A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE JOINT UTILIZATION OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES BETWEEN THE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AGENCY AND THE DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

FINAL REPORT

June 5, 1978

Cresap, McCormick and Paget inc
Management Consultants

Cresap, McCormick and Paget Inc.
Management Consultants

1776 K STREET, N. W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 • Telephone: (202) 833-8350

Washington • New York • Chicago • San Francisco
London • Melbourne • São Paulo

June 5, 1978

Dr. John A. Dyer
Transportation Coordinator
Metropolitan Dade County
Dade County Courthouse
Miami, Florida 33130

Dear Dr. Dyer:

We are pleased to submit our report on the feasibility of joint utilization of transportation services between the Dade County Metropolitan Transit Agency and the Dade County Public School System. This report summarizes the findings of our study and presents recommendations and a plan of action regarding specific joint utilization opportunities.

The objective of the study was to provide Metropolitan Dade County with an examination of whether the Dade County Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA) and the Dade County Public School Board (School Board) could use their resources jointly in providing transit services for school-age children. Specifically, the following five alternatives for joint utilization were considered:

- Home-to-school transportation of public school students by the MTA
- Field trip transportation of public school students by the MTA
- After-school transportation of public school students by the MTA
- Maintenance of School Board vehicles by the MTA
- Usage of School Board vehicles by outside agencies for school-age children programs.

Each of these alternatives was assessed in terms of the legal and institutional, financial, and operational implications of joint utilization, and the recommended courses of action were thereby developed.

We received strong cooperation and assistance in this study from members of the MTA and the school system. We also received the ongoing assistance of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee throughout the study.

We appreciate this opportunity to serve Dade County on this important project. If, after reviewing this report, you have any questions concerning its contents, we are available to answer any questions or to provide additional information that you may desire.

Very truly yours,

Cresap, McCormick And Paget Inc.

CRESAP, McCORMICK And PAGET Inc.

A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE JOINT UTILIZATION OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES BETWEEN THE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AGENCY AND THE DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I - INTRODUCTION

I - INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the objectives and scope of the study, the approach taken to it, and the arrangement of this report.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to provide Metropolitan Dade County with an examination of whether the Dade County Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA) and the Dade County Public School Board (School Board) can use their resources jointly in providing transit services for school-age children. Specifically, this examination was to consider the following five alternatives for joint utilization:

- Home-to-school transportation of public school students by the MTA
- Field trip transportation of public school students by the MTA
- After-school transportation of public school students by the MTA
- Maintenance of School Board vehicles by the MTA
- Usage of School Board vehicles by outside agencies for school-age children programs.

Consideration of the alternatives was to involve an exploration of the legal and institutional, financial, and operational implications of each and the development of recommended courses of action. In scope, this study was intended as a first-phase effort to identify the nature and implications of joint utilization; the second phase, if warranted, would involve a more detailed examination of the operational, scheduling, and technical services aspects of the two systems.

APPROACH TO THE STUDY

A 12-member Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, composed of elected officials and representatives of various organizations and citizen groups, was formed to meet with the study team and to oversee the study's progress; a list of these members is presented in Exhibit I-1. The Committee held three progress meetings with the study team and received a presentation of the final report.

MEMBERS OF
THE AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Two members of the Dade County Board of Commissioners
Three members of the Dade County School Board

President of the Transport Workers Union, AFL-CIO Local 291
President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Dade County Employees Local 1363

Chairperson of the Dade County Commission on the Status of Women
President of the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Dade County
President of the Dade County Council of PTA/PTSA
President of the Senior Centers of Dade County, Inc.
Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation for Metropolitan Dade County

The approach to the study consisted of five major activities. Relative to the joint utilization issues, interviews were held with the following key individuals in Dade County:

- Various members of the Dade County Public School System, including selected members of the School Board, the Superintendent of Schools, the Associate Superintendent for Business Services, the Assistant Superintendent for Business Support Services, selected area superintendents and school principals, the Director of Transportation and selected members of the school transportation staff (including drivers and mechanics), and the President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Dade County Employees Local 1363

- Various members of the MTA, including the Director, the Deputy Director, the General Superintendent of Transportation, selected drivers and other members of the transportation services staff, the General Superintendent of Maintenance, selected mechanics and other members of the maintenance staff, and the President of the Transport Workers Union, AFL-CIO Local 291

- Interviews were also held with other key persons, including the Transportation Coordinator for Dade County, the State of Florida Administrator for School Transportation, a state representative from Dade County, representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Office of Education, and all members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee (some of whom have been noted above).

Pertinent background information on the MTA and the School Board's Transportation Department was reviewed, including federal and State of Florida statutes and rules, organization charts and staffing summaries, administrative directives and policies, operating and capital financial summaries, operating and performance reports, schedules and route layouts, labor contracts, and statements of future plans.

Visits were made to all MTA and School Board transportation and maintenance facilities. Interviews were held with representatives of the following five public school systems and public transit authorities to discuss their experiences with joint utilization:

- City of Buffalo (New York) and the Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc.

- City of Atlanta (Georgia) and the Metropolitan Altanta Rapid Transit Authority

- City of Toledo (Ohio) and the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority

- City of Norfolk (Virginia) and the Tidewater Metro Transit System

- Broward County (Florida) and the Broward County Division of Mass Transit.

The data and other information thus collected were analyzed, and conclusions and recommendations concerning the joint utilization alternatives were developed. The final report was prepared and presented in an open meeting to the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee.

ARRANGEMENT OF THIS REPORT

This report is divided into four chapters as follows:

I - Introduction (this chapter)

II - Background - describes the background of the School Board's Transportation Department and the MTA.

III - Conclusions And Recommendations - presents an overview of joint utilization alternatives under consideration, and, for each alternative, presents conclusions on legal, institutional and financial issues, conclusions on operational issues, and recommendations.

IV - Summary And Plan Of Action - summarizes the study recommendations and the various steps for implementation.

The report also contains an appendix on "Joint Utilization In Five Metropolitan Areas."

II - BACKGROUND

- Dade County Public School Board
- Metropolitan Transit Agency

II - BACKGROUND

This chapter presents background information on the transportation services of the Dade County Public School Board and the Dade County Metropolitan Transit Agency.

A - DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Background on the Dade County Public School Board's transportation services is discussed below in terms of scope of responsibilities, organization and staffing, financial structure, and operations and maintenance.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

School boards in Florida are required by the state statutes to provide school transportation services for students, including:

- Home-to-school (and return) transportation for all students who live 2 or more miles from school
- Home-to-school (and return) transportation for many types of exceptional students (e.g., physically handicapped students), regardless of how far from the school they live
- School-to-school transportation for students participating in vocational and special education programs.

These requirements, which apply to students in Kindergarten through Grade 12, are the basic framework for pupil transportation programs in Dade County as well as elsewhere in the state.

The Dade County Public School Board has sought to meet these responsibilities by owning and operating its own pupil transportation fleet. This fleet of 448 vehicles is used to meet the statutory requirements of providing the daily services outlined above. These services are provided to a total of about 38,300 students per day.

In addition, and beyond the minimum legal requirements, the School Board:

- Provides transportation for about 2,600 students (mostly in Kindergarten, first grade and second grade) who live within the 2-mile legal limit but are near school bus routes where extra seats are available

- Provides transportation for almost all school field trips (involving about 14,000 vehicle-trips per year)

- Provides up to 30 after-school runs from selected junior and senior high schools.

As a result, the School Board is providing all required service and a significant level of supplemental service.

Although it does transport some students at various times of the day as a part of its general ridership, the MTA is not involved in school bus transportation. Outside contractors are used by the School Board only for occasional field trips.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The School Board's responsibilities for student transportation are carried out on a day-to-day basis by its Transportation Department. The Department's operational responsibilities include:

- Directing, planning and coordinating the assignment of drivers and vehicles to transport eligible students to and from school

- Coordinating the use of, and providing vehicles for field trips

- Maintaining the vehicles in accordance with federal, State of Florida and School Board guidelines.

The Transportation Department is one of six departments of the Division of Business Support Services. The Department is managed by a Director, who reports to the Assistant Superintendent for Business Support Services; the latter reports to the Associate Superintendent for Business Services, who in turn reports to the Superintendent of Schools.

The Department's 564 people are organized in six units as follows:

- The Driver's Section, with a staff of 443 regular and substitute drivers, is responsible for operating the school buses over the 393 routes in the morning and afternoon. This section also includes 45 temporary bus aides used to assist on certain buses that cover special education routes.

- The Maintenance Section, with a staff of 104 mechanics and support staff, is responsible primarily for maintaining and repairing the school bus fleet.

- The three Route Management Sections (one each for the north area, the south area, and special education), staffed by three route managers and six route specialists, are primarily responsible for planning and establishing the bus routes, directing the operation of the school buses over these routes, covering runs with substitute drivers, and coordinating with all parties regarding timing, overloads and other routing problems.

- The Office Management Section, with a staff of seven people, processes the Department's payroll, coordinates field trip requests, processes work orders and requisitions, and handles departmental correspondence.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

The Transportation Department's pupil transportation budget for the 1977-78 school year is $5.6 million. As shown in the table below, the primary expenditure is driver compensation.

Expense Item	Budgeted for 1977-78 Amount ($)	Per Cent Of Total
Driver compensation (including bus aides)	$2,980,000	53
Vehicle operation and maintenance		
Maintenance staff compensation	1,146,000	
Gas, oil, tires, etc.	688,000	
Repair parts and other	349,000	
Subtotal	2,183,000	39
Administration		
Administrative compensation	355,000	
Custodial and other compensation	95,000	
Subtotal	450,000	8
Total	$5,613,000	100

No capital purchases were authorized in the 1977-78 school budget.

