

Proposed Substitute Motion
Transportation System Transformation by Evolution
Sponsor: School Board Member Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner

Substitute Motion [The author of this motion preserves the prerogative to modify this motion simply or in its entirety, or not offer it at all, based on feedback he receives]:

I move the following substitution to the main motion:

A. That the proposed bell schedule change (known as "Iteration 3") is rejected in its entirety.

B. That the School Board's transportation operational expectation is amended, as follows:

The Superintendent will assure the transportation of all students (1) in a safe and timely manner to instructional programs for which they are eligible or that meet their needs; (2) in a cost-effective manner; and (3) in conformance with School Board-approved performance parameters; and further that

(a) the performance parameters must include (1) a system-wide "no-earlier-than" student pick-up time and "no later than" drop-off time; (2) a limit on the time a student will spend on the bus as differentiated by elementary and middle/high school levels; (3) consideration of the needs of after-school and extracurricular student activities and community impacts, such as on traffic and public use facilities; and (4) an implementation approach that minimizes abrupt disruptions to family and employee schedules.

(b) transportation route design and implementation costs will not grow beyond FY2009, which represents the base year against which costs will be evaluated, while accounting for fluctuations in the cost of equipment, fuels, and personnel, and student growth; and

(c) full implementation of the performance parameters will be achieved within five years, after which all schools whose bell schedule cannot accommodate the performance parameters must be approved annually by the School Board.

C. That the Superintendent is directed to prepare a resource plan, for consideration for inclusion in the Final FY2010 School Board Budget, which (1) identifies the staffing, consultant support, and software acquisition needed to implement the School Board's amended operational expectation; and (2) secures the needed funding through efficiencies identified during the transportation system reengineering initiative.

Explanation:

This substitute motion rejects Iteration 3 of the bell schedule, as developed by the transportation system staff at the SB's direction. The SB took Iteration 3 out to the community for feedback because it represented a "no-cost" option for establishing a later start time for high school students, as advocated by parents, primarily represented by the

SLEEP organization. My personal judgment, based on the SB's community engagement process and the extensive and detailed feedback received by me personally, is that the community and staff are decisively opposed to this iteration because of its potential for significantly disrupting established daily patterns for both students and adults. Most parties appear, to be in agreement with the SB's position that "...later start times would be beneficial..." but their interest dissipates precipitously after considering the benefits in relation the impacts on other aspects of the students' lives, as well as on the family and community.

The current motion before the SB rejects Iteration 3 and maintains the status quo. My substitute applies our Governance tool by refining the SB's transportation operational expectation. The expectation drives the SB's direction to the Superintendent to the next level of specificity by establishing performance parameters that ensure a student is picked up and returned within "reasonable" bounding time constraints. The substitute direction provides him, however, wide latitude to both design the routing system and implement it over an extended period of time. Furthermore, my amendment allows for the Superintendent to put forward to the SB for approval the schools that, after five years effort, cannot ultimately meet the performance parameters we establish.

My substitute acknowledges that a transportation system as large and complex as FCPS's requires sophisticated analytical support and tools, while also ensuring that new costs are not added to our operating budget, particularly during these dire fiscal times. While software support was available to the transportation staff in designing the three route iterations, its use was not optimized due to its limitations in use on a system as large as ours and the absence of technical support to customize its features to match our requirements. While the operational expertise of the current transportation staff is outstanding, route design is extraordinarily labor intensive and slow. Pursuit of iteration 4 (or more) is therefore impracticable and not cost-justified.

I believe that transportation routing could be designed in line with our desires for a reasonable pick-up time, while not being too disruptive in any given year -- an "evolution rather than a revolution," if your will. To do so, staff analytical skills and capabilities, which were lost in prior year budget reductions, were to be reacquired and funded by savings identified during the last two-year reengineering exercise, as well as by fees to, for example, gain access to parking and to regular use of the "kiss and ride" lanes.

Background:

The transportation system reengineering initiative included the formation of a task force whose major charges were to:

1. Assess the transportation reengineering options and their implications for the community.

2. Identify the pluses and minuses in adjusting parameters and bell schedule alternatives [and]...the limits of community acceptability.

The School Board approved Transportation Task Force's Charter notes in the background section that:

The FCPS Office of Transportation Services will re-engineer bus routes to reduce operational risk and to address minimum service levels not currently being accomplished. In addition, transportation bell schedule alternatives will be considered with a focus on possibly changing school start times particularly for high schools. In this regard, the SB believes that later start times would be beneficial, and seeks the best alternatives for achieving them; the "how" and "at what cost" are, however, the key constraints.

