

Driving Change

APRIL 2025

Executive Summary

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Transportation's mission is to provide Boston students with safe, reliable, on-time, and cost-effective transportation. School transportation in Boston has a complicated and challenging history, dating back more than 50 years. Today, the BPS transportation system is highly complex. [State law](#) requires that public school districts must also provide bus service for students at charter schools, private schools, and out-of-district special education schools (i.e. specialized schools outside a student's local school district designed to meet the unique needs of students whose educational needs cannot be met within their home district), even if bell schedules or calendars at those schools do not align with the district's schedule. BPS Transportation is thus responsible for transporting more than 22,000 students to more than 200 schools on a daily basis, including ~17,000 BPS students and ~5,000 non-BPS students. This requires 640 buses on the road completing approximately 1,500 morning runs and 1,500 afternoon runs every day.

Under Superintendent Mary Skipper's leadership, the BPS Transportation team has undertaken diligent and detailed work to make improvements to the system. As one of the first steps in this work, in September 2022, the Council of Great City Schools conducted a [review of the BPS Transportation operation](#), providing a transparent accounting of performance and making recommendations for systemic changes to improve transportation services for all Boston students and families.

Since 2022, BPS has made significant progress in addressing many of the long-standing structural issues impeding transportation improvements, including:

- Reforming vendor and labor contracts;
- Addressing staffing shortages impacting school districts nationwide; and
- Modernizing technology and operations, replacing a paper-based system with a real-time GPS navigation system and tracking app, Zūm

These reforms have led to measurable improvement. BPS shares detailed on-time performance (“OTP”) data publicly on a monthly basis. The start of the 2023-24 school year saw the highest Day 1 morning OTP in the past decade. At the start of the 2024-25 school year, as the District adjusted to the deployment of the new Zūm technology platform, OTP saw an initial decline. But since the start of October 2024, OTP has rapidly improved, and morning OTP has stabilized at levels consistently ~1.1 percentage points higher than last year’s performance.

In March 2025, BPS Transportation averaged 94% morning bus on-time performance, meaning 94% of school buses arrived at school prior to the morning bell. This represents the highest monthly on-time performance recorded at any time in the last five years.

Notably, no other comparable major urban school district across the country consistently publishes bus on-time performance data in the manner that Boston Public Schools does; no other school districts in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts do so either. NYC School Bus Umbrella Services, a bus contractor for New York City Public Schools running ~760 routes (a similar size as BPS), [reports 2024-25 OTP](#) that is consistently lower than 80%. BPS’ 94% March 2025 OTP rate with 640 routes puts BPS’s performance on par with far smaller, less complex districts in the United States. For example, according to the most recently available [monthly data](#), Grand Rapids, MI had monthly OTP of 93.8% in February 2025 with around 100 routes, about one-sixth the size of BPS Transportation’s operations.

BPS will continue making improvements for every student to arrive at school on-time. **But without further system-level changes, OTP is likely to plateau at or near its current levels.** An operation of this size and complexity will always absorb some degree of impacts from unforeseen circumstances affecting OTP—such as traffic impacts due to construction, medical or other onboard bus incidents requiring immediate attention, and bus breakdowns or vehicular crashes that affect buses.

Other instances of late buses are more systemic—buses running long routes and too many bus routes overall. Although fewer students are riding the bus in total now compared to a decade ago, BPS Transportation has become more complex and overstretched to serve the population of students riding the bus today. The

total number of bus stops has increased over the past decade, driven by several key factors:

- The number of students whose Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) require **door-to-door bus service has grown 50%** in ten years, including a 500% increase at charter schools.
- The number of students **enrolled in non-BPS charter schools has grown 50%** in ten years, with routes that tend to be longer as these schools serve a citywide population and have start times that are sometimes out of sync with BPS bell schedules.
- Many Boston students continue to attend schools far from home, with **more than 14% of bus riders traveling more than 45 minutes** on the bus each morning.

To continue making progress with on-time performance, we must align demand for bus service more closely with the capacity of our fleet.

In May 2025, BPS will be taking a step towards increasing the efficiency of the system with the introduction of a Ridership Procedure for pausing student bus assignments based on non-ridership. This procedure—developed and unanimously recommended by BPS’ [Transportation Advisory Council](#)—will ensure only students who use the bus are routed for transportation. Upon implementation of the Ridership Procedure, we estimate that close to 1,000 students who have consistently not been riding the bus this school year will be opted out of transportation. Enabled by the adoption of the Zūm technology platform in 2024, which allowed BPS to systematically track student ridership for the first time, this change will further improve reliability and on-time performance, while ensuring resources are allocated equitably and efficiently to the students who rely on the school bus to get to and from school.

With this report, we aim to share key information with the community on current BPS Transportation measures and the next steps to drive continuous improvement. We are committed to continued transparency, collaboration, and accountability in our efforts to ensure Boston students receive safe, reliable, on-time transportation.

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1 The Basics of BPS Transportation

BPS Transportation’s mission is to provide Boston students with safe, reliable, on-time, and cost-effective transportation on a daily basis. BPS provides transportation for more than 22,000 students across more than 200 schools every day. This includes ~17,000 BPS students and ~5,000 students at non-BPS schools. [State law](#) requires BPS to provide transportation to Boston resident students attending non-BPS charter and private schools in Boston, as well as students attending out-of-district special education schools (i.e. specialized schools outside a student’s local school district designed to meet the unique needs of students whose educational needs cannot be met within their home district). Transportation to these non-BPS schools must be provided on similar terms and conditions as transportation is provided to students attending BPS schools, even as the non-BPS schools may have pick up and drop off times that are out of sync with BPS schedules.

To transport students, BPS maintains a fleet of ~740 buses across three bus yards. BPS contracts with a bus vendor—currently Transdev—to maintain the bus fleet, hire and manage bus drivers, and manage bus yard and bus operations. Transdev employs a workforce of ~1,000 staff in Boston. This includes ~750 active bus drivers as well as mechanics, dispatchers, yard supervisors, trainers, safety personnel, and managerial staff. BPS Transportation employs more than 800 staff, including ~750 bus monitors who support students with disabilities who require additional adult support on the bus based on their IEP and/or 504 Plan. All buses that transport students with disabilities (~500 of our buses) have at least one general bus monitor onboard. In addition, some buses have additional 1:1 bus monitors onboard to support individual students who require a 1:1 bus monitor based on their individualized needs.

