



RHODE  
ISLAND

# Statewide Transportation System Overview

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October 9, 2024

# Agenda

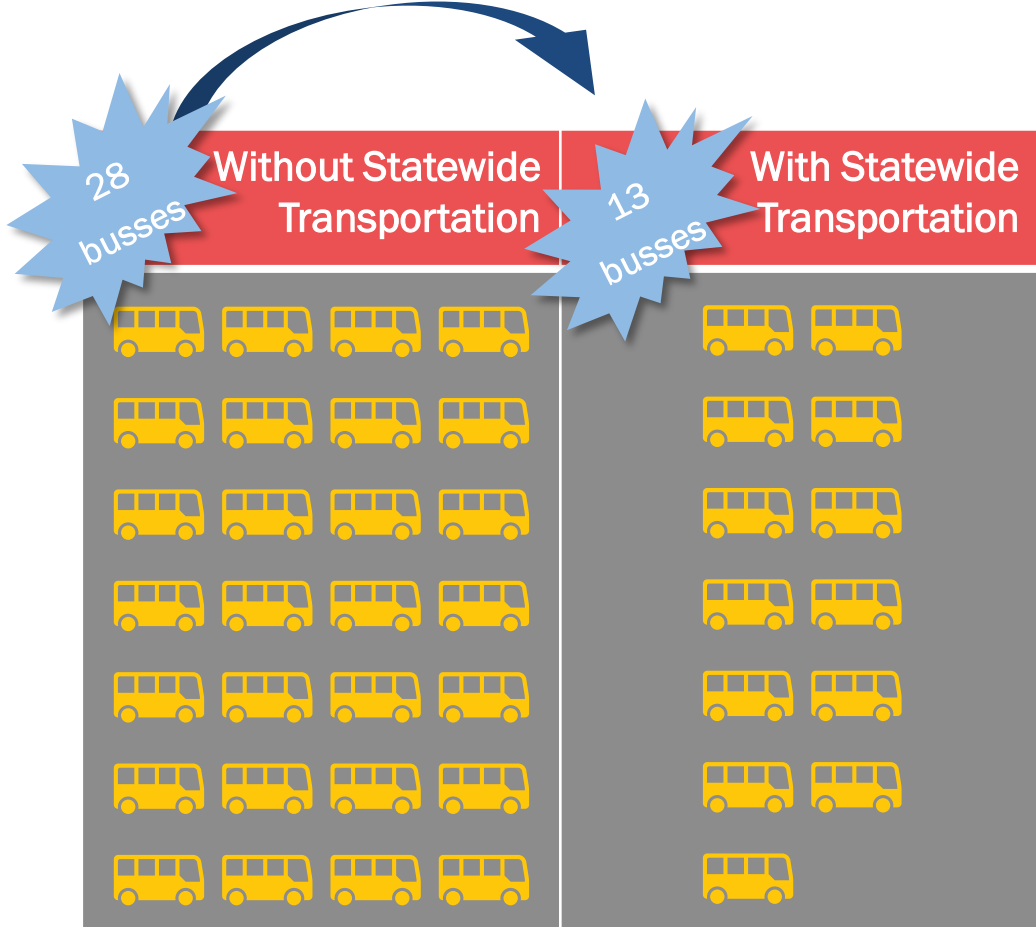
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- History & Purpose
- Existing System Improvements
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Potential Opportunities
- Threats



# Meeting Street Example

Statewide Transportation enables the number of buses pulling into Meeting Street to be reduced by over 50%.



# History

In FY 2009, the General Assembly created the Statewide Transportation System to reduce transportation costs.

- RIGL § 16-21.1 (Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits).
- Phased in over three years: (14 LEAs in 2010, 26 LEAs in 2011, all LEAs in 2012).
- LEAs saw significant savings compared to providing transportation on their own.

FY 2010  
(\$1,362,086)



FY 2011  
(\$2,057,767)

