

	Alexandria City Public School (ACPS)		DASH			
	#	Questions	Responses	#	Questions	Responses
Adequate Routes/Scheduling	1	Our current policy sets a maximum of one hour for transportation for K-12 students. Would we be able to set a maximum DASH route time or transfers beyond which a student could receive ACPS busing (potentially below the one hour threshold)?	To be discussed at 4/28 meeting	1	To what extent could DASH bus routes be revised to accommodate greater coverage across the city? Or to increase the number of bus runs during morning/afternoon "rush" transportation for students? What would be the lead time necessary to do that (i.e., 6 months, a year, 2 years)?	It is possible that DASH routes or schedules could be modified to accommodate a larger number of ACHS students. The lead time for such changes is dependent upon several factors including the availability of buses and operating funding. DASH currently does not have additional buses that could be deployed during AM/PM peak periods, but additional buses are anticipated to be available in time for the 2026-2027 school year.
	2	How does ACPS currently decide pickup points for high school students? Is it distance from the farther student who would that stop? Are there capacity decisions about how many students can be picked up at one stop?		2	How far does the average bus rider after their ride to get to their final destination?	DASH does not have specific statistics on walking distances for its riders, however, the DASH system is designed to serve the community based on the assumption that riders are able to walk roughly 1/4 mile to (or from) the nearest bus stop.
	3	Are there any legal requirements (my understanding is no) that dictate where a stop is, what amenities it has, how many students are "assigned" to that stop?		3	How far does the average bus rider walk to arrive at their bus stop?	DASH does not have specific statistics on walking distances for its riders, however, the DASH system is designed to serve the community based on the assumption that riders are able to walk roughly 1/4 mile to (or from) the nearest bus stop.
	4	Which routes have highest ridership? Which routes have lowest ridership?		4	Will DASH be used to transport students who are unhoused or don't have a permanent address?	DASH is a public transit service. It is open to everyone.
			5	Would students have to transfer DASH buses to get to ACHS?	To be determined. DASH has two routes (Lines 31 and 36A/B) that serve the ACHS campuses. Students traveling to school from areas that are not served by these two routes could be required to make a transfer. The DASH network is generally designed to facilitate transfers with minimal wait times due to the availability of high frequency bus service across the City.	
			6	In some areas of the West End, the closest DASH bus stop for students is a 30+ minute walk. Will DASH bus service be extended to the depths of residential neighborhoods?	To be determined. DASH and ACPS staff will evaluate the needs of all ACHS student across the City, including those that are not in the immediate vicinity of DASH bus stops.	
			7	How will secondary students be transported to field trips? What about the late afternoon activity bus routes and transport to athletic competitions?	DASH is not equipped to provide field trip or activity bus services.	
			8	Would DASH buses be used for transport between Minnie Howard & King Street campuses?	This requires a separate discussion, unrelated to the task assigned.	
			9	How would DASH manage two hour delays and early dismissals?	To be determined. DASH has the ability to adjust service levels based on inclement weather. Currently, DASH extends the operating hours of Lines 103 and 104 in response to delayed openings or early closures of the federal government. Several routes such as Lines 36A/B also operate with frequent midday service, which could reduce the need for weather-related service changes.	
			10	If commuter bus schedules are used to add buses, will those schedules be shifted when ACPS has to institute delays for things such as extreme temperatures and to take into account teacher commutes during weather events?	To be determined. DASH has the ability to adjust service levels based on inclement weather. Currently, DASH extends the operating hours of Lines 103 and 104 in response to delayed openings or early closures of the federal government. Several routes such as Lines 36A/B also operate with frequent midday service, which could reduce the need for weather-related service changes.	
			11	Would students get late passes as they exit if buses arrive late like they currently do on ACPS buses? Who would be held accountable for that?	DASH is open and free to all riders and therefore does not accept or issue passes. DASH's customer service team is able to verify any bus or route schedule adherence if needed.	
			12	Do the same drivers drive elementary-middle-high school routes? If so, how would eliminating high school routes allow for more drivers at the elementary level?	DASH is working with ACPS staff to understand school bus driver assignments and identify efficiencies that could be gained by reducing the number of ACHS school bus trips and shifting student riders to existing DASH routes. Our ability to answer this question is limited by the data and information shared by ACPS.	

