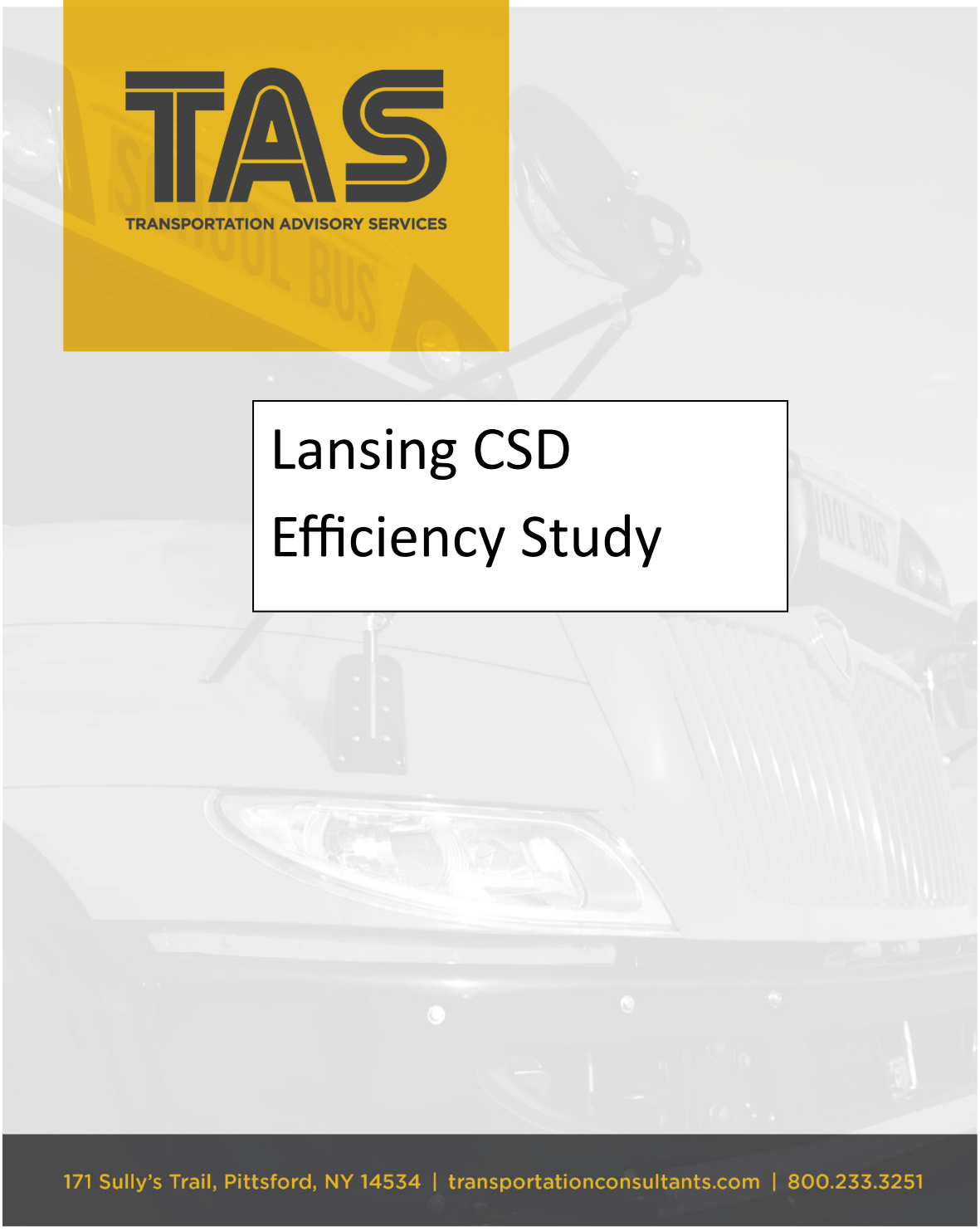


Lansing CSD
Efficiency Study

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Contents

INTRODUCTION 3
METHODOLOGY 5
1. Document & Data Acquisition 5
2. On-Site Visits & Facility Assessment 5
3. Stakeholder Interviews 6
4. Workflow Tracing & Operational Evaluation 6
5. Routing Structure & Technology Analysis 7
6. DOT Compliance & Maintenance Program Review 8
7. Financial & Fuel Systems Review 8
8. TAS Comparative Framework & Best-Practice Alignment 9
9. Synthesis of Findings & Development of Recommendations 9
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 11
HIGH-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS & PRIORITIZATION 12
FACILITY & MAINTENANCE 16
Facility Condition & Infrastructure 16
Maintenance Operations & DOT Readiness 16
Workflow, Tools & Documentation 17
Impact on Operations & Service Quality 17
Overall Assessment 18
FINANCIAL 19
FLEET 24
LABOR 27
MANAGEMENT 31
POLICY & PROCEDURES 35
ROUTING 39

INTRODUCTION

The Lansing Central School District (LCSD) operates a district-run student transportation system that services **913 students** across a diverse range of instructional settings, including in-district public schools, private and parochial schools, and multiple out-of-district (OOD) programs such as TST BOCES, OCM BOCES, PTECH, Blue Sky, George Jr., and Career & Technical education programs. The transportation program supports a multi-tier bell schedule, with **11 middle/high school routes** and **9 elementary routes**, and additional daily obligations including McKinney-Vento transportation, Montessori and New Roots routes, and secondary OOD shuttles. These wide-ranging responsibilities require a reliable, well-maintained fleet and coordinated routing structure to ensure on-time arrival for instructional programs beginning as early as **7:35–7:49 AM** and concluding after **3:26–3:30 PM**, depending on the building served.

In recent years, the District has identified significant operational challenges that have increasingly strained the Transportation Department's ability to deliver safe, compliant, and efficient service. Most notably, the program experienced **serious Department of Transportation (DOT) inspection failures**, including **7–8 failed inspections during the summer preceding the study**, with staff reporting that additional failures may have occurred prior to the arrival of the current Mechanic. Interviews revealed that mechanical issues were at times **unaddressed or unresolved**, causing buses to remain out of service longer than appropriate and exposing the District to regulatory risk. Drivers indicated that the recurring failures contributed to reduced confidence in vehicle safety, increased frustration, and ultimately the loss of several employees. These circumstances raised concerns regarding the sustainability of the maintenance program, the adequacy of compliance oversight, and the need for systemic corrective strategies.

Compounding these compliance concerns, LCSD's transportation facility has long been recognized as **insufficient for the demands of a modern transportation program**. The facility, located at **322 Ridge Rd.**, is described by staff as **aged, undersized, and in deteriorating condition**. Environmental issues include **heating system failures**, chronic **mouse and insect infestations**, **unsafe flooring**, and **inadequate restroom facilities**. Exterior operational challenges—such as **insufficient lighting**, winter **ice accumulation**, and **inconsistent plowing and salting**—further compromise staff safety and impede daily operations. The building offers **no indoor bus storage**, limited workspace, and essentially **no room for expansion**, restricting LCSD's ability to conduct efficient inspections, store parts, train employees, or accommodate routing and administrative personnel effectively. The District itself has acknowledged the facility's inadequacy and noted the possible need for **facility replacement or expansion** in the long term.

Operational pressures extend beyond facility and compliance concerns. Routing has become increasingly complex due to consolidation, expanded OOD obligations, and the need to shorten

windows between tiers to maintain on-time arrivals. Staff reported increased behavioral issues following consolidation, inconsistencies in late-bus assignments, and the absence of formal policies governing walkers, dangerous stops, or turn-around locations. Daily operations have been further stressed by staffing shortages, requiring the router and other employees to drive regularly to maintain coverage, while the Transportation Specialist balances both 19-A duties and daily route assignments. The cumulative impact of these shortcomings has resulted in operational inefficiencies, procedural inconsistencies, and elevated risk.

Recognizing the convergence of these challenges—**persistent facility deficiencies, significant DOT compliance failures, staffing pressures, leadership transitions, routing complexity, and the need for clearer procedural structures**—the District requested an independent Transportation Efficiency Study. The purpose of this study is to provide LCSD with a comprehensive, objective evaluation of its transportation operations; to identify the underlying causes of inefficiencies; and to recommend actionable improvements that support the District's commitment to safe, reliable, and fiscally responsible transportation services.