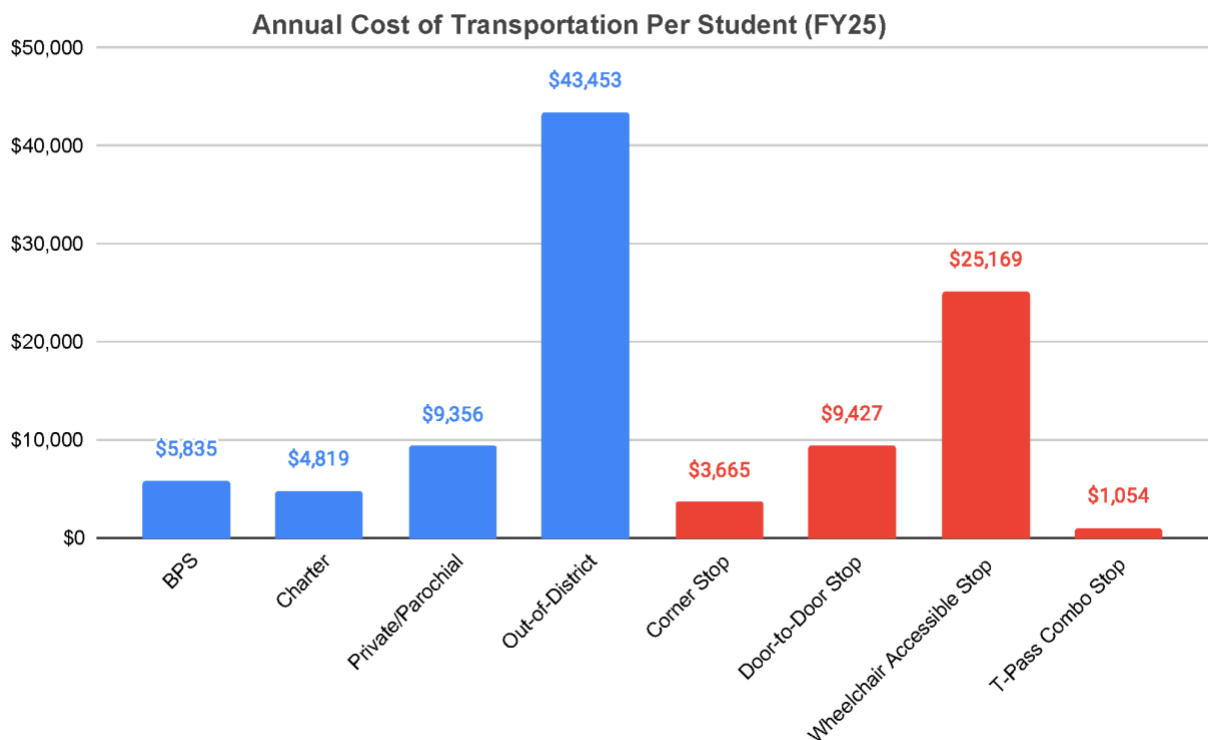
On a daily basis, 640 BPS buses are on the road completing more than 1,500 runs each morning and more than 1,500 runs each afternoon. Buses typically complete 2-3 runs each morning and 2-3 runs each afternoon in succession, maximizing efficiency to the extent possible given school bell times. BPS also completes ~5,000 bus trips for athletic events and field trips each year.

BPS Transportation costs approximately \$180M in FY25 and is projected to cost about \$188M in FY26, making up 12% of the BPS Operating Budget. More than \$130M of FY25 costs are directly related to the annual provision of yellow bus transportation. The remaining budget includes costs associated with contracted van transportation for students displaced due to homelessness or in DCF custody (~\$20M), providing bus monitors for students with disabilities (~\$21M), providing M7 MBTA passes for students in grades 7-12 (~\$9M), and departmental administrative costs (~\$1M).

BPS Transportation’s ridership breaks down as follows by school type:

- BPS schools: ~77% of bus riders
- Boston charter schools: ~21% of bus riders
- Boston private schools: ~1% of bus riders
- Out-of-district special education schools: <1% of bus riders

As shown in the chart below, annual transportation costs for students vary significantly by the type of school the student attends and the type of transportation the student receives.

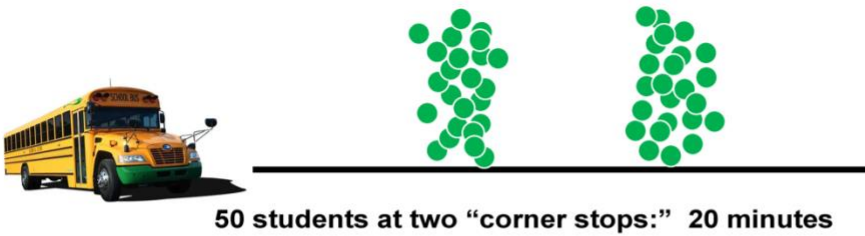


2 Understanding the Complexity of the System

While overall ridership has declined by nearly 10,000 students over the past decade, the complexity of BPS' transportation system has only increased during that time, driven by a few key factors:

1. The number of students requiring door-to-door bus service through IEPs or 504 Plans has increased by more than 50% in ten years, from about 4,300 students at the start of SY14-15 to about 6,600 students at the start of SY24-25. Because more students receive door-to-door service and a smaller proportion of students are traveling to and from a corner stop shared with other students in their neighborhood, the total number of bus stops across all routes increased from ~10,100 stops to ~10,800 stops over the same time period. More stops, and particularly more door-to-door stops, means longer, more complex routes on smaller buses traversing smaller, harder-to-navigate streets.

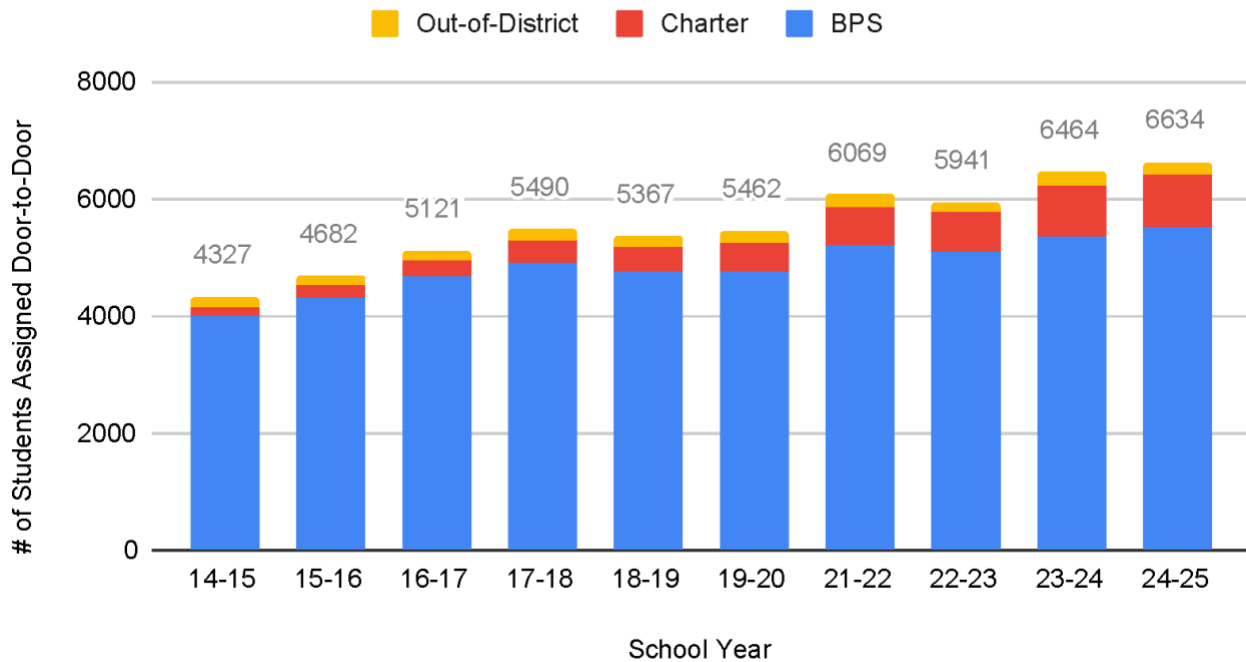
What does this look like in practice? Each morning, there are six buses picking up students from the Charlestown neighborhood and dropping them off at the Eliot K-8 School in the North End. Four of the buses have only corner stops on their route—these routes average less than 20 minutes in length with more than 50 students per route. Two of the buses have only door-to-door stops on their route—these routes average more than 30 minutes in length with fewer than 10 students per route.



