

The HIDDEN COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY:

transfinder

What Transportation Leaders Want You to Know



Behind every smooth school day is a complex system with real costs—financial, operational, and human.

Let's uncover what matters most.



STEWARDSHIP IN MOTION

Every decision impacts budgets, resources, and the communities we serve.



TURNING EFFICIENCY INTO RESULTS

Smart routing, better planning, and data-driven insights drive measurable impact.



THE HUMAN FACTOR

Behind every ride is a driver, a family, and a story. People are at the heart of student transportation.



DRIVER SHORTAGES CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE DISTRICTS

Recruiting and retaining qualified drivers remains one of our most pressing issues.



TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE

The right technology empowers teams, enhances safety, and supports better decisions every day.



AWARENESS DRIVES CHANGE. Together, we can build a better tomorrow for our students.

For school leaders, transportation is one of the few operational areas where daily decisions can have an immediate financial impact. Every route affects fuel costs, staffing, fleet utilization, maintenance expenses, and ultimately taxpayer dollars.

Yet according to a recent **Transfinder** survey of school transportation professionals - clients and nonclients - from 30 states, achieving efficiency has become increasingly difficult due to driver shortages, community expectations, special education requirements and geographic challenges.

But an investment in technology can actually pay dividends.



Stewardship in Motion

The surveyed transportation leaders consistently described efficiency as more than a routing exercise. For many, it is a matter of fiscal responsibility.

Chris Corder, *director of transportation* for **Hardin County Schools** in **Kentucky**, defined efficiency as, “Maximizing taxpayer monies that we are entrusted with to run our department.”

Similarly, **Debbie Schomisch**, *transportation director* at **Farwell Area Schools** in **Michigan**, summed it up as: “Getting the most bang for the school’s money.”

Those perspectives resonate with school officials who must balance service expectations with limited resources.



Turning Efficiency into Results

Some districts are finding measurable savings through route redesign and operational changes.

In **Texas**, **Sam Day**, *transportation director* for **Caddo Mills ISD**, described a significant achievement made with Transfinder’s award-winning Routefinder PLUS.

He said he “rolled out a two-tier bell schedule this year utilizing **Routefinder PLUS** and was able to eliminate six bus routes.”

In **Pennsylvania**, **Stephen Mackle**, *transportation supervisor* for **Wayne Highlands School District**, credited **Routefinder PLUS** with helping his district adapt to staffing challenges.

“I lost nine buses out of 32 to retirement and with Routefinder PLUS I was able to lay other routes over those I lost and eliminate two buses while making my other routes more efficient and attractive to my contractors.”

The survey also revealed broad agreement on what efficiency looks like. **Steve Biggar**, *owner and CEO* of **B Line Transportation** in **Connecticut**, summed it up:

“Efficiency means transporting our students in the fewest vehicles possible and saving money.”



The Human Factor

Efficiency is not always achieved through software alone.

Patricia McGrane, *transportation supervisor* for **Northport-East Northport UFSD** in **New York**, emphasized the importance of leadership support when implementing difficult changes.

“Our routes became more efficient when we received the support from administration to make the tough changes that cause political problems,” she said.

“They have stood by the department instead of caving to pressure from some members of the community.”

Her comments highlight a recurring theme from the survey: transportation departments often operate at the intersection of fiscal realities and community expectations.



Driver Shortages Continue to Challenge Districts

Among all survey responses, driver shortages emerged as one of the most significant barriers to efficiency.

Lori Smith, *transportation coordinator* for **Bellbrook Sugarcreek Schools** in **Ohio**, described the challenge many districts face:

“I have not accomplished it quite yet. We are meeting our bell times better but we still encounter a driver shortage and we are running half empty buses or more regularly to meet the bell times.”

Other districts have responded by restructuring operations.

Michael Hush, *director of transportation* for **Nye County School District** in **Nevada**, said he took a “two tier district to three tier, cut seven routes/buses, helping end driver shortage.”

In **Utah**, **Michelle Gray**, *routing technician* for **Alpine School District**, explained how creative routing strategies helped overcome staffing shortages.

“When we were short drivers, we instituted double runs into our junior high schools. Groups are assigned first or second wave. Since nearly 50 percent of all routes are to this age group, it is saving us having to use a lot more buses.”



Technology's Role

Most respondents reported relying on routing software to design and optimize routes, and many pointed to **Routefinder PLUS** as a key tool in improving operations.

James Graham, *financial secretary* for **Norman Public Schools** in **Oklahoma**, described what routing looked like before using Transfinder solutions:

“Our routes looked like someone threw a bowl of spaghetti on a map & said this looks good. We had routes criss crossing, two or three buses in the same neighborhood. SPED students who can ride a GenEd bus, no shuttles, etc. With Transfinder tools we solved this.”

In **Michigan**, **Schomisch** detailed how **Routefinder PLUS** helped eliminate route overlap:

“Routefinder helped us realign the routes so buses were not tripping over each other. When I was a driver we had three buses stopping in a five-mile section of road. Now the routes go out like wheel spokes from the school.”

Ohio's Joshua Shannon, *transportation supervisor* for **Oregon City Schools**, described the long-term benefits of switching to Transfinder.

“Three years ago, when we switched to Transfinder from Edulog, I rerouted high school and elementary school busing to improve efficiency,” he said. “We are currently doing the same thing with our 5-8th grade routes for next year, reducing route times and miles driven.”

Other respondents highlighted **Routefinder PLUS** features that helped identify overlapping routes and merge services. **Jason Hibbard**, *transportation supervisor* for **Chenango Valley CSD** in **New York**, said:

“Many times per year we reevaluate our routes. We have been able to easily collapse and merge routes when needed. We are able to view our routes in a simple format on a map.”

Annette “Kecia” Ling-Neal, *lead director of pupil transportation* for **Savannah-Chatham County Public School System** in **Georgia**, pointed to a broader technology strategy:

“Savannah–Chatham maintains an efficient and accountable route structure through strategic use of the Transfinder mapping platform, automated on-time performance reporting, targeted video audits, in-field route reviews, and direct engagement with drivers.”

Meanwhile, **Debbie Rader**, *router/administrative assistant* for **Pike County Schools** in **Georgia**, offered perhaps the most direct endorsement:

“Currently we are running at maximum efficiency due to having Routefinder PLUS and it’s many advantages.”

An Ongoing Process

Survey respondents repeatedly stressed that efficiency is not a destination but a continual process of evaluation and refinement.

Amy Rosa, *director of transportation* for **Wa-Nee Community Schools** in **Indiana** – a “threepeat” winner of the **Top Transportation Teams** award - captured that mindset:



“I began using Transfinder in 2006. Each year since, we have found new ways to improve efficiency and save money.”

For school officials, that may be the most important takeaway from the survey. Transportation efficiency is not achieved through a single change. It requires leadership support, operational flexibility, and technology that helps districts make informed decisions.

Every route is a financial decision. Every adjustment carries operational consequences. And as transportation leaders across the country made clear, effective routing remains one of the most important opportunities schools have to improve service while protecting taxpayer resources.



To learn more...

Please call **800.373.3609**, email solutions@transfinder.com or visit www.transfinder.com or scan the QR code to learn how Transfinder's award-winning software and service can save you time and money while increasing safety.

