

Board of Education

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HOOVER CITY SCHOOLS

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May 6, 2014

Dear Hoover City Schools' Stakeholder:

On April 17th, the Hoover City Board of Education unanimously approved my recommendation of a fee structure supporting student bus transportation. This fee structure will serve as a planning guide as we work to transition to a more effective, efficient, and financially sustainable student transportation model. The plan has evolved over the past four months through collaborative discussion, analysis, and review with the United States Department of Justice, and we are pursuing this course of action with continued monitoring and dialogue with both the Justice Department and our State Department of Education. The fee structure is tiered with equitable discounts for students participating in the National School Lunch Program and families with multiple children utilizing transportation services.

Although the Board's approval only provides a path to initial planning and design, the overarching goal is to provide a model of improved student transportation service for our community while responsibly addressing the costs of the program through multiple sources of funds. We envision Hoover City Schools providing world-class pupil transportation services using a cost-sharing model whereby state earmarked transportation funds are combined with local tax receipts and equitably administered ridership charges for students choosing to ride. Currently we are working towards implementation with the beginning of the 2015-2016 school-year. For additional explanatory information, please review the Questions/Answers document included with this letter.

We have already begun to think about the possibilities this model could offer our school system and its students. One such possibility is the integration of technology that will enhance the safety and efficiency of our student transportation services. For example, technology can be incorporated to capture ongoing, accurate ridership data that can be used to improve route design and overall quality of service. Another possibility is the increased potential for implementing enhanced supervision on buses. There is also the possibility that this transportation model could be the springboard to overcoming existing restrictions that have historically excluded students from transportation services and truly provide transportation choice to all of our students and families.

As we look forward, there is no doubt that we are engaged in a process of change - movement away from "how it has always been done" to a transportation model that I believe will better serve our students, families, and school system.

Thank you for allowing me to share this information with you and for your support of Hoover City Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Craig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andy Craig
Superintendent

QUESTION: What is the timeline for implementation?

ANSWER: Over the months ahead, we will continue to work with the United States Department of Justice and Alabama State Department of Education officials to plan and design this cost-sharing transportation model. Currently the implementation goal is the start of the 2015-2016 school year.

QUESTION: Why is it now necessary to change the operating model for pupil transportation?

ANSWER: In short, transportation has become chronically underfunded in recent years. Formula based state allocations have consistently fallen short of actual operating costs for providing school transportation. This shortfall tends to be compounded for Hoover City Schools because of the consistent enrollment growth we have experienced and the in-arrears nature of the current funding methodology. We do not see significant potential for sustained improvement and recovery of this lost funding capacity from the state allocation model. We are planning a transition to a model where these annual unfunded costs will be shared primarily between ridership charges and local tax proceeds.

QUESTION: What is the enrollment of Hoover City Schools, and how many students ride buses?

ANSWER: Total 2014 school year enrollment for grades K – 12 is 13,882. The official ridership for the same school year is 6,585. Of this number, there are approximately 6,266 regular route, to and/or from school average daily riders.

QUESTION: Will the ridership fees be discounted for students that qualify for free or reduced lunches and families with multiple riders.

ANSWER: Yes. Rates for students qualified for reduced and free lunches under the National School Lunch Program are discounted 50% and 63% respectively. Rates are discounted for multiple riders as well. The schedule approved by the Board to be used as guidance in the planning and implementation is shown below:

	1 Rider Both Ways Per Day	2 Riders Both Ways Per Day	3+ Riders Both Ways Per Day
Non-Poverty Riders	\$ 2.26	\$ 1.59	\$ 1.19
NSLP Qualified Reduced Riders	\$ 1.13	\$ 0.80	\$ 0.59
NSLP Qualified Free Riders	\$ 0.83	\$ 0.58	\$ 0.43

QUESTION: What payment intervals will be used? Will parents be required to pay by month?

ANSWER: We know that actual ridership occurs in a seemingly infinite number of variations. Our goal as we develop our plan is to explore technology and applications that allow for assessment at the actual ridership and one-way trip level. We envision that this would work similarly to the way payments and charges currently flow with student lunch accounts in our cafeterias. In general, payments would be credited to the student's bus account, and the account would be reduced by actual ridership when it occurs. One-way ridership would incur a half-day charge. This is our goal.