

04/30/2026

Dr. Ilandus Hampton
Assistant Superintendent for Business Services
Joliet Township High School District 204
300 Caterpillar Dr.
Joliet, IL 60436

Dear Dr. Hampton,

First Student is pleased to submit a proposal to Joliet Township High School District 204 in response to your Bid Packet for Special Education Out of District Student Transportation Services. The accompanying proposal documents outline the many ways we will use our local and national resources to meet your requirements and organizational goals with a customized approach. We are truly excited by the prospect of partnering with Joliet Township High School District 204 to provide safe, efficient, world-class pupil transportation for the Joliet community.

Our mission is simple: to help Joliet Township High School District 204 provide every student with the safest, most reliable ride to and from school. As the leading school transportation partner in North America, First Student proudly supports **1,300 customers** in delivering efficient transportation every day. Our highly trained drivers safely transport **4.6 million students daily**, backed by the industry's strongest safety record. We work alongside districts to enhance their operations with full-service transportation management, specialized solutions for students with unique needs, innovative fleet electrification, smart route optimization and scheduling, expert maintenance, and flexible technology solutions.

First Student brings a distinct combination of strengths that set us apart as the ideal transportation partner for Joliet THSD 204. Our proposal is built around key differentiators that directly address the district's priorities for safe, reliable, and comprehensive special education out of district student transportation services. We believe these advantages position us to deliver exceptional value from day one and throughout the life of our partnership.

First Alt® Alternative Transportation - First Alt® provides safe, cost-effective transportation for students who cannot be served efficiently by a traditional bus. This includes McKinney-Vento students, out-of-district placements, and those with special needs.

First Serves™ Special Needs Leadership Training and Communication Program - First Serves™ goes way beyond typical special needs training to incorporate research-based interventions and other effective training models to better serve children with disabilities.

Web-based Behavioral Incident Reporting System - provides school administrators with visibility into student conduct on the bus, allowing for quick incident response to reduce negative behaviors.

Dedicated Hiring Power- A dedicated Centralized Acquisition Team focused exclusively on recruiting, training, and retaining qualified drivers, ensuring routes remain fully staffed and students are never left waiting.

The pages that follow provide a detailed look at each of these abilities and demonstrate how First Student will translate these strengths into measurable results for Joliet Township High School District 204.

First Student at a Glance

Your students come first in every decision you make. Each day, districts across North America trust First Student to transport their students to and from school. Over the past century, we have developed relationships based on a common approach to student care. Together we will establish the core tenets of our mutual philosophy – ensuring every student achieves to their highest level. First Student knows the communities we serve, and we care for their children like a trusted family member.

The Proven Solution

Over 100 years of providing customer-focused solutions.



Student-Centric

Caring for the students we serve is our First priority.



Recognized Leader

Chosen and trusted by more districts in North America than any other student transportation provider.



Operational Excellence

Data-driven metrics ensure we proactively modify and adapt to ever-changing needs to elevate district transparency and deliver on our goals.



Award-Winning Safety

The only school transportation company recognized as a safety leader by the Campbell Institute and awarded the National Safety Council's Green Cross for Safety medal.



Environmental Stewardship

Alternative fuel, electrification strategies, and operational solutions that lower emissions, provide greater efficiency, and improve passenger experience.



Proprietary Technology

Seamlessly connected technology connects the bus, route, and student, which elevates safety and gives districts and parents greater visibility and control.



Diversity & Inclusion

Since we serve the most diverse communities in North America, we attract, engage, and develop a workforce that reflects the students, customers, and communities we serve.



Committed to Caring



95%

of our 1,300 customers

**RECOMMEND
FIRST STUDENT**

to their colleagues

“During our time working together, First Student has demonstrated a high level of skill in their management team, operations, driver and aide training, vehicle maintenance program and their care for our students.

Ronald Johnson
Indian Prairie School District
204, IL

“First Student truly embodies customer first mentality. They prioritize the needs of our students and understand that each situation requires a tailored approach.

Mandy Johnson
Stevenson High SD 125, IL

“We have all experienced times of very tight driver pools and limited resources, and First Student has worked with us proactively to address those challenges in a responsible and cost-conscious way.

