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SHIFTING STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL BUSES TO PUBLIC TRANSIT:

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR
BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
AND
BURLINGTON URBAN SERVICE

Michael Kyte and Associates
Transportation Planners

May 21, 1985

May 18, 1985

Dr. James Smith, Superintendent
Burlington Community Schools
1429 West Avenue
Burlington, IA 52601

Mr. W.G. Lawley, City Manager
City of Burlington
City Hall
Burlington, IA 52601

I am pleased to transmit my final report on the Burlington Transportation Coordination Project. The conclusions described in this report have been developed as a result of a number of meetings between the staffs of Burlington Community Schools and Burlington Urban Service during the past five months.

After a detailed analysis of the cost structures and patterns of service of the two agencies, it is clear that it is not cost-effective for the School District to contract with BUS to transport all 1,600 students now carried daily on school buses. It is feasible, however, to selectively shift groups of students onto city transit buses where student travel patterns generally follow existing BUS services and where excess capacity exists on city buses.

The group that holds the most potential to be feasibly shifted onto city bus routes are those students now riding school bus routes that operate only within the City of Burlington corporate boundaries. This group consists of the 318 students now served by school routes 20, 21A, 22A, 24, 24A, 25, and 25A.

In order to adequately test the concept of transportation coordination in the Burlington area, it is necessary to develop a pilot project that 1) will generate benefits to both the School District and to BUS and 2) has the support of the staffs of both agencies. To meet both of these criteria, it is recommended that, for a one-year trial period, BUS transport the 108 junior and senior high school students that now regularly use school routes 24, 24A, 25,

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In order to adequately test the concept of transportation coordination in the Burlington area, it is necessary to develop a pilot project that 1) will generate benefits to both the School District and to BUS and 2) has the support of the staffs of both agencies. To meet both of these criteria, it is recommended that, for a one-year trial period, BUS transport the 108 junior and senior high school students that now regularly use school routes 24, 24A, 25,

and 25A, charging the School District at a rate of \$7.50 per month per student carried.

If the recommendations described in this report are adopted by the Burlington School Board and the Burlington City Council, the following benefits would accrue:

-A net annual operating cost savings of from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for the School District during the first year, and a savings of \$5,000 annually in subsequent years.

-A long term capital cost savings of \$106,000 for the School District.

-An annual increase of \$7,300 in revenue and 38,900 passengers for BUS.

-Development of effective staff working relationships over the next year so that additional opportunities for coordination can be identified and implemented.

I look forward to presenting these findings and recommendations to the City Council on May 22nd and to the School Board on May 23rd. Please contact me if you have any questions on this report.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Kyte
Proprietor

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AND
BURLINGTON URBAN SERVICE

Prepared for
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I. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Burlington Transportation Coordination Project is one of six pilot projects within the state of Iowa to test the feasibility of coordinating school transportation and public transit programs. The specific objectives of the project are to reduce the transportation expenditures now incurred by Burlington Community Schools (School District) and to increase ridership and revenue for Burlington Urban Service (BUS).

Findings

There are nine major findings of the Burlington Transportation Coordination Project.

-The two objectives described above cannot be met by shifting all students now transported by school buses onto city transit buses. In general, it is more cost effective for the School District to continue to provide its own service. Several factors combine to make the cost structure of the School District more favorable than that of BUS: lower operator labor rates, higher vehicle capacities, a larger fleet, and lower per-bus capital costs.

-It is feasible, however, to selectively shift groups of students onto city transit buses. The key element here is to make more productive use of excess capacity on BUS by putting students onto city buses that now have unused seats. In this way, BUS can provide student transportation at a lower cost (on a marginal cost basis) than the School District.

-In order to achieve significant cost reductions for the School District, it is necessary for the School District to eliminate entire school bus routes. Shifting only a portion of the students now carried on a given bus route generally would yield little or no cost savings since the driver and bus would still be required to transport the remaining students on the route.

-A detailed analysis of student travel patterns and the service networks operated by BUS and the School District indicate that the School District can feasibly eliminate four of the thirty-one regular bus routes that it now operates. Taking into account both operating and capital costs, BUS could carry 108 students now transported on School District routes 24, 24A, 25, and 25A less expensively than the School District.

-These actions would result in direct annual operating cost reductions of \$13,500 for the School District. In addition, because of the elimination of four routes, long-term capital expenditures could be reduced by \$106,000. (see Table 1)

-The School District would have to transfer two full-time bus drivers to part-time status if the pilot project were implemented. The District would thus be liable for unemployment benefits of up to \$2,000 per driver.

