



# Rabbit Creek Community Council

1057 W. Fireweed Ln. Ste. 100, Anchorage, AK 99503



April 1, 2016

To:

Ms. Tam Agosti-Gisler, Clerk & Members, Anchorage School Board  
ASD Education Center  
5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.  
Anchorage, AK 99504-3135

RE: Suggestions to Improve ASD Student Transportation

Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) greatly appreciates Ms. Tam Agosti-Gisler's informative presentation on school bonds at our March 10 meeting. At Ms. Agosti-Gisler's invitation, RCCC submits the following suggestions for improving school transportation:

1. Audit school bus routes and safe walking zones *with input from Community Councils, parents, and nearby residents*. Residents know the pedestrian network better than ASD staff.
  - Start a list of necessary crossings or safety solutions and get those crossings on the MOA Capital Improvement list.
  - Where there are disconnected street grids, look for pedestrian connections that allow direct routes. There may be undeveloped pedestrian easements available to increase safe walkability.
2. Stop facilitating parental chauffeurs. Parent driving causes peak-hour congestion (which demands expensive tax-paid infrastructure like turn lanes and signals) and wastes time for teachers and staff who are assigned to direct traffic. Inclement weather only exacerbates these issues.
  - End ASD construction bonds for pick-up zones and parent parking/idling.
  - Try a fee-based system or a carpool advantage if drop-off/pick-up space is limited. Ask AFD to enforce red curb emergency access zones.
  - Offer recognition or incentives to students (and faculty and staff) who walk or cycle, especially where such infrastructures currently exists.
3. Develop definitive design standards that will *ensure* that a new road or crossing meets ASD Safe Walking Zone approval.
  - Case in point: With recent proposed – though currently unfunded – upgrades to Golden View Drive, the Community Council wanted to make sure that additional street lighting and speed limits would result in a safe walking designation for neighborhoods near Golden View Middle School. ASD apparently told the design engineers that ASD makes safe walking zone decisions only after a project is built and reviewed in the field.
4. Analyze the cost-efficiency and range of *shorter buses as well as vans*. Full-size buses often run at low capacity and they cannot negotiate steep roads (e.g. Upper Huffman Road, Upper O'Malley Road, all of Potter Valley Road.)

5. Further combine student busing and People Mover transport.

- City bus routes synchronized to schools are especially useful for high school students, who would have access to more after-school choices if there were a variety of bus routes and departure times.
- City bus routes to schools would lessen the barriers for ALL kids to choose magnet and charter schools, not just kids whose parents can drive them. For example, city bus access to West High would open the gifted and IB programs to all students.
- Riding city buses is a life-skill in an increasingly urban world.

Upon further consideration, we would like to propose two specific opportunities for efficiencies as well as positive synergy leading to greater access for the citizens of Anchorage generally:

- Girdwood Bus Service. A high school bus carries a small number of students to or from Girdwood once in the morning and twice in the afternoon. Combine this with People Mover bus service to serve commuters, too. Similar opportunities may exist for other “long haul” routes in the Eagle River, Chugiak, and Eklutna areas.
- Improve the efficiency of special needs buses. Some special needs students and aides can ride on regular buses. There may, likewise, be instances where special needs bus routes can transport general population students. Integration of special needs and general student transportation can save both money and time and further break down stereotypes.

RCCC, through its transportation and trails committees, would be eager and elated to be the first Council to brainstorm safe walking routes and new pedestrian connections with ASD transportation representatives, the school board, and others. I look very much forward to your response.

Sincerely,

*Adam S. Lees*

Adam S. Lees, Chair