

A photograph of a long line of yellow school buses parked in a lot. The buses are viewed from a low angle, showing their front and side. The sky is clear and blue. An orange rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

## **The Bussing Blues: Challenges and Opportunities in Massachusetts Student Transportation**

- Special Commission on Improving Efficiencies in Student Transportation
- MAPT Special Education Transportation Cost Savings Initiative
- MFSAB, Driver Training & New RMV 7D Regulations

**MASS/MASC Conference November 8, 2019**

# Panel Presenters

**Joseph Maruszczak**

**Mendon Upton Regional School District**

**Colleen Cavanaugh**

**Massachusetts Association of Pupil  
Transportation**

**Stephanie Fisk**

**Gateway Regional School District**

**Brian Hyde**

**Uxbridge Public Schools**



# **Student Transportation Challenges in Massachusetts: The Superintendents' Perspectives**

# MASS Survey- April 2019



- Two separate surveys put out to superintendents to gauge major concerns
- Responses representing 145 districts (53% response rate)
- Identified these major concerns:
  - **EXPENSE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION**
  - **LACK OF BIDDERS FOR BUS CONTRACTS**
  - **INSUFFICIENT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT**
  - **INSUFFICIENT REIMBURSEMENT FOR VOC/AG SCHOOLS**
  - **INSUFFICIENT REIMBURSEMENT FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS AND FOSTER STUDENTS**

A close-up, slightly angled view of a large pile of US one hundred dollar bills. The bills are fanned out and overlapping, showing various serial numbers and the portrait of Benjamin Franklin. The colors are primarily green and blue. An orange rectangular box is superimposed over the right side of the image, containing the title text.

# Costs of Transportation

# In-District Transportation: State, FY2012-2018



Year	Expenditures	Per Student
FY12	\$443,912,382	\$482.92
FY13	\$464,392,209	\$505.57
FY14	\$503,242,531	\$548.67
FY15	\$523,996,806	\$573.76
FY16	\$540,630,577	\$594.76
FY17	\$570,875,423	\$626.48
FY18	\$605,155,164	\$666.60

This represents a **36.3% INCREASE** in the seven-year span

# OOD Transportation: State, FY2012-2018



Year	Expenditures
FY12	\$120,334,500
FY13	\$122,334,501
FY14	\$133,217,072
FY15	\$136,106,995
FY16	\$143,385,229
FY17	\$147,926,650
FY18	\$150,481,181

This represents a **25.1% INCREASE** in the seven-year span



# Typical Costs Based Upon MASS Survey

## Regular Transportation

- Range of expenses: \$185/bus/day (Foxborough) to \$540/bus/day (Newton)
- Most reporting districts were in the range of \$375-\$450/bus/day

## Special Ed Transportation

- A wide variety of expenses, based upon size of bus or van, and distances traveled
- Most districts use multiple contractors and are in the range of \$60-180/direction/day







“

***It is difficult to compare, as regular education transports 1000+ students no more than 5 miles to the same place while our special education program transports 40 students to 25 different place that are 5-20 miles from their homes.***

# One District Example: Mendon-Upton Regional

Regular Education Transportation		
		<b>FY2019</b>
1000.01.3300.04.00.1	Trans. Serv.-Regular	\$1,609,200
1000.01.3300.04.01.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Voc. Ed	<u>\$21,840</u>
		<b>\$1,631,040</b>
	Reimbursement	\$1,119,338
	<b>Net Reimbursement %</b>	<b>68.63%</b>
Special Education Transportation		<b>FY2019</b>
1000.02.3300.04.01.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Pre-Sch.	\$140,000
1000.02.3300.04.02.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Public School	\$135,000
1000.02.3300.04.03.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Public Separate Day	\$195,000
1000.02.3300.04.04.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Private Day	\$460,000
1000.02.3300.04.05.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Private Residential	<u>\$10,000</u>
		<b>\$940,000</b>
<b>Total All Transportation</b>		<b>\$2,571,040</b>

