

Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives



SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION REPORT 2013-2014

8/31/2014

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Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC) this report is being submitted to summarize the activities of the Massachusetts Special Education Transportation project funded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

The website, www.SpEdTransSavings.org, is designed to provide valuable information to school districts and program administrators in creating greater cost efficiencies while maintaining and supporting the highest quality of services in the area of special needs transportation.

The October DESE SIMS data and actual ridership for targeted programs is made available on-line, this will provide school districts and program personnel with another tool to use as they strive to maintain high quality cost-effective transportation for all special education students in the Commonwealth.

Ridership data was provided by private day and collaborative programs and reflects actual ridership from the fall of 2013, this provides an opportunity for school districts to review the data to see what opportunities exist to share routes, see actual routes they shared with other districts, examine existing trends and plan for future transportation services.

We believe that this project continues to demonstrate opportunities for multi-district routing and provides districts with information that will help them to make sound fiscal decisions and maximize cost benefits. The project will be continue to be funded in FY2015 to assist districts in the current school year to maximize cost benefits.

Respectfully,

Colleen Cavanaugh

Pupil Transportation Consulting, Inc.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION TASKFORCE 2013-2014

Background

Transporting our special needs students continues to be a challenge facing school districts across the Commonwealth, and in many cases the cost of transportation exceeds the tuition. The total expended by public schools in FY2013 for out-of-district special education transportation services was \$ 102,595,193, as reported on the DESE End of the Year Report, (information for FY2014 is not yet available). As part of the State's on-going efforts to create efficiencies in the area of Special Education Transportation and reduce costs, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has continued to support the State Special Education Task Force on various initiatives. An on-line resource was created, *SpEdTransSavings.org*, to provide actual ridership data for identified special education programs and the October 1 DESE SIMS data to allow school districts and program administrators to explore the potential cost benefit of multi-district routing. Information is provided that would allow school district administrators to explore opportunities to cost share with contiguous communities. The actual ridership data collected at the school site is a valuable resource for school districts as they strive to maintain and reduce costs in the area of special education transportation.

The State first funded this initiative in FY2011; data was collected from targeted private day and collaborative programs on the actual ridership by vehicle at the school site. The project met with great success and clearly demonstrated the potential for generating cost savings and providing a valuable resource for districts. This past year efforts were focused on developing and enhancing the website, creating an on-line data application, conducting outreach and providing district support when requested.

According to October 1 DESE SIMS data, 10,384 students attended 363 special education out of district programs in FY2014. Special education administrators have highlighted that they do not necessarily know if students from neighboring communities are attending the same out of district placement as students from their town. They have further noted they do not always know if there are students from neighboring towns riding on the same vehicle as their students, in which case they should be receiving a reduced rate.

Purpose

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) continued funding in FY2014 to support the initiative. An on-line data application was developed to assist program administrators in recording their ridership data, in previous years an Excel spreadsheet was utilized for this process. This on-line application has eased the data collection process while ensuring a more timely collection of the information. Program directors were asked to identify personnel responsible for maintaining ridership data, where upon a user name and password was assigned that correspond with the program to ensure data accuracy. Target programs were selected based on the FY2012 October 1 DESE SIMS data.

Outcomes

The target programs were selected based on those receiving students from ten or more school districts. User names were provided from 39 of the 83 private day programs, representing a 46% response rate, with 20 schools recording ridership data, and from 37 of the 50 collaborative programs, representing a 74% response rate, with 16 programs recording ridership data. Data was received from 20 of the 38 targeted private day programs that submitted user information, representing a 53% response rate, and from 16 of the 37 collaborative programs that submitted user information, representing a 43% response rate. The October 1, DESE SIMS data for FY2014 was imported into the database. The total number of targeted programs has increased from last year, which was represented by 76 private day schools and 44 collaborative programs.

	Collaborative Programs	Private Day Schools
Targeted Programs	50	83
% Programs Provided User Information	74%	46%
User Accounts Set-up	37	38
Data Received	14	20
% Users Uploaded Data	43%	53%

The Program Director page was developed for recording ridership information and is only accessible by an authorized log in.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR DATA COLLECTION MODULE

PROGRAM DIRECTOR PAGE

Welcome to the Program Directors Page!

This is where you will record the ridership data for your program. Feel free to download and print the "Ridership Template for Data Collection", this will assist you in collecting information at the curb and facilitate the data input process.

