



Date: September 27, 2024

To: Student Walking Route Committee Members

From: Paul Bertulis, Planning Manager, Office of Student Transportation

Re: Elkridge Elementary – Bus Stop Walking Route Appeal

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Attached please find the following information regarding an appeal of current bus stop at River Road at Rockburn Hill Road for Elkridge Elementary School:

- Completed Howard County Student Walking Route Committee Survey forms.
- Map of the route from requested bus stop to current bus stop.
- Board of Education Policy – 5200 Pupil Transportation.
- Please note this bus stop only affects residences on one street (Rockburn Hill Rd).

The Transportation staff has reviewed the area in question and has determined that, based on the criteria in Policy 5200, the neighborhood in question's bus stop should be located on River Road at Rockburn Hill Road.

Please try to have your written report and comments completed and submitted to me within four weeks of receiving the information. When the Committee reports are completed, I will forward them to the Superintendent for his consideration.

If you have questions or need more information, please contact me at 410-313-6727. Thank you for your assistance.

Attachments

By email

cc: School File



## HOWARD COUNTY STUDENT WALKING ROUTE COMMITTEE SURVEY

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide you, the parent or guardian, an opportunity to express why you feel the approved walking route/ bus stop for your child is inappropriate due to the level of safety it provides. We thank you for your time and input. The completed form will be provided to the Student Walking Route Committee.*

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ See page 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Your Telephone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address: \_ W Rockburn Hill Rd. Elkridge MD\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_Elkridge Elementary School and Elkridge Landing Middle School\_\_

1. What are the major concerns with your child(ren)'s walking route/bus stop? Please be specific. You may attach drawings or photos.

*Photos have been provided via email. The route is along a narrow road with a blind curve. There is no sidewalk or shoulder so the children need to walk in the road. Illegal activity happens regularly at that site. People do not realize we live just beyond the hill and come to smoke, dump trash, engage in other questionable activities. The neighbors call the non emergency police and 911 to report some of the things we see. Included in my photos is a couch on fire, used condoms, cars parked illegally, and an example of the hill.*

2. Are there any unique conditions or information you feel the committee should be aware of? (Please check any of the following conditions which apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criminal Activity*	<input type="checkbox"/> Flooding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steep Grades
<input type="checkbox"/> Street Crossings	<input type="checkbox"/> Attractive Nuisance**	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Overgrown Trees/ Underbrush
<input type="checkbox"/> Prior Accidents**	<input type="checkbox"/> Surface Deterioration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visibility (sight distance)
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction Activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

\*Cite type, police case number, person registering complaint, date and time. Mention any resulting arrests or convictions.

\*\*Provide details.

*We have called non emergency and 911 many times. We do not stick around to observe or keep record of our calls.*

3. Please suggest any changes that you feel would improve the route/stop.  
*The only change the parents would feel safe with is if the bus picks up again at the top of the hill as it has for years.*

4. Have you investigated alternate routes?  YES  NO  
If yes, which ones? *There are none*

If they were unsatisfactory, state why.

*Our neighborhood backs up to Patapsco State Park and does not have an outlet.*

5. What alternatives would you suggest?  
*There is no alternate way in or out of the neighborhood.*

6. Have you discussed your concerns with your  PTA,  School,  Other, please list.  
*Neighbors*

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO: Office of Student Transportation  
[transportation@hcpss.org](mailto:transportation@hcpss.org)  
Howard County Public School System  
5451 Beaverkill Road  
Columbia, MD 21044

Parents:

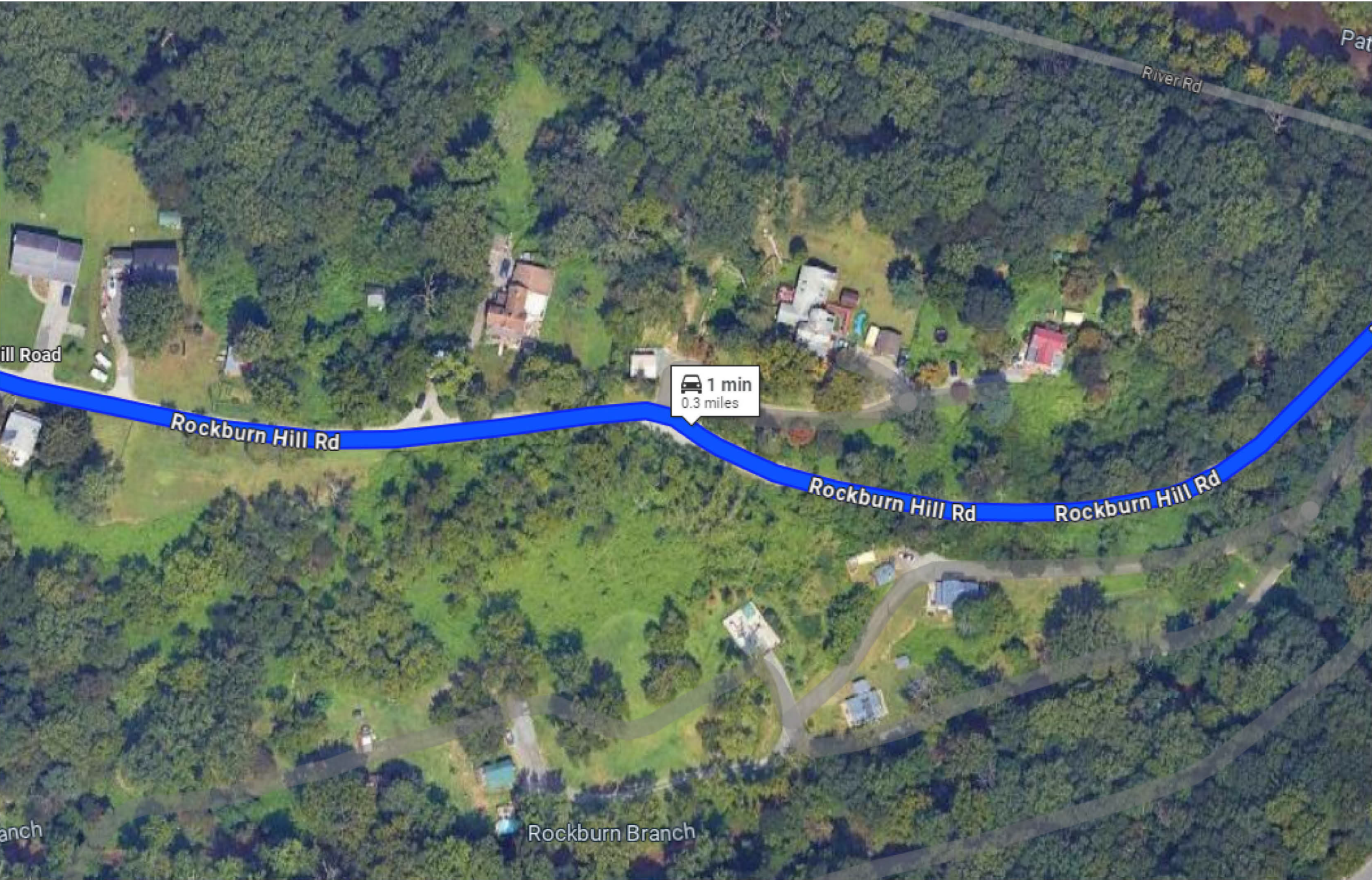
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Pat