The State of Florida, through the Florida Education Financing Program (FEFP) currently provides the Dade County School Board with about $2.7 million of funding for pupil transportation. This level of FEFP support, which is based on state formula using the number of students transported and vehicle mileage, represents approximately 48 per cent of the County's total pupil transportation costs.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

School Hours

The hours during which the schools operate are a principal factor in routing and scheduling school buses. The school system has 25 senior high schools (including opportunity schools), which include Grades 10 through 12. Of these schools, 21 have classes on a standard schedule from 7:30 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. The remaining four schools are on a double-session basis.

The system's 47 junior high schools include Grades 7 through 9. In an effort to balance the peak in transportation, three of the junior high schools operate at the same time as the senior high schools. Forty-one of the junior high schools have classes on a standard schedule from 8:05 a.m. to 2:25 p.m. The remaining three junior high schools operate on a double-session basis.

All elementary schools start at 8:30 a.m. and, except for Wednesday, close at 3:00 p.m. Elementary schools close at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, to allow for teacher preparation.

Operations

School bus trips are operated on the basis of routes and schedules developed by the Transportation Department. The goal of the routing and scheduling process it to provide safe service that minimizes the number of vehicles and operators required by maximizing the passenger loadings for each bus and having each bus make as many trips as possible. The Department's fleet operates over 393 designed routes and makes about 1,150 runs each morning and afternoon. A total of 448 school buses are operated, of which 393 are required for daily service and 55 are spares. Most of the vehicles hold 66 passengers, and 96 vehicles are lift-equipped to accommodate handicapped students.

Home-to-school and school-to-school transportation involves 38,300 students transported on a daily, round-trip basis:

- 36,300 students, including 2,700 exceptional students transported on special runs, are transported from home to school

- 900 vocational students and 1,100 special education students are transported between schools.

The average cost per student is about $146 per year, 81¢ per day, and 40¢ per trip. These average costs vary significantly between the regular school runs and the special runs made for exceptional students. The regular school runs (which involve about 69 per cent of all runs and 91 per cent of all students transported) have an estimated cost per student-trip of 31¢; the special runs (which involve about 31 per cent of all runs and only 9 per cent of all students transported) have an estimated cost per student-trip of $1.35.

For the year, total vehicle mileage is estimated at 5.7 million. In terms of operating costs, the Transportation Department is seen as providing its basic home-to-school and school-to-school service at a cost of about 98¢ per mile, as shown in the following table.

Expense Item	Cost Per Mile
Driver	52¢
Vehicle operation and maintenance	38
Administration	8
Total	98¢

In addition to home-to-school and school-to-school transportation, the Transportation Department provides field trip transportation and limited after-school transportation. Field trip transportation, which is provided for educational, athletic, and band trips, is required through the school year. For almost all of the field trips, the Transportation Department provides the buses and drivers. Also, for students staying after school (and therefore missing their regular school-to-home service), the Transportation Department provides a limited number of buses and drivers for "activity runs." Up to 30 runs are made from selected junior and senior high schools in an effort to provide service for students who participate in extracurricular activities.

Maintenance

For maintenance purposes, the buses are assigned to four Transportation Department terminals: Central, North, Dunbar and Redland. The maintenance program is coordinated out of the Central Terminal, and most major repairs (e.g., engine rebuildings) are made there. Recurring maintenance is performed at the three satellite terminals as well as at the Central Terminal. A preventive maintenance program has been established and is adhered to.

B - METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AGENCY

Background on the MTA is discussed below in terms of scope of responsibilities, organization and staffing, financial structure, and operations and maintenance.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The MTA is the authorized public transit carrier for Dade County; that is, it is the agency that has exclusive public transit operating rights within Dade County. These operating rights were transferred as part of the assumption of private transit companies when the MTA was created as an authority, and were continued when the authority status was changed and the MTA became an operating agency of the Metropolitan Dade County government.

As a public carrier and a recipient of operating and financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), the MTA's operating responsibilities are a compilation of mandates from the Commissioners of Dade County and constraints imposed by the UMTA rules and regulations. The MTA fulfills its public transportation responsibilities by owning and operating its own fleet of 550 buses, of which up to 425 are committed to providing scheduled transit service at one time. The MTA also operates charter service within the constraints of the UMTA regulations.

The MTA currently operates only buses, but it will become a rail-bus operator when the Dade County rapid rail system is completed. Initial opening of the rail system is projected for 1983, and, by 1982, the size of the MTA fleet is expected to expand to approximately 900 buses.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The Director of the MTA manages the MTA on a day-to-day basis and reports to the Transportation Coordinator for Dade County (who in turn reports to the County Manager); this arrangement places the MTA as an independent operating department similar to the Department of Public Works or the Department of Traffic. With a budgeted staff of 1,377, the MTA is organized into six operating units:

- The Transportation Division, organized into divisional, dispatching and operations sections and employing 939 people, is responsible for operating the MTA's bus service 7 days a week

- The Maintenance Division, organized into office, paint and body, unit, inspection, general repair, service, and stores sections and employing 305 people, is responsible for the preventive and recurring maintenance that keeps the MTA fleet in running condition

- The Planning and Marketing Division, with 44 people, undertakes service improvement and routing studies, marketing programs, public information and scheduling

- The Personnel Division, with six people, is responsible for the career management of all MTA employees, including safety and training programs

- The Finance and Accounting Division, with 50 people, is responsible for the capital and operating financial management of the MTA

- The Administration Division, with nine people, undertakes day-to-day records management and administrative support for the MTA.

The Office of the Director includes the Director's immediate staff and other support staff (e.g., legal support).

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

The MTA's operating budget for fiscal year 1977-78 is $39.2 million. As shown in the table below, using actual results for the 6 months ending March 1978, driver compensation is the major operating expenditure.

Expense Item	6 Months Through March 1978 Amount ($)	Per Cent Of Total
Driver compensation (including superintendence)	$10,177,000	55
Vehicle operation and maintenance		
Maintenance staff compensation (including superintendence)	3,140,000	
Gas, oil, tires, etc.	1,617,000	
Repair parts and other	1,939,000	
Injuries and damages	955,000	
Subtotal	7,651,000	41
Administration		
Administrative compensation	561,000	
Other	271,000	
Subtotal	832,000	4
Total	$18,660,000	100

The capital budget for 1977-78 is $21.5 million.

Operating revenues are comprised of passenger fares (97 per cent of operating revenue), charter fees, and advertising reimbursement. Farebox revenue as a proportion of total operating expenses has declined in recent years, from about 62 per cent in 1975 to an estimated 38 per cent in 1978. The difference between operating revenues and operating expenses is covered by federal operating assistance (known as Section V funds) and by funding from the Dade County General Fund.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The number of buses that operate at one time is tailored to the demand for service during a particular period and to overall budget constraints. The maximum number is 425 in the morning commuting hours (i.e., the morning peak period); on Sundays as few as 115 buses operate. The MTA's buses travel on routes that are laid out in a grid system and tend to be concentrated in the Miami Central Business District, other mainland commercial areas, and the commercial areas on Miami Beach.

The MTA buses carry approximately 5.6 million people each month, while operating over about 1.8 million miles during the same period. The cost of providing this service is approximately $1.70 per mile, as shown in the table below.

Expense Item	Cost Per Mile
Driver compensation	$0.94
Vehicle operation and maintenance	0.69
Administration	0.07
Total	$1.70

On the basis of the number of passengers carried, the average cost per passenger-trip is 55¢.

Buses are assigned to the Central and Northern garage facilities. Maintenance of MTA buses is accomplished by the agency's maintenance staff and ranges from routine servicing to engine rebuilding. Preventive maintenance for buses is based on a 3,000-mile incremental schedule.

* * * * *

The next chapter of this report discusses our conclusions and recommendations regarding five alternatives for the joint utilization of transportation services. The present status of each of these alternatives, in terms of who is currently providing the service, is outlined below.

- Home-to-school transportation of public school students is provided by the Transportation Department to all students eligible by state law.

- Field trip transportation of public school students is provided almost exclusively by the Transportation Department. Outside contractors, including the MTA, are rarely used.

- After-school transportation of public school students (e.g., involving students staying after school and therefore missing their regular school-to-home service), is provided on a limited basis by the Transportation Department. In addition, as a part of its regularly scheduled service, the MTA operates supplemental service in the late afternoon on bus routes that tend to serve school children at that time of day.

- Maintenance of the School Board vehicles is performed by the Department using its own staff, equipment and facilities. Occasionally, an outside company will be used for specialized repairs.

- Usage of School Board vehicles by outside agencies is not currently provided by the School Board.

III - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Overview
- Home-To-School Transportation Of Public School Students By The MTA
- Field Trip Transportation Of Public School Students By The MTA
- After-School Transportation Of Public School Students By The MTA
- Maintenance Of School Board Vehicles By The MTA
- Usage Of School Board Vehicles By Outside Agencies For School-Age Children Programs

III - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses our conclusions and recommendations on the five alternatives for joint utilization considered in this study.

A - OVERVIEW

This study considers the following five alternatives for the joint utilization of transit services:

- Home-to-school transportation of public school students by the Dade County Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA)
- Field trip transportation of public school students by the MTA
- After-school transportation of public school students by the MTA
- Maintenance of School Board vehicles by the MTA
- Usage of School Board vehicles by outside agencies for school-age children programs.

