

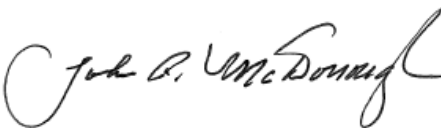
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: John P. McDonough
Interim Superintendent 

DATE: March 26, 2014

SUBJECT: Responses to School Committee Transportation Questions

Please find our responses below to several questions we have received from School Committee members.

1. What is the total number of 6th grade students who would be eligible for the pilot MBTA program?

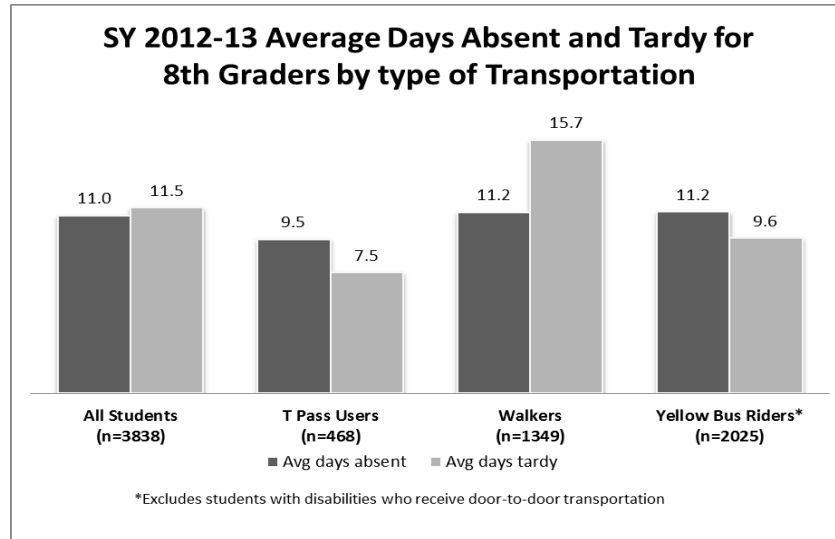
The total number of students eligible for this service is equal to the number of rising sixth grade students who currently use corner-to-corner yellow bus service in BPS, charter, and private/parochial schools:

	BPS	Charter	Private/ Parochial	Total
Current Fifth Grade Students	2,243	764	40	3,047

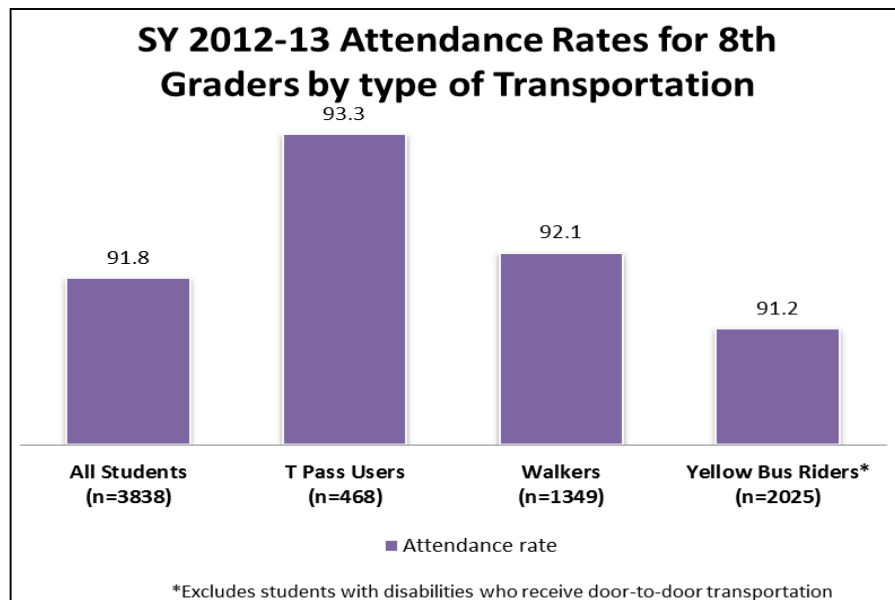
In addition, we have already heard from 11 schools, including one charter school, that are asking us to expand the MBTA pass service to their 6th graders (with parent or guardian approval).

