



2023-24 Transportation Update

Mark Strickland, Chief of Facilities and Operations
Bob Snidemiller, Senior Director, Transportation

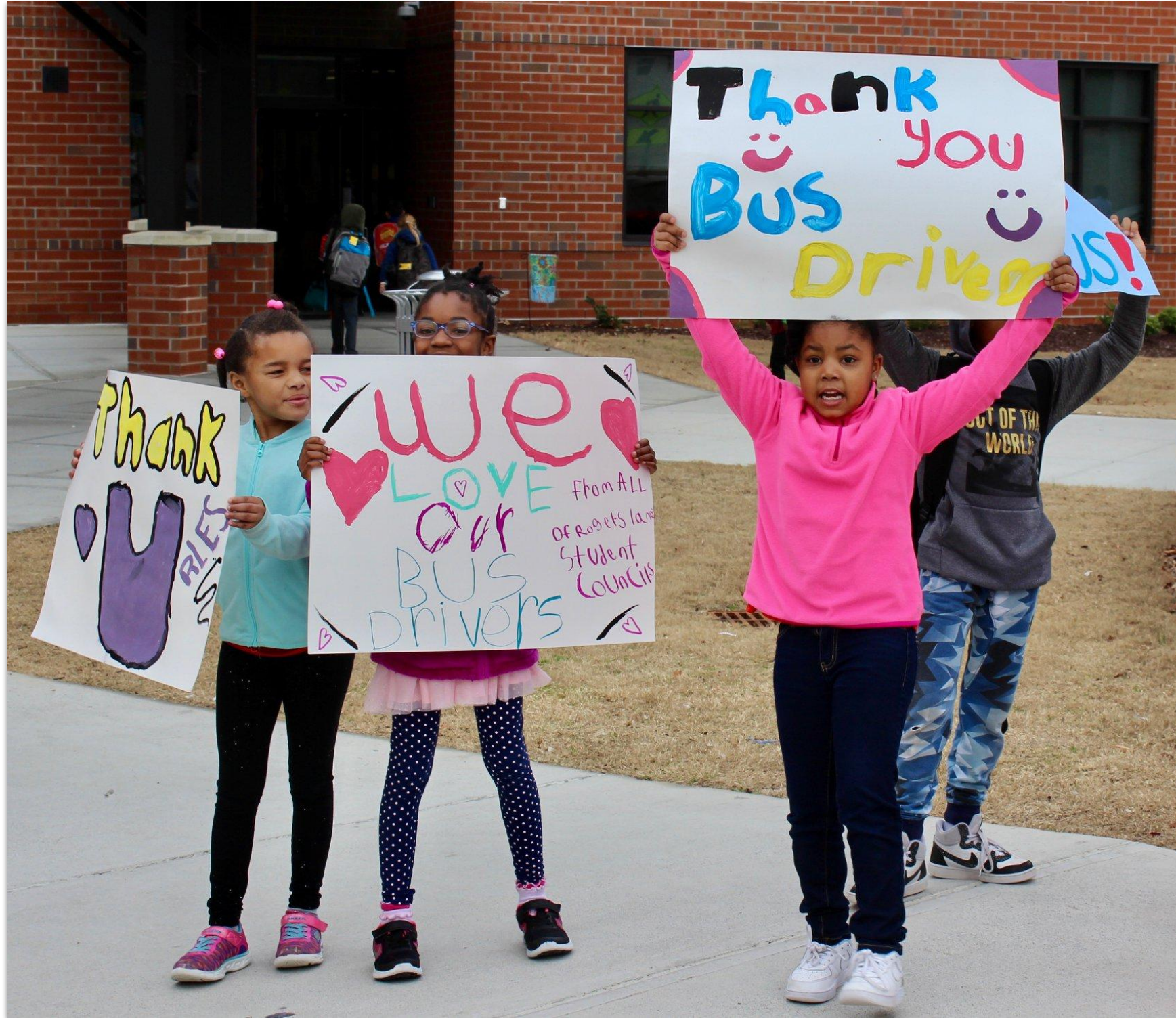
Board of Education Work Session
August 1, 2023

Desired Outcomes

Board members will gain an understanding of:

- The district's ongoing bus driver recruitment and retention efforts;
- Current bus driver staffing levels and number of routes needed to serve students;
- Efforts to mitigate impact of the bus driver shortage on families and related communications to schools and families; and
- Update regarding shortage for vendor transportation riders and next steps for mitigating impact of this shortage.

