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[remote or in person] LSC Advisory Board

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Agency: Chicago Local School Council Advisory Board

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Takeaways

- The District still needs to improve wages and other incentives for bus drivers and bus aides
- Many parents are not satisfied with the improvements the District has made towards securing transportation routes, specifically for Diverse Learners experiencing long travel times.
- Parents also seem confused about how to request transportation from the District and when they will be notified that they've received transportation.

Follow-Up Questions & Observations

- After attending this meeting, I think CPS should do more to secure bus drivers and bus aides, especially when it comes to wages and benefits, i.e., retirement, PTO, healthcare because Chicago is not the least expensive city to live in and is already facing inflationary pressures due to the current economic climate.
- It would be interesting to learn how much impact the CPS Parent for Buses group has on the CPS Student Transportation Department and the CPS Board of Education decision making process for these transportation issues.

Meeting Summary Notes:

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m. and attendance was taken. The [agenda](#) for today's meeting was approved as well as the minutes from the October 2023 meeting.

Presentation - CPS Transportation Update:

Chicago Public Schools Executive Director of Student Transportation Kimberly Jones presented on the District's student transportation status. She stated that the District is collaborating with the CPS Parents for Buses group to improve transportation issues. Also, the Department wasn't able to offer transportation services during the first quarter of the school year but will begin offering services in the second quarter. The Department is collaborating with other school districts and companies like Amazon to see what methods they're using to recruit bus drivers, including various types of incentives they offer potential candidates.

As of November 2, 2023, there has been a 16% increase from last year in Diverse Learner students requesting transportation routes. During the 2022-2023 school year, approximately 3,000 students experienced travel times to school over 60 minutes long and 365 students experienced travel times over 90 minutes long. For the 2023-2024 school year, 73 students are experiencing travel times to school between 61-65 minutes long and 51 students are experiencing travel times between 66-80 minutes long. Compared to last year, the amount of Diverse Learners seeking transportation has increased by 1,886 students from 9,867 students in the 2022-2023 school year to 11,753 students in the 2023-2024 school year. However, the number of General Education students seeking transportation has declined from last year's total of 6,764 students to 5,862 students this year.

However, the District is operating at 54% capacity and has a total of 707 bus drivers compared to the total of 692 last year. CPS still needs 1,300 bus drivers despite efforts to increase driver wages by \$3 last year and \$2 this year. The District is also having monthly hiring fairs, including 15 fairs that are scheduled to date. As of November 2nd, the District has interviewed 114 bus drivers and 274 bus aides but has only hired 39 bus drivers and 174 bus aides. Since August 2023, the Department has received approximately 3,793 transportation requests, but the requests began to stabilize in September and October 2023. The Department stated that Illinois is one of the states experiencing the National Bus Driver Shortage, which began in 2016 with the loss of 13 bus companies. To address the driver shortage, the Department is collaborating with several national and local agencies, including the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), CPS, the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), City Colleges of Chicago, the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT), the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago and the Council of the

Great City Schools.

Additional notes from the presentation, include:

- The Department began accepting transportation route requests in early July of 2023 and stated it usually takes them about six weeks to solidify routes.
- They will continue to collaborate with the Parents for Buses group and provide transportation updates to parents.
- Some of the Department's partnerships include working with the Secretary of State office to relax some of the requirements to become a bus driver.
- The Department has launched a bus driver/bus aide marketing campaign to advertise for these positions
- Bus drivers and bus aides are mostly needed in the North and West side communities.
- Working with City Colleges of Chicago students to offer them part-time positions with bus companies—with the hope that these students will become potential bus drivers after graduating.
- Bus drivers are paid between \$22-\$25/hr, which is based on the transportation route and is not an hourly rate (*i.e., in terms of a bus driver or bus aides making between \$22-\$25/hr if they work 40 hours a week*).

Public Participation:

1. One of the members asked if the Department can outsource transportation services to vendors. Kimberly Jones replied that yes, certain types of buses are outsourced for transportation.
2. There was a public comment about when families are notified that they've received a transportation route and the length of time it will take for them to be transported from their neighborhood to school. Kimberly Jones responded that selective enrollment and magnet students should not be traveling to school for two hours but that some of the Diverse Learner students may have travel times that long depending upon the type of educational program they are enrolled in.
3. James Mantz from the CPS Parent for Buses Groups wants to know why Chicago is having an issue solving the National Bus Shortage problem when compared to other cities that have been able to address the problem. He continued by stating that the cps.edu/careers is the website where the marketing campaigns are advertised for bus drivers and bus aides but that the positions are still not listed, including how to apply nor the requirements and qualifications needed. He suggested on behalf of CPS Parents for Buses that the District should consider

co-mingling bus routes for General Education and Diverse Learner students (where General Education students can be picked up from some sort of transportation 'hub') and then the bus driver would proceed to pick up Diverse Learners. The hourly rate that CPS is paying bus drivers is not enough when compared to other school districts in Skokie (offering \$25-\$30/hr rate) and Niles (offering full benefits such as healthcare and 401K).

Director's Report

The Director of the Office of Local School Council (LSC) Relations Kishasha Williams -Ford reported that the LSC Office website has a webpage dedicated to LSC vacancies across the City of Chicago and information on how to apply for those vacancies. As of last month, the website also includes candidate applications in English and Spanish and that by the end of November, six more languages will be added. A 'candidate map' is also available on the website so viewers can see who is running and at which school. The candidate nomination period is now open through February 8, 2024. She encouraged applicants to submit their materials early, specifically the candidate paperwork. If people are interested in becoming an election judge for the LSC in February 2024, they must submit applications. The requirements to be a judge are:

- you must be 18 years of age or older; and
- verified to work within the United States and by the IRS.

Applicants for judges cannot be a CPS employee, student, or a judge at a school where they are running for a LSC seat. The Advisory Board must recruit approximately 1,200 judges to ensure enough coverage for the election days in February. Over the last month, the District has been hosting a series of Budget Roundtable Discussions to inform the community about school funding and receive feedback from community members about what they need. The last two Budget Roundtable Discussions will be held on Tuesday, November 15th and on Thursday, November 16th. You can register for these meetings on the LSC website. In December, the District will be hosting a series of neighborhood roundtable discussions around the City to discuss details regarding the Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP). To increase LSC engagement, it was suggested that Zoom break rooms happened after the monthly Advisory Board meetings as well as in-person community engagement opportunities with other stakeholders.

Someone asked how LSC members can report feedback from these meetings to the CPS Board of Education. The Director responded that a document can be shared to the CPS Board of Education for their consideration. The Old Business portion of the meeting was tabled for a future meeting and there wasn't any New Business to report. The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

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