Each of these alternatives is discussed in the following pages in terms of four areas:

- Nature of the alternative
- Conclusions on legal, institutional and financial issues
- Conclusions on operational issues
- Recommendations.

The recommendations have been developed on the basis of an evaluation that includes the following criteria:

- Ability to maintain or improve the safety of the students being transported

- Ability to operate within the legal and institutional constraints of the federal government and the State of Florida (and, where constraints exist, the desirability of and likelihood that changes could be achieved)

- Ability to provide responsive and flexible service

- Ability to maintain or reduce the overall cost of service to the MTA and the School Board

- Ability to ensure equitable treatment of existing employees.

B - HOME-TO-SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

This section discusses our conclusions and recommendations concerning the transportation of public school students on a home-to-school basis by the MTA.

NATURE OF THE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative under consideration is whether the MTA should be used to provide home-to-school (and school-to-home) transportation service for public school students. As such, it involves the use of MTA's standard transit buses, drivers and facilities as a substitution for the existing service provided by the School Board's own staff and fleet of vehicles.

CONCLUSIONS ON LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

Federal And State Rules And Regulations Allow The MTA To Engage As An Operator In School Bus Transportation

Federal statutes, rules and regulations allow the MTA to engage in school bus transportation. Although the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-365), as amended, imposes various limitations on transit authorities operating in this area, these limitations would not apply to the MTA because it is not hindering a market where a private carrier is (or is currently capable of) operating an efficient school bus system.

State laws, as well, allow the use of mass transportation authorities, such as the MTA, for the transportation of school children.

However, Federal Regulations Require That The MTA Use "Open Door" Vehicles

Under federal regulations, MTA service involving the transportation of students must be provided on "open door" vehicles (i.e., vehicles open to the general public and, therefore, not open exclusively to students). Further, federally assisted buses must remain open to the public at all times and be clearly marked for public use, unless operating as a charter service. The MTA, with a fleet composed of federally assisted vehicles, would have to comply with the open door policy of the UMTA regulations. As well, the charter service exemption would not be of benefit since this service cannot

be provided during the morning peak period when the school runs are made. Under federal regulations, charter service can only occur during non-peak hours (e.g., 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) which, as such, conflicts with School Board transportation needs.

As defined in Section 605.3 of the UMTA Rules and Regulations:

> (the MTA may provide) regularly scheduled mass transportation service which is open to the public, and which is designed or modifed to accommodate the needs of school children and personnel, using various fare collection and subsidy systems.

Further, buses used in this type of service must therefore:

- Be clearly marked as being available to the general public
- Stop only at regular service stops
- Involve routes that are included in the published schedules.

As well, this service may be operated during peak-hour periods. By way of comparison, certain other transit agencies and authorities, including the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority in the City of Atlanta, Georgia; the Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc. in the City of Buffalo, New York; and the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority in the City of Toledo, Ohio, currently provide this service for their own public school systems.

State Law Requires That A Sufficient Level Of Service Be Provided So That All Students Have A Seat On The Vehicle

The School Board maintains a permanent responsibility for ensuring that students are provided a seat, with an exception only in emergency cases. Under Section 234.02(3), Florida Statutes:

> The routing and scheduling of school buses shall be planned in such a manner as to eliminate, whenever reasonably possible, the necessity for children to stand while a school bus is in motion...Each school board is responsible for prompt relief of the emergency condition by providing additional equipment, bus rerouting, bus rescheduling, or other appropriate remedial action.

This requirement exists in the interest of student safety.

At the same time, the other cities visited in this study (and employing joint utilization with public transit) did not have a comparable state requirement on seating. As a result, under the laws of their states, students in Atlanta, Buffalo, Norfolk, and Toledo were allowed to stand as necessary.

State Law Would Exempt The MTA From Any Special Vehicle And Driver Requirements

The State Board of Education of Florida has established certain safety standards for school buses and drivers used for transporting public school students to and from school. Under Section 6A-3.311 of the Rules of the State Board of Education of Florida, transit authority buses used as school buses are required to use "school bus" signs, stop signal signs and double-flashing lights, and to be inspected at least once each month by a qualified mechanic approved by the superintendent. As well, the drivers must be at least 18 years of age, hold a valid Florida chauffeur's license, demonstrate ability to safely operate the school bus assigned, and hold a valid school bus driver's license.

However, the MTA buses as open door vehicles, available to both students and the general public, would not need to comply with these standards. Under the same Section 6A-3.311 of the Rules:

> (the) specific requirements for transit authority buses used as school buses... shall not apply... while operating on regularly scheduled trips to serve the general public and transportation of students is incidental to the operation.

Accordingly, the MTA vehicles would not need to be equipped with temporary signs with the words "school bus," actuated stop sign signals, warning lamps, control systems, or flashing units. Similarly, the vehicle inspection and driver licensing requirements would be waived to the standards already employed by the public transit authority.

However, State Law Would Presently Disallow State Financial Support For MTA's Open Door Vehicles

The Florida Education Financing Program (FEFP) currently provides about $2.7 million of funding to the Dade County School Board for pupil transportation. This level of FEFP support, which is based on state formula using the number of students transported and vehicle mileage, represents about 48 per cent of the County's total pupil transportation costs. Including all 38,300 students transported daily on a home-to-school basis, this level of support amounts to about $70 per student per year, or about 19¢ per trip.

However, the formula used by the state for the FEFP does not allow for the inclusion of bus mileage for other than vehicles exclusively carrying students. Accordingly, under the present state laws, financial support of student transportation would not be provided when open door service by the carrier (e.g., the MTA) is used. In an effort to facilitate joint utilization with public transit and continue state funding, a number of bills have been recently introduced in the Florida legislature that would revise the allocation method.

CONCLUSIONS ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The Peak Periods Of Demand For MTA Service And School Service Overlap

The peak demands for both school transportation and general public transportation occur during the same 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. weekday period. Accordingly, at the point when school transportation needs are the greatest, the MTA is already using its available capacity to transport the general public.

As well, little flexibility exists with respect to school starting times, and it is unlikely that school starting times could be shifted to the point that the MTA vehicles would be available for service (e.g., before 6:30 a.m. or after 9:30 a.m.). With only a few exceptions, the County's high schools open at 7:30 a.m., junior high schools open at 8:05 a.m., and elementary schools open at 8:30 a.m. Although the period of demand for school transportation covers the 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. period, the MTA vehicles are already being utilized for general transit services.

Further, the limits of school demand cannot be reasonably spread by more than one-half hour in each direction without causing significant disruptions. As an example, a 6:30 a.m. school opening would necessitate that many households begin the day at 5:00 a.m.; at the other end of the range, a 9:30 a.m. school opening for elementary schools would create additional child care problems for single parent households and households where both parents are employed away from home. A later school opening would also tend to create a second peak conflict with existing MTA demand in the afternoon hours.

The MTA Lacks The Available Capacity To Provide Home-To School Transportation Service For The School Board

Although accurate counts on the number of seats available on the MTA vehicles are not kept, discussions and random reviews indicate that extra seats on these vehicles are available only in a limited number of circumstances

and that, for most routes, either few or no seats are available for major sections of the peak morning runs. Even in the extreme case where a vehicle may be only 50 per cent filled during the morning peak, only about 28 seats would be available for student use. In accordance with the state requirement of guaranteed seats, this level of availability would be inadequate to replace a school bus run, which averages 50 to 60 seated passengers per trip. Further, the MTA could not guarantee the availability of these seats on a regular basis.

As a result, the MTA could not presently provide additional peak service without either adding vehicles and drivers or reducing service elsewhere. For most urban transit operations, and the MTA is not an exception, the morning peak period (i.e., the time of day when most people travel from residences to places of employment) is the time frame that places the highest demand on a system. The MTA seeks to meet this demand by operating its highest number of vehicles (425 buses), which then strongly influences the overall vehicle and driver needs for the MTA system; other influences, such as the extent of the reduced weekend service and the evening and late evening service on weekdays, are also factored into the scheduling of operators and vehicles. With the MTA's present level of 850 drivers predicated on a peak need to man 425 vehicles, little flexibility is available to support additional peak morning service without a corresponding reduction in the level of service provided during other periods. As such, expanding the level of morning peak service by, for example, 200 vehicles would, in fact, require the MTA to obtain and service another 200 vehicles (plus appropriate spares) and hire another 200 operators (plus others for days off and absenteeism) or to reduce existing service elsewhere.

In addition, the proposed expansion of the MTA's service may not be a meaningful opportunity to transfer student transportation responsibilities to the MTA. It is understood that the expansion involves primarily the use of a rapid rail system and the expansion of the bus fleet so as to:

- Lengthen some routes and provide more frequent headways, while maintaining the grid system

- Use feeder buses to support the rapid rail system.

The rail system itself has limited applicability to the origin-destination needs of students; in most cases, it would likely involve one or two transfers per trip and a lengthening of transit time. The bus system, as designed to meet the needs of the general public, may involve a grid system (with the difficulties outlined above) plus a feeder-oriented network that increases vehicle utilization by running buses to and from rail stations. Neither should be that helpful for student needs. As well, although the question of seat availability for students cannot be predicted at this time, the decision to expand the MTA's bus fleet

was based on the level of anticipated demand, excluding any transfer to the MTA of school transportation responsibilities. Accordingly, even if the routing were consistent with school needs, it is unclear whether the requisite number of seats could be made available (without additional vehicles and drivers) for students on a regular basis.

