

January 25, 2007

Mr. Ray Proctor
Assistant Superintendent, Business Services
Fallbrook Union Elementary School District
321 North Iowa Street
Fallbrook, California 92028-2108

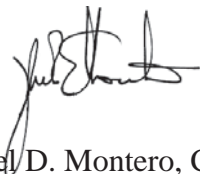
Dear Mr. Proctor,

In July 2006, the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement for a transportation routing review with the Fallbrook Union Elementary School District. Specifically, the request asked FCMAT to:

1. Conduct a review of the number of bus routes, the student bus loading factors, and a sampling of the current routes in order to provide recommendations for changes to optimize routing efficiency.

The attached final report contains the study team's findings with regard to the above area of review. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, and we extend our thanks to all the staff of the Fallbrook Union Elementary School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel D. Montero". The signature is stylized and written in cursive.

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer
Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

FISCAL
CRISIS
&
MANAGEMENT
ASSISTANCE
TEAM

**Fallbrook Union Elementary
School District**

Transportation Routing Review

January 25, 2007

FISCAL CRISIS
& MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM



Administrative Agent
Larry E. Reider
Kern County
Superintendent of Schools

Chief Executive Officer
Joel D. Montero

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Introduction

The Fallbrook Union Elementary School District is located in northern San Diego County and serves more than 5,800 elementary students, pre-school through 8th grade, at the following campuses:

- Maie Ellis Elementary, K-3
- William H. Frazier Elementary, K-3
- Fallbrook Street Elementary, K-2
- Live Oak Elementary, 3-6
- La Paloma Elementary, 4-6
- Potter Junior High, 7-8
- Mary Fay Pendleton, K-6
- San Onofre Elementary, K-8
- Iowa Street School K-8 (home education and opportunity programs)
- De Luz Ecology Center

The district provides a high level of transportation services for home-to-school transportation, special education, shuttle bus service between schools, field trips, and other extracurricular activities. The transportation staff takes great pride in their work and is committed to safety and meeting the needs of students and parents.

In June 2006, the Fallbrook Elementary District requested that the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) conduct a management study to review the student transportation routing methodology and current routing efficiencies. This study was approved by the district's board of trustees as a result of findings and recommendations that were developed by FCMAT during an earlier study of the transportation department in May 2006.

According to the study agreement approved by the district, the scope and objectives of the FCMAT study are as follows:

1. Conduct a review of the number of bus routes, the student bus loading factors, and a sampling of the current routes in order to provide recommendations for changes to optimize routing efficiency.

Study Team

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Fiscal Intervention Specialist
Fiscal Crisis and Management
Assistance Team
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Cajon Valley Union Elementary
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Assistance Team
Bakersfield, California

*As members of this study team, these consultants were not representing their respective employers but were working solely as independent contractors for FCMAT.

Study Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district on July 17-19, 2006 to conduct interviews, collect data and review information related to transportation routing practices. This report is a result of these activities and consists of the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Routing Challenges and Strategies

Executive Summary

The Fallbrook Union Elementary School District provides a high level of pupil transportation service to its students. One fairly unusual and highly utilized service offered to the community is the shuttle bus service provided to transport students between “sister schools.”

The current operational structure may provide transportation to more than the intended student population. The district may want to consider developing administrative guidelines for non-state mandated regular education transportation to ensure that service is consistent and fair for all students.

The district provides shuttle bus service to transport regular education students between “sister schools.” This level of service dictates the fleet size for the entire district’s overall transportation needs. Nearly half the regular education bus fleet is used to meet the shuttle service demand. The district may not clearly understand the cost of this shuttle service. Determining the true cost of the service will allow the district to make potential future decisions should a challenging budget cycle dictate budget reductions.

To recruit and retain qualified bus drivers, the district provides drivers with a sufficient number of hours, usually greater than four hours daily, to ensure that an adequate, responsible and dependable staff is in place. In addition, a very costly and generous employee benefits package is provided to less than full-time employees, making the overall employee compensation costs higher than found in some other similar-sized school districts. The large bus fleet required to support the shuttle service requirements, coupled with the high labor costs, is very expensive.