Curt Saindon
Woodridge School District 68,
IL

Awards & Certifications



Technology



TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY
IMPACT

Electrification



Operations



Why First Student is the Right Choice for Joliet Township High School District 204

Serving Joliet Township High School District 204 and your community requires an immense amount of expertise, commitment, and an army of dedicated professionals. This proposal reflects your evolving needs and highlights service elements that reinforce consistency, support student well-being, and maintain trust across the community. First Student brings the experience needed to help your district move forward with clarity and care.

Regional Strength That Keeps Joliet’s Routes Covered, Every Day

A successful transportation program depends on having a full complement of qualified, dependable drivers. First Student brings the advantage of a strong Illinois presence backed by scalable regional resources. The kind of depth that helps districts stay fully staffed even in a tight labor market.

We recruit, hire, and retain qualified drivers through a coordinated approach that pairs local leadership with our dedicated **Centralized Talent Acquisition Team**. Our approach includes programmatic advertising, social media outreach, and a web-based Applicant Tracking System that streamlines the hiring process from application to onboarding. Our team monitors applicant sources and adjusts campaigns to ensure the best return on effort. We also support job fairs, manage online job boards, and ensure all applicants are contacted within 48 hours.



Training is equally essential. First Student’s Professional Driver Development Program (PDDP) goes beyond road test preparation. It builds customer service skills, safe decision-making, and community awareness. Region Training Managers ensure best practices are followed and that all training meets or exceeds state and federal requirements. Drivers also participate in ongoing refresher sessions, including our annual back-to-school kickoff, with topics informed by real-time safety data and trends.

At the root of all this, and strengthening our ability to deliver consistent, high-quality performance is our deep and long-standing footprint across the state.

With 20+ locations within a 30-mile radius of Joliet Township High School District 204, we are positioned to provide immediate support through shared resources, additional drivers, and maintenance expertise. **Across the state of Illinois, we operate 40 locations and employ more than 6,000 team members.** Nationally, our network includes over 500 locations, all connected through shared systems, training, and leadership. This structure gives your district the benefit of local familiarity backed by regional and national strength.

First Student’s local teams are backed by regional and national expertise and resources to professionally manage and support all of your transportation needs. In our proposal, we present how comprehensive this support and expertise is. **We are the benchmark of the industry and have set the standards in technology and service.** Our people make the difference when it comes to streamlining your transportation operation.



 Joliet Township High School District 204
 First Student Location

First Serves™ Special Education Training Program: Delivering Calmer, Safer Rides

Transporting students with disabilities requires more than logistics. It demands empathy, specialized knowledge, and a commitment to each child’s unique needs. First Student’s First Serves™ program goes beyond standard training to create a complete support system for your district’s special education transportation.

First Serves™ delivers a comprehensive, research-driven training program supported by a dedicated Student Services division—the only one of its kind in the industry—ensuring drivers and attendants are equipped with the latest strategies developed in collaboration with educational researchers, behavioral psychologists, and families. This partnership brings PBIS and MTSS frameworks onto the bus, reinforces Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) principles, and customizes supports to match district goals and student needs.

Complementing this is our web-based Behavior Incident Reporting system, which connects drivers, school administrators, and families around timely communication and data-driven interventions. Districts using this combined approach have achieved a significant reduction in behavioral incidents, demonstrating the measurable impact of training paired with ongoing coaching and consistent reporting. Together, First Serves™ and Behavior Incident Reporting create calmer rides, more confident students, and stronger alignment between transportation and instructional teams, enhancing the district’s entire student experience from home to school and back again.

First Student is the only transportation company with an internal Student Services Division. We are dedicated to going beyond the industry standard to serve Joliet’s special needs students.

Key features of First Serves™ include:

- Individualized Approach**
 Training emphasizes understanding each student as an individual with unique traits and challenges. Staff learn how to respond appropriately and compassionately to student needs as they arise.
- Collaborative Development**
 The program was built in collaboration with medical and educational experts to ensure it reflects best practices in student care and behavior management.
- Sustainable Knowledge Transfer**
 Through the train-the-trainer model, district and community leaders are empowered to train their teams. This cultivates a local base of special education transportation experts and ensures knowledge remains current and accessible.
- Customizable Implementation**
 First Serves™ is not one-size-fits-all. It is tailored to your district’s systems, staffing structure, and student population.
- Continuum of Services**
 First Serves™ functions as a continuum of student services on the bus. It helps prevent disruptions and supports emotional readiness for the school day.



