



MEMORANDUM
City of Alexandria, Virginia

TO: CITY COUNCIL & SCHOOL BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE

FROM: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER

DATE: JUNE 20, 2025

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION OF ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

RECOMMENDATION: Direct staff to implement a phased plan beginning in the 2026–2027 school year (FY27) to use the DASH public transit system as a transportation option for most Alexandria City High School (ACHS) students:

- **Phase 1** would transition a portion of Alexandria City High School bus riders to DASH service, capitalizing on and utilizing existing, higher frequency Lines 31 and 36A/B.
- **Phase 2** would provide additional resources to add more trips to DASH Line 35 to improve frequency and improve choice for ACHS students in the West End, serving the highest density of current school bus riders.
- **Phase 3** envisions broader route changes so that any student within a ¼-mile of a DASH stop could use DASH instead of school buses, potentially covering most current riders. It would require service expansions, new bus purchases, and increased operating subsidies.

Timelines for implementation of Phase 2 would be anticipated for the 2027-2028 school year and Phase 3 will be further evaluated after the implementation of Phases 1 and 2. For all three phases, ACPS would continue providing yellow bus service for students requiring accommodation or specialized transportation services and for elementary and middle school students.

This City Manager recommendation will require further discussion by the City Council and the School Board, as well as community engagement and feedback prior to any action on the recommendation.

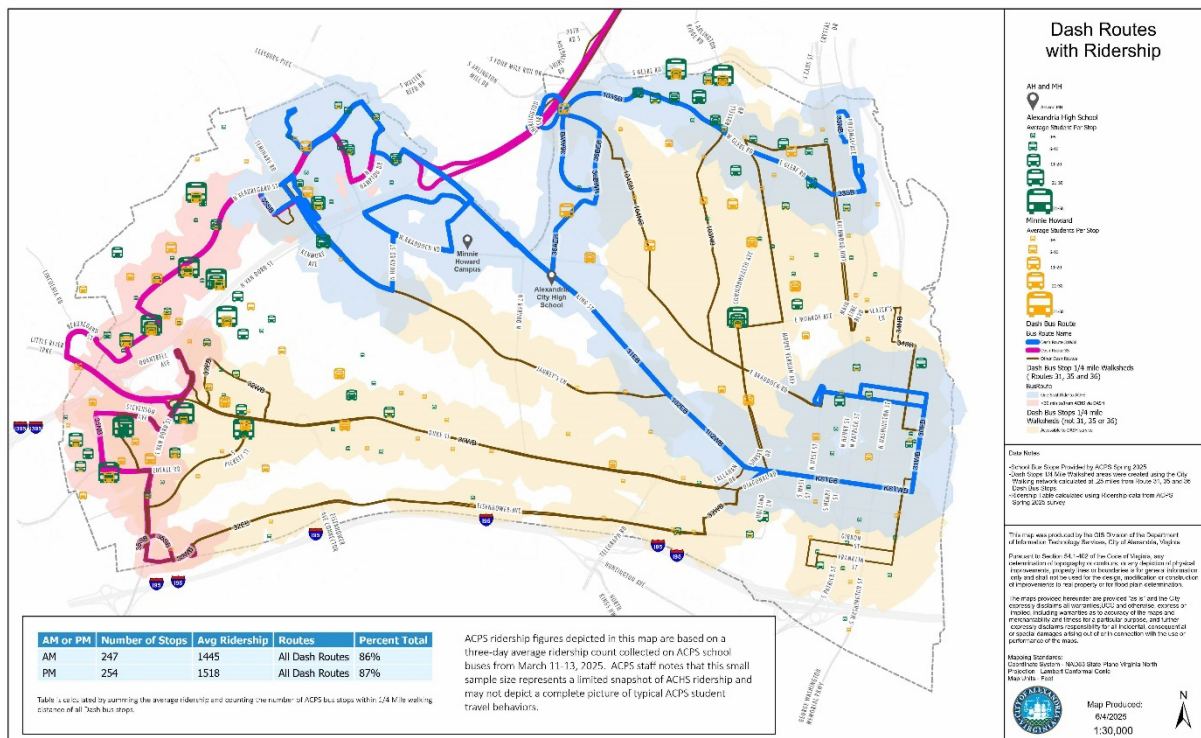
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Alexandria and Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) are exploring the feasibility of a phased approach to using the DASH public transit system as a transportation option for Alexandria City High School (ACHS) students in lieu of typical ACPS school buses. It should be noted that ACPS would continue to provide specialized transportation services, after school and event type transportation, and standard bus transportation for elementary and middle school students as is provided today. This initiative's primary goal is to provide student transportation in a manner that is safe, reliable, effective and aims to improve efficiency, maintain and utilize DASH's excellent safety record for passengers and advance environmental goals.

Based on ridership data and safety analyses gathered and provided to the City Council/School Board Subcommittee (CCSB) between January and April 2025, staff have identified a near-term opportunity for DASH to serve up to 30 percent of the ACHS students who currently rely on school buses. These students could be served by DASH Lines 31 and 36A/B, which both provide direct service to the King Street and Minnie Howard campuses.

Figure 1 – DASH and ACPS Secondary Student Ridership Routes

The figure below shows a snapshot of ACHS student ridership by school bus stop as represented by school bus icons. As shown by the dense clusters of bus icons, most ACHS school bus riders live in the West End and Arlandria. The shaded areas represent the parts of the city that are walkable to DASH service. The blue buffer zone represents the areas served by the two DASH bus routes (Lines 31 and 36A/B) that provide a direct connection to the ACHS campuses where no transfer would be required. Areas shown in light red are walkable to DASH Line 35, which could transport students to ACHS in 30 minutes or less but may require a transfer. Areas shown in yellow are accessible to other DASH routes but would require more than 30 minutes and a transfer to get to ACHS.



This transition could occur at the start of the 2026-2027 ACPS school year. As a result of this transition, ACPS could re-optimize its remaining ACHS school bus routes to account for 30% fewer students and would likely be able to remove 10-12 of the existing 50 ACHS bus routes.

City staff will continue to work with ACPS staff to evaluate cost savings that would result from these route discontinuations and with DASH on any minor financial adjustments to their FY27 budget. A comprehensive financial analysis will quantify both the additional costs and potential savings of the proposed changes and identify opportunities for reallocating funds. This analysis will account for any minor up-front investment needed to expand DASH bus capacity if needed, recognizing it as a long-term investment in the City's transportation system that aims to reduce redundancy between bus services. The analysis will also be aligned with the City's broader strategic goals and evaluated within the context of the long-term Capital Improvement Program (CIP). One of the key benefits of the analysis and reduction in redundancy of service is that potential cost savings could be utilized to address other needs such as but not limited to the following:

- additional funding for ACPS support,
- expansion of DASH services for all residents,
- budgetary savings to strengthen the City's already solid financial position and tax relief opportunity,
- expanded services for our youth in the community, or
- other community needs.

To move forward, the City recommends a series of strategic actions to ensure a smooth transition. These include:

- finalizing route capacity and additional ridership analysis
- completing more detailed financial analysis to determine cost implications and savings
- enhancing real-time communication tools by integrating DASH updates with ACPS communication systems
- building and implementing a comprehensive community engagement effort, with additional ACPS-led family surveys, monthly listening sessions, student club conversations, pop ups around the community, meetings with ACPS staff and other stakeholders, the use of QR codes in various ways, and ongoing coordination between ACPS, the city, and DASH to be planned throughout the remainder of calendar year 2025
- ensuring student safety, especially for those requiring accommodations, will remain a top priority, and specialized transportation services would continue to be provided by ACPS for students who need them

The proposed phased approach would include:

- **Phase 1**, eliminating yellow bus service for students within ¼ mile of DASH routes offering frequent, direct (“one-seat”) rides to the King Street and Minnie Howard Campus (i.e. DASH Lines 31 and 36A/B).
- **Phase 2** would subsequently focus on replacing the school bus service for most of West Alexandria where students could use an enhanced DASH Line 35 and other routes to travel between their bus stop and ACHS campuses in 30 minutes or less.
- **Phase 3** would explore further expansion of DASH use to other parts of the city, but it would require more significant investment, fleet expansion, and infrastructure enhancements. ACPS would continue providing a yellow bus service for students requiring accommodation or specialized transportation service.

Full implementation for Phase 1 would not begin before the 2026–2027 school year, pending final analysis and approval. Phase 2 would be anticipated for the 2027-2028 school year.

BACKGROUND

This memo provides a narrative summary and analysis of the ongoing initiative to explore the feasibility of using Alexandria’s DASH public bus system to transport high school students. The effort responds to a memo (attachment #1) submitted by Councilman Abdel Elnoubi and Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley in January 2025 to the Mayor and City Council, proposing a collaborative study between ACPS, the City, and DASH. This summary draws on discussions from City/Schools Subcommittee meetings held between January and April 2025, as well as supporting data from recent transportation studies, ridership analyses, and operational reviews.

The rationale for this study is rooted in several converging factors. First, the 2025 ACPS Transportation Study conducted by TransPar Group (attachment #2) noted the persistent shortage of school bus drivers, which continues to hinder ACPS’s ability to provide timely and reliable transportation for all eligible students. This study also revealed that less than 60% of the system’s overall bus capacity is utilized, leaving many routes underused. Additionally, Alexandria’s current fiscal environment, while strong, has prompted a continued effort to explore efficiencies through shared public services. Currently, the City is paying for transportation services through ACPS and DASH that can be provided by DASH, saving taxpayer funds.

The potential benefits of this initiative go beyond operational efficiency. Encouraging high school students to use DASH, an accessible, fare-free, and environmentally friendly transit system, supports the City’s climate goals and reduces congestion. State law does not mandate high school transportation in most cases, allowing legal flexibility for such a partnership. Models from other cities, including Washington, DC, show that integrating public transit into student commutes can be successful. It should be noted a significant number of students ride DASH now. By further improving this high-quality, reliable, safe, frequent, and free transit service, we

can encourage even more youth to use it, expanding mobility options and creating long-term benefits for the entire Alexandria community.

SUBCOMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT AND FINDINGS

In January, Councilman Elnoubi and Vice Mayor Bagley initiated the study with a formal request for collaboration and identified the City/Schools Subcommittee (CC/SB) to explore the feasibility of this request. The City/School's Subcommittee is comprised of two Council members (Mayor Gaskins (Chair) and Councilman Chapman) and two School Board Members (Chair Rief and School Board Member Booz) and meets monthly to discuss shared operations, programs, and policies. The CC/SB approached this exploration in phases with the findings below categorized by the topic covered in four CC/SB meetings:

MEETING 1: JANUARY 2025 CC/SB MEETING: SCOPE OF WORK

At the January meeting of the Alexandria City Council and School Board Subcommittee, members discussed shared priorities and opportunities for collaboration, with a particular focus on student transportation. The conversation centered on a planned evaluation in Spring 2025 of both DASH and ACPS transportation services for secondary students. Key areas of consideration in a scope of work included: (1) existing services and utilization, (2) safety, and (3) student travel patterns. It was emphasized that no changes to transportation services would be implemented for the 2025–2026 school year.

MEETING 2: FEBRUARY 2025 CC/SB MEETING: TRANSPORTATION DATA AND UTILIZATION

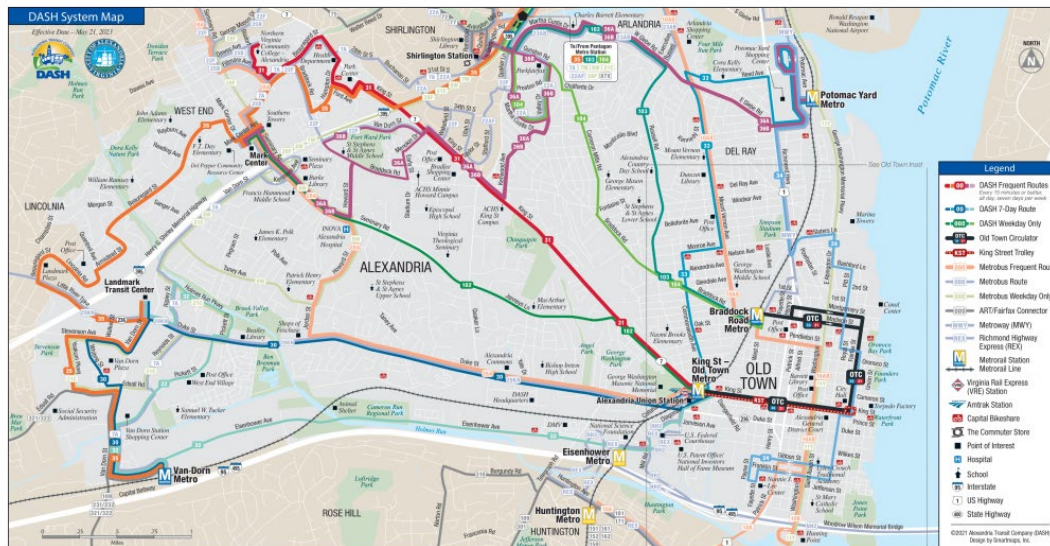
Per ACPS facilities staff, approximately 1,700 Alexandria City High School students currently rely on ACPS-provided transportation, with the majority living in the West End and Arlandria.

DASH has been operating for over 40 years, with 12 bus routes and the King Street Trolley, shown in Figure 2 below. DASH averages 17,000 weekday boardings and drew 5.3 million passengers in FY 2024. The DASH fleet consists of 101 active buses, and the annual operating subsidy is \$34.4 million, with a subsidy cost of \$6.49 per rider. DASH has the lowest cost per rider rate of any transit agency in the Washington, DC region, where the average cost per transit rider is approximately \$12.33. DASH employs over 300 full-time employees, including over 200 bus operators; DASH is currently fully staffed in terms of bus operators but continues to hire operators as a proactive approach to offset natural attrition.

Although DASH is unable to specifically track ACHS student ridership due to its free fares policy, DASH staff estimates that ACHS students account for approximately 2,200 boardings on a typical school day, which translates to roughly 1,100 students per day.

This estimate is based on comparative ridership analyses between typical school days and ACHS teacher workdays.

Figure 2 – DASH System Map



Notable milestones in the DASH-ACPS partnership include the launch of the highly popular “Free Student Rides” program in 2017, the introduction of free fares for all riders in 2020, and the use of larger buses for ACHS routes starting in 2022 to reduce crowding.

MEETING 3: MARCH 2025 CC/SB MEETING: SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

The ACPS transportation safety strategy highlights the district’s adherence to state and federal regulations, comprehensive driver training, emergency response protocols, and ongoing efforts to ensure student and driver safety. ACPS buses are equipped with required safety features, such as stop arms, warning devices, GPS tracking, and video surveillance, which are paired with strict reporting requirements for accidents and monthly crash data submission to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Drivers must meet rigorous qualifications, including passing background checks, holding a CDL (Commercial Driver’s License), and undergoing specialized training in defensive driving, emergency response, and accommodations for students with autism. Additionally, the transportation system for special education students involves specialized equipment (e.g., harnesses, wheelchair accessibility) and requires bus monitors on all routes.

DASH has a dedicated safety and security department responsible for regulatory adherence, risk management, and incident reviews. Operators undergo extensive training, including defensive driving, emergency response, and youth-specific de-escalation techniques. Fleet safety is ensured by a 24/7 maintenance department, comprehensive preventative maintenance programs, GPS vehicle tracking, roaming field supervisors, and

up to 14 onboard cameras per bus, which allow real-time monitoring during incidents and retroactive viewing for safety-related investigations.

All riders must follow a strict Code of Conduct that enforces zero tolerance for disruptive behavior. DASH collaborates with the Alexandria Police Department (APD) but prioritizes internal conflict resolutions before seeking law enforcement support. Recent ridership data shows a steady increase in bus usage with minimal increases in preventable incidents. DASH’s excellent safety record reflects its commitment to providing safe, reliable service for our community, including students, and the primary goal of this proposal remains getting kids to school in a manner that is safe, reliable, effective, and efficient.

It should be noted that while there are differences in the requirements of the ACPS and DASH safety elements, they are both firmly positioned to ensure the highest level of safety for the riders. In the case of DASH, they currently have a very robust set of tools used for ridership safety and have essentially the same safety protocol if there is an incident as would be the case with ACPS. That proposal would be to contact Alexandria Police Department to respond and manage incidents needing that level of assistance.

Table 1– DASH Passenger Incidents by Year

Fiscal Year	Total Ridership	Total Incidents	Total Incident Rate (per 100,000 boardings)	Estimated Annual Student Boardings	Student- Involved Incidents	Student-Involved Incident Rate (per 100,000 boardings)
2023	4,540,860	14	0.31	429,480	4	0.93
2024	5,310,995	20	0.38	398,520	1	0.25

A successful transition will need coordinated communication systems. While DASH currently provides real-time updates across several platforms, it does not integrate with ACPS’s communication systems and will need alignment with communication tools to ensure swift incident response protocols involving dispatch, police, and parent contact. This is achievable with the use of technology.

ACPS buses would continue to be used for field trips, after-school activities, or special needs transportation, and ACPS would need to continue providing a yellow bus service for students requiring accommodation or facing significant logistical barriers.

MEETING 4: APRIL 2025 CC/SB MEETING: ASSESSING STUDENT MOVEMENT PATTERNS AND THE FEASIBILITY OF DASH INTEGRATION

DASH staff presented initial findings from an analysis of ACHS school bus ridership data collected by ACPS bus operators in March 2025. These counts provide a three-day average ridership count for all ACHS school bus routes and stops across the City of

Of these current school bus riders, roughly 86% live within walking distance (1/4 mile) of a DASH bus stop, and more than 60% are within walking distance of Lines 31, 35, or 36A/B that would allow them to reach ACHS campus within 30 minutes. Staff further estimates that 31% of current ACHS school bus riders could walk to DASH Lines 31 or 36A/B, which provide direct service to ACHS without requiring a transfer. It should be noted that these figures assume students would not be required to walk more than 1/4 mile, which is less than the current 1/2-mile standard for ACPS bus stops. If DASH increased its standard to 1/3 mile or 1/2 mile, a larger percentage of current ACHS school bus riders could be served by DASH routes.

Figure 3 – DASH and ACPS Secondary Student Ridership Routes



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Stakeholder Engagement

Subcommittee Members requested community engagement and feedback as the next phase of work. In advance of new engagement, staff first identified any recent student and parent engagement that may provide insight into perceptions of secondary student transportation. In 2023, the Phase 2 Safe Routes to School Walk Audit survey collected input from students and families about how they travel to Alexandria City High School's King Street and Minnie Howard campuses.

At the time of the audit, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), in coordination with the City's Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), reported that over 4,490 students were enrolled at ACHS. Among them, roughly 2,590 students rode the school bus and about 850 used city buses to get to the King Street and Minnie Howard Campuses. Observations confirmed that many students relied on DASH routes 31 and 36, though no other routes were identified in the report.

As part of the project, a survey was distributed via school fliers, posters, and email outreach targeting students, parents, and the broader school community. There were 369 respondents from the King Street Campus and 93 from the Minnie Howard Campus. The survey's primary focus was on pedestrian and sidewalk conditions near school sites, making it unsuitable for more detailed geographic transportation studies.

Despite these limitations, student comments about DASH bus service revealed several concerns and preferences. Some students use DASH as a fallback when school buses are unavailable or when walking feels unsafe. Others noted long wait times or poor alignment between DASH schedules and school dismissal, which can lead to delays getting home. Comments also pointed to gaps in DASH coverage and pedestrian safety issues near transit stops. These observations highlight opportunities to better coordinate transit services with school schedules and improve the safety and accessibility of routes to and from school. (See attachment #3 for a full report and survey results).

