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DOING LESS WITH MORE:

HOW SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION IS FAILING STUDENTS & TAXPAYERS

A Report by:



Office of

Bill de Blasio

PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Executive Summary

The bus ride to school should be the most routine part of the day for students and parents. Yet for thousands of families in New York City, it is a constant source of frustration. Buses are often late. There is no accountability or incentive for bus companies to provide reliable service. And despite all these shortcomings, costs for busing continue to spiral upwards at a time when the Department of Education is facing repeated budget cuts.



Close to \$1 billion was spent in the last school year alone on school bus transportation. The budget for pupil transportation has jumped nearly \$150 million since 2007. No-bid contracts issued to bus operators year after year lead to built-in cost increases without accountability. Despite the ever-growing costs, the reliability and quality of school bus service has declined considerably, even as the Department of Education has ended service for students in grades seven and eight.

School transportation issues are ranked in the top three educational related complaints from Office of the Public Advocate constituents, after enrollment and special education related issues. They point to a system that repeatedly fails many of the 160,000 students who ride buses each day. And while many of these problems are system-wide, no students feel them more acutely than those in special education. For them and their families, the bus system can be a physically and emotionally draining part of daily life, with many parents convinced that conditions on the bus and hours of travel have a direct impact on their child's ability to learn.

Just last month on the first day of school, a bus carrying 11 special education students from PS 723X in the Bronx went missing for several hours. The bus driver had become ill and stopped mid-route, and parents waiting for their children encountered only busy signals and inaccurate information at the bus company and the Office of Pupil Transportation. It was left to the parents themselves to track down the bus on its route and bring their children home, the last of which walked in the door six hours after leaving school. The episode typifies the lack of accountability and communication plaguing school bus service.

In response to these accounts, Public Advocate de Blasio conducted an extensive survey with parents and initiated a review of the Department of Education's bus contracts. That research found:

- **The cost of busing is increasing sharply even as other parts of the education budget face cuts.** The transportation budget for the Department jumped from \$937 million in FY2007 to \$1.08 billion in FY 2012—a 15.2% increase. Rising fuel costs, the basic rationale used by the Department to explain the need for yearly budget increases, only account for a 4% increase over that time.
- **Bus contracts are effectively “no-bid,” without checks on increasing costs.** As long as the first year's contract was bid competitively, contracts are renewed each year without any further competition to control rising costs. There are current contracts with operators that have not been bid competitively since 1979.
- **There is little accountability in the system.** Fines for poor service by bus operators are insignificant compared to the size of each multi-million dollar contract, and are ineffective at incentivizing quality service.
- **Students with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poor bus service.** On one day alone, the Department posted a total of 398 bus delays; of these, 76% were special education routes.

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio has laid out a five-point plan to make the Department of Education more responsive and effective at providing bus service to students.

1. **Reduce the maximum time limit students with disabilities are allowed to spend on the bus** from 90 minutes to 60 minutes (within borough), and 115 minutes to 90 minutes (out of borough).
2. **Bus contracts should be put out to bid in a fair RFP process.**
3. **Bus companies that deliver quality service should have the opportunity to do more business with the City.**
4. **The Department of Education should notify parents of delays** exceeding 15 minutes, and clarify lines of communication so that parents have one—not several—points of contact when they have a question or complaint. Develop an information-sharing plan that keeps that point of contact informed of on-the-ground issues.
5. **Perform a dry run before the first day of school and on any restructured bus route** to prevent disruptions at the beginning of the school year.

The Public Advocate urges the implementation of all recommendations on special education bus routes first, where the need for improved service is most acute. These recommendations will provide cost savings for the City and improved service for the students who use bus transportation, as well as their parents.

Introduction

For many students, the school day begins and ends on the school bus. School bus transportation is a critical service for over 160,000 of New York City public school students, and it is essential that students and their families can rely on transportation that is safe, reliable, and easy to navigate.¹ Unfortunately, many families cannot always rely on transportation services that consistently demonstrate these characteristics. School bus routes often subject children to excessively long commutes and bullying sometimes carries over from the school yard into the school bus. When bus services are delayed or when emergencies arise, confusing lines of communication between bus operators, school staff and the Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation (Department) mean that parents are left in the dark. All of these conditions have the potential to negatively impact a child's ability to perform well in school.

These concerns are especially important for families of children with disabilities who have to face many hurdles throughout their child's education to find the most appropriate educational setting for their child. *Parents must navigate complex systems and fight at each step in their child's education* – busing should not add to these stresses. More importantly, challenging bus conditions have the potential to create significant ripple-effects for student success. This concern is directly addressed in each child's individual education program (IEP), which specifies the type and duration of door-to-door transportation services that the child needs – and which the Department of Education is legally mandated to fulfill. Unfortunately, despite the unique circumstances and clearly articulated importance of transportation for children with disabilities, the system often fails these families.

Parents and children deserve a school bus system that fits seamlessly into their day. Unfortunately, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio has learned from many distressed families that transportation to and from school is a major concern. In response to worrying trends, the Office of the Public Advocate analyzed constituent calls, assessed the Department's transportation practices and analyzed results from a survey of over 500 parents of children with disabilities that was initiated by the Office in the spring of 2011.

“The ride, which is probably about 3 miles in total, can be more than an hour. My child gets restless and does not know how to express himself. He may slap himself out of frustration. The school is aware of this and has tried to adjust his bus schedule somewhat. The bus matron is sweet and does what she can. On certain days, when I know his trip will be long, I will pick him up myself.”

