

School Bus verses Public Transportation:
Secondary Educational Opportunities resulting from the Transportation Alternatives

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Executive Summary

The education of secondary students could be enhanced and more fulfilling for students with more student participation in after school activities. However, yellow school bus routes generally only provide afternoon transportation immediately after dismissal time. This eliminates student participation in after school activities for students that rely upon yellow school bus transportation.

Other transportation means may provide the flexibility for student participation in after school activities. Other transportation means include public transit transportation, Type III buses (State Patrol inspected vans and cars, including taxicabs), parent transportation, student transportation (including student car pools), riding a bicycle, or walking to and from school. Some students are already utilizing these transportation methods through student initiative.

School districts generally assign transportation service to a group of students based upon economy, safety, and convenience. School bus transportation is very safe, and is economical. Therefore, most students are generally assigned to yellow school bus transportation. Some students are assigned to other means of transportation because of various reasons, including the students are scattered over a wide area, the need special Individualized Educational Program (IEP) transportation service, or the capacity or number of vehicles creates the need for the use of transportation alternatives.

When the need for student participation in after school activities is valued more than the cost efficiency of yellow school bus transportation, then public transportation is a primary means of transportation because of flexibility of the transportation service. Public Transit routes run on a repeating time schedule, allowing passengers to board the Public Transit routes at various

times. Thus, students could participate in after school activities and a reasonable time later use the public transit transportation service.

There is an exceptional limitation with public transit transportation of students. A federal law known as the St. Germain Act prohibits public transportation systems from providing transportation to students in competition with private school bus operations. In other words, public transportation providers can only provide transportation service to students on public routes that are available to the general public (Metropolitan Council, 1998, p. 55).

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) initiated a public transit program for most secondary students at five of seven high schools during the 2012/2013 school year. The thought was that limitations in student transportation prevent maximum educational opportunities for students. More flexibility would create more options for students. Students could have more exposure to extra classes and exposure to community events and services. The additional educational opportunities would lead to a more fulfilling academic experience. The MPS public transit program can be reviewed as a case study.

Transportation comparative costs are factors to consider. A school bus is very inexpensive for the transportation of students after the first school transported. The Saint Paul Public Schools average 2nd and 3rd school transportation cost is \$13.71 per school daily (table 4). The capacity of a typical school bus is 48 senior high students. Therefore, the marginal cost is about \$0.29 per day or \$0.145 per ride for senior high students in a full school bus. Comparatively, the secondary student Metro Transit fare is \$1.35 per ride, which would be \$2.70 per day. MPS and Metro Transit signed a \$1.2 million contract for Metro Transit to provide student ride cards to the participating students for the 2012/2013 school year. This is extra contracted transportation cost to MPS.

Another method to encourage student participation in after school activities is to enroll students to attend their local neighborhood school. Residing closer or walking distance from school could supplement current student creatively in transportation from school activities, e.g. car pools, etc. In this scenario, secondary students that are grandfathered to attend a non-local neighborhood school, or take special classes at a non-local neighborhood school such as International Baccalaureate (IB) classes would be assigned to public transit transportation. Thus, participation in after school activities is encouraged, either by proximity to a neighborhood school, or by the Public Transit flexibility for secondary students attending a non-local neighborhood schools.

My recommendation to increase student participation in after school activities is to enroll students to attend their local neighborhood school, and assign secondary students that are grandfathered to attend a non-local neighborhood school or take special classes at a non-local neighborhood to public transit transportation.

Introduction, Background, & History

By State law students who reside two miles or more from the neighborhood attendance area school are eligible for School District transportation to school. This transportation usually is provided by yellow school bus. School Buses run on strict schedules. The limited transportation opportunity discourages student participation in after school activities and other community programs.

Some times students are transported by alternative means. Student transportation, including the alternative means, consist of:

- 1) Yellow school buses,
- 2) Type III buses (State Patrol inspected vans and cars, including taxicabs),
- 3) Public Transit buses,
- 4) Parent transportation (including parent arranged carpools),
- 5) Student driver transportation (including carpools)
- 6) Walking (elementary grade walking students may be assisted by Adult Crossing Guards, School Patrol Programs, or “Safe Walk to School” programs), or
- 7) Riding a bicycle (seasonal).

