



CVILLE KIDS WALK TO SCHOOL

A Small-City Transportation Transformation

Charlottesville City Schools

Beth Cheuk, Supervisor of Community Relations

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Pre-K -12 School Division | 4,500 students, 9 schools

Number of Communications Staff: 2 (plus 1 Super Superintendent)



2023 NSPRA Communication Awards
Gold Medallion Entry: Public Engagement/
Parental Involvement Campaign

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SYNOPSIS

As the 2021-22 school year ended, Charlottesville City Schools learned that only 40 percent of our school bus drivers would return to work in August. This sounded an alarm bell in a community that, like schools across the country, was already facing a significant driver shortage. Clearly, relying primarily on school buses would not work for 2022-23— or the future. In Charlottesville, public discourse is often mired in finger-pointing; it was our goal to *literally* mobilize the community to address this problem. By following the RPIE process, the division’s two-person Office of Community Relations (supported by our NSPRA-trained superintendent) served as communications strategists, thinking partners, and cheerleaders to get students to school safely.

After researching local and national trends in school transportation, our division decided to expand our “walk zones,” meaning students who live relatively close to their schools would no longer qualify for a bus seat. Collaborating with the city, we made an ambitious plan to improve pedestrian infrastructure, hire crossing guards, and raise motorist awareness. We hoped we could additionally inspire Charlottesville to view this shift to walking and biking as a way to make our small city healthier, safer, and more environmentally friendly.

Key communications included a video of our superintendent teaching tips for safely walking to school; cute yard signs planted citywide to raise awareness about pedestrian safety (and normalize walking); individualized messaging, and kid-friendly walking maps. Several low-income communities would now be in their schools’ walk zone, so we prioritized engagement with public housing residents at “talk and walk” meetings to minimize the equity impact.

Finally, on the first day of school, we had evidence that our efforts had paid off: we had parents, staff, volunteers and, yes, students! walking and biking and scootering across the restriped sidewalks and waving to the newly hired crossing guards and getting to school on time.

Our transportation crisis is not “solved”; we continue to cycle through RPIE as we engage with families. Even so, we hope the transformation our division was able to effect serves as an inspiration and roadmap for colleagues across the country facing similar challenges.



Virginia State Del. Sally Hudson reminds motorists to slow down at a busy intersection near Burnley-Moran Elementary on the first day of school, August 24, 2022.

RESEARCH

Research was underway for years as the bus driver shortage worsened. Initially, research was focused on shoring up our old, bus-centric approach, but that same research taught us that we needed a new model. Here are a number of our research questions and key findings.

Sources varied from interviews with longtime and retired staff, to national reports on the topic, to data about hiring/marketing efforts for school bus drivers. Find list of sources on page 22.

Can't we just hire more bus drivers? (Short answer: No.)

- The national and local bus driver shortage was growing even prior to the pandemic.
- Local efforts to increase pay and marketing for school bus drivers were not moving the needle.
- Charlottesville's school bus driver position **vacancy** rate was 75% (10 drivers out of 40 positions).
- The pre-pandemic solution of "stuffing the bus" with children was no longer acceptable.

Area Walk Zones for Bus Eligibility:

	Elementary	Other Grades
Cville OLD	.3 mile	.5 - .7 mile
Region	.94 mile	1.28 miles
Cville NEW	.75 mile	1.25 miles

Do other communities have ideas that could help us? (Yes.)

- Other communities assign family responsibility for students within a mile+ of school; Charlottesville's old "walk zones" for bus eligibility were among the shortest in the nation.
- Other communities were promoting the use of public buses; encouraging use of carpool apps; staffing "walking school buses" and "bike trains"; and purchasing small "type A" buses that didn't require a commercial license to broaden the number of eligible drivers.

What challenges do walkers/bikers face? (Our families and community have thoughts.)

- Crowd-sourced data showed infrastructure and safety concerns that could be addressed through staffing crossing guards or implementing sidewalk, road, or signage improvements.

What are the equity impacts of expanding the "walk zones"? (Let's talk with those impacted.)

- Reviewing prior attendance data sorted by bus status (assigned to bus/waitlisted, etc.) showed that families value school and find ways to get their child to school (with or without a school bus).
- Speaking directly with impacted Black, Brown, and ESL families helped us hear their actual concerns (which in some cases were different than what their White allies had reported).
- We heard questions about weather, safety, the physical abilities of children, and more.
- We learned cultural differences, such as that some families from the Middle East do not think it is appropriate for girls to walk to school without a chaperone.

Who is already running/walking/biking or advocating for a safer & greener Cville? (Many groups.)

- Community partners were already deeply engaged in this work, fully supportive of our goals, and identified key streets/intersections of concern along with draft solutions for the City/schools to pursue. Our joint advocacy resulted in the City allotting \$500,000 toward "quick builds" that cleared up some of our advocates' long-sought priorities, making the City better for everyone.

PLANNING

As we submerged ourselves in the research, we realized this work would best be undertaken in close partnership with several key departments in the City of Charlottesville and with a number of partner organizations.

Goal Statement: As Charlottesville City Schools adopts a transportation model with less emphasis on school buses, our students will get to and from school safely.

- **Objective 1:** All families understand that school transportation is changing for Fall 2022 and have a plan for how each of their children will get to and from school by the first day of school.
- **Objective 2:** While money will not buy the school bus drivers we need, staff and families feel confident that the school division and the City of Charlottesville are investing wisely to promote safety as students walk or bike to school.
- **Objective 3:** Our wider community supports new walk zones through safe driving, volunteering, embracing changes to traffic patterns, etc.

Key Messages:

- The bus driver shortage is a national, complex issue that cannot be solved with “a little money.”
- Cville Schools welcomes the community to help us identify transportation problems and solutions.
- Expanding our walk zones (also called “family responsibility zones”) will have positive impacts on Charlottesville in the short and long-term.
- We are investing time, tools, and money into supports to get children to school in other ways.
- The community can support students walking to school by reporting infrastructure problems and driving safely.