River Rd

Hill Road

Rockburn Hill Rd

1 min  
0.3 miles

Rockburn Hill Rd

Rockburn Hill Rd

anch

Rockburn Branch

Home / Series 5000

# Policy 5200 – Student Transportation

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process by which transportation services for students are provided.

[Policy Document](#)

[Implementation Procedures](#)

## I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education is committed to providing transportation services to students in a safe and efficient manner. With the intent of protecting the general well-being of students, the Board of Education recognizes the need to establish parameters for which transportation services are provided.

## II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process by which transportation services for students are provided.

## III. Standards

- A. The provisions of this policy apply to all eligible students, public and non-public, for whom school bus transportation is provided by the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).
- B. Transportation will be provided to all eligible students attending public and non-public schools designated and approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and/or the HCPSS subject to the availability of funding.
- C. Transportation services provided to a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 plan will be provided in accordance with that plan, as well as federal, state, and local laws/regulations.
- D. Students who attend parochial schools will receive transportation services as provided in the Howard County Code and HCPSS policies and procedures. This service will be provided only on a space-available basis along existing school bus routes designed to serve public schools. Parochial schools that receive state aid will not receive transportation services.
- E. When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff will consider:
  - 1. Reasonable levels of safety.
  - 2. Program efficiency.
  - 3. Economy of operations.
  - 4. Equity of service.
  - 5. IEP or Section 504 plan requirements.
  - 6. Homeless children and youth.

Providing a reasonable level of safety will be the major staff consideration.

## F. Eligibility for transportation

The rolling implementation of changes to this policy begin with an opt-in initiative, along with distance change, for Pre-K students only, beginning with requests for transportation in Summer 2022 that take effect in school year 2022-2023. All other changes to this policy for the opt-in initiative, along with distance change, for grades K-12, will begin with requests for transportation in school year 2022-2023 that take effect in school year 2023-2024.

1. Transportation services will be available to students when the measured distance between their bona fide residence and the home school is greater than the following, except as otherwise specified within Policy 5200, Implementation Procedures. Utilizing transportation software, measurements will begin at the property boundary or the school/school campus from the closest adjacent suitable pathway and end at the property line of the bona fide residence:
  - a. Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5: 1.0 mile
  - b. Grade 6 through Grade 8: 1.5 miles
  - c. Grade 9 through Grade 12: 2.0 miles
2. Other transportation service:
  - a. The parent of a child in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12, who is eligible for transportation services, may request Alternate School Bus Service.
  - b. The parent of a child in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 8, who is not eligible for transportation service, may request Space Available Bus Service to or from a child care provider.
  - c. Temporary transportation service may be provided when a suitable pathway or suitable crossing does not exist, or if the service is necessitated by a student's medical diagnosis.
3. Every student deemed eligible must submit a request for assignment before they will be provided with transportation services. The following criteria will apply to this requirement:
  - a. Service will be provided to eligible students after their request for assignment is approved and processed by the Student Transportation Office.
  - b. Student assignments will be monitored for regular use. Those assignments not actively utilized may be reviewed for reconsideration.
  - c. A new request for transportation services will be required for each school year.
  - d. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan with transportation as a related service are exempt from the requirements in this section.

## G. School Bus Stops

1. Routes will be established in such a way that the walking distance from a student's bona fide residence to an established school bus stop is no greater than the eligibility for transportation distance as outlined in Section III.F.1.
2. Students are expected to board and exit the bus from the same bus stop location that is the closest suitable pathway to their residence unless otherwise directed or permitted to do so by a principal, assistant principal, or transportation area manager.
3. School bus stops for students with needs of accommodation or assistance will be determined consistent with the needs identified in the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan.

#### H. Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Appeals

1. Requests for re-evaluation of a walking route or school bus stop are to be directed to the Student Transportation Office.
2. Appeals of the decisions made by the staff of the Student Transportation Office are to be directed, in writing, to the Student Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Committee.

