

BOARD BRIEF

Date: May 19, 2023

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION:

FROM: MeChale Johnson, Director of Pupil Transportation and Fleet Management

THROUGH: Dr. Alicia Hart, PMP, Chief of Facilities and Operations
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Response to Pupil Transportation Topics Presented during Public Comments at
May 4, 2023 School Board Meeting

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation

SY 2022-2023 FOCUS AREA:

Strategic Plan Implementation

FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:

N/A

SUMMARY:

On May 4, 2023, four (4) Pupil Transportation topics were presented during the public comments at the School Board Meeting. The first topic mentioned concerns about a lack of transportation vehicles that support wheelchair accessibility for after-school activities and events. The second topic mentioned the retention rate of bus drivers. The next topic referenced the removal of the safe driving awards for bus drivers. The final topic presented surrounded advocacy for the recruitment and retention bonuses to extend to bus monitors.

BACKGROUND:

Topic 1- The Office of Pupil Transportation and Fleet Management (PTFM) currently provides transportation for after-school activities and events to students using a wheelchair through our alternative transportation vendors. Scheduling and transportation arrangements are made with the support of staff from each school, as needed and requested. The administrators and special education support staff are aware of the availability of this mode of transportation.

Topic 2- ACPS remains impacted by the effects of the regional and national bus driver shortages. PTFM has worked diligently with the Human Resources Office of Recruitment and Retention to increase recruitment efforts of hiring bus drivers in a variety of ways including

BOARD BRIEF

open house hiring events, mass external advertising, and competitive recruitment bonuses. Our driver vacancies have remained consistent over the past few years. However, PTFM will continue creative recruitment efforts and initiatives to hire more school bus drivers.

Topic 3- The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Pupil Transportation Office promotes annual recognition of drivers through the School Bus Safe Driving Awards Program. This program recognizes staff who operate their bus without a preventable accident or driving violation for the entire school year. The awards given include certificates, lapel pins, key chains, plaques, trophies, and more promotional items. Several years ago, ACPS began allocating yearly funding to PTFM for the issuance of cash bonuses to further promote and encourage safe driving. The cash bonuses coincided with the VDOE eligibility requirements. Staff did not receive any awards or bonuses for the 2019-2020 school year due to the school closures as a result of COVID-19. PTFM issued safe driving awards and bonuses the past three years and plans to continue this initiative for upcoming school years.

Topic 4- During FY 2020-2021, VDOE authorized school districts to apply for a grant, via the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to issue recruitment bonuses to address the critical bus driver shortages. Many school districts acquired the opportunity to make budget allocations to support their own recruitment bonus efforts. For FY 2022-2023, ACPS allocated funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to issue recruitment bonuses for newly onboarded bus driving staff and retention bonuses for current driving staff. Other staffing shortages, including bus monitors, were not identified as critical and therefore not eligible for the bonuses.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Interim Superintendent recommends that the School Board review this information for knowledge purposes only.

CONTACT:

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