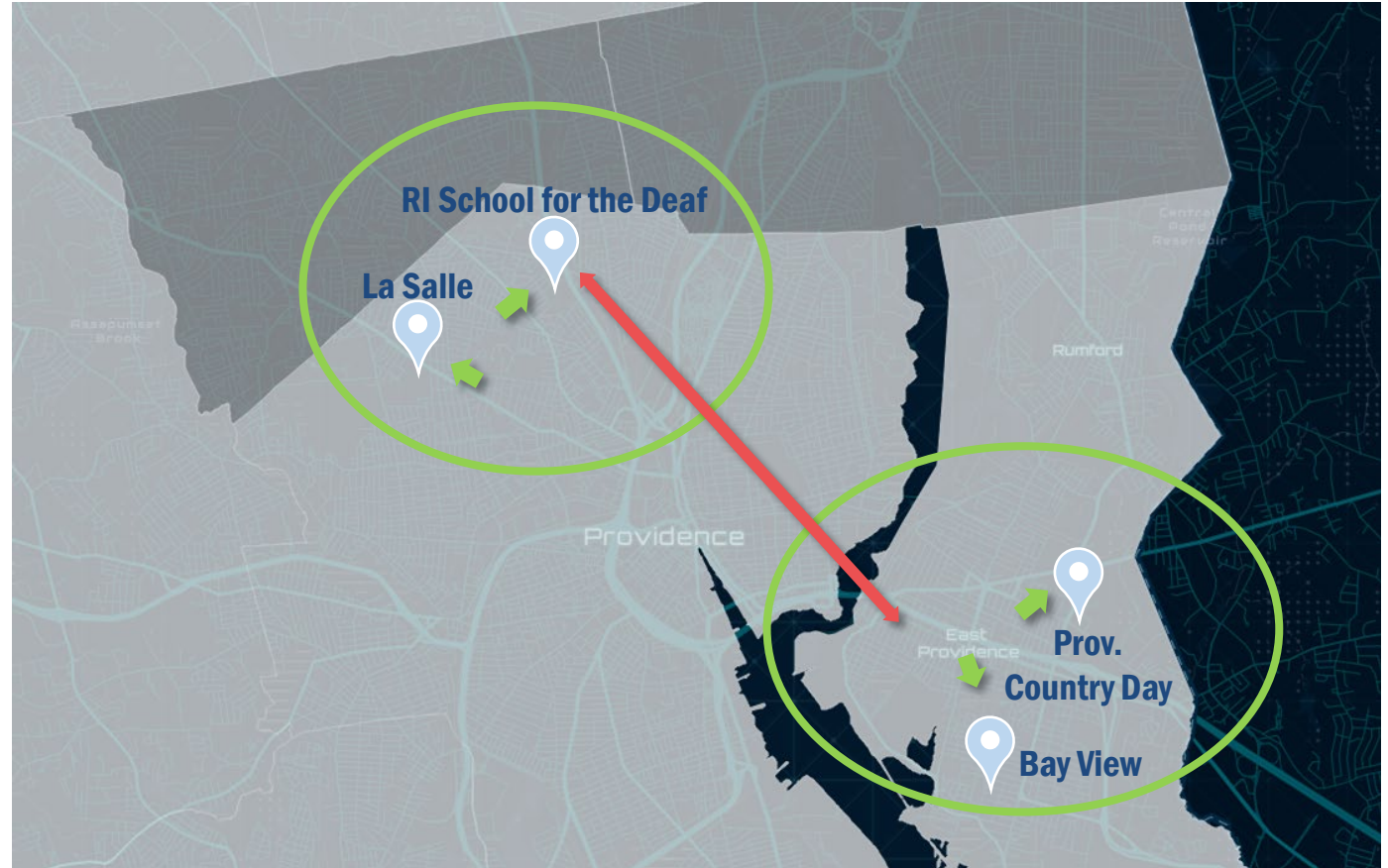
FY 2012  
(\$2,326,527)



# In-District vs Out-of-District

- In-District transportation includes all schools *within* a municipality.
- Out-of-District transportation includes all schools *outside* of a municipality.
- This includes transportation to **Private** and **Special Ed** schools.