As a result of door-to-door transportation resulting in longer, more complex routes with fewer students per stop, door-to-door transportation also costs significantly more (about \$9,400 annually per student) than corner stop transportation (about \$3,700 annually per student).

The below chart shows the growth in door-to-door transportation needs over the past ten years.

Growth in Door-to-Door Transportation Needs



***Note:** Data from 2020-21 is excluded from the chart. Available data from the 2020-21 school year is incomplete due to the impact of remote and hybrid learning schedules.

Since the 2014-15 school year, BPS schools have seen a 38% increase in door-to-door transportation needs. All specialized transportation needs are evaluated annually during the IEP process. BPS is actively working toward the clear and consistent implementation of this process, to ensure that all transportation accommodations are reviewed annually during IEP meetings, consistent with individual student needs, and not overly restrictive. As part of these efforts, special education team members will also work with families to ensure all students with documented specialized transportation needs in their IEP also have documented transportation goals, with a goal of building student independence.

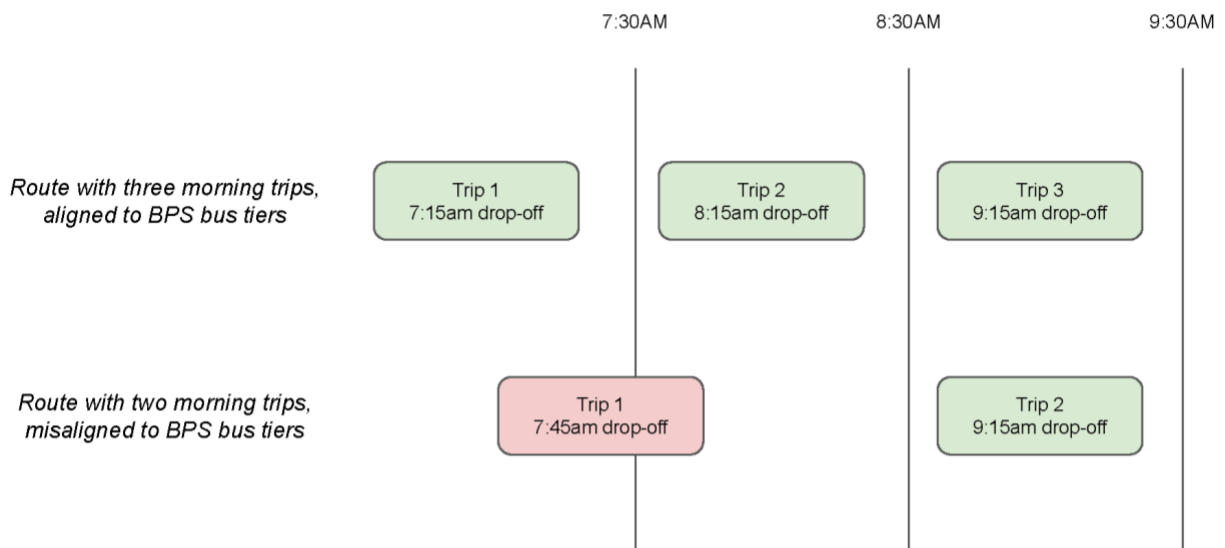
Since the 2014-15 school year, Boston charter schools have seen a ~500% growth in door-to-door transportation needs. BPS is working in collaboration with the Boston Compact to encourage all charter schools to appropriately review transportation accommodations during annual IEP team meetings, ensuring they are consistent with individual student needs.

***What does this look like in practice?** At one large BPS high school, approximately 150 students had door-to-door transportation accommodations at the start of the 2024-25 school year. Through the use of ridership data from Zūm, BPS Transportation identified that about one-third of these students were consistently not riding the bus. Through outreach to families of these students, BPS was able to opt many of these students out of the bus, consolidating and shortening many bus routes. During annual IEP meetings, these students' IEP teams will review their specialized transportation accommodations to ensure they remain consistent with the students' individual needs and not overly restrictive, and to help students work towards safely navigating the City independently.*

2. **The number of students enrolled in Boston charter schools has increased** by nearly 50% from 6,847 Boston charter school students in 2014 to 10,125 in 2023 (the latest data available). Charter schools have citywide enrollment whereas BPS elementary school assignment includes distance to school as a factor in determining school eligibility, leading to longer charter school bus routes. On average, students who are transported to charter schools live **50% farther from their school** compared to students transported to BPS schools and have a **22% longer bus ride time**.

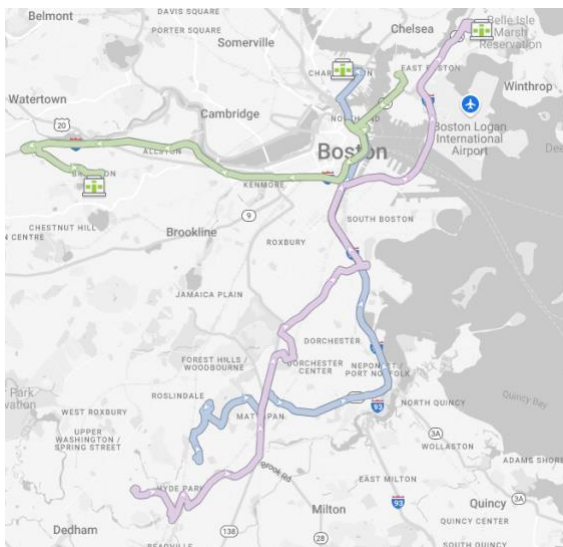
Charter and private schools also often set different calendars and bell times than BPS schools, increasing routing and operational complexity. During the 2024-25 school year, nine charter schools and nine private schools that receive BPS Transportation have bell schedules that are not aligned to one of the three BPS morning bus tiers (7:30AM, 8:30AM, or 9:30AM). This leads to routing and operational inefficiencies.

What does this look like in practice? One Boston charter school with a 7:45AM morning bus arrival time has six morning buses. Whereas most buses in our system service three schools in succession each morning, only one of the six morning buses that services this charter school is able to complete two other morning routes. The remaining five buses are only able to complete one additional route each morning. This decreases the overall efficiency of the bus fleet and reduces our overall operational capacity.



