



Head Start 45 CFR Part 1310 – Transportation Waiver Request Data Collection Form.  
[Attachment for Information Memorandum] ACYF-IM-HS-06-01. DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB, 2006.  
English.

### **Justification for Requesting a Transportation Waiver**

The Milwaukee Public Schools Head Start Program is requesting a waiver for 45CFR1310.11(a), child safety restraint system requirement, for 3-year-old and 4-year-old students, and 45CFR 1310.15(c)(1), bus monitor requirement. MPS is proposing to provide bus transportation for all Head Start children who request or need transportation to and/or from school in the ~~2021-2022~~ 2023-2024 school year.

In the past, MPS has been concerned that parents were making education decisions for their children based on where transportation services were provided rather than on the quality of programs or schools. It is also believed that Head Start enrollment, and attendance would be increased if transportation was provided. Additionally, by offering transportation to all students, families would be able to ride busses together rather than separating Head Start children from their siblings.

It is expected that up to ~~43%~~ 44% of the ~~1,506~~ 1,291 children in Head Start will take the bus service once it is offered, as consistent with actual ridership of Head Start students for the ~~FY23~~ FY24 school year.

Providing the service would involve MPS supporting ~~118~~ 39 bus routes at a cost of approximately ~~\$3.03 million~~ \$1,461,600. The district would cover these costs with local funds and not use Head Start funding to support this new service. In light of these costs, MPS requests these waivers for the following reasons:

- Compliance costs with these two sections of 45 CFR Part 1310 for all Head Start students would be approximately ~~\$4.1~~ \$4.7 million, creating an undue financial hardship for the district:
  - Bus Monitors: ~~\$4,154,641~~ \$4,279,340
  - Restraints: All K3 and K4 (HS [647] and Board Funded [4016]); ~~\$722,765~~ \$460,660 (~~4,663~~ 2,972 x \$155)
- All busses transporting MPS students are equipped with 2-way radios, GPS fleet tracking and electronic child safety check systems:
  - All bus drivers are required to walk the bus before exiting, or the horn will sound. This is accomplished by a button in the rear of the bus, which must be pressed in sequence after the unit is activated.
  - Ensures that bus drivers perform required post trip checks for sleeping children.
- All MPS buses will be equipped with Mobile Data Terminal system, which provides the ability to identify the location of a child on a school bus, including boarding and departure times via an id card or the MDT touchscreen itself. Information is captured electronically and stored for accurate accounting and attendance purposes.
- Improved bus safety record due to the implementation and success of:

- School Bus Behavior Project mitigating the need for bus monitors.
- Standardized bus driver training resulting in fewer accidents.
- Regular vehicle inspections resulting in fewer breakdowns.
- Increased access to Head Start programs for families would be achieved thereby improving attendance and reducing tardiness.

Waiver for 45 CFR 1310.11 (a) – Child Safety Restraint Equipment Systems

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) serves approximately ~~66,017~~ 65,000 urban students in grades K3 through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. MPS currently contracts with nine bus companies for 3,660 daily bus routes to transport more than ~~39,734~~ 34,740 students in three-year-old kindergarten through twelfth grade. Included in this number are ~~4,907~~ 2,972 K3 and K4 students (~~889~~ 665 K3 students and ~~4,018~~ 2,307 K4 students) ~~1,114~~ 536 of which are Head Start students attending 39 schools. The same buses are used to transport students of all grades to school.

**Costs & Timing** – Purchase, installation and repair costs for child restraint systems would create an undue burden on the district given the number of bus routes and companies used to transport K4 students district-wide. The costs for child restraint systems would be \$155 per rider, with up to ~~1,506~~ 1,291 potential K3 and K4 head start riders, resulting in a total of ~~\$233,430~~ \$200,105. To provide the same, comparable standard of care for non-Head Start peers in the same grade (K3 and K4) – in many instances riding the same bus to school – the cost increases to ~~\$760,535~~ \$460,660.

