazard areas have been established per Section 29-C of the Illinois School Code. This is required to be reviewed by the School Board annually. If no changes have occurred or it is not verified that something has changed, generally it is approved by the School Board.

Edulog was asked to perform an in-depth review of the district's school bus transportation plan. Part of this review entails how students are bused based on state law and district policy. In the case of the Oak Park Elementary School District, the School Board has established the policy that: 1) students who reside more than 1.5 miles from school qualify for transportation; and 2) students subject to hazards also qualify. Hazards, defined in Illinois State Statute (105 ILCS 5/29-3) (from Ch. 122, par. 29-3) Sec. 29-3 Paragraph Five, constitutes a serious hazard to the safety of the pupil because of vehicular traffic and/or rail crossings. Such transportation shall not be provided if adequate transportation for the public is available.



Railroad crossings are not a factor for the Oak Park Elementary School District: there are no locations where students would be required to walk across a railroad track. Underpasses or overpasses do not constitute the crossing of railroad tracks.

Thus, vehicular traffic is the only hazard that the Oak Park Elementary School District must evaluate. Specific criteria need to be determined when considering hazards. Additionally, there are levels of thresholds that need to be agreed upon and established.

One level of threshold would be the minimum age when a student can walk to school unaccompanied. This threshold is one that needs to be determined by the parents. If it is understood that a parent would not leave their five-year-old alone in a shopping mall with the promise to meet by a store in one hour, then a similar understanding needs to take place with students walking to school on their own. With this threshold being determined by the parent, the district needs to change the term “walk distance” or “walk zone” to “parent responsibility zone.”

The School Board can then begin to evaluate each intersection with this understanding of “parent responsibility zone.” By having the parent responsibility zone established as a threshold, walking through an intersection would need to be the next threshold.

Two circumstances determine the threshold of an intersection: 1) is the intersection controlled or not; and 2) what is the amount/speed of traffic.

A controlled intersection is defined as having a stop sign, signal light, or a crossing guard. An uncontrolled intersection would be a corner with a crosswalk and no stop sign, signal light, or crossing guard. For the purposes of determining a hazard, traffic would most likely be a factor at uncontrolled intersections with increased traffic volume during rush hour. In most cases, rush hour has passed in the morning when students need to get to school. Likewise, rush hour has not started at school dismissal.

None of the current hazards are at uncontrolled intersections. Therefore, there is no need to further discuss this type of intersection.

For controlled intersections and the threshold classification, it must be understood that each person driving a car is required to follow the law, and if the law is not being followed, then the proper authorities must be notified. With this in mind, it is apparent that the safest street crossing locations for students are at controlled intersections.

However, if the crosswalks are not well defined or are unclear, this potentially could be an issue, and the agency responsible for street maintenance should be notified so that crosswalks are clearly marked with painted lines.

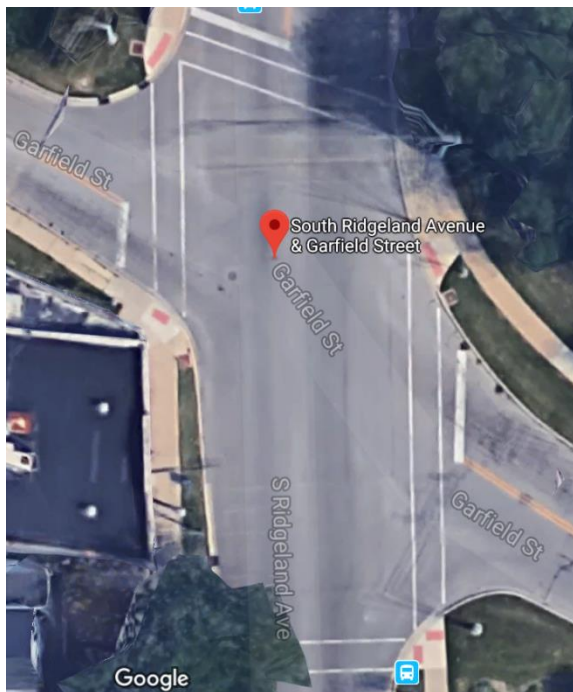


Now that it is understood what a safe crosswalk and controlled intersection is, we have another threshold established.

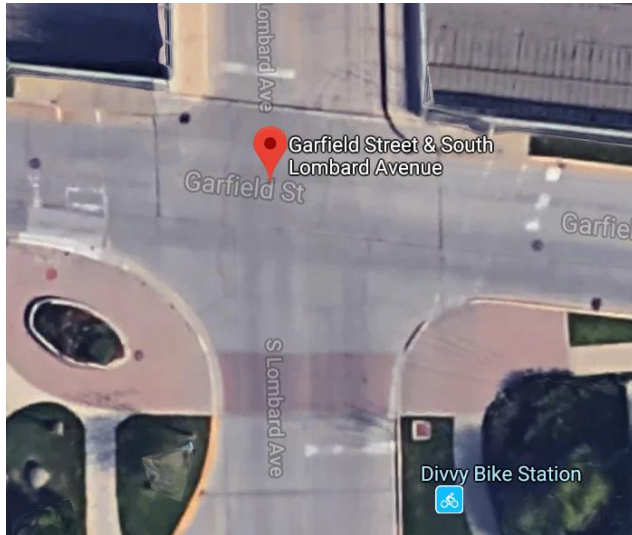
Most probably it has been some years since each hazard intersection has been evaluated in-depth. Additionally, many of the intersections may have changed over the years to enhance pedestrian safety; stop signs or signal lights may have been installed since the last hazard review.

For this report, I have reviewed the hazards within the district that have been approved by the School Board and sent to the State Superintendent of Education for approval. The following photographs of each intersection were created in an attempt to provide the best view available.

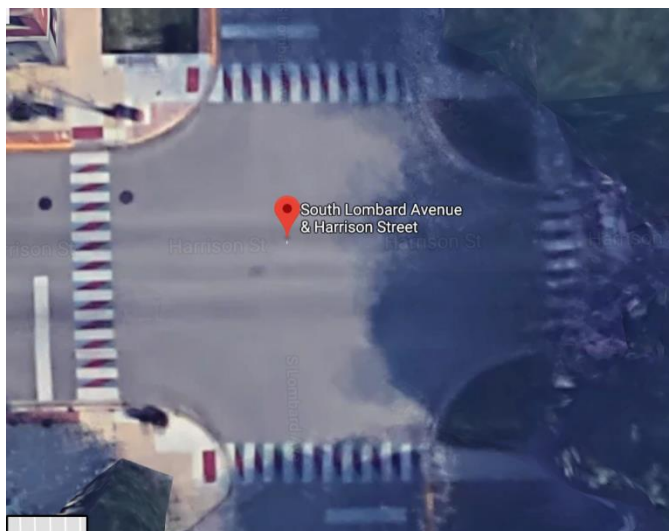
The intersection of Garfield & Ridgeland is a controlled intersection. The intersection has signal lights with clearly marked crosswalks for students.



Garfield & Lombard is a controlled intersection with four-way stop signs. Just north of this intersection is the entrance to the train. Many people walk through this intersection.



Harrison & Lombard is a controlled intersection with four-way stop signs and well-defined crosswalks.





The Harrison & Eisenhower Walkover North is a controlled intersection by (all stop) three-way stop signs. In addition, there is signage indicating a school crossing.

The south end of the crosswalk comes out on Garfield. This intersection is controlled by (all stop) three-way stop signs.

North



South

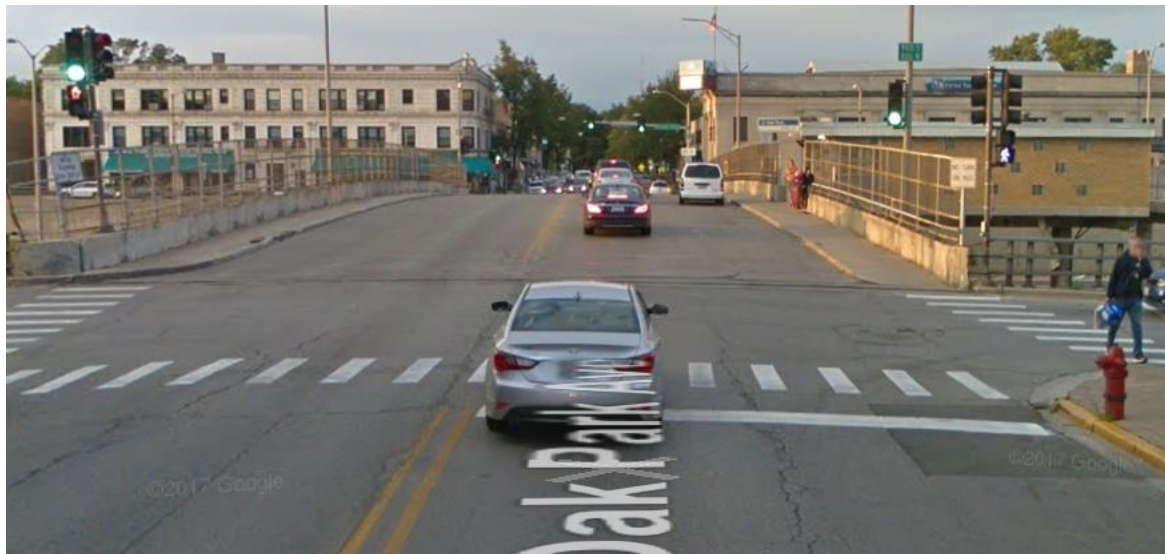




The Jackson & Home intersection is a controlled intersection with four-way stop signs. The sidewalks at this intersection have recently been replaced.



Garfield & Oak Park intersection is controlled by signal lights. Just north of this intersection is a city bus stop. This intersection is used by many pedestrians.



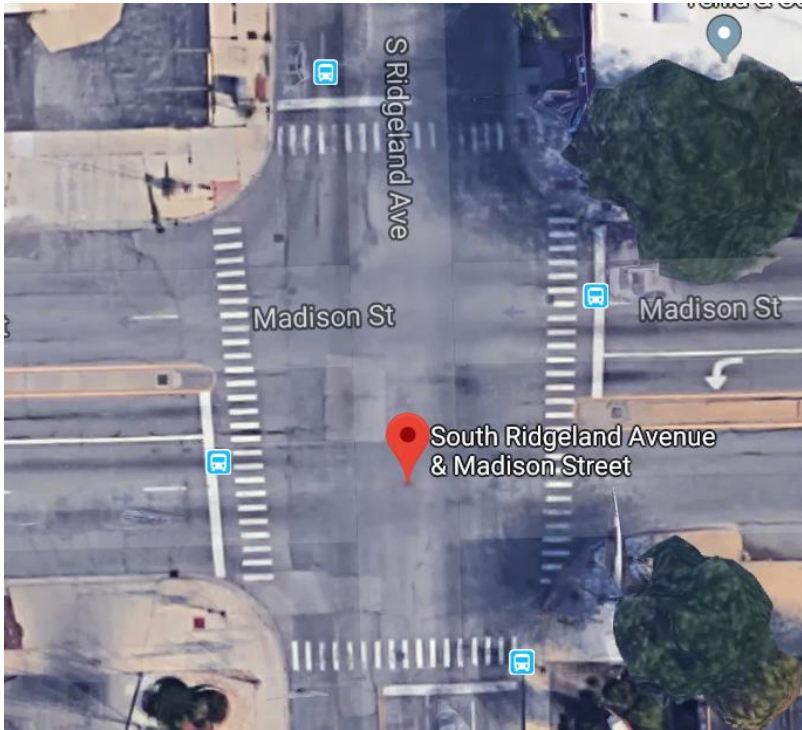


Jackson & Oak Park intersection is controlled by a four-way signal light with clearly marked pedestrian walkways.





Madison & Ridgeland is an intersection controlled by signal lights with clearly marked walkways.

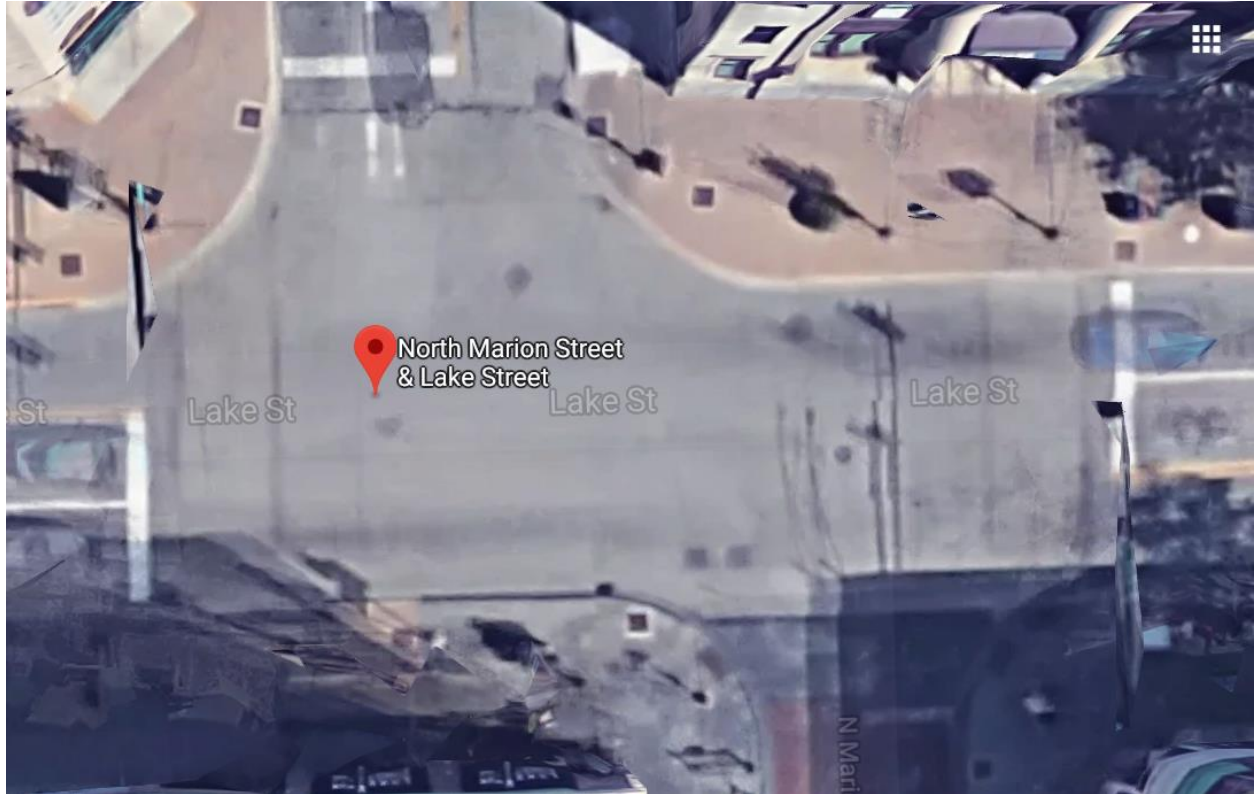




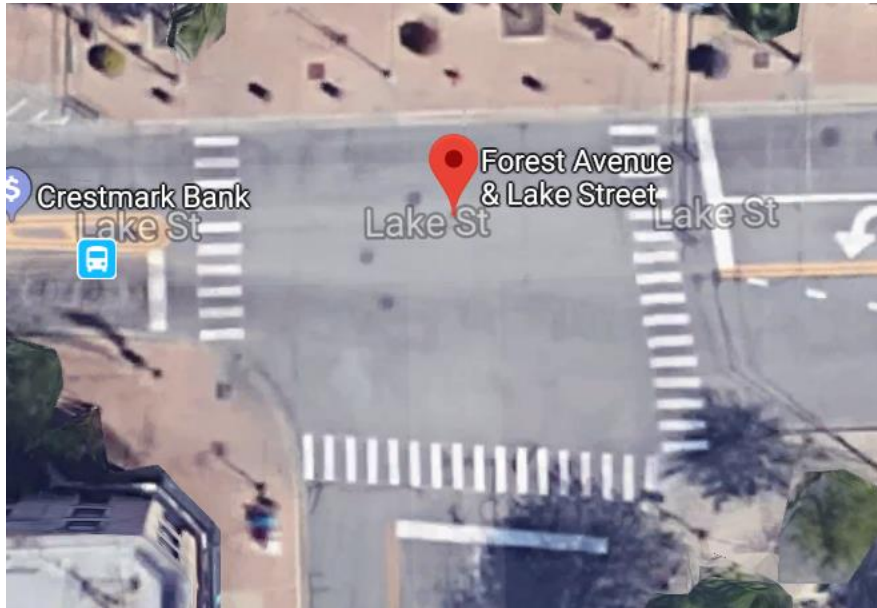
South & Marion is an intersection controlled by four-way stop signs. The pedestrian walk area is clearly marked.



The Lake & Marion intersection is a controlled four-way intersection. This intersection has clearly marked walkways.



Lake & Forest is a three-way intersection that is controlled by signal lights with clearly marked walkways for pedestrians.



The South & Home intersection is controlled by four-way stop signs. East of the intersection on South Street is one-way with the traffic heading west.



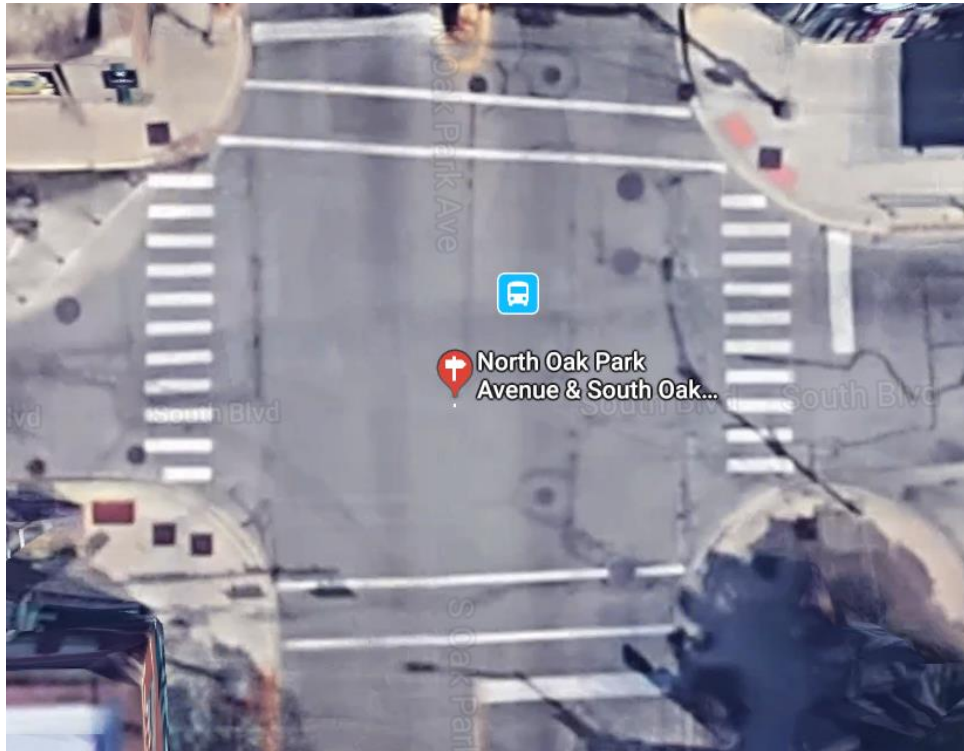


Lake & Oak Park is an intersection controlled by signal lights. It has clearly marked pedestrian walk areas.





South & Oak Park is an intersection controlled by signal lights. The walkways are clearly marked for pedestrians. East of this intersection on South is a one-way heading west.



In summary, the reviewed hazard locations were designated as hazards years ago, and they should no longer be considered hazardous intersections because they are now all controlled, whereas years ago they may not have been.

There is, however, one questionable location: Madison & Ridgeland, because Madison is a boulevard. This does not necessarily make it hazardous, but it would be a different threshold. According to the previously mentioned state statute regarding the definition of hazardous: "Such transportation shall not be provided if adequate transportation for the public is available." In the case public transportation (Pace) is available that would not require any person to cross Madison. This would apply to any student north of Madison who attends Longfellow Elementary. Students could take the city bus route 320 to route 314 or, based on residence location, use only route 314.

If it is agreed that no hazardous corners exist, then all the transportation of all elementary students would become a parent responsibility.



Alternate Review of Elementary School Busing

If the school district cannot come to an agreement on the elimination of hazard locations, below is another way to consider busing for the elementary schools.

Beye Elementary School currently uses two buses to transport students to the school. The furthest residence distance to the school is 1.1 miles, and none of these students currently have to walk through any of the hazard intersections previously discussed. Therefore none of these students should be claimed on state aid for the district.

Holmes Elementary School has four buses that serve this school. The furthest distance for any student from home to school is 1.3 miles. There are six listed corners on the hazard crossing list that students could pass through. Two roads that are not listed are Harlem and Kenilworth. Because these roads are not listed, they could be used without adding additional mileage to/from school. Therefore, all four buses could be eliminated. Many of the students bused to this school live less than 1.0 mile from the school, and they could walk to school without entering any of the currently listed hazards. Therefore none of these students should be claimed on state aid for the district.

There is currently one bus serving Irving Elementary School. The furthest distance from home to school for any student is .9 mile. For this school, there are three intersections on the hazard crossing list that students would have to pass through if walking to school. Two alternate routes that could be used are Austin Boulevard or East Avenue. Neither of these roadways have listed hazard intersections, and walking along them would still keep the home to school distance (by actual travel path) to less than 1.5 miles. Using the alternative paths would eliminate the bus currently used for the Irving Elementary School.

Lincoln Elementary School uses six buses to transport students to/from school. The furthest point from the school's exterior boundary to the school is 1.3 miles. Within the school boundary there are three intersections on the hazard crossing list. Two of these could be easily avoided by using East Avenue as an alternate route. The Eisenhower Walkover cannot be avoided. However, this walkover is designed for pedestrian travel, and the rationale for considering it hazardous is not clear. The majority of the students riding on Lincoln Elementary School buses live less than 1.0 miles from school.

Longfellow Elementary School uses one bus to transport students to/from school. The furthest point from the school's exterior boundary to the school is .8 mile. There is one intersection on the hazard crossing list that students would have to pass through, but this intersection can easily be avoided by using two alternate walking routes to school that have not listed hazards. Madison & East has a signal light for crossing, as does Madison & Lombard. These alternate



routes would allow for safe passage to school without the walk distance exceeding 1.5 miles. This bus could easily be eliminated.

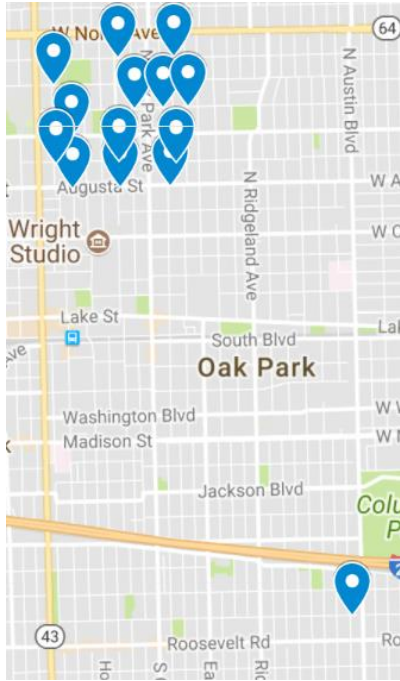
Middle Schools

The elimination of elementary school transportation would be the first step to saving money on transportation. However, the middle schools would still require busing. In order to keep costs to a minimum, it would be necessary to realign the bell times so that the buses could be used twice (transport students to one middle school, and then do the same for the other middle school). If this scenario were approved, there would be a savings of \$200,000 per year.

Additionally, the current middle school boundaries are causing additional expense for the district. With the realignment of boundaries, there would be many students who lived closer than 1.5 miles to school and therefore would no longer require transportation. By the realignment of the middle school boundaries a savings in transportation costs could be realized. Moreover, adjusting bell times for the middle schools would allow for the dual utilization of buses. If middle school boundaries were realigned, there were bell time change for the middle schools, and busing was no longer provided for the elementary schools, the largest possible savings would be realized and the school district could reduce its transportation budget by more than \$300,000 per year.

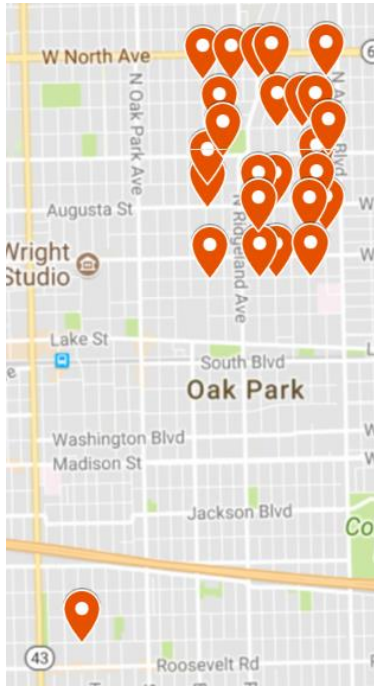


The illustration below shows the bus stops for Julian Middle School. As you can see, most busing comes from the west side of East Avenue. If the boundaries were changed, many of these students would be less than 1.5 miles from Brooks Middle School and would no longer require busing.



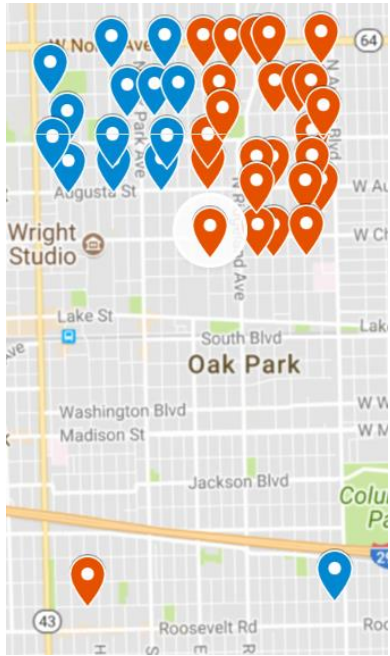


Below are the bus stops for Brooks Middle School. As you can see again most of the bus stops are on the east side of East Avenue.



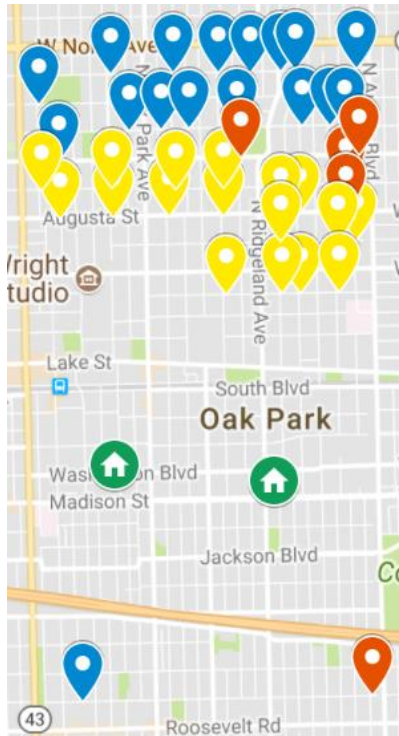


Below are the locations of all the middle school bus stops.





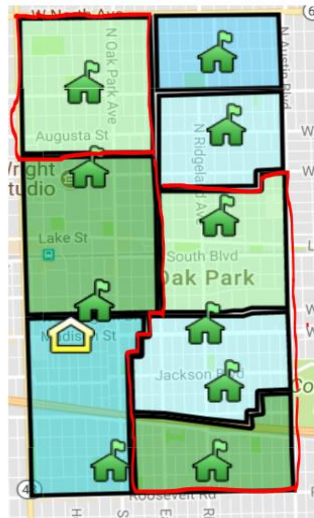
If the school attendance boundaries were changed for the middle schools, the bus stops would be located as shown below. The yellow bus stops would no longer be needed because the students would now live less than 1.5 miles from school, and 17 bus stops would no longer be needed.





Below, in red, is the boundary for Julian Middle School. The other four elementary boundaries go to Brooks Middle School.

The top left elementary boundary is Mann. The top two right boundaries are Hatch and Whittier. The street that separates the boundaries is East Avenue, which runs north and south. These are the boundaries recommended for change.





The proposed boundaries would look like the map below. Students could be grandfathered in if they would like, or they could switch schools upon request. This would only affect the district for two years; after then, the maximum savings would be realized.



Communication Plan

A communication plan of the changes, with talking points, would need formulated then given to the community. A frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet with answers should be developed. The changes should be communicated clearly to the public through different channels: local newspaper; local radio; posts on the district website; flyers to the parents; auto dialer; text messages; emails from the district database—and perhaps listening sessions. The goal is to reach as many people as possible and to clearly communicate the message. All public communication should directed to the district’s communications coordinator.

Contract

My review of Oak Park Elementary School District busing contract indicates that the district is in the final year of a three year contract, and I recommend that a new RFP be carefully considered and then published. This should be done as soon as possible to give the greatest opportunity for different contractors to bid.



Currently each bus costs the Oak Park Elementary School District \$212 per day, \$106 for AM runs and \$106 for PM runs. Each of these runs (AM or PM) is based on the current transportation plan.

Summary

Every school district has budget issues, and transportation is a large expense to most districts.

The elimination of elementary school busing will reduce the Oak Park Elementary School District's costs. Further savings can be realized by adjusting middle school bell times so that buses could be used twice. To maximize savings, a realignment of the middle school boundaries should to take place. The Oak Park Elementary School District could reduce its transportation budget by more than 50 percent if these recommendations were put in place.

In addition, an RFP would need to be developed based on any approved changes. Edulog would be more than happy to assist the Oak Park Elementary School District with the writing of the RFP.