Timeline

The need to remake our student transportation system became clear by early June 2022. By end of June, we sent out the first communication to families explaining the planned changes. July and August were for outreach and individualized communications so that we would be confident that families were ready for the first day of school on August 24, 2022.

Budget

Zero was aside for this work. We kept expenses to \$8,762.



Left to right: Denise Johnson, Supervisor of Equity & Inclusion; Vizena Howard, crossing guard, and Bianca Johnson, Coordinator of Family Engagement.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

The work to prepare our city to have many more students walking to school in Fall 2022 necessitated strong, ongoing communication with numerous key collaborators.

Within Cville City Schools:

- Operations
- Information Technology
- Equity & Inclusion
- Family Engagement

City of Charlottesville:

- Pupil Transportation*
- Safe Routes to School
- Traffic / Public Works
- Charlottesville Area Transit

Other Community Organizations:

- Livable Cville
- Piedmont Mobility Alliance
- Piedmont Housing Alliance
- Cville Community Bikes
- Public Housing Association of Residents

**In Charlottesville, the city manages pupil transportation*

Identifying Our Audiences

- Charlottesville Schools staff members, who needed to be informed in order for the process to be successful and trusted by the community
- Students and families of students, especially those no longer eligible for the bus
- Prospective Cville Schools families – watching this process unfold as a measure of competence, sensitivity, and solutions-oriented approaches
- City staff who manage our student transportation program. Other key partners in the city were infrastructure, traffic, communications, and safe routes to school
- City Council
- Charlottesville School Board
- Drivers and public transit users in Charlottesville (as well as people who live in other communities but commute to Charlottesville)
- UVA community who might serve as volunteers
- Local electeds who don't have responsibility in this work but who might get complaints

IMPLEMENTATION

Knowing that families needed as much time as possible to find alternative ways to get their students to school, we began communicating in June – even when we were still in the research and planning modes. Our very first communications took the open and even vulnerable position of “This problem is worse than ever. These are the possibilities we are investigating, but we don't have all the answers. Together, let's find solutions.” The community responded with a helpful and hive-mind approach to problem-solving that felt like a big win in an often divided community.

Strategy 1: Outreach with emphasis on equity impact

- Hold “Transportation Talk and Walk” events, hosted at public housing community centers and sites where a large number of Black and English language-learner families would be removed from bus eligibility. At these events, our superintendent held a Q&A and then literally walked with families to their neighborhood school.
- Hold second “Talk and Walk” event at one housing center with the most questions, and one virtual event.
- Distribute [neighborhood-specific flyers](#) that show how each housing community is impacted. These were given to participants at the meetings and also posted door-to-door in the neighborhood.
- “Talk to me about Transportation” Table at the Back to School Bash (a community event offering free school supplies)

We invited the public, including media, to Talk & Walk Sessions in many public housing neighborhoods that would be impacted by the new walk zones. At these sessions, Superintendent Gurley spoke directly with families and then accompanied them on a walk to their neighborhood school. A “Big Yellow” awaited them for a ride home so that participants – like students— would only walk one way before having a rest.





Strategy 2: Through multi-platform communications, emphasize how division is investing time, money & tools into new approach

- Send division-wide messages to families via newsletter, website & social media with information, explanations, and invitations to give feedback
- **Engage local media** with reporting that builds awareness of these changes
- Recruit staff and community volunteers to walk sidewalks and paths to school and **report needed improvements** such as crossing guards, sidewalk/road improvements, or signage
- Produce the **"Dr. G's 5 Tips for Walking Safely to School"** video starring our supe!
- Collaborate with the City of Charlottesville Public Works to make immediate improvements to pedestrian safety on routes students use
- Create a **public spreadsheet** on the status of requested street safety improvements
- Recruit crossing guards, ultimately **more than doubling the team** from 9 to 19. (Example of **neighborhood-level crossing guard recruitment flyer**)
- Organize **walking groups, guided by division staff**, to bring students to/from school every day, for high-density neighborhoods. (Some walking groups are also organized by neighbors.)
- Add pedestrian safety to P.E. curriculum (K-12) during the first weeks of school
- Re-evaluate our administrative procedures for communicating & acting on bus needs
- Create a **how-to and answer guide for staff answering questions** by phone or in person; this equipped principals to take a "no bus, no problem" attitude that inspired others



Top: "Dr. G's 5 Tips for Walking Safely to School" (starring Superintendent Dr. Royal Gurley and some of our students) earned more than 6,000 views! Above: a crossing guard recruitment flyer and the front page of the Daily Progress newspaper featuring a story about our pedestrian safety PE curriculum.

Strategy 3: Customized Communications

- Collaborate with Pupil Transportation team to confirm bus eligibility of each residence on the periphery of all walk zones
- Send messages with student-by-student information about each child’s eligibility for bus service (clarifying that, even if eligible, the child might still be on a waitlist for the bus)
 - ⇒ Your child is not eligible for bus service; please make a plan and let us know if this causes true hardship
 - ⇒ Your child is eligible for bus service but is on a waitlist; please make a plan and let us know if this causes true hardship
 - ⇒ Your child is assigned to a bus (with bus stop/time info)
 - ⇒ Thanks for declining bus service!
- Open walkzones@charlottesvilleschools.org email to give families an easy way to contact the right person about issues

Strategy 4: Mobilize Parents, Kids, Community

- Ask every family to make a transportation plan that *does not involve a school bus*.
- [Enlist central office staff and community volunteers/“celebrities”](#) (including local electeds, clergy, the fire dept, and UVA cheerleaders) to staff intersections for the first 5 days of school to give extra assistance and encouragement
- Bring walk/bike advocates into planning

An example of a kid-friendly map showing walking routes & crossing guards.