**Implementation** – MPS has the following concern about the implementation of child restraints in busses.

**Transportation for 3 and 4-year-old students** will be provided by multiple vendors. MPS has a proven track record for safely transporting students in K3-12<sup>th</sup> grades. MPS is committed to an equal standard of care for all children, and we believe that our long history transporting K3 and K4 students specifically demonstrates our ability to successfully add the additional Head Start students to our current transportation plan. These school buses however by WI State Statute are exempt from seat belt accessibility and use requirements. This is authorized in large part due to the unique school buss ‘compartmentalization’ design of school buses that maxims student safety when transporting. 5-point harnesses cannot be utilized without seat belts. It is for this reason MPS is asking for the 5-point harness waiver.

**MPS Bus Safety Record**

Milwaukee Public Schools maintains the highest standards in the transportation of students. Due to its excellent historic and always improving safety record, the requested waiver is reasonable and appropriate. All transportation services provided for students are currently fully compliant with 45CFR1310.11(a), 45CFR 1310.15(c)(1), Wisconsin State Statutes and Administrative Codes. Compliance is assured through contracts and regular monitoring of provider services.

Transportation services, as offered by MPS, have become increasingly safe and efficient mode of conveying students to and from school. Over the last few years, the Office of Pupil Transportation has begun several successful initiatives which have improved operations and safety of its transportation system.

**Accidents and breakdowns:** Standard bus driver training and reporting resulted in a 48% decline in accidents from 2010 to ~~2022~~ 2023 (238 to 115). The percentage of accidents to bus trips is 0.016%. Vehicle Inspections & Breakdowns: Vehicle Inspections conducted by the WI Highway Patrol and the number of vehicle breakdowns that occur over the year are good gauges for measuring the safety of buses. Bus companies contracted by MPS achieved a 92% first time Vehicle Inspection approval rate in 2021-2022. This compares to a WI state average of 85%. Buses that do not pass the first time are repaired and re-inspected prior to operating. In 2021-2022, the number of breakdowns was at 30 occurrences out of a total of 680,400 annual trips, for a breakdown to trip percentage of 0.0044%.

## Waiver for 45 CFR1310.15(c)(1) 0 Bus Monitor Requirement

### **Costs**

Additional bus monitors create an additional undue financial hardship for the district. Under current regulations, MPS must hire ~~109~~ 39 new bus monitors to ride buses each school day. 109 bus monitors at \$100.00 per day (avg. 5 hours per day, 260 days) plus ~~46.6%~~ 51% in benefits will equal ~~\$4,154,641~~ \$4,279,340.

### **Bus Behavior**

MPS implemented the School Bus Behavior Project reduces the number of negative bus behavior incidents. This program has created a safe bus environment for students of all ages. Since its inception in the 2012-2013 school year, the number of incidents has decreased by 68%. The School Bus Behavior Initiative was designed to be easy to use, data driven and on-going. Focusing on communication and collaboration among bus drivers, schools and parents, the project utilizes both positive reinforcement (PBIS) and consistent consequences and actions for misbehavior. Continued improvement is forecasted for upcoming school years as schools, bus drivers and parents become more familiar with the project.

### **Closing Statement**

Standard of Care and Access

Equitable access to education opportunities is a guiding principle of MPS. The requested waiver would allow all families access to Head Start services regardless of their transportation through the provision of quality and dependable transportation furthers the MPS commitment to a single standard of care for all students.

Due to the behavior and bus safety record of MPS, transportation of Head Start children under this waiver would not pose an undue risk. Wisconsin school bus transportation systems are already heavily regulated including safety inspections of buses and in-service requirements for

drivers. MPS currently transports ~~4,663~~ 2,972 K3 and K4 students safely, responsively and efficiently, including ~~647~~ 556 MPS Head Start students. The same quality service for Head Start is requested for ~~FY22~~ FY24.

Given the high standards to which Milwaukee Public Schools holds itself, we are bale to, with great confidence; affirm our belief that our transportation services will provide quality services to our Head Start families. In addition to our invested to ensure quality transportation services for all Milwaukee Public students.

Thank you for consideration of this waiver of 45CFR1310.11(a) and 45CFR 1310.15(c)(1).