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Committee Members

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

Administrative  
Representatives  
Brian Allen

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

AGENDA #5

**The following item will be discussed at a virtual meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Operations on Thursday, June 9, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.:**

gb #0-33 - Mr. Foley/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (January 8, 2020)

To include a standing item for "Transportation Update" at each Finance and Operations committee meeting with information provided regarding the problems facing student transportation and improvements experienced.

STANDING COMMITTEE: **FINANCE AND OPERATIONS**

DATE OF MEETING: Thursday, June 9, 2022

ITEM: Mr. Foley/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (January 8, 2020)

To include a standing item for "Transportation Update" at each Finance and Operations committee meeting with information provided regarding the problems facing student transportation and improvements experienced.

PRIOR ACTION:

1-16-20 - Referred to the Administration.

2-6-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

aor #0-5 - Clerk

(January 29, 2020)

To consider approval of the Minutes of the School Committee Meeting of Thursday, January 16, 2020.

Mr. Foley made the following amendment to the minutes:

Request that referral for item gb #0-33 be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Operations instead of to the Administration.

On a voice vote, the amendment was approved.

4-12-21 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Mr. Allen stated that the Administration meets weekly with representatives from Durham School Services to discuss the number of drivers that are available to the Worcester Public Schools. The number of buses needed will be based upon the number of students choosing to return to school or remaining remote.

Ms. McCullough wondered what the options would be in the event of a shortage.

Mr. Allen offered potential options which included:

- subcontracting drivers from other companies
- moving tiered school times around
- reducing the number of students who may be eligible for transportation

BACKUP:

Annex A (2 pages) contains a copy of the Student Transportation Update.

PRIOR ACTION

- 4-12-21 - Mr. Allen stated that all WPS owned buses have been used every  
(continued) day since the start of the school year.  
Miss Biancheria made the following motion:  
Request that the Administration provide weekly transportation updates to include information from the Durham meetings and the status of Durham bus drivers.  
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.  
Mr. Foley made the following motion:  
Request that the Administration and School Committee work with the City Solicitor to produce a notice of Breach of Contract letter to be sent to Durham School Services highlighting the Breach of Contract reaffirming the Worcester Public Schools' legal and financial rights and raising the imperative nature of the May 3, 2021 return to school and the need to have the full allotment of bus drivers in place by that time.  
On a roll call of 2-1 (nay Miss Biancheria), the motion was approved.  
On a roll call of 3-0, the item was held for additional updates.
- 4-15-21 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the actions of the Standing Committee as amended.  
Mr. Foley made the following motion:  
Request that the Administration and School Committee work with the City Solicitor to produce a notice of Breach of Contract letter to be sent to Durham School Services highlighting the Breach of Contract reaffirming the Worcester Public Schools' legal and financial rights and raising the imperative nature of the May 3, 2021 return to school and the need to have the full allotment of bus drivers in place by that time.  
On a roll call of 5-2 (nays Miss Biancheria and Mr. Monfredo), the motion was approved:  
Mr. Foley requested a vote to reconsider the motion.  
On a roll call of 2-5 (yeas Miss Biancheria and Mr. Monfredo), the motion for reconsideration was defeated.
- 10-26-21 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS  
(Considered with gb #1-110)  
Mr. Allen stated that there are drivers in training that are interested in 7D training. The Administration is discussing with AA transportation the continued use of their vans that were being used by the National Guard. This will allow the Worcester Public School's bus drivers to continue to drive the same routes as the National Guards.  
Mr. Foley made the following motion:  
Request that gb 1-110 be filed and that gb 0-33 be held.  
On a roll call of 2-1 (absent Miss Biancheria), the motion was approved.
- 11-18-21 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee on a roll call of 6-1 (nay Miss Biancheria), approved the actions of the Standing Committee as stated.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

11-30-21 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Mr. Allen provided information on the following:

- bus driver recruitment
- procurement of vehicles

**Bus Driver Recruitment**

As of November 23, 2021, there were 27 people actively in training. Seven out of the 27 people in training acquired their 7D van license. These seven people are currently driving the bus routes that the National Guards had previously driven. The Commonwealth is conducting another 7D training class on December 4, 2021. Mr. Allen stated that updates will be provided at the December Standing Committee meeting.

