



CSIS California School Information Services

Twin Rivers Unified School District

Management Review

December 7, 2010



Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer





CSIS California School Information Services

December 7, 2010

Frank S. Porter, Ed.D. Superintendent
Twin Rivers Unified School District
5115 Dudley Blvd.
McClellan, CA 95652

Dear Superintendent Porter:

In September 2010, the Twin Rivers Unified School District and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement to provide a review of the district's transportation programs and services. Specifically, the agreement states that FCMAT will perform the following:

1. Conduct a review of the Twin Rivers School District's Transportation program and operations for special education and regular home to school services. Staffing, routing, location of bus facilities to be reviewed. The evaluation shall provide recommendations, if any to reduce encroachment from the unrestricted general fund.
2. Develop strategies for the district to use in communications with parents of regular and special education students during the process of identifying alternatives for transportation services, including parent transportation contracts.
3. Provide recommendations for a new bus routing methodology based on a standardized district wide school bell scheduled and the most efficient use of transportation routes. An evaluation of the district's board policies regarding bus pickup and walking distances should be included in this component.
4. Review bus routes and provide recommendations for changes to improve route efficiency.
5. Provide an estimate of the cost to implement the recommendations and identify possible funding sources, including parent fees.
6. Analyze the fiscal impact of current bargaining contract provisions related to transportation including wait time, field trips, extra duty, additional benefits, other overtime and hourly activities. This component should include options to increase ridership and improve the registration process, if any.
7. Evaluate the current in-house bus maintenance activities and provide recommendations for cost savings and improvement.
8. Provide recommendations for communication strategies with parents and the community if the district considers reductions or fee based options for transportation services.

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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9. Evaluate and provide cost comparisons for outsourcing or a joint powers agreement with other surrounding districts for home to school transportation and a component identifying the advantages and disadvantages for these types of services.
10. Analyze capacity to accommodate overflow student, NCLB and out-of-district programs.

The attached final report contains the study team's findings and recommendations.

On behalf of FCMAT, we appreciate the opportunity to serve you and extend our thanks to the staff of the Twin Rivers Unified School District for their cooperation and assistance during fieldwork.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel D. Montero". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Joel D. Montero
FCMAT Chief Executive Officer

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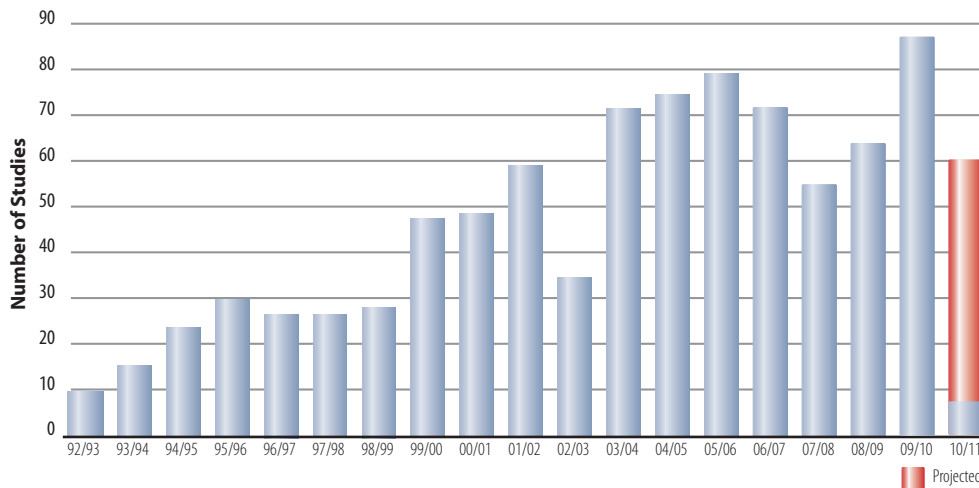
About FCMAT

FCMAT’s primary mission is to assist California’s local K-14 educational agencies to identify, prevent, and resolve financial and data management challenges. FCMAT provides fiscal and data management assistance, professional development training, product development and other related school business and data services. FCMAT’s fiscal and management assistance services are used not just to help avert fiscal crisis, but to promote sound financial practices and efficient operations. FCMAT’s data management services are used to help local educational agencies (LEAs) meet state reporting responsibilities, improve data quality, and share information.

FCMAT may be requested to provide fiscal crisis or management assistance by a school district, charter school, community college, county office of education, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, or the Legislature.

When a request or assignment is received, FCMAT assembles a study team that works closely with the local education agency to define the scope of work, conduct on-site fieldwork and provide a written report with findings and recommendations to help resolve issues, overcome challenges and plan for the future.

Study Agreements by Fiscal Year



FCMAT also develops and provides numerous publications, software tools, workshops and professional development opportunities to help local educational agencies operate more effectively and fulfill their fiscal oversight and data management responsibilities. The California School Information Services (CSIS) arm of FCMAT assists the California Department of Education with the implementation of the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) and also maintains DataGate, the FCMAT/CSIS software LEAs use for CSIS services. FCMAT was created by Assembly Bill 1200 in 1992 to assist LEAs to meet and sustain their financial obligations. Assembly Bill 107 in 1997 charged FCMAT with responsibility for CSIS and its statewide data management work. Assembly Bill 1115 in 1999 codified CSIS’ mission.

AB 1200 is also a statewide plan for county office of education and school districts to work together locally to improve fiscal procedures and accountability standards. Assembly Bill 2756

(2004) provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans.

In January 2006, SB 430 (charter schools) and AB 1366 (community colleges) became law and expanded FCMAT's services to those types of LEAs.

Since 1992, FCMAT has been engaged to perform nearly 850 reviews for LEAs, including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools and community colleges. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for FCMAT. The team is led by 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.

Introduction

Background

The Twin Rivers Unified School District is located in the northeastern portion of Sacramento County with a student enrollment of approximately 26,000 students. Approximately three years ago, four school districts in the area, Grant Joint Union High School District, Rio Linda Union Elementary School District, North Sacramento Elementary School District and Del Paso Heights Elementary School District, unified to create the Twin Rivers Unified School District. Two local elementary school districts, Robla Elementary School District and Elverta Joint Elementary school district did not participate in the unification.

At approximately 120 square miles in size, the district is generally divided in the center by state highway route 80. It encompasses the north and northeast portions of the city of Sacramento and unincorporated portions of Sacramento County. The district serves the communities of North Sacramento, Del Paso Heights, Rio Linda, North Highlands and Foothill Farms. The Twin Rivers Unified School District is comprised of four high schools, two junior high schools, three charter junior high schools, one creative arts junior high school, one technology academy (middle school grades) 30 elementary schools, two alternative schools two adult schools, and one special education preschool. The district closed two elementary schools this year, Rio Linda Elementary, and Aero Haven Elementary School in the North Highlands area.