Dear family of A. [redacted]

We are writing to confirm that A. [redacted] lives within the expanded walk zone for (or lives out of district). That means this student is not eligible for bus service and will need to find an alternate way to get to school. You should receive a personalized message like this for each returning student in your family. In addition, we have not received a re-registration for [redacted]. See instructions, below.

About the Expanded Walk Zones

The expanded walk zones are about 0.75 miles for elementary schools, and 1.25 miles for Walker, Buford, and CHS. These distances are on the lower range of schools across the region and country, and these revised walk (or “family responsibility”) zones are an important part of addressing the bus driver shortage.

You can learn more about this process and how we determined the walk zones [on our website](#).

What Can You Do Now?

- Review our [walking maps](#), including the intersections where we plan to have crossing guards (marked with a star).
- Make a plan for this student, and practice it if you intend for your child to walk, bike, or use a scooter.
- Talk with other families in your neighborhood and consider organizing groups to walk, bike, and/or carpool to school together - your PTO may be able to assist in this effort or recommend an app.
- Make a back-up plan for inclement weather.
- Would a bike help? Contact Community Bikes at 434-260-0893 or info@cbikes.org.

An example of a customized email sent in early August to give families plenty of time to digest the news and make a plan.

meetings and use their feedback to implement immediate infrastructure improvements

- Distribute 500 “Go Slow! Cville Kids Walk to School” yard signs at school open houses, to community partners and others (which, 6 months later, are still everywhere in the city!)
- [Update kid-friendly maps](#) that show commonly used routes to school
- Encourage older students to take public City buses ([parents volunteered as guides!](#))
- Reach out to PTOs about spearheading the use of carpool apps (insufficient interest)
- Purchase billboards (not ultimately pursued)
- Promote bike giveaways, free repair events
- Mail postcards to all residents/businesses who live along walking routes to remind them to keep sidewalks clear of leaves/snow/debris
- Partner with police to post pedestrian safety messages along key roadways
- Feature transportation update in printed calendar/handbook mailed to all households
- Post yard signs of school logos with directional arrows to help new walkers/bikers navigate to school

EVALUATION

Ultimately, our most important evaluation has been answering the simple question: Did families have a plan to get their kids to school? Secondly, we're pleased that schools like Durham (NC) Public Schools have already reached out to learn how we did this.

Attendance/Truancy and Transportation Data

- **22-23 attendance has been fairly stable in 3 key areas** despite a year with challenges unrelated to transit. August 30 enrollment vs Sept 30 enrollment (up 6 points to 98.9%); overall attendance (down about 2 points to 92.4%); and rate of chronic absenteeism (up by 4 points to 21.9%).
- Our **staff-led "walking school buses" are still in full force serving about 50 students**; we were heartened to see parents/guardians form others.
- The **"back to school" reporting was "Students Hit Streets to Head to School"** (instead of, as is easy to imagine, a headline about students being stranded at home without a bus
- Coming April 2023: **Updated data from our annual survey in K-10 P.E. of how kids get to school.**

Safety Data

- We have had **no injury reports in 22-23** of any students, staff or volunteers during transit.

Face-to-Face Feedback

- Our approach literally took staff to the streets, where we had the chance to assess how this big change was landing. What we found was that families largely understood the change that was coming, felt the schools and City were doing what was in their power to make the situation better, and were making plans for their children to get to school safely.
- During public comment at School Board and City Council meetings, there were very few (1-2) speakers on this topic, indicating that this was not an animating issue for the community.
- And we received positive feedback in the forms of "Do you have any more of those yard signs?" "That video was so cute," and "You guys rocked out this community engagement!"

Digital Feedback

- Social media: Even in the hours after we sent potentially upsetting messages (e.g. "your child is not eligible for bus service") there was very little negative feedback online. By July, many parents were posting strong support. As an example, on Facebook, the "Dr. Gurley Walks to School" video got 88 likes/loves, 42 shares, and 19 comments (none snarky). A "[So Many Routes to School](#)" slideshow posted to Facebook on the first day of school got 48 likes/loves, 9 shares and 0 negative comments.
- We monitored emails received by the School Board and by the "walkzones" email alias we created and did not see any surge in complaints. For instance, the 47 emails received by "walkzones" were largely about logistical matters. And **small number of these emails (concerning 47/4400 students, or about 1%)**, was a sign that the vast majority of families were finding solutions for their students.
- We succeeded in getting in the news to raise a lot of awareness about this topic. Of the **14 media reports** about this topic from June-September 2022, **13 featured accurate content and a positive tone**, including [NPR national's framing of our approach as "creative"](#) or K-12 Dive billing the key idea as "[building community partnerships](#)."
- On a public budget survey in October 2022, we were pleased to see that **transportation ranked as a distant #9** on public priorities with just 24 votes out of 422 respondents.

"This has been a terrific public process—the CCS and the City are working together, equity has been absolutely centered, public input has been respected." —Kathryn Laughon, Charlottesville equity advocate and frequent Tweeter



SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

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Clockwise from top left: Crossing guard Kevin Cox explaining to elementary school families how he'll help them safely cross on the first day of school; police used signage to notify motorists about school starting; CCS staff Tamara Mines and Julia Green help students coming to school in all weather; "Even high school students enjoy walking to school with their teachers!"

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OUR TEAM



Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Superintendent

First-year, communications-oriented superintendent Dr. Gurley was the face of this effort. He literally walked to school with families, taught kids how to ride public transportation, and starred in our video. He was able to look parents in the eye and say, "I don't have a bus for you. But if we trust our children, they can handle this."



Beth L. Cheuk, Supervisor of Community Relations

Beth is an experienced communications professional with a nerdy interest in maximizing how our student information system can make communications better. She has led Charlottesville Schools through changes in gifted education, school safety, and moving forward after the Neo-Nazi rallies in Charlottesville in 2017.



