

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Mindy Roche <m.roche@bowensbusservice.com>
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 1:35 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Howard County Transportation

Importance: High

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Hello,

Ms. Walsh brought up about the cutting of school buses for students on the council meeting on 05/01/2023. Just wanted to tell you that Mr. Nevin is telling you blatant lies. There is absolutely no conversations with the current school bus contractors. Please push more on this.

Thanks,
Mindy Roche
HR Director
Bowen's Bus Service, Inc.
(410) 489-9501
(410) 489-9604 Fax
m.roche@bowensbusservice.com

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Lauren Barnes <lobarnes1@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 9:00 AM

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We need YOUR help to restore school bus service to thousands of children. The budget will be finalized May 25th so the families of Howard County appreciate anything you can do to immediately influence this negative change for our county!

This change will be detrimental to the community in the following ways:

SAFETY – Personal safety from crime, extreme weather, and having to carry a heavy backpack load such a long way.

ACADEMICS – Based on the updated Policy 5200, elementary school kids may need to walk up to 1.5 miles, middle schoolers up to 2 miles, and high schoolers over 2 miles EACH way with 15-20 pounds of gear. Even if they get a bus, they may have to walk that far JUST to the bus stop! How are these kids going to be able to focus on school? How will they get to school during rainy, cold, and hot weather days?

EQUITY – Lower income communities will be the strongest hit by the bus cuts. Bus cuts have been made disproportionately to Title 1 elementary schools and Title 1 feeds to middle and high school. Absenteeism and truancy will increase and negatively impact these communities at higher rates than others. This is directly opposite to equity.

TRAFFIC – There are already many schools overburdened by car drop offs. Extra cars and traffic will increase air pollution throughout the county.

ECONOMY - Based on the Baltimore Sun article, HCPSS cut ties with all local bus vendors and awarded \$99 million in business to out-of-state bus contractors.

Full article: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/howard/cng-ho-howard-bus-contractors-20230426-wco2gg4jjzcubciindex6y5kju-story.html>

Thank you for your time!

A very concerned citizen and parent,
Lauren Barnes

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Soak Fold <soakandfold@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:09 PM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail
Subject: School buses please!

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Carranza, Amankaya

From: Willietta Mathies <wrmathies44@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:09 PM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail
Subject: We need the school buses

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Carranza, Amankaya

From: V Kimou <akehtee@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:12 PM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail
Subject: Help us fight for the school bus please.

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Thank you for your time!

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Vivlyn Kimou <vkimou1@students.towson.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:11 PM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail
Subject: School bus needed, parents work, COVID is over or kids will miss school

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Thank you for your time!

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Abena Freeman <abenafreeman@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:05 PM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail
Subject: We need school buses

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Thank you for your time!

From: [Kehtee Kimou](mailto:Kehtee.Kimou)
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; [Jacquelin McCoy@hcpss.org](mailto:Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org); [Robyn Scates@hcpss.org](mailto:Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org); student_member@hcpss.org; [Scott Washington@hcpss.org](mailto:Scott_Washington@hcpss.org); [Michael Martirano@hcpss.org](mailto:Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org); [Adam Downes](mailto:Adam_Downes); [Paul Bertulis@hcpss.org](mailto:Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org); [Brian Nevin](mailto:Brian_Nevin); CouncilMail
Subject: School buses for elementary or neglect
Date: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:11:18 PM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

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Thank you for your time!

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Jeffrey Guzek <jeffandsabina@verizon.net>
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 12:34 AM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail; Jung, Deb
Cc: jeffandsabina@verizon.net
Subject: Howard County Schools Buses

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

As a concerned citizen and parent of 2 Howard County students, we ask for YOUR help to restore school bus service to thousands of children. The budget will be finalized May 25th so the families of Howard County appreciate anything you can do to immediately influence this negative change for our county!

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Thank you for your time
Sabina Gill and Jeff Guzek

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Kerry Ketler <kmoroz@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 6, 2023 7:03 AM
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; Adam Downes; Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; Brian Nevin; CouncilMail; Jung, Deb
Subject: loss of school bus routes

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Hello Board and Council Members,

I'm including a letter below expressing the concerns of my family and my community around the recent decision to enlarge the non-transportation areas around many of the schools in Howard County. I was angry when the new non-transportation areas were first released, and confused as there was no information released about WHY this was happening. Is it to save money? Is there really no way to save money other than to ask high schoolers to walk 2.5 miles to school, middle schoolers to walk 1.5 miles, and elementary schoolers to walk over a mile? Please bear through my personal story below, and **I implore you to find ANY way to restore this and previous years' bus service.**

What a kick in the gut, to have received the wonderful news that school start times would be pushed back to give our children more sleep, particularly our older children, only to hear that some of that would then be taken away from many of them due to additional time required to get to school. Does the county assume that every parent can find a ride for their child??? Would any of the adults who made this decision ever agree to live somewhere where they had to walk 2 miles to work every day?