The Public Transit transportation may be more economically than school bus for schools and programs with relatively few students scattered over a wide area. In addition, Public Transit transportation provides for flexible student schedules due to the various times available to board a Public Transit transportation bus.

During the 2010/2011 school year, 14 school districts and 30 charter schools used Public Transit transportation to some extent according to Minnesota Department of Education statistics (Minnesota Department of Education, 2012). These school districts included the Cities of first class and other larger cities.

Saint Paul Public Schools uses Metro Transit for certain student groups: the Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs) which have relatively few students scattered city wide, Nonpublic schools which have relatively few students scattered city wide, and for Special Education students to obtain education through community programs as required by their Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The 2011/2012 fiscal year costs for Saint Paul Public Schools for this transportation is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Saint Paul Public Schools categories of Metro Transit expense for the 2011/2012 fiscal year

Category	Amount
To and From School - Public	\$131,767
To and From School – Nonpublic	\$ 65,832
Special Education – Between Buildings	\$ 93,782

I am unaware of any national Public Transit transportation statistics, but it is commonly believed that many large urban school districts use Public Transit transportation service.

In general, federal and Minnesota State legal standards for school buses are tougher than legal standards for public transit transportation. Although drivers for both types of vehicles need a “commercial driver license”, Minnesota school bus drivers (Metropolitan Council, 1998):

- 1) Need a drivers license “school bus endorsement”,
- 2) Need to be provided with annual training on student transportation,
- 3) Will lose their “State school bus endorsement” for State defined multiple moving violations,
- 4) Will lose their “State school bus endorsement” for committing a felony.

Also, school bus vehicles are built to stricter construction and component standards.

School bus vehicles (Metropolitan Council, 1998):

- 1) Require State Inspection,
- 2) Are required to have a first aid kit,
- 3) Are required to have padded seats positioned close together for protection in the event of an accident (aka compartmentalized),
- 4) Are painted the unique “school bus” yellow color, and
- 5) Have an eight light system along with stop signs to control traffic.

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) initiated a public transit program for most MPS transported secondary students during the 2012/2013 school year. Limitations in student transportation prevent maximum educational opportunities for students. More flexibility would create more options for students. This would result in school educational resources lining up better with student interests. Students could have more exposure to extra classes and exposure to community events and services. The additional educational opportunities would lead to a more fulfilling academic experience. The MPS public transit program can be reviewed as a case study.

Many communities have implemented creative transportation programs to assist in meeting the local transportation needs. These programs include a van available on a “dial-a-ride” basis, ride sharing, and the promotion of bicycle programs.

In Saint Paul one innovative approach to meet transportation needs was the creation of the “Circulator” route. The circulator route concept is to have a route available to youth and other groups as collaborative effort to bring access to neighborhood programs (Saint Paul Citywide Circulator Taskforce Committee, 2008).

However, transportation of school students must be by vehicles and drivers meeting stringent Federal and State laws. But children and youth in non-school community programs are

not students subject to school transportation laws. Nevertheless, superior (best) transportation practices should be a consideration for non-school transportation service.

Any school district or school assigned student transportation is subject to school student transportation laws. But the transportation methods of students chosen by parents and students which is beyond school arrangement is not subject to school transportation laws. So for some transportation situations the lack of school involvement creates more opportunities.

Client & Stakeholders

The clients and stakeholders are Students, Parents (including various Community Groups), School Staff, and Public (Metro Transit users, and taxpayers).

Students

Students are the primary impacted client group. Generally, when students reside beyond a local school district determined walk distance from school (subject to a State Law that requires students living beyond two miles from their neighborhood school to be offered transportation to the neighborhood school), then the students are offered transportation by yellow school bus. The yellow school bus transportation is economical, accessible, and yellow school bus transportation is very safe.

Public Transit transportation has several main differences from school bus transportation for student transportation:

- 1) Students have more flexibility when using Public Transit transportation service,
- 2) Students generally walk further to get to Public Transit bus stops (Public Transit organizations generally provide service on main streets),

- 3) Students may experience waiting time at Public Transit bus transfer points, and
- 4) Students interact with the general public, which may be socially undesirable (e. g. possible student exposure to drug dealers, possible harassment of the members of the general public by students).
- 5) On rainy days or very cold days students using public transit transportation are more subject to the elements.

