



THE YELLOW BUS CHALLENGE: Less Traffic, Half Price Bus Passes

FAQ

1. *Why are the Town of Tiburon and City of Belvedere providing a school bus subsidy?*

It's all about traffic. School-related automobile traffic is certainly not the only cause of traffic congestion, but reducing it could make a difference. In an effort to reduce traffic congestion the Town and City are willing to fund a one-year subsidy to see if lowering the cost of school bus passes from \$2.38 per trip to \$1.19 per trip will result in substantially increased bus ridership and therefore fewer cars on Tiburon Boulevard. If this subsidy results in meaningful traffic improvements, the next step will be to find a permanent funding solution for the 2015-2016 school year and beyond.

2. *Why is this subsidy opportunity coming so late in the summer?*

The Town of Tiburon and City of Belvedere participated with RUSD in a CART (Community Action to Reduce Traffic) Task Force for the past three years. Recommendations included improvements to public transportation on Tiburon Boulevard, increasing the number of bike riders, encouraging walking to and from school, and more car-pooling by parents. Late this spring, Council members from both communities approached RUSD leadership with an idea to offer bus subsidies to entice more families to use school buses rather than drive their children to school. Unfortunately, the concept didn't come together until after school bus passes for 2014-15 had been placed on sale. Rather than wait another year to implement a bus rider subsidy plan to address traffic, the decision was made to implement the plan for the 2014-15 school year.

3. *Why is this funding subsidy just for one year – shouldn't it be permanent?*

Funding the "Yellow Bus Challenge" will draw heavily from budget reserves in both Tiburon and Belvedere. While possible on a one-time basis, this approach is not sustainable as an ongoing funding source. If our communities want to subsidize school buses to improve traffic on an ongoing basis, they will need to create a new annual source of dedicated funding, perhaps in combination with assistance from regional funding partners. Traffic is a community-wide issue, and a big challenge to

overcome. A successful bus subsidy program in school year 2014-15 will demonstrate what is possible if more RUSD students ride the bus each day. It will then be up to the entire community, to determine how to fund the ongoing subsidy in a fiscally sustainable way.

4. *Why the threshold of 360 new “trips”?*

There are currently 677 one-way bus pass holders for 2014-15 (that is, for either morning or afternoon service, each of which is one “trip”). 360 new one-way bus riders will mean three additional buses in both the morning and the afternoon, the minimum needed to make a significant reduction in traffic. Right now 50% of all RUSD students are being driven to or from school in private vehicles. We hope to lower that percentage considerably.

5. *What if I have already purchased a pass for my child for 2014-15?*

You don’t need to do a thing. Your child’s space on a school bus is secure on the same route you signed up for. If the program goes forward, you will be credited a refund for half the cost of your bus passes. Please do not sign up again!

6. *Why are new routes being offered?*

A transportation analysis was conducted to determine where the greatest potential existed to attract additional riders to the bus system and to optimize the likelihood of increasing ridership. That led to the creation of school-specific routes, and one more bus from East Corte Madera in the morning to serve Bel Aire and Reed students only. If the subsidy program is successful and a permanent source of funding identified, greater ridership will enable improved bus routing for everyone in the future.

7. *What if I prefer a new route to my existing route?*

Those with current bus passes will not be able to change routes unless, after all new sign-ups are received, it turns out that some rebalancing of routes is feasible. Those interested in a different route for their child will be placed on a waiting list, but should not expect to be able to switch. We apologize that starting over with all new bus routing is not an option at this late stage, The worst case scenario is that a student has a guaranteed seat for the route his/her parents originally purchased - and at half the original cost.

8. *What happens if new sign-ups don’t reach 360?*

Failure to reach critical mass will cancel the “Yellow Bus Challenge.” The status quo will remain, meaning those who purchased bus passes in the Spring of 2014 will still have the bus service for which they signed up. There will be no subsidy and no expansion of school bus routes. Those parents who sign up for the Yellow Bus Challenge will receive a refund. 360 new riders are necessary because if

implemented the subsidy program includes providing 50% refunds to all those riders who had signed up in the Spring (which is only fair), so a significant number of new bus riders are required to justify the overall expense of the Challenge. If only a handful of new riders sign up, the public cost would still be significant but without any meaningful traffic reductions, defeating the purpose of the program.

9. *How much will this program improve traffic congestion?*

Traffic survey data shows a difference of about 400 vehicle trips between summertime and the school year during each of the two weekday traffic peak times. Most (but not all) vehicle trips to pick up or drop off kids at school count twice – once going to school and once returning home - so if we add 180 morning bus trips we believe that will eliminate close to 360 private vehicle trips at the peak traffic time of day. There should be similar results in the afternoon if 180 bus riders are also signed-up for those routes. In other words, we hope the result will move the peninsula to something resembling a summertime traffic pattern. Actual traffic reduction is exactly what we will test with this program.

10. *Are School Buses safe?*

Statistically speaking, there is simply no safer way to get your child to and from school than on a school bus. Modern school buses meet rigorous safety standards that far exceed those of family cars, and bus drivers are extensively trained. In 2012-13 the Department of Education reports the chance of a student injury occurring on or around a school bus was 1 in 9,272,277 miles driven. All RUSD school buses are now equipped with internal video cameras which has had a positive impact on student behavior while on our school buses.

11. *Will my child get to school on time?*

Yes. RUSD has modified bus routes and bell schedules this year to increase on-time arrivals. In the unlikely event your child is ever late to school on a school bus, he or she will never be marked tardy.

12. *When will I know if the program will actually happen?*

August 8 is the firm deadline for sign-ups so that a go / no-go decision can be made by August 11. We will contact all parents with the decision. This timing will give parents 10 days prior to the start of school to make transportation arrangements.