**Procurement of Vehicles**

The district has awarded the bid of school buses as follows:

	<u>Vehicle Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
100 Type C Big Buses	\$99,580	\$9,958,000
38 Type A Mid-Size Bus	\$80,110	\$3,044,180
27 Type A Wheelchair Bus	\$84,030	<u>\$2,268,810</u>
Total Bid Award		\$15,270,990

Mr. Allen stated that the delivery of the vehicles is expected by June 1, 2022 and that the total bid was \$1,229,010 less than the amount included in the ESSER III application. He proposed that the ESSER savings could be used:

- to purchase additional school buses scheduled for regular replacement during the ESSER grant timeframe
- to purchase additional vehicles that may need to be expanded due to the possible change in walking radius or school start times.
- to apply the savings towards a higher capacity 7D van or
- for other district ESSER-eligible initiatives

**Other Updates**

- The recently signed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will provide \$2.5 billion for new zero-emissions or electric school bus purchases and \$2.5 billion for low-emissions school buses. The Administration will explore the eligibility of applying for these funds for future school bus purchases.
- The Administration is exploring the feasibility of having a dedicated fuel location for up to 335 vehicles at or near the 115 Northeast Cutoff location.
- The Administration will provide the School Committee a 15-year vehicle replacement plan for all existing and newly purchased vehicles which will help to make informed decisions on future budgets and vehicle purchases.
- The Administration is preparing bid specifications for the purchase of 7D vans, which were approved in the ESSER III grant, and is expected to begin service for late FY23 or the FY24 school year.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

11-30-21 - Mr. Foley asked how long the training takes before a person gets their CDL license.

Mr. Allen stated that due to the fact that the School Committee has approved the additional training Job Descriptions, it will help accelerate the training process.

Mr. Hennessey stated that in order to obtain a CDL license, a person has to have 28 hours of classroom time and 32 hours behind the wheel. Once a person receives their CDL learner's permit, he/she can start receiving their 32 training hours on the road.

Ms. Novick suggested that information regarding bus driver recruitment and the free training opportunities be placed on the Worcester Public Schools' social media platforms.

Mr. Foley made the following motion:

Request that the item be held.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.

12-16-21 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

2-9-22 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Mr. Allen provided information on the following:

- bus driver hiring and recruitment
- other support staff
- status of positions added
- positions to be added for FY23
- school bus vehicle procurement

**Bus Driver Recruitment**

As of January 28, 2022, the Worcester Public Schools has 36 people actively in training:

- 31 through MassHire / Night Life Program
- 2 Driver referrals
- 2 WPS Bus Monitor (1 through the Mass Hire/Night Life Program)
- 1 from the Civil Service List

Of these 36 people in training, 12 have also been trained and possess 7D van licenses and have been hired by the Worcester Public Schools, and have taken over the routes previously operated by National Guard drivers during October 2021. (The district is leasing 7D vans from AA Transportation for the remainder of the year).

**Other Support Staff**

The District-Operated Transportation Cost Analysis Report assumed four additional mechanics, one operations supervisor, one transportation liaison, and one Human Resources liaison. Additional supervisory trainers have recently been approved to enhance school, parent, and student customer experience.

**Status of Positions Added**

- Human Resources Liaison (to be called Transportation Personnel Supervisor): *The position is still open, and the Administration is currently accepting applications.*

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

2-9-22 (continued)

- Transportation Systems Coordinator: *The position is in the interview process.*
- Transportation Safety and Training Liaison (3): *Two of the positions have been filled with February start dates. The remaining position is still open, and the Administration is currently accepting applications*
- Transportation Safety Supervisor: *This position has been filled with a February start date.*

**Positions to be added for FY23:**

- Four Mechanics
- Operations Supervisor
- Transportation Liaison

**Procurement of Vehicles**

The district has awarded the bid of school buses as follows:

	<u>Vehicle Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
100 Type C Big Buses	\$99,580	<b>\$9,958,000</b>
38 Type A Mid-Size Bus	\$80,110	\$3,044,180
27 Type A Wheelchair Bus	\$84,030	<u>\$2,268,810</u>
Total Bid Award		<b>\$15,270,990</b>

School Committee Member Mailman asked if the Durham bus drivers have been offered positions to drive for the WPS.

Mr. Allen stated that he will provide an update at the next meeting regarding the civil service process of hiring bus drivers and 15 year replacement plan for all vehicles.

Vice-chair Kamara asked for an update on the MyStop App.

Mr. Freeman stated that the tablets were ordered and will arrive before the start of the next school year. The MyStop App will run off of the tablets and has the capability of tracking all the routes. Individuals will be able to download the App to their Androids or iPhones.

Chair Novick made the following motion:

Request that the item be held.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.

3-17-22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee on a roll call of 7-0, approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

4-11-22 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS  
Chair O'Connell-Novick opened the meeting by stating that the members of the Finance and Operations Standing Committee toured the Worcester Public Schools' Transportation Facility.

In the report Mr. Allen stated that the Durham bus driver availability continues to be approximately the same with thirty drivers fewer than what was contracted at the beginning of the year. The WPS has thirty-four people in training with thirty of them coming from the MassHire Night Life Program.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

4-11-22 - (continued) The Information Technology Transportation Systems Coordinator is the only unfilled position. The FY23 Budget will reflect the addition along with four mechanics, a Transportation Personnel Supervisor and a Transportation Safety and Training Liaison.

Mr. Allen stated that all the busses are on order and provisions have been made within the contract for purchase of those busses and the supplemental lease of busses if any or all of the busses are not available for the first day of school. That is the result of supply chain issues that are happening across the country.