2. What does the comparative data show about attendance and tardiness for students riding the MBTA vs. yellow buses?

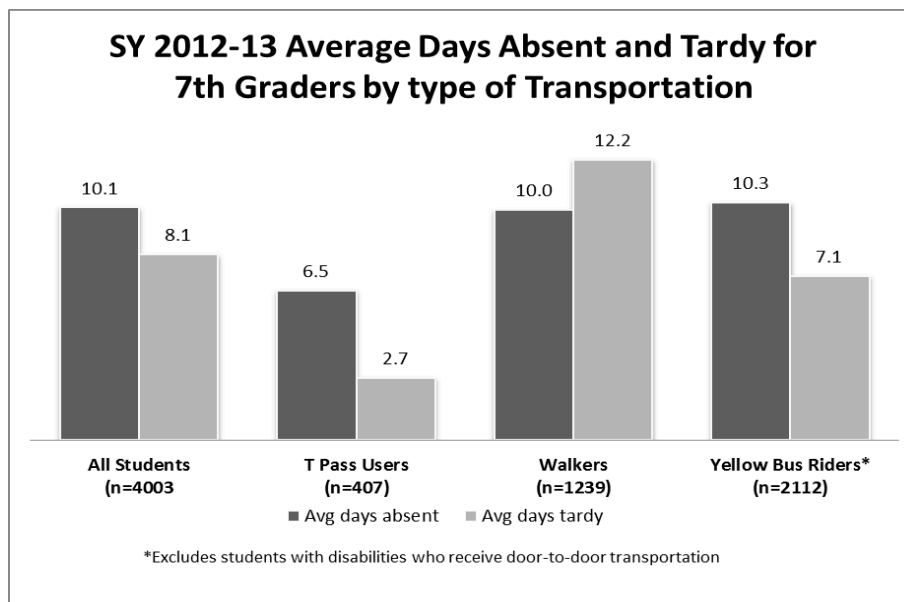
The BPS Office of Data and Accountability examined the attendance data for the 7th and 8th graders in a subset of district schools who received MBTA passes in SY 2012-13 (Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin, Dearborn, Edison, McKinley, Middle School Academy, Quincy Upper, TechBoston Academy, and Umana Academy). The following charts compare the attendance data for these students with data for students at the same schools who walk to school or take a corner-to-corner yellow bus.



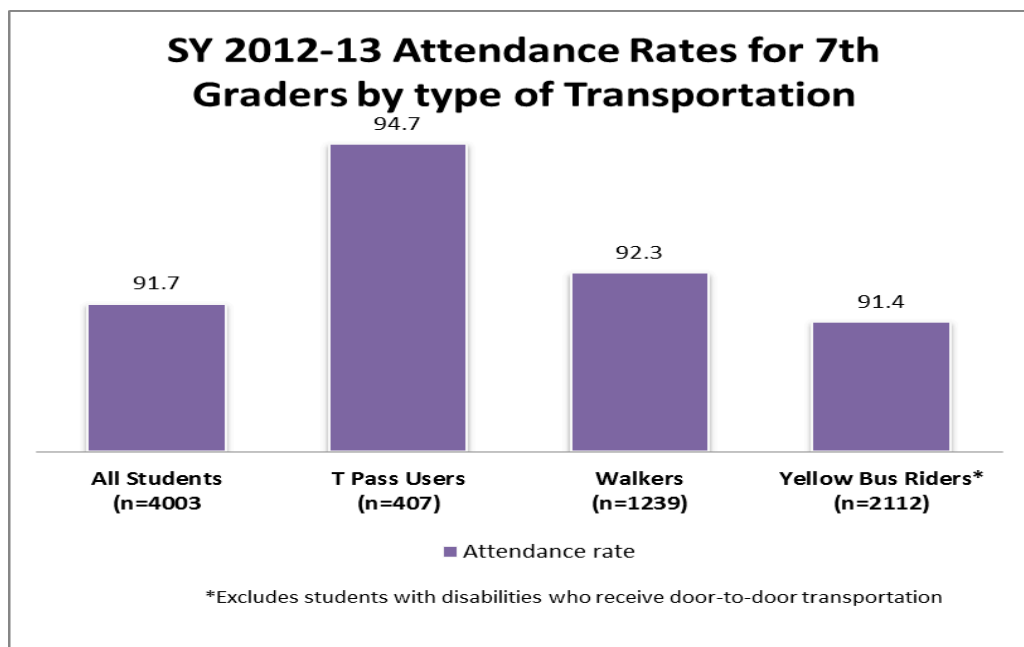
The chart above shows the average number of days absent and tardy for students in 8th grade by type of transportation. On average, 8th graders were absent 11 days and tardy 11.5 days in SY2012-13. When disaggregated by mode of transportation, students who used the T-Pass had the fewest days absent (9.5) compared to students who walked to school (11.2), and those who rode a yellow bus (11.2). Students who used the T-Pass were also less likely to be tardy, with an average of 7.5 days, compared to 15.7 days for walkers and 9.6 for bus riders. Note that in all analyses, the yellow bus riders exclude students with disabilities who receive door-to-door bus service.



