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Committee Members

Tracy Novick, Chair
Jermoh Kamara, Vice-Chair
Susan Mailman

Administrative Representative

Brian Allen

OFFICE OF THE
CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01609

AGENDA #3

The Standing Committee on FINANCE AND OPERATIONS will hold a virtual and/or in-person meeting:

on: March 20, 2023
at: 5:30 p.m.
in: Room 410, Durkin Administration Building

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. GENERAL BUSINESS

gb 2-241.9 Novick August 23, 2022

To consider monthly updates on the implementation of district-operated transportation during the 2022-23 school year.

IV. HELD ITEMS

gb 2-23.4 Novick/Clancey/Johnson/Kamara/Mailman January 12, 2022

To consider a pilot of provision of menstrual supplies at all secondary schools.

gb 2-92.11 Clancey March 8, 2022

Request that the Administration provide quarterly reports regarding building maintenance to include timeframes on when work will begin and be concluded.

gb 2-241.8 Novick August 23, 2022

To consider monthly updates on the implementation of district-operated transportation during the 2022-23 school year.

gb 2-239.5 Administration August 15, 2022

To review the status of the FY23 Budget and make appropriate transfers as required.

gb 3-48 McCullough January 16, 2023

To consider exploring the hiring of athletic trainers for high school athletics.

gb 3-22 McCullough December 20, 2022

To explore the feasibility of increasing the day-by-day substitute rate for licensed/retired educators.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Helen A. Friel, Ed.D.
Clerk of the School Committee

STANDING COMMITTEE: **FINANCE AND OPERATIONS**

DATE OF MEETING: Monday, March 20, 2023

ITEM:

To consider monthly updates on the implementation of district-operated transportation during the 2022-23 school year.

PRIOR ACTION:

9-1-22 - On a roll call of 7-0, the item was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Operations.

9-8-22 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Mr. Allen presented the September Student Transportation update which included:

- 74 Full-Size Bus Drivers (full size): 17 WPS buses
- 95 Mid-Size Bus Drivers and 12 new buses
- 109 Bus Monitors 42 leased
- 35 Drivers in Training

Additionally, 32 new buses were awaiting registration and inspections. The number of drivers currently in training are projected to bring the Transportation Department to full budgeted strength. He stated that the district began this school year using the new Versatrans My Stop app and that a few technical issues occurred in particular, double trips do not show on the app, and some adjustments were made.

If there are any questions regarding accessing the app, caregivers can call the Transportation Department at (508) 799-3241.

Mr. Allen also stated that any School Committee policy change including changing start times or changing walk zones for the 2023-24 school year impacting the number of buses needed would have to be voted on as soon as possible in order to place orders for additional buses for next year.

There are 13 buses coming off of lease at the end of this school year, and Mr. Allen provided information of various alternative fuels for those buses that have been explored by the administration; a decision on that would also be needed as soon as possible. Administration recommends that the district plan to use propane for this set of buses, and pilot an electric bus.

The district plans on implementing a transportation registration portal for secondary students to pre-register in order to allow for better load management and planning for 2023-24.

He thanked the whole transportation team including drivers and liaisons for their work during the first two weeks of the school year.

(continued on Page 2)

BACK UP:

Annex A (2 Pages) Transportation Monthly Update March 2023

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

9-8-22 - Member Mailman asked if there was any data available from other districts that currently use electric buses. Mr. Allen stated that he and Mr. Hennessey have been attending transportation conferences pertaining to the use of alternative fuel, but due to the fact that electric buses are three times the cost of a regular school bus, and that there are concerns about such buses' with the cold climate, with hills, as well as with the infrastructure needed for their support, the district would prefer to use propane as the alternative fuel choice at this time, piloting an electric bus.

Mr. Hennessey provided the following advantages of using propane in the buses rather than gasoline:

- price per gallon is significantly less
- maintenance is significantly lower
- no engine warmup needed for heating
- less oil changes needed
- no hazardous waste

Chair Novick asked if there are plans to provide My Stop access for private and parochial school families and Mr. Freeman stated that it is possible, but will take further data sharing.

