



Update Regarding District 97's Transportation Services April 16, 2018

First and foremost, the District 97 Board of Education and administration would like to thank everyone who shared their thoughts and concerns regarding our discussion of regular education transportation services. We value your feedback and believe it is vital as we make decisions driven by our vision to provide a positive learning environment that is equitable, inclusive and focus on the whole child. Our discussion of transportation is part of a broader effort to assess the financial impact of all of our services while considering the needs and interests of our schools, students and families. These discussions are often tied to formal processes required by our policy or law, but we are committed to improving our communication around these processes and providing plenty of time to engage with the community and gather information. We care deeply about your concerns, and believe it is critical that we work together to ensure the success and safety of every student we serve.

With this in mind, we wanted to provide an update on the transportation bids that were presented and discussed at our board meeting Tuesday, April 10.

On April 9, District 97 received the responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) we issued for transportation services for the 2018-19 school year. After performing a thorough analysis of all three bids, we determined that none of them would result in savings for the district. **Therefore, we will not be eliminating elementary busing for the 2018-19 school year.** Our primary bid was for maintaining our current level of transportation service, while the alternatives included options we thought might generate savings for the district, including eliminating elementary school busing and restructuring middle school busing as a shuttle system. We sought bids on alternative options to explore potential savings and start a conversation about the overall efficiency of our transportation operations.

Of the six companies who attended the mandatory pre-bid meeting, two (North American and Lakeview) submitted bids for providing service at our existing level and one of those companies (Lakeview) submitted a bid for the alternatives. Lakeview bid higher on the alternative than the existing services, and the other company did not bid on the alternative. Accordingly, as there is no savings, we are not exploring eliminating elementary school busing for the 2018-19 school year.

As we have stated throughout this process, the purpose and intent of recommending that the board explore changes were to improve the overall efficiency of our transportation operations and save money that would aid the growth, development and success of every child in District 97. While we will continue to explore ways we might find efficiencies by enhancing the internal systems and structures we have in place for managing the logistical aspects of this service, we do not believe there is any financial benefit associated with eliminating elementary school busing entirely or reissuing the RFP for transportation.

Between now and April 24, Dr. Alicia Evans, the district's assistant superintendent of business and operations, will follow up on references for the bidder that we have not previously worked with (North American) because their bid was lower. Some community members have raised questions about the potential consequences of switching bus companies next year, particularly for students and families who have built relationships with their current bus drivers. We appreciate your concerns and strive to provide consistency for our students and families whenever possible. However, assuming the references meet our requirements, we are obligated to accept the lowest qualified bid. We understand that this change could impact our families who currently use transportation services, and we want to assure you that we are committed to making any transition as seamless as possible.

Moving forward, we also plan to discuss ways in which the board and district can engage in a positive and productive dialogue with the community as we explore transportation services in the future. Two board members have already begun devising a framework that would include input from parents, community members and the village, as well as a work group to thoroughly analyze bus routes, efficiencies, safety, congestion, and other concerns raised by the board and community. Our hope is that this framework will guide future conversations about transportation in District 97.

On April 24, we will be selecting a bus company for the 2018-19 school year and discussing the potential work group and how we can work with the community to explore transportation in the future. We encourage you to join us if you are interested in listening to this conversation or sharing your thoughts via public comment. We also hope that those of you who brought forth a variety of concerns about safety for pedestrians of all ages (crossing busy streets or intersections, adherence to speed limits and safety signage, etc.) will continue to advocate and explore avenues for change. We look forward to hearing your thoughts about the ways we can work together as a community to address these challenges for all of our children.

We want to thank you again for sharing your thoughts with us regarding this issue, and for your continued support of our schools and the more 6,000 children serve.

Sincerely,

The District 97 Board of Education and administration