

Client Case Study



District Profile

Shelbyville Central Schools is located about 26 miles southeast of Indianapolis, Indiana.

It provides full-day pre-school at all three elementary schools. The district also has a middle school and a high school that serves a population of 19,191 (7,682 household).

The district has been using Transfinder since 2016 after using a competitor's product for years.

Self-starters dug into Transfinder online resources to learn Transfinder technology and got up and running in record time for the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, which was the best start in years. Now the district is using Transfinder's solutions for an innovative concept: Placing permanent school bus stop signs along routes so drivers get used to these locations.

Situation:

Make bus stop locations safer for a transitional community and reduce student pickups at intersections.

Meet Bob Martin, Shelbyville Transportation Supervisor:

"When I came on board four years ago (2013), when looking at Versatrans, it was very difficult. It was difficult to learn and the training was expensive. But we pushed through it and did the best we could."

After meeting Transfinder's VP of Business Development Greg Zibro at a tradeshow in Indianapolis, Martin began studying Transfinder's products and saw its merits.

"What I liked was the use of GIS technology to the point where I could absolutely say with certainty that this parcel of land, whether it's a tent, mobile home, trailer or house, if a child lives there, they go to this bus stop. Period," Martin said.

He didn't have that same confidence with the school's previous mapping software product.

"Versatrans wouldn't quite do that," he said. "We wanted to absolutely control it."

Getting Up to Speed

These days, Martin said Transfinder technology gets a workout, helping the district as it processes changes "every single day."

It's been a positive experience since the first day of school in the 2016-2017 school year.

"We did not have one misplaced kid the entire time. We were processing a ton of changes and because of the ease and flexibility that Routefinder Pro gave us, we were able to accomplish that," he said. "It was one of the best first weeks we ever had. We just got off to a seamless start of the school year because of the hard work we put in during the summer to get ready with Routefinder Pro to understand it."

It took a lot of effort and self-determination on the part of Shelbyville staff. Martin and one of his colleagues, Tiffany Riggs, who is a scheduling coordinator, worked tirelessly through the summer, just diving in to all the content Transfinder provides through its private MyTransfinder portal.

"Tiffany and I went to MyTransfinder.com and we printed off the listing of all the videos there and what we did is watched every single one of the videos and took notes while the project team was working with our IT department. This was so we could be ready and be familiar with concepts. Your video library is tremendous."

Martin described the videos as "very intuitive, very professionally done. It's well thought out."

He continues:

"It's really unprecedented—the documentation, the glossary, everything. It's very impressive."

It got to the point where Martin and Riggs would be quizzing each other whenever they ran into each other.

"We printed out the glossary and we would test each other on terms. When we're talking to support staff, we wanted to make sure we're using the terms that Routefinder Pro uses."

Transfinder's Support Lives Up to its Reputation

Martin said when the district purchased Transfinder software, he heard a great deal about Transfinder's "tremendous support team."

"The proof is in the pudding," Martin said. "We tested it. And it was."

Martin said every week he and Riggs met with a Transfinder trainer (virtually) and every week, the trainer addressed any questions Martin or his team had. And every week he ticked off items on his to-do list that he was assigned.

"We worked diligently and we worked our butts off so we were able to deploy at the beginning of the year," Martin said. He described the opening day as "flawless."

Ahead of the curve, Martin then signed up for Transfinder University's online offering, a 90-minute class each week, complete with homework, to become more expert in the technology.

"The expectation is very high," Martin said, something he appreciated. "You've got to expect a lot out of people in order for them to perform. You guys set the bar high."

A Novel Idea

Martin said a top goal of turning to Transfinder was to create safer bus stops.

"We wanted to take our bus stops out of the intersections and move them into the center of the blocks," he said. Prior to using Transfinder, bus stops often had students at all four corners of busy intersections.

"They were scattered," he said. "What we wanted to do is bring the stops into the middle of the block where the kids can get off the bus, go to the left or to the right sidewalks and there's plenty of time for drivers to see them when they turn onto the street and see the front visual of the stop arm sign."

Martin is working with city officials to see if permanent bus stop signs can be placed at these stops.

"This is what we're doing in our community to make our children safer at the bus stop," Martin said.

"We're building that. That's why we needed Transfinder so bad."

Martin believes if these permanent bus stop signs are up, drivers will become accustomed to those stops and be more alert.

“People are creatures of habit. They will drive the same route to work that they always have. If there’s a sign there they see every day, they’ll think, ‘I better watch for the bus.’”

These permanent bus stops would be slightly smaller than traditional road signs. They would have the Shelbyville mascot, the Fighting Golden Bear, as well as a number. This would be valuable to homeowners as well as real estate agents.

“When you move in and you’re in this house, you know definitively that this is going to be your bus stop,” Martin said. In addition, real estate agents and families already have access to Transfinder’s Infofinder *i* product, which shows where bus stops are for given areas as well as arrival and departure times. Each stop has already been determined to be the best stop for each given household.

Routefinder Pro a Critical Tool for a “Moving” Population

Transfinder has been a critical solution for Shelbyville, which Martin describes as increasingly transient.

“We’ve got kids that are moving in all the time,” he said. Martin expected some 2,000 transportation changes in the first year of using Transfinder. He said Routefinder Pro has tools that allow for the creation of alternate sites, and is especially useful for his demographic. This is also helpful in dealing with more complicated housing situations where students may be staying with parents who may be divorced or where children may be picked up at home but dropped off at a grandparent’s, for example.

“Our demographic is transitional. We accept that. We embrace that,” Martin said. He said Infofinder *le* is another critical tool the district uses to keep all the stakeholders in the loop.

“How do you let the teacher know that this student goes to this person on this day? The driver has to know.

The parents have to know. I have to know. We all have to be on the same page. That’s where the reporting feature within Routefinder Pro is tremendous, and Infofinder *le* has the information that teachers can get.”

All these tools are necessary to make students as safe as possible on their journeys to and from school. Martin said despite the size and color of your average school bus, they are invisible to drivers.

“Even though its 11 feet tall and 8 feet wide and yellow with flashing lights, it is the most invisible vehicle on the planet,” Martin quips.

