



News Release

For immediate release: March 18, 2009

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School Board approves new Transportation Service Plan **New Bus Arrival Times begin fall 2009**

Seattle – At its meeting on March 18, the School Board voted to approve changes to transportation service standards for 2009-10. These changes mean that bus arrival and departure times will change this fall. Some changes, especially for most K-8 schools, are significant.

The changes will maximize operational efficiency, provide more consistency and reduce transportation costs by \$2.2 million. Other changes will reduce rides times for many students. The changes for fall 2009 are:

- **Middle schools, high schools and most K-8 schools** (Alternative School #1, Catharine Blaine, Broadview-Thomson, Jane Addams, Madrona, Orca, Pathfinder and South Shore): Yellow buses will arrive at the schools at approximately 8:15 a.m. and depart at approximately 2:45 p.m. Principals will have the flexibility to adjust their specific school arrival and departure times within a narrow window of time in conjunction with the transportation service standards.
- **Elementary schools, plus Salmon Bay K-8 and TOPS K-8:** Yellow buses will arrive at these schools at approximately 9:30 a.m. and depart at approximately 3:40 p.m. Principals will have the flexibility to adjust their specific school arrival and departure times within a narrow window of time in conjunction with the transportation service standards. Salmon Bay and TOPS are included in this second tier because current bus routes for these two schools are longer than all of the other K-8 schools. Including these two schools in this tier will help ensure that younger students will not need to wait for buses in the dark.

"Creating consistent bus times across the District is important in increasing our operational efficiency and reducing transportation costs," said Board President Michael DeBell. "These changes will reduce the amount of time students spend on buses, save Seattle Public Schools \$2.2 million annually and move us closer to the goals of our strategic plan, *Excellence for All*. These are decisions that need to be made now, during our Open Enrollment period, so that parents and families can determine the best school and schedule for their children and their family."

The new bus arrival and departure times allow "tiering" of buses, which means that each bus will drive two routes in the morning (one secondary or K-8 followed by one elementary) and then do the same in the afternoon. With the current inconsistencies in arrival times, most buses can only drive one route in the a.m. and one in the p.m.

In addition, many routes will be streamlined so that **ride time will be reduced for many students**. Currently, many routes serve two or more schools, which lengthen the total ride time. All K-8's and many elementary and middle schools will have dedicated routes under the new system.

(more)

The benefits of the proposal to students, families and the school system include:

- Reduced ride times for many students.
- Consistency of bus arrival and departure times.
- More consistency of drivers, which is beneficial to providing a positive climate on each bus route (one of the reasons for driver turn-over is that many of our routes do not provide a full day of work – with this change, we will be able to offer more hours per driver).
- Savings of approximately \$2.2 million per year in transportation costs. With Seattle Public Schools facing a \$25 million budget gap for the 2008-2009 school year, this savings helps minimize budget reductions at the classroom level.
- This plan will mean that Seattle Public Schools will run 49 fewer buses while serving approximately the same number of students. In addition to reducing costs, the district will reduce fuel consumption as well as its carbon footprint.

Seattle Public Schools faces a \$25 million funding gap for the 2009-2010 school year. Central office staff reductions, school closure, a hiring freeze, changes to the school funding model and strategies to maximize grant revenue will all contribute to closing that gap. Increasing the operational effectiveness of school bus routes was identified as an important strategy for closing the gap, and will save \$2.2 million per year – the equivalent of 25 certificated classroom teachers.

The motion was introduced and approved by School Board members on March 18 to ensure that families have an opportunity to consider the impacts of the decision on their schedules, and to have the opportunity to apply for a different school, if needed, before the end of the Open Enrollment period on March 31. The motion was adjusted from the original proposal of 8:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. arrival times to reflect feedback from staff and families, who expressed concerns about students needing to wait for buses in the dark.

Other changes to transportation service standards include establishing Neighborhood Attendance Area bus stops for schools with large geographic draws. Using “safe walk zones” determined by the City of Seattle, neighborhood attendance area bus stops will be established at key centralized locations from which students will be picked up and dropped off daily. These locations can be YMCAs, neighborhood schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. For students not residing within a “safe walk zone,” bus stops will be created to provide transportation for those students.

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