METHODOLOGY

Transportation Advisory Services (TAS) conducted this review using a **structured, multi-phase evaluation process** that reflects our firm's established methodology for comprehensive transportation efficiency studies. While the TAS approach is consistent across districts, each study is tailored to the specific circumstances, conditions, and challenges of the client. For Lansing Central School District (LCSD), the methodology placed special emphasis on **DOT compliance, facility assessment, operational workflow analysis, and routing complexity**, as these areas were identified by the District as priority concerns following recent operational difficulties.

This study relied on **document review, data analysis, on-site observation, stakeholder interviews, workflow tracing, and comparative evaluation of practices** to produce a holistic understanding of LCSD's transportation program and to develop targeted, achievable recommendations.

1. Document & Data Acquisition

The study began with the District's completion of TAS's standard **Transportation Efficiency Study Information Survey**, which provided foundational data regarding staffing, fleet composition, facilities, financial information, fuel systems, routing software, maintenance operations, and operational procedures. The District submitted detailed information on enrollment, transported counts, trip mileage, vehicle inventory, fuel tank specifications, GPS/camera systems, maintenance vendors, fleet changes, labor structures, training programs, and facility features.

TAS also reviewed supplemental materials from the **Lansing TST Project**, which provided further insight into routing processes, behavior management, operational constraints, technology adoption, environmental and facility challenges, and daily management practices. This document expanded the context by identifying additional concerns such as inadequate lighting, unsafe flooring, conflicts between Buildings & Grounds and Transportation, and the impact of route consolidation on student behavior.

Together, these materials provided a robust quantitative and qualitative foundation for the study.

2. On-Site Visits & Facility Assessment

A key component of the methodology involved a **comprehensive on-site review**, including an in-person assessment of the District's transportation facility at **322 Ridge Rd.** TAS examined the physical condition of the shop, including the three work bays, lifts, parts storage, tire room, workflow configuration, parking layout, environmental conditions, lighting, and seasonal

hazards. Particular attention was given to **documented facility concerns**, such as heating failures, rodent presence, inadequate lighting, winter ice accumulation, insufficient restroom facilities, and unsafe flooring. These issues were analyzed to determine their impact on productivity, staff safety, DOT readiness, and long-term operational sustainability.

TAS's standard facility inspection protocol was used to assess structural adequacy, functional layout, equipment utilization, space constraints, vehicle storage limitations, and interactions with Buildings & Grounds. Observations were compared to best-practice standards for maintenance facilities supporting a fleet of LCSD's size and complexity.

3. Stakeholder Interviews

TAS conducted **structured interviews** with a cross-section of district personnel to fully understand the internal dynamics, operational challenges, and workflow patterns within the transportation program. Interviewees included:

- Mechanics
- Transportation Specialist (19-A and safety oversight)
- Clerical and routing staff
- Bus drivers and substitute drivers
- Building principals and administrative staff
- Assistant Superintendent for Business
- Other District personnel connected to transportation

These interviews provided critical insight into the **root causes of DOT failures**, the deterioration of morale, the perceived absence of leadership structure, conflicts with Buildings & Grounds, referral/discipline inconsistencies, trip-assignment challenges, and driver scheduling issues. Several interviews also highlighted the significant improvements following the arrival of the new Mechanic, including more disciplined inspection cycles, enhanced communication, and increased confidence in fleet reliability.

Interview data were cross-referenced with survey responses and observations to confirm accuracy and identify patterns.

4. Workflow Tracing & Operational Evaluation

To evaluate LCSD's daily operations and compliance posture, TAS conducted a **workflow tracing analysis**, examining how information flows between drivers, mechanics, office staff, building administrators, and district leadership. This included:

- **DVIR processes** (from driver submission to mechanic response)
- **Maintenance scheduling and documentation**
- **Parts ordering and vendor coordination**
- **Trip assignment procedures and weekly postings**
- **Referral and behavior-management workflows**
- **Timekeeping and attendance monitoring**
- **Communication between Transportation and Buildings & Grounds**

TAS compared LCSD's workflow to standard operating procedures recommended for New York State school transportation programs. Special attention was paid to areas where inconsistent or informal practices created risk—such as paper-based DVIRs, case-by-case dangerous stop evaluations, absence of a walker policy, unstructured late-bus assignments, and variations in discipline follow-through.

This analytical phase was critical for identifying systemic inefficiencies and opportunities for modernization.

5. Routing Structure & Technology Analysis

TAS examined LCSD's routing environment using the data provided by the District and interviews with the routing staff. This included assessment of:

- Two-tier bell schedule alignment
- Route counts (11 MS/HS, 9 elementary)
- OOD transportation requirements
- Driver feedback regarding late-bus assignments
- Turn-around points and stop safety considerations
- Effects of route consolidation on student behavior
- Use of Transfinder Plus, Tripfinder, Servicefinder, Stopfinder, Google Docs, and GPS systems

The TST Project document highlighted operational stress caused by compressed windows between tiers ("keep shortening the window to get there"), inconsistent late-bus communication, and route changes contributing to behavioral problems. TAS evaluated these

concerns and benchmarked them against industry expectations relating to bell-time efficiency, route balancing, and resource allocation.

This analysis informed recommendations regarding tier restructuring, digital integration, and policy updates.

6. DOT Compliance & Maintenance Program Review

Given the District's recent compliance struggles, TAS placed an elevated emphasis on reviewing:

- DOT inspection histories
- 30–35-day inspection cycle implementation
- Maintenance staffing structure
- Prior failure trends
- Documentation practices
- Vehicle rotation and spare management
- Vendor involvement (Leonard, Parmenter, others)

The review incorporated employee accounts that **7–8 buses failed DOT inspection during the summer**, with additional failures occurring prior to mechanical staffing changes. Interviews were used to verify the nature of past deficiencies and to assess the effectiveness of the District's improved practices, including extended shop hours (6:00 AM–5:00 PM), DOT-approved inspection lists, and better shop organization.

This section of the methodology was crucial in determining the operational stability of the maintenance program and its future sustainability.

7. Financial & Fuel Systems Review

TAS evaluated the District's financial data with a focus on transportation-related expenditures, aidability, benefit costs, retiree-health impacts, vendor pricing, and fuel system design. The review included analysis of:

- Building Aid rate (68.1%)
- District benefit costs
- Fuel tank age, capacity, and pricing (Mirabito and Buell Fuel)
- Fuel drop frequencies and annual consumption
- Cooperative purchasing (DCMO bid)

- Trip mileage (255,735 miles annually; 8,922 summer)

These financial inputs were used to identify long-term cost implications associated with facility needs, fleet replacement timing, and operational inefficiencies.

8. TAS Comparative Framework & Best-Practice Alignment

As part of TAS's standard methodology, findings from Lansing were evaluated using our comparative framework, which is informed by **hundreds of transportation studies conducted across New York State and beyond**. This framework assesses:

- Operational safety and regulatory compliance
- Facility adequacy relative to fleet size
- Appropriate staffing ratios
- Maintenance scheduling and documentation
- Routing efficiency and bell-time alignment
- Fleet lifecycle management
- Policy consistency and administrative structures

While TAS never applies external numerical benchmarks or data from other districts to a client's dataset, our extensive experience allows us to identify where a district's practices diverge from accepted operational standards. This contextual analysis ensures that recommendations are grounded in proven, real-world practices.

9. Synthesis of Findings & Development of Recommendations

The final phase of the methodology involved synthesizing all findings—survey data, interviews, facility observations, workflow tracing, routing analysis, compliance review, and financial inputs—into a cohesive set of short-term and long-term recommendations.

Each recommendation was evaluated based on:

- Feasibility
- Cost and aidability
- Operational benefit
- Safety and compliance impact
- Sustainability and long-term efficiency

This structured approach ensures that the District receives **clear, actionable, and prioritized guidance** for strengthening its transportation operation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lansing Central School District (LCSD) operates a district-run transportation program serving **913 students** through a system of **11 middle/high school routes**, **9 elementary routes**, and multiple out-of-district services including McKinney-Vento, Montessori, New Roots, TST BOCES, and Career & Technical education programs. This combination of in-district and high-variability out-of-district responsibilities requires a transportation operation built on consistent fleet readiness, disciplined routing workflows, and reliable staff coverage to meet early morning start times and afternoon dismissal schedules. ,

In recent years, LCSD's transportation operation has experienced significant challenges that prompted the District to commission this comprehensive Transportation Efficiency Study. The most pressing concerns relate to **DOT compliance failures** and a **deteriorating transportation facility**. During the prior summer, LCSD experienced **7–8 DOT failures**, with staff reporting that past maintenance practices allowed mechanical issues to persist unresolved. These failures raised regulatory risk, contributed to driver dissatisfaction, and resulted in several staff departures. Facility conditions further compounded these concerns: the transportation building is **aged, poorly heated**, and affected by **rodent infestations, unsafe flooring, insufficient lighting, inadequate restrooms, winter safety hazards, and no indoor storage capacity**—all of which limit productivity and threaten safety.