The transportation staff does not use standard pupil transportation routing software. The district should consider evaluating and purchasing a routing software system that would enhance the staff’s ability to optimize routes for efficiency, create routing scenarios for budget purposes, and help ensure that only eligible students access the district’s regular education transportation services.

District staff provided a very thorough and detailed history of the reasons leading to the development of the sister school concept. While certain advantages are created by having smaller divided elementary sites, the design does create a more challenging environment for the transportation staff to map efficient routes and significantly increases costs to shuttle students between sites.

Routing Challenges

The Fallbrook Union Elementary School District has a student population of approximately 5,800, with about 2,400 students eligible for home-to-school transportation based on eligibility criteria established by the district. The district is semi-rural with the exception of the small central Fallbrook community, where the population density is greater. The district has a large student population residing in high occupancy dwellings such as apartments and condominiums, creating very large groupings of students in relatively small areas. Another large portion of the district consists of single-family dwellings on moderate to large parcels of land in gently sloping hills accessed by small, two-lane roadways, with some areas that are inaccessible for school buses.

The district plan for providing home to school transportation is based upon a “self-transportation boundary” walking distance of one and one-half miles from each school site measured in a radius fashion. Although the study team found maps that clearly identify the radius zones for each school site, it was noted that the district does not consistently adhere to these boundaries. The district has established some school bus stops for students residing within the walking zones. Staff explained that transportation within the self-transportation boundaries is sometimes authorized for various student safety reasons such as insufficient walking paths from the student’s home to their assigned school of attendance, local community concerns about student safety in specific neighborhoods, and at least one example of community appeal in the William H. Frazier K-3 attendance zone for access to student transportation services.

Complicating the school bus routing challenge is the unusual practice of having two sister school elementary sites assigned as home schools of attendance for almost all of the district’s regular education population. The district has established one K-2 school (Fallbrook Street Elementary), two K-3 schools (Maie Ellis Elementary and William H. Frazier Elementary), one 3-6 school (Live Oak Elementary), one 4-6 school (La Paloma Elementary), one K-6 school on the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base (Mary Fay Pendleton Elementary), one K-8 school also on the Camp Pendleton base in the far northwest corner of the district (San Onofre Elementary/Junior High) and one junior high school that serves all district 7-8 students with the exception of the students who attend the San Onofre site.

The sister school for the Fallbrook Street Elementary K-2 site is the Live Oak Elementary 3-6 site. The sister school for the Maie Ellis Elementary K-3 site is the La Paloma Elementary 4-6 site. The sister school for the William H. Frazier Elementary K-3 site also is the La Paloma Elementary 4-6 school site. The district operates two elementary school sites on the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. The Mary Fay Pendleton Elementary School is a K-6 site, and junior high school students from its attendance area are brought off base to the 7-8 Potter Junior High School site. The district’s second site on the military base, San

Onofre Elementary School, is K-8 because of its remote location in the northwest corner of the district.

The district's transportation department staff is challenged with providing transportation services to dual schools for each attendance zone. The sister schools are generally close enough to each other that the one and one-half mile radius self-transportation boundaries overlap. Staff explained that while the district has previously explored the option to operate comprehensive K-6 sites, the current arrangement of sister schools better meets the needs of the community and provides other educational and programmatic advantages, especially with the implementation of class size reduction.

The sister school concept increases transportation expense. One example is the routing challenge created by providing shuttle bus service between sites if students attending one sister school walk or get a ride to the other sister school even though they may live within the one and one-half mile walking distance of both schools. The highest percentage of students who ride a bus are those being shuttled between sister school sites. The routing and number of buses used each day is based upon the large number of students taking advantage of the shuttle service between schools in both the A.M. home-to-school routes and the P.M. school-to-home routes. According to staff-provided school bus load counts, the shuttle buses are generally at capacity.