My family lives in the Beaverbrook neighborhood, and we are served by Longfellow Elementary, Harper's Choice Middle, and Wilde Lake High Schools. For 7 years my children have ridden the bus to Longfellow (a 35-minute walk for a small child from our house) and next year, EVEN THOUGH THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTANCE IS STILL 1 MILE, my youngest daughter, and several children in our neighborhood, will lose bus service! I will note that most of our neighborhood does not have sidewalks, and the streets that would presumably be used by our children to walk to school are high-traffic streets that are used as shortcuts by cars going from the Longfellow/Harpers Choice area up to the intersection of 108 and Centennial Lane. I've never felt great about my kids walking through our neighborhood, and how dare the county ask that many of them now do it EVERY DAY during rush hour periods?

The car drop-off and pick-up at Longfellow is a complete zoo; the parking lot cannot accommodate the number of cars that already drive their children to school (because who expects their young child to walk a mile to school?!). The traffic on Hesperus and Elliot's Oak during the morning and afternoon is a local nightmare.

My middle schooler, who already walks 0.3 miles to her bus stop carrying her computer and other school items in her backpack AND a saxophone every day, will lose her bus service as well. There are many current and rising middle schoolers in our neighborhood who now have no bus service to middle school OR high school when that time comes. Those schools are NOT close and should not be considered walkable from our neighborhood!

The form letter that I'm sure you have seen, but that I agree with 100%:

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Thank you for your time,
A very concerned citizen and parent,
Kerry Ketler

Carranza, Amankaya

From: crisfar <crisfar@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 9, 2023 11:48 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: School bus changes

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

I am a prior long term PTA delegate and a parent of high schoolers at WLHS. I'm now being told we will no longer have a bus for school yet we're over 2 miles away and there are paths in the woods. This is not a fair safe plan we're in Beaverbrook. Please reconsider this!

Plus I want to keep local bus drivers and. Companies. If there's more money to pay a CA company than fund these routes.

Sincerely,

Christina Thomas

Taxpayer and parent

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Corinne Happel <corinne.happel@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 9, 2023 10:38 AM
To: Goldscher, Paige; CouncilBoard@howardcountymd.gov; CouncilMail
Subject: Re: Save our School Buses for safety, for equity, for Earth

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Thank you for the note, Paige,
I do plan to provide additional testimony in support of funding continued school bus service to children losing it under changes to Transportation Policy 5200. Please see below.
Respectfully,
Corinne

Dear Howard County Council,

As a board-certified pediatrician, I have the duty to help children thrive and to speak out when a policy or action threatens their well-being. The cancellation of school buses for thousands of children in Howard County threatens their safety. What can you do to help secure funding of a reversal to transportation policy 5200 changes that cancel school bus service to thousands of children?

Last week at the BOE budget hearing, concerned parents and community members including three pediatricians described safety problems created by school bus cancellations. Families described busy roads being converted to walking paths to school despite lack of truly safe infrastructure to protect children walking to school. The Department of Public Works has promised some projects but in talking with parents who have lost school service over the past year due to similar projects, it is becoming clear that rather than truly creating safe walking zones, projects are often bare minimum efforts being used to exclude children from school bus service.

It is our duty to protect children. School buses are the safest way to get to school as cited by many including the Maryland Department of Transportation.

Have you seen the data on school zone speeding in Howard County? The recently released School Zone Speed Camera Report to the Howard County Council using 2022 data demonstrates that cars routinely speed in school zones, even after using speed cameras in efforts to decrease this. I have attached a copy here or you can read the report online: <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/School%20Zone%20Speed%20Camera%20Report%20to%20the%20County%20Council%202022.pdf>

A school zone speeding example: The recording site on Southbound Centennial Lane @ Centennial Woods Lane had 1,395 violations mailed per 126 hours enforced in 2022. That is MORE THAN 11 SPEEDING VIOLATIONS IN A SCHOOL ZONE PER HOUR (this is after they tossed out camera errors, license plate obstructions, and other non-confirmable incidents).

MORE THAN 11 SPEEDING VIOLATIONS PER HOUR IN A SCHOOL ZONE

Do we really want to add more car riders to this? Do we really think children are going to be safe bicycling in an unprotected bike lane on Centennial Lane or walking on the road itself when the sidewalk there is routinely unmaintained and slippery with leaves?

For the safety of our children, please advocate for operating funds in the BOE budget to fund a reversal of Transportation Policy 5200 changes.

Respectfully,
Corinne Happel, MD

On Tue, May 9, 2023 at 10:14 AM Goldscher, Paige <pgoldscher@howardcountymd.gov> wrote:

Dear Corinne,

Thank you for sharing your testimony with Councilwoman Rigby!

The County Council will be voting on the Fiscal Year 2024 Capital and Operating budget at the Council's Legislative Session on May 24th, when the budget is formally adopted. In the meantime, there will be many work sessions and opportunities for the public to offer testimony on the budget.

For more information on the budget process and upcoming meetings, please visit the Council's budget page here: <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Budget>.

Thank you again for taking the time to share your feedback as the Council considers the FY24 budget.

Sincerely,

Paige Goldscher (*she/her*)

District Aide for Councilwoman Christiana Rigby, District 3

Howard County Council

3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043

pgoldscher@howardcountymd.gov

410.313.3108



[Sign up for our newsletter!](#)

From: Corinne Happel <corinne.happel@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 10:46 PM
To: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>
Subject: Save our School Buses for safety, for equity, for Earth

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County Council,

I attended last Wednesday's County Council / Board of Education Joint Meeting and would like to follow up with some additional points as they relate to student safety with school bus cancellations and other modifications to transportation policy 5200. I am highly concerned about the safety of my children and other children in Howard County.