First Alt® – Alternative Transportation division of First Student

First Alt®, powered by First Student, provides districts with a safe and reliable alternative transportation option for students with special needs, students experiencing homelessness, out of district students and hard to serve trips. First Alt® utilizes a fleet of small capacity vehicles from existing local transportation companies that are expertly operated and maintained, giving districts flexibility in their transportation program, reducing costs and freeing up resources for higher capacity trips.

By selecting First Alt®, Joliet Township High School District 204 benefits from a single, fully integrated transportation partner for all student mobility needs. From non-conforming and first-division vehicles to traditional yellow bus service, First Student provides a coordinated, end-to-end solution that simplifies oversight, ensures consistent standards, and supports seamless service across every trip type. This “one-stop” model allows the District to remain focused on student outcomes while we manage the complexity of transportation behind the scenes—helping students arrive safely, ready to learn, and positioned to grow and thrive.

We know that the safety of students is the number one priority. **First Alt® confirms that all transportation providers and their drivers have met all First Student, state, local and district requirements before they can service trips.**

- Custom training program developed by First Student in conjunction with the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center focusing specifically on how to work with and interact with students with special needs.
- Pre-service, random, post-accident and reasonable suspicion drug testing program. Rideshare companies do not typically require these same drug and alcohol testing standards.
- Initial and continuous background and MVR checks.

Please see the First Alt® section of the proposal for more information and pricing.



Safest, Most Advanced Technology in the Industry

HALO™ is First Student’s proprietary technology platform, created to enhance every aspect of your district’s transportation experience. **Through our exclusive partnership with Samsara®, HALO™ now includes advanced AI capabilities that elevate safety, security, and performance across our fleet.** Powered by artificial intelligence, HALO™ transforms how transportation is managed and monitored—delivering real-time insights into driver performance, vehicle health, and student behavior. These features help anticipate concerns, prevent incidents, and support continuous improvement. AI-enhanced driver scoring and predictive analytics improve safety and reduce service disruptions. Here’s how it works:



- **Continuous Data Collection:**
 - High precision GPS units and AI cameras installed on every bus collect real-time data on over 30 key driving behaviors, including speeding, rapid acceleration, hard braking, idling, and route adherence
- **Behavior Correlation:**
 - The HALO™ platform’s AI algorithms analyze this data by correlating multiple inputs—vehicle sensor data, camera footage, and external conditions (such as traffic and weather)—to identify patterns and relationships between driving actions and safety outcomes
- **Trend Identification Over Time:**
 - AI tracks each driver’s performance over days, weeks, and months, building a comprehensive profile of driving habits. This enables the system to spot trends, such as improvements after coaching or recurring risky behaviors that may need intervention
- **Proactive Insights and Alerts:**
 - Predictive safety analytics generate proactive insights, alerting managers to potential risks before incidents occur. For example, if a driver’s hard braking events increase, the system can flag this for review and coaching
- **Gamification and Recognition:**
 - Drivers receive scores based on measurable behaviors, with milestones and progress tracking to encourage positive competition and growth. Managers can recognize and reward safe driving, while also targeting coaching for those who need improvement. Real-time insights and post-trip analytics help supervisors identify coachable moments and reinforce accountability.

AI-powered analytics in the HALO™ platform don’t just monitor driving behaviors—they correlate, track, and analyze them over time to identify trends, coachable moments, and opportunities for recognition. This approach supports a safer, more reliable transportation experience for students and families, while fostering continuous improvement and accountability among drivers.

