



Merced Union High School District

Transportation Review

October 31, 2007

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer



October 31 2007

Dr. Robert H. Fore, Superintendent
Merced Union High School District
3430 "A" Street
Atwater, CA 95301

Dear Superintendent Fore:

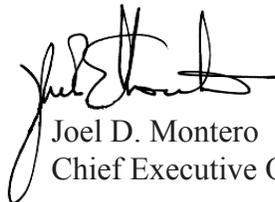
In August 2007, the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement with the Merced Union High School District for a transportation review. Specifically, the agreement asked FCMAT to perform the following:

1. Conduct an operational and fiscal analysis of the impact of reorganizing the district's home-to-school and special education pupil transportation-based operations from a centralized location to multiple locations that will serve the communities of Merced, Livingston, and Atwater.

FCMAT visited the district September 17-20, 2007 to interview employees, collect data and review information. This report is the result of that effort.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, and please give our best regards to all the staff of the Merced Union High School District.

Sincerely,



Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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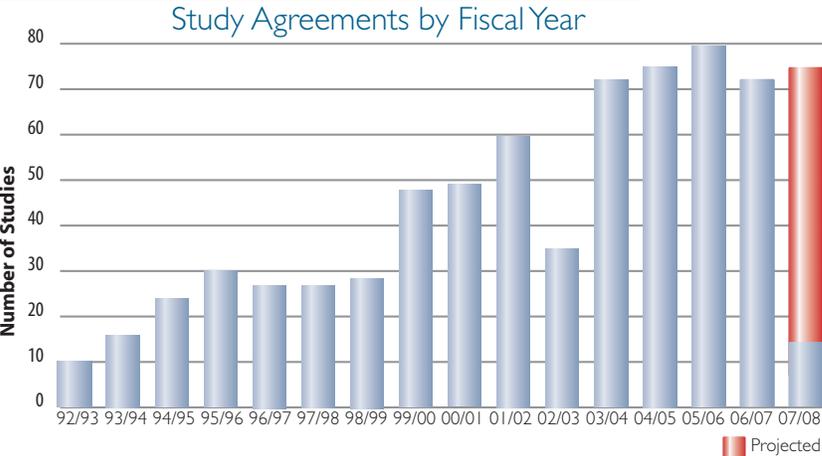
FCMAT Background

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) was created by legislation in accordance with Assembly Bill 1200 in 1992 as a service to assist local educational agencies in complying with fiscal accountability standards.

AB 1200 was established from a need to ensure that local educational agencies throughout California were adequately prepared to meet and sustain their financial obligations. AB 1200 is also a statewide plan for county offices of education and school districts to work together on a local level to improve fiscal procedures and accountability standards. The legislation expanded the role of the county office in monitoring school districts under certain fiscal constraints to ensure these districts could meet their financial commitments on a multiyear basis. AB 2756 provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans. These include comprehensive assessments in five major operational areas and periodic reports that identify the district’s progress on the improvement plans.

Since 1992, FCMAT has been engaged to perform more than 600 reviews for local educational agencies, including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools and community colleges. Services range from fiscal crisis intervention to management review and assistance. FCMAT also provides professional development training. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for FCMAT. The agency is guided under the leadership of Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer, with funding derived through appropriations in the state budget and a modest fee schedule for charges to requesting agencies.

Total Number of Studies.....	667
Total Number of Districts in CA 982	
● Management Assistance.....	631 (94.6%)
● Fiscal Crisis/Emergency.....	36 (5.4%)
Note: Some districts had multiple studies.	
● Districts (7) that have received emergency loans from the state.	
(Rev. 10/10/07)	



Introduction

Background

The Merced Union High School District is located in Merced County and serves the cities of Merced, Atwater, Livingston and surrounding communities. The district comprises approximately 625 square miles, with an enrollment of more than 10,000 high school students from 10 elementary school districts. A large percentage of the district's student density is along the State Route 99 corridor in the cities of Merced, Atwater, Livingston and surrounding county areas. The district operates the following schools:

Atwater High School
Buhach Colony High School
Golden Valley High School
Livingston High School
Merced High School
Yosemite Continuation and Adult School
East Campus Educational Center
Housing: Yosemite High School
Independence High School
Adult School

The Transportation Department provides home-to-school transportation services for approximately 2,200 regular education students residing in eligible transportation areas of the school district. Another 157 special needs students have transportation support services included in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

The district contracts with the Merced County Office of Education as an in-house and contract provider for transportation services for special education students. Eighty of the 157 special needs students are severely handicapped and attend county office programs. The district's Transportation Department also provides activity/athletic trips and schedules these tasks. As with most school districts, the Transportation Department's increasing operational costs have created a growing encroachment on the district's general fund.