Three key points that I do not think were addressed at Wednesday's meeting:

1) Safety is a huge concern in revisions to Policy 5200. While the Board of Education is referring concerned citizens to the Transportation office to address these concerns, many safety concerns do not relate to the physical structure of walking routes and are outside of the jurisdiction of the transportation office.

a. For middle schoolers and high schoolers who are generally walking these longer routes alone up to 1.5 miles and up to 2.0 miles respectively unsupervised, parents and caregivers have expressed concerns about the risk for stalking by child predators. Routes that pass by homes of registered sex offenders are not excluded from safe walking paths. Children who have a history of molestation or violence against them feel vulnerable by new requirements to walk from far distances to school if they have no access to private vehicles.

b. Car rider pick up and drop off lines are already overwhelmed at Howard County schools and many administrators have reached out to parents and students multiple times this year recommending that they take an assigned bus to avoid the congestion and car idling in school parking lots that pollutes school air and presents safety challenges. Recently, at least one child was struck in a pick-up line at a local HCPSS school and was rushed to the ER. Local neighbors feel scared that this could happen to them both as pedestrians (being run over) and as drivers who struggle to see pedestrians in busy pick up zones. The children who are losing school bus service are

the ones who are further distances away than the children in current walk zones who are choosing to be driven to school. **As this non-service area expands outward, the majority of children who are losing service will be the ones who are driven in private vehicles if they can afford it.** As a result, current car lines in congested school parking lots will continue to expand as the visibility of walking school children and their safety decreases.

c. **School bus cancellations will lead to under-supervision of young elementary school children.** Families who do not have access to a private vehicle for school commutes will either need to pay someone to walk their child further distances, lose valuable income earning hours (think about walking round trip to and from a school that is 1, 1.5, or 2.0 miles away back and forth twice daily – easily over 5 miles), or more likely leave children under-supervised. Particularly for elementary school students including pre-K and kindergarten students, under-supervision on school commutes can have devastating consequences when a child does not see a car coming and runs across a street.

2) In addition to having children walking or being driven in private vehicles from further distances to schools in Howard County, children may have to walk or drive significantly increased distances to their school bus stops. **While previously the maximum allowable distance from home to a bus stop was 0.5 miles, bus stops for elementary school students can now be up to 1.0 mile away, bus stops for middle school students can be 1.5 miles away, and bus stops for high schoolers can be 2.0 miles away.** This was not discussed at the meeting and has not been advertised to parents. In discussions with many parents, most are not aware. Bus stops and routes are not released until August. Just as parents & caregivers were shocked to see announcements that their school bus was canceled in the days right before spring break, others will be shocked to see that they too will be highly affected by transportation 5200 policy changes when they see in August that their school bus stop is a mile or more away from their home. Concerns about increased cars on Howard County roads, equity, and safety as they relate to bus cancellations are compounded by the change in bus stop distances from homes.

3) As per statistics cited by HCPSS transportation head Nevin, more than a third of children losing their school bus next year are ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN (1,350 out of 3,500 of children are the figures cited during the meeting). That is more than 1 out of every 20 elementary school students in Howard County who will lose school bus service next year. As we think about equity and the young children who have fallen behind during the pandemic (the children with less were more likely to miss crucial educational milestones), it is concerning that we will expect their caregivers to walk close to five miles roundtrip daily to supervise them going back and forth to the school in the morning and afternoon. These parents and caregivers need time to spend working on skills like reading with their children, reviewing basic math facts, or earning valuable income to pay for surging grocery bills, rent/property tax, and childcare in Howard County. **These children should not be tired, exhausted, cold, or wet when they arrive at school because they did not have access to a private vehicle when it was stormy, wet, or cold.** We do not allow children to go outside for recess when it rains or when wind chill temperatures drop below 20 degrees F. Why would we require children with less to be exposed to bad weather over distances that take longer to

walk than the average time for recess? Transportation Policy 5200 revisions will not just cause high school students with less to fall behind, it will continue to widen the gap between elementary children in Howard County with less and elementary children in Howard County with more.

Parents are looking for a hero. A leader or group of leaders to rise to the occasion and reinstate bus service to the thousands of children losing service in Howard County under revisions to Transportation Policy 5200. **Cuts to school bus access come at a time when parents and caregivers are being hard hit by surging inflation hitting big ticket expenses like rent and property tax, childcare, and grocery bills.** Parents have fallen behind in their careers and financially as they took time off to care for children when crucial services were canceled during the pandemic. Affected families were not specifically informed or consulted for an opinion prior to policy 5200 changes, and now that concerns have come up, we need to find solutions. Many parents losing school bus coverage are so desperate that they have asked for ways to pay to reinstate bus service; fees could be used to subsidize school bus costs for recipients of Free and Reduced Meals or those meeting other need-based criteria. Partnerships with RTA have been discussed as an option. Governor Wes Moore has recently created a year of service for graduates, and should revisions be made to current bus driver hiring requirements, graduates could be offered work as school bus drivers as a way to give back and learn more about their community and as a way to serve as role models for younger students. If we invited more people to sit at the decision-making table, perhaps there are other unheard solutions that will emerge. What can you do to help?