Looking ahead, we plan to conduct a comprehensive community engagement strategy in conjunction with ACPS staff. Building upon tools used in successful community engagement strategies in other processes, potential engagement components include:

- **Student and Parent Surveys:**
 - Integrate survey questions into existing outreach to parents and students at the beginning of the 2025–2026 school year, streamlining efforts and avoiding duplication. Questions would explore current and preferred modes of transportation to school, existing student use of DASH, and qualitative feedback

on the experience. They could also capture feedback, particularly regarding concerns about safety, reliability, and confidence in the DASH system.

- Surveys would be brief, multi-lingual, mobile-friendly, and, in addition to integration into existing outreach, can be accessible via QR codes posted at key school and transit locations.

- **Listening Sessions**

- Student listening sessions may be held in Fall 2025, integrated into high school clubs and activities, which have proven effective in surfacing a wide range of student perspectives. In previous student engagement efforts, students have been most receptive to providing feedback when the forums are hosted by youth and youth facilitate the questions, with adult subject matter expert guidance.
- Monthly discussions with students where they are (i.e. Recreation centers, community events, clubs, etc.)
- Parent sessions may build upon discussions in PTA meetings and other forums in which parents provide feedback.

- **Informational and Interactive Tools:** To support awareness and understanding of the proposed changes, the following tools and strategies could be used:

- **Clear FAQs with visuals:** Tailored for both students and parents to address common questions and concerns.
- **On-Site Pop-Ups:** Staffed booths at King Street and Minnie Howard campuses to directly engage students.
- **Virtual Engagement:** QR code feedback stations with chat features at bus stops and other key locations (as used for Duke Street in Motion).
- **Community Events:** Leverage City and school-sponsored events as opportunities for dialogue and input.
- **Ride-Along Opportunities:** Offer optional ride-alongs with incentives, followed by feedback opportunities to evaluate the experience.

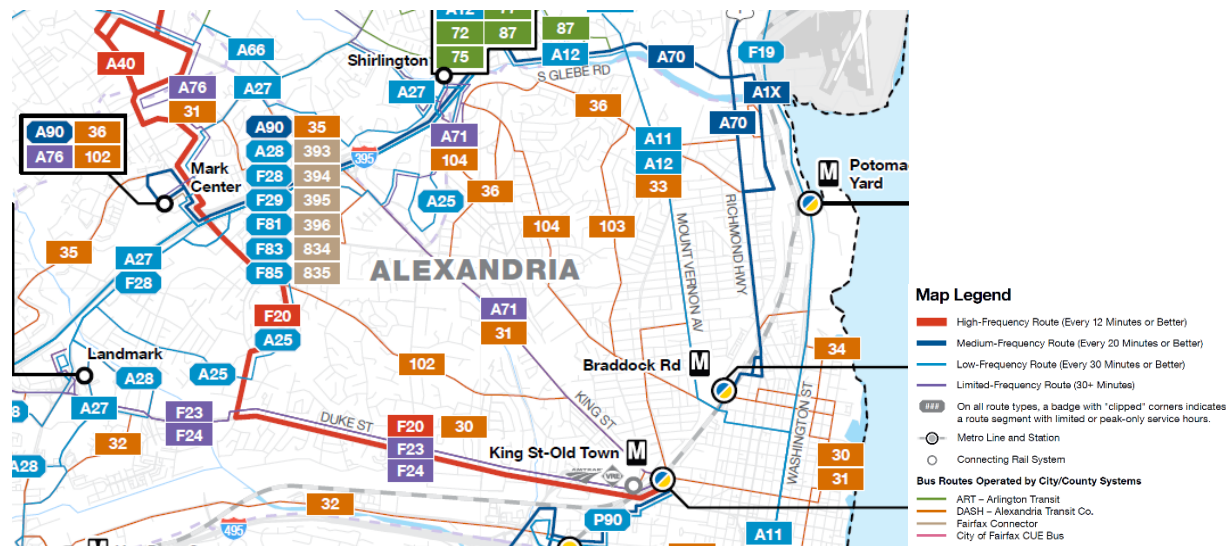
To build trust and ensure community voices are heard, the City and ACPS will share key findings and next steps with participants throughout the process.

Metrobus

Metrobus, operated by WMATA, is a separate transit system from the local Alexandria run and operated DASH system. While our projections on student ridership with this shift to DASH don't include this Metrobus service, it is possible that additional students may choose to ride Metrobus to and from school, increasing the number of ACPS students taking public transportation to school. This would provide more efficiency, cost savings over time and environmental benefits.

Beginning June 29, 2025, WMATA will launch its “[New Bus Network](#),” which includes changes to the routes currently serving Alexandria. One notable change is that Metrobus Route A71 will now travel along King Street, directly in front of the Alexandria City High School King Street Campus. The city will be able to monitor the route use and ridership once the change is implemented.

Figure 4 – Metrobus Better Bus Network Map



To further expand transportation access for students, the City of Alexandria secured a \$150,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, with a \$30,000 local match, to pilot a fare-free Metrobus program for middle and high school students. The program, expected to run through at least June 2026, will provide SmartTrip cards for unlimited, free Metrobus rides, including weekends, helping students access school, jobs, and activities, especially those not near DASH routes. The city will partner with Alexandria City Public Schools for card distribution and outreach, while WMATA will support ongoing planning and evaluation. This builds on the DASH Student Ride Program and allows the city to gather valuable ridership data to improve student transit. It also gives more opportunities for the student population to experience public transit in advance of the phase 1 transition.

RECOMMENDED PHASES

Staff recommend a phased implementation approach:

Table 2 – DASH Service Enhancement Phases

Phase	Description	DASH Routes	Ops Investment	Capital Investment	ACHS Riders Served	Potential Imp. Date
1	One-Seat Rides	31, 36A/B	\$	-	>30%	SY26-27
2	<30-Minute Rides	31, 35, 36A/B	\$\$	\$\$	>60%	SY27-28
3	Systemwide Rides	All	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	>86%	TBD

Phase 1 (“One-Seat Rides”): Eliminate ACPS school bus service for students living within walking distance (¼ mile) of a DASH Lines 31 or 36A/B, which would provide direct (“one-seat”) rides to and from the King Street and Minnie Howard ACHS campuses each day. Staff estimates that these two routes could serve approximately 30 percent of current ACHS school bus riders. DASH expects to increase its annual subsidy slightly to operate the additional AM/PM trips on Lines 31 and 36A/B, but no additional buses would need to be purchased. Based on staff analyses, this scenario would allow ACPS to reoptimize their ACHS school bus service and remove an estimated 10-12 routes that currently serve ACHS students. Further analysis is needed to determine if these changes would result in any changes for ACPS staff, but any ACPS employees affected by the transition would be encouraged to apply to DASH, which offers full-time, year-round employment opportunities for qualified bus operators. *Note: this would not include the 55 high school students requiring special services, including the McKinney-Vento federal provision for students experiencing homelessness and specialized transportation.*

Phase 2 (“30 Minutes or Less”): Under this phase, DASH would implement additional trips on Line 35 and 36A/B for improved frequency to transport the large number of ACHS students who live in the West End. These students would be expected to travel between their bus stop and the King Street and Minnie Howard campuses within 30 minutes or less. Some students will be required to transfer buses. This scenario would ensure DASH service for more than 60 percent of current ACHS school bus riders. It would also require more investment for additional trips and would require some limited increased Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding so that DASH is able to purchase larger (60-foot) buses to replace smaller buses as they are retired in future years. This investment would have a long-term benefit to the entire community and result in more cost efficiency over time providing quality transit service to Alexandria residents and visitors.

Phase 3: (“Systemwide Replacement”): In the final phase, DASH would evaluate implementing major systemwide service improvements and route adjustments so that any student that lives within walking distance (~1/4 mile) of a DASH bus stop would be able to use DASH instead of ACPS school buses to travel to and from the King Street and Minnie Howard campuses. The recent ACPS school bus ridership survey indicates that more than 86 percent of current school bus riders could be served by existing DASH route alignments. This scenario would require increases in DASH service and special route realignments to serve ACHS students. It would also require an increase in annual DASH operating subsidy and the purchase of additional 60-foot buses beyond what is identified in the current Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Many ACHS students would be required to make transfers in this scenario and some students would take more than 30 minutes to travel between their nearest bus stop and the ACHS campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The following recommendations and next steps will require further discussions with the City Council and the School Board, as well as receiving additional community feedback and engagement prior to action on the staff recommendations.

1) Summer 2025:

- a) **Complete Route and Capacity Analysis:** Finalize studies to determine which students can be reliably served by DASH.
- b) **Refine Cost and Funding:** Conduct a detailed financial analysis to quantify both the additional costs and potential savings of the proposed changes, and to identify opportunities for reallocating funds during the budget process. This analysis will account for the up-front investment needed to expand DASH bus capacity, recognizing it as a long-term investment in the City’s transportation system that aims to reduce redundancy between bus services resulting in long term cost savings and avoidance of cost increases to serve our community. The analysis will also be aligned with the City’s broader strategic goals and evaluated within the context of the long-term Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- c) **Continue to ensure safety and legal compliance.**

2) Fall 2025:

- a) **Continue Stakeholder Engagement:** Conduct comprehensive community engagement, focusing on student and parent perspectives around safety, familiarity, and barriers. Using proven tools such as integrated surveys, listening sessions, ride-alongs, and interactive outreach, the effort will prioritize inclusive, youth-friendly formats and transparent communication of findings.