In an interview on September 21, 2012, Metro Transit Public Relations Manager John Siqueland stated that students “overwhelming” support the flexibility and independence with the use of Metro Transit transportation. Two youth groups, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board and the Saint Paul Youth Commission, were noted as studying the student use of Transit transportation and formally supporting the MPS Public Transit program.

Nevertheless, there is not universal student support of the MPS Public Transit program. In fact, a student Face Book page was established to oppose the MPS Public Transit program (*Put all Mpls HS students back on school buses*, August 21, 2012).

Parents (including Community Groups)

Parental and business support for switching students to Metro Transit transportation can be gauged from a survey conducted as part of a Metro Transit study of student transportation in 1998. The factors for these opinions have not changed drastically over time.

Table 2

Survey of Parent and Business level of support of Public Transit transportation of students conducted 1998.

Ranking	Minneapolis	Saint Paul
Poor Idea	37 %	42 %
Average Idea	32 %	30 %
Good Idea	31 %	29 %

Source: Metropolitan Council Plan for Public Transit transportation of students in Grades 9-12 (Metropolitan Council, 1998, p. 11).

School Staff

The main impact on school staff is the organization of staff supervision over students who would generally be on school property for longer periods of time.

Public (Metro Transit users, and taxpayers)

The Minnesota Daily expressed concerns about moving from school buses to Metro Transit buses (Minnesota Daily, September 26, 2012). There were a number of media reports on the MPS program.

One article stated that there have been fights at the Metro Transit bus stops. "There has been quite a few incidents at the bus stops or going to the bus stops," said Officer Charles Adams III, the police liaison at North High School (Star Tribune, October 12, 2012).

In an interview on September 21, 2012, Minneapolis School Board Chair Alberto Monserrate stated there was "overwhelming" community support of the Metro Transit program. An exception arose from the Hmong community at Henry High School. A lack of Hmong students having experience using Metro Transit transportation because of cultural practices is believed to be the main factor. Accommodation is being provided by a phase in of the student Metro Transit transportation for Hmong students at Henry High School.

Finally, taxpayers would generally prefer the lowest cost transportation service.

Problem Definition

Limitations in student transportation prevent maximum educational opportunities for students. More flexibility would create more options for students. This would result in school educational resources lining up better with student interests. Students could have more exposure to extra classes and exposure to community events and services. The additional educational opportunities would lead to a more fulfilling academic experience. How can mobility options be expanded to generate new educational possibilities?

Monserrate identified public transit transportation as a means of providing flexibility for Minneapolis Public Schools. Besides greater after school activity program participation, students can better access "zero" hour classes, miss the bus and still get to school on the next bus, and leave the school grounds for other community events and access.

A draw back to the MPS public transit transportation program is the cost. Siqveland stated MPS and Metro Transit signed a \$1.2 million contract to provide GoTo cards to the select students for the 2012/2013 school year. However the MPS route structure sans five High School routes was not rearranged to reduce the number of school buses. A reduction would require significant “bell time” changes for the schools, disrupting parent and student daily schedules.

Perhaps for a future school year the routes will be rearranged and there will be a reduction in the number of buses. If so there would be a savings offset amount against the MPS and Metro Transit contract amount. However, not all students can be removed from yellow school bus. Some special education students need special transportation services. Other students (e.g. homeless, treatment programs, 504 accommodation plans) may be best served by yellow school bus transportation service.

Transportation comparative costs are factors for consideration. Per table 4, a school bus is very inexpensive for the transportation of students after the first school transported. The Saint Paul Public Schools average 2nd and 3rd school transportation cost is \$13.71 per school daily. The capacity of a typical school bus is 48 senior high students. Therefore, the marginal cost is about \$0.29 per day or \$0.145 per ride for senior high students in a full school bus.

Comparatively, the secondary student Metro Transit fare is \$1.35 per ride, which would be \$2.70 per day.

However, there are additional Metro Transit costs. For example, the Office of the Legislative Auditor reported at one time that about 45% percent of Metro Transit’s operating fund came from property taxes (Office of the Legislative Auditor, p. 26). In other words, the fare charge is only part of the overall costs. Other subsidizes would further increase the total cost per ride.