In August 2007, the district entered into an agreement with the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) for a transportation review. The scope and objectives of the study agreement are as follows:

1. Conduct an operational and fiscal analysis of the impact of reorganizing the district's home to school and special education pupil transportation based operations from a centralized location to multiple locations that will serve the communities of Merced, Livingston, and Atwater.

Study Team

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*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 September 17-20, 2007, to conduct interviews, collect data and review information related to transportation operations. This report is the result of these activities and is divided into the following sections:

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Transportation Facilities Assessment
- III. Current Centralized Transportation Facility
- IV. Decentralization of Student Passenger Vehicles
- V. Transportation Technology
- VI. Bell Schedules
- VII. Activity Trip Internal Cost
- VIII. Special Education Transportation Delivery System

Executive Summary

The Merced Union High School District operates its transportation program from three separate facilities, resulting in inefficiency and a duplication of effort. Operating at several sites has caused operational inconsistencies in the following areas:

- The workload schedules for vehicle maintenance teams.
- The quality of vehicle maintenance.
- Dispatching/two-way radio communications.
- The scheduling of school buses for activity trips and student passenger vehicles.

Of more concern is the inconsistent level of supervision from site to site. This could result in fewer vehicles being serviced at the Livingston site as well as the ineffective tracking of driving staff members when they perform nondriving assignments.

Neither of the district's current transportation facilities at Merced or Livingston is suitable in size, design and current configuration to function as a central facility. The district should begin planning to design and fund a central district transportation facility that would meet current and future growth needs. In addition, the district should immediately begin researching the possibility of merging the Livingston site with the Merced site at the Merced site. This would require some reconfiguration of the school bus fleet parking area along with the redesign of approximately 40 feet of added parking space on the southern perimeter. Merging the two site staffs could easily be accomplished by implementing a night vehicle maintenance shift, which would also add considerable flexibility to address the demands of a growing school district transportation program.

Although the Transportation Department has a well delineated process for requesting, authorizing and checking out vehicles, the process is also cumbersome, time consuming, inefficient and does not meet the best interest of students. Access to student passenger vehicles would be more convenient if they were located at each specific school campus. Site principals are willing to assume full responsibility for ensuring that appropriately approved staff members are assigned and that the vehicles are located in a secure area. The district should implement a decentralized student passenger vehicle use policy, ensuring that central control is maintained of all staff driving history records and vehicle preventative maintenance schedules. Decentralization of the student passenger vehicles would also free parking space that could be used to merge operations.

The district's transportation program makes little use of technology. The district owns a suitable, commonly used, industry software package including modules for both student bus routing and vehicle maintenance, but implementation has been slow. The district manually processes both activity and athletic trip requests, which is both cumbersome and time consuming and will become increasingly more challenging as the number of

high school sites increases. Because high school districts have comprehensive athletic programs at all sites, they have a higher number of trips than K-12 unified and elementary districts. The district cannot effectively track vehicle maintenance trends to determine cost per mile, replacement needs and work orders. The district should fully implement its current transportation software package for vehicle maintenance and routing. The district should also consider purchasing transportation software to assist in the electronic submittal and scheduling of activity trips and bus driver training records. Additionally Merced Union should assess the computer hardware needs of its transportation program and upgrade, as necessary, so that it can operate the various systems that need to be implemented.

The district's site bell schedules are not staggered sufficiently to allow for any type of school bus route efficiency. As a result, the district is probably operating more school bus routes than necessary. It is common for school districts with several sites and a large home-to-school transportation program to stagger school site start and end times. This allows for several school runs in the morning and afternoon. FCMAT believes the district could easily implement a two-tiered bell schedule that would meet the needs of a high school district with comprehensive athletic programs. With a staggered bell schedule, the district could attain greater efficiency from its current school bus fleet, better meet the needs of future school sites, and possibly reduce its heavy use of individual student passenger vehicles.

Internal activity trip costs for the use of student passenger vehicles and school buses appear high when compared with most school district transportation programs. This could be because the fleet's mileage and vehicle maintenance expense calculations are not effectively tracked and monitored. As a result, the district must base its expense on a state-required TRAN Report. However, this report reflects the total cost of the district's transportation program, including expenses that should not be charged back to the school sites. In this report, FCMAT provided two suggested methods to formulate the actual mileage and labor expense or a combined mileage and labor expense. This data would allow the district to create a charge-back to the site. The district should also establish an average distance between one central Merced transportation facility and each of the district's school sites. Basing the terminal-to-school mileage on this average distance for billing purposes will create greater equity in individual site trip billings, especially for the more distant sites of Livingston and Atwater.