### IV. Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/designee will ensure the safe design of all school bus routes that serve public and non-public schools.
- B. Parents will ensure the safety and conduct of their children from the time they leave home until they board the school bus or enter school property and from the time they leave the school bus or exit school property at the end of the day.
- C. The Student Transportation Office will identify transported areas, non-transported areas, and school bus routes.
- D. Students will adhere to the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct.

### V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

### VI. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Accommodation – A strategy, service, or facility modification that allows a student to access academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities comparable to peers without disabilities.
- B. Adequate Sight Distance – A distance required along a roadway to enable a motorist traveling at or near the design speed of the roadway to see and stop for a student to safely cross the street or safely pass a student walking along roadway shoulder used as a walking route to and from school or a school bus stop. This determination may be made in conjunction with a county or state traffic engineer.
- C. Alternate School Bus Service – A program for students in grades Pre-K through 12 who are eligible for transportation services and need to ride two different buses on a regular basis due to individual parental needs.
- D. Bona Fide Residence – A person's principal residence maintained in good faith. It does not include a temporary residence or a superficial residence established for the purpose of attendance in the HCPSS. Evaluation of a person's bona fide residence is a factual one made on an individual basis.
- E. Child Care Provider – An individual or center chosen by a parent to care for or supervise their child(ren) in their absence.
- F. Homeless Student – A student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, whether or not the temporary housing is located in Howard County, as defined in Policy 9300 Homeless Children and Youth.
- G. Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written description of the special education and related services for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the student's IEP team.
- H. Non-Transported Area – The geographical area within each school attendance area, as defined by the Board of Education, within which HCPSS school bus transportation services are not provided.
- I. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
  1. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
  2. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.

3. Custodian – A person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
  4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
  5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody or control over the student, but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101 (c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
  6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- J. School Bus Routes – A set of scheduled school bus stops and planned roadways traveled by a school bus as developed by the Student Transportation Office.
- K. School Bus Stop – A designated location where students board and are discharged from a school bus.
- L. Section 504 Plan – A plan to provide accommodation for an individual student to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- M. Space Available School Bus Service – A program for students in grades Pre-K through 8 whose residence is located outside the service area. Student participation in this program is predicated on the need for child care services on a daily basis and meeting all eligibility requirements. Bus service will be provided only if school bus seating space is available.
- N. Student Transportation Office – The HCPSS office that is responsible for coordinating transportation services.
- O. Student Walking Route – The path a student walks to and from home to school.
- P. Student Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Committee – Committee composed of external representatives and one (1) or more citizens of Howard County approved by the Superintendent/designee to review walking route and school bus stop appeals. Persons with a pending student walking route and school bus stop appeal will be temporarily prohibited from participating in related activities of the Student Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Committee.
- Q. Suitable Crossings
1. Where adequate sight distance, line striping, and crosswalk signing exists when warranted.
  2. Where pupils are not required to walk across railroads, bridges, tunnels, or overpasses unless they have adequate pedestrian walkways.
  3. Where adequate safety provisions can be made for crossing roadways.
  4. Where pupils are not required to cross certain roadways unless a grade separated crossing is available.
- R. Suitable Pathways – Road shoulder, walkway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface which students can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles except:
1. Residential streets in a community with little or no transient traffic.
  2. Roads/streets with speed limits of 30 miles per hour or less.
- S. Transported Area – The geographical area within each school attendance area, as defined by the Board of Education, within which HCPSS school bus transportation services are provided.

## VII. References



## **A. Legal**

- Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §1411
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §791 et seq
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act – 42 U.S.C. §11301 et. seq.
- Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 5-203
- Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 7-606
- Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 9-100
- Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 9-101
- Md. Ann. Code, Transportation, § 22-228
- COMAR 13A.06.07, Pupil Transportation
- COMAR 13A.05.01
- Louisa E. Baker v. Carroll County Board of Education, Maryland State Board of Education, Opinion No. 99-25

## **B. Board Policies**

- Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment
- Policy 9300 Homeless Children and Youth

## **C. Relevant Data Sources**

## **D. Other**

- HCPSS Student Code of Conduct

## **VIII. History**

ADOPTED: July 24, 1980

REVIEWED: July 1, 2011

MODIFIED: May 26, 2022

REVISED:

- June 14, 1990
- June 21, 2005
- June 10, 2021

EFFECTIVE: July 14, 2022

## Policy History Key

- **Adopted**-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy
- **Reviewed**-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group
- **Modified**-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination
- **Revised**-The date the Board took action on a that policy based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination
- **Effective**-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.

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## Howard County Public School System

10910 Clarksville Pike  
Ellicott City, MD 21042  
Main Phone: (410) 313-6600

[Staff Directory](#) | [Inclusivity & Accessibility](#)



On Sep 12, 2024, at 11:53 AM, Melissa A. Marchetti <[Melissa\\_Marchetti@hcpss.org](mailto:Melissa_Marchetti@hcpss.org)> wrote:

Good afternoon, I want to inform you about an important update regarding the bus stop for Elkrige ES Bus 979.

This morning, I visited the current stop location at Rockburn Hill Rd & River Road and also assessed the turn-around area at the top of Rockburn Hill Road. Based on my observations and in the interest of safety, we have decided to make a change.