– Anonymous parent

Background

The Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation

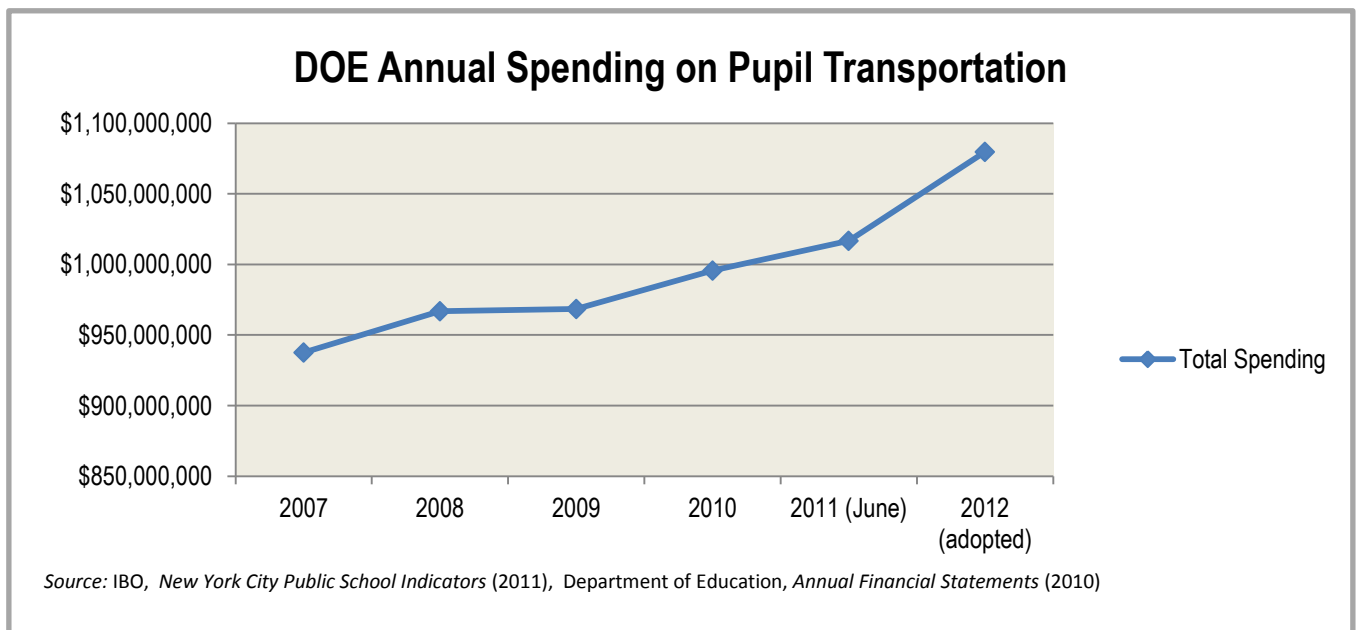
The Department has a difficult task: coordinating the pick-up times, route progression, school and home drop-offs for the largest public education system in the country. In discharging this critical function, the Department maintains systems and provides oversight for stop-to-school and door-to-door busing; it is also charged with the disbursement of MTA MetroCards for those students who qualify. In addition, the Department operates the City's yellow buses,

¹ See Panel for Educational Policy Contract Agenda, September 15, 2010. Accessed at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/C4289A88-883F-41A9-A33E-1092178DD71C/88199/FinalRAPackageforPostingo.pdf>

which conduct approximately 8,700 distinct daily bus routes – 4,600 of which are special education routes.² A total of 7,800 buses are used to conduct these routes, and the Department is responsible for ensuring they meet legal thresholds for safety and licensing.³ The Department must follow state law and New York City Administrative Codes relating to school bus service. The rights and responsibilities of students, parents, school staff, and bus staff are further addressed in Chancellor’s Regulation A-801. All of these documents are intended to ensure trips to and from school are safe.

Budget expansion and service delivery

The myriad functions of the Department’s Office of Pupil Transportation and bus companies are supported by a continuously increasing annual budget. The Department’s pupil transportation budget has increased from \$937,593,000 in 2007 to \$1,079,761,000 for FY2012 – a 15.2% increase of \$142,167,000.⁴



Pupil transportation is one of the areas in the Department which has increases in funding each fiscal year. This is in order to adjust to increases in the Consumer Price Index – fluctuations in the price of fuel cannot lead to cuts in legally mandated busing services.⁵ However, average fuel costs in New York City only rose 4% from 2006-2010; other factors for budgetary increase can be attributed to the nature of bus contracts and rising costs of insurance.⁶

² The Office of Pupil Transportation reported that of the 8,700 routes, 4,600 are special education, with 2,000 in the summer. Information presented in contract discussion during the Panel for Educational Policy hearings. See Panel for Educational Policy Contract Agenda, September 15, 2010. Accessed at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/C4289A88-883F-41A9-A33E-1092178DD71C/88199/FinalRAPackageforPostingo.pdf>

³ For more information about the Department’s OPT obligations and bus company contracts, see: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/default.htm>

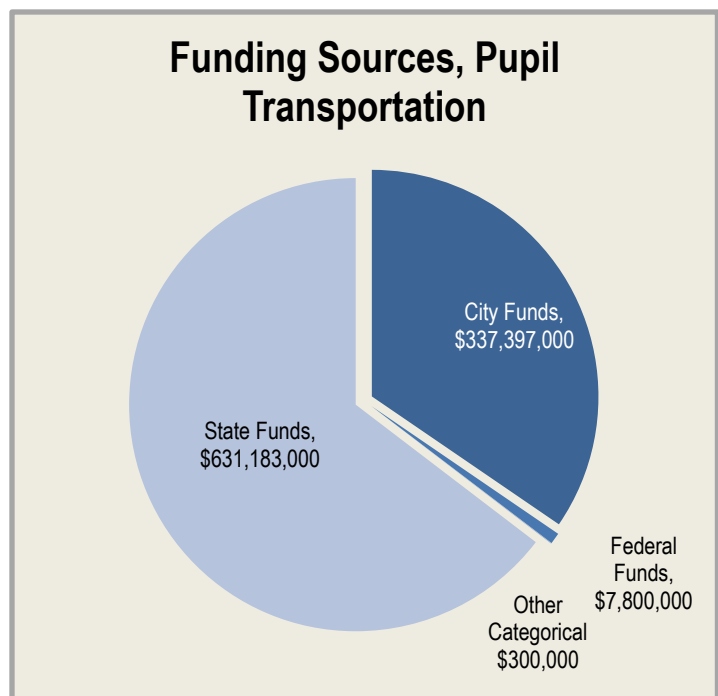
⁴ Independent Budget Office, *New York City Public School Indicators: Demographics, Resources, Outcomes*. Annual Report 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2011edindicatorsreport.pdf>

