

# 2022 STATE OF SCHOOL **TRANSPORTATION**



**HopSkipDrive**

SETTING THE BAR ABOVE AND BEYOND FOR SAFE YOUTH TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

---

# Contents

**1** Introduction

**2** Survey Audience

**3** Educational Equity and Transportation

**4** Attendance and Transportation

**5** State of School Transportation: 2021-2022 School Year

**6** Bus Driver Shortages

**7** Alternative Transportation Solutions

**8** School Transportation Pain Points

**9** What's Going Well

---

## Introduction

The United States' school transportation industry is at a critical juncture.

Where, when and how students are learning is evolving. From charter schools to individualized education plans, independent study, school of choice, and remote or hybrid learning, these days no two students' educational needs are quite the same.

Of course, these changes have further complicated the logistics of getting each and every student where they need to go on a daily basis. So too have the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and relentless school bus driver shortage. These complexities make closely examining the current state of school transportation even more critical.

As we did in 2021, we gathered pertinent information and data by surveying a wide range of school transportation professionals including directors of transportation and other school transportation staff. This year, we also asked school administration and district leadership about the correlations between transportation, chronic absenteeism and educational equity in their communities.

Our comprehensive report highlights the current successes and areas of focus for school transportation professionals. The report also provides key insights into common student transportation pain points such as funding, operational and school staffing challenges.

Read on to learn more about the State of School Transportation in 2022.





---

## Survey Audience

Respondents to our 2022 State of School Transportation survey hold a variety of school transportation and administration roles, representing public, charter and private schools and districts of all sizes. In addition to directors of transportation, routing coordinators and dispatchers, bus drivers, safety trainers and other school transportation staff, we also had

superintendents, principals, operations managers, directors of finance, special education directors, McKinney-Vento and special needs coordinators, social workers, counselors and other school employees respond to this year's survey. We're grateful to everyone who took the time to participate.



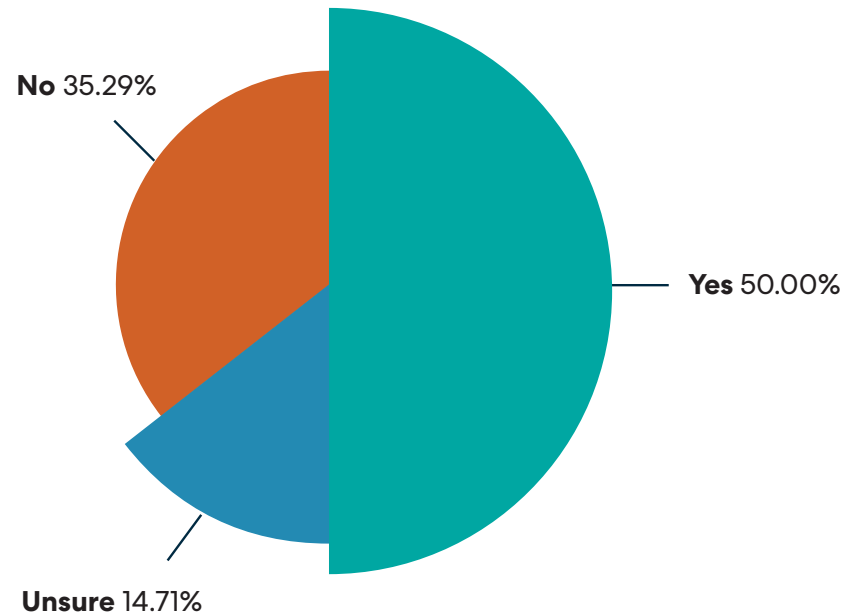
## Educational Equity and Transportation

Accessible school transportation for all children is crucial to securing a brighter future for students. This year's survey revealed a strong correlation between school transportation and educational access, with 50% of respondents reporting a direct link between access to transportation and educational equity in their district.

This critical issue demands more research, given the significant social, economic and policy implications.

Limited access to transportation is a common issue in low-income or geographically isolated areas, and it often impacts vulnerable students with special needs or those experiencing homelessness or in foster care. Students facing barriers to transportation miss out not only on educational opportunities — including the ability to choose which school they want to attend — but also on extracurricular and other enrichment activities.