Operationally, LCSD also faces constraints related to routing complexity, increased behavior issues following route consolidation, inconsistent late-bus assignment communication, and the absence of formalized policies for walkers, dangerous stops, and turn-arounds. Staffing shortages—where the router and safety specialist must often drive—further strain daily operations. Despite these challenges, LCSD shows strong capacity for improvement. The recent hiring of a new Mechanic has substantially improved DOT outcomes, introduced a consistent **30–35-day inspection cycle**, and restored staff confidence in vehicle readiness. The District also leverages modern technology platforms, including GPS, Transfinder Plus, Servicefinder, Tripfinder, and Stopfinder, which provide a strong foundation for routing and maintenance modernization.

Taken together, the findings indicate a district at an inflection point: deeply challenged by facility limitations and past compliance failures, but now demonstrating clear momentum toward recovery, stability, and modernization.

HIGH-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS & PRIORITIZATION

Below is a concise summary of the major recommendations emerging from the study, categorized by **priority level** based on operational impact, cost considerations, and effect on level of service.

PRIORITY 1 — IMMEDIATE (0–6 Months)

1. Stabilize DOT Compliance & Maintenance Controls

Rationale: Highest operational and safety impact; directly tied to regulatory risk.
Key Actions:

- Maintain strict **30–35-day inspection cycle** with documentation.
- Implement **quarterly internal DOT mock audits**.
- Digitize the DVIR process (driver submission → Servicefinder → mechanic close-out).
- Formalize parts inventory (min/max levels, vendor SLAs).

Impact: Major risk reduction; improves reliability, driver confidence, and student safety.
Cost: Low–moderate.

2. Enforce Workforce Accountability & Establish Clear Leadership Structure

Rationale: High operational impact; addresses root causes of inconsistency.
Key Actions:

- Implement a defined RACI for all transportation roles.
- Reinforce timekeeping, pre/post-trip, and DVIR compliance with progressive discipline.
- Hold monthly transportation safety/operations meetings.

Impact: Improves consistency, morale, and communication.
Cost: Minimal.

3. Strengthen Routing Procedures & Late-Bus Communication

Rationale: Direct level-of-service impact for families and buildings.
Key Actions:

- Standardize late-bus assignment protocols.
- Correct early arrivals at elementary level.
- Build uniform dangerous-stop and turn-around procedures.

Impact: Improves reliability, reduces behavior incidents, increases predictability.
Cost: Minimal.

PRIORITY 2 — SHORT TERM (6–18 Months)

4. Continue with recommendations on the Facility Capital Assessment & Develop a Replacement/Addition Plan

Rationale: Major long-term operational and safety impact; large cost.
Key Actions:

- Commission a **Building Condition Report**.
- Develop a capital plan for **facility replacement or expansion**.
- Address immediate hazards: lighting, heating, flooring, restroom issues.

Impact: Enhances maintenance efficiency, reduces hazards, supports compliance.
Cost: High.

5. Optimize Routing & Evaluate Tier Structure

Rationale: Medium-high impact on level of service and operational efficiency.
Key Actions:

- Model potential **three- or four-tier structures**.
- Reduce compressed routing windows ("getting tighter").
- Integrate GPS data into runtime calibration.
  Impact: Reduces driver strain, behavior issues, and route variability.
  Cost: Low–moderate.

6. Right-Size the Fleet & Improve Utilization

Rationale: Medium operational impact; necessary for cost efficiency.
Key Actions:

- Review low-usage vehicles (#33, #17, #18).
- Align fleet with OOD needs and replacement lifecycle.
- Expand GPS deployment beyond 23 units.
  Impact: Reduced cost, increased reliability, better fleet longevity.
  Cost: Moderate.

PRIORITY 3 — LONG TERM (18–36 Months)

7. Full Policy & Procedure Modernization

Rationale: Needed to institutionalize consistent practice and protect against drift.
Key Actions:

- Update all transportation policies.
- Adopt formal walker, dangerous stop, and turn-around policies.
- Standardize discipline referral and return-communication loop.

Impact: Long-term operational consistency and clarity.
Cost: Minimal.

8. Strengthen Shared Services Evaluation & Regional Collaboration

Rationale: Potential moderate cost savings and operational resilience.
Key Actions:

- Reengage in monthly regional supervisor meetings.
- Explore limited pilot programs with neighboring districts.
- Assess shared training opportunities and facility partnerships.

Impact: Potential long-term savings and stronger regional continuity.
Cost: Low.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE SUMMARY

Timeline	Focus Areas	Key Benefits
0–6 Months (Immediate)	DOT audit cycle; DVIR digitization; leadership structure; timekeeping enforcement; safety meetings; late-bus protocol	Restores compliance, improves reliability, stabilizes morale
6–18 Months (Short Term)	Facility report; routing optimization; tier modeling; fleet right-sizing; hazard mitigation	Improves efficiency, reduces operational strain, enhances safety
18–36 Months (Long Term)	Policy overhaul; shared services exploration; capital planning; long-term facility redesign	Sustains improvements, increases resilience, positions district for future growth

Lansing CSD is emerging from a period of significant operational difficulty marked by DOT failures, facility deficiencies, and leadership transitions. Yet the District has already demonstrated meaningful progress, especially with improvements in mechanical performance and inspection reliability. If LCSD follows the recommended prioritization—stabilizing compliance and workforce accountability first, modernizing routing and facility planning next, and institutionalizing policies and collaboration long-term—the District will be well positioned to deliver a safe, compliant, and efficient transportation program for years to come.

FACILITY & MAINTENANCE

The Transportation Facility at **322 Ridge Road** serves as the operational and mechanical hub for Lansing CSD's student transportation program. Based on District-submitted data and extensive on-site observations, the facility is **functionally inadequate, environmentally compromised, and physically undersized** for the size, scope, and regulatory demands of the current transportation operation. The building's condition and limitations have contributed directly to past DOT failures, workflow inefficiencies, safety risks, and long-term sustainability concerns for the program.

Facility Condition & Infrastructure

Structurally, the facility consists of **three work bays**, one small-vehicle lift, one main lift installed in **2019–20**, and a portable lift of similar age. It also includes a **30×10 parts storage room** and a **20×10 tire room**, both of which are limited in capacity. Critically, the building provides **no indoor vehicle storage**, forcing all buses to remain outdoors year-round. This contributes to accelerated wear, corrosion, extended warm-up times, and decreased reliability during inclement weather. The District acknowledged that the facility has **"no real room for expansion"**, underscoring both spatial limitations and infrastructure constraints.

Environmental conditions within the facility present significant challenges. Staff describe the building as **aged**, with **heating system failures**, leading to reliance on space heaters. Interviews further identified **rodent and insect infestations**, **unsafe flooring**, and **inadequate bathrooms**, conditions which compromise staff safety, cleanliness, and morale. These issues were not limited to interior spaces; outdoor areas are characterized by **poor exterior lighting**, limited line-of-sight for nighttime operations, and **severe winter ice accumulation**. Staff reported inconsistent plowing and salting by Buildings & Grounds, including incidents of slip-and-fall injuries on site. These chronic facility deficiencies hinder operational readiness and create preventable safety risks.

The cramped nature of the current building prevents efficient movement of buses, parts, tools, and personnel. Mechanical tasks requiring additional staging space, component organization, or multi-vehicle workflows cannot be performed optimally. The lack of a dedicated training or meeting space also restricts the District's ability to conduct safety briefings, driver refreshers, and instructional sessions—an important operational need given the District's monthly safety meeting structure.

Maintenance Operations & DOT Readiness

The District's recent DOT performance history reinforces the operational consequences of the facility's limitations. LCSD experienced **7–8 DOT failures** during the summer prior to this study,

with staff indicating even more failures occurred under the former mechanical leadership. Interviews revealed that some mechanical issues were **not identified or addressed promptly**, in part due to disorganized workflow, inadequate workspace, and incomplete DVIR follow-through caused by paperwork bottlenecks and inefficient documentation practices.