⁵ Independent Budget Office, “What is Yellow and Rises at the Same Time it Falls?” (December 23, 2010). Accessed at: <http://ibo.nyc.ny.us/cgi-park/?p=267>

⁶ Independent Budget Office, “What is Yellow and Rises at the Same Time it Falls?” (December 23, 2010). Accessed at: <http://ibo.nyc.ny.us/cgi-park/?p=267>

The majority of funding for the pupil transportation comes from State sources, with the City providing roughly \$337 million for the past school year.⁷ As a consequence, despite the startlingly large figures of the total transportation budget, the funding is considerably less for the City.

The steady increase in cost over the past four years has not led to expanded service or to an increase in service quality. During this time period, the Department has cut services for many New York City students. Eligibility for school bus service depends on the distance a student lives from a school in conjunction with their age.⁸ The Department has made changes to these criteria, most notably by eliminating service for 7th and 8th graders.⁹ This has negatively impacted many students, and students from districts that have fewer public transportation options have suffered disproportionately. As the 2011-2012 school year commenced, stories of children riding up to three hours to school have captured headlines.¹⁰ In Staten Island, parents have been rallying for the passage of “Aniya’s Law” – named for a 13 year old girl who was killed in an accident while chasing a city bus – which would restore bus service to middle school students.¹¹



Bus Contractors

The majority of the Department’s transportation budget is directed to private bus contractors that provide daily transportation services for City students.¹² Currently, the Department lists fifty companies with which it contracts for transportation services;¹³ it has a total of 107 contracts for pupil transportation services.¹⁴ All drivers must obtain certification as outlined by the State and articulated by the Department, and are charged with maintaining order, keeping schedule, and assisting students who need extra help.¹⁵

Bus contracts assume a unique form under New York City procurement policies. These contracts are in effect “no bid” – contractors are exempt from bidding under New York State education law § 305, which permits the extension

⁷ Independent Budget Office, *New York City Public School Indicators: Demographics, Resources, Outcomes*. Annual Report 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2011edindicatorsreport.pdf>

⁸ New York City Department of Education, Accessed at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/ServicesandEligibility/BusTransportation/default.htm>

⁹ New York 1, Assessed at: http://www.ny1.com/content/top_stories/118982/city-to-cut-free-bus-service-to-seventh---eighth-graders

¹⁰ Please see: http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/queens/2011/09/26/2011-09-26_bus_cuts_leave_kids_stranded_7th_8thgraders_now_face_long_commutes.html#ixzz1Z3TPCltT

¹¹ For full proposed text of Aniya’s Law, see: <http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/A2988A-2011>

¹² New York City’s Office of Management and Budget, Expense Revenue Contract for 2012: http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6_11.pdf

¹³ For a complete list of school age bus companies see: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/E11B866B-0B8E-4F4D-9461-A9569C6C229A/0/SchoolAgeBusCompanyDirectoryupdated9111.pdf>

¹⁴ New York City’s Office of Management and Budget, Expense Revenue Contract for 2012: http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6_11.pdf

¹⁵ New York City Department of Education, accessed at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/DriverInformation/default.htm>

of contracts that had at one point been competitively bid when they are related to pupil transportation.¹⁶ As noted during one contract renewal hearing, most of the regular school bus contracts were bid in 1979, with another group of special education contracts bid in 1986.¹⁷ As such, most contracts only come up for renewal, and the Panel for Educational Policy regularly renews these preexisting bus contracts when extensions are necessary.

The cost of bus contracts represents the single largest component of the Department's Office of Pupil Transportation budget.¹⁸ Of the one billion dollars allocated to the transportation budget, contracts for pupil transportation services for fiscal year 2012 account for \$973 million in total spending.¹⁹

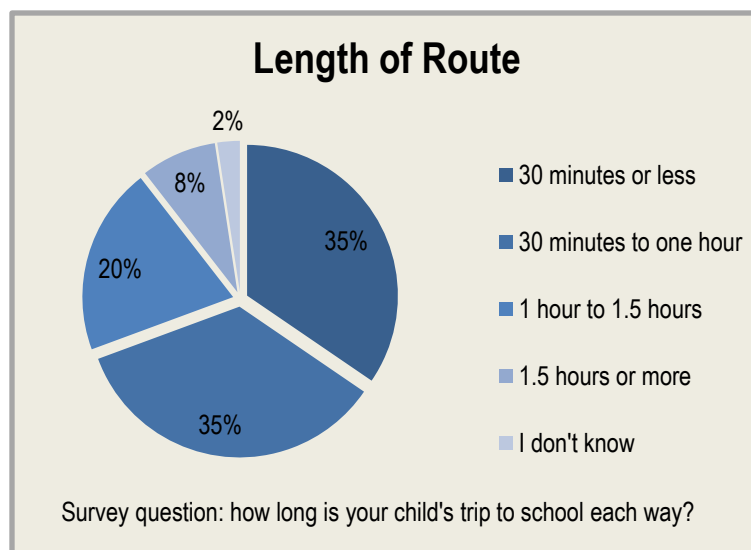
Despite the entrenched and long-established relationship between bus companies and the Department, the chains of command and delineation of responsibility are not always clear. In Chancellor's Regulation A-801, parents are instructed to report complaints to the principal, who should then notify the bus company and the Office of Pupil Transportation.²⁰ Yet, based on conversations with parents and advocates, parents are often directed to call the Department's Office of Pupil Transportation hotline from principals and from the Department's Office of Pupil Transportation staff. Thus, there is a disconnect between the Chancellor's Regulation A-810 and the instructions parents receive from the Department's personnel, leaving it unclear who parents are supposed to call when they have issues with the bus: the bus company, the Department's pupil transportation hotline or the school. When timing delays are experienced, parents may call the school, which does not have information. The parent may in turn call the bus company directly, though there have been persistent complaints of a lack of responsiveness by the companies. Finally, should it become necessary to make a change or report a problem with the bus, the parent must first contact the Department, file a complaint, and then follow up to ensure proper handling. Consequently, it falls on the parent to navigate this system, identify the best contact for information, and follow up when communication breaks down.