Do you see a link between access to transportation and educational equity in your district?



*Access to transportation is a fundamental necessity for a significant percentage of students.*

Josh Davis  
Chief Operations Officer



# Attendance and Transportation

This year's survey highlighted a lack of safe, reliable transportation as a significant factor that contributes to chronic absenteeism (which is defined as absent more than 15 days in a school year). 67% of this year's survey respondents said that access to transportation has impacted attendance in their district, while 61% admit their district has been struggling with chronic absenteeism.

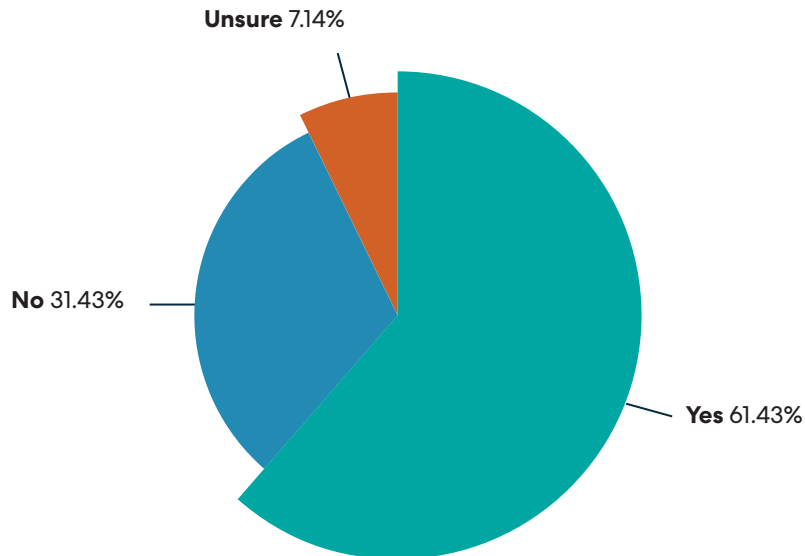
# 61.43%

ADMIT THEIR DISTRICT HAS BEEN STRUGGLING WITH CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

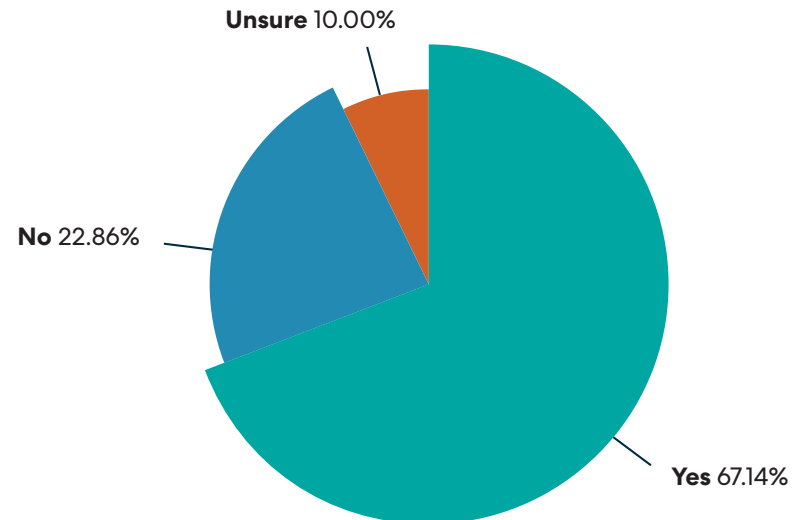
# 67.14%

OF RESPONDENTS SEE A DIRECT LINK BETWEEN ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION AND ATTENDANCE

Does your district have issues with chronic absenteeism?



Do you see a correlation between access to transportation and attendance (defined here as a student being present at school) in your district?





