

Dr. Lawrence Feldman, Chair

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, EVALUATION AND TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY, AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In school districts throughout the nation, technology is applied in ways that add safety and security features to all aspects of the school house. From enhanced security systems with feeds to central agencies to identification verification systems that use databases to inform school site officials of a visitor's possible criminal record, students are benefiting from the increased scrutiny and consideration given to their safety.

In Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), Global Positioning Systems (GPS) monitored busses are adding additional safety features allowing the District and parents to follow busses while on their routes and providing real time data regarding our fleet. This School Operation's initiative and the School Board and District leadership behind its implementation is to be commended for extending safety and security features beyond the classroom walls and into the school busses where over 50,000 of our students are transported daily. However, there are additional opportunities to achieve needed safety features and access to information for both parents/guardians and our District that are worth exploring. These features will reduce the risk of student truancy, confirm pick up and drop off times and locations, decrease the risk of missing students, and decrease parent anxiety while cutting down on the need for transportation personnel to field calls regarding missing students and/or school bus location.

During the past ten years, school districts across the nation have installed GPS systems along with student boarding and exiting tracking components. These tracking components include bar code scanners and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), among others. Technology has evolved greatly since the inception of these features and an increasing number of parents and community members indicate that it is time for deeper consideration of its potential benefits here in Miami-Dade.

These technologies will offer the most advanced and necessary security features in the case of a crisis or emergency, such as providing an accurate and updated passenger manifest. However, just as important, is the day-to-day capacity to offer school administrators and parents/guardians the ability to know when and where their children boarded and exited the bus. Particularly for younger students, with varying drop off points due to two household scenarios, or varying routines depending on the day of the week, as well as for substitute bus drivers, drop-off can be confusing. A tracking system allows parents/guardians and administrators to quickly track drop-off time and location for confused or missing students who mistakenly exit the bus, thus reducing tension and anxiety when a student is identified as missing from their regular stop. This component is a safety feature that offers piece of mind to all those vested in student safety. Additionally, a tracking system may assist the District with maximizing and

ensuring accurate federal reimbursements resulting from documented travel of ESE students enrolled in programs such as Medicaid.

Large urban school districts do not often consider the implementation of programs that potentially create financial obstacles, implementation challenges, and logistical hurdles. Yet, time and again, M-DCPS has risen to this very challenge, particularly in the area of progressive technological innovation. Through careful deliberations M-DCPS has ensured that regardless of zip codes: 21st Century classrooms feature the latest technology in every school, digital deserts are being eradicated, enhanced real-time communications with stakeholders and parents/guardians are increasingly available, and the use of telecommunications and mobile phone features expanded. Additionally, as a result of its careful and deliberate planning and initiation, M-DCPS received overwhelming support for a General Obligation Bond to improve facilities and infrastructure at each school. These seemingly insurmountable goals for a large urban school district have been effectively and efficiently met through the leadership of the School Board, Superintendent, and staff, each committed to exploring new ideas while building a budget based on a foundation of mutual values.

This item seeks to authorize the superintendent to conduct a feasibility study for the implementation of an electronic student bus boarding and exiting tracking system that features real-time reporting to parents/guardians and/or the District on all currently GPS monitored M-DCPS busses; and subsequently installing GPS monitoring student boarding and exiting systems on all remaining non-monitored M-DCPS busses.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY CHAIR
LAWRENCE FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida authorize the Superintendent to conduct a feasibility study to consider the:

1. implementation of a student bus boarding and exiting tracking system featuring real time reporting to District and parents/guardians on all current M-DCPS GPS monitored busses; and
2. feasibility of installing GPS monitoring systems and student tracking systems on all remaining currently non-monitored M-DCPS busses and all future purchased busses; and
3. exploration of pilot programs featuring the trial of aforementioned systems and report back by the March 2017 School Board Meeting.