

Seattle Public Schools
MS 23-169
PO Box 34165
Seattle, WA 98124-1165



Sept. 24, 2018

Dear Seattle Public Schools Bus Riding Families,

This is an update on transportation services contracted with First Student. First Student and the bus driver union came to an agreement after an 8-day strike in February. This agreement was supposed to ensure sufficient bus drivers. Although First Student had sufficient drivers at the end of last school year, many drivers did not return this school year.

While most routes have been on time, some routes have been consistently late. **Anytime there is a late bus, students, families and schools are impacted. We apologize for this disruption.** Getting students safely to and from school on time is a top priority.

Unfortunately, First Student has found filling the 411 positions they require to serve SPS challenging, and they have been 15 to 35 positions short. When this happens, First Student “double ups” on routes to make sure every route is run daily, but this means some routes are significantly delayed.

What are we doing to get your student to and from school on time?

- First Student has been actively recruiting and training staff, however, they continue to have a high turnover rate. **To reduce this, First Student has just agreed to a significant salary increase for beginning drivers.** First Student said they have 46 drivers in training, and we should anticipate that all positions will be filled by early October.
- Meanwhile, we continue to prioritize yellow bus service to Title 1 schools and for special education students.
- The district has been continuously working with First Student to develop plans and supports to reduce the impact on families.
 - We have subcontracted with a Special Education transportation contractor
 - Provided more ORCA cards to students
 - Re-routed existing routes to reduce the total number of drivers needed
 - Convened a Transportation Force that includes transportation and school professionals, parents and community members
 - Provided additional funding for schools when buses are late and additional supervision is needed

We will keep you updated as more information is available. Please check the transportation website (<http://www.seattleschools.org/departments/transportation>) for updates. We also are working to provide more timely communications to families and schools.

Because this has not been resolved, we are asking families to make alternative plans in case your student’s bus is late. We realize this is difficult for families and impacts their family schedule. We continue to work with First Student to resolve this as soon as possible.

Transportation Department