

TO: Richard A. Powell
Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Michele S. Moloney
School Business Manager

DATE: March 8, 2006

RE: **Transportation Advisory Services (TAS)**

As you will recall, in November 2005, we requested that Transportation Advisory Services undertake a study with respect to the delivery of our transportation services and identify areas containing cost efficiencies.

Members of TAS met or spoke with school board members, administrators, union representatives, other district staff, and PTA Council President, Kim Virtue.

Attached please find a copy of subject report. A representative from TAS will be at Monday night's board meeting to introduce this topic and review the report. The board will have an opportunity to ask questions. In addition, we have set aside the meeting of March 20th to further discuss this topic.

MSM/jv
attachment

TO: Kim Virtue – PTA President
Johanna Hudak-Coordinator – Special Education
Jennifer Simmons-Coordinator – Physical Education, Interscholastic Athletics,
Home and Careers, & Health
Debra Cassidy-WFW President

FROM: Michele S. Moloney
School Business Manager

DATE: November 14, 2005

RE: **Transportation Study**

Our district is undertaking a study with respect to delivery of our transportation services and areas in which we can become more efficient.

Mr. Mark Walsh, from Transportation Advisory Services, will be in the district on the morning of December 7th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon to interview district stakeholders. We are inviting you to attend a meeting with Mr. Walsh in which he will solicit your input on our transportation process. The meeting will be held in the small conference room at the District Office.

Please call Janet Viggiano at 298-5000 ext 149 to set up a time to meet with Mr. Walsh. Thank you in advance for your anticipated participation.

MSM/jv

cc: Richard A. Powell - Superintendent of Schools

William J. Crosson – Director of Safety, Security and Transportation

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM
STUDY**



**WAPPINGERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
WAPPINGERS FALLS, NEW YORK**

FEBRUARY 2006

PREPARED BY TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY SERVICES

**MARK A. WALSH, CMC, PROJECT LEADER
LOUIS J. BOFFARDI, PROJECT CONSULTANT**

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INTRODUCTION

Transportation Advisory Services (TAS) was engaged to perform a focused review of the student transportation program of the Wappingers Central School District (hereinafter referred to as “District”). The purpose of this Study is to provide a third-party perspective on the provision of transportation services in the District with particular emphasis on policy, procedures, and routing protocols.

The District’s liaison for the project was Mr. William Crosson, Director of Safety, Security and Transportation. Mark A. Walsh, CMC, served as the Project Leader for TAS, with Louis J. Boffardi of TAS serving as the Project Consultant.

STUDY PROFILE

During the 1997-1998 school year, TAS conducted a thorough efficiency study of the Transportation Department of the Wappingers Central School District. Based upon comments received during our interview process, and our review of the program during this engagement, the District has done an excellent job of implementing many of the recommendations made during that previous study.

We commend the District for their willingness to conduct again a third-party review of the program. We often caution districts... *“Don’t ask the question if you don’t want to hear the answer”*. Wappingers Central School District has again been willing to be open and cooperative in our review of certain aspects of the District’s transportation services.

The District is being challenged, along with most other districts, with the financial realities of ever-increasing operating costs. In an effort to ensure that they are providing transportation services in the most efficient method possible, the District engaged TAS to perform this review of the various policies and procedures in place in the District. In some instances we have been able to provide projections on possible savings if service levels were modified.

It is important to state that although most of the services that are provided are pursuant to established policies or procedures of the Board of Education, these transportation services exceed what is required and are growing in type and in number as more and more demands are being made upon the program as the District grows. In

order to change the services being provided, the Board of Education will need to provide specific guidance to the Transportation Department... and support their efforts as the changes are implemented. Some of these possible changes are difficult because they involve a possible change in services. The implementation of these changes is properly within the purview of the Board of Education.

Although the District's transportation program appears to be well run, and fully utilizing the resources that have been made available, there are some areas where we have provided our thoughts and recommendations for change. Additionally, although it was not an issue specifically addressed in our engagement, the District is still severely challenged by the lack of adequate transportation facilities. It appears that this is causing the District to spend more money on staff and mileage.

Overall, based upon our experience throughout New York State over the past eighteen years, the District is providing a level of transportation services that far exceeds the "norm", and certainly that exceeds any State mandates. Within the framework of State regulations, the District has great latitude on the level of services that it provides. In most areas, assuming the proper voter approvals, the Board of Education can exercise its authority to provide highly responsive services as long as they are offered in a consistent manner.