The district contracts with the county office for all special needs student transportation and is experiencing a significant increase in its bill-back because of increased operational expenses. However, the district has the capacity to incorporate additional routing if some of the previously mentioned operational recommendations are implemented. Although some specialized school buses would be needed, potential savings could be realized by providing transportation services internally for some or all of the district's special needs students. To substantiate the potential cost savings, the district should initiate a thorough analysis of its routing and vehicle needs.

The district is considering the use of paraprofessionals to transport special needs students in student passenger vehicles. This practice is not commonly used by school districts and not recommended because of issues related to student safety and the best use of the district's physical resources.

Findings and Recommendations

Transportation Facilities Assessment

The Merced Union High School District operates transportation services at three facilities, the main one located adjacent to Merced High School. Another facility is adjacent to Livingston High School, and support vehicles are adjacent to the Atwater High School. All three facilities have both gasoline and diesel fueling capability. However, only the Merced and Livingston facilities have vehicle maintenance capabilities. These facilities also house all of the district's school bus fleet, most student passenger support vehicles and other fleet vehicles.

The Merced facility is the main operation, housing 24 school buses, student passenger vehicles and various other types of support vehicles. The Livingston site houses 14 school buses, student passenger vehicles, and maintains other various types of district support vehicles. Although the Atwater site at one time housed school buses, student passenger and support vehicles, only a few student passenger and agricultural vehicles are currently housed at this site. A decision was made to stop washing and fueling buses there as a result of an inappropriate water runoff storm drain system.

FCMAT believes that neither the Merced nor Livingston sites are adequate to fully house and maintain the district's current fleet size in its current configuration. The Merced site is in a remote corner of the Merced High School campus adjacent to the district's Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Department. This location is in the south/central part of the district. Fleet parking space is limited and is currently filled to capacity. Attempts have been made to expand fleet parking capacity, resulting in several additional bus and passenger vehicle parking stalls inside the Transportation and M&O departments' perimeter fence. Staff parking is outside the fence, on the Merced High School campus. Three inside shop bays provide staff members with the ability to work on two buses and one support vehicle simultaneously. Adjacent to these maintenance bays is an outside covered vehicle wash area with adequate coverage and a basin to catch runoff. The shop facility is old, poorly lighted and unusually configured, preventing the best use of space. It also has inadequate storage, no secure area for parts control, and little office space. The district recently discovered that the in-ground vehicle lift was unsafe and beyond repair. Portable lifts have been purchased to meet vehicle maintenance needs.

The connecting transportation office areas are old, cramped and poorly designed to meet the needs of a growing operations staff. Office spaces are very small and house more support personnel than intended. An adjacent drivers' lounge, which is connected to an M&O building, is inadequate to meet the needs of the staff. All facilities are clean and orderly, and the staff attempts to work around the obstacles.

The Livingston facility is located on the south/east corner of the Livingston High School campus. This location is in the northern section of the district and houses 14 school buses, four utilized for daily routes in that area. About half of these buses were parked off the asphalt and on dirt. Approximately eight student passenger vehicles are located at this site for easier, more accessible access by the staff. The shop and office building is newer than the Merced building and has three vehicle maintenance bays, one office area for the shop supervisor, a small break room and a small inventory parts storage area. The facility is generally unclean and disorganized.

FCMAT believes the district should operate at a single centralized transportation terminal facility. A careful review of geographical boundaries, urban centers and areas of proposed growth suggests that the district should explore the possibility of establishing a central facility in the northernmost area of Merced adjacent to main arterial highways such as State Route 99 near Franklin Road. It is convenient to have several facilities in far-reaching areas so that the staff can easily check out student passenger vehicles, fuel cars, etc. However, the oversight of such facilities creates excessive expense, inconsistencies in operational procedures and supervisory difficulties. Therefore, the current practice of utilizing multiple sites is not an effective or efficient operation of the transportation system. While the district is geographically large at approximately 625 square miles of service territory, the main population densities are along the State Route 99 corridor, generally stretching from south southeast to north northwest. The travel distances from a centrally located transportation terminal to the five comprehensive high school sites, one continuation school site and the planned high school site are reasonable and within comparable district norms.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Immediately begin planning for a centralized district transportation terminal to address current fleet needs and future growth. The planning process should consider areas such as the following:
 - The estimated acreage for the site.
 - The number of vehicle maintenance bays.
 - The types of offices available, including those for the director, the staff room, the dispatcher room, etc.
 - Bus washing facilities.
 - Fueling stations.
 - The estimated costs and whether these would be supported by local or state funding sources.