Effective this afternoon, Thursday, September 12, 2024, our buses will no longer travel up Rockburn Hill Rd to service students. The stop at the bottom of the hill (Rockburn Hill Rd & River Rd) has been established to enhance safety and avoid the use of residential driveways for turn-arounds. The previous bus turn-around at the top of the Rockburn Hill Road is not adequate for a full-sized school bus to maneuver safely.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Best regards,

Melissa Marchetti

Area Manager (Area 2)

Student Transportation Office

Desk Phone # (410) 313-0783

[REDACTED]

*"Believe you can and you're halfway there." – Theodore Roosevelt*

On Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 12:21:13 PM EDT, [REDACTED]

wrote:

I want to inform you that this is completely unacceptable. The children cannot WALK up and down that road. It doesn't even have a shoulder. The county put a bus turn around sign years ago to end this debate. Buses have been turning around at the top of the hill safely for years. It is where county picks up trash and recycling. Ups and other large delivery trucks come up daily. I would like to meet you at the top of the hill and have you walk down and back up with me and you tell me if children should walk that.

I do not accept this answer and need to speak to you asap. This is shameful.

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 03:44:20 PM EDT

**Subject:** Re: Update to route for Elkridge ES Bus 979

Ms. Marchetti,

I have already outlined the significant safety concerns for the students in writing in my initial email. I will recap them for everyone not on my initial email dated 22 August 2024.

1. Rockburn Hill Road is a blind, dangerous curve. There are NO SIDEWALKS. There is NO SHOULDER for the kids to walk on. The kids will be walking IN THE STREET on a BLIND CURVE to get to this bus stop.

2. There is an entrance to Patapsco State Park at your proposed bus stop location. People illegally park in front of the entrance, in the street, on the bridge, and up and down River Road at all hours of the day and night. These are people going to the park, people not going to the park, people sitting in their car, people setting up camp, people engaging in illegal acts including drug use, people having sex in their car in broad daylight, and people bringing weapons out to take pictures by the river in that same spot. This is just to name a few things that have happened there. Many of these instances have been reported to Howard County Police and MD Natural Resources Police. In fact, there are people illegally parked today at the proposed bus stop location at the times the kids are getting off the bus, despite the many no parking signs.

You say you visited the site and deemed the proposed site more safe for buses, but did you walk the route? Did you walk in the street competing with other vehicles? Did you note the lack of visibility on the street that the kids would have to take to get to and from this bus stop location? Can you honestly tell me you think that this location is a safe location for kids? I've outlined significant safety concerns for the proposed stop. There is a County designated bus stop/turnaround at the top of the hill. For years buses have dropped off and picked up kids at that bus stop. I'm not sure why HPCSS Transportation finds the top of the hill is not safe for buses but is okay with sacrificing the safety of children instead. I'm asking you again to please reconsider this location as it is NOT SAFE for KIDS.

[REDACTED]

Email chain:

Urgent: Unacceptable Change in Bus Stop Location and Safety Concerns for My Child

Inbox

Search for all messages with label Inbox

Remove label Inbox from this conversation



[Redacted]

Thu, Sep 12,  
10:30 PM (8  
days ago)

to Melissa, Bill, [Redacted], Jahantab, [Redacted]

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my deep concern and utter frustration regarding the abrupt and uncommunicated change to my daughter's bus stop location today. As a parent, it is completely unacceptable that I had to learn about this change from a **neighbor, 10 minutes before the bus arrival**, rather than through proper channels. I was not notified in advance of this decision, which placed my [Redacted]-year-old daughter in a potentially dangerous situation.

The new bus stop, located at the bottom of Rockburn Hill Rd near Avalon park, is an area notorious for its association with drug activity and homelessness—an environment far from suitable for a [Redacted]-aged child like my daughter. When asked what the driver would have done had I not been there to meet the bus, I was told that it was believed to be acceptable to let my child walk home alone from this location. According to Maryland law a child under the age of 8 years may not be left unattended at home, at school, or in a car, but it's okay to leave a [Redacted]-year-old unattended in a public access point rife with safety risks?!

As a parent, I trust that the school transportation system will prioritize the safety and well-being of all children vs convenience and potential savings. However, this incident has shattered that trust. Changing the bus stop mid-day without any form of communication shows a blatant disregard for both my time and, more importantly, my daughter's safety. Allowing a bus driver to operate under the belief that it is acceptable to leave a young child alone in such a potentially dangerous environment is beyond negligent.

I demand an immediate explanation for this situation, as well as a clear plan to prevent such

reckless actions in the future. Going forward, I expect to be notified of any changes to the bus stop or schedule well in advance.

This level of carelessness is inexcusable, and I trust that you will take swift action to rectify this issue.

Additionally, we want to emphasize our support for our neighbors regarding their concerns about the security and safety of the bus stop and the walk home. Rockburn Hill Road is a steep incline with limited visibility and no walking path or shoulder, making it unsafe for children.

Since we moved here in 2017, we have consistently observed the school bus pick up and drop off children at the top of Rockburn Hill Road. Over the years, we have seen the bus driver navigate this turn safely, so we believe there is no substantial reason to relocate the stop.

We trust that you will make a decision with the utmost consideration for our children's safety.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted]

Fri, Sep 13,  
1:11 PM (7  
days ago)

to Melissa, Jahantab, [Redacted]

Hello Mrs. Marchetti and Mr. Fritz,

It is 1:10 PM on Friday afternoon and not one single parent has heard back regarding this ongoing issue.

[Redacted]



James C. Fritz <James\_Fritz@hcpss.org>

Fri, Sep 13,  
2:03 PM (7  
days ago)

to [REDACTED], me, Melissa, Jahantab, [REDACTED]

Ms. Marchetti provided an update to all parties yesterday at 11:53 AM.

She has visited your community, sought out the opinion of more senior members of the office, and completed a thorough investigation which included obtaining the history of the decision when it was made two years ago.

Unfortunately, a driver chose to deviate from our published route. We consistently remind drivers to only follow the route as prescribed by our office. The issue of the driver failing to follow protocol has been addressed with both the driver and bus contractor.