However, following the appointment of a new Mechanic, maintenance performance and DOT compliance have improved significantly. The shop now adheres to a **consistent 30–35-day inspection cycle**, and the District's DOT inspection list has been **reviewed and approved by DOT**, with **Leonard Bus** also validating the quality of the inspection documentation. These improvements demonstrate the effectiveness of disciplined, knowledgeable mechanical leadership—and highlight that shop personnel can deliver high-quality work even within an inadequate facility. The Mechanic routinely works extended hours (**6:00 AM–5:00 PM**) to keep pace with inspections, repairs, and emergent work orders. These efforts, however commendable, are not sustainable long-term without facility modernization.

Workflow, Tools & Documentation

Maintenance workflows currently combine digital and manual components. The District utilizes **Servicefinder** and spreadsheets for tracking inspections, repairs, and parts, but **DVIRs continue to rely partly on paper**, creating potential gaps in documentation and delays in escalating issues to mechanics. Drivers submit post-trip DVIRs inconsistently, and clerical staff manually route these to mechanics, contributing to a backlog and undermining real-time visibility of safety conditions.

Parts ordering remains largely reactive. Mechanics order parts "as needed," resulting in variable turnaround times of **3–5 days** depending on vendor supply. While this system functions at a basic level, it lacks the structured inventory planning necessary for a well-optimized shop. The current storage environment—constrained rooms without climate control, shelving optimization, or inventory software—limits the District's ability to implement a modernized parts management system.

The District outsources specialized repairs such as glass replacement, lift inspections, camera repair, bus warranty work, and tire services, with vendors such as **Leonard**, **Parmenter**, **Surveillance 247**, **Choice Auto**, and **Filtrec** providing targeted support. While outsourcing is appropriate for specialized or infrequent tasks, the District must ensure timely vendor coordination, especially when facility constraints limit internal repair capacity.

Impact on Operations & Service Quality

The current facility has a direct and measurable effect on maintenance productivity, staff morale, DOT readiness, and overall service reliability. Environmental constraints slow repairs,

increase inspection preparation time, and reduce the margin of error needed to maintain a high-functioning shop. Seasonal weather amplifies these challenges as buses exposed to the elements require more warm-up time and accumulate more rust, corrosion, and wear. Furthermore, staff safety concerns—unsafe flooring, inadequate lighting, and winter hazards—have resulted in injuries and ongoing tension between Transportation and Buildings & Grounds over site maintenance responsibilities.

Additionally, the absence of dedicated, climate-controlled work and meeting spaces undermines the District's ability to consistently provide required safety training, pre-service instruction, and ongoing professional development—all critical components of a compliant and effective transportation program.

Overall Assessment

In summary, the facility and maintenance environment at Lansing CSD presents a mixture of **significant limitations**, **improving maintenance performance**, and **structural deficiencies** that cannot be overcome through staffing or procedural modifications alone. While the recent improvements under new mechanical leadership demonstrate what can be achieved with skilled personnel and disciplined processes, the facility itself remains the single largest barrier to long-term operational excellence.

Addressing the facility's structural, environmental, and functional limitations is essential to sustaining the gains made in DOT compliance, supporting staff safety, increasing efficiency, and ensuring reliable service for the District's students.

FINANCIAL

The financial performance of the Lansing Central School District's transportation program is shaped by a combination of statutory aid formulas, operational decision-making, and the presence of non-allowable transportation costs that directly impact reimbursement. Analysis of the District's Transportation Aid Output Report (TRA) reveals meaningful trends in aidability, cost pressures, mileage efficiency.

Over the six operating years reviewed, LCSD's **gross transportation expenses** ranged from **$1.09 million to $1.49 million**, reflecting increases in wages, benefits, supplies, and contractual expenses driven by growing service demands and facility-related inefficiencies. During this same period, the District generated between **$706,923 and $991,816** in State Transportation Aid. Despite statutory aid rates between **63.2% and 67.3%**, the District's **Effective Aid Rate** consistently trailed behind, falling between **52.45% and 57.77%**. This gap highlights the extent to which non-aidable expenses, deductions, and non-reimbursable services reduce the District's net return on transportation expenditures.

One of the clearest illustrations of the District's aid loss is found in the relationship between **Line 99 (Revenue)** and **Line 101 (Deduction)**. In the TRA, Line 99 captures **revenues generated by the transportation program**, such as reimbursements, charge-backs, or shared service income that reduce the gross cost of transportation. In contrast, Line 101 identifies **deductions based on the milage reported as leased to others**. In some years the District lost more in transportation aid than the revenue that was brought in.

Across the six-year period, LCSD consistently incurred Line 101 deductions ranging from **$3,634 to $13,975**, while Line 99 revenue remained comparatively low, between **$0 and $9,750**. This imbalance translated into annual losses ranging from **$899 to $4,759**, directly reducing the net costs LCSD incurred. This can easily be rectified by charging enough to overcome these deductions. The state determines the deduction based upon the cost per mile that the district incurs. Moving forward if the district is going to provide services to others where revenue is generated the revenue must exceed this calculation.

Personnel-related costs also contribute to LCSD's fiscal profile. Wages have grown steadily from **$737,572 to $830,067**, reflecting staffing pressures, overtime demands due to driver shortages, and increasing out-of-district commitments. Benefits increased in parallel, rising from **$254,883 to $269,270**, with a portion of these costs—particularly excess family benefit contributions—remaining non-aidable under State rules. Rising expenditures in supplies and materials, which peaked at **$262,086**, and increases in contractual expenses—driven by repairs, warranty work, and specialized vendor services—further expand the District's cost base, while the aging

transportation facility continues to impose additional maintenance burdens that do not qualify for Transportation Aid.

Fuel represents another high-cost, partially aidable expense. The District operates two aging fuel systems (20+ years old), consuming approximately **38,000 gallons** annually at prices ranging from **$2.44 to $2.71 per gallon**. While participation in the **DCMO cooperative bid** helps stabilize fuel costs, the lack of automation, inventory tracking technology, and equipment modernization increases the risk of inefficiencies, leakage, and non-aidable discrepancies.

The cumulative effect of these factors—non-allowable mileage, aidability deductions, rising labor and benefit costs, facility-related inefficiencies, and limited revenue offsets—has driven LCSD's **Effective Aid Rate** downward. Despite a statutory aid rate over 63%, the District's realized aid seldom exceeds 57%, with several years falling near 53%. This represents a substantial and recurring gap in cost recovery.

Functional Recommendations

To improve aidability and reduce the fiscal impact of non-allowable transportation services, TAS recommends the following high-leverage strategies:

1. Reduce Non-Allowable Mileage and Improve Routing Efficiency

A targeted review of out-of-district transportation, late-bus assignments, turn-around locations, and discretionary transportation decisions should be conducted with the goal of reducing **Other Purpose Miles** and lowering the **Non-Allowable Pupil Decimal**. Standardizing walker policies, dangerous stop criteria, and eligibility documentation will

2. Modernize Cost Documentation and Eligibility Tracking

A more rigorous system for capturing student eligibility, ridership counts, DVIR data, GPS logs, and transportation classifications will ensure that all aidable services are appropriately documented. This will reduce the risk of non-allowable cost assignments and strengthen the District's compliance position during State audits.

3. Pursue a Transportation Facility Capital Project

The district should move toward a formal Building Condition Survey and capital planning process for transportation facility modernization. Many non-aidable facility repair and maintenance costs could instead be captured in an aidable capital project, improving long-term fiscal efficiency.

4. Control Overtime, Benefit Excess, and Contractual Costs

By stabilizing staffing through recruitment, retention, and consistent enforcement of operational procedures, LCSD can reduce overtime reliance and limit the growth of non-aidable benefit expenditures. Evaluating vendor contracts for camera repair, tire work, and warranty service may also provide opportunities for cost containment.

5. Utilize Fuel Automation and Inventory Tracking

Modernizing fuel systems with automated pumps, card controls, and telemetry can reduce shrinkage, improve reporting accuracy, and align fuel purchases more closely with aidable transportation activities.

The financial analysis of LCSD's transportation program demonstrates that while the District is operating within expected cost ranges for a district its size, its Effective Aid Rate is consistently reduced by non-aidable mileage, and rising operational costs not aligned with aidable service categories. By modernizing routing practices, enhancing documentation, increasing revenue opportunities, and strategically leveraging Building Aid, LCSD can significantly reduce annual aid losses and improve the long-term financial sustainability of its transportation operation.