Temporary Centralized Transportation Facility

The district's transportation facility structure consists of two fleet and vehicle maintenance yards, but is inefficient and difficult for the staff to manage. The Livingston site duplicates efforts that could be better managed and supervised at the Merced facility. General concerns in vehicle maintenance, staff supervision and volume of work are prevalent. Only four of the district's 22 school bus routes are scheduled at the Livingston site, with only two for the immediate Livingston area. These four routes could easily be scheduled at the central Merced facility, providing better accountability of drivers and oversight of buses. Vehicle operational costs are not considerable in this scenario since labor time is included as part of the district's contractual arrangement for 11-month/ eight-hour staff members. A minor loss in the operational cost per mile expense would be negated by the current operational expense of having two sites.

Scheduling activity trips and dispatching are centrally assigned to the main facility in Merced. Because transportation operations are divided between the Merced and Livingston sites, supervision is difficult. The district essentially operates dual programs for vehicle maintenance and supervision. As a result, there are inconsistencies regarding the volume and possibly, the quality of vehicle maintenance.

If the district implemented an alternative to the current practice of assigning student passenger vehicles to school-site personnel and decentralized this service, additional fleet parking could be made available at the Merced site. This change would also reduce the number of vehicles that would need to relocate from the Livingston site to the Merced site. Decentralizing the assigning of student passenger vehicles may allow the district to free approximately 40 feet of space along the southern perimeter of the Merced site. This might provide sufficient space to move the school bus fleet to the Merced facility, leaving only spare vehicles, if any, at the Livingston facility.

By implementing a night vehicle maintenance shift at the Merced site, the district could essentially double its use of the Merced vehicle maintenance facility. This could be accomplished by transferring the Livingston site's two full-time bus drivers and two bus driver/bus driver helpers who are part of the vehicle maintenance staff to the Merced site. Supervision of the night vehicle maintenance staff at the Merced site could be handled by the second shop supervisor currently assigned to the Livingston site. Although this would be a considerable change for the vehicle maintenance program, the consolidation would increase consistency in the vehicle maintenance program.

The consolidation would allow all bus drivers to be supervised from one central site, creating benefits in the areas of dispatching and route assignment. The change would also allow for adequate supervision of the newly contracted driver nondriving assignments, which allow drivers to complete their eight-hour days with other tasks. Staff members indicated this is not being consistently supervised at present. An additional benefit would be greater access to the district's support fleet vehicles. For example, M&O vehicles that are not generally used at night could be serviced by the night shift's vehicle maintenance personnel.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consolidate the district's vehicle maintenance program at the Merced site.
2. Explore the possibility of capturing and expanding the southern perimeter of the Merced transportation facility fence line to gain approximately 40 feet of space, allowing for additional school bus parking.
3. Analyze the benefits of implementing a night vehicle maintenance program. This could improve scheduling of the fleet and scheduling of preventative maintenance and work orders for other district support vehicles such as Maintenance and Operations vehicles, which do not operate in the evening.
4. Explore the advantages of decentralizing the control of student passenger vehicles utilized by the school sites.

Decentralization of District Student Passenger Vehicles

The district has a centralized system of managing site passenger vehicles. The current practice helps ensure these vehicles can be accessed only by identified staff members who have the appropriate driving records on file (the Department of Motor Vehicles Employer Pull Notice program) to verify that they have satisfactory driving histories and experience. However, the process is also cumbersome and time consuming for the school site staff. Valuable faculty time is lost because faculty members have to travel to sites, often at inconvenient times, to check out student passenger vehicles. The district has a cumbersome paper-based process for requesting, authorizing and checking out passenger vehicles.

The district could implement a decentralized student passenger vehicle policy that would distribute student passenger vehicles to each of the five comprehensive high schools and house the vehicles at those locations. Full control and responsibility would be assumed by the site principal or a designee. A decentralized policy would also alleviate overcrowding at centralized transportation facilities, provide greater and easier access by users at the school sites, and continue to ensure that vehicles are accessed only by appropriate drivers. The district's centralized transportation vehicle maintenance program would continue to maintain student passenger vehicles. Routine fueling and washing of student passenger vehicles could be completed by bus drivers assigned to travel to the sites during their nondriving time or by the site staff members assigned to utilize the vehicles. Instituting a decentralized policy would substantially reduce the amount of paperwork required to request and authorize a vehicle by transferring this responsibility to the sites. This practice is followed in many school districts.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Implement a decentralized student passenger vehicle use policy.
2. Upon the creation of a decentralized student passenger vehicle use policy, immediately assign student passenger vehicles to the school sites.
3. Create a personnel process for ensuring that specific district employment classifications are automatically reported to transportation personnel for inclusion, as well as deletion, from the DMV Employer Pull Notice system.

