

FCPS Boundary Review

Policy 8130 Priority: **Transportation**

Provide for walking and bussing safety, limit transportation times and ensure efficient transportation routes with attendance areas

In-Person Community Sessions Input: Summary

The discussion of transportation challenges within school boundary reviews is a critical issue for school districts striving to achieve equity and efficiency. As communities assess changes to school boundaries, transportation emerges as a key factor influencing students' access to education, participation in programs, and overall well-being. This analysis highlights five prominent themes derived from community feedback: (1) bus overcrowding and delays, (2) length of commutes, (3) equitable access to transportation, (4) proximity to schools, and (5) safety concerns. These themes underscore the need to ensure a safe, equitable, and accessible educational environment. Through community insights and direct quotes from meeting notes, this report presents a comprehensive overview of these pressing transportation issues.

Themes of Discussions on Student Transportation

1. Bus Overcrowding and Delays

Community members expressed frustration over overcrowded buses leading to tardiness, absences, and a lack of consistency in transportation services, emphasizing the need for better bus capacity management. Many buses are overcrowded, leaving some students waiting for additional buses to arrive. This leads to delays and missed class time, especially in areas with overpopulation.

Why important: Ensuring timely and efficient transportation is vital for equitable access to education and maintaining student attendance.

Supporting Quotes:

- “In areas of overpopulation, when buses are full, students are left behind waiting for a late bus arrival.”
- “If the goal is reducing transportation, but the area is not overcrowded, why would we consider changes?”
- “Audubon Community Mobile Homes students are marked absent or late for bus late arrivals being at over-capacity.”
- “Less bussing needed, shorter routes, fewer buses.”

2. Length of Commutes

Students in certain areas experience excessively long commutes due to boundary assignments, reducing time for after-school activities, rest, and family engagement. Concerns were raised about the physical and emotional toll of long bus rides on students, with a shared consensus that shorter, more efficient routes should be prioritized to improve access to education and afterschool programs.

Why important: Long commutes negatively affect students' well-being, participation in extracurriculars, and overall academic performance.

Supporting Quotes:

- “Length of bus ride because they’re needing to go beyond their zone.”
- “Kids can’t stay for afterschool. Sleep.”
- “Shorter bus rides - no dawn/dusk waiting.”
- “Students are losing time in transit use.”
- “Travel time, which leads into equitable access.”
- “Don’t want children on the bus forever or miss bus.”

3. Equitable Access to Transportation

Some schools lack equitable transportation services, leading to difficulties in accessing programs such as advanced or immersion offerings at distant schools. Participants emphasized the importance of aligning transportation options with program availability to ensure all students, regardless of their zone, could access specialized educational opportunities equitably.

Why important: Transportation disparities can lead to unequal educational opportunities for students based on their location.

Supporting Quotes:

- “More equal access to programming or better transportation to centers with that programming (Spanish immersion; IB; AAP).”
- “Transportation challenges: equitable access for all families.”
- “Accessible Parent/Student After-School Programs.”
- “Why is FPS willing to spend \$\$ funding buses for early release Mondays but so focused on equitable transportation with a boundary change?”
- “Address transportation needs efficiently.”

- “Every school provides equal access to programming, regardless of transportation or school ratings.”

4. Proximity to Schools

Proximity impacts transportation needs, as students located far from their schools are bused unnecessarily, causing inefficiencies and disconnect from their local communities. Many attendees supported the idea of aligning school assignments with neighborhood proximity to reduce commute times and strengthen local community connections, especially for elementary and middle school students.

Why important: Reducing transportation distances strengthens community ties and improves safety and engagement.

Supporting Quotes:

- “Ensuring proximity of elementary schools—shorter commutes to school for the first few years when kids need the most support and parental involvement.”
- “Walt Whitman - 100% bus in - issue of attendance island and can’t walk to school.”
- “Students end up at schools that don’t logically make sense.”
- “Would zoning based on town help keep population and travel time down? Keeping families within certain town addresses for schools (e.g., Vienna address for Vienna Elementary, Middle, and High Schools).”
- “Proximity to schools—long travel times.”

5. Safety Concerns

Safety is a major concern, especially for students crossing busy roads or using dangerous bus stops. Limited sidewalks exacerbate this issue. Participants voiced strong concerns about student safety, highlighting the urgent need for improved infrastructure, such as sidewalks and safer bus stops, to mitigate risks associated with walking to schools or bus stops.

Why important: Addressing these issues ensures students’ physical safety and reduces parental concerns.

Supporting Quotes:

- “Safety of the walkers → abusers, traffic (roads & sidewalks safe? No crossing roads & busy intersections).”

- “Is Fairfax County addressing sidewalk issues. Also dangerous bus stop locations (Telegraph Road).”
- “Limited sidewalks and options without buses.”
- “Some students are crossing highways to access buses.”
- “Bus routes on major highways—new drivers having to drive on dangerous highways to get to school.”
- “safe and secure path to school, not crossing major highways if possible.”
- “Bike/walk options – safe → avoid major highways + divided highways.”
- “Safety concerns with long commutes.”