



Greenville School Board
Advocacy Committee

Transportation Workgroup UPDATE

Prepared by Transportation Workgroup members:
Derek Lewis, Lisa Wells, Chuck Saylor, Lynda Leventis-Wells

Workgroup Purpose

Appointed by Greenville County School Board Advocacy Committee Chair Joy Grayson on Tuesday, August 8:

The Greenville County Schools Board Advocacy Committee requests a summary of findings relating to buses used to transport public school students within Greenville County (both state and locally owned buses) and the **compliance of these vehicles with SC Code of Laws** (Section 59-67: School Buses). The Committee also requests that the Workgroup makes **recommendations regarding local or state policy** needed to improve the transportation of Greenville County Schools students as a result of these findings.



Workgroup Meetings

9/15	Initial Presentation: Phillip Davie, Adam James, David Poag Topics: Routes, ride times, magnet schools, and transportation review
9/19	Bus Finance: What fund sources are available for transportation costs: Jeff Knotts
9/25	SC Dept. of Education staff: Meeting with transportation and leadership staff from SCDE
10/6	Hazardous Routes summary: Betty Farley
10/12	Tour of SCDE maintenance shop and GCS bus shop
10/17	Conference call with Beaufort Schools and Charleston Schools bus operations staff
10/24	Update presentation to Advocacy Committee including staff responses to questions submitted at prior Workgroup meetings
11/7	Public Transportation challenges and opportunities: Meeting with Greenlink Staff and Piedmont Health Foundation board



Three Principal Themes

- ▶ Replacement of buses most likely to cause “thermal events” - 1995-96 Type D rear-engine buses
- ▶ Improvement of reliable transportation options, including operational efficiency, reducing operating costs, and ensuring fewer late arrivals for students
- ▶ Adoption of policy changes that would allow the SC Board of Education to grant waivers from applicable regulations to local school districts for innovative approaches