3. **Many students attend school far from home**, requiring long bus rides across the City each morning and afternoon. More than 14% of bus riders currently travel more than 45 minutes on the bus each morning. These long bus rides mean students have less time at home or to participate in before- and after-school activities, while further decreasing efficiency and overall operational capacity of the transportation system.

More than 225 bus routes each morning are currently longer than 40 minutes and have 5 or fewer students onboard. These routes comprise 15% of all morning bus routes while serving only 4% of students.



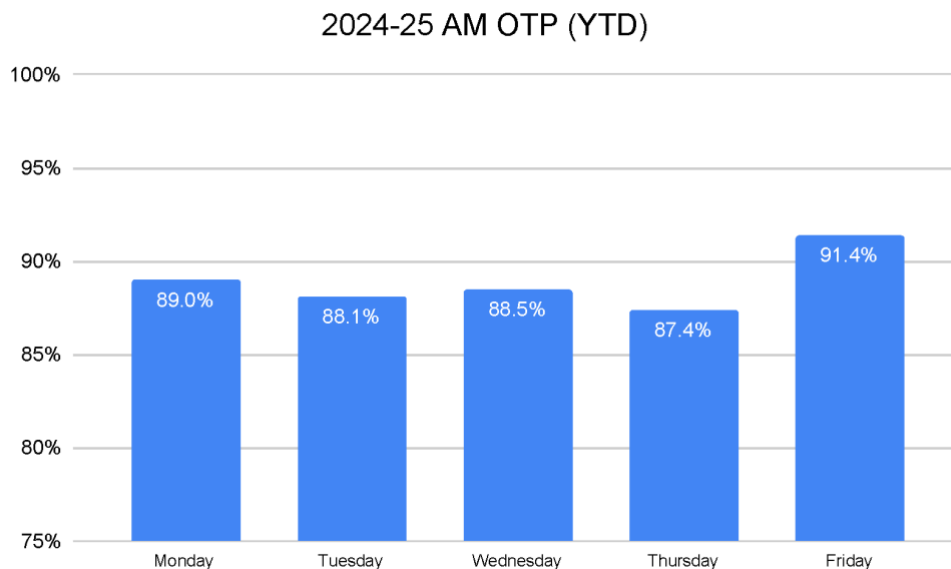
What does this look like in practice? The image to the left shows the route path for three such routes that transport students long distances across the City. Each of these routes is scheduled for between 45-60 minutes with four or fewer students onboard. In practice, depending on daily traffic conditions, these routes can take longer than an hour.

3 Measures of Success

The primary performance measure of BPS Transportation is On-Time Performance (“OTP”). OTP measures the percentage of buses that arrive at school prior to the bell in the morning, and the percentage of buses that arrive at school prior to the scheduled departure time in the afternoon.

Data for the 2024-25 school year shows that the greatest variation in OTP is seen across bell time tiers, rather than school type or bus type. BPS Transportation operates three morning bus tiers, with morning bell times largely aligned to either 7:30AM, 8:30AM, or 9:30AM. Buses are scheduled to arrive 15 minutes before the morning bell (e.g. 7:15AM for a 7:30AM bell time). The lowest OTP consistently occurs during the 8:30AM bell time tier, when traffic is worst and when the volume of transportation needs is highest.

Traffic has a significant impact on OTP. According to INRIX’s 2024 Global Traffic Scorecard, Boston has the fourth-worst traffic congestion in the United States. Traffic variations, in particular, can impact bus OTP. For example, there is less traffic congestion on Fridays, when more people work remotely and fewer cars are on the road. We see this reflected in our OTP, which averages about three percentage points higher on Fridays than the rest of the week.

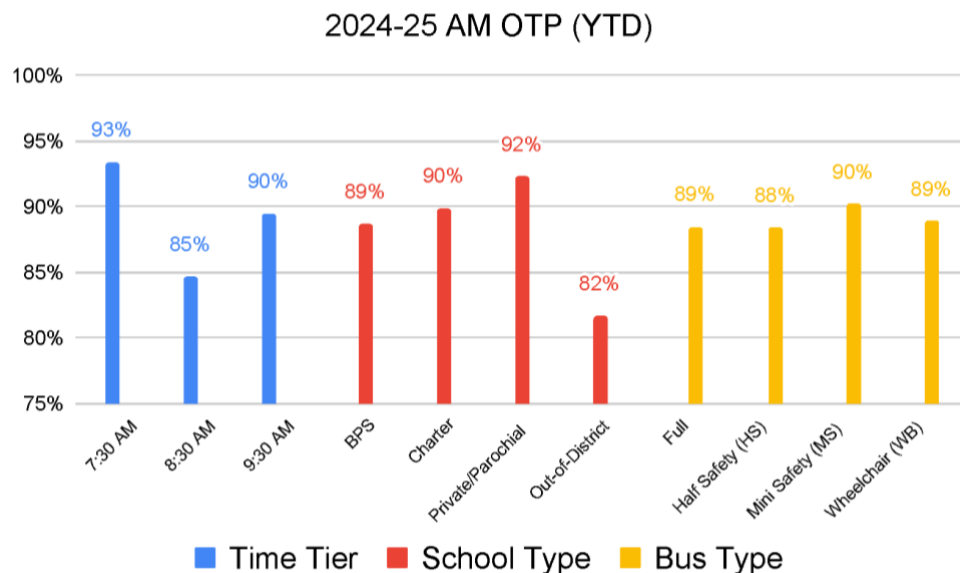


**All 2024-25 YTD data throughout this report is through March 31, 2025*

More than 40% of all scheduled morning trips occur during the 8:30AM tier. In an optimal system, each tier would have one-third of scheduled trips. However, as a result of the disproportionate number of trips scheduled during the 8:30AM tier, the 8:30AM tier has limited routing flexibility to make adjustments to address scheduling issues and late buses.

What does this look like in practice? The Lee K-8 and Murphy K-8 schools are similarly sized and located schools in Dorchester, each with more than 20 morning buses and a significant number of bus riders. The Lee K-8 has a 7:30AM morning bell time and has 96% morning bus OTP so far in the 2024-25 school year. On the other hand, the Murphy K-8 has an 8:30AM morning bell time and has only 83% morning bus OTP so far in the 2024-25 school year. Students at the Murphy K-8 are consistently and disproportionately impacted by late buses compared to their peers at the Lee K-8.