In September 2010, the district entered into a study agreement with the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) that requested FCMAT to perform the following

1. Conduct a review of the Twin Rivers School District's transportation program and operations for special education and regular home to school services. Staffing, routing, location of bus facilities to be reviewed. The evaluation shall provide recommendations, if any to reduce encroachment from the unrestricted general fund.
2. Develop strategies for the district to use in communications with parents of regular and special education students during the process of identifying alternatives for transportation services, including parent transportation contracts.
3. Provide recommendations for a new bus routing methodology based on a standardized districtwide school bell schedule and the most efficient use of transportation routes. An evaluation of the district's board policies regarding bus pickup and walking distances should be included in this component.
4. Review bus routes and provide recommendations for changes to improve route efficiency.
5. Provide an estimate of the cost to implement the recommendations and identify possible funding sources, including parent fees.
6. Analyze the fiscal impact of current bargaining contract provisions related to transportation including wait time, field trips, extra duty, additional benefits, other overtime and hourly activities. This component should include options to increase ridership and improve the registration process, if any.

7. Evaluate the current in-house bus maintenance activities and provide recommendations for cost savings and improvement.
8. Provide recommendations for communication strategies with parents and the community if the district considers reductions or fee-based options for transportation services.
9. Evaluate and provide cost comparisons for outsourcing or a joint powers agreement with other surrounding districts for home to school transportation and a component identifying the advantages and disadvantages for these types of services.
10. Analyze capacity to accommodate overflow students, NCLB and out-of-district programs.

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

William P Gillaspie, Ed.D.
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Sacramento, CA

Tim Purvis *
Director of Transportation
Poway Unified School District
Poway, CA

Leonel Martínez
FCMAT Public Information Specialist
Bakersfield, CA

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Executive Director
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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 27-30, 2010 to conduct interviews with district staff, collect data, review documents and inspect facilities. This report is the result of those activities and is divided into the following sections:

- I. Organizational Structure and Staffing
- II. Routing Method
- III. Vehicle Maintenance
- IV. Driver Training
- V. Facilities
- VI. Transportation Service Fees
- VII. Communication
- VIII. Bargaining Unit Contracts

Executive Summary

The Twin Rivers Unified School District operates 28 regular education home-to-school bus routes transporting approximately 1,975 students and 74 special education school bus routes transporting approximately 690 students.

The state's Form TRAN, or TRAN report, for the district includes a reporting discrepancy regarding the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. On that form, the district reported more than 8,000 students transported for both years, significantly higher than the total number of students transported according to the district source data. A review of the financial and student data submitted by the district for the TRAN report for both years found that the approved cost for severely handicapped/occupationally impaired students was \$1,645,086 for 2008-09 and \$1,751,131 for 2009-10, representing an increase of approximately \$150,000. The district reported almost twice as many special education buses and approximately 100,000 additional miles; therefore, the increase in cost appears quite reasonable.

Although the recently unified district has two satisfactory routing software systems, there seems to be very little consolidation of the routes previously utilized by the four separate districts. Student load counts are generally very low per school bus route/run with some exceptions. Costs could be contained by integrating the routes, but this has not been fully realized.

The district has a high supervisory staff ratio compared to the program's size and operational requirements. The staffing model utilizes operations supervisors instead of the more common practice of having nonmanagement or classified positions such as a dispatcher or scheduler. As a result, supervisors meet many of the technical demands of daily routing decisions. Greater efficiency could be achieved by assigning fewer supervisors to oversee drivers for regular education or special education routes, field trips, safety and training. Under this plan, a dispatcher or scheduling staff members would route and schedule bus routes, freeing time for supervisors to perform more oversight tasks. The district has a program director and operations manager, allowing for strong oversight of the administrative and daily operational responsibilities for a large transportation program and should more clearly defined the respective roles.

The vehicle maintenance program staff includes a vehicle maintenance program coordinator, a shop supervisor, and eight vehicle maintenance personnel of varying levels. While the current organizational structure is sufficient for the district's large vehicle maintenance program, there is some inconsistency and overlap in supervisory duties between the two senior-level supervisors and program sites. In addition, a lead mechanic performs a significant amount of necessary clerical support in the shop which from a cost standpoint is very inefficient.

The district should consider realigning the management and supervision of the transportation operations program and creating dispatcher/scheduler positions to better support the program needs. One additional part-time clerical support person is also needed for the vehicle maintenance program.

Staffing levels are generally appropriate for operating the district's large vehicle maintenance program. The district complies with applicable laws and regulations and earned a terminal rating of satisfactory from the California Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier unit. There are indications of inconsistency in the supervision of the two transportation sites. The district maintains little data that can be used to analyze the fleet. Inventory control storage and the appropriate stocking of parts inventory is evident at the Rio Linda facility. Although the required 3,000 mile/45-day school bus safety checks are performed and documented, there is little indication that the district has a preventative maintenance schedule for its buses or support fleet.

A review of a sample records from the district's driver training program indicates full compliance with all laws and regulations. The district has the required transportation safety plan, and individual driver training records are in good order. Most of the district annual in-service training, which is required of school bus drivers, is provided at the annual four-day school in-service program. Dispersing these in-service programs throughout the year may be more beneficial and informative for the drivers.

The transportation facilities are in poor condition and inadequate for housing the district's transportation staff, equipment and equipment repair facilities. As the district plans for the development of a larger, more centrally located and modern facility, a contingency plan should be developed to create one single facility for the transportation program. FCMAT proposes that the Grand Avenue Facility, which is adjacent to Grant High School, house all the staff and vehicles necessary for the daily assigned route buses if the district moved the rear fence closer to the school and erected two modular classroom-type buildings on the property. These buildings could house the transportation offices and drivers' ready room. It may also be necessary to demolish the existing office and remove the convex storage containers adjacent to the shop area. This plan would require the off-site storage of extra vehicles at one of the district's other facilities such as the Rio Linda or Vineland School facility. The district should meet with its architect to review the proposed facilities modernization plan to ensure that the requirements are consistent with the long-range facilities master plan and Department of the State Architect regarding facility requirements.

Since the districts unified years ago, the transportation program has been challenged to merge four individual transportation departments and staffs with differing cultures into a single new district transportation team. However, this effort is made more difficult because the facilities are in different locations, the driving staff's route assignments are separated by the old geographic route designs of prior school districts, and the administration supervises staff members under three different bargaining unit contracts. This creates divisiveness and contention among the staff. The director and transportation operations manager should be more visible and interactive with all staff members. The district should consider implementing a team building program to help the staff assimilate into one single and unified transportation team.

The district's transportation director, manager, and supervisors have had the challenge of managing the program under three different bargaining agreements. This is especially difficult for a transportation program because it increases the difficulty of coordinating field trips, selecting routes based on varying amounts of time, addressing the standards for minimum hours paid or guaranteed, and maximum efficient use of staff. The difficulty with fulfilling these demands has contributed to the organizational issues that are being questioned by the transportation staff at all levels.

