PRESENTATION TO THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

Transportation Services

Getting Students to School, Safely and Reliably in SY 2026-27

October 6, 2026

Vision & Goals

Every student reaches school safely, on time, and with confidence in a transportation system their family can count on

Reliable, On-Time Service

Stabilize daily operations and reduce late arrivals so every route runs safely, consistently, and on time.

A Fully Staffed Workforce

Recruit, train, and retain the drivers and routers needed to close vacancies and eliminate open routes.

Trusted Family Communication

Give families accurate, real-time information about their child's bus, every single day.

Data-Driven Accountability

Use clear metrics and consistent oversight to catch problems early and keep improving all year.

What's Inside This Update

A quick guide to what this update covers — and where our attention is focused

⚠️ Key Operational Challenges

Routing System Concerns
Critical system functionality issues must be addressed to achieve full routing stabilization.

Route Coverage Risks
Persistent driver vacancies and daily absenteeism heavily impact consistent service delivery.

Communication Gaps
Inconsistencies in parent-facing tracking apps lead to visual communication gaps for families.

1. **Performance Shifts**
   How transportation performance changed between SY 2025-26 and SY 2026-27.
2. **Routing Optimization**
   Our plan for balancing and optimizing student route assignments as an ongoing effort.
3. **Progress & Obstacles**
   The successes we've built on and the challenges still ahead of us.
4. **Demand Outpaces Resources**
   Daily demand exceeds available resources (e.g., SPED, MVP, Specialty, Comprehensive, and ECCs).
5. **Ongoing Action Plan**
   What's happening right now, and our plan for continued improvement.

Update on Recent Progress

Student Assignment

- As of September 17, all Early Childhood Center (ECC) students have received a bus assignment. Student enrollment is ongoing.
- Staff has prioritized assigning transportation for students in the McKinney-Vento Program.

Route Balancing and Optimization

- Throughout the month of September, Transportation Services prioritized the review of bus routes to balance travel times and student ridership numbers.
- This will be a continuous effort throughout the school year.

Dora Kennedy French Immersion (DKFI) & Robert Goddard Montessori (RGM)

- Adjusted routes were implemented September 17 to reduce ride times and balance student ridership times; resolved 2 doubled runs, nearing the ≤90-min ride-time goal.
- Continuing to debrief, review ride times and student ridership, and making adjustments as needed.

Building Routing Capacity

- Completed interviews for four (4) new router positions, drawn from roughly 200 applicants; hiring recommendations are forthcoming.
- Presently working with Human Resources to fill the Scheduler and Routing Supervisor positions to provide additional supervision and support in the routing process.

Driver Capacity

Our most significant operational constraint — and where near-term relief is coming from

~55
Current Driver Vacancies

7-10%
Average Daily Absenteeism

10
New Drivers in Training Pipeline

Up to 50
Contracted CDL
Phased Over 3–4 Mos.

How we are closing the gap:

Near-Term Pipeline
10 drivers in training, testing, and supervised driving.

Daily Attendance
Monitoring daily absenteeism helps minimize unexpected route gaps.

Supplemental Workforce
One provider that is prepared to supply 10–15 drivers, scaling to ~50 total.

No Added Infrastructure
Contracted drivers operate PGCPS buses from existing depots.

Routing Technology

Decision Factors: **Routing Functionality • Parent Communication • GPS Integration • Staff Usability • Implementation • Cost**

Our Planned Path Forward

Exploration of Redundancies

Identify a path forward across technology and organizational structure.

Decision Making: December

Bring proposed recommendations and action steps to the Board, informed by research.

Required Fixes (Regardless of Platform): We will address core weaknesses in staffing, supervision, training, and operational continuity independent of the technology selected.

Customer Service & Family Responsiveness

Strengthening the human side of transportation services

PGCPS

Top Sources of Family Concern

Late Buses & No-Shows

The largest single source of family concern — directly tied to our on-time performance priority.

Application-Tracking Issues

Families unable to locate or confirm their child's bus assignment.

Stop-Change Requests

Requests to adjust assigned stops and pickup points.