As Council member Deb Jung prompted at the recent joint Howard County Council/Board of Education meeting, let's "think outside the box." Parents are open to suggestions. Let's not hurt our children.

Please save our school buses!

Respectfully,

Corinne Happel

Respass, Charity

From: Slguido00 <slguido00@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 10, 2023 11:24 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Restore HoCo Bus Service

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Please consider reading this letter and taking action on the part of the families that will be greatly affected by the removal of the bus service that is very much needed and used by many. In the last few years, the buses that pick up students in my neighborhood have been packed to maximum capacity showing how many students utilize this service. We need YOUR help to restore school bus service to thousands of children. The budget will be finalized May 25th so the families of Howard County appreciate anything you can do to immediately influence this negative change for our county!

This change will be detrimental to the community in the following ways: ·

SAFETY – Personal safety from crime, extreme weather, and having to carry a heavy backpack load such a long way. Many of these students also carry large musical instruments to school. How are they supposed to carry all this for up to 2 miles.

My son is in middle school and when I mapped the walk to his school it mapped at 1.7 miles but the middle school is saying it is only 1.1 miles! I still haven't found a path that is only 1.1 miles from my house to the middle school. Furthermore, the walking routes that are being proposed for kids to walk are not sidewalks they are the trails that go through wooded areas. I have never allowed my children to walk alone on those paths as it is a safety issue. Adults are routinely mugged often by a perpetrator with a knife and have their wallets and cellphones stolen on those paths. Please refer to the HCPD for frequency of this type crime around Lake Elkhorn.

ACADEMICS – Based on the updated Policy 5200, elementary school kids may need to walk up to 1.5 miles, middle schoolers up to 2 miles, and high schoolers over 2 miles EACH way with 15-20 pounds of gear. Even if they get a bus, they may have to walk that far JUST to the bus stop! How are these kids going to be able to focus on school? How will they get to school during rainy, cold, and hot weather days?

EQUITY – Lower income communities will be the strongest hit by the bus cuts. Bus cuts have been made disproportionately to Title 1 elementary schools and Title 1 feeds to middle and high school.

The lower income families will not be able to take the time off work to drive their students at the later time and will now have to pay for before school care creating more economic burden for them. The school district should have conducted a study of the hardships this decision will cause to families currently busing their children to school.

TRAFFIC – This is going to cause a traffic nightmare at the schools. There are already many schools overburdened by car drop offs. Extra cars and traffic will increase air pollution throughout the county. The increased traffic around the school may cause delays and frustration to residents who live within the school neighborhoods. It will require additional crossing guards and personnel to manage the traffic. This will create an increased incidence of students getting struck by cars per year simply because so many more students will be crossing streets as they walk/ride bikes to school.

ECONOMY - Based on the Baltimore Sun article, HCPSS cut ties with all local bus vendors and awarded \$99 million in business to out-of-state bus contractors.

Finally I would like to say that the decision to extend the walk distance and remove bus service for so many in HoCo coinciding with the announcement of the (looks very expensive) waterfront library gives the appearance that one is being traded to raise funds for the other. I do not know if that is true, but it looks that way to people in HoCo. We don't NEED a fancy new library, but we DO NEED our school buses!

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and please consider supporting the thousands of students that need the bus service restored for 23/24 and future school years.

Susan Guido

Respass, Charity

From: Council Web Inquiry <councilmail@howardcountymd.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 10, 2023 3:41 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: school bus service

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Name Judith C Lovchik

Email jlovchik1@att.net

Number 410 241-4142

Address 10320 Burnside Drive Ellicott City, Maryland. 21042

Subject school bus service

Message I'm not sure if I am in your district, but a neighbor said you might be an important player in the struggle to preserve school bus service for the little ones in our neighborhood. I don't have school age children anymore, but the safety of our children is paramount to the quality of our neighborhood.

Respass, Charity

From: Dewit, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dewit@MWPH.ORG>
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 12:43 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Written Testimony 511
Attachments: CC Testimony 511 de Wit.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Hello,

Please find my written testimony from 5/11/23.

Thank you,
Stephanie

Stephanie de Wit, MD
Neonatologist

Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital

1708 W. Rogers Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21209
410-578-7098 (office)
www.mwph.org

For over a century, MWPH has been a leading provider of family-focused, coordinated care to children in Baltimore and beyond. [Click here](#) to learn more about our 100 year history.



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General Budget Public Hearing

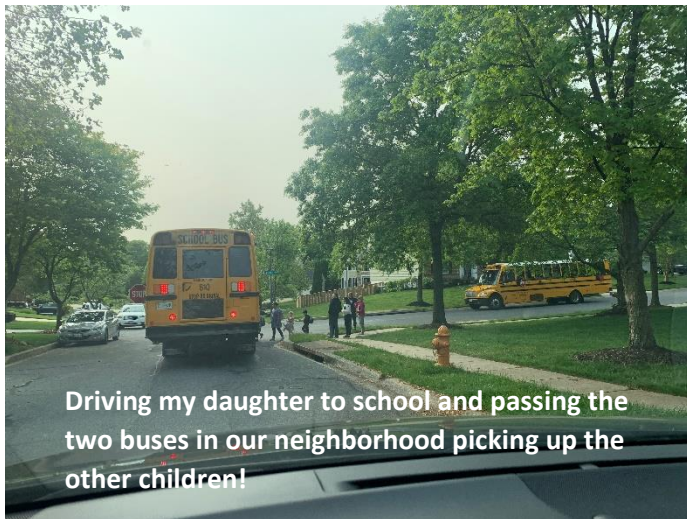
Meeting on May 11, 2023 at 9:30AM

Testimony by S. de Wit

Good morning. My name is Stephanie de Wit, from Elkridge, and I am asking for increased operating budget funding for transportation and to restore school bus service for the thousands of children slated to lose service in August.