The district is involved in collective bargaining to establish one single unified contract. The typical criteria found in a transportation bargaining unit contract would address items such as route and bidding selection criteria, extra (field trip) work, priority of work such as daily home-to-school routes and extra work, and how route vacancies or unintended reductions in route work should be addressed. Adoption of a single contract under the recently unified district will greatly benefit the efficiency of the transportation program.

The district indicated that 88% of its students qualify for free or reduced price lunches and could not be charged a fee for transportation under state law. FCMAT reviewed parent fee programs and the related general practices for student transportation programs from districts throughout the state. This review suggested that districts with more than 40 percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches do not significantly benefit from establishing a fee program.

Findings and Recommendations

Organizational Structure & Staffing

The Twin Rivers Unified School District's transportation program operates approximately 102 daily home-to-school and special education school bus routes transporting approximately 2,560 students daily, according to district source data. In addition, the staff schedules or contracts transportation services for more than 3,500 extracurricular and field trips annually. The department provides maintenance and servicing for more than 200 district fleet vehicles and has over 150 employees. The transportation program is housed predominantly in two terminal locations, the Grand Avenue site and the Rio Linda site with some off-site vehicle parking at the Vineland Elementary School site. It is a tremendous challenge to manage the district's transportation program from two main sites and build a single unified district from the three separate transportation programs that existed before unification.

The Transportation Department has a high supervisory staff ratio compared to other school district programs of similar size. The staffing model utilizes four transportation operations supervisors. These supervisors spend much of their time meeting the technical demands of daily scheduling and routing decisions. The tasks associated with the high routing demands of a program this size could be more effectively performed by dispatchers or scheduler positions. Under this type of scenario, three dispatcher/scheduler positions would manage regular education home-to-school routing, special education routing and field trips. The three dispatcher/schedulers would ideally be supervised by at least two operations supervisors. One dispatcher/scheduler would oversee routing and drivers for regular education home-to-school transportation service, and a second would supervise special education routing and drivers. The third dispatcher/scheduler would schedule and manage the district's extracurricular trips and field trips and could be supervised by the operations supervisor with the fewest routing and oversight duties. This would probably be the individual overseeing home-to-school transportation since this program has fewer routes and does not require the continuous routing of individual special education students.

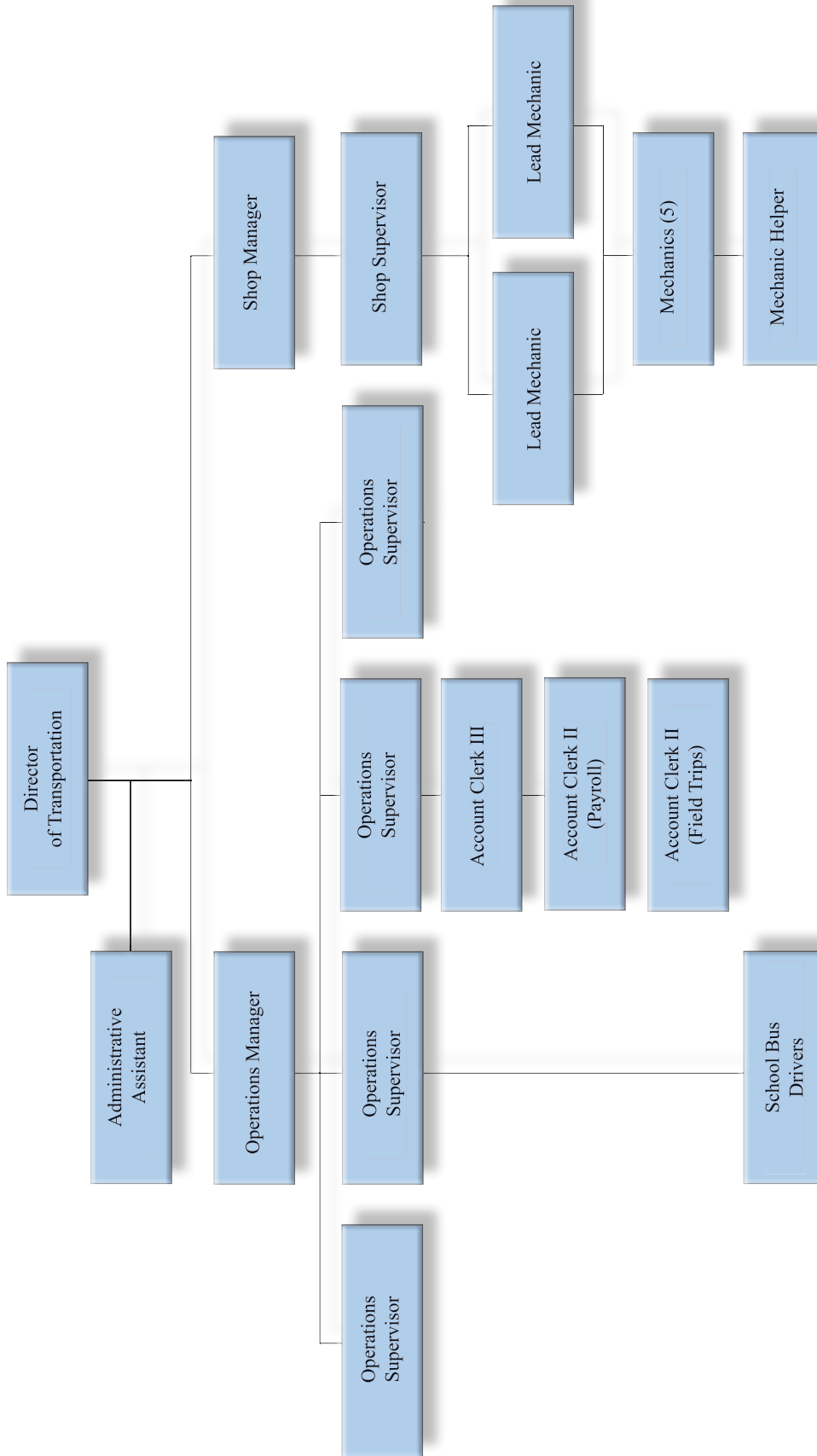
The district's transportation supervisory and scheduling staff is staggered to ensure supervision is available from early morning to late afternoon. Although each of the three recommended dispatcher/scheduler positions has specific routing and oversight responsibility, all three should be responsible for general daily dispatch duties. One position should be scheduled early morning through early afternoon, the second position mid-morning through mid-afternoon, and the third late morning through late afternoon. The two operations supervisors would also have overlapping work assignments and work shifts similar to the dispatcher/schedulers to ensure sufficient supervision during the program's daily operating hours. The district's current staffing model has a transportation operations manager, and this position could provide oversight from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. This would ensure sufficient oversight during busy student arrival and departure times as well as at mid-day. Similar to Twin Rivers Unified, larger transportation programs often have a second tier of administrative oversight. This is a prudent use of human resources because of the size of the program, the numerous administrative demands of the director of transportation, and the high number of schools and parents utilizing transportation services.

