
Boston Public Schools



Transportation Strategic Support Team Overview

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Agenda



- **Overview**
 - **Leadership**
 - **Student Assignments, Enrollment, and Routing**
 - **Management**
 - **Questions and Answers**
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Overall Key Findings



- The district sets annual calendars and daily schedules for BPS schools, but the calendars and daily schedules for non-BPS schools are designated by various governing boards resulting in challenges that include:
 - A BPS routing system that has 24 different morning bell times, 20 different mid-day bell times, and 29 different afternoon bell times
 - Non-BPS schools that schedule half-days or “early-outs” at their discretion with no regard to system-wide scheduling or available resources
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Overall Key Findings



- District school assignment policies result in many students traversing the city each day rather than utilizing neighborhood schools - increasing the number of buses on the road at any given time
 - Over five years, there has been a 70 percent increase in students whose IEP/504 plans require bus monitors
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Overall Key Findings

- The City/District is required to utilize the specific driver workforce regardless of which transportation vendor is under contract with the City/District to provide transportation operations services
 - While the City/District can change vendors as often as is feasible, the same front-line employees (drivers, mechanics, operations), under the same collective bargaining agreement (CBA) terms and conditions of employment, led by the same union leadership, will remain in place and dictate, to a large extent, the way BPS DoT operates. This remains true regardless of whether the City/District brings transportation in-house.
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Leadership

Key Findings - Commendations

- Strong Department of Transportation (DoT) Leadership
 - DoT Business Plan
 - DoT management team appeared to be laser-focused and dedicated to improving efficiencies and controlling costs
 - DoT was responsive to information requests before, during, and following the site visit
 - Currently there is a 3-tier schedule for BPS, but not all schools adhere to it
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Key Findings – Data Collection

- Inefficiencies in BPS transportation are not granularly tracked or differentiated by useful categories
 - Categories typically tracked elsewhere include, but are not limited to -
 - School type (BPS, charter, out of district, etc.)
 - Students Transported Out of Zone
 - Ridership and average bus utilization rates (projected and actual riders vs. bus capacity)
 - Eligibility type (more than 1.5 miles to the school of attendance, within 1.5 miles of the school of attendance)
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Recommendations

- Implement a consistent 3-tier bell schedule districtwide
 - Routinely update all policies and procedures and regularly review and update routes to maximize fleet utilization
 - Identify and fiscally quantify opportunities to increase efficiencies by reviewing -
 - Walk-to-stop distances
 - Walk-to-school distances
 - Average ride time
 - Earliest pickup time
 - Bus loads and seat utilization, and
 - Tiering
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Recommendations

- Strengthen internal fiscal and management controls by tracking the per pupil and per bus/van vehicle costs for all services provided
 - Simultaneously transport students to nearby schools on the same bus, such as an elementary school with a nearby middle school
 - Design a DoT strategy for monitoring actual ridership throughout the school year to aggressively identify stops, runs, and routes for consolidation or elimination
 - Establish cross-collaboration with school systems outside of BPS that receive transportation services to align calendars and schedules to the maximum extent possible
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Student Assignments, Enrollment, and Routing

Key Findings

- School assignment plans and program placements impact DoT services
- Student information system (SIS) connection to transportation programs
- Interdepartmental annual route planning with key stakeholders
- Routes built on eligibility rather than actual average ridership
- Final date that critical student data sent to transportation to begin summer and fall routing appears to be out of sync with the need
- Lack of coordination between special education & DoT
- SIS communication between BPS and 103 non-BPS schools

Recommendations

- Improve formal communications between special education and the DoT
 - Commence a comprehensive review of all routing practices and processes to identify opportunities to improve routing outcomes and route efficiency
 - Meet regularly with charter and non-public school administrators to share areas of concern, improve communication
 - Use, to the greatest extent possible, the previous school year's ending routing configuration
 - Review all routing policies and practices
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Management

Key Findings

- DESE found that high-quality transportation services to BPS students and key performance indicators identified by the district and its vendor were not effectively addressed
 - DoT has not linked its modern call center to the vendor or retained a multi-linguist that could provide a higher level of customer service to parents and administrators when there are missed bus stops
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Recommendations

- Update and fully implement the comprehensive business plan to include goals, objectives, benchmarks, performance, accountabilities, and costs
 - Create an effective communications system throughout the DoT organization, including communications channels up and down and side to side that involves regular meetings at each level with specific agendas, documented minutes of discussions, decisions, and follow-up activities
 - Resume the annual DoT customer service survey
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Recommendations

- The IFB seems to do a thorough job of defining service and performance requirements, interface structure and mechanisms, oversight process, etc. Ensure that the contract includes performance indicators that address on-time bus performance that is easily measured and hold the vendor and its staff directly accountable for providing dependable student service. Performance measurements should include, but are not limited to –
 - On-time performance,
 - Missed trips,
 - Maintenance/vehicle inspection results, and
 - Monthly financial and statistical reporting adherence
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Thank You

Questions and Answers
