



PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
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December 16, 2005

To Parties Interested In the PAUSD J Route:

I want to thank all of you who have written to me about the recent proposal to change the J Route, which provides transportation from Stanford West to Nixon, Terman, and Gunn. I also received a request this past summer to change the route to include a pick-up at Nixon for the Gunn students living in the Stanford area. The current schedule, proposed schedule from the proponents of a route change, and the District's proposed route modifications are as follows:

Current Schedule	Proposed Schedule Proponents of Route Change	District Proposed Route Modification
7:15 Stockfarm @ Sandhill	7:20 Stockfarm @ Sandhill	7:05 Nixon
7:20 Clark @ Mosher	7:25 Clark @ Mosher	7:15 Stockfarm @ Sandhill
7:22 Clark @ Durand	7:27 Clark @ Durand	7:20 Clark @ Mosher
7:35 arrive Gunn	7:40 arrive Nixon	7:22 Clark @ Durand
7:40 arrive Terman	7:50 arrive Gunn	7:35 arrive Gunn
7:55 arrive Nixon	8:00 arrive Terman	7:40 arrive Terman
		7:55 arrive Nixon

School starts at 7:55 a.m. at Gunn, 8:00 a.m. at Nixon, and 8:10 a.m. at Terman.

The proposal submitted to the District was denied for the following reasons:

1. Students would arrive at Nixon Elementary a minimum of 20 minutes before school begins. As a practice, the District does not deliver students earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of school at any of the PAUSD elementary schools. In accordance with the Administrative Procedures implementing Board policy, "Safety shall always be the primary consideration in the operating of school buses and shall override all other considerations."
2. As a rule, PAUSD does not transport high school students. However, on a courtesy basis, when space is available on an existing route, high school students have been allowed to purchase bus passes. Routes are not changed for the purpose of increasing high school ridership.

On Wednesday, December 14, 2005, Kathy Durkin, Manager of Auxiliary Services, and I met with Leslie Fielder, Peggy Esber, and Joan Marx, who reviewed the current proposal with us. I want to thank them for the thoughtful way they expressed their concerns. I told them I would seriously consider the request and provide an answer by December 19, 2005. Because of the sense of urgency expressed by the supporters of the proposed change, I have given this my full attention and am providing a response at this time.

The proposal presented to me Wednesday was the same proposal I received last summer. Additional information was provided by the group. They expressed concern about traffic on the Charleston-Arastradero corridor and indicated the proposed change would also shorten the amount of time Nixon students ride the bus. They also expressed their confidence that student supervision could be handled by volunteer parents and teachers, and possibly a paid instructional aide. They indicated that the cost of student supervision would approximate \$200 annually and that it would be more than offset by additional fees from increased ridership. The group also indicated that there would not be sufficient interest to justify the District's previous proposal of a 7:05 A.M. pick-up at Nixon for Gunn students.

After careful review of all the data presented, and serious consideration of the proposal, I must reaffirm the earlier decision to maintain the J Route. We can, however, implement the District's proposed modification if there is sufficient interest. For those families who are interested in having a 7:05 A.M. pick up at Nixon for Gunn students, *please note this on the second semester bus pass application form*. If there are at least five students requesting transportation, we will provide this extra pick up starting the first day of the second semester (January 23, 2006).

Following are the reasons for this decision.

1. Early arrival at Nixon. The District has a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to protect its students. The District cannot deliver students to campus early and rely on volunteers to supervise them. Joan Marx provided me a letter from a consultant to the California Department of Education responding to her questions about the Education Code and campus supervision. I read the letter and find that it further confirms the concern about the District's responsibilities.

The concluding comment in the letter states, "Based on all this case law, I would be very careful with campus supervision and transportation at any time of the school day. In *Rodriguez v. Ingelwood Unified School District*, the Court of Appeal stated: 'A special relationship is formed between a school district and its students so as to impose an affirmative duty on the district to take all reasonable steps to protect its students.'"

2. Schedule Feasibility. The proposed time schedule does not allow sufficient time for elementary students to disembark from the bus at Nixon and the Gunn students to board the bus and still arrive at Gunn in time for their first class.

3. District-Wide Equity. When one focuses solely on the J Route and the 39 students who ride the bus from Nixon, Terman, and Gunn, as well as the potential additional riders, it is easy to lose sight of the district-wide implications a change can have for the 10,700 students who attend school in the District, and the other District schools. The proposed schedule modifications will create equity issues at other schools related to the amount of time elementary students spend on the bus, supervision on elementary campuses before the start of school, and an increase in transportation for students at both Paly and Gunn.
4. Labor Laws and Employee Relations. There is a strong possibility that using volunteer teachers and parents to supervise students as a result of a change in the District's transportation program will eventually lead to grievances and incurred costs.

In the February through April 2006 time frame, the District will be surveying the community regarding program priorities. At that time, if enhanced transportation services surface as a major priority for the expenditure of public education funds, the District could develop and fund a transportation program that better meets the desires of the community as additional funds become available. Pupil transportation is not a core District function. To the extent that PAUSD provides pupil transportation, safety is the overriding consideration. Furthermore, given the Board policy on pupil transportation, additional commitments cannot be made that will result in unreimbursable costs. I am convinced that if PAUSD makes the changes that have been recommended by the proponents of the route change, the District will incur unreimbursable costs.

Once again, I want to thank you for your communication regarding the J Route.

Sincerely,



Gerald Matranga
Associate Superintendent
Chief Business Officer