*Our students with special needs have the lowest attendance as a result of transportation issues. With the school bus driver shortage, if a bus route is not running, the students do not have a way to attend school. It is so inequitable.*

Anonymous respondent



*Transportation is cited as a key issue in terms of why families decide not to enroll or re-enroll. As a school in a semi-rural area, transportation is always an issue.*

Anonymous respondent



*We draw students from very different areas and no one transportation system is adequate to serve all. We have had severe transportation challenges, which have meant students transferring schools or not coming to school at all.*

Anonymous respondent



*When students' ability to attend school is directly linked to their ability to access public transportation, there will always be inequities and disparities.*

Anonymous respondent



*Many of our students reside over three miles from the campus. Daily bus transportation is often the only option as parents have grown more accustomed to adopting hybrid/virtual schedules in lieu of arranging alternatives to the yellow school bus model.*

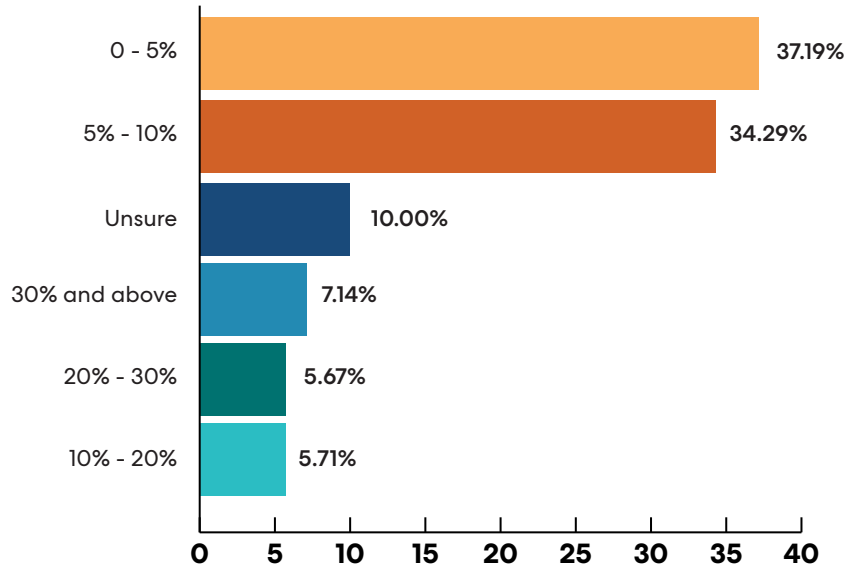
Anonymous respondent



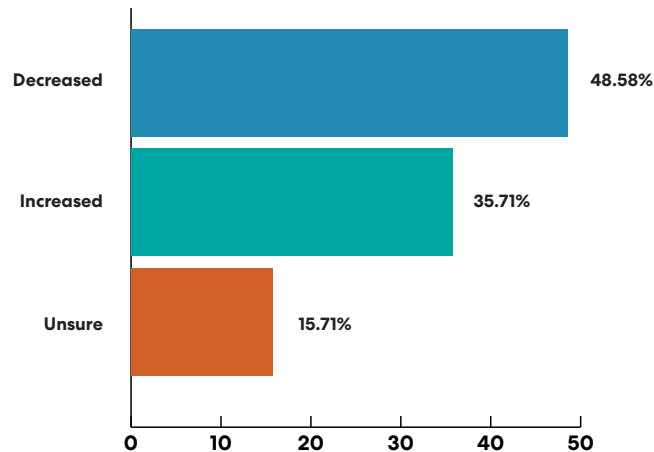
*Students who have poor transportation access often miss chunks of instruction during their day, or can't participate in extracurricular activities due to transportation barriers.*