A controlling factor is the reality of financial resources. Since voter approval of a transportation proposition in May 1994, the District has been providing services more liberally than required by State regulations. It is also providing services more liberally than the District's own policies. Any incremental services beyond State mandates must be supported by the local taxpayers without any State transportation aid assistance. The District may quickly experience a point where the wishes of a segment of the population will exceed the resources that will be supported by the Community.

In order to facilitate the review and use of this report, most of the sections have been presented using a "bullet" format. This allows a succinct presentation of the issues, and we believe enhances the on-going use of the report as a resource for the Administration and District personnel.

Everyone involved was extremely cooperative and provided us with everything we requested. We would like to thank those individuals for their assistance in this study process.

METHODOLOGY

In July 2005, **TAS** was contacted by Mr. William Crosson, Director of Safety, Security and Transportation for the Wappingers Central School District relative to the District's interest in conducting a follow-up review of the transportation program. Mr. Crosson met with Louis Boffardi of **TAS** on July 11, 2005, to discuss the specific focus of the potential program review.

On July 18, 2005, **TAS** submitted a detailed proposal to the District. This proposal was accepted by the District as evidenced by a Purchase Order dated July 26, 2005. Subsequent to the proposal's acceptance the following activities were undertaken as part of our analysis:

- 1) **TAS** submitted to the District a request for certain background information and program details in order to form a basis for the review. Given the typical transportation workload during the summer months, this data request was issued to the District on September 20, 2005. The District did an excellent job of supplying the requested data, and the information was reviewed by **TAS** prior to our on-site visits.
- 2) On December 6 and 7, 2005, the **TAS** Project Leader and Project Consultant were on-site in the District conducting the following meetings/interviews:

December 6, 2005:

- ◆ An initial meeting with the Superintendent and School Business Manager. This meeting was designed to provide **TAS** with a greater understanding of the scope of the engagement, while also allowing **TAS** an opportunity to ask questions about the data submitted by the District.
- ◆ An interview was held with the Director of Safety, Security and Transportation, and the Assistant Director of Transportation, to discuss the engagement and various aspects of our review.
- ◆ A group meeting was held at the Transportation facility with Department office staff members, Head Drivers, Department Administrators, and Mechanics. At this meeting we discussed

the nature of our review, projected issues that will be evaluated, and methodologies that would be utilized. Additionally, the attendees were asked to provide assistance in helping us find ways to operate the program with the maximum efficiency.

December 7, 2005:

The **TAS** Project Leader held the following meetings:

- ◆ A telephone interview was held with one Board Member.
- ◆ A meeting was held with one Board Member, and the School Business Manager, to discuss their areas of interest and concern.
- ◆ An interview was held with the Director of Special Education.
- ◆ A meeting was held with the WFW President.
- ◆ A meeting with the Coordinator of Physical Education and Athletics

The **TAS** Project Consultant was on-site at the Transportation Center beginning the detailed data analysis.

- 3) Following the initial meeting the **TAS** Project Consultant had a series of meetings with the Transportation Director, the Assistant Transportation Director, the Head Bus Driver of the Fishkill Plains garage, the Head Bus Driver of the Sheafe Road garage, and with various support staff members within the Transportation Department office. Several of these meetings were with all the people together, others were in small groups, and still others were individual meetings.

Meetings and reviews of the transportation program were held on Wednesday, December 7th; Tuesday, December 13th; Thursday, January 5th; Friday, January 20th; Thursday, February 9th, and Friday, February 10th.

The purpose of these meetings was to gain the perspective of the transportation program from those individuals who are involved

in its operation, to review route information, to gain knowledge as to the process followed by the Transportation Department when requests are made for bus stop changes and for the establishment of bus stops, to observe directly the interaction of the Department members in dealing with transportation requests from various District administrators and parents, and to review operational records including those contained within the Department's routing software.

