

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
Comprehensive Student Transportation Services

Issued Date: April 15, 2026

Owner: Youngstown City School District Board of Education ("District")

Address: 20 W. Wood Street, Youngstown, Ohio 44503

Proposal Deadline: May 15, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. local time

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Introduction & Intent

The District is soliciting proposals from qualified transportation service providers to furnish comprehensive student transportation services.

The District intends to fully outsource transportation operations while:

- Retaining ownership of its existing fleet
- Maintaining oversight, accountability, and regulatory control
- Ensuring transparency in staffing, facilities use, and costs

Communication Protocol

All questions concerning this RFP shall be directed in writing via email to **Nancy Mikos, Business Manager**, at nancy.mikos@youngstown.k12.oh.us by 5:00 p.m., on May 6, 2026.

Pre-Submittal Meeting:

Vendors are encouraged to attend a pre-submittal meeting on **May 5, 2026 at 10:00am at 1500 Teamster Drive, Youngstown, Ohio 44510**. Vendors are asked to confirm their attendance by email to **Nancy Mikos, Business Manager**, at nancy.mikos@youngstown.k12.oh.us.

District Transportation Service Philosophy

- Student safety is the highest priority
- Reliable service delivery across all student populations
- Fiscal stewardship of public funds
- Clear performance accountability
- Equity and compliance with all state transportation requirements

Scope of Services

A. General Education Transportation

The vendor shall provide all general education transportation services, including but not limited to:

- Daily AM and PM transportation
- Midday transportation
- Early Release and Delayed Start transportation
- Transportation for modified schedules per the District calendar
- Emergency and contingency routing
- Optional services (priced separately):
 - i. Field trips
 - ii. Athletic events
 - iii. Extracurricular activities
 - iv. Late buses

B. Special Education Transportation

The vendor shall provide all transportation services required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including but not limited to:

- Door-to-door service where required
- Transportation for students with IEPs
- Wheelchair-accessible vehicles
- Transportation for medically fragile students
- Properly trained drivers and aides
- Compliance with all IEP transportation requirements
- Coordination with District Special Education administration

Failure to meet Individualized Education Program ("IEP") transportation obligations shall constitute a material breach of contract.

C. Transportation needs by Building

1. McKinney-Vento Transportation

The vendor shall provide transportation services in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, including:

- Transportation to and from a student's school of origin
- Rapid response to short-notice transportation changes
- Coordination with the District's McKinney-Vento liaison
- Transportation across district or municipal boundaries when required

2. Preschool Transportation

The vendor shall provide transportation services for District-operated preschool programs, including:

- Full-day preschool programs
- Midday and staggered transportation schedules
- Transportation for preschool students with specialized or IEP-related needs
- Coordination with District Preschool administration

Preschool transportation shall be considered a core service, not an optional add-on.

3. Charter and Non-Public School Transportation (State-Mandated)

The vendor shall provide all transportation services required by the State of Ohio for District-resident students attending charter schools and non-public schools, including but not limited to:

- Transportation to all charter and non-public schools for which the District is legally obligated to provide transportation
- Transportation beyond District-owned school locations, including schools located outside District boundaries
- Compliance with all applicable Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Department of Education requirements

- Routing and scheduling that accounts for varying school start and end times
The vendor acknowledges that:
- Transportation to charter and non-public schools is a mandatory service and shall not be excluded, limited, or treated as optional

All proposal pricing shall reflect the full scope of charter and non-public school transportation requirements.

Vendor shall assume full responsibility for daily routing design, dispatch operations, driver assignment, substitute coverage, and real-time operational decision-making necessary to deliver all contracted transportation services.

D. Fleet Ownership & Use

1. District-Owned Fleet

The District shall retain ownership of its existing transportation fleet.

- The vendor may:
 - Lease and operate District-owned buses
 - Assume full responsibility for:
 - Preventive and corrective maintenance
 - Repairs and replacement parts
 - Inspections and regulatory compliance
 - Fueling and daily readiness

District-owned vehicles shall be returned in equal or better condition, less normal wear and tear.

2. Vendor-Owned Supplemental Fleet

The vendor may utilize additional vendor-owned vehicles as necessary, provided that all such vehicles:

- Meet or exceed Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) standards
- Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations
- Receive District approval prior to use

E. Maintenance & Mechanical Services

The vendor shall provide all mechanical and maintenance services necessary to support transportation operations.

