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ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Jennifer Bauer, Finance and Operations Manager
Melissa Mackedon, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Transportation Plan: Pinecrest Academy of Northern Nevada
DATE: March 4, 2024

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 from its sponsor. Therefore, charter schools that have not already been approved to provide student transportation must submit to their sponsor a contract amendment request 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, until all funds are expended². 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.

The SPCSA's website provides additional details and a form associated with the Transportation Plan and Funding Application.

Transportation Plan Overview

PANN is requesting \$391,608 to implement the school’s Transportation Plan. Below is an overview of the proposed Plan, as provided in the application.

“PANN has approximately 16.30% Free and Reduced Lunch eligible-students, 15.40% with Individualized Education Plans, 2% English Language Learners, including 34% non-white. Currently, PANN students are driven to school by their parents or walk to school. For students utilizing the Boys and Girls Club transportation, these students are required to be dual enrolled as PANN students and Club members. The 1,028 currently registered PANN students come from 29 different zip codes, with a maximum traveled being 45.20 miles. Pickup/drop-off locations would include the following target areas where there is high need (lower socio-economic status) with the transportation routes strategically close to major roadways and freeways. Students who are present for the majority of school days ((i.e. not chronically absent) will traditionally show growth socially, emotionally, and academically. This is why chronic absenteeism reduction is also of key importance to this transportation plan. Students within the identified zip codes would be able to apply for transportation. It will be on a first come basis based on capacity. Students within the surrounding zip code of 89441 and 89436 would not currently be included in this plan because they are within the closest radius to the school.

PANN’s campus being located at the north end of Spanish Springs makes it a long commute for our families and with these added transportation options the goal is to

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.

reduce chronic absenteeism, increase student engagement, and increase access to a top-tiered education at Pinecrest. Being 20 minutes from the nearest freeway, 395/Interstate-80) which is the only one interstate access point from Pyramid Highway for families living in Reno and southern Sparks, the school has unique challenges for access to education. This commute translates to an average of 40-45 minutes just to get to school one-way in peak traffic for individuals in the farther out zip codes or those in the North Valleys/ Cold Springs area. Per the school's Nevada Report Card for SY21-22, PANN's Chronic Absenteeism was 16%, Average Daily Attendance was 94.2%, and student transiency was 11.4%. The underlying goal of this transportation plan is to reduce the burden on families' commute, which as a byproduct will decrease chronic absenteeism and similarly increase diversity of student enrollment. We expect with implementation of transportation there would also be an increase in families with students who historically may not be applying for PANN due to lack of access to reliable transportation. Public transportation such as RTC buses unfortunately is not a reliable or safe option for our school location. We suspect parents would not like their kids riding public transit as supervision is an issue with that option. Accordingly, the current plan is to provide targeted transportation. Students who attend the Boys & Girls Club and that are from the identified zip codes meet the strategic plan of the SPCSA as well.

PANN intends to build out a larger fleet of passenger vans over the next 2 years to target areas of need where transportation to PANN's campus may otherwise be difficult, such as Sun Valley, southern and southeastern Sparks, and around the NE side of the McCarran Blvd loop. The initial purchase of 2 passenger vans will serve 20 students (2 10-passenger vehicles). Grade levels K-8 will have access to the transportation option. As identified above, zip codes of high need that align with the SPCSA Strategic Plan would be the target for the van routes (89433, 89431, 89512, 89506, and possibly 89436 south-east Sparks). Extra stipend/duty pay would be offered to staff members of impeccable driver history to drive the 10-passenger vans before and/or after school as part-time drivers; alternatively, part-time employees will be sought to fill these roles. PANN further intends to continue use of the Boys & Girls Club of Truckee Meadows for 4 routes to areas of need where transportation to/from PANN's campus may otherwise be difficult (on top of the above 10 passenger vehicle usage). A total 120-140 students this year: with two 10-passenger vehicles and approximately 100-120 students under the Club contract. We anticipate these numbers to increase over the next 2-3 years as well based on future transportation funding and capacity increase. K-8 would be served with these transportation funds. Washoe County is the geographic area served, with targeted zip codes beyond 6 miles as identified herein. Eligibility will be based on geographic area, with an exclusion of approximately 6 miles from the immediate 2 zip codes from the school (namely 89441 and 89436 zip codes). The family's resources will be assessed as well if data is present for the applicant. Timing of an application for subscription to transportation route will also be assessed if there is oversubscription. The commencement of the additional vehicles (to be operated outside of the Club contract) would start service after a short ramp up period which will be dependent on acquisition / delivery timelines, including build out of school driver and management structure for the transportation. March 2024 is the proposed operation start date for the 10-passenger vehicles.

Based on the Q2 FY24 Q2 ADE Report, PANN is eligible to apply for \$391,608 in transportation funding through AB 400.

Analysis and Recommendation

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

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

1. The Transportation Plan is comprehensive and likely to be successfully implemented.
2. The school's narrative explains that if the transportation plan is approved and funded, PANN will be able to serve a more significant geographical area, improving chronic absenteeism and equitable access to the 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 PANN during the second quarter of the 2023-24 school year was 999. PANN is in Washoe County, where the four-year average (per pupil) in transportation funding for the **2023-24** school year is \$392.00. The total funding request for PANN is \$391,608, which is less than or equal to the average cost per pupil for transportation within the Washoe County School District.
6. The charter school's academic, financial, and organizational performance indicate that the transportation plan is in the interest of the pupils who will be served by it. Specifically, the Transportation Plan indicates that transportation will expand access, improve chronic absenteeism, and improve the current drop-off and pick-up procedures at the school.

Therefore, SPCSA staff recommend approval of the PANN's Transportation Plan and eligible 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 PANN Transportation Plan and eligible funding to implement it. 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 PANN 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-8	K-8	K-8
Total Enrollment	957	988	988