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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: Sage Collegiate Public Charter School
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

Sage Collegiate Public Charter School (Sage Collegiate) is requesting a total of \$111,440 to implement the school's Transportation Plan. Below is an overview of the proposed Transportation Plan for Sage Collegiate, as provided in the application.

“Sage Collegiate recognizes the critical need to offer its students reliable transportation to and from the school premises. Presently, the absence of dedicated transportation has led to withdrawal or non-enrollment of potential students, exacerbating chronic absenteeism patterns. Key reasons for this include the high cost of public transit, incompatibility of public transit schedules with parent work hours, and lack of personal transportation. The proposed transportation plan is set to revolutionize access to education in the region by catering to these identified gaps. With a specific focus on the zip codes 89107, 89108, 89146, 89106, and 89102, this initiative seeks to bridge the gap between potential students and quality education.

The designed transportation system aims to accommodate 338 students, spanning kindergarten to 8th grade, with a primary target of 140 students who face the greatest transportation challenges. To optimize coverage and capacity, two Model Year 2011 Class D buses from International, each with a practical capacity of 70 students, will be incorporated. Routes and schedules have been meticulously crafted to maximize reach within target zones. Adherence to Nevada's School Bus Standards, driver training, safety regulations, and

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.

stringent compliance norms ensure the program's integrity. A significant partnership with Bright Yellow Lines, a local bus provider, has been established to facilitate this initiative. Furthermore, Sage Collegiate will employ two bus safety specialists to maintain on-board discipline, ensuring a safe and conducive environment during commutes.

Sage Collegiate stands tall on its record of academic excellence, fiscal responsibility, and organizational prowess. With an academically rigorous curriculum that's complemented by a plethora of extracurricular activities, the institution continues to nurture holistic development. Financially, the school showcases prudent budgeting by earmarking \$111,440 annually for the transportation initiative. This translates to a cost-efficient \$345 per student, notably lower than the average per pupil transportation cost in the local district. Sage Collegiate's meticulous planning and budgeting underscore its commitment to its students and to fiscal integrity.”

As part of the transportation plan, Sage Collegiate proposes to use funding to provide a bus safety specialist on each bus route. The bus safety specialists will ride the route each day and manage bus culture and safety and handle urgent communications so the driver can focus fully on driving and road safety.

Analysis and Recommendation

Sage Collegiate is a Title I School and is requesting approval of its Transportation Plan and funding to implement the Transportation Plan. In addition, because Sage Collegiate 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 “By providing reliable and safe transportation to and from school, we can eliminate the barriers that have previously hindered our families and students. By focusing on the zip codes of 89107, 89108, 89146, 89106, and 89102, we target both the areas with acute access issues as well as the higher-income areas closer to the school, thereby ensuring a comprehensive reach of our services.” 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. In accordance with the Nevada Department of Education's guidance for significantly expanding schools, Sage Collegiate received an enrollment audit during June of 2023 to establish the student count for the purpose of funding through the Pupil Centered Funding

Plan. As of the enrollment audit, the student count was 323. Sage Collegiate 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 Sage Collegiate was \$111,440, 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 issues of chronic absenteeism and help the school to be fully enrolled.

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the Sage Collegiate 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 Sage Collegiate 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 Sage Collegiate 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 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade Levels | K-6 | K-7 | K-8 | K-8 | K-8 |
| Total Enrollment | 308 | 392 | 476 | 532 | 588 |