

**Assessing the impact  
of a pandemic  
on school transportation**

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**Prior to the pandemic ...**

- School transportation services were operating well, but at capacity.
- The “old normal”:
  - No extra drivers, few extra buses, and bell schedules were very tight to maximize efficiency
  - Efficiency defined as maximum riders per bus, minimum cost per rider

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**During the pandemic . . .**

- Like everywhere else, change is constant
  - Disruptions abound regarding:
    - Driver's license renewals
    - Federal Drug & Alcohol tests
    - School bus and driver certificates
    - School bus and van driver physicals
    - Limits on person-to-person contact
  - Driving staff who are “at-risk” for COVID-19
  - Other staff without daycare resources

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**After the pandemic . . .**

- Many scenarios are possible
- Thorough planning requires consideration of all potential changes,
  - including impacts on transportation services for students.
- Any school day changes that do not consider transportation could easily fail

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**Potential needs and impacts (1)**

- Need to increase social distance in buildings
  - Stagger attendance times, reduce number of students in the building?
    - Affects route times and routing tiers
    - Move to single tier, but that requires more buses and drivers to transport the same number of students

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**Potential needs and impacts (2)**

- If we prioritize routing for one group of students (elementary and special ed?)
  - We may not be able to transport other students (middle school, high school?)
  - What about nonpublic and community school schedules?
  - What about vocational schools?

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### Potential needs and impacts (3)

- How do we increase social distancing on a school bus?

Bus size	30" distance	60" distance	
66 passenger	21 riders	10 riders	(skip seat behind driver)
72 passenger	23 riders	11 riders	(skip seat behind driver)

- Currently the average ridership in Ohio is 27/bus, but typically much higher for elementary routes.
- To maintain the same number of transported students, we will need more buses . . . And drivers!

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### Potential needs and impacts (4)

- Bus cleaning
  - It is possible buses will need to be cleaned between routes.
  - That requires time to accomplish.
  - Many of the EPA approved disinfectants require time to kill the virus, adding additional time to cleaning window.
- This reduces bus availability – fewer trips

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### Potential needs and impacts (5)

- What about our drivers?
  - We may need to consider barriers on the bus
- Some of our current drivers are in the high-risk group, and it may not be safe for them to come back to work.
- Others may choose not to return for other reasons

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**Potential needs and impacts (6)**

- Right now we do not know what we will need to do this fall.
- But . . .
- It certainly appears that any changes that affect transportation will reduce our transportation capacity
- Someone who is riding now may not be able to ride this fall.

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**Management flexibility**

- Build a list of options
  - Identify the adjustments required
  - Identify any limitations
  - Be realistic about department capacity to provide service
    - Available routing time
    - Available driving staff

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**Make the team all-inclusive**

- Planning teams need someone from every discipline at the table.
  - That includes transportation logistics
- We need to be realistic about the difference between what we want to have done, and what we can accomplish.
- “Just get it done” may not be a reality

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**Homework for the transportation team:**

- Calculate your average ridership
  - Elementary routes
  - HS routes
  - MS routes
- Make certain that the rider data is detailed and very accurate
- Get ready for some serious routing work

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**Start thinking about details**

- Driver training
  - How to manage annual in-service
  - What extra training will they need this year?
- Bus and fleet
  - What modifications are needed?
  - How and when will they be sanitized?

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**More details . . .**

- Bus garage / transportation facility
  - Driver room modifications needed
  - Garage / work areas
  - Fueling station
- Sanitizing
  - Cleaning supplies
  - Procedures

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## And more details

- Routing
  - What is our revised bus capacity?
  - Bus stops (maximum students?)
  - School loading/unloading zones
  - Extra time for sanitizing

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## We can adopt a new normal . . .

But not without great  
cooperation, teamwork, and  
attention to detail  
and  
The need to be realistic about  
our resources

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