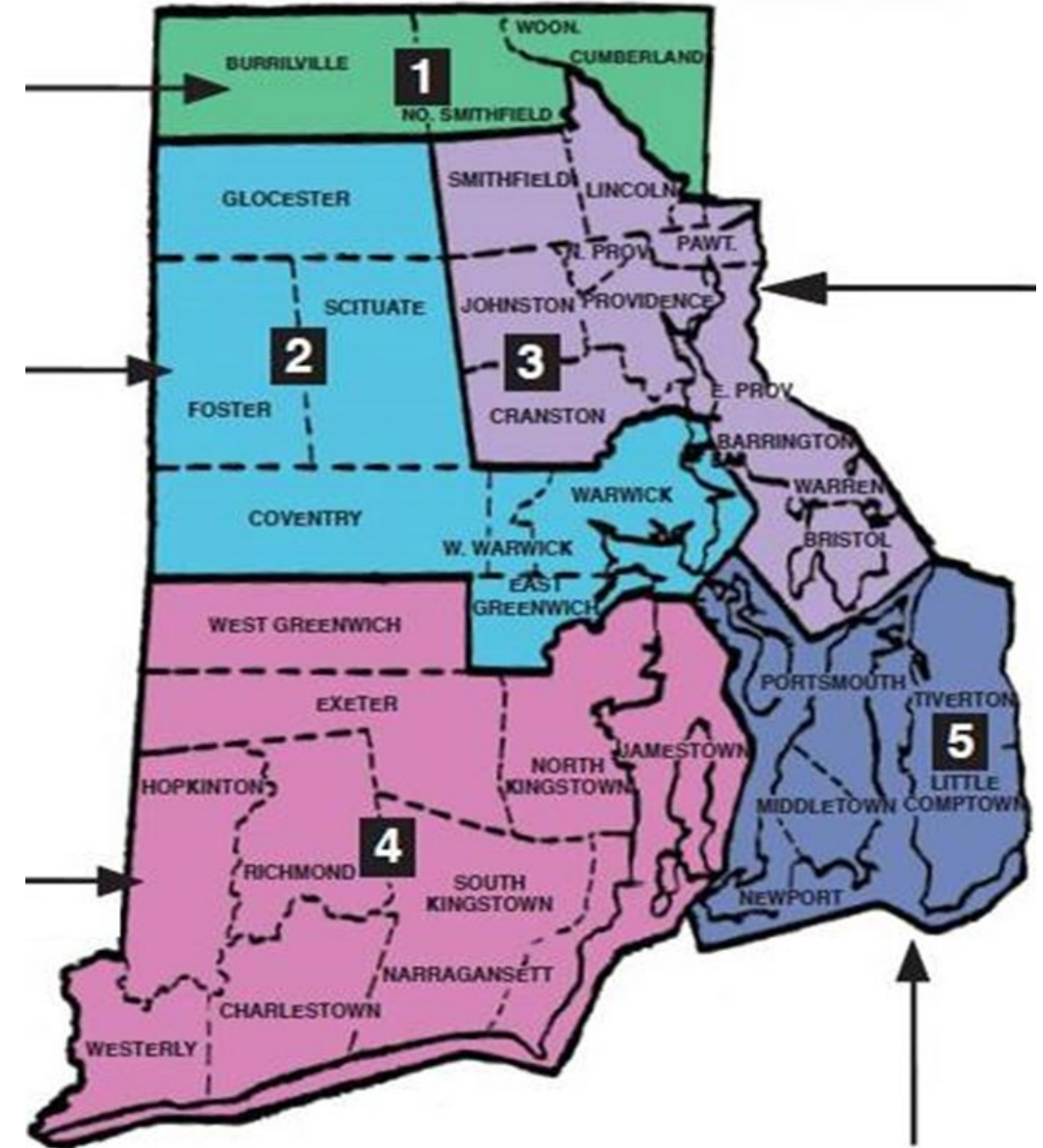
In-District   
Out-of-District 



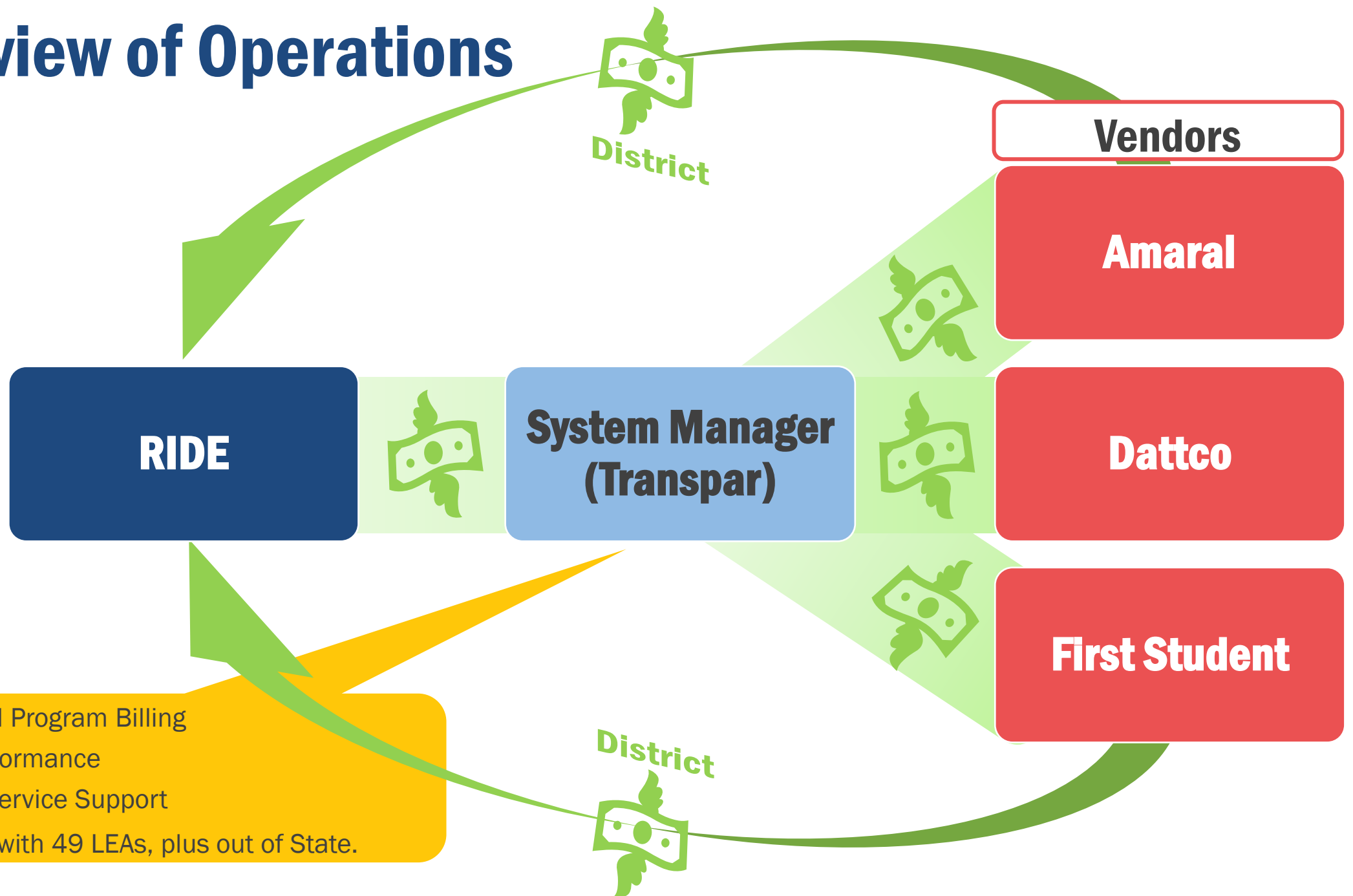
# Regions & Type of Students

Regional Boundaries determine transportation eligibility  
RIGL § 16-21.1-2.

- Special Ed – Required by Federal. Regions do not apply.
- Homeless – Required by Federal Law. Regions do not apply.
- Foster Care – Required by Federal Law. Regions do not apply.
- Private, Charter and Career & Tech (PCCT) – State Law only. Regions do apply
- In-district special request – Case by Case



# Overview of Operations



# Total Cost and Cost Sharing

Districts share the cost of the Statewide Transportation System.

- The total cost for Statewide Transportation in FY 2025 is over \$41M
- Statewide implements a “expenditure follows the child” methodology similar to how the funding formula ties revenues to students.

Example:

- A Private School Bus travels 10 miles with 5 Johnston Students, 3 Smithfield Students and 2 North Providence Students.
- Johnston would be charged with 50 miles, Smithfield with 30 miles and North Providence with 20 miles. These would be part of the total Private School miles traveled. The total cost of Private School students is the proportionally divided between the LEAs.