Findings

In order to clearly define some of the issues regarding transportation services, the Public Advocate's Office reviewed constituent calls, assessed the Department's pupil transportation practices and analyzed results from a survey of parents of children with disabilities it conducted in the spring of 2011.

Survey Data

In April 2011, the Public Advocate's Office conducted a survey of 512 parents who have children with IEPs. Over 65% of survey respondents used specialized transportation



¹⁶ New York State Education Law § 305, specifically subdivision 14.

¹⁷ See Panel for Educational Policy Contract Agenda, September 15, 2010. Accessed at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/C4289A88-883F-41A9-A33E-1092178DD71C/88199/FinalRAPackageforPostingo.pdf>

¹⁸ New York City's Office of Management and Budget, Expense Revenue Contract for 2012: http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6_11.pdf

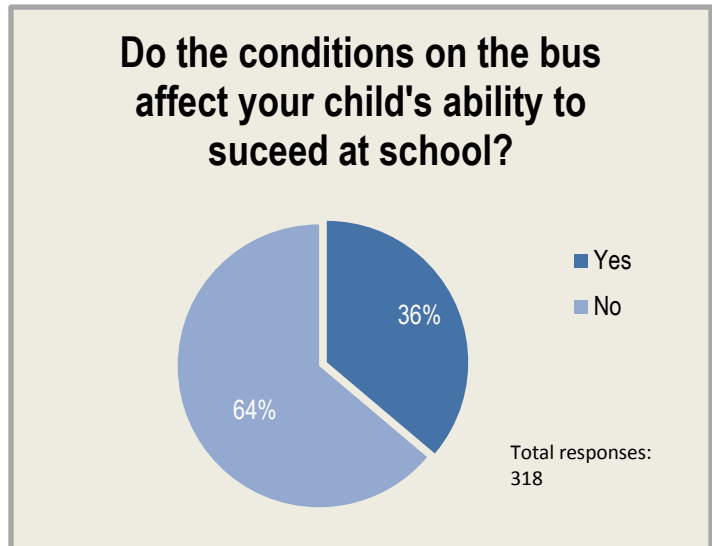
¹⁹ New York City's Office of Management and Budget, Expense Revenue Contract for 2012: http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/erc6_11.pdf

²⁰ New York City Department of Education's Chancellors Regulation A-801, Section 2, part III (F).

services, such as a school bus. When asked if the conditions on the school bus affect a child's ability to succeed at school, 36.2% of parents responded affirmatively.²¹

In response to a question regarding the length of bus routes, 20.1% of parents stated that their child had a commute of between 1 to 1.5 hours on the bus each way and 8.1% of parents responded that their child had a commute of 1.5 hours or more.²²

Questions regarding the timeliness of school bus arrivals at school revealed that a substantial number of children arrive at school late. A majority of respondents said that their child's bus arrived on time for school (60.8%).²³ Yet, 11.7% stated that their children arrive 15 minutes late to school, 3.1% stated they arrive 30 minutes late to school, and 4.6% arrive over 30 minutes early to school. It is imperative that *all* students arrive at school on time to ensure they are not missing valuable school hours.



Constituent Complaints

In addition to reviewing the survey data, the Public Advocate's Office reviewed constituent data related to educational issues from July 2010 to September 2011.²⁴ Of the 359 calls the Office received regarding educational issues during this time period 14% were related to transportation issues, ranking number three in the Office's constituent complaints, after enrollment and special education issues. Of the Office's transportation related complaints 42% involve students with disabilities.²⁵ The following chart is broken down by the primary complaint from the constituent, thus the 21 transportation calls that are related to students with IEPs are included in the transportation category and not under the student's with IEP category.

"This system is neither compassionate nor efficient"
- Parents to Improve School Transportation

A review of constituent cases and the free response section in the survey reveals that parents are frustrated with the Department and bus companies after attempting to seek resolution of transportation-related problems.²⁶

Some bus delays are an inevitable, but many constituent calls and survey respondents pointed to consistent, erratic bus pick-ups and drop-offs. A cursory review of the Department's posted bus delays demonstrates the majority of bus-related problems which cause pick-up and drop-off delays that impact special education routes. On one day

²¹ Office of the Public Advocate, Survey of Parents and Guardians of Students with Disabilities, Survey question: "Do conditions on the school bus affect your child's ability to succeed at school?" Total respondents to this question = 318

²² Office of the Public Advocate, Survey of Parents and Guardians of Students with Disabilities, Survey question: "How long is your child's trip to school each way?" Total respondents to this question= 333

²³ Office of the Public Advocate, Survey of Parents and Guardians of Students with Disabilities, Survey question: "If s/he takes a DOE school bus, does your child usually arrive at school: On time; 30 minutes or more before the school day starts; 15 minutes after school starts; 30 minutes or more after school starts; I don't know." Total respondents to this question= 324.

