

Business Finance Committee Meeting October 5, 2020

PUPIL TRANSPORTATION 2020-2021



The City of Pittsburgh School District Transportation Study

Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials



Expect great things. 

Introduction

Under the direction of the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), a team of two school business officials, recognized as experts in the field of school district transportation operations, was assembled to conduct a transportation review for the Pittsburgh Public School District.

This review was at the request of the School District. The following individuals comprised the Study Team:

- Wayne McCullough, DBA, PCSBA
- Jennifer Grove, PCSBO



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Introduction

- Student Transportation Services:
 - The Transportation Department is responsible for arranging transportation for students who attend schools within the City of Pittsburgh and Mt. Oliver Borough. Transportation is also provided for students who are city residents attending nonpublic and charter schools located within a 10-mile radius of the city lines. The transportation works daily with eighteen (18) local bus contractors to provides transportation services.

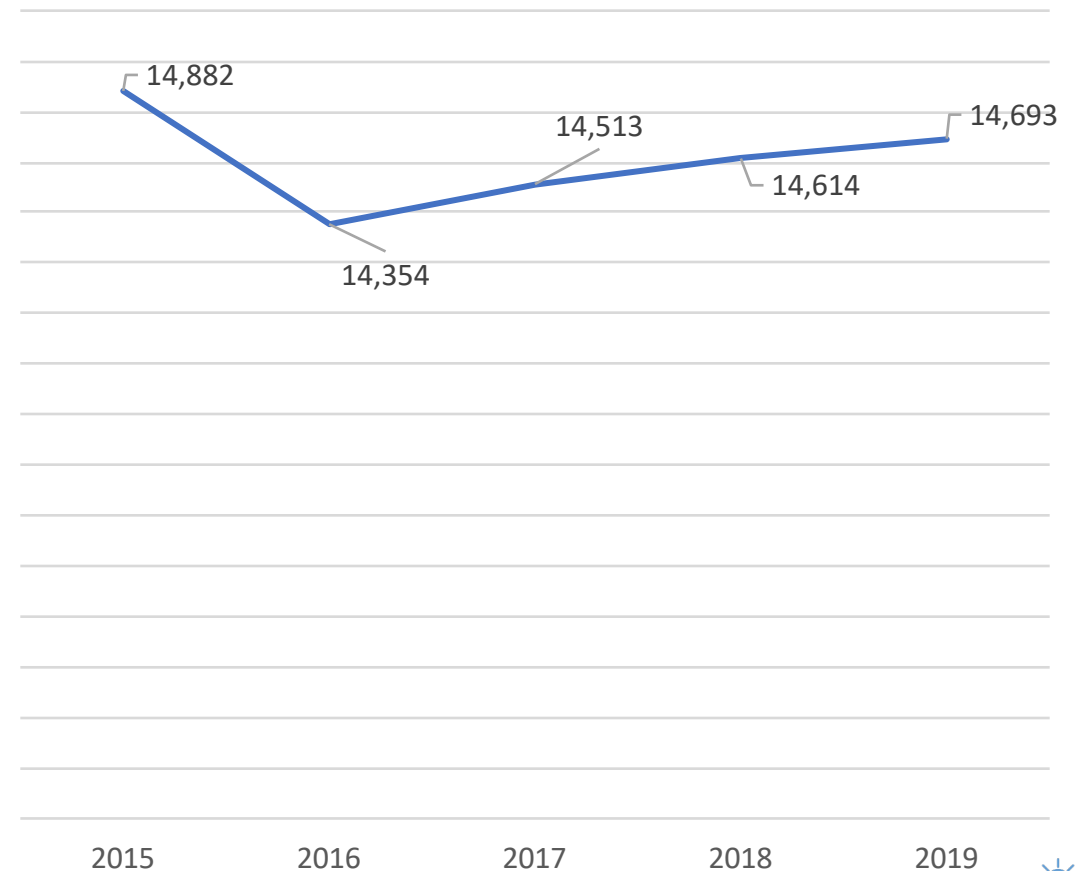


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Public Students Transported

This graph shows the total number of public-school students transported (minus charter school students) which includes non-hazardous and hazardous students.

- The Bureau of Traffic Safety of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, at the school district's request, makes "hazardous" walking route" determinations. The regulations for hazardous walking routes are in Chapter 447 of the Pennsylvania Code and can be found at www.pacode.com

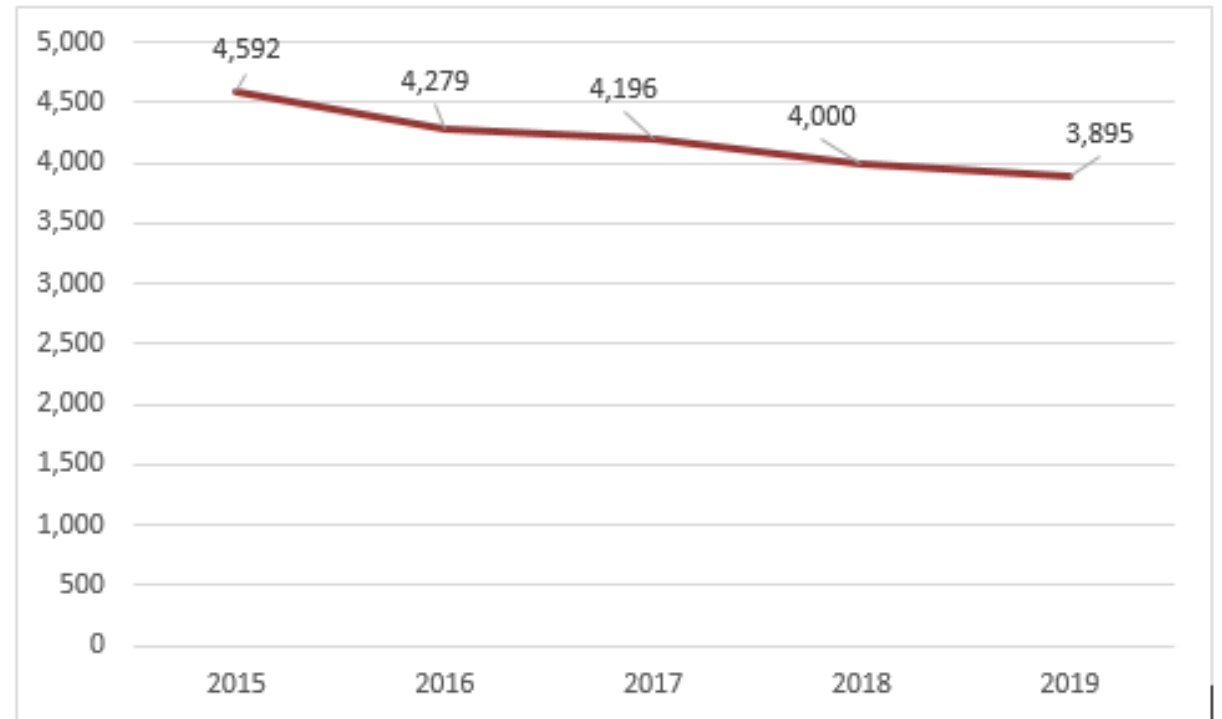


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Non-Public Students Transported