The MTA's Operating Costs Are Significantly Higher Than Those Of The School Board's Fleet

Even if the difficulties in other areas could be overcome, the comparative costs between the School Board and the MTA remain a primary obstacle. The seating capacity of the standard School Board vehicles is somewhat higher than that of the standard MTA vehicles (e.g., 66 passengers on a standard school bus as compared to 49 to 53 passengers on a standard MTA bus). As well, the MTA system, as discussed below, is more costly in terms of both the operating costs for the vehicle and compensation of drivers.

1. MTA vehicles are more expensive to operate and maintain than School Board vehicles. The MTA vehicles are both more costly to purchase and significantly more costly to operate than the School Board vehicles. With the federal assistance of 80 per cent for a $90,000 vehicle, the local cost to purchase is about $18,000; by comparison, the standard yellow school bus is about $15,000. Both vehicles will last for 10 to 12 years. A major difference exists, however, in terms of operating costs.

For the 6 months ending March 1978, the MTA had a total operating cost of $1.70 per mile, as compared to 98¢ per mile for the School Board. Excluding driver compensation (discussed below as a separate issue), the operating cost of the MTA vehicles was 76¢ a mile, as compared to about 46¢ per mile for the School Board's vehicles. The impact of this difference is most significant. Since School Board transportation involves 5,500,000 miles per year, the estimated 30¢ per mile difference in nondriver costs alone could add up to $1.6 million per year to the cost of school transportation.

2. MTA drivers have a higher level of compensation and require a longer work week than School Board drivers. The MTA operators are paid 10 to 19 per cent more than the School Board operators. Base pay for the MTA operators averages $6.41 per hour; further, if the average operator work week of 47 hours (which includes 7 hours per week of overtime at premium rates) is used, the MTA drivers actually average $6.88 per hour. By contrast, the School Board drivers average $5.80 per hour, with all hours as regular hours on a straight-time basis. The fringe benefits package of both groups is similar, adding an additional 21 to 22 per cent to base compensation. From this, the use of MTA drivers in place of School Board drivers would increase costs at least 61¢ and up to $1.08 per operator hour. In turn, this would add between $200,000 and $275,000 per year to the cost of routine school transportation.

In addition, the MTA contract requires the payment of a minimum 40-hour work week, as compared to the 20-hour guarantee for School Board drivers. Accordingly, since School Board runs involve only between 20 and 25 hours per week, it would be necessary to pay for drivers for extensive periods during which they are not clearly needed for school or public transportation.

Routing And Scheduling, Reliability, Safety And Existing Expansion Plans Also Pose Varying Obstacles To MTA Involvement In Student Transportation

The transfer of transportation responsibilities from the School Board to the MTA presents a number of additional obstacles that, while not insurmountable, may be difficult to overcome. Four of these obstacles--routing and scheduling, reliability, safety, and existing expansion plans--are discussed below.

1. The MTA's routing and scheduling provide limited assistance in meeting School Board needs. In establishing a routing plan, the respective goals of the MTA and the School Board are significantly different. The MTA seeks to design its routes to meet the needs of the general public, thereby utilizing lengthy direct routes on major roads and making a minimum number of stops. By contrast, school service involves short runs of multiple stops, primarily in residential neighborhoods, followed by a "closed door" run to the school. The inherent differences between the two systems, in turn, limits the extent of compatibility and route integration that can occur.

As a result, the MTA's routes and schedules are typically inconsistent with School Board needs. As an example, an overview of the present routes of the two systems indicates that, except in Miami Beach and the Miami Central Business District, there is little overlap in response to the School Board's origin-destination requirements. Accordingly, an attempt to use the MTA's system of routings for school transportation would, on most routes, require that:

- Many or most of the students transfer at least once during each trip (as an example, an estimated 75 per cent of the students in Buffalo have at least one transfer)

- Students increase their walking distances from home to the bus stop (e.g., if the MTA vehicles continued to operate on main streets, walking distances from the home to the bus stop and from the school to the bus stop would, in most cases, be increased).

2. School Board vehicles have exhibited a high level of reliability. The School Board vehicles have exhibited a high level of reliability. Few of the School Board's runs are cancelled, and the School Board fleet has a daily breakdown rate of only about 3 per cent. As well, the School Board has been able to adhere to its preventive maintenance schedules.

3. The safety of students would not be enhanced under public transportation. Two aspects of safety are important to consider. As discussed earlier, the MTA vehicles would not be recognized as school vehicles and, as such, could be less safe for students getting on and off the vehicles. As well, the commingling of the lower-age students with the general public (on open door vehicles) could be undesirable in terms of safety.

4 MTA's management already faces significant challenges in terms of the proposed expansion plans. MTA's management has been, and is likely to continue to be, heavily involved in addressing the problems of its own operations, which have been significant in recent years. Even where the current problems are resolved, the MTA management faces extensive challenges with its planned acquisition and absorption of 400 new vehicles over the next 5 years and the introduction of the rapid rail system.

The Special Needs Of Exceptional Students And Vocational And Special Education Students Could Not Be Met Effectively By The MTA

The MTA, as discussed below, could not meet the present effectiveness of the School Board in addressing the special transportation needs of the exceptional students and the vocational and special education students.

1. The home-to-school transportation of exceptional students involves special safety and routing requirements. Exceptional students include handicapped students (who may be educable mentally retarded, trainable mentally retarded, profoundly mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, deaf, blind, physically handicapped, or autistic or may have a learning disability) and socially maladjusted students. Although some of these students are transported on regular school bus runs with other students, 2,700 of them are transported daily on a home-to-school basis using runs composed strictly of exceptional students.

The factors that discourage the consideration of joint utilization for routine student runs (such as seat requirements and costs) also apply for these exceptional student runs. As well, there are other unique factors. The federal requirement that the MTA operate open door service on its vehicles poses difficulties because of the exceptional status of the students. From a safety perspective, it would be undesirable to mix these exceptional

students and the general public on a transit vehicle. Second, consistent with state rules, students who are blind, deaf, profoundly mentally retarded, autistic, and physically handicapped and trainable mentally retarded students, are provided door-to-door transportation service. Since these routes require special stops, they would probably violate the federal regulations on routine stops for the MTA. To the extent that the MTA attempted to establish special door-to-door routes, it could be expected to receive protests from private contractors and could risk its federally assisted status. Third, for all of these students, the MTA's routing pattern is (and is likely to continue to be) inconsistent with the special origin-destination requirements of these students. The special "zig-zag" patterns that are necessary would require a set of additional vehicles for these special routes, but the cost of transportation would probably increase significantly. As discussed earlier, school buses are less expensive to purchase and to operate than MTA vehicles, and the school bus drivers are less costly than their MTA counterparts. With vehicles of similar seat capacity, the School Board vehicles operate at an average cost of 98¢ per mile including the driver, while the MTA has an average operating cost per mile of $1.70

Of the major cities visited during this study that use joint utilization (Buffalo, Atlanta, and Toledo), none use its public transit system to transport exceptional students. In each of these cities, all other students are transported to and from school on the public transit vehicles, while a special school bus system is in use strictly for the transportation of the exceptional students. Each city is understood to have adopted the special system in recognition of the unique requirements of transporting these students and of the extent of significant incompatibility that their needs have with those of public transit.

As a separate issue, the County's Special Transportation Service Program (STS) for the handicapped does not presently provide an effective alternative to the present school bus arrangement. This program, which uses local taxicabs, has an average cost per mile of 90¢ but has a limited vehicle capacity; usually no more than four people can be accommodated in a vehicle (average loads have been only 1.2 riders per trip).

2. The school-to-school transportation of vocational students and special education students also involves special safety and routing requirements. The School Board is also responsible for the transportation of vocational and special education students between schools for special programs. About 900 vocational students and 1,100 special education students are transported daily using the school bus fleet. About 123 different round-trip runs (42 for vocational and 81 for special education programs) are made on an average day, and many of these runs occur throughout the day.

Again, the same operational drawbacks apply. Both the vocational students and the special education students have "zig-zag" origin-destination requirements that are generally inconsistent with the MTA's routing patterns. Service could be provided only by putting more MTA vehicles into service to replace school buses, which would increase overall costs significantly. As well, it could be considered as being undesirable for the special education students (who consist of gifted students and students who have a learning diability) to be intermixed with the general public while being transported to a special school program.

In the four other cities visited, vocational student and special education student runs were handled under a contract bus arrangement.

RECOMMENDATION

The School Board Should Continue To Provide Home-To-School Transportation Service For All Eligible Students, Using Its Own Drivers And Vehicles

The MTA should not become involved in providing home-to-school transportation for the public school students. The School Board should continue with its present service for routine runs as well as for exceptional student trips and vocational and special education student trips.

In particular, transportation of students by the MTA would not improve service and would significantly increase transportation costs. Specifically, significant obstacles to the transportation of Dade County students by the MTA are presented by:

- Legal and institutional impediments, especially the State of Florida "guaranteed seat" requirements, the federal open door requirement, and (to a lesser extent, because modification is possible) the state funding requirement

- Operational impediments, including the overlap of peak period demands, the lack of available MTA capacity, and the significantly higher MTA operating costs.

C - FIELD TRIP TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

This section discusses our conclusions and recommendations concerning the use of the MTA for field trips by public school students.

NATURE OF THE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative under consideration is whether the MTA should be used to provide service to meet School Board needs for "field trips," including class trips, athletic team trips, and band and chorus trips.