Today, Ms Marchetti took the extra step of visiting your neighborhood for a second time with one of our driver trainers. The driver trainer concurs that there is no suitable turnaround for a school bus without using private property.

While I recognize that this is not the response you desire, I support the decision of Ms. Marchetti and the stop location will remain at Rockburn Hill Rd and River Rd.

James C. Fritz

Coordinator of Transportation, Contracted Services

Office of Student Transportation

5451 Beaverkill Rd

Columbia MD 21044

(410) 313-6702

[REDACTED]

Fri, Sep 13,  
2:28 PM (7  
days ago)

to James, [REDACTED] Melissa, Jahantab, [REDACTED]

Mr. Fritz,

I would like to request a record of your office communicating with me ( [REDACTED] ) or my husband ( [REDACTED] ) yesterday.

As we previously stated - we didn't find out about the change until one of our neighbors messaged us.

Also, you have not addressed the fact that driver believes that my daughter ( [REDACTED] year old) can walk home on her own.

As far as the location of the stop - we would like to request a copy of the investigation done by Ms. Marchetti.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Fri, Sep 13,  
2:39 PM (7  
days ago)

to [REDACTED], me, James, [REDACTED] Melissa, Jahantab, [REDACTED]

While I do appreciate actually receiving ANY response after waiting over 24 hours, there are some missing pieces here...

You referenced a decision made 2 years ago... which is the last time Tip Top got it wrong and was corrected. The history goes back several years longer. I don't know if Tip Top took over 2 years ago or not, but the nature of your reply makes it sound like you're saying Tip Top was doing it wrong since then which I think sounds crazy personally.

Quite frankly, Tip Top is on the wrong side of this issue which we should not even be talking about.

It very much appears that Tip Top feels inconvenienced by having to drive up this hill which is unacceptable rationale. There is a school bus turnaround sign that has been there for years! Why are we even having this conversation?!



Tip Top has literally introduced a problem that does not and has never existed.

I look forward to this being resolved and seeing a bus at the top of the hill Monday morning.



Sent from my iPhone

**James C. Fritz**

Sep 13, 2024,  
2:46 PM (7 days  
ago)

to [REDACTED] me, [REDACTED] Melissa, Jahantab, [REDACTED]

You entered the conversation last night at 10:30 PM after Ms. Marchetti shared her decision with the school and parents that were included on previous emails.

By virtue of my previous response today you have been included in the discussion well within an acceptable timeframe.

As Ms. Marchetti's investigation was based on conversations with the contractor and other members of the transportation office along with site visits, there are no documents to share.

Furthermore, the stop location as it is currently structured does not represent a change from prior years. The change this year is that the driver failed to follow the route as designed. As there is insufficient room to turn a bus safely while remaining on public property at the stop site requested, the driver was instructed to follow the route as written.

I am sorry you found out about the change from your neighbor. However the decision was provided to the school and all parents involved up to that point in an appropriate manner.

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

Fri, Sep 13,  
2:56 PM (7  
days ago)

to James, [REDACTED] Melissa, Jahantab, [REDACTED]

Mr. Fritz,

The email was forwarded to me by [REDACTED] (my neighbor)

I've never gotten a call, email, mail or any other communication from Ms. Marchetti. This is not acceptable! You changed a bus stop mid day with no notice to the parents of the [REDACTED]!

And now your "thorough" investigation is actually not documented anywhere other than Ms. Marchetti's head. Bravo!

Best,

[REDACTED]

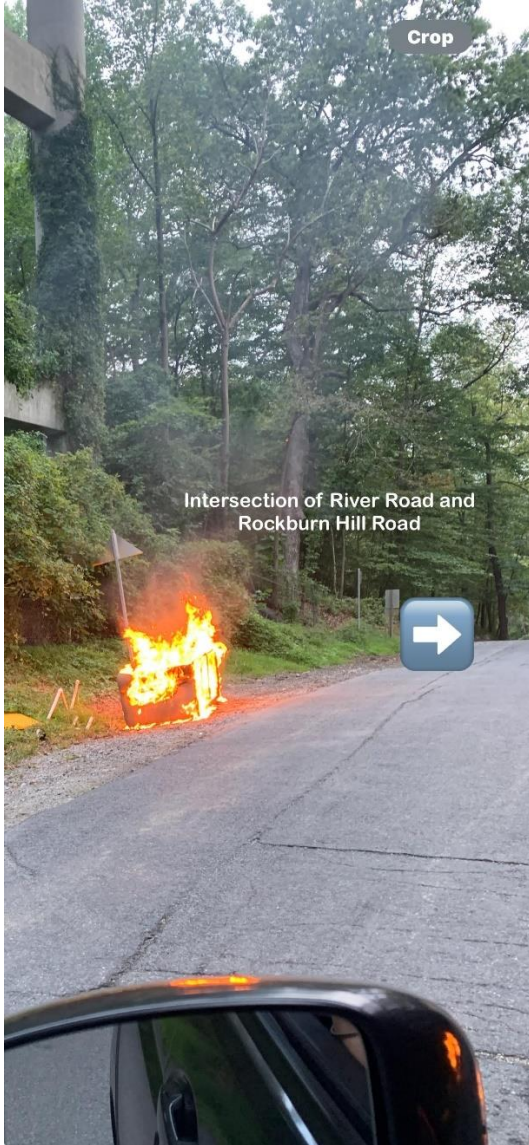
[REDACTED]

Sep 13, 2024,  
2:58 PM (7 days  
ago)

to James, me, Melissa, Jahantab, [REDACTED]

Every single year the bus has come to the top of the hill. I am not sure why you are so confused and it's concerning that you are not able to keep the facts and records straight.