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				13	How will space for students be guaranteed if DASH buses are also used to transport non-students who may have varying schedules?	The route analysis will include two components: (1) route coverage to identify the number of ACHS students that could be served by existing DASH routes; and (2) existing bus capacity to determine which routes could accomodate additional students, and which routes would need additional trips or larger buses to accomodate increased student ridership demand.
				14	If there is a large number of students who live on the same route, how would space on the DASH be guaranteed?	The route analysis will include two components: (1) route coverage to identify the number of ACHS students that could be served by existing DASH routes; and (2) existing bus capacity to determine which routes could accomodate additional students, and which routes would need additional trips or larger buses to accomodate increased student ridership demand.
Drivers	5	Would potentially displaced ACPS bus drivers be eligible for priority hiring for those DASH roles?	To be discussed at future meeting	15	It appears that DASH has 0% unfilled bus driver positions, how many additional buses would need to be added (either additional routes or more often buses) to accomodate intended students?	To be determined. Any needs for additional buses or operators will be identified as an output from the route and capacity analyses.
	6	Would the hours of ACPS bus drivers be cut or limited?		16	Will DASH drivers be trained on the same safety protocols as ACPS bus drivers?	New operators undergo 6-9 weeks of training, depending on prior experience and CDL certification. Training includes the Smith System, a defensive driving approach designed for commercial transit vehicles. Drivers also receive emergency response and de-escalation training, covering evacuations, first aid, CPR, and specialized techniques for managing younger passengers. DASH strictly follows federal drug and alcohol compliance standards, conducting regular audits every three years. Continuous development is emphasized through annual training, with more than 2,100 hours completed in 2024, as well as incident-based retraining for drivers involved in safety events. Quarterly safety meetings are mandatory for all staff, ensuring that policies, trends, and compliance expectations remain a central focus
	7	If hours are cut, how will that affect school bus driver recruitment and retention?		17	Will DASH drivers be vetted and trained using the same standards as ACPS bus drivers, including fingerprint clearance/background checks?	
				18	For long-time ACPS bus drivers, how would transitioning to a job with DASH impact their retirement benefits? Do DASH drivers participate in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS)?	Any ACPS drivers who would transition to a job with DASH would receive the full benefits package offered by DASH. While different from the City's and from what is offered by ACPS, DASH is known to have some of the best benefits offerings of public transit systems throughout the region. DASH drivers are not eligible to participate in VRS.
Cost Savings/Budget	9	What is the average cost of a bus route, which includes the driver salary, the fuel cost, the bus maintenance cost, and potentially the bus replacement cost, each time we eliminate a route, how much do we save?	To be discussed at May meeting	19	If it is determined that there are cost savings from DASH transportation of high school students (fewer drivers, lower fuel and maintenance costs, etc.) would those savings be held entirely by ACPS?	To be discussed at May meeting
				20	How much funding would be saved by replacing ACPS buses with DASH buses?	
				21	If the same ACPS buses and drivers that transport high school students are also used to transport middle and elementary school students, how would the cost savings be generated?	
				22	If there is a cost saving, would that money go back to ACPS?	
				23	How much grant funding have DASH and the ACPS transportation department received in the past 5 years? Is there a target for future grant funding, and what steps could be taken to increase the likelihood that DASH and ACPS secure more grant funding in the future?	The DASH budget is included as part of the City's proposed FY26 budget document. The operating section is 13.60 and capital is 10.01

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				24	Can ACPS and DASH provide a breakdown of their expenditures by category, i.e. personnel, non-personnel (supplies, maintenance, etc.), and capital costs?	10.0.1.
Electrification				25	To what extent would DASH supporting ACHS student transportation help/harm our city's larger environmental goals?	Increased usage of DASH services would promote city goals for environmental sustainability by reducing traffic congestion and climate impact. The majority of the DASH fleet is comprised of hybrid or low-emission vehicles. DASH also has 14 100% electric buses with plans for continued fleet electrification in the coming years.
				26	Could this approach enable a faster overall electrification of the fleet across DASH and ACPS buses? If so, how?	To be determined. Additional funds are needed to accelerate DASH fleet electrification process. DASH has traditionally sought federal funding for electric buses, but recent changes at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are likely to result in reduced availability of grant funds.
