

Support Services – Transportation

This chapter addresses transportation services as reviewed by the Office of Educational Quality & Accountability. It is divided into these sections:

- A. Introduction & Background
- B. Organization and Staffing
- C. Policies and Procedures
- D. Management
- E. Vehicle Maintenance and Replacement

A. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The primary objective of school transportation is to provide safe, timely, and efficient transportation services to students. School districts collectively operate the safest form of transportation in the country and, per the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration school buses are safer than any other form of public or private mode of transportation. Students are nearly 50 times more likely to get to and from school safely when riding school buses instead of riding in cars because school buses are built with crash-safety features unmatched by any other type of commuter vehicle. They also help ameliorate some of the adverse environmental effects of mass automobile commute – each school bus that is student-filled replaces 36 cars in America, saving over two billion gallons of fuel and nearly 45 billion pounds of carbon dioxide emissions each year.¹

The Oklahoma School Code (OSC) authorizes school districts to provide student transportation services between school and home, from school to career and technology location, and for approved extracurricular activities. The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* requires districts to provide transportation services to students who must travel to receive special education services, if they provide regular school transportation services.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) provides some funding for regular transportation of students who live more than 1.5 miles from the assigned school. Oklahoma school districts receive a transportation supplement that is calculated based upon a per capita allowance, the district's student density, and the number of students who live more than 1.5 miles from school (considered the average daily haul or ADH). These factors are multiplied by a state funding figure of \$1.39 (transportation factor), a figure that has not been updated since 1988.

This level of funding does not begin to support all transportation expenses in a typical Oklahoma school district. In general, the state transportation supplement provides just 16 percent of the funding needed to operate a district transportation program. Thus, every dollar saved in a school

¹ National Highway Transportation Safety Administration – <http://www.nhtsa.gov/>

district’s transportation program can instead be spent in other district programs, including classroom instruction.

The Oklahoma Department of Public Safety requires bus drivers to obtain a specialized bus driver’s license. The SDE requires bus drivers to obtain bus driver certification and training and to pass a license history review. Cleveland Public Schools conducts criminal background checks on all new employees and annually evaluates the motor vehicle records of the personnel who drive school vehicles. New bus drivers also must pass an alcohol and drug test. Random drug tests are administered throughout the year.

Oklahoma Public Schools transportation departments provide route and extracurricular transportation for its students. Approximately 7,600 school buses travel more than 67 million miles a year, carrying nearly 369,000 children every day. **Exhibit 5C-1** provides an example of a medium-sized (1,000-1,999 student enrollment) district’s bus fleet usage.

**Exhibit 5C-1
Example Bus Fleet Usage**

Bus Type	Number	% of Fleet
Regular	20	80%
Special Education	5	20%
Total	25	

Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Exhibit 5C-2 provides a breakdown of the fleet, support vehicles, and equipment of the selected sample district. It is noted that of the five special needs buses, four are being used as regular routed buses, which is not uncommon among districts due to limited funding for transportation.

Exhibit 5C-2
Sample District Bus Fleet, Support Vehicles, and Equipment

Inventory #	Year	Make/Model
1	1995	International
2	1999	Bluebird
3	1999	Bluebird
4	2001	Bluebird
5	2001	Bluebird
6	2001	Bluebird
7	2002	Bluebird
8	2002	Bluebird
9	2004	Bluebird
10	2004	Bluebird
11	2004	International
12	2004	International
13	2005	International
14	2005	International
15	2006	International
16	2006	*International (Lift Bus)
17	2009	International
18	2010	International
19	2010	International
20	2010	International
21	2010	International
22	2012	International
23	2012	International
24	2012	International
25	2015	International
26	1970	Chevy Truck
27	1992	Ford Dump Truck
28	1998	Cargo Van
29	2001	Chevy Suburban
30	2001	Ford Pickup
31	2009	Chevy Pickup
32	2010	Ford Escape XLS
33	2010	Ford Escape XLS
34	2011	Chevy Suburban
35	2012	Ford Van
36	2012	Chevy Pickup
37	2000	Utility Trailer
38	2004	Stock Trailer
39	2008	24' Elite Trailer
40	2013	Wells Cargo Trailer
41	2014	Stock Trailer

Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Districts employ Oklahoma CDL certified drivers to operate school buses. Of these drivers there are only a few that are certified with an “Air Brake” endorsement. Again, this is partly due to financial limitations within the transportation department of most districts.

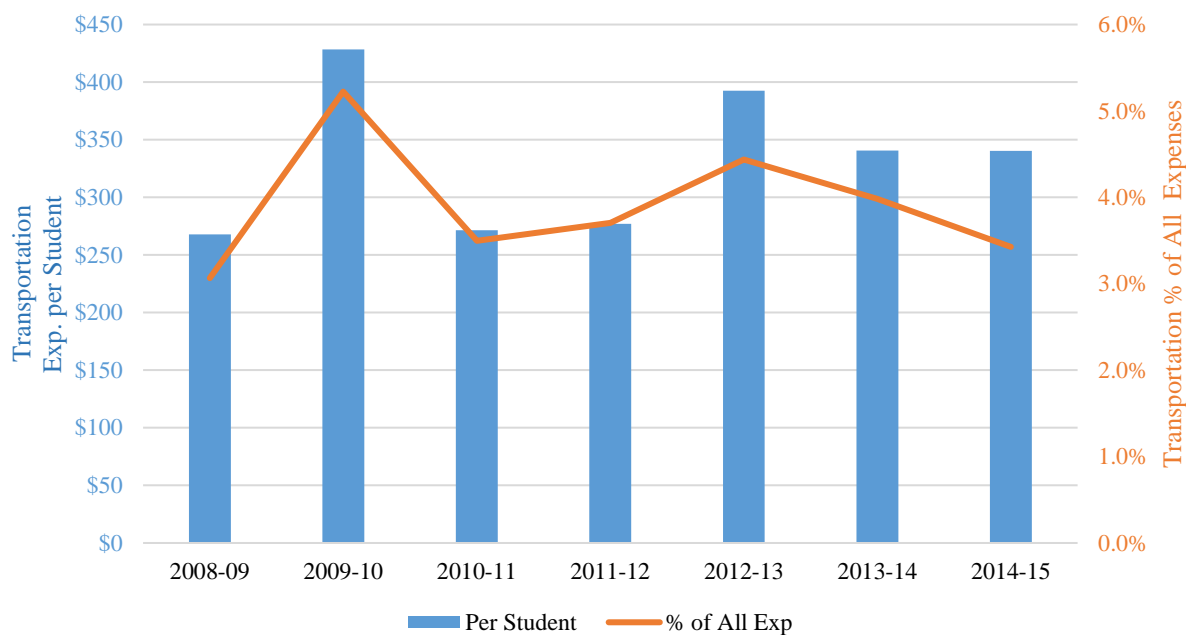
Drivers, contracted or substitute, maintain a current Oklahoma Commercial Driver’s License, with the proper endorsements and must report any moving violations to a district’s superintendent or director of transportation.