Having a dispatcher or scheduling staff assigned to configure and schedule bus routes would promote greater efficiency of resources and free the time of supervisors to perform greater oversight tasks.

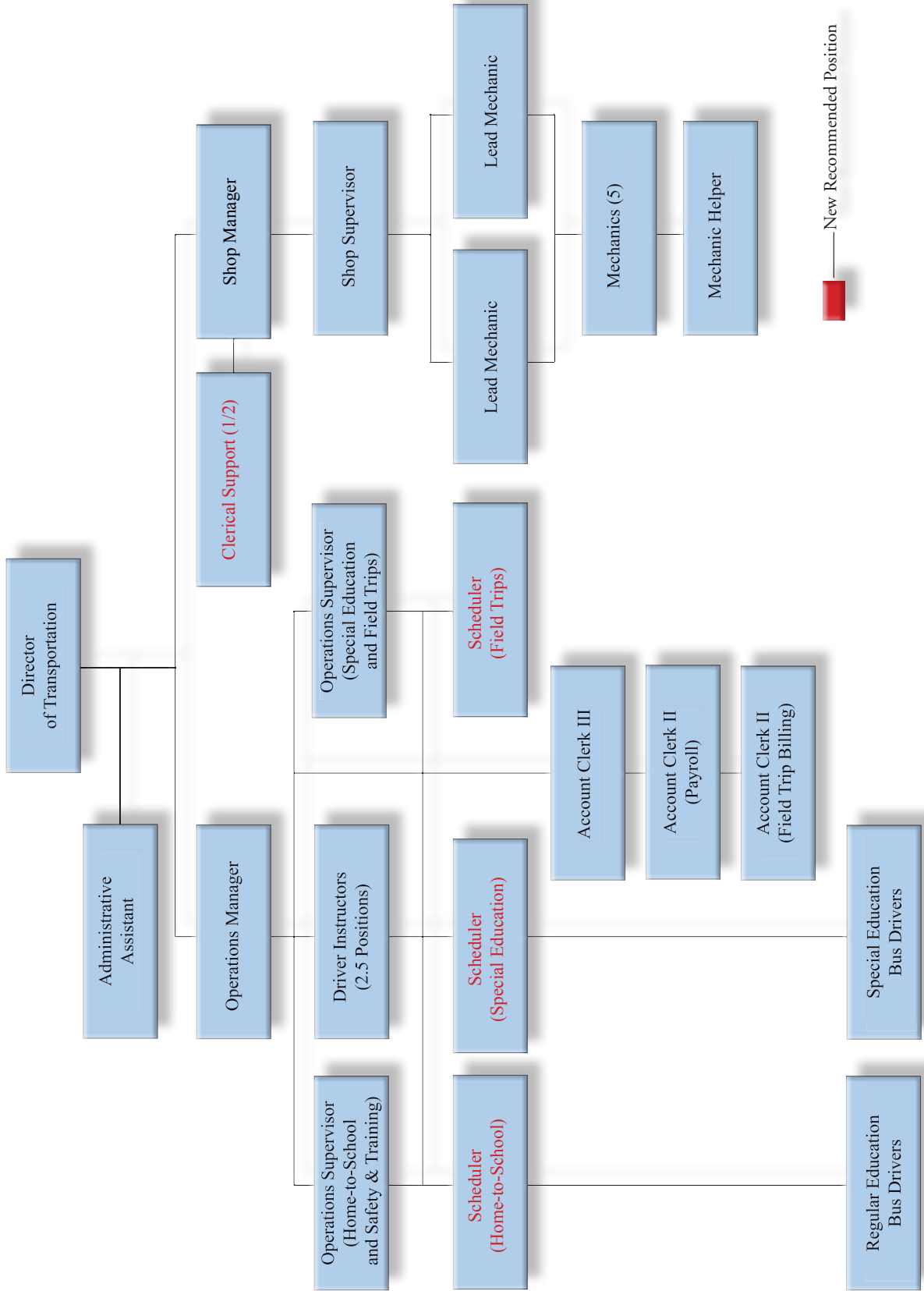
The vehicle maintenance program is staffed by a vehicle maintenance manager and shop supervisor with eight vehicle maintenance personnel of varying levels. While the current organizational structure is sufficient for the district's large vehicle maintenance program, there is some inconsistency in supervision between the two senior-level supervisors and program sites. Staff members indicated that the vehicle maintenance manager does not provide specific direction over the Grand Avenue site or the Rio Linda site and that requested repairs by drivers are addressed more quickly at Rio Linda. A lead mechanic provides a significant amount of necessary clerical support in the shop. The district should consider adding a part-time clerical position to complete these tasks rather than a highly skilled lead mechanic. The daily needs of processing vehicle maintenance work orders, handling state-required maintenance records, and processing invoices are primarily clerical duties. Because of the size of the district's fleet there may be sufficient work to justify a full time position however the district may consider conducting a time survey to determine the number of hours needed.

The transportation program has three additional clerical support positions; one account clerk III, one account clerk II for payroll needs, and one account clerk II assigned to field trip scheduling. In the recommended structure, the dispatcher/scheduler would absorb the functions of the account clerk II assigned to field trip scheduling as shown in the following organizational charts. However, that position could be utilized to provide the recommended clerical support for the vehicle maintenance program. This would free the lead mechanic currently performing those duties to concentrate on vehicle maintenance repairs.

Current Transportation Department Organization



Proposed Transportation Department Reorganization



Recommendations

The district should:

1. Reorganize its transportation operations supervisory model to include fewer operational supervisors specialized by program who oversee dispatcher/scheduling personnel and the related driving staff of each program.
2. Consider the organizational benefits of disaggregating duties and creating three dispatcher/scheduler positions to specialize in home-to-school route scheduling, special education route scheduling and field trip/contract scheduling.
3. Add or reassign one clerical support person to the vehicle maintenance program to maintain state-required vehicle maintenance records, assign and generate work orders, and process invoices.

Routing Method

The state TRAN report provides objective criteria on a school district's approved transportation cost. This report should include accurate home-to-school and special education transportation data on the number of buses utilized and the number of students transported. The report should also show the actual annual miles driven for each program. However, the district's TRAN reports, provided to FCMAT for fiscal years 2008-09 and 2009-10, include a much higher student transportation count than the district source data. The report for those two years showed that approximately 8,000 students were transported in both home-to-school regular education and special education, including the severely handicapped and orthopedically impaired.