Safety / Liability	10	If there is an incident involving students on the bus (i.e., fighting), what role would ACPS play in addressing the issue (via a vis APD or otherwise)? Would ACPS have access to the video for any necessary consequences?	ACPS has a structured response protocol for handling incidents on school buses, ensuring student safety and clear communication. For student behavior incidents, drivers contact the dispatch office for guidance. If a serious issue arises, such as a fight, students may be returned to school for administrative intervention, or Alexandria Police Department (APD) may be contacted. In such cases, the driver pulls over, waits for APD to arrive, and, if necessary, a replacement bus is dispatched. The Communications Department sends a ParentSquare notification to families, providing real-time updates in multiple languages. ACPS also equips buses with GPS tracking and two-way radios, allowing direct communication with dispatchers and emergency responders. For accidents, drivers immediately report incidents to dispatch, which then contacts APD and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Even if no injuries are apparent, EMS evaluates all students before continuing the route. The school administration is also notified, ensuring coordination and parental awareness. If the bus is undrivable, a replacement bus is sent, and affected families receive a ParentSquare notification confirming student safety and detailing the situation. The Transportation Supervisor is dispatched to assist at the scene and facilitate communication. ACPS compiles biannual safety reports to track and analyze incident trends, ensuring continuous improvement in transportation safety measures.	27	If a student is injured while riding DASH, who is currently responsible/liable (City or ACPS)?	DASH is covered under the Virginia Transit Liability Pool, a specialized insurance program for public transit. This policy provides \$20 million in coverage per occurrence, ensuring broad protection for all incidents involving school buses, including passenger injuries, collisions, and other liabilities. In addition to financial coverage, the program provides training and data analysis to help DASH monitor incident trends and enhance safety measures. All bus operations are coordinated through the 24/7 Operations Control Center, with field supervisors and onboard cameras ensuring continuous oversight and accountability.
				28	What challenges are presented to the system, if any, by the presence of riders under 18?	DASH enforces a Passenger Code of Conduct to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for all riders, with a zero-tolerance policy for violence, harassment, and disruptive behavior. Reports of misconduct are investigated, and video footage is recorded and retained for review in case of incidents. DASH collaborates closely with Alexandria Police Department (APD) to respond to emergencies and enforce safety protocols. Virginia law now classifies bus operator assaults as a misdemeanor, further enhancing protections for drivers.
				29	What would happen if a fight broke out on a DASH bus involving students and non-students? Will APD be involved or ACPS in the response?	Regarding student-related incidents, DASH tracks occurrences involving students as either victims or perpetrators. In fiscal year 2023, four student-involved incidents were recorded, while only one was reported in 2024, despite increased ridership from 4.5 million to 5.3 million boardings. Overall, the total number of preventable incidents increased from 14 to 20 during this period, with an incident rate of 0.31 and 0.38 per 100,000 boardings, respectively. Incidents are broadly defined as any reportable event affecting operations or safety but do not include accidents where a vehicle hits an object.
				30	Will DASH enforce the same rules as school buses, such as no vaping?	All DASH passengers are required to adhere to the DASH Code of Conduct, which prohibits smoking or vaping on all buses. The full code of conduct is available at https://www.dashbus.com/conduct/
Communication	11	If we are to move forward with the proposal, would it be possible to create a system for communicating issues through ACPS's ParentSquare? What budget or capacity would need to be in place to do that?	To be discussed at future meeting	31	ACPS currently provides updates to parents about bus route changes and delays (as well as real time tracking of buses). I know that DASH also provides real time updates of bus status via its website (and app). Does DASH currently have any other methods for proactive communications to riders about delays?	DASH provides real-time bus arrival information across multiple platforms, including via the DASH Tracker, third-party apps, phone/text, and digital displays at key bus stops across the City. DASH provides service alerts via website, e-mail blast and social media.

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Bus Maintenance	12	What, if any, impact would priority maintenance on DASH buses that service ACHS routes have on the current ACPS bus depot?	To be discussed at future meeting	32	Would it be possible for DASH buses that service ACHS routes to receive priority for maintenance? Or backup coverage?	DASH takes great pride in its service reliability, consistently ranking as one of the most reliable bus systems in the Washington, DC region. All DASH buses undergo a comprehensive maintenance program with regular preventable maintenance activities to ensure safe and reliable operations. DASH also maintains a large fleet of spare buses to minimize the impact of maintenance work that may need to be completed.
