



# DEPTFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Business Administrator  
Board Secretary

August 9, 2024

Dear Spartan Community,

I hope this letter finds you well and you are enjoying the summer months! I apologize for the length of this letter, but it is necessary in order to clearly and transparently communicate an important change to our transportation services for the 2024-25 school year.

To optimize our resources and ensure the financial stability of our district, we have made the difficult decision to reduce the number of bus stops and the number of students who will be transported to and from each of our schools. Please know that I could not, in good conscience, continue maintaining the same practices that have pilfered our budget and transportation department in recent years. I have made a concerted effort to work with new leadership in the transportation department, the Board of Education, and my colleagues in administration to be mindful of the taxpayers' contributions and to make this right.

With that, under New Jersey statutory provisions (18A:39-1), State Board of Education regulations, and New Jersey Transportation regulations, the district will provide free public transportation to all scholars whose residence lies beyond the minimum distance to the property line of the assigned school. To qualify for bus transportation early childhood/elementary/middle school students must reside over 2.0 miles from their assigned school. High school students must reside 2.5 miles away from the high school. Students with special needs will be provided with transportation to and from school, per their IEP. This will also apply to students with a 504 and temporarily displaced students who require transportation.

## **Why Are We Making This Change?**

The decision to cut back on bus stops was not made lightly. After extensive analysis, it became clear that reducing the number of stops would significantly contribute to the overall efficiency and sustainability of our transportation services. Reducing the number of stops across the district minimizes the burden on our Deptford fleet of drivers and reduces our need to contract out with an outside bus vendor. This measure is projected to save the district **over \$1.65 million annually**, as our contracted services will now be limited to a couple of out-of-district runs and PreK transportation only. Additionally, the district hasn't received any reimbursement from the NJDOE for transporting students who live within the 2/2.5 mile radius in the past. This means we do not receive any funding from the state to transport the students within the mileage. The average cost to transport a student is \$735 per year. This equates to another **\$1.36 million loss** to the district. These savings will allow us to reallocate funds to other critical areas.

## **How Will This Savings Be Reallocated?**

These savings will allow us to support much needed areas such as security and renovations at our schools, maintaining and increasing teaching staff, academic programs, classroom resources, and student support services, ensuring that we continue to provide a high-quality education to all our students in the future. Additionally, please realize that there are plans for new home construction in Deptford over the next 5 years. Our goal is to provide cost-savings to taxpayers when a new school has to be built or additions have to be made to existing schools in order to support the expected increase in enrollment due to the housing developments.

## What This Means for You

We understand that these changes may considerably impact many of our families. Our transportation department and central administration have carefully reviewed and adjusted the bus routes to minimize inconvenience while maintaining safety and accessibility. Here are some key points to note:

- **No Longer Receiving Free Transportation:** Your scholar(s) may no longer receive free bussing from the district - even though they have received it previously - as you live within 2/2.5 miles of the school.
- **Consolidated Stops:** Bus stops have been consolidated to central locations within neighborhoods. This may mean a longer walk to the bus stop for many students.
- **Updated Bus Schedules:** New bus schedules and stop locations will be communicated to all affected families before the start of the school year. Please review these schedules carefully and plan accordingly.
- **Safety Measures:** Ensuring the safety of our students remains our top priority. We have worked closely with local authorities to review walking paths and will continue to monitor and address any safety concerns that arise.
- **District-Wide Decision and Impact:** Both in-district and out-of-district schools have experienced this impact in the past while others have not. This decision will be consistent for all and will finally calibrate the district's transportation services at each level.
- **Building our Deptford Fleet:** Our goal this past calendar year is to minimize the number of contracted services we use for bussing and increase the jobs and buses offered with our fleet of buses and drivers.

## Next Steps

We are committed to supporting our families through this transition.

- **Subscription Bussing:** For students who live within 2/2.5 miles of their respective schools, subscription bussing can be provided. **This will be a \$365 fee for the school year per student.** If the student misses their seat three times (and they are present for the school day), their spot will be given to another student on the waitlist. Please remember, this price is roughly half of the average cost to transport a student (\$735 per year).
- **Bus Stop Change:** For those who qualify for free transportation, we have allowed parents to make a one-time change to their child(ren)'s bus stop to assist families with caregivers with the update to Policy #8600 - Pupil Transportation.

Please understand that if you contact the district asking for transportation stating that you have had bussing in the past, the request will be politely denied. However, we are here to help you navigate these changes and ensure a smooth start to the school year with this new transportation plan to ensure buses are on time and students arrive to and from school in a safe and timely manner.

## Community Presentation

We believe in the strength of our community and the importance of working together and communicating in a direct, face-to-face setting. With that in mind, a public presentation will be given at the **August 20, 2024 (6:30 PM)** regular Board of Education meeting at Deptford Middle School Cafeteria and the facts will be laid out for all.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we implement these necessary adjustments. Together, we can ensure that our district is efficient and continues to provide excellent educational opportunities for all our students.

All my best, always,



Kevin Kanauss  
Superintendent of Schools