

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 18, 2013**

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## **Several Harford County Public Schools Transportation Changes to Take Effect for the 2013-14 School Year**

On June 10, 2013, as a part of the expenditure reductions, four different transportation changes were adopted when the Board approved the Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) Operating Budget that will save the school system approximately \$890,000. These changes, effective August 26 for the start of the 2013-14 school year, include: four new elementary schools added to the fourth tier schedule, elimination of previously approved exemptions to the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) transportation policy, depot bus stops established for magnet school students, and consolidated bus stops established for both middle and high school bus routes.

“While my Board colleagues and I lamented on approving changes to these services that have been provided for our students for many years,” said Board President Rick Grambo, “we have arrived at a point where cost-saving strategies are necessary to begin making improvements to our budget picture that will affect generations of students for years to come.”

### **Four new elementary schools move to fourth tier schedule**

The following elementary schools have been added to the fourth tier schedule: Bakerfield, Red Pump, Bel Air and Forest Lakes. The school day at these four locations will now start at 9:30 a.m., and students will be dismissed at 4:00 p.m. Parents/guardians of students attending these four schools were notified by mail with a letter dated July 17, 2013.

The four schools were selected using specific criteria such as number of available buses in surrounding schools, timing and proximity. By modifying the school day for these four schools, buses will be able to service more schools, thereby decreasing the number of total buses necessary and eliminating costs associated with the extra buses, such as fuel, maintenance and personnel costs.

### **Exceptions to transportation policy eliminated**

Board policy states that elementary students who live within a one-mile radius of school and secondary students who live within a one-and-a-half-mile radius of school are not eligible for transportation service. For many years, waivers and exceptions to this policy have been granted. As the Board is no longer in a financial position to provide transportation for those students, the waivers have been eliminated. Parents of the students affected by this change were notified by mail with a letter dated July 17, 2013.

By eliminating the waivers and reducing the number of riders in close proximity, HCPS was able to further reduce the number of buses needed. Criteria that are used to determine non service areas in all other schools were applied to these cases and the exemptions were lifted.

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**Magnet program depot stops**

Transporting magnet program students is costly due to the dispersion of students going to programs throughout the county. A depot stop system has been established for all HCPS students enrolled in the Science and Mathematics Academy at Aberdeen High School, the Global Studies Program/International Baccalaureate Program at Edgewood High School, and the Natural Resources and Agricultural Science Program at North Harford High School.

The depot stop system incorporates the designation of several sites throughout the county where buses will pick-up and drop-off students when transporting them to their magnet program. Each magnet student's home high school will now serve as the designated depot stop. Transportation to and from the depot site to the child's home will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. It is up to the parent/guardian to determine the appropriate means by which their student will arrive to and return home from the depot location. Many surrounding school districts utilize shopping center parking lots and recreation areas as depot locations; however, HCPS feels that the safest practice is to have students wait for their bus on HCPS property.

As a result of the creation of depot stops, in general, students will now be spending less time on buses for transport to and from school throughout the county. Parents of the students affected by this change were notified by mail with a letter dated July 17, 2013. In addition, during the second week of August, parents will receive a postcard from the HCPS Transportation Office with the confirmation of their child's depot location.

**Consolidated bus stops for middle and high school students**

Middle and high school bus routes are being reconfigured to decrease the number of stops, as well as the length of the routes, where possible. As the new routes are being configured, great care is being taken to ensure the safety of HCPS students. Reducing the number of stops for middle and high school students will reduce the cost of completing a bus run.

**Release of bus routes, stop locations and pick-up times**

Bus routes are still being finalized for the 2013-14 school year. The routes, as well as bus stop locations, pick-up and drop-off times and bus numbers, will be posted on the school system's website as soon as they are available. An automated call will be made to notify parents/guardians when the information is posted. It is important for parents to access the information as soon as possible, as the first day of school is Monday, August 26, 2013. Parents are urged to review the routes and pay close attention to stop locations and bus numbers, as they most likely have changed from previous years. Middle and high school parents especially will want to pay close attention to the information and the consolidated stop locations.

If parents of students who are affected by the transportation changes have not received information, they should visit their child's school Edline website or contact their child's school as soon as possible.

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