CONCLUSIONS ON LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

Under Federal Regulations, MTA Service Would Be Allowable For Field Trips Only On A Charter Basis

Under federal regulations, the MTA is allowed to use its federally assisted vehicles only for "open door service on regularly scheduled routes" or for charter service during off-peak periods. Recognizing that the demand for field trips is sporadic (in terms of frequency, time of day, and origin-destination needs), the inclusion of field trip services as part of MTA's regular service is not possible. In particular, the demand for field trips involves specific point-to-point service that is irregular in its time and volume requirements.

Accordingly, field trip service by the MTA may be provided only on a charter basis during the off-peak periods. As defined in Section 604.11(b) of the UMTA Rules and Regulations, these vehicles cannot be used for the following types of services:

> (1) Weekday charters which occur during peak morning and evening rush hours;
> (2) Weekday charters which require buses to travel more than fifty miles beyond the grantee's urban area; or
> (3) Weekday charters which require the use of a particular bus for more than a total of six hours in any one day.

As well, charter bus operations may be provided only within the urban area in which regularly scheduled service is provided.

Federal Regulations Also Require That Charter Rates Exceed Costs And Not Foreclose Private Competition

The federal capital and operating assistance to public transit authorities is specifically designed to avoid interfering with the operations of private bus companies. As a result, under Section 604.13 of the UMTA Rules and Regulations, the MTA, as a recipient of federal funds, must agree that:

> (2)...revenues generated by its charter bus operations are equal to or greater than the cost of providing charter bus operations consistent with its cost allocation plan
> (3)...(it) will not establish any charter rate which is designed to foreclose competition by private charter bus operators.

As a result, the MTA has established the following charter rate schedule, which is consistent with the above factors and with competitive rates from private operators:

Time Of Service	Rate Per Bus Per Hour	Minimum Number Of Hours
Weekday off-peak (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)	$21	3
Evenings, weekends	$24	4
Holidays	$27	4

State Laws Do Not Restrict The Use Of The MTA For School Field Trips

State regulations allow the MTA or any private contractor to transport school children on field trips. As a result, the MTA has provided vehicles for school trips when the demand could not be fully met by the School Board's own transportation fleet. At the same time, there is no state funding for field trip services, regardless of the carrier.

CONCLUSIONS ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The Cost Of MTA Service For Field Trips Will, In Virtually All Cases, Significantly Exceed School Board Costs

The School Board's Transportation Department established a rate for field trips designed to cover the cost of operation. This rate, which is

charged to the schools, is now set at $6.25 per hour (to cover direct driver costs) and 43¢ per mile (to cover average nondriver operating costs). As well, the rate appears to have been properly established, in that it does attempt to equate the revenue for trips with the cost of operation. School Board vehicles, which are currently used for virtually all school field trips, will be involved in an estimated 14,000 vehicle-trips during the 1977-78 school year; revenue from this program, to directly offset the associated expenses, is estimated at $300,000.

The MTA charter rates, which are established in accordance with the federal requirements discussed earlier, are significantly above the School Board's own cost of field trip transportation. As a result, the MTA is rarely asked to provide vehicles for School Board field trips, and, because of the significant cost differentials involved, it would not be advantageous to change this approach and seek the MTA's assistance in this area. As an example, for the MTA to be cost-competitive on an individual trip, the trip would need to involve at least 34 miles per hour of usage. Using another perspective, the School Board's field trips in 1977-78 will involve an estimated 31,000 hours. Had these trips been performed by the MTA using its current rates, the schools would have been charged at least $650,000, rather than the $300,000 charged by its own Transportation Department.

RECOMMENDATION

The MTA Should Not Replace The School Board In The Provision Of Field Trip Services

The use of the MTA for field trips should be considered only when the School Board itself is unable to provide the service. The School Board has again demonstrated responsiveness and good performance in providing field trip services to the schools. As well, the federal restrictions, which are not likely to be changed in the foreseeable future, create a rate structure that would increase the School Board's cost substantially were field trip services to be provided by the MTA.

D - AFTER-SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

This section discusses our conclusions and recommendations concerning the transportation of public school students on MTA buses after the close of the normal school day.

NATURE OF THE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative under consideration is the transportation of students on MTA vehicles after the close of the normal school day, that is, transporting students who have stayed after school for extracurricular activities. This service would follow and represent a supplement to the regularly scheduled school bus service and would be provided to accommodate junior and senior high school students involved in academic, athletic, and other extracurricular activities.

CONCLUSIONS ON LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

Under Federal Regulations, The MTA Could Provide After-School Service As A Part Of Its Regular Schedule

The federal rules and regulations discussed earlier for the MTA on home-to-school service also apply to after-school service. The MTA can provide transportation service but only on an open door basis and on regular routes that are incorporated into published schedules.

Technically, the MTA could provide after-school service on a charter basis prior to the evening peak period; however, as already discussed in the section on Field Trip Transportation, it would be more than double the cost to the School Board in comparison to the School Board providing the service with its own fleet.

Under State Regulations, The MTA Would Not Be Restricted In Providing After-School Service

As discussed in Section 234.01, Florida Statutes, school boards are required to provide transportation to eligible students. However, when a student misses a bus by personal choice, the school system is not obligated to operate a supplementary service. Further, there are no requirements that any supplemental service provide a seat for each student on the bus.

Thus, the MTA could provide this service, and one of the principal impediments to the transporting of pupils on the MTA's vehicles (namely, the guaranteed seat requirement) would not apply.

CONCLUSIONS ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Regular MTA Service Is Already Being Used By Some Students For After-School Transportation

The number of students staying after school, and their trip destinations, vary considerably each day. At present, the transportation of these students is being provided by the MTA, by the School Board's late bus runs (known as "activity buses"), or by the students themselves or their families.

According to estimates prepared for the Dade County Office of Transportation Administration, approximately 10 per cent of all MTA passengers are students. These counts include private school students, public school students living within 2 miles of their school (and ineligible for public school transportation), and public school students traveling on evenings and weekends, as well as public school students who miss their regular bus. Although the relative proportions of these groups have not been determined, it is clear that students' after-school use of the MTA buses is already occurring. As well, to accommodate student demand, a reduced fare (now 15¢ per trip) has been in effect. However, a difficulty with the MTA service is that the scheduling and routing are often not convenient for student use. For example, some vehicles pass by a school minutes before the time when the demand for service develops. As well, there is some lack of knowledge on the part of students concerning the availability of the service.

Otherwise, as noted earlier, some school bus service is now provided on a scheduled basis after the end of the school day. The School Board's Transportation Department currently operates about 30 of these activity runs, scheduling them according to individual school needs; in particular, this service is tailored to school-to-home needs and does not facilitate other travel opportunities that are particularly attractive to junior and senior high school students. Finally, when the needs cannot be met by the MTA or the activity runs, transportation is placed with the student or the parent. This choice, however, places a burden on the parents and is particularly a problem in single-parent households and households where both parents are employed.

Coordinating The MTA Bus Routes And Service Times With The School System Activity Times Could Improve After-School Travel Opportunities For Students

The MTA already operates a significant level of service during the late afternoon period that would coincide with the primary period of after-school student needs. In particular, the MTA operates 312 buses during the midday period (2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.) and 415 buses in the afternoon peak period (4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.), compared with a morning peak utilization of 425 buses. Although the peak period varies by location (e.g., it is different in the Central Business District than in the Miami Beach area), there is generally a midday period when virtually all MTA buses are operating with available seats and/or standing room. Thus, additional ridership, from students or members of the general public, could be accommodated (without an incremental cost increase) as long as the routes and schedules were related to needs.

As Long As The MTA Used Existing Runs, After-School Service Could Be Provided At No Additional Cost

The cost of providing transit service is incremental; that is, an operator's hourly wage and benefits and the vehicle operating costs are generally the same regardless of the passenger load of a bus. For example, the hourly cost to the MTA to place a bus in service varies very little if the bus carries no passengers, six passengers, or 60 passengers. As well, the additional wear on the bus caused by more frequent stops for passengers to board and alight is minimal, and all other costs are constant. Therefore, an incremental increase in costs occurs only when an extra vehicle is operated to provide additional capacity or to improve service.

As noted earlier, additional capacity appears to be available on the existing MTA bus service, particularly in the after-school period between 2:00 p,m. and 4:30 p.m. Consequently, additional riders can be accommodated without an incremental cost increase. Indeed, the fares paid by the riders (now at 15¢ per trip) will slightly improve the fare-to-operating cost ratio of the service.

However, If The MTA Were To Increase The Number Of Vehicles In Operation, The Cost Of Service Would Exceed Present Levels

As discussed extensively earlier, the bus service operated by the School Board is not only less constrained with respect to routing and scheduling, it is also significantly less costly to provide than MTA bus service. The MTA drivers cost between 10 and 19 per cent more per hour than their School Board counterparts and, otherwise, the MTA's vehicles (with a smaller seating capacity than the School Board's vehicles) are about 65 per cent more costly

per mile to operate. For these reasons, it will always be less expensive to add a school bus than to add an MTA bus.

RECOMMENDATION

The MTA Should Coordinate With The School Board To Better Meet The Demand For After-School Service

After-school service by the MTA represents a meaningful opportunity for joint utilization, as along as it can be accommodated within the framework of existing on-the-street service. Considering all classes of potential riders, students are an attractive marketing target for the MTA to try to service during the late afternoon period. With this intent, a number of implementation steps should be undertaken, as outlined in Chapter IV.

E - MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL BOARD VEHICLES BY THE MTA

This section discusses our conclusions and recommendations concerning the maintenance of School Board vehicles by the MTA.

