



**Transportation Efficiency Study  
for Valley Stream 13 Union Free School District  
August 2025**

Completed by  
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# VALLEY STREAM 13 SCHOOL DISTRICT

Valley Stream Union Free School District contracted with *On the Bus Transportation Planning* to provide an evaluation of the current routes for the 2025-2026 school year. OTB will make recommendations on efficiencies and consolidations to save the district money.

## Revised Scope of Work - 7/23/24

*FEHB On the Bus Transportation Planning Services* will follow the following scope, in detail, to provide Valley Stream 13 with a plan moving forward.

1. Working with a transportation consultant to review routing across the district to balance loads and look for cost saving opportunities.
2. Working on a comprehensive review of special education transportation for in district and out-of-district students and related expenditures.
3. Investigating the cost/benefit for the district to purchase one large and one medium bus that would potentially cover internal routes, such as gifted and talented or special education routes, along with grade level field trips.

In addition, OTB has been asked to respond to a request for in-district transportation from Mr. Gerard Antoine, former Assistant Superintendent for Business and Human Resources.. The response to the question of bringing transportation “in-house” can be found in Appendix A.

## Current Transportation

Currently the district is contracting pupil transportation with the following providers: First Student, Guardian Bus, Independent Transportation, Nassau BOCES, Suburban Transportation, and WE Transportation/VTC. Guardian Transportation provides in-district general education transportation using 10 big buses and one small bus for a nonpublic school route. The 10 big buses provide the following services: six bus routes at James A. Dever School, six bus routes at Howell Road School, four bus routes at the Wheeler Avenue School, and four routes at the Willow Road School. The remaining contractors provide service for special education and nonpublic transportation.

The district has experienced long delays with the routing software upgrade from Routefinder Pro to Routefinder Plus. The routing software company continues to provide the necessary support and training to assist the district in using the product to its fullest potential. Unfortunately, these setbacks have prolonged the delivery of the necessary data needed for the completion of this report.

## Data Concerns

According to the district's routing software, Routefinder Plus, Valley Stream 13 has 2149 students assigned to public, private, parochial, charter, and special education schools. Whereas, in the data grid for students there are 2152 students in the system (meaning three students not assigned to a school). Further analysis shows there are 26 of the 2152 not pinned to a map for them to be routed. When looking at the student population sorted by grades P, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 there are 2119 students. If you sort the student database by the four elementary schools, you find 1847 students; whereas the total from the schools database is 1868. *On the Bus* is not aware why these discrepancies exist but it does heighten the need for caution when examining the routes and providing solid recommendations for efficiencies to the district.

Cross referencing this data with district personnel, *On the Bus* was notified of 121 in-district special education students who will be transported by Suburban Transportation and 161 out-of-district special education students and nonpublic students who will be transported by the aforementioned contractors. It is unclear if these students are in the routing database at the time of drafting this report, but they will need transportation.

# Cost

*On the Bus* reviewed the student data to determine eligibility for transportation based on the district’s walking distance policy of one-half mile for grades K-3 and one mile for grades 4-6 (Appendix B). The number of students in Routefinder who qualify for transportation to the four indistrict elementary schools is 893 students. Including the in-district special education students, out-of-district special education students, and the nonpublic school students, the total students in the Valley Stream 13 district eligible for transportation is 1155 pupils.

Last year the district spent \$4,220,000 on transportation with an additional expenditure of \$41,000 for field trips. The ‘24-’25 contracts were extended at an increase of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 3.4%. The anticipated total for transportation with field trips for the 2025-2026 school year is \$4,405,874 considering the \$144,874 CPI increase. The current anticipated cost per pupil per year is \$3814.61 and the cost per pupil per day is \$21.19.

# Specific Recommendations

In reviewing the routes currently in the Routefinder system for the coming school year, *On the Bus* notices the vehicle capacity was set to 44 students while the contractor was operating 66 passenger buses. The recommendation is to increase the capacity to 59 students, which provides compliance with district policy to have 10% surplus capacity for each bus. At the time of writing the routes are configured as indicated in the table below:

AM ROUTES	# STOPS	# STUDENTS	AM TIMES	Bus Capacity	Efficiency
DEVER 1	18	37	753-815	59	63%
DEVER 2	20	21	752-815	59	36%
DEVER 3	14	33	754-815	59	56%
DEVER 4	17	37	748-815	59	63%
DEVER 5	18	26	752-815	59	44%
DEVER 6	12	17	757-815	59	29%
HOWELL 1	15	38	822-840	59	64%
HOWELL 2	16	34	820-840	59	58%

HOWELL 3	10	30	825-840	59	51%
HOWELL 4	20	55	810-840	59	93%
HOWELL 5	11	46	824-840	59	78%
HOWELL 6	19	54	817-840	59	92%
WHEELER 1	23	32	816-840	59	54%
WHEELER 2	20	52	816-840	59	88%
WHEELER 3	21	55	812-840	59	93%
WHEELER 4	21	49	814-840	59	83%
WILLOW 5	13	39	731-750	59	66%
WILLOW 6	17	30	726-750	59	51%
WILLOW 7A	12	43	731-750	59	73%
WILLOW 7B	10	23	735-750	59	39%

The total students assigned to buses in the above chart equals 751 however, the eligible amount of students to be transported beyond the walking distance is 893. *On the Bus* is not aware of the transportation needs of the 142 additional pupils. Conversations with district personnel lead us to believe that these students are going to be assigned to nonpublic or special education routes yet to be determined. Based on this uncertainty, *On the Bus* conservatively recommends reducing one bus route at Dever and one bus route at Howell.