- 4) Following the visits of January 5th and January 20th, the TAS Project Consultant traveled and reviewed portions of three routes from different locations within the Fishkill Plains garage and the Sheafe Road garage operating areas. The purpose was to trace the operation of the routes and to observe the locations of various bus stops.
- 5) Numerous additional documents and analyses were provided by the District in response to questions raised during the analysis process. Throughout the review process numerous items were discussed or provided through the use of telephone conversations, letters, fax communications, or email.
- 6) Due to the nature of some of the issues under review, we requested that the District undertake several detailed analyses of the current program, and the financial and operating impact of possible changes. The District has been very responsive and we appreciate the assistance.
- 7) This document constitutes the final written report to the District. A copy of this report is being provided to various District representatives, including Administrators and Board Members. This report is intended to serve as an advisory document and resource for the District, and as such it should be reviewed and evaluated by the District for its applicability to the circumstances at the time of review.
- 8) The following information was utilized as a part of our analysis of the District's transportation program:
 - Fleet listings
 - Line item financial reports, and various budget documents

- Labor agreements, staff listings, and job descriptions
- Route listings
- Board Policies
- District transportation forms
- Miscellaneous District-prepared analyses and reports
- Interviews with Transportation Department staff members
- Dispatch sheets
- Database information from the routing software

***TAS** uses available information and its experience to estimate the potential costs and/or savings of particular transportation service arrangements described in this study. Although past experience can be an excellent basis for projections, **TAS** does not warrant that the costs or savings estimated herein will be realized if implemented.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As stated in the Introduction section of this report, the comments contained herein pertain to those aspects of the engagement that are within the scope of the study as determined by the District.

Recommendations pertaining to each section of this report are embodied in those sections. They are also included here in summary for easy reference. For a more definitive discussion of each topic, please refer to the section itself. **The following recommendations are not listed in any prioritized order.**

Section 4 – POLICY & PROCEDURES

- The District should address the practice of entering a private road and any cul-de-sacs less than 2/10ths of a mile for elementary school students and 5/10ths of a mile for junior/high school students to ensure that the services are consistent with the District's policy and desires.
- The entire issue of stop locations requires a detailed reviewed. As identified in this report, practices are not consistent with policy, many exceptions exist, and savings could be realized through consistent enforcement.
- An objective method of evaluating stop locations should be put into place.
- Junior and Senior High School students should be provided services consistent with the District's policies. Additionally, a practice should be put into place that addresses stop locations when students transition into the higher grade levels.
- A legal opinion should be sought on the need to provide dedicated buses to certain private and parochial runs. Assuming that integrating runs is allowable, these routes should be restructured for efficiency consistent with District policy.
- Providing transportation to private and parochial schools on days when the public schools are closed should be reviewed in light of regulations and comparability with other districts.

- The “grandfathering” process which continues due to the redistricting several years ago should be terminated.
- If certain procedural changes are considered to be major disruptions to the existing program, consideration should be given to integrating these service level changes into a future building realignment (assuming that one is anticipated).

**Section 5 -
ROUTING**

- The decentralized routing process should continually be reviewed to ensure that the District can realize the efficiencies that would potentially be gained through a more coordinated routing process.
- The Department staff members are sophisticated users of the VersaTrans routing software. The District should continue with its planned upgrades of the software and the maps.
- It is very important that the Department continually receive the support of the District in the implementation of the Board’s policies.

POLICY & PROCEDURES

School Board Transportation Policy #8410 establishes the requirements for the transportation program. Following are some of the key features that should be identified:

- ♦ kindergarten students are to be picked-up/dropped-off at their home or at the designated bus stops (Section III.C.);
- ♦ morning pick-up and the afternoon drop-off of elementary school students (including kindergarten) designates that students are to walk no more than 2/10ths of a mile to a bus stop (Section III.E.);
- ♦ junior/senior high school students are to walk no more than 5/10ths of a mile to a bus stop (Section III.E.);
- ♦ bus routes within the School District are not to be more than 45 minutes. An operational exception is the transportation to licensed day care locations that are out of the attendance zone of the school to which the student attends (Section II.F.).
- ♦ transportation is not to be provided on private roads, and where ever possible, transportation is not to be provided into *cul-de-sacs* (Section II. B.C.D.).

Many of the above policies will be addressed in this section of the report.

CUL-DE-SACS

- For many years the Transportation Department has been providing transportation services on private roads contrary to School Board policy. For example, a bus travels onto Alpine Drive into the Montclair Apartments development on Route 9D. Although the Department's stated practice is that buses can travel into *cul-de-sacs* if they are able to make a turn at the circle and the student's home is within the mileage limits to establish a bus stop, there are apparently some *cul-de-sacs* that are entered by buses to accommodate the wishes of parents.

The practice of going into *cul-de-sacs* should be reviewed. The practicality is that the circle at the end of the road makes it difficult for buses to turn without moving back and forward several times.

