



Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors  
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January 26, 2021

Louisa Boren STEM K-8  
Parent Teacher Association Board  
5950 Delridge Way SW  
Seattle, WA 98106

Dear Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors,

We strongly protest your intention to discontinue yellow bus transportation to Seattle Public Schools (SPS) **option schools** in an effort to close the identified budget gap of nearly \$70 million for the 2021-2022 school year. The projected savings of cutting this essential service ranges from \$550,000 to \$740,000 (~1.5%), which is not significant enough to make up for the harm and disruption our students and families will endure. This decision appears to unfairly and inequitably target option schools, which are a critical part of the SPS choice plan. This should not be a budgetary matter since RCW 28A.160.150 provides that transportation operating costs “...shall be funded at one hundred percent or as close thereto as reasonably possible for transportation of an eligible student to and from school...” Transportation is an integral component to guaranteeing access to students at our option schools.

This decision is being fast tracked during open enrollment which will cause undue chaos. It has not been discussed with school administrators, teachers, communities, parent teacher associations, etc. We sincerely hope this is not an attempt by SPS to begin their dismantling of option schools by first reducing access to our schools and then telling the community that the school’s enrollment is too low; thereby, putting the school in jeopardy of closing.

This decision places an undue hardship on our families. Last year, 558 students were enrolled at Louisa Boren STEM K-8 with 350 students utilizing yellow bus transportation. The ability for a student to ride the bus can be the difference between a caregiver having a job or not. If a student can ride the bus, their caregiver may be able to work an additional two hours each day which at Seattle’s minimum wage equates to \$33.38 a day. That’s \$166.90 a week and \$667.60 a month. \$667.60 a month can keep the lights on, buy groceries, winter coats for a family, etc.

Many of our families only have one vehicle or do not have a car at all. If buses are discontinued, how will those students get to school everyday? Taking public transportation is costly, unrealistic, and frankly, an unsafe option. Our geographic zone stretches as far south as 35th Ave

SW and Thistle Street SW. That is a 2.2 mile walk to school and completely unreasonable for SPS to expect a Kindergartener to walk that distance. How will our students who attend after-school programs at other facilities get to those locations? Our current YMCA after-school care is already at capacity. Without buses, our school can only serve students whose families can afford and commit to driving them to/from school everyday without the need for after-care options. This is further creating a socio-economic divide within SPS. If enacted, SPS's decision effectively turns option schools into "elite" schools, denying access to the very population it seeks to foster and goes against its own priorities. According to SPS's own racial equity tools, "It is the moral and ethical responsibility and a top priority for Seattle Public Schools to provide Equity Access and Opportunity for every student, and to eliminate racial inequity in our educational and administrative system."

This decision will create a tremendous strain on our local roadways. West Seattle is suffering through a traffic nightmare due to the closure of the West Seattle Bridge. Currently Delridge Way SW, SW Roxbury Street, and Highland Park Way SW are at a near standstill during morning and afternoon commute times. Our school is fortunate to have a parking lot and a relatively safe area for parents to drop-off/pick-up students, but we already experience logistical challenges with just 200 students a day. These challenges will be even more exasperated by the Delridge Way detour once school resumes in person learning.

If any number of those 350 students are forced to leave our school and return to their neighborhood schools because they do not have other transportation options, where will they go? Our neighborhood schools are already at (or over) capacity and do not have the ability to absorb an overflow of new students. Where will the money and space come from for more classrooms and teachers? Is SPS prepared to pay for transportation for some of these students who live outside the walkzone of their neighborhood school?

This transportation cut would effectively devastate our school community and take away any hope at continued diversity for our student body in years to come. Option schools like Louisa Boren STEM K-8 serve many high needs communities. Our school serves a larger than average number of students with IEPs and 504s, and it is 49% ethnically diverse. Approximately 29% of our students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Our student body is incredibly reflective of the world around us and our BIPOC, low income, and special education families should have been taken into greater consideration when this decision was made.

We implore you to reconsider your decision and not discontinue yellow bus transportation to SPS option schools.

Sincerely,

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