The district provides regular education transportation services to more students than its self-imposed guidelines require. The practice of allowing all students who get to a sister feeder school to access the shuttle buses, along with the district's practice of not stringently enforcing the self-transportation boundary walking radius of one and one-half miles, places a costly burden on the transportation department that may not achieve the original intended level of home-to-school transportation service. However, it is important to note that this practice appears to be well understood and supported by district administration and the community.

Strategies

During the 2005-06 school year, the district operated a total of 35 school bus routes: 27 regular education and eight special needs routes. To meet these needs, the Transportation Director used 27 regular buses and four special needs buses, two district support vans, and contracted with a taxi company for two runs.

The transportation staff does not use industry standard pupil transportation software to assist with developing and maintaining routes. Student address ranges both within and outside the self-transportation boundaries are identified manually. There is no computerized report system to assist in route optimization or to strictly and consistently provide reliable transportation service throughout the district.

To assess the efficiency of the current routing practices, FCMAT closely examined three of the boundaries: the William H. Frazier K-3 Elementary, Maie Ellis K-3 Elementary, and Fallbrook Street K-2 Elementary sites. Using both the district's self-transportation boundaries and attendance zones for these sites found on district-provided maps, the team made the following findings:

William H. Frazier Elementary, K-3

- Student enrollment - 517
- Students residing within the district's one and one-half mile radius (not eligible for transportation) - 379
- Students residing outside the district's one and one-half mile radius (eligible for transportation) - 138
- Number of students accessing transportation service - 278 on seven buses

Maie Ellis Elementary, K-3

- Student enrollment - 496
- Students residing within the district's one and one-half mile radius (not eligible for transportation) - 384
- Students residing outside the district's one and one-half mile radius (eligible for transportation) - 112
- Numbers of students accessing transportation service - 121 on nine buses

Fallbrook Street Elementary, K-2

- Student enrollment - 483
- Students residing within the district's one and one-half mile radius (not eligible for transportation) - 329
- Students residing outside the district's one and one-half mile radius (eligible for transportation) - 154
- Number of students accessing transportation service - 109 on seven buses

The maps utilized are attached to this report as Appendix A. Based on the above criteria, FCMAT determined that 40% of the district's non-mandated, free transportation is for the shuttle bus service, using approximately half (12) of its buses daily to support this service.

The team found unusually low student load counts on several bus routes for the three sampled schools due to the flexibility needed to provide more buses for shuttle service between schools after home-to-school routes arrive at the school sites.

Since the district cannot reasonably expect to employ drivers for the sole purpose of operating a shuttle route twice daily because any potential employee would not be scheduled for sufficient contract hours, some home-to-school routes are expanded to provide additional contract time for drivers. This is a very costly arrangement since all school bus

drivers are employed for more than four hours daily and are thus entitled to the district's full benefit package.

There were some logical explanations for routes with low student passenger counts due to the district's rural and challenging terrain. The necessity for dedicated buses to serve remote areas and prevent long ride times for some students residing in these areas is practical.

Recommendations

The district should:

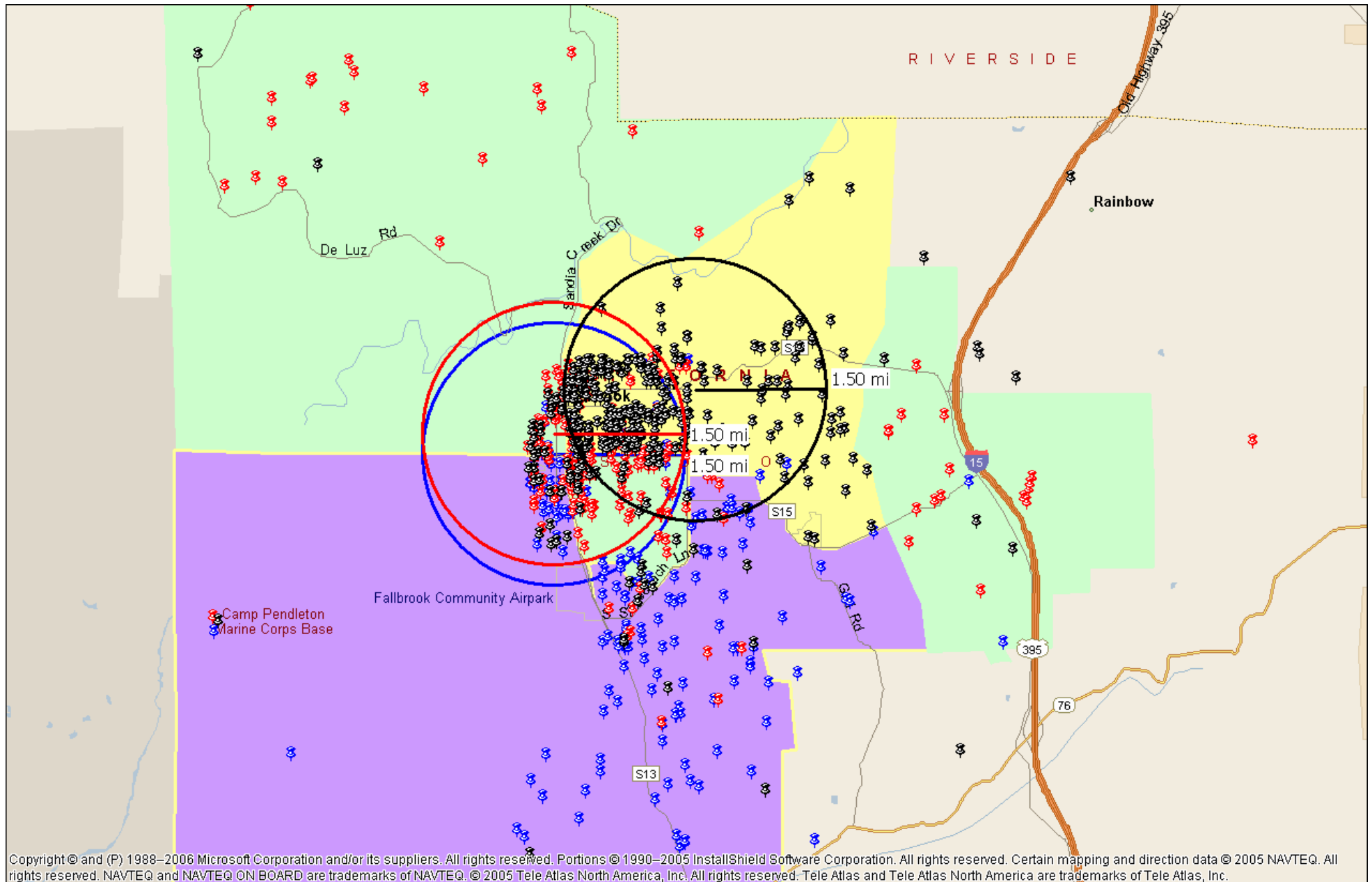
1. Explore the financial benefits of strictly enforcing the existing self-transportation boundaries walking distance of one and one-half miles for each school site.
2. Establish administrative procedures that clearly delineate the rules along with any exceptions to the district's self-transportation boundaries to ensure that regular education transportation services are applied consistently for all eligible students.
3. Review the status of students accessing the district's regular education transportation services to assure eligibility for service.
4. Explore alternatives, should future budget shortfalls occur, to the district's current practice of providing school bus shuttle service in the manner currently provided as a means to reduce the number of school buses operated daily
5. Clearly understand the non-mandated transportation expense created by operating the school bus shuttle service between the "sister schools" and that such service requires additional employees and the operation of additional school buses.
6. Consider exploring the feasibility of reconfiguring the schools as comprehensive K-6 schools as opposed to the current model if and when budget restraints warrant program reductions. This should be carefully considered with regard to the best educational plan for students.
7. Research the various types of industry standard school pupil transportation routing software packages available at very competitive pricing to assist in routing optimization.