I am a board-certified Pediatrician who works in a Pediatric Rehabilitation Hospital, and I am here today to continue advocating for the safety of the children in Howard County. I am also a mother with three daughters in Howard County Public Schools.

I would like to thank Council Members Rigby, Jung and Walsh for your comments and questions regarding transportation at the Operating Budget Work Session on May 1st. I share many of your concerns, especially those regarding the safety of walking students in unwalkable areas.



As I have shared before, my kindergartener was designated a walker this school year, despite TWO buses still servicing our neighborhood. Most of her journey is through an adjacent neighborhood without sidewalks. Cars are parked along the road, and the rolling terrain decreases visibility with at least one blind hill present. Children walk in the street to get to school. Children should not be sharing the road with speeding cars! And starting this summer, every child in my neighborhood will be walking to elementary school along this route. Some walking 1.5 miles!



General Budget Public Hearing

Meeting on May 11, 2023 at 9:30AM

Testimony by S. de Wit

My primary concern is safety. The reckless and aggressive driving we witness on highways does not stop in neighborhoods. The School Zone Speed Camera report supports the observation that people speed on our roadways, even in school zones with speed cameras! Did you know that a child has a 40% risk of death or severe injury when struck by a car going residential road speeds (30MPH)? Sidewalks can reduce pedestrian crashes by almost 90%! Sidewalks should not be optional, even in residential areas.

Our walk to school also involves crossing a busy road, across a crosswalk staffed with a crossing guard. However, just this week, there have been two consecutive mornings where my neighbor found the crosswalk empty – there was no crossing guard! Soon, children will be expected to walk longer distances to school without sidewalks and without dependable crossing guards! This is alarming! And sadly, I know these issues are not isolated to my neighborhood. Why is the HCPSS Transportation Office so unwilling to adapt and adjust their plan based on safety and equity concerns voiced by parents, County Council and Board of Education members? How many children will be hit by cars walking to school this year?

My daughter is more than a dot on a map. Her safety and the safety of her classmates is at risk. School buses are the safest way for children to get to school. Please continue to advocate for our children's safety and help restore bus service. This could literally be a life or death decision.

Resources:

1. Safe Kids Worldwide: [Things You Need To Know As You Head Back To School | Safe Kids Worldwide](#)
2. Safe Routes Partnership: [Too far to walk? | Safe Routes Partnership](#)
3. [Maryland School Bus Laws and Safety Tips - Zero Deaths Maryland & Vision Zero - Maryland Highway Safety Office \(zerodeathsmd.gov\)](#)
4. [School Zone Speed Camera Report to the County Council 2022.pdf \(howardcountymd.gov\)](#)