-The four school routes carry 14 parochial school students for which the School District is directly reimbursed by the State for transportation costs. Because its average per pupil transportation costs are higher than the actual costs for transporting these 14 students, the School District now makes a "profit" for their transportation. If the School District contracts with BUS for the service at a rate lower than the District's average transportation cost, the District would experience a reduction in State support (estimated reduction: \$900-\$1600 per year).

-The actual net savings to the School District would depend upon the fee charged by BUS to provide this service. If BUS charged full fare (\$12.50 per month per student), this annual fee would be \$12,200. Consideration was also given to lower rates: \$10.00 per month and \$7.50 per month. These rates would result in annual fees of \$9,700 and \$7,300, respectively. Since there is little cost increase to BUS for the provision of the school service, it is appropriate to consider these lower fees.

-State law permits a school district to contract with a common carrier to provide state-mandated pupil transportation. Federal law also permits BUS to provide non-exclusive or school tripper service, as proposed here.

Recommendations

The most suitable arrangement to allow these benefits to be realized would be in a trial or pilot project. The following actions are recommended to implement this pilot project:

-The School District should enter into a one-year purchase-of-service agreement with BUS to provide state-mandated transportation for 108 students. A model contract is provided in Appendix A of this report. The contract would cover such issues as operating requirements and student discipline.

TABLE 1
COST ANALYSIS

<u>1. School District Cost Reductions</u>	
Reduction in annual operating costs	\$13,500
Reduction in long term capital outlays	\$106,000
<u>2. BUS Service Fees</u>	
Full fare (\$12.50 per month per student)	\$12,200
Reduced Fare #1 (\$10.00 per month)	\$ 9,800
Reduced Fare #2 (\$7.50 per month)	\$ 7,300
<u>3. Other School District Costs</u>	
Possible unemployment costs (maximum)	\$4,000
Net loss in parochial student revenue	\$900-\$1,600
<u>4. Potential Benefits (with recommended fee)</u>	
Net annual operating cost saving for the School District	\$1,000-\$5,000
Long term capital cost savings for the School District	\$106,000
Net additional revenue for BUS	\$7,300

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 1983, Burlington was selected as one of the sites for a pilot project on transportation coordination by the Iowa Department of Transportation. The major interest on the part of local officials was to determine the feasibility of consolidating or coordinating the transportation systems now operated individually by BUS and the School District.

There are several different scenarios that can be followed when considering consolidation or coordination. At its extreme, it would involve complete consolidation of the activities of BUS and the School District's Transportation Department. In this scenario, all activities, including administration, operations, maintenance, and planning, would be consolidated into one entity. Even if this scenario ultimately were more cost-effective than the present system, it does not necessarily represent a more practical approach. Each agency has its own legal and administrative rules, labor agreements, operating policies and procedures, and funding sources that need to be considered. And probably most important, the success of consolidation or coordination ultimately involves bringing people (i.e. the staffs of the respective agencies) together in a way that will result in effective and efficient operations. It is thus more appropriate to begin such an effort by examining in detail what functions performed or services provided by the two agencies can in fact be merged so that savings to the taxpayer will result. Such an approach is being followed in the Burlington Transportation Coordination Project. If some success can be achieved in an initial coordination project, then the scope of activities can be enlarged to include additional coordination or consolidation.

III. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Services Provided

Both BUS and the School District operate extensive transportation systems.

The major purpose of the BUS system is to provide general transportation services to residents of the Burlington area. BUS operates seven fixed-routes, six days a week, using a fleet of 14 buses. The system carried over 350,000 passengers during FY 1984, or an average of 1,300 per weekday.

The School District operates a special purpose transportation system designed to meet its legal obligation to carry students to and from school. The School District uses a fleet of 37 vehicles to operate 31 regular routes and 10 kindergarten routes. The system carried over 290,000 passengers in FY 1984, or an average of 1,600 per school day.

The major portion of the transportation operations budget for both agencies goes for operator costs. For BUS, bus operators are paid on an hourly basis (\$7.77 per hour in FY 1984), with premium rates for all overtime work. School bus operators are also compensated on an hourly basis at an average rate of \$7.70 per hour during FY 1984.

