

March 2014

School Committee Approves New Transportation Policy

Transportation savings of \$11M important to closing the BPS FY15 budget gap

At its March 16th meeting, the School Committee unanimously voted to approve a new transportation policy that is estimated to generate a savings of \$11M in busing costs in FY15. The plan will provide 7th and 8th graders, in both BPS and Boston charter schools, with 7-day MBTA passes instead of corner to corner bus service. Roughly 1,800 7th and 8th graders in 15 BPS schools already use MBTA passes for school transportation.

Transportation Costs

For Fiscal 2014

	Students	Cost	Per Pupil
BPS Bus	25,557	\$38.4M	\$1,503
BPS MBTA Pass	14,314	\$3.1M	\$214
BPS SPED Bus	3,875	\$40.0M	\$10,309
Charter Bus	4,600	\$9.6M	\$2,091
Charter MBTA Pass	1,346	\$0.3M	\$214

Cost Savings

As seen above, an MBTA pass saves the BPS \$1,289 per student, which creates \$8M in savings when applied to all 7th and 8th graders. The plan also included additional savings from restructuring school bell times (\$1M), consolidation and elimination of MBTA “shuttle” service for BPS high schools within one mile of a major MBTA station (\$1M), and asking schools to budget for “a la carte” services such as late buses, early release buses and field trips (\$1M). Additionally, 11 schools have expressed interest in a pilot program for 6th graders who wish to use MBTA passes. The BPS has

not budgeted for any cost savings from this pilot program.

Safety Concerns

Statistically speaking public transit is the safest mode of transportation, but the BPS has taken a number of steps to further reduce risk to students. The BPS met with The Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPac) to identify students with specific disabilities that would prevent them from safely using public transit. The BPS has also worked with the BPD, BPS Police and MBTA Police to identify transit hubs that will receive additional attention and shuttle bus service.

Attendance Concerns

Despite concerns that students with MBTA passes will be more likely to be absent or tardy, data from the 15 BPS schools where 7th and 8th graders already use MBTA passes indicates that students with passes have better attendance rates (94.7%) than both yellow bus riders (91.4%) and walkers (92.3%). Additionally, MBTA passes give students more of a chance to participate in before and after school activities, which are currently underutilized.

Attendance Data

Averages For BPS 7th Graders

	All	MBTA	Walker	Yellow Bus
Days Absent	10.1	6.5	10	10.3
Days Tardy	8.1	2.7	12.2	7.1
Attendance Rate	91.7%	94.7%	92.3%	91.4%

* Excludes students with disabilities who receive door to door service