Trans Data				
	HTS 2008-09	SH-OI 2008-09	HTS 2009-10	SH-OI 2009-10
BUSES	91	12	77	24
STUDENTS	8,572	171	8,582	193
HTS W/ IEP	608		612	
MILES	934,385	219,294	925,001	308,900
REVENUE	1,849,896	870,078	1,482,846	697,440
COST	\$7,182,123.00	\$1,645,086.00	\$7,009,146.00	\$1,751,131.00
ENCROACHMENT	\$5,332,227.00	\$ 775,008.00	\$5,526,300.00	\$1,053,691.00
ENCROACHMENT %	74.24%	47.11%	78.84%	60.13%
COST/MILE	\$ 7.609	\$ 7.302	\$ 7.371	\$ 5.621
COST/STUDENT	\$ 829.384	\$ 9,364.421	\$ 794.445	\$ 8,996.501

A review of a sample of district source data using actual routing information, which included student loads, found that the district transports approximately 2,560 students daily. Of these, approximately 1,975 are home-to-school regular education students, and 592 are special education students that receive transportation as a related service on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Therefore, the number of students was greatly overreported on the TRAN report in both programs for both years reviewed, giving the impression of an extremely high student load count ratio.

Ridership Data as Collected by Drivers in September 2010								
AM Ridership					PM Ridership			
Routes	Regular Ed	SPED	SH	OI	Regular Ed	SPED	SH	OI
100 Series	422	2			443			
200 Series	357				387	7		
300 Series	28	195	32		25	189	28	
400 Series	677				645	6		
500 Series	167				191	2		
600 Series	12	202	16	20	38	208	12	23
700 Series	313	91	22	12	136	27	28	12
Totals	1,976	490	70	32	1,865	534	68	35

NOTES:

SPED refers to special education students who require transportation as a related service in their IEP, but are not SH or OI

SH means severely handicapped

OI means orthopedically impaired

The district-provided source data shows that the transportation program utilizes 28 buses for home-to-school transportation and 74 buses for special education curb-to-curb transportation with approximately 102 daily school bus routes in operation. To determine the expense for each service, the district should calculate the number of regular and special education students transported as tracked and reported through the California State Accounting Manual (CSAM) for resources 7230 (Home to School Transportation) and 7240 (Special Education Transportation). It is imperative that the number of buses reported for each service reflect actual usage and mileage. Determining the number of miles driven in each program is an important step in accurately calculating the cost per mile, cost per student, and approved expense for both programs.

The district has established a board policy for transportation service eligibility. This policy is within expected eligibility guidelines and addresses the unique nature of some of the district's more rural areas that have insufficient walking paths. Students are eligible to be transported if they live farther than the following distances from their schools:

- High school: Three miles
- Junior high: 2½ miles
- Elementary school one mile.

A sample review using 15 of the district's home-to-school regular education school bus routes found that most routes have low ridership as demonstrated by the data below:

Grant High School 7:30 a.m. /Rio Tierra Junior High 8:45 a.m.

#101/Grant High School: 49, Rio Tierra: 27
 #102/Grant High School: 29, single school route in morning
 #103/Grant High School: 53, Martin Luther King Junior High: 19
 #104/Grant High School: 55, Norwood Junior High: 9
 #105/Grant High School: 117, single school route in morning
 #106 Grant High School: 49, Norwood Junior High: 13

Rio Linda High School 7:30am/Rio Linda Preparatory 8:45 a.m.

#201 Rio Linda High School: 55, Rio Linda Preparatory: 26
 #202 Rio Linda High School: 47, Rio Linda Preparatory: 5
 #203 Rio Linda High School: 36, Rio Linda Preparatory: 17
 #204 Rio Linda High School: 19, Rio Linda Preparatory: 9
 #205 Rio Linda High School: 11, Rio Linda Preparatory: 19
 #206 Rio Linda High School: 42, single school route in morning
 #207 Rio Linda High School: 59, Rio Linda Preparatory: 13

Foothill High School 7:30 a.m./Foothill Farms Junior High 8:45 a.m.

#401 Foothill High School: 22, Foothill Farms Junior High: 15
 #402 Foothill High School: 60, Foothill Farms Junior High: 60

The staff generally follows the routing of the school districts that existed before they unified to become the Twin Rivers Unified School District. The above sample demonstrates that with some exceptions, the 100, 200, and 400 series routes reflect those of the Grant Joint Union High School District. Routing was obviously not merged upon unification of the four school districts. The district could merge more routes by having elementary runs assigned to the same bus as a high school or junior high run through the staggering of bells schedules. Efficient routing typically attempts to keep a single bus in a specific area, providing rotational service to all school

levels within that area. In this manner, the district can reduce the time buses spend operating without passengers.

When the district unified, it inherited two industry-recognized routing software applications. While each routing software application has strength and weaknesses, both can meet district needs. Staff interviews indicated that there is a lack of direction about which software application will be fully implemented. As a result, both are utilized to some degree, but neither is used to merge routes and create the most efficient and resourceful routing plan. Staff interviews indicated that special education transportation is partly routed by the individual drivers who create specific routes and present them to a supervisor so the information can be entered into the routing software. School bus drivers are generally the most knowledgeable about the most direct routes. However, without electronic oversight, this practice can result in unnecessary route time and mileage in programs the size of Twin Rivers Unified. The district should fully implement one of its two electronic routing software applications, using the route optimization capability and the oversight of schedulers and supervisors. This will help ensure the most efficient use of drivers and buses as well as the shortest ride times for students.

The district's transportation program managers work with three bargaining unit contracts and sets of past practices inherited from the previous districts. As a result, the driving and mechanical staff is confused, with individual groups of drivers following different sets of rules. There is a perception among the staff that one group has more flexibility than the other regarding the minimum guaranteed route times, and how vacant routes are filled and nondriving assignment time is approved. This greatly frustrates the supervisory and driving staff. Nondriving assignment time is higher than the industry norm as a result of efforts to merge practices. For example, a 200 series Rio Linda route has little actual driving time; however, the driver's work schedule includes the following:

- Thirty minutes for fueling
- Thirty minutes for the pretrip inspection
- Two 15-minute breaks
- A five-minute secondary pretrip inspection in the afternoon
- Fifteen minutes for vehicle closeout, paperwork, and in some cases, guaranteed daily fueling time.

A sufficient amount of time should be provided to safely and efficiently pretrip a vehicle daily; however, industry norms suggest that 15 to 25 minutes is sufficient. Driver breaks are typically scheduled between morning or afternoon runs during any stand-by or nondriving time waiting at schools. A secondary pretrip "walk-around" inspection may be beneficial, but it is not required. The driver in the above example is paid for 6.25 hours of daily work but actually drives only 3½ hours. In addition, a review of driver assignment times found that it is unclear what some drivers do for part of their assigned work hours. The district should develop criteria and apply it consistently to all district bus route assignments. A reasonable daily pretrip inspection should be approximately 15 minutes in length for buses without air brakes and 20 to 25 minutes for larger buses with air brakes. Break periods should conform to Department of Labor requirements and can be taken during the morning and afternoon routing periods in most cases. A 10- to 15-minute closeout period is sufficient to complete driver daily paperwork including brief sweeping and dusting of buses. Deeper cleaning can be accommodated on a one-on-one basis with appropriate supervisor approval as needed.

