

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: McLean County Unit District No. 5 Board of Education  
Alan Chapman, Superintendent

From: Tiered Transportation System Committee  
Julia Basting, UFEA President  
Wes Caldwell, Dispatcher  
Charles Hartseil, Dir. of Special Education  
Lynette Mehall, Principal-KJHS

Jeanette Nuckolls, Principal-NCHS  
Bert Popejoy, Interim Dir. of Trans.  
Kurt Swearingen, Principal-Prairieland  
John W. Pye, Assistant Superintendent

Date: December 8, 2004

Subject: Three-Tiered Transportation System

### **Introduction**

Like most school districts in Illinois, McLean County Unit District No. 5 has faced significant reductions despite on-going growth. To cope with this loss of funding and financial resources, the Board of Education sought Education Fund cost-saving recommendations from staff, parents, and community members during the fall of 2003. These suggestions resulted in a 5.3 million dollar savings in that fund.

Unit 5 continues to pay attention to cost avoidance and reduction in current expenses as ways to guarantee meaningful savings in other school district funds. A district committee was established to investigate the potential cost savings that could be realized through the implementation of a tiered transportation system.

The goal of the committee was to maximize the transportation resources available to McLean County Unit District No. 5. This would be achieved by developing a more cost-effective transportation plan that would provide efficient, safe, reliable transportation for the students in our care. Additionally, the committee made it a priority to minimize the wait and ride times of those students utilizing district transportation services.

The committee met on a regular basis this fall to review and discuss a variety of relevant material. An integral document used was the Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) study on tiering that was completed in April 2004. The CAC report also contained a Large Unit District Association (LUDA) survey on tiering that was conducted in February 2004 which provided data from a number of districts similar to Unit 5. In addition, the committee reviewed the sleep studies highlighted in the CAC study as well as a number of other relevant documents.

### **Recommendations**

After reviewing the relevant material and research, the committee recommends moving to a three-tiered transportation system. The adoption of this system would necessitate that each bus make two or three runs each morning and afternoon with approximately thirty minutes between each route. In adopting this three-tiered system, the district would also need to move to different starting times for the elementary, middle and high schools.

Presently, the high school day is seven hours and fifteen minutes, the middle school day is seven hours and twelve minutes, and the elementary school is six hours and forty-five minutes. The committee had considerable discussion about the starting and ending times for each school level. Although there are numerous positives and negatives for each of the school starting and ending times, the committee consensus was to recommend a configuration that begins with the high schools, then the middle schools and finally the elementary schools. The beginning and ending times for each level would be as follows:

High Schools	7:30 a.m. – 2:45 p.m. (Seven Hours, 15 Minutes)
Middle Schools	8:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. (Seven Hours, 15 Minutes)
Elementary Schools	9:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. (Six Hours, 45 Minutes)

The committee would also recommend the following if this new configuration is adopted by the Board of Education:

1. A plan be developed to address the issue of early dismissal, and
2. An approach for the implementation of late start days.

These plans would need to be communicated to all segments of the district community.

**Relative Data – Pros and Cons**

In formulating our recommendations, the committee identified the positive and negative factors of implementing a three-tiered transportation system on various aspects of the district. The following are our findings:

