



District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

DIVISION OF STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Internal Strategic Roadmap (FY2025-26)

Updated November 2025

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Overview

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s Division of Student Transportation (OSSE-DOT) is responsible for providing transportation to and from school for nearly 4,500 District students with disabilities deemed eligible under their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or 504 Plan.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, OSSE-DOT – like many student transportation operations across the country – has faced significant staffing shortages alongside an increase in student ridership, resulting in performance challenges for the division. To address these challenges, beginning in Fiscal Year 2023, OSSE-DOT implemented several new initiatives to help increase its supply of bus drivers and attendants while controlling demand for services. These initiatives included expanding contracts with private transportation vendors, launching a Parent Stipend Program for families who wish to self-transport, and various employee hiring and attendance incentive programs. While these initiatives have improved OSSE-DOT’s on-time performance in recent years, they were also costly and created significant spending pressures; in Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025, OSSE-DOT required a combined \$30.7M in supplemental funding from the District.

Given this, during Fiscal Year 2025, OSSE-DOT embarked on a new series of strategic projects aimed at maximizing operational efficiency, optimizing ridership demand, and controlling or reducing overall costs. The following plan details those projects and outlines OSSE-DOT’s path to improving cost efficiency while also delivering better service to students and their families. *This plan will serve as a foundation for the student transportation components of OSSE’s forthcoming agency-wide, multi-year strategic plan, to be published in 2026.*

Mission, Vision & Values

Mission

OSSE-DOT provides safe, reliable and efficient transportation services that positively support learning opportunities for eligible students from the District of Columbia. The division's work is designed to achieve four main objectives: safety, efficiency, reliability and customer focus.

Vision

Every eligible District student who relies on OSSE-DOT transportation services arrives to and from school on-time, safely, and ready to learn each day, and students, families and their schools and LEAs experience the highest standard of customer service and care from OSSE-DOT staff.

Core Values

OSSE's Core Values guide OSSE-DOT's work in service of DC residents:

- **Focus on students.** We believe in the potential of all DC students, from our infants and toddlers all the way to our adult learners, to learn and achieve at high levels. We believe that a critical part of our role as the state education agency is in ensuring greater equity in outcomes for our students, by accelerating progress for those who are furthest behind.
- **Organizational excellence.** We hold ourselves and our colleagues to high expectations. We focus on getting the details of our core work right and developing systems that will make it possible for us to sustain excellent work over time. We act with a sense of urgency, and balance this with the need to bring good judgment and make wise decisions.
- **Determination.** We are relentlessly focused on finding solutions and paths forward, and bring creativity, innovation, and skill in navigating and addressing barriers to do so. We are committed to learning and continuous improvement. We constantly strive for a higher level of performance in all of our work.
- **Partnership.** We strive to understand the needs and perspectives of our stakeholders, and we work in partnership with many others to support DC students and families. We are committed to working with empathy, transparency, and humility. We are mindful of the trust placed in us to administer services fairly and honestly and operate with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.
- **Teamwork and collaboration.** We believe in the importance of diversity in many forms and believe that it strengthens our team and our work. We value and care about each other, operate with a generosity of spirit, and inspire, challenge, push, and support each other to be our best. We are guided by mutual trust and respect, accountability to one another, and a shared sense of mission and purpose.

Year-Over-Year (YoY) Performance Data

	FY23 (Actual)	FY24 (Actual)	FY25 (Actual)	FY26
Total Operating Budget <i>Including supplemental and contingency funding</i>	\$122M	\$129.8M	\$147.9M	\$133M
Available Staffing <i>Daily Average</i>	1,148	1,115	1,070	981
Staff Absenteeism <i>Daily Average</i>	Not Tracked	Not Tracked	30%	24%*
Students Routed <i>Start of School</i>	3,639	3,878	3,983	3,177
Total Routes <i>Start of School</i>	525	558	552	424
OSSE-DOT Routes <i>Start of School</i>	525	441	402	334
Private Routes <i>Start of School</i>	0	117	150	90
On-Time Terminal Departure <i>Daily Average, OSSE-DOT routes only</i>	Not Tracked	Not Tracked	94%	93%*
On-Time School Arrival (Bell Time) <i>Daily Average, OSSE-DOT and private routes combined</i>	Not Tracked	Not Tracked	Not Tracked	88%*
Parent Stipend Program Participants	Not Yet Launched	60	350	977*

*Through November 17, 2025

Key Challenges & Measures of Success

This plan seeks to directly address several key and persistent problems that OSSE-DOT has faced in recent years:

1. Staffing Shortages: OSSE-DOT continues to struggle to hire enough qualified bus drivers (especially when competing with private companies and neighboring jurisdictions for CDL-licensed drivers), and staff absenteeism due to callouts remains stubbornly high. In addition, OSSE-DOT's terminal manager to frontline staff ratio is nearly 40:1, making it challenging to effectively supervise and monitor employee performance and attendance. These staffing shortages and challenges in managing staff directly drive bus route performance issues. Despite improvements in on-time performance over time, approximately 10% of all student riders still arrive to school after the bell time on any given day.
2. Parent/Family Communication: Parents do not have a way to track the location of their student's bus route in real-time, and notifications about route issues (e.g., traffic delays) can take time to get to parents from dispatch. This contributes to a high-volume of calls into the Parent Resource Center (PRC) (80% of calls answered by the PRC are related to bus status), longer call wait and hold times, and increased frustration and confusion for families.
3. Outdated (Paper-Based and Manual) Data Collection Systems: OSSE-DOT still utilizes a manual, paper-based trip ticket system for each of its routes to record terminal departure times, the time they arrive at each student's home address and at school, and whether a student rode the bus and their reason for not riding. The process of scanning and processing these paper trip tickets is time-consuming and creates significant limitations on OSSE-DOT's ability to quickly analyze and report on route performance. Similarly, terminal managers use a manual process for recording daily route delays.

To address these underlying challenges, this plan outlines a set of ten (10) strategic projects under two (2) main priorities: to improve operational efficiency and to contain operating costs.

By the end of this strategic plan, OSSE's key measures of success will include:

- **Every District student who relies on transportation services rides a route with an annual on-time arrival performance of *at least* 95%, with an average late arrival time of no more than 10 minutes past bell time.**
- **OSSE-DOT's operating expenses will not exceed its local budget, and no supplemental funding will be required.**

Priority Area 1: Strengthen Operational Performance

Project and milestone statuses in each table below are as of November 2025.

Project 1.1: OSSE-DOT Parent Portal

Project Status	Complete		
Owner	Office of the Chief Information Officer		
Strategy	To address the historical challenge of inaccurate Transportation Request Forms submitted by LEAs (resulting in a large volume of incorrect home addresses and non-riders – including unenrolled students – being routed), OSSE will develop and launch an online portal that will enable families of eligible students to submit their own transportation preferences and details (bus transportation, Parent Stipend Program, or no transportation needed), with LEAs only needing to confirm school enrollment and specific IEP/504 Plan accommodations.		
SMART Goal(s)	By the start of School Year 2025-26, over 95% of students routed for bus service will have correct home address information and will be active riders, and twice as many families will enroll in the Parent Stipend Program compared to the previous school year.		
Target Completion Date	August 2025		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Finalize business requirements for online portal	March 2025	Complete	
Develop, test and launch online portal	June 2025	Complete	
Conduct family outreach via LEAs and other agency partners and host in-person help sessions for parents	August 2025	Complete	

Project 1.2: GPS System & Parent Application

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Office of the Chief Information Officer		
Strategy	<p>OSSE will select, procure, and implement a comprehensive GPS routing and tracking technology and associated parent application. This technology will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow parent/guardian(s) to track and receive notifications about their student's bus location in real time; • Automate routing and route adjustments; and • Replace OSSE-DOT's paper trip ticket system with a digital system, enabling OSSE-DOT to more quickly and accurately track individual route performance, identify consistent non-riders, and more quickly process and submit Medicaid reimbursement requests. 		
SMART Goal(s)	During School Year 2026-2027, OSSE-DOT will implement a GPS bus tracking and parent application – starting with a summer pilot and scaling to our entire fleet and private vendors – to achieve reliable real-time tracking on 100% of bus routes and at least 80% parent adoption.		
Target Completion Date	School Year 2026-2027		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Onboard IT project managers	September 2024	Complete	
Finalize vendor selection and execute letter contract	November 2025	Complete	
Finalize definitive contract, <i>Council approval required</i>	January 2026	Not Started	
Configure business requirements for the GPS system software	Winter 2026	Not Started	
Integrate relevant student and school data feeds into software	Winter 2026	Not Started	
Implement routing technology features	Spring 2026	Not Started	
Complete installation of GPS tablets on entire OSSE-DOT fleet	Spring 2026	Not Started	
Complete training for all frontline bus staff	Summer 2026	Not Started	
Host parent information and help sessions on parent app	Summer 2026	Not Started	
Tiered implementations	School Year 2026-27	Not Started	