Appendices

Appendix A – School site boundary maps

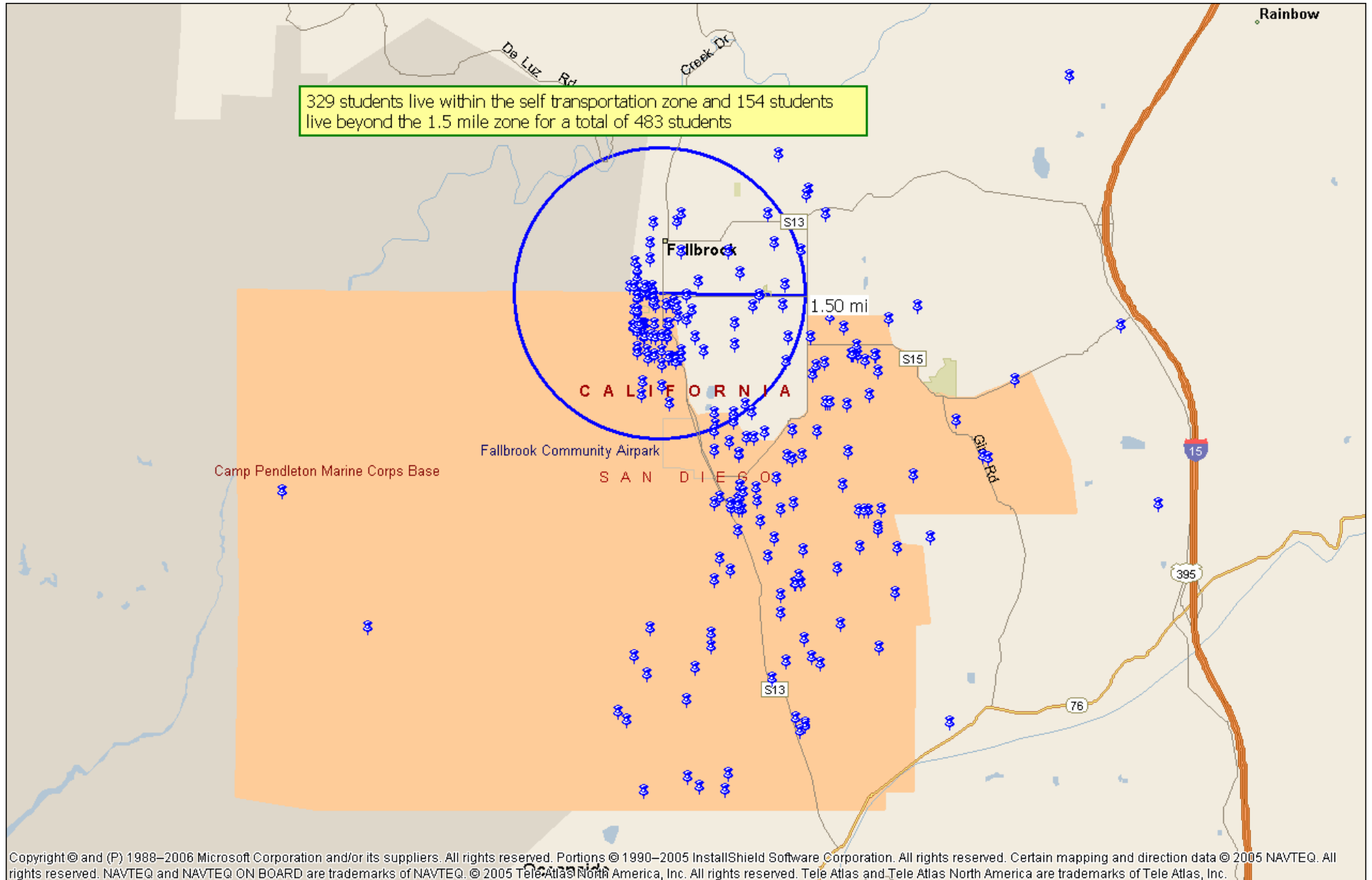
Appendix B – Study Agreement

FALLBROOK STREET, MAIE ELLIS, AND WILLIAM H.