- b) Monthly meetings and pop ups where students are throughout the community (recreation centers, libraries, clubs, ACPS events, etc.,).
 - c) Discussions with youth at city events and programs including with organizations focused on our youth (these could be forums, roundtable discussions, youth led conversations, etc.)
 - d) Discussions with PTAs and other areas where we can have meaningful discussions with parents and students.
 - e) Schedule a joint work session between ACPS and City Council.
- 3) Winter 2025/26:
- a) Enhance Communication Systems: Explore the integration of DASH updates with ACPS communication platforms and establish clear procedures for communicating delays and incidents.
 - b) Set Implementation Timeline: Use findings to inform a phased plan, with any changes anticipated for the 2026–2027 school year.
 - c) The City Manager submits the proposed budget reflecting Phase 1 implementation.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Overall % of ACHS students riding DASH
- Safety: Stable or reduced number of ACPS & DASH safety incidents involving students
- Overall % of student satisfaction with ACPS/DASH transportation services
- Students, parents, and ACPS staff reporting on time arrival to school and home
- Reduction in the expense of student transportation over a period. As described above, savings could be reinvested in ACPS or other city services that support youth.
- Growth in DASH transit ridership

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memo from Councilmembers Bagley and Elnoubi directing staff to conduct a Feasibility Study regarding the use of DASH Bus for secondary students
2. TransPar ACPS Transportation Study
3. [Questions received from the City Council and School Board Members and responses from DASH and ACPS staff.](#)
4. ACHS School Bus Ridership Map
5. DASH Service Analysis for ACHS School Bus Ridership

CC: The Honorable Members of City Council
 The Honorable Members of the School Board

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 14, 2025

TO: THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

FROM: COUNCILMAN ABDEL-RAHMAN ELNOUBI AND VICE MAYOR SARAH BAGLEY

SUBJECT: UTILIZATION OF DASH TRANSPORTATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Alexandria is fortunate to have a thriving free bus service, DASH. DASH service provides an affordable, climate friendly, and equitable service to Alexandria residents. We propose that ACPS collaborate with the City and DASH to evaluate the opportunities available in transitioning high school student transportation to DASH where feasible and beneficial.

Given the recent bus driver shortage ACPS has been suffering from and the budgetary challenges the city is facing, finding areas where ACPS and City services can be consolidated may be an effective way to address said challenges. We can take advantage of our free DASH bus system to transport ACPS high school students instead of ACPS transporting them via school buses and have ACPS only use the school bus to transport elementary and middle school students. Benefits may be not only financial but in safety and environmental impact.

Several school systems including our neighbor the District of Columbia, do not provide transportation to the general student population via school buses. Rather, those students who are able use Metro Bus for free. Also, the code of Virginia does not require Schools to provide transportation to students except in certain cases

(<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title22.1/chapter12/>). This collaboration would potentially reduce the number of vehicles on our roads transporting students (and driven by students) thus reducing our carbon footprint and positively impacting traffic on our streets. It also saves resources ACPS uses to transport high school students, enabling them to focus the use of their bus driver population to transport elementary and middle school students. This would further reduce the strain and need for bus drivers, allowing the City's resources to be most effectively utilized while improving the efficiency of school transportation.

A robust study and examination of ACPS needs and DASH availability may identify areas requiring expansion of the DASH bus network. Should that expansion be financially feasible, it would become another added benefit for the entire city. The study may also reveal areas where ACPS service will continue to be necessary. We look forward to the analysis and what opportunities it may reveal.

We are requesting Council's support to have the City Manager explore the feasibility of this proposal and report findings to Council prior to the add/delete deadline for the FY26 budget. Those findings, interim and final, should include the budgetary impacts on both City and ACPS budgets as well as staffing and service adjustments necessary to implement this proposal. We also recognize that the City/Schools Subcommittee represents a venue for deeper discussion about issues that impact the community and intends to meet on this topic starting in January. As such, we are also requesting that the requests outlined in this memo be coordinated and that the findings be shared at a City/School subcommittee meeting.

CC: Jim Parajon, City Manager
Cheran Ivery, City Attorney
Gloria Sitton, City Clerk and Clerk of Council



Alexandria City Public Schools

**2023-24 and 2024-25 Transportation Studies
Executive Summary**

April 2025



TRANSPAR GROUP, INC.

186 Seven Farms Drive | Ste. F, PMB #103 | Charleston, SC 29492
transpargroup.com | (888) 518-3377



April 15, 2025

Mx. Sophie Huemer
Director of the Office of Capital Programs, Planning, & Design Services
Alexandria City Public Schools
1340 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314

Mx. Huemer,

TransPar Group, Inc., is pleased to submit the following executive summary of the original draft deliverables presented to ACPS for the route efficiency, bell time, and facility analyses conducted during the 2023-24 school year, as well as the updated studies and analyses conducted during the 2024-25 school year.

The remainder of this document condenses the full project milestone deliverables that have been presented to the district to-date. Should more detailed information be requested, we will advise which of the aforementioned deliverables can be reviewed to meet the stated request.

We are grateful for the opportunity to continue our partnership with ACPS, and we invite you to ask any questions you may have as we continue the finalization of this new scope of work to ensure it meets the district's stated needs and goals. I can be reached at (512) 284-2916 or via e-mail at mbrassfield@transpar.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micah Brassfield", is written over a large, light gray "DRAFT" watermark that is oriented diagonally across the page.

Micah Brassfield
Vice President
TransPar Group, Inc.

TRANSPAR GROUP, INC.

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Executive Summary

Project Overview:

In December 2024, TransPar Group, Inc. was re-engaged by Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) to update the transportation study conducted during the 2023-24 school year. The initial scope of work included route efficiency, bell time, and facility analyses which were completed and delivered to the district in April of 2024. Due to a desire to more thoroughly discuss the recommendations made within the context of current and future operational constraints and resources, while also navigating competing district initiatives, ACPS postponed decisions for acting on the recommendations until the 2024-25 school year. Recognizing ongoing challenges and a need to refresh two of previous studies, ACPS expanded TransPar's project scope to include the following updated and/or additional analyses. Of note, TransPar was not asked to update the facility study in the new scope of work but will summarize the observations and recommendations from the facility portion of the study conducted during the 2023-24 school year.

2024-25 Key Analyses:

1. RouteYield™ Analysis:

An update to the previous route efficiency study comparing 2024-25 route data to 2023-24 route data, which analyzed the time and capacity utilization of each bus run and route, revealed the following:

- Decreasing Ridership Trends: Ridership has decreased in both the morning and afternoons.
- Stable Overall Capacity Utilization, Under Utilization of the System as a Whole: AM capacity utilization has increased, while PM capacity utilization has remained stable; overall time and capacity utilization across the system is below 60%, indicating opportunities for run and route consolidation
- Minor to Moderate Standard Deviations: Standard deviations of runs have improved, suggesting more consistent run lengths; approximately 40 minutes are needed between bell time tiers in the morning and 36 minutes in the afternoon, with additional time advised for deadhead and traffic variables
- High Number of Underutilized Runs: 49 AM runs and 40 PM runs have been identified as less than 60% utilized in time and capacity; about half of these runs are deemed as potential excess and could be reduced; however, to achieve run and possible route reductions will require bell time adjustments

2. Bell Time Alternative Scenario Development Analysis:

An update to the proposed alternative bell time scenarios based on updated observations and findings from the route efficiency analysis revealed bell time alternatives should be consider to account for the following:

- Current Operational Structure and Challenges: ACPS continues to operate with a balanced two-tier system; however, further efficiency and maximization of

capacity is constrained by time, traffic, and other variables such as capacity transfers

- Unaccounted for Average Route Lengths and Standard Deviations: Recommendations include ensuring adequate operational time between tiers, with a suggested 60 minutes to account for average route lengths and the varying factors previously mentioned

3. High School Shuttles Efficiency and Financial Analysis:

A new study to evaluate the efficiency and costs associated with mid-day shuttles between the ACHS King Street and Minnie Howard campuses captured the following data and observations:

- Shuttle Data: 45 shuttles were reported as operating, with 5 of the shuttles transporting no students and supporting in a standby capacity; 7 of the 40 transporting shuttles were less than 60% utilized in capacity
- Onsite Observations: The King Street campus has staging and loading safety concerns with students crossing the bus loop, while Minnie Howard campus operations were well-structured and safely coordinated and monitored
- Financial Analysis: Consolidating underutilized shuttles, optimizing schedules, and leveraging the master schedule to minimize the total number of shuttles (targeted at reducing 8 shuttles) is estimated to save approximately \$53,300 annually

4. Rezoning Transportation Impact Analysis:

In a future project phase, a new study will be conducted to evaluate the transportation impact of ACPS' selected school rezoning scenario upon completion of the rezoning study by another vendor.

Overarching Recommendations:

The following recommendations have been made for ACPS from the 2023-24 and 2024-25 transportation studies.

