

July 19, 2021 @ 5:00pm

Everyone,

As a school district, the purpose of every effort is to facilitate and enhance the relationship between a student and their classroom teacher. Every employee and every function throughout the district is an extension contributing to this connection. For many students, their **bus driver** is the first adult they interact with when they leave home each day and the last adult they see before returning home. The MJUSD bus drivers develop trusting long lasting relationships with students under their care. It takes a special effort and mindset to become a bus driver. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of bus drivers statewide.

In terms of student transportation for the 2021-22 school year, the public health guidance for buses, now being implemented for the 2021-22 school year, is: 1) **all students and staff wear masks** on the bus; 2) at minimum **two windows be open** for ventilation; and 3) students are to be **distanced as much as practicable**. As a result **seating capacity has been increased**.

Though this is positive news, MJUSD faces some serious **transportation challenges** as the school year approaches:

1. A statewide bus driver shortage existed several years prior to COVID-19, which has been **made worse by the pandemic**.
2. MJUSD **lost a number of drivers to retirement** this past year.
3. A handful of **drivers are not able to return to work** until September.
4. There is an increase in the number of **legally mandated students** that must be transported, thereby impacting the number of available routes.
5. MJUSD is **offering free bus driver trainings**, participating in job fairs, and providing incentives to retain and attract bus drivers, but, currently, there are not enough trainees to replace the lost drivers or the increase in need for additional drivers.

Becoming a bus driver requires completion of a *minimum 20-hour bus driver training*, CPR and first aid certification, logging a minimum **20 training hours behind the wheel of a bus**, passing exams, and adhering to random drug testing before obtaining bus driver certification.

MJUSD has been, and continues, working on all phases, including **capacity**, alternative **scheduling**, legal mandates, **route** analysis, and bus driver **recruitment**. This issue is receiving much energy and attention and, incrementally, is looking to improve. However, the reality is that bus routes will be limited due to lack of drivers, especially at the beginning of the school year.

The current bus driver shortage means limited transportation services will be prioritized beginning with legally mandated routes followed by routes based on length of distance,

safety concerns, and volume of students impacted. The number of available routes is changing each day. For latest information, parents can call the MJUSD Transportation Department at (530) 749-6189.

The good news is that all contributing elements are working together toward providing full 5-day a week in-person instruction for students. Thank you for your awareness and patience as we work together toward increasing available service.