

Mr. Rasmus called the Millville Area School District Transportation Committee Meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Those present in the library were Joseph Rasmus, Whitney Holloway, Susan Myers, Dee Davis, Lori Nafus-Jones, Glen Rhinard, Helen Johnson, Carol Chiverella, David Chiverella, Ron Reichenbach, and Chelsea Rosenberger.

### **eTRAN REPORT REVIEW:**

- Mr. Rasmus began the meeting by sharing that the district would be placing the transportation contract out to bid for the 2024-2025 school year at the beginning of March. He asked Mrs. Lori Nafus-Jones to review the 2022-2023 eTran report with the Committee.
- Mrs. Nafus-Jones shared the report for all transportation van runs with the exception of those covered in-district with MASD staff.
  - Mr. Rasmus asked how many vans the district currently has.
  - Mrs. Davis answered that she has two vans that go out for daily transportation. However, the difficulty with this, she explained, is that the drivers of those vans are paraprofessionals for the district who leave to start that run at 6:45 am, work a full day at school, and do not return until close to 5:00 pm every night. She added that if the staff members call off sick, there is not a backup for the van route.
- Mrs. Nafus-Jones then explained the spreadsheet she presented to the Committee, sharing that there are a number of variables to the calculations of the eTran report such as the age of the vehicles students are being transported on, the miles with and without students, etc.
  - Mrs. Chiverella asked how many van runs there are currently.
  - Mrs. Nafus-Jones answered that there are 17 van runs, including those covered in district.
  - Mr. Rasmus added that it is a challenge for us to cover these runs because it depends on support staff and also that the age of our district vans are older.
  - Mrs. Davis commented that one van is on its last year for viability due to concerns about safety. She explained that the district has tried to purchase another vehicle, however, we are still going through that process.
  - Mr. Rasmus clarified that the first five years for vans purchased through access funds must be utilized for special education.
  - Mrs. Davis added that the largest issue is that we must provide specialized transportation for students who are experiencing homelessness and those who have special needs.
  - Mr. Rhinard, the district's current contractor, shared his concern that next school year there would be a student who was handicapped and would need a handicap-accessible van, and he was not sure where the funds would come from to pay for that specialized van.
    - Mr. Rasmus answered that yes, as difficult as it may be, we do need to make accommodations for the needs of all students.
    - Mrs. Davis added that in district, we also have to find a way to transport students for field trips similarly with a handicap accessible van.
- Mrs. Holloway then shared the total district reimbursement paid for the 2021-2022 school year for transportation was \$402,944.88 and that the total cost for transportation reported to the state that school year was \$786,870.

### **TRANSPORTATION BID: PROPOSED MARCH 2024**

- Mr. Rasmus then reviewed some items related to the proposed Transportation bid for March 2024. First, he explained that the nature of our rural district causes us to have a higher number of miles without students being transported compared to the miles with students actually being transported. Then, he shared that the district will be looking to find ways to increase safety by not allowing students to cross over rural roads in order to get on their transportation vehicle.
  - Mr. Rhinard commented that they have condensed the amount of buses by three over the last few years.
  - Mr. Rasmus clarified that it has helped but that some drivers start their runs from their residence as opposed to a hub stop location because it is closer to the start of their run.

- Mr. Rhinard answered that there are now five buses being stored at our local gas station and the others are stored at the residence of the drivers because it cuts down on the number of miles without students.
- Mrs. Davis asked if it would cut down on miles without students if all drivers started at the gas station bus storage location.
  - Mrs. Helen Johnson, a Rhinard Transportation driver, answered that it is more advantageous to the district to have the drivers start at their home because it is closer to the start of their transportation run.
  - Mrs. Davis then asked if it would help for the van run mileage, if not the buses.
  - Mr. Rhinard answered that van runs are a little bit tougher because they are farther apart but that they have to consider who they are able to get to drive the van runs.
  - Mr. Rasmus asked if it would be helpful or cut down on the mileage if the drivers for vans started at the gas station storage location in Millville.
  - Mr. Rhinard answered that it could potentially decrease the mileage for vans.
- Next, Mr. Rasmus discussed the calculation for student days, as per the transportation contract. He explained that in the contract, there is a stipulation that they are paid for a minimum of 180 student days. However, Mr. Rasmus shared that according to the state, Act 80 days are counted as student days the same way that students being physically in school count towards total student days, even though the students are not being transported. Therefore, he explained that the contract should have language in it clarifying payment for student days. Additionally, there should be some language explaining what happens for schools like CMAVTS and other non-public schools and specialized placements that require transportation.
  - Mrs. Davis added that there are also some days where the transportation is needed for those special placements out of district when Millville does not have school.
- Moving on, Mr. Rasmus then discussed the topic of radios in the buses and vans. He explained that the district is concerned about safety of our students while on district transportation. He asked the question to the Committee and those present of how we manage communication effectively when traveling.
  - Mr. Rhinard answered that all buses have radios which are very reliable.
  - Mrs. Davis asked for clarification if a driver is off the road or has an emergency, could all of the buses hear the issue in real time.
    - Mr. Rhinard answered that yes, the radios can be heard.
  - Mr. Rasmus clarified that the issue may be that the communication needs to come back to the district. So, he proposed that the district radio base could be added to the radio frequency of the drivers.
    - Mrs. Nafus-Jones answered that we could call the radio vendor to see if it is possible.
- Then, Mr. Rasmus asked about cameras, sharing the desire of the district to have cameras in all of the buses. He explained that in the given climate, it is incumbent on the district to have them in every bus, but currently, that is not the case.
  - Mr. Rhinard commented that he agreed but was concerned about where the finances would come from to purchase the cameras still needed.
  - Mrs. Davis added that it is a need as there are discipline issues and other reasons that necessitate seeing the footage from the cameras in investigations.
  - Mrs. Susan Myers shared that the district needed to come up with a way to subsidize this purchase. She agreed that from a safety standpoint, the cameras are needed, however, she understood the financial burden this would place on the contractor. She believed that the district should participate in this cost or help find the means to subsidize this project.
  - Mr. Rhinard answered that at Benton School District, they received a grant to purchase enough cameras for all of the buses so that the district owned the cameras but Rhinard Transportation maintained them on the buses.
  - Mrs. Davis added that a potential subsidy could be the competitive PCCD grant, however, it would need to be put out to bid or receive three quotes if underneath the threshold.
  - Mrs. Myers then clarified that this purchase could possibly be added in the language as an endeavor over the length of the contract so that the district is also liable to participate in the funding.
  - Mr. Rhinard appreciated this idea and added that the cost for camera sets for each bus is about \$1500.