Transportation Aid Output Report (TRA)						
Operating Year	**19-20**	**20-21**	**21-22**	**22-23**	**23-24**	**24-25**
State Aid Year	**20-21**	**21-22**	**22-23**	**23-24**	**24-25**	**25-26**
Annual Miles	353,615	182,844	254,854	231,604	265,301	248,447
Other Purpose Miles Ratio - 9	11.24%	20.71%	16.08%	14.55%	20.16%	18.72%
Non-Allowable Pupil Decimal - 12	0.79%	2.08%	2.08%	2.08%	0.47%	0.47%
Transportation Aid Rate - 32	**63.20%**	**64.40%**	**67.30%**	**67.30%**	**64.10%**	**64.30%**
Personal Services (Wages) - 80	$737,572	$621,729	$653,585	$772,919	$830,067	$807,696
Benefits - 81	$ 254,883	$ 204,994	$ 237,818	$ 256,340	$ 260,856	$ 269,270
Supplies & Materials - 82	$ 170,945	$ 113,462	$ 193,237	$ 244,977	$ 262,086	$ 238,859
Contractual Expenses - 83	$ 59,592	$ 75,201	$ 57,778	$ 71,789	$ 87,794	$ 97,056
Operating Expense Summary - 85	$1,222,992	$1,015,386	$1,142,418	$1,346,025	$1,440,803	$1,412,881
Trans Supervisors Office - 145	$ 164,424	$ 159,646	$ 227,196	$ 196,390	$ 180,039	$ 164,570
Amortized Capital Expense - 158	$ 255,623	$ 212,712	$ 227,288	$ 214,092	$ 201,464	$ 215,493
Gross Transportation Expense - 159	$1,454,542	$1,097,706	$1,316,451	$1,472,130	$1,449,731	$1,486,362
Transportation Aid - 174	$ 919,978	$ 706,923	$ 886,644	$ 991,816	$ 934,828	$ 956,881
Revenue - 99	$ 6,134	$ -	$ 1,410	$ 2,735	$ 9,750	$ 6,990
Deduction - 101	$ 6,134	$ -	$ 6,169	$ 3,634	$ 13,975	$ 10,031
Loss in aid vs revenue	$ -	$ -	$ 4,759.00	$ 899.00	$ 4,225.00	$ 3,041.00
Effective Aid Rate	**56.46%**	**52.45%**	**57.00%**	**57.77%**	**53.46%**	**54.01%**
Enrollment (PK-12) - 27	1,216	1,209	1,208	1,164	1,151	1,120
Gross Trans Expense per Student	$ 1,005.75	$ 839.86	$ 945.71	$ 1,156.38	$ 1,251.78	$ 1,261.50
Cost per mile	$ 3.46	$ 5.55	$ 4.48	$ 5.81	$ 5.43	$ 5.69

FLEET

The Lansing Central School District operates a diverse fleet consisting of large diesel buses supplied primarily by Leonard Bus Sales, along with smaller gasoline-powered vehicles used for specialized transportation and out-of-district routing. The District historically follows a **10-year replacement cycle**, although interviews indicate that several vehicles are not successfully reaching the full lifecycle due to environmental exposure, maintenance limitations, and lack of indoor storage capacity. The absence of heated or enclosed storage accelerates corrosion, increases cold-weather start-up issues, and reduces the lifespan of exhaust, electrical, and body systems—factors that directly influence DOT outcomes and long-term capital planning.

The fleet is used to support **11 middle/high school routes, 9 elementary routes**, late-run transportation, multiple out-of-district placements, McKinney-Vento routes, and specialized programs such as Montessori and New Roots, resulting in high variability in daily mileage and utilization patterns. The District reports the presence of under-utilized vehicles, including Bus **#33**, which had not moved since the end of the previous school year, and Transit Vans **#17 and #18**, which were used sparingly—primarily during the tennis season. These utilization gaps suggest an imbalance between available vehicles and actual service needs, particularly in the context of staffing shortages that prevent maximizing the District's vehicle assets.

Technology-equipped units include newer buses outfitted with **six interior and two exterior cameras** and a partial deployment of **GPS systems on 23 vehicles**. Video retrieval currently requires manual extraction, which introduces delays in student management investigations and limits the ability to proactively audit driving behavior. Staff also reported that camera functionality is checked manually each day, and although effective, this process is labor-intensive and dependent on clerical availability. The District uses Transfinder Plus, Tripfinder, Servicefinder, and Stopfinder to monitor routes, maintenance activity, and trip assignments. However, the partial deployment of GPS limits the District's ability to fully integrate telematics with routing and maintenance planning to optimize efficiency.

DOT performance has shown significant improvement following the hiring of a new Mechanic. The implementation of a **structured 30–35-day inspection cycle**, combined with extended daily maintenance hours, has greatly stabilized fleet readiness. DOT inspectors and Leonard Bus have both validated the District's updated inspection lists and procedures. However, continued success in this area will require aligning replacement schedules, facility capabilities, and preventive maintenance practices to ensure that aging vehicles do not reintroduce compliance vulnerabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a Full Continual Fleet Utilization and Right-Size the Vehicle Inventory

The District should analyze mileage patterns, daily trip assignments, and actual ridership across the full fleet to determine whether any vehicles can be retired, reassigned, or held as strategic spares rather than active units. Buses such as **#33**, which remained unused for extended periods, should be evaluated for decommissioning or redeployment. Vans with minimal use should also be reassessed.

Implementation:

- Compile a 12-month utilization report using GPS and Servicefinder data.
- Identify vehicles averaging <25% annual utilization.
- Develop a phased decommission or repurpose plan.

2. Expand GPS Telematics to the Entire Fleet

Universal GPS deployment will improve route accuracy, provide precise documentation for aid claims, enhance driver performance monitoring, and support real-time decision-making. It is important to utilize the data obtained to better understand the utilization and improvements for the district.

Implementation:

- Add GPS units to all remaining vehicles during the next budget cycle.
- Integrate GPS data into routing optimization and maintenance scheduling.

3. Strengthen the Preventive Maintenance and Lifecycle Replacement Program

Although the new inspection cycle has improved compliance, the District should formalize an updated **fleet replacement plan** that reflects realistic lifespans under current facility conditions.

Implementation:

- Build a 10-year capital plan aligned to Building Aid opportunities.
- Prioritize replacement of aging, high-maintenance units.
- Replace outdoor-stored vehicles sooner due to cold-weather and corrosion impacts.

4. Modernize Camera Systems and Video Retrieval Processes

Manual video retrieval should be transitioned to a cloud-based or automated system, which increases efficiency and reduces the burden on office staff.

Implementation:

- Evaluate camera vendors for cloud upload capability.
- Phase in upgrades with new bus purchases.

- Establish monthly technology performance checks.

5. Expand Diagnostic Capabilities in the Maintenance Shop

The District currently relies on vendor support for specialty diagnostics and programming. Increasing in-house capabilities will reduce downtime and shorten repair cycles.
Implementation:

- Acquire updated diagnostic software compatible with all fleet models.
- Provide training for mechanics on manufacturer-specific systems.
- Develop a vendor escalation protocol to reduce delays in specialized repairs.

Overall, Lansing CSD maintains a versatile fleet capable of supporting a broad range of transportation services; however, fleet performance and efficiency are limited by aging units, restricted storage conditions, partial technology deployment, and imbalanced utilization patterns. The improvements achieved under new mechanical leadership demonstrate the District's potential to sustain a high-performing fleet, provided that modernization, right-sizing, and preventive maintenance strategies are implemented. Addressing these issues through targeted fleet management, expanded telematics, structured lifecycle planning, and upgraded storage solutions will ensure LCSD continues to meet its transportation obligations safely, reliably, and cost-effectively.

LABOR

The labor environment within the Lansing Central School District's Transportation Department reflects several systemic pressures impacting daily operations, long-term program stability, and overall service delivery. The District reports 15–20 total drivers, including a high proportion of substitutes, who are used daily to maintain minimum route coverage. The District maintains a pool of eight substitute drivers, paid $23.50 per hour with access to ERS benefits and no minimum hour guarantee. However, interviews reveal that substitutes accept work on a largely voluntary basis, contributing to highly variable staffing availability and forcing non-driver personnel—including the router and the Transportation Specialist—to drive regular routes on a daily basis. This dynamic is operating as intended but does reduces the Department's administrative and planning capacity, increases operational stress, and limits time available for safety oversight, professional development, and coordination with building leadership.