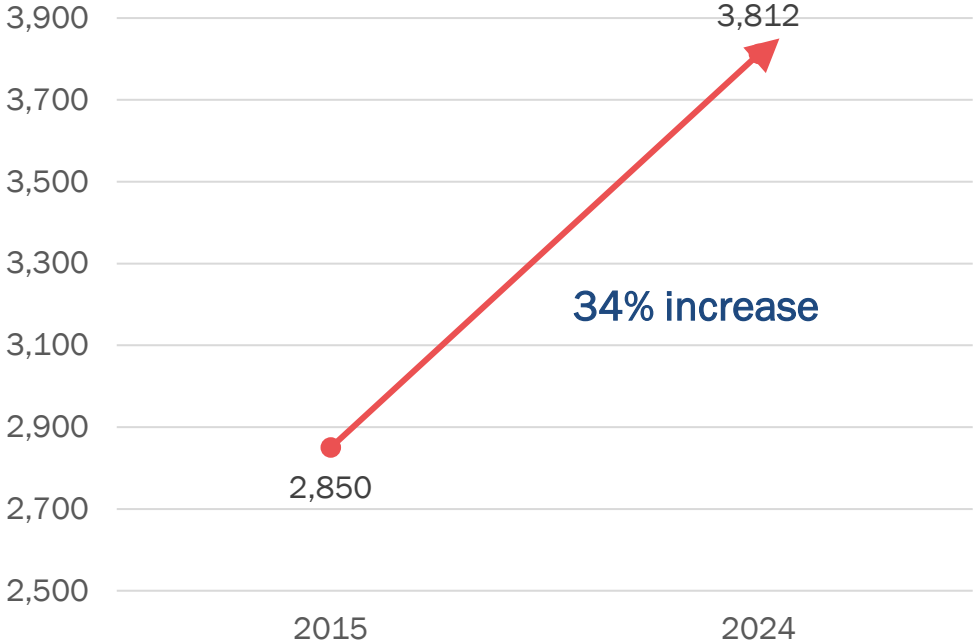




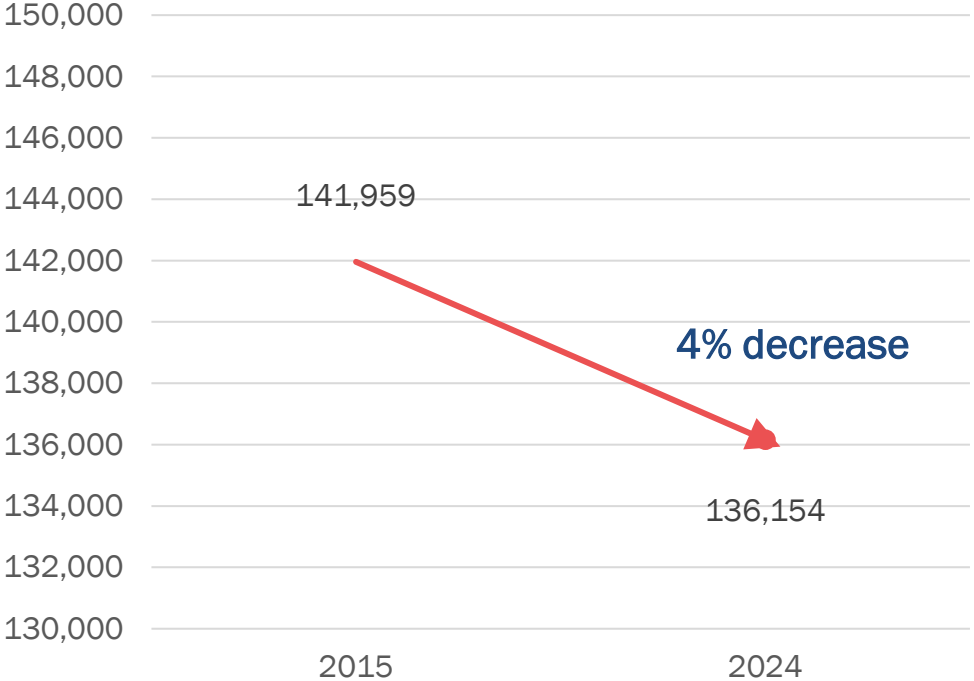
# Ridership Data: Total Students

Although total enrollment is down over the last 10 years, the number of riders has greatly increased.