Individual route driving times should be closely monitored by routing schedulers, with supervisor approval, using an electronic software application to ensure maximum efficiency. Final route selection should be based strictly on actual approved route time and approved nondriving time as suggested above. Minimum hour guarantees are unique from district to district, and the specifics are outlined in each labor contract. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages; however, if a minimum employee or route guarantee model is selected, the contract should include clear language that allows the district to reduce or increase work as necessary. Guaranteeing a minimum amount of work without allowing for fluctuations can discourage the staff from reviewing and optimizing daily routing for maximum efficiency. Home-to-school routing typically fluctuates very little after a route is created since the model uses centralized stops for several students. Special needs routing changes as the number of students fluctuates and typically grows throughout the school year. Practices should be developed that provide drivers with sufficient notice if their routes need to be increased or decreased.

Overflow students and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) routing are customized due to specific program requirements. Transportation programs must be flexible in their approach and creative in how they schedule these students. The district's transportation program is effective at routing these students within the resources applied to home-to-school and special education routing. A review of routes indicated that the department has been efficient in scheduling many of these students in small or in some cases individual trips between school runs where time allows. Because this routing is typically very high at the beginning of school years, it sometimes takes longer to schedule. The demand for scheduling these students stabilized after the start of this school year. To ensure timely and appropriate routing for overflow and NCLB students, this routing should be assigned to one specific scheduler and supervisor who can specialize in the task, gain a better understanding of potential routes, and determine where customized routing can be absorbed between runs. When there are no other alternatives, added resources will be necessary to meet the district's high number of overflow and NCLB students.

A single point person in each program should be assigned and held responsible for generating and receiving the transportation information sheet.

The transportation and special education staffs want improved communication to ensure all special education students are scheduled for transportation service in an appropriate and timely manner. Depending on the needs of each individual, special education students are typically routed curb-to-curb, essentially making a student's home or corner location a bus stop. Routing in this manner is extremely time-consuming and labor-intensive. The accuracy of student information regarding the type of handicap, parent/guardian data, and delivery pick-up and drop-off times is critical. The district's transportation information sheet does not include all the information required to ensure effective transportation scheduling. In addition, the form is generated from the student's IEP process and comes from the special education staff to the transportation staff, which is problematic. No one specific person on the special education program administrative staff has the task of coordinating transportation requests between the IEP teams and the Transportation Department special education staff. As a result, forms (transportation requests) are sometimes incomplete, lacking important information such as special instructions for pick-up and drop-off times, parent contact data, and current school of program assignment when a child is promoted from one grade to the next and the school changes. Both department staffs recognize this problem.

A single point person in each program should be assigned and held responsible for generating and receiving the transportation information sheet. Transportation should not be provided unless the transportation information sheet includes current information and stipulates that the service is approved. This will ensure that only special education students with transportation identified as a related service on their IEPs receive transportation and that enough information is provided to ensure transportation meets student needs. Questions regarding the service requested should be directed to the point person in each department.

Transportation personnel should participate in annual or twice-annual Special Education Department meetings to communicate and reinforce the importance of the transportation information sheet and flow of communication. A spring and fall meeting between the special education and transportation program staffs should also be scheduled annually to discuss school start-up success or concerns, spring preparation for the summer programs, and the need for fall student promotion lists and updated information sheet data. Most transportation programs begin planning their fall routing in the late spring of the prior school year.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Accurately track and report student, bus and mileage data for the state TRAN report.
2. Immediately select one of its two electronic routing software systems for full implementation.
3. Consolidate routing using its electronic software to ensure optimization and efficiency.
4. Work as quickly as possible toward agreement with its bargaining unit to eliminate the confusion of managing three separate bargaining unit contracts and ensure that the contract language is appropriate and mutually beneficial, resulting in an effective transportation program.
5. Choose personnel in the special education program and transportation program to effectively communicate needs, issues or concerns.
6. Redesign the Transportation Information Sheet (TIS) to ensure that appropriate information is documented, resulting in successful, timely and appropriate transportation support for special education students.

Vehicle Maintenance

According to district source data, the Transportation Department operates approximately 102 school buses daily, with a total school bus fleet of 136 buses and 253 support vehicles. The vehicle maintenance staffing model is appropriate for the size of program with the exception of clerical support. The district's vehicle maintenance program is administered by a vehicle maintenance manager, one vehicle maintenance supervisor, two lead mechanics, five mechanics and one mechanic's helper.

The transportation program operates two vehicle maintenance repair and operations yards, one at the Grand Avenue site and one at the Rio Linda yard. Differences in the program are easily identifiable. The Rio Linda garage facility is clean and well organized with an inventory stock that is current and appropriately stocked. The inventory module of the vehicle maintenance software is not utilized, but tracking is performed on an Excel spreadsheet. At the Grand Avenue site, the inventory stock is outdated and generally disorganized, and the area is dirty. The site has an excessive amount of stock, and there is no documented accountability of parts. The vehicle maintenance software includes an inventory module that could be utilized for accountability. Two additional sea/land containers store parts because of space restrictions, however an abundance of parts stock is maintained unnecessarily. The district is susceptible to inventory loss and lack of accountability of stock. The volume of stock should be reduced or eliminated if it has no practical use. The district should consider merging its two vehicle maintenance sites to improve productivity, maintain consistency in service, and provide for more efficient program oversight. The top supervision of the vehicle maintenance program should be highly engaged in administration and communication of goals.

A sample review of the district's state-required 45-day/3,000 mile bus safety inspections found that all school buses are monitored on a 41- to 42-day rotation with a few special needs vehicles on high-mileage routes monitored by mileage. The required inspections are also partially serving as "A" checks, which are cursory reviews of numerous bus safety items as well as oil, filter and lubrication servicing. The district has a well-defined paper documentation system. This is used when a driver identifies a repair need during the pretrip inspection, or a mechanic notes this need during a vehicle safety check or preventive maintenance servicing. Repairs are well documented on an electronic or manual work order, and a vehicle history file is also maintained.

The transportation program has two industry-standard vehicle maintenance programs. One is utilized mostly by the vehicle maintenance supervisor and staff assigned to Rio Linda site. The vehicle maintenance manager at the Grant Avenue site uses the vehicle maintenance software to track school bus safety checks, but usually generates handwritten work order repairs. The Rio Linda staff is more comfortable with the use of technology than the Grant Avenue staff.

The district lacks a suitable preventive maintenance plan for the district's support fleet. Interviews and records indicated there is no regular maintenance review or scheduled maintenance for this fleet. The vehicle maintenance team reportedly depends on the support fleet staff assigned to self-monitor and initiate routine oil and service intervals. Repairs are made as identified by the vehicle maintenance staff. The district should implement a support fleet preventive maintenance schedule to ensure the optimum longevity for its vehicles. There is no district-generated vehicle source data to identify vehicle operating efficiency, cost per vehicle, cost per mile, and vehicle condition.