With HALO™, Your Transportation Program Gains the Ability to:

Recruit the Best Drivers and Get Them on the Road Sooner

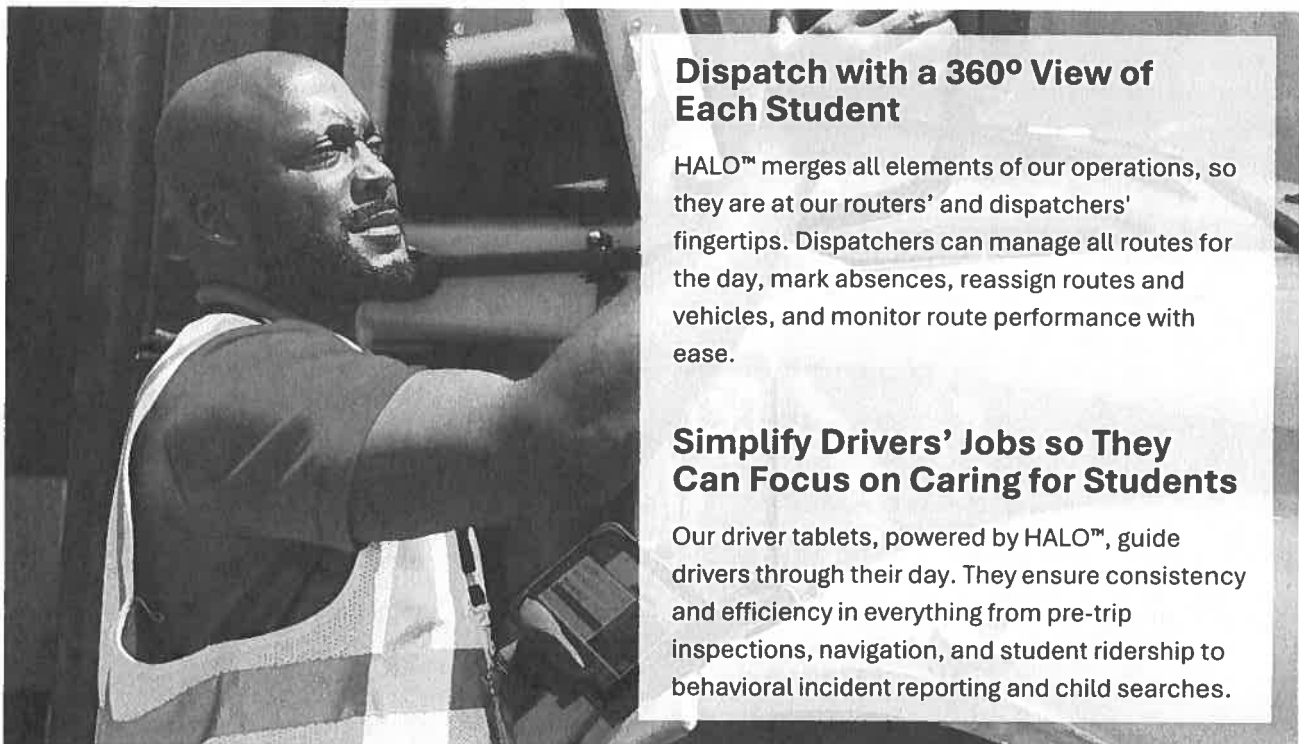
HALO™ allows us to bring more qualified drivers on board, faster. The platform supports efficient recruiting, consistent training, and strong CDL test preparation.

Ensure Your Students Are in the Right-Sized Vehicle

HALO™ ensures every student is on the right-sized vehicle. As needs change, the system supports smooth transitions while upholding the Least Restrictive Environment principle across your transportation program.

Provide Adaptive and Responsive Navigation

HALO™ improves the safety and efficiency of your whole transportation system by systematically reviewing routes, monitoring for hazards, and identifying opportunities for improvement.



Dispatch with a 360° View of Each Student

HALO™ merges all elements of our operations, so they are at our routers' and dispatchers' fingertips. Dispatchers can manage all routes for the day, mark absences, reassign routes and vehicles, and monitor route performance with ease.

Simplify Drivers' Jobs so They Can Focus on Caring for Students

Our driver tablets, powered by HALO™, guide drivers through their day. They ensure consistency and efficiency in everything from pre-trip inspections, navigation, and student ridership to behavioral incident reporting and child searches.



Monitor Every Ride and Provide Drivers with Coaching

HALO™ tracks, records, and scores every route, providing our Location Managers with detailed vehicle operations data to monitor drivers' improvements and identify coaching opportunities. The result is a safer, more consistent experience for students.

Provide Parents Peace of Mind with First View®

HALO™ powers the First View® app, giving families real-time updates on vehicle location and trip changes. Parents can track multiple students, receive customized notifications, and access live support in several languages.