Amanda Korman, Community Relations Liaison

A relative newcomer to school PR, Amanda brought expertise in journalism and mental health communications. She also happens to have traversed a lot of Cville by foot herself, which came in handy when determining the impact of the new walk zones and communicating about pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

Not NSPRA Members (Yet), but We Love Them Anyway

Bianca Johnson, Family Engagement Coordinator

If community events gave frequent flyer miles, Bianca could travel the world. She helped organize the Walk and Talk events and represented Charlottesville City Schools at many other events. She created [neighborhood-specific flyers](#) to help residents understand the walk zones. She herself led a walking school bus for middle schoolers at one of our housing complexes until the students were acclimated to the walk.

Denise Johnson, Supervisor of Equity and Inclusion

A Charlottesville High School graduate, the soon-to-be Dr. Denise Johnson used her lifelong relationships, deep knowledge of the community, and equity framework to steer our decisions about topics ranging from the lengths of the walk zones and the tone of our communications. Denise took the lead organizing the Walk and Talk events in our community.

Patrick Moctezuma, Manager of Enterprise Services (IT)

Patrick had a vision for how we could use data to improve our processes for managing who was in the walk zone, assigned to a bus, or on a waiting list (with a need level of low, medium, or high). He also supported the work of using that data to give families individualized information about each child in their family.

Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer

Charged with areas such as facilities, nutrition, and safety, Kim also oversees our partnership with the City of Charlottesville, which runs our Pupil Transportation Services. Kim has explored every transportation idea that came our way and is experimenting with how smaller "Type A" school buses can bring more solutions to our community. As part of this work, Kim became an expert in the "street view" tool of Google maps.

Thanks to many other Cville Schools colleagues and to all our partners at the City in Pupil Transportation, Safe Routes to School, Traffic, Public Works and more. This "transportation transformation" was truly a team effort!

TIPS FOR THE NEXT SCHOOL DIVISION

- Communicate early and often: By announcing that 800 more children were now in an expanded walk zone, we knew families would be upset. But we would rather they be upset in July and early August, when they had time to make a plan well before the first day of school.
- Cultural differences show up, including learning that many of our refugee families question whether the streets are safe for walking (or they may not believe girls should walk without a chaperone). The “Talk and Walk” events (with translators) helped us gain mutual understanding.
- On our Google sheets log of emails received, we also included our responses to the parent/guardian. This was another indicator that we had replied, but it also created a mini-library of possible responses so that we could reuse phrasing as needed.
- “Walking School Bus” and “Bike Trains” are somewhat common expressions, but for our ESL families, they were confusing. (“Is my child walking or is my child on a school bus?”) For some audiences, we called them “guided walking groups.”
- Our evaluation of the walk zone expansion was complicated by the fact that we still have 200 eligible bus students on a waitlist for the bus. In other words, our community’s most lingering frustration is not with the expanded walk zones, but with our still-ongoing bus driver shortage.
- Our individualized messaging worked great, but we were certainly nervous about whether the communications tech would fail us or whether our student information system was 100% correct. As a result, we included a disclaimer in our messages: *We have made every effort to ensure accuracy, but if you believe your student’s bus eligibility is incorrect, please [review our website](#) and then reach out to us at walkzones@charlottesvilleschools.org. Alternatively, if we find an error, we will contact you.*
- Crossing guards play a special role in the community and have ended up being some of the best advocates for pedestrian safety, and motorist awareness. Not to mention we never saw social media posts get more likes and loves than when it was a picture of one of our guards in action.
- Use this as an excuse to get your steps in! Amanda and Beth enjoyed walking around the city as we tested out the walk-to-school routes. Dr. Gurley was happy to tell families, “We’re not asking your child to do anything our staff hasn’t already done.” Bonus points if you wear a school t-shirt!



UVA students volunteer to help our “walking school buses” get to Clark Elementary. Photo by Erin Edgerton.

NEXT STEPS: RPIE



How do we prepare and support our community for a future with far fewer school bus seats? Normalizing walking to school is key.

As we repeat the RPIE process, here are a few things we're thinking about:

Research: "What can we do to encourage more families to choose walking/biking instead of car-riding?" While we do have more kids walking, we also know that many families are choosing to drive their student. What can we do in future years to encourage more walking? This summer, some of our families suggest that all students in the walk zone should be *required* to walk or bike. We decided to celebrate walking, but we left the actual decision-making to families. After all, our most important goal was making sure that students got to school. Still, a growth area is to normalize and support walking/biking while reducing car traffic.

Ongoing Planning/Implementation

This is not one-and-done. We'll need good messaging to help people understand that these walk zones were not a one-time crisis measure, but the "new normal." In addition, our new families will need to learn whether they're in the walk zone. One area of planning is learning whether this information (walk zone or bus-eligible) could be included into the [City's GIS tool](#). We certainly plan to incorporate it into our online registration/re-registration forms so that families won't have the option to request bus service if they're not eligible. Finally, when we initially pushed out these messages, we did not know how many of them would be received (we expected a lot more push-back and anger). Knowing that these messages were received in a positive way opens the door for paid social media boosts to expand our reach.

NEWS APPEARANCES

npr radio IQ

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NATIONAL

A need for bus drivers forces school districts to be creative

September 8, 2022 - 5:11 AM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

FROM **VPM**

By Megan Pauly

4-Minute Listen

A nationwide shortage of school bus drivers means some districts are turning to creative solutions to get students to school safely. One of them involves escorting kids to school — on foot.

In addition to local media coverage from the two local network TV stations, daily newspaper, and news website, [NPR's Morning Edition](#) told the story of how our district got "creative" with our transportation needs, and [K-12 Dive](#) wrote about our efforts to get more kids to walk safely to school.