<b><u>PROS</u></b>	<b><u>CONS</u></b>
ESL and special education students will be able to attend a full-day of school. (E/MS/HS)	Traveling teachers may not be able to serve multiple levels. (E/MS/HS)
Students will miss less instructional time for away athletic events. (MS/HS)	Students may have increased wait times for after-school activities to begin. (MS/HS)
Most students will ride with building level peers. (E/MS/HS)	Zero hour classes would be discontinued. (HS)
Students will have minimal before and after school wait time. (E/MS/HS)	Earlier lunch period times. (MS/HS)
Many students may have shorter ride times. (E/MS/HS)	PDA classes and curriculum meetings may need to be conducted at multiple times. (E/MS/HS).
Increase supervised study opportunities for students. (MS/HS)	Building meeting schedules may need to be adjusted to a.m. or p.m. only. (E/MS/HS)
May decrease discipline issues in bus lanes. (MS/HS)	Staffings may need to be conducted at alternative times. (E/MS/HS)
Reduced cost for internal subbing. (MS/HS)	Elementary extracurricular activities may need to meet at times other than after school. (E)
Adult supervision time may be reduced. (E/MS/HS)	Elementary students in before school care for a long period of time before school starts. (E)
Older siblings at home before younger siblings. (MS/HS)	Children left unsupervised for longer periods. (MS/HS)
Longer before school and shorter after school programs will attract more and better childcare workers. (E)	Staff may have difficulty finding childcare that fits their schedule. (E/MS/HS)
Core group of drivers who are properly trained and committed to serving the student population. (E/MS/HS)	Schedule conflicts may result in reduced Schedule B opportunities. (E)
Zero hour classes would be discontinued. (H)	Staff opportunity to teach classes at other educational institutions (Heartland, ISU, IWU) may be impacted. (E)
Increase student opportunities to enroll in college courses at Heartland and ISU. (H)	Schedule change may require alternative approach in preparing satellite food. (MS/HS)

**Financial Impact**

The implementation of the three-tiered system will have an impact on transportation resources. The tiering approach will enable costs to be reduced by the following estimated amounts:

Leasing (22 Buses)	\$211,307.46
Insurance (22 Buses)	22,346.00
Driver Wages (26 Drivers - \$11.72/Hour, 4 Hours Per Day)	<u>207,209.60</u>
<b>Total Estimated Savings</b>	<b>\$440,913.06</b>

Additional savings may also be realized through the reduction of fuel and maintenance costs. It should be noted that some of the savings may be offset by increased fuel and maintenance costs for the remaining buses since they will be traveling more extensive miles each and every day.

Although savings will undoubtedly be realized in the transportation fund, increased costs may be incurred in other areas due to newly established school times. This may include increased costs in the following areas: personnel (certified and educational support personnel); professional development; Schedule B; and supervision.

**Scheduling**

This proposed system will enable the transportation department to utilize the same bus for multiple routes. Additional benefits anticipated with the tiering approach will result in less travel time and school bus waiting time for most students at both their home and school.

It is estimated that the district will need sixty-five buses for its regular education routes and twenty-five to thirty buses for special education routes. This will leave approximately twelve to fifteen buses to be used as spares or for emergency needs.

**Community Impact**

We recognize that this change will impact many facets of the community. Childcare providers will need to adjust their schedules to coincide with the new school starting and ending times. Agencies and local businesses that offer after-school programs and student lessons may also need to modify their time frames to better accommodate and meet student needs. Although these changes will provide groups with some new challenges, it is our belief that they are not insurmountable and will enable the district to continue to provide the children with a quality educational program.

**Collective Bargaining**

The committee readily acknowledges that a change to a three-tiered system of transportation will have implications for collective bargaining with various employee groups. Areas subject to impact bargaining or bargaining in successor agreements would include but not be limited to the following: scheduling, planning time, supervision, meeting times, PDA structure, working hours, etc.

**Timeline**

If the recommendation to adopt a three-tiered transportation system is approved by the Board of Education, the committee would suggest the following implementation timeline:

January 2005	Board of Education Approval
February – March 2005	Staff/Parent Notification Bus Route Development Administrative Review of Routes
April 2005	Bus Route Trial Runs
May – June 2005	Bus Route Revisions
July 2005	Parent Notification of Bus Routes
August 2005	Bus Route Implementation

**Conclusion**

The adoption of a three-tiered transportation system will be a major systemic change for the school district. We anticipate that it will also receive mixed reactions from the various segments of our district community. In addition, it will not eliminate all of the issues and problems associated with our present transportation system. What this change will provide is the opportunity to manage our resources more efficiently and effectively while continuing to provide safe and reliable transportation for the children of Unit 5.

JWP:pc