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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** School Committee

**FROM:** Dr. Samuel DePina, Deputy Superintendent, Operations

**CC:** Superintendent Mary Skipper  
Monica Hogan, Assistant Superintendent, Data Strategy and Implementation  
Delavern Stanislaus, Executive Director of Transportation  
Daniel Rosengard, Deputy Director of Transportation

**DATE:** Wednesday, January 11, 2022

**RE:** Council of Great City Schools Report on Transportation

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Tonight, Dr. Ray Hart, Executive Director of the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS), will summarize findings and recommendations from the CGCS report on Transportation: "Review of Student Transportation Program of the Boston Public Schools." This report is required as part of the Systemic Improvement Plan.

The presentation will cover some key points and the areas of recommendations from the CGCS. The recommendations include:

1. Implement a consistent 3-tier bell schedule districtwide.
2. Update policies and procedures and regularly review and update routes to maximize fleet utilization.
3. Continue to use a systematic approach to create and update bus routes and bus stops that are effective and efficient without compromising safety.
4. Identify and fiscally quantify opportunities to reduce transportation costs.
5. Design a Department of Transportation (DoT) strategy for monitoring actual ridership throughout the school year to aggressively identify stops, runs, and routes that could be consolidated or eliminated to increase system wide capacity.
6. Establish cross-collaboration with school systems outside of BPS that receive transportation services to align calendars and schedules to the maximum extent possible.
7. Strengthen internal fiscal and management controls.
8. Create a committee of leaders from DoT and the Office of Special Education (OSE) to confer on issues of mutual concern.



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9. Commence a comprehensive review of all routing practices and processes to identify opportunities to improve routing outcomes and route efficiency.
  10. Update and fully implement the comprehensive business plan with goals, objectives, benchmarks, performance, accountabilities, and costs that support the district's strategic plan.
  11. Create an effective communications system throughout the DoT organization.
  12. Implement a system for tracking progress and measuring outcomes on all initiatives.
  13. Hold the next transportation vendor accountable to the key performance indicators in the new IFB that address on-time bus performance to ensure dependable student service.
  14. Collaborate with city officials to address any shortfalls in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The recommendations broadly fall into three categories: internal transportation processes and procedures, policy work, and cost controls. The district has begun work in these areas in the past year, and will incorporate the recommendations from the Council of Great City Schools:

- Internal transportation processes and procedures: Although there is a long way to go, the Department of Transportation (DoT) has made significant progress on this front over the past few years. The DoT has weekly working groups throughout the year with the Assignment team, the Office of Special Education, and the Office of Instructional and Information Technology focused on (1) setting and maintaining timelines for collaboration and data-sharing, (2) identifying and problem-solving issues, and (3) making recommendations for improvements. The DoT implemented a Monthly Performance Review process in 2020 with Transdev, the current bus vendor, in order to drive and measure service improvements. Finally, the Invitation for Bids for the next transportation vendor contract introduces mechanisms to hold the vendor accountable and align incentives towards student-oriented results. While the current contract has essentially zero financial risk to the vendor, the new IFB ensures that any incoming vendor has “skin in the game” through a mix of performance incentives for improved performance and damages to compensate the district for non-performance. Finally, we are making progress in the area of transportation for athletics and field trips. In collaboration with the Athletics department, we have reviewed our processes, analyzed data on uncovered trips and late cancellations/added work to make targeted improvements, and taken efforts to improve advanced scheduling by sports teams and coaches. Additionally, we continue exploring the feasibility of alternative solutions (e.g. purchasing/leasing vans) to further improve athletics and field trips transportation.
- Policy work: The district sees the biggest opportunity for continued transportation improvements in this area. As highlighted in the report, BPS transportation operates under uniquely complex circumstances, driven by bell times and school assignment

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policies, special education policies and growth, as well as by the requirement that BPS Transportation adhere to non-BPS school calendars and schedules for the 105 non-BPS schools to which they transport students. The district has kicked off work internally and with charter schools to make recommendations for aligning school calendars and making incremental bell time changes that will move BPS towards a more uniform, evenly distributed three tier bell system in order to improve transportation operations, while minimizing impact on and ensuring engagement with school and community stakeholders. Effective implementation of any policy changes will require meaningful stakeholder engagement and will need to be guided by larger conversations across the district and community about how we want to reimagine BPS. The newly formed Transportation Advisory Council will play an important role in this work. BPS is committed to doing this work and doing it the right way.

- **Cost controls:** This report highlights that BPS Transportation has one of the highest transportation costs in the nation, and provides several recommendations for better tracking, controlling, and reducing costs to free up assets for redeployment (e.g., additional technological solutions, reducing trip lengths for students by breaking up trips, etc.). While our first and most urgent priority needs to be making service improvements for students and families, BPS also needs to ensure that transportation is cost-effective. The district will closely review the cost-control recommendations in this report and take steps to implement the recommendations that will have the greatest impact on improving transportation services outcomes.

The district is deeply committed to improving the transportation experience for all BPS students and families, and values the CGCS's insights, recommendations, and partnership.

Tonight's presentation from CGCS will provide the School Committee with an understanding of these recommendations from an external partner. The district team will present at a later School Committee meeting on the work currently underway and the district's implementation plan for the recommendations within the report.

The report and slides will be submitted to DESE and made available on the BPS website at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/strategicprogress](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/strategicprogress).