View Your Entire Fleet with First View®

District personnel can see the whole picture with our vehicle tracking dashboard, powered by HALO™. This solution provides a complete fleet view and allows you to drill down to the route and stop level to always know where every vehicle is.



Provide Advanced, Digitized Fleet Maintenance

Every First Student maintenance shop is using fault-code centered predictive analytics to identify and solve problems two to four weeks before failures occur. Predictive analytics keeps maintenance costs, downtime, and road failures to a minimum.

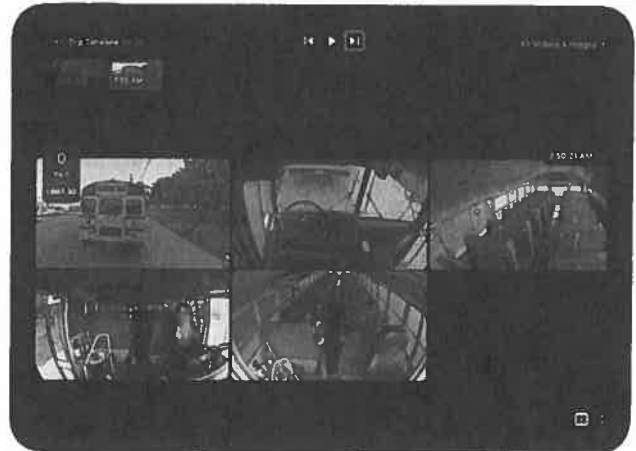
Leverage Data and Analytics To Continually Improve Transportation for Your Students

HALO™ helps enhance safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness by monitoring and making recommendations on current bus routes, ridership data, fuel consumption, and maintenance expenses.



HALO™ is fully modular and adaptable, allowing your district to select only the tools you need today while maintaining the flexibility to expand as needs evolve. Rather than requiring districts to conform to a fixed system, First Student aligns technology to support your existing operations and long-term goals.

Successful implementation is supported through close collaboration and a paced rollout. Tools such as First View® rely on student and route data to deliver accurate reporting and customized support, with full system integration typically occurring within the first three months of the school year.



For more information on our innovative technology solution through Samsara, please watch our First Student x Samsara: Setting a New Standard for K-12 Student Transportation: <https://firststudentinc.com/halo/>

Award-Winning & Industry-Leading Safety Program

At First Student, safety is foundational to everything we do. We are the only school transportation company to receive the National Safety Council Green Cross for Safety®, the highest safety honor in North America. This recognition reflects a deep and ongoing commitment to protecting students, supporting staff, and earning the trust of every community we serve.

Our training programs are designed to build strong habits and reinforce a culture of care. Drivers and trainers participate in certification programs that focus on safe decision-making and student well-being. Local managers and team members receive training on customer service and professionalism. These programs create a transportation environment where students feel safe, staff feel supported, and families can count on consistent, high-quality service every day.

For more information on our Safety Program, please refer to the Safety and Security Measures section and the Training and Development section.



First Student's Proposal Includes:

- Operational Excellence & Customer Service
- Recruitment, Hiring & Retention of Drivers
- Local Routing Assistance
- Driver Compensation
- Award-Winning & Industry-Leading Safety Program
- Proprietary HALO™ Technology Platform
- Fleet and Equipment
- Preventative Maintenance Services
- Facility Management



Operational Excellence & Customer Service

Serving Joliet Township High School District 204 means more than getting students from point A to point B. It means building a transportation program that reflects your values and supports the people who make it work every day. First Student remains focused on maintaining high operational standards while honoring the experience of those already in place.

Employees in good standing will be invited to continue their work through roles with First Student. Together, we will build a transportation program that delivers consistent, high-quality service from day one.

To learn more about your local and regional support teams, please refer to the Management and Operations Support section.

Our proposed operations team includes:

- **Location Manager II:** Pam Dougherty
- **Assistant Location Manager:** Keyana Brooks
- **Assistant Location Manager:** Michele Miller

- **Location Safety Manager I:** Bayley Johnson
- **Charter/Field Trip Coordinator:** Heidi Unger
- **Operations Clerk:** June Fry
- **Road Supervisor:** Darcy Swartz
- **Dispatchers:** Jennifer Wheeler, Sharon Nudi and Jean Kinney

Our proposed maintenance team includes:

- **Shop Manager I:** Todd Griswold
- **Technician III:** Steven Raulerson & Teddy Rodden
- **Technician I:** Chuck Raysel, Richard Field, Shawn Harvey, Alan Marquez and Ramiro Diaz

Most of these positions will be full-time employees. However, some responsibilities may be shared. Full-time employees have access to our benefits program, which includes insurance for medical, dental, vision, life and accidental death and dismemberment, as well as a 401K plan, paid vacation and sick days, and employee training and development programs.

