

Response to Questions on the FY 2016 Budget

Request By: Board of Supervisors

Question: Can FCPS reduce school bus fuel consumption by:

1. Reducing the number of school bus stops.
2. Increasing bus capacity and require new bus riders to register for bus service well ahead of the school year to allow for planners to sufficiently forecast how many “full” buses are needed.
3. Eliminating unnecessary bus idling.
4. Expanding pedestrian and bicycle routes to schools where feasible.

Response: The following response was prepared by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS):

Over time, FCPS has continued to reduce bus fuel consumption through a reduction and consolidation of bus stops, especially for Advanced Academic Program (AAP) programs. Each year, potential riders vs. bus stops are carefully examined in the division’s on-going efforts to maximize efficiency.

In addition to the efficient placement of bus stops, FCPS also strives to maximize bus capacity. With this in mind, bus routers have several parameters and contributors when considering routes which reduce capacity. The parameters include: respecting “civil twilight” and 45-minute maximum ride length for elementary school runs; 60-minute maximum ride length for middle and high school runs; maintaining a 5 to 15 minute arrival/drop off window for elementary students; and maintaining 10 to 20 minute arrival/drop off window for middle and high school students. Transporting the AAP population can contribute to the reduction in capacity when maintaining an acceptable length of ride for students.

FCPS trains our drivers to minimize bus idle time. Dispatch locations also receive notifications through our Automated Vehicle Locator (AVL) system when idling is excessive. The Office Transportation Services works with our bus drivers to reduce idling and often issues reminders over the radio, in safety messages, or in our monthly publication. We continually monitor driver idling practices.

Many of the FCPS regulations have been updated to include new information about walking and bicycling to school. We are working with the Office of Safety and Security and the Safe Routes to School coordinator to promote healthy alternatives.