Boston Public Schools

Transportation Office Simplifies Early-Dismissal Days with Versatrans®

Industry: Public School District
Location: Boston, MA
Population: 625,000+
Student Population: 57,040
Years as Tyler Client: 3 years
Tyler Products Used: Versatrans Routing & Planning™, Versatrans Onscreen®, Versatrans TripTracker®

The Facts: Boston Public Schools (BPS) is considered to be the birthplace of American public education, with its first institution founded in 1635. Today the district includes 125 schools: 6 early learning centers, 47 elementary schools, 25 elementary & middle schools, 9 middle schools, 2 middle & high schools, 24 high schools, 3 “exam” schools, 6 special education schools, and 3 alternative (at-risk) programs.

Contact:
www.bostonpublicschools.org

Key Challenges:
• Creating a route plan for early dismissal days such as the day before Thanksgiving break, when every school in the district dismisses at a different time
• Preventing driver confusion on these special dismissal days, which in the past had led to problems with late buses
• Ensuring that all buses are used and routed efficiently on these special dismissal days

Action Taken:
BPS worked with their bus contractor to create a one-time-use custom route map for the 2012 Thanksgiving early dismissal day. This map was created using Versatrans, which ensured that buses were routed efficiently and timed accurately.

Results:
A once chaotic day in the transportation office became an organized, highly successful one. Clear communication between BPS and the bus contractor was facilitated by Versatrans Routing and Planning.

Software allows multiple people to edit route. Each of the district’s Transportation Officers could enter the correct Thanksgiving dismissal and routing information for each school into one common database to ensure accuracy.

On time buses. On the early dismissal day, 97.8% of trips were on time.

In their Own Words:
“This solution assisted in transforming one of the most chaotic and dreaded days of the school year into one of our best performing days so far, in regards to on-time performance.”
-Tchad Cort, Transportation Officer

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**Story:**
The Versatrans transportation management solution became an essential part of the day-to-day work in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) Transportation Department soon after they implemented it in 2010. Before Versatrans, the BPS Transportation Department manually produced a paper “trip sheet” which laid out specific route details for the fleet; it consisted of dozens of pages, kept in a binder, difficult to access and harder to alter. After implementing Versatrans, BPS moved that schedule and route plan to the software. That standard route plan is now presented electronically and in a streamlined, editable, updated manner. For a large and complex district like BPS, with four bus yards and tens of thousands of students, this kind of change can add up to immense savings in time and money every day.

But there are always special situations where the usual route plan doesn’t apply. AT BPS, one of those situations occurs annually on the day before Thanksgiving: an early dismissal day for some schools in the district, a vacation day for others, and in every way a non-standard day in the Transportation Department. As Tchad Cort, Transportation Officer at BPS told Tyler, “The logistics involved in planning transportation for this one day have contributed to its reputation as being one of the most dreaded days of the school year.” Normally, on the Thanksgiving early dismissal day a list of each school’s dismissal times would be handed to the transportation staff who would then manually determine to the best of their ability which buses would cover which routes. Tchad discussed the problems this caused: “This means that a bus that normally transports for a certain set of schools all year may end up transporting for completely different schools on this special day, which can result in a lot of confusion, and trips running late, because the driver is not as familiar with this brand new route.”

For the 2012-2013 school year BPS decided to embrace the full capabilities of Versatrans in their approach to this early dismissal day. The district’s transportation managers created a separate database within Versatrans which would hold the routing information for the Thanksgiving dismissal day, and that day only. The district’s nine Transportation Officers then worked with their managers and with their bus contractor to ensure that all of the schools’ dismissal times were entered correctly. Tchad described how “in this database each Transportation Officer altered the route information for the schools they were responsible for to reflect the release times for this one particular day. For example, I am the Transportation Officer responsible for the Private Special Education schools, and many of those schools would be closed on this day, so in the database I just deleted the routes completely, which now made that bus available to accommodate another trip for a school that was open on this particular day.” The Versatrans program was then able to calculate, time, and present the day’s routes in an electronic format.

Through this process, BPS was able to efficiently create a clear and accurate trip sheet for the early dismissal day. Thanks to this, 97.8% of that day’s trips were on time, making it one of the best-performing days ever for the BPS Transportation Department. Tchad told Tyler, “This new tool resulted in an exponentially higher level of success on this particularly challenging day. Our department was so excited about the success with this project that we plan to use this process for any other special days throughout the school year.”

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**About Versatrans**

Versatrans, Tyler’s transportation management software suite, provides solutions for many areas of transportation operations, including routing, planning, field trip management, fleet maintenance, bus driver training, risk management, GPS vehicle location and more.

Contact Tyler Technologies to learn more about this best-in-class solution: email versatrans.info@tylertech.com, or call 1-800-433-5530.