Project 1.3: Automated Routing

Project Status	Complete		
Owner	Division of Student Transportation (Routing & Scheduling)		
Strategy	OSSE-DOT will better utilize the automated routing functions of the division's Trapeze system to build fewer, more efficient routes.		
SMART Goal(s)	By the start of School Year 2025-26, OSSE-DOT routes will have fewer overall routes as compared to last school year and the student-to-bus ratio will increase to at least 10.		
Target Completion Date	October 2025		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Onboard IT contractor/consultant with Trapeze expertise	October 2024	Complete	
Design and monitor ESY routes using automated routing	July 2025	Complete	
Design and monitor regular SY routes using automated routing; analyze and adjust as needed before Run Bid route assignments	October 2025	Complete	

Project 1.4: Terminal Improvements

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Division of Operations (Building Operations); <i>Department of General Services (DGS)</i>		
Strategy	OSSE will invest in critical improvements to building infrastructure and working conditions at bus terminals to further incentivize attendance at work by frontline staff.		
SMART Goal(s)	By May 2026, OSSE-DOT will have engaged DGS to complete prioritized repairs for all bus terminals, with 100% of critical issues resolved and at least 80% of non-critical issues addressed and will have finished 100% of work on the new W Street Terminal.		
Target Completion Date	May 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Complete necessary reprogramming	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Finalize prioritized list of repairs and scope of work with DGS	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Complete all critical repairs and majority of non-critical repairs	Spring 2026	In Progress	
Procure new trailer for New York Avenue	Summer 2026	Not Started	
Complete all work on new W Street Terminal	Spring 2026	In Progress	

Project 1.5: Non-CDL Vans

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Division of Operations (Building Operations)		
Strategy	To expand our fleet with lower-cost vehicles that do not require special/CDL licensure to operate, OSSE-DOT will procure a fleet of shuttle vans from DPW and will create a new driver position for trained frontline staff (e.g., Bus Attendants seeking a promotion opportunity) to operate these vehicles.		
SMART Goal(s)	By July 2026, OSSE-DOT will have incorporated 14 new non-CDL vans into its fleet, created and filled at least 14 new non-CDL driver positions to operate the vans, established the criteria for routes that can be serviced by a van, and deployed routes starting with ESY 2026.		
Target Completion Date	July 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Execute purchase order for 14 non-CDL passenger vans	November 2025	Completed	
Work with HR to establish a new driver position	January 2026	In Progress	
Ensure delivery of vans to appropriate terminals	February 2026	In Progress	
Hire, onboard and train new drivers to operate passenger vans	June 2026	Not Started	
Assign passenger vans to relevant routes beginning with ESY	July 2026	Not Started	

Project 1.6: HR Changes in Practice

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Division of Human Resources		
Strategy	OSSE-HR will review and make updates to OSSE-DOT's staff callout line, use of unpaid leave, and other practices to help promote staff attendance and reduce daily absenteeism at bus terminals.		
SMART Goal(s)	By end of School Year 2025-2026, OSSE-DOT will maintain a below 30% daily absenteeism (higher attendance than year prior).		
Target Completion Date	June 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Review historical data and develop recommended changes in practice and policy	September 2025	Complete	
Meet with unions and terminal managers to discuss implementation changes to CBA's	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Hold All Employee Meeting to discuss changes and rollout timelines	Winter 2026	Not Started	
Implement new practice and policies	Winter 2026	Not Started	
Monitor employee absenteeism, including year to year analysis	Ongoing	In Progress	

Project 1.7: Non-Ridership Tracking

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Office of the Chief Information Officer; Division of Student Transportation (Terminal Operations, Routing & Scheduling); Deputy Superintendent of Operation's Project Management Office		
Strategy	OSSE will develop and launch a new application to digitally track daily non-ridership, so that the agency can continually identify students who do not ride the bus for ten (10) or more consecutive days (when routes arrive within the scheduled pick-up window to the student's home, and without a reason for student absence), notify LEAs and families, and remove students from routes where applicable.		
SMART Goal(s)	By Q2 of FY26, OSSE will have identified the total number of non-riders and reduce a similar proportion of routes (e.g., if 10% of students do not ride, Routing Team will attempt to reduce 10% of the agency's current route volume).		
Target Completion Date	June 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Develop and launch the non-ridership iPad application	June 2025	Completed	
Develop business rules for terminal operations specialists to enter non-riders based on paper trip ticket data	October 2025	Completed	
Identify non-riders and notify LEA and family	Ongoing	In Progress	
Remove non-riders from routes and adjust routes accordingly	Ongoing	In Progress	

