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ACTION MEMORANDUM

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

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**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.”<sup>1</sup>

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, 2023<sup>2</sup>. 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 Hillpointe Campus (Discovery Hillpointe) is requesting a total of \$179,000 to implement the school’s Transportation Plan. Below is an overview of the proposed Transportation Plan for Discovery Hillpointe, 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 Hillpointe campus is hoping to run a bus from its Sandhill campus to the Hillpointe campus, with strategic and safe stops along the route. With remaining funds we plan to remove barriers and add opportunities for more targeted support. We will operate two vans specifically for getting students with transportation insecurities to and from school every day.

This will allow us to accomplish two main goals. First, it will allow our geographic footprint to increase allowing more families an accessible route to school. Second, it will give more Discovery students the opportunity to attend middle school at a Discovery Charter School campus, enrolling at Hillpointe and riding the bus from Sandhill.

Discovery Charter School is pursuing school transportation and student safety because we believe it is critical to our school’s mission and commitment to equity. Ensuring students are arriving at school safely and consistently is top priority as we grow from our founding year. We were pleased to see the developments of the 2023 Legislative Session because public

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<sup>1</sup> Section 28.5 of Assembly Bill 400 (2023 Session of the Nevada Legislature)

<sup>2</sup> 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.

funding for transportation will allow us to provide critical services we could not provide, otherwise.

At a cost of \$66,000 per route, Discovery Charter School can secure an annual contract to provide full-size yellow bus transportation access to at least 60-70 students every day. We are open to adding new transportation services in the future as our enrollment and allowable budget allocation allows.

Based on our Q4 ADE from 2022-2023, we are eligible to apply for \$180,375 in SPCSA transportation funding. This funding will support Discovery Charter School's mission to keep students safe and support families by providing an equitable efficient option for transportation."

### **Analysis and Recommendation**

Discovery Hillpointe 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 "As students from Sandhill graduate from elementary school they continue their time at Discovery Charter School at the Hillpointe campus, where middle school is offered. We wish to make this process easier and more accessible to families by providing a bus route from our Sandhill campus to Hillpointe, allowing students to stay at Discovery Charter School until the completion of eight grade." The application goes on to state "If the transportation plan is approved and funded, Discovery Charter School will be able to serve more families who currently cannot attend to transportation difficulties. The proposed plan would expand our equitable, walkable recruitment footprint to 20 square miles." 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 Hillpointe during the fourth quarter of the 2022-23 school year was 375. Discovery Hillpointe 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 Hillpointe was \$179,000, 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

help reduce chronic absenteeism and tardiness. The school was able to cite large-scale national research to back this claim. Additionally, this transportation plan will help to stabilize enrollment at the school by allowing more students to continue their education at Discovery Charter Schools as they transition from elementary to middle school. The school also hopes that having a portion of students arriving by bus will allow the arrival and dismissal process to run more smoothly.

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the Discovery Hillpointe Transportation Plan, along with funding to implement the plan.

**Proposed Motion:**

1. Approve the Discovery Charter School Hillpointe 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.