K-12 DIVE Deep Dive Opinion Library Events Topics

How 2 districts use community partnerships to ensure students can walk safely to school

Officials from Harrisonville, Missouri, and Charlottesville, Virginia, shared the role their communities play in shaping student pedestrian safety.

Published Sept. 2, 2022

Anna Merced
Reporter

As students return for the new school year, pedestrian safety is one of many topics on administrators' minds and working with community stakeholders is crucial in this work, say several district officials. Stock Photo via Getty Images

NBC 29 COUNT ON US

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CCS starts new transportation program amid bus driver shortage

CHARLOTTESVILLE SCHOOLS

CBS 19 NEWS AT 5

August 23rd, 9:18 PM EDT
Updated: August 24th, 9:35 AM EDT
By Sarah Robinson

Daily Progress WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Wednesday, August 24, 2022

GO SLOW! CHARLOTTEVILLE KIDS WALK TO SCHOOL

Students hit streets and head to school

A sign reminding motorists to drive slowly sits on the side of the road on Tuesday, the day before the first day of school for Charlottesville City Schools.

More walking, bicycling and getting rides

A shortage of bus drivers across the commonwealth and in Charlottesville and Albemarle County is leading to fewer bus routes and longer bus rides, some as long as 90 minutes or more in the rural areas of the county. School officials in the city have urged students and their parents to hit the sidewalk or ride to school in the wake of...

"We are facing a significant shortage of school bus drivers as we begin the 2022-23 school year," Charlottesville Public Schools officials said on the district's webpage. "Our old transportation model is not going to work for this fall or the future, and we are committed to working together to find solutions." As of July, Albemarle County was still looking for about...

Students to and from school. The school district's transportation...

Consumer expectations in Virginia have risen

Dropping gas prices reflect lower costs on many items

Michael Bantz

Consumer expectations are going up in 19th largest quarterly report, rising average 10 points to the CPI.

The blog in general cost-benefit average \$4.80 a \$3.00 a decline lower e at half "As will it cheap of b

READ: An article on Charlottesville's bus driver shortage, and the changes it's causing. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the link. NEWSVU

SOCIAL MEDIA: DIVISION & STAFF MESSAGES

You Retweeted

Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Ed.D.
@royalgurley

I am thankful for our community partners, specifically @LivableCville, @carfreecville, & @Cville4Ed for their advocacy for safe routes to schools for our kiddos. It will take a community effort to ensure our students get to school safely. #BetterTogetherCCS


3:56 PM · Jul 11, 2022 from Florida, USA

9 Retweets 2 Quotes 58 Likes

You Retweeted

Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Ed.D.
@royalgurley

We are not facing a challenge, we have been presented with an opportunity to make our city better. During these adverse times, we get to see the heart and core values of our school community. Thank you to everyone that walked with us today!



3:20 PM · Jul 22, 2022

4 Retweets 35 Likes

Charlottesville City Schools
@CvilleSchools

Help spread the word that Cville kids walk to school! Pick up a yard sign at your school Meet & Greet/Open House this week.
#BetterTogetherCCS




12:30 PM · Aug 22, 2022

View Tweet analytics

23 Retweets 5 Quotes 73 Likes

We Walk 2 School 30w


Why yes these are Walker walkers!!!



@cvillefiredept

@CVILLEFIREDEPT
helping students cross safely
THANK YOU

Walking to Buford with Principal Jordan and Ms. Johnson!



cvilleschools 31w

So many routes to the #firstdayofschool in ...

Liked by jackrabbitpto and 142 others

cvilleschools · Original audio

You Retweeted

Katina Otey, Ed.D.
@KatinaOtey

Clark Bees were up early to walk to school to start their learning today! It's so good to see kids learning in their classrooms! #learningisfun @CvilleSchools



4:25 PM · Aug 25, 2022

2 Retweets 11 Likes

You Retweeted

Jill Dahl
@dahL_jill

No buses, no problem. Even high school students enjoys walking to school with their teachers! A great first three days with students! #betheemcee #leanintorelationshipbuilding



11:32 AM · Aug 28, 2022

3 Retweets 22 Likes

You Retweeted

GreenbrierElementarySchoolVA @GreenbrierElem · Sep 5, 2022
We can't wait to see our Reading Stars tomorrow! Remember to drive slow - C'Ville kids walk to school! Thanks to our amazing AP @rollo_leads for jumping in as our crossing guard last week! @CvilleSchools



1 3 16

Charlottesville City Schools

Published by Amanda Korman · December 6, 2022

Hats off to Charlottesville City Schools' incredible crossing guard team. You know them for their friendly waves, their dauntless traffic management, and their commitment to our students through heat, cold, wind and rain. After school started this morning, the team gathered for an appreciation breakfast and to discuss ways to improve student safety. We are so grateful to this group of exemplary people!



See insights and ads

Boost a post

271

20 comments 5 shares

Charlottesville City Schools is at Jackson-Via Elementary

August 31, 2022 · Charlottesville

Students across the division are learning pedestrian safety in PE class. Here's a quick snap of third graders learning by doing at Jackson-Via!

Jackson-Via 3rd graders learning pedestrian safety in PE



Love the energy

Thank you Mr. Shipp!!

See insights and ads

Boost a post

24

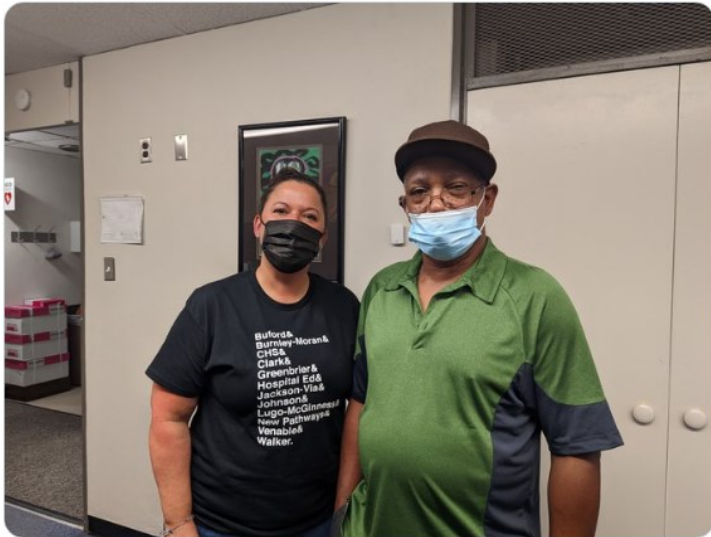
1 comment 4 shares



Charlottesville City Schools
@CvilleSchools

...