### Riders on Statewide

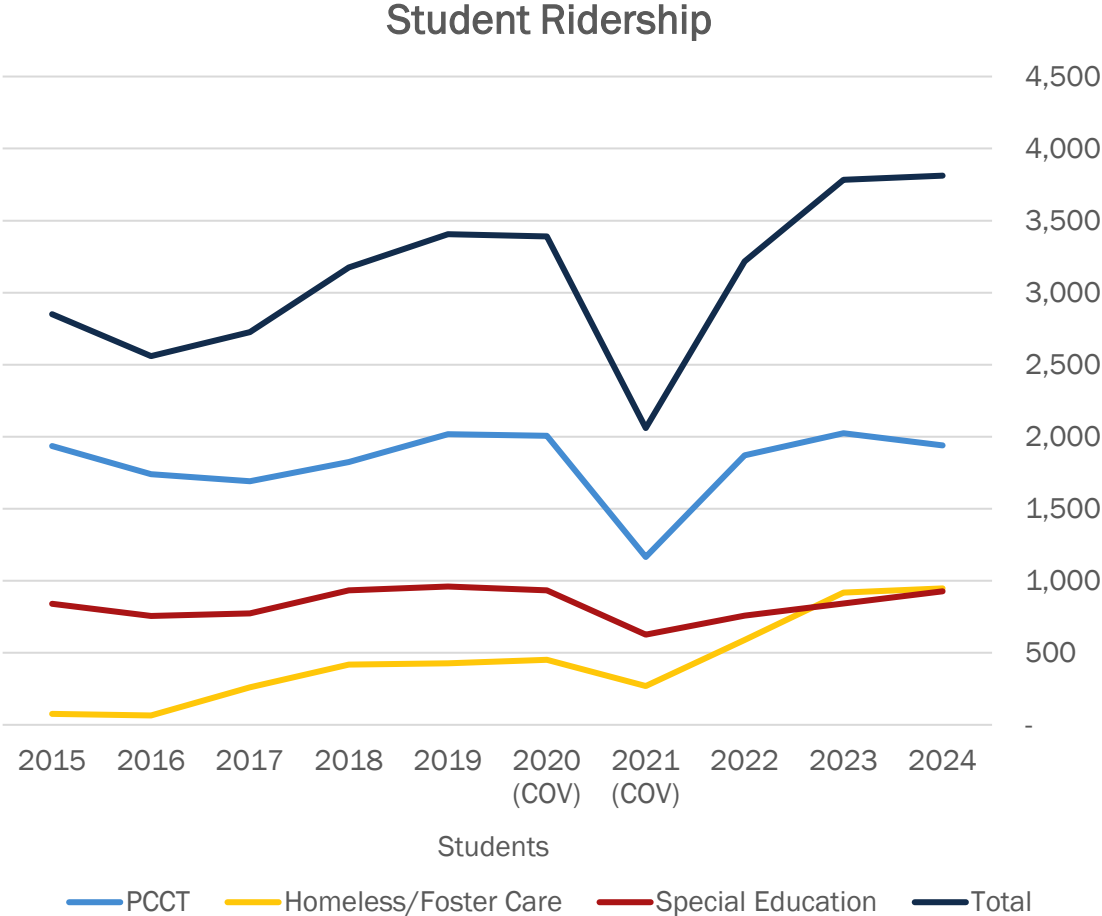
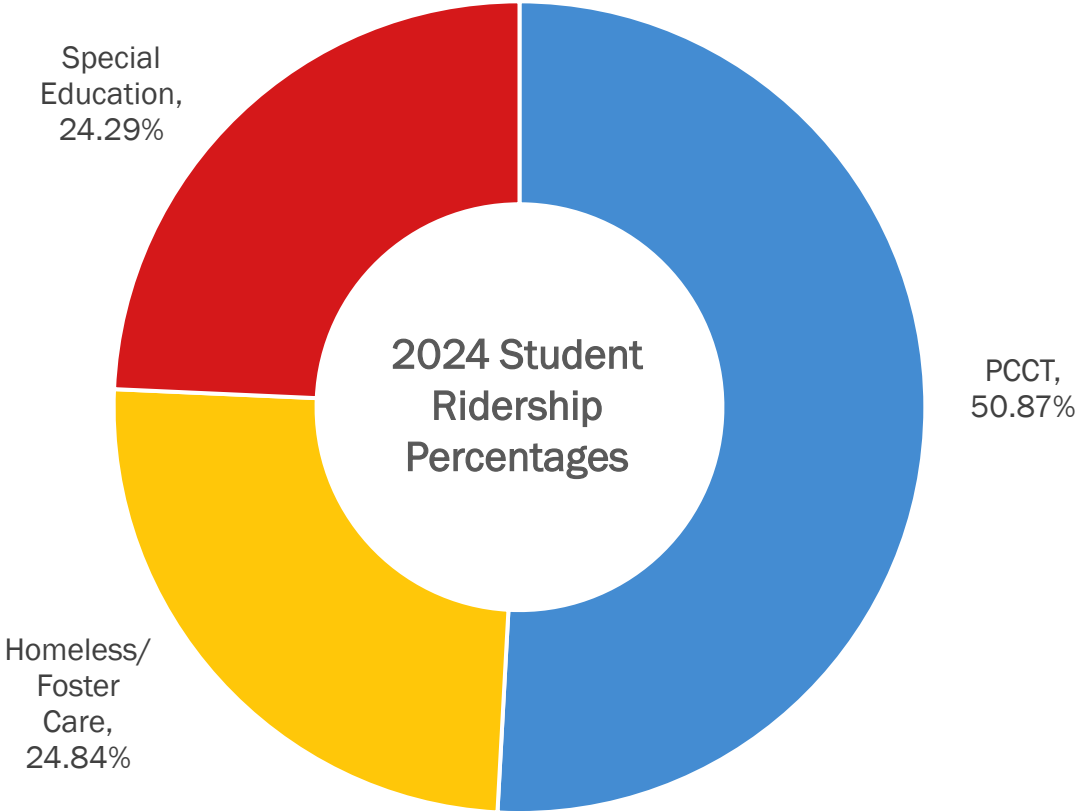