Please enjoy this photo of a couch on fire where you would like the children to wait. Note there is not a single home insight.



[Redacted]

Sep 13, 2024,  
3:53 PM (7 days  
ago)

to Melissa, Jahantab, [Redacted]

Mr. Fritz,

I would like you to forward the written authorization from the fire department/ fire marshal authorizing the use of the fire lane as a dedicated child pickup and drop off at the location the bus is now using. I fail to see how a location designated as a school bus turn around by the county is not

sufficient. Additionally please identify who your supervisor is on this email chain and if not included add them.

VR,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sun, Sep 15,  
7:27 PM (5  
days ago)

to Jahantab, bill\_barnes, officers, Melissa, [REDACTED]

I'm adding the EES PTA and Bill Barnes to see if we can reach someone who can help address our serious safety concerns.

In addition to everything that we have said so far, I would like to point out that on Friday the bus could not turn around at the bottom of the hill until we moved our cars. So after the kids have loaded into our cars and strapped in. We don't know what there is to gain by not picking up at the top of the hill. It isn't a time saving. Here is a short video and photo of a tip top bus easily navigating at the top of the hill in the past. Mrs. Marchetti's assessment does not match up with a decade plus of historical evidence.

[REDACTED]

**James C. Fritz**

Tue, Sep 17,  
6:50 AM (3  
days ago)

to Bill, [REDACTED] Jahantab, officers@eespta.com, me, Melissa, [REDACTED]

As a follow up to last week's conversation regarding this bus stop location and since the Superintendent has now been copied, I felt it prudent to include a timeline of recent events involving the stop.

On **8/19/2024** the MS and ES routes (attached) were provided to Tip Top Transportation indicating a stop location of River Rd and Rockburn Hill Rd for both Elkridge ES and Elkridge Landing MS. By extension, because the online bus stop locator tool feeds from this data, the publicly published

stop location was River Rd and Rockburn Hill Rd. As I indicated in email responses last week, the stop has not been moved from its originally published location as asserted by [REDACTED]. The stop location was enforced to its proper location beginning with the PM run on Thursday, September 12.

On **8/21/2024** [REDACTED] emailed Bill Stolis in this office with concerns about the stop which indicates the community was made aware of the correct stop location via our online tools prior to the beginning of the school year. [REDACTED] also reached out to me with her concerns. I forwarded her information to the routing team and area management team in this office when I replied to her and [REDACTED] on 8/22/2024.

Prior to **9/12/2024**, Ms. Marchetti visited this site and sought guidance from both our routing team and myself regarding the concerns raised by [REDACTED]. Ms. Marchetti deemed it unsafe for the bus to travel to the top of the hill and turn around to board / deboard students and therefore decided that the stop should remain at the assigned location. She shared her findings with me, the routing team, and our director. All of us concur that her assessment is correct. The routing team also indicated that the stop location was published last year at River Rd and Rockburn Hill Rd. This was verified in last year's bus routes database.

Responsibility for ensuring that buses follow HCPSS published routes lies with the Area Manager. Until this year, the ElkrIDGE manager was Bill Stolis. I can't confirm any history of issues at this location with Mr. Stolis as he is now retired. I apologize that the bus did not use the assigned stop last year or to begin this year. However, now that Ms. Marchetti has been made aware of the discrepancy, she is obligated to uphold the published stop location.

On **9/12/2024**, Ms. Marchetti informed both the bus contractor and affected schools that the bus would now stop at the previously published and assigned bus stop location. When I inquired with ElkrIDGE ES if they published the notice to their community, they indicated that they did not since the notice did not constitute a change to the route or any of its stops.

On **9/13/2024**, after receiving additional community concerns, Ms. Marchetti took an additional review step and asked an HCPSS School Bus Driver Trainer to visit the stop location with her. This is not a step that we normally take, but was an extra step of due-diligence due to continued resident objections. The driver trainer agreed that the requested stop location presents a hazard for turning a bus around due to limited space and the need to use private property to affect the turn. Additionally, Ms. Marchetti observed several cars parked in the area posted with No Parking signs in front of the yellow gate on River Rd. This impeded the ability of the bus to use the designated stop and make an effective turn around at the stop location.

The assessment of the current stop location is that it provides an acceptable level of safety and access, is compliant with COMAR and HCPSS policy, is consistent with other similar stops both in your area and across the county, and a move is not warranted. The decision is supported by Ms. Marchetti, myself, our routing team, a certified driver trainer, and our Director of Transportation.

I understand this is not the resolution you have been seeking, but a change in stop location is not warranted.

To directly address [REDACTED] inquiry; Mr. Siddiqui, Director of Transportation, is my immediate supervisor. He is cc'd on this email.

James C. Fritz

Coordinator of Transportation, Contracted Services

Office of Student Transportation

5451 Beaverkill Rd

Columbia MD 21044

(410) 313-6702

[REDACTED]

Tue, Sep 17,  
10:10 AM (3  
days ago)

to James, [REDACTED], Jahantab, Bill, officers@eespta.com, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Mr. Fritz,

I would like to share our perspective regarding the recent changes to our child's school bus stop location.

As parents of a [REDACTED] we initially used the online tool and saw that the stop was listed at the corner of Rockburn Hill Rd and River Road. We didn't think much of it at the time since our daughter is too young to walk home alone. On the first day of school, August 26, the driver informed us that pick-up and drop-off would be at the top of our street. This adjustment made sense to us as it aligned with our observations since we moved into our house in 2017. It also seemed to be a safer option for older children who can walk home on their own, and it alleviated some stress for parents.