This can be especially difficult when snow is on the ground and cars are parked in the circle. The circle gets smaller. Furthermore, other people in the circle at the time the bus is making its “K” turn (violation of Section II.C.) can be subject to an accident. The backing of a bus is difficult and could be dangerous. It should be avoided whenever possible. A bus going into more than one *cul-de-sac* each day is increasing the possibility of an accident happening.

In addition, going into and out of more than one *cul-de-sac* often lengthens the time of the operation of the route. School bus operators very frequently do not wish to go into *cul-de-sacs* for these reasons. Frequently students are required to walk to the entrance of *cul-de-sacs* because *cul-de-sacs* are ordinarily not high traffic areas. Traffic is limited to the residents of the road. Finally, many of the *cul-de-sacs* have a length well within the 5/10ths of a mile walking distance to a bus stop allowed by District policy for junior/senior high school students.

STOP LOCATIONS

- Functionally, much of the routing and service levels exceed the requirements established by School Board policy. Over the period of years, it appears that the District in general, and the Transportation Department in particular, have responded to parental requests to provide house stops for convenience purposes. The District has apparently met other requests for reduced walking distances under the premise that a reduction in walking distance would help establish an improved level of safety. This is especially true in portions of the southern part of the School District which is seen as being partially rural.

At one point there was a bus stop review committee that reviewed bus stops, and bus stop change requests, from parents. Two out of the three members made the decision for approval or denial of the request. If a request was denied, and parents pursued the request further, a re-review committee reconsidered the request based upon information provided by the initial committee, the parent, and their own observations. These committees were eventually eliminated as a result of some difficulties with the people coming together for the necessary meetings and as more and more parent requests were accommodated by the Transportation Department directly and outside of the committee purview.

Based upon our review, including interviews, it appears that many parental requests may have been accommodated to avoid the request being forwarded to the District Office. While it appears that the review committees responded to pressure from parents, and the wishes of District administrators to “resolve the request,” it must also be said that the existing objective standards to evaluate the safety of the location of bus stops are insufficiently detailed resulting in subjective determinations.

According to the Transportation Director, there exists a committee consisting of the Business Manager, the School District’s insurance agent, and himself to resolve serious and persistent parent requests for bus stops.

The single most challenging issue in the Transportation Department is the number and frequency of bus stops. The elevated number of stops reduces the operational efficiency of the transportation program. Because of the maximum of 45 minutes for in-District routes, the frequency of stops reduces the number of students that are placed on a bus, increases the number of buses (and drivers) needed, consumes more fuel, is a wearing factor on the brakes and the transmission of the bus, increases the probability of a car passing the stopped bus because it is slowing traffic, and increases the probability of the bus being hit in the rear by another vehicle as a result of the constant stops.

No other single factor brings together so many problems for the transportation program as the frequency of the bus stops and no other problem appears to be as costly in route time. It is also true that no other single issue generates such strong feelings from members of the Transportation Department. It is universally felt that by reducing the number of stops being made each day by each bus there are significant safety benefits. Every time the bus stops to load or unload students, the risk to students increases incrementally

The many bus stops on each route represent operational problems for the Transportation Department’s supervisors and many bus drivers. Most stops are seen as unnecessary, inconsistent with School Board policy for reasonable walking distances, and an impediment to the efficient operation of the transportation program.

To determine what would happen if the walking distances to bus stops were followed in accordance with School Board policy #8410, approximately ten percent of the drivers at the Fishkill Plains garage and approximately ten percent of the drivers at the Sheafe Road garage had their routes redesigned. The goal was to see if there would be any savings in mileage and/or time. The drivers chosen were selected randomly and had routes that represented a cross section of schools and geographic areas serviced by each garage. The time and mileage shown does not include deadhead time and mileage as well as pre-trip/post-trip time. Nor does it include mid-day routes or “unassigned driving time”. It is specifically live morning and afternoon time and mileage taken from the route information contained within the VersaTrans routing software.