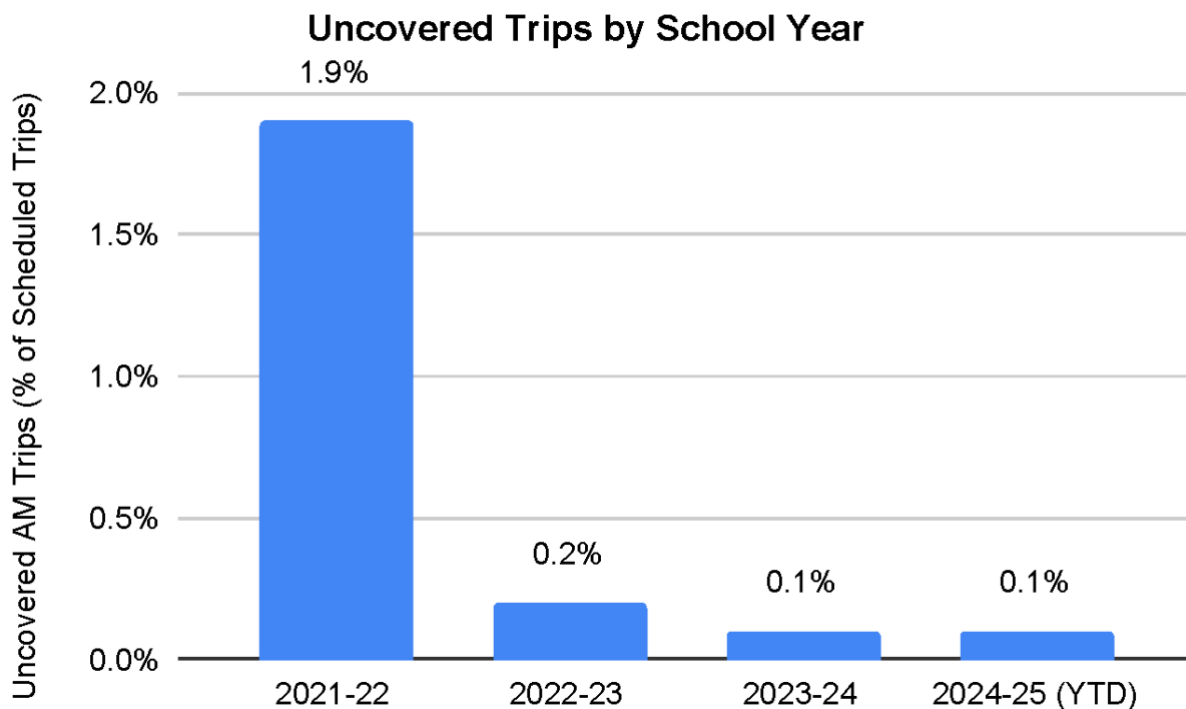
The below chart shows how OTP for the 2024-25 school year varies across bell time tiers, school type, and bus type. Even though, on average, charter schools have longer and more complex routes, they have slightly higher overall OTP because they are more likely than BPS schools to be in the 7:30AM time tier.



4 Progress Made From 2022-2025

Over the past several years, BPS Transportation has worked to address a number of underlying structural issues that have contributed to poor historical performance—leading to OTP improvements in SY24-25, as well as stronger customer service and greater transparency with families.

1. **Addressed nationwide shortage of bus drivers and monitors:** Coming out of the pandemic, [school districts nationwide](#) have been significantly impacted by transportation staffing shortages. BPS, by contrast, began the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years fully staffed. Through expanded recruitment and hiring efforts, the introduction of paid Commercial Driver's License training for new drivers, and changes at our bus yards to better support employees, BPS and Transdev have hired and trained hundreds of new monitors and drivers in recent years. While $\approx 2\%$ of trips were uncovered in SY21-22, fewer than 0.2% of trips have been uncovered over the past three years.



2. **Reformed key transportation contracts.** A new bus drivers' collective bargaining agreement (ratified in May 2022) was the first in many years to secure significant operational reforms to support service improvements. These reforms included requiring in-person practice runs, increasing penalties for late arrivals to work, eliminating retroactive use of PTO for no-call-no-shows, limiting emergency leaves to documented emergencies and freezing seniority after one year on leave. Collectively, these reforms support our efforts to make sure that every day we have enough drivers at work, ready to complete their route. Additionally, the new bus vendor contract (in effect since July 2023) introduced meaningful financial incentives and liquidated damages that did not previously exist to align bus vendor financial incentives towards operational improvements. The new contract also shifted a significant portion of financial responsibilities to the bus vendor to better control costs. These reforms help us to push operational improvements to increase on-time performance and cost controls to slow transportation cost growth, in partnership with our bus vendor, Transdev.
3. **Modernized routing and operations.** At the start of the 2024-25 school year, BPS deployed the [Zūm transportation software](#) across our operation, replacing paper-based routes and outdated, disconnected systems. Previously, bus drivers used paper rosters and directions, and student ridership was captured by school-based staff using pens and clipboards, if it was tracked at all. This made it challenging to reliably track student ridership and created safety and transparency issues. The Zūm technology platform centralizes routing, dispatch and operations, driver GPS navigation, and a mobile app for parents/guardians.

Zūm has supported a more proactive operation in numerous ways, including: 1) providing ETAs, automated delay notifications, and significantly greater transparency to parents/guardians on their student's bus through the Zūm mobile app, 2) providing student information to bus drivers and monitors to enable a safe, smooth ride, and 3) creating a feedback loop to regularly

update bus schedules based on actual performance and traffic data. Bus routes are updated every Wednesday based on any student-level changes, as well as to improve efficiency. The feedback loop facilitated by Zūm ensures that when route updates are made, they also reflect actual traffic conditions to ensure the most accurate and efficient bus schedules on an ongoing basis.

4. **Aligned bell times.** Prior to the 2024-25 school year, 23 BPS schools had morning bus arrival times that were not aligned to one of the three BPS morning bus tiers. When schools are misaligned from the three tiers, buses either have less time between trips (leading to delays) or buses are able to complete fewer trips in succession (leading to less efficient routing). Over the past two years, BPS has adjusted arrival times and reduced the number of misaligned schools to only eight BPS schools, as of the 2024-25 school year. These schools are all high schools, with the majority being small alternative education high schools, encompassing only 27 morning bus trips across the eight schools in 2024-25. Moving forward, BPS will continue looking for opportunities to further align bell times within the context of the broader mergers, closures, and other school changes through the implementation of the Long-Term Facilities Plan.

In addition to BPS schools, 18 non-BPS schools (nine charter and nine private/parochial) that receive BPS transportation are not currently aligned to one of the three BPS morning bus tiers. These 18 schools collectively account for 46 morning bus trips. **Although BPS does not have jurisdiction over non-BPS schools' bell times, we are working closely with the Boston Compact to encourage non-BPS schools to make schedule adjustments to align to the morning bus tiers and support overall service improvements for Boston students.** As of now, at least three of these schools are anticipated to align to one of the BPS morning bus tiers in the 2025-26 school year.

5. **Improved athletics transportation.** Athletics transportation has historically seen similar challenges as home-to-school transportation, with ~5% of scheduled athletics bus trips not receiving bus coverage over the past several years. In the fall and winter of the 2024-25 school year, BPS has undertaken a number of strategies to improve athletics transportation:

- Transitioned athletics transportation fully into Zūm as of January 2025, supporting improved scheduling, operations, and communications
- Optimized athletics scheduling to consistently stay within yellow bus capacity constraints
- Working to put in place backup vendor transportation options
- Working to finalize drivers' collective bargaining agreement language for implementation of the "work-as-directed" provision as early as July 2025, to further improve ability to cover trips that don't get driver coverage through existing driver assignment processes

These strategies have already paid off, with **100% coverage of scheduled athletics trips and field trips since the start of February 2025.**

5 Evidence of Recent Improvement

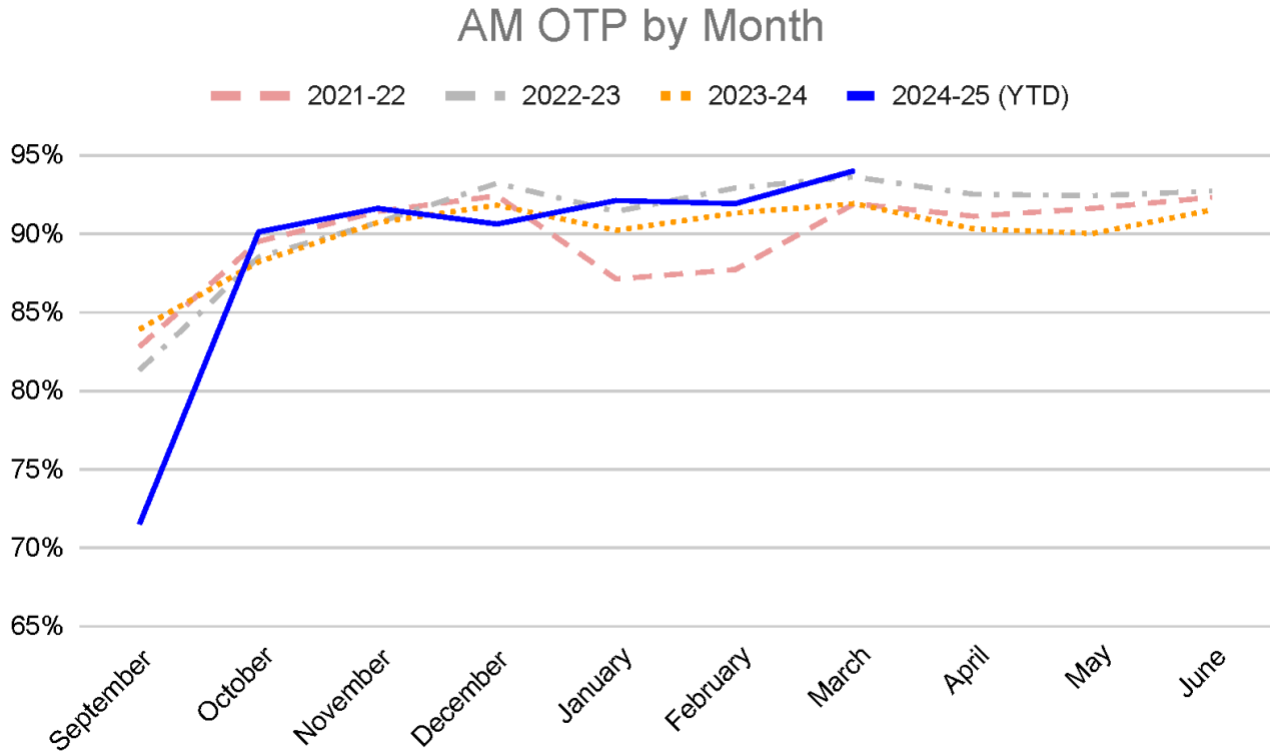
The work in recent years has focused on addressing the structural and systems challenges that have historically impeded BPS Transportation performance. This work has shown clear results, with steady OTP improvements in recent years.

The first day of the school year always has the lowest OTP, as students and parents introduce themselves to bus drivers, drivers complete new routes in real-world conditions for the first time, and school staff work to safely unload students they are meeting for the first time. Day 1 OTP is a high-profile and important measure of transportation performance. **The start of the 2023-24 school year saw the highest Day 1 morning OTP in the past ten years.**

School Year	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21*	21-22*	22-23	23-24	24-25
Day 1 OTP	59%	49%	51%	41%	51%	43%	56%	57%	50%	61%	34%

**During School Years 21-22 and 22-23, Boston experienced significantly less traffic due to Covid-19, leading to higher OTP.*

At the start of the 2024-25 school year, BPS Transportation deployed the Zūm technology, which contributed to a sharp decline in Day 1 OTP, as bus drivers used the app in real-world driving conditions for the first time. Over the first couple of weeks, as drivers, school staff, and families grew accustomed to the new technology, OTP rapidly improved, stabilizing at a higher rate than last year. From October to March of the 2024-25 school year, AM OTP averaged 91.7%, compared to 90.6% from October to March of 2023-24. The below chart shows AM OTP by month for each of the past four school years.