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

BURLINGTON URBAN SERVICE/BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

	BUS	School District
Passengers Carried (FY 84)	350,000	288,900
Number of Vehicles	14	37
Number of Drivers	10 (fulltime) 6 (parttime)	28 (regular) 2 (substitute)
Driver Wage Rate	\$7.77 (FY 84)	\$7.70 (FY 84)

Cost Structure

The key to the feasibility of any coordination project between BUS and the School District is whether there is a financial benefit to both agencies. This can be stated in two ways:

- Can the School District reduce its operating and/or capital costs for transportation?
- Can BUS increase its revenues and ridership?

Because of the complex nature of the problem, it is difficult to make general conclusions about the feasibility of coordination. Each specific project must be analyzed individually. However, it can be stated that the basic cost structures of the two agencies favor the School District simply in terms of unit costs of transportation provided. The School District has a larger fleet, a larger average capacity per bus, and a lower operator wage rate (see Table 3). The cost per seat-hour, a gross measure of service productivity, is 63 percent lower for the School District than for BUS. It is clear that if BUS were simply to provide additional service to serve students it would be more expensive than if the School District were to provide its own service. Thus for BUS to offer its services for school transportation competitively it must more effectively use its buses and operators already operating on the existing system. For example, if BUS had a route traveling to a local school and if there were seats available on buses operating on the route, BUS could sell these seats to the School District at a cost less than its full cost (i.e. at its marginal cost). It is likely that these costs would be less than the costs now incurred by the School District to provide the service.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF COST STRUCTURES

	School District	BUS
Bus fleet size	37	14
Average capacity per bus (estimated)	60	30
Operator wage per hour	\$7.70	\$7.77
Cost per seat-hour	\$0.21	\$0.56

IV. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this section is to summarize the relevant state and federal laws and regulations that relate to the use of public transit for pupil transportation.

Pupil Use of Transit Buses

Iowa law allows pupils to be transported on transit buses in certain instances. Chapter 285.1(5) of the Iowa Code states:

Where transportation by school bus is impracticable or not available or other existing conditions warrant it, arrangements may be made for use of common carriers according to uniform standards established by the superintendent of public instruction and at a cost based upon the actual cost of service and approved by the board.

This provision allows a school district to contract with a local public transit provider to transport students to and from school. The transit agency is reimbursed by the school district for the cost of providing the service.

Rules of Operation and Design Standards

Under Iowa law, transit buses transporting pupils are not be required to meet state and federal school bus design standards nor be equipped with the same warning signals required of a normal school bus. Section 321.1(27) defines a school bus as any vehicle transporting pupils to and from school. One exception to this definition is a vehicle "operated by a municipally or privately owned urban transit company for the transportation of children as part of or in addition to their regularly scheduled service."

Despite this exemption, the Iowa Administrative Code does establish some standards for common carrier vehicles when used exclusively for pupil transportation to and from school. However, the service proposed here is not exclusive school service. That is, it would be open to the general public.

School Funding Considerations

The way in which school districts receive state funds for pupil transportation is an important consideration in the coordination of school and public transportation. Under the Iowa School Foundation Program, each district receives from the state an amount equal to the difference between the school foundation uniform levy property tax revenue per pupil in the district and the state foundation base, which

is 78 percent of the state per pupil cost for the 1983-1984 school year. The per pupil state aid is a lump sum for all allowable purposes. In other words, no established amount per pupil is earmarked for transportation.

Thus, Iowa school districts that are able to reduce the costs of pupil transportation may have more money per pupil to spend on materials, instruction, and other expenses. This point is important because it strengthens the desire of districts to reduce transportation costs, possibly through coordination with transit providers.

Federal Regulations

The federal government, through the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), has some restrictions for the pupil use of public transit service. Basically, federal law prohibits recipients of UMTA funds from providing exclusive school service, but does allow school tripper operations. The goals of these laws and regulations are: 1) to ensure that operators receiving federal funds use their resources to provide transportation to the public, and 2) that UMTA-assisted public transportation agencies do not compete unfairly with private school bus operators.

It is very important to note that the only school service recipients of federal funds are prohibited from providing is service exclusively for the transportation of students and school personnel to and from school. Service that is not exclusive is permissible. The proposal for Burlington outlined in this report does not involve the transit system operating exclusive school service. The proposed service does not compete with a private school bus operator and does not detract from transportation service to the general public. Thus, the proposal creates no conflicts with federal law.

V. DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

First Stage Analysis

To determine which students now transported by the School District could be shifted to BUS routes, the following work tasks were undertaken:

1. The locations of existing BUS routes, School District bus stops and pick-up points, and Burlington public and parochial schools were located on a map.
2. The School District bus stop locations were compared with the BUS route structure.
3. The BUS schedule times were compared with school start and dismissal times.
e.
4. From this comparison, groups of students which might be carried on BUS routes and which routes and schedules would require modification in order to accomodate School District students were determined.

