



# Transportation Audit Review



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Audit

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# SLPS Strategic Values



Highly Effective  
Educators and  
Leaders



Authentic Family  
and Community  
Partnership



Equitable and  
Multiple Sources  
of Data



Joyful and  
Engaged  
Students



Personalized  
Supports and  
Innovative Pathways



College and  
Career Ready  
Critical Thinkers

*Values Across Our Student Goals*





## 3rd Grade Reading

—  
Growth and Proficiency



## 3rd Grade Math

—  
Growth and Proficiency



## College and Career Readiness

—  
High School Students Prepared for Workforce and Post-Secondary Employment



## Culture and Climate

—  
Student Wellbeing

# Student Success Goals



# Portrait of a Graduate



College & Career Ready

Change Agent

Critical Thinker

Communicator

Competent

Culturally Aware

Collaborator





# Agenda

- Summary of 2023  
Transportation Audit  
observations
- Audit Recommendations
- Corrective Actions Review



# Summary of Observations



- Lack of communication between vendor and parents, administration, and staff
- Vendor was unprepared to provide adequate services (driver shortages, lack of driver accountability, lack of driver training, lack of mechanics, bus shortages)
- Bus safety issues (lack of inspections, driver checks, garage equipment shortages)
- Poor vendor oversight by the district Department of Transportation (DoT); inadequate staffing levels in DoT
- Inefficiency and excessive costs (DoT allowed vendor to develop routes, schedules, lack of invoice reconciliation)
- No evidence of interdepartmental annual route planning by district stakeholders



# Summary of Observations Cont.

- Consistently late schedules (pickups and drop-offs)
- Routes were built based on eligibility versus average ridership history (actual daily ridership data not being collected/monitored by DoT)/few students on some bus routes
- Low threshold for performance penalties/penalties not being charged/performance incentives not offered
- Lack of internal controls to monitor Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data/lack of compliance specialist in district to monitor KPIs
- Insufficient technology to track buses, students, provide for incident/accident reporting, to track maintenance
- District should respond quickly to requests for information when audits are being conducted



# Audit Recommendations



- Convene task force immediately to extensively review bus vendor contracts, terms, safety, routing, technology, etc.
- Schedule meetings with the CEO/President of the bus vendor to discuss concerns
- Engage a comprehensive staffing study for DoT to ensure adequate manpower to monitor ongoing contract compliance
- Develop a succession plan and cross training for DoT to ensure knowledge transfer among employees
- Prepare a business case justification for bringing the routing function in-house to improve routing outcomes
- Develop a strategy to monitor daily ridership metrics





# Audit Recommendations Cont.

- Develop programs to measure customer and stakeholder satisfaction
- Establish an annual interdepartmental routing timeline committee
- Use prior year ridership figures as starting point for ensuing year; allow for up to a 15 percent contingency
- Require transportation policy exceptions to be approved by the Superintendent or a designee
- Explore the benefits of incorporating performance incentives or recouping some portion of the performance penalties
- Enhance contract administration by creating an SLPS central office function whose primary responsibility is to monitor district contract management, deliverables, compliance, and best practices



# Audit Recommendations Cont.

- Complete vendor performance evaluations and utilize as a rationale for decisions on contract extensions or allowing vendors to submit bids in the future
- Ensure a DoT employee attends or communicates often with special internal stakeholders such as Department of Special Education
- Develop strategies to ensure that buses are on time
- Implement better technology for bus tracking, maintenance, tracking of students, communication amongst stakeholders



# Corrective Actions



- A taskforce was convened to receive input on transportation issues and to vet potential new bus vendors (in progress for 2025-2026 school year)
- A meeting with the President/CEO of previous bus company was held and negotiations failed. The vendor requested an additional \$2M for the increase in driver wages and reduction in volume. The District identified the service failures, compliance issues and presented the findings during the meeting
- Staffing assessment for DoT is still pending, but SLPS has onboarded a Contract Compliance Manager to monitor the management of contracted services; also a Transportation Routing Specialist, Transportation Field Supervisor/Compliance Officer, and Assistant Director of Transportation; we are in the process of internalizing call center with Transportation Associates