1) RouteYield™ Analysis:

- a) Consolidate as many underutilized runs and routes to improve efficiency by:
 - i) Reviewing all runs with less than 60% time and capacity utilization and consolidating any operating among the same schools and feeder patterns
 - ii) Most importantly, ensuring adequate operational time between bell time tiers, considering deadhead and traffic variables, and adjusting bell times accordingly

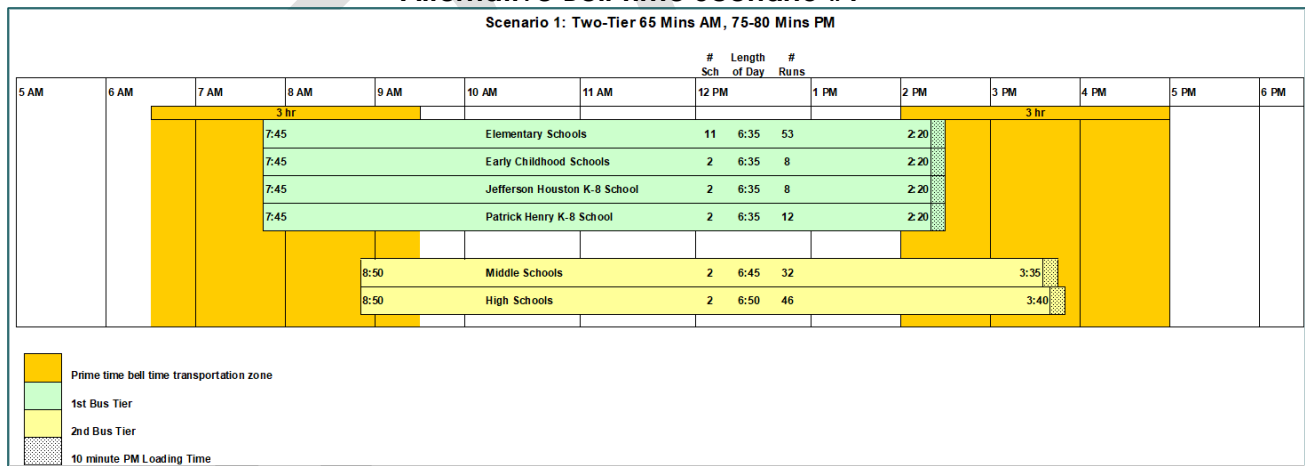
Route Yield Analysis Comparative Metrics Table

Metrics Category	2023-24 RouteYield Metrics	2024-25 RouteYield Metrics
Total Reported AM Riders	5898	5496
Total Reported PM Riders	5753	5627
Average AM Riders	36	42
Average PM Riders	36	32
Average AM Capacity Utilized %	46%	58%
Average PM Capacity Utilized %	51%	50%
Average AM Run Length	30 mins; std. dev. 34.45 mins	26 mins; std. dev. 13.3 mins
Average PM Run Length	23 mins; std. dev. 11.22 mins	24 mins; std. dev. 12 mins
Average AM Time Utilized %	31%	35%
Average PM Time Utilized %	41%	45%

2) Bell Time Alternative Scenario Development Analysis:

- a) Two updated scenarios were developed, each with its own benefits and challenges, but each of which took into account what average route length and standard deviation metrics necessary to enhance operational efficiency:
 - i) Scenario 1 Overview: Two-tier system with 65 – 80 minutes between AM and PM tiers

Alternative Bell Time Scenario #1

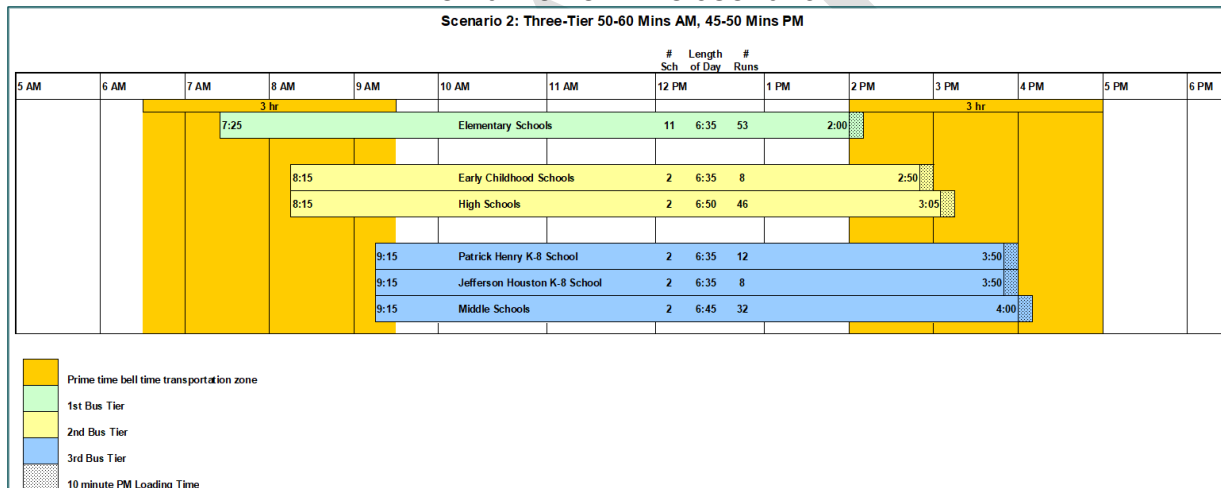


(1) Primary Benefits:

- a) *Enhance Service Quality by accounting for Actual Operational Route Metrics: Achieves more than minimum required time between tiers based on route efficiency data to allow for greater on-time performance of AM and PM runs*

- (b) *Minor Route Reduction to Combat Driver Shortage/Absenteeism:* With a full re-route of the system under proposed bell times, it is estimated that 5-7 routes could be reduced
- (c) *Adequate Time to Account for Variables:* With more time between tiers, traffic, capacity transfer, and other variable challenges can be better mitigated
- (2) Primary Challenges:
 - (a) *Somewhat Earlier Primary Start/End Times:* Elementary, early childhood, and K-8 schools will start and end 15 minutes earlier
 - (b) *Moderately Later Secondary Start/End Times:* Secondary schools will start and end 20 minutes later
 - (c) *Condensed Drop-off Window:* Students will likely be dropped off closer to the start bell, reducing the amount of time before school from 20-30 minutes in some instances, down to 10-15 minutes
- ii) Scenario 2 Overview: Three-tier system with 45 – 60 minutes between AM and PM tiers

Alternative Bell Time Scenario #2



- (1) Primary Benefits:
 - (a) *Improve Service Quality by Accounting for Actual Operational Route Metrics:* Achieves minimum suggested time between tiers based on route efficiency data to mitigate some of the on-time performance challenges on AM and PM routes
 - (b) *Moderate to Major Route Reduction to Further Combat Driver Shortage/Absenteeism:* With a full re-route of the system, there is a potential reduction of 20 buses, more conservatively estimated at 10 buses, removed from the system; conservative estimates are to prevent earlier than 6:30 AM pick-up times as well as to account for any increased student ridership which could occur in future years or any rezoning changes which may increase transportation eligibility and demand

(2) Primary Challenges:

(a) Significant Earlier/Later Start/End Times for Schools: 35-45 minute changes to start and end times for schools on the first and third tiers, which will have implications for staff contracts, student supervision, high school shuttles and extracurricular activities

3) **High School Shuttles Efficiency and Financial Analysis:**

- Consolidate shuttles with less than 50% capacity utilization
- Optimize shuttle schedules to reduce the number of required shuttles through coordination and collaboration on high school master schedules and capping of class sizes
- Implement safety improvements at King Street campus and maintain efficient operations at Minnie Howard campus
- Set target cost savings to achieve during the 2025-26 school year based on estimates for reducing currently underutilized shuttles

High School Shuttles Run and Metrics Listing

Bus	From School	Dismiss	To School	Class Bell	Arrive	Pickup	Dropoff	Duration	Riders	Bus Capacity	Riders/Seat	Eff. Capacity	Utilization	
4	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:36 AM	10:36 AM	10:45 AM	9m	50	77	2	50	100.0%	
7	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:37 AM	7m	51	77	2	50	102.0%	
9	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:52 PM	2:05 PM	2:12 PM	7m	2	65	2	42	4.76%	
11	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:30 PM	1:50 PM	2:00 PM	10m	50	77	2	50	100.0%	
16	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:40 PM	1:54 PM	2:04 PM	10m	50	77	2	50	100.0%	
21	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:40 PM	1:50 PM	1:58 PM	8m	48	77	2	50	96.0%	
21	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:28 AM	ACHS: King Street	10:41 AM	10:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:40 AM	10m	52	77	2	50	104.0%	
27	ACHS: King Street	1:48 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	2:01 PM	1:30 PM	1:48 PM	2:01 PM	13m	50	77	2	50	100.0%	
28	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	12:05 PM	12:11 PM	12:17 PM	6m	45	77	2	50	90.0%	
40	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	11:50 AM	12:08 PM	12:14 PM	6m	51	77	2	50	102.0%	
40	ACHS: King Street	10:48 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:40 AM	10:40 AM	10:48 AM	8m	21	77	2	50	42.0%	
41	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	12:05 PM	12:10 PM	12:15 PM	5m	51	77	2	50	102.0%	
41	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:28 AM	10:28 AM	10:40 AM	12m	49	77	2	50	98.0%	
42	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	ACHS: King Street	12:18 PM	11:50 AM	12:15 PM	12:20 PM	5m	51	77	2	50	102.0%	
44	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	11:53 AM	12:13 PM	12:20 PM	7m	53	77	2	50	106.0%	
44	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:25 AM	10:25 AM	10:38 AM	13m	27	77	2	50	54.0%	
46	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	11:52 AM	12:10 PM	12:16 PM	6m	49	77	2	50	98.0%	
46	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:38 AM	8m	51	77	2	50	102.0%	
54	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	ACHS: King Street	12:18 PM	12:05 PM	12:10 PM	12:15 PM	5m	35	65	2	42	83.33%	
54	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:28 AM	ACHS: King Street	10:41 AM	10:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:33 AM	3m	38	65	2	42	90.48%	
55	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	11:15 AM	12:10 PM	12:15 PM	5m	56	77	2	50	112.0%	
57	ACHS: King Street	1:18 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	2:01 PM	1:40 PM	1:45 PM	2:05 PM	20m	41	77	2	50	82.0%	
65	ACHS: King Street	1:48 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	2:01 PM	1:48 PM	2:01 PM	2:09 PM	8m	21	77	2	50	42.0%	
82	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	12:00 PM	12:00 PM	12:30 PM	30m	40	77	2	50	80.0%	
82	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	Satellite	12:48 PM	12:30 PM	12:30 PM	12:40 PM	10m	3	77	3	75	4.0%	
84	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	ACHS: King Street	12:18 PM	12:03 PM	12:05 PM	12:08 PM	3m	20	77	2	50	40.0%	
85	ACHS: King Street	1:48 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	2:01 PM	1:38 PM	1:42 PM	2:02 PM	20m	48	77	2	50	96.0%	
86	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:05 PM	ACHS: King Street	12:18 PM	12:05 PM	12:15 PM	12:20 PM	5m	57	77	2	50	114.0%	
88	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:30 PM	1:58 PM	2:02 PM	4m	36	77	2	50	72.0%	
91	ACHS: King Street	1:48 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	1:17 PM	1:51 PM	1:54 PM	3m	52	77	2	50	104.0%	
91	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:38 AM	8m	55	77	2	50	110.0%	
97	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	11:51 AM	12:07 PM	12:12 PM	5m	52	77	2	50	104.0%	
111	ACHS: King Street	10:28 AM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	10:41 AM	10:28 AM	10:28 AM	10:40 AM	12m	48	77	2	50	96.0%	
112	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	11:50 AM	12:05 PM	12:13 PM	8m	62	77	2	50	124.0%	
115	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:18 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:42 PM	1:57 PM	2:03 PM	6m	57	77	2	50	114.0%	
123	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	11:55 AM	12:12 PM	12:16 PM	4m	14	65	2	42	33.33%	
211	ACHS: King Street	1:48 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	2:01 PM	1:48 PM	1:58 PM	2:03 PM	5m	51	72	2	48	106.25%	
211	ACHS: King Street	12:05 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	12:18 PM	12:05 PM	12:05 PM	12:17 PM	12m	54	72	2	48	112.5%	
212	ACHS: King Street	1:48 PM	ACHS: Minnie Howard	2:01 PM	1:45 PM	1:46 PM	2:15 PM	29m	48	72	2	48	100.0%	
214	ACHS: Minnie Howard	1:48 PM	ACHS: King Street	2:01 PM	1:48 PM	2:00 PM	2:02 PM	2m	8	72	2	48	16.67%	
Average									9m	43	76	2.03	50	85.98%
Min									2m	2	65	2	42	4.0%
Max									30m	62	77	3	75	124.0%
Range									28m	60	12	1	33	120.0%
Std Dev									6m	16	4	0.16	5	30.74%

High School Shuttles High-Level Financial Analysis

Cost Category	ESTIMATED ACPS Cost Per Shuttle/Student Metrics
Estimated Annual Total Cost for All Shuttles (Assumes 45 Shuttles)	\$ 300,000.00
Estimated Annual Total Cost Per Shuttle	\$ 6,666.67
Estimated Annual Total Cost Per Student (Assumes 1,697 Students Transported)	\$ 176.78
Daily costs, if operating shuttles for 177 school days, are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per day total shuttle costs = \$1694.92/day • Per shuttle, per day = \$37.66 • Per student, per day = \$0.99 	

4) Facility Study:

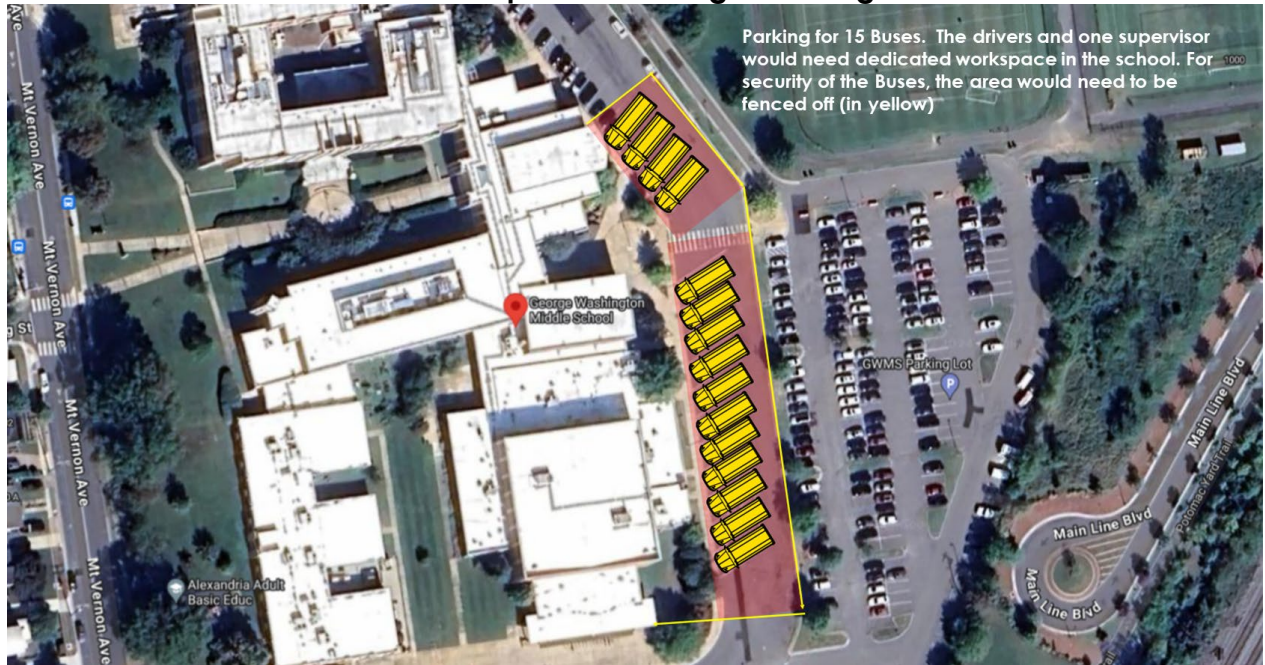
- a) Facility needs are inextricably linked to the total number of buses, drivers, and employees that are required to operate the system; steps should be taken to optimize the system based on the route efficiency, bell time, and future rezoning recommendations so that ACPS can adequately determine the staffing and equipment needs of its transportation department in the immediate term and long-term
- b) As ACPS awaits direction and confirmation on which route efficiency, bell time, and rezoning recommendations it will implement, there are still immediate action steps that should be taken to improve working conditions within the existing, and less than adequate transportation facility, which include:
 - i) Repairing all water leaks and associated damage
 - ii) Monitoring and enhancing procurement, use, and storage of parts and equipment in order to find efficiencies in use of storage space
 - iii) Requiring decluttering, cleaning, and housekeeping of unorganized and cluttered areas
 - iv) Making repairs to all painted surfaces
 - v) Making repairs to and updating the locker room/restroom in the shop
 - vi) Repairing all lot lighting
 - vii) Repairing all lot pavement

- viii) Replacing carpet and furniture in drivers' break area, flex, and common spaces
- ix) Removing mechanics from three office spaces downstairs and repurposing the space for administrative staff
- x) Removing all food preparation/storage spaces from the shop work area
- c) Due to a lack of other district-owned and/or publicly available spaces to procure, ACPS' Transportation Facility will have to be renovated in the existing space as it continues to operate simultaneously out of the same space; the following steps and considerations will need to be taken in order to make larger and more invasive repairs and renovations to the facility:
 - i) Right-size the bus fleet to match operational needs so that excess fleet can be removed from areas surrounding the building, particularly the area east of and immediately adjacent to maintenance bays where buses are being parked and multi-stacked
 - ii) If necessary, after right-sizing of the fleet, select one of the two most feasible decentralization options, at either George Washington or Francis Hammond Middle Schools, based on the operational needs and realities of those two schools in the year in which decentralization would be implemented, shifting 10-15 buses and drivers, and at least one (1) operations staff member to operate strategically out of one of these two locations

Current Facility Bird's Eye Overview of Challenges and Opportunities for Efficiency



De-Centralization Option #1: George Washington Middle School



De-Centralization Option #2: Francis C. Hammond Middle School



Conclusion:

TransPar would be remiss if it did not state that the ACPS Transportation Department is operating at commendable levels given the many constraints and operational variables and challenges it faces on a daily basis. The support and cooperation of the entire Transportation Team have made the results of these studies possible and demonstrate a dedicated desire to improve operations if given the resources and support to implement key recommendations.

The studies have provided comprehensive analyses and recommendations to address ACPS' current and future-state transportation demands and challenges. Each recommendation seeks to improve upon the service quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of the entire operation.

Overall staffing levels, resource utilization, and facility needs cannot be strategically set without a right-sizing of the operation, which can only be achieved through ACPS deciding its desired goals and/or required service models by taking into account:

- The reality of its driver staffing and absenteeism challenges
- Ability for routes to meet on-time performance expectations given operational variables such as traffic and capacity transfers
- The limitation of its options regarding facility space, particularly as the current facility is less than adequate to support higher-performing operations
- An ever-increasing budget due to growing demand for more transportation services (e.g. high school shuttles)

As such, ACPS will need to implement, at minimum, route efficiency and bell time recommendations as soon as operationally feasible in order to right-size the operation and subsequently make staffing, facility, and cost decisions that cannot successfully and sustainably be made otherwise.

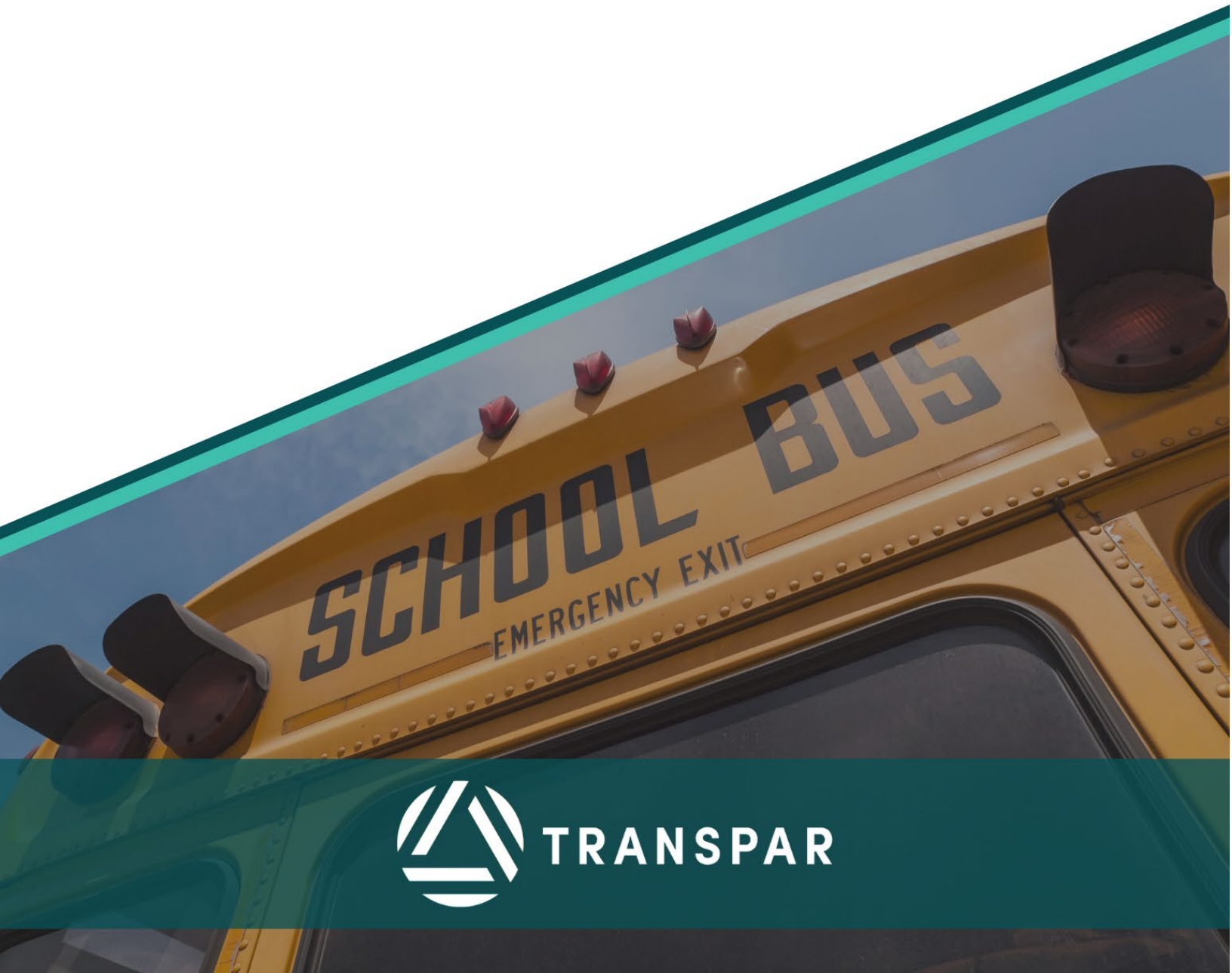
TransPar is appreciative of its partnership with the district and looks forward to supporting ACPS in the next phase of work, which is also irrevocably tied to the long-term sustainable success of transportation operations, which is evaluating the impact of future school rezoning on transportation. It should be noted here that the result of the rezoning work being performed by another vendor will have a correlative and direct impact on the recommendations made within TransPar's studies, which TransPar will note and highlight for ACPS during its analysis of the selected rezoning scenario.

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TRANSPAR

Alexandria City Public School (ACPS)			DASH		
#	Questions	Responses	#	Questions	Responses
1	Our current policy sets a maximum of one hour for transportation for K-12 students. Would we be able to set a maximum DASH route time or transfers beyond which a student could receive ACPS busing (potentially below the one hour threshold)?	To be discussed at 4/28 meeting	1	To what extent could DASH bus routes be revised to accommodate greater coverage across the city? Or to increase the number of bus runs during morning/afternoon "rush" transportation for students? What would be the lead time necessary to do that (i.e., 6 months, a year, 2 years)?	It is possible that DASH routes or schedules could be modified to accommodate a larger number of ACHS students. The lead time for such changes is dependent upon several factors including the availability of buses and operating funding. DASH currently does not have additional buses that could be deployed during AM/PM peak periods, but additional buses are anticipated to be available in time for the 2026-2027 school year.
2	How does ACPS currently decide pickup points for high school students? Is it distance from the farther student who would that stop? Are there capacity decisions about how many students can be picked up at one stop?		2	How far does the average bus rider after their ride to get to their final destination?	DASH does not have specific statistics on walking distances for its riders, however, the DASH system is designed to serve the community based on the assumption that riders are able to walk roughly 1/4 mile to (or from) the nearest bus stop.
3	Are there any legal requirements (my understanding is no) that dictate where a stop is, what amenities it has, how many students are "assigned" to that stop?		3	How far does the average bus rider walk to arrive at their bus stop?	DASH does not have specific statistics on walking distances for its riders, however, the DASH system is designed to serve the community based on the assumption that riders are able to walk roughly 1/4 mile to (or from) the nearest bus stop.
4	Which routes have highest ridership? Which routes have lowest ridership?		4	Will DASH be used to transport students who are unhoused or don't have a permanent address?	DASH is a public transit service. It is open to everyone.
Adequate Routes/Scheduling			5	Would students have to transfer DASH buses to get to ACHS?	To be determined. DASH has two routes (Lines 31 and 36A/B) that serve the ACHS campuses. Students traveling to school from areas that are not served by these two routes could be required to make a transfer. The DASH network is generally designed to facilitate transfers with minimal wait times due to the availability of high frequency bus service across the City.
			6	In some areas of the West End, the closest DASH bus stop for students is a 30+ minute walk. Will DASH bus service be extended to the depths of residential neighborhoods?	To be determined. DASH and ACPS staff will evaluate the needs of all ACHS student across the City, including those that are not in the immediate vicinity of DASH bus stops.
			7	How will secondary students be transported to field trips? What about the late afternoon activity bus routes and transport to athletic competitions?	DASH is not equipped to provide field trip or activity bus services.
			8	Would DASH buses be used for transport between Minnie Howard & King Street campuses?	This requires a separate discussion, unrelated to the task assigned.
			9	How would DASH manage two hour delays and early dismissals?	To be determined. DASH has the ability to adjust service levels based on inclement weather. Currently, DASH extends the operating hours of Lines 103 and 104 in response to delayed openings or early closures of the federal government. Several routes such as Lines 36A/B also operate with frequent midday service, which could reduce the need for weather-related service changes.
			10	If commuter bus schedules are used to add buses, will those schedules be shifted when ACPS has to institute delays for things such as extreme temperatures and to take into account teacher commutes during weather events?	To be determined. DASH has the ability to adjust service levels based on inclement weather. Currently, DASH extends the operating hours of Lines 103 and 104 in response to delayed openings or early closures of the federal government. Several routes such as Lines 36A/B also operate with frequent midday service, which could reduce the need for weather-related service changes.
			11	Would students get late passes as they exit if buses arrive late like they currently do on ACPS buses? Who would be held accountable for that?	DASH is open and free to all riders and therefore does not accept or issue passes. DASH's customer service team is able to verify any bus or route schedule adherence if needed.
			12	Do the same drivers drive elementary-middle-high school routes? If so, how would eliminating high school routes allow for more drivers at the elementary level?	DASH is working with ACPS staff to understand school bus driver assignments and identify efficiencies that could be gained by reducing the number of ACHS school bus trips and shifting student riders to existing DASH routes. Our ability to answer this question is limited by the data and information shared by ACPS.

				13	How will space for students be guaranteed if DASH buses are also used to transport non-students who may have varying schedules?	The route analysis will include two components: (1) route coverage to identify the number of ACHS students that could be served by existing DASH routes; and (2) existing bus capacity to determine which routes could accomodate additional students, and which routes would need additional trips or larger buses to accomodate increased student ridership demand.
				14	If there is a large number of students who live on the same route, how would space on the DASH be guaranteed?	The route analysis will include two components: (1) route coverage to identify the number of ACHS students that could be served by existing DASH routes; and (2) existing bus capacity to determine which routes could accomodate additional students, and which routes would need additional trips or larger buses to accomodate increased student ridership demand.
Drivers	5	Would potentially displaced ACPS bus drivers be eligible for priority hiring for those DASH roles?	To be discussed at future meeting	15	It appears that DASH has 0% unfilled bus driver positions, how many additional buses would need to be added (either additional routes or more often buses) to accomodate intended students?	To be determined. Any needs for additional buses or operators will be identified as an output from the route and capacity analyses.
	6	Would the hours of ACPS bus drivers be cut or limited?		16	Will DASH drivers be trained on the same safety protocols as ACPS bus drivers?	New operators undergo 6-9 weeks of training, depending on prior experience and CDL certification. Training includes the Smith System, a defensive driving approach designed for commercial transit vehicles. Drivers also receive emergency response and de-escalation training, covering evacuations, first aid, CPR, and specialized techniques for managing younger passengers. DASH strictly follows federal drug and alcohol compliance standards, conducting regular audits every three years. Continuous development is emphasized through annual training, with more than 2,100 hours completed in 2024, as well as incident-based retraining for drivers involved in safety events. Quarterly safety meetings are mandatory for all staff, ensuring that policies, trends, and compliance expectations remain a central focus
	7	If hours are cut, how will that affect school bus driver recruitment and retention?		17	Will DASH drivers be vetted and trained using the same standards as ACPS bus drivers, including fingerprint clearance/background checks?	
				18	For long-time ACPS bus drivers, how would transitioning to a job with DASH impact their retirement benefits? Do DASH drivers participate in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS)?	Any ACPS drivers who would transition to a job with DASH would receive the full benefits package offered by DASH. While different from the City's and from what is offered by ACPS, DASH is known to have some of the best benefits offerings of public transit systems throughout the region. DASH drivers are not eligible to participate in VRS.
Cost Savings/Budget	9	What is the average cost of a bus route, which includes the driver salary, the fuel cost, the bus maintenance cost, and potentially the bus replacement cost, each time we eliminate a route, how much do we save?	To be discussed at May meeting	19	If it is determined that there are cost savings from DASH transportation of high school students (fewer drivers, lower fuel and maintenance costs, etc.) would those savings be held entirely by ACPS?	To be discussed at May meeting
			20	How much funding would be saved by replacing ACPS buses with DASH buses?		
			21	If the same ACPS buses and drivers that transport high school students are also used to transport middle and elementary school students, how would the cost savings be generated?		
			22	If there is a cost saving, would that money go back to ACPS?		
				23	How much grant funding have DASH and the ACPS transportation department received in the past 5 years? Is there a target for future grant funding, and what steps could be taken to increase the likelihood that DASH and ACPS secure more grant funding in the future?	The DASH budget is included as part of the City's proposed FY26 budget document. The operating section is 13.60 and capital is 10.01

ACPS/DASH Coordination
Questions from CC SB Members

				24	Can ACPS and DASH provide a breakdown of their expenditures by category, i.e. personnel, non-personnel (supplies, maintenance, etc.), and capital costs?	
Electrification				25	To what extent would DASH supporting ACHS student transportation help/harm our city's larger environmental goals?	Increased usage of DASH services would promote city goals for environmental sustainability by reducing traffic congestion and climate impact. The majority of the DASH fleet is comprised of hybrid or low-emission vehicles. DASH also has 14 100% electric buses with plans for continued fleet electrification in the coming years.
				26	Could this approach enable a faster overall electrification of the fleet across DASH and ACPS buses? If so, how?	To be determined. Additional funds are needed to accelerate DASH fleet electrification process. DASH has traditionally sought federal funding for electric buses, but recent changes at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are likely to result in reduced availability of grant funds.
Safety / Liability	10	If there is an incident involving students on the bus (i.e., fighting), what role would ACPS play in addressing the issue (vis a vis APD or otherwise)? Would ACPS have access to the video for any necessary consequences?	ACPS has a structured response protocol for handling incidents on school buses, ensuring student safety and clear communication. For student behavior incidents, drivers contact the dispatch office for guidance. If a serious issue arises, such as a fight, students may be returned to school for administrative intervention, or Alexandria Police Department (APD) may be contacted. In such cases, the driver pulls over, waits for APD to arrive, and, if necessary, a replacement bus is dispatched. The Communications Department sends a ParentSquare notification to families, providing real-time updates in multiple languages. ACPS also equips buses with GPS tracking and two-way radios, allowing direct communication with dispatchers and emergency responders. For accidents, drivers immediately report incidents to dispatch, which then contacts APD and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Even if no injuries are apparent, EMS evaluates all students before continuing the route. The school administration is also notified, ensuring coordination and parental awareness. If the bus is undrivable, a replacement bus is sent, and affected families receive a ParentSquare notification confirming student safety and detailing the situation. The Transportation Supervisor is dispatched to assist at the scene and facilitate communication. ACPS compiles biannual safety reports to track and analyze incident trends, ensuring continuous improvement in transportation safety measures.	27	If a student is injured while riding DASH, who is currently responsible/liable (City or ACPS)?	DASH is covered under the Virginia Transit Liability Pool, a specialized insurance program for public transit. This policy provides \$20 million in coverage per occurrence, ensuring broad protection for all incidents involving school buses, including passenger injuries, collisions, and other liabilities. In addition to financial coverage, the program provides training and data analysis to help DASH monitor incident trends and enhance safety measures. All bus operations are coordinated through the 24/7 Operations Control Center, with field supervisors and onboard cameras ensuring continuous oversight and accountability.
				28	What challenges are presented to the system, if any, by the presence of riders under 18?	DASH enforces a Passenger Code of Conduct to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for all riders, with a zero-tolerance policy for violence, harassment, and disruptive behavior. Reports of misconduct are investigated, and video footage is recorded and retained for review in case of incidents. DASH collaborates closely with Alexandria Police Department (APD) to respond to emergencies and enforce safety protocols. Virginia law now classifies bus operator assaults as a misdemeanor, further enhancing protections for drivers.
				29	What would happen if a fight broke out on a DASH bus involving students and non-students? Will APD be involved or ACPS in the response?	Regarding student-related incidents, DASH tracks occurrences involving students as either victims or perpetrators. In fiscal year 2023, four student-involved incidents were recorded, while only one was reported in 2024, despite increased ridership from 4.5 million to 5.3 million boardings. Overall, the total number of preventable incidents increased from 14 to 20 during this period, with an incident rate of 0.31 and 0.38 per 100,000 boardings, respectively. Incidents are broadly defined as any reportable event affecting operations or safety but do not include accidents where a vehicle hits an object.
				30	Will DASH enforce the same rules as school buses, such as no vaping?	All DASH passengers are required to adhere to the DASH Code of Conduct, which prohibits smoking or vaping on all buses. The full code of conduct is available at https://www.dashbus.com/conduct/
Communication	11	If we are to move forward with the proposal, would it be possible to create a system for communicating issues through ACPS's ParentSquare? What budget or capacity would need to be in place to do that?	To be discussed at future meeting	31	ACPS currently provides updates to parents about bus route changes and delays (as well as real time tracking of buses). I know that DASH also provides real time updates of bus status via its website (and app). Does DASH currently have any other methods for proactive communications to riders about delays?	DASH provides real-time bus arrival information across multiple platforms, including via the DASH Tracker, third-party apps, phone/text, and digital displays at key bus stops across the City. DASH provides service alerts via website, e-mail blast and social media.

ACPS/DASH Coordination
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Bus Maintenance	12	What, if any, impact would priority maintenance on DASH buses that service ACHS routes have on the current ACPS bus depot?	To be discussed at future meeting	32	Would it be possible for DASH buses that service ACHS routes to receive priority for maintenance? Or backup coverage?	DASH takes great pride in its service reliability, consistently ranking as one of the most reliable bus systems in the Washington, DC region. All DASH buses undergo a comprehensive maintenance program with regular preventable maintenance activities to ensure safe and reliable operations. DASH also maintains a large fleet of spare buses to minimize the impact of maintenance work that may need to be completed.
				33	The City Manager's budget guidance in September encouraged ACPS to rethink the centralized bus facility model because it drives up capital and maintenance costs. How does this differ from the model that DASH uses? What would an alternative model look like and how would the cost savings be generated?	DASH operates out of the existing full service William B. Hurd operations and maintenance facility. Further, DASH receives Federal and State grants and is in the process of expanding the current facility to accomodate expansion along with the ongoing transition to electric vehicles. The operating model of DASH is highly efficient and is the same as other public transit systems.
Scheduling				34	What is the greatest challenge that DASH sees in attempting to serve people who need to arrive at school by a fixed hour in the morning? What would best help them reliably deliver that service?	The biggest challenges will likely be providing adequate capacity to transport such a larger number of students in a short period of time, and meeting the disparate needs of students who dont live near existing DASH routes. DASH is working with ACPS staff to evaluate the extent of these challenges and identify potential solutions. These challenges will likely require DASH to operate additional service, which may require additional resources such as operating funds or buses.
				35	Is DASH able to provide modified service on certain routes for small windows (2 hours for example) and otherwise not change a route outside of those windows?	This is something that will be considered as part of the route coverage analysis. DASH already operates additional trips on Lines 31, 35 and 36A/B during school arrival/dismissal times, including some that do not follow the standard route alignments.
				36	What is the greatest challenge that DASH sees in attempting to serve people who need to arrive at school by a fixed hour in the morning? What would best help them reliably deliver that service?	The biggest challenges will likely be providing adequate capacity to transport such a larger number of students in a short period of time, and meeting the disparate needs of students who dont live near existing DASH routes. DASH is working with ACPS staff to evaluate the extent of these challenges and identify potential solutions. These challenges will likely require DASH to operate additional service, which may require additional resources such as operating funds or buses.
Accessibility	13	How many high school students receive any form of accommodation (in amenities or in timing) to affiliate their access to ACPS?	Response forthcoming.	37	Will DASH be used to transport students who have specialized services?	DASH provides public transit services that are accessible to many riders, including students; however, accommodating students with disabilities may require additional considerations. While DASH buses are equipped with accessibility features such as wheelchair ramps and priority seating, certain special accommodations, such as harnesses or specific medical supports, may not be available. If DASH were to expand its accommodations, it might need to modify policies, adjust vehicle configurations, or introduce new training for operators. However, there may still be limitations on what DASH can reasonably provide, given that it operates as a general public transit service rather than a specialized student transportation provider. In other cities, a hybrid approach is often used, where some students with disabilities ride public transit while others continue to use school-provided transportation based on their specific needs.
				38	How many DASH riders use the system that would identify as having a physical or other disability (blind, deaf, limited mobility, mental health or development challenge). This is likely challenging to track but if DASH has any data. I have observed people in al of those categories on the bus but only have my personal anecdotal perspective.	
Ridership		Is there any guidance from an educational performance perspective about how long a student should or shouldn't be in transit to school?	Response forthcoming.	39	What percentage of DASH ridership is already riders under the age of 18?	DASH estimates that there are 2,200 students boarding their buses daily. A recent DASH onboard survey found that roughly 8 percent of all DASH riders were 18 years or younger, however, the survey was not given to any riders who appeared to be 13 years or younger so the actual percentage is likely significantly higher.
	14	How many high school students do not generally arrive via bus?				

	What is the most comment challenge to high school situation? Shortage of drivers? Shortage of busses? Behavior incidents on the bus? Bullying on the bus? Crime or drug related issues on the bus? Children missing the bus?	Response forthcoming.
Community Engagement 15	Will families be allowed to provide feedback and input? Will there be surveying, with an effort to reach a diverse range of parents? Will community partners such as the Alexandria Police Department and Alexandria Sheriff's office be asked for feedback?	Whenever we consider adjustments to services, we actively involve all stakeholders in the process—including those who may be impacted and our public safety partners. Their input is valued and carefully considered before any decisions are made.

ATTACHMENT #4