School Districts must also provide transportation to resident non-public students attending non-public schools within ten miles of district borders if they provide transportation services to their own students.

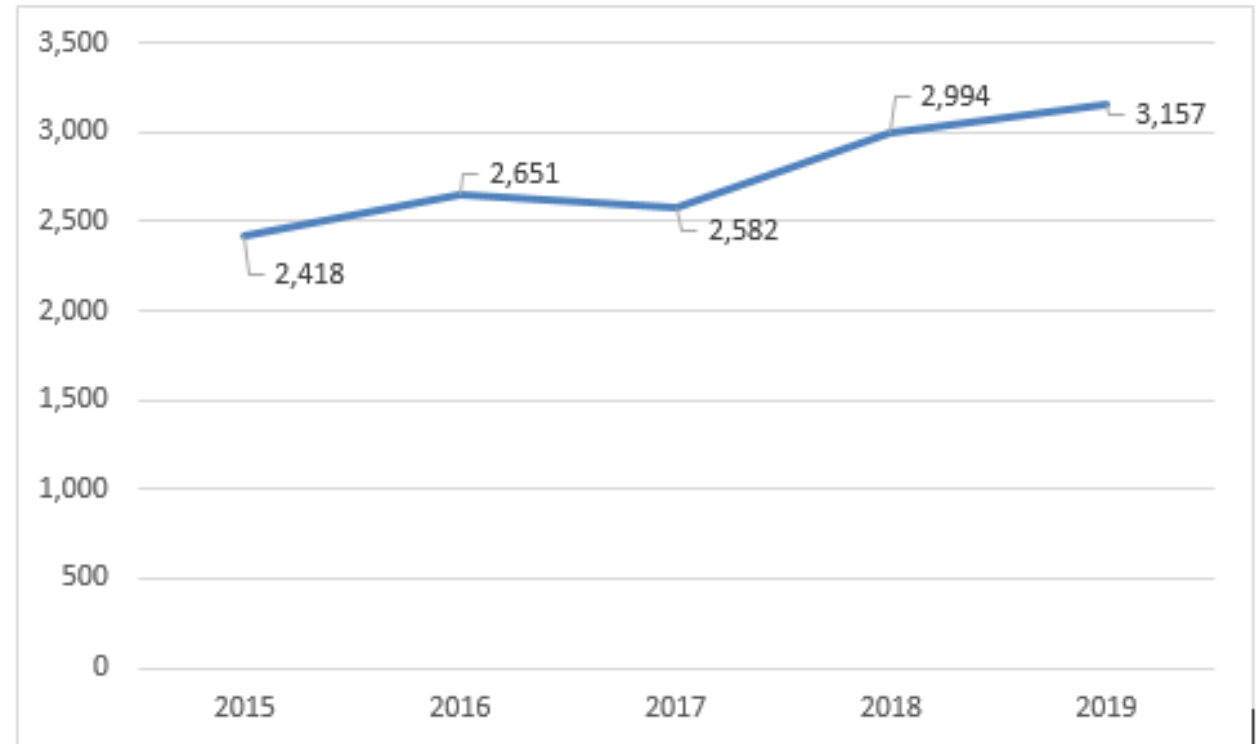
- This graph shows the number of non-public schools transported by the City of Pittsburgh School District transportation operations



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Charter School Students Transported

The chart shows the number of charter school students transported. The District is required to transport charter school students who attend charter schools within the borders of the district and within ten miles of the district's borders.



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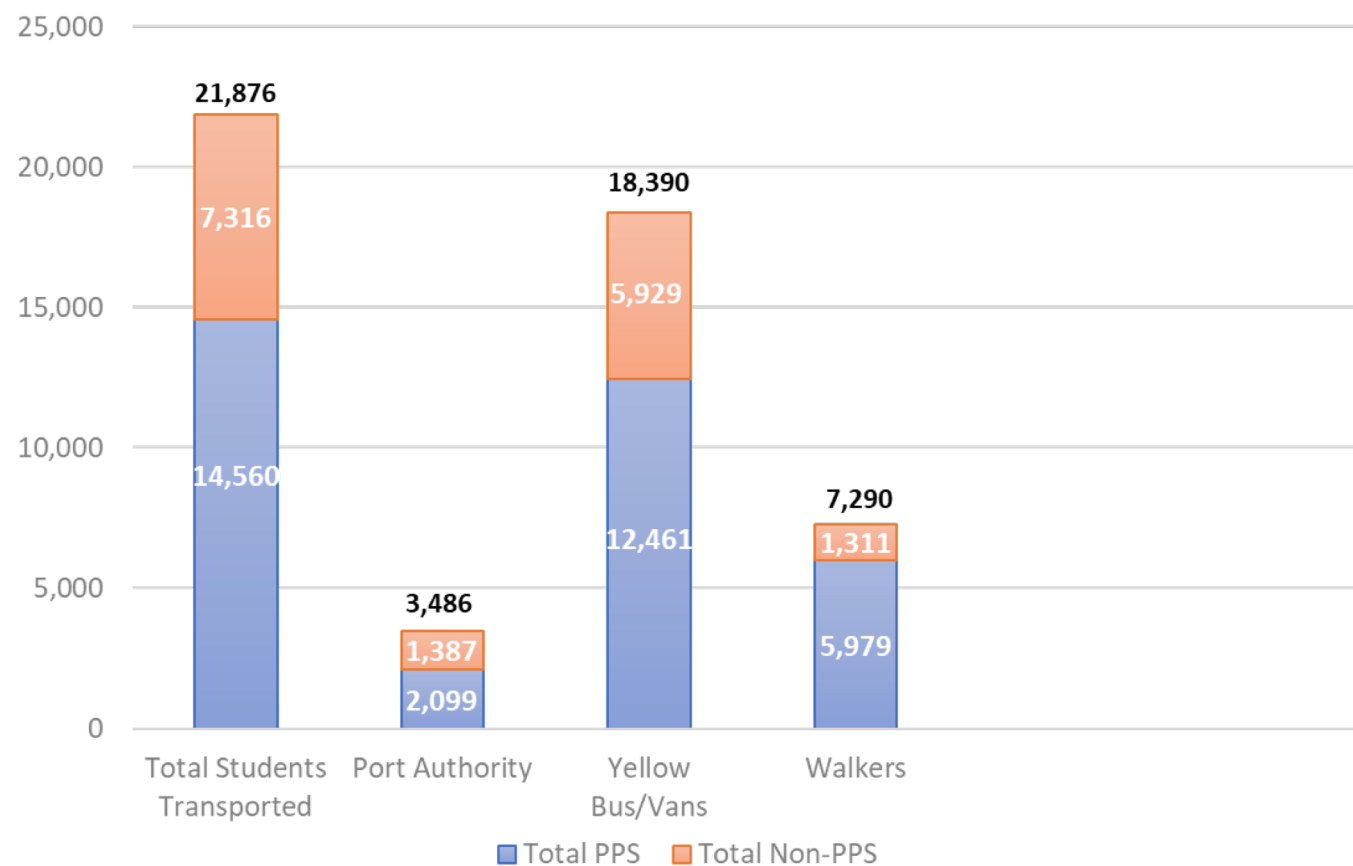
Charter School Students Versus Non-Public Students