Building a Transportation Performance Dashboard: Focused on on-time performance and the percentage of routes with reliable tracking data — so the administration, the Board, and the public can see whether performance is actually improving.

~40

Staff Completed Customer Service Training in Coordination with the Ombudsman's Office

Showed measurable gains in processing & resolving tickets.

Training Focus Areas:

- **Telephone Communication**
- **Email Responsiveness**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Effective Use of Zendesk**

Transportation Data Dashboard

PGCPS is committed to transparency as we work to resolve identified issues.

Our progress will be supported by a **public data dashboard** designed to measure and report targeted transportation **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**, ensuring accountability and building trust with our community.

Key Contributing Factors Affecting On-Time Performance

Bell Time Alignment

Optimizing school schedules to maximize route efficiency and reduce cascading delays across bus runs.

Stop Consolidation

Grouping bus stops strategically to decrease overall transit times, idle periods, and route complexity.

Walk-to-Stop Distances

Re-evaluating neighborhood walk-to-stop distances to ensure highly structured and safe student boarding points.

Bus Utilization

Maximizing fleet capacity and route density to optimize resources and reduce total daily runs.

Staffing

Addressing driver shortages through targeted recruitment, streamlined training, and improved backup staff capacity.

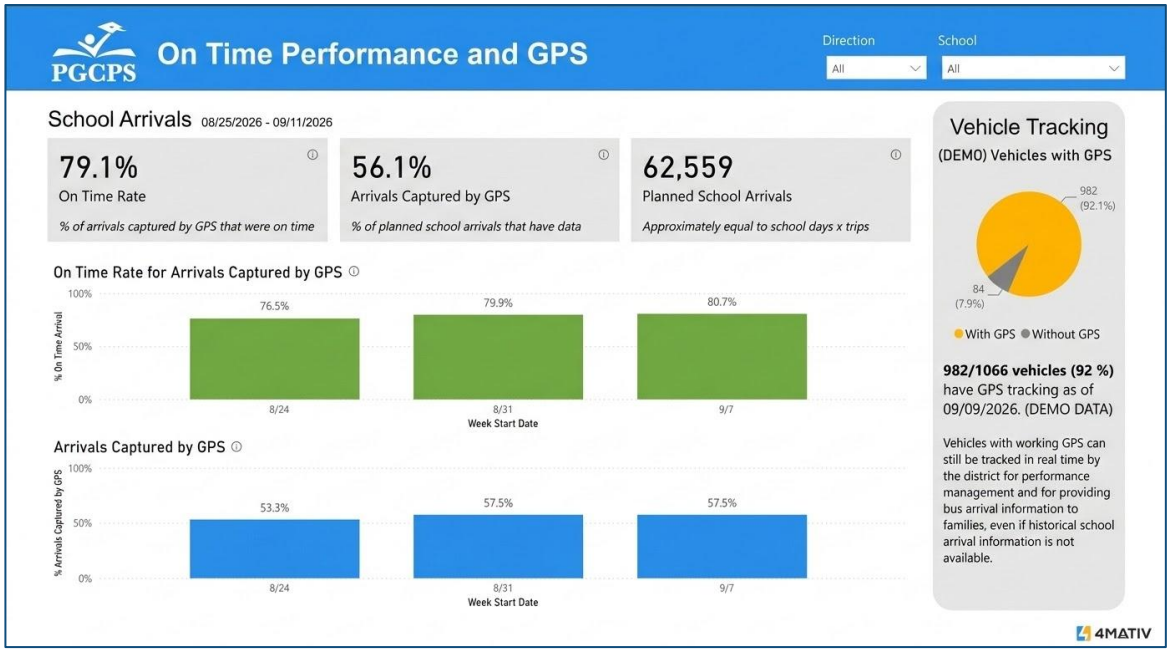
Bus Equipment

Maintaining physical fleet readiness and stabilizing core GPS tracking units to ensure reliable transit data.

Transportation Data Dashboard

Demo Data Only

An early preview of the dashboard in development with 4MATIV and the Accountability Office



Sample view: On-Time Performance & GPS Coverage, week of 8/25-9/11 (wireframe / demo data)

Board Accountability & Compliance Audit

Immediate Oversight Action Following SY 2026-27 Launch Challenges

Audit Directive: The Board of Education approved an immediate operational and compliance review of the $3.2 million transportation vendor agreement.

Primary Trigger: Follows systemic routing breakdowns and the technical failure of the new Chipmunk bus-tracking app on the first day of school.

Strict Timeline: Comprehensive analysis evaluating technical compliance, financial oversight, and operational impact is due within 30 days.

Financial Redundancies: Investigating potential software overlaps between current vendors (BusPlanner / Chipmunk) and zero-cost tracking features.

Leadership Transition: Action follows the resignation of the Director of Transportation; interim leadership and an emergency “surge team” are currently steering recovery efforts.

Moving Forward

Our work is increasingly moving from immediate crisis response toward building more sustainable systems

Immediate Priorities: Stabilize daily service, reduce excessive ride times, improve reliability, strengthen family communication, and increase driver capacity.

Deeper Systemic Work: Address the underlying systems — technology, staffing, supervision, employee relations, data quality, leadership development, and organizational culture — that allowed these challenges to develop.

Leadership Development: Structured, recurring professional development for all transportation leaders to problem-solve and strengthen leadership practices.

Our Commitment: We will keep the Board informed as this work progresses. Our standard is more than getting through the opening of school — it is a transportation operation that is reliable, responsive, transparent, and worthy of families' trust.

PGCPS

Questions about your child's bus route? Contact BusHelp@pgcps.org

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APPENDIX

Getting Students to School, Safely and Reliably

This report shares highlights from Prince George's County Public Schools' (PGCPS) ongoing work to stabilize and strengthen bus transportation for the 2026–27 school year.

Where we've made progress ▪ What challenges remain ▪ What comes next

Transportation by the Numbers

SY 2025-26 vs. SY 2026-27

PGCPS

86,215

Students Transported

▲ 0.5%

Up from 85,812 — more students riding, without straining the system.

1,127

Total Routes

▲ 1.1%

Up from 1,115 routes, keeping pace with rising ridership.

61

Open Routes

▼ from 236

A steep drop in unstaffed routes — the year's clearest sign of recovery.

19.9 min

Average Run Time

Stable

Essentially flat versus 19.7 minutes last year, even with more riders on board.

28%

On-time Performance

▲ late, up from 26%

The department's primary opportunity area for SY 2026-27.

On-Time Performance (OTP): SY 2026-27

SY 2025-26 vs. SY 2026-27 Comparison

PGCPS

TOP PRIORITY

28%

Late

▲ Up from 26%

32%

On-Time

▼ Down from 33%

40%

Early

▼ Down from 42%

Here's how we'll bring late arrivals down in SY 2026-27:

Route Optimization & Monitoring

Reduce late arrivals through continuous route monitoring and adjustments.

Public Performance Dashboard

Launch a public dashboard tracking on-time performance in real time.

Strategic Risks and Areas of Focus

On-Time Performance (OTP)

28%

▲ Up from 26%

Late arrivals rose from 26% to 28% year-over-year — now our top priority for SY 2026-27.

Staffing Sustainability

61

61 routes still open

Despite major hiring gains, ongoing vacancies keep 61 routes open across the transportation network.

Capacity & Enrollment

Rising

▲ Enrollment Demand

Rising student enrollment continues to challenge routing capacity and long-term fleet planning.

Recommended Next Steps

<20%

Late Arrivals

Target: Under 20%

Reduce late arrivals below 20% through route optimization and continuous monitoring.

100%

Staffing & Routes

Target: 100% Staffed

Fill all vacant positions and create a viable bank of substitutes to ensure capacity at all times.

Launch

Public Transparency

New Tool

Track on-time performance, vacancies, ridership, and safety in one public view.

Hire

Leadership Hiring

New Roles

Add a new Director of Transportation, an Assistant Director of Transportation, and Transportation Supervisors.