Table 4

Saint Paul Public Schools Bus Company Additional 71 Passenger School Service Daily Rates

Company	1 st School	2 nd School	3 rd School
Centerline Charter	\$280.00	\$ 5.00	\$10.00
First Student	\$291.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Illinois Central	\$289.00	\$ 9.00	\$18.00
Monarch Bus	\$297.80	\$10.00	\$18.50
Safeway Bus	\$298.00	\$15.00	\$23.00
Sunburst Bus	\$300.00	\$12.00	\$24.00

Source: St Paul Public Schools additional service rate composite for the 2012/2013 school year.

Nevertheless, Metro Transit may also have marginal cost savings, to the extent that additional transportation of students does not require addition Metro Transit routes.

There is also Federal law limits on the public transit transportation of students. The St. Germain amendment of 1974 (Public Law 93-503, 93rd Congress, S.386, November 24, 1974, School Bus Operations) prohibits public transportation systems from providing transportation to students in competition with private school bus operations. In other words, public transportation providers can only provide transportation service to students on public routes that are available to the general public (Metropolitan Council, p. 55).

Saint Paul Public Schools High School bus routes generally run on the following morning (am) schedule:

Pre 6:30 am students are walking to bus stops

6:30 am - typical first pick up time

7:15 am – bus arrival for the breakfast program

7:30 am – school start time

If all the transported Saint Paul Public Schools High School students were assigned to Metro Transit transportation, there would be additional costs and cost savings. The additional cost would be the Metro Transit student card fare rate of \$1.35 per ride, unless alternative fees for the GoTo student card could be arranged.

The cost savings would be the elimination of the “additional school” bus routes (i.e. elimination of the buses arriving at the high schools at 7:15 am). The elimination of one school from a three school route combination results in limited savings. However, if Junior High Schools or Elementary Schools could be assigned to the 7:15 am arrival time the overall number of school buses could drastically be reduced. This could result in millions of dollars in savings. However, a 7:15 am arrival time for Junior High Schools or Elementary Schools could result some of these children walking to bus stops before 6:30 am. Having children walking to bus stops in the dark is deemed socially undesirable and to be avoided to the extent reasonably possible.

The mere elimination of the inexpensive 7:15 am arrival time routes would be the most likely result only assigning senior high school students to Metro Transit transportation in Saint Paul, without changes in Junior High or Elementary start times. The yellow school bus route changes would be very nominal yellow school bus route cost savings

Minneapolis Public Schools start times present a different scenario. The Minneapolis Public Schools senior high schools have a later start time. The later start times came about mainly because of concerns about student academic performance related to sleep deprivation. Minneapolis Public Schools can be more flexible in adjusting senior high schools start times without necessarily having a major negative impact of the overall Minneapolis Public Schools budget. The senior high school time slots in the middle of a three-school time slot could be filled by rearranging Junior High or Elementary start times.

Method/Resources/Evidence

Overview

Since Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) initiated a public transit program for most MPS transported secondary students, the MPS program serves as a case study. If successful, the MPS program may be a paragon for other schools districts. The MPS program can be reviewed through information on the Metro Transit website, information on the MPS website, and numerous news articles.

I choose to interview both Minneapolis School Board Chair Alberto Monserrate and Metro Transit Public Relations Manager John Siqveland to learn more about the MPS program. Monserrate and Siqveland are excellent sources of information, and I learned much about MPS program, in particular the interaction with community, and the of success of allowing for additional learning opportunities.

Monserrate and Siqveland are excited about the MPS program and strong advocates. However, as advocates they are not good sources of information on opposing viewpoints. There

were several news reports that were skeptical, and some news reports that were negative, but in general the MPS project had media support.

There is plenty of technical and trade magazine articles on the relative safety of school buses verses public transit buses. However, the fact that public transit buses are used routinely in many school districts nationwide indicates that the safety differences are not deemed excessive.

Cost differences are also a major consideration. The school district cost factors were readily available, but the Metro Transit marginal costs for different levels of change warrant further review.

In addition, there have been various studies and documents prepared on student transportation that included studying public transit transportation issues. These studies include an Office of Legislative Auditor pupil transportation study, and a Minnesota Department of Education pupil transportation study.

Metro Transit Accommodation Review

One question that arises is how easily could Metro Transit accommodate large groups of additional secondary students? One gauge is how easily can Metro Transit currently accommodate large groups of secondary students. Currently within the Saint Paul Public School District, metro transit transportation is the school district assigned transportation service for three nonpublic schools: Cretin-Derham, Saint Agnes High School, and Saint Paul Academy (SPA) Upper High School. In table three, the current enrollment for these three schools is listed with enrollment of the Saint Paul Public High Schools.