Member Mailman asked for more information on the out-of-school providers and Mr. Allen stated that the Administration met with them again in August and provided the current practice which is if a bus is heading in a certain direction and if there is capacity to take on the students. The process has not changed, but it's the number of buses heading in that direction that has changed. Once there are more buses and drivers, there will be greater flexibility. Mr. Hennessey stated that the district started with the same locations that it ended with last year. Mr. Freeman stated that there were other providers such as Ride Rite that were providing transportation but they are also experiencing capacity issues.

Chair Novick stated that the Student Handbook clearly states that the transportation provided is from a student's home to school and school back home. She questioned if the Committee should consider clarifying the language. She also asked if a parent inquired about out of school transportation, they should call the Transportation Department for information. Mr. Allen suggested they could call the provider.

On a roll call of 3-0, gb 9-355, gb 1-101, gb 2-44, gb2-109 and gb 2-205 were filed and gb 2-241 will be the current transportation item and will be held for the next meeting.

9-15 22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

10-12-22 - Mr. Allen presented the monthly transportation update with the staffing plans for the next school year as of October 5, 2022.

	Full Size Bus Drive r	Mid Size Bus Drive r	Bus Monitor s
Total Employees (or in Process)	73	97	110
Current Routes	<u>74</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>89</u>
Difference between Planned Routes	-1	8	21
Total Planned Routes	<u>101</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>95</u>
Difference between Planned Routes	-28	2	15
Budgeted Positions	<u>118</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>
Difference between Budgeted Positions	-45	-15	-2

Drivers in Training

Permitted Drivers	1
Trainees working on Permits	5
	<u>1</u>
	<u>4</u>
	2
	9

In addition, there are 40 additional people in the evening training program.

School Bus Vehicle Procurement

Current Vehicle Fleet	Full- Size Bus	Mid Size Bus
WPS Buses	16	63
New Buses	48	0
Leased Buses	<u>49</u>	<u>44</u>
Total Vehicles as of 8/31/22	113	107

Mr. Allen provided an update on electric school buses and stated that there have been a number of meetings over the last month. He was under the assumption that the district was not eligible for some of the federal EPA funding under the infrastructure for some vehicles. He believes that even though the district does not have diesel engines that some of the older combustion gas engines may qualify to be exchanged for electric school buses. If that is the case, it is the district’s intention that the next round of funding window will open this month and it will work on an application up to 15 electric school buses to add to the fleet. **(Continued on Page 4)**

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

- 10-12-22 - The School Committee last week authorized the district to lease 13 buses for next year, but it is thinking about buying out those leases and keeping them and pursue the electric bus option instead. He will be providing an update at the next meeting on the status of the application. He stated that the WPS is a high priority district for funding consideration but there's a lot to consider including a new infrastructure that would need to be installed. Member Kamara asked for an update on athletic transportation and Mr. Allen stated that in the past, the WEDF provided funds for field trips using AA Transportation and this year, with the district owning its own buses, there has been a \$40,000 savings. Mr. Freeman stated that there has been some compatibility issues with the MyStop app due to drivers using tablets and incurring a break in the GPS connection. IT technicians are working on trying to fix the problem.
- On a roll call of 3-0 the item was held.
- 10-20-22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.
- 11-17-22 - **gb 2-241 - Novick (August 23, 2022)**

Mr. Allen provided an update on the implementation of the district operated transportation. There has been an increase of 5 full-sized bus drivers, 3 mid-sized bus drivers, with more in the pipeline. With regard to vehicles, Mr. Allen stated that the transition of bringing in the new buses, getting them registered and inspected, and sending the leased buses back is ongoing; the district is up 22 buses from last month. The hope is to have all 100 new full-sized buses on property next month. There is no change in mid-sized buses. The landlord has received all necessary permits for construction of the fueling station on Pullman Street; the plan is for that to be operational next year.

In response to a question from Vice Chair Kamara, Mr. Allen stated that for the fall season, bus transportation was being provided to athletics only after 4 pm. Winter season is generally night events; it is expected that for the spring season, the increase in drivers and vehicles will allow for athletic transportation at the end of the school day.

In response to a question from Member Mailman, Mr. Allen stated that administration shares some of the concerns shared during public comment, and that there is ongoing work with schools regarding student behaviors on school buses. He further stated that questions regarding response times can be addressed during the upcoming joint labor-management meeting.

Mr Allen stated that at this time, the administration has decided not to pursue the lease of propane vehicles due to the length of time it is taking for vehicles to arrive. The intent is to purchase the 13 buses

coming off of lease; the district also will pursue the upcoming federal grant for 15 electric buses.

