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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mike Dang, Manager of Organizational and Financial Performance
Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Transportation Plan: Discovery Charter School Sandhill Campus
DATE: August 25, 2023

Background

[Assembly Bill 400 \(2023 Session of the Nevada Legislature\)](#) appropriated \$7 million to the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) for each year of the upcoming biennium (the 2023-24 fiscal year and the 2024-25 fiscal year) to award to charter schools, including SPCSA-sponsored and district-sponsored charter schools, to fund student transportation. To receive funding, a charter school must submit a Transportation Plan to the SPCSA and the SPCSA may approve the Transportation Plan and award funding to the charter school if the plan meets the following criteria:

1. “The transportation plan is comprehensive and likely to be successfully implemented;
2. The transportation plan will materially improve access to education in the region served by the transportation plan;
3. The transportation plan demonstrates that the charter school will be able to comply with statutory and regulatory transportation requirements, including, without limitation, the certification of bus drivers and vehicle safety;
4. The transportation plan is financially viable;
5. The transportation plan would not cost more, on a per pupil basis, than the average cost for transportation for other public schools operating in the school district in which the charter school is located; and

6. The academic, financial and organizational performance of the charter school indicate that the transportation plan is in the interest of pupils who will be served by the transportation plan.”¹

It is important to note that pursuant to NAC 388A.330(4), a charter school is only permitted to provide transportation to pupils if the school has approval to do so from its sponsor. Therefore, charter schools that are not already approved to provide student transportation will be required to submit to their sponsor a contract amendment request in order to implement the Transportation Plan. For those schools sponsored by the SPCSA, the amendment request to provide student transportation was incorporated into the application process, and the SPCSA Board will consider approval of the amendment request in conjunction with the Transportation Plan.

Applications for the 2023-24 school year will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis from July 7, 2023 and through September 30, 2023². While the SPCSA hopes to fund all applicants that submit a compliant transportation plan, because there is only \$7 million available in each school year, the SPCSA may prioritize funding Title I charter schools.

Additional details and form associated with the Transportation Plan and Funding Application can be found on the [SPCSA's website](#).

Transportation Plan Overview

Discovery Charter School Sandhill Campus (Discovery Sandhill) is requesting a total of \$46,657 to implement the school's Transportation Plan. Below is an overview of the proposed Transportation Plan for Discovery Sandhill, as provided in the application.

“With two campuses in the valley, Discovery Charter School has been able to serve the Las Vegas community since 2012. With this new funding opportunity, our Sandhill campus is hoping to solve one of its most challenging academic issues, chronic absenteeism.

With a chronic absenteeism rate of 57% in 22-23, we are focused more than ever on removing barrier and adding opportunities. School based transportation is the most efficient and equitable solution. We will operate a van specifically for getting students with transportation insecurities to and from school every day. We were pleased to see the developments of the 2023 Legislative Session because public funding for transportation will allow us to provide critical services we could not provide, otherwise.

Based on our Q4 ADE from 2022-2023, we are eligible to apply for \$46,657 in SPCSA transportation funding. This funding will support Discovery Charter School's mission to support families by providing an equitable and efficient option for transportation.”

¹ Section 28.5 of Assembly Bill 400 (2023 Session of the Nevada Legislature)

² After September 30, 2023, the SPCSA will determine if there are remaining funds that have not yet been awarded. If funds remain, the SPCSA will re-open the transportation application.

Analysis and Recommendation

Discovery Sandhill is a Title I School and is requesting approval of its Transportation Plan and funding to implement the Transportation Plan.

SPCSA staff has reviewed the Transportation Plan and find that the Plan meets the requirements set forth in Assembly Bill 400.

1. The Transportation Plan is comprehensive and likely to be successfully implemented.
2. The narrative provided by the school explains that “Our Sandhill campus had a chronic absenteeism rate of 57% last year. In order to provide support and equity to our scholars we have created a plan to strategically use one van to transport students to and from school.” This demonstrates that the Transportation Plan will materially improve access to education in the region.
3. The Transportation Plan includes details regarding how the charter school will ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory transportation requirements.
4. The budget provided within the Transportation Plan demonstrates that the Transportation Plan is financially viable.
5. The average daily enrollment for Discovery Sandhill during the fourth quarter of the 2022-23 school year was 97. Discovery Sandhill is located in Clark County where the four-year average (per pupil) in transportation funding for the 2023-24 school year is \$481. The total funding request for Discovery Sandhill was \$46,657, which is less than or equal to the average cost, per pupil, for transportation within the Clark County School District.
6. The academic, financial and organizational performance of the charter school indicate that the transportation plan is in the interest of pupils who will be served by the transportation plan. Specifically, the Transportation Plan indicates that transportation will address chronic absenteeism, improving academic performance. Additionally, this additional service will help reduce the risk of under-enrollment. There is also believed to be operational benefits to having a streamlined absenteeism tracking and intervention system.

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the Discovery Charter School Sandhill Campus Transportation Plan, along with funding to implement the plan.

Proposed Motion:

1. Approve the Discovery Charter School Sandhill Campus Transportation Plan, along with funding to implement the Plan and allow SPCSA staff to work with the school to make budget revisions as long as the total funding does not exceed the average per pupil cost in the local school district.
2. Require the school to provide SPCSA staff with documentation to demonstrate that the school is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations prior to beginning to transport students.