



Proposed Transportation Strategies for 2024-25



July 2, 2024



Agenda



- Current Challenges
- SLPS Transportation Goals
- Stabilization in 2024-25
- Review of Proposed Strategies
- Communication & Engagement
- Next Steps
- Questions and Discussion



Current Challenges



- **National driver shortage** has caused route cancellations and unpredictable service for many schools and families.
- **SLPS' primary bus supplier canceled its contract** abruptly and a year early.
- **Fewer buses available next year** means we must be efficient with the resources we have.
- We expect to work with **new vendors and up to 19 total vendors** next year, but **still anticipate not being able to cover all current routes.**
- **Route reduction needed** to ensure reliable service for those who need it most.



SLPS Transportation Goals



1

Safe and reliable transportation options for all students.

2

On-time and reliable service to minimize disruptions to students' educational experience.

3

Clear communication to schools and families regarding transportation schedules, changes, and policies.

4

Continuous Improvement of policies and practices based on feedback from students, families, and school staff.



Stabilization in 2024-25



- **SLPS partnered with transportation solutions firm 4MATIV** to analyze data and explore vehicle reduction options.
- **4MATIV has worked with school districts and state education departments nationwide**, including in Cincinnati, Houston, Indianapolis, Rhode Island, and Virginia.
- **We will need to reduce buses by 70** to align with current resources (from 228 to 158).
- **Our plans ensure transportation for students with the highest needs**, including those with IEPs and students in transition. Students receiving ELL services will continue to be provided transportation based on districtwide policies.
- **We've prioritized solutions that align with long-term goals** and fiscal responsibility.





Proposed Strategies

- 1 **Align bell times:** Balance tiers for efficiency and ensure 65 minutes between tiers
- 2 **Public transit shift:** Use public transit for high schoolers if route meets specific criteria
- 3 **Opt-out campaign:** District initiative for eligible students not planning to ride the bus
- 4 **Stop consolidation:** Reduce the number of stops to decrease run time
- 5 **Strategic routing:** Ensure high-capacity vehicles are assigned the most students



Proposed: Align Bell Times



- Current imbalance in trips across tiers. Average driver completes 5.34 trips/day whereas 6 trips/day optimal.
- 65 min recommended between tiers to run routes on time. Proposing adjusting all district bell times by 5-20 minutes.
- 3 high schools would have a more significant change of 50 minutes moving from a start time of 8:05am to 7:15am.
 - Roosevelt, Sumner, and Vashon
- We considered later start times for high schools, but it would require more buses

Tier	Start Time	End Time
1	7:15am	2:12pm
2	8:20am	3:17pm
3	9:25am	4:22pm



Proposed: Public Transit Shift

- Only high school students with a specific transit journey would receive a transit pass in lieu of a district provided transportation
- The criteria for this journey is defined as:
 - Total route duration is approximately 70 minutes or less
 - No transfers required
 - Walking distance is approximately half a mile or less at each end
 - Arrivals and departures are expected within 5-30 minutes of the school bell



Proposed: Opt-Out Campaign

- Inefficiency comes from non-riders—students assigned transportation who do not ride. This impacts service levels for actual riders.
- At the end of last year, we sent a survey inviting families to opt-out of transportation for the 2024-25 school year. We will be promoting this option more widely in the coming weeks.
- At this time, the voluntarily opt-out will be without compensation.
- Families needing transportation later will be added to a route and should contact the Transportation Department at least 7 days before the service is needed.



Proposed: Stop Consolidation

- The median home-to-stop distance for all students is 0.11 miles.
- We are proposing to review and remove some stops to reduce route time and /or increase vehicle utilization.
- We are creating a formal process for families to be able to submit stop concerns and will be reviewing concerns equitably based on a set criteria.



Proposed: Strategic Routing

- On a typical bus trip, 44% of seats are occupied.
- Approximately 25% of routes have fewer than 9 assigned riders and could be served by a smaller vehicle.
- We aim to enhance efficiency and cost-effectiveness by increasing vehicle utilization on our yellow buses through routing more students onto existing buses, and strategically shifting certain routes to smaller vehicles.



Process for Building Recommendations

Despite limited bus resources, these solutions minimize impacts on families and ensure transportation for those in need. Our collaborative decision-making includes:

- **Balancing and Minimizing Impacts:** Balance the number of people impacted and the extent of the impact
- **Acknowledging Varied Impacts:** Recognize different effects on families, schools, and the city
- **Gathering Feedback from School Leaders and Partners:** We've shared these proposals with school leaders and partners such as St. Louis Metro who have raised concerns that will shape our implementation plan
- **Continued Collaboration:** We commit to ongoing collaboration with key partners including school leaders and families for a successful school start and stable service year-round





Anticipated Benefits

We've identified potential benefits of this plan in addition to reducing the overall vehicle need.

- **Overall Improvement in On-Time Performance:** More time between bell times means buses are less likely to run late to their next run.
- **Metro Cards for High Schoolers:** High school students will receive metro cards that can be used outside of school hours for travel to activities and work opportunities.
- **Shorter Trip Duration:** Stop consolidation will reduce travel time for some students.
- **Efficient Use of Resources:** Vehicle use and routes will be optimized for greater efficiency which should reduce the district's relative cost on transportation.