The Cretin-Derham enrollment is lower than the enrollment at six Saint Paul Public High Schools. This indicates that the current Metro Transit routes may not be able to accommodate the

transportation of secondary students from these six High Schools if their students were assigned to Metro Transit transportation.

Table 3

Select City of St. Paul High Schools Projected 9-12 Enrollments for the 2012/2013 school year.

School	Enrollment	Metro Transit Transportation
Central High School	2,078	
Como Senior High School	1,253	
Cretin-Derham High School	692	Yes
Gordon Parks ALC High School	252	Yes
Harding Senior High	1,954	
Highland Park Senior High	1,261	
Humboldt Senior High	595	
Johnson Senior High	1,473	
Open World Learning	108	
Saint Agnes High School	94	Yes
Saint Paul Academy – Upper	163	Yes
Washington Technology	981	

Source: St Paul Public Schools Research Department.

In addition, private schools would be expected to have students from wealthier families with more personal transportation options. Therefore, the private schools would have a lower percentage of students using Metro Transit transportation.

Gordon Parks High School is an Alternative Learning Center (ALC) public high school. The school is conveniently located on the University Avenue Metro Transit bus line. Students take a morning session class schedule track, or take a afternoon session class schedule track, plus additional schoolwork. These students are assigned to Metro Transit transportation, because of the relatively small number of students arriving at or leaving the building at one time. This is a successful use of Metro Transit transportation to assist with flexible student schedules.

Sleep Deprivation Review

Sleep deprivation is the condition of not having enough sleep, which can be either chronic or acute. Chronic sleep deprivation can cause fatigue, daytime sleepiness, clumsiness, and weight loss or gain. Sleep deprivation adversely affects the brain and cognitive function.

In 1997 the University of Minnesota conducted research on 7,000 High School students whose school start time changed from 7:15 am to 8:40 am. The students with the later start time were reported as “getting more sleep, being less sleepy during the day, getting higher grades, and experiencing fewer depressive feelings, mood swings, and poor behaviors” (Braverman, 2012, p. 1).

Students transported early in the morning may be getting less sleep, and therefore are more likely to be suffering from sleep deprivation.

Criteria

Michael Kraft and Scott Furlong have identified some criteria for evaluating public policy proposals (Kraft & Furlong, 2013, p. 185). I have chosen four of the criterion to analyze the benefits and disadvantages of the transportation alternatives and their effects on the goal of creating educational opportunities:

Social Acceptability

The public needs to support the policy proposals. The public for this analysis includes parents, students, general Metro Transit riders, and taxpayers. Parents and students that don't agree with the policy proposal may choose alternative education options, e.g. open enrollment options, charter schools, private schools, home schooling.

Dissatisfied general public metro transit riders may discontinue the use of metro transit transportation.

Social acceptability can be hard to measure, due to the subjective nature of the public reaction. However, social acceptability is a good criterion to use for evaluation because of the controversial nature of public policy with directly impacts parent and student lifestyles.

Political Feasibility

Political feasibility is the extent to which elected officials (i.e. School Board members) accept and support a policy proposal. A School Board member would be reluctant to support a policy proposal that could affect the School Board member's chance of re-election. Since School Board members are the decision makers for implementing this policy proposal, the School Board support is essential for a successful program.

Efficiency

The making available of the additional educational opportunities should not be excessively expensive. However, the availability of additional educational opportunities may be worth some level of new costs. The choice from a cost-benefit analysis of the options ultimately resides with the School Board.

Technical Feasibility (Safety and Security)

Although there is not an overwhelming difference in the safety and security of school buses operations verses public transit bus operations, clearly school buses operations have a distinct advantage, e.g. traffic control devises, generally less groups of students waiting at bus stops when the large groups waiting may lead to more fights and lead to other student misbehavior.

Student misbehavior incidents in the MPS program have been severe enough to require extra security, require change bus stop location, slow down Metro Transit buses, and cause the intervention of the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board to assist the transit police (Star Tribune, October 12, 2012).

I have listed safety and security under technical feasibility as elements of the transportation infrastructure. Unforeseen surveillance changes or public transit traffic control changes could change the level of public transit transportation safety.