The district's transportation vehicle maintenance program was given a satisfactory terminal grade by the California Highway Patrol motor carrier inspectors, which is the highest rating that can be achieved.

One of two lead mechanics is heavily utilized at the Grand Avenue site for clerical support in data entry, work order tracking, and repair-order generation. This is not an effective use of a lead mechanic's time. The district should consider a full- or part-time position for clerical support in the vehicle maintenance program.

The Grand Avenue site is in disarray, and the lot is dirty. Although the facility has a limited amount of space, it stores several vehicles that should be sold at surplus, scrapped or stored at one of the district auxiliary off-site parking areas at the old North Sacramento or the closed Vineland Elementary School sites.

Staff interviews indicated that communication is satisfactory among the shop staff at the Rio Linda yard, but not between drivers and the staff at the Grand Avenue site. Some staff members perceive that their individual vehicle concerns are not addressed until the issue becomes a higher priority. Greater shop supervisory interaction could improve vehicle maintenance work completion communication.

During a three-day field study visit, FCMAT observed very little vehicle maintenance occurring at the Rio Linda yard and the Grand Avenue site. Inventory control and site clean-up are just two immediate needs that could be addressed during this time.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Merge the district's two vehicle maintenance operations into one site for greater span of supervisory oversight, improved consistency in vehicle repairs, greater efficiency in inventory housing, control and usage.
2. Consolidate the district's parts and equipment inventory and reduce it to appropriate levels in a well organized inventory space with appropriate electronic tracking of stock and usage.
3. Immediately create a well defined preventative vehicle maintenance program for buses and the support fleet. All district fleet vehicles should be regularly maintained to ensure optimum life expectancy.
4. Select and fully implement a vehicle maintenance software system to track school bus safety checks, preventative maintenance schedules for all district vehicles, maintain and track parts and equipment inventory levels and to generate all work orders as necessary.
5. Improve communication between the vehicle maintenance staff and drivers.
6. Generate vehicle maintenance operational data from the vehicle maintenance electronic software capability to track vehicle operational efficiency.

Driver Training

The Transportation Department supports the training needs of more than 100 district school bus drivers. Two other department supervisory positions hold a State Department of Education school bus driver's certificate. Two supervisors and the operations manager are certified instructors. There is no indication that delegated behind-the-wheel instructors are utilized. Therefore, all the district's bus drivers are supported by one instructor who is on Worker's Compensation leave as the result of a workplace injury.

The State Department of Education recommends and partially funds the certification of up to one state-certified instructor per 25 school bus drivers on a school district staff. Although this ratio is not strictly adhered to in all school district transportation operations, having only one instructor does not meet the state recommendation. The industry norm for a district the size of Twin Rivers Unified would be two to three active instructors. Some transportation programs assign several school bus instructors to other transportation-related work functions, but they remain active instructors who help support the ongoing needs and requirements of aiding drivers in their certificate requirements, training, and maintaining records. A tremendous amount of time and work is necessary to maintain required documentation such as driver training state T-01 records, driver proficiency logs, Department of Motor Vehicles driver pull notice reports, commercial driving licenses, commercial driving medical exams, school bus driver certificates and ride checks. One full-time driver instructor cannot satisfactorily perform all these duties. Although the current instructor receives some assistance from other supervisory personnel who have a state instructor's certificate, the district should consider assigning one to two additional instructors to meet program needs.

An on-site sample review of the district's driver training records indicates they comply with all laws and regulations. The district also has a required pupil transportation safety plan as specified in Education Code Section 39831.3.

Education Code Section 40080 requires drivers to receive a minimum of 10 hours of in-service training annually in appropriate areas. The district meets most of this requirement with a four-day school year start-up program. These programs are common in the industry; however a four-day program is long and drivers may find it difficult to absorb the necessary industry safety and update information. Most districts divide this training into monthly or quarterly in-service periods complemented by one or two professional growth day programs and/or an annual school start-up program of a day or two in duration, including the discussion of the coming year's driving assignments and bus assignment preparation. The district should consider modifying its in-service format to allow for more ongoing training throughout the course of the school year and reduce the number of days committed to the start-up in-service program.

Although the current instructor receives some assistance from other supervisory personnel who have a state instructor's certificate, the district should consider assigning one to two additional instructors to meet program needs.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider assigning two or three certified school bus instructors to devote all or most of their time to school bus safety and training-related duties.
2. Reduce the number of days committed to the school start-up school bus driver in-service program and implement a shorter program with ongoing in-service programs monthly or quarterly.

Facilities

The district's transportation facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of a large transportation program. As a result of the district's recent unification, several properties were acquired that previously housed the previous districts' transportation programs. As a result, the current program is generally divided between two terminals, the Grand Avenue site and the Rio Linda yard. Some off-site parking is assigned to the recently closed Vineland Elementary School; however, no vehicle maintenance or office personnel are assigned to this site. Both facilities are inadequate. The office and driver areas at the Grand Avenue site and the Rio Linda yard are marginal at best and do not provide for adequate work space. The office area at the Grand Avenue site has insufficient heating and ventilation. Individual office areas operate portable air conditioning units that collectively do a marginal job of cooling and ventilating the building. Pathways through the office areas are small, storage areas are insufficient, and restrooms are inadequate for the size of staff. The fleet yards used to park and secure the district's bus and support vehicle fleet lack sufficient space for these purposes. Some community members have voiced concerns about the recent increased parking of buses at the Rio Linda yard. Office spaces at both yards are not adequate to appropriately house support personnel for the program. Local health and safety regulations may be an issue at both sites with respect to office spaces and appropriate access.

The district should consult with its local architect regarding uniform building code and Division of the State Architect requirements and immediately consider the alternatives for creating one central site to house the full fleet and transportation support personnel. Because the district is approximately 120 square miles in size and generally densely populated with some rural areas, it should be relatively easy to access all areas from one central point. The district should also immediately consider consolidating the existing two transportation sites at one; the Grand Avenue site. The left and rear fence lines of the Grand Avenue site could be extended toward the Grant High School facility. By transferring all surplus, excess or back-up spare vehicles to the Vineland Elementary School parking area, the district could appropriately house its entire current school bus fleet at this site. To accomplish this task, the district should demolish the existing office and driver's room as well as remove one or both of the sea/land storage containers utilized to store excess parts. The district should consider temporarily placing two modular buildings at the front of the property to house the transportation office personnel with the second building as a driver's room. To maximize use of the Grand Avenue site, the district should assign the transportation staff to park across the street from the Grand Avenue site at the old Grant High School District administrative offices. The existing vehicle shop would suffice until the district can plan and secure funding for a new transportation facility.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Immediately prioritize a long-range plan to fund and build a suitable centralized transportation facility to meet the needs of the district.
2. Consolidate its two transportation sites at one central site located at the Grand Avenue location.