"I sat at home wondering how could I help the children, and I thought, I can do this." Welcome back to Mr. Henry Rush, coming out of retirement to serve as a crossing guard. Shown here with the amazing Laura Floyd of our HR team.



1:30 PM · Aug 24, 2022

View Tweet analytics

5 Retweets 2 Quotes 95 Likes



Charlottesville City Schools
@CvilleSchools

...

Say hello to our amazing crossing guards! The crew has expanded this year to help more students safely cross intersections throughout the city.



9:30 AM · Aug 23, 2022

View Tweet analytics

8 Retweets 6 Quotes 80 Likes



Charlottesville City Schools
@CvilleSchools

...

Amazing to have @KappaRhoDST come from UVA to @Buford_Middle this morning to welcome students back to school! h/t @ZyahnaB



9:37 AM · Aug 24, 2022

View Tweet analytics

2 Retweets 2 Quotes 46 Likes



Charlottesville City Schools
@CvilleSchools

...

Thank you to @PHARCVille for a great conversation about student transportation last night. We sincerely appreciate community members' questions, concerns and ideas for improvements. This is #BetterTogetherCCS.

Public Housing Association of Residents (P... @PHARC... · Aug 16, 2022
Watch now the LIVE now about the Bus: youtube.com/watch?v=JchG-m...

8:47 AM · Aug 17, 2022

View Tweet analytics

3 Retweets 8 Likes

You Retweeted



Rodney Jordan
@bufprincipal

...

No bus, no problem! We'll walk with you! Shout-out to everyone who helped us out, especially Ms. Bianca Johnson who walked with us from Friendship Court to Buford!

NBC29 @NBC29 · Aug 24, 2022
First day of school means hundreds of student walking to Charlottesville and Albemarle schools nbc29.com/2022/08/24/fir...

6:13 PM · Aug 24, 2022 from Virginia, USA

1 Retweet 35 Likes

SOCIAL MEDIA: WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

Charlottesville is *all* about Twitter. We were amazed and humbled by the level of engagement from parents and community partners (organizations from the Public Housing Association of Residents to UVA Hospital).

You Retweeted

Peter Krebs @PK_in_VA

So proud of the many kids [#walking](#) to school today, parents who went with them, @CvilleSchools staff who literally went and got them, community members who made it safer, drivers who modified their behavior ([#yestheyacan](#)), @CvilleCityHall who implemented quick improvements....

9:44 AM · Aug 25, 2022

2 Retweets 28 Likes

Tweet your reply

Peter Krebs @PK_in_VA · Aug 25, 2022
Replying to @PK_in_VA @CvilleSchools and @CvilleCityHall
But the key thing really, was @CvilleSchools saying "We're doing this" and not backing down. There are always concerns, always reasons to say no or later but there needs to be a bold first step. That's how culture changes and the other things we want (infrastructure) will follow.

1 Retweet 9 Likes

Peter Krebs @PK_in_VA · Aug 25, 2022
This is no victory lap. The work is beginning. But in my experience getting into the pool can be harder than swimming. We'll figure it out, together.

1 Retweet 2 Likes

You Retweeted

Matthew Gillikin @mtgillikin

First ride this morning was a success! Almost 15 CHS and Walker students.

Matthew Gillikin @mtgillikin · Aug 2, 2022
After looking into it, we are planning on our oldest riding the @RideWithCAT 9 Bus to Walker. I put together a google doc with information on the route, which may work well for families near West Main, UVA Hospital, 10th & Page, Venable, or Rose Hill. docs.google.com/document/d/102...
[Show this thread](#)

9:13 AM · Aug 24, 2022

2 Retweets 52 Likes

Tweet your reply

Katie Darden @KatieDarden23 · Aug 24, 2022
Replying to @mtgillikin
Our test rides went great earlier this week. Excited for the boy to ride after school today. Although that southbound bus stop at Walker is a disgrace.

1 Retweet 2 Likes

Matthew Gillikin @mtgillikin · Aug 24, 2022
Replying to @KatieDarden23
My understanding is that an alternative southbound bus stop at Walker has been created as of yesterday that will be used in the afternoons. I'm going back out to ride the 9 this afternoon, so will keep you posted!

1 Retweet 3 Likes

You Retweeted

Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR) @PHARCVille

Wishing all students and their families a safe and happy start of the school year tomorrow! If you missed our town hall on school transportation for the upcoming year, you can check it out here: youtube.com/watch?v=JchG-m...

[#phar](#) [#pharville](#) [#BackToSchool](#) [#Transportation](#)

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION TOWN HALL
youtube.com
8.16.22 Community Transportation Conversation
Join PHAR, community residents and our friends at the Charlottesville City Schools to dive deeper into ...

2:38 PM · Aug 23, 2022

2 Retweets 8 Likes

You Retweeted

Shannon Wright @shanw314

Saw Buford principal @bufprincipal walking a group of kids to school today. He even doubled as a crossing guard on busy Cherry Ave. This brand new Buford mom is impressed!

8:21 AM · Aug 24, 2022

5 Retweets 2 Quotes 58 Likes

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MATERIALS

Posters, postcards and of course our yard signs helped us connect with our families and the broader community, as well.