Identifying Concerns



Bell Times	Public Transit	Opt-Out	Stop Consolidation	Strategic Routing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disruption to established schedules for students and staff ▪ Attendance concerns for high schoolers getting up earlier or taking younger siblings to school later ▪ Impact on after-school activities and childcare ▪ Potential safety concerns for students traveling during darker hours, especially in winter ▪ Impact on lunch schedules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anticipated additional safety and supervision needs at bus stops and on the bus ▪ Potential overcrowding on public transit during peak hours ▪ Concerns around navigating Metro for students who have never ridden the bus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of awareness or understanding of the opt-out initiative among families ▪ Inconvenience for families who may need to adjust transportation plans mid-year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased walking distance to bus stops for students ▪ Safety concerns for younger students walking longer distances, especially in adverse weather conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk of overcrowding on high-capacity vehicles ▪ Potential for longer ride times for some students if routes are not optimally planned





Addressing Concerns

After discussing these potential changes with Network Superintendents, school leaders, labor partners, and analyzing other feedback from families, we've begun plan for addressing potential concerns:

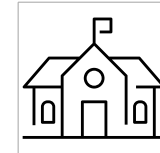
- **Attendance Concerns:** Reliable transportation aims to improve overall attendance, but we recognize that earlier bell times may be challenging. We will monitor and support schools to address any attendance issues.
- **Before and Aftercare:** Bell time adjustments should have minimal impact on before and aftercare. We will inform providers of any changes promptly so they can plan accordingly.
- **Transit Impacts:** We are collaborating with Metro to manage additional capacity needs and ensure enhanced safety and support at key transit stops and routes.
- **Clear Communication:** We will regularly update families on the changes and address any issues during the rollout of these strategies.
- **Safe Routes to School:** We will launch safety initiatives and provide training to enhance transportation safety protocols for students and staff.



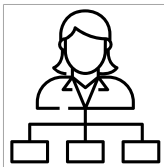
Feedback Cycle



**Operations & Transportation
Departments** continuing
analyzing feedback and acting on
insights as possible



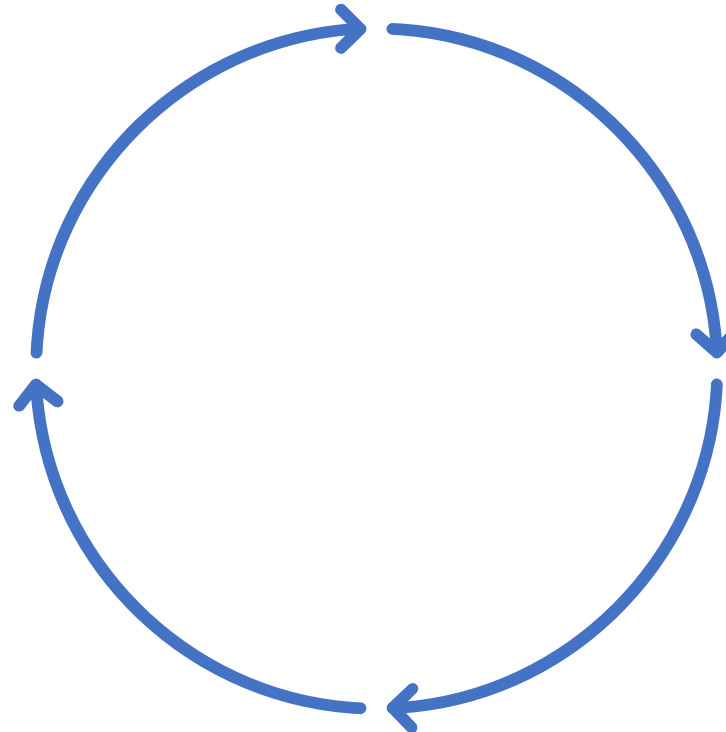
**School staff, students,
families, community partners**
provide feedback



**Network Superintendents
& School Leaders** provide
feedback



**Expert consultants and
labor partners** provide
feedback





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TRANSPORTATION SOLUTION

Community Problems, Community Solutions

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Tuesday, August 6 | 6 PM

Vashon High School | 3035 Cass Ave.



Communication Plan



- ✓ Present recommendations at June 25th Board Work Session
- ✓ Communication goes out to schools and families immediately following meeting
- ✓ Talking points provided to school leaders
- ✓ “Let’s Talk” set up for schools, families, and the community to provide feedback and ask questions

- Final proposal presented for approval at July 2 Board Meeting
- Plan details provided to schools and families; Targeted communication provided to families most impacted by changes
- Video presentation on changes to SLPS website & social media
- Continued communication of updates on the website and social media channels
- Update at July 23 Board Work Session

- Transportation Community Meeting on August 6
- District will create a “How to use the Metro” video for students
- Routes communicated to families
- Continued communication of updates on the website and social media channels

- Conduct follow-up metrics checks on effectiveness of plan
- Continued communication of updates on the website and social media channels
- Gather feedback from schools and families and act on insights as possible



Next Steps



- Approval of Transportation Strategies for the 2024-25 school year
- Communicate changes to schools and families
- Continue to gather and incorporate feedback for implementation plan
- Begin implementation
- Continuous communication to schools and families leading up to the start of school





Questions and Discussion





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