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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Mike Dang, Manager of Organizational and Financial Performance
Jennifer Bauer, Interim Executive Director
SUBJECT: Transportation Plan: Honors Academy of Literature
DATE: October 13, 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

Honors Academy of Literature (Honors/the school) is requesting a total of \$83,000 to implement the school’s Transportation Plan. Below is an overview of the proposed Transportation Plan for the school, as provided in the application.

“Students will have van pick up and drop off by a Honors Academy of Literature Staff member on all school days based on demonstrated need for transportation to and/or from school.”

Analysis and Recommendation

Honors is a Title I School and is requesting approval of its Transportation Plan and funding to implement the Transportation Plan. In addition, because Honors is not currently approved to provide transportation, the school is also requesting to amend its charter contract to provide transportation, and has submitted a good cause exemption request to have this amendment considered outside of the established amendment windows.

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.

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.

2. The narrative provided by the school explains that, “Current transportation options available and used by students at Honors Academy of Literature are parent drop off and pick up, local/ regional bus transportation services, ride share, or walking to and from school. The current gaps and limitations include the local bus schedule that does not often align with our school day schedule of 8am- 3pm and age of students accessing public transportation. Also, limitations for families are that if they are dropping off and picking up from school, they often must leave work early, or adjust their schedules to be able to make the commute to bring their students to school. Limitations for families include lacking personal transportation or the ability to ride share with others to get their students to school. Additional gaps included inclement weather days when our students who walk in extreme cold or hot weather cannot do so safely due to conditions. Honors Academy of Literature serves 225 students in grade K-8. During the 2022-2023 school year we had three families leave the school citing transportation needs that could not be met. Additionally, school staff members provided transportation for 6 families in personal vehicles (covered by school's auto liability policy) throughout the year. On days with inclement weather, our attendance clerk estimates 5-10 families would call in to excuse absences because they did not have a vehicle to bring their children to school safely.” 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 Honors during the fourth quarter of the 2022-23 school year was 213. Honors is located in Washoe County where the four-year average (per pupil) in transportation funding for the 2023-24 school year is \$392 per pupil. The total funding request for the school was \$83,000, which is less than or equal to the average cost, per pupil, for transportation within the Washoe 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 enable the school to enable children of families in that those “who express need and demonstrate that their child would not be able to attend school unless transportation is provided will be prioritized for transportation. Based on demonstrated need, the student would be picked up and dropped off at their home at an agreed upon time..

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the Honors’ Transportation Plan, along with funding to implement the plan. Furthermore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the good cause exemption and amendment request to enable the school to provide transportation to students.

Proposed Motion:

1. Approve the Honors 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. Approve the charter contract amendment request for Honors to allow the school to provide student transportation.
3. 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.

If approved, the enrollment for the remainder of the contract term will remain unchanged:

School Year	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Grade Levels	K-8	Contract renewal required; last contract renewal was 1/26/2018				
Total Enrollment	225					