JOIN US FOR:

Transportation Talk and Walk Sessions

Join us to discuss our school transportation updates. There will be a listening/feedback session the first hour, and then join us for a walk to school!

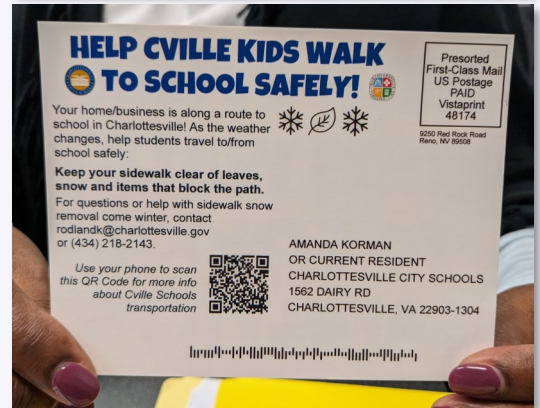
Wednesday, July 6th: 5:00-6:30pm
Westhaven

Friday, July 15th: 12:00-1:30pm
Friendship Court
418 Garrett Street

Friday, July 22nd: 12:00-1:30pm
Hearthwood Apartments
2111 Michie Drive




For questions, email goodnews@charlottesvilleschools.org

School News—Westhaven Edition

Transportation Updates



Despite the city's best efforts to hire more school bus drivers, there will be even fewer bus routes this fall than last year.

As a result, CCS has expanded the walk zones for all schools (.75 miles, or up to a 20-minute walk, for elementary; 1.25 miles, or up to a 30-minute walk, for Walker/Buford/CHS)

How does this impact you?

The walking zones for Venable and Buford will now include Westhaven. This means students will walk to school or families will need to provide transportation.

Important Info:


Students who live in Westhaven and attend CHS, Walker, and BME or students with qualifying disabilities are still eligible for bus service.

Ways to prepare:

1. Begin discussing transportation options with students and family.
2. Take practice walks to school.
3. Encourage people to apply to be a crossing guard or bus driver.

For More Information:

www.charlottesvilleschools.org
or call (434) 245-2400



COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATES

[Click here](#) (or on the image below) for a Google directory of the various messages we sent to families over the summer. Templates provided are email-only (and English-only) for the sake of space.



Charlottesville Schools Transportations Communications Templates Summer 2022

This is a step-by-step suite of sample messaging relating to our implementation of expanded walk zones (family responsibility zones) during the summer of 2022.

1. Note that throughout this process, we relied heavily on the filtering and mail-merge capabilities of the student information system and/or the messaging system to send individualized student information, which required the development of many variants of each communication. This student-by-student approach means that families of 6 students will receive 6 separate messages.
2. In addition, we set the "reply-to" email for these messages to go to the walkzones@ email address, which populated a spreadsheet where we assigned team members to reply to messages.

ASK FAMILIES TO UPDATE THEIR BUS REQUESTS

Sent June 5

[Letter asking families to re-register each child](#), which includes requesting bus service.

ANNOUNCE NEW MODEL OF TRANSPORTATION

Sent June 29

[Summer newsletter announcing that](#) the bus driver shortage is worse ever, and we need a new model. The letter points people to the FAQ and other resources on website.

INFORM FAMILIES IF STUDENT IS IN WALK ZONE OR IS ELIGIBLE FOR BUS

Sent August 2

As noted above, these messages give student-specific updates for 5 different situations:

1. Student who is [re-registered \(re-regged\) AND in walk zone](#)
2. Student who is [re-regged AND requested the bus](#)
3. Student who is [re-regged AND declined the bus service](#)
4. Student who is [NOT re-regged AND is in walk zone](#)
5. Student who is [NOT re-regged AND is eligible for bus](#)

INFORM FAMILIES IF STUDENT IS ASSIGNED TO BUS, WAITLIST, OR WALK ZONE

Sent August 14

As above, these messages give student-specific messages for 8 (!!) situations:

1. Student who is [re-registered \(re-regged\) and in walk zone](#)
2. Student who is [re-regged and declined bus](#)
3. Student who is [re-regged and assigned to bus](#)
4. Student who is [re-regged but on waitlist](#)
5. Student who is [NOT re-regged and in walk zone](#)
6. Student who is [NOT re-regged and assigned to bus](#)
7. Student who is [NOT re-regged and on wait list](#)
8. Student who is [NOT re-regged and NOT on wait list](#)

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL AUGUST 24

ARCHIVED TRANSPORTATION WEBPAGE

The transportation webpage continued to get updated, but here's a glimpse of the initial webpage — including a robust FAQ — that we used in launching the new model in late June.

- Current webpage: charlottesvilleschools.org/transportation/
- Archived original page: charlottesvilleschools.org/archive-of-transportation-page-june-2022/
- Archived mid-summer page: charlottesvilleschools.org/transportation-archive-2022-23-school-year/

Archive of Transportation Page June 2022

As we look to fall 2022, our school bus challenges appear to be worse, not better. While the City will continue to recruit bus drivers, it is time for us to try new strategies such as

- supporting walking in expanded walk zones
- encouraging use of public transportation
- collaborating with community partners to support biking
- adding mini-school buses (hopefully electric)



Our old transportation model is not going to work for this fall or the future, so come help us find ways that make our schools and city safer, healthier, and more environmentally friendly. We particularly want to minimize the equity impact of these changes. Look below for the dates and details for community "Talk and Walk" sessions, or [sign up to learn more](#) or [work to be part of the solution!](#)

Want to Know More?

