

Talking Points on Nonpublic School Transportation

- In his recent Budget address, Governor Murphy fully funded the Public School Funding Formula for the first time in history. We believe that this is an important point that should be stressed when making the appropriate “asks” for nonpublic schools.
- The NJ Department of Education states that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for student transportation is 5.81%. We are asking for that same increase of 5.81%, which raises the ceiling to \$1,233, in an attempt to obtain more transportation instead of aid-in-lieu to assist parents to receive busing rather than aid-in-lieu.
- Transportation is the lifeblood of nonpublic schools. Many times, when children cannot get a ride, their parents cannot get them to school, and they will then transfer to public school at greater expense to the taxpayer.
- Nonpublic transportation routes cost more than public school routes because they involve fewer children traveling more miles. Nonpublic school students, for example, normally do not live in enclaves, so the population is more regionally spread out throughout a given region, making the ride more costly.
- In order obtain rides within the per-pupil amount, we have tried cluster stops, asking districts to mix public and nonpublic school students on the same buses where feasible (this is permitted by the New Jersey Department of Education), and even reducing the number of days for which a route is bid in order to get a ride for the majority of school days. We have also eliminated half-days in our schools wherever possible because half-days are more costly for bus operators and affect the amount of the bid for transportation.
- We are at the mercy of private bus contractors who can charge whatever they want, and our parents are held hostage by that figure. These private contractors currently serve over 85% of the nonpublic school routes.
- No public school child is ever denied a ride to school because of transportation costs.
- Another critical component of the failure to provide transportation for nonpublic students is the lack of drivers. This is a state-wide shortage, but districts and third-party contractors are more inclined to hire drivers for public school routes first than for nonpublic routes. In particular, many third-party contractors withhold bids on nonpublic school routes because they are waiting for the more lucrative contracts of routes for special education students which occur later in the summer.
- The ceiling for the per-pupil amount for nonpublic school transportation was frozen for 17 years, and we are still trying to recover from that freeze. Two years ago, there was an increase of \$22.00 per pupil which was hardly enough to make a significant increase in the number of routes. Last year’s increase to \$1,165 occurred late in the summer when the Department of Education was able to validate what the Legislature had included. As a result, it is impossible to assess how many additional routes were run with that figure because many districts had already received no bids and thus offered only aid-in-lieu.

- Attached to these Talking Points is the latest available report, by county, prepared by the New Jersey Department of Education. For the first time in the history of nonpublic school transportation, the report shows that there are more students given aid-in-lieu payments than transportation. This is hardly a trend that should be encouraged or continued because the loss of transportation for nonpublic school pupils means a loss of enrollment. Note that, when the law was first passed in 1968, aid-in-lieu was only created to be used in unusual circumstances, not as a norm.
- Please add your own horror stories.

Transportation vs. Aid-in-lieu
2023-2024 School year

COUNTY CODE	COUNTY NAME	Nonpublic Transported A-6	Nonpublic AIL A-7	Nonpublic Transportation 20.1 to 30 D-1	Nonpublic Transportation >30 D-2	Nonpublic AIL 20.1 to 30 D-3	Nonpublic AIL >30 D-4
01	ATLANTIC	908.0	1263	.0	0	8	1
03	BERGEN	2745.5	4813	.5	2	6	0
05	BURLINGTON	503.0	2422	.0	1	13	1
07	CAMDEN	371.0	2510	1.0	1	3	0
09	CAPE MAY	102.0	349	.0	1	1	0
11	CUMBERLAND	61.0	791	.0	0	0	0
13	ESSEX	430.0	3433	.0	0	21	2
15	GLOUCESTER	344.0	2055	.0	0	0	14
17	HUDSON	.0	889	1.0	0	0	0
19	HUNTERDON	.0	678	.0	0	0	2
21	MERCER	824.0	2306	.0	0	6	1
23	MIDDLESEX	695.0	4200	6.0	0	12	0
25	MONMOUTH	3442.0	3449	8.0	2	1	0
27	MORRIS	1006.5	3040	1.0	1	6	0
29	OCEAN	26802.0	8573	27.0	17	7	0
31	PASSAIC	190.5	2510	4.5	0	30	1
33	SALEM	.0	174	.0	0	0	2
35	SOMERSET	44.0	3266	.0	0	4	0
37	SUSSEX	570.0	484	.0	1	0	1
39	UNION	44.0	2480	.0	0	0	2
41	WARREN	2.0	292	.0	3	0	3
	Total	39084.5	49977	49	29	118	30