The District's current staffing model relies heavily on the Transportation Specialist, who serves as the primary 19-A compliance officer while also performing daily driving responsibilities. This dual burden limits the Specialist's ability to focus on essential safety functions such as driver evaluations, corrective training, review of DVIR compliance, and coordination of retraining after incidents. Interviews suggest that this role conflict contributes to inconsistent application of safety standards, inconsistent follow-through on driver discipline referrals, and delays in attendance monitoring and documentation. The District's ability to maintain a compliant and well-coordinated operation is directly affected by the need to divert safety personnel to daily driving assignments.

Staff morale remains a prominent concern. Drivers and clerical personnel expressed frustration over an extended period during which leadership transitions, DOT failures, and unresolved facility problems contributed to a perception of organizational instability. Several employees reported that in previous years "no one was in charge," and behaviors that should have triggered corrective action—such as late clock-ins, failure to complete post-trip DVIRs, or extended breaks—were not consistently addressed. This lack of accountability created unequal standards across the workforce and undermined professionalism within the department. Although morale has improved in recent months due to leadership stabilization and improved mechanical oversight, the lingering effects of prior inconsistency continue to shape departmental culture.

The District invests substantially in staff training. Training is provided through TST BOCES and the District's Transportation Specialist, at annual costs of $15,000 and $30,000, respectively. The District also holds monthly safety meetings, supplemented by topic-specific refreshers. Despite this structure, training effectiveness is diminished by inconsistent attendance, the lack of a dedicated meeting/training space, and an overloaded schedule for key staff responsible for

training delivery. The District's training systems would benefit from modernization, better documentation, and reinforced expectations for participation.

Behavioral management also places strain on the labor environment. Drivers report that the referral process lacks consistency across buildings. While some principals communicate outcomes and work collaboratively with transportation, others provide limited follow-up, leading to frustration among drivers who feel unsupported when serious behavior concerns arise. This inconsistency reduces the effectiveness of assigned seating plans, intervention strategies, and parent communication, and may contribute to increased driver turnover in the long term.

Finally, the labor environment is affected by facility shortcomings, including inadequate lighting, poor restroom conditions, winter hazards, environmental discomfort, and insufficient workspaces. These factors negatively impact staff satisfaction and operational readiness. Facility deficiencies also make it more difficult to recruit or retain qualified mechanics and drivers—positions that are already difficult to fill statewide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Stabilize Staffing Levels and Rebalance Workload

The District should develop a multi-phase recruitment and retention strategy designed to reduce reliance on substitutes and eliminate the need for administrative staff to drive daily.
Implementation Steps:

- Establish a targeted driver recruitment campaign with defined incentives.
- Introduce a structured "guaranteed hours" model for substitutes to improve reliability.
- Reduce administrative driving through staggered start times or part-time hires.

2. Clarify Roles and Strengthen Accountability

Consistent enforcement of operational expectations is essential for departmental stability.
Implementation Steps:

- Publish an updated organizational chart and RACI matrix for all transportation roles.
- Standardize timekeeping requirements, DVIR submission deadlines, and dispatch protocols.
- Reinstate progressive discipline for chronic noncompliance.

3. Strengthen the Safety and Compliance Function

The 19-A and safety oversight responsibilities must be protected from daily route coverage pressures.

Implementation Steps:

- Allocate protected time for the Transportation Specialist to complete evaluations, retraining, and documentation.
- Cross-train alternate personnel to support compliance tasks during peak periods.
- Formalize a monitored, digital incident-tracking process to ensure timely follow-up.

4. Enhance Training Infrastructure

Improved training documentation and delivery will support consistent safety practices and improve driver performance.

Implementation Steps:

- Create a structured, annual training calendar with mandatory attendance expectations.
- Document training participation in a centralized system compatible with 19-A requirements.
- Incorporate recurring refreshers on DVIRs, student behavior management, and emergency procedures.

5. Improve Coordination with Building Leadership

Behavioral management and student discipline must be aligned across schools.

Implementation Steps:

- Establish a districtwide protocol for transportation referrals and resolution tracking.
- Require confirmation of referral outcomes from building administrators within a defined timeline.
- Introduce joint meetings (Transportation + Principals) to review recurring issues.

6. Address Facility-Related Labor Concerns

Improvements to physical working conditions will directly improve morale and retention.

Implementation Steps:

- Prioritize lighting repairs, restroom upgrades, and safety improvements.
- Implement interim measures (portable lighting, slip-mitigation materials) ahead of capital work.

- Integrate staff input into future facility planning.

The labor environment at Lansing CSD is characterized by dedication among the staff but hindered by chronic driver shortages, inconsistent accountability, dual-role burdens on key personnel, and facility-related morale challenges. Despite these obstacles, recent improvements in leadership and shop stability demonstrate strong potential for sustained progress. By implementing structured workforce controls, reinforcing safety and compliance functions, modernizing training, improving cross-department coordination, and addressing facility deficiencies, Lansing can establish a more stable, professional, and supportive labor environment that enhances service reliability and organizational resilience.

MANAGEMENT

The management structure of the Lansing Central School District's Transportation Department has undergone significant transition in recent years, creating both operational instability and opportunities for improvement. Interviews and documentation indicate that the Department experienced an extended period during which leadership responsibilities were unclear, communication pathways were inconsistent, and key decisions—particularly involving DOT compliance, discipline, and workforce expectations—were not consistently enforced. Several staff members reported that at various points "no one was in charge," and this absence of clear leadership contributed to procedural drift, morale issues, and the persistence of operational deficiencies that required substantial correction.

Organizationally, the Department has been positioned under Facilities, with the Director of Facilities II providing oversight while the District sought to fill or restructure supervisory transportation roles. This layered oversight approach created ambiguity regarding decision-making authority and limited the amount of time leadership could dedicate exclusively to transportation. Staff interviews expressed concern that the Director's responsibilities were "too split," leaving the Department without consistent, transportation-specific administrative guidance. This structural gap contributed to delays in addressing facility concerns, resolving driver conduct issues, and establishing coherent safety and compliance expectations.

Daily management responsibilities have been heavily influenced by staffing shortages. The Transportation Specialist, who holds significant responsibility for safety and 19-A requirements, has been required to drive a daily route because of ongoing driver shortfalls. This has diminished the Specialist's availability for essential management tasks, including evaluating driver performance, coordinating retraining after incidents, monitoring DVIR compliance, and maintaining operational readiness standards. Similarly, the Department's router has been routinely assigned to drive, reducing the time available for routing refinement, communication with schools, and strategic planning. This structural dependency on key administrative staff to fill driver vacancies places the Department in a reactive posture and constrains the development of long-term management systems.

Communication between Transportation and other District departments—particularly Buildings & Grounds and school administrators—has been inconsistent, often relying on informal interactions rather than documented, repeatable processes. Building principals reported generally positive collaboration for student discipline and video requests, but concerns were raised regarding the lack of formal notification systems for late-bus assignments and the inconsistent follow-through of referral outcomes. Transportation staff similarly noted a lack of clarity in expectations regarding snow removal, facility maintenance, and communication timing, leading to friction and operational delays. This absence of formalized

cross-departmental coordination mechanisms has contributed to preventable misunderstandings and inefficiencies.

Despite these challenges, recent feedback suggests that Departmental leadership has improved significantly in the past several months, largely due to the stabilization brought by the new Mechanic, clearer communication from District administration, and greater overall responsiveness to operational issues. Staff acknowledged that management is now more present, more structured, and increasingly proactive. However, the Department has not yet established formalized management systems that ensure sustainability, consistency, and long-term accountability.

In its current state, the Department relies heavily on the dedication and institutional knowledge of individual staff members rather than on formal, repeatable processes. This creates organizational vulnerability—particularly when the Department experiences turnover, illness, or unexpected absences. The District's lack of documented standard operating procedures (SOPs), defined leadership escalation paths, and structured communication protocols makes it difficult to ensure continuity of operations and limits the Department's ability to plan beyond immediate daily needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a Formal Organizational Structure and RACI Framework

The District should clearly articulate leadership roles within the Transportation Department and publish a formal organizational chart that includes a RACI (Responsible–Accountable–Consulted–Informed) matrix for all major operational tasks. This will clarify who holds decision-making authority, who executes specific processes, and who must be notified when issues arise.

Implementation:

- Complete and publish a Transportation Organizational Chart.
- Develop a RACI for routing, DVIR processing, discipline, safety training, trip assignments, facility reporting, and communication with schools.
- Review and update annually.