- No District maintenance staff shall be assigned
- Vendor assumes all labor, parts, tooling, and compliance costs
- All vehicles must meet OSHP inspection standards
- Failure to maintain vehicles shall constitute contractual non-compliance

Staffing Requirements & Dedicated Resources

A. Required Staffing Plan

Proposals shall include a detailed staffing plan identifying personnel assigned to the District, including:

- Number of drivers
- Number of aides (general, special education, preschool)
- Number of dispatchers
- Number of supervisory staff
- Number of administrative/support staff. The staffing plan shall clearly distinguish between:
 - a. Dedicated District staff
 - b. Shared regional or corporate staff

B. Dedicated Account Management

The vendor shall identify:

- A primary District-dedicated or on-site supervisor
- A secondary escalation contact
- Expected on-site presence and availability

C. Staffing Commitments

- Staffing levels and assigned personnel identified in the proposal shall be considered contractual commitments.
- Any material reduction in staffing shall require prior written District approval.
- The vendor shall provide and maintain an organizational chart and update it as staffing changes occur.
- Vendor staffing shortages or labor market conditions shall not relieve the Vendor of contractual performance obligations.

Technology, Cameras & Student Behavior Management

A. Camera & Transportation Technology

The District intends to retain ownership of existing onboard camera systems and transportation technology, where applicable. The vendor shall:

- Monitor cameras and technology on a routine basis
- Maintain required data retention standards
- Provide the District with full access to footage and data upon request

B. Student Behavior Management

- The vendor shall manage transportation-related student behavior in accordance with District policies and applicable law.
- The vendor shall designate supervisory personnel to work directly with principals and administrators regarding transportation-related behavior issues.
- The District retains final authority over student discipline decisions.

C. Escalation & Serious Incidents

In cases involving serious misconduct, safety concerns, or incidents requiring administrative or legal review, the vendor shall:

- Immediately notify the District
- Preserve all relevant footage and records
- Fully cooperate with District investigations

Performance Standards & Accountability

The vendor shall meet established performance metrics, including but not limited to:

- On-time performance
- Route completion
- Incident and complaint response timelines
- Reporting and documentation requirements

Performance standards shall apply equally to:

- District schools
- Charter schools
- Non-public schools

Any fines, penalties, sanctions, or financial assessments imposed upon the District by the State of Ohio or any regulatory authority that are directly attributable to the vendor's failure to meet contractual or regulatory requirements shall be the sole responsibility of the vendor.

The District reserves the right to assess financial penalties or liquidated damages for repeated missed routes, excessive late arrivals, safety violations, or failure to meet reporting requirements.

Insurance & Risk Management

The vendor shall maintain insurance coverage at its sole expense for the duration of the contract, including:

- Commercial General Liability
- Automobile Liability (owned, leased, and non-owned vehicles)
- Workers' Compensation (per Ohio law)
- Employers' Liability
- Umbrella/Excess Liability
- Minimum limits to be determined by District legal counsel.

Additional requirements:

- District named as Additional Insured
- Coverage shall be primary and non-contributory
- Certificates provided annually
- Failure to maintain coverage constitutes material breach

Pricing Structure

Proposals shall include detailed pricing, including:

- Cost per route
- Cost per student
- Cost per mile
- Special education transportation pricing
- Preschool transportation pricing
- Charter and non-public school transportation pricing
- McKinney-Vento transportation pricing
- Optional services pricing

Transition Plan

Proposals shall include a detailed transition plan addressing:

- Staffing onboarding
- Route implementation
- Communication with families
- Coordination with Special Education, Preschool, McKinney-Vento, and charter/non-public schools
- Fleet and data transition
- First-day operational readiness

District Facilities & Office Space (Optional)

Use of District-owned office or operational space is **not required**.

If the vendor requests use of District facilities, the proposal shall include:

- Description of space requested
- Intended use
- Staffing assigned to the space

Any use of District facilities may be subject to:

- A lease or license agreement
- Fair market rental rates or District-determined fees
- Utility and operational cost recovery

The District reserves the right to approve, deny, modify, or terminate facility use independently of the transportation contract.

Vendor use of District transportation facilities shall not imply District operational supervision or involvement in daily transportation services.

Contract Term & Termination

The District anticipates an initial contract term of **three (3) to five (5) years**, with renewal options.

The District reserves the right to terminate the contract for:

- Performance failure
- Regulatory non-compliance
- Fiscal or operational necessity

Vendors are to submit a copy of their standard form of agreement as part of their proposal.

The following terms shall apply to the finalized contract between the selected Vendor and the District.

Employees

All employees of Vendor shall be carefully selected as to their character and ability, and must pass all requirements and tests provided for by the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code. All employees should have undergone a criminal records check as required of school employees pursuant to Ohio Revised Code §3319.39.

Vendor shall maintain copies of criminal background checks, which shall be made available to the School District prior to employment or immediately after an offense has been committed.

