



Education Committee - Board of Representatives

Diane Lutz, Chair

Megan Cottrell, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Monday July 30, 2018
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Democratic Caucus Room, 4th Floor Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT

The Education Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Vice Chair Cottrell and Committee Member Reps. Aquila and de la Cruz. Excused was Chair Lutz, and Committee Member Reps. Di Costanzo, Jacobson and Stella. Also in attendance was Clarence Zachery, BOE; Steve Schneider, BOE; and Michael Gaudio.

Vice Chair Cottrell called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
¹ 1. E30.015	REVIEW; School bus operations with respect to safety, overcrowding, and length of travel. 05/11/18 – Submitted by Rep. de la Cruz	Report Made

Mr. Zachery introduced himself to the Committee. He is the Chief Fiscal and Operations Officer for the BOE, responsible for all things not directly related to education -- facilities, dining, transportation, security, IT, and financial issues.

Rep. de la Cruz explained that he has received many concerns from parents about school bus safety, including cameras not working, overcrowding and length of trip. Additionally, the Student Advisory Council had expressed concern about school buses often being late for school.

Mr. Zachery and Mr. Schneider explained the following:

- Lengthy bus rides are inevitable when students are going to schools far from their homes; this is due to both racial balancing and parents choosing schools
- Buses do not always take a straight route if there are students from many different areas going to one school
- Bus drivers are employees of First Student
- First Student bus monitors are sometimes put on buses but this is expensive
- Smaller children cannot always be seen by the bus drivers
- The BOE is using the industry norm routing system
- The district guideline is for a bus ride to be no longer than 55 minutes

¹ Video Time Stamp 00:00:10

- There is often a difference between parental perceptions and actual statistics
- Last school year there were only two requests for reviewing cameras that were unfulfilled due to malfunctioning cameras
- Cameras are checked five times per year during breaks, and they are fixed or replaced as soon as it is determined they are malfunctioning; there are penalty clauses for cameras not working
- Construction and inclement weather can make a ride longer
- Concerns about bus issues can be directed to Steve Schneider at sschneider@stamfordct.gov, or the transportation department at 203-977-4249

Preventative measures for negative behavior was discussed, including having parent volunteer bus monitors. Mr. Zachery explained there is an expectation that the school bus is an extension of the classroom, and any reported unacceptable behavior is handled that way. Having parent volunteer bus monitors is not feasible – there are many liability issues when it involves the safety of students. Risk mitigation is very important.

- ²2. [E30.018](#) REVIEW; citizen concern over the training of school bus drivers in the parking lot of Cove Island Park **Report Made**
07/11/18 – Submitted by Rep. Cottrell

Vice Chair Cottrell discussed that some constituents have complained about bus driver training in Cove Island Park. The [attached](#) was read into the record. Mr. Zachery and Mr. Schneider discussed that large open spaces are needed to safely train bus drivers before driving on the streets, and this is the most convenient and safe area for this to be done. It has been done this way for many years, and training has alternated between Cove Island and Cummings Park in different years. The bus company currently has a permit to use the Cove Island parking lot, so there is no liability to the City.

- ³3. [E30.005](#) REVIEW; Provisions for Pedestrian Safety Around Stamford Public Schools. **Report Made**
12/06/17 – Submitted by Rep. de la Cruz
12/18/17 – Held In Committee 5-0-0
01/29/18 – Report Made & Held in Committee
02/15/18 – Report Made & Held in Committee
03/12/18 – Moved to Pending
04/16/18 – Report Made & Held in Committee
05/14/18 – Moved to Pending

Rep. de la Cruz discussed that he has received many concerns from parents about there being no sidewalks near schools. Some parents drive their children to school because they feel it is not safe for the students to walk without sidewalks. In the winter, it is very dangerous as many students have to walk on busy roads. Vice Chair Cottrell discussed

² Video Time Stamp 00:46:42

³ Video Time Stamp 00:55:45

that she sees many students walking to school, but the sidewalks are not consistent, and are sometimes only on one side of road. Surveys to parents in the community might help to determine the needs of walking students. Mr. Zachery said that the sidewalks might not reduce the amount of students who are driven to school by parents, but he will look into it. Creating sidewalks is a capital improvements issue. The Committee discussed that it would like to make it more feasible and safe to be a pedestrian in Stamford.

Vice Chair Cottrell adjourned the meeting at 8:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Megan Cottrell, Vice Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).