Districts’ transportation departments should maintain and file driving records that comply with the Oklahoma State Department of Public Safety. The department maintains these records for the duration of the school year and for anyone driving a district vehicle.

Before the start of each school year and before any drivers are permitted to drive a school bus, drivers must submit to a full license review. The district’s transportation department then reviews the licenses for proper endorsement and infraction history. Some district’s transportation policy mandates that any traffic infraction must be reported to the director of transportation immediately.

Exhibit 5C-3 provides a seven-year comparison of a sample district’s transportation expenditures as a percent of total expenditures as well as the annual transportation expenditures per student. Over that period, transportation expenses have ranged from 3.1 percent to 5.2 percent of all expenditures. Transportation dollars per student have varied from \$268 per student in 2008-09 to \$428 in 2009-10.

Exhibit 5C-3
Trend in Sample District's Transportation Expenses



Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Exhibit 5C-4 compares a small-sized (ADM under 1,000) sample district's transportation costs over time. The exhibit includes all transportation expenses by category. In the past five years, almost every category of transportation spending has increased substantially. This has resulted in a near doubling of total transportation expenses. **Exhibit 5C-5** and **Exhibit 5C-6** provide trend information for a medium-size district (ADM under 10,000) and for a large-size district (ADM over 10,000) respectively.

Exhibit 5C-4
Trend in Sample District (Small-size) Transportation Operating Costs

Expenditure Category	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Percent Change
Salaries	\$18,300	\$21,067	\$26,240	\$28,240	\$29,614	61.8%
Benefits	\$3,529	\$4,017	\$4,982	\$5,820	\$6,150	74.3%
Purchased Services	\$26,383	\$26,602	\$28,723	\$25,139	\$219,140	730.6%
Supplies	\$44,616	\$31,637	\$36,348	\$28,904	\$24,901	(44.2%)
Property	\$7,048	\$4,500	\$0	\$222,054	\$0	(100.0%)
Other	\$289	\$135	\$689	\$112	\$3,031	948.8%
Total	\$100,165	\$87,958	\$96,982	\$310,399	\$282,836	182.4%
Annual Percent Change		(12.2%)	10.3%	220.1%	(8.9%)	

Source: SDE, OCAS, School District Expenditures

**Exhibit 5C-5
Trend in Sample District (Medium-size) Transportation Operating Costs**

Expenditure Category	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Percent Change
Salaries	\$228,599	\$229,245	\$241,801	\$219,129	\$208,244	(8.9%)
Benefits	\$57,878	\$54,214	\$56,452	\$56,269	\$52,840	(8.7%)
Purchased Services	\$56,454	\$61,802	\$59,773	\$94,369	\$109,791	94.5%
Supplies	\$176,955	\$143,373	\$130,699	\$79,407	\$90,662	(48.8%)
Property	\$148,700	\$69,956	\$74,703	\$0	\$98,446	(33.8%)
Other	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$160	\$249	896.0%
Total	\$668,611	\$558,615	\$563,453	\$449,334	\$461,884	(39.9%)
Annual Percent Change		(16.5%)	0.9%	(20.3%)	2.8%	

Source: SDE, OCAS, School District Expenditures

**Exhibit 5C-6
Trend in Sample District (Large-size) Transportation Operating Costs**

Expenditure Category	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Percent Change
Salaries	\$3,631,077	\$ 3,645,202	\$ 3,623,465	\$ 3,601,820	\$ 3,571,566	(1.6%)
Benefits	\$1,556,255	\$ 1,635,864	\$1,598,365	\$1,362,945	\$ 1,467,569	(5.7%)
Purchased Services	\$227,821	\$ 214,425	\$219,166	\$324,079	\$ 258,725	13.6%
Supplies	\$ 979,741	\$ 984,243	\$914,892	\$ 593,394	\$ 653,995	(33.2%)
Property	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$ 5,208	\$0	0%
Other	\$ 9,448	\$ 8,207	\$ 8,758	\$ 8,844	\$ 8,671	(8.2%)
Total	\$6,404,342	\$6,487,941	\$6,364,646	\$5,896,290	\$5,960,526	(6.9%)
Annual Percent Change		1.3%	(1.9%)	(5.4%)	1.1%	

Source: SDE, OCAS, School District Expenditures

Exhibit 5C-7 compares the cost efficiency of a medium-size sample district’s transportation operations with its peers. Although the daily cost per rider can be negatively affected by factors beyond the control of the transportation department, a low cost may reflect a more efficient department. The sample district’s cost per rider was in line with the peer average.



Exhibit 5C-7
Comparison of Cost per Rider per Day

Entity	Total Annual Operating Cost ²	ADH	Attendance Days	Overall Cost per Rider per Day
Sample District	\$488,750	1,158	175	\$2.41
Sample Peer 1	\$177,928	694	169	\$1.52
Sample Peer 2	\$630,411	1,277	170	\$2.90
Sample Peer 3	\$502,005	1,213	165	\$2.51
Sample Peer 4	\$532,137	1,000	174	\$3.06
Sample Peer 5	\$343,453	1,176	170	\$1.72
Peer Average	\$437,187	1,072	170	\$2.40

Source: SDE, OCAS, School District Expenditures

The consulting team calculated the cost per route mile for sample district and the peer districts in **Exhibit 5C-8**. As shown, the cost per mile was \$2.23, which was lower than all but one of the peers and lower than the peer average. A lower cost per mile generally indicates greater efficiency.

Exhibit 5C-8
Sample District and Peer Districts Annual Cost Per Mile

Entity	Total Annual Operating Cost ³	Activity Miles	Route Miles	Total Miles	Cost per Mile
Sample District	\$488,750	46,710	172,078	218,788	\$2.23
Sample Peer 1	\$177,928	36,568	33,986	70,554	\$2.52
Sample Peer 2	\$630,411	22,323	162,460	184,783	\$3.41
Sample Peer 3	\$502,005	126,832	129,177	256,009	\$1.96
Sample Peer 4	\$532,137	40,152	61,285	101,437	\$5.25
Sample Peer 5	\$343,453	27,135	110,653	137,788	\$2.49
Peer Average	\$437,187	50,602	99,512	150,114	\$2.91

Source: SDE, OCAS, School District Expenditures

B. ORGANIZATION & STAFFING

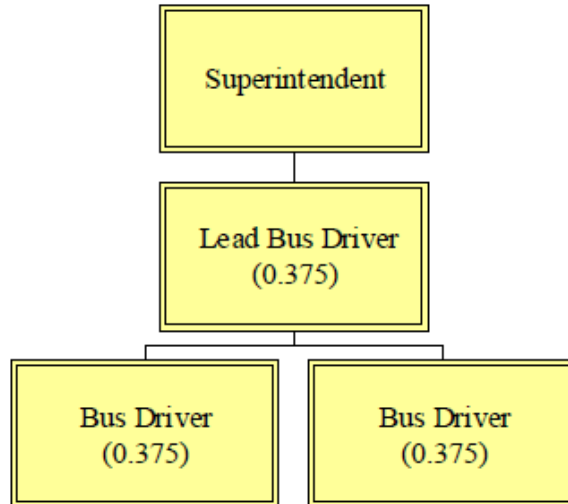
The management of student transportation does not differ from any other department in that it is incumbent upon management to select, organize, maintain, and adjust staff to meet demands. Establishing and reviewing action plans, training employees, and adopting new methods and technologies are part of the ongoing efforts required for a transportation department to be

² Excluding property expenses.

³ Excluding property expenses.

efficient and successful. **Exhibit 5C-9** shows an organization chart of a small-size rural district’s transportation department.

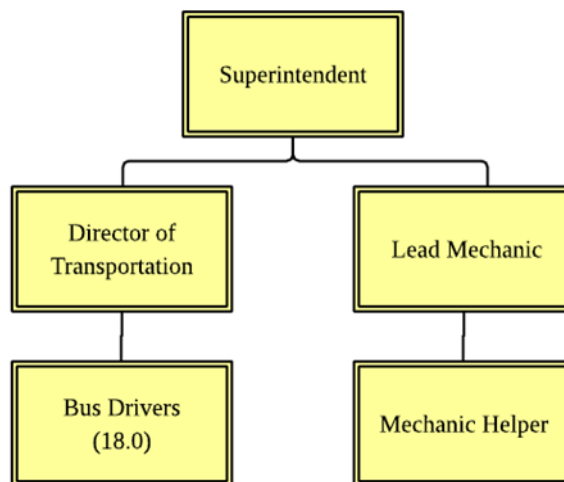
Exhibit 5C-9
Sample of a Small Rural School District’s Transportation Organization



Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Exhibit 5C-10 presents the transportation organization of a medium-size district. The sample district contracts bus drivers based on current needs and are not full-time. The transportation director and lead mechanic are FTE.

Exhibit 5C-10
Sample of a Medium-size Transportation Organization

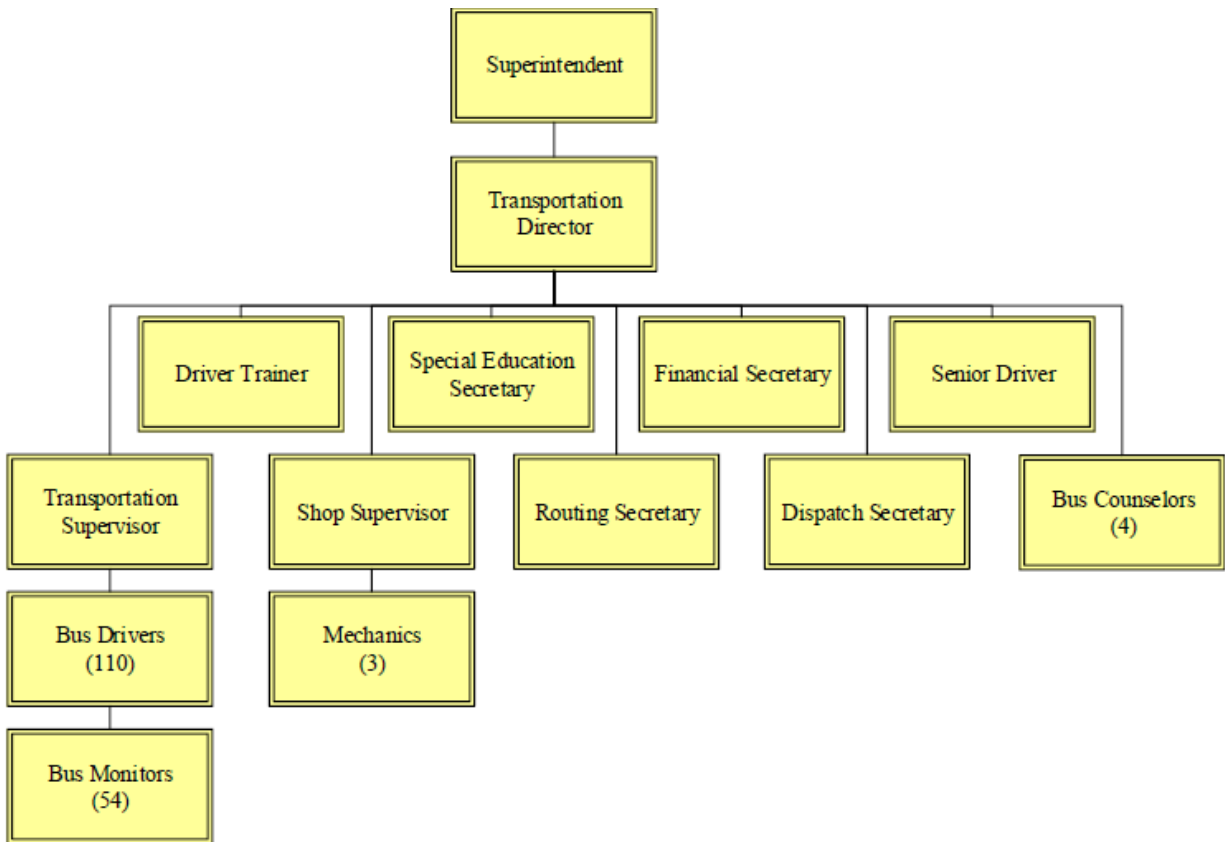


Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Exhibit 5C-11 presents a larger school district’s transportation organization. As shown, in addition to bus drivers, the department includes the typical transportation functions of:

- operations management (transportation supervisor, special education route secretary, and
- dispatch secretary);
- route planning (routing secretary);
- fleet management (shop supervisor); and
- business processes (financial secretary).
- the organization also includes a driver trainer, senior driver, and bus counselors

Exhibit 5C-11
Sample of A Large-Size School District’s Transportation Organization



Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

FINDING 5C-1

Districts’ transportation department leaders, regardless of size, report that they receive limited to no information regarding students with individual education plans (IEPs) who are transported on regular buses as well as on special education buses. Neither do they receive any training on students that may require special considerations due to their disability. During onsite visits, the consulting team did not find any information or information-sharing documents relating to students and transportation services.

The state average of special education students in Oklahoma is 15.8 percent of all students attending Oklahoma public schools. Of this 15.8 percent who have IEPs, many are transported daily on both regular and special services buses. During onsite visits, consulting teams requested information on students’ intervention strategies and general notations supplied to each driver. Due in part to privacy concerns this information was not readily available to the individual driver, nor was the transportation department certain if any students with exceptional needs were being transported on the regular buses. Bus drivers are only given limited, word-of-mouth explanations of a student’s situation with no formal instructions. The transportation department has no direct dialogue with the special education program about the students being transported;

rather, it merely receives and fulfills indirect transportation requests. Beyond this, bus drivers are not trained on specific techniques to manage special education students on an individual basis. The transportation department does not participate in the IEP meetings, and the transportation department does not have any direct input in the transportation related outcomes of the meetings.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide information, training, and intervention strategies from special education services to the transportation department for students' whose IEPs require transportation as a related service.

Whenever possible, children on an IEP should be transported with their nondisabled peers. However, the need for and type of transportation must be determined by the IEP team, consisting of a parent, special education teacher, general education teacher, and administrator. If the IEP team determines that transportation is a related service the child needs in order to access a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), then the service will be provided regardless of the distance the parent lives from school. *Since the IEP team is responsible for determining the necessity of providing transportation to the child as a related service, it is imperative that the transportation department of the school district be consulted in this decision.*⁴

The transportation director or a transportation department representative should attend all IEP meetings, as each student's individual program has a direct implication for the transportation department. The special education department should educate and debrief all drivers on a regular basis to report, plan, and review any issues a student is experiencing. The departments should work together to inform and educate all employees that may have direct interaction with special education students requiring transportation as a related service. The transportation department should receive a written intervention strategy for each special education student as well as peer monitoring from the special education department on a regular basis.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-2

Many transportation departments do not offer an information manual specific to the daily function of pupil transportation. Information is generally received by word of mouth or by means of historical practice. Bus drivers do not receive written procedures or instructions regarding job performance expectations. They are routinely unaware of policies in such areas as pupil transportation, tobacco use, cell phones, and student interaction.


Bus drivers are not given the SDE information guide, which outlines areas such as danger zones, loading and unloading, and emergency exits. This guidebook (**Exhibit 5C-12**), however, does not cover information specific to each individual district's transportation operational activities.

⁴ [https://sde.ok.gov/faqs/frequently-asked-questions-regarding-transfers-and-transportation-students-disabilities#Q:What is included in transportation for a child with a disability?](https://sde.ok.gov/faqs/frequently-asked-questions-regarding-transfers-and-transportation-students-disabilities#Q:What%20is%20included%20in%20transportation%20for%20a%20child%20with%20a%20disability?)

Exhibit 5C-12
SDE Transportation Department Manual

SECTION 10 – School Buses

- **Danger Zones and Use of Mirrors**
- **Loading and Unloading**
- **Emergency Exit and Evacuation**
- **Railroad-Highway Crossings**
- **Student Management**
- **Antilock Braking Systems**
- **Special Safety Considerations**



This section is for drivers who will be driving school buses.

Commercial Driver's Manual 10-1
First and CPR. Cool V6 Tech - Sept. 21st

Source: SDE Publication, November 2016

One large school district in the state has a robust training program for new drivers (**Exhibit 5C-13**) and a retraining program for existing drivers who need it (**Exhibit 5C-14**). This surpasses state requirements and contributes to a safer working environment.

Exhibit 5C-13
Lesson Plan for New Drivers

- pre-trip and post-trip (familiarization with switches and controls)
- air brake (exterior and interior)
- seatbelt
- mirror adjustments
- intersections (approach, signal, visual checks, lane position, speed)
- stopping (stop line, stop sign, crosswalk, gap)
- speed
- lane change (visual check, signal, interval)
- right turns (visual checks, signal, lane position, correct lane, speed)
- left turns (visual checks, signal, lane position, correct lane, speed)
- mirror usage (checks mirrors every 3 to 5 seconds)
- steering (position and smoothness)
- following distance (both +/- 40)
- 15 steps (loading and discharging)
- parking (uphill, downhill, roadside stop)
- turnabout
- railroad crossing (right lane, ambers, stop, distance, look, listen)
- bridges and overpasses (weight limit and clearance signs)
- right and left curves (stay in lane, speed)
- stall parking (signal, parallel to curb, 4-ways)
- unsafe acts (traffic violations, accidents, vehicle over sidewalks or curbs)

Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

**Exhibit 5C-14
Driver Retraining Check Sheet**

Retraining Check Sheet	
_____	: Name of Trainee _____
_____	: Date of accident _____
_____	: Date of retraining _____
_____	: Report to JL (written statement)
_____	: Driver meets with Director
_____	: Online School Bus course (GCN)
_____	: Check and tighten all mirrors with dots
_____	: Revisit the accident scene
_____	: Overall skill training (drive time)
_____	: Post Training Conference with driver
_____	: Submit all reports, papers to Director to put in drivers file
_____	: Trainee _____
_____	: Trainer _____
Director Section	
_____	: Review Training Process
_____	: Letter of Counsel Reprimand Plan of Improvement
_____	: File all papers
_____	: Director

Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

This district also provides its transportation employees with a 52-page handbook that covers all aspects of employment as well as directions on how to pick up and drop off students, road courtesy, and what to do in case of an accident. **Exhibit 5C-15** provides the table of contents for the transportation handbook.



**Exhibit 5C-15
Transportation Handbook Table of Contents**

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Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

RECOMMENDATION

Develop an operations manual specific to pupil transportation.

The transportation director should develop a bus driver’s manual that can be distributed during one of the mandated in-service meetings held twice each school year. The transportation director should brief and instruct employees as to the use and purpose of the driver’s manual so that employees understand the policies and procedures that govern the department. Drivers that receive ongoing information and instruction are equipped to better understand the district’s operational standing.

General topics covered in the manual should include:

- Mission Statement/Vision/Goals
- Organization Chart
- School Bus Operator Qualifications
- Driving Record Standards
- Operator Duties and Responsibilities
- Disciplinary Guidelines
- Student Conduct Form
- Student Management Techniques
- Cell Phone Use
- School Bus Idling
- Student Management Techniques
- Emergency Procedures
- Dress Code
- School Bus Crash/Accidents
- Incident Reporting Procedure
- Student Injuries and Illnesses
- Field Trips
- Bus Stops and Walk-to-Stop Distances
- Loading and Unloading Students
- Certificate of Absence
- Leave Request
- Employee Agreement Form
- 2016-2017 Payroll Schedule

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-3

Districts typically do not have an adequate number of cover drivers to substitute on bus runs in the absence of regular route drivers. The shortage of cover drivers results in the need for office and shop personnel to regularly serve as substitute drivers, which takes them away from their job

assignments and creates unnecessary overtime costs. One district has six cover drivers, but an average daily driver absenteeism rate of nine percent, which equates to 11 drivers based upon a total of 118 route drivers. This situation can cost the district with over-time expenditures.

In addition to the shortage of bus drivers created by absenteeism (including leave of absences), many transportation departments maintain an average of three to five unfilled bus routes throughout the school year.

RECOMMENDATION

Increase the number of cover drivers to be commensurate with the average rate of driver absenteeism.

This recommendation applies well for districts of all sizes, however, for districts with more than 10 routes it is crucial. For such districts the following fiscal impact statement that was included in a school performance review report for a large district should be examined for consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT

Considering the current starting driver pay, the amount for five drivers would be approximately \$56,020. It is projected that at \$10.61 per hour, the six-hour minimum guarantee to cover drivers and 176 school days, the cost to increase the cover driver pool by third-tier campus bell schedule is implemented, one-half of the cost of the additional five cover drivers could be absorbed by the cost savings realized due to the elimination of ten regular route drivers.

Recommendation	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Increase the number of cover drivers to be commensurate with the average rate of driver absenteeism.	(\$56,020)	(\$56,020)	(\$56,020)	(\$56,020)	(\$56,020)

FINDING 5C-4

As expressed in Finding 5C-3, transportation departments experience high volumes of absenteeism and is short staffed on a regular basis. This has been observed in almost every district in which OEQA has conducted a performance review. In many cases two or more drivers may be absent each day for a variety of reasons. Unfulfilled bus routes are usually assigned to the transportation director and part-time employees are assigned to other operational areas. During a few onsite visits, the transportation director had to cover bus runs in the morning and afternoon.

Whereas the previous recommendation for **Finding 5C-3** suggested increasing the pool of substitute drivers, this recommendation focuses on decreasing the absenteeism and retention.

RECOMMENDATION

Take steps to reduce driver absenteeism and then recruit and retain enough bus drivers.

Districts across the nation have experienced a high number of absences and shortages of bus drivers. One district in Louisville, KY initiated a pilot program that paid school bus drivers a bonus for perfect attendance each pay period. The transportation director of that district stated that absenteeism has decreased from a 10 percent rate to as low as 4 percent.⁵ Other district transportation directors express the importance of an environment of mutual respect between them and their drivers induces a positive morale and loyalty. Also, others state that fair and clearly stated policies regarding absenteeism supports a lower number of absences by drivers.

Driver recruitment should be ongoing, with the goal of having at least one or more substitute driver available each day to cover runs as needed. Driver recruitment tactics that have been successful in other districts include:

- requests through drivers (best way);
- contacts with local fire department and law enforcement;
- PTA contacts;
- flyers on cars in parking lots;
- newspaper ads;
- recruitment table at student enrollment (at schools);
- parked bus with recruitment banner/drivers with flyers;
- a finder's bonus;
- place posters around town;
- letters sent home with student riders;
- flyers door to door;
- ads in local gazettes/weekly free papers;
- billboards;
- positive news articles regarding school busing;
- church newsletters;

⁵ <http://www.schoolbusfleet.com/news/719468/district-cuts-school-bus-driver-absenteeism-with-attendance-bonuses>

- safety brochure sent home with students – also explains need for drivers; and
- recruitment table at local shopping center.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

C. POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & PLANNING

School board policies set the standard for administrative procedures created by transportation staff. Transportation policies should support a safe and economical operation. Although numerous state regulations govern transportation services, school districts have the flexibility to establish procedures that can enhance operations such as strategically setting bell schedules, designing more efficient routes and fostering sound maintenance procedures.

FINDING 5C-5

Districts allow buses to enter private property to pick up students, and then make a turnaround on that private property. While, in some cases, this is the safest method, and none of the stops appear to violate SDE regulations, it does take additional time and increases the risk of property damage to have a bus negotiate a turn-around.

Further, districts may not have a written agreement with property owners to limit the district's liability should one of the buses cause damage while on their property. A sample turn-around agreement is shown in **Exhibit 5C-16**.

**Exhibit 5C-16
Sample Bus Turnaround Agreement**

[] PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Address, City, State
Phone: Fax:

SCHOOL BUS TURN-AROUND APPLICATION FORM
(For School Bus Turn-Around on Private Property)

Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Date: _____

Legal Land Description: _____ Address: _____

City/Town: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Email: _____

We request that [] Public Schools consider turn-around service for the following students:

Name of Student(s)	Grade	School

Parent Comments: _____

The Board retains the right to review and change the conditions on an ongoing basis.

Please return the "SCHOOL BUS TURN-AROUND AGREEMENT FORM" to the bus driver, who will forward to the Transportation Office for approval.

TURN-AROUND SERVICE WILL ONLY BE OFFERED IF PRIVATE ROAD IS MAINTAINED (GRADED AND PLOWED) AND A SUFFICIENT TURN-AROUND IS PROVIDED.



Exhibit 5C-16 (continued)
Sample Bus Turn-Around Agreement

SCHOOL BUS TURN-AROUND AGREEMENT FORM

I/We, _____ and _____, acknowledge that we are the owner(s)
of the property hereinafter described: _____
(LEGAL LAND DESCRIPTION)

(ADDRESS/ BOX) (TOWN) (STATE) (POSTAL CODE)

I/We, acknowledge that we have granted permission to the Board to operate a school bus or school busses on our property for the purpose of pick-up/drop off child(ren) who are students in the [] Public Schools division.

WHEREAS the Parent/Guardian has requested that the board provide School Bus Turn-Around Service to the above noted Legal Land Description upon the terms and subject to the conditions herein stated.

WITNESSEED that the Parent/Guardian/Owner agree as follows:

1. To sign a school Bus Yard Turn-Around Agreement on a yearly basis;
2. To ensure that the private road is developed and maintained to a standard to accommodate regular school bus travel;
3. To ensure that a proper turn-around exists;
4. Failure to maintain the road and turn-around in an acceptable condition can result in withdrawal of service;

IN CONSIDERATION of the Agreement of the Board to transport the forenamed child(ren), we/I agree to indemnify and to save harmless _____ Public Schools, its agents, administrators, and employees from and against all claims, demands, losses, costs, damages, actions, and causes of action of any nature whatsoever arising out of any act or omission, in relation to any damage to the real property described herein or any personal property on the said real property, if any of such damages arise from the operation of any matter related to operation of the said school bus or school busses.

Signed this _____ day of _____, A.D. 20 _____.

Parent/Guardian

Witness

Owner if different from Parent/Guardian

Source: Created by Prismatic Services Inc.

RECOMMENDATION**Develop a district policy for the operation of school buses while on private property.**

Districts should not allow any new turn-arounds to be developed without the superintendent's prior approval. An acknowledgment/agreement document that limits the district's liability should be developed and implemented between the landowners and the district for the current turnarounds.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-6

Districts have little or no formalized training programs that provide information and instruction to student bus riders in the early elementary grades. Districts cannot assume that young elementary students have an understanding of the potential hazards associated with the loading, riding, and unloading of school buses.

RECOMMENDATION**Implement a student bus rider training program for Pre-K through third grade.**

The training program should be based upon the current safety and behavior requirements of the district. The district should work with bus drivers and school principals to provide a program aimed at improving bus rider safety. The program should be informative, entertaining, and target Pre-K through third grade students. The program should include actual practice of the desired behaviors and safety practices.

There are several resources available from which to draw additional information for the safety program, including:

- National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services - www.nasdpts.org;
- National Association for Pupil Transportation - www.napt.org;
- Glenn Graphics Safety Posters - www.glenngraphics.com; and
- Pupil Transportation Safety Institute - www.ptsi.org.

The consulting team noted the absence of child safety restraint systems (CSRS) on all of the buses. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration²⁵ and the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures Manual⁶ recommend the use of CSRS for all preschool age children under the age of five years old. There are several businesses that

⁶ <http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/SpecsProcedures.pdf>

specialize in meeting the CSRS needs of school districts. A review of options to implement CSRS in the future should occur.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-7

Prior to the beginning of the school year, the bus drivers do not pre-drive routes to confirm any changes and/or additions, check for safety issues, or determine efficiency. Transportation directors may assign drivers a “Run Sheet” before the start of school year but this does not mandate an exact plan to pre-drive a route.

The SDE recommends regular checks of bus routes. **Exhibit 5C-17** provides a portion of the SDE bus evaluation form.

**Exhibit 5C-17
Oklahoma School Bus Route Evaluation Form, Page 2**

Revised August 2016

Oklahoma State Department of Education -- 2500 North Lincoln Boulevard -- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105--4599

EVALUATION: School Bus Stop Areas for Student Pickup/Discharge

School district personnel may use this form for evaluating local school bus route service to assure all conditions are the safest possible for student school bus transportation. *(Do not submit to the SDE.)*

Date: _____ City: _____ District Name: _____

Person Conducting Evaluation: _____ Bus Number: _____

Route: _____ Bus Stop Location: _____

Use the answers to the following questions to guide you in determining the best bus stop location for your students. Very few school bus stops will comply with all of the ideal characteristics listed below. In spite of that, attempt to balance the conditions of each stop to provide the optimum level of safety.

Ideally the following answers will be yes;

1. Does this bus stop location allow all approaching drivers a **clear vision area** of at least 500 feet, about 1 ½ blocks, to allow traffic to stop safely? _____
2. Is there a **vehicle pull-out** area at this bus stop location? _____
3. Is the designated student waiting area a **safe distance from traffic**? _____
4. Is this bus stop area **well-lighted**? _____
5. Are **signs** posted to advise motorists of a school bus stop area? _____
6. Is the **speed limit posted** at/near this bus stop area? _____

Ideally the following answers will be no;

7. Is this bus stop area at/near a busy **intersection**? How close? _____
8. Does the bus stop area have a **registered sex-offender** living within 2000 feet of a school bus stop area? _____
9. Do the students have to **cross a street** to board or exit the bus at this location? _____
10. Do students have to cross **multiple-lane streets** to get to the bus stop area? _____
11. Is there evidence of **illegal drug or gang activity** near this school bus stop? _____



Exhibit 5C-17 (continued)
Oklahoma School Bus Route Evaluation Form, Page 2

Revised August 2016

Oklahoma State Department of Education --- 2500 North Lincoln Boulevard --- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105---4599

EVALUATION: Traffic and Road Condition

School district personnel may use this form for evaluating local school bus routes to assure all conditions are the safest possible for student school bus transportation. This report should be shared with local city and county road authorities as needed. *(Do not submit to the SDE.)*

Date: _____ City: _____ District Name: _____

Person Conducting Evaluation: _____ Bus Number: _____

Route: _____ Bus Stop Location(s): _____

1. Traffic flow on this route. Morning: Light _____ Moderate _____ Heavy _____ Varies _____
 Afternoon: Light _____ Moderate _____ Heavy _____ Varies _____

Comments: _____

2. Condition of roads on this route.

Dirt Roads: Poor _____ Fair _____ Good _____ Comments: _____

Location: _____

Gravel Roads: Poor _____ Fair _____ Good _____ Comments: _____

Location: _____

Paved Roads: Poor _____ Fair _____ Good _____ Comments: _____

Location: _____

3. Additional hazardous road surface conditions and locations. _____

4. Can width of all roads accommodate two oversized vehicles (i.e. two school buses)? Yes ___ No ___

Location of the narrow roads: _____

5. Is adequate road area provided for school bus "emergency evasive maneuvers?" Yes ___ No ___

Location of problem areas: _____

6. Is visibility adequate when the bus approaches narrow bridge? Not applicable ___ Yes ___ No ___

If no, indicate location of the hazard. _____

7. Is the "maximum weight allowed" posted on all bridges on this route? Yes ___ No ___

Is it safe for a school bus at full passenger capacity to travel over? Yes ___ No ___

Problem bridge locations: _____

8. List additional road conditions on the route you consider hazardous (steep downgrade, sharp turn, etc.)

Source: Oklahoma State Department of Education, Parts 1 and 2 of 5, January 2017



RECOMMENDATION

Develop a plan for a yearly evaluation of all bus stops and then pre-drive routes prior to the beginning of the school year to review safety and efficiency.

The director of transportation should develop procedures outlining the timing of dry runs during the instructional year. Drivers should report to the director regarding the safety and efficiency of their routes.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-8

The insurance schedule for district vehicles may be inaccurate due to the districts' lack of review. The district needs to check the number of vehicles it is insuring as well as the amount for which the vehicles are insured. Some of the vehicles may have insurance amounts that are incorrect with excessive costs.

RECOMMENDATION

Review insurance policies and ensure information about buses is up to date.

Maintaining updated insurance policies and schedules allows a district to pay the appropriate price on its policies. It also guarantees that all buses are insured correctly in the event that a claim needs to be filed. Upon review of their records, one district found they were able to save close to \$1,000 per year on insurance.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-9

There are districts with no written procedures for locating a student that is believed to be missing. This can lead to confusion in locating a missing student.

Many districts, such as one district reviewed, have a common understanding that “when a student is believed to be missing, a school official will call the transportation office. An ‘All-Call’ is then issued to all buses. Drivers are to stop and look for the student believed to be missing. Buses are not to leave school grounds until all buses have been checked by the director in charge at central grounds.” Such common understandings may represent the culture of “this is how we do things around here”, however, for new drivers or substitute drivers such knowledge may not be widely known.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation director should propose to the superintendent a written policy and procedure for locating a child believed to be missing.

This procedure should list step-by-step instructions regarding when to call, who to call, and where to look for the student. Confirmation from each source should be documented during this process. If the student believed to be missing cannot be found, instructions should be provided for contacting local law enforcement. This procedure should be part of the transportation departments' operation manual.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

D. MANAGEMENT

Transportation is a vital support service that requires sound management. Capital investments in bus fleets and annual expenditures required for fleet maintenance and operation are substantial. An efficient, effective administrative staff ensures the transportation department delivers regulated, consistent service to its students and is responsive to their needs.

FINDING 5C-10

Some districts have no formalized program to check for sleeping children at the end of the run (post-trip) on the district owned buses of the fleet. Simply making sure the bus is empty after a run is one of the easier duties a driver has, yet children still get left behind on school buses again and again. Incidents across the country are reported every year. Most recently, a special education student was left on a bus in a metro school district.⁷ Preventing a potentially tragic situation begins with driver training and requires regular reinforcement of the need to do “walk-backs” after every trip.

Transportation departments often use electronic devices and other reminders to assist drivers in this essential task. Any tool that contributes to passenger safety is a valuable asset to an operation.

RECOMMENDATION

Develop a program to check for sleeping children on the bus.

One of the easiest and least expensive systems is the placard system (**Exhibit 5C-18**). The system

⁷ <https://kfor.com/2018/12/12/child-with-special-needs-left-unattended-on-mid-del-school-bus/>

usually consists of designing a flyer/placard that is laminated with Velcro attached so that it can hang in the rearview window following an inspection. Once the driver finishes the route, he walks to the back of the bus looking for any children that may have fallen asleep. At the back of the bus, he places the placard in the rear window. When the driver returns to drive the next route, he walks to the back of the bus, removes the placard, and places it in the front driver's compartment. Transportation staff members then patrol the lot after all the buses have returned to make sure that a placard has been placed in the back of each bus.

Exhibit 5C- 18
Sample Sleeping Children Placard



Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-11

Many districts operate buses with extremely light student rider loads. Most of the buses were running below 50 percent capacity. Staff interviews and focus groups were also in consensus that buses typically operate with light student rider loads.

RECOMMENDATION

Minimize the number of empty seats on regular education bus routes.

Districts can make considerable strides toward reducing this problem with an automated routing system. Full implementation of this system would support efforts to increase bus usage on each route. For districts who may already have purchased one but not fully implemented, the consulting team anticipates that it will take the district several years to fully implement automated routing, based upon experiences in other districts.

As a first step, the district will need to substantially improve its system for recording of bus capacities, routes, and student counts. That exercise itself is likely to reveal areas where improvements can be made even before automated routing yields results.

The district can immediately improve bus usage simply by reviewing the routings in place for elementary schools. Transportation staff could address the issue on a school-by-school basis while automated routing is implemented. This should reduce the number of routes and reduce the need for regular drivers.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation should result in the elimination of several routes. A modest five percent reduction in route miles could save a district that has just over one million route miles nearly \$230,000 per year.

FINDING 5C-12

For larger school district's transportation staff, some have not analyzed bus incident data collected in their automated system nor are all incidents reported to the transportation staff recorded into the system. Bus discipline statistics are not tracked or analyzed on a regular basis. Analyzing incident data could point to areas in need of focus, such as communications with students and parents, or in training of bus drivers.

Many times, not all incidents are recorded into the system being used (e.g. hand-written logs or spreadsheet). Depending on the specific incident, the bus driver may or may not fill out a bus referral form; if it is relatively minor, the driver may just alert the director verbally and no paper trail is created. If a written referral form is completed, transportation department staff inputs the data into the district's overall discipline incident database, using a set of incident codes that clearly identify them as being related to transportation. However, no staff member is responsible for analyzing the overall data.

Exhibit 5C-19 provides a sample district's results. As shown, some schools had no bus discipline incidents recorded for the entire year, while others had a high number of incidents in comparison to other schools at the same grade level.

**Exhibit 5C-19
Bus Discipline Incidents by School**

School	Aggravated Assault	Biting / Spitting	Bullying Student w/o Injuring	Defiance	Damage to Property	Discourteous / Rude	Disruptive Conduct	Failure to Follow Rules	Fighting Without Injury	Hitting / Pushing / Tripping	Intimidation, Harassment	Inappropriate Language / Gestures	Jeopardizing Safety	Racial Harassment	Sexual Harassment (Student)	Theft / Larceny	Threatening Behavior	Total
Elementary																		
Angie Debo				1			2		2				2					7
Centennial																		0
Charles Haskell			1															1
Chisholm		1								1			1					3
Clegern																		0
Cross Timbers						3			3									6
Ida Freeman					1		2				1							4
John Ross	1			3	1	2	1	2	4	1								15
Northern Hille									2									2
Orvis Risner					2				1									3
Russell Dougherty																		0
Sunset		1					1			3		2	1				1	9
Washington Irving					1			3	3									7
Will Rogers							0			3	0							3
Elementary Total	1	2	1	4	0	8	5	6	13	11	2	2	4	0	0	0	1	60

School	Aggravated Assault	Biting / Spitting	Bullying Student w/o Injuring	Defiance	Damage to Property	Discourteous / Rude	Disruptive Conduct	Failure to Follow Rules	Fighting Without Injury	Hitting / Pushing / Tripping	Intimidation, Harassment	Inappropriate Language / Gestures	Jeopardizing Safety	Racial Harassment	Sexual Harassment (Student)	Theft / Larceny	Threatening Behavior	Total
Middle																		
Central			1	7	3	3	21		5	9	1	2	15			1	3	71
Cheyenne				1			2			1		1						5
Cimarron				1			2		1			1						5
Sequoyah							4						4			1		9
Summit							6		3	2					1			12
Middle Total			1	9	3	3	35		9	12	1	4	19		1	2	3	102
High																		
Memorial					1	3		3	1								1	9
North							1		1	1								3
Santa Fe				2			1						3					6
High Total				2	1	5	3	3	2	1		3	3				1	18
Total	1	2	2	15	3	12	45	6	25	25	4	6	26	0	1	2	5	180

Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Exhibit 5C-20 provides a sampling of survey results from several districts regarding bus discipline. As shown, less than 50 percent of students and parents have a positive opinion of the management of bus discipline.

Exhibit 5C-20
Survey Results Regarding Bus Discipline

Survey Questions		Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
Parent	Bus drivers effectively handle discipline issues on the bus.	44%	45%	11%
Student	Bus drivers effectively handle discipline issues on the bus.	46%	38%	16%

Source: OEQA Sampling of Archived Surveys

RECOMMENDATION

Record all bus incident data into a database and analyze for patterns and trends that might indicate needs for parent/student communications or driver training.

In order to avoid any appearance of inequitable treatment, all incidents should be recorded in a district's discipline database. Then, the data should regularly be analyzed by the director of transportation to identify any patterns or trends that might need to be addressed.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING 5C-13

It has been observed in some district reviews that the transportation garage areas are not well maintained. In one district the transportation building had several items piled up; barrels of oil, grease, and other items not stored in a neat or safe fashion (**Exhibit 5C-20**).

Exhibit 5C-20
Poor Storage Habits in Garage



Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

RECOMMENDATION

Organize the garage area and maintain it, ensuring that hazardous supplies are stored safely.

Properly maintaining and optimizing the garage space allows for better space efficiency, freer movement and access and a safer working environment. Storing materials like oil and gasoline in a properly controlled manner further safeguards employees and reduces the risk of fire and other threats.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

E. VEHICLE MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT

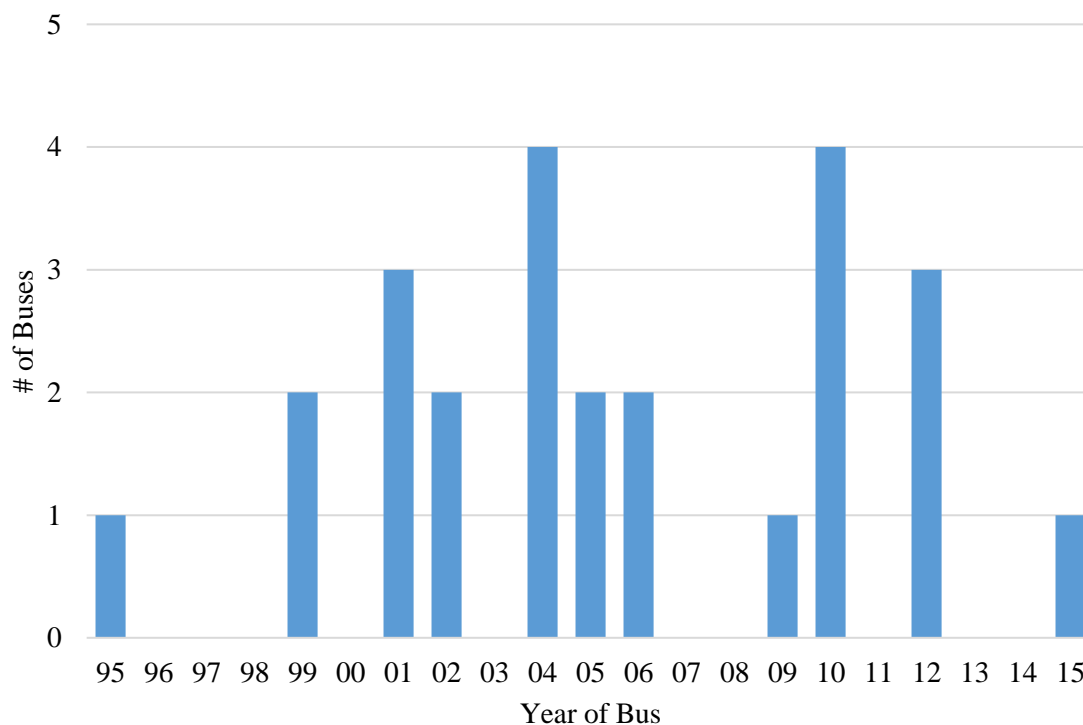
FINDING 5C-14

In review of several district's transportation policies, it was noted that there was no policy to address the school bus or support vehicle replacement schedule. Over the past several years, buses have been purchased with the passage of bonds. The Oklahoma State Department of Education does not mandate a policy regarding the replacement cycle or service life of school buses, nor is there a set policy outlining the purchase of support vehicles.

Exhibit 5C-21 provides the breakdown of a sample district's school bus fleet by age. The average age of the fleet is 10.5 years. As shown, the district has not adhered to a regular

replacement cycle and has instead purchased no buses in some years, but then as many as four in a single year. The oldest bus is a 1995 model. Six buses are currently 15 years of age or older.

Exhibit 5C-21
Sample District's Number of School Buses by Year of Manufacture



Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation recommends that buses be replaced every eight to 15 years, depending upon the type of bus and level of use. Buses older than 16 years are often not compliant with evolving regulations and policies. An aging fleet with significant mileage generally has a higher cost of operation, in the form of lower gas mileage, more frequent repairs, and higher repair costs.

RECOMMENDATION

Develop a formal bus replacement plan to fund new buses biannually.

A district's superintendent should suggest a policy to the board that ensures the replacement of buses older than 15 years of service. This standard will ensure buses are compliant with evolving regulations and vehicle specifications. The funding for new buses should be implemented to replace one bus biannually.

FISCAL IMPACT

The calculation of a fair market price for school buses in Oklahoma is subjective. Per 70 O.S. § 9-109 Section 219, "Price List and Description of Transportation Equipment"; *all bus purchases*

shall be made under a sealed bid and contracts will be awarded to the lowest and best bidder. The consulting team contacted each of the approved vendors to obtain the prices, shown in **Exhibit 5C-22** as averages.

**Exhibit 5C-22
OSDE Approved School Bus Vendor List**

Entity	Condition	Model	Estimated Cost per Bus
American Bus	Used	Blue Bird	N/A
Blue Bird	New	Blue Bird	\$81,550
I.C. Corporation	New	International	\$79,700
Mid Bus	New	Thomas	\$80,000
Starcraft	New	Thomas	\$78,300
Thomas Freightliner	New	Thomas	\$82,680
Transnational	Used	International	\$74,150
Average Cost			\$79,388*

Source: OEQA Archived Exhibit

Recommendation	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Provide a one-per-bi-annually bus replacement fund.	(\$80,000)	\$0	(\$81,000)	\$0	(\$82,000)

FINDING 5C-15

It was common to see the interiors of buses in poor condition. Examples of disrepair observed are as follows:

- seats repaired with duct tape;
- emergency equipment in need of replacement;
- special education bus had minor exterior rusting and peeling paint;
- tires on a spare lift-equipped bus needed to be replaced.

RECOMMENDATION

Address all bus safety problems as they occur, including minor ones, such as seat damage, and more serious ones, such as worn tires to ensure safety and compliance with emergency codes.

Districts should repair seats as they are reported and monitor the tread depth of the fleet’s tires. The transportation department should also develop guidance on what is allowed as decorations on or in a school bus that is focused on the safety of the riders. Student safety on buses should be both the district’s top priority. Beyond meeting regulatory statutes, regular care and maintenance of safety provisions on buses help ensure the vital safety of passengers.



FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.