Transportation Technology

The Transportation Department makes little use of technology. Although the district purchased a software package for transportation routing, vehicle maintenance and driver training, the package has not been fully implemented. Staff members disagreed on the next steps to take in implementing and using the data. The software is very common and suitable for the district's transportation needs. However, because certain transportation software applications are absent, the district cannot track vehicle maintenance costs and vehicle costs per mile. The district maintains paper records for its school bus fleet Title 13 mandated 3,000/45 day safety checks and recommended preventative vehicle maintenance schedules.

The district's 22 school bus routes are manually developed. Using this process, the district cannot quickly optimize and route electronically to account for current and anticipated growth. As growth continues, it will become more inefficient to manually develop routes, and the transportation operational staff will find it difficult to review the routing structure for efficiency.

Because it is a high school district with five comprehensive high schools, the Merced Union High School District has more annual activity trips for school athletics than many unified districts of the same size. Activity/athletic trips are manually scheduled using a paper request process that is tedious and time consuming for the school sites and transportation operations staff. Most districts, particularly high school districts, use trip scheduling software that allows school site personnel to request a trip electronically. Approval processes can be implemented at the district's choice, and transportation services can provide the sites with scheduling and trip confirmation. Additionally, the internal account string billing of trips would be greatly facilitated, allowing for a better tracking of activity trip expense.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Immediately assess the technology hardware in the Transportation Department.
2. Fully implement and train all pertinent staff members to use the various modules of the district's transportation software for routing, performing vehicle maintenance and maintaining driver records.
3. Review the various software options for electronic trip scheduling, select one and implement it.
4. Assign the Transportation Director to develop a departmental goal in the area of technology to ensure full implementation of the areas noted in this report.

Bell Schedules

School bell schedules are very compact for a district the size of Merced Union. As a result, the district is not able to utilize its school bus fleet efficiently. While the district has a large enough fleet, including spare buses, to accommodate growth, the labor expenses incurred for drivers is greater than would be required if operational efficiencies were implemented. Four of the district's five comprehensive high schools start classes from 8 a.m. to 8:10 a.m., dismissing students from 3 p.m. to 3:10 p.m. One high school starts at 7:40 a.m. and dismisses at 2:40 p.m. This does not allow for the implementation of a staggered bell schedule. With the district's newly contracted arrangements for 11-month/eight-hour drivers, a schedule without staggered tiers can be costly.

The lack of a staggered bell schedule also may prevent the district from increasing efficiency when providing transportation for activity/athletic trips. Programs dismiss students simultaneously, overburdening the bus fleet and hindering the district's ability to stagger activity/athletic trip transportation.

A two-tiered bell schedule separated by at least 45 minutes would be sufficient to realize transportation routing efficiencies and add greater flexibility for activity/athletic trip scheduling. As an additional benefit, this type of schedule would dramatically reduce or eliminate the projected need for five additional bus routes when the district's sixth comprehensive high school opens.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Review the potential efficiencies gained by creating a two-tiered district bell schedule.
2. Evaluate the savings that could be realized by reducing the need for outside contracts for activity/athletic trip transportation.
3. As flexibility is gained, investigate the possibility of using its bus fleet to provide increased transportation for activity/athletic trips instead of frequently utilizing student passenger vehicles.

Activity Trip Internal Cost

The district recently implemented an updated student passenger vehicle and school bus charge. Although the district forgave the debt incurred by some sites as a result of overspending their accounts for transportation, the newly implemented cost structure appears high. This cost structure may have been based on data generated in the development of the district's TRAN Report provided to the Department of Education. However, TRAN Reports actually reflect the total costs of a district's transportation operation, including some expenses that should not be part of the internal charges to school sites for services.

The newly implemented costs are as follows:

- School buses: \$3.96 per mile or \$26 per hour
- Student passenger vehicles: 75 cents per mile

This price structure is substantially greater because of the hourly rate. Most school districts either adopt an increased cost per mile that incorporates estimated labor expenses or a dual charge that more actually reflects the actual cost per mile. The district has been challenged about its school bus and student passenger cost per mile because the supporting data is not readily available. This is because no cost tracking occurs through a vehicle maintenance tracking system.

FCMAT believes that an acceptable cost per mile would be approximately \$1.75 to \$2 per mile plus a salary hourly rate. A district formula should be developed to address the current inequity of charging for miles from the central Merced transportation facility to each site. A suggested formula would include an average from all sites generated from the central Merced transportation facility. This would increase equity for the far-reaching sites such as Livingston and Atwater.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Immediately implement the cost tracking software for transportation fleet maintenance to help transportation personnel establish a more realistic cost per mile for vehicle maintenance, labor and total operational expenses.
2. Modify the cost per mile to include an average labor cost, or add a driver's actual or average hourly cost per hour to the trip charge formula used to bill school sites.
3. Determine actual travel distances from one district transportation facility to each of the five high school sites and calculate an average of all these distances. This will help the district implement a fair cost per mile charge for the outlying sites, specifically, Livingston and Atwater high schools.

