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BPS Looks to Busing to Reduce Costs

Student assignment and policy choices involved in any change

With the setting of the FY09 School Department budget at \$827.5M, the Superintendent has been given time to develop plans to achieve efficiencies and cost savings in service areas that certainly will include transportation with its budget of over \$70M. Mayor Menino teed up this issue in his January State of the City Address when he called upon the Superintendent to reduce the School Department's transportation budget by \$10M.

In this situation, the choice becomes how to apply limited resources - to support needed educational initiatives or to pay \$4.7M for fuel costs. Reducing the BPS transportation budget is not about moving toward neighborhood schools but about reconsidering policy choices made that constitute the current transportation plan with its FY08 budget of \$73.3M. Savings cannot be achieved without modifying the current student assignment plan which will involve less choice and flexibility than provided now.

Under the current student assignment plan, the City is divided into three geographic zones for elementary and middle school students. All high schools are citywide. Students may apply for schools in the zones in which they live and other zones if the schools are within their "walk zone." Fifty percent of each school's seats are set aside for students with walk zone priority. This policy is accepted as being "race neutral" and meeting

constitutional requirements. Five K-8 and middle schools are citywide schools.

What a Busing Review Will Involve

- Modification of student assignment plan
- Consider increasing number of zones
- Review of placement of special education programs
- Consider creating more K-8 schools
- Possibly eliminating citywide schools (not high schools) and creating them in each zone
- Review of busing for private and parochial school students. Consider transporting BPS, private and parochial students together if routes allow.

What a Busing Review Will Not Involve

- Adopting a neighborhood schools plan
- Change of the current 50/50 walk zone policy

The school transportation budget for FY08 is \$73.3M which represents an increase of 22% over six years. Employee salaries, benefits and fuel costs have shown the largest growth since FY02 [<MORE>](#).

Boston transports 45,351 students to approximately 259 sites. [<MORE>](#) This plan requires about 670 vehicles for 629 daily routes. The service delivery model involves a management style contract with First Student that extends through June 2013.