Anonymous respondent

**Approximately what % of students are chronically absent (here defined as absent more than 15 days in a school year)?**

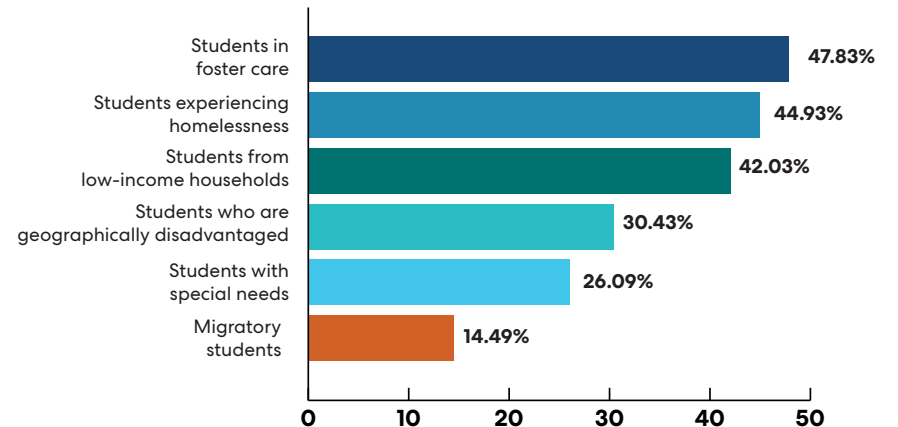


**Has your attendance rate (defined here as a student being present at school) increased or decreased in the last year?**



The attendance data we gathered indicate that students from vulnerable populations experience higher absenteeism rates throughout the school year. Students in foster care are absent the most, followed by students experiencing homelessness, and students from low-income households.

**Compared to the general student body, which of the following student populations experience higher rates of absenteeism? Select all that apply.**







***Children who have to cross unsafe areas to get to school often do not come if they cannot be accompanied or are running late.***

---

Anonymous respondent



***Students who rely on cab transportation, such as our homeless students, are frequently late or absent.***

---

Anonymous respondent



***The buses don't have drivers. The parents don't have cars or have to get to work on time. These are some of the things that have been attendance barriers.***

---

Anonymous respondent



***Students are missing so many days of instruction that they are falling behind.***

---

Anonymous respondent



***Caregivers are more likely to keep students home if they walk to school than if they take public transportation.***

---

Anonymous respondent

---

# State of School Transportation Today: 2021-2022 School Year

With the multilayered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic still lingering, this year we surveyed boots-on-the-ground directors of transportation and other transportation staff who work on the front lines every single school day. We wanted to know what is working well for them, hear about their most pressing recurrent issues and learn more about what's on their minds.



# Bus Driver Shortages

Not surprisingly, the ongoing national school bus driver shortage remains a high-priority issue, with 88% of survey respondents reporting that the driver shortage has constrained their school transportation operations. This is a large increase from last year when 78% of respondents said the shortage constrained them.

The school bus driver shortage is not a new issue. Survey respondents confirm many contributing factors related to its longevity and the fact that the shortage has heightened since the pandemic's onset.

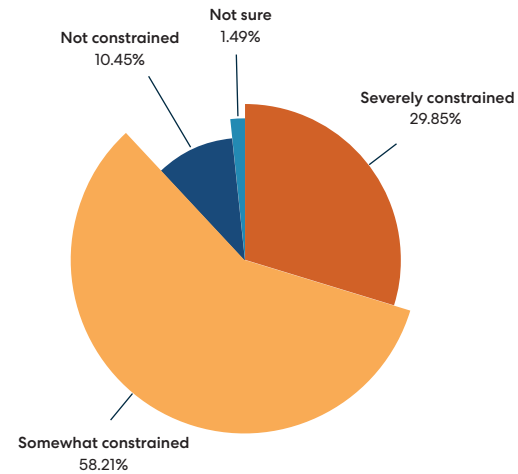
Difficulty recruiting new drivers is the top-cited reason for bus driver shortages, followed by low driver pay, drivers reaching retirement age, drivers opting to retire early, ongoing health concerns related to COVID-19 and bus drivers choosing to leave for jobs in the private sector. Other relevant factors mentioned include lack of incentives, low driver morale and more.



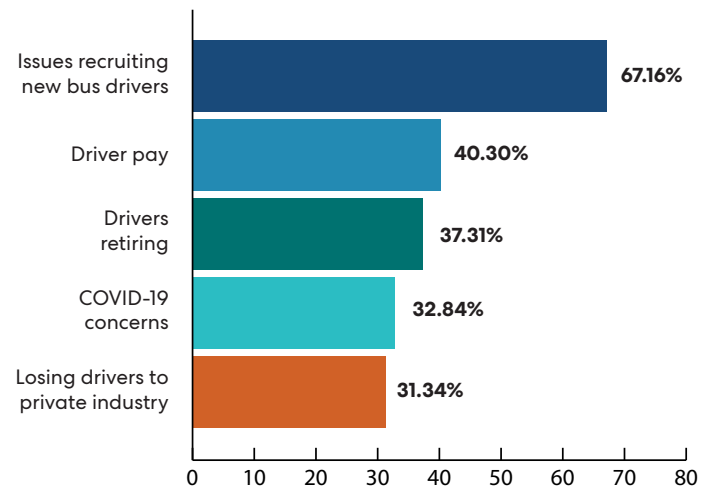
# 88%

### OF RESPONDENTS REPORT THAT THEIR SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN CONSTRAINED BY THE DRIVER SHORTAGE