Special Education Transportation Delivery System

The district contracts with the Merced SELPA for the transportation of severely disabled students. The district has approximately 1,316 special-education students or 12.4 % of the student population. The statewide average is 11.3%. Ten elementary school districts feed into the high school district, with 99% of the incoming special education students already identified.

The IEPs of 157 of these students include transportation services as a needed support service, with 80 students being severely handicapped or orthopedically handicapped and attending county office programs.

The county office supports its own internal transportation program, augmented by contract services provided by Merced Transportation Services, which has had the county office transportation contract for several years. The district contracts with the special education local plan area (SELPA) for all special education transportation needs. The district spends an average of \$4,357 per student for transportation services, and the 2006-07 bill-back was \$572,000. The SELPA bill-back formula is based half on average daily attendance and half on actual mileage. While the district's student cost for transportation is not substantially outside state norms, it represents a 48% increase over the prior year.

The district is considering the use of paraprofessionals as drivers in some instances. However, this practice is not recommended because of increased liability, safety issues, and training issues.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Evaluate the savings or cost containment that could be realized by utilizing its own buses for special education transportation.
2. Determine how many routes would be required, as well as the number of children who would participate, to determine the cost effectiveness of providing its own special education transportation services.
3. Explore the possibility of operating its own special programs to serve some students attending county office programs. This option could have the following benefits:
 - A reduction in costs charged by the county office for the delivery of programs.
 - A reduction in costs for transportation of students.
 - Increased control of programs and the transportation delivery system.

4. Explore the possibility of utilizing other transportation vendor providers as an alternative to using the SELPA.
5. Re-evaluate the proposal to use paraprofessionals as student passenger vehicle transportation providers. This would raise concerns related to liability, safety, and training.

Appendices

- A. *Sample Transportation Policies*
- B. *Study Agreement*

_____ **High School District**
Guidelines for District/Private Vehicle Use

I. General Overview

The _____ High School District has considerable automobile liability exposures resulting from employees driving in the course and scope of their duties, such as transporting students to and from District-sponsored events. Also posing potential liability exposure are parents and other volunteers driving on District-sponsored activities and events.

II. Department of Motor Vehicles (D.M.V.) Employer Pull Notice Program

The Department of Motor Vehicles has instituted a program whereby the _____ High School District can automatically receive driving records for specified employees. This is an excellent method of obtaining the current driving status and driving records of employees who drive for _____ High School District business.

The District/Pupil Personnel Services will:

- A. Identify all employees who drive a vehicle to transport students for _____ High School District business and whose job classification requires them to possess a valid California Driver's License.
- B. Complete the D.M.V. request for each employee.
- C. Maintain a list of approved employees who are authorized to operate District vehicles.
- D. Provide each site with a list of approved employees based on current employee information.

Note: The normal processing time for a DMV check is thirty (30) days.

III. District Driver/Vehicle Guidelines

Employees who utilize ___ High School District vehicles or private/personal vehicles will be required to participate in the D.M.V. Employer Pull Notice Program prior to receiving authorization to transport students. District vehicles include vans, pool vehicles, maintenance vehicles, grounds vehicles/equipment, food service vehicles, warehouse and other motorized vehicles designated for the purpose of moving any person or property on a public roadway.

Employees whose job classification requires them to possess a valid California Driver's License will be **required** to participate in the D.M.V. Employer Pull Notice Program.

The ___ High School District reserves the right to refuse authorization for any employee to operate a District vehicle. Employees who do not participate in the D.M.V. Employer Pull Notice Program **will not** be authorized to use any District vehicle or private/personal vehicle to transport students.

- A. District, as used throughout this document defines the policies and procedures of the “___ High School District.”
- B. All employees who drive District vehicles or private/personal vehicles to transport students will be asked to submit (and resubmit as changes occur) the following information to Pupil Personnel Services: See “D.M.V. Pull Notice Employee Information Form.”
 1. California Driver's License number
 2. Last name, first name, middle name or initial
 3. Current address with zip code
 4. Date of birth

This information will be forwarded to the Department of Motor Vehicles for participation in the Employer Pull Notice Program. It will be the employee's responsibility to submit current information to Pupil Personnel Services as changes occur (i.e. name, address, etc.).

