



August 27, 2018

To the Parents, Board Members, and Administration in Santa Rosa County,

I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the issues that have arisen during the first two weeks of school relative to school bus transportation, and provide an update with the steps we have taken and are taking to correct them. We are excited to be part of the Santa Rosa family and have been working tirelessly over the spring and summer months to organize the logistics of transporting your children to and from school safely and on time. Thank you in advance for your patience!

**Issue #1: Radio communication outage during the first week.** During the first week of school we did experience functionality problems with the radios on the buses, stemming from improper installation of the radios. These were addressed immediately and resolved by the end of the third day of school. It was also brought to our attention that the repeater on top of Navarre HS needed to be adjusted since it was misaligned after the roof was replaced in the summer. We worked in conjunction with the district staff to resolve this and thank them for their assistance.

**Issue #2: SafeStop functionality.** We were overly excited to bring this technology to you as a means of providing you real time information on the location of your bus. The inaccuracy of the ETA's is common during the first few weeks of school as routes are adjusted and students are added, and we apologize for not conveying this ahead of time in the midst of our eagerness to share the technology. We are going to be crediting Santa Rosa District Schools for one month of service as the app has not performed the way we led everyone to believe it would from the outset.

**Issue #3: Inability to communicate with transportation office staff.** In favorable economic times like we are currently experiencing, bus driver positions are difficult to staff. As such, we regularly have all of our transportation staff driving buses and are therefore unable to answer phones in the office. The staff members are doing the absolute best they can to return phone calls upon returning from routes. As we add drivers – and we do have a pipeline of people in training – this problem becomes remedied. If you or someone you know are interested in becoming a school bus driver, please visit [www.drive4sta.com](http://www.drive4sta.com) to apply!

**Issue #4: Lateness on the routes.** Several items have contributed to lateness on the routes to date. Santa Rosa County has undergone tremendous growth in the past decade, requiring us to rebuild all of the routes and plot all of the stops given the outdated maps and software used by the prior contractor – a time-consuming process as one may imagine. As many of the routes, particularly in the south end, were redone in the spring and summer months, many of the drivers, even veteran drivers, are riding



new routes this school year. All drivers did complete dry runs on those routes, but to master any task or process takes time. We asked those drivers to take their time in the name of safety, rather than rush through a route haphazardly. Moreover, the introduction of larger buses is new for many drivers as well. Similarly, we have asked drivers to be cautious when driving a larger-sized bus and to drive the back of the bus like they would the front of the bus. All drivers completed training over the summer on the larger buses, but again that skill takes time to master. Lastly, as we add drivers and can avoid splitting routes, the timeliness of the routes naturally improves as well.

We sincerely apologize for the inconveniences these first few weeks and ask again for your patience! Please know that STA and the local Santa Rosa transportation staff members are doing all we can to improve the service. We always welcome feedback that you may have and will continue to work with parents on individual issues.

Thank you, and have a safe day!

Denis Gallagher, Jr  
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