Recruitment, Hiring, & Retention of Drivers

Reliable transportation starts with having the right people behind the wheel. To maintain a steady, qualified driver workforce, First Student will implement enhanced recruitment and retention strategies tailored to Joliet Township High School District 204's needs. A competitive wage scale will be introduced to attract strong candidates and reduce turnover. These efforts are designed to ensure consistent service and give your district confidence that students are in capable hands every day.

For more information on our recruitment and retention methods, please refer to the Recruiting, Retaining, and Engagement section.



Driver Compensation

Competitive pay is essential to attracting and keeping qualified drivers. First Student uses market analysis to align wages with other CDL-licensed positions in the area, helping Joliet Township High School District 204 maintain a steady workforce. A clear wage scale supports recruitment and retention efforts, giving the district confidence that students are served by professionals who are valued and fairly compensated.

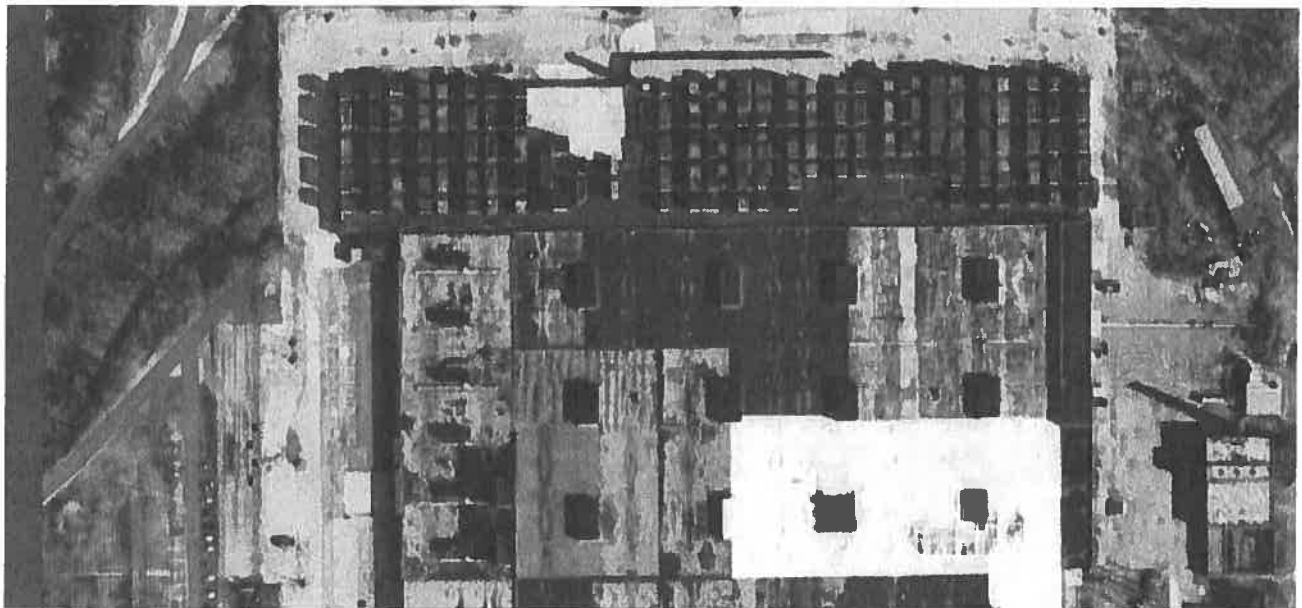
Our starting rate for drivers is \$27.00 per hour. Drivers based on years of experience have the opportunity to earn up to \$39.22 per hour during the 2028-29 school year.

For more information on our recruitment and retention methods, please refer to the Recruiting, Retaining and Engagement section.