Project 1.8: Interim Parent Notification Improvements

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Division of Student Transportation (Customer Engagement and Terminal Operations); Deputy Superintendent of Operation's Project Management Office		
Strategy	OSSE will review its parent-facing communications and notifications to identify and implement improvements that will help ensure that parents receive more timely and accurate information regarding their child's bus route and other OSSE-DOT processes, especially in the interim period before the GPS system and parent application is launched.		
SMART Goal(s)	During School Year 2025-26, OSSE-DOT will strengthen parent communication and notification processes that collectively ensure bus delay notification accuracy by 1) conducting quarterly training and 2) reducing Parent Resource Center call volume related to bus status by 15%.		
Target Completion Date	June 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Conduct an audit of bus delay parent notifications and information on the Daily DOT Updates website page to establish baseline data and identify systematic gaps	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Review parent contact information to identify and address any discrepancies between IDS and Parent Portal	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Identify concrete process improvements and develop or update SOPs for terminal managers and PRC representatives	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Discuss parent texting requirement for all frontline bus employees with OLRCB and union partners; <i>implement if/as deemed possible</i>	Winter 2026	In Progress	
Conduct quarterly parent communication quality and accuracy reviews to adjust process improvements as needed and support continuous improvement	Ongoing	Not Started	

Priority Area 2: Optimize Cost Efficiency

Project 2.1: Overtime Monitoring

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Deputy Superintendent of Operation's Project Management Office; Division of Student Transportation (Administration)		
Strategy	OSSE-DOT will rigorously monitor and update the process for requesting and approving overtime hours for frontline staff, to reduce overtime spending to only areas of operational necessity.		
SMART Goal(s)	By the end of FY26, OSSE will decrease overtime spending by 10% compared to FY24.		
Target Completion Date	September 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Develop process for compiling and analyzing overtime reports biweekly	June 2025	Completed	
Review and amend internal process for requesting and approving overtime usage	October 2025	Completed	
Monitor monthly trends and identify additional cost savings opportunities in routes if available	Ongoing	In Progress	
Identify additional opportunities to establish funding agreements that will cover overtime costs associated with servicing extracurricular (non-FAPE) transportation events (e.g., field trips, Special Olympics)	December 2025	In Progress	

Project 2.2: Parent Stipend Program Expansion

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Division of Student Transportation (Finance)		
Strategy	OSSE will significantly expand and promote the availability of our Parent Stipend Program to eligible families who have the ability to regularly self-transport their student(s) and receive reimbursement, to reduce the number of students who require bus service (and therefore reduce the number of overall routes operated and associated costs).		
SMART Goal(s)	During School Year 2025-26, OSSE will <i>at least</i> double the number of eligible families enrolled in the Parent Stipend Program as compared to School Year 2024-25		
Target Completion Date	June 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Build Parent Stipend Program enrollment as a transportation option in the new Parent Portal	June 2025	Completed	
Process application materials and approve participants timely	Ongoing	In Progress	
Conduct targeted outreach and provide in-person and over-the-phone support to eligible families who indicated interest in Parent Stipend but did not complete their application	Ongoing	In Progress	
Review attendance records and process monthly stipend payments	Ongoing	In Progress	

Project 2.3: Private Route Reduction

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Division of Student Transportation (Terminal Operations, Routing & Scheduling)		
Strategy	OSSE will continue to reduce our overall route count based on tracking non-ridership, optimizing route efficiency, and reducing staff absenteeism, enabling us to reduce the total number of routes assigned to private vendors as compared to previous years.		
SMART Goal(s)	During School Year 2025-26, fewer than 25% of all bus routes will be operated by privately contracted vendors (or at least a 40% reduction in total private route count as compared to School Year 2024-25).		
Target Completion Date	April 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Monitor route performance, non-ridership and staffing availability to identify route consolidation opportunities	Ongoing	In Progress	
Strategically assign relevant routes to private contractors and inform vendors	October 2025	Completed	
Analyze cost control impact and performance	Ongoing	In Progress	

Project 2.4: LEA-Led Transportation Pilot

Project Status	In Progress		
Owner	Deputy Superintendent of Operation's Project Management Office		
Strategy	During School Year 2026-27, OSSE will pilot and test a model of OSSE-subsidized, LEA-operated transportation with Kingsman Academy Public Charter School, in which OSSE provides funding to support the cost of Kingsman operating their own transportation services for eligible students with disabilities enrolled in their LEA (in an amount not to exceed to cost of enrolling each student in the Parent Stipend Program). OSSE will then expand the pilot to other interested small- and mid-size LEAs.		
SMART Goal(s)	During Fiscal Year 2026, OSSE-DOT will not need to transport any eligible students attending Kingsman PCS; in addition, OSSE-DOT will engage Public Charter schools to gain interest in LEA-led transportation model.		
Target Completion Date	September 2026		
Key Milestones	Target Completion Date	Milestone Status	
Finalize the terms and conditions under which a LEA may receive funding from OSSE to operate their own transportation services	September 2025	Completed	
Execute a funding agreement with pilot LEA (Kingsman Academy PCS)	December 2025	In Progress	
Compile best practices and templates and determine interest from other small- and mid-size LEAs	April 2026	Not Started	