3. Expand the Grand Avenue site to allow space for two modular buildings in the front with sufficient bus parking. This plan would require demolishing the existing office and driver's room area as well as removing one or both of the sea/land storage containers utilized for parts inventory.
4. Create transportation staff parking across the street from the Grand Avenue transportation site to allow for maximum usage of space for the consolidation of the district's fleet.

Transportation Service Fees

Because home-to-school transportation service is not a state-mandated and fully funded support program under the California Education Code, school districts can choose to implement fees for transportation service. However, a district cannot charge more than its program expenses and is obligated to ensure a means of free ridership eligibility for students in need. The state TRAN report indicates that the transportation program had a 78.84% encroachment into the general operating fund for the 2009-10 school year. This equaled an encroachment of more than \$5,526,000 and state-authorized reimbursement revenue of only \$1,482,846.

Based on FCMAT's review of many transportation programs throughout the state, the district should not pursue the implementation of a parent fee program for transportation service. This type of fee program is generally not successful in districts where more than 40% of the student body is eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. Approximately 88% of district students participate in this program. In addition to an anticipated high free ridership ratio, the overhead administrative and supply expense would negate substantial revenue generation ability.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Cease efforts to pursue a transportation fee-for-service program for home-to-school transportation.

Communication

Staff interviews indicated that communication between the administrative/supervisory and driving staffs is ineffective. The administrative team should be more visible and involved directly with the staff by listening to concerns and providing direction.

The district faces a tremendous challenge in combining the transportation staffs of the three previous districts into one cohesive team. Having various transportation facilities contributes to the staff's feeling of separation. During interviews, many staff members used the terms "us" and "them" and alluded to a distinction between the Grant Union High, Rio Linda or North Sacramento district approaches to accomplishing tasks. These approaches would be expected to continue for a period of time after unification, but by now, a new cohesive culture should have started developing at Twin Rivers Unified. Having three individual bargaining unit contracts greatly contributes to a lack of cohesiveness because teams of employees work for the same entity and yet are managed by different sets of rules.

Despite these issues, the district lacks a cohesive plan for building a single strong team. The transportation administrative team should lead the transportation program in the long-range goal of team building. Grand Avenue signs that read "Grant JUHSD" should be removed as should route numbers that reflect the routing that existed before the district unified. Bargaining unit practices should be modified to reflect the existence of only one unified district, and verbal references to "us" and "them" should be discouraged. The director and supervisors should lead efforts to build a unified district transportation program and should involve drivers and mechanics in these efforts by facilitating team-building exercises, problem solving sessions and being visible and accessible for discussion.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Improve Transportation Department morale through a team-building exercise that involves all levels of employee groups in the program.
2. Involve the staff in decision-making to create a new policy and operating procedures for a new transportation program.

Appendix

A. Study Agreement

FCMAT

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT
ASSISTANCE TEAM

CSIS California School Information Services

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM STUDY AGREEMENT September 14, 2010

The FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the Team, and the Twin Rivers Unified 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 Twin Rivers Unified 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.

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. The final report will be published on the FCMAT website.

2. SCOPE OF THE WORK

A. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The scope and objectives of this study are to:

1. Conduct a review of the Twin Rivers School District's Transportation program and operations for special education and regular home to school services. Staffing, routing, location of bus facilities to be reviewed. The evaluation shall provide recommendations, if any to reduce encroachment from the Unrestricted General Fund.

2. Develop strategies for the District to use in communications with parents of regular and special education students during the process of identifying alternatives for transportation services, including parent transportation contracts.
3. Provide recommendations for a new bus routing methodology based on a standardized district wide school bell schedule and the most efficient use of transportation routes. An evaluation of the district's board policies regarding bus pickup and walking distances should be included in this component.
4. Review bus routes and provide recommendations for changes to improve route efficiency.
5. Provide an estimate of the cost to implement the recommendations and identify possible funding sources, including parent fees.
6. Analyze the fiscal impact of current bargaining contract provisions related to transportation including wait time, field trips, extra duty, additional benefits, other overtime and hourly activities. This component should include options to increase ridership and improve the registration process, if any.
7. Evaluate the current in-house bus maintenance activities and provide recommendations for cost savings and improvements.
8. Provide recommendations for communication strategies with parents and the community if the District considers reductions for fee based options for transportation services.
9. Evaluate and provide cost comparisons for outsourcing or a joint powers agreement with other surrounding districts for home to school transportation and a component identifying the advantages and disadvantages for these types of services.
10. Analyze capacity to accommodate overflow students, NCLB and out-of-district programs.

Services and Products to be Provided

- 1) Orientation Meeting - The Team will conduct an orientation session at the School 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) Exit Report - 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 administration following completion of the review.
- 7) Follow-Up Support – Six months after the completion of the study, FCMAT will return to the District, if requested, to confirm the District’s progress in implementing the recommendations included in the report, at no cost. Status of the recommendations will be documented to the District in a FCMAT Management Letter.

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. William Gillaspie | FCMAT Chief Management Analyst |
| B. Timothy Purvis | FCMAT Consultant |
| C. Michael G. Rae | FCMAT 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. Cost per day for outside consultants will be billed at the actual daily rate.

- B. All out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals, lodging, etc. The District will be invoiced at actual costs, with 50% of the estimated cost due following the completion of the on-site review and the remaining amount due upon acceptance of the final report by the District.

Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total cost of the study is estimated at \$11,100.

- 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 or proposed organizational charts
 - 4) Current and two (2) prior years' audit reports
 - 5) Any documents requested on a supplemental listing
 - 6) Any documents requested on the supplemental listing should be provided to FCMAT in electronic format when possible.
 - 7) Documents that are only available in hard copy should be scanned by the district and sent to FCMAT in an electronic format.
 - 8) All documents should be provided in advance of field work and any delay in the receipt of the requested documentation may affect the start date of the project.
- 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:


<i>Orientation:</i>	<i>September 27, 2010</i>
<i>Staff Interviews:</i>	<i>September 27-29, 2010</i>
<i>Exit Interviews:</i>	<i>to be determined</i>
<i>Preliminary Report Submitted:</i>	<i>to be determined</i>
<i>Final Report Submitted:</i>	<i>to be determined</i>
<i>Board Presentation:</i>	<i>to be determined</i>
<i>Follow-Up Support:</i>	<i>If requested</i>

7. **CONTACT PERSON**


Name of contact person: Rob Ball, Associate Superintendent, Business

Telephone: (916) 566-1700 FAX: (916) 566-3585

E-Mail: rob.ball@twinriversusd.org


 Frank Porter, Superintendent
 Twin Rivers Unified School District

9/14/10
 Date


 Anthony L. Bridges, Deputy Executive Officer
 Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

September 14, 2010
 Date