- 2019-2020 there were 4,749 students enrolled in a charter school
 - 3,157 of those students were provided transportation
 - 66% of the student use transportation services
- 2019-2020 there were 5,266 students enrolled in non-publics
 - 3,895 of those students were provided transportation
 - 74% of the students use transpiration services



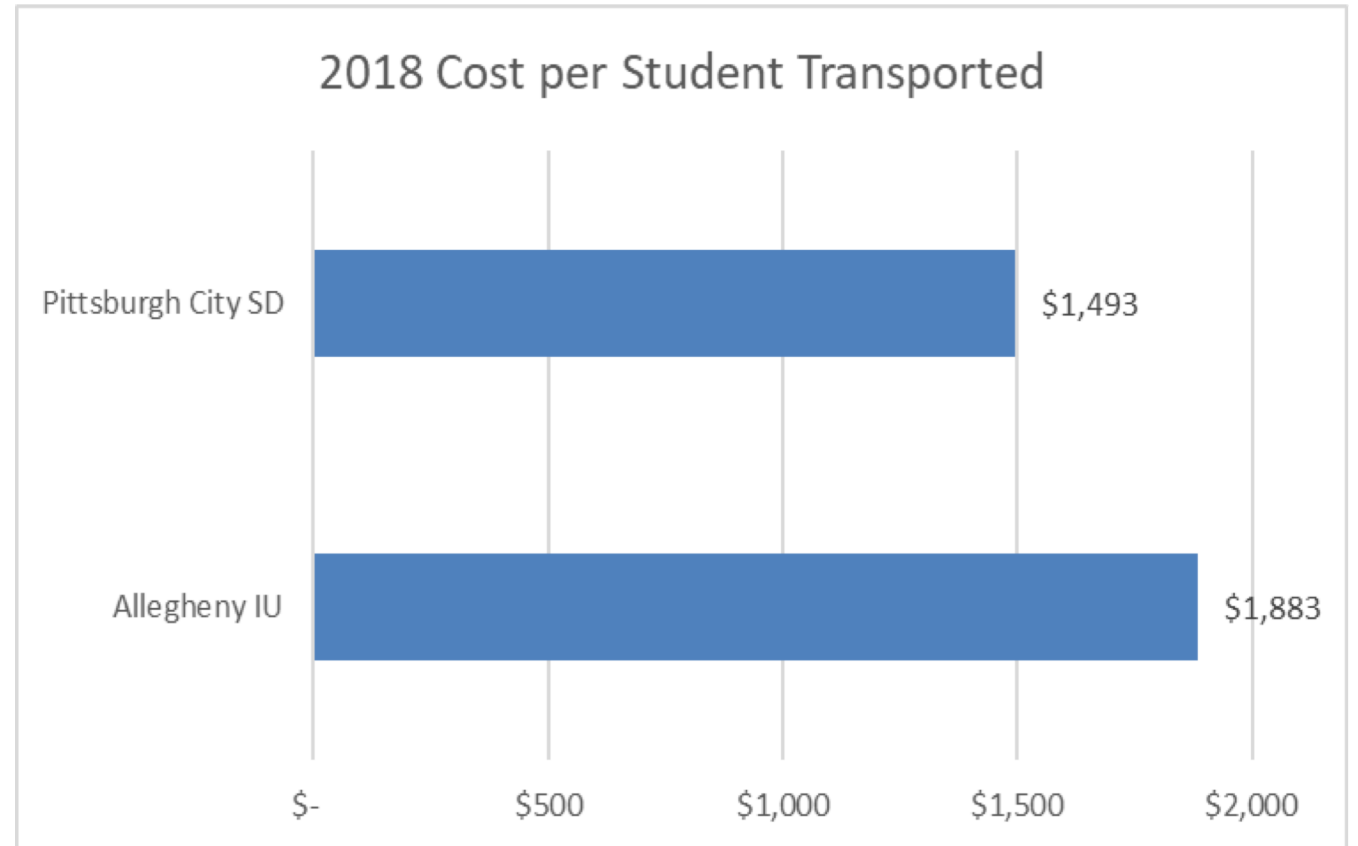
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Transportation for Both PPS and Non-PPS Students 2018-2019 Student Data



Transportation 2018 Cost per Student

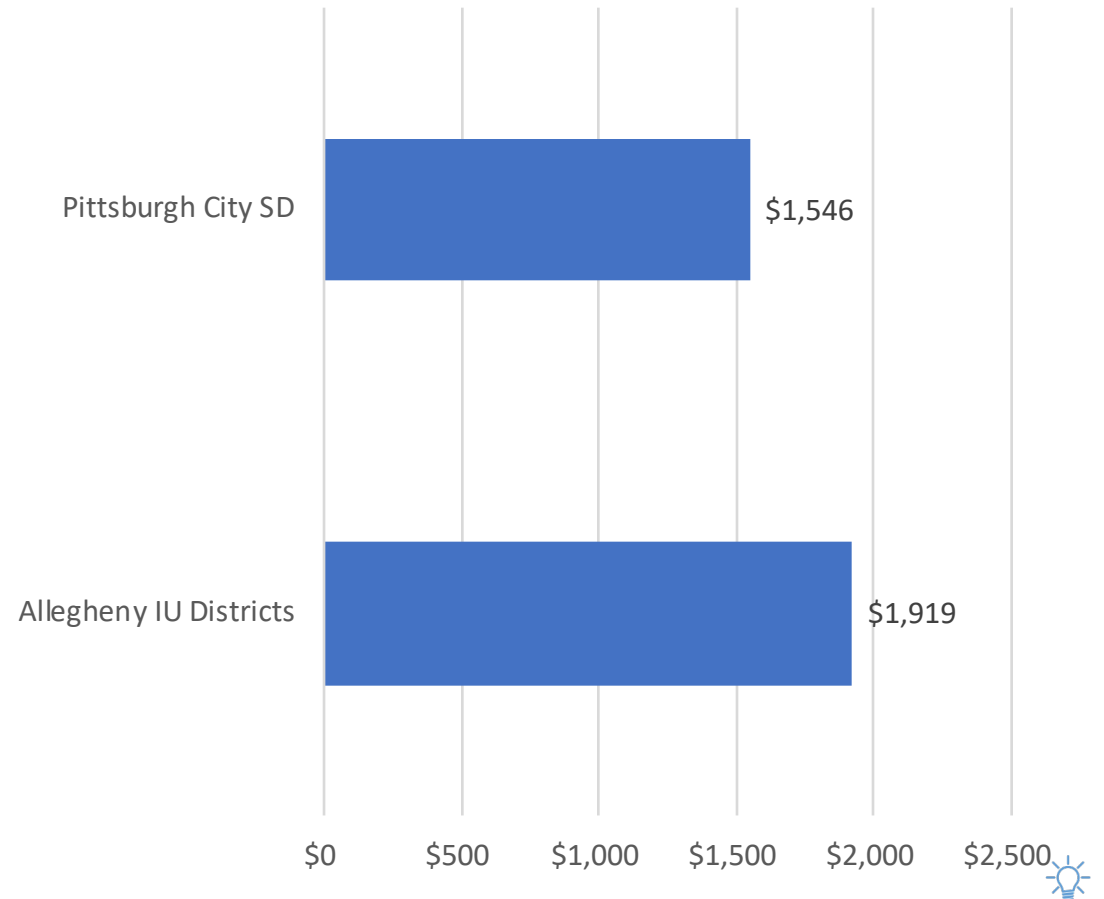
This graph shows the District's cost per student transported in approximately \$400 less per student than all other LEA's in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.



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Transportation 2019 Cost per Student

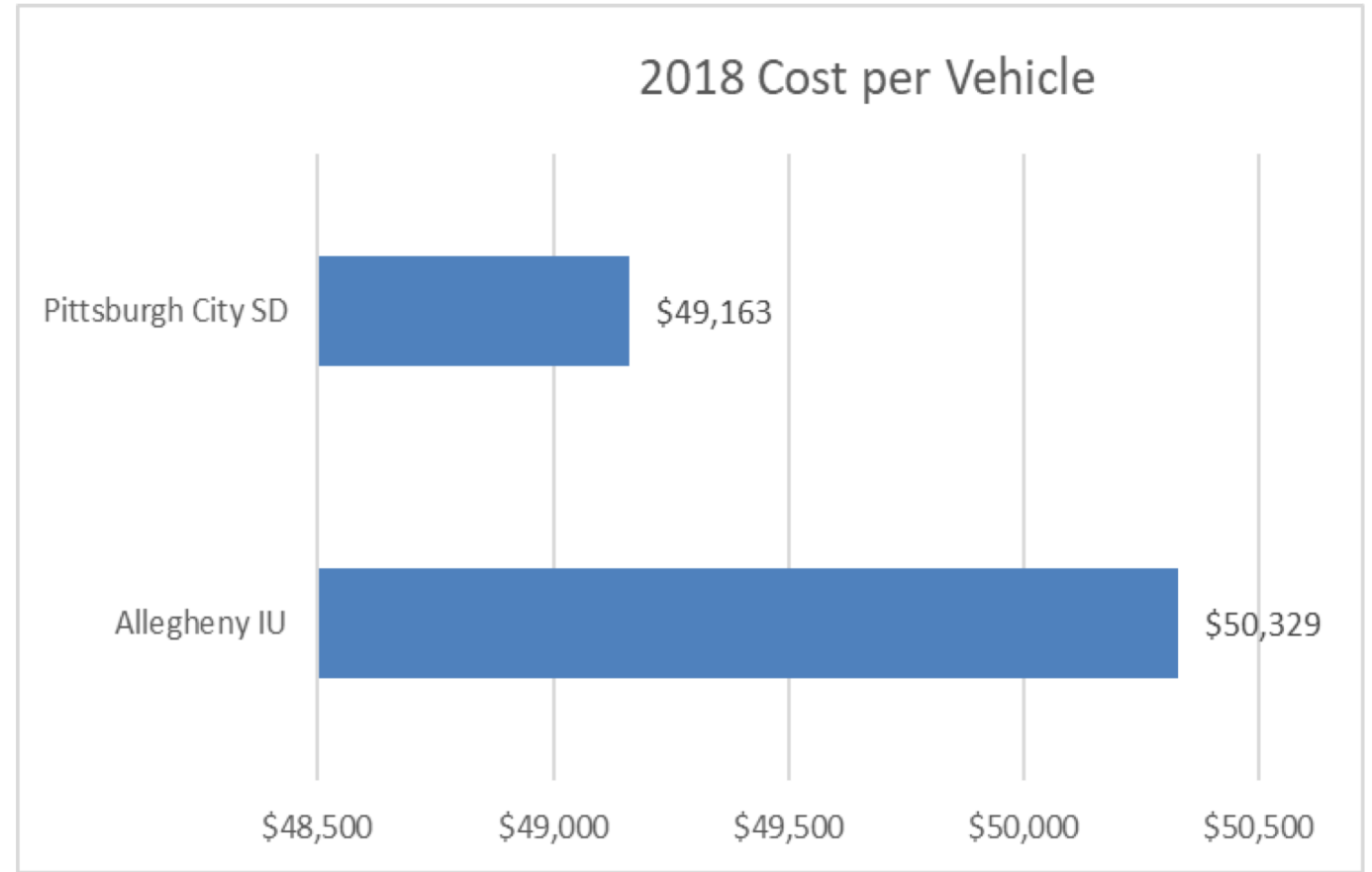
This graph shows the District's cost per student transported in approximately \$400 less per student than all other LEA's in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.



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Transportation 2018 Cost per Vehicle

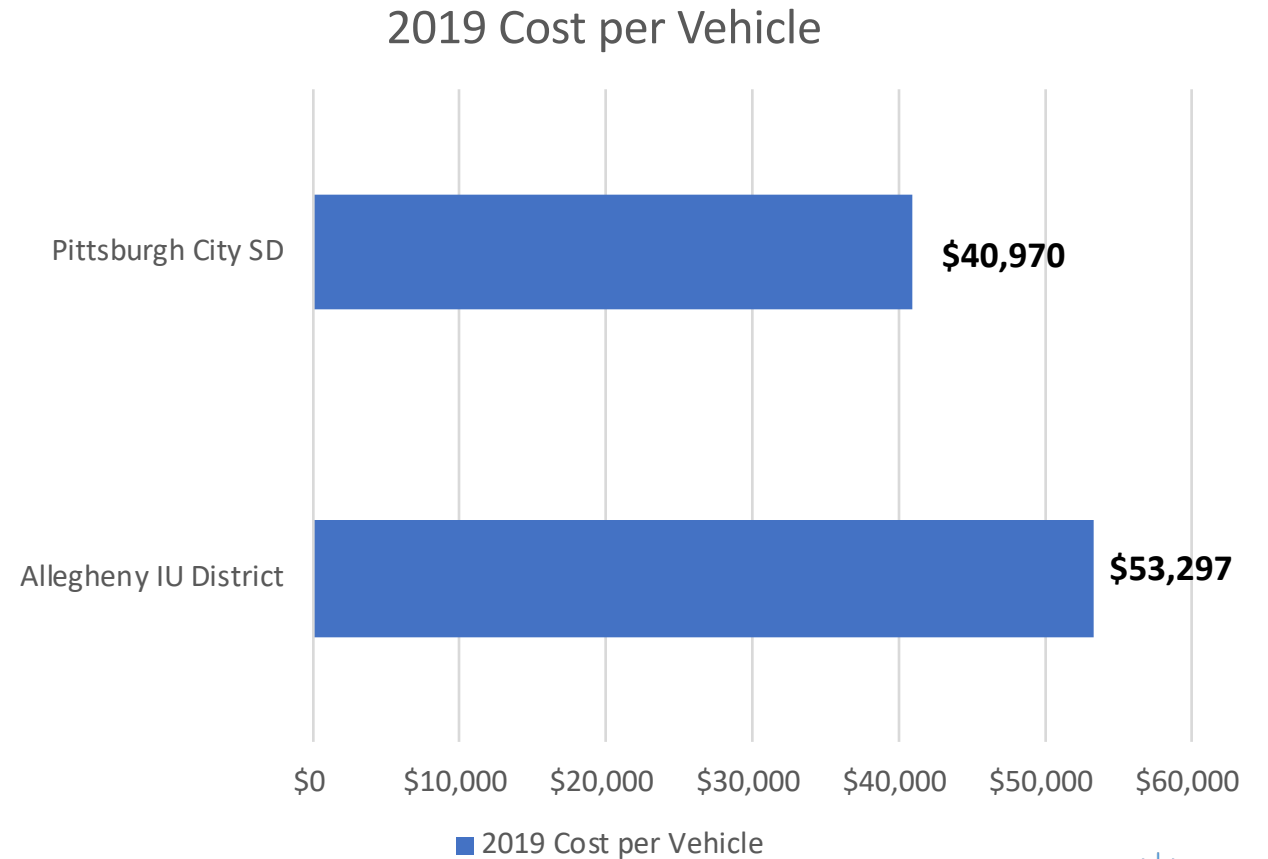
This graph shows the cost per vehicle on an annual basis.



Expect great things.

Transportation 2019 Cost per Vehicle

This graph shows the cost per vehicle on an annual basis.



Expect great things.

Total Cost of Student Transportation

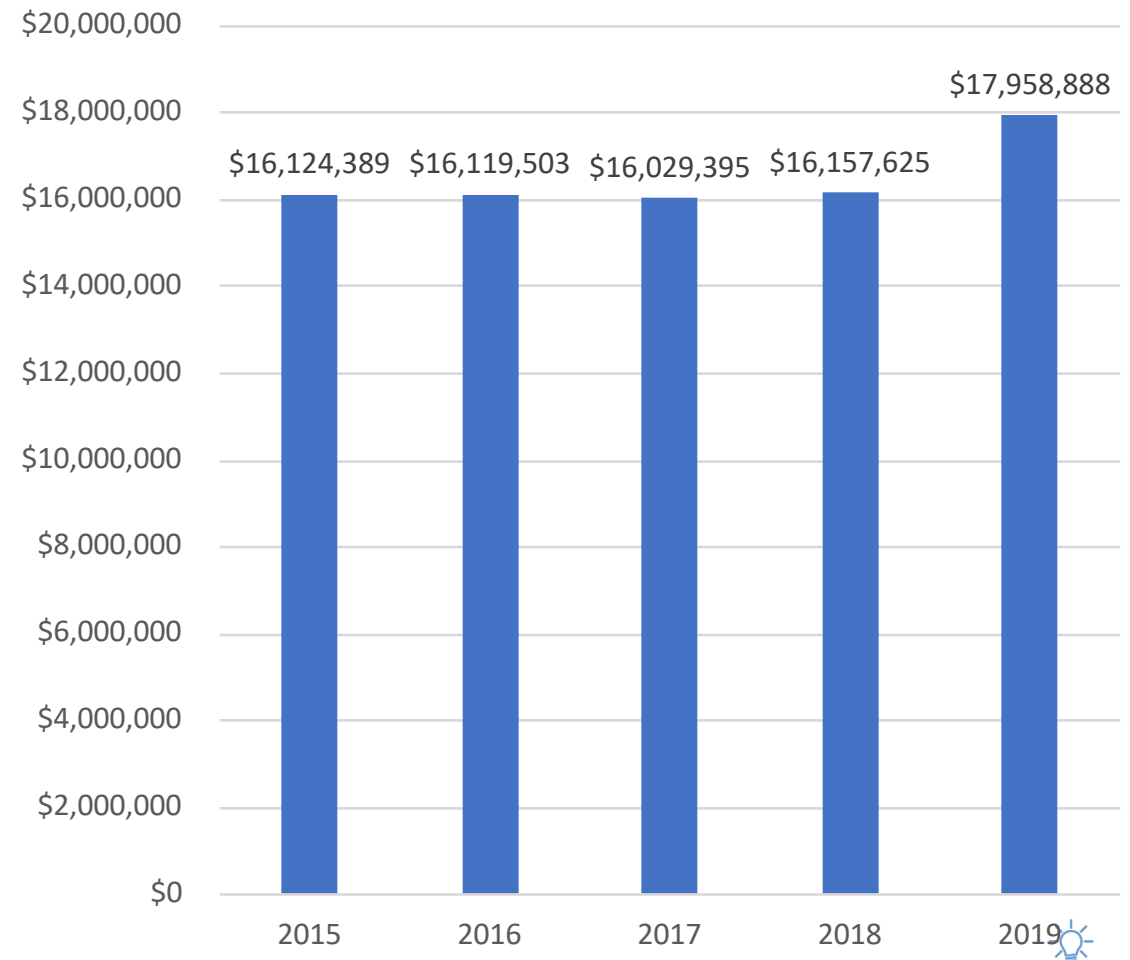
This graph shows the total cost of transportation operations for the District as reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.



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Approved Cost

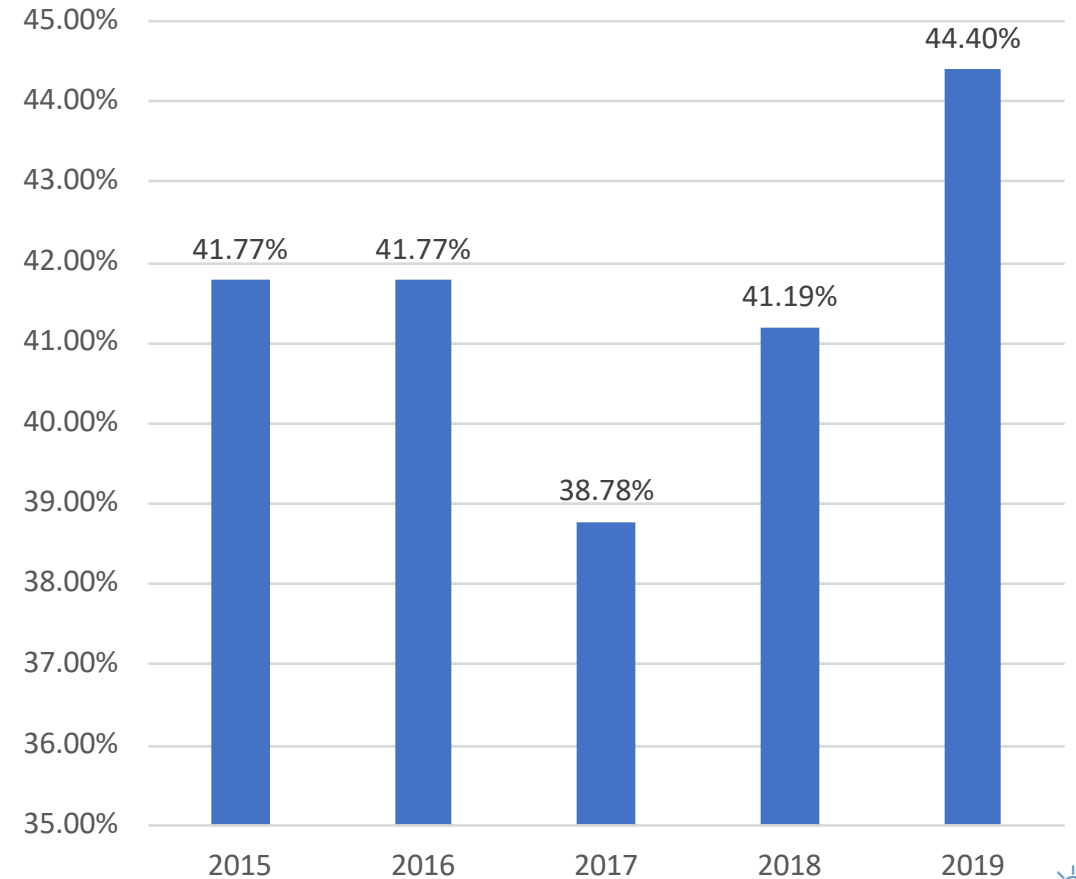
- The total approved cost is the maximum amount the school district can consider as being subject to the pupil transportation subsidy calculation.
- The total approved cost is a function of the age and size of the vehicles, the mileage traveled with and without students, and the number of pupils assigned to the vehicle.
- Allowances are increased each year by a transportation cost index established by PDE using the percentage change in the December to December Consumer Price Index (CPI-U).
- In year-end 2019, the City of Pittsburgh had an approved cost that was 4.5% higher than the average in Allegheny County.



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Percent Approved Cost

This graph shows the percent of approved cost compared to the total cost of transportation operations.

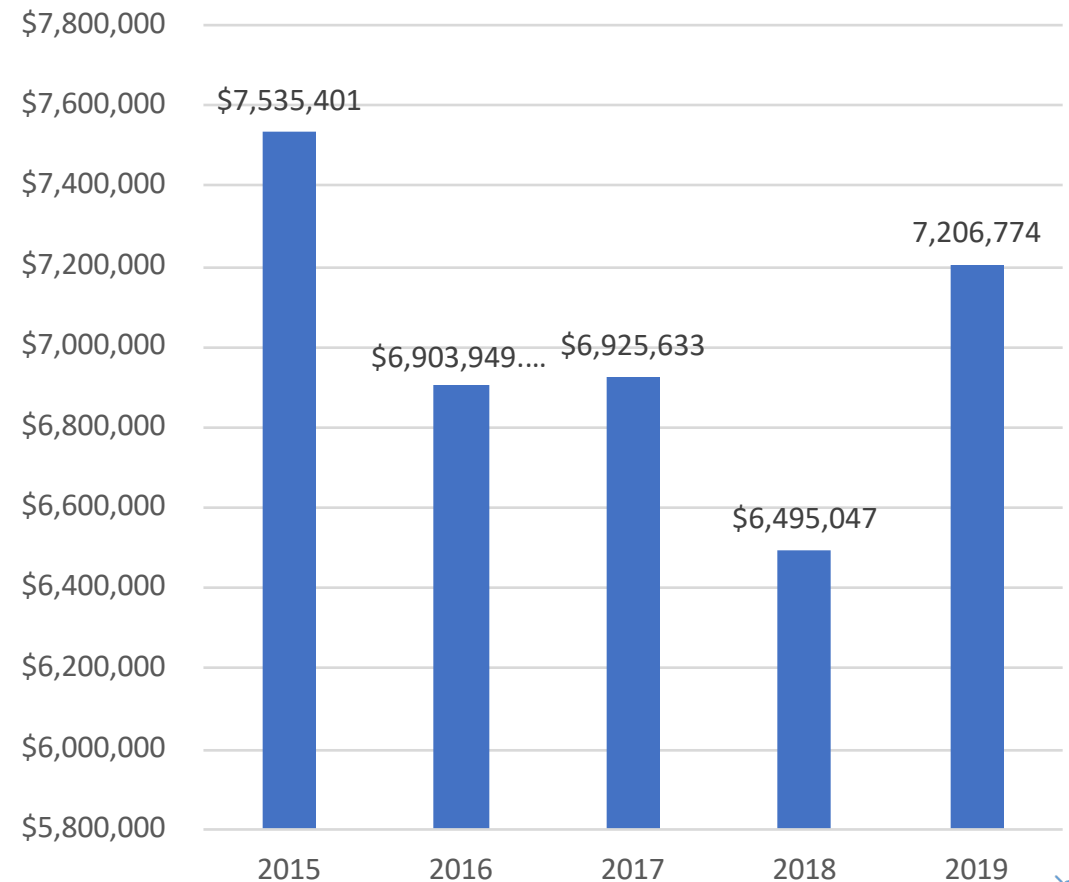


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Subsidy

The Public School Code authorizes partial reimbursement of an LEA's cost of transporting elementary students who reside one and one-half miles or more from the school in which they are enrolled and secondary students who reside two miles or more from the school in which they are enrolled.

- Subsidy is paid for students residing within those distances if they would have to walk along a route certified by PennDOT to be hazardous because of road or traffic conditions.
 - The basic transportation formula includes the cost of transporting public and non-public school students. The chart below shows a history of state subsidy for District. The reduced subsidy is due to a change in the District's Market Value Aid Ratio (MVAR) from .4390 to .3249.
 - The transportation office's effort to control costs has minimized the impact of the approximately 25% change in MVAR. Without these efforts, the reduction of subsidy would be approximately an additional \$.5 million.
 - 2019 MVAR was .3130



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Overview of Recommendations & Findings

- Contracted Versus Self-operated
 - It is the opinion of the PASBO Team that the District should maintain the current program of a contracted transportation system.
- Significant cost to convert to self-operated
 - There would be significant cost to procure land and buildings to provide an adequate space for a bus depot with within appropriate locations to schools within the District. There would also be a significant investment in additional mechanic labor and parts to properly staff and stock the depot.
 - *The state subsidy process provides for a higher percentage of subsidy for contracted services than self-operated services.*



Expect great things.

Overview of Recommendations & Findings

- Cost effective operation
 - Data show PSD operates a highly cost-effective operation. The District costs per vehicle (\$49,163) are less than less than other school districts in the Allegheny County IU (\$50,356) and the State (\$50,797). The cost per student transported is approximately \$400 less per student than all other LEA's in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. This results in a cost avoidance of over \$8 million compared to the average cost in the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.



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Overview of Recommendations & Findings

- Subsidy is outstanding
 - The subsidy received in year end 2018 was 41.19% of total costs, which exceeds the market value aid ratio (32.49) of the District by 8.7%. It is extremely rare for subsidy to exceed market value aid ratio, which demonstrates a cost-effective system.
 - It should be noted that as the District's market value aid ratio has decreased the percentage of subsidy to approved cost has also decreased. The District should be commended to efforts to maximize subsidy through routing and other operational processes.



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Overview of Recommendations & Findings

- RFP for transportation services
 - The PASBO Team recommends the District conduct an RFP process for transportation services. This process should begin no later than October 2021 for the 2022-2023 school year.
- Use of Fare-based services
 - The Public School Code allows for a full approved cost for use of fare-based services for student transportation services. The PASBO team recommends an increase use of fare based services whenever possible.
- Transportation Software
 - The PASBO Team commends the District for beginning the process to implement a new transportation software.
- Contract Review
 - The PASBO team recommends updated language related to fuel purchase and usage.
- Bus Driver Handbook
 - The PASBO Team recommends PSD transportation department development a detailed bus driver handbook that becomes a contract addendum for all bus contractors, including a required training program.
- Audit Record Keeping
 - The Bureau of School Audits is an agency of the Pennsylvania Auditor General's department, an agency independent of PDE, but required to report its findings for disposition.



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PASBO Study Questions?

How Transportation is Currently Operating

- 239 routes on the road every day for 88 schools
 - All students are sitting one student per seat
- Two routes are doubling back
 - Bishop Canevin High School and St. Therese
 - Commuting times are about the same as last year with the doubling back due to not having to travel to multiple neighborhoods
- All students are wearing a mask
- Planning for how PPS information will look in eSchoolPLUS
 - Need all cohort information by October 8th



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Changes from 2019-2020 School Year

- No alternative PM drop off (daycare) transportation is being provided due to capacity issues, consistency
- Changes have occurred to the following schools:
 - Colfax
 - Faison
 - Alderdice
 - South Hills
 - Yeshiva
 - Hillel
 - St. Edmund's
 - Community Day



Expect great things.

Changes from 2019-2020 School Year

- Colfax
 - Crossing guards:
 - Beacon & Murray
 - Beacon & Shady
 - Beacon & Wightman
 - Beechwood & Forward
 - Beechwood & Phillips
 - Beechwood & Wilkins
 - Forbes & Denniston
 - Forbes & Wightman
 - Shady & Forward
 - Shady & Monitor
 - Shady & Phillips
 - Exclusive Pedestrian Walk Phase (no traffic has green light while walk sign is on)
 - Forbes & Shady
 - Hazards:
 - Murray & Northumberland (this is close enough that students can walk many other ways and still be within 1.5 mi.)
 - Wilkins & Negley
 - Presumed Hazard:
 - Wilkins & Wightman
 - the dynamics of this intersection may be hazardous; students remain bus riders
 - Zone was stretched out to the full 1.5 miles except in the northwest corner, where crossing Wilkins & Negley and Wilkins & Wightman was avoided; keeping 12 students inside 1.5 mi on bus.



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Changes from 2019-2020 School Year

- Faison
 - Crossing guards:
 - Bennett & Tokay
 - Frankstown & Blackadore
 - Homewood & Hamilton
 - Hamilton & Lang
 - Lang & Hermitage
- These intersections have recently seen upgrades to crosswalks, traffic signals, & pedestrian walk lights:
 - Bennett & Dallas
 - Bennett & Murtland
 - Bennett & Lang
 - Bennett & Homewood
 - Bennett & Sterrett (4-way stop signs, new crosswalks)
 - Bennett & Braddock
 - Bennett & Brushton
 - Bennett & Oakwood
 - Homewood & Kelly
 - Frankstown & Standard
 - Frankstown & Woods
 - Frankstown & Blackadore



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Changes from 2019-2020 School Year

- Safety Routes to School
 - The Safe Routes to School program provides skill-building and safety education for students, creates encouragement activities that get children moving together, and builds enthusiasm and support among families, teachers, school administrators, and local government officials
 - Faison was selected as a "Champion Schools" for this project.



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Changes from 2019-2020 School Year

- Allderdice
 - The walk zone has been expanded to the full two miles, gathering approximately 50 additional students, mostly in Greenfield, Shadyside, and Point Breeze. The walk zone was cut off to prevent crossing of Penn Ave and walk up Commercial St.
 - Stop locations in this zone:
 - Penn & Dallas
 - Shady & Walnut
 - The Port Authority Zone was expanded to include parts of Lawrenceville and Bloomfield. Two routes can service these students without transfer.
- Approximate bus stop locations that fall in this zone:
 - Penn & 40th
 - Liberty & 40th
 - Liberty & Ella
 - Liberty & Edmond
 - Liberty & Pacific
- The stops have been shifted to balance student loads. Three routes are overlapping some due to loads. We'll have to watch and revise again as necessary. This mainly refers to drive paths due to student loads.



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Bus Carriers

- Frequent Carrier meetings
- Driver Count Survey
- How many drivers are parents with students in PPS?
- PPS AA/BB Cohort Survey
 - Parent-Driver availability in a hybrid schedule may be limited
 - Two drivers split the same route



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Issues that the Companies are Facing

- Drivers are afraid of exposure
 - Students not keeping masks on
- Drivers are stating that they went to a Hot Spot, causing them to quarantine for 14 days
- Childcare obligations
- Older drivers are attempting to work but do not want to put themselves at risk
- Complaints about additional work of cleaning in-between routes
- Drivers are going to work at Amazon



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School Districts Bus Social Distancing

School District	Response
Aurora Public Schools	Loading back to front, one per seat unless family member and unload front to back.
El Paso Independent School District	Loading back to front, one per seat unless family member and unload front to back.
Orange County Public Schools	Assign seats to minimize contact in the aisle when loading and unloading the bus, load from back to front, unload from front to back, alternating rows.
Cleveland Metro Schools	To maintain social distancing, ridership will be limited to a maximum of 15 students per large bus; generally, one per seat, two per row.
Upper St. Clair School District	Loading back to front, one per seat unless family member and unload front to back.
North Hills School District	Sitting students 2 per seat with the exceptions of masks. No students are seated in the first row.
Sto-Rox School District	Sitting students 2 per seat with the exceptions of masks. No students are seated in the first row.
Shaler Area School District	Sitting students 2 per seat with the exceptions of masks. No students are seated in the first row.
Seneca Valley School District	Sitting students 2 per seat with the exceptions of masks. No students are seated in the first row.
Fox Chapel School District	Sitting students 2 per seat with the exceptions of masks. No students are seated in the first row.
Highlands School District	Sitting students 2 per seat with the exceptions of masks. No students are seated in the first row.



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Port Authority

- Bus Capacities still have restrictions
 - No more than 10 riders will be permitted on a 35-foot bus at one time
 - No more than 15 riders will be permitted on a 40-foot bus at one time
 - No more than 25 riders will be permitted on a 60-foot articulated bus or light rail vehicle at one time.
 - Internal discussions are beginning to determine next steps for easing the capacity limits
- Service changes will go into effect on November 22, 2020
 - 55 schedule modifications; some permanent and others temporary due to COVID.
 - Areas that PPS will see improvement are in the North and South
- Ridership remains 65%-70% below normal
- COVID Procedures
 - If Port Authority receive a positive COVID-19 from an employee at one of their divisions (garages), they will do temp screenings when people show up to work at that division only for 14 days. They will send someone home if their temp is 100.4 or higher. So the temp screening will be accomplished for all employees entering a division, operators, maintenance, admin staff, etc.
 - Port Authority is going the extra mile to ensure your safety. From door handles, safety bars and seats, to fareboxes and stop request pull cords, every bus and light rail vehicle is being sanitized daily from top-to-bottom using a registered EPA disinfectant that eliminates germs and viruses.
 - Each night, the interior of every bus is thoroughly sanitized using a disinfecting fogger to apply a registered EPA disinfectant.
 - Port Authority is staying in constant communication with local health officials and Port Authority management teams at each facility to ensure we implement the latest safety mandates.
 - New signage has been installed throughout the system encouraging riders to follow all recommended guidelines while on the vehicles or waiting at our high-volume stations/stops to keep yourself and other riders safe.
 - All employees and riders are required to wear masks while on board. If you are unable to maintain social distancing, do not board.
- Any additional questions please refer to the webpage, <https://www.portauthority.org/safetogo.html>



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Thank you!

Questions?

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