NATURE OF THE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative under consideration is whether the MTA should be used to provide maintenance service on the school buses that are owned and operated by the School Board. Under this alternative, maintenance service on school buses would be provided by the MTA staff, using the MTA's facilities and equipment.

CONCLUSIONS ON LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

Federal Rules And Regulations Virtually Prohibit The Use Of MTA Facilities And Equipment For The Maintenance Of School Buses

Federal rules and regulations specifically seek to disallow the maintenance of outside school buses by a public transit authority such as the MTA. Under Part 605 of the UMTA Rules and Regulations, school buses may be serviced or maintained in federally assisted facilities or equipment only where such use does not interfere with and is incidental to the use of such facilities for the regular mass transit fleet. Since the School Board has a bus fleet of 448 vehicles (as compared with 550 for the MTA), it is considered unlikely that maintenance at any meaningful level would be seen as "incidental."

To the extent that incidental maintenance of School Board vehicles can be provided by the MTA, federal regulations indicate that the maintenance of the MTA's own vehicles is to receive the highest priority. In turn, this raises questions concerning both the quality and the responsiveness of service that could be provided for school buses; as an example, a backlog in the MTA's maintenance of its own vehicles would likely preclude the MTA's providing any service on School Board vehicles. As well, where incidental use occurs, federal rules require some disallowance of federal funding. Specifically, the proportional usage of maintenance facilities and equipment for school bus vehicles is not an allowable operating expense for which federal funds may be requisitioned.

Federal involvement in this area is provided by the existence of federal capital grants for the MTA's acquisition of facilities and equipment and of

federal operating subsidies for the MTA's overall operation. The operating subsidy, under the Section V program, involved $8.5 million in 1978, with increasing amounts expected in future years. About 20 per cent of the MTA's operating budget is used for maintenance and garage expenditures, and, on a proportional basis, the MTA is now receiving a $1.7 million operating subsidy for maintenance activities.

State Rules Would Allow The Provision Of Maintenance Services By The MTA

State rules allow outside organizations, such as the MTA, to provide maintenance services on School Board vehicles. Although the School Board, in all cases, retains full responsibility over the performance of maintenance on its vehicles, the Superintendent, as the executive officer of the School Board, is authorized under the rules to use outside maintenance services when appropriate. Under Section 6A-3.18(8), the Superintendent is to:

> ...propose garages at which buses shall be inspected, when arrangements for this service have not been made to use school board-employed mechanics, and to see that inspections are systematically made at least once each month at garages approved by the board.

At the same time, as a part of its own responsibilities, the School Board establishes and controls the maintenance program for its vehicles. Under Section 6A-3.17(8), the School Board is to provide adequate storage, maintenance and inspection procedures for all buses owned by the School Board.

State financial support, under the FEFP, will not be affected by whether the MTA or the School Board performs the maintenance function. As discussed earlier, state financial support is based solely on a formula involving the number of students transported and the number of vehicle-miles used by the school district in transporting these students.

CONCLUSIONS ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The MTA's Present And Planned Maintenance Facilities Do Not Have Sufficient Capacity To Service School Board Vehicles

The MTA's present maintenance facilities, including a main garage and two satellite garages, are designed to accommodate a maximum of 550 vehicles. With the MTA having a fleet of 550 vehicles at present, these facilities are physically incapable of being used to service the School Board's fleet as well.

In terms of the foreseeable future, the MTA is planning to open a third and fourth maintenance facilities by 1980 that will raise its capacity to 800 vehicles. However, present plans also provide for significant expansion in the size of the MTA's own fleet, consistent with present plans for a rail system and additional bus service. A gradual increase in the number of vehicles is planned until the MTA's fleet has reached approximately 900 vehicles by 1982. Accordingly, no excess capacity for School Board or other vehicles is expected to be available.

The School Board's Maintenance Operation Is Already Of Sufficient Size To Achieve Its Own Efficiencies

Both the MTA and the School Board have maintenance operations already of a size sufficient to achieve their own economies of scale in terms of efficient maintenance operations. In terms of staffing, the MTA, with its own maintenance backlogs, does not have available staffing that could be used for school bus maintenance. As well, it appears that the School Board's staff has little available time to work on MTA vehicles; however, to the extent that available time exists, the benefits of this availability could already be obtained by a corresponding reduction in the level of staffing. There is limited commonality between the MTA and School Board maintenance operations (there are significant differences in terms of, for example, engine type and repair parts). Further, even where commonality exists (for example, in the purchase of fuel and oil), any joint purchase efforts could be undertaken administratively while still maintaining separate maintenance operations.

As well, the School Board maintenance staff has been effective in recent years in responding to and meeting the maintenance requirements of its fleet. Preventive maintenance schedules are adhered to, and the breakdown rate is limited to about 10 vehicles per day, or 3 per cent of the fleet. Finally, the School Board's own facilities and equipment are sufficient for its current fleet of 448 vehicles. Since the School Board's fleet is not expected to grow over the next few years, these facilities are considered adequate for the foreseeable future.

RECOMMENDATION

The MTA Should Not Be Used For The Provision Of Maintenance Services On School Board Vehicles

Using the MTA's staff, facilities and equipment for the maintenance of the School Board's vehicles should not be considered further. Federal rules and regulations sharply restrict usage of the MTA's equipment and facilities for school bus purposes. In addition, the MTA lacks the present and planned capacity for servicing School Board vehicles and, as discussed earlier, the School Board has already demonstrated responsiveness and good performance in its maintenance operation.

F - USAGE OF SCHOOL BOARD VEHICLES BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN PROGRAMS

This section discusses our conclusions and recommendations concerning the use of School Board vehicles by outside agencies for school-age children programs.

NATURE OF THE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative under consideration is whether the School Board should make its vehicles available to outside agencies for the transportation of school-age children to nonschool programs. An example of this would be the transportation of school-age children during the summer to programs administered by the Dade County Department of Parks and Recreation.

CONCLUSIONS ON LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

State Statutes Appear To Allow The Outside Usage Of School Board Vehicles, But Only For The Transportation Of Elderly Or Handicapped Persons

Outside usage of School Board vehicles for "the elderly, the handicapped and other similarly needy segments of society" is allowed under Section 236.083(9), Florida Statutes:

> ...(a) school board may submit to the Department (of Education) a proposed program designed to coordinate the use of public school buses. With the concurrence of (the School Board and the MTA), such equipment may be used not only for transportation of students, but also for the elderly, the handicapped, and other similarly needy segments of society.

According to the Florida Department of Education, outside usage of School Board vehicles in the state has only been allowed in conjunction with a meals program for the elderly in Sarasota County, in accordance with Section 236.083(9). Other requests for outside usage are understood to have been denied, including a case where Sarasota County sought to lease its school buses for public transit system use during the summer; and where Leon County sought to use its school buses to transport County jurors to land condemnation sites.

At the same time, however, there are restrictions on using yellow-colored school buses for other than transporting school children or, in temporary cases, handicapped persons. Under Section 234.041(1), Florida Statutes:

> It shall be unlawful... to use on the public highways of the state any bus of an orange or yellow color..., unless and until said bus has been changed from said color to some other color by repainting, and unless and until all signs and insignia which mark or designate it as a school bus have been removed therefrom. However,...in school districts operating specially designed or equipped buses for the transportation of the handicapped, those buses may be used on a temporary or irregular basis to transport persons other than students within the county with the express consent of the school board.

It is understood that there is pending legislation that, if enacted, would significantly broaden the types of outside groups eligible for using School Board vehicles. As a result, while the present statutes allow limited outside usage, a legal opinion will need to be sought based on the statutes that emerge from the present session of the state legislature.

State Rules Require That Outside Usage Not Interfere With School Transportation Needs

State rules require that certain guidelines be adhered to when school buses are involved in outside usage. Under Section 6A-3.33(2):

> (a) Maximum regard for safety, health, and comfort of passengers shall be primary factors considered by school boards in scheduling buses, employing drivers and in maintaining and operating buses.
> (b) Transportation of eligible students to and from school or school activities shall be given first priority in the assignment of buses by school boards.
> (c) Operation of school buses for other than public school students shall indirectly reduce the level of safety or efficiency of the system.
> (e) Public school buses...transporting exclusively passengers other than public school students shall have the words "school bus" on front and rear of bus covered...,and the stop arm and school bus warning lights shall not be activated.

For Approved Programs, State Financial Assistance May Be Available

Under state law, some financial assistance is available for pilot projects involving usage of school buses for the elderly, handicapped, and "other similarly needy segments of society." Under Section 236.083(9), Florida Statutes, an application process is defined and, for up to three approved programs, the Department of Education will then provide up to 50 per cent of the program cost for transportation:

> The superintendent shall prepare an itemized statement of the estimated total cost of the program and a copy of the school board resolution indicating its intention to provide at least one-half of the total cost of the program... The program may authorize the school board... to impose fares for the use of the transit services provided.

A total of $200,000 of funds has been allocated to date under Florida law and, to date, it is understood that most of these funds are still available. In addition, it is understood that a bill has recently passed the state legislature that would fund up to five programs of outside usage involving elderly and handicapped persons.

State financial support under the FEFP will not be affected by the usage of School Board vehicles by outside agencies. Again, state financial support is based solely on numbers of eligible students transported between home and school and (for vocational and special education students) between schools and on total vehicle mileage. As well, federal laws do not prohibit outside usage, with the appropriate federal guidelines already incorporated into the state regulations discussed above.