Attend our Work Sessions (actually, they are "Talk and Walk" Sessions)

- Join us to discuss what these changes mean for your neighborhood and help us find solutions. We'll meet for an hour and then walk to a school. (A school bus will be available for the return trip.)
 - **Wednesday, July 6**, 5-6:30pm, Westhaven
 - **Friday, July 15**, 12-1:30pm, Friendship Court, 418 Garrett St.
 - **Friday, July 22**, 12-1:30pm, Hearthwood Apartments, 2111 Michie Drive
 - **Friday, July 29**, 12-1:30pm, Mt. Zion First African Baptist Church, 105 Lankford Ave.



We'll also be at "Healthy Streets, Healthy People" (organized by Move2HealthEquity and WellAWARE), Washington Park, July 16, 9am-1pm

Other Ways to Help and Stay Tuned

- [Sign up here](#) to...
 - receive e-mail updates about the changes
 - and/or express interest in working to be part of the solution, including becoming a crossing guard

Want to work towards a more walkable, bikable Charlottesville? Consider [joining the Piedmont Mobility Alliance](#). We'll also be at the "Healthy Streets, Healthy People" event sponsored by Move2HealthEquity and WellAWARE at Washington Park on July 16, 9am-1pm!

More Information

Update on Bus Driver Shortage

This national problem is not getting better. The City has tried increasing pay, offering bonuses, and increasing marketing without long-term success.

[+ Details about the Bus Driver Shortage](#)

What Strategies Can We Try?

We have looked at other college towns to see what is in place in similar communities. We need your help to work out the details, but here's what we're planning:

- **Bus service for special-education students** will remain in place
- **Expanding walk zones** (up to a 20 minute walk at elementary, up to a 30 minute walk at Buford, CHS, and Walker)

[+ Details about Expanding Walk Zones](#)

SOURCES

SOURCES WE USED (AND ARE USING) FOR RESEARCH

Prior School Board reports about transportation showing the growth of this crisis with data points such as:

- Driver vacancy rates
- Prior “stuff the bus” practices
- History of walk zones in Charlottesville
- Efforts to recruit bus drivers (marketing, raises, bonuses) and their limited impact
- Number of routes served
- Local market conditions that impact bus driver hiring
- Student ridership figures (number of students previously served, current capacity to transport students, size of waitlist for bus seats)
- Transportation procedures (ie, number of students per bus before and after the onset of the pandemic)

Attendance data (sometimes broken out by bus status – see evaluation list for more details).

Interviews with current, long-time, or retired Schools or City staff in areas of:

- Operations
- IT
- Principals
- Equity/Family Engagement
- Pupil Transportation
- Safe Routes to Schools
- School Board members

Our feet! (We literally walked any bus routes we had concerns about.)

Google maps (Using the street view function, we have “walked” and “driven” every square inch of our 10-square-mile small city.)

Crowd-sourced data about problem sidewalks or intersections (and their proposed solutions!)

Prior reports of City colleagues in areas such as traffic, road infrastructure, facilities

Versatrans or other bus routing software maps and reports

Public transportation information (routes, policies, schedules, maps, input from regular riders)

National reports or websites such as:

- Safe Routes to School (<https://saferoutesdata.org>)
- Strongtowns.org, including “[The Bus Driver Shortage is a Problem We didn’t Have to Have](#)”
- Center for Cities & Schools: [Beyond the Yellow Bus](#)

Other school divisions’ transportation and bus pages

Local, state, and national reporting

Insights/prior reports from local partner groups around topics such as running, biking, livability, environment

Suggestions and previous solutions implemented by small-bus vendors and consultants

Voices of the community, especially those who live in public housing who would be impacted by these changes as well as the partner organizations who serve these communities

The next resource an NSPRA member sends our way!

EVALUATION METRICS

Attendance Data Before/After the Change

- Daily Attendance Rates
- Chronic Absentee Rates
- Rate of Attendance During First Week of School (were students immediately able to get to school?)
- By Bus Status Rates ("Assigned to Bus" vs "In Walk Zone" etc)
- By-School Rates (especially if one school is more impacted by these changes than another)
- Tardy Rates for 1st Period

Transportation Data Before/After the Change

- Bus Waitlist #s
- # Crossing Guards hired
- Students Walking to School (as captured by PE teachers in annual data collection)

Safety Data

- Number of injuries/incident reports for people in transit to from/school

Digital Data

- Social media data (# of posts, interactions/reach, "likes", comments, shares, tone of comments)
- Website (evaluation of content, number of visits)
- Messaging to families (# of messages, evaluation of content, open rates, responses)
- Video reach, comments
- Media Reporting (# of articles, evaluation of tone and content, comments on social media)
- Emails received by key staff, designated email address, School Board, etc. (#, tone, content, response rate)

Face to Face Data

- School Board public comments (#, tone, content, follow-up responses)
- City Council comments (#, tone, content, follow-up responses)
- Number of community meetings held in person or online
- Comments received at "Talk and Walk" or other community meetings
- Participation numbers ("Talk and Walk" meetings, online Q&A meetings, interactions at other community events)
- Comments reported by school staff (school secretaries, counselors, principals, family engagement staff) and responses such as phone calls received or public interactions at summer or back-to-school events. Staff may not think to report these to you, but you can always call them to learn what they are seeing and hearing
- Feedback from community partners

Accomplishment data

- Can be a checklist of your implementation plan
- Evaluation of implementation
- # of signs distributed
- # of volunteers

COSTS

Since this issue arose somewhat suddenly, we had no designated budget for these projects. Even so, we managed to stretch our dollars. We spent \$8,762 on the following:

- Dr. Gurley Walk to School Video Filming/ Production: \$1,000
- 500 Coroplast yard signs with H stakes ("Go Slow, Cville Kids Walk to School"): \$4,395
- Graphic design to modify existing walk-to-school maps: \$900
- Design, printing, postage for 3000 postcards to residents along key walking routes: \$1,407
- 95 Coroplast yard signs printed with school logos (plus H stakes): \$980
- 2 rolls of arrow tape to add directions to school logo signs to assist with wayfinding: \$80