Alternatives

The goal is to allow transportation flexibility to enable more student participation in after school activities and other community programs. Yellow school bus schedules generally require students to go home immediately at dismissal time. However, the repeating Metro Transit routes allow flexibility in when students can leave school grounds.

Alternative One: Status Quo - Primarily School Bus Transportation

Schools generally provide transportation by yellow school buses. But the yellow school buses transportation is often supplemented by other transportation means for different groups of students.

A typical status quo transportation mixture would be yellow school buses for most students, Type III buses (State Patrol inspected vans and cars, including taxicabs) for some scattered special education/treatment program students and some homeless students, public transit buses for some scattered students in Area Learning Center programs, senior high charter school students and scattered nonpublic schools, parent transportation by transportation contract for students in outlying areas, and walking for students that reside a mile or two from school (with elementary grade walking students assisted by Adult Crossing Guards, School Patrol Programs, or “Safe Walk” to School programs).

Some students’ transportation includes airplane rides: students that reside in northern Minnesota and are enrolled in the Faribault Academies residential program (five days a week) fly to and from Bemidji for weekend home visitation.

The typical status quo transportation mixture is based primarily upon low cost. Safety may be a consideration in choosing school buses over other means of transportation. However,

consideration of after school programs is often not a component of creating school bus route schedules. Rural school districts may have more need to run separate “late activity” routes.

Alternative Two: New Program – Senior High Metro Transit Transportation

Currently no Minnesota school district has all secondary students assigned to Public Transit transportation. Under the MPS program five of seven public high schools are transported by Metro Transit transportation during the 2012-2013 school year. The remaining two schools are likely to Metro Transit transportation during the 2013-2014 school year.

The flexibility of using public transit transportation extends not only school based after school activities, but also to getting students to other community programs or to job locations. The GoTo student card used for the program is valid for transportation from 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM. If a student misses the public transit bus, the student can wait for the next bus (and not miss school for the day). Schools get reports on student usage of the card, including the days the student was absent from school (Star Tribune, October 12, 2012).

The GoTo student card is also the student ID card on the backside of the card. Students learn the responsibility of having and safeguarding the card. Also, students are learning to be comfortable using public transportation.

Alternative Three: Expansion – Options by Attendance Area Changes

Another method to encourage student participation in after school activities is to assign students to their local neighborhood school. Residing closer or walking distance from school could supplement current student creatively in transportation from school activities, e.g. car pools, etc.

If students were assigned to their local neighborhood school the bus routes would be shorter. Up to forty-five minute ride time could be reduced around a 20-minute ride time. This could assist with the sleep deprivation issue. In addition, if elementary students were also assigned to their local neighborhood school, then the increase in walkers and shorter bus routes could lead to a substantial reduction in the number of school bus routes. The cost savings could create more funds for classroom learning.

Secondary students that are grandfathered to attend a non-local neighborhood school, or take special classes at a non-local neighborhood school such as International Baccalaureate (IB) classes would be assigned to public transit transportation. Thus, participation in after school activities is encouraged, either by proximity to a neighborhood school, or by the Public Transit flexibility for secondary students attending a non-local neighborhood school.

Alternatives– Side-by-Side Comparison

Table 5 lists a summary of highlights of the alternatives by evaluation criteria:

Table 5

Highlight Comments on Alternatives

Alternative	Status Quo	Expansion	New Program
Social Acceptability	Historical Acceptance	Loss of Direct Service	Community Outreach Needed
	Opportunities Lost	Voluntary Participation	Cultural based Resistance
Political Feasibility	Status Quo Works	Metro Transit Works	Operation Adjustments needed
Efficiency	Low Cost Emphasis	Cost Differences Not Extraordinary	School bus generally less cost
			Non-monetary values
Technical Feasibility (Security/Safety)	Vehicle is Safer (s. bus)	Some Students exposed to Public	Students exposed to Public
	Operation is Safer (s. bus)	Some Public exposed to Students	Public exposed to Students

Analysis

Table 6 lists a subjective rating of the alternatives by evaluation criteria. For this list a range is used with “5” as important, “3” as moderately important, and “1” is not very important:

Table 6

Weighting of Alternatives

Alternative	Status Quo	Expansion	New Program
Social Acceptability	5	5	5
Political Feasibility	5	5	5
Efficiency	5	5	1
Technical Feasibility (Security/Safety)	4	4	3

These ratings show that the transportation service in any alternative should be acceptable to parents, students, and the community. In addition, the transportation service should be functional with few operational problems.