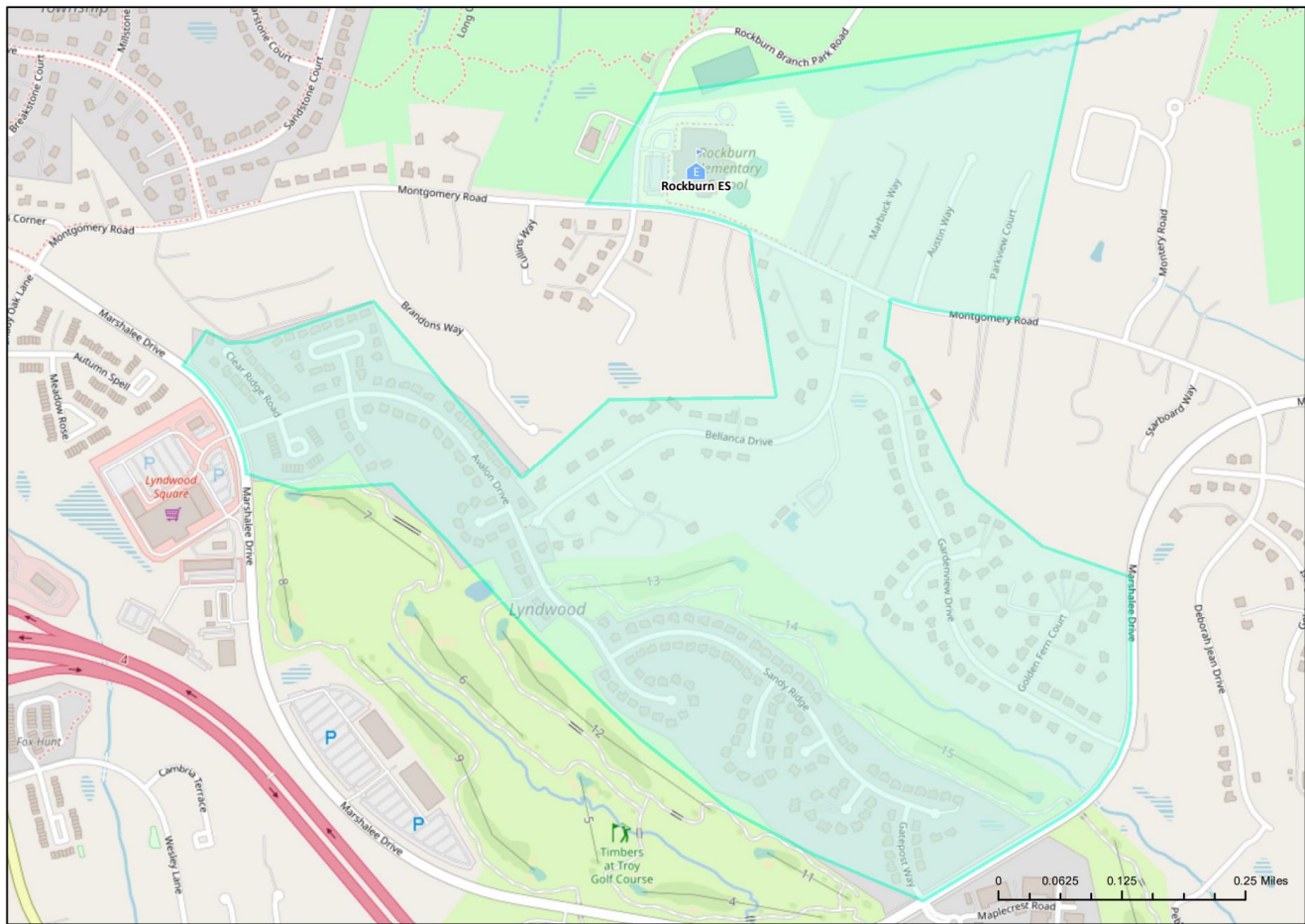
General Budget Public Hearing

Meeting on May 11, 2023 at 9:30AM

Testimony by S. de Wit

Addendum:

This is the non-transported area map for Rockburn Elementary School. The neighborhood directly across the street from our elementary school continues to have bus service (“hazard bus”). Many children in this neighborhood actually walk to school. A crosswalk is in place, but there is not currently a crossing guard. With the expansion of non-transportation areas, even more children will be driven to school, and traffic around the elementary school will increase. So again, pedestrians are at risk of being hit by a car.



 Non-Transported Area SY23-24

Rockburn ES Elementary Non-Transported Area 2023-24

The information shown on this map is only to be used as a guide for HCPSS non-transported areas. The data is compiled from many sources, and while the HCPSS has made substantial efforts to ensure the accuracy of this information, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. School and transportation assignments can be verified by contacting the Public Information Office at (410)313-6682.



From: [Lauren Barnes](#)
To: jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org
Subject: Safety concerns testimony
Date: Saturday, May 13, 2023 6:22:18 PM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good Evening,

I have already written and submitted testimony regarding the revisions to policy 5200 scheduled to be implemented in SY 2023-2024. But, I feel compelled to write again after witnessing a near pedestrian incident in my neighborhood the other day due to the LACK OF ANY SIDEWALKS.

The very thought of my young elementary school children walking, not only over a mile to school with instruments, heavy backpacks, projects etc in every kind of weather condition, they are also expected to do this through a neighborhood with no sidewalks anywhere, makes my heart absolutely sick.

Durham Rd West runs through the neighborhood of Beaverbrook. It wasn't until I registered my oldest child for Kindergarten several years ago that I learned it was a major cut through "shortcut" in the mornings and afternoons for people looking to avoid the congestion on 108 or through Harper's Farm Rd in the center of Columbia. How did I learn this? As soon as I brought my daughter up to school for the FIRST time, more than one Longfellow Elementary staff member said they recognized us already because they drive by my house each afternoon on their way home from school. I was mildly creeped out with the information that so many people already knew who we were and where we lived. As my network of parents, teachers, and friends has expanded over the years I have really seen the impact of using Castlemoore Dr/Durham Rd West as a shortcut. I literally wave hello to tens and tens of familiar faces daily that do not live in my neighborhood as they cruise down my street to avoid traffic/congestion. Even amongst my friend groups and trusted adult network, I have witnessed unsafe driving down my street. Unsafe behavior such as speeding, flying over speed bumps and swerving to one side of the street suddenly as another car approaches from the following direction.

And do you know what? There is not a sidewalk to be found. Hundreds of cars speed through Beaverbrook everyday and I cannot imagine a scenario existing where this isn't excessively dangerous to our children. We rely on the bus to ensure that our kids get to and from home each day. As parents, we let a piece of our hearts walk out that door each morning and we cannot imagine a world where that heart doesn't return. With the revision of policy 5200 and the cancellation of buses slated for next school year, we are undoubtedly going to hurt, if not lose, people's hearts and lives. Do not allow our school system to be responsible for that. Do not allow yourselves to be responsible for that.

Please change policy 5200 back and restore the bus services our citizens rely on for public safety.

If the Board does not take action on these citizen concerns, I would ask that Beaverbrook and Durham Rd West/Castlemoore Dr. be evaluated and approved for a safety exemption through HCPSS transportation. Our hearts are on the line.

Please see other written testimony about the direct impact this policy has on equity throughout our county.