The average annual attendance rates also show that T-Pass users attended school at a higher rate (93.3%) than walkers (92.1%) and bus riders (91.2%).



Data for 7th graders show a similar pattern: T-Pass users were absent an average of 6.5 days, four days fewer than walkers and yellow bus riders. T-Pass users were also tardy less often (2.7 days), compared to 12.2 for walkers and 7.1 for bus riders.



The comparison of attendance rates shows that 7th graders who used T-Passes had an annual attendance rate of almost 95% (94.7%); students who walked to school had a lower attendance rate (92.3%), as did yellow bus riders (91.4%).

3. What feedback have we heard about safety issues that students could face due to violence or turf issues?

We are awaiting more feedback from BPS School Police and the Boston Police Department on this question. At the moment, based on our conversations with principals, police, and community stakeholders, we have heard particular concerns about Charlestown High, East Boston High, Excel High, and the Lilla Frederick Pilot Middle School. We plan to offer shuttle service for 7th and 8th grade students of the Lilla Frederick Pilot Middle School from the nearest MBTA station next year, and we will likely retain some shuttle service at the other schools as a result of these concerns.

We have also been taking a number of steps to ensure the safety of all students on the way to and from school. Already, we have met with WalkBoston and Safe Routes to School to begin initial planning. In addition, to ensure that we address all areas of concern, we have reached out to community partners and the Boston Police Department, as well as to the MBTA, to establish a task force that will make sure this transition is a safe one.

4. What will we do to work with the Boston Police Department to ensure that they work collaboratively with other police departments (especially MBTA Transit Police) and that they are sensitive to the needs of students?

We are engaged in joint planning with BPS School Police, BPD, and MBTA Transit Police. They have pledged to expand upon existing channels of communications and to cooperate to ensure this effort is a success. More information on these planning efforts is available in the attached safety briefing.

5. What is BPS doing to work with students on MBTA pass rates?

The Superintendent met with the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) regarding this proposal to share our thinking and to hear their concerns. We are scheduling follow-up meetings with BSAC and with middle school students to engage them on the impact of this policy proposal and to ensure that their questions and issues are addressed.

In addition, we are very pleased that the MBTA is proposing to expand the 5-day BPS student passes to 7-day student passes for \$26 per month. This is the cost figure we had built into our budget projections. While higher than the \$10/month pass proposed by the Youth Affordabili(T) Coalition, we are excited that students will be able to access this valuable asset and use the T for weekend activities as well as after-school activities.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Fairmount Line (and all other zone 1 and 2 commuter rail lines) will also be accessible to students using their MBTA fare cards.