

Mustang Family,

Beginning next Wednesday, November 1, 2023, Mustang Public Schools will be combining bus stops in neighborhoods that receive bus service due to the issues outlined below.

It is no secret that, like much of the country, MPS is struggling with providing reliable and timely transportation to/from school for our families who need it. Despite this, the unwavering dedication of our bus drivers and Transportation support personnel, who have been working tirelessly since before the school year began, is nothing short of heroic, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to them. We've been diligently working to identify the root causes of our unique challenges and actively seeking solutions to overcome them. We started this discussion publically in September at the Board of Education meeting. At the October 10 Board meeting, Dr. Pittenger (Assistant Superintendent of Operations), Donnie Ryan (Director of Transportation), and Mr. Bradley (MPS Superintendent) spoke at length about the challenges and solutions that will be coming soon.

How Will This Impact Mustang Families?

What?

Starting Wednesday, November 1, 2023, MPS will consolidate bus stops in neighborhoods that receive bus service.

- This will not impact rural routes;
- This will not impact Special Education routes.

Some bus stops will be eliminated or changed due to this consolidation.

How do I find my CURRENT/OLD bus stop?

- Families can visit the Transportation Page (<https://www.mustangps.org/departments/transportation>) and find the area titled "BUS STOP CONSOLIDATION" (in big red letters) to find the bus routes in numerical order: find your child's bus number to see the current/old stops followed by the new stops, which will start on Wednesday, November 1, 2023.

How do I find my NEW bus stop that starts on November 1?

- To access new bus stop information using your home address, simply go to elink.mustangps.org. Be sure to uncheck the box next to "Authenticate using Network Credentials." Then, enter the username of mustang, and the password of guest.
 - You will be prompted to select the grade of a student living in your household;
 - You will enter the house number, street address, and zip code for your home;
 - Please be sure to double-check the street spelling
 - Next, click "Find School/Transportation Info."
 - After a moment, you will be provided school/bus stop information, including approximate arrival times of the bus at the stop each morning, a map, and more.
 - If your address is NOT populating in the finder, please call the Transportation Department for assistance at 405-376-2630.

When?

The new consolidated routes will begin on Wednesday, November 1, 2023.

We understand that change is hard, but we must work toward the goal of each student riding an MPS bus to arrive at school (and back home) in a timely manner. This change does not decrease bus service for any student but will help us improve on-time arrivals to and from school. The MPS Transportation Team will

continue to work to alleviate the impacts of the challenges outlined below on the families and community of Mustang Public Schools. This is only the first step, and more efforts to improve transportation services are likely to come (ranging from adjusting parental transport zones to eliminating routes, adjusting school start times, etc). Any future changes will be clearly communicated well prior to implementation. As always, we cannot thank you enough for your support of our District, and we greatly appreciate your partnership in the education of your children. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out via email to MERCcontact@mustangps.org and someone will be in touch.

If you would like to read more about the challenges facing MPS Transportation and the reason behind this change, and potentially future changes, please continue reading below.

Issues Impacting MPS Student Transportation

1. Lack of Qualified/Licensed Drivers
2. Inability to Ensure Students Arrive To School On Time (i.e., Timely Arrival)
3. Increased Ridership

Shortage of Qualified/Licensed Drivers

When MPS started school on August 11, 2023, there were approximately fourteen (14) vacancies in the department; this resulted in delays and combined routes almost daily. In order to combat the shortage of drivers, we have rolled out a Driver Discovery Incentive to MPS staff and announced the reimbursement of costs associated with obtaining a CDL for new employees. These have made an impact; since the start of school, we have hired fourteen new employees, but have also lost some employees as well. At this time, MPS is still four (4) route drivers short of being adequately staffed (defined as having enough drivers to allow CDL-holding Directors, mechanics, and office personnel to remain in their roles instead of driving routes each day). Additionally, we have hired several individuals who are working toward obtaining their CDL, but the process takes approximately 45-60 days to complete. We still have room to improve in this area, but we are seeing progress being made.

Timely Arrival

Numerous students riding buses throughout MPS, but primarily at Mustang High School, have not arrived at school before the “tardy bell” for the majority of days so far this school year. This is unacceptable; missing even a few minutes of class is detrimental to our students. When a route gets delayed due to traffic, construction, mechanical issues, or driver shortage, there is a domino effect, and the remaining stops/schools for that route are impacted. This has also been an occasional issue in the afternoons, with students being delayed arriving home at the end of the day. After much consideration, the best approach moving forward to address this issue is to find more time for buses/drivers, and this must come through the consolidation of the number of bus stops in our neighborhoods.

Increased Ridership

During late October, MPS has traditionally seen an increase in the number of students riding our buses, likely due to the end of some early morning practices. This will present an additional challenge to an already strained system. We are still examining the full impact of this challenge and exploring/researching solutions ranging from adjusting the parental transport zones to eliminating routes to adjusting school start times. There are no decisions in this area at this time, but we hope this can serve as a preview of things that might be on the way in the future to address this challenge.