2. Reinforce Management Availability by Protecting Administrative Time

Key management personnel—including the Transportation Specialist and router—must have protected time to perform safety, compliance, and planning duties. Daily driving obligations should be reduced or eliminated for these roles.

Implementation:

- Recruit or develop additional substitute drivers to relieve administrative staff from daily driving.
- Create a structured backup system for emergency coverage that does not rely solely on administrative personnel.

3. Implement Standard Operating Procedures for All Core Processes

The Department should develop SOPs covering DVIR workflows, trip assignment, late-bus notifications, student discipline referrals, snow removal escalation, facility reporting, and video retrieval. These SOPs will enhance consistency, reduce reliance on informal practices, and streamline interdepartmental communication.

Implementation:

- Draft and publish SOP documents accessible to all transportation staff.
- Train staff on SOPs through monthly meetings.
- Conduct annual SOP reviews to incorporate updates and lessons learned.

4. Formalize Communication Channels with Buildings & Grounds and School Administration

Transportation should establish standing communication expectations with B&G regarding snow removal timing, lighting issues, and facility repairs, and with building administrators regarding referral follow-up and late-bus communication.

Implementation:

- Hold quarterly coordination meetings between Transportation, B&G, and school principals.
- Implement a standardized electronic form for referral resolution returns.
- Develop a consistent alert protocol for late buses.

5. Reinstitute Monthly Transportation Supervisor / Regional Collaboration Meetings

The District's transportation leadership should participate in monthly supervisor meetings—locally and regionally—to ensure alignment with neighboring districts, strengthen professional networks, and stay informed of regulatory updates.

Implementation:

- Reestablish a monthly internal transportation leadership meeting.
- Resume attendance at NYAPT regional meetings (Southern Tier).

6. Enhance Documentation and Data-Driven Decision-Making

Management should increase its reliance on telematics, GPS data, DVIR analytics, and Servicefinder reports to guide decisions about routing, safety, discipline, vehicle assignment, and driver performance.

Implementation:

- Build monthly management dashboards summarizing major performance metrics (attendance, DVIR completion, vehicle OOS trends, mileage efficiency).
- Use these dashboards in monthly safety and operations meetings.

The management structure of Lansing CSD's Transportation Department is emerging from a period characterized by leadership ambiguity, inconsistent accountability, and heavy reliance on administrative staff to backfill driver shortages. While recent improvements demonstrate strong forward momentum, the Department still requires formalized communication systems, documented procedures, and clearly defined leadership responsibilities to ensure long-term stability. By implementing structured management frameworks, protecting administrative capacity, institutionalizing SOPs, strengthening interdepartmental coordination, and adopting a data-driven approach to decision-making, Lansing can establish a resilient and professional management environment that supports safe, reliable, and efficient transportation services.

POLICY & PROCEDURES

The Lansing Central School District's transportation policies and procedures represent a critical structural component of the overall operation. However, based on District-submitted materials and staff interviews, the Transportation Department currently functions without a comprehensive, unified, and consistently enforced policy framework. While LCSD maintains general expectations for routing, student conduct, DVIR completion, and timekeeping, the absence of formalized, written procedures has resulted in inconsistent practices, variable interpretation of requirements, and avoidable operational inefficiencies. This lack of procedural clarity increases exposure to safety risks, regulatory inconsistencies, and non-aidable transportation costs.

The District did not provide a current Board Transportation Policy or associated administrative regulations with its data submission, and interviews indicate that multiple aspects of the program—such as walker eligibility, dangerous stops, turn-around locations, late-bus procedures, referral follow-through, and the timing and routing of out-of-district transportation—are handled on a case-by-case basis rather than in accordance with established protocols. This leads to inconsistent decision-making across grade levels, buildings, and staff, and contributes to frustration among drivers and clerical personnel. The absence of a uniform walker policy is particularly notable: with no defined age thresholds, distance criteria, or exceptions process, routing decisions vary from day to day and from school to school, creating uncertainty for families and complicating driver assignments.

Similar inconsistencies exist in the handling of **dangerous stops**, where requirements for sight distance, road conditions, and traffic volume are evaluated informally rather than through a documented rubric. This exposes the District to safety and liability concerns, particularly during winter months when road conditions vary significantly across the community. The District also relies on approximately **15 turn-around locations**, none of which appear to have been formally inspected or approved under a standardized safety protocol. Formal documentation is essential to ensure that turn-around sites meet minimum safety standards for radius, shoulder width, visibility, and traffic control.

In addition, the referral and student behavior management processes lack consistency. While some school administrators respond promptly to discipline referrals and communicate outcomes to Transportation, others provide little or no follow-up. Drivers expressed frustration that referrals "die sometimes," meaning that no disciplinary feedback is returned to the driver who submitted the concern. This lack of timely follow-through undermines driver authority, increases behavioral issues, and weakens the relationship between Transportation and building administrators. The lack of standardized documentation, uniform timelines, and consistent

communication protocols has created uneven expectations across grade levels and contributed to confusion among staff.

Timekeeping and DVIR submission also present policy gaps. Although the District has issued memos outlining expectations, enforcement remains inconsistent. Drivers sometimes clock in late, return from routes and linger before clocking out, or fail to complete post-trip DVIRs in the required time frame. These behaviors disrupt shop workflow, delay identification of safety concerns, and complicate labor tracking. Clerical staff currently collect DVIR paperwork manually and transfer information to spreadsheets, a process that increases the risk of errors, delays, and lost documentation. A formalized policy requiring electronic DVIR submission, deadline enforcement, and standardized record retention would significantly strengthen the District's compliance posture.

The District's reliance on **informal communication practices** further complicates procedural consistency. Late-bus decisions and OOD trip details are sometimes communicated verbally or through text messaging, rather than through a standardized channel or documented protocol. This leads to confusion at dismissal, inconsistent messaging to families, and difficulties in ensuring that all stakeholders are informed in a timely manner. A lack of structured communications also affects Buildings & Grounds coordination, particularly around snow removal, salting, and lighting issues. Without clear expectations and documented timelines, operational friction and safety hazards remain prevalent.

Despite these challenges, the Transportation Department demonstrates strong potential for creating a robust policy and procedures framework. Staff consistently expressed a desire for clearer guidelines, better communication, and more predictable processes. The existing monthly safety meeting structure provides an ideal forum for policy rollout, training, and reinforcement. With appropriate development and implementation, LCSD can create a procedural environment that enhances accountability, supports compliance, and improves the student, driver, and family experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a Comprehensive Transportation Policy Manual

The District should establish a structured, written policy manual covering all operational areas, aligned with Board expectations and New York State requirements.

Implementation:

- Create sections for routing, student eligibility, DVIRs, driver conduct, discipline referrals, OOD transportation, timekeeping, safety procedures, and communication protocols.
- Review and approve the manual through administration and the Board of Education.

- Update annually or as regulations change.

2. Formalize Walker Eligibility and Dangerous Stop Procedures

To reduce liability and ensure consistent decision-making, LCSD must adopt formal criteria for walkers and unsafe stops.
Implementation:

- Establish distance guidelines, age thresholds, and parent-request exceptions.
- Develop a dangerous-stop evaluation rubric (sight distance, traffic volume, speed, topography).
- Document approved accommodations and communicate them to families annually.

3. Codify Turn-Around Location Approval Standards

Turn-around sites must be formally evaluated, documented, and approved.
Implementation:

- Conduct a site review of all 15 current turn-around points.
- Use safety criteria (turning radius, shoulder width, line of sight, surface condition).
- Maintain a digital folder of approved sites within the routing system.

4. Standardize Student Discipline Referral and Communication Protocols

A consistent system is needed to ensure all referrals receive timely follow-up.
Implementation:

- Create a digital referral workflow shared between Transportation and building administrators.
- Require acknowledgment and response within a defined time frame (e.g., 48 hours).
- Track outcomes through shared logs accessible to drivers, administration, and clerical staff.

5. Implement Electronic Timekeeping and DVIR Submission Standards

Electronic systems will reduce errors and enhance compliance.
Implementation:

- Require pre-trip and post-trip DVIRs to be submitted electronically through Zonar or equivalent.
- Set firm submission windows (e.g., within 10 minutes of route completion).

- Monitor compliance through automated reporting dashboards.

6. Establish Formal Late-Bus and OOD Communication Procedures

Predictability is essential for buildings, families, and bus staff.
Implementation:

- Create a standard communication window for late-bus assignments (e.g., alerts by 1:00 PM).
- Require Transportation to publish late-bus assignments in a central building-accessible platform daily.
- Document all OOD trip approvals and assignment procedures.