This first stage analysis indicated that of the 1,600 students now carried by School District buses, those 318 students on school buses that operate only with the City of Burlington would provide the best initial opportunity for a feasible transportation coordination project. (see Table 4). It is within the City limits that city bus routes and School District bus routes and student travel patterns most closely coincide.

Final Project Development

The development of the recommended pilot project was based upon several factors. First, it was important that the project result in direct operating cost savings to the School District and additional ridership and revenue for BUS. Second, the size of the pilot project could not be so large as to present unrealistic risks for either agency. Finally, consideration was given to such matters as the number of school drivers that might be reassigned, the effect of revenue generated by parochial school students now transported on school buses, and the successful administration of the pilot project. For these reasons, it was determined that the most feasible routes to be included in a pilot project would be school routes 24, 24A, 25, and 25A. Further, it was determined through school ridership surveys, that of the 221 students eligible to use these four routes, only 108 actually utilized school bus service on a day-to-day basis. This limited the actual capacity that was needed from Burlington Urban Service.

The School District would reduce its direct operating cost by \$13,500 annually by eliminating the four routes described in this recommendation. It would also reduce its vehicle needs by two, thus reducing its capital procurement needs by a like number over the next several years. With current purchase prices at approximately \$53,000 per bus, this would mean a reduced expenditure of \$106,000 for the School District during the life of these buses.

BUS would provide service to these 108 students using equipment and bus operators that are now already in regular service. The normal fare charged by BUS for riders using a monthly pass is \$12.50 per month. However, since BUS would incur only minor costs to provide this service, it is recommended that BUS charge the School District at the rate of \$7.50 per month per student. In this way, BUS would more than cover its costs for the service and it would give the School District a volume discount based on the large number of students who would use the system daily. If this fee were charged, BUS would increase its revenues by a net of \$7,300 per year and its annual ridership by 38,900. The School District would achieve a net reduction in its direct cost of operation as well as a long-term reduction in capital costs.

It should be noted that the School District would be changing the status of two of its drivers from full-time to part-time status. This means that the District could be liable for up to \$2,000 in unemployment costs for each of the two drivers involved. The District also transports fourteen parochial students on these four routes and would thus stand to lose from \$900-\$1600 in direct state aid since BUS would be transporting them in a less costly manner.

TABLE 4

SCHOOL ROUTES CONSIDERED FOR COORDINATION

School Route	Number of Students	School District FY 84 Annual Operating Cost
20	37	\$9,300
21A	41	\$3,100
22A	29	\$1,800
24	76	\$7,200
24A	38	\$2,700
25	64	\$6,100
25A	33	\$1,900
Total	318	\$32,100

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE CONTRACT

BETWEEN

BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

AND BURLINGTON URBAN SERVICE

CITY OF BURLINGTON-BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

DRAFT AGREEMENT

LIST OF CONTRACT ARTICLES

- I. BUS Services Agreed Upon
- II. Method of Passenger Accounting
- III. Reimbursement
- IV. Passenger Behavior and Discipline Procedures
- V. Operational Responsibilities
- VI. Duration of Agreement

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

- I - Description of BUS Services Agreed Upon

Introduction

This is an Agreement entered into on the ___ day of _____, 1985, at Burlington, Iowa, by and between the BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, hereinafter referred to as the "School District," and the CITY OF BURLINGTON. (BUS Transit shall be referred to as an agent of the City of Burlington in sections dealing directly with service operation.)

WHEREAS, BUS has sufficient transit bus capacity to serve School District students eligible for school transportation at such times and along such routes as specified in this Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the City of Burlington desires to use BUS vehicles as efficiently and fully as possible at all times during the service day; and

WHEREAS, the School District wishes to reduce the overall cost of student transportation by entering into this Agreement with the City of Burlington for the provision of the services specified in this Agreement,

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the School District and the City of Burlington, in consideration of the premises and mutual agreements and subject to the conditions hereinafter set forth, agree as follows:

Article I: BUS Services Agreed Upon

- A. BUS shall provide the transportation services described in Attachment I for the 1985-86 school year.
- B. BUS shall provide sufficient vehicle capacity to ensure each student a bus seat on all routes under this Agreement.
- C. When route adjustments are necessary to improve the services for students or to reduce expenditures, BUS shall consult with the School District transportation manager. Final approval of the route adjustments rests with the School District.
- D. By July 1, 1985, the School District shall provide a calendar to B.U.S indicating when school will be in session throughout the school year.
- E. BUS agrees to adjust the times of the school runs

provided for under this Agreement to accomodate students on those occasions when the school schedule is altered. The School District shall notify BUS as early as possible about changes in the school day schedule or cancellations of school due to adverse weather conditions, school building problems, special school events, or other circumstances.