#### Are your transportation operations constrained by school bus driver shortages?



#### Top 5 reasons for districts' bus driver shortage





*[The bus driver shortage] is a problem across the country that will force districts to increase walking distance, do group stops so they can cut times to do double routes, load buses to capacity and more.*

---

Wayne Winters  
Director of Transportation



*Driver morale is a huge issue. Drivers are having to bend over backward to help cover routes or work longer hours. There is also a fear of COVID and other related illnesses that is causing older retired people who would have normally wanted to drive for us to withhold from applying. We also have a shortage of substitutes, which is causing myself, the supervisor/director and mechanics and other staff to cover routes almost daily.*

---

Taylor Perrington Ashley  
Supervisor of Transportation



*Right now, the majority of the people driving our buses are older. Many are retired and doing this to supplement their retirement. This is fine but there is a certain amount of concern attached to it, as well. There are more health concerns with this generation and yet they are the ones transporting our younger generations. There need to be incentives for individuals in their 30s to 50s.*

*We never know from one day to the next when we're simply not going to be able to transport on any given route. One regular driver sickness and no subs means we can't transport a group of students. This is not good because people depend on our service, and it's only a matter of when it will happen.*

---

Angela Marshall  
Transportation Director



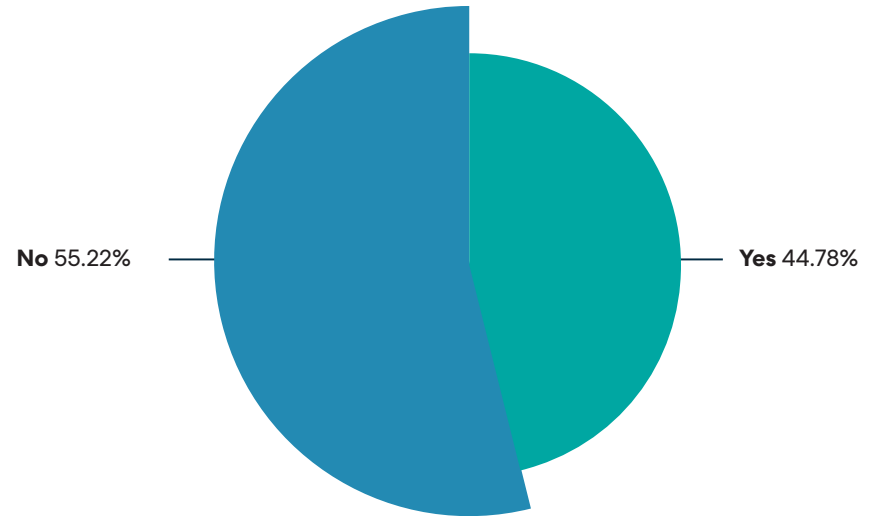
# How Districts Are Adapting to Bus Driver Shortages

Without enough bus drivers, school districts across the country have been forced to try many different remedies, including staggering school schedules, expanding walk boundaries, being flexible about CDL requirements, having other school employees drive buses and paying parents to transport their children to school themselves.

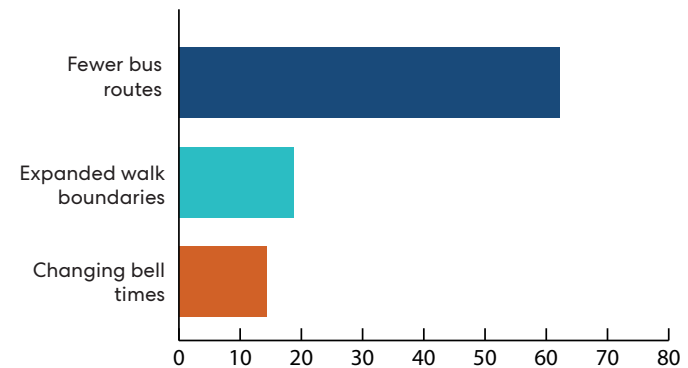
Districts have also been forced to reduce services in an attempt to counteract the strain on their transportation operations.



