Looking to improve the efficiency of busing and transportation? Here are some key considerations to keep in mind

Faced with rising costs and pressures to keep expenses down, many district leaders are looking for areas to improve efficiency, and that often includes busing and transportation. Taking a close look at bus routes and finding ways to make them more efficient can make a significant difference, but there are some important considerations to keep in mind. One being to consider bringing in experts from Transfinder's Professional Services Team to help you execute the decisions below.

Here are some key tasks to consider:

Use the right tools. The complexity of bus routes requires software to make any improvements to efficiency, but your standard office productivity software is not up to the task. Unfortunately, there is still a small percentage of school districts using paper and pencil and physical maps to manually create bus routes. Using software specifically designed for school transportation is critical to efficiency.

Prioritize communication and achieving buy-in. It is crucial to communicate with everyone in the community about the reasons behind any bus routing or transportation changes you may be planning, so that you achieve buy-in from all stakeholders involved—including parents, administrators, or bus drivers. If you don't, you run the risk of any changes being walked back, because change is often met with resistance.

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For example, the transportation department could design more efficient bus routes that would enable a reduction in the number of routes overall. But the change may require some students to walk to a bus stop, or walk to school, when they didn't have to before. If those parents are caught by surprise, there is probably going to be some negative feedback, and

you may have to undo all that work. Keep everyone informed about any future changes and why they are in everyone's best interest.

Maximize "walk to stop" distances. Most school districts have some policies defining a safe walking distance to a bus stop, or what is a reasonable distance to ask students to walk to school, specific to grade level. But those policies are not always checked against the bus routes being used. Reconciling routes with those existing policies can help identify ways to reduce the number of stops or reduce the number of routes overall.

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Once you've done that, try to design routes to pick up students beginning with those farthest away from the school, then work your way back towards the school, rather than vice versa. That minimizes the ride time for all students.

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ABCD: Always be collecting data. What does efficiency mean to you? How will you know if it is being achieved or you are being successful? This could be defined as the number of routes, number of stops, average ride time, fuel consumption, or other data points. The key is having access to the right data, and a baseline to start with, so you can measure progress. Efficiency isn't a single goal you accomplish and move on. It's an ongoing process. Data is what enables you to measure and see the difference you're making over time.

Prioritize safety. In any effort to improve efficiency, remember that safety must be the top priority. There may be routes that are more efficient but are not as safe for students. For example, a new route might be more efficient, but could require students to cross a busy road to get to a bus stop. Efficiency is important, but the safety of students is what is most important.

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