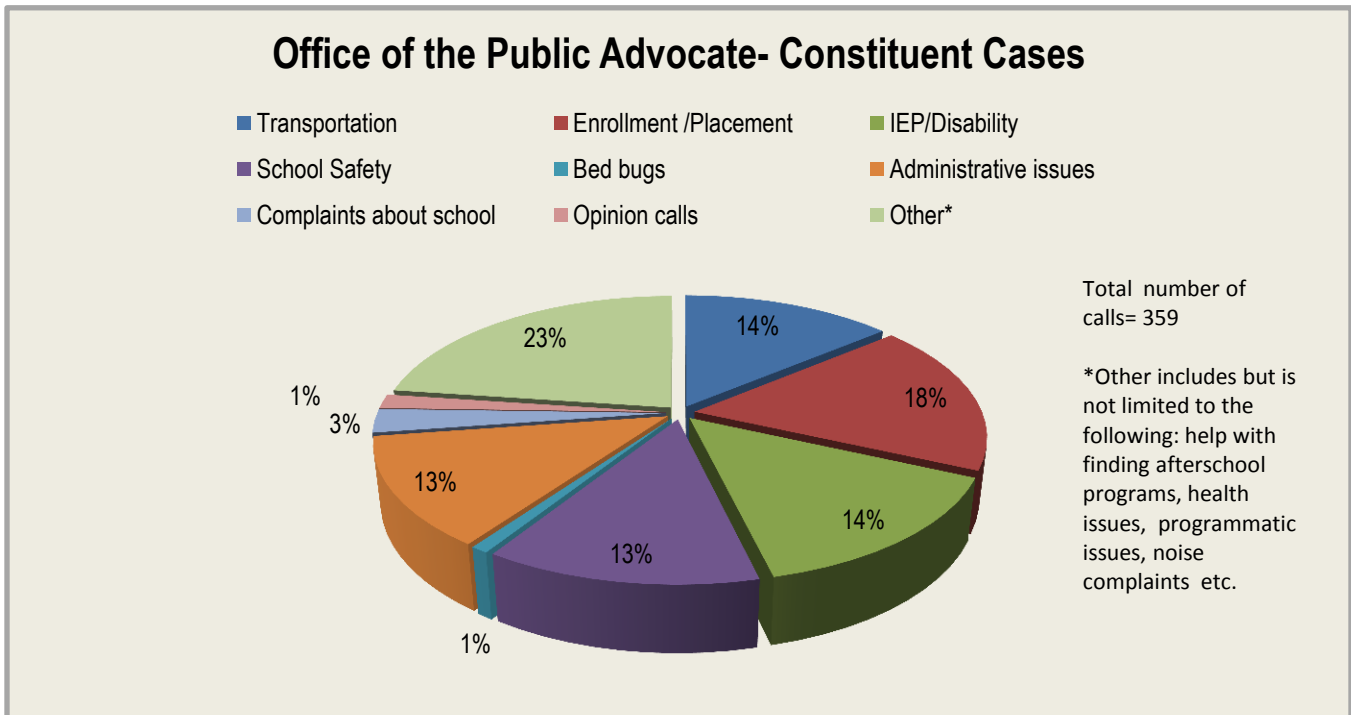
²⁴ Review of Office of the Public Advocate constituent complaints from July 2010 to September 2011.

²⁵ Calculation by the Office of the Public Advocate: Total education calls: 359; total transportation: 50; total OPT/IEP calls: 21.

²⁶ The open responses can be seen in the appendix of this document.

alone, the Department posted a total of 398 bus delays; of these, 76% were on special education routes.²⁷ Delays result in missed classroom time and disruptions in clearly defined schedules.

When speaking with parents and the Citywide District 75 Council, it is apparent that bus companies do not always notify school staff and parents that there is a delay on their route. An especially grievous example of such a problem occurred on September 8 2011, when a bus (and communication) breakdown resulted in eleven special education children being left stranded on their bus on the side of the road for up to six hours; parents could not obtain a clear answer as to their children’s location from the bus company or the school.²⁸



Busing is a persistent, unresolved concern for families and advocates. Advocates for children with disabilities have long pointed to major busing issues as a central concern for families. In 2006, the Citywide Council on Special Education surveyed parents of students in District 75 and then-Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum released a report that outlined the survey’s findings.²⁹ In terms of transportation, the report noted that the “Department of Education fails to provide many children with special needs with reliable transportation.”³⁰ It pointed to problems with the Department and bus company responsiveness, consistently irregular pick up times, and concerns over bus safety.

Transportation is clearly a major concern for many New York City families. What emerges from this information is that there are persistent and specific problems which the Department and bus companies must resolve.

²⁷ Review of Bus Delays, as posted on the DOE website, on September 27, 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.opt-osfns.org/opt/vendors/busbreakdowns/default.aspx?search=YES>, 9/27/2011, 11:30pm.

²⁸ Yoav Gonen, “Parents’ school-bus nightmare”, *New York Post* 22 September 2011. Accessed at: http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/parents_school_bus_nightmare_F75EEsiCC9LmctOkuMS6TJ

²⁹ Public Advocate Gotbaum, “Left in the Dark: Citywide Council on Special Education Survey Finds DOE Not Informing Parents of Educational Opportunities for Children with Disabilities.” June 2007, accessed at: <http://publicadvocategotbaum.com/policy/documents/CCSEREREPORTFINALWEB.pdf>

³⁰ *Ibid*, page 3.

Recommendations

The Office of the Public Advocate urges the Department to implement the following recommendations to improve student transportation services and address the increasing costs of pupil transportation:

1. Reduce the maximum time students with disabilities are allowed to spend on the bus.

According to recent presentations given by the Department's Office of Pupil Transportation, the current maximum limit for bus transit for students is 90 minutes for in borough transportation and 115 minutes for students traveling out-of-borough. The Department should develop a time reduction plan to make sure students are not spending excessive time on the bus. The Department should move towards 60-minute time limits for rides within borough and 90 minutes for out-of-borough transportation.

2. Bus contracts should be put out to bid in a fair RFP process.

Currently, bus contracts are essentially no-bid and are renewed yearly, despite a lack of monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. According to a recent presentation by the Department's Office of Pupil Transportation, fines are regularly imposed on bus companies for minor offenses. These small infractions are financially insignificant compared to total contracts valued in the millions. As a consequence, they do little to motivate improvement in services and are largely punitive measures.

The Department should establish greater transparency in the contract review process and open the bidding process to new companies.

3. Bus companies that deliver quality service should have the opportunity to do more business with the City.

The Department should establish baselines of service delivery relating to i) safety, ii) timing and efficiency, and iii) customer service. Each contract should go through a comprehensive review to ensure the contractors are meeting targets for improving service, and those who are not meeting standards as measured by the Department should be subject to reductions in their contracts; companies that have excellent performance should be given preference through the RFP process.

4. Clarify lines of communication.

The Department should establish a clear protocol for handling complaints that specifies the responsibilities of the school, bus driver, attendant, and the bus company. This should include who is responsible for parental notification when an issue arises and how that notification occurs.

The Department should establish a simple system of notification when bus routes face delays. Bus attendants should be required to notify parents when they anticipate delays exceeding 15 minutes. This can be done simply and safely through text-message alerts.

The Department should proactively solve transportation issues as they emerge – take the responsibility off of parent's shoulders. Currently, when problems with busing emerge, parents must call the Office of Pupil Transportation to file a complaint. They are given a complaint reference number, but the Public Advocate's Office has heard from parents and advocates that the Department never contacts the parent to follow up. The Department

should establish a protocol whereby all complaints are followed up with an explicit explanation of the steps towards resolution made by the Department and bus companies.

5. Take preventative and proactive steps to reduce bus schedule confusion:

Every year, the same ritual is played out: children and families prepare for a month of confusion and repeated adjustment as bus routes change and bus rosters are finalized. The Office of Pupil Transportation instructs parents to “be flexible the first day” and to “be ready for the bus as early as the time the route begins”.³¹ It also encourages families to discuss with the driver a regular pick-up time for the rest of the school year. However, there are a few simple changes to DOE protocol that can help ameliorate transportation challenges.

Ensure that the majority of children who will need bus services are incorporated into the Department’s system *before* the beginning of the school year. The Department should conduct transportation outreach with all families in the summer to ensure the least amount of route adjustment in the fall.

The Department should clearly outline which documents parents need to bring to IEP meetings that relate to transportation services and place these documents in an easy to access place at the school to ensure students who are eligible for busing have transportation services in place before the beginning of the school year.

The Department should ensure each route is subject to a “dry run” before the first day of school.

Conclusion

Inaction from the Department is unacceptable, inefficient and costly, and thus the Office of the Public Advocate urges the Department to implement the aforementioned recommendations so that next year our students and parents can trust that they will be provided quality and efficient transportation services.

³¹ New York City Department of Education’s Office of Pupil Transportation, <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/News/fallbusinformationspecial.htm>

Appendix 1

Do conditions on the school bus affect your child's ability to succeed at school?

If yes, please explain:

Response (unedited)

Any change, such as new [illegible] or driver, upsets him.

As long as there are no problems with other students on the bus.

Asthma, Autistic, Non-verbal

At times recently, she asked to be moved off bus.

Bullying on bus and taking personal property causes behavior problems.

Cannot tolerate long rides

Everything seems okay according to the driver.

He gets home very late.

He was changed to an out of control bus.

He's always late for school.

I feel sometimes because sometimes he has an incident on bus and may act up in school about it.

If a child acts out on the bus, my child becomes afraid.

If he had a bad time on the bus it reflects in school.

If he has a bad bus ride to school the rest of the day is off.

If he has a rough ride to school, it will affect his attitude in school.

If the bus is not air conditioned

If the bus is late, she misses her lesson.

If the children arrive agitated it's difficult to teach them.

Jason is happy with bus staff and this carries over into school.

My child gets nervous when he's late for school. sets a bad tone for the day

My son has a 45 minute time limit. Sean has seizures all day long and he will go in his pants

Not want to get on the bus (thus not want to go to school) if the experience was negative

On the bus for too long!

Ride too long, agitates on the bus for so long

Route could be shorter

She is on a large bus which appears to increase her anxiety and irritability.

Shorter distance, give him more energy to want to get up faster

Some bus drivers are not prepared to work with children with special needs.

Sometimes older students

Sometimes when bus is late or doesn't know.

The bus has adult disabled people-not appropriate makes him nervous.

The radio helps me learn.

There is [illegible] fighting on the bus and physical abuse.

There was a bully on the bus so I drive him.

This year I've had bus routes changed several time. Late arrivals

Usually there's fighting and arguing on the bus that he enters.

Yes, he is put on a bus with teenagers that is a problem. Its intimidation and bullying to him.

behavior of student riders is a concern

fighting on school bus - driver and attendant of no help

fighting, nasty language, hurting each other

if he is late it is stressful

if the bus is not properly air conditioned my child gets overheated and lethargic

In past years, he has been the victim of bullying by teenagers in D.75 programs who were placed on the same bus as young elementary school students.

timing is a main concern so ,when he/she always comes to the school late,she/he will miss some or part of the lessons within a curricula.

His bus was late since thensecond wk of school. I complained to the school and they told mento call the bus company. About a month ago, i had enough and really was angry that jack kept getting to school 30 mins late! TThe social worker told me to call the Office of Pupil Trasportation, not that she had the #, I had to google it. They were great! Mr jamerson got the bus to us on time by fining them!! Finally someone cared that he was missing 30 mins everyday! Had I known to call them 6 months ago I would have!!

if the bus is overcrowded, especially in the summer, my son becomes anxious and has to be calmed down before work can begin (my son is is claustrophobic)

In response to question 15: started being on time in late November In response to question 16: Again, starting in November only. He missed several weeks of Extended Day. The chaotic routing in the first 2-3 months undermines inclusion and day to day functioning; stresses the entire family!

The disruptive behavior of some children. My child arrives home 2 hours after school departure, arrives very fatigue and refuses to do his homework. He attempts to do h.w. after he wakes around (7:30-8:00pm). Almost every other night.

When the trip was too long (more than 1 hr) or when there were disruptive children on the bus who were not under control by the matrol, my son acted out in school and had numerous behavior issues which resulted in his inability to succeed

My daughter leaves our home one hour before school starts, and is late almost every day, even though her IEP has a 40 minute limit for the bus ride. This causes her to be stressed each morning, and now she is upset because the school has told all children that if they arrive late on the days of the state testing, they will not be allowed into the classrooms until the test is over, and will have to make it up on the days that there are class trips. Also for question 16: on the days my daughter has extended day, she leaves early, and on the days that there is no extended day, she leaves late, having to wait for the bus to come.

bryan has a small bus with limited time travel do to his sensory issues,and other issues that could not be addressed on a regular bus

If the ride is too long or a child bullies my child then he has issues the rest of the day at school.

Some of the kids may be older in age of have other issues, but my son asked me one day, "what does idiota?"

means. Being that he is the youngest in the bus, he tells me that some kids call him, baby. Sometimes he does not like getting on the bus.

Our son has difficulty transitioning and this bus service helps him be prepared for the day. He has difficulty getting organized in the morning and getting him ready can be overwhelming for the entire family, so this service is incredibly helpful.

If the climate control is not working correctly and my child becomes too cold or warm, he will become less cooperative and this will affect his ability to work throughout his school day.

Conditions on the school bus do affect my child's ability to succeed at school. For the reason that there is only a driver and no matron kids make fun of him if they understand what he said so altercations have occurred. One girl on the bus 2 yrs older than him pushed his head into the bus window and caused a bump on his forehead with bruising. Another incident another girl hit him in the face with her umbrella. Those are a few examples of what has occurred on the bus which has no matron and only a driver. When my son gets into any altercations he does not want to go to school because he fears what's going to happen next and he becomes withdrawn.

If the school bus is not kept controlled Kerry will not participate in the classroom and will cry. This year this has not happened.

my son has been taking more than an hour, almost an hour and half on return trip home. Despite my efforts, he has still not been approved for limited travel

My son is traumatized by the long ride, the teasing on the bus, the lack of concern from the drivers and matrons and I have had to spend time and money driving him and having my general ed son be late to school due to the fact that my special ed son is forced to attend a school very far away

My child comes out of school at 2:50 and gets home at 4:45. He has eating problems and is starving when he comes home so late.

he is made to wait in front of another school for 15-30 everyday on his home-bound route. OPT is not fulfilling his limited time travel requirement on his IEP

Buses are most often late and cuts into instructional time. Breakfast which is usually through 1st period is an integral part of my child's curriculum as interaction with cafeteria and teaching staff during asking for a tray to food promotes social and speech therapy scenarios that is vital to my child's schooling.

The ride, which is probably about 3 miles in total, can be more than an hour. My child gets restless and does not know how to express himself. He may slap himself out of frustration. The school is aware of this and has tried to adjust his bus schedule somewhat. The bus matron is sweet and does what she can. On certain days, when I know his trip will be long, I will pick him up myself.

When he is placed on a large bus, he becomes overwhelmed by the noise and amount of interaction. This sets him off for the rest of the day.

IF IT IS A HOT SUMMER AND THEY ARE DRIVING AROUND ON A HOT BUS FOR OVER AN HOUR WHO IS IN THE MOOD TO FOCUS AND WORK IN SCHOOL KEEP IN MIND THESE ARE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES SOME HAVE A VERY DIFFICULT TIME ADAPTING AND ADJUSTING TO FEELINGS AND ENVIRONMENTS IT CAN BE A SENSORY OVERLOAD FOR THEM

my son has sensory issues so the radio on the bus may annoy him at times especially at the end of the day after he has used his energy to deal with his sensory issues at school he is exhausted and will express himself with words that adults consider rude and disrespectful. like asking them to change the station or turn the radio off. when he engages in conversation with a peer on the bus he is told to shut up because he is too loud or rude when he asks how he is being rude or why he has to shut up once again he is being rude and should not question it.

The length of the ride affects him, it could cause a meltdown on a bad day. Also my son has been physically

attacked over the years by other students on the bus and not much is done.

A good bus ride guarantee he does not get upset when he reaches school and will have a productive day at school

First it affects her safety. For a week I complained to the driver that he had a flat tire (yes, he drove on it for a week) until finally he got sick of me complaining to him and stepped out of the bus to see that it was flat and to get it fixed. Second, my child chews on objects - so we provide her with a rubber "P" to chew on so she won't chew on the seat belts (which make her all black) and her clothing. It was a battle with the matron to get her to clip the "P" on my child and to make sure she had it. In fact - the bus "lost" the "p" many times. Finally I decided to use a safety pin to attach it to my child so that the bus is not responsible for it. Not sure what the matron does if they can't do that.

If my child gets a good and happy ride to school, the happy and good experience to school is important.

It's important to have a nice matron who understands the kids and creates order on the bus and a good bus driver who takes care with his/her driving.

The matron is excellent; attentive and in control. The driver is efficient and calm. These two adults are crucial as a team to maintaining the safety and peace of special needs children including my child during travel time. This is imperative in order for my child to start the school day safely and stably.

Difficult children, and escorts that are not sufficiently trained and have no activities or resources on the bus can create a wild atmosphere on the bus that can make my son wild as well.

The commute is too long, especially in the morning. How can a young child with an attention deficit be expected to focus after such a long journey? Arriving late cuts into instruction time, disrupts the class, and aggravates transition issues. Most importantly it also precludes some mandated therapy.

The ride is TOO LONG. The bus is supposed to be a direct route to and from school: My kids' bus stops at MULTIPLE schools, and my 7 year old twins are riding with middle school children.

If the matron and driver are knowledgeable and understanding and treat him with respect, and like my child, my son arrives at school in a better state of mind.