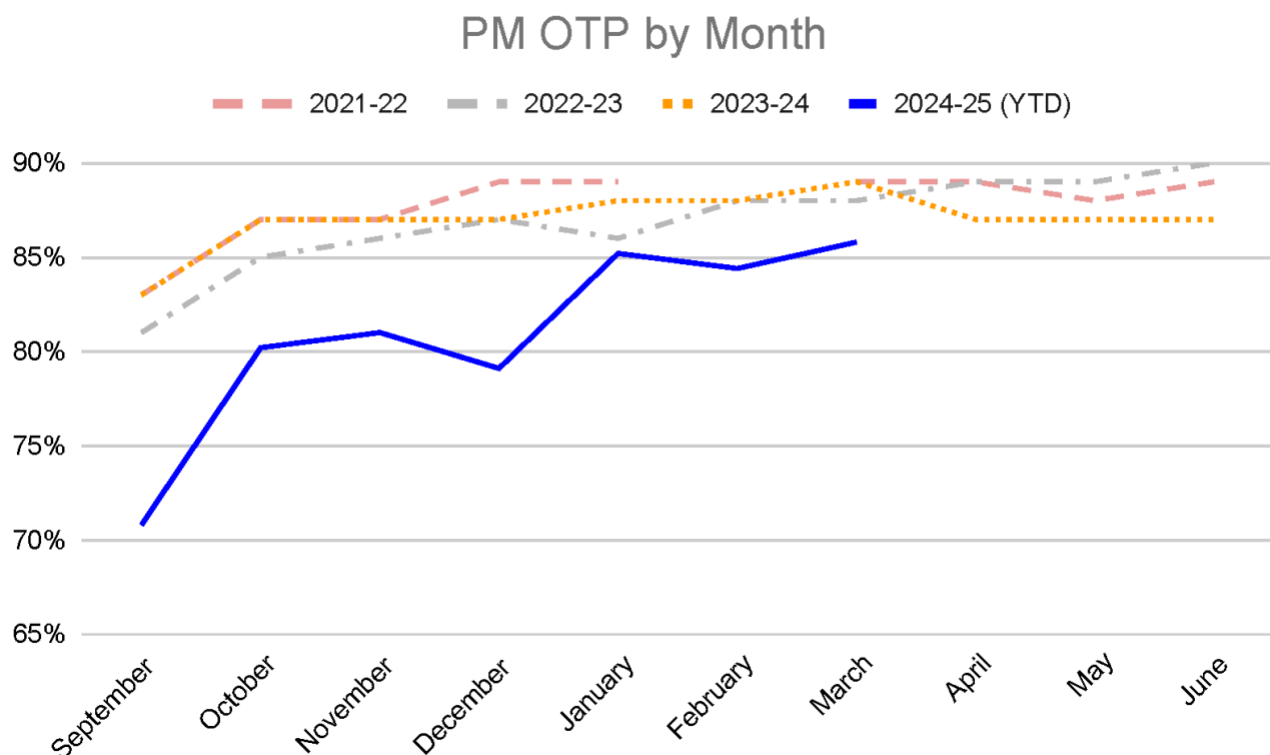


In March 2025, BPS Transportation averaged 94% morning bus on-time performance, meaning 94% of school buses arrived at school prior to the morning bell. This represents the best monthly performance seen at any time since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Historically, afternoon OTP has been somewhat lower than morning OTP, typically peaking in the mid-to-high 80s each year. This is driven by a number of factors. These include afternoon traffic congestion, significant variation in school day lengths, and early dismissal days—all of which make afternoon routing more complicated than morning routing—as well as the impact of buses waiting for parents/guardians to pick their students up from their bus stop. The additional complexity associated with afternoon routing, in particular, makes it more difficult to adjust and streamline afternoon bus schedules mid-year. As a result, afternoon OTP also has not improved as rapidly this school year.

However, **afternoon OTP has continued to trend upwards throughout the year.** In March 2025, BPS Transportation averaged 86% afternoon bus on-time performance, the highest monthly afternoon OTP of the school year. With a full school year of Zūm data, BPS Transportation expects to build more efficient routes ahead of the 2025-26 school year and see significant progress in afternoon OTP next year.

The below chart shows PM OTP by month for each of the past four school years.



**Note: BPS is missing PM OTP data from February 2022.*

While 2024-25 OTP is still trending slowly upwards, **OTP is likely to plateau in the low-to-mid 90s without further structural changes.** Of the 8% of trips that were late in February 2025, roughly half were on routes that were on time more than two-thirds of days in February. These late trips are mostly due to unforeseen circumstances: unusual traffic, onboard bus incidents (e.g. medical or behavioral incidents), bus breakdowns or crashes, or other operational incidents which are largely unavoidable in a transportation system of this size and complexity. We can

therefore expect that even under peak performance, roughly 4% of bus trips may be late on any given day, but that these delays should be relatively evenly distributed across routes—e.g. one particular route should not experience disproportionate delays. Even when buses arrive to school late, students still have access to a nutritious breakfast through BPS Eats—but this can put operational strain on school staff and is not ideal for students feeling settled and ready for the day.

The other half of late trips in February were on routes that were late on more than one-third of days in the month. 94 routes fell into this category. These late trips are mostly structural in nature—a result of the current transportation system being stretched beyond its capacity, meaning the number of scheduled bus runs is too high for the size of the bus fleet. The students on these trips experience disproportionate, frequent bus delays as a result of these structural challenges.

These are the delays that BPS Transportation is working urgently to address.

What does this look like in practice? In February 2025, there were five routes that were late on 100% of school days in the month. The 42 students on these routes were late to school every day of the month. Despite urgent efforts to improve the performance of these routes, the current system simply doesn't have available capacity to successfully address all of these persistent delays.

Five worst performing AM routes in February 2025

Start	Finish	School Bell	Average Arrival	Notes
Readville Bus Yard	Community Academy of Science and Health (Dorchester)	7:30AM	7:36AM	This is a 60 minute, 7.0 mile route in the first bell time tier. Poor performance is due to operational issues, with the bus driver leaving the bus yard late daily. BPS Transportation is working to address this with our bus vendor.
Roxbury Prep High School (Roxbury)	Neighborhood House ES Charter School (Dorchester)	8:30AM	8:40AM	This route is in the 2nd bell time tier. There is a 21 minute conflict with the prior run, meaning as scheduled the route is projected to be 21 minutes late. The conflict cannot be addressed through routing adjustments within the current bus fleet capacity.
MLK Jr. Elementary School (Dorchester)	Tobin K-8 School (Mission Hill)	9:30AM	9:38AM	This route is in the 3rd bell time tier. There is a 12 minute conflict with the prior run, meaning as scheduled the route is projected to be 12 minutes late. The conflict cannot be addressed through routing adjustments within the current bus fleet capacity.
Joseph Lee K-8 School (Dorchester)	Grew Elementary School (Hyde Park)	8:30AM	8:38AM	This route is in the 2nd bell time tier. There is a 2 minute conflict with the prior run, meaning as

Start	Finish	School Bell	Average Arrival	Notes
				scheduled the route is projected to be 2 minutes late. The conflict cannot be addressed through routing adjustments within the current bus fleet capacity.
Community Academy of Science and Health (Dorchester)	Fenway High School (Mission Hill)	8:30AM	8:51AM	This route is in the 2nd bell time tier. There is a 24 minute conflict with the prior run, meaning as scheduled the route is projected to be 24 minutes late. The conflict cannot be addressed through routing adjustments within the current bus fleet capacity.

Four of these five routes are consistently late because of structural issues: there is simply not enough capacity in the system to adjust the routes and eliminate all scheduling conflicts. Structural transportation delays can be addressed by either increasing the capacity of the BPS Transportation system by an estimated 5-7% (i.e. adding ~30-45 more buses on the road every day, which would require approximately \$17 million in one-time start-up costs and more than \$3 million in additional annual operating costs) or by decreasing the demand on the system by an estimated 5-7% (i.e. reducing ridership by ~1,000-1,500 more students). Moving forward, BPS Transportation is taking concrete steps to decrease the demand on the system to improve service for our students and families.

6 How We Rightsize the Transportation System

BPS Transportation is committed to continuous pursuit of 100% OTP. To keep making progress towards that goal while prioritizing fiscal responsibility, we must take steps to align demand for bus service more closely with the capacity of our fleet.

This work requires a district-wide and city-wide approach. To drive continued improvements, BPS is focused on making systemic changes to reduce the volume of transportation needed—improving the quality of service for students and families while reducing budget growth. This approach aligns with broader district-wide planning to rightsize the physical footprint of BPS as well as our goal of slowing BPS Transportation budget growth to keep dollars in the classroom, rather than further expanding the system and increasing cost to meet current capacity needs.

Immediate Focus: Creating routes based on actual student ridership, rather than eligibility (2025-26)

Until this year, BPS had no way to systematically monitor student ridership. That meant that BPS was deploying buses for students who did not need and were not using them, with no established process to identify non-riders and remove their bus assignments.

With the introduction of Zūm, student ridership is now tracked directly in the Zūm platform. To date, BPS Transportation has identified over 2,000 students (~10% of scheduled riders) as consistently not riding their assigned bus this school year. By reaching out directly to families, BPS has opted-out more than 1,000 of these students from transportation.

