

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS JOHN FITZGERALD AND ENRIQUE PEPÉN



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL OPTIONS FOR BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ALL NEIGHBORHOODS

- WHEREAS,** We must ensure that students in every neighborhood of Boston have access to high-quality schools, and that all Boston Public Schools (BPS) have adequate resources to serve students and families, regardless of the neighborhood they are in; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** BPS utilizes a Home-Based lottery process to assign students to kindergarten through grade 8, which provides families with the opportunity to rank their top school choices from a customized list, which includes every school within a one-mile radius of their home; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** Without high-quality school options in every neighborhood, families are forced to make a false choice between nearby schools or long commutes to higher-quality schools in other neighborhoods; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** By ensuring all students in every neighborhood have high-quality school choices nearby, we can reduce travel distances for more BPS students; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** BPS Transportation costs have also increased significantly over the past decade, rising by \$60 million since 2014, despite losing nearly ten thousand student passengers in that same time frame; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** Money spent on transportation accounts for a large portion of the BPS budget, and reducing these costs would allow greater investments in providing better school environments, improved academic and athletic programs, more counselors and other student and family support programs, and other direct benefits for the education and welfare of our students; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** We must recognize the inequitable distribution of resources our school system has historically had and continues to suffer from, and as the City continues to work to rectify this legacy, any decreases in BPS transportation costs must be reinvested towards improving the schools with the greatest need; *and,*

- WHEREAS,** This investment strategy would counteract inequalities that arose in previous school community-based models, and which were upheld by a Boston School Committee that aggressively blocked school funding and resources from communities of color; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** Reducing long travel distances for some BPS students would enable prioritizing existing bus operators and transportation staff to better serve students who still need school bus travel options; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** Boston is experiencing increased traffic congestion, and BPS travel adds 632 school buses to our city's traffic, in addition to cars and other transportation needed to transport the two-thirds of BPS students who do not use school bus travel; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** As the City works towards addressing traffic by improving pedestrian safety and elevating alternative forms of travel, we must further expand these initiatives within school transportation; with some students attending schools closer to their homes, we can reduce demand on our school bus transportation system and reduce car trips by encouraging more students to walk, bike, or take other non-vehicular modes of travel to school; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** Decreasing school bus demand can also reduce staggered school start times, allowing for a more uniform school schedule, making planning easier for parents when coordinating drop-off and pick-up times; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** In 2023, school buses accounted for 11% percent of municipal greenhouse gas emissions, and fossil fuel emissions also release harmful particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, which risk human and environmental health; shorter travel distances can allow the City to more easily phase out existing propane- and diesel-powered buses, as the City moves towards electric vehicles; *and,*
- WHEREAS,** School bus electrification alone does not remove all environmental and public health concerns, with greenhouse gasses released during electricity generation, and environmental harm done in mining for the raw materials for batteries, so reducing travel distances is still beneficial; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**
- ORDERED:** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss the potential of increasing access to high-quality school options for Boston Public School students in all neighborhoods. Representatives from the appropriate departments of the administration and other interested parties will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

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