

What is going on with athletic transportation?!

As many of the Middle School and High School students and parents are aware, we have had tremendous difficulty with our athletic transportation over the last 2 years. In fact, we have for the first time relied on parent transportation for many weekday games at all levels over the last year. While we are grateful for the Bronxville parent community for helping with this issue, it pains us to have to do this.

How is our athletic transportation supposed to work?

In Bronxville, we are proud of our “One Square Mile.” However, our limited geographic size means that we do not transport students to and from school each day. Therefore, we have no busing infrastructure. We are then forced to contract out our athletic and field trip transportation requirements to private vendors. This is not uncommon among smaller districts like Bronxville. We conduct a public bid for this service and have contractors respond with fair market pricing.

Why is Bronxville having trouble getting buses?

We started to notice issues with late arrivals or cancellations for athletic transportation with our previous contractor prior to the pandemic. Buses were arriving later and later (or not at all) to take our students to games or off-site practices. It became such an issue that we cancelled the contract mid-year and re-bid the contract. The subsequent contractor, Royal Coach Lines, filled the void effectively for a short time and then began telling us that they could not get to Bronxville until their drivers completed their regular routes due to a prolific shortage of bus drivers. We are now moving on to Academy Bus but are hearing the same issues from other districts using contractors, and even districts who own and operate their own buses. This shortage is both a regional and national phenomenon. As a district without busing infrastructure, we are at the mercy of available contractors, who in turn are now limited by available drivers. They can't get buses to us until the drivers they do have complete the routes wherein they are contracted daily to deliver students home from school for various other districts. In the past, they retained plenty of drivers to meet both needs, but now must scramble as they can't find enough drivers. They are just not out there.

Is Bronxville having parents drive to save money?

The answer to this is an emphatic NO! This is not a financial issue and does not have a clear financial solution. The Bronxville Board of Education and Administration has no lack for financial expertise. We routinely reallocate resources to handle all sorts of financial issues. Despite having parents do some of the driving to games, we are spending more than budgeted on transportation in that many of our back-up contractor and coach bus solutions are much more costly. If we can get a bus, we get a bus.

What is Bronxville doing to address the issue?

This issue is limited to weekday afterschool games. Weekend games are not an issue, nor are night games. However, most of our weekday contests are not night games in that many of the similar sized schools on our schedule do not have lights. Here is just a sampling of what we have tried to do to alleviate the situation:

- The Athletic Director has tried to work with both Section 1 and individual districts to schedule more weekend games, weekday night games with those districts that have lights, and weekday home games where possible. We have had limited success.
- We have sought out other contractors to help where ours can't accommodate us. We have worked with and will work with any company that will work with us during this period. Most of the busing companies we contact tell us straight away that they can't help us due to the driver shortage.
- We have purchased one large bus and one smaller bus. However, we are having the same issue finding drivers. We are offering to pay for training for any staff member or coach who will obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) thereby qualifying them to drive one of our buses.
- We are even seeking out more expensive coach bus alternatives but are running into the same driver issue.
- As a last resort, we have asked our parents to help where they can. It is important to note that when we are down to asking for parent help, the only other alternative is cancelling the game.

What can you do to help?

We are desperately seeking referrals for qualified CDL drivers for both Bronxville and our contractors. If you know anyone or have ever thought about driving a bus yourself -let us know. Bronxville's need is part-time, mostly afternoon/evening from 3:00pm to 8:00pm and weekends but our contractors are looking for full-time as well.

We appreciate our parent drivers. The last thing we ever want is for a game to be cancelled and we look to avoid that at all costs. Parent drivers are the last safety net before that happens.