



Arkansas District Says Pandemic Was Perfect Time to Implement Routefinder PLUS

Prevented pain that creating
additional routes to deal
with social distancing
could have caused



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Gravette (Arkansas) Public Schools is a small rural district. Gravette City is just four-square miles but the district spans 160 miles. A main thoroughfare and railroad tracks dissect the district in half.

That creates one set of unique challenges to be sure as safety is of paramount importance to the district. And like most schools, the coronavirus, has created another set of issues.

Overnight, the district had to double the number of routes for students to remain socially distanced, what would have been a major undertaking.

Gravette, located just 17 miles from Walmart's headquarters in Bentonville, has 1,600 students who attend classes in five school buildings, half of which are transported on 25 buses or smaller vehicles.

In the midst of the pandemic, the district decided to make the move from Routefinder Pro to Routefinder PLUS. **Richard Carver, Gravette Public Schools' director of transportation**, said that provided to be a smart decision.

"Transfinder has been tremendous. I can't say enough good things about them," he said.

Here's why...

Browser-based a Big Plus

For a dozen years Gravette utilized Routefinder Pro, which served the district well. At a time of great change in the district caused by the virus, Carver decided to make the move to Transfinder's newest routing solution, **Routefinder PLUS**, the browser-based product that allows users to create ad store multiple "what if" scenarios that can be implemented quickly.



The timing, it turned out, couldn't have been better. Carver rattles off the new features PLUS has, like being web-based, that were beneficial during the pandemic when schools were closed and many school employees were forced to work from home.

“I can have PLUS at home,” Carver says. “These days of working from home, having a web-based feature is so nice. You don’t have to log into a server, I don’t have to log into my computer here at work and hope it’s up and running. I just go web-based and I can get right to it.”

Frequently Carver cites the “ease of operation” when discussing PLUS.

“I really, really like it,” he gushes. “I like the routing features. It is a lot less complex to make stops and paths. You can see the big picture. You can absorb paths.”

PLUS Simplifies the Complicated, Easy-to-Use interface

Carver decided to use PLUS to reopen school in the fall of 2020 in the midst of the pandemic. He said using the easy-to-use PLUS helped simplify complicated routing schedules.

“We went from having 40 routes to having 80 because of A-B days,” he says, referring to split schedules where the student body is divided in half and alternate days on campus.

“To be able to go in and copy the routes and change them over and take the stops with you – it just makes it so much easier in PLUS,” he says. He said the district implemented new routes and adjusted the number of riders per route, tasks made easier by using PLUS.

Carver says his district is mostly rural and it is very important to not have students crossing the street to board their buses. “That’s a huge safety thing. We had to reconfigure a lot of our routes,” he said. With PLUS you can create rules and imbed school policies such as preventing students from crossing the street, eliminating a student from unintentionally being placed at a stop that would force the student to cross a street. Routers have to go through the effort of overriding a rule to permit such actions.



Enhanced Safety Features a Plus

“We have designated safety zones,” Carver explains. “The main street and railroad dissect our district right in half. So obviously there’s a lot of consideration to take place there, too, with the amount of traffic and stuff like that.”

Parents frequently make special requests and PLUS made it easier to accommodate and adhere to district policies, Carver says.

Carver expects the district will also find savings as a result of PLUS as well. One reason for that is PLUS makes it easy to absorb trips.

“You are able to look and see where maybe you take one route and eliminate it by combining it with another,” he says. It’s not something the district is doing now as students are socially distanced on the bus, but when seating returns to somewhat regular normal in the future, it might be necessary to combine routes to combat a national driver shortage that has already impacted his district.

“That [trip absorption] feature is going to help tremendously,” Carver notes. “Maybe I can be more efficient. I don’t think anyone in the industry wants to talk about losing personnel, that’s for sure. But if that’s the way it is, we’ll do it the most efficient way and certainly PLUS will help us do it the most efficient way.”

He said with uncertainty about future budgets, Transfinder makes financial success.

“I don’t mean to sound like a commercial for Transfinder but I really believe we get the biggest bang for our buck out of anything that I do with Transfinder than we do from any other programs.”



Transfinder University Livestream Gets an A-Plus

The training Carver said he received during Transfinder University Livestream was critical to getting the district prepared to use PLUS. “Your staff is tremendous so it made it a lot easier,” he adds.

“It was a lot of information in a short period of time,” Carver remembers. “But understanding where we were and where we needed to get to, I had enough to get up and running.”

Transfinder support is in your corner, another Plus

Several times Carver mentions the support he’s had from Transfinder over the years as well as during the transition from Pro to PLUS.

“You feel a sense of security knowing that Transfinder is in your corner,” Carver says. “It’s nice to be able to get in touch with somebody from support and it’s not three, four or five days later. They get back in touch with you and it’s typically in a very short time frame.”

He remembers that feeling during the summer before school opening.

“We didn’t know what was going to happen until late July and August,” he recalls. “Being able to have that support was nice because you resolve things quicker. We had an opportunity to have everything done by the time schools started. Yes, there is that comfortability Transfinder provides that you can call and get good service and you don’t have to wait to get things done.”

He takes a breath and continues his praise of **Transfinder’s award-winning support team.**

“I have the utmost respect for the support team Transfinder has,” he says. “Those guys are tremendous. Anytime you start something new, of course, and at the time we started, we were in the middle of a pandemic, you just wonder how it’s going to go. They took the angst out of it, really. I couldn’t ask for anything better.”



Want More Information?

For more information on parent apps, GPS, routing software or any other transportation solution challenges, please contact the experts at Transfinder. With over a combined century of knowledge and expertise in the industry, the team at Transfinder is committed to generating superior value by delivering user-friendly and economical solutions combined with “best in class” service. Transfinder’s skilled professionals establish and maintain a long-term relationship with every client that is built upon respect, confidence, integrity, and mutual trust.

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