### Rhode Island Student Enrollment



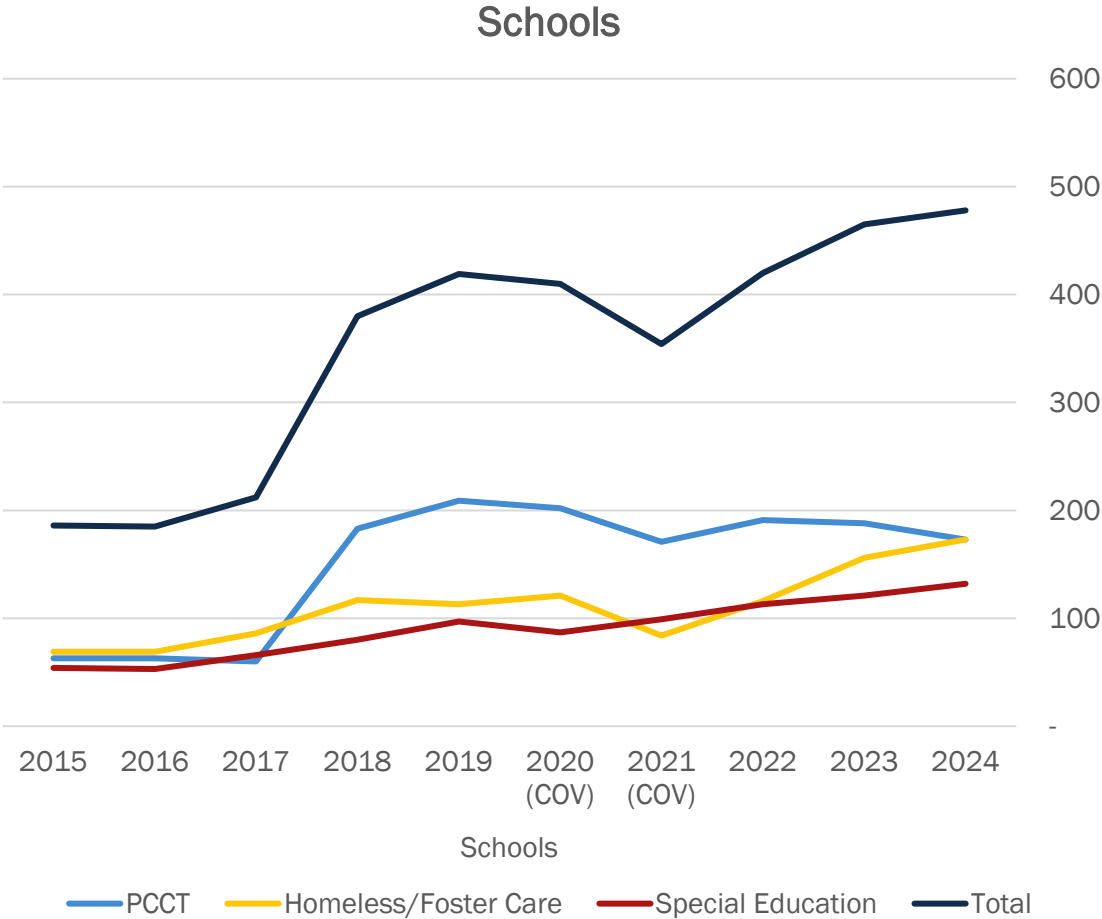
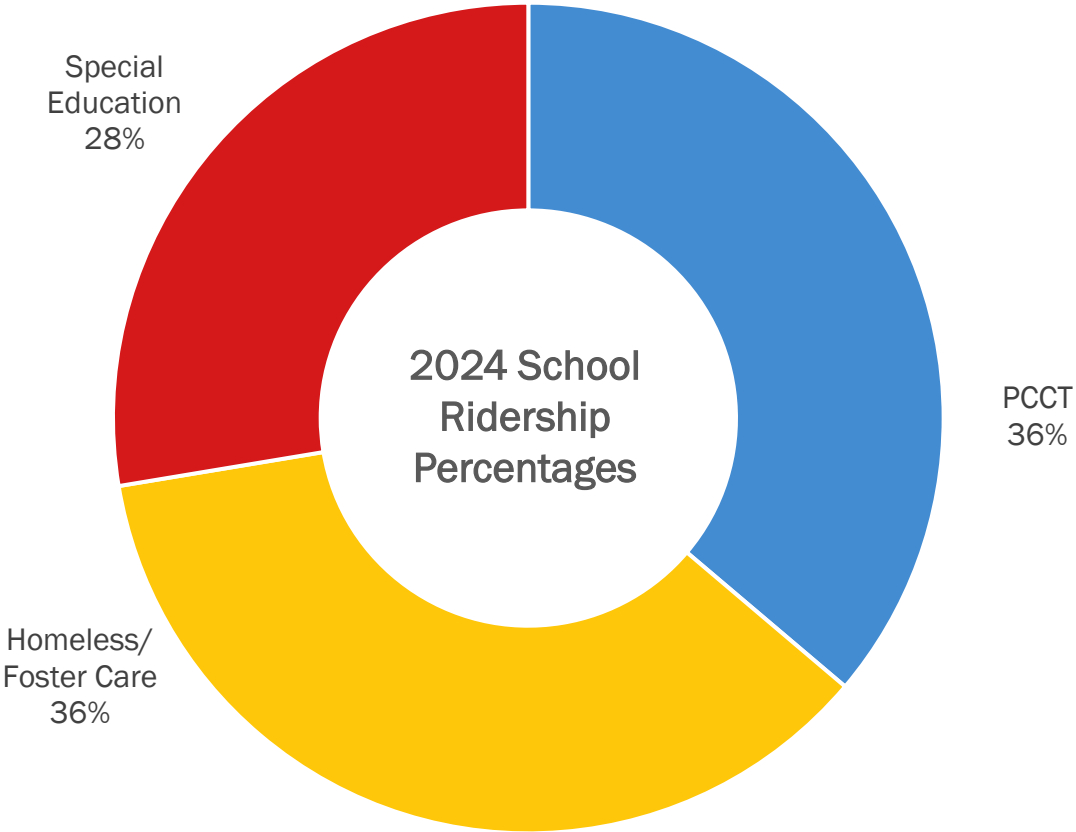
# Ridership Data: By Student Type

Across the state, student ridership is up, with most students being PCCT.