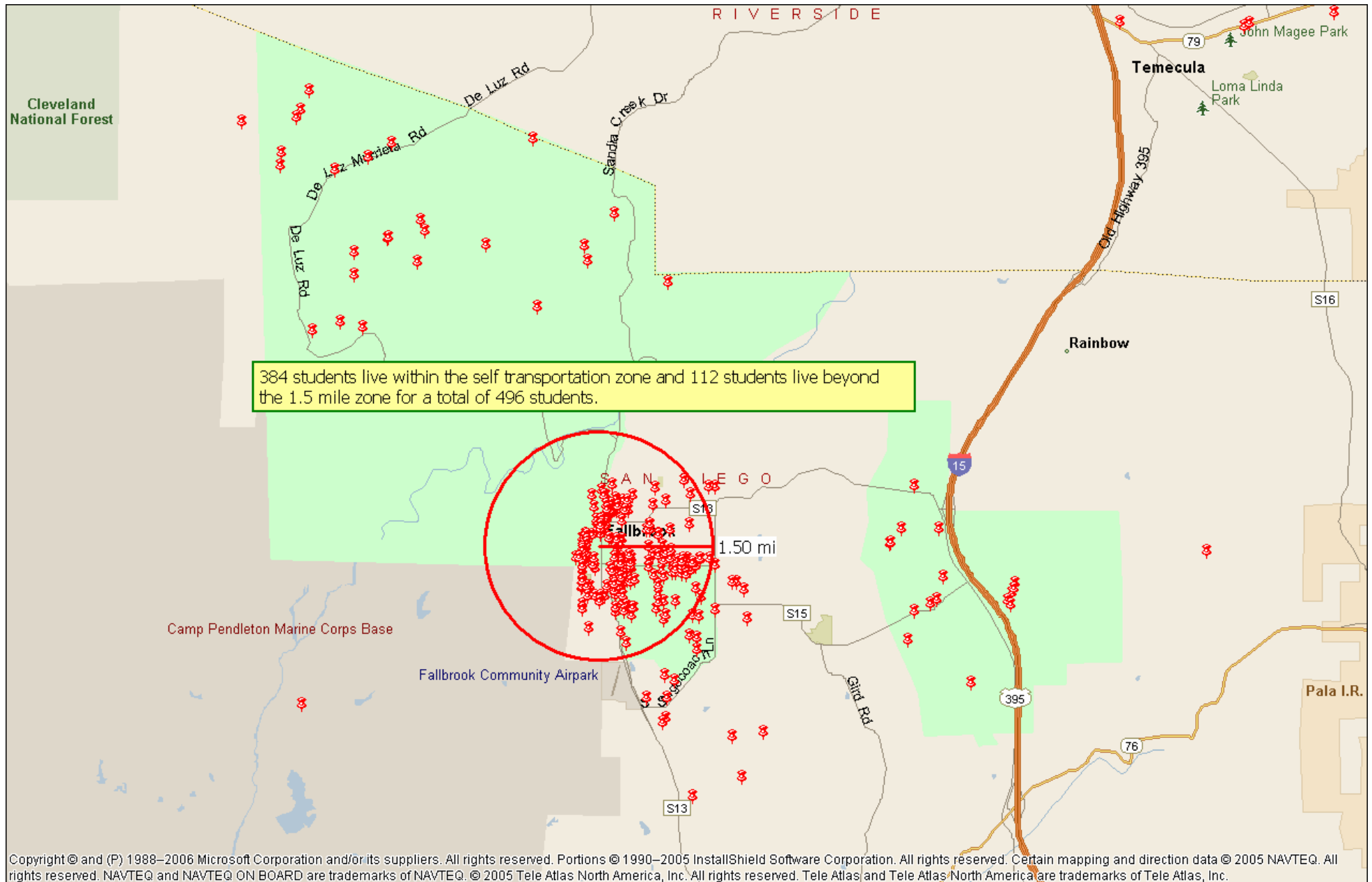


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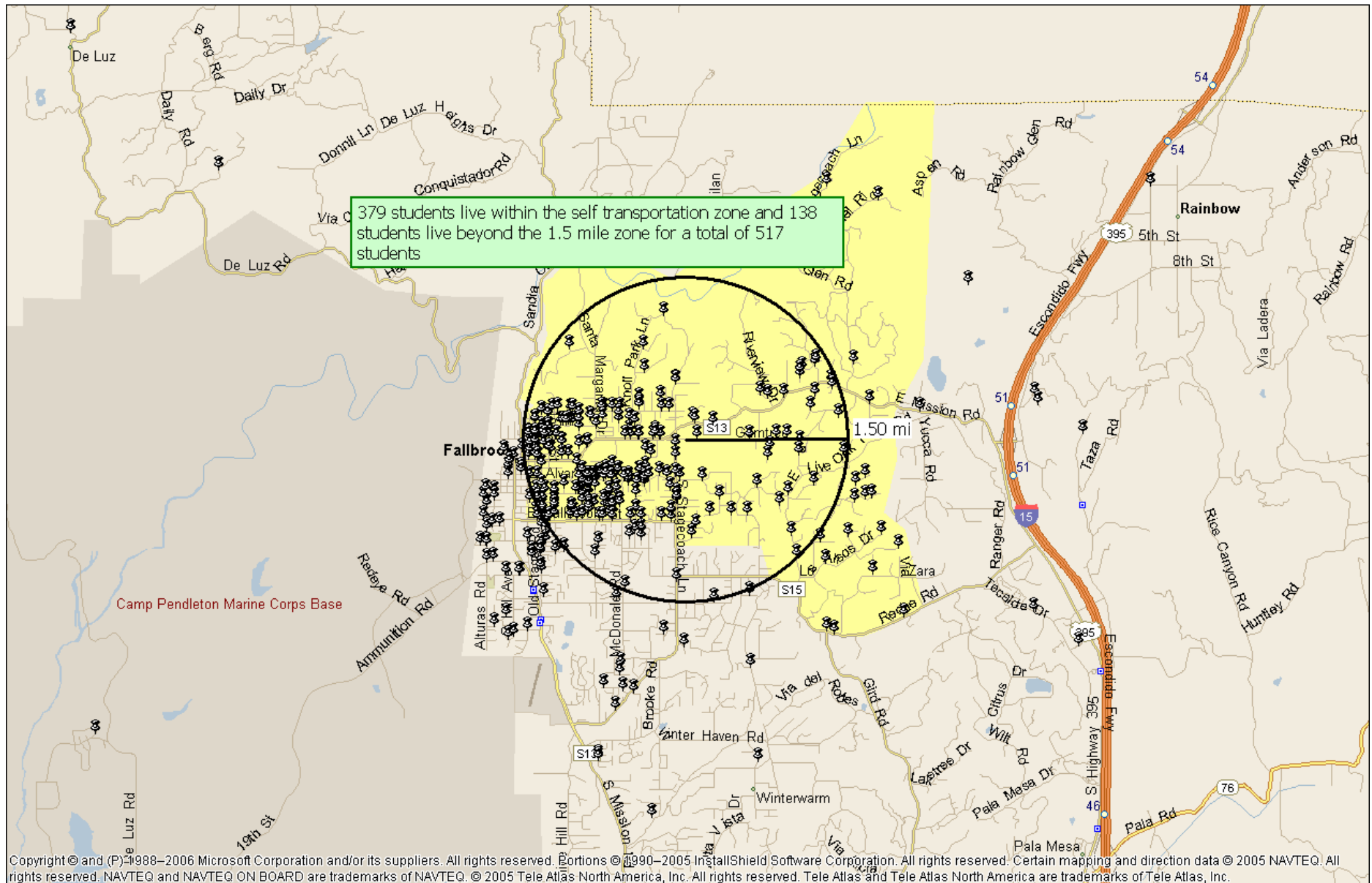
FALLBROOK STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



MAIE ELLIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



WILLIAM H. FRAZIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



POTTER JR. HIGH

276 students live within the self transportation zone and 722 students live beyond the 1.5 mile zone for a total of 998 students.