- The current transportation operational expectation is as follows:
The Superintendent will assure the transportation of all students in a safe and timely manner, to instructional programs for which they are eligible or that meet their needs, in a cost-effective manner.
- The current transportation operational expectation and the Superintendent's reasonable interpretation and metrics are available as the Appendix.
- Table 1 provides a set of performance criteria and parameters that are examples for consideration by the SB Governance Committee and Superintendent as they collaborate to finalize the transportation operational expectation and reasonable interpretation.

Table 1. Examples of Possible Transportation System Optimization Operational Expectations	
Performance Criteria	Performance Parameter
Academic achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The safety of all students will be paramount. ▪ "No-earlier-than" pick-up time is surrogate for student academic performance, health, and safety. ▪ Students will not to be picked-up in the morning earlier than [TBD or e.g., 6:45 am] ▪ Students shall not ride the bus to their within-boundary base-school for more than 45 minutes. ▪ "Civil twilight" should be respected but not as an absolute barrier. Elementary school (ES) bus runs may start before civil twilight, but not more than ten days each academic year, and not by more than ten minutes. ▪ ES students should arrive no later than five minutes before school and no earlier than 15 minutes before school - a 5-15 minute arrival/drop off window - and are to be permitted to exit the bus and enter the school immediately upon arrival. ▪ HS and MS student arrival/drop off window is to be 10 - 30 minutes before school, with immediate entry. ▪ The "Exception to Ride" program will be retained

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Student health and safety	
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transportation costs will not grow beyond FY2009, which represents the base year against which costs will be evaluated, while accounting for variability in the cost of equipment, fuels and personnel, as well as student growth. ▪ Transportation will optimize bus stop placements within the permissible walking distance, up to, but not exceeding one-half (1/2) mile for ES students and three-quarters of mile for MS and HS students. ▪ ES students may not ride with MS or HS students, except for current rare and unusual circumstances related to centralized pick-ups, such as TJHSST. ▪ MS and HS students may ride the same bus. ▪ Transportation will not be provided to a GT Center when the base school offers Level IV advanced academic services. ▪ The use of centralized pickup locations will be expanded for all students attending non-mandatory out-of-boundary programs ▪ Fees will be collected to both encourage bus use or walking; and discourage driving or "kiss-and-ride" use. ▪ "Grandfathering" for school boundary changes may be permitted, but for not more than a single year following the changes. ▪ "Grandfathering" will not be used for non-boundary program changes.
Employee impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No school start time will be changed by more than one-half hour earlier or later than the average start time of the three prior years.
Family impact [family time, child care, work schedule]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No school start time will be changed by more than one-half hour earlier or later than the average start time of the three prior years. ▪ No HS and MS will be assigned an end time earlier or later than one-half hour earlier or later the average of the three prior years
Extra-curricular activities [both school and community]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional differences in traffic patterns and facility availability will be identified for route design and for

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sponsored]	assuring availability for pre- and after-school activities.
Community impact [shared use facilities, traffic, carbon-reduction, youth exercise]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Differences in different areas of the county will be accounted for when designing routes and establishing school start times, including traffic patterns and facility availability for pre- and after-school activities. ▪ Designated high-traffic routes will be assigned the earliest morning pick-up times. ▪ A campaign will be undertaken to promote bus ridership or walking within the permissible distance. ▪ Fee-based incentives will both encourage bus use or walking; and discourage driving or "kiss-and-ride" use.

**Appendix
Operational Expectation and Goal Monitoring Report**

FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Period Covered: 2006 – 2007

B. Transportation: The Superintendent will assure the transportation of all students in a safe and timely manner, to instructional programs for which they are eligible or that meet their needs, in a cost-effective manner.

Reasonable Interpretation:

School bus transportation is the safest means to get students to and from schools or other sites. Students need to arrive at their destinations on time so that instructional time is not lost. The bus transportation system needs to be designed and implemented to ensure that students arrive on-time and safely. It also means that bus routes need to be kept as short as possible to encourage ridership.

Indicators:

- Report on provided transportation that is legally required and that which is provided by School Board policy or practice
- Report on ratio of preventable accidents to total miles driven.
- Report on late bus arrivals as a percentage of total bus arrivals. After a baseline is established, the goal should be to reduce this percentage each year. (Please note that it is not possible to capture this data accurately at this time.)
- Report on cost per student for general education and special education students.
- Average age of school bus fleet.

