

BPS Transportation Ideas Over the Years

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A Suggestion from Spring 2019

METCO:

- METCO could be limited by income. Boston students who participated would not be middle or high income. Suburban students could go to schools in Boston if they were middle or high income and in grades K1-grade 6. High income students could go to the Boston Schools from the suburbs outside of Boston in equal numbers to low income students from Boston going to suburban schools outside of Boston.
- If this happened, then suburban districts would be giving BPS money to educate their students. The district would have less of an enrollment loss which would help the district financially including adding more money to the transportation budget.

Suggestions from Winter 2019

BPS working with METCO:

With METCO being open to changes in their admissions policy it got me thinking about how METCO transportation, BPS transportation and school assignment for both METCO and BPS could work together better.

- METCO could transport their students to the school communities closest to their homes to reduce transportation costs.
- METCO could prioritize assignments to students living in the neighborhoods with the lowest access to high tier public seats. BPS could share this data with METCO.

Suggestions from Fall 2018

- The bus drivers for Boston schools are requesting bus monitors on all buses. Monitors could be paid for by some of the new state funds that are intended for school safety. If more buses had monitors it would be less likely that safety issues would happen on a bus. That could possibly save money by having less bus drivers on suspension (from not handling safety issues well) but still receiving a paycheck. This could possibly not be a significant cost to the district as less substitute bus drivers would be needed.

This could be set up with having the safety department have a fund that would pay for needed monitors. They could be subs that could ride on buses where they are most needed. If there was an emergency need a new monitor could be added the next day or even the same day. There could also be some monitors that could be on call subs.

- My daughter travels 40 minutes on the bus each day. I am planning on picking her up three days after school. If I had a good reason to pick her up all the days that would save on transportation costs for the district. If many students did that perhaps a few less buses would be needed in the afternoon. For me having a staff person walk my daughter and friends to the library or an art class would make the difference. Creating after school options that would go just long enough so that a parent could do a pickup instead of putting their child on a bus is worth considering. Not all families want their kids to be in afterschool for hours, or on the bus for long rides. An in between option might save some money on transportation and also work for more families.

A big question to ask is **where should savings come from in the transportation budget?** If it is from school assignment how can this happen without causing segregation?

Thinking about equity in School Assignment:

http://ljgraf.com/BPS/More_Equity_in_School_Assignment.pdf

Possible priorities for school assignment:

This approach would give some groups a higher priority. It is another approach to consider.

1. When possible have neighborhoods that are near one another with different racial backgrounds, and/or economic backgrounds go to the same school. Then the travel time would be less, but the schools would still be more diverse. This idea came from Josh Weiss in 2013.
2. It is hard to tell the backgrounds of families when they first take part in the BPS lottery. However, there is information about how different students perform from different neighborhoods who are already enrolled in BPS. Perhaps there can be a priority for students from neighborhoods with a high achievement gap to have a higher priority for getting into a high performing school.

Suggestions from Summer 2018

- Provide more housing for students experiencing homelessness. For students who live far away, it might be cost neutral to provide closer housing, and closer transportation.

- See if it is possible to have some out of district placements, brought back into Boston by satellite campuses of popular schools, or simply serving students needs better so an out of district placement is not necessary.
- Cutting down on door to door service is reasonable as long as it is voluntary (I.E.P.s would not change so families could return to door to door service at any time) and appropriate for the student, and any benefits to cost savings go directly into the special education budget.
- Currently it is more cost effective to use diesel school buses than electric school buses. When that starts to change one interesting solution would be to place windmills in Widett Circle. Electricity created could be used to run Boston's school buses.

Lower Tier Schools

Who gets assigned to the lower tier schools? If it is the students closest to those schools, then those students don't have a chance of getting into a higher tier school. No one wants to travel a long distance to a low-tier school. But no one also wants to travel a short distance to a lower tier school either. These schools need equal or additional resources for families to consider sending their kids there.

Suggestions from Winter 2017-2018

Target affordable housing for the Allston Brighton Area so that the schools in that area do not need to transport students as far. Families with students who go to the school could get priority for that housing.

Suggestions from Spring 2017

Dead time

- To help dead time between the morning and afternoon routes, have busses park in MBTA bus yards where this would save time. The yards would largely be empty in the daytime and might be a way to save money on fuel for transportation, as well as a small source of revenue for the MBTA.
- See if some buses could park at the schools where the next school pickup would happen. The buses with the longest trips could have priority for parking.

- Ask Parents if there is parking they could offer during the day for middle of the day parking.

Bus Routing

- Ask Parents for suggestions on bus stops. Suggest that parents consider stops where their child can wait for the bus with a friend, or a stop that is more convenient for them like a place of work (if it is within a school's zone). Or where the students have before or after school childcare or activities (if it is within a school's zone). Perhaps a map could be made for each school so parents could see this map to get ideas.
- Consider for some routes having an express location at the end of the route. Parents would have the option to have this be their child's bus stop. Parents could be asked for ideas on where express bus stops would be useful. This would be helpful for parents who work nearer to their child's school. It would be appreciated by parents because a shorter bus trip feels like a safer bus trip.
- Offer families other bus routes as options. Let them at least get a list of the express stops available for each school.
- Add possible stops at all childcare locations in Boston that are within a school's zone. Parents would know in advance that this could be a bus stop. The family would only need to notify transportation that this would be a stop for their child.
- Allow families to choose a school that is an undersubscribed school that is outside of their home zone if they are willing to take care of transportation costs themselves.

Bus Safety

- Have bus buddies set up between kids on the bus so no children are isolated and easier to bully.
- Have some bus cost savings go to more monitors.
- Have a goal to have at least one monitor per bus. Try to have each bus have the same percentage of students on IEPs and 504 plans to divide monitors better.
- Don't have different schools share buses unless it is requested by school communities. If there are problems between students on the bus it is easier to resolve them by mediating at a shared school.
- If a student has serious behavior problems assign them a one on one monitor or if that is not possible assign the bus a monitor. Be careful of not pairing victims

of abuse with a student who has harmed them. Find a solution to have victims of abuse not have to ride with a perpetrator.

- Sell bus cameras to gain more funds to pay for monitors.

Questions:

- Are commuter rail passes available for families in place of bus service for long commutes? If a parent has a plan (commuter rail, cab, etc..) that would cost less than BPS bus service could BPS fund that instead? This could be offered only to families with current BPS bus service.
- How are Private Sped students transported currently? What vehicles are used and how many students ride in these vehicles? How many routes do these vehicles have a day?
- I would also like to know more about where homeless students are being bused from. Are they mainly in Boston or in suburbs of Boston? I am wondering if a vehicle could transport a homeless student to school and then drive a student with special education needs to a private school in the suburbs next.

Suggestions from 2016

Offer families a financial incentive to take their kids to school to cut down on transportation costs. Offer those families a free t-pass for themselves and their children (if needed). Allow families to apply for schools outside their home area that are level 3 or 4 schools if they agree to provide transportation for their kids. Some families might work near a school so this could be a convenience and not a burden. For parents who have door to door service but would prefer to drive their child to school perhaps there could be a benefit for families like cash for gas each month.