- Mr. Rasmus then moved on to a discussion of clearances and mandated training for transportation drivers. He explained that in the past, it has been difficult to get all of the requirements completed for transportation drivers. Mr. Rasmus shared that moving forward, if the clearances and trainings are not complete, they cannot operate a vehicle for the district in any capacity.
- Next, Mr. Rasmus explained that there would be language placed in the contract about submitting mileage reports monthly to the Business Office. This would be essential so that the eTran report can simply be compiled from these monthly reports in the future.
- The next topic, in regards the transportation contract language, was about field trips, athletic transportation, and the billing expectations. Mr. Rasmus explained that the district has entered into several cooperative agreements for athletics and that sometimes it can be difficult to get transportation for all of these arrangements. He shared that the district has utilized staff and other means to provide transportation as necessary.
  - Mrs. Davis asked if they could endeavor to have the daily specialized transportation logs turned in more regularly from the van drivers as it was important for medical access billing.
    - Mrs. Nafus-Jones clarified that there should be an attendance sheet that needs to be completed daily and submitted to the Transportation department every month.
    - Mrs. Holloway added that these logs should go first to Mrs. Nafus-Jones, then to the Special Education department for billing, and finally back to Transportation for filing.
  - Mr. Rasmus then asked the Committee what other concerns may be important to note in the contract for athletics.
    - Mr. Rhinard answered that the athletic rates have been the same for the last three years and have not increased, even though the rate of index has gone up by close to 17%.
    - Ms. Rosenberger added that the numbers did increase internally on the transportation cost calculation document.
    - Mr. Rhinard answered that he has not been asked to increase the numbers for the last few years.
    - Mr. Rasmus asked that Mr. Rhinard send in the updated numbers for inclusion in the contract and for budgeting purposes. He then asked about how the driver wait time is calculated.
    - Mr. Rhinard answered that the contractor sets the cost figure per hour for driver wait time.

### **BUS ROUTES / ROUTE EFFICIENCY PLANNING**

- Mr. Rasmus then explained to the Committee that the Administration as well as the Transportation Coordinator would like to spend time this spring driving the bus routes to review them for efficiency and safety concerns, looking for ways to minimize students' crossing over the road to board the bus.

### **ATHLETIC BUS RUNS**

- Mrs. Holloway shared some concerns about the billing for Junior High Softball being that the district has a cooperative agreement with Benton Area School District.
  - Mr. Rhinard said that he would review the billing.

### **SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR ALL TRANSPORTATION**

- Mr. Rasmus explained that the current system for transportation coordination is fractured and there are a number of staff members attaining transportation for different events and activities. He shared that the plan moving forward would be that all transportation would be coordinated through Mrs. Nafus-Jones as the sole point of contact with the transportation contractor.

### **CMAVTS BUS RUN**

- Mr. Rasmus shared that improvements have been made to the Columbia Montour Area Vocational Technical School bus run over the last few years with the community bus runs bringing all students, including CMAVTS students, to the high school and leaving from there as well at the end of the day. This system change has proved to be more reliable.

**COMMUNICATION TO TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS**

- Mr. Rasmus commented that there have been requests made to Board members about needed communication between the township supervisors and the district. He explained that the district was endeavoring to rectify the issue and now sent the bus routes to all of the supervisors.
- Mr. Ron Reichenbach answered that the bus route information was extremely beneficial so that they can effectively clear the roads in a weather emergency.
- Mrs. Nafus-Jones asked if PennDot had ever provided the township supervisors with the full district boundary map, including all townships.
- Mr. Reichenbach answered that he did not believe so.
- Mrs. Nafus-Jones answered that she would work to get that to them.

**TOPICAL ITEMS**

- Mr. Rhinard shared that at Benton School District, the Township Supervisors all report into him in the morning and that he would appreciate that happening in the future at Millville.
- Mr. Rasmus then concluded the meeting by sharing the next steps from this Committee meeting. He explained that the Board would be informed of the changes and proposed contract language from this Committee. Then, they would put the bid out for the transportation contract by the first week of March. Finally, the Board would accept, review, record, and choose the contractor for the 2024-2025 school year.
- Mrs. Chiveralla asked what the term of the contract would be.
  - Mr. Rasmus answered that previously it had been yearly, but the district would like to consider a multi-year contract. It could possibly be a three-year contract.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Rasmus adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Chelsea Rosenberger  
Assistant Board Secretary