



To: Harlem Board of Education

From: Josh Aurand, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations  
Don West, Director of Transportation

Date: October 15, 2024

Re: 2 Tier Feasibility

The District has worked hard over the last two years in recruitment and retention of bus drivers. That involved television ads, billboard ads, and online/newspaper advertisements. The District also offered hiring, retention and referral bonuses with mild to low success rates. In spite of all of the efforts listed, the district continued to see a reduction of drivers leading up to the administration's recommendation to move to a 3 tier system for the FY 25 school year.

Over the past three years, the Transportation Department was forced to reduce the number of routes to accommodate the loss of school bus drivers. First, routes that had low student counts were combined and made longer to reduce the number of drivers that we needed. Then, schools that had District wide programs such as pre-k, Academic, and Fine Arts, and had routes that ran in similar areas were combined together adding shuttles to each of those schools. Even with the reduction of 11 routes, the District was forced to outsource almost all of the out-of-district schools with companies such as Everdriven, Sunrise, and First Student.

We were asked to put together what the cost would be relating to if the District were able to move back to a 2 tier system. Those costs are below:

Add 18 Drivers	\$255,555
Add 4 Bus Assistants	<\$10,099>
Add 4 Buses	\$265,000
Additional Fuel Costs	\$25,000
<b>Estimated Annual Costs</b>	<b>\$535,456</b>

Harlem isn't alone in its shortage of bus drivers. In a recent survey, of 400 district leaders and school transportation workers, more than 90% said their district has a shortage of bus drivers that is "severely" or "somewhat" constraining their operations. 60% percent of school leaders said they've had to cut routes this year because of shortages. In Northern Illinois we have also seen districts that have routes that they are unable to be run each day including RPS #205 and Romeoville.

Looking back over the last few years and seeing the challenges Harlem has had adding net new drivers, although a 2 Tier system would be preferred in light of the information above we don't believe it is feasible.

