

School Bus Feasibility – FAQ update

January 25, 2018

New-1: I live in Los Gatos but I didn't receive an invitation to complete the survey. Why?

A: At this time we are most interested in input from households with students at the LGUSD schools and LGHS. However, we would love to hear from all community members. Please provide any thoughts or comments via our project email at schoolbus@losgatosca.gov.

New-2: I/we received multiple requests to complete the survey or we have more than one child enrolled in schools, how many times should I/we complete the survey?

A: In order to get an accurate picture of the families' preference, we are asking each family complete one survey only. The survey was designed to account for families with either one or more children.

New-3: Your website indicates that the earliest start of a school bus service would be a pilot in January 2019. The survey asks "If a school bus service (as previously described) was provided today". What is the start date should be assumed when answering this question?

A: The survey was designed to get representative and accurate responses so we ask people to assume today's conditions, i.e. their child(ren)'s age, school enrollment, and traffic conditions. We fully understand that these conditions change to some extent by the time the service starts. However, we can project people's preference with a good level of confidence as long as we get representative and accurate responses.

New-4: Your website mentions that the feasibility study would include two surveys. Why two surveys and how are they different?

A: Survey 1 is a very brief survey targeting all parents in the LGUSD and LGSUHSD schools. The goal is to provide an initial assessment of the interest and demand. Survey 2 will target parents who indicate an interest in the service. It will be longer and more in-depth. We intend to quantify the interest level, identify factors in families making school commute decisions (time, cost, after school activities, etc.), and evaluate price sensitivity. Based on the responses from Survey 1, we will develop a draft service plan. In Survey 2 we will use this draft service plan to make the idea more real for the families so they can evaluate whether this is something that will work for them.

1. Why is this study being done by the Town of Los Gatos?

A: The primary goal of this study is to reduce traffic congestion around schools and on main arterials near schools by providing school bus service during peak commute times. The goal will be to remove more passenger vehicles on the road during peak commute times and improve traffic congestion for the entire community.

2. Who is leading the study?

A: The Town of Los Gatos is taking the lead to study the feasibility of such a service, with input from the schools, community stakeholders including LGUSD, LGSUHSD, SR2S, Home and School Clubs, the Transportation and Parking Commission, Hillbrook School, and an outside consulting firm with expertise in student transportation program creation and management.

3. Who will provide the school bus service?

A: At this point in the feasibility study, the service provider has not been determined. A likely scenario would involve a contracted service vendor, but this is only a working option.

Operational oversight of service and route planning may come from the Town of Los Gatos, the schools, an outside contractor, and/or an agency formed in order to manage day to day bus activities.

4. Which schools are included in the study and potentially may receive school bus service?

A: Traffic reduction is the primary goal of this project. The exact schools and neighborhoods that may receive service will be dependent on several factors including where traffic relief is most needed and where concentrated demand for the service creates efficiencies.

In the current concept, the project will begin as a small pilot which will include a few select routes servicing only one or perhaps a few schools. The pilot program's effectiveness and actual ridership will help influence the potential addition of more routes and schools to the program.

The program is not intended to be all inclusive, but rather to reduce congestion. Because of this, some neighborhoods or schools will not receive service, especially in the pilot phase.

5. When would the program start?

A: Assuming a positive outcome from this feasibility study, the planned start of the pilot program is January 2019.

6. Which students would the program provide service to?

A: The program will target students who are currently transported to school by automobile. Several factors will play into service areas, including the ability to transport students in a cost effective manner, considering bus routes, concentration of students in neighborhoods, etc.

7. How will bus routes work?

A: The routes will be planned for normal home to school and school to home service in the morning and afternoon. Group bus stops will be strategically located within the communities that are being served.

8. Who will decide the initial program routes?

A: The Town of Los Gatos would design the initial pilot program routes with input from the community stakeholders, schools, and our outside consulting firm.

9. What size of vehicles will you use?

A: The program plans to use state law compliant yellow school buses that will be safe and effective in operating within the community. The exact size(s) of buses to be utilized has not yet been determined as this will be dependent upon a variety of factors including potential demand, community infrastructure, and accessibility at school sites. Bus size options could range from a smaller Type A school bus that could accommodate 24 elementary/ 16 high school riders to a larger Type D bus that could accommodate 90 elementary / 60 high school riders.

10. What safety considerations are being made as part of this pilot program?

A: All school buses will be compliant with Federal and State school bus laws. This includes the use of school buses equipped with seat belts.

Bus stops in the communities and at schools will be planned in safe and legally compliant locations.

11. From where is the funding for this program being sourced?

A: Funding for this program is initially being provided by the Town of Los Gatos in anticipation of future funding from Santa Clara County Measure B, as well as other local sources. Anticipated funding from the Town, Measure B, and other local sources are not anticipated to cover all program costs, and therefore there will be cost sharing for parents / guardians whose students utilize the service.

12. How much will the service cost to utilize?

A: Cost for bus fare per student has yet to be decided. The Town of Los Gatos has found that similar programs have a range of costs from \$250 to \$550 per student per school year. Every school or agency provides subsidies from public and private funds, in addition to the parent / guardian derived revenue. Annual per-student costs and the bus fare structure will be decided at a later point in this study.

13. What are the other schools and agencies that provide school bus service?

A: The Town of Los Gatos has done research on the following programs that provide school bus service for congestion relief purposes: Hillbrook School, City of Mill Valley, Lamorinda and the TRAFFIX bus service in Danville-San Ramon area.