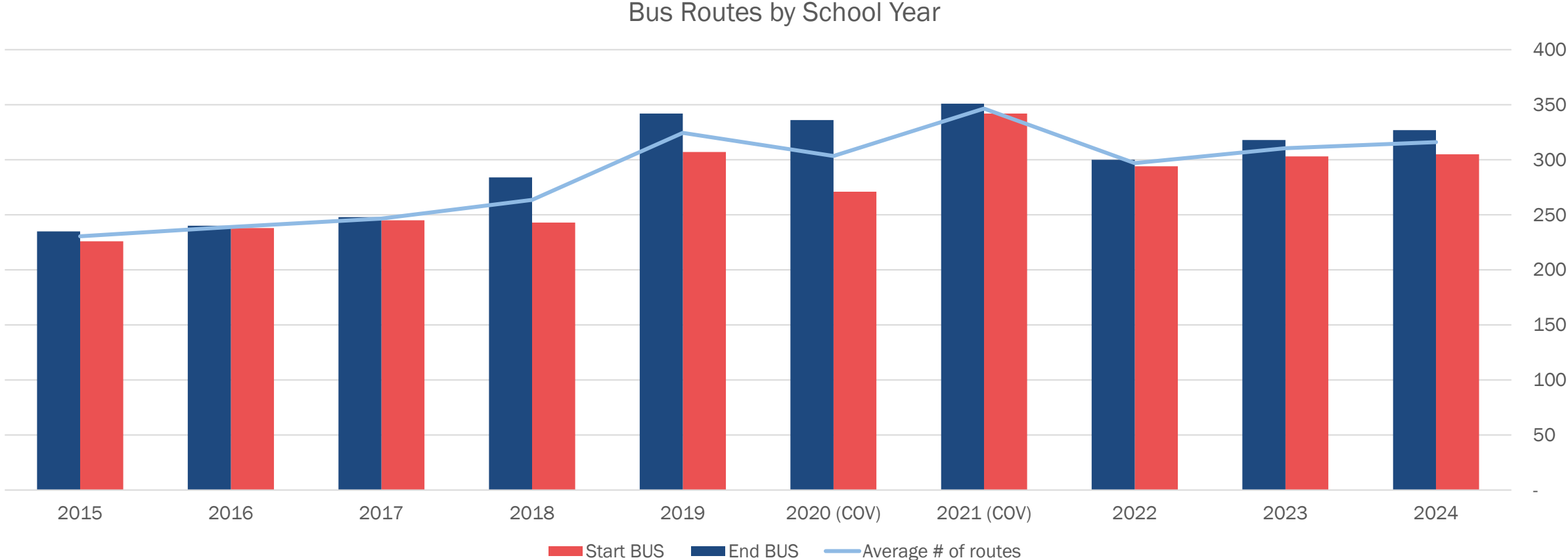
# Ridership Data: By Location

The locations where students are transported has also increased.



# Ridership Data: By Buses

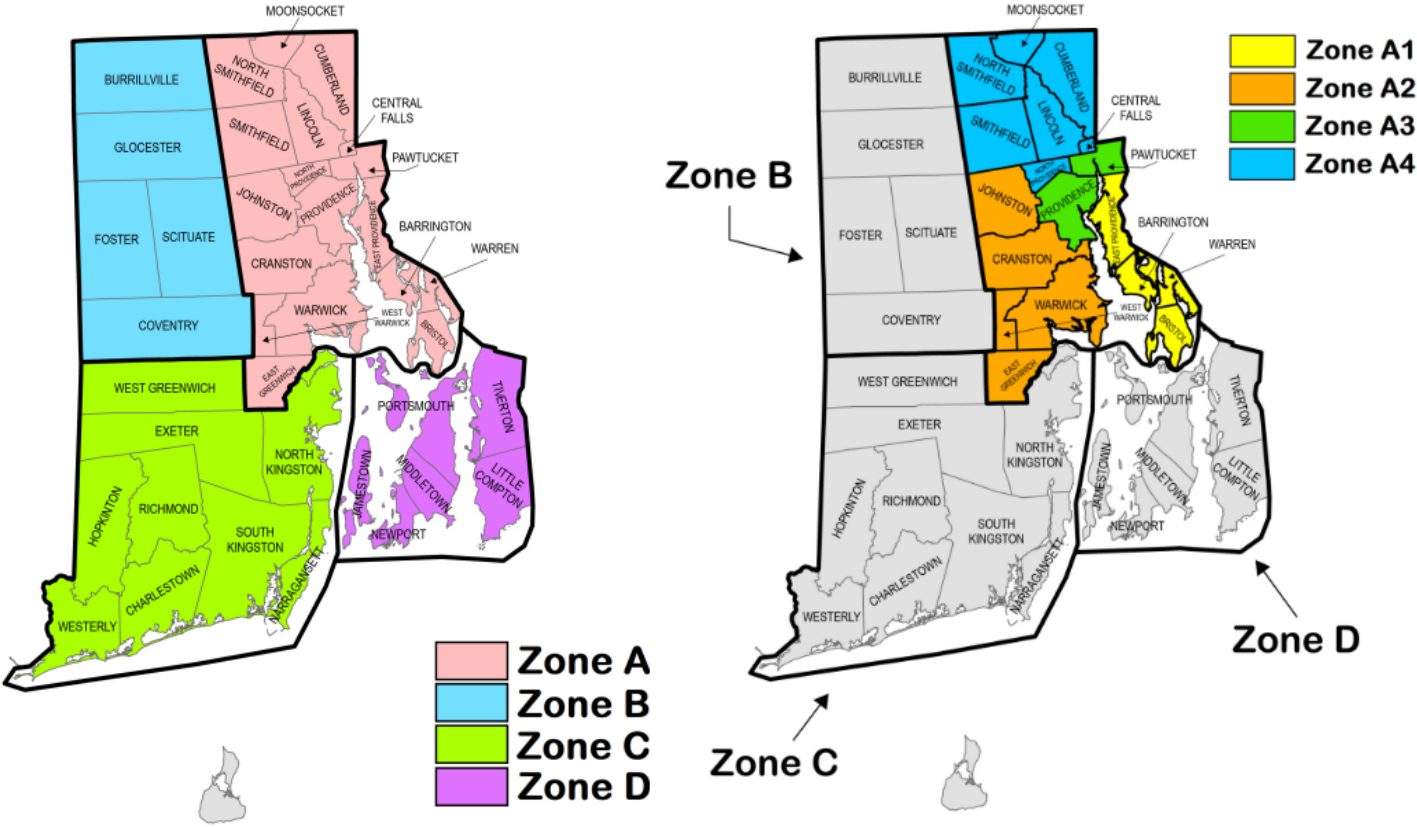
Routes have steadily increased over the last 10 years: Close to **100 more** buses per day.