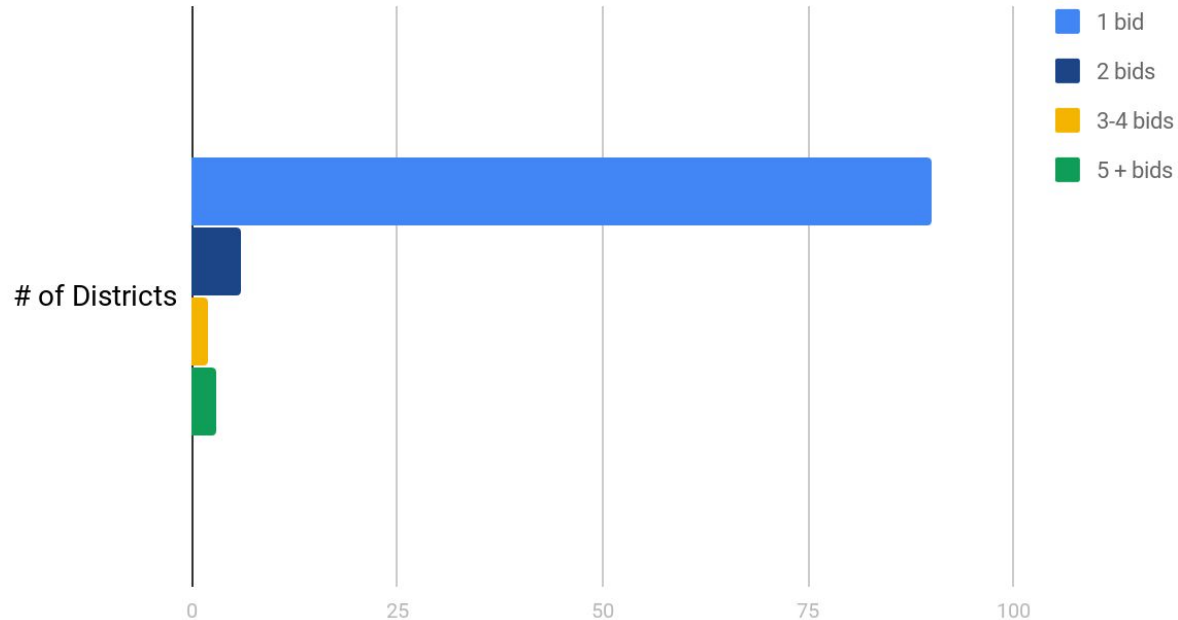


# One District Example: Mendon-Upton Regional

Regular Education Transportation			
		FY2019	FY2020
1000.01.3300.04.00.1	Trans. Serv.-Regular	\$1,609,200	\$1,688,400
1000.01.3300.04.01.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Voc. Ed	<u>\$21,840</u>	<u>\$23,375</u>
		<b>\$1,631,040</b>	<b>\$1,711,775</b>
	Reimbursement	\$1,119,338	\$1,095,082
	<b>Net Reimbursement %</b>	<b>68.63%</b>	<b>63.97%</b>
Special Education Transportation		FY2019	FY2020
1000.02.3300.04.01.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Pre-Sch.	\$140,000	\$147,000
1000.02.3300.04.02.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Public School	\$135,000	\$145,000
1000.02.3300.04.03.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Public Separate Day	\$195,000	\$275,000
1000.02.3300.04.04.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Private Day	\$460,000	\$525,000
1000.02.3300.04.05.1	Trans. Serv.-SPED-Private Residential	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>
		<b>\$940,000</b>	<b>\$1,102,000</b>
<b>Total All Transportation</b>		<b>\$2,571,040</b>	<b>\$2,813,775</b>

# Bidding on Transportation Contracts

Bids Received



**90** of the responding districts reported only receiving one single bidder

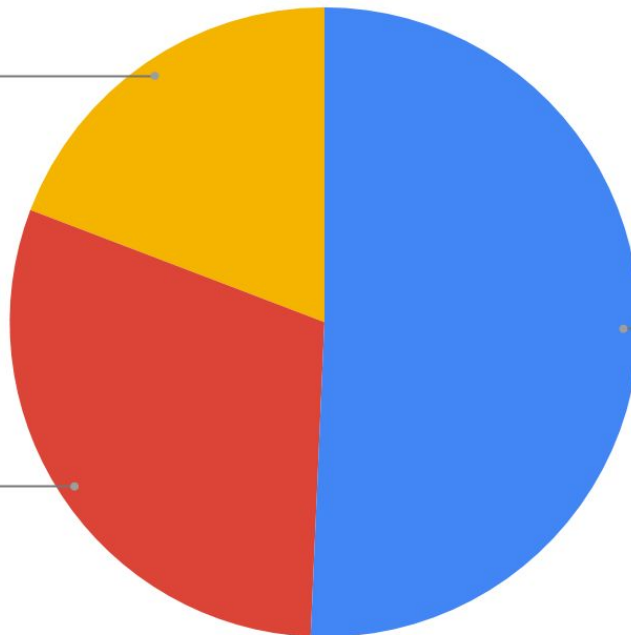
# Owning of Own Transportation

## District-Owned Transportation

Limited  
19.2%

Yes  
30.1%

No  
50.7%



## Common Responses

- Purchase of vans by districts for transportation of some special education programming (e.g., preschool and vocational placements), athletics, field trips
- In some cases, the district shared ownership with an outside vendor