The contract with the dealer allows for accessing vehicles from their fleet as soon as June 1<sup>st</sup>. The district is working on a plan to make those vehicles accessible by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

The new Transportation Human Resources Coordinator will be working closely with the WPS Human Resources Department and the Chief Diversity Officer to continue the trend of diversity hiring within the department.

Mr. Allen stated that it would be beneficial to have the approval of the positions prior to the start of the school year, knowing that it will take time to go through the posting process.

Chair O'Connell-Novick made the following motion:

Request that School Committee approve the hiring process for the following additional transportation positions:

- Four Mechanics
- Operations Supervisor
- Transportation Liaison and
- whatever else the Transportation Department feels necessary to be prepared for the beginning of fiscal year 23.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.

5-5-22 - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as amended:

Ms. Novick asked Mr. Allen if the Worcester Public Schools are competitive in regards to wages to attract drivers.

Mr. Allen stated that 28 drivers were offered positions during a civil service hiring event. The Administration has been looking at the local trends regarding the competitive pay rates for drivers and found that other districts are making adjustments to their rates. Therefore, he suggested that discussions take place in Executive Session regarding adjustments to increase the hourly rate for the Worcester Public School bus drivers.

Chair O'Connell-Novick made the following motion:

Request that School Committee approve the hiring process for the following additional transportation positions:

- Four Mechanics
- Operations Supervisor
- Transportation Liaison and
- whatever else the Transportation Department feels necessary to be prepared for the beginning of fiscal year 23.

On a roll call of 7-0, the motion was approved.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

5-11-22 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND OPERATIONS  
**(consider with 2-44)**

Mr. Allen provided the monthly update which remained consistent and included 36-38 drivers and 8 more potential drivers are enrolled in the MassHire program. He stated that approximately 20 Durham bus drivers have applied for positions. A hiring event was held last Thursday and the district is issuing hiring letters to 28 drivers. By June 1<sup>st</sup> the district will be receiving leased busses in preparation for summer school. He also stated that the Transportation Department has been invited to Tulsa, Oklahoma to view the busses being built.

A vehicle replacement cycle was provided in the backup which outlined future costs that may be incurred through the 2037 school year. ESSER funds were used in 2022 for the purchase of the busses, but by FY33 future Administrations will need to go back into the budget for vehicle replacement.

Chair O'Connell Novick asked for an update on the MyStop app.

Mr. Allen stated that a video is being created in multiple languages to include a step by step process.

Mr. Freeman stated that the department is also creating flyers in multiple languages on the process of accessing the MyStop app and that office staff will be available to provide assistance.

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

6-2-22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as



WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 STUDENT TRANSPORTATION MONTHLY UPDATE  
 JUNE 2022

**Durham School Services Bus Driver Availability**

The following is the availability of bus drivers from Durham School Services to the Worcester Public Schools using a monthly snapshot for the 2021-22 school year:

Date	Available Bus Drivers from Durham School Services*	Contracted Number of Drivers for 2021-22	Difference
8/26/2021	122	141	-19
9/15/2021	115		-26
10/12/2021	115		-26
11/3/21	114		-27
1/12/22	112		-29
2/2/22	110		-31
3/2/22	107		-34
3/16/22	109		-32
4/6/222	108		-33
4/27/22	103		-38
5/4/22	105		-36

Since Last Report:

6/1/22	104	141	-37
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*\*As reported by Durham School Services local management. Included in these available drivers are 6 drivers from other Durham School Services locations*

**Bus Driver Hiring and Recruitment**

As of June 1, 2022, the staffing plans for the next school year:

- 21 midsize bus driver job offers have been sent to candidates
  - 7 Drivers from WPS Training Program to begin employment immediately
  - 14 Drivers are current drivers for Durham School Services
- 6 full-size bus drivers job offers sent to candidates
  - 1 driver from WPS Training Program to begin employment immediately
  - 4 drivers from Durham school Services
  - 1 driver from another transportation company to begin employment immediately
- 23 bus monitor jobs have been sent to candidates
  - 11 candidates to begin employment immediately
  - 12 bus monitors from Durham School Services

Bus Drivers In Training:

- 32 Drivers in training
  - 7 Drivers have test dates scheduled in June
  - 9 Drivers have permits and are working towards a test date
  - 16 Drivers working on obtaining their permits.
- New Nightlife class started Tuesday, May 31, and has 5 participants.

### **School Bus Vehicle Procurement**

The district will lease 35 full-size school buses, 10 midsize school buses, and 10 midsize wheelchair buses for summer school from DATTCO, Inc to meet the district's summer school needs beyond existing district-operated school buses. Any additional buses needed in advance of the delivery of new school buses will be primarily provided by DATTCO, Inc.

A schedule for the expected delivery of new school bus purchases will be provided in an upcoming monthly update.

### **Fueling Location**

The district's plan for a dedicated fueling location for WPS vehicles is under a design plan, but due to supply chain issues, it is not expected that this facility will be completed until the middle of the 2022-23 school year. Alternative plans to fuel the additional buses under the district-operated plan are being developed by the district Administration.