# Existing Improvements

RIDE has made several changes to improve service and reduce costs.

- Increased Bidding – created zones to increase competition.
- Parent GPS App – launching in October.
- De-Escalation Training – 8 hours (drivers and aids of all special ed buses).
- 17 Hours of Annual Training – all statewide drivers and aids.
- Proactive Outreach – to have LEAs and families sign up sooner.
- Rightsizing Buses – increasing vans and minibuses.



# Strengths

## A Statewide System has efficiencies not available to individual LEAs.

- Less total buses under Statewide than if LEAs each transported on their own.
  - Cost savings and reduction in number of drivers needed during a national shortage.
  - Environmental benefits of fewer emissions.
- State subsidizes LEAs for students that ride on Statewide buses to Private Schools.
- Helps districts meet their obligation to transport displaced and foster care students.
- System Manager provides transportation support and mediation.
- Reduces in-district contracts both rates and number of buses.



# Weaknesses

**Transferring these responsibilities to the State, does present some challenges.**

- **Out of local control** – parents and stakeholders may not be certain who to contact (district, bus provider, RIDE or Transpar).
- **System Manager Cost** – an additional expenditure to have a manager in place to route buses and field calls.
- **Information sharing** – LEAs need to provide transportation plans that are part of an IEP into eRIDE each year.
- **Students must sign up each year** – unlike in-district, there is no automatic enrollments.
- **Outdated payment system** – districts send 700 checks a year to RIDE.
- **District schedules** – that are not coordinated can leave students without transportation.

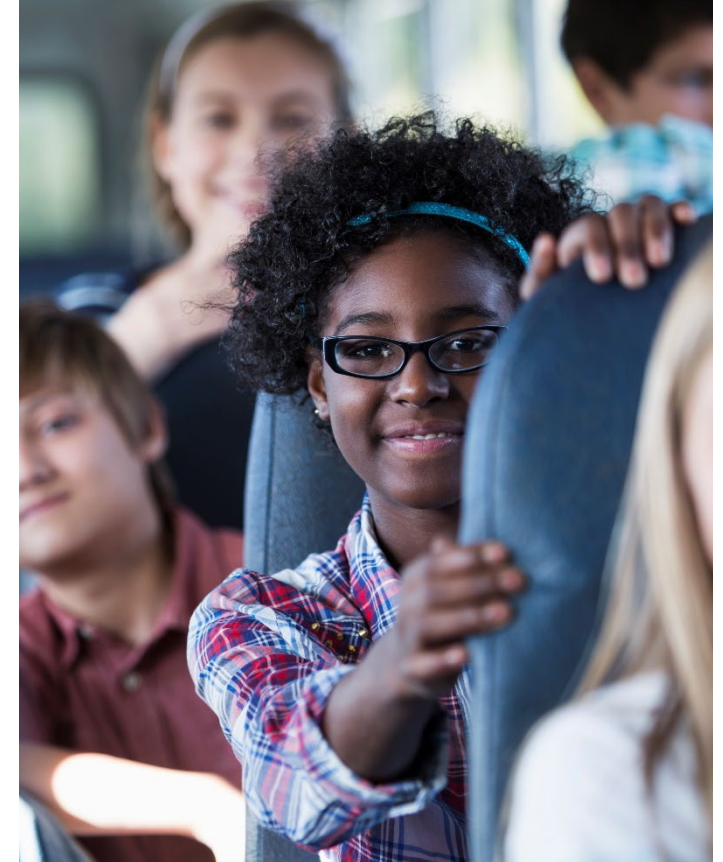


# Potential Opportunities

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There are significant opportunities in the State's control to reduce costs.

- Reimagine Regions different sized regions would alter the number of PCCT riders
- Make Private Schools pay for in region transportation
- Review Past Recommendations
- Unified school calendar
- Increase allowable van size (i.e., 8 to 10 passengers)
- Streamline payments with state aid
- Temporary MA/CT CDL Driver Credential Waiver process in the event of shortages
- Expand Statewide to include some in-district transportation
- Create a Bus Driver Apprenticeship program





# Threats

There are several challenges that may increase pricing or provide other difficulties to LEAs.

- **Driver Shortage** – competition from other driving and delivery services (i.e., Uber, Doordash, RIPTA, Fedex, Amazon), increases the costs to obtain bus drivers (both hourly rate and guaranteed hours).
- **RI CDL Requirements** – to obtain a “Rhode Island white card”, which is unique to Rhode Island, licensed out-of-state CDL drivers must take an additional multi-day course at CCRI and driving tests at the DMV.
- **Growing number of riders** – proportion of riders and costs continues to grow, despite less students and overall resources.
- **Limited competition for bidding** – there are very few companies that bid providing statewide routes.