## Has your district reduced transportation services due to the bus driver shortage?



## How districts have reduced transportation services



## Unconventional Ways to Address Bus Driver Shortage



*We are having to use office staff as drivers to maintain routes. We are also now hiring bus drivers without CDLs and allowing them up to 90 days to complete the training.*

Gregory Dutton  
Director of Transportation



*We're now using the public transit system.*

Anonymous respondent



*Not really unconventional, but we are paying our drivers an extra hour for every bus run they double up on.*

Taylor Perrington Ashley  
Supervisor of Transportation



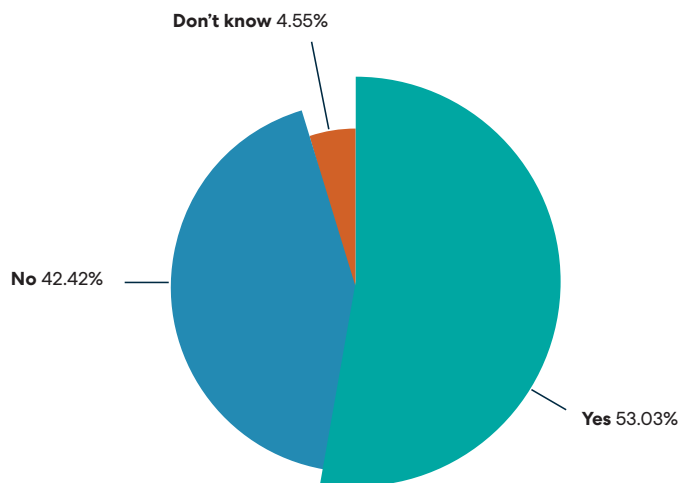
# Alternative Transportation Solutions

More than half of respondents report their district uses alternative solutions to meet some of their student transportation needs. The most common reported use for these types of outside resources is transportation for special education students.

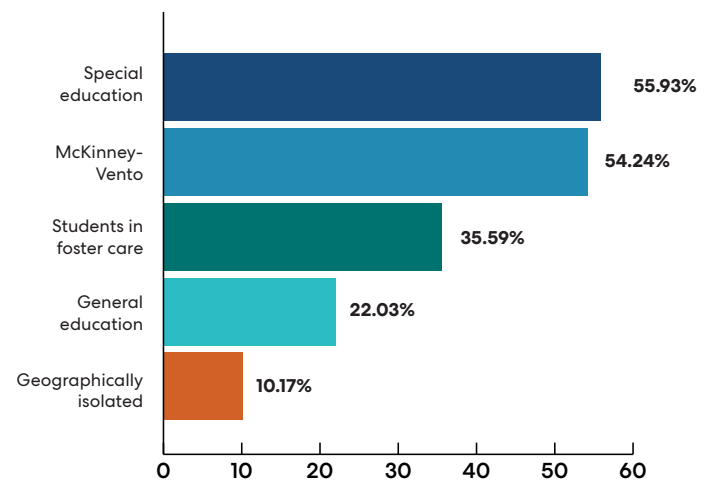
The next most frequent use of alternative transportation resources by school districts is McKinney-Vento transportation for students who are experiencing homelessness.