Mr. Allen stated that there will be an update on phasing in the new drivers at the December meeting; there is a planned schedule being constructed. Mr. Allen stated that the administration may be asking the School Committee to add training staff further to address the ability to move trainees through the pipeline.

On a roll call of 3-0, the item was held.

2-13-23

Mr. Allen presented an update. He highlighted that we hired 7 new drivers, had 8 drivers retire/resign, and for the first time in two years there are two after school buses for athletics. He mentioned that all the full sized buses are now owned and operated by WPS. Mid-sized and wheelchair vehicles are not available due to supply chain issues, but Mr. Allen is putting out a new bid for alternative layouts on 7D vehicles as those may be available sooner.

On voice vote, the motion to hold was approved.

**WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STUDENT TRANSPORTATION MONTHLY UPDATE
March 2023**

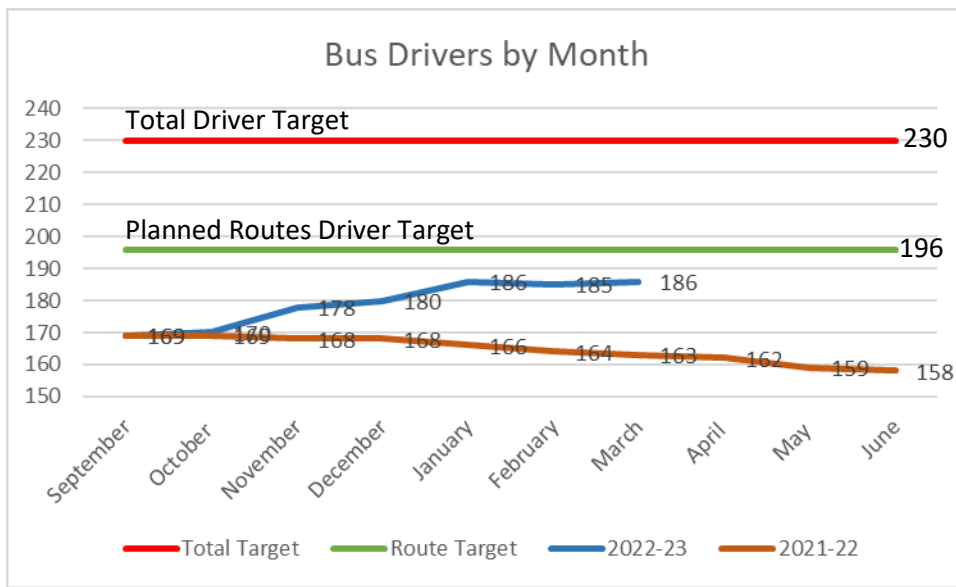
Bus Driver Hiring and Recruitment

As of March 15, 2023, the staffing levels are as follows:

	Full Size Bus Driver	Mid Size Bus Driver	Bus Monitors
Total Employees (or in Process)	83	103	109
Current Routes	<u>74</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>89</u>
Difference between Planned Routes	7	14	20
Total Planned Routes	<u>101</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>95</u>
Difference between Planned Routes	-18	8	14
Budgeted Positions	<u>118</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>
Difference between Budgeted Positions	-35	-9	-3

Drivers in Training

Permitted Drivers	16
Trainees working on Permits	<u>21</u>
	37



School Bus Vehicle Procurement

Current Vehicle Fleet	Full-Size Bus	Mid Size Bus
WPS Buses	16	53
New Buses	100	0
Leased Buses	0	45
Total Vehicles as of 11/28/22	116	98

Next Steps & Open Items:

- **Athletic Trips:** As the Transportation Department plans for the Spring athletic season, for the first time in two years, two buses are now available for 2:30 pm after-school athletic transportation. The plan is to continue to increase staffing, reduce double trips of buses, and provide up to eleven athletic buses for afternoon events.
- **Fueling Station:** The fueling station at Pullman Street is expected to be operational by the end of March. The fueling station will be available to fuel all WPS gasoline vehicles, including Facilities, Nutrition, and school vehicles. More details about the fueling station will be provided in upcoming monthly updates.
- **7D Vans:** The District has issued a bid for up to forty 7D vans, with delivery by December 31, 2023. Bid opening is scheduled for March 29, 2023.