Bus Driver Role and Benefits



- Builds relationships with students and families
- Schedule includes mid-day break
- Excellent benefits
- Paid training and CDL fees
- Opportunities to grow into team lead, operations manager and other leadership roles
- Up to \$4,200 available in sign-on and attendance bonuses

Recruitment and Retention Strategies

- Focus groups, interviews and research conducted with drivers and transportation leaders re: workplace culture - July 2020.
- Ongoing efforts to recruit instructional assistants, coaches and other employees to drive bus routes for their schools before or after the workday.
- Transportation Core Team formed to develop and implement additional driver recruitment and retention strategies.
- [Bus and Cab Rider Code of Conduct](#) - launched Sept. 2022.
- Pay for employees to serve as bus monitors on most challenging routes - approved by BOE in Nov. 2022.

Bus Driver Starting Salaries

- 2018-19 - \$13.11/hr
- 2019-20 - \$13.11/hr
- 2019-20 Mid-Year Update Enacted January 2020 - \$15.00/hr
- 2020-21 - \$15.00/hr
- 2021-22 - \$16.20/hr
- 2022-23 - \$17.20/hr
- 2023-24 - ???

Bus Driver Bonuses

- \$500/semester attendance bonus for drivers
- Additional \$200/month perfect attendance bonus for bus drivers, team leads, safety assistants and bus mechanics - approved March 2023
 - Drivers can now earn up to an additional \$3k annually
 - 35% of eligible employees earned bonus in initial months of implementation
- \$1,200 sign-on bonus for new drivers
- \$100 referral bonus

Recruitment and Retention Strategies

- Virtual information sessions and in-person job fairs
- Ongoing search and display, radio, programmatic and social media recruitment advertising
- 1000+ leads collected via landing page form since July 2022
- Recruiters follow up with leads **on a daily basis** to guide candidates through hiring process



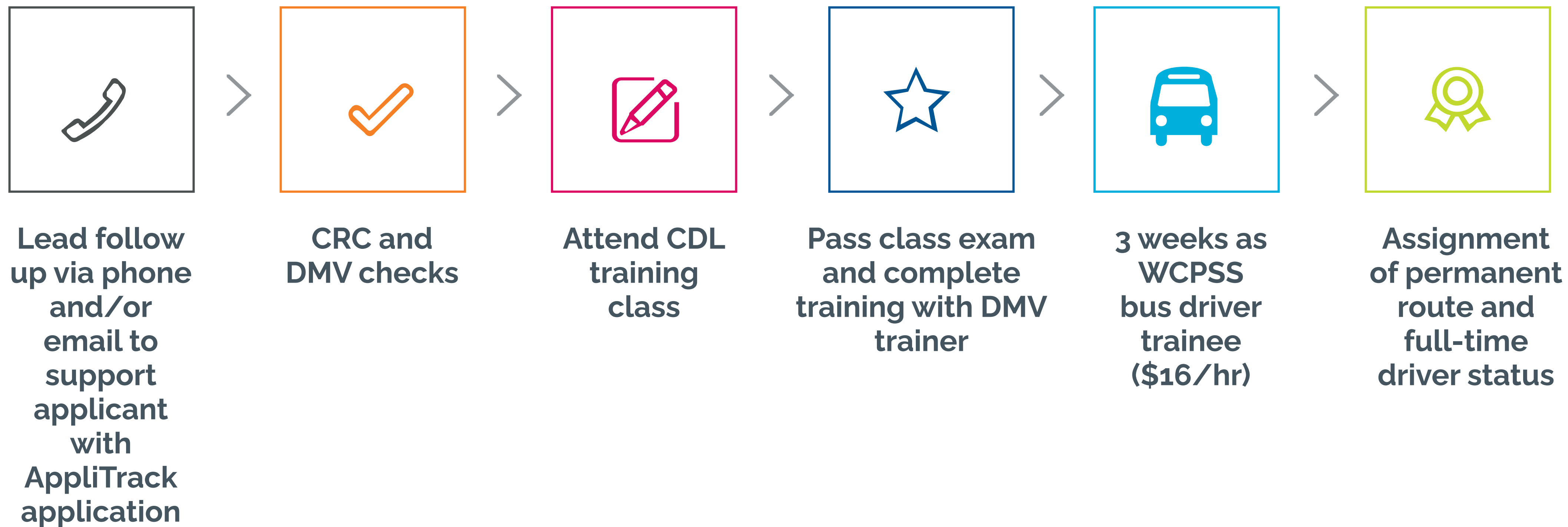
BUS DRIVERS:
**Be the smile
that starts
their day.**

