

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 14, 2025

TO: THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

FROM: COUNCILMAN ABDEL-RAHMAN ELNOUBI AND VICE MAYOR SARAH BAGLEY

SUBJECT: UTILIZATION OF DASH TRANSPORTATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Alexandria is fortunate to have a thriving free bus service, DASH. DASH service provides an affordable, climate friendly, and equitable service to Alexandria residents. We propose that ACPS collaborate with the City and DASH to evaluate the opportunities available in transitioning high school student transportation to DASH where feasible and beneficial.

Given the recent bus driver shortage ACPS has been suffering from and the budgetary challenges the city is facing, finding areas where ACPS and City services can be consolidated may be an effective way to address said challenges. We can take advantage of our free DASH bus system to transport ACPS high school students instead of ACPS transporting them via school buses and have ACPS only use the school bus to transport elementary and middle school students. Benefits may be not only financial but in safety and environmental impact.

Several school systems including our neighbor the District of Columbia, do not provide transportation to the general student population via school buses. Rather, those students who are able use Metro Bus for free. Also, the code of Virginia does not require Schools to provide transportation to students except in certain cases

(<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title22.1/chapter12/>). This collaboration would potentially reduce the number of vehicles on our roads transporting students (and driven by students) thus reducing our carbon footprint and positively impacting traffic on our streets. It also saves resources ACPS uses to transport high school students, enabling them to focus the use of their bus driver population to transport elementary and middle school students. This would further reduce the strain and need for bus drivers, allowing the City's resources to be most effectively utilized while improving the efficiency of school transportation.

A robust study and examination of ACPS needs and DASH availability may identify areas requiring expansion of the DASH bus network. Should that expansion be financially feasible, it would become another added benefit for the entire city. The study may also reveal areas where ACPS service will continue to be necessary. We look forward to the analysis and what opportunities it may reveal.

We are requesting Council's support to have the City Manager explore the feasibility of this proposal and report findings to Council prior to the add/delete deadline for the FY26 budget. Those findings, interim and final, should include the budgetary impacts on both City and ACPS budgets as well as staffing and service adjustments necessary to implement this proposal. We also recognize that the City/Schools Subcommittee represents a venue for deeper discussion about issues that impact the community and intends to meet on this topic starting in January. As such, we are also requesting that the requests outlined in this memo be coordinated and that the findings be shared at a City/School subcommittee meeting.

CC: Jim Parajon, City Manager
Cheran Ivery, City Attorney
Gloria Sitton, City Clerk and Clerk of Council