

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 3

QUESTION:

Please provide information regarding the Lincoln Park transportation issue. What strategies could be used to address the attendance problems of Lincoln Park students? Would there be a fiscal impact? Was the Lincoln Park bus issue evaluated by the STEP committee?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: NA

ANSWER:

The high school students who live in Lincoln Park in Rockville do not receive transportation because they live within two miles of Rockville High School. In an effort to improve attendance, the director of the Department of Transportation was asked by the principal of Rockville High School about the possibilities of providing bus service to these students. The principal expressed concern that students were demonstrating poor attendance possibly due to the walking distance. Several factors were considered in reaching a conclusion to deny this request.

- The request is not consistent with Board of Education Policy EEA Student Transportation regarding eligibility for transportation services. This policy requires high school students to reside greater than two miles from high schools to be eligible for transportation service.
- In addition to Lincoln Park, the affected area includes portions of the Maryvale and Southlawn Communities.
- The Lincoln Park community is split between Richard Montgomery and Rockville high schools. The greater portion of the community is in the Richard Montgomery High School attendance zone. Students in this area also walk to school.
- Because there are many similar situations in Montgomery County, and providing transportation at some distance less than the distance prescribed by the policy would be arbitrary.
- Students residing in the Manor Lake, Manor Woods, and Rock Creek Manor areas along Bauer drive are scheduled to have bus service to Rockville High School reduced in September 2007 in conjunction with recently completed improvements to the walking route along Baltimore Road.

The areas beyond Norbeck Road have been designated non-transported areas for many years and students have been successfully walking to Rockville High School for a considerable time from these areas. More than 170 students reside in the Southlawn, Maryvale and Lincoln Park Communities who attend Rockville High School. Depending on the areas and number of students that might be considered in a plan to extend bus service, the cost would be at least \$200,000 for staff, buses and maintenance expenses.

Temporary transportation service currently in place for students living on the Bauer Drive side of Baltimore Road (the East intersection of Baltimore and Norbeck Roads) has been provided while improvements were being made to the walking route for students along the east side of Baltimore

Road. Improvements have now been completed and service reductions to this area are planned for September 2007. Additionally, if service were provided from the Southlawn, Maryvale and Lincoln Park Communities to Rockville High School, students and parents residing in the Lincoln Park Community who attend Richard Montgomery High School would likely expect transportation services also.

The STEP Committee does not evaluate issues such as this. The STEP Committee generally works to bring the agencies together to plan construction projects and safe access to school projects involving roadway improvements or changes.

After-school activity bus stops have been established in the Lincoln Park area to encourage participation in after-school learning opportunities. Another strategy considered was to provide some form of morning activity bus route serving students in the community. This idea was abandoned because it would encourage students to arrive late.