Below you will find a summary of the results

Sheafe Road Garage							
Item	Driver	Miles Per Day	Re-Routed Miles	Miles Saved Due to Re-Routing	Current Time Per Day (minutes)	Average Re-Routed Time	Time Reduced Due to Re-Routing
1	Sheafe Road Driver 7	48.62	42.63	5.99	186	151	35
2	Sheafe Road Driver 14	31.16	18.37	12.79	148	90	58
3	Sheafe Road Driver 21	44.07	39.68	4.39	153	130	23
4	Sheafe Road Driver 28	32.96	26.36	6.6	113	85	28
5	Sheafe Road Driver 35	39.42	35.72	3.7	158	136	22
6	Sheafe Road Driver 42	50.1	44.04	6.06	192	159	33
7	Sheafe Road Driver 49	30.68	27.1	3.58	136	113	23
8	Sheafe Road Driver 56	32.11	24.26	7.85	111	79	32
Total		309.12	258.16	50.96	1197	943	254
Average		38.64	32.27	6.37	150	118	32

Fishkill Plains Garage							
Item	Driver	Miles Per Day	Re-Routed Miles	Miles Saved Due to Re-Routing	Time Per Day (Minutes)	Re-Routed Time	Time Reduced Due to Re-Routing
1	Fishkill Plains Driver 8	43.21	22.35	20.86	141	83	58

Fishkill Plains Garage								
Item	Driver	Miles Per Day	Re-Routed Miles	Miles Saved Due to Re-Routing		Time Per Day (Minutes)	Re-Routed Time	Time Reduced Due to Re-Routing
2	Fishkill Plains Driver 16	42.64	35.63	7.01		152	119	33
3	Fishkill Plains Driver 24	39.98	34.19	5.79		142	103	39
4	Fishkill Plains Driver 32	51.01	40.62	10.39		191	139	52
5	Fishkill Plains Driver 40	66.33	65.43	.9		223	198	25
6	Fishkill Plains Driver 48	45.8	37.78	8.02		145	112	33
7	Fishkill Plains Driver 56	30.98	25.7	5.28		113	86	27
Total		319.95	261.70	58.25		1107	840	267
Average		45.71	37.39	8.32		158	120	38

The above shows the benefits of the Transportation Department following the District policy of consolidated bus stops with elementary school students walking no more than 2/10ths of a mile, and junior/senior high school students walking no more than 5/10ths of a mile. Obviously, there will be situations when house stops and/or reduced walking distances are appropriate, but these should be the exception rather than the norm.

For the Sheafe Road garage example the average daily time saved for the routes of the eight drivers tested is 32 minutes and the amount of miles saved is slightly more than six-and-a-half daily miles. If this were extrapolated for the 68 drivers assigned to Sheafe Road, the terminal would save almost 435 miles per day, and over 36 hours per day.

For the Fishkill Plains garage drivers the average daily time saved for each of the seven drivers tested is slightly more than 38 minutes and the amount of miles saved is slightly more than eight-and-a-quarter daily miles. If this was extrapolated for the 74 drivers assigned to this terminal, there would be a mileage savings of almost 616 miles per day, and a time savings of almost 47 hours per day.

It is important to reiterate that the above analysis was performed through a review of data contained in the routing software. Although we believe that it fairly represents what would happen in a live run, it

would be necessary to actually travel the modified routes in order to document actual time and mileage savings.

What does this mean? Some drivers who are unable to complete a three-tier driving assignment might be available due to reduced time and mileage on their existing two-tier routes. Some routes would be shorter. There would be savings of fuel and driver time. Much greater consistency would exist between the service levels and School Board policy.

RECOMMENDATION

If the above issue is to be addressed, how can bus stops be established so they are independent of parental pressure and consistent with objective standards of student safety? Since the establishment of bus stops is stated as the single most critical issue affecting the routing, and the one item that generates the most pressure on the Transportation Department, the School District should give very serious consideration to the means by which a bus stop review is made and the creation of these stops. Suggested guidelines are listed below. Known and objective standards could eliminate many of the consistent and subjective complaints about this issue. These standards could establish guidelines for the addition and/or movement of bus stops as well as the routing of some buses.

A determination for the need for a bus stop, or a change in the location of a bus stop, for safety purposes with some objectivity could include the following:

1. Number of road lanes at the bus stop location
2. Speed limit and amount of traffic for the 15 minutes surrounding the time of the bus stop
3. Grade level of student crossers
4. Proximity to railroad tracks
5. Visibility of the bus stop to traffic
 - a. Existence of curves, hill crests, and blind spots in the area of the bus stop

- b. Existence of large vehicle traffic during the 15 minutes surrounding the time of the bus stop
- c. Adverse weather conditions at the bus stop such as an area that has persistent fog, white outs, flooding, etc.
- d. Non traffic barriers such as trees, shrubs, large knolls, etc. that inhibit visibility
- e. Area must exist for students to wait, embark the bus, and disembark the bus safely
- f. Distance of the bus stop from intersections and/or left hand turns into a four lane or wider road
- g. Distance from other bus stops
- h. Crossing barriers such as State Highways, Interstate Highways, railroad tracks, etc.

