



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Dear Commissioner Gore,

Thank you for submitting ANC 3/4G's 14 recommendations to OSSE to improve student transportation services in the District of Columbia. We have given great consideration to your suggestions. Please find our responses to each in turn below.

1. Provide gas and rideshare gift certificates to impacted families.

We appreciate this recommendation and consulted with OCFO about this possibility. OCFO informed us that this practice did not meet their financial standards for preventing waste, fraud, and abuse. Therefore, we are unable to effectuate this recommendation.

2. Work with families who need to be reimbursed to fill out the paperwork and get the money to them as soon as possible.

We appreciate this recommendation and find it persuasive. We will implement virtual sessions for families to assist them in filling out the parent reimbursement forms.

3. Hold harmless in performance evaluations the teachers, staff and schools who are losing countless instructional hours with their students because of buses.

OSSE plays no role in teacher evaluations (this is managed by LEAs) and therefore cannot effectuate this recommendation.

4. Investigate exactly why this situation has happened and hold those in OSSE leadership positions accountable.

We appreciate this recommendation and have effectuated its intent.

5. Come up with a plan to address the loss of special education and related service provider services to students due to bus delays or no-shows.

OSSE maintains multiple processes to address this issue, and we are committed to continuing to address loss of special education and related services as appropriate. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that individualized education plan (IEP) teams determine whether or not a student's missed services amount to a denial of a free appropriate education (FAPE), requiring make-up services to be provided to the student. OSSE-DOT is in communication with LEAs to provide guidance on supporting the delivery of make-up services in instances where IEP teams make this determination.

6. Provide a timeline to parents about the resolution of the late and down routes.

As shown in the table below, OSSE has made great strides in reducing late and canceled routes, and we will continue to strive to deliver timely student transportation services.

Date (Week Of)	% On Time	Average # of Late Morning Routes	Average # of Late Afternoon Routes	Average # of Routes Not Services
Jan. 9	N/A	N/A	N/A	12
Jan. 16	82%	99	24	3
Jan. 23	84%	91	23	
Jan. 30	84%	90	5	0
Feb. 6	88%	65	4	0
Feb. 13	91%	53	5	0
Feb. 20 (DCPS Closed)	99%	3	0	0
Feb. 27	91%	46	1	0
Mar. 6	94%	32	7	0
Mar. 13	94%	34	9	0
Mar. 20	96%	22	7	0
Mar. 27	96%	24	18*	0
Apr. 3	93%	38	7	0

* A medical emergency occurred at one of our terminals

7. Implement a software application similar to those used in surrounding counties where parents and students can track the school transportation vehicles so they can tell when the buses or vans are coming or if they are coming at all.

We appreciate this recommendation. We are in the middle of a multi-year plan to effectuate this recommendation.

8. When transportation is going to be earlier or later than its scheduled window, make sure drivers can communicate that information directly to families/ caregivers/students via phone and/or text based on student/guardians preference.

We appreciate this recommendation. In February 2023, we instituted a pilot program to have bus personnel text 200 families on route to picking their students up. The initial phase of the pilot was successful, so we announced an expansion of the program to 800 additional families, beginning on April 24, 2023. With further success, we will continue to expand this program.

9. Allow drivers to communicate directly with the schools they are serving to let

the school personnel know about delays and schedule changes.

We appreciate this recommendation. The Parent Resource Center currently notifies schools who are impacted by delayed routes through our messaging system. If there are individual staff at the school level who wish to be added to the notification list, they should notify their LEA manager.

10. Require ESY (Extended School Year) planning to be made public earlier so families, caregivers, and students can plan their lives.

We appreciate this recommendation. LEAs and schools are required to submit to OSSE-DOT student transportation request forms as well as school calendars. The transportation request forms are the official request from the LEA to OSSE-DOT that provides us the information necessary (AM/PM service address, attending school, frequency of services, etc.) to plan and schedule the routes for the upcoming school term. Currently, we are working with our LEAs to submit this information earlier, which, if successful, would allow OSSE-DOT to route students and share transportation schedules sooner with families and schools. In sum, we are currently working toward meeting this recommendation and will continue to do so.

11. Create calendars to be shared directly with parents/guardians/students receiving transportation services that clearly communicate when OSSE will and won't be providing transportation services before the beginning of the new school year so families, caregivers and students can make alternative arrangements on days when there is school and no transportation service.

We appreciate this recommendation and find it persuasive. We will announce a ride schedule before the start of school year 2023-24. For your awareness, OSSE-DOT will observe holidays according to the District of Columbia Department of Human Resources (DCHR) Holiday [Schedule](#). Furthermore, whenever a legal public holiday falls on a non-work day, the holiday shall be the Monday right after a legal public holiday occurring on Sunday, or the Friday immediately before a legal public holiday occurring on a Saturday.

12. Ensure that student drivers are properly vetted and make the vetting process transparent for students, guardians, and DCPS.

OSSE requires bus drivers to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with Passenger (P) and School Bus (S) endorsements. In addition, drivers must hold certification in CPR and first aid. Prior to employment, perspective drivers undergo drug testing and criminal background checks. Please further note that the bus driver who was involved in a crash and subsequent arrest in October 2022 was not connected to, or affiliated with, OSSE's transportation services.

13. Create an incentive program to attract and hire more bus drivers who are so desperately needed.

We appreciate this recommendation. We currently maintain a \$5,000 hiring incentive program to attract more bus drivers for hire, and we recently finalized a new collective bargaining agreement with our bus drivers to increase salaries and maintain strong benefits. In addition, we were recently approved as Training Provider through the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to certify CDL drivers, and we will begin our first cohort this summer. We will continue to seek ways to attract and hire more bus drivers to address and prevent staffing shortages.

14. The ANC also supports the recommendations to fully fund OSSE to resolve its driver issues and attendant shortages put forth in Councilmember Matthew Frumin's FY23 Budget Request for Ward 3.

This is not a recommendation that OSSE can take action upon, so we do not have a response to this enumerated recommendation.

Sincerely,
Andrew Gall
Deputy Chief of Staff, Legislative Affairs & Policy
Office of the State Superintendent of Education