However, on September 12 (Thursday), my husband received a text from a neighbor informing us that the drop-off location was being moved back to the bottom of the street. We were both surprised and disappointed that we were not notified directly by HCPSS. Additionally, the email from Ms. Marchetti did not include us, so without our neighbors' heads-up, we might not have been there to meet our daughter.

We are also concerned that the driver seemed to believe that our [REDACTED] year-old daughter could walk home alone, which is not the case. This situation has led us to reconsider the location of the stop and its impact on the safety of all children, their parents, and the community.

You mention that Ms. Marchetti (quote) "observed several cars parked in the area posted with No Parking signs in front of the yellow gate on River Rd. This impeded the ability of the bus to use the designated stop and make an effective turn around at the stop location". You do realise - THIS IS the DESIGNATED bus stop location. Your statement inadvertently confirms the issue we've been trying to address: illegal parking at the stop location is a problem that affects bus operations.

In contrast, the top of our street is quieter, with fewer random cars, and is generally safer for the children. We believe this location would be more appropriate for both safety and operational reasons.

When I look at HCPSS website, i find following statement:

## How are bus stops established?

Bus stops are established based upon several factors, which include walking conditions, walking distance to the stop and road accessibility. Given acceptable walking conditions, bus stops are placed a minimum of one-quarter mile apart.

Bus stops are placed to allow the buses easy access and egress through neighborhoods while keeping safety a priority. Adding bus stops can cause further delays on bus routes and extend students' ride times.

We noted that walking conditions from the bus to the homes are not safe. The road in question lacks sidewalks and shoulders and is a hill with a curve, which creates a hazardous environment for children walking alone.

If our primary goal is to ensure the safety of the children, we are puzzled as to why our concerns seem to be disregarded. Additionally, it is unclear why the bus company now views the top of the road as a problem when it has been used as the stop location for many years without issue.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We hope for a resolution that prioritizes the well-being of all children and considers the input of parents in these decisions.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Tue, Sep 17,  
11:18 AM (3  
days ago)

to James, [REDACTED], Jahantab, Bill, officers, me, Melissa, [REDACTED]

The statement below from your most current email, tells me everything I need to know. You all are not communicating with each other or us effectively. We told you that there are cars parked by the yellow gate. The yellow gate is at the intersection of River Road and Rockburn Hill Road where you want the children to wait for a bus. There is no yellow gate at the top of the hill where we are requesting the bus come as it has come for the last decade. I don't think communicating with you via email is effective. It seems this requires an in person or virtual meeting to discuss.

On 9/13/2024, after receiving additional community concerns, Ms. Marchetti took an additional review step and asked an HCPSS School Bus Driver Trainer to visit the stop location with her. This is not a step that we normally take, but was an extra step of due-diligence due to continued resident objections. The driver trainer agreed that the requested stop location presents a hazard for turning a bus around due to limited space and the need to use private property to affect the turn. Additionally, Ms. Marchetti observed several cars parked in the area posted with No Parking signs in front of the yellow gate on River Rd. This impeded the ability of the bus to use the designated stop and make an effective turn around at the stop location.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sep 17, 2024,  
2:01 PM (3 days  
ago)

to James, Jahantab, Bill, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Mr. Fritz and all concerned parties on the email chain,

In my initial email to Ms. Marchetti dated 22 August 2024, I explained the serious safety concerns with the stop at Rockburn Hill Rd. and River Rd. I explained that we've worked with Mr. Bill Stolis and



HCPSS transportation department in the past to get this resolved. I've attached the email chain with Mr. Stolis from last year, where I highlighted the safety concerns at the River Rd and Rockburn Hill Rd location. In his response on August 25th, 2023, which was addressed to myself and to you (James Fritz), he noted the change in location. While initially the bus route was published at River Road and Rockburn Hill Road, it was changed to come up Rockburn Hill Road as seen in the attached email.

We aren't trying to be difficult here. We are asking to ensure the safety of our kids.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

[REDACTED]

**James C. Fritz**

Wed, Sep 18,  
3:31 PM (2  
days ago)

to Jahantab, Bill, Melissa, [REDACTED]

office

The statement about the cars parked at the yellow gate was in reference to Ms. Marchetti's observation of the stop at the bottom of the hill. It was a polite way of responding to the complaint you sent me on Sunday evening about the bus not able to turn around at the bottom of the hill:

"In addition to everything that we have said so far, I would like to point out that on Friday the bus could not turn around at the bottom of the hill until we moved our cars."

Ms. Marchetti witnessed the same issue in her AM observation of the stop where parents were parked in the space needed for the bus to turnaround. If parents are choosing to drive their children to the bus stop, we ask that they find a place that is not in the way of the bus to stage their vehicles. There is plenty of room along the roadway or along the hill for parents to stage for the few minutes they are waiting on the bus. We would ask that you not park in front of the yellow gate knowing that the space is needed for the bus to turn around. If illegal parking at the bus turnaround is an issue, I am more than happy to coordinate with HCPD to increase patrols and enforcement efforts throughout the posted fire lane.

This morning, several members of my team visited the stop one final time. This time we also consulted with other county experts from outside of HCPSS. *All parties* are in agreement that the walking route to access the stop provides a reasonable level of safety as outlined in COMAR and HCPSS Policy. Furthermore, the stop location at the bottom of the hill is a safer spot for the bus to turn around than the previous stop location. Finally, the school bus stop sign that has been referenced several times was installed in 1994. I have no way of knowing what criteria were used

for the sign installation 30 years ago. But, our criteria in this office have certainly evolved throughout the last 30 years. Our buses have also gotten longer and larger throughout that time. Therefore, what may have been appropriate 30 years ago is no longer a valid basis for comparison for today's vehicles.