**\$17.20/hour to start
\$3K in attendance bonuses**

Apply Now

 **WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Bus Driver Hiring Process



Candidates Currently in Hiring Process



Nationwide Bus Driver Shortage

- Ongoing problem since 2018, worsened after COVID-19.
 - Retirees who were driving did not return.
 - Public school district wages not competitive with private industry driving jobs.
 - Training and CDL requirements require greater time commitment.

2023-24 Bus Driver Staffing and Routes

560 total CDL drivers

- 513 full-time route drivers
- 52 full-time permanent substitute drivers
- 9 drivers currently in training pipeline
- Reduction of 56 full-time route drivers from July 2022

About 90,000 registered riders on 577 bus routes

- Over half of the district's 160K students ride the bus
- Reduction of 7 routes from 2022-2023

Current State

- **560** total CDL drivers (including 52 full-time subs) for **577** routes serving **about 90,000** registered riders.
- **17** routes currently **without** an assigned permanent driver, impacting approximately 2,000 students.
- Buses typically run on a three-tier schedule, serving a high school, middle school, and elementary school.
- To fully utilize every bus, there are planned double backs on most routes.

Covering Routes without Permanent Drivers

- 17 full-time permanent substitute drivers will be assigned two permanent routes.
- The two routes would be run on an A-B schedule, alternating weekly.
- Our goal is to transport every elementary school rider to and from school every day.
- Middle and high school riders on A/B routes would not be scheduled to receive service.
- We will clearly communicate this plan to affected families.

Example - Week A

- Week A riders - Tiers 1, 2, and 3 runs - receive regular service.
- After those runs are completed, driver would collect Week B elementary (Tier 3) riders.
- These riders are likely to arrive at school/home late.
- Week B middle and high school riders (Tiers 1 and 2) likely would need to provide their own transportation on Week A, though we will make every effort to provide delayed service to them whenever possible.
- The next week would follow the same procedure, with Week B students receiving regular service and Week A Tier 3 riders receiving delayed service.

Identifying A/B Routes

- We will attempt to avoid implementing A/B plan at schools with higher needs populations.
- We will also consider route proximity to schools in selecting A/B routes.

Covering Driver Absences on Any Route

- Another available driver will collect Tier 3 (elementary) riders on the uncovered route after his/her regular routes have been completed. Service will be late.
- Schools will be notified when there is an uncovered route. Schools will have the option of notifying families.
- Notifications also will be posted on wcpss.net/busupdates. All bus riders are encouraged to **check this page daily**.
- Families of Tier 1 and 2 riders (middle and high school students) on uncovered routes likely will need to provide their own transportation.

Vendor Transportation - 2022-23

- 3,580 total riders (special education, preK, McKinney-Vento)
- Vendors also experienced a driver shortage.
- Approximately 200-400 students a day received significantly delayed service in the morning and/or afternoon.
- These delays were communicated in the morning and the afternoon to schools and families via email and text.

Vendor Transportation - 2023-24

- Do not yet have official count of 2023-24 vendor riders.
- When a driver is absent, another driver will pick up their students after completing their regular run.
- Like last school year, we will notify parents via text and email when their child's transportation will be delayed.
- Stipends offered to families.

Vendor Transportation - 2023-24

- Contacted all riders in the spring to offer them the option of providing their own transportation for a stipend.
- Approximately 450 accepted stipend and will provide their own transportation this school year.
- Continue to receive and process stipend requests.

Next Steps

- Work with stakeholders to identify A/B routes.
- Communicate with principals of schools with impacted routes to coordinate services available to students.
- Communicate with families with students assigned to A/B routes on plan. Share support available and where to access transportation updates.
- Communication to all registered riders on route assignments on Aug. 18.
- Back-to-school message for all families on Aug. 23.



Questions?