# Utilization of Public Transportation

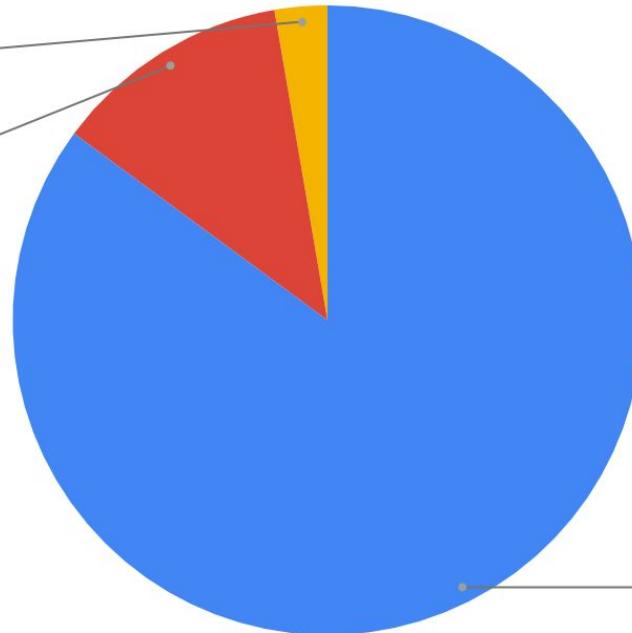
## Use of Public Transportation

Limited

2.7%

Yes

12.2%



No

85.1%



## Common Responses

- Overall, public transportation was simply not an option, particularly for suburban and rural districts
- In some very limited cases, public transportation was available for school choice students and for those with T service, discounted Charlie cards



# Utilization of Regional Transit Authorities

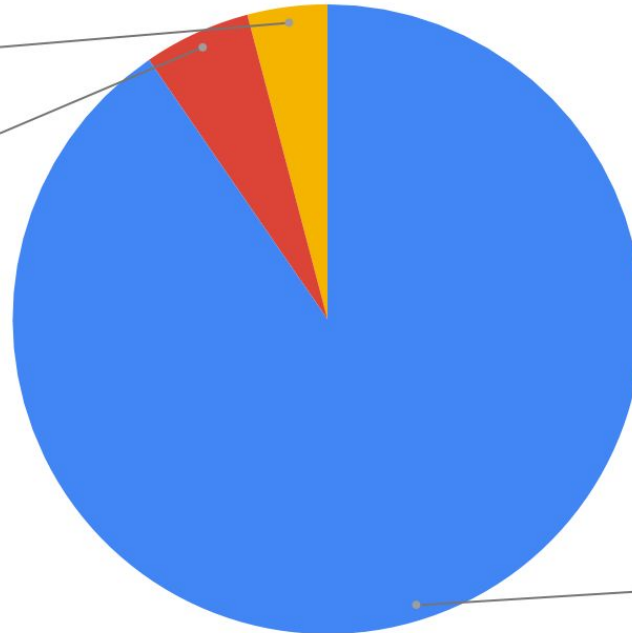
Use of Regional Transit Authorities

Limited

4.1%

Yes

5.5%



No

90.4%

# Common Responses

- Instance of special education collaborative using regional transit
- Also, use of MBTA for MetCo students



