SUSD Transportation
Audit No. 2508

SUSD Audit Committee

Lai Cluff, Acting City Auditor, City of Scottsdale

April 04, 2025

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Audit Objective

To assess the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the District's transportation program, including safety, staffing and recruitment, outsourced services, and operating efficiency.

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Transportation Department

Mission: To transport students safely to and from school. In addition to the daily routes, the department provides student transportation for athletic and activity trips and maintains the bus fleet.

Table 1. Eligible students transported and average daily miles driven, 6-year trend.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	6-Year Change
Eligible transported students	4,990	3,739	1,567	2,826	3,033	2,868	-43%
Avg daily route miles:							
District-transported	7,466	4,997	2,941	3,975	4,711	3,552	-52%
Contracted	294	786	616	1,263	1,409	2,728	827%
Other route miles	1,577	844	695	552	274	1,075	-32%
Total daily route miles	**9,337**	**6,627**	**4,252**	**5,790**	**6,394**	**7,355**	**-21%**

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Properly sizing the bus fleet, further evaluating route efficiency, and formalizing maintenance policies would improve the effectiveness of the transportation program.

What we found:

A. Fewer than 60% of buses are used daily for school routes. Maintaining too many spare buses increases mechanic workload and certain operating costs.

B. Assessment of the bus fleet is impacted by potential future reductions to contracted transportation.
   - Estimated cost per rider for transportation to and from school:

	Avg. Number of Round trips per day[1]	Avg. Daily Cost per Rider (Roundtrip)	Estimated Yearly Cost (180 days)
Care Transit	115	$60	$10,800
HopSkip	21	$123	$22,140

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Properly sizing the bus fleet…cont'd

C. Further evaluation of route efficiency should be considered due to declining ridership and systemic driver shortages.

- Some routes have low ridership:

	Highest observed bus capacity utilization, per route *(based on 2 students per seat)*	% of Routes	% of All Daily Runs in the first 100 days
Greater than 70%	33	70%	20%
Between 51-70%	10	21%	22%
Less than 50%	4	9%	58%
Total routes	47	100%	100%

D. Formalizing bus inspection and maintenance requirements and utilizing system capabilities to monitor completion of these tasks would help ensure that operational standards are met.

- Pre-trip inspections for activity buses are less consistently performed.
- Service system contained different inspection cycles.
- Service system contained inaccurate inspection data.

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Properly sizing the bus fleet, cont'd

What we recommend:

- ✓ Assess the optimal size and composition of the bus fleet.
- ✓ Evaluate the use of routing software and data-driven tools for route optimization.
- ✓ Adopt bus inspection and maintenance policies.
- ✓ Ensure that existing software systems correctly reflect the active fleet of buses.
- ✓ Maximize the use of available technology solutions to manage inspections.
- ✓ Establish processes to ensure accurate and complete maintenance data.

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Improvement to contract monitoring practices are needed.

What we found:

A. Key contract terms, such as driver qualifications, vehicle maintenance, and insurance coverage, need to be actively monitored.

B. Invoices lack documentation to assess the accuracy of charges.

What we recommend:

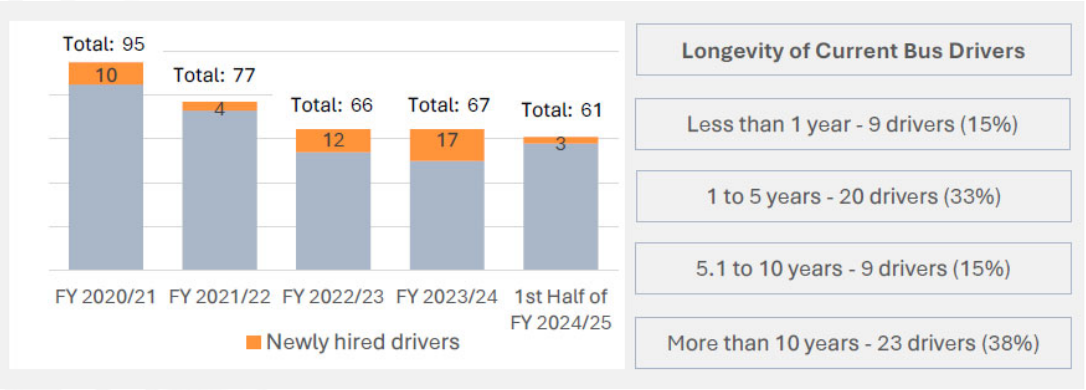
- ✓ Develop a contract administration policy for approval.
- ✓ Monitor contractor compliance with key contract requirements.
- ✓ Request contractors to provide detailed service reports.
- ✓ Consider establishing additional policies or requirements for contractors.

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Driver retention appears to be improving but additional recruitment efforts are needed to reach operational goals.

What we found:

- The number of bus drivers has been steadily decreasing, but drivers staying with the district appears to be improving:



What we recommend:

Consider re-instituting recruitment practices such as referral program and continue evaluation of extending contracts.

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Questions

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