

Questions and Answers

on the Washtenaw Transportation Consolidation Design

February 2, 2010

At the request of its ten public school districts, Washtenaw Intermediate School District is coordinating an effort to develop a countywide consolidated transportation model.

1. What is the Washtenaw Transportation Consolidation Design?
Our schools are designing a model, in cooperation with Washtenaw Intermediate School District, which will allow school leaders to determine if consolidating transportation services will meet the needs of our students and district.
2. Why is it being done?
Over the last several years, we have cut budgets and consolidated services while striving to maintain the quality of educational programming. But, with the current fiscal and political pressures challenging our schools today, we need to find additional ways to cut costs.
3. What is the goal?
The goal is to maintain the quality and safety of transportation services while creating a more efficient, consolidated operation that will generate cost savings in the 18%-25% range.
4. How will savings be realized?
Savings will be gained through:
 - standardization of buses, fuel systems, processes and supplies
 - centralization of facilities, administration and overhead
 - optimization of routing, staging, inventory strategies and industry best practices, and
 - budgetary control of compensation and benefits.
5. Which districts are participating?
All of the public school districts in Washtenaw County: Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Lincoln, Manchester, Milan, Saline, Whitmore Lake, Willow Run and Ypsilanti have agreed to participate in this design phase.
6. Who is doing the design work?
The design work will be carried out by facilitated teams of individuals from the school districts in Washtenaw County. It will be coordinated by consultants from Xavier Leadership Center of Xavier University in Ohio and Transportation Strategies of Indiana.
7. Who are the consultants?
They are nationally known experts from Xavier Leadership Center of Xavier University in Ohio and Transportation Strategies LLC of Indiana. They have worked with school districts in several states including Indiana, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio. They presented at the Michigan Association of School Administrators Fall 2009 Conference. And, locally, they have been doing some work for the Ann Arbor Public Schools.
8. Will district employees have input into the process?
Yes. Facilitated teams of individuals from the school districts in Washtenaw County will be part of the design process.
9. If a district participates in the design phase, does that mean it has already made the final decision to consolidate its transportation services?
No. Once the design phase is completed, each district's board of education will have an opportunity to review and decide if the district is going to participate.
10. What happens if my district chooses not to participate?
Your board of education will have to answer this question.
11. What's the difference between this and privatization?

This model is being developed as a potential alternative to privatization of school transportation services. Under this model, the transportation staff could remain as public school employees. Under a privatization model, the staff would not be public school employees.

12. Who will employ the staff?

Various employment options will be examined. They could be employed by one agency throughout the county instead of by individual school districts.

13. How much money will this save the schools?

Depending on the timeline for implementation, number of participating districts and other considerations, the consolidation model could save nearly \$6 million per year, countywide.

14. How will the design phase be conducted?

The consultants will work with local transportation staff to develop a county-wide: routing plan, maintenance system, management and support system, resulting in a proposed consolidated transportation network.

15. Will the same agency handle transportation for the entire county?

Under this consolidation model, potentially one agency would coordinate transportation for all the districts.

16. How will this impact students?

If a student currently rides the bus, he or she will still be picked up at the designated bus stop and returned to the designated bus stop at the end of the day.

17. Will this new system be safe?

Yes, the consolidated transportation network will be safe and efficient. As required by law, it will operate under state transportation rules and standards. And, Washtenaw Intermediate School District will continue to provide comprehensive beginner and advanced bus driver training.

18. When will the design phase be completed?

The Washtenaw Transportation Consolidation Design will be completed before the end of this school year.

19. If approved, when will it start?

If approved, the model could be implemented in the Fall of 2010.

20. Where can I get more information?

Contact the superintendent's office.