

## A Q&A with

# DAVENPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Davenport Community School District is a repeat customer of School Bus Consultants (SBC), having worked with them previously to analyze their routing & scheduling in an effort to reduce their number of buses. The previous work was such a success that they engaged SBC once more, this time to analyze the district's bell times in another effort to further reduce transportation costs.

**Mike Maloney**

**Director of Operations**

Davenport Community SD

Davenport, IA

31 Schools / 14,000 Students / 94 Routes

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### **What problems, issues, or needs led Davenport to engage School Bus Consultants?**

Davenport Community Schools is in the midst of a five-year \$20 million budget reduction plan, which was the impetus behind our desire to reduce transportation costs. Our school district covers 109 square miles and serves some 14,000 students in 31 schools. We run 94 regular home-to-school routes plus activities and special trips so we are a large operation.

### **What made Davenport choose SBC? What made their services stand out from others?**

We had a prior engagement with SBC a few years ago, to look at our school bus routing and scheduling that resulted in a reduction in buses. Based on the quality of that work, our good working relationship and their knowledge of our operations, we decided to bring them back in to analyze our bell times to see if we could cut additional costs.

I was not here when SBC did the initial study but I have to say that when I first spoke with them, it was very clear that they had the expertise and ability in-house to help us with bell change management. I met with Phil McConnell at our offices, and outlined what we wanted. He came back to us with a scope of work and fee proposal that matched up in terms of the effort needed.

### **What has the implementation phase and ongoing relationship been like with SBC?**

As the study got underway, SBC's Griffin Scott got involved in the detailed analysis of our operations. It was evident that both Phil and Griffin have a lot of expertise in conducting bell time studies. The materials they produced were high quality and very professional with great graphics that made their analysis very understandable. The in-depth study was based on solid data analysis and complemented by high-level PowerPoint slides that made the information easy to present to our board. This was extremely helpful because while we had the data to back it up, we did not have to burden the board with many pages of narrative.

We implemented the new bell times in August 2018, and things are going well. We've had to adjust some bus stops and a few parents have had concerns about having to walk a bit farther, but we worked those out in the first weeks of school. All in all, it's been a typical start to the school year.

**What have been the greatest benefits of working with SBC? Can you share specifically how SBC helped Davenport reach its goals?**

The greatest benefit of working with SBC is the level of expertise they are able to bring to a problem. As an objective third party, they helped us overcome any local objections to the study's findings and resulting recommendations.

**How is SBC to work with? Are there any specific team members who stand out as being particularly helpful? Can you cite an example of how SBC went "the extra mile" to serve Davenport?**

The SBC team has been very responsive. Prior to the board meeting we had several last-minute changes that required Griffin to recalculate his projections and redo slides but he turned them around right away. Then, during the approval process, when board members suggested, "What if you do this?" Griffin responded quickly to provide data that showed the impact of those changes.

On another occasion when we asked for a last-minute increase in the scope of work, the SBC team could not do it immediately but gave us a realistic delivery date. They said, "We simply don't have time this week but is there another way we can help?" They were always good about clear and complete communications. They never took on something they couldn't deliver, but worked to meet our needs at their first opportunity.

**Would you recommend SBC to others? What positive benefits would you emphasize?**

I definitely would recommend SBC to other school districts and will use them again here in our district. They now are very well acquainted with our transportation operation, which gives them a huge advantage over competing firms for future work.

**How has working with SBC made your job and/or work life easier?**

The results of SBC's work and the process of getting it done far exceeded my expectations. I expected a competent job, of course, but they went above and beyond in every aspect of the job.