In short, after having multiple members of this office review your concerns on multiple occasions and after consulting with outside experts in the field, the stop will remain at River Rd and Rockburn Hill Rd.

At this point, if you wish to escalate the issue, you will need to follow up with my supervisor. Please be aware however that he is apprised of the situation as he has been included on all emails.

James C. Fritz

Coordinator of Transportation, Contracted Services

Office of Student Transportation

5451 Beaverkill Rd

Columbia MD 21044

(410) 313-6702

[REDACTED]

Sep 18, 2024,  
3:49 PM (2 days  
ago)

to James, [REDACTED], Jahantab, Bill, officers, me, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Yes, we would like to speak to your supervisor and the board of education.

Mr. Siddiqui and Mr. Barnes, please let us know when we can discuss this with you.

There is no legal place to park down there and we will not allow the children to walk that hill. There is also nowhere for them to stand that is not the street. This is shameful.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Wed, Sep 18,  
3:56 PM (2  
days ago)

to [REDACTED] James, [REDACTED] Jahantab, Bill, officers, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Mr. Fritz,

I would like to request a copy of COMAR & HCPSS Policy that you reference.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

**James C. Fritz**

Thu, Sep 19,  
6:55 AM (1 day  
ago)

to me, [REDACTED], Jahantab, Bill, officers@eespta.com, Melissa, [REDACTED]

COMAR:

<https://dsd.maryland.gov/Pages/COMARHome.aspx>

HCPSS POLICY:

<https://policy.hcpss.org/5000/>

James C. Fritz

Coordinator of Transportation, Contracted Services

Office of Student Transportation

5451 Beaverkill Rd  
Columbia MD 21044  
(410) 313-6702

[REDACTED] <president@eespta.com>

Thu, Sep 19,  
6:00 PM (23  
hours ago)

to Bill, James, me, [REDACTED], Jahantab, officers@eespta.com, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Mr. Fritz and Superintendent Barnes,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am the president of the Elkridge Elementary PTA. Based on the sequence of emails I have reviewed, [REDACTED] brought concerns about the Rockburn Hill/River Road bus stop for Bus 979 to the transportation office on August 21, 2024. [REDACTED] and others were clearly not satisfied with the response from the District. Per Policy 5200, Section III.H.2 and the Policy 5200 Implementation Procedures, Section V.B, the Student Transportation Office should have supplied [REDACTED] and the other objecting parents with a Walking Route and School Bus Stop Appeal Form so that these concerns could be appropriately addressed. These parents have been denied the opportunity to have their concerns investigated and addressed by the School Bus Stop Committee or have the Superintendent's Office review the matter.

As the District has abandoned its own procedures, it is appropriate for parents to take this directly to the Board of Education. I will be requesting time to speak during the open forum and I am encouraging others to submit written testimony to the Board for the September 26, 2024 meeting.

This is a matter of student safety and echoes the lack of priority that Elkridge Elementary has been shown in safety matters with regards to security cameras at the school. That is a separate matter but as both center on safety, it is prudent to remind the HCPSS office that the Elkridge Elementary PTA will advocate for the safety of all its students, even outside of the school walls. We should all be prioritizing student safety.

In this instance, returning the bus stop to its historical location at the top of Rockburn Hill Road would provide a safer place for students to board and exit the bus and eliminate the safety issues for children walking up a narrow road with limited visibility and no sidewalk or discernable shoulder. The transportation office seemed to imply that a bus could not safely turn around at the top of the hill, but buses have done so without issue over the last several years. The concern about

a private drive is easily addressed by talking with the property owner, but there is no indication that the District has made any effort to do so. This change would be a return to the status quo and add negligible time to the bus route, if any.

We will be taking this matter up with the Board and asking them to grant the request to return the bus stop to the top of Rockburn Hill Road and direct the HCPSS staff to implement the change.

[REDACTED]  
President, EES PTA

--

[REDACTED]  
President, EES PTA

*Because it really does take a village...*

**Jahantab Siddiqui**

Thu, Sep 19,  
8:55 PM (20  
hours ago)

to Bill, [REDACTED] James, [REDACTED], officers@eespta.com, me, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

As Mr. Fritz noted, I have been apprised of the request and the investigation that our team has done. I visited the area this afternoon during afternoon arrival and plan to discuss further with our contractor and trainers tomorrow. I will be back in touch as soon as possible but no later than Monday afternoon.

Jahantab

[REDACTED]

Thu, Sep 19,  
10:03 PM (19  
hours ago)

to boe, ewalsh, [REDACTED]

officers

Good afternoon,

We are writing you, the BOE and Liz Walsh, to hopefully receive your support and guidance with a safety issue we are having with the school transportation office. I live off of Rockburn Hill Rd, Elkridge MD 21075. I met with the neighbors last night and we have decided to jointly bring this to your attention. I have cc'd the concerned parents in this development. This issue arises at the beginning of each school year but is always quickly resolved with a phone call or email. This year Mrs. Marchetti and Mr. Fritz decided to undo a safety standard that had been established many years before. I am forwarding the email chain below for more details but I'd like to summarize our main points. Mr. Fritz's replies and summary are not entirely correct. They have not acknowledged our concerns and have made impractical suggestions.

Our neighborhood is nestled in Patapsco Park. We are the only neighborhood that was not redistricted with our elementary school middle school to the new high school. This email is not about redistricting but to show how we are an outlier in our own community. There are currently plans to add even more homes up here. The transportation company wants our kids to walk to the bottom of a tight road with a blind curve and wait at the entrance to the park, where there are no homes. There are no sidewalks. