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Regional School District No. 17

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October 9, 2007

Dear Parents and Concerned Citizens:

I hope that this letter finds you well and enjoying the start of the 2007-2008 school year.

Since the commencement of this school year, there have been a number of transportation issues which have required the attention of our Director and Assistant of Transportation and have led to numerous unanticipated changes to bus routes as well as pick-up and drop-off procedures at most schools. Unfortunately, their attempts at implementing acceptable solutions to the remaining issues have not been successful. The solutions sought were to ensure that our district-wide transportation system was in alignment with what was planned and presented as the transportation scheme for this year as we moved from a two-tiered system to a three-tiered system. Specifically, we continue to experience the following challenges with our transportation system

- Inconsistent pick-up and drop off times most notably at the Middle School and elementary schools
- Not achieving parameters articulated publicly last school year when preparing for three-tiered transportation system (e.g. - length of bus runs)
- Issues with sequence of pick-up and drop off (first students on are those last off, etc.)
- Inadequate number of bus drivers to achieve planned routing configuration
- Multiple route changes implemented weekly (cause and effect changing)
- District exceeded budgeted amount for salaries since the start of the 2007-2008 school year
- Slow processing time for FBI to clear new drivers for work
- Incurring unbudgeted expenses due to outsourcing of special needs transportation to free up CDL driver to be used on large vehicle
- Experiencing need to cancel athletic trips
- Continued receipt of parent concerns regarding transportation
- Larger than anticipated number of people transporting children to school

The district has implemented the following measures in an attempt to ameliorate the remaining challenges and to fully implement an improved system for the remainder this school year.

- Superintendent meets or is in direct communication daily with Transportation Director and Assistant Director since first day of 2007-2008 school year
- Request made of Transportation Director and Assistant Director to communicate with parents and others who have expressed concerns and to implement changes when and if deemed necessary
- Transportation has implemented multiple route changes
- Original routes are being re-routed after review of timing and ridership
- Outsourced special needs transportation to free up CDL driver to be used on large vehicle (non-budgeted item)
- Requested temporary assistance (and vehicles) from many transportation companies state-wide with no success. Other transportation companies experiencing similar personnel and licensing issues.

"COMMITTED TO MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE"

- Changed sequence of steps used when submitting individuals for security clearance through the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles and FBI
- Accelerating required training program for new drivers
- Using Dattco "activity vehicles" when needed to transport athletic teams
- Limiting trips that impact on regular transportation runs
- Increased recruitment of new drivers
- Reviewed all available options to secure drivers from public works department, emergency personnel etc
- Requested immediate use of new Versatrans software
- Requested immediate re-routing of all routes to be completed by Versatrans (included in original purchase of software)

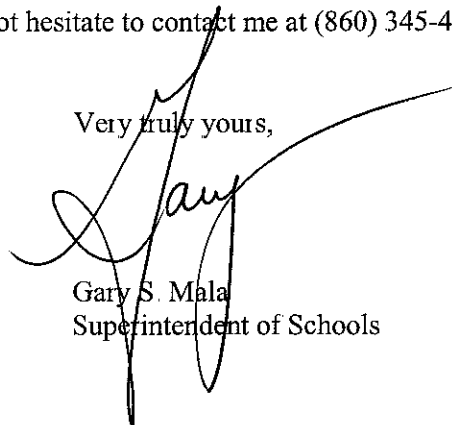
As you can see after reviewing both the list of remaining challenges and the steps implemented to date, the district's response has been comprehensive. Unfortunately, this response has not resulted in achieving an acceptable and efficient transportation system. Last week, this fact alone prompted me to request that the Board of Education act favorably on my recommendation to secure a transportation consultant from the Versatrans company to assist the district with re-routing our transportation vehicles. Versatrans is a company which specializes in student transportation and also is the vendor from whom we recently purchased a new bus routing software product. The Board of Education voted unanimously to accept my recommendation at its meeting of October 2 and I anticipate the consultant to be on site in the district sometime during the last week of October. The consultant will be here for approximately seven to ten days, concluding with routes that meet our district's needs. The consultant's work is expected to conclude sometime during the first week of November. In the meantime, we have provided all of the necessary information via electronic means to representatives of Versatrans, who are presently reconfiguring our bus routes. Upon Versatran's completion of new routes, district personnel will review and run each route as designed by Versatrans to ensure that the configuration and terrain of our roads in both Haddam and Killingworth are considered prior to finalizing the new bus routes. After all of the routes have been finalized, I will communicate with you again via letter in which I will outline any changes necessary to fully implement a transportation design which is safe, efficient and acceptable.

I am optimistic that this action will allow for all of us to experience bus service for our children which incorporates all of the specific elements that were articulated during public presentations made last year as they relate to the length of bus routes as well as to how the bus routes are configured.

In closing, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to you for your patience and understanding as we work diligently to solve the outstanding transportation challenges across the district.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (860) 345-4534 or the Transportation Department at (860) 345-8228.

Very truly yours,



Gary S. Mala
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Board of Education Members
Martha Vaughn, Director of Fiscal Operations
Michael Zanelli, Director of Transportation
Cathy Luisi, Assistant Director of Transportation
School Principals
File (memo book, Transportation)