Low cost efficiency is a high priority under the current transportation structure. Moderate expansion of transportation of students by Metro Transit may supplement current transportation efficiencies. However, a switch of all secondary students to Metro Transit service would be viewed as a new program with new costs, and not based upon cost effectiveness.

Safety is a high concern with student transportation. The construction and operation of yellow school buses is a paragon of transportation safety (National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Service, 2000, p. 1). Nevertheless, School Districts often assign students to taxicabs, district operated cars and vans, or parent operated cars and vans, reducing the safety level. Although Metro Transit vehicles are very safe, the safety level is not as high as with

yellow school busses. As an example, the school bus drivers can control traffic with the flashing red lights and the stop sign.

Recommendations

My recommendation to encourage student participation in after school activities is to assign students to their local neighborhood school, and by assigning to Metro Transit transportation for secondary students that are grandfathered to attend a non-local neighborhood school, or take special classes at a non-local neighborhood school such as IB classes. In addition, all nonpublic secondary students would be assigned to Metro Transit transportation.

Nevertheless, special education students requiring special transportation according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP), students requiring transportation because of a 504 plan, students in treatment programs, and homeless students would be exempt from Metro Transit transportation.

If elementary students were also assigned to their local neighborhood school, then the cumulative increase in walkers and shorter bus routes could lead to a substantial reduction in the number of school bus routes. The cost savings could create more funds for classroom learning.

For secondary students walking to school is a relatively safe method of getting to school. However, student driver transportation is the most dangerous means of student transportation (National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Service, 2000) . The attendance area recommendation, if implemented, may cause an increase in crashes because of an increase in student driver transportation.

Nevertheless, the attendance area recommendation would increase participation in after school activities by students residing closer to their attended school and being able to walk home from after school programs, or by the flexibility from Metro Transit for secondary students attending a non-local neighborhood school.

Implementation/Lobbying Strategies

The decisions to use yellow school transportation service or Metro Transit transportation, and attendance area enrollment requirements are ultimately decisions of the School Board.

If approved by the School Board, then community outreach would be needed by community meetings, publications, press releases, social media interaction, etc.

Summary

The recommendation to increase student participation in after school activities is to assign students to their local neighborhood school, and assign secondary students that are grandfathered to attend a non-local neighborhood school or take special classes at a non-local neighborhood to public transit transportation.

There is a wide variety of means student transportation, including yellow school bus transportation, public transit transportation, Type III buses (State Patrol inspected vans and cars, including taxicabs), parent transportation, riding a bicycle, or walking to and from school.

A school bus is very inexpensive for the transportation of students after the first school transported. For Saint Paul Public Schools the average 2nd and 3rd school transportation cost is \$13.71 per school daily. The marginal cost is about \$0.29 per day or \$0.145 per ride for senior high students in a full school bus. Comparatively, the secondary student Metro Transit fare is

\$1.35 per ride, which would be \$2.70 per day. Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and Metro Transit signed a \$1.2 million contract for Metro Transit to provide student ride cards to the participating students for the 2012/2013 school year.

Public Transit transportation has several main differences from school bus transportation from a student transportation perspective: students have more flexibility when using Public Transit transportation service, students generally walk further to get to Public Transit bus stops, students may experience more waiting time at Public Transit bus transfer points, students interact with the general public when using public transportation, and on rainy days or very cold days students using Public Transit are more subject to the elements.

Minneapolis Public School students are reported as having “overwhelming” support for the flexibility and independence with the use of Metro Transit transportation. However, that support is not universal. Additional formal feedback would be helpful.

Evaluation

Increased student participation in after school activities would be the primary measure of success in students utilizing the change in transportation service. This measure could be obtained using enrollment records.

Student participation in other community activities or employment changes could be measured by surveying the students.

Other select measurements would be available; the enrollment in “zero” hour classes, changes in the serving of breakfast program meals, absentee rate change.

Ultimately the goal is more flexibility to create more student options. For the students that utilize the options created by the transportation change to participate in various programs

and activities, the transportation change can be considered a success. The program success for an individual is regardless of the overall cumulative level of participation.

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