



November 18, 2021

Tianay Amat  
Interim Superintendent  
Cincinnati Public Schools  
2651 Burnet Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45219

Dear Ms. Amat,

This letter is intended to provide response to the CPS administration regarding your recent credit request of \$2.4 million for unused student passes; to provide greater insight into the letter Metro sent to CPS' pupil transportation director regarding CPS' bid request for student transportation services; and to encourage further dialogue regarding how we might be able to assist CPS and its student families with transportation needs moving forward.

#### **2021-2022 Contract Cost Adjustment**

In August, Metro fulfilled CPS' initial order request of 14,416 passes for a total contract cost of \$4.5 million. Subsequently, the district requested an additional 1,217 passes to date, bringing the total contract cost to \$4.8 million. We have been pleased to see that student ridership on Metro has stabilized to pre-pandemic numbers with approximately 9,000 student trips taken each school day.

As is standard practice each school year and outlined in our contract, any unused passes may be returned to Metro by Oct. 31 for a full credit. CPS has requested a cost adjustment for 7,772 unused passes, but have only returned 2,920, which would have only resulted in a \$919,800 adjustment to the total contract cost.

However, in our continued effort to support CPS and its student riders, and as an act of good faith, we are willing to credit your account for the additional unused student passes even though they have not been returned. Metro's analysis has found that 673 more passes have been used since CPS' initial request, and in order to prevent disruption to those students' trips, we believe it is in their best interest that we keep those passes active. Therefore, we can offer to adjust your total contract cost by \$2.2 million.

In return, we ask that CPS send communication as soon as possible to each of the remaining 4,180 families whose passes you are requesting to be deactivated, to inform them that their pass will no longer be valid should they attempt to use it in the future. This communication will greatly help reduce or avoid any misunderstandings moving forward.

#### **CPS RFP for student transportation services**

Metro has been proud to partner with CPS for years, and our top priority has been and continues to be providing the safest, most reliable transportation service to all riders, both students and non-students.

Toward that mission, CPS and Metro officials agreed in June on a plan to discontinue Metro's Xtra routes in favor of more robust, wide-reaching improvements to Metro's entire fixed-route network. These changes were made to increase efficiency and reliability along all Metro routes, including those serving CPS students.

In the weeks leading up to the school year, however, Metro was surprised to learn CPS leaders indicated they no longer supported this plan, despite having been informed of its benefits and of the insurmountable challenge of sustaining Xtra service in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent, unprecedented labor shortage continuing to impact Metro's entire network of routes.

- Throughout this process, Metro has made every effort to remain open and transparent about service challenges and continue to do everything in our power to deliver the very best possible service to CPS and our student riders, including: staffing bus stops, transit centers and attending student orientation sessions to help families with routing information; holding regular meetings with CPS staff to better understand and address challenges (the most recent offer was declined); implementing service changes that included route adjustments, relocation of bus stops and increased frequency in mid-August with another round of adjustments planned for Dec. 5; in addition to aggressive recruitment efforts to hire more bus operators, including significant increases in pay and benefits.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances surrounding our service challenges and our ongoing efforts to address those challenges, it has been made clear on multiple occasions that CPS leadership remains unsatisfied with the level of service that we are able to provide at this time. It has also been made clear that the administration is unwilling to work with us towards any other solution outside of demanding the return of Xtra service, which, we have communicated extensively, is not feasible.

In response, the CPS administration has solicited bids from transportation service providers – including Metro – for chartered bus service. Metro has indicated on multiple occasions that we are prohibited by federal law from competing with private charter operators and thus cannot submit a bid for the recently submitted Pupil Transportation services RFP.

While your request for bid does not immediately preclude a future agreement between Metro and CPS, it causes us to believe the district's transportation needs have extended beyond what Metro – as a federally funded transportation agency – is legally authorized to provide. It is with this realization that we determined it best to submit written notice ([sent Nov. 17](#)) that we will not exercise our contract option-years following the conclusion of our current contract on June 30, 2022.

It is our hope that, by crediting CPS' account \$2.2 million and by providing plenty of notice of our intention not to extend our contract, we can provide CPS with sufficient funding and time to continue seeking and cover the expense of a private service provider and to begin communicating this change with CPS student families well ahead of the start of the next school year.

As always, we remain committed to delivering the best possible service to all residents of Hamilton County, including student riders and are dedicated to doing all we can to assist the CPS administration as you seek a new transportation provider who you believe can better meet your needs moving forward.

I look forward to continuing this dialogue with you and the administration soon to determine how we may be able to support student transportation needs within Metro's capacity beyond the current school year.

Sincerely,



Darryl Haley  
CEO & General Manager