[Ridership Template for Data Collection](#)

[Directions for Data Input](#)

Program: Learning Prep School
Program Code: 02070867

Vehicle Information

Vehicle Num:

Vendor:

Vehicle Type: [Clear Form](#)

Home District:

HomeTown:

Stud Count:

Rec_ID	VehNum	Vendor	VehTp	HomeDist	HomeTown	StudCnt	
3388	1	VHS Transport	Van	Quincy	Quincy	1	Delete
3278	11	J.S.C. Trans	Minivan	Wayland	Wayland	2	Delete
3279	11	J.S.C. Trans	Minivan	Weston	Weston	1	Delete
3280	12	Van Pool	Minivan	Auburn	Auburn	1	Delete
3281	12	Van Pool	Minivan	Millbury	Millbury	1	Delete
3282	13	AA Trans	Minivan	Dudley-Charlton Reg	Charlton	1	Delete
3283	14	Van Pool	Minivan	Northboro-Southboro	Southborough	1	Delete
3284	14	Van Pool	Minivan	Northboro-Southboro	Northborough	1	Delete
3285	14	Van Pool	Minivan	Westborough	Westborough	1	Delete

All data is validated by the web administrator prior to public web access. The special education programs may also preview and export their data; vendor contact information is provided.

RIDERSHIP PREVIEW FORMAT

PROGRAM DIRECTOR PAGE

Welcome to the Program Directors Page!

This is where you will record the ridership data for your program. Feel free to download and print the "Ridership Template for Data Collection", this will assist you in collecting the information at the curb and facilitate the data input process.

[Ridership Template for Data Collection](#)

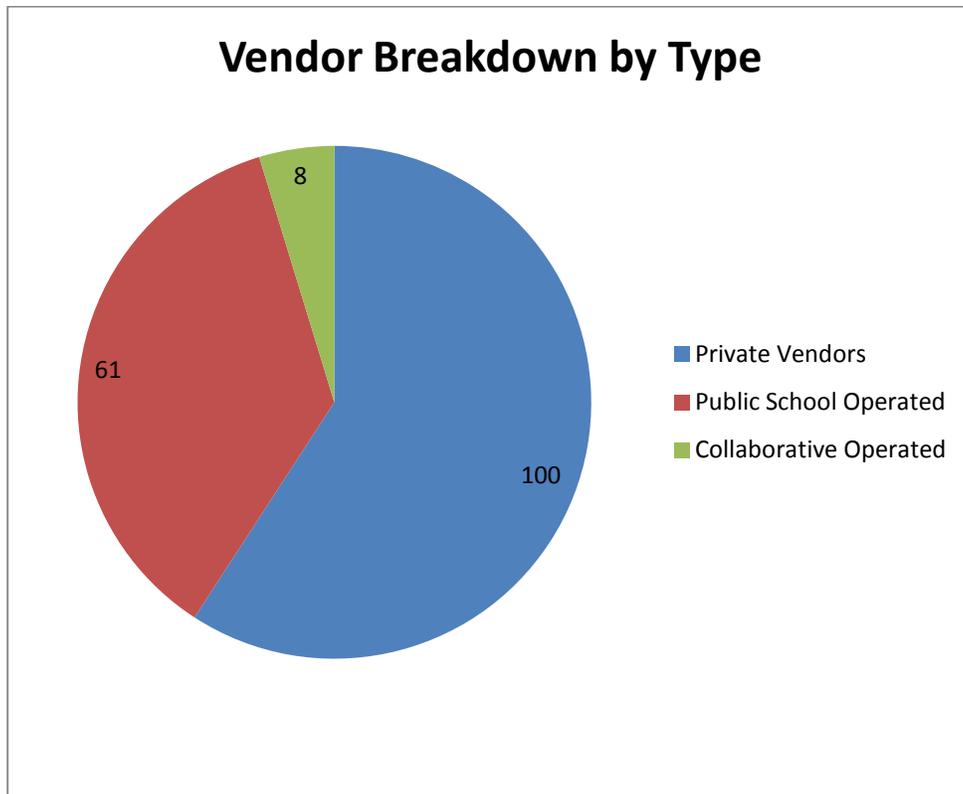
[Directions for Data Input](#)

Program: Learning Prep School
Program Code: 02070867

Veh. No.	Vendor Name	Vendor Phone	Veh. Type	Home District	#Stud
2	Marks	508-472-3600	Minivan	Mendon-Upton	1
2	Marks	508-472-3600	Minivan	Mendon-Upton	4
3	Millis PS	508-376-7000	Van	Millis	3
4	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Braintree	1
4	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Holbrook	1
4	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Randolph	4
5	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Cohasset	1
5	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Hingham	1
5	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Weymouth	1
5	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Braintree	2
6	S.C.O.	781-982-2259	Minivan	Weymouth	4
7	Sharon PS	781-784-1545	Van	Sharon	2
8	RAZ	781-335-2929	Minivan	Marshfield	2
9	Easton PS	508-230-3222	Van	Easton	2
11	J.S.C. Trans	781-272-8555	Minivan	Wayland	2
11	J.S.C. Trans	781-272-8555	Minivan	Weston	1
12	Van Pool	413-599-5522	Minivan	Auburn	1
12	Van Pool	413-599-5522	Minivan	Millbury	1
13	AA Trans	508-791-9100	Minivan	Dudley-Charlton Reg	1
14	Van Pool	413-599-5522	Minivan	Northboro-Southboro	1
14	Van Pool	413-599-5522	Minivan	Northboro-Southboro	1
14	Van Pool	413-599-5522	Minivan	Westborough	1

This can be a useful tool for program administrators in maintaining accurate records on student transportation arrangements and providing a quick reference.