Article II: Method of Passenger Accounting

- A. The School District shall furnish to BUS a list of the students to be transported on each BUS school run under this Agreement. The list will include each student's name, address, school, and pick up/drop off point.
- B. BUS shall provide by mail information concerning the BUS route, bus identification number, stop location, and pick up and drop off times to students transported under this Agreement and their parents.
- C. BUS will provide and distribute by mail boarding passes for those students to be transported by BUS under this Agreement. A different color pass will be issued for each different BUS run. The pass will include a space for the student to enter his or her name, address, and school.
- D. BUS shall furnish to each school principal a supply of temporary replacement passes to be issued to students who lose or destroy their passes. The temporary pass shall be dated and shall be valid for two days after its issuance. The student holding the temporary pass shall obtain a permanent replacement pass from the BUS office.
- E. The School District shall notify BUS of the names, addresses, and schools of student passengers moving in and out of the areas served. With this information, BUS shall be responsible for updating its passenger lists, issuing new passes and route information, and attempting to collect passes no longer valid.
- F. BUS drivers shall record the number of students transported on each route under this Agreement on a daily basis. These passenger counts shall be compiled weekly by BUS. If the number of passengers transported falls significantly below the number provided for under this Agreement, BUS shall notify the School District transportation manager.
- G. It shall be the responsibility of the BUS driver to insure that every student boarding the bus has in his or her possession the appropriate pass. Any student not presenting the pass may be barred from boarding the bus.

Article III: Reimbursement

In consideration for the services provided, the School District agrees to pay the City of Burlington on a monthly basis the amount of _____ per month for nine months. The total for the school year commencing September __, 1985 and ending June , 1986 shall be _____. Payment shall be made on the first Monday of every month, beginning September __, 1985.

Article IV: Passenger Behavior and Discipline Procedures

The School District shall provide the City of Burlington with passenger conduct rules for students transported by BUS under this Agreement. BUS drivers shall abide by the policies and procedures established by the School District for student behavior and discipline.

B. Drivers of BUS buses transporting pupils under this Agreement shall make every reasonable effort to enforce the passenger conduct rules specified by the School District. If a driver or drivers of a particular run experience a persistent conduct problem with a student, and no progress can be made in correcting the problem, the following steps will be taken:

Article V: Operational Responsibilities

A. In cases of bus breakdown enroute, it shall be the responsibility of BUS to immediately dispatch a second bus to that location for the transportation of students. The school principal shall be provided timely notice in all such cases.

B. In the case of accident or emergency, the driver shall remain with the bus and the students until either the proper authorities or a substitute bus arrives. The school principal shall be notified at once as to the location and last pickup or stop, so that parents or awaiting students can be notified.

C. BUS will be required to keep a list of dates and routes for each driver performing under this Agreement. Complaints about BUS drivers received by the School District shall be directed to BUS management.

Article VI: Duration of Agreement

This Agreement shall commence on September __, 1985, and will remain in effect until June __, 1986. At the end of this period, the parties agree to discuss the terms of the Agreement and consider its renewal.

-BUS should charge the School District \$7.50 per day per student transported using a suitable pass or punch ticket available only to those students legally entitled to transportation.

-The School District and BUS should continually monitor the performance of the service during the year to insure that benefits to both agencies are being realized. If appropriate, the agencies should identify ways to enhance coordination in the future.

-The School District and BUS should explore ways in which non-eligible students can be encouraged to use regular BUS service. This should include increasing awareness of transit's role in the community, demonstration of transit operations and maintenance to interested students such as those in automotive mechanics classes, and information about BUS routes and schedules in student newspapers.

Benefits of the Recommended Project

If the recommended pilot project were to be implemented for the 1985-1986 school year, the following benefits would be realized by the two agencies:

-A direct savings of from \$1,000 to \$5,000 during the first year, and \$5,000 in subsequent years, for the School District.

-A long term capital cost savings of \$106,000 for the School District.

-An increase of 38,900 annual rides and \$7,300 in net revenue annually for BUS.

-Direct operational experience in working together for the two agencies which can lead to additional opportunities for coordination and cooperation in the future.