- C. Pupil Personnel Services will conduct employee history inspections through the Department of Motor Vehicles. Traffic convictions will be considered by the District as evidence of unsafe driving on a roadway, and will be counted as one (1) negative point towards being designated as a negligent driver. Two (2) negative points will be charged against drivers who have been convicted of:
 1. Reckless driving
 2. Hitting an unattended vehicle without notification to the owner
 3. Causing property damage, injury, or death by hit-and-run driving
 4. Manslaughter involving a vehicle
 5. Causing injury or death with a vehicle while evading a peace officer

6. Driving on the wrong side of a divided highway
 7. Participating in a speed contest or exhibition of speed
 8. Illegal transport of explosives
 9. Driving under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal substances
- D. For the District's purpose, a driving record that shows one of the following negative point counts will be grounds for denial of authorization to operate District vehicles to transport students and/or transport students in private/personal vehicles.
1. Two points in a twelve month period
 2. Three points in a twenty-four month period
 3. Four points in a thirty-six month period
- E. Pupil Personnel Services will maintain a list of approved employees who are authorized to operate District vehicles, based on current employee information. Each site will receive a list of approved employees. Employee questions regarding driving status should be directed to Pupil Personnel Services.

IV. Guidelines for "Paid" Walk-on Coaches, Substitute Employees and Volunteer Drivers

- A. "Paid" Walk-on Coaches: A Department of Motor Vehicles "H-6" Report (10-year driving record) must be attached to the employee application. If coaching more than one sport, a D.M.V. "H-6" must be sent to Pupil Personnel Services **prior to the start of each sport.**
1. "Volunteer" Walk-on Coaches must be checked through Pupil Personnel Services before they are authorized to transport students. A "___ High School District Non-Employee Vehicle Use Form" must be attached to the application.
 2. Coaches who are full-time employees of the ___ District will be cleared through the Employer Pull Notice Program.
- B. Substitute Employees: If the substitute position requires transporting students, the substitute employee will be asked to submit a D.M.V "H-6" Report (10-year driving record) to Pupil Personnel **prior** to driving.
1. When requesting a sub, please indicate if the position requires transporting students.

- C. Volunteer Drivers: The volunteer’s California Driver’s License number will be checked through Pupil Personnel Services before an individual is cleared to drive. The site must submit a “___ High School District Non-Employee Vehicle Use Form” five (5) days **prior** to the volunteer driving.

The point system used for District employees will also apply to the walk-on coaches, substitute employees and volunteer drivers.

V. Guidelines for use of Private/Personal Vehicles when Transporting Students

The following guidelines apply to the use of privately owned vehicles while transporting students on District activities or athletic events.

- A. The driver must possess:
1. A valid California Driver’s License
 2. Insurance at the Property Liability/Property Damage level of \$100,000/\$300,000/\$50,000
- B. The number of passengers shall never exceed nine (9).
- C. Every passenger must have and wear a seat belt.
- D. The driver must complete the “Employee Private/Personal Vehicle Use Form” or the “Non-Employee Vehicle Use Form.”

VI. Private/Personal Vehicle Proof of Insurance

As a minimum risk management practice, the District shall require evidence of insurance. A “Proof of Insurance”, as required by California law, must be attached to the “Employee Private/Personal Vehicle Use Form.”

It is important to note that the **primary layer of coverage is the insurance on the vehicle driven**. Therefore, when a **private/personal vehicle** is being driven, the primary liability coverage will be on the private/personal vehicle and the District’s liability coverage will be secondary. When an authorized user is driving a ___ High School District vehicle, the District’s liability coverage will be primary. The District does not provide any collision or comprehensive coverage on damage to private/personal vehicles.

VII. Requirements for Transporting Students

As stated in District Administrative Code Regulation 420.2, the following shall apply:

420.2 Non-employees may operate school vehicles (non-buses) on school-sponsored activities if they are at least 25 years of age, possess a valid California Driver's License, and are identified as responsible drivers by the chief site administrator.

- A. All drivers will be held accountable for the safe operation of their vehicles and passenger safety.
- B. Prior to departure, the driver must inspect or cause to have an inspection performed of the vehicle. Important areas include, but are not limited to: tires, brakes, lights, horn, suspension, fuel tank, seat belts, etc.
- C. Prior to departure, the driver must submit to the school site, a complete list identifying all students, passengers and chaperones by name(s) in each vehicle.
- D. The driver must provide the site administrator with a copy of the travel path. Prior to departure, road conditions should be checked to ensure safety.
- E. The driver must avoid unnecessary and unscheduled stops.
- F. The driver must comply with all District policies, California Vehicle Code rules and regulations, and he/she must demonstrate appropriate judgement at all times.
- G. Drivers must not carry non-District personnel (except chaperones), non-students, or other guests as passengers.
- H. Drivers must not transport more than nine (9) passengers in a private vehicle or utilize a vehicle designed for more than 10 passengers, including the driver.
- I. Drivers must not transport more than ten (10) people, including driver, in a District van vehicle.
- J. After using a District van, the driver must complete and submit a "Vehicle Condition/Use Report" to the Transportation Department.