A statewide vendor database was developed based on ridership information submitted. This is useful in setting up transportation services. Information is available on the website for 169 vendors. Not included in this total are the Collaboratives that coordinate transportation services on behalf of their member districts, these include; the Assabet Valley Collaborative, LABBB/EDCO, BICO and GLEC.



Process

Districts can utilize the district data tab on the website to look at programs they send students to or they can view the Oct 1 DESE Sims data which provides statewide enrollment. This information can be exported into an Excel spreadsheet and sorted to show districts other communities within close proximity that may be sending students to that same program. Districts should then reach out to that district to explore a ride share potential. Districts can also see their ridership information and check their billing to make sure they are receiving a cost benefit on a shared ride.

In many cases school districts own and operate their own vehicles, by sharing the cost of that route with another district, they can reduce their operating budget.

Savings can be realized by sharing a route, an example would be, if the cost of the vehicle is \$215 per day, a district transporting one student alone would pay \$38,700 dollars based on 180 days, if they were to share the vehicle with another district who sends a student to the same school their cost could be reduced in half resulting in a savings of \$19,350 dollars. Even greater savings can be realized when additional students from other districts are added to the route.

Reports were prepared for each of the 26 Collaboratives statewide utilizing the October 1 DESE SIMS data to identify programs member districts send students to. This information is most valuable in assessing and planning coordinated transportation services for member districts of the collaborative.

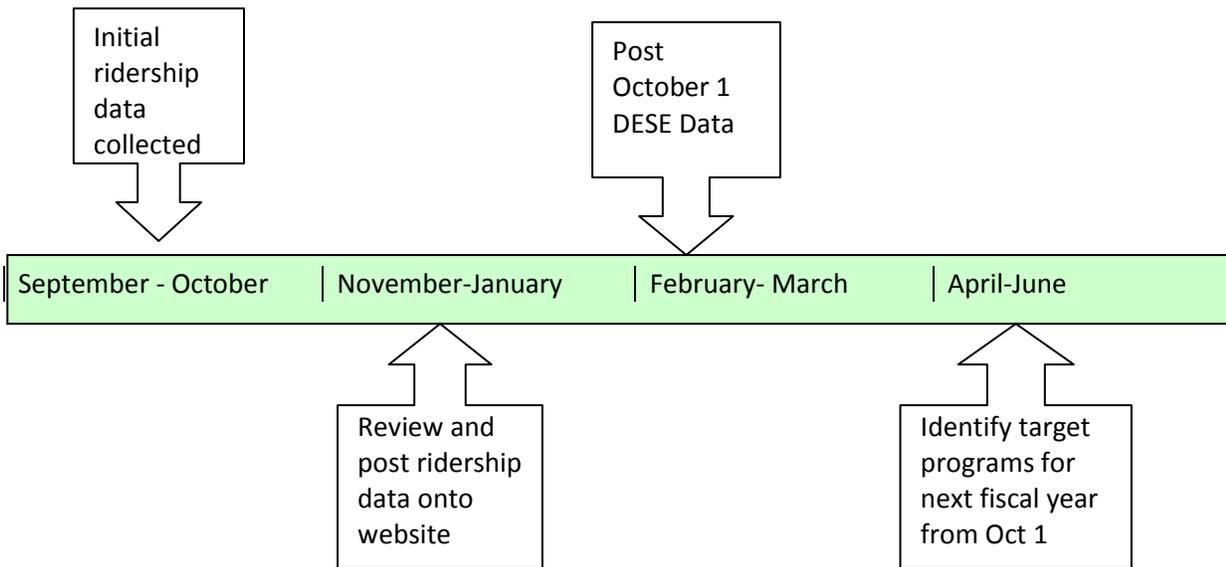
Conclusion

The actual ridership data collected at the school site is a valuable resource for school districts as they strive to maintain costs in the area of special education transportation. It allows a district to determine if a ride share exists and they can reference their cost to see if they are receiving a discounted rate, and explore additional opportunities to cost share with other communities. The October 1 DESE SIMS Data provides districts with information for all special education programs in the state and can also assist with the transportation planning process.

The DESE has continued funding in FY2015 to sustain and support this initiative. It is critical to maintain current data; with the creation this past year of an on-line data entry module, information can be recorded in a timelier manner and be updated on a regular basis.

One of the goals for next year is to ensure 100% participation from the private day and collaborative programs in recording ridership data. This has been a struggle over the past several years and it is the Task Force's belief that with the ease of reporting and providing on-site support, participation will increase. It is also a goal to work with the programs to update data in real time. Workshops and trainings will be conducted across the State to promote the project and assist users.

The timeline for the data collection process is illustrated below. It is our expectation that the ridership data can be updated on a monthly basis as ridership changes.



The website provides school districts and program personnel with another tool to use as they strive to maintain high quality cost-effective transportation for all special education students in the Commonwealth.