				33	The City Manager's budget guidance in September encouraged ACPS to rethink the centralized bus facility model because it drives up capital and maintenance costs. How does this differ from the model that DASH uses? What would an alternative model look like and how would the cost savings be generated?	DASH operates out of the existing full service William B. Hurd operations and maintenance facility. Further, DASH receives Federal and State grants and is in the process of expanding the current facility to accommodate expansion along with the ongoing transition to electric vehicles. The operating model of DASH is highly efficient and is the same as other public transit systems.
Scheduling				34	What is the greatest challenge that DASH sees in attempting to serve people who need to arrive at school by a fixed hour in the morning? What would best help them reliably deliver that service?	The biggest challenges will likely be providing adequate capacity to transport such a larger number of students in a short period of time, and meeting the disparate needs of students who don't live near existing DASH routes. DASH is working with ACPS staff to evaluate the extent of these challenges and identify potential solutions. These challenges will likely require DASH to operate additional service, which may require additional resources such as operating funds or buses.
				35	Is DASH able to provide modified service on certain routes for small windows (2 hours for example) and otherwise not change a route outside of those windows?	This is something that will be considered as part of the route coverage analysis. DASH already operates additional trips on Lines 31, 35 and 36A/B during school arrival/dismissal times, including some that do not follow the standard route alignments.
				36	What is the greatest challenge that DASH sees in attempting to serve people who need to arrive at school by a fixed hour in the morning? What would best help them reliably deliver that service?	The biggest challenges will likely be providing adequate capacity to transport such a larger number of students in a short period of time, and meeting the disparate needs of students who don't live near existing DASH routes. DASH is working with ACPS staff to evaluate the extent of these challenges and identify potential solutions. These challenges will likely require DASH to operate additional service, which may require additional resources such as operating funds or buses.
Accessibility	13	How many high school students receive any form of accommodation (in amenities or in timing) to facilitate their access to ACPS?	Response forthcoming.	37	Will DASH be used to transport students who have specialized services?	DASH provides public transit services that are accessible to many riders, including students; however, accommodating students with disabilities may require additional considerations. While DASH buses are equipped with accessibility features such as wheelchair ramps and priority seating, certain special accommodations, such as harnesses or specific medical supports, may not be available. If DASH were to expand its accommodations, it might need to modify policies, adjust vehicle configurations, or introduce new training for operators. However, there may still be limitations on what DASH can reasonably provide, given that it operates as a general public transit service rather than a specialized student transportation provider. In other cities, a hybrid approach is often used, where some students with disabilities ride public transit while others continue to use school-provided transportation based on their specific needs.
				38	How many DASH riders use the system that would identify as having a physical or other disability (blind, deaf, limited mobility, mental health or development challenge). This is likely challenging to track but if DASH has any data. I have observed people in all of those categories on the bus but only have my personal anecdotal perspective.	
Ridership		Is there any guidance from an educational performance perspective about how long a student should or shouldn't be in transit to school?	Response forthcoming.	39	What percentage of DASH ridership is already riders under the age of 18?	DASH estimates that there are 2,200 students boarding their buses daily. A recent DASH onboard survey found that roughly 8 percent of all DASH riders were 18 years or younger, however, the survey was not given to any riders who appeared to be 13 years or younger so the actual percentage is likely significantly higher.
	14	How many high school students do not generally arrive via bus?				

	What is the most comment challenge to high school situation? Shortage of drivers? Shortage of busses? Behavior incidents on the bus? Bullying on the bus? Crime or drug related issues on the bus? Children missing the bus?	Response forthcoming.
Community Engagement 15	Will families be allowed to provide feedback and input? Will there be surveying, with an effort to reach a diverse range of parents? Will community partners such as the Alexandria Police Department and Alexandria Sheriff's office be asked for feedback?	Whenever we consider adjustments to services, we actively involve all stakeholders in the process—including those who may be impacted and our public safety partners. Their input is valued and carefully considered before any decisions are made.