Non-Collusion And Non-Conflict of Interest

Vendor, by submission of its Proposal, acknowledges that no officer, employee, or member of the Board of Education of the School District shall benefit financially or have any interest in this contract, nor has Vendor attempted to influence any employee, officer or Board of Education member of the School District to breach ethical conduct standards. Vendor shall state under oath an affirmation if it, its employees, officers, and/or owners have been under investigation, indictment, or criminal information for any of the following:

- Attempting to influence a public employee to breach ethical conduct standards;
- Colluding or attempted colluding with other bidders to restrain competition by any means;
- A criminal offense related to the application for or performance of any public or private contract, including, but not limited to, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, receiving stolen property, tax fraud and any other offense that directly reflects on the vendor's business integrity;
- Criminal offense under state or federal antitrust laws;
- Deliberately or willfully submitting false or misleading information in connection with the application for or performance of a public contract; or
- Debarment or license revocation by another state or by any agency or department of the federal government.

Deduction For Taxes

The Vendor shall accept liability for payment (for its employees) of all applicable payroll taxes or deductions required by local, state and federal law.

Insurance

Workers' Compensation Insurance through the State of Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation and employer's liability insurance shall be carried by Vendor to the full amount required by law and by the School District.

Equal Employment and Non-Discrimination

The Vendor shall in all solicitations and/or advertisements for employees placed by or on behalf of the Vendor, state that all qualified applicants shall receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, creed, disability, marital or parental status, national origin, race, sex, veteran status, or political opinion or affiliation. The Vendor shall cause any subcontractor engaged to perform any services required by this contract to include this Equal Opportunity clause in all solicitations, advertisements and employment practices it shall perform.

Dismissal

The Board reserves the right, subject to Vendor's collective bargaining obligations, to request the dismissal or transfer of any of the Vendor's employees whose performance or actions are detrimental to the School District's programs. The Vendor shall dismiss any employee involved in misconduct, drug abuse, consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while performing services under this contract, use or possession of firearms on School District premises, upon learning of such problem, or at the School District's request.

Safety

The Vendor performing services for the School District is required and shall comply with all Occupational Safety and Health Administration Standards and any other applicable rules and regulations. The Vendor shall be responsible for the safety of its employees and any unsafe acts or conditions that may cause injury or damage to any persons or property within or around the work site area under this contract.

Indemnity

The Vendor shall, during the term of the contract including any warranty period, indemnify, defend and hold the School District, its officials, employees, and Board members harmless from all suits, actions, or claims of any kind, including attorneys' fees, brought on account of any personal injury, damage or violations of rights, sustained by any person or property as a result of any neglect in performing this contractual work, or on account of any act or omission by the

Vendor and/or its employees, or from any claims, actions or causes of action arising from violation of any law, bylaw, ordinance, regulation or decree. The Vendor agrees that this clause shall include claims involving infringement of patent or copyright.

Termination For Convenience

The School District may terminate the contract, in whole or in part, whenever it is determined that such termination is in the best interest of the School District, without showing cause, upon giving sixty (60) days' written notice to the Vendor. The School District shall pay all reasonable costs incurred by the Vendor up to the date of termination. The Vendor shall not be reimbursed for any profits which may have been anticipated but which have not been earned up to the date of termination.

Termination For Default

When the Vendor has not performed or has unsatisfactorily performed the contract, the School District may terminate the contract for default. Upon termination for default, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the School District. Failure on the part of the Vendor to fulfill the contractual obligations shall be considered just cause for termination of the contract. The Vendor will be paid for work satisfactorily performed prior to the termination, less any excess costs incurred by the School District in procuring and completing the terms of the contract. If at any time during the term of the contract, the School District determines that the Vendor has not kept and observed the conditions of the contract, and has not corrected the breach within five (5) working days following receipt of written notice, the School District shall have the right, in its sole discretion to terminate said contract upon five (5) days' additional written notice.

Governing Laws

The Ohio Revised Code, the Ohio Administrative Code, and any applicable resolutions of the Board of Education insofar as they apply to the laws of competitive bidding contracts and purchases and as they may apply to the provision of transportation services are made a part hereof, as if fully restated herein.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Experience and qualifications
- Compliance with scope of services
- Fleet and maintenance approach
- Staffing plan and dedicated resources
- Performance accountability
- Pricing and overall value
- Transition readiness

Additional Terms

The District reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals
- Negotiate terms
- Request additional information
- Modify the scope as needed

Impracticality Determinations and Payment-in-Lieu Coordination

The District remains solely responsible for making formal determinations regarding impractical transportation and the issuance of payment in lieu of transportation in accordance with applicable Ohio law.