Because of he is impulsive and hyperactive this causes him to be in conflict with other student, this has caused us to request a Para- professional for him which have been approved and is working wonderful for him.

she was on a bus with much older, bigger kids and it was scary for her. Even the driver was upset with her placement on the bus. It took a lot of effort to convince OPT to change the route even though there was a bus leaving the school with other littler kids with space. Very trying process. the school was calling, we were calling. it was a totally inappropriate placement on the bus. Any parent would have been upset and it interfered with her ability to learn

If there are problems on the bus and a bus matron is not there to supervise this could create a lot of anxiety and make it difficult for him to focus. In addition, when his bus ride is too long (in the past he has been on the bus for over an hour) or there is no air conditioning in hot weather, he has difficulty self-regulating when he arrives at school.

had a horrible driver last year - screamed at the children, always late to school and late to p/u after school. he arrived at school very stressed out. it was miserable.

Children's inappropriate behaviors such as excessive screaming makes my son anxious throughout the day about riding the bus.

I do not send him on the bus in the AM because the pick up is too early and the ride too long which would affect his mood and performance. When he had to be on the bus for two hours one way it was affecting his behavior at

home(wetting his pants,crying,moody etc.)

The time of the bus actually varies it is not consistently late on either end, but it can fluctuate from on time to 45 minutes late on any given day

I the school bus is very late, and sometimes it's over an hour late, he gets upset and scared. This makes him feel ditracted throughout the day.

The kids on the bus sometimes argue & irritate each other. My daughter is both the victim & the troublemaker because she's not able to adjust her behaviour to suit the others. I assume the other kids have similar issues. The bus matron & driver aren't always capable of handling the conflicts. One bad bus ride can upset my daughter for a day or more.

My child is sometimes on the bus for more than 2.5 hours EACH WAY. He is dazed and disregulated, exhausted, and anxious. Repeated complaints to the OPT and CSE have had no result.

The trip to school is too long and the trip home is too long. He gets home too late to have time to finish all his homework.

He has limited time travel but travel plus waiting at school before and after means he spends 2 hours each way in transit.

My son needs a short bus ride in a quiet environment or he will become unfocused throughout the day.

The teasing mostly takes place on the school bus and that sets Erica's mood for the day. School bus staff need training to deal with kids with special needs/behavioral problems to learn how to cope and also learn how to calm the children down.

A long trip with many stops in a bus without ac is very uncomfortable and makes it hard to transition to a day of school work.

my son is lucky enough to have a great bus driver and an attentive and caring matron, both of whom insure that he is safe and has a good trip to school. we are also fortunate that he is the last on and the first off so he has a ride of under half hour. If neither were the case I am sure he would NOT arrive at school ready to learn so I am grateful that we have been so lucky but I imagine other kids may not be so fortunate. on the days when the bus is late, or broken down, or without air conditioning I know it negatively impacts his preparation for learning and his health.

Arriving late to school everyday makes my son very anxious and full of anxiety. All of his classmates are settled in and starting there day. It takes him extra time now to get to the point where there at. :(

When he experiences bullying or teasing he effects his whole day. He Does not understand that typeof behavior

If he feels safe or unsafe then his performance in school reflects how he feels. If he feels unsafe then he "acts" out and can't concentrate on his studies.

He needs a small wagon because he was teased in a big bus, there were children from Middle School and he was small, loud noises affect him. Now he goes in a small wagon and he's doing better.

My son cannot take loud noises and lots of people on larger buses. There is too much noise and fights.

There have been repeated incidents of bullying on the bus. The matron tends to blame the kids who are the victims.

They affect my child but in a positive way, his bus driver and matron are very nuturing and interested in my child's well being. They interact with him in a warm, loving way. This gets his day off to a great start!

If the ride was too long, it would hinder his ability to succeed in school. Also, the interaction with other children on the bus has an impact.

He rides with older children, and some appear to be mentally deficient/behavior issues. He has seen fights on the bus.

Jared has autism and continuous loud noise(chatter of large bus full capacity) will make him anxious, jittery, he may respond physically by hitting, he may lose control of his bowels due to the stress of the noise

for the first three months of school, the bus was late on an average 30-45 min. This implies missing 45 min. of educational instruction every day. Also, if the bus is so late, my child cannot keep up with the tight schedule of therapies he has after school. In addition, because my child is medically fragile, a late bus makes him to miss on his feeding schedule, which is critical to keep him mediacly stable. Hence, he will miss more school.

If the bus is comfortable and has supportive staff, my child will look forward to going to school each AM.

she arrives home exhausted every day; she once urinated and defecated on herself because the bus was stuck in traffic and took nearly two hours to get home.

We live 15 minutes from school, but since my child is the first child on the route, his bus ride is a little under an hour and a half. That's an awfully long time for a little kid. It's very hard for him to get in gear when he finally makes it to school.

He is a blind child who is bused with children with behavior problems from another program. Their behavior causes my son anxiety. This is an ongoing problem that the school pricipal and director have been trying to change via the DOE/OPT to no avail.

If the bus is late or if the air conditioning is not working, my son is strongly affected and becomes unable to focus

I submitted Dr.'s health restrictions for both of my children to Office of Pupil Transportation. My daughter is in remission from leukemia and my son has asthma. I have not heard back from OPT in 2 months. They behave like bullies on the phone. Doctor who reviews health related reduced time documents comes in 1x /week in the afternoon to review entire city's students documentation. There is no support in this area at all. My children, ages 6 and 7 are also on a mini-bus with Atlantic Express Rte 661 - with several high school students who go to Bishop Ahearn. I find this inappropriate and alarming but told by OPT they can't discriminate by age. I fear that my children are in danger of being harmed.

When the bus is on time, which it currently is, it adds to his good days. When it is late (after school has begun) which happened a lot earlier in the year, it has a pronounced negative effect on him. After one extra long bus ride my child showed up late at school and promptly vomited.