7. Strengthen Interdepartmental Coordination with Buildings & Grounds

Facility-related support must follow defined timelines and responsibilities.
Implementation:

- Create a shared task list for snow removal, salting, lighting, and facility repairs.
- Establish escalation timelines (e.g., if tasks are not addressed within 24–48 hours).
- Incorporate transportation facility needs into districtwide maintenance planning.

8. Provide Ongoing Training on Policies and Procedures

Policy development is only effective when paired with consistent training.
Implementation:

- Integrate policy rollouts into monthly safety meetings.
- Conduct annual refresher training for all drivers, monitors, mechanics, and clerical staff.
- Use scenario-based training to reinforce correct application.

The Lansing Central School District's transportation operation currently functions without the benefit of a comprehensive, standardized, and consistently enforced procedural framework. While the Department has capable staff and strong technology platforms, the absence of formal policies contributes to inconsistency, safety exposure, communication gaps, and operational inefficiencies. By developing and implementing a districtwide Transportation Policy & Procedures Manual—with clearly defined routing rules, safety standards, referral processes, communication expectations, and documentation requirements—LCSD can strengthen compliance, protect student safety, and improve operational reliability. The recommendations

provided above will enable the District to transition from reactive management to a structured, policy-driven transportation environment.

ROUTING

The routing operations within the Lansing Central School District represent one of the most complex and operationally sensitive components of the transportation program. LCSD currently operates a **two-tier system**, consisting of **11 middle/high school routes** and **9 elementary routes**, with additional daily responsibilities for multiple out-of-district (OOD) students, including those attending Montessori, New Roots, TST BOCES, McKinney-Vento placements, and other specialized programs. These layered service obligations generate a routing environment with high variability in student ridership, fluctuating daily demand, and compounded time pressures between tiers. Interviews indicated that the District has been required to "shorten the window" between tiers to maintain on-time arrival at the elementary level, resulting in narrow scheduling margins and reduced operational flexibility.

Routing responsibilities are concentrated primarily within a single individual—the District's router—who not only oversees the full routing portfolio but also drives a daily route due to ongoing staffing shortages. While the router is described as having a strong understanding of the community road network and student distribution, this dual assignment significantly limits available time for proactive route adjustments, long-term planning, performance analysis, and communication with families and school buildings. Furthermore, routing processes rely heavily on a combination of **Google Docs, Transfinder Plus, Servicefinder, Tripfinder, and Stopfinder**, each serving different parts of the workflow. Although these systems provide strong technical capability, the lack of centralized integration and the router's limited administrative capacity constrain the District's ability to fully leverage these platforms for efficiency gains.

Out-of-district transportation adds substantial complexity to LCSD's routing matrix. Daily transportation is provided for students living in multiple municipalities and attending schools beyond District boundaries. The District completes extra runs to return OOD students home after dismissal, including multiple groups such as Montessori, New Roots, and McKinney-Vento placements. These additional layers contribute to elevated **Other Purpose Miles**, increased travel time, and exposure to non-aidable transportation costs. Routing decisions involving OOD students also have significant implications for TRA Line 99 revenue potential and Line 101 deductions—factors that influence the District's net aidability. Behavioral issues have also increased following route consolidations, indicating that student grouping and timing adjustments may be contributing to overcrowding, extended ride times, or insufficient supervision during specific route segments.

Communication challenges also affect routing efficiency. Principals noted that while communication is generally strong for trip coordination or video review requests, advance notice for **late-bus assignments** is inconsistent, leaving schools and families with limited predictability. Students are divided into three zones for late-bus transportation, but the decision about which bus they should ride is not always communicated in a timely manner. This results in confusion at dismissal, delays in departure, and increased administrative burden at the school level. In addition, the District currently lacks a **formal walker policy**, which results in case-by-case decisions regarding which students may walk home. This inconsistency creates uncertainty for drivers and families and may expose the District to safety or liability concerns.

Furthermore, the District relies on approximately **15 routine turn-around locations**, none of which have been formally documented or evaluated using consistent safety standards. Turn-around points—if not regularly assessed—can introduce hazards related to sight distance, roadway width, traffic volume, and weather conditions. Similar inconsistency exists in the District's handling of "dangerous stops," which are being addressed informally rather than through a documented standard. Without formal routing safety criteria, the District risks uneven decision-making, potential safety exposure, and reduced transparency with families.

Despite these operational challenges, LCSD benefits from access to sophisticated routing technology—including high-capacity GPS, camera systems, and Transfinder software—that, if fully leveraged, can significantly improve schedule reliability, deadhead reduction, and routing accuracy. However, with only **23 GPS-equipped vehicles**, the District currently lacks the full telematics coverage necessary to validate runtime assumptions, optimize route spacing, and evaluate stop-to-school travel times with high precision. Based on staff feedback and current system capability, a fully integrated GPS-Transfinder approach would enable more accurate run-time modeling, improved alignment with bell times, and strengthened documentation for State aid claims.

Taken together, LCSD's routing system is functioning, but constrained by structural staffing shortages, inconsistent policies, and the pressure of significant OOD responsibilities. The District would benefit from both **operational restructuring** and **policy formalization** to stabilize and improve routing efficiency, student experience, and fiscal performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a Comprehensive Routing Efficiency Audit

A districtwide audit should be completed to assess stop locations, load profiles, deadhead miles, run times, and school arrival patterns.

Implementation:

- Use Transfinder Plus with full GPS integration to measure actual vs. scheduled run times.

- Re-evaluate route consolidations that increased behavior incidents.
- Identify opportunities for rebalancing loads to reduce early arrivals at elementary schools.

2. Evaluate Transition to a Three- or Four-Tier System

Given shrinking time windows between tiers and increased OOD obligations, the District should assess whether additional tiers would relieve scheduling pressure.

Implementation:

- Model tier options using Transfinder scenario planning.
- Evaluate impacts on staffing, fleet availability, ridership patterns, and TRA aid.
- Engage building principals early to identify academic impacts.

3. Formalize Routing Policies (Walker, Dangerous Stops, Turn-Arounds)

The District should adopt standardized, written policies governing walkers, safety-based routing decisions, and turn-around locations.

Implementation:

- Develop criteria for turn-around approval (sight distance, shoulder width, traffic speed).
- Establish a uniform walker policy with age-based thresholds.
- Publish a dangerous-stop evaluation rubric aligned with State guidance.

4. Strengthen Late-Bus Communication Protocols

Late-bus assignments should be communicated consistently and well before dismissal to reduce confusion.

Implementation:

- Establish a standardized daily communication window (e.g., 1:00 PM notification).
- Use a shared digital board between Transportation and building main offices.
- Provide families with predictable, zone-based expectations.

5. Expand GPS Coverage to the Full Fleet

Universal telematics will allow the District to more precisely monitor arrival consistency, evaluate travel times, and improve aid documentation.

Implementation:

- Install GPS units on remaining vehicles during next budget cycle.

- Integrate GPS with Servicefinder to link mileage with maintenance.
- Use GPS heat-mapping tools to identify congestion or inefficiency points.

6. Redistribute Administrative Responsibilities to Support Routing

The router should not be assigned a daily driving run; administrative time must be protected for planning, communication, and emergency adjustments.

Implementation:

- Add two part-time or flexible substitute drivers to reduce reliance on administrative employees.
- Designate one clerical staff member as a routing support aide during peak periods.
- Establish weekly routing review meetings.

7. Enhance Communication with Schools and Families

A transparent communication structure will reduce confusion, improve reliability, and reduce operational bottlenecks.

Implementation:

- Standardize the method, timing, and content of all routing-related communications.
- Provide principals with a real-time dashboard for bus arrival times.
- Update families at the start of each school year with consistent routing expectations.

Lansing CSD's routing operation is complex and resource-intensive, driven by two-tier schedules, frequent out-of-district commitments, behavior-related challenges, and limited staff capacity. While the District benefits from strong technology platforms and experienced personnel, operational constraints—including the router's dual responsibilities, inconsistent policies, and incomplete GPS deployment—limit the efficiency and predictability of transportation services. Through targeted routing analysis, expanded telematics integration, formalized policy development, and structured communication enhancements, LCSD can significantly improve efficiency, reduce non-aidable mileage, strengthen safety, and deliver a more consistent and reliable transportation experience for students and families.