The selected vendor shall be expected to:

- Cooperate with the District in identifying transportation scenarios that may be operationally impractical
- Provide routing data, mileage analysis, ride time projections, and related documentation upon request
- Participate in collaborative routing reviews with District administration
- Adjust routing plans as directed following District determinations

All final decisions regarding transportation eligibility and payment in lieu remain the responsibility of the District.

Payment in Lieu of Transportation (PILOT) Responsibility

Vendors shall identify procedures for administering state-mandated payment in lieu of transportation determinations for students deemed impractical to transport.

The District shall retain financial responsibility for statutory payment in lieu obligations unless otherwise negotiated. However, the vendor shall be responsible for:

- Conducting routing feasibility analysis
- Providing documentation supporting impracticality determinations
- Assisting with state reporting and parent communication

Routing Feasibility Analysis Requirement

As part of the alternate high school transportation proposal, vendors shall include:

- An estimated percentage or range of routes anticipated to be operationally impractical
- Assumptions used in developing this estimate
- Any recommended mitigation strategies

This information will be used by the District for planning and financial forecasting purposes.

Transportation Eligibility and Routing Optimization

The District currently operates under established student transportation eligibility standards, including existing walk zone thresholds.

Vendors shall:

- Demonstrate experience in delivering efficient routing within defined eligibility parameters
- Provide recommendations for phased service optimization strategies that may reduce transportation costs or improve operational efficiency over time
- Describe methodologies for evaluating walk zone thresholds, hub stop models, bell schedule alignment, and routing consolidation

The District retains sole authority over transportation eligibility determinations and policy decisions.

State Reporting and Regulatory Compliance

The selected vendor shall be responsible for supporting the District in meeting all federal, state, and local transportation reporting requirements.

At a minimum, the vendor shall:

- Prepare and maintain documentation necessary for completion of all required Ohio Department of Education transportation reports, including but not limited to **T-1, T-2, T-3, and T-4 reports**.
- Maintain accurate daily operational records including:
 - Student ridership counts
 - Route mileage
 - Driver assignment records
 - Fleet utilization
 - Accident and incident reporting
- Provide all requested transportation data to the District in a timely manner consistent with state reporting deadlines.
- Assist with audits, reviews, or compliance inquiries related to transportation operations.
- Maintain driver certification, training documentation, and qualification records in accordance with Ohio State Highway Patrol and ODE requirements.
- Provide documentation supporting impracticality determinations and Payment-in-Lieu calculations when applicable.
- Vendor shall designate a **Compliance Coordinator** responsible for transportation reporting accuracy and state regulatory adherence.

The District shall retain final responsibility for submission of all required reports.

Failure of the vendor to provide timely or accurate reporting data may be considered a material breach of contract.

Alternate Service Options

Option A: High School Transportation

Vendors shall provide a separate operational plan and pricing structure for the provision of general education transportation services for high school students.

This alternate shall include:

- Transportation of resident students to District high schools
- Transportation obligations to charter and non-public high schools as required by Ohio law
- Additional fleet, staffing, routing, and dispatch requirements
- Estimated cost impact and implementation timeline

The District reserves the right to accept or reject this alternate in whole or in part.

Option B: Workforce Transition and Employment Continuity

The District requires Vendors to include a detailed workforce transition plan addressing the continuation of employment opportunities for current District transportation personnel.

At a minimum, the selected vendor shall:

- Offer employment to all current District bus drivers and bus aides who meet the vendor's hiring qualifications and background requirements.
- Maintain each qualified driver and aide at a wage rate no less than their current District hourly rate for a minimum period of **two (2) years** from the commencement of services under the contract.
- Provide written documentation of hiring standards, training requirements, performance expectations, and disciplinary procedures.

The District acknowledges that continued employment is contingent upon:

- Meeting licensure and qualification standards
- Satisfactory performance
- Compliance with vendor employment policies
- Absence of disqualifying incidents

Failure of an employee to meet these requirements shall not be deemed a breach of this provision.

Benefit Coordination / Transitional Insurance Availability

The District intends to work cooperatively with the selected vendor effective **July 1, 2026** for the start of the 2026/2027 school year and continued access to District-sponsored health insurance benefits for eligible transportation employees hired by the vendor, through **June 30, 2028**, subject to applicable plan provisions and administrative feasibility.

Vendors shall describe their willingness and operational ability to coordinate onboarding timelines, eligibility tracking, and payroll coordination to support a smooth transition of benefits.

Nothing in this provision shall be interpreted as requiring the vendor to assume responsibility for District-sponsored benefit costs unless otherwise negotiated.