Through these efforts, the total number of morning bus stops has decreased from ~10,800 at the start of the school year to ~10,400 currently. These efforts have shortened many routes, and in some cases even allowed for consolidation of some routes. This adds slack to the system, improving route efficiency and introducing additional buffer time between successive trips, supporting the OTP improvements made so far this year.

The Transportation Advisory Council is a group of BPS Transportation stakeholders—including BPS and non-BPS school leaders, advocacy groups, parents, students, and BPS staff—who collectively work to review and advocate for transportation improvements. **In spring 2024, the Transportation Advisory Council developed a Ridership Procedure—consistent with the [recommendation of the Council of Great City Schools](#)—for pausing student bus assignments based on non-ridership.** The Ridership Procedure also ensures that families can reinstate bus transportation whenever it is needed.

BPS Transportation will implement the Ridership Procedure starting in May 2025:

- After 10+ consecutive school days of a student not riding the bus without providing prior notification in the Zūm app to cancel a student's scheduled bus rides, BPS Transportation will communicate to families through ParentSquare that their student is being opted out of the bus.
- The communication will include instructions on how families can notify BPS Transportation (within 3 business days) that their student plans to return to the bus.
- Students can keep their bus assignment if they return to riding the bus. Otherwise, they will be opted out of transportation and their bus assignment will be paused.
- Students can also reinstate transportation services at any later date, as long as they are still eligible for a yellow bus.
- Opt-outs carry over year-to-year, and students who have been opted out of transportation will remain opted out until they reach out to Transportation to reinstate their bus service, including for the start of a new school year.

Upon implementation of the Ridership Procedure, we anticipate that close to 1,000 additional students who have consistently not been riding the bus during the 2024-25 school year will be opted out of transportation. Prior to this initial implementation, BPS Transportation staff will call families of all impacted students, in addition to following the steps detailed above.

Implementation of the Ridership Procedure in Spring 2025 is particularly important to ensure that routing and planning for the start of the 2025-26 school year is done based on an accurate landscape of student need. **This will lead to operational and cost efficiencies for the 2025-26 school year.**

The Ridership Procedure will ensure only students who use the bus are routed for transportation, aligning transportation service with actual ridership. This will improve reliability and on-time performance. It will also ensure resources are allocated efficiently and equitably, with the potential for millions in transportation savings (initial estimates of up to ~\$3-5M per year).

Longer-Term Focus: Developing an ecosystem of schools that facilitates a more streamlined system (2025-30)

Many Boston students attend school far from home, requiring long bus rides across the City each morning and afternoon. More than 225 bus routes each morning are longer than 40 minutes and have five or fewer students onboard. These routes comprise 15% of all morning bus routes, while serving only 4% of students. Through broader district-wide planning—including implementation of the Long-Term Facilities Plan, expanding access to inclusive education, and creating or expanding specialized programs that serve students with disabilities who are currently served out-of-district—BPS is working to ensure all students have access to a high quality seat that meets their individualized needs and aspirations at a school close to home. These efforts help to right-size the transportation system, supporting continued performance improvements and greater efficiency.

Long-Term Facilities Plan: Right-sizing the physical footprint of BPS is anticipated to reduce the total volume of transportation needed across the district. Mergers, closures, and reconfigurations lead to fewer schools that, on average, have larger student bodies. That also means fewer, fuller buses. Through the continued implementation of the Long-Term Facilities Plan, BPS is working to ensure that all students have access to a high quality seat at a school that is close to home, reducing the need for students to travel long distances to and from school on buses.

What does this look like in practice?

- *In 2024, UP Academy Boston—which served students in grades 6-8—closed, with most students transitioning to UP Academy Dorchester (K-8) or UP Academy Holland (K-6). This consolidation resulted in a net reduction of six bus routes from the morning bus schedule, resulting in over \$100K in annual estimated savings.*
- *The merger of the Winthrop and Clap Elementary Schools at the end of the 2025-26 school year is expected to result in a net reduction of three bus routes from the morning bus schedule. Currently, the two schools require a combined 15 buses to transport students to school each morning. Under the merger and relocation to the Frederick building, only 12 buses are expected to be needed to transport students to school, given the current student population.*

Inclusive Education Plan: All BPS schools are working towards being able to provide every student with the appropriate and individualized support they need to be successful. This will reduce the need for students with disabilities to be placed at schools far from home based on their individual needs.

These efforts will also help ensure that when students move, BPS is able to offer them a high quality seat that meets their needs close to their new address. Currently, students with door-to-door transportation who move within Boston are eligible to stay at their school and continue to receive door-to-door transportation from their new address. Often, families choose to keep their students at their school, despite the long bus ride from their new address. In other cases, particularly if the family moves midway through the school year, there may not be any available special education seats that can meet their student's specific needs at schools near their new address. Expanding access to inclusive education across our schools means that families will have more choices close to home.

What does this look like in practice? *There are some cases every year where students who have door-to-door transportation service assigned in their IEP move into a new Boston neighborhood midway through the school year. When the students do not have school options close to their new home that meet their special education needs, students may be bussed long distances each day with very few (if any) other students on the bus with them. For example, there are multiple bus routes transporting two or fewer students between East Boston and Hyde Park or Mattapan each day. Each of these bus routes takes more than an hour each morning and afternoon, and requires the allocation of entire bus routes for one or two students.*

Through the continued rollout of inclusive education, BPS hopes to give students improved options so they can always access the appropriate and individualized support they need at a school close to home.

Out-of-district special education placements: BPS currently transports more than 200 students to more than 70 different out-of-district special education schools through a mix of yellow buses and contracted van transportation, at an average annual cost of more than \$40,000 per student. These students are typically on very long rides with a small number of other students (if any), and buses transporting students to out-of-district schools typically do not have enough time to service any other schools. BPS is working to provide high quality seats within BPS that can meet the individualized needs of more of these students, which would free up significant capacity within the transportation system while allowing more students to attend school closer to home without long bus rides to and from schools outside of Boston each day.

7 2030 Vision: What does BPS Transportation look like?

The upcoming Ridership Procedure and longer-term system changes across the district will make BPS Transportation more efficient and better able to deliver high-quality transportation service to students and families. In addition to improved OTP, the following measures will allow us to demonstrate progress and gauge the success of our current efforts to improve transportation:

- **The total number of runs will decrease.** Currently, there are about 1,560 total runs each morning and about 1,540 total runs each afternoon.
- **The number of students per run will increase.** Currently, there are an average of 14 students per run.
- **The average student bus ride length will decrease.** Currently, the average student bus ride is approximately 2.0 miles and 28 minutes long.
- **Budget growth will slow and the transportation budget will decline as a percentage of the BPS Operating Budget.** Currently, transportation represents 12% of the overall BPS operating budget.

BPS will continue making improvements so every student can get to school safely, reliably, and on time every day. We strive every day to continue making progress on transparency, collaboration, and accountability across the entire community.