



Bus Transportation Issues Continue in Washington Township

September 6, 2022 by Educator Barnes

After wrapping up the Labor Day three day weekend, Washington Township parents awoke to transportation disruption on Tuesday, September 6.

At 7:32 a.m., the district sent the following message:

Families and Staff,

We have several drivers absent this morning and many unfilled routes. Please expect delays. If you have the ability to take your child to school, please do so. We apologize for the inconvenience.

Midday parents were contacted again.

Due to an increased number of bus drivers reporting absences this afternoon, we are unable to provide after school activity late bus runs today. Individual schools may issue additional guidance to families this afternoon as a result of this change. We apologize for the inconvenience.

At 5:05 p.m., Dr. Woodson, Washington Township Superintendent, sent a six-minute video addressing transportation concerns.

Woodson began the video by stating, "I know many of you continue to be frustrated with the service you are experiencing from our transportation department. As a district, this is not how we wanted to begin this school year and certainly not indicative of the service that we want to offer our families."

Woodson explained that many bus drivers called out from work on the morning of September 6, and more called out that afternoon, impacting the district's ability to provide after school activity late buses. She also acknowledged that school personnel is also frustrated with the transportation issues. Late arriving students impacts teaching and learning and school building schedules.

Woodson noted that former transportation director Brent England, who was named director in an April 2022 district press release, has been replaced with Marla Palacios. Included in the district newsletter sent to families on Friday, September 1, it was noted that "Ms. Palacios is a long-time building-level administrator with a long history of success managing both projects and people."

In Tuesday's video, Woodson also shared the current transportation job openings:

- 1 dispatcher
- 1 receptionist
- 1 assistant garage supervisor
- 1 vehicle technician specialist
- 18 bus drivers
- 10 bus aides

Woodson explained the district's effort to recruit and retain transportation staff.

"Unfortunately, even after record high raises the past two years, after incentive packages being offered, after covering all training fees, after competitive wages, and loyalty stipends, we are still unable to fill these positions."

She also addressed bus driver absences. "Adding to these complexities we are currently experiencing, we have a high number of bus driver absences on certain days, which has impacted the entire system. We offer bonuses for attendance and are thoughtful and balancing holding staff accountable for regular attendance and supporting those appropriately using their accumulated illness time."

Washington Township parents and caregivers should continue to read district communication sent through ParentSquare and use the [VersaTrans link](#) provided on the district's website for the updated bus stop and bus number information. Last, the district is partnering with the [Washington Township Parent Council Network](#) and will discuss transportation during PCN's next meeting.

Pike Township had transportation issues last school year. It seems that Washington Township is taking a more robust approach than its neighboring district did last school year by communicating as much as possible with parents, holding a webinar, hiring additional staff to answer phone calls about transportation, and through newsletters and video messages.

Community members interested in the vacancies can view the job descriptions and apply by going to [the quick links tab, choosing employment, and clicking current vacancies.](#)