At James A. Dever School, Dever 5 could be eliminated by dividing the students between Dever 2 and Dever 4.

AM ROUTES	# STOPS	# STUDENTS	AM TIMES	Bus Capacity	Efficiency
DEVER 1	18	37	753-815	59	63%
DEVER 2	TBD	31	TBD-815	59	53%
DEVER 3	14	33	754-815	59	56%
DEVER 4	TBD	53	TBD-815	59	90%
<del>DEVER 5</del>	<del>18</del>	<del>26</del>	<del>752-815</del>	<del>59</del>	<del>44%</del>
DEVER 6	12	17	757-815	59	29%

At Howell Road School *On the Bus* recommends deleting Howell 1 and reassigning the students to Howell 2 and Howell 3.

<b>HOWELL 1</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>822-840</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64%</b>
HOWELL 2	TBD	55	TBD-840	59	93%
HOWELL 3	TBD	48	825-840	59	80%
HOWELL 4	20	55	TBD-840	59	93%
HOWELL 5	11	46	824-840	59	78%
HOWELL 6	19	54	817-840	59	92%

The above adjustment would save the district the cost of one vehicle and driver because that same bus was used for both Howell 1 and Dever 5.

In reference to the district’s walk back policy (Appendix C), greater efficiencies could be found if this policy, which was established in 2018, was revisited. If increased savings were desired, the district could reduce the number of routes at Willow Ave School to three by combining the lowest populated route among the remaining three. This would require a solid grasp on ridership numbers and the phasing out of the walk back policy. The district could also reduce James A. Dever to four routes if student numbers were firm and route times were slightly longer.

To further determine precise ridership, Valley Stream 13 should consider an opt out program where parents notify the district if they are planning on personally transporting their children to school each day. This could provide additional support to the reduction of contracted vehicles. An example of the parental opt out form has been included in the Appendix D.

At the time of completion the special needs routes were not in the Routefinder system for analysis. In general, *On the Bus* recommends using the piggybacking contract and shared services to find cost savings.

## Staffing

The complexities of contract pupil transportation and the ever changing federal, state, and local laws and regulations require full-time monitoring and commitment. To thoroughly complete this task, a transportation professional such as a civil service qualified Pupil Transportation Director or Supervisor would be a great asset to the district. This individual would establish safe, efficient routes, oversee contractor compliance and prepare for upcoming changes such as the conversion to zero emission

buses. In addition, this person would be the district contact person for emergency changes to daily transportation routines, coordinating with each school. This person would be responsible for state-mandated bus safety and evacuation drills and create a comprehensive district-wide bus safety instruction program for students.

## Summary

*OTB* makes the following recommendations to maintain safety and maximize cost savings in pupil transportation:

- Phase out the “walk-back” policy
- Review data in routing software to insure accuracy
- Track ridership to establish the actual number of students who ride
- Implement an “opt-out” policy for families who do not need transportation to obtain more predictable ridership numbers for efficient routing (see sample form in Appendix D)
- Route buses closer to capacity than is currently being done (see specific recommendations above)
- Combine routes to reduce the number of vehicles and drivers needed (see specific recommendations above)
- Hire a full-time Transportation Director/Supervisor to interface with the contractor to ensure compliance with the contract, create and maintain routes, oversee contractor compliance with NYDMV, NYDOT, and NYSED

## Appendix A

Valley Stream 13 Union Free School District has 700+ students in kindergarten through sixth grade. These students are being transported to and from school by the district's contractor for the 2024-2025 school year.

The current district policy regarding eligibility for transportation is:

- Kindergarten through third grade: pupils residing one-half (1/2) mile or greater from the school they attend.
- Fourth through sixth grades: pupils residing one (1) mile or greater from the school they attend.

The question to be addressed is: can the district bring their transportation "in house?" This process involves:

- Registering as a motor carrier with NYDMV, NYDOT and complying with NYSED Regulations 156.3.
- Terminating the current transportation contracts
- Purchasing or leasing vehicles (currently the district has 20 routes at a purchase cost of \$150,000/bus)
- Building or leasing repair facility with a lift
- Stock the repair facility with supplies and parts
- Build a fueling station/purchase fuel
- Build a bus wash station
- Hiring and training employees
  - Transportation Supervisor
  - Dispatcher
  - Mechanic(s)
  - Driver Trainer
  - Drivers (maintain compliance -fingerprints, physicals, PPT...)

- Purchasing routing software

*On the Bus* does not recommend moving away from contract transportation. The cost of establishing an “in house” transportation facility is prohibitive. Other obstacles include the bus driver shortage, the mechanic shortage and the impending transition to electric vehicles which increases the cost per bus by 3 times plus the costly infrastructure to support electric vehicles. The timeframe to accomplish this transition to district owned and operated vehicles is lengthy and complicated.

OTB makes the following alternative recommendations to maintain safety and obtain cost savings in pupil transportation:

- Eliminate the “walk-back” policy
- Track ridership to establish the actual number of students who ride
- Implement an “opt-out” policy for families who do not need transportation to obtain more predictable ridership numbers
- Route buses closer to capacity than is currently being done
- Combine routes to reduce the number of vehicles and drivers needed
- Appointing a full-time district employee to interface with the contractor to ensure compliance with the contract, create and maintain routes, oversee contractor compliance with NYDMV, NYDOT, and NYSED

*On the Bus* believes the district can achieve significant cost savings, maintain safety and increase efficiency by implementing the above recommendations.

### STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The Board of Education affirms its goal of providing a safe and economical transportation system for district students. Transportation shall be provided at district expense to those students who are eligible as authorized by the Board in accordance with all applicable laws.

Transportation in the district is divided into two categories: Regular and Special, as described below.

The Superintendent of Schools shall be responsible for administering the transportation program. The program shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and policies established by federal, state and local authorities.

#### Regular Transportation

Regular transportation refers to the bus service provided by means of conventional school buses. Transportation will be provided for all children in grades K - 3 who live one-half mile or more from the school they attend and for all children in grades 4 - 6 who live one mile or more from the school they attend. Distance shall be measured from the property line of the student's home nearest the school to the nearest school building entrance door, regardless of whether that door is in use and/or available for student access, by the shortest distance over publicly maintained routes. There are no exceptions to this distance rule. If a parent or guardian questions the measurement, it will be checked by the Assistant Superintendent for Business or his/her designee.

Transfers from one school to another within the district, which are subject to approval or denial on a yearly basis, qualify a child for transportation provided the child meets the requirement for regular transportation as set forth above.

The Board of Education hereby authorizes the Superintendent to develop and implement an administrative regulation establishing a procedure for providing transportation walk-back passes to students who do not live within the specified mileage limits established above. Unassigned space must be available on the bus on an existing route where they reside and such transportation must come at no additional cost to the District.

### Special Transportation

Special transportation is subdivided into two categories: (1) transportation for students with disabilities; and (2) transportation for children attending nonpublic schools that are located some distance from the district.

#### Nonpublic Schools:

Parents of children who attend nonpublic schools and who desire transportation must submit an application requesting this service by April 1st of the preceding school year. Families moving into the district after April 1st are given 30 days after moving into the district to submit such a request. The same minimum distance requirement that applies to Regular Transportation also applies to children who attend nonpublic schools, except that the distance transported shall not exceed 15 miles.

Transportation eligibility: decisions for students with disabilities are made by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) and/or the Committee on Preschool Education (CPSE). The same minimum distance requirement that applies to Regular Transportation also applies to students with disabilities, except upon the recommendation of the CSE/CPSE. In all such cases, the distance transported shall not exceed 50 miles [Special education transportation to a parentally selected unilateral placement shall not exceed 50 miles if the program provides services similar to those recommended on a child's Individualized Education Program ( IEP )].

### STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

**SUBJECT: Scheduling and Routing**

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE**

1. Walk-back passes will be issued to students who do not otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for transportation following the end of the third week of school based on a space available basis on each route as follows:

- Priority will be given to students in grades K-3 and will continue in the sequence of grades 4, 5, and 6.
- Thereafter, priority will be given to students in order of furthest distance from the school the students attend.

2. Ten percent (10%) of each bus's available ridership will be exempt from Walk Back Passes to avoid overcrowding on buses. After the third week of school, if there is more than 10% of the ridership available on a bus following an analysis of established ridership, administration may issue Walk-back passes. In the event of a change in ridership during the school year such that a bus has less than ten percent (10%) available ridership, Walk-back passes will be withdrawn. For the purpose of this procedure, ridership means the number of students assigned to a particular bus regardless of whether such student(s) actually ride such bus.

3. Students will walk back to the nearest existing stop on the regular route.

## Appendix D

### Bus Transportation Opt Out Requests

Some parents may decide to transport their child to and from school instead of placing them on the school bus. This decision needs to be for both AM and PM transportation and every day of the week. For this purpose, please complete and click on the "opt out" button on the form below and click submit.

**Parent Name\***

**Student Name\***

**School Name\***

**Grade\***

**Email Address\***

**Phone Number\***

**To opt out of bus transportation, click the buttons below. \***

**Opt Out**

Requests are processed in the order received. Once your request has been finalized, it will remain in effect until the parent/guardian notifies the transportation department that bus transportation is needed. The request for reinstatement of bus transportation may be submitted at any time but may take up to 48 hours to process.