

EWSD Transportation Update - June 20, 2017

As we approach July 1, the date that the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union (CCSU) and the Essex Town School District (ETSD) will officially unify, we wanted to provide you with the latest updates around student transportation for the new Essex Westford School District (EWSD).

As you may know, we are expanding student busing in Essex Junction (adding buses for students that live in Essex Junction and who live a certain distance from their school) and Westford (adding busing for high school age students that live in Westford). While busing currently exists for many of our students, the new unified school district is legally required to provide equitable access to transportation for all students in every community that is a part of the unified district. In its report supporting school district unification, the members of the Regional Education District Study Committee recommended that student transportation options be expanded. Voters approved the articles of agreement, which included transportation as a top priority.

With schools in Essex Junction adding busing this coming school year, logistical and engineering work is taking place to map out the best drop off/pick up locations at each school as well as determining the optimal locations for school bus stops. The District is working with a consultant engineer from Krebs & Lansing to facilitate the plans to maximize safety and efficiency as well as looking at existing drop off patterns and physical limitations. Essex High School and the Center for Technology, Essex will be largely unaffected as busing currently exists at those two schools and improvements have been made in recent years to accommodate buses in designated lanes. Currently, plans are being identified to help isolate bus traffic that will avoid impacting the current flow at both Albert D. Lawton and Hiawatha schools. The adjustments will be necessary improvements to existing curbing and walkways which are needed to accomplish this and will take place over the summer. Site work will be minimal and is expected to be completed with very little impact on current traffic flow, parking and student drop off.

The road configurations, residential neighborhood and lack of parking near Summit Street School and Thomas Fleming have made transportation planning more difficult in those two locations. The EWSD is currently in the process of working with our consulting engineers on possible viable options, but it also understands that trade offs might be required to the current setup to ensure the safety of our students, families and staffs. It is our hope that traffic flow on Summit and Prospect streets will be minimally impacted, but we do expect changes to traffic flow in this area as cars are required to stop for buses that are unloading and loading students in front of the school. We are encouraging parents to continue using the drop off and pick up

site in the Holy Family parking lot behind Summit Street School which provides for a much easier and efficient place to pick up and drop off your child. That parking area for drop offs can be easily accessed from Route 2A and helps ease congestion on Summit and Prospect streets before and after school.

Route design is another area of focus that is currently being discussed and developed for students that live in Essex Junction. Both CCSU and ETSD have shared current student population information and school assignments with the bus vendor, who expects to have a first draft of the routes in mid-to-late July. The process of designing routes is a complex task and our vendor is utilizing the latest routing software to design the most efficient routes possible given the most up to date addresses of the students that will be eligible for busing this fall. All routes will be tested out in early August and final routes will be established based on the student enrollment data well before school starts back up late August. We will begin communicating the routes and bus pickup and drop off estimates to families as soon as they become finalized.

We can also share that Special Education busing will not change for the next school year, but we will look at this area to see if efficiencies can be made going forward.

The EWSD Board will continue to provide updates as progress is made over the summer and will be looking for community feedback as the new system begins to take shape. As always, we are striving to provide the best possible service to our students and community. Given that student busing is a new service for those students living in Essex Junction, there will undoubtedly be changes to the bus services as it is refined and we ask for your continued patience as the service is planned out and finalized.

Questions? Review the [student transportation FAQ](#) or contact school board member Brendan Kinney via email, brendan.kinney@board.ewsd.org.

One of our school busing contractors is currently seeking qualified candidates for the position of school bus driver. If you or someone you know might be interested in an exciting and rewarding part time position, please contact the Stacy Emerson at Mountain Transit directly at 802-893-1334.