Respectfully,
Lauren Barnes
Parent of 3 and PTA President at Longfellow Elementary

From: [Jack Guarneri](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Operating Budget Testimony - HCPSS Transportation
Date: Sunday, May 14, 2023 8:42:11 PM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Councilmembers:

I am a bit conflicted because I've been working for over 15 years with Bike HoCo to promote active (bicycle and pedestrian) transportation with County Executives, Council, Department of Public Works, Office of Transportation, as well as Horizon Foundation and other non-profits. That being said, my primary motivation has always been to make bicycling and walking a safe option by advocating for infrastructure improvements and safe routes to schools, shopping, etc..

Bottom Line Up Front: The changes to the Board of Education Policy 5200 that should emphasize the safety of children over efficiency is jeopardizing that safety by the way the school transportation changes have been implemented. The significant reduction in area coverage of bus transportation (at greater cost to the County) has been made for reasons other than "ensuring safe, reliable and efficient transportation to and from school for enrolled students" - from HCPSS Transportation web page. Mitigation efforts to improve safety are not being planned or funded in the Operating Budget.

My concerns/issues with proposed changes.:

- The only purpose of HCPSS Office of Student Transportation is to enable parents to get their children to school safely as is required by law (i.e. children have to attend school - or be homeschooled as an option). It is NOT to save the County money, or make transportation logistics easier for contractors, or to promote electric powered transportation, or to encourage more daily exercise.
- The, unintended but predictable, impact of BOE decisions, more than a shortage of bus drivers, forced significant changes to transportation:
 - Changing school times without considering transportation impact or informing parents of potential consequences.
 - The decision to exempt rising juniors and seniors attending GPHS (as well as rising sophomores redistricted from MHHS to HHS), resulted in at least 13 additional bus routes needed for neighborhoods to provide transportation to two schools.
 - The bus contract to Zum Services Inc., a California based company resulted in an increase in cost per route from current \$75,000 to \$117,000 (over 50%). Was this done for environmental concerns (electric school buses vice diesel)? Will Zum even have adequate buses and drivers by August?
- The assessment made by the HCPSS Transportation (as described by Paul Bertulis one of the HCPSS Transportation Area Managers at the April 18th Bicycle Advisory Group meeting) was flawed in that it was not done by physically assessing routes, looking at actual vice posted speeds on residential roads, or looking at terrain (they did not consider the grade of roads at all). Any determination of what constitutes a safe route should adhere to safe routes for school standards and include physical surveys, and discussion with communities.
- The HCPSS Physical Education and Health curriculum does not not include any

required bicycle/pedestrian safety instruction except as a 1st grade discussion/handout package. Although the school system owns around 150 bicycles, bicycle safety instruction is not funded or mandated (with maintenance provided by Bike HoCo grants and additional bicycles provided by Free Bikes 4 Kids). It is currently only available in 3 of 77 County schools at the option of PE teachers at those schools - it is not mandatory and there is no plan or funding to add it to the PE curriculum. In the past two years an 11 year old (Jeffers Hill ES) was killed on a bicycle and a 17 year old (Oakland Mills HS) on a bicycle put in long-term coma; neither of these HCPSS students had bike safety training in school.

- Any routes that have been thoroughly assessed as safe need to have: school crossing signs, speed signs, school zone pavement markings and other traffic calming devices to remind drivers to treat the area with special care. There should also be extra police coverage funded and additional speed cameras. This should all be done before the first day of school. **None of this has been planned or funded.**
- There are cuthroughs/easements that would make walking more feasible in some neighborhoods but DPW must obtain permission from multiple community associations to pave pathways/connectors. There is no overall project to identify and create these pathways or funding to build them.

If your efforts and those of BOE to address safety issues fail, Bike HoCo can provide some instruction to PTAs and parents on establishing bus or walk 'trains' to assist in getting kids safely to school. We are also working with Scout Troops to see if additional bike racks and bicycle repair stations can be put at schools where needed as Eagle Scout projects. In addition, FB4K has offered to provide bicycles to some students affected by transportation changes. But this is mitigation, not a fix for concerns with execution by HCPSS of changes.

Finally, I want to emphasize not providing safe routes to schools or bus transportation will result in many additional parents driving children to school. This will exacerbate an already unsafe environment at schools and surrounding roads for all users - vehicles, bicycles and walkers - during arrival and departure times.

Jack (James M.) Guarneri
10224 Little Brick House Court
Ellicott City, MD 21042
(301)844-8930

From: [Will Power Nutrients](#)
To: antonia_watts@hcpss.org; yun_lu@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; Jacquelin_McCoy@hcpss.org; Robyn_Scates@hcpss.org; student_member@hcpss.org; Scott_Washington@hcpss.org; Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org; [Adam Downes](mailto:Adam_Downes); Paul_Bertulis@hcpss.org; [Brian Nevin](mailto:Brian_Nevin); [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Please help with school busses
Date: Friday, May 19, 2023 3:38:28 PM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

LETTER TO COPY AND PASTE:

We need YOUR help to restore school bus service to thousands of children. The budget will be finalized May 25th so the families of Howard County appreciate anything you can do to immediately influence this negative change for our county!

This change will be detrimental to the community in the following ways: ·

SAFETY – Personal safety from crime, extreme weather, and having to carry a heavy backpack load such a long way.