Thermal Events

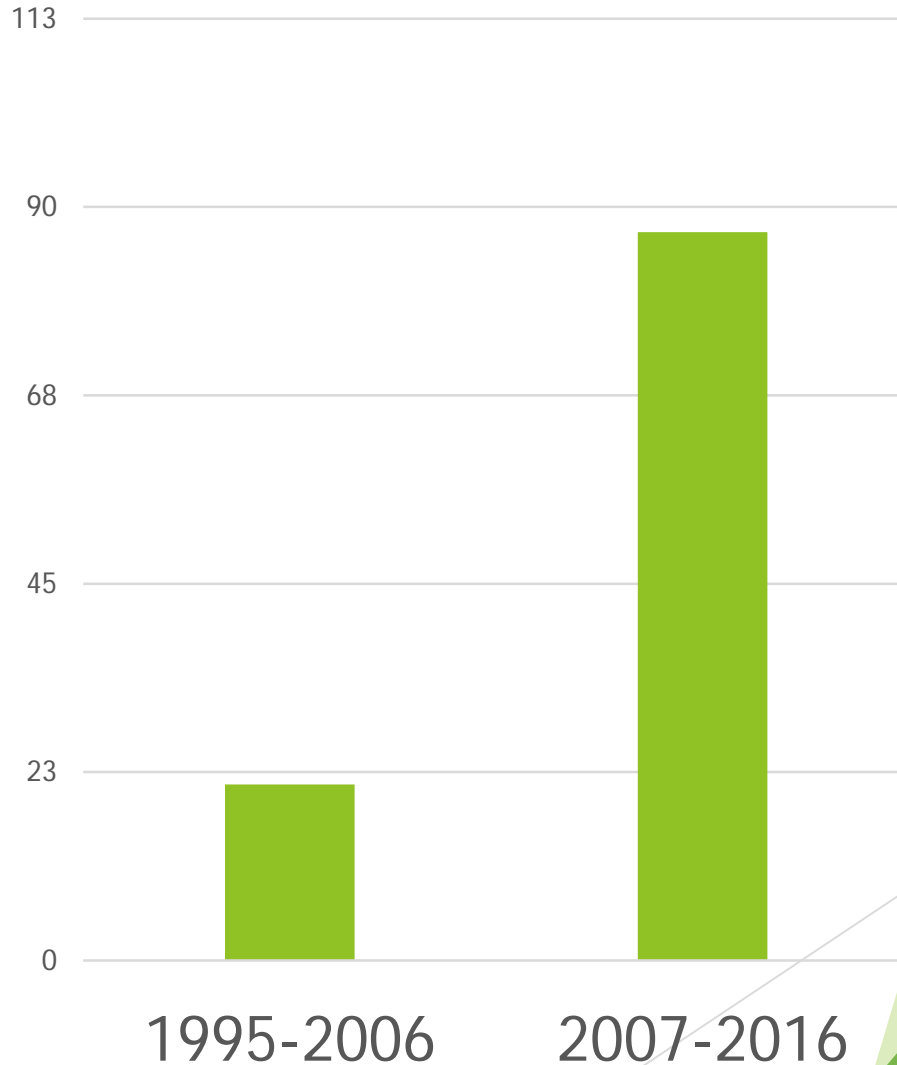




Thermal Events

- ▶ 75% of “thermal events” in past 20 years were on 1995-1996 buses
- ▶ Thermal events have quadrupled over past decade
- ▶ Thermal sensors are not as effective as we had hoped
- ▶ Greenville County Schools currently operates:
 - ↗ 40 State-owned 1995-96 buses
 - ↗ 12 District-owned 1995-96 buses

Thermal Events on SC Buses
(statewide)



Thermal Events:

Areas where we find SCDE out of compliance

- ▶ *SC Code of Laws Section 59-67-543: The Department of Transportation shall be responsible for providing all supplies required for the operation of state-owned school buses and for maintaining them in efficient and **safe mechanical condition***
- ▶ *Section 59-67-530- Expense of operation of State and locally owned buses: State Board shall be responsible for all expenses of operation of State-owned buses and for **the replacement of obsolete equipment***



Thermal Events:

Policy Recommendations



- ▶ In accordance with SC Code of Laws 59-67-530, SC General Assembly must immediately fund replacement of all 1995-1996 Type D Rear-engine buses by overriding Gov. McMaster's veto and allocating funds necessary to replace the remainder of the 1995-1996 buses from the state owned fleet
- ▶ In accordance with SC Code of Laws 59-67-543, General Assembly should prohibit SCDE from including 1995-1996 buses in allocations made to local school districts. These buses are demonstrably unsafe, and the risk has quadrupled over the past decade. To include these bus in our daily routing is a gamble our legislators should not ask local school districts to take.



Improving Reliable Transportation



Improving Reliable Transportation:

Late Buses



Greenville 2016-17 data:

- 20 buses break down daily
- 3,600 annual breakdowns
- 150,000 late student arrivals
- 40% of late buses caused by mechanical issues



Improving Reliable Transportation:

Fiscal Impact



Operational Costs

- ▶ 1995 bus = \$.49/mile
- ▶ 2013 bus = \$.21/mile

105 buses older than 2002
x 13,500 miles daily/bus

**\$396,600 annual cost to
taxpayers**



Policy Confusion



- ▶ *Section 59-67-580: Replacement Cycle; funding: **With funds appropriated by the General Assembly** for school bus purchases, the State Board of Education shall implement a school bus replacement cycle to replace approximately one-fifteenth of the fleet each year with new school buses. These funds must not be used for school bus maintenance or fuel.*

Policy Recommendations



- ▶ The General Assembly should annually appropriate the necessary funds for a 15-year bus replacement cycle, as required by statute. SCDE's current estimated cost to achieve this is \$34.1 million per year.
- ▶ SCDE must develop and General Assembly must fund a formula to add additional buses to the school bus fleet to accommodate student growth.

Improving Reliable Transportation: *Strengthening Local Partnerships*



Collaboration with GREENLINK could increase potential for:

- Transportation options for staff
- Shared transportation and maintenance staff
- Shared maintenance equipment and facility space
- Added transportation options for families on bus routes

Improve Reliable Transportation:

Policy Recommendations



- ▶ The General Assembly should require SCDE to promulgate and publish “average per pupil operating cost of its state owned fleet” as required by 59-67-460 to allow local school districts flexibility to contract out parts of bus operation system
- ▶ Greenville County Schools staff and board should meet with City of Greenville and Greenville County staffs and councils to explore possible cost savings and system efficiencies of coordinated shared bus services between Greenville County Schools and Greenlink and the policy recommendations necessary to foster these collaborations.

Improve Reliable Transportation:

Halton Road Bus Center

- ▶ The General Assembly should adopt a proviso allowing SCDE to sell the Halton Road state-owned bus shop and use the proceeds to build a new bus shop facility co-located with GCS' bus shop at Donaldson Center



Innovative Approaches to Transportation



Innovative Approach #1:

Use of 14-Passenger Vehicles to Reduce Wait Time



- ▶ *Some wait times and ride times exceed the 90 minutes mandated by state law*
- ▶ *Often it is rural routes with longest ride times:*
 - ▶ *Slater Marietta ES*
 - ▶ *Travelers Rest HS*
 - ▶ *Northwest MS*
 - ▶ *Magnet Schools*

Innovative Approach #1: *Policy Recommendation*

- ▶ State Board of Education should adopt amended regulations regarding public school driver credentials to allow non-CDL drivers to operate 14-passenger buses on regular routes.



Innovative Approach #2: *Increase Walkability*



- Current law defines area as < 1.5 miles
- 27% of District students live < 1.5 mile from school
- Some schools have 80-90% of school attendance area <1.5 mile from school
- \$105,000 in District fees owed to SCDE for Hazardous Route transportation



Innovative Approach #2: *Policy Recommendations*

- ▶ The General Assembly should appropriate the necessary funds to reduce the “hazardous route” zone from 1.5 miles to .5 miles to increase likelihood that a student could be served by bus transportation in unsafe, dense, urban areas.
- ▶ Greenville County Council and local municipalities should reduce hazardous routes by requiring new residential developments to include pedestrian facilities that connect to the public sidewalk system and by working to retrofit existing developments to create safe routes to schools (e.g., multi-use paths, bike paths, sidewalks, signalized and non-signalized crosswalks).



Innovative Approach #3:

Increase Monitoring Technology on Buses



Wi-fi equipped buses would make it possible for added monitoring, including:

- ▶ Real-time two-way communication
- ▶ GPS tracking and bus monitoring
- ▶ Real-time data on bus arrivals
- ▶ Wi-fi on buses for students to complete homework



Innovative Approach #3: *Policy Recommendation*

- ▶ The General Assembly should appropriate the necessary funds to equip all new buses with wi-fi and bus driver and passenger monitoring, including GPS tracking, two-way communication, cameras, and microphones



Final Policy Recommendation

- We are aware that there is currently proposed legislation (H.4389) that would turn over control of the bus fleet to local school districts. This Workgroup recommends that the General Assembly take no action regarding ownership issues until the General Assembly and SCDE modernize the bus fleet, replacing all buses that are 15 years or older



Other Actions for the Board to Consider:

- ▶ District should consider replacement cycle for District-owned buses that are greater than 15 years of age, with attention to 12 1995-1996 Type-D buses
- ▶ District should prioritize where a few 14-passenger buses could be piloted for 18-19 school year, as we monitor for effectiveness
- ▶ District should explore and quantify potential benefits (to employees, students, families, operations) from a partnership with Greenlink
- ▶ Follow up on this report with media communications and distribution of report to school districts across state
- ▶ Presentation to Legislative Delegation and distribution of report summary to County Council, city councils, Greenlink, and local municipalities



THANK YOU

- ▶ Dr. Burke Royster, Superintendent
- ▶ Phillip Davie, Assistant Superintendent for School Support Services
- ▶ Adam James, Director of Transportation
- ▶ David Poag, Coordinator of Routing and Scheduling
- ▶ SC Dept. of Education: Emily Heatwole, Virgie Chambers, Tim Camp
- ▶ Pam Mills and Nancy Fitzer, Workgroup staff





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