Indicator 1.a.

Report on provided transportation that is legally required and that which is provided by School Board policy or practice. (See Attachment B.1.a.)

Commentary: The school system provides both mandated and non-mandated transportation for a number of different programs at many of our schools. The attached chart shows this information. In many cases it is not possible to capture and report specific costs as many bus runs are integrated, i.e. they serve several programs on the same run.

Indicator 1.b.

Report on ratio of preventable accidents to total miles driven.

Preventable Accidents

	<u>SY 06-07</u>
Miles	18,613,232
Preventable Accidents	218
Mileage interval between accidents	85,381

Commentary: Preventable accidents are contacts between one of our buses and some object, vehicle, or person, that result in any damage or injury, no matter how minor or "inconsequential". The current goal is to ensure that there is no decrease in the mileage intervals between preventable accidents. FTS recently participated with the Council of Great City Schools benchmarking effort that will provide us with national standards for preventable accidents; a revised goal will be established once that data is received and analyzed.

Indicator 1.c.

Report on late bus arrivals as a percentage of total bus arrivals. After a baseline is established, the goals should be to reduce this percentage each year.

Bus Arrivals

	<u>SY 06-07</u>	<u>SY 07-08</u>
# Bus Arrivals	N/A	101,874
# on Time	N/A	99,268
% on Time	N/A	97.4%

**Actual year-to-date values based on the BARC (Bus Arrival Report Card) system pilot program.*

***The goal is to show improvement from the base year in the percentage of on time arrivals.*

Commentary: On time arrivals are important to student achievement as instructional time can be lost when students are late. Historically there has been no means by which to reliably capture and report bus arrivals. The optimum solution is to install GPS systems in each bus and we are currently evaluating potential systems and plan to award a contract in the near future. Complete implementation of GPS will require an initial investment of approximately \$1.5 million and annual recurring costs of \$150,000. It is our intent to phase in GPS implementation as funds are found within existing budgets or as funds are made available to the department. As an interim solution, the department developed an online reporting system that schools have been requested to use. This system is user friendly and only requires that schools report late arrivals. The data shown above is that which has been reported year-to-date by schools participating in the program.

Analysis: Transportation is improving on time arrivals primarily due to the improvement in the availability of bus drivers. The current driver shortage of approximately 40 is a huge improvement from two years ago when the shortage was approaching 170 drivers. With sufficient numbers of drivers, supervisors are able to identify and address bus runs that arrival late on a recurring basis. In some cases, the only solution is to add bus runs and this necessitates that there are drivers to assign to such runs. Because we stress safety over being on time, we have no expectation that 100 percent of buses will arrive on time. We do accept the importance of timely arrivals and the need to show continuous improvement.

Indicator 1.d.

Report cost per student for general education and special education students.

Cost per Student

	<u>SY 06-07</u>
Regular Ed	\$329
Special Ed on Dedicated Buses	\$5,860

**The goal is to keep the cost per student as low as possible.*

Commentary: Several studies conducted the past number of years, to include the most recent MPS study, have indicated that we operate a cost effective transportation system as compared to other large systems in the country. We look forward to obtaining the results this spring of the survey conducted by the Council of Great City Schools (in which we participated) so that we can benchmark our data to that of other large school systems.

Analysis: Transportation does not totally control the factors that influence costs so it is not possible to commit to reducing future costs. Programmatic decisions made by the School Board or program location decisions made by other departments have a great an impact on services. Federal mandates such as McKinney-Vento and No Child Left Behind also affect costs significantly. Transportation has made every effort to be as efficient as possible by consolidating bus stops, by moving bus stops to more central locations, by declining requests from parents for enhanced services, and by acquiring school buses that operate efficiently.

Indicator 1.e.

Average age of school bus fleet. (See Attachment B.1.e.1.)

Commentary: As indicated in the attached chart, we have made great progress in achieving this goal. The number of buses over 12 years of age is projected to decline through FY 2010 but then will begin to increase absent an increase in funding. This is due to the fact that bus costs are increasing significantly as a result of higher materials costs and to emission improvements.

Analysis: The current state of the school bus fleet is greatly improved over the past several years thanks for support from the Superintendent and the School Board. Newer buses are less costly to operate, produce far less harmful emissions, and offer many safety/operational enhancements. (See Attachments B.1.e.2. and B.1.e.3.)