



The transportation staff at Metro Nashville Schools has several challenges – plenty of road construction, heavy commuter traffic and a huge population of riders.

Metro Nashville Public Schools Nashville, Tenn.

Transporting 48,000 students within a two-and-a-half-hour window each morning and afternoon is a robust challenge even when conditions are perfect. Road construction and unanticipated traffic congestion just add to the excitement. “It’s really amazing what we do,” says Transportation Director Keith Phillips, who is making a concerted effort to minimize the excitement this year.

To that end, Phillips says the operations section has implemented Edulog software that has optimized routing and enabled the department to send letters to parents with the location of bus stops and times for pick-ups and drop-offs. “It’s worked really well,” Phillips says. “The people at Edulog told us that we provided exceptionally clean data, which facilitated the process.”

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The department is also revamping its driver-training program. “We provided good training in the past,” Phillips says, “but we didn’t have a defined structure or standards.” What’s needed, he says, is a series of checks and balances to ensure that drivers are fully prepared before they start transporting students. In-service training has been quite successful, with about 90 percent participation.

To improve maintenance efficiency, the department collaborated with an Atlanta-based consultant called TCI to create an incentive program that encourages each mechanic to complete at least 85 percent of his tasks within a standardized time frame. This flat-rate plan has helped to improve productivity and reduce vehicle breakdowns — with a much smaller maintenance staff.

“We’re turning out better work with 21 staff members than we did three years ago with 43 people,” says Ken Batey, shop manager. He

explains that mechanics can earn up to \$5,000-per-year bonuses for performing 85 percent of their jobs under the flat-rate plan (both individually and as a team), having perfect attendance, obtaining ASE certification and receiving 40 hours of technical training.

This new maintenance program has not only improved productivity but also bolstered morale, Batey says. “The men are happier than they have been in years, even though there’s a greater workload,” he says. “The men receive more respect from management, and management receives more respect from the men.”

Fleet Facts

Buses	585
Students transported	48,111
Schools served	124
Staff	530
Average driver wages	\$14.32