The above represent the broad considerations that are included in a review of the factors to determine the safety and location of a bus stop. Obviously, some of the above listings will require greater detail. A point system could be established for each of the above safety issues and a certain point level could be the guideline for the creation of an additional bus stop or the relocation of a bus stop. There may be some safety issues that are unique to the Wappingers School District, and these could be included in the criteria. It is recommended that the area to be reviewed be done by three people independent of one another. These can include a School District official; someone trained in safety reviews from the Transportation Department; and a third person independent of the other two. The average of the points from the three people can be used for helping to decide what action should be taken, if any.

Based upon our experience, most people have confidence in the inclusion of objective standards for decision-making. It eliminates resistance to maintain simply the *status quo*, the refusal to take action because the request is seen primarily as self-serving, and parental pressure through threats or intimidation. It is for these reasons that the recommendation is made that the School District give serious consideration to this proposal.

**WALKER DISTANCE
- JR/SR HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS**

- A review of many routes that included junior/senior high school students showed that they are not required to walk the maximum of 5/10ths of a mile. Apparently, the student was initially assigned a house pick-up/drop-off at the time the student was in primary school, and this service level continued as the student progressed into high school. This situation should be evaluated for existing District students, while a process should be put into place to review services provided to junior and senior high school students as they are transitioned into this modified level of service.

**PRIVATE &
PAROCHIAL
SERVICES**

- Many students who attend out-of-District private/parochial schools are transported on dedicated buses. Based upon comments received during our review, this level of service was put into place to satisfy parental requests for increased service levels since the parents made the decision not to send their children to public school, and do not want their children commingled with public school students.

Some of these dedicated routes appear to be justifiable since the nature of the route, and the start/end time of the private/parochial school, is such that a dedicated bus is the most appropriate means of transportation. However, there are situations in which this is not true, and it appears that a dedicated route is provided to accommodate parental wishes for this type of service. Parallel to the above, students attending in-District private/parochial schools are also transported on dedicated buses to the extent that students attending separate schools are separated from one another even though there are operational opportunities to commingle these students. An exception is students attending the Randolph School and St. Mary School in Wappingers who are transported together.

We believe this level of service should be addressed. Although developing a specific estimate of the potential savings would require a great deal of effort from the Department staff members, it is our belief that there are opportunities for significant savings if the integration of services was allowed.

There apparently is a perception that if some private/parochial school students are placed on buses with public school students, they are not being treated the same as other private/parochial school students who are on dedicated buses. The School District should seek the advice of

its legal counsel as to whether or not differences in the means by which students are transported to/from school represents a difference in treatment of students in like circumstances. In other words, if some students attending private/parochial schools are on dedicated buses while other private/parochial school students are commingled with public school students and then shuttled to their private/parochial school, does this constitute unequal treatment?

Based upon our experience, we believe integrating services for efficiency purposes is reasonable and permissible.

CHILD CARE

- The District has elected to provide child care transportation services. Although this is normal and customary, it means that the District provides transportation services to all child care locations within the attendance zone of the public school that children in grades K-8 attend. This election also includes transportation services to District-wide licensed child care locations that are registered under §390 of the Social Service Law. It would appear that the District's policy is consistent with State regulations. The only alternative to the direction chosen by the District would be the elimination of all day care transportation services. We are not recommending this elimination.

Often these licensed child care locations are well outside the attendance zone of the elementary school that the child attends. The selection of these child care locations by parents is often based upon cost, availability of space for the child, and what is perceived as the quality of the before school/after school program operated by the child care location. Transportation to the kindergarten programs associated with the licensed child care centers are provided in accordance with the School District's mileage limits.

There are approximately 90 licensed day care locations within the School District, and transportation is provided to all of them. The total number of students who are transported to day care locations is 716, which includes those students who attend day care within the attendance zone of the school they attend, and those students who are transported to licensed day care locations outside of the attendance zone.

A formal process exists within the School District that determines if students in a particular geographic area attend the morning or the afternoon kindergarten session. The system appears to work well, and parents are able to make appropriate accommodations for the necessary half-day day care. The School District should review its practice of reassigning some students and providing the transportation service for these students to meet the schedule of a single day care provider.

