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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: Nevada Rise Academy
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

Nevada Rise Academy (NV Rise) is requesting a total of \$205,800 to implement the school’s Transportation Plan. Below is an overview of the proposed Transportation Plan for NV Rise, as provided in the application.

“Nevada Rise Academy, NV Rise, is in its sixth year of operation. Since launch we have continued to grow and the need for safe and equitable transportation has grown too. Our goal is to provide equitable support to families and students. We believe providing safe transportation is a critical step toward achieving this goal.

Based on enrollment data, we believe a strategic bus route with bus stops in our highest density enrollment areas would provide the best service to families. We have built a strong community around NV Rise and value this community greatly. Not only do these bus stops best support current families, it also helps us enroll more students from a concentrated geographic area closer to our campus.

NV Rise is pursuing school transportation because we believe it is critical to our school’s mission and commitment to equity. With a per-route budget of \$66,000 (\$132,000 total) for the 2023-2024 school year, NV Rise can provide transportation access to approximately 164 scholars each day. Each bus will run a morning and afternoon route. Separate from the operational budget for each bus route, NV Rise plans to purchase services from a transportation provider a monthly service fee for the planning month only, then a monthly fee

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.

of \$5,100 to run 2 buses for students every morning and afternoon for 13 total months. We will also purchase 2 buses at average cost of \$59400 used school bus. NV Rise will lease these vehicles back to a third-party service provider. Finally, a commercial auto policy at \$500 month for 13 months.

Based on our 2023 EEGA Audit, we are eligible to apply for \$205,868 in SPCSA transportation funding. We are currently applying for \$205,800 to support NV Rise’s mission to keep students safe and support families by providing an equitable and efficient option for transportation.”

Analysis and Recommendation

NV Rise is a Title I School and is requesting approval of its Transportation Plan and funding to implement the Transportation Plan. In addition, because the school 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.
2. The narrative provided by the school explains that “If the transportation plan is approved and funded, NV Rise will be able to serve a more significant geographical area. The proposed plan would expand our equitable recruitment footprint.”. 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 NV Rise during the fourth quarter of the 2022-23 school year was 428. NV Rise is located in ClarkCounty where the four-year average (per pupil) in transportation funding for the 2023-24 school year is \$481 per pupil. The total funding request for NV Rise was \$205,800, 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 reduce absenteeism and tardiness, as supported by large-scale national research. Additionally, bus service will help remove as much as 45% of traffic from arrival and dismissal lines, allowing for a smoother and safer arrival and dismissal procedure. .

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the NV Rise 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 Nevada Rise Academy 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 Nevada Rise Academy 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
Grade Levels	K-5	K-5	K-5
Total Enrollment	504	504	504