## Do you use alternative school transportation solutions?



## Which populations do you use alternative transportation solutions for? Check all that apply.



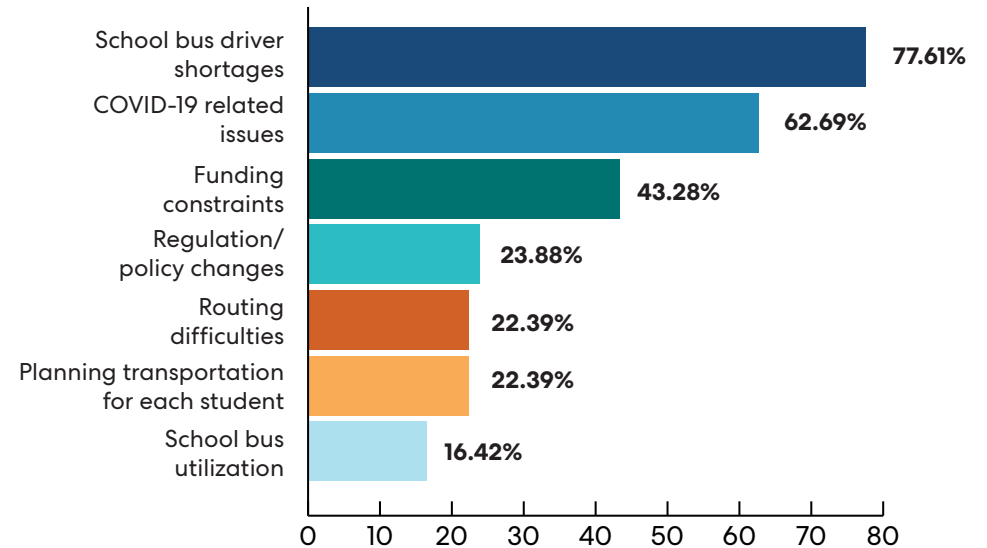


# School Transportation Pain Points

While most students have returned to their classrooms for in-person learning this school year, many of the challenges and frustrations schools faced in 2021 have not been resolved.

Far and away, the school bus driver shortage outranks any other pain point that school transportation and administration professionals are facing today. Next on the list are the many concerns and complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, school transportation funding limitations, industry regulation and policy changes, and the logistical difficulties involved in individualized transportation planning for each student round out the top pain points impacting the state of school transportation today.

Factors that have a negative impact on district transportation operations







**We experienced some difficult driver shortages before the school year started and during the first semester. Although the issue has mostly resolved, we are still dealing with residual effects from COVID-19 and some budgetary issues that are causing some overcrowding on buses.**

Anonymous respondent



**As is the case with all districts, we are faced with the daily challenge of covering all the routes.**

Trudy Foster  
Transportation Director



**[We're] underfunded by the state for transportation.**

Wayne Winters  
Director of Transportation



**Delays in new buses are hurting us. As a growing district, we need the additional buses.**

Cody Cox  
Director of School Transportation



**We primarily use the public transit system to coordinate transportation for our students, which in a way means their transportation is out of our hands. If a train or bus breaks down, we have no control or alternative for them to get to school.**

Anonymous respondent



**Due to lack of drivers, routes can be long with students on the bus for over an hour and buses are over-crowded.**

Anonymous respondent



**We are having to pull teachers and coaches to assist with transportation.**

Brigitte Hargrove  
Director of Transportation



**Not having enough buses is not allowing us to space out students. We're also not able to offer transportation to athletic events.**

Anonymous respondent



**The primary effects of the transportation constraints are a severe dip in morale. When drivers are not happy or feel good about their jobs, it shows. When districts put unrealistic expectations on a contractor, it is reflected in the performance. Lack of district support impacts busing also.**

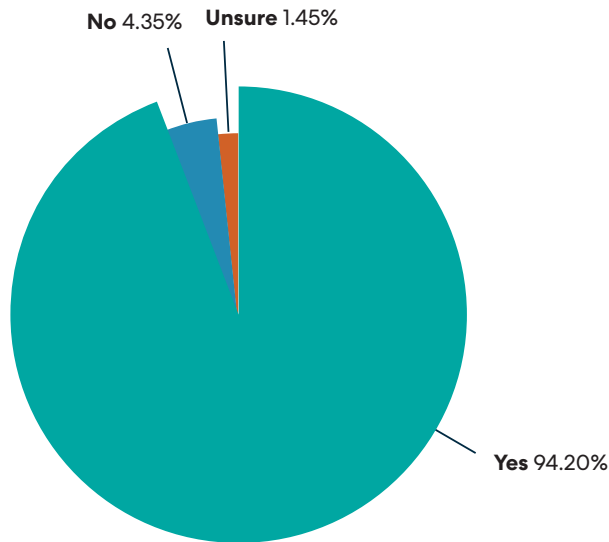
Anonymous respondent

# Staffing shortages

This year's survey revealed that school staffing shortages — including but not limited to bus driver shortages — are a major issue. These shortages impact all facets of school administration and operations. Almost 94% of respondents report that staffing shortages are an issue in their school or district.