# Corrective Actions



- SLPS has developed Standard Operating Procedures and cross-training within the Transportation Department
- The District has on-boarded transportation routers
- Will establish training for routers to become more efficient with route planning and building capacity
- The district will establish monthly ridership counts to get actual ridership data
- Will conduct frequent PAC meetings to discuss transportation issues; survey school administrators to identify service concerns





# Corrective Actions



- Established quarterly meetings with routers and key staff from Special Education, McKinney-Vento, English Language Learners and dispatchers from transportation service companies to discuss and address any routing issues
- Routing Tiers were extended to 65 minutes between tiers
- The District has begun registration for the next school year; families will register on-line and they must opt-in to transportation
- Transportation Department is exploring RFID cards to accurately capture ridership and bus capacity
- Current performance penalty with school bus vendors cannot exceed \$7,500 per calendar month



# Corrective Actions



- Quarterly meeting will be held with vendors to inform transportation providers on district policy and contract compliance
- The current contract does not include performance incentive opportunities; district is in the RFP process currently
- There is no process in place that verifies assigned students were actually transported; currently, the Transportation Department relies on information provided by transportation vendor; currently audits are performed during which the vendors are required to provide student ID number which is cross referenced with the District's Student Information System to determine if assigned students attended school



# Corrective Actions



- The prior contract did not define what constitutes a bus accident or incident
- Current provider has passed Missouri State Inspections
  - The team can verify that cabs and alternative transportation companies –
    - Have confidential student information protocols were in place;
    - That there is a clear definition of what constitutes an accident or incident with SLPS students aboard;
    - That minimum age requirements or conditions exist allowing students to ride cabs without parental presence (or other authorized adult) in the vehicle with the student
- The field trip tracking software has been addressed which allows for District personnel to receive confirmations once field trips have been submitted



# Corrective Actions



- SLPS DoT has access to the GPS software and parent portal tracker system
- SLPS does not have operational cost data for our current vendor at this time (ie. Cost per bus, cost per mile operated, cost per student)
- Meetings were held with the Special Education Department, Students in Transition and English Language Learners prior to the first day of school
- DoT currently receives nightly updates from the Student Information System
- On-time bus arrival remains at 85%; District is pursuing liquidated damages





# Corrective Actions



- DoT has begun regular engagement with school administrators, transportation companies, and parents to gather input and ensure transportation plans meet the needs of students and families; collect data on transportation performance and student outcomes, and use it to guide improvements and monitor the effectiveness of corrective actions; engage in Continuous Improvement by setting up a process for periodic review and improvement of transportation services to keep up with changing demands and avoid future issues.
- 99% of the concerns mentioned in the 2023 Audit can be mitigated/resolved through the hiring of a new bus transportation vendor for the 25-26 school year, if a quality vendor is selected by the district



# Corrective Actions



- DoT will conduct a risk assessment and develop a contingency framework
- Department Chief will review and update the Job Descriptions with approval of HR
- DoT will send follow-up email/reminder: Send a follow-up email or official communication to all staff members who have not responded to data and information requests. Clearly reiterate the importance of the requested information, the deadline for submission, and the consequences of non-compliance. For staff who continue not to respond after the follow-up, make direct contact via phone or in person to understand any challenges or obstacles they may be facing in providing the requested information. Clarify Expectations: Provide a clear explanation of why the information is needed and the impact it will have on the district's transportation operations. Emphasize the need for timely responses to support decision-making processes.



# Corrective Actions



- 99% of the concerns mentioned in the 2023 Audit can be mitigated/resolved through the hiring of a new bus transportation vendor for the 25-26 school year, if a quality vendor is selected by the district





# Questions?