The School District's decision to provide transportation service to day care locations has a twofold cost. In addition to the actual cost of transportation, the route structure and the route time often limits the ability of the bus to operate another route within the elementary school attendance zone.

As far as transportation services to/from the in-District private/parochial schools, because there are no clearly defined attendance zones for these schools other than the mileage limitation for transportation to such schools, the School District makes an effort to provide transportation services to non licensed child care locations for students attending these schools. This is especially true if the child care location is on or near an existing route to/from the private/parochial school.

**TRANSPORTATION TO
PRIVATE/PAROCIAL
WHEN DISTRICT
SCHOOLS ARE
CLOSED**

- Although it is an option, the School District has elected to provide transportation services on days when the public schools are not in session and the private/parochial schools are in session. Although this service has been provided for approximately eight to ten years, it is not stated within School Board Policy #8410. For the 2005-2006 school year there are six (6) days when this occurs – the first day of school (Superintendent's Conference Day), Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the Superintendent's Conference Day on November 8, 2005, and two Professional Development Days (April 16 and April 27, 2006).

We recommend that the District review this practice to determine if it should be continued. Based upon our experience, a review of this type typically entails a survey of neighboring districts to determine what level of services they provide (see summary at the end of this section). Additionally, the Transportation Department should be requested to provide an estimate of the incremental costs associated with this service.

GRANDFATHERING

- Many years ago when redistricting took place within the School District, a decision was made that some students attending certain schools could elect to remain in the school they were attending until completion at that school. This process has been referred to as “grandfathering”. This process is not unusual when districts undertake a redistricting program.

However, a few of these students then received permission to continue onto the secondary schools they would have attended if the redistricting had not take place. For example, students living on Dose Road could have elected to be “grandfathered” into Van Wyck Junior High School in lieu of being reassigned to Wappingers Junior High School. Based upon the redistricting feeder pattern, these students should then attend Roy C. Ketchem High School.

Apparently, some students were given permission to attend John Jay High School which would have been their high school prior to the redistricting (the former feeder pattern). This decision has led to some transportation to identical types of schools from the same area. In other words, from the same area, some students are attending John Jay High School and others are attending Roy C. Ketcham High School. Obviously, this decision entails increased costs and routing inefficiencies.

Furthermore, since the inception of the permission to allow some students to complete the school in which they were enrolled at the time of the redistricting, and then extending this permission to other schools these students were initially scheduled to attend, this permission was granted to younger siblings who wanted to attend the school their other brother and/or sister attended. According to the Transportation Department’s student database, presently, there are 33 students who are “grandfathered” this way, 31 are attending John Jay High School, and two are eighth graders attending Van Wyck Junior High School. However, according to the same database, there are also 141 students who have received administrative approval to attend District schools outside of their specific school attendance zone. While these students are supposed to be transported by their parents to an existing bus stop of the school they are attending, many have also been granted transportation privileges from their home, thereby extending the dual transportation service from the same area.

We believe the grandfathering issue needs to be addressed. It has been several years, and at some point the process needs to be terminated. If siblings are allowed to receive exemptions, the program can take on a life of its own for many years to come.

**IMPLEMENTING
POLICY CHANGES**

- Making dramatic changes in service levels is difficult. If the District determines that they will pursue the recommendations contained in this section, many of the significant changes should probably be timed with any building assignment changes (redistricting) that may occur in the next few years. If no redistricting is envisioned, then proper planning and notification to parents is critical to ensure the successful implementation of these changes.

ROUTING

The Wappingers School District operates an extensive transportation program that in many respects cannot be compared to many other school districts in the Region. Over the years the levels of service appear to have grown exponentially as the school district has grown in size and the requirements of the community have increased.

PROGRAM SCOPE

- Presently, the School District is operating 242 buses and vans. These vehicles transport approximately 12,100 regular and special education public school students to 15 District schools. There are also approximately 1,350 private/parochial school students plus 641 special education students who attend approximately 91 out-of-District program locations. The total number of transported students is approximately 14,091 making the transportation program the largest in the Hudson Valley and among the largest in the State. To meet the service requirements, there are 215 bus driver positions (76 eight hour drivers and 139 hourly drivers), and 62 support as well as supervisory positions, for a total of 270 Transportation Department positions.