Does your district have a staffing shortage?



Positions respondents report experiencing staffing shortages with include:

- Teachers
- School bus drivers
- Custodians
- Health professionals
- Librarians
- Administration



*Great employees who show up daily are getting worn out from covering other routes and responsibilities.*

Dodi Young  
Transportation Coordinator



*What keeps me up at night is how to keep schools open and operating during the pandemic and amid staffing shortages.*

John French  
Superintendent

---

## What's Going Well

School transportation and administration staff work hard each and every day to meet the evolving and diverse needs of all students. The accomplishments of these resourceful and dedicated professionals deserve to be recognized and celebrated.

This year's survey respondents expressed gratitude for many things they consider essential to their day-to-day successes.

The most frequent mention? The people — including diligent and patient bus drivers and other school employees who step up and help out when needed. Other positives that were mentioned include effective route planning, efficient operational processes and well-established backup plans that utilize contract employees.





*I have a group of contractors who work their tails off for the sake of the kids. The people we have are, for the most part, awesome.*

Angela Marshall  
Transportation Director



*Generally, we have not had to cancel bus routes or make drastic reductions in routes yet.*

Gregory Dutton  
Director of Transportation



*We have a solid percentage of on-time routes, even with shortages.*

Dodi Young  
Transportation Coordinator



*As drivers retire or separate, we always have contracted drivers without assigned routes who can move to that position. In our district, the drivers go above and beyond to make sure all runs are covered, and they always offer to help.*

Trudy Foster  
Transportation Director



*I have some really great drivers who have stepped up to the plate to help out. They have doubled up on runs, covered other routes last minute and have been incredibly patient with changes on the fly.*

Taylor Perrington Ashley  
Supervisor of Transportation



*Our route planning and overall operational organization has been working well.*

Anonymous respondent



*Our employees are committed to the academic success of students.*

Erica Flores  
Director of Transportation



*Because of the driver shortage, it has really showed us the team spirit that we have within our school district and community. Not only did we have the athletic director and superintendent volunteering daily, we also had community members stepping up to get their license to help out.*

Anonymous respondent



*The drivers are being better compensated and many are committed to their jobs. We are blessed with an incredible Driver Trainer who is getting drivers trained as quickly as possible.*

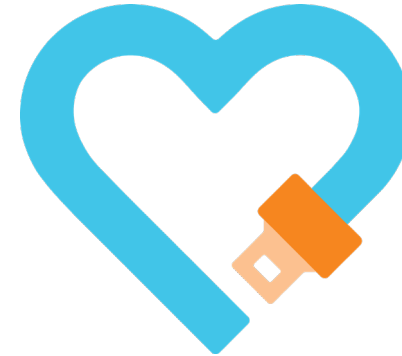
Anonymous respondent



## About HopSkipDrive

HopSkipDrive is the safe, innovative school transportation solution. From optimizing routes to enabling non-routine pupil transportation, HopSkipDrive helps schools, districts and more create opportunity for all through mobility.

- Our unique model connects you with a community of qualified CareDrivers — flexible driver supply means that education rides are always guaranteed.
- HopSkipDrive CareDrivers have over five years of caregiving experience; they're truly 'caregivers on wheels.'
- The easy-to-use, intuitive HopSkipDrive Platform allows you to build, edit and cancel rides within minutes.
- Real-time tracking during rides for you and your riders' caregivers ensures you're always in the loop.
- Get rides up and running with 8 hours notice.
- HopSkipDrive's first priority is safety, from a 15-point CareDriver certification process to technology that promotes safe driving behavior.



**20M+** | **1.4M+**  
SAFE MILES DRIVEN | RIDERS DRIVEN

**13,000**  
SCHOOLS COVERED

Learn more at [www.hopskipdrive.com](http://www.hopskipdrive.com)

**THANKS FOR READING!**