ACADEMICS – Based on the updated Policy 5200, elementary school kids may need to walk up to 1.5 miles, middle schoolers up to 2 miles, and high schoolers over 2 miles EACH way with 15-20 pounds of gear. Even if they get a bus, they may have to walk that far JUST to the bus stop! How are these kids going to be able to focus on school? How will they get to school during rainy, cold, and hot weather days?

EQUITY – Lower income communities will be the strongest hit by the bus cuts. Bus cuts have been made disproportionately to Title 1 elementary schools and Title 1 feeds to middle and high school.

TRAFFIC – There are already many schools overburdened by car drop offs. Extra cars and traffic will increase air pollution throughout the county.

ECONOMY - Basedon the Baltimore Sun article, HCPSS cut ties with all local bus vendors and awarded \$99 million in business to out-of-state bus contractors.

Full article: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/howard/cng-ho-howard-bus-contractors-20230426-wco2gg4jjzcubciindex6y5kju-story.html>

Thank you for your time!

--END OF LETTER----

From: [Kasia Modzel O'Donnell](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Cancellation of the school buses.
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 1:45:04 PM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good Afternoon,

On behalf of myself and Hopewell neighborhood who have lost the school bus service to Lake Elkhorn

Middle School for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year, I would like to raise again, our concerns.

Maryland Department of Transportation clearly states "School Buses are the safest way for children to

get to school."

Our concerns are:

1. SAFETY

* Majority of way to school are unsupervised, secluded, and not lit paths through wooded areas

and around a large body of water (lake). In case of emergency, the help to get to those paths will

be severely delayed. They are not main driving roads.

*Several crimes have been reported on these particular paths in the past years (Indecent exposure 4.28.23- 7200 Cradlerock Way; Woman stabbed on the neck 9.14.20- 7000

Cradlerock

Way, Woman grabbed by the Lake Elkhorn 10.27.17; Bicycle hot and run injuring a 4 year old 3.21.16-Lake Elkhorn).

*2 registered sex offenders living on the route to school.

*Distances from homes to school are often exceeding 1.5 mile, when measuring from actual front

door of the house to the front door of the school (not only property boarder).

*Students carrying expensive chromebooks, cell phones (parents tracking), pricey music instruments are an easy target for a robbery. Several robberies at gun point in the Cradlerock Way area reported in the past few years. ARE WE WAITING FOR ANOTER TRAGEDY TO HAPPEN

BEFORE DEAMING THE AREA NOT SAFE FOR CHILDREN TO WALK UNSUPERVISED?

2. OTHER

Health

*Heavy backpack pushes the spine out of alignment. It also causes bad posture and other conditions that lead to scoliosis in children and teens (since the spine is still developing at these

ages). – Scoliosis and Spine Institute

*Backpacks, instruments and other items to be carried by students weigh around 20lbs combined.

According to Dr. Hirsch from Nemours Children's Health, that weight is not be over 10%-20% of

the child's body weight. My child weighs 64lbs- he will need to carry over 30% of his body weight.

Distance

- * 35-40 min walk to school is a recipe for the students to be constantly late to school.
- * During bad weather they might choose to stay home rather than to go to school at all.
- * Parents will not allow their children to walk that far. They will drive them to school instead creating additional chaos, traffic and work for school administrators to deal with. Pick

up/Drop

off is currently very busy. Adding 30-40 cars will only makes it so much worse.

*Not every family has an available driver during school hours. Some families will have no other choice but to have their children walk to school. This policy targets the most vulnerable families.

If the county is able to find in its budget funds to support building of the new library, they should be able to find money to keep our kids safe by providing them with school bus transportation.

Sincerely,
Kasia O'Donnell

From: sararmagness
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Bus transportation, student safety
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 10:45:17 AM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County Council,

I am writing as a parent of two highschool students. My two daughters attend Mt. Hebron. A few months ago, a boy was hit in the parking lot and broke his leg, while walking to Mt. Hebron high school. My daughter, Athena, watched from the window as the ambulance loaded him into the back, hoping he was okay. A few minority students said he was lucky he was white and had health care, because if they got hit by a car they don't know what would happen. The minority students also said it's a good thing they are tough, because Mt. Hebron probably would not call an ambulance in the first place if it were one of them hit by a car. Obviously, this left my daughter feeling horrible!!! She felt the injustice of racism and she was very confused, as well as the trauma of witnessing a fellow student with a serious injury. My daughter was so distracted by this she texted me in the morning and asked me to pick her up, because she was so upset emotionally. I encouraged her to talk to school counselors, but ultimately she did feel depressed about this. My daughter, Samantha also felt depressed about it, because the boy that got hit by the car was her good friend. Although she didn't see anything or hear any racist comments, it was very upsetting to have her friend get his leg broken in the school parking lot.

For the safety of our students, I ask that you please provide bus transportation. If you do not, students will get hurt or killed next year. They will get hit by cars on the road and in the parking lots, it's not if... it's WHEN. It is simply not safe to have that many students walking to school. I hope you can understand our students concerns and the fact they fear that the school doesn't care if they do get hit by a car. As you put money before student's safety, the students are right to question whether they are really safe.... Is an ambulance ride cheaper then a bus ride? What is the cost for our student's safety, and ultimately all of our student's mental health? It effects every single one of them if something happens!!!

Sara Magness

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone