

## Board of Finance Transportation Questions

- 1. Since 2011, there have been rebate programs for replacing diesel buses with lower emission vehicles. Funding has been reauthorized through 2017. All-Star was a recipient of a grant in 2015, so they are aware of the funds. Sources of funding include the US EPA and US Department of Energy. How did you integrate these rebates in the negotiation of the 5 year contract with All Star, particularly in light of the fact that the cost increases by 3% per year. If you did not include the rebates in your negotiations, please explain why not.**

  - The rebate program is to replace older, less efficient, higher emission vehicles with newer vehicles. AST received a grant to replace a 2006-07 vehicles. They file an application every year and the award is by a random drawing of all eligible applicants. The District's vehicles that are currently 2013 model years and the new propane vehicles are not eligible for these rebates.
  
- 2. According to the US Dep't of Energy Alternative Fuels Data Center, propane vehicles require less maintenance and achieve longer engine life than conventionally fueled vehicles. ([www.afdc.energy.gov/vehicles.propane.html](http://www.afdc.energy.gov/vehicles.propane.html)) (<http://www.afdc.energy.gov/uploads/publication/case-study-propane-school-bus-fleets.pdf>) How do the negotiated vehicle rates incorporate the longer vehicle life and lower maintenance costs?**

  - This is included as part of the contract rate negotiated. The maintenance is less but the cost of propane vehicles are \$7,000-\$10,000 more than a standard diesel bus. The higher vehicle cost is offset by the maintenance savings and is considered part of the overall contract.
  
- 3. If we retained the fleet of diesel vehicles, what rates were proposed by All Star? If you did not look at this alternative, please explain why not.**

  - There were no rates proposed because the contractor preferred capital investment rather than continual maintenance with older vehicles.
  
- 4. Are there any propane fuel tax credits available to the town and are these incorporated into the fuel cost projections shown on page 244?**

  - Yes, you can see the propane costs listed as \$0.49 per gallon. Federal credit is estimated at \$0.35. Please see page 244 notation.

**5. The propane refueling station is at the All Star facility. Could we save trip time and mileage if the refueling facility were more centrally located? Does this location prevent the town from purchasing other propane powered vehicles?**

- The fueling station is at the AST facility which is where all the busses begin and end their day. Having an alternate location doesn't make sense; it would be off route and require additional staffing and monitoring. The location would not prevent the Town from purchasing propane vehicles. A mutual agreement would have to be developed to allow non-school busses to fuel at the site.

**6. Given that the buses have a meaningful number of open seats, what savings could we expect from a two tier routing plan in lieu of the current three tier plan. We recognize this is a BOE decision, but are curious about the potential savings figure.**

- A two tier system would require a change to school start times and an addition of at least 2-3 busses. The lower rates in the contract for a two tier system with the same number of vehicles would be \$249,521 less. The two to three additional vehicles would add \$120,780 to \$181,170 for a savings range of \$128,741 to \$68,351.

**7. Page 20 of the All Star contract – While this is not a budget question, how can the district utilize the GPS system on buses to allow parents to track the buses and minimize time spent waiting for the vehicle? (curiosity only)**

- There are apps that can tie into the GPS system at a cost. In the fall of 2015 the District reviewed "Safe-Stop" which would provide this ability with parent groups, who surveyed their member, and subsequently they determined they were not interested.

**8. What are the parameters used by the district and All Star to determine bus routes. Specifically, what percentage of capacity do you target, can you combine routes to fill more seats, do you vary capacity based on age (older students can endure a longer ride and are more capable of safely walking to a bus stop), and where do you stand on developing group bus stops. It looks like your required bi-annual student count reports (article 15.5.3 of the transportation contract) are inadequate to provide meaningful insight into utilization. Please revise the report detail to include number of students entering/exiting the bus by stop.**

- The software used by AST is Transfinder and includes the criteria enumerated above, time and geography are the most critical components of routing requirements. Bus stops have remained constant as a community expectation. 15.5.3 refers to a bi-annual report that we need for our purposes twice per year while within that section is a sentence that reads "The Contractor shall also

complete a student count at least four times per school year.” (Exhibit F). Drivers are required to focus on safety and discipline and will not be counting the number of students entering/exiting by bus stop. The counts are taken four times per year at the school when the kids are dropped off and picked up. This is the safest way to count.

**9. New Canaan has had success with a “opt out” program. ([http://www.ncps-k12.org/cms/lib8/CT01903077/Centricity/domain/315/q%20and%20a/1.Transportation Q A Grp 1 updated 07 10.pdf](http://www.ncps-k12.org/cms/lib8/CT01903077/Centricity/domain/315/q%20and%20a/1.Transportation%20Q%20A%20Grp%201%20updated%2007%2010.pdf)) They instituted this program after determining 20% to 50% of students (depending on school) find alternative means of transportation. Will you institute a similar program in an attempt to reduce the number of buses contracted by the BOE?**

- “Opt-out” programs are not legal. A parent cannot waive the right to have their student not ride the bus. We questioned parents about this a few years ago and found very low participation with no meaningful data.

**10. The average bus route is 27 minutes in total length. The longest route is a 43 minute high school route. The shortest route is 13 minutes in length. What are your parameters for combining routes and standards for length of routes?**

- The average bus route is actually between 30-40 minutes, depending on whether it’s A.M. or P.M. The longest/shortest bus routes times listed above are inaccurate and taken from the District website. The routes that are published on the web are developed before the school year begins and used as a parental guide as to when pick-ups and drop-offs will occur. The stops and times are not adjusted throughout the year and therefore, should not be used for analysis or when determining average times. The bus company supplies us with ridership reports four times per year.

The time required for the entire route needs to be taken into consideration, not just the ride time. The times listed are the theoretical times published with the route sheets. Actual times differ considering real traffic situations. There is not a simple answer for such a complex process.