Charges To Outside Agencies For The Usage Of School Vehicles Could Require Public Service Commission Approval

Where compensation for transportation services is involved, it may be necessary to first obtain certification from the Florida Public Service Commission. Under Section 323.02, Florida Statutes:

> No motor carrier shall operate any motor vehicle for the transportation of persons...for compensation on any public highway in this state... without first having obtained from the Public Service Commission a certificate of public convenience and necessity, a permit as hereinafter provided...or an exemption as hereinafter provided.

The certficiation process then includes an application, hearings and notice, and the review of existing service in the territory under consideration.

Again, a legal opinion will be needed as to whether fares can be charged to outside agencies for the use of School Board vehicles.

CONCLUSIONS ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

School Board Vehicles Are Generally Available Only During The Summer Period

During the summer, a significant number of School Board vehicles (out of a total fleet of 448) are likely to be available for outside usage. Though certain major maintenance is performed on the school bus fleet during the summer, a substantial portion of the fleet is still available for transportation purposes. The specific number of available vehicles will depend on the upcoming requirements for summer school transportation which, at this time, have not yet been determined.

During the school year, however, the school bus fleet does not appear to have a meaningful number of extra vehicles available. The Transportation Department uses 393 routes, with a vehicle required for each; including the requirement for preventive maintenance on a vehicle every 20 days, an average of 22 other vehicles must be taken out of service. This leaves 33 vehicles (or 7 per cent of the total fleet) for use as spares to cover for breakdowns and to replace buses undergoing maintenance work. Accordingly, during the school year, availability would thus involve only a few vehicles on an irregular basis and would be inappropriate for meeting any type of program need for periodic service.

Outside Usage Will Result In Some Vehicle Wear

The outside usage of the School Board vehicles will result in some vehicle wear, generally in proportion to the extent of additional mileage; as a result, in accordance with the extent of mileage, additional maintenance of the vehicles would need to be performed. Presumably, the School Board would establish a rate for outside users that would be sufficient at least to cover average vehicle operating costs plus direct compensation of drivers and a factor for vehicle replacement. Because of their comparatively low operating cost, the school buses could be of benefit to eligible groups. Although school buses are generally less comfortable than MTA vehicles, they are significantly less expensive to operate (on a per mile basis); as discussed earlier, the per mile operating cost of school buses is about 98¢, compared with $1.70 for the MTA buses. Accordingly, as long as the School Board is

able to charge outside agencies for usage, it will be making its vehicles available on a low-cost basis and, as well, will be at least covering the associated costs.

RECOMMENDATION

The Usage Of School Buses By Outside Agencies During The Summer Months Should Be Supported

The school buses do provide a low-cost means of transportation that could be of benefit to other County programs. Further, a large number of these buses are available during the summer months, and their usage by outside agencies would not be detrimental to school activities (as long as compensation is received by the School Board to cover the associated operating costs). With this intent, a number of implementation steps should be undertaken, as outlined in Chapter IV.

However, Due To The Nature Of The Existing And Pending Legislation, A Legal Opinion On Outside Usage Should First Be Sought

Prior to implementing a program of outside usage, it will first be necessary for the School Board's legal staff to obtain a ruling on the potential for outside usage. This opinion would need to consider the range of groups eligible for outside usage (e.g., only elderly and handicapped persons, as at present), the impact of the yellow color restrictions, and the prerogative of the School Board to charge for the transportation services provided.

IV - SUMMARY AND PLAN OF ACTION

- Summary Of Recommendations
- Plan Of Action

IV - SUMMARY AND PLAN OF ACTION

This chapter summarizes our recommendations and presents a plan of action.

A - SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommendations are summarized below for each of the five joint utilization alternatives considered.

HOME-TO-SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

The School Board Should Continue To Provide Home-To-School Transportation Service For All Eligible Students, Using Its Own Drivers And Vehicles

FIELD TRIP TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

The MTA Should Not Replace The School Board In The Provision Of Field Trip Services

AFTER-SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

The MTA Should Coordinate With The School Board To Better Meet The Demand For After-School Service.

MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL BOARD VEHICLES BY THE MTA

The MTA Should Not Be Used For The Provision Of Maintenance Services On School Board Vehicles.

USAGE OF SCHOOL BOARD VEHICLES BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN PROGRAMS

The Usage By Outside Agencies Of School Buses During The Summer Months Should Be Supported. However, Because Of The Existing And Pending Legislation, A Legal Opinion On Outside Usage Should First Be Sought.

B - PLAN OF ACTION

The after-school transportation of public school students by the MTA offers a meaningful opportunity for joint utilization as long as it can be accommodated within the framework of existing service. A Plan of Action for implementing the recommendation on coordinating usage is presented in Exhibit IV-1.

The usage of School Board vehicles by outside agencies for school-age children programs also presents an opportunity for joint utilization within the legal contraints stated earlier. A Plan of Action for implementing the recommendations on coordinated usage is presented in Exhibit IV-2.

PLAN OF ACTION

AFTER-SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY THE MTA

	Action	Responsibility	Timing	
			Commence	Complete
1.	The School Board and the MTA should establish a mutual interest on this issue. A key individual in each organization should be assigned coordinative responsibilities, and an ongoing framework, such as quarterly meetings to review routings and demand for service, should be established.	School Board and the MTA	8/78	Continuing
2.	The transportation staffs of the School Board and the MTA should identify existing MTA routes and schedules that are available and convenient for after-school use by senior high school students and the extent of demand likely for this after-school service. As an example, eligible MTA bus service might include all service that is currently available within walking distance (perhaps one-third of a mile) of junior and senior high schools.	School Board and the MTA	8/78	10/78
3.	When there is specific student demand, a trial program should be undertaken in an effort to improve after-school travel opportunities for students. One likely area in which a trial program could be tested would be the senior high school on Miami Beach.	School Board and the MTA	9/78	12/78
4.	After a 3-month trial period, the program should be reviewed and, as appropriate, discontinued, modified, or expanded to include adjustments in service and routing for other junior and senior high schools.	School Board and the MTA	1/79	1/79

EXHIBIT IV-1

PLAN OF ACTION

USAGE OF SCHOOL BOARD VEHICLES BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN PROGRAMS

Action	Responsibility	Timing	
		Commence	Complete
1. The School Board should request its attorney to obtain a legal opinion on the legality of outside usage, including the groups eligible for outside usage, and the prerogative to charge other agencies for usage.	School Board and attorney	7/78	9/78
2. Assuming a positive result from Step 1, the School Board should adopt a resolution expressing its interest in making transportation resources available for outside usage.	School Board	11/78	11/78
3. The School Board should request its attorney to draft regulations for outside usage that are consistent with Florida Revised Statutes.	School Board and attorney	11/78	1/79
4. The School Board should modify its policy to permit outside utilization for programs involving school-age children (and, possibly, such other groups as the elderly). At all times, all nonschool service should receive a lower priority than School Board needs.	School Board	11/78	11/78
5. The School Board should define and issue a specific statement on the extent of vehicle availability during the summer and nonsummer periods.	School Board	11/78	11/78
6. The Transportation Department should establish both a point of contact within its Department for outside groups and a set of procedures for outside usage approval.	Transportation Department	1/79	Continuing
7. A fee schedule for outside usage that covers all direct operating costs plus a contribution to indirect costs (such as those for vehicle replacement) should be established. As such, School Board charter service should cover the full cost of providing the service.	School Board and Transportation Department	1/79	Continuing

EXHIBIT IV-2

APPENDIX A

JOINT UTILIZATION PROGRAMS IN FIVE SELECTED METROPOLITAN AREAS

APPENDIX A

JOINT UTILIZATION PROGRAMS IN FIVE SELECTED METROPOLITAN AREAS

This appendix describes the joint utilization programs for student transportation in five selected metropolitan areas.

OVERVIEW

As part of its study of Dade County's student transportation program CMP reviewed school transportation and general public transportation activities in the following five metropolitan areas:

- Buffalo, New York
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Toledo, Ohio
- Norfolk, Virginia
- Broward County, Florida.

These metropolitan areas were selected for review on the basis of the significant size of their student populations, their combined urban and suburban characteristics and their recent experience with the use (or planned use) of public transit facilities to transport public school students. During visits to these areas, the study team had discussions with school administrators and transit system managers, reviewed available data and information, and examined equipment and facilities.

CITY OF BUFFALO, NEW YORK

School Board Responsibilities

Pupil transportation responsibility in New York, as established by state law, rests with the school district in which the student resides. Unlike most states, New York assigns its boards of education the responsibility for providing transportation to private and parochial school students, as well as public school students. In Buffalo, nonpublic school students comprise almost 30 per cent of the total student population.

Elementary school students living more than 2 miles from a school and secondary school students living within 3 miles of a school are required to be provided transportation to school; shorter distances for transportation eligibility may be authorized by the voters of a district. Typically, the transportation eligibility distance throughout the state is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

Scope Of Transportation Services

The Buffalo Public School System educates about 53,000 students, almost half of whom are transported to school daily. Public transit buses have been used to transport school children in Buffalo since 1966. Currently, about 19,300 students are served on the buses owned and operated by the local public transit agency, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA). Approximately 15 per cent of the NFTA's total passengers are school children riding with Board of Education passes under a program administered jointly by the Board of Education and the NFTA. Students do not need to be guaranteed a seat while being transported and may be required to stand for trips under 10 miles. A standee limit of 20 per cent of the seated capacity, however, has been established (for example, on a 66-passenger bus, 13 children may be required to stand).

Pupil transportation is an essential element of a school desegregation program, and 173 buses are currently being used through a private contractor. Transportation of handicapped students is provided by another 35 contractor buses and by a fleet of 20 school buses owned and operated by the Board of Education; four of these buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts.

Routing

All school trips on NFTA buses are made on regularly scheduled runs and, for the most part, on the same routes followed in providing other bus service. During the morning peak period, 368 of the system's 473 buses are used to carry passengers throughout the City of Buffalo and suburban areas. To meet the special demand created by the need to transport school children, about 10 per cent of the buses operate on special "tripper" runs. These "trippers" operate over regular routes, with some adjustments made in order to terminate trips at schools. These trips are made on an "open door" basis (that is, they are available to any passenger) and, because of the adjusted routing, they usually carry only school children.

An estimated 75 per cent of the school children transfer buses during a trip to or from school.

Funding

The cost of pupil transportation is reimbursed by the state at 90 per cent of approved expenses. "Approved transportation expense" is the actual expenditure incurred for transporting students who live more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from a school; disapproved expenses include, for example, field trips and midday trips between schools. For the 1976-77 school year, the Board of Education paid the NFTA $2.5 million based on the contract, representing an average cost per student of $129 per year or 36¢ per daily trip. The NFTA has an average cost per passenger-trip of 46¢.

Handicapped and special education transportation, which has significantly higher costs per student, is reimbursed by the state at the same 90 per cent rate as regular transportation.

CITY OF ATLANTA, GEORGIA

School Board Responsibilities

Under state law, the school boards of county school districts in Georgia are required to provide transportation to students who live more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from a school. However, the 20 independent (i.e., noncounty) school districts, of which the City of Atlanta is one, are exempted from any state requirements to provide transportation services.

As a result, the Atlanta school board does not provide transportation for the bulk of its students. The board has assumed responsibility for some handicapped and special education student transportation. Also, in accord with a court order, it has accepted responsibility for pupil transportation as part of a desegregation program.

Scope Of Transportation Services

The Atlanta Public School System educates about 80,000 students. Approximately 30,000 of these students are provided home-to-school transportation on the public transit buses owned and operated by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). Transit buses have been used for pupil transportation in Atlanta for over 10 years, and approximately 15 per cent of all of MARTA's passengers are school children. Students are not guaranteed a seat while being transported to school, and standing loads occur on most trips.

The school board provides contract pupil transportation for 3,000 children as a part of a desegregation program and for 550 students in handicapped and special education programs. This contract pupil transportation involves a total of 85 buses.

Routing

MARTA operates an average of 250 school trips during each morning and afternoon period, using regular transit buses that run open door service. These trips are operated from a fleet of 782 buses.

Many of these routes, having been designed to serve school needs, zig-zag through residential neighborhoods and terminate at or near schools; accordingly, usage by non-school passengers is very limited. In compliance with the requirements to operate "regular" service, a timetable listing all the school trip service is published annually. Additional service is provided to offer students after-school travel opportunities.

Funding

The Atlanta school board does not provide funding for the MARTA school service and does not receive any reimbursement from the State of Georgia. The students pay a 15¢ fare--the same fare as any other passenger--each time they board a bus. (This means that families have an out-of-pocket expense of 30¢ a day for each child who rides a bus.) This fare is 56¢ less than MARTA's average cost for providing transportation of 71¢ per passenger-trip.

The cost of handicapped and special education transportation is $477 per student per year, or $1.32 per trip. Approximately 60 per cent of this cost is reimbursed by the state. Desegregation program transportation costs $200 per student each year, and no state reimbursement is received.

CITY OF
TOLEDO, OHIO

School Board Responsibilities

Pupil transportation responsibility in Ohio rests with the district in which the student resides and involves all students who live more than one mile from their school. Students are not guaranteed a seat while being transported.

The Ohio statutes were amended in 1971 to permit school boards to contract with a transit authority in fulfilling this responsibility. School boards may also contract with a private operator or may own and operate their own school bus fleet.

Scope Of Transportation Services

The Toledo Public School System educates 53,000 students. Approximately 20,000 students travel to and from school each day on public transit buses owned and operated by the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA). The school system and TARTA have established a single-pass system for these students, permitting them to board TARTA buses between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. without paying a fare.

The TARTA system carries approximately 19 million passengers a year, of whom one-third are students traveling on school trips.

School-owned buses, involving a fleet of 84 vehicles, are only used to transport eligible handicapped and special education students. At present, the Toledo Board of Education is seeking bids for contracting these services. TARTA, as a potential contractor, is under consideration to provide these services, using existing transit buses and new lift-equipped vehicles.

Routing

TARTA operates scheduled open door trips for all service, which involves 174 of the system's 202 buses during the morning peak. Approximately 40 of the buses are specifically assigned to school service, in which transit buses operate along regular transit routes and routes that have been tailored for school service. To improve utilization, school and non-school trips are incorporated into an operator's work schedule; accordingly, work assignments are coupled to include school and non-school trips (and thereby maximize operator and equipment efficiency).

Funding

The Ohio Department of Education pays the Toledo Board of Education a fixed $60 a year for each eligible student, and the Board then gives these funds directly to TARTA. In addition, the Board receives a mileage-based reimbursement from the state for the handicapped and special education service it provides.

Students who are not eligible for pupil transportation (that is, students who live less than a mile from school) and who choose to ride a TARTA bus pay a reduced fare of 15¢. This reduced fare is 20¢ less than the adult fare of 35¢ and 39¢ less than TARTA's cost for providing service, which averages 54¢ per passenger-trip.

CITY OF
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

School Board Responsibilities

Pupil transportation is required by state law for eligible students and is the responsibility of the school district in which the student lives. The eligibility distance for transportation is one mile for elementary students and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles for junior and senior high school students.

Scope Of Transportation Services

The Norfolk Public School System educates 47,000 students. Pupil transportation, which involves approximately 50 per cent of the students, is provided by a fleet of 245 yellow buses that are owned and operated by a private contractor. A fleet of 30 buses owned and operated by the School Board is used for handicapped and special education student transportation.

Public transit buses were used to provide pupil transportation for 5 school years; 1971 through 1976. However, the program was discontinued for four reasons. First, the School Board wanted to control its own transportation. Second, community dissatisfaction occurred because of staggered school starting times, which were associated with the program. Third, safety problems arose and were attributed to inadequate driver training. Fourth, calculations made by the school staff and the city staff showed that school bus transportation would be 10 per cent less expensive than transit bus transportation.

Routing

The contract buses and the school-owned buses operate on routes designed to accommodate school and student needs; that is, buses travel through residental neighborhoods to pick up students and then go directly to a school.

Funding

The cost of pupil transportation is reimbursed by the state on the basis of a formula involving mileage and attendance. For the 1976-77 school year, pupil transportation costs averaged $103 per student, and the Virginia Department of Education reimbursed approximately 40 per cent of the district's transportation costs. The amount of funding is not affected by the decision to use school-owned or contract buses for student transportation.

BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

School Board Responsibilities

The Broward County Public School Board must adhere to the same regulations as the Dade County Public School Board. Pupil transportation of eligible students is a school board responsibility established by Florida statutes and further defined in the rules and regulations of the Florida Department of Education. Transportation of eligible students involves those who live more than 2 miles from school, handicapped students and special education students. Consistent with Florida law, a seat is provided for each student.

Scope Of Transportation Services

The Broward County Public School System educates 139,000 students. Approximately 50,000 students are transported to and from school on a fleet of 368 buses owned and operated by the school board. Sixty-eight of these buses, including four lift-equipped vehicles, are for special education and handicapped pupil transportation.

Joint utilization in cooperation with the Broward County Division of Mass Transit is not currently in use. A joint utilization program is being considered, however, for a senior high school in the southeastern portion of the County. Under the proposal, transit bus service would replace school bus service for 450 students.

Funding

The cost of transporting a pupil enrolled in regular programs to and from school is $85 per year, or approximately 24¢ a trip. The cost for transporting handicapped and special education students (an aide is present on every bus) is $512 per year per student, or approximately $1.42 per trip. The Florida Educational Funding Program reimburses school board's for a portion of their transportation costs: about 55 per cent of the Broward County School Board's total costs are reimbursed under this program.

On the basis of preliminary discussions with the local transit operator, the school system is considering paying 15¢ per trip per student. The transit operator now has an average cost per trip of 70¢.

CONCLUSIONS

The approach to pupil transportation in the five metropolitan areas that were visited reflected the legal, institutional, and operating characteristics that occurred in the community. Some of these characteristics were unique, and of limited value to Dade County; however, other characteristics have direct application to the feasibility of joint utilization in Dade County, and are summarized in the following conclusions:

- The use of public transit buses for transporting pupils is achievable from an operational perspective. The federal requirement for open door service is not a significant impediment to the use of transit buses for pupil transportation. Routing and scheduling can be adjusted to reduce the probability of non-students wanting to use the service.

- However, in the cities where this approach is used, the economics of the service do not appear to have been fully considered or compared with the alternative of a separate school bus system. As an example, the Dade County School Board's cost per regular student-trip is 31¢, as compared to 46¢ per passenger-trip for NFTA, 71¢ for MARTA, 54¢ for TARTA, and 55¢ for MTA.

- The guaranteed seat requirement in the Florida Statutes does not apply in Georgia, Virginia, New York, or Ohio.

- The public transit buses in the other metropolitan areas were not involved in transporting handicapped, vocational, special education students, or students on desegregation runs.