



To: Board of Education
From: Scott Woods, Superintendent
Date: April 15, 2025
Subject: Transportation Bid Recommendation

The current transportation contract with First Student is set to expire at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year, which represents the final year available under the existing extension terms. The District initiated a competitive bid process for student transportation services covering the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, and 2027-2028 school years. A formal bid opening was conducted on April 7, 2025, during which the District received proposals from four vendors: Robinson Transport Inc., Yellow Bus Group of America, Positive Connections/Student Transportation of America (STA), and Illinois Central/North America Central.

Per Section 10-20.21 of the School Code, student transportation contracts must be awarded by first considering the bidder or bidders most able to provide safety and comfort for pupils, stability of service, the factors required in the bid documents, and then price.

All bidders were required to submit sealed proposals to the Rantoul City Schools District 137 Administration Office by 1:00 p.m. on April 2, 2025. Bid submissions were required to include a 5% bid bond, a certified financial statement (not older than 18 months), company background and experience, a list of current contracts, maintenance program information, job descriptions, and completed bid forms with rate details for each contract year.

The following table provides a summary of the bidders:

	Robinson Transport	Illinois Central	Yellow Bus Group	Positive Connections	First Student
Sealed Bid	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bid Bond	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Financial Statement	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Company Info	Yes	Yes	No.	Yes	Yes
Maintenance Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Job Description	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Signed Bid Proposal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Three Year Cost	3,277,003.00	3,978,687.47	3,700,366.20	4,122,029.10	3,753,407.20

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After careful review of the bid submissions, the District determined that two of the bids did not meet all required specifications and were therefore not considered responsible bids under the criteria established in the bid documents and Section 10-20.21 of the School Code.

Not Meeting Minimum Bid Requirements:

- Illinois Central/North America Central did not submit a certified financial statement, which is required for verifying financial stability and the ability to perform services over the term of the agreement. Without this documentation, the District cannot adequately evaluate the company's capacity to fulfill the contract.
- Yellow Bus Group of America failed to meet two critical requirements. It did not provide a certified financial statement and did not meet the minimum requirement of two years of experience transporting students for K–12 public school districts in Illinois. As a newly formed company, Yellow Bus Group does not meet the threshold for demonstrated, stable service.

Complete and Responsive Bids:

- Robinson Transport Inc. submitted a complete and responsive bid that met all technical requirements outlined in the bid specifications. However, Robinson operates primarily in far southern Illinois, with the closest current contract located in Salem, IL—approximately 138 miles from Rantoul. Given the significant geographic distance and the lack of established infrastructure or operations in our immediate region, we have concerns about Robinson Transport Inc.'s ability to provide stable and consistent service to the District.
- Positive Connections/Student Transportation of America (STA) submitted a complete and responsive bid and met all minimum requirements. However, its total three-year cost proposal was the highest among the qualified vendors, and Positive Connections does not operate in our region.
- First Student submitted a complete and fully responsive bid and met or exceeded all bid requirements, including documentation, financial qualifications, and service experience. First Student's three-year cost was competitive, and the company has a strong and established record of providing reliable transportation services to Rantoul City Schools.

The estimated costs of First Student's services are as follows:

Current	\$1,251,907.20	Percent Change
2025-2026	\$1,214,316.10	-3.0%
2026-2027	\$1,250,785.20	+3.0%
2027-2028	\$1,288,305.90	+3.0%
Three Year Total	\$3,753,407.20	+2.91%

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To clarify, the costs shown in the bid do not represent our total transportation costs. Other cost considerations are for added services such as field trips, additional routes, additional monitors and activity buses. An additional consideration for next school year is the significant routing changes plus additional bus routes that will be implemented to support the Companion School model. First Student's familiarity with the District's needs and routes positions them to continue delivering consistent service.

Based on the thorough evaluation of the submitted proposals and consideration of service quality, stability, and cost, it is our recommendation that the Board of Education award the student transportation contract for the 2025–2028 school years to First Student, and authorize the superintendent to finalize and sign said contract. The district will reserve the right to terminate the contract per provisions within the contract.