

MINIMUM SCHOOL PROGRAM PUPIL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

PUBLIC EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

The Minimum School Program includes two items of appropriation that provide funding to school districts for pupil transportation programs. These programs include To & From School and the Guarantee Transportation Levy. Charter schools are exempted by statute from receiving pupil transportation funding.

STATUTORY GUIDELINES

Utah Code (53A-17a-127) provides guidelines for school districts to use in determining eligible students for state pupil transportation funding. Eligible students include students enrolled in grades K-6 that live at least 1 ½ miles from school and students enrolled in grades 7-12 that live at least 2 miles from school. Regardless of distance from school, some students with severe disabilities may qualify for state funding if they are incapable of walking or it is unsafe for them to walk. Please refer to the statute for all qualifying criteria.

Statute (53A-17a-126) also states that the “state shall contribute 85% of approved (see UCA 53A-17a-127) transportation costs, subject to budget constraints.”

PUPIL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

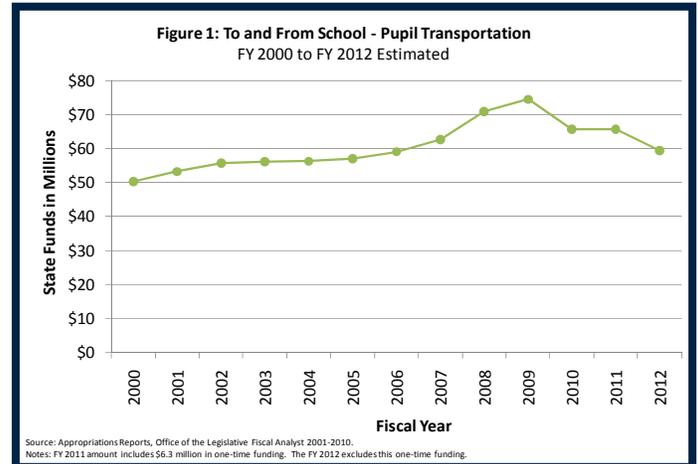
The ongoing state-fund appropriation for To & From School Transportation in FY 2011 is \$59,346,865. Of this amount, \$56,762,465 is distributed to school districts and \$2,584,400 is distributed to the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. In FY 2011, \$6.3 million in one-time funding was appropriated to support the To & From School program. The Guarantee Transportation Levy has been funded at a constant \$500,000 since FY 2002.

Figure 1 shows the state appropriation to the To & From School program since FY 2000. Figure 2 details the distribution of both transportation program appropriations by school district.

PROGRAMS

To & From School - provides state funding to assist Utah’s 41 school districts in transporting students to and from school each day. State funds are used to bus students based on statutory guidelines relative to the distance a student lives from school. State funds are distributed to school districts based on the Transportation Finance Formula found in statute. In addition to state funding, local school districts also use local property tax revenues to support pupil transportation services.

State funding only pays school districts for actual bus routes operated. The Transportation Finance Formula includes items required in statute, namely, “an allowance per mile for approved bus routes; an allowance per hour for approved bus routes; and a minimum allocation for each school district eligible for transportation funding” (UCA 53A-17a-127). As a result, pupil transportation funding is not distributed on an equal (or per student) basis to school districts. Figure 2 details the per-student distribution



difference in pupil transportation funding. In many cases, school districts with few students but large travel distances benefit greater from the formula.

Guarantee Transportation Levy – assists certain small school districts in providing pupil transportation services not covered through the To & From School program. Program funds assist qualifying districts with the added costs associated with remote locations and small student populations.

A district can levy a tax to purchase new buses, provide special busing for hazardous walking areas, and fund costs associated with student field and activity trips.

Local school districts qualify if they levy the minimum special transportation tax rate of 0.0002, and the revenue generated by the levy is not enough to pay for at least 85 percent of the state average cost per mile for the purposes listed above.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

The Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee did not fund the pupil transportation programs in 1st Substitute Senate Bill 1 (2011 General Session). The subcommittee opted to hold programmatic funding for further discussion and potential appropriation in the final education funding bill. The Legislature may wish to consider the following:

1. Review the To & From School and Guarantee Transportation programs for funding in FY 2012. Due to the nature of pupil transportation funding, discontinuing to fund pupil transportation will impact some districts more than others. Similarly, moving this funding into the WPU Value will alter the distribution among school districts.
2. The FY 2011 one-time appropriation of \$6.3 million will not continue in FY 2012. The Legislature may wish to review how school districts are managing this anticipated reduction in their FY 2012 budgets.

Figure 2: Pupil Transportation Programs
Program Distributions by District - FY 2011 Preliminary
Includes One-time Appropriations

School Districts	Pupil Transportation	Guarantee Transp. Levy	Total Enrollment	Amount Per Student
ALPINE	\$2,490,706	\$0	66,044	\$38
BEAVER	158,777	31,163	1,566	\$121
BOX ELDER	2,633,903	0	11,187	\$235
CACHE	3,375,802	0	15,409	\$219
CARBON	661,588	0	3,458	\$191
DAGGETT	96,798	20,558	168	\$699
DAVIS	6,019,132	0	66,019	\$91
DUCHESNE	866,822	20,790	4,448	\$200
EMERY	451,616	0	2,359	\$191
GARFIELD	175,757	65,476	925	\$261
GRAND	223,122	0	1,510	\$148
GRANITE	4,254,189	0	68,573	\$62
IRON	1,337,710	0	8,483	\$158
JORDAN	5,165,721	0	49,729	\$104
JUAB	288,239	0	2,286	\$126
KANE	275,036	0	1,176	\$234
MILLARD	568,944	0	2,826	\$201
MORGAN	429,569	0	2,437	\$176
NEBO	3,434,353	0	29,136	\$118
NO. SANPETE	524,501	21,198	2,419	\$226
NO. SUMMIT	301,214	0	978	\$308
PARK CITY	848,066	0	4,351	\$195
PIUTE	169,084	20,300	305	\$621
RICH	183,222	0	484	\$379
SAN JUAN	1,468,999	230,318	2,912	\$584
SEVIER	764,276	65,476	4,533	\$183
SO. SANPETE	410,872	6,151	3,038	\$137
SO. SUMMIT	263,691	0	1,433	\$184
TINTIC	64,090	0	220	\$291
TOOELE	1,750,410	0	13,439	\$130
UINTAH	1,482,291	0	6,683	\$222
WASATCH	767,439	0	5,089	\$151
WASHINGTON	3,507,387	0	25,671	\$137
WAYNE	166,116	18,570	567	\$326
WEBER	3,615,252	0	30,347	\$119
SALT LAKE	2,584,512	0	23,960	\$108
OGDEN	789,061	0	12,568	\$63
PROVO	1,321,089	0	13,376	\$99
LOGAN	651,383	0	6,133	\$106
MURRAY	382,067	0	6,500	\$59
CANYONS	3,455,767	0	33,469	\$103
USDB	2,584,400	0		
State Total	\$65,646,865	\$500,000	536,214	\$123