

Prismatic Perspective: Insourcing vs. Outsourcing Transportation Needs

By: Nick Johnson and Sara-Rose B.



Transportation is a complex challenge that school districts face every day. Adequate transportation is a key factor in measuring student and school district success. A successful transportation department will have the capability to not only transport students daily, but also to adjust routing assignments in real time, perform regular and timely maintenance and upgrades to vehicle fleets, and identify areas where streamlining service and efficiency is possible. Furthermore, a successful transportation department is expected to offer 100% of eligible students transportation services every day, even though 100% utilization is almost unheard of. Considering these various factors, we are here to help you decide: **insourcing vs. outsourcing** – which is the right transportation model for your district?

The Benefits

The benefits of insourcing transportation services where possible are numerous. First, insourcing generally results in an overall cost reduction, which helps provide resources to departments that need it most. Additionally, in-house management and execution of transportation helps to increase the level of personal service and communication within the department, allowing for more accurate troubleshooting and crisis management should those needs arise. School districts that manage their own transportation team more frequently and more readily offer personalized services, such as multiple stop locations to accommodate family needs. Lastly, community and stakeholder perception of in-house transportation management tends to be higher because it allows for increased familiarity and personal connections.

The Evidence

Francis-Howell School District in St. Louis and St. Charles offers an informal case study on the benefits of insourcing vs outsourcing. Jennifer Simpson was hired as the transportation director in 2019 and tasked with finalizing the district's 30-year contract with an outside company and rebuilding the district's transportation department from the ground up to be fully independent and functional in less than 12 months. After initial expenditures for fleet upgrades, facilities renovations, and new routing software, the district reported increased satisfaction of parents and school administrators with transportation services, citing more consistent service, increased staff morale and professionalism, and a reduction in the number of outside transportation vehicles employed by the district.

When asked what the district could have done better to facilitate the transition from outsource to insource, Simpson cites a tight transition period and poorly maintained facilities were the biggest obstacles and expenditures (respectively) in getting their operation moving.

Over the years, we have reviewed both in-house and outsourced operations. For a client that had recently returned to an in-house transportation operation after years of outsourcing, we had the opportunity to complete a true apples-to-apples cost comparison. We found that the district was saving **38 percent annually** with an in-house transportation function and stakeholder satisfaction was higher.

Our Philosophy



At Prismatic Services, we believe the best solutions are generally the most efficient ones, where problems can be recognized and addressed on an individual basis. Often, district staff and key stakeholders are the best decision makers on these issues, as they are most familiar with the scope of problems and the extent of resources. However, we understand that most districts or agencies are rarely capable of making major transitions, such as this one, on their own.

In this regard, Prismatic offers 14+ years of experience evaluating and consulting for PreK-12 districts across the U.S. We have the expertise and capability to investigate your big-looming questions and offer research-backed, data driven solutions.

This leads to Prismatic Services' formal stance on transportation: **insource where possible, outsource where necessary**. We have helped over 100 districts analyze their performance and decide what steps are right for them going forward. We would love to connect with you and see how we can help your district next.

Get in Touch with us Today!

Let's start a conversation. Email us at info@prismaticservices.com to discuss your specific needs.



Ready to Schedule Your Free 15 Minute Consultation?

Do you have a specific project in mind you want us to work on? Let's get the conversation started with a **Free 15-minute consultation:** <https://www.prismaticservices.com/free-15-minute-consultation/>

20460 Chartwell Center Drive, 1, Cornelius, NC 28031
704.438.9929 (voice/fax)
www.PrismaticServices.com