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
STUDY AGREEMENT
July 23, 2007

The FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the Team, and the Merced Union High School District, hereinafter referred to as the District, mutually agree as follows:

1. BASIS OF AGREEMENT

The Team provides a variety of services to school districts and county offices of education upon request. The District has requested that the Team provide for the assignment of professionals to study specific aspects of the Merced Union High School District operations. These professionals may include staff of the Team, County Offices of Education, the California State Department of Education, school districts, or private contractors. All work shall be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

2. SCOPE OF THE WORK

A. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The scope and objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Conduct an operational and fiscal analysis of the impact of reorganizing the districts Home to School and Special Education pupil transportation based operations from a centralized location to multiple locations that will serve the communities of Merced, Livingston, and Atwater.

B. Services and Products to be Provided

- 1) Orientation Meeting - The Team will conduct an orientation session at the District to brief District management and supervisory personnel on the procedures of the Team and on the purpose and schedule of the study.
- 2) On-site Review - The Team will conduct an on-site review at the District office and at school sites if necessary.
- 3) Progress Reports - The Team will hold an exit meeting at the conclusion of the on-site review to inform the District of significant findings and recommendations to that point.
- 4) Exit Letter - The Team will issue an exit letter approximately 10 days after the exit meeting detailing significant findings and recommendations to date and memorializing the topics discussed in the exit meeting.
- 5) Draft Reports - Sufficient copies of a preliminary draft report will be delivered to the District administration for review and comment.
- 6) Final Report - Sufficient copies of the final study report will be delivered

to the District following completion of the review.

3. PROJECT PERSONNEL

The study team will be supervised by Anthony L. Bridges, Deputy Executive Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

- A. Dr. William Gillaspie, FCMAT Management Analyst
- B. Timothy Purvis, FCMAT Transportation Consultant
- C. Bud Bankston, FCMAT Transportation Consultant

Other equally qualified consultants will be substituted in the event one of the above noted individuals is unable to participate in the study.

4. PROJECT COSTS

The cost for studies requested pursuant to E.C. 42127.8(d)(1) shall be:

- A. \$500.00 per day for each Team Member while on site, conducting fieldwork at other locations, preparing and presenting reports, or participating in meetings.
- B. All out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals, lodging, etc. Based on the elements noted in section 2 A the cost is estimated at \$11,500. The District will be invoiced 50% of the cost following the completion of the on-site review and the remaining amount due upon acceptance of the final report by the District
- C. Any change to the scope will affect the estimate of total cost.

Payments for FCMAT services are payable to Kern County Superintendent of Schools-Administrative Agent.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISTRICT

- A. The District will provide office and conference room space while on-site reviews are in progress.
- B. The District will provide the following (if requested):
 - 1) A map of the local area
 - 2) Existing policies, regulations and prior reports addressing the study request
 - 3) Current organizational charts
 - 4) Current and four (4) prior year's audit reports
 - 5) Any documents requested on a supplemental listing

- C. The District Administration will review a preliminary draft copy of the study. Any comments regarding the accuracy of the data presented in the report or the practicability of the recommendations will be reviewed with the Team prior to completion of the final report.

Pursuant to EC 45125.1(c), representatives of FCMAT will have limited contact with District pupils. The District shall take appropriate steps to comply with EC 45125.1(c).

6. PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following schedule outlines the planned completion dates for key study milestones:

Orientation:	September 17, 2007
Staff Interviews:	September 17-19, 2007
Exit Meeting:	September 20, 2007
Preliminary Report Submitted:	Six weeks following the Exit meeting
Final Report Submitted:	To be determined
Board Presentation:	To be determined

7. CONTACT PERSON

Please print name of contact person: Diane Hockersmith,
Deputy Superintendent

Telephone 209 385-6411 FAX 209 385-8911

Internet Address dhockersmith@muhsd.k12.ca.us

Robert Fore 9-4-07
 Dr. Robert H. Fore, Superintendent Date
 Merced Union High School District

Barbara Dean Aug 24, 2007
 Barbara Dean, Deputy Administrative Officer Date
 Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

In keeping with the provisions of AB1200, the County Superintendent will be notified of this agreement between the District and FCMAT and will receive a copy of the final report.