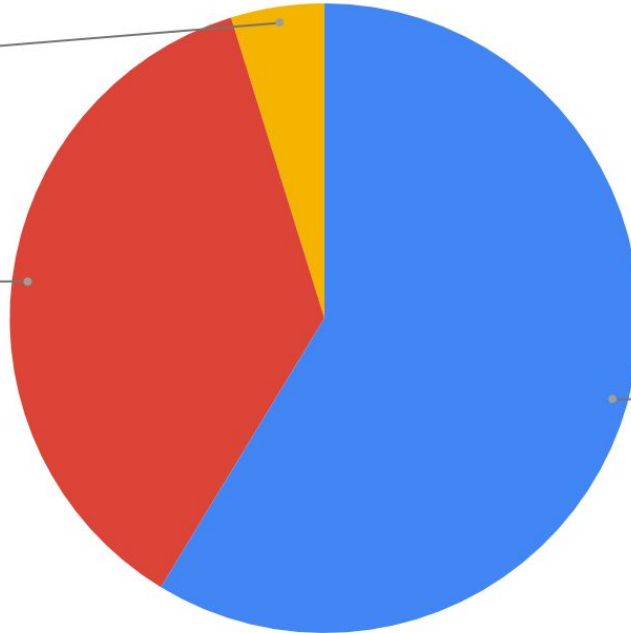
# If Public Transportation Were Available, Would You Use It?

Possibility of Using Public Transportation

Maybe  
4.8%

Yes  
36.5%

No  
58.7%



# Common Responses

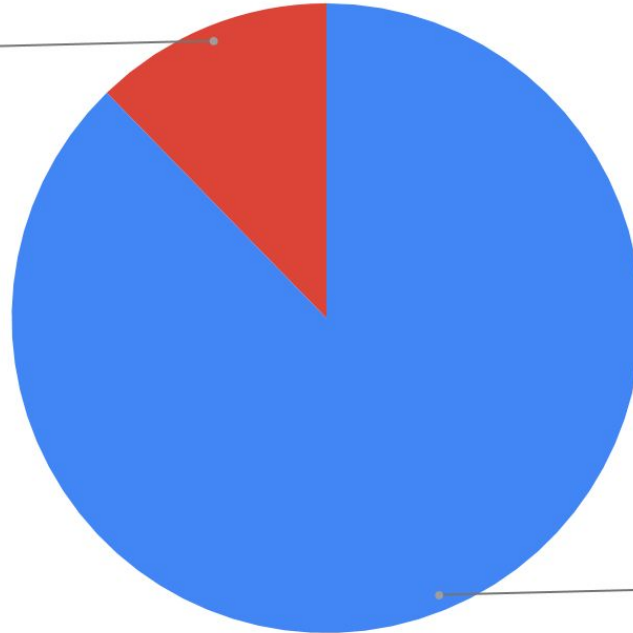
- Common concerns expressed were the location of schools (e.g., rural) and the lack of transport options and the lack of feasibility of public transportation for children
- A few supts expressed interest wanting to know more details, specifics (e.g., the possibility of expansion of MBTA options)

# Provision of Incentives for Carpooling, Biking, Walking to School, etc.

Incentives for Carpooling, etc.

Yes

12.3%



No

87.7%

# Common Responses

- Preferred parking for students who carpool
- Creation of a student app to promote carpooling
- Newton has created a committee to create more PR in the community around safe, healthy and efficient means of transportation
- Concerns raised included: rural logistics and challenges of infrastructure within communities





# Ideas for Innovation

**Use of  
collaboratives to  
do the bidding  
for regions**

**Creation of  
state-run  
collaboratives  
that provide more  
competition**

**Creation of more  
opportunities for  
sharing of  
transportation  
ressources  
between districts**



# Ideas for Innovation

**Regulation:  
state setting  
flat rates for  
buses- per mile**

**Implement  
ride-sharing  
system such as  
Uber or Lyft**

**Additional grant  
opportunities to  
purchase electric  
buses**



# Ideas for Innovation

**Coordination of  
OOD  
transportation  
through the  
private school**

**Incentivize  
district purchase  
of vans/buses for  
targeted needs**

**Reimburse OOD  
transportation as  
part of the Circuit  
Breaker Program**



# Special Education Transportation Task Force

**In 2003 representatives from MASS, MOEC, maaps, MAPT and ASE organized to discuss rising costs in out-of-district special education transportation**

**A Statewide Task Force was created in 2004**

**Preliminary study showed significant cost savings by consolidating routes**

**For the past several years the Massachusetts Legislature and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have funded initiatives to reduce cost of out-of-district transportation**



# Resources Available

**Website developed in 2012 to show the October 1 DESE Data**

**[www.SpedTransSavings.org](http://www.SpedTransSavings.org)**

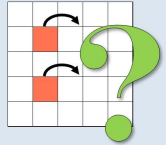
**This data can assist in identifying contiguous districts to explore potential ride sharing**