The transportation program operates out of three locations. The southern portion of the School District is serviced by a garage located in Fishkill Plains. The northern portion of the School District is serviced by a garage located on Sheafe Road. The general division between the two operational locations is Old Hopewell Road. The garage at the Wappingers Junior High School serves as the Transportation Department's administrative office as well as the service center for special education and other special service routes that operate School District wide.

DECENTRALIZED ROUTING

- At one point in time, all the routing was completed centrally and primarily by one person. Specifically, this was at the Transportation Department's office at the garage at Wappingers Junior High School. For what was stated as being for greater efficiency and accountability, several years ago a decision was made to reassign the routing responsibilities to the Head Bus Drivers at each garage. This requires the Head Bus Driver to complete the routing for the schools and/or the geographic areas from/to which each garage is responsible for transporting students. This is done primarily in the summer at the Transportation Department's office. The two garages (Fishkill Plains and Sheafe Road) also cooperate informally with one another during

the school year if it appears to be more efficient for buses or vans from one garage to transport students that would ordinarily be transported by the other garage. The same cooperation is true of the utilization of special education or special service vans operating from the Wappingers Junior High School garage.

Although it is our belief that the centralization of the routing would be the most efficient and effective structure for the Department, a transition back to this mode would probably result in an increased staffing requirement. If the routing was centralized, Head Bus Drivers would still be required in the two terminals. Probably two additional staff members would be required in the main office to perform the routing tasks now assigned to the terminals. At this point in time we do have sufficient data to guarantee that sufficient routing economies would occur to offset the incremental staffing costs.

SOFTWARE UTILIZATION

- The routing that takes place within the Transportation Department is extremely complex and subject to many demands. In addition to the typical morning and afternoon transportation service to and from school, the Department is subject to on-going requests for transportation services for modified school day programs, extended day programs, and for various support services that require the transportation of students from one school to another for portions of the school day.

To assist with the oversight of the transportation program and the development of the routes, the Department utilizes computerized routing software. Specifically, the software is VersaTrans (v. 8.22 which is being upgraded to v. 9.4) from VersaTrans Solutions, Inc. of Latham, New York. The student and route information within the software is current, detailed, and the use of the software is efficient.

It should be stated that the Department staff members are well trained in the use of the software, and impressive in their manipulation of the data. Frequently we find routing software that is underutilized, but that is not the case with the Wappingers Central School District program.

Unfortunately, the map is old and represents what was provided at the time the routing software was purchased, namely, a map of the School District only (and portions of Poughkeepsie) as opposed to a

state of the art map which would include the entire county. However, associated with the software upgrade, the School District will receive the most current county map available as well as maps of those surrounding counties that include schools and special education locations to which students are transported.

BUS ROUTES

- The bus routes appear to be designed tightly within the directives and parameters given to the Head Bus Drivers by the Department and the District administration. Whatever layover time exists between the tiers appears to be minimal and is reasonable. Full tier unassigned driving time is not pervasive and is utilized for substitute driving assignments as well as for administratively directed work assignments.

However, once the bus routes and bus stops are established they appear to remain as structured permanently. In the industry this is called “historical routing”. Periodic reviews and/or redesigns (including what is done in the summer) are not made unless there are student changes. The latter consists of students who are added or subtracted from the private/parochial school routes; changes in student school assignments (elementary school to junior high school to high school or changes due to administrative approval of school assignments); changes in special education, special services, and/or Section 504 services; etc.

Given the dynamics of the District, we believe that periodic rerouting is necessary. It is important that a fresh look be made for all routes in order to maximize efficiencies. The scope of this project is significant, so rerouting every two to three years would be appropriate.

DEPARTMENT STAFF

- It should be stated that during the time periods the **TAS** staff members met with members of the Transportation Department staff, and had the opportunity to observe other staff members, we found them to be very professional and helpful. They appeared to be meeting their job functions competently and dealt with one another as well as with members of the community in a very polite manner.

Unfortunately, there are times when people have requests that are inconsistent with the service levels the Department provides. When these requests were denied by operational staff members, some members of the public received this denial poorly even though a “No”

is just as legitimate an answer as a “Yes”. During the appeal process from the initial denial of the request, statements are sometimes made that “No” answers reflect Department members as being difficult, unresponsive, and uncooperative. This was not seen by TAS as the atmosphere in which the Department was operating. Rather, the atmosphere was seen as one of attempting to be of service to the public within the guidelines under which the Department operates. Failure to identify this and to recognize the many members of the Transportation Department who were observed performing their responsibilities competently and cheerfully would be unfair to these people.