Facility Management

900 & 910 Sak Dr.
Crest Hill, IL 60403

Operations will be executed from our established facility in Crest Hill, ensuring a seamless transition for the district from day one. Because the facility is already fully operational and well equipped, there is no need for construction, build-out, or lengthy setup. Services can begin on schedule without disruption. The facility consists of a total of twenty offices, with eleven located in the 900 Building and nine in the 910 Building, providing ample administrative and management space to support district operations. It also features four shop bays, offering versatile space for maintenance, storage, and various operational needs. Altogether, the facility encompasses approximately 475,000 square feet, giving the district immediate access to the infrastructure required for efficient, uninterrupted service delivery.



Fleet & Equipment

We are committed to maintaining a safe, efficient fleet for Joliet Township High School District 204. Our fleet replacement strategy ensures the appropriate number of vehicles are always available while fully complying with district age requirements. No scheduled route bus will exceed 12 years of age. Our intent is to bring in a new fleet for your contract. Due to the timing, we may need to use contingency fleet based on the time of award.

For a comprehensive overview of our proposed fleet, please refer to the Fleet and Technology Solutions section of this proposal.



Preventative Maintenance Services

HALO™ supports a proactive maintenance program that helps your district reduce road failures, control costs, and keep vehicles in top condition. Some highlights include:

TAC Help Desk

The Technical Assistance Center (TAC) Help Desk is an exciting tool for First Student technicians that helps save time, reduce the use of unnecessary parts, and keep costs down. Powered by HALO™, the TAC Help Desk allows technicians to share vehicle-specific information, include helpful photos, and collaborate in real-time via video chat with ASE-certified experts.

Predictive Analytics

Every First Student maintenance shop uses fault-code-centered predictive analytics to identify and solve problems two to four weeks before failures occur. The system, powered by HALO™, uses data pulled from buses in your fleet to identify exhaust, cooling, and ABS brake issues. All buses and equipment will be maintained in accordance with state and federal law and accepted industry maintenance standards.

Please refer to the Maintenance Program section for more information on our preventative maintenance services.

Pricing

Our pricing reflects the complete cost structure outlined in the RFP specifications and thoughtfully includes the necessary resources to attract and retain qualified drivers. After a thorough review of bid specifications, we believe we can offer the best and most competitively priced solutions for Joliet Township High School District 204.

For a detailed overview of our price proposal, please refer to the Appendices section of this proposal.

Contract Start Date

Under the current scenario, our services would begin July 1, 2026. Alternate start dates are available if your district makes an award earlier or requires additional time to finalize your decision.

Contract Terms & Suggested Language

Our proposal assumes that, based on the RFP and this submission, Joliet Township High School District 204 and First Student sign a mutually acceptable contract for a 2-year term. Subsequent to the award and any additional negotiation, our legal team will work with your legal representative to create a mutually agreeable contract.

For notes on suggested language to the RFP and Contract, please refer to the Contract Suggestions section.

As students navigate their way from childhood into adulthood, they depend on us to keep them safe. Families throughout the Joliet community count on Joliet Township High School District 204 to educate, nourish, and protect their children. No matter how old they are, it's not easy to hand your child over to someone else's care. Joliet Township High School District 204 is dedicated to ensuring that families can feel confident their students are in good hands. In turn, you need a transportation provider you can trust to make sure your students have a safe start and finish to each school day.

For over 100 years, First Student has refined our operation and developed a proven method of student safety operations and industry leading solutions. By providing exceptional student transportation services and positively impacting your students' and families' experiences, we enable Joliet Township High School District 204 to focus on your core mission –to positively impact our community and thrive in a global society by providing an equitable, personalized, and rigorous education.

By submitting this proposal, First Student agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions set forth in this Bid, including the contractor's Bid response and the contract to be entered into by both parties.

First Student acknowledges receipt of the addenda released by Joliet Township High School District 204.

We recognize that decisions about student transportation affect your families, staff, and the Joliet community. This proposal reflects our commitment to supporting each of them. We welcome the chance to speak with your administration, evaluation committee, and/or school board to explore how our services can best align with your district's goals.

I look forward to further discussing our proposal and how our capabilities can help strengthen your transportation program. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



PETER RUDNIK



Director of Business Development
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Peter.Rudnik@firststudentinc.com