**The Massachusetts Association of Pupil Transportation was awarded a contract from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Activities include conducting Special Education Transportation Reviews with a possible 50% contribution from DESE**

# District Reviews: Scope of Work

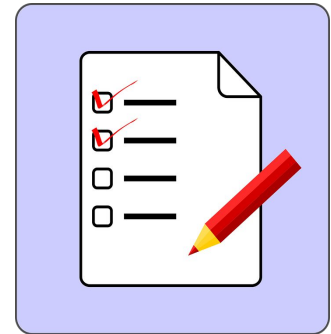
- Review all contracts and internal processes used for obtaining transportation services
- If applicable conduct analysis of in-house operations
- Explore the role of district personnel in arranging services and how it is conducted
- Review all policies, protocols and procedures
- Conduct analysis of transportation budget and actual route costs for both out of district and in district transportation



What-If  
Analysis ▼

# District Reviews: Scope of Work

- **Review IEP process as it pertains to transportation**
- **Provide comparative State data from Schedule 7 for FY13-FY18**
- **Review process and cost of Homeless and Foster Care transportation**
- **Conduct a self assessment prior to the visit**





# What Have We Learned?

- **MAXIMIZING vehicle load is key to savings**
- **Makes sense to see if neighboring/contiguous communities also have children attending same out of district school**
- **Review in-district transportation to ensure students are riding the regular education bus when possible**
- **Discussion at the IEP meeting impacts transportation costs**



# What Have We Learned? (Continued)

- **Carefully consider when a monitor is needed on the vehicle**
- **Seek quotes or bids annually to allow for changes in ride share opportunities**



# Challenges

- **Parents may not want child riding with students from other districts**
- **Length of ride**
- **Frequent changes to routes**
- **Special conditions for monitors and/or wheelchairs**



# Considerations

- **Out-of-District transportation can be the least efficient and the most expensive**
- **Bid out all outside Special Education runs as opposed to quoting each trip**
- **Bid annually or negotiate prices annually**
- **Vendor competition, research available vendors in your area**



# Considerations (continued)

- Some vendors will share information with you for the best price while others are more guarded with their route information
- Know your neighboring districts
- The telephone can be your most valuable tool to secure a good price
- A few minutes invested can save considerable money





# Gateway Regional School District

District Overview: 6 Towns - 187 square miles

FY17 Special Education Transportation Review included:

- Colleen Cavanaugh, M.A.P.T.; Gateway's Assistant Superintendent, Special Education Director & Transportation Coordinator

Major Changes for Savings!

- Received 2 quotes = Competition
- Coordinated preschool transportation with special education director and preschool coordinator for placement of students from same town on same preschool schedule
- Purchased used 7D vans for transportation of special education students involved in the transition program
- Created in-house programs vs. tuitioning out
- Require all new paraprofessionals hired to become 7D certified

# Gateway Regional School District

## Special Education Transportation Cost Comparisons

- FY '17 - \$639,569
- FY '18 - \$436,128
- FY '19 - \$348,449
- FY '20 - \$326,915 (Projected)



Cost reductions from FY '17 - FY '20 projected to be \$312,654



# UXBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **MAPT COL-MAR (54) + Uxbridge (1) = \$219,627 or 41.43% Savings**
  - **1,700 students**
  - **18.6% SPED (316 IEPs)**
  - **29% (91) receive Specialized Transportation**
  - **Five in-district vehicles**
  - **Two in-district SPED buses**
  - **FIVE+ (former) Vendors**
- **MAPT met with Business Office, Special Education Office (including Team Chairs), Drivers and All Vendors**
- **Reviewed, Analyzed and Provided Thoughtful Feedback of All In & Out of District Special Education Transportation**



# UXBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **MAPT Provided four full pages of recommendations including:**
  - **Formalized bid process and expanded vendor list;**
  - **Expanded our in-district routes;**
  - **Neighboring schools' collaboration;**
  - **Tightened up Team Chairs and IEP process with Individual Transportation Checklist;**
  - **Reviewed monitor need;**
  - **Driver/Monitor training program;**
  - **Vendor guidelines;**
  - **Parent relationships; and**
  - **Ride sharing language**
- **Introduced Uxbridge to MAPT, [spedtranssavings.com](https://www.spedtrans.org/)**
- **Updated job descriptions for drivers and monitors**
- **Moved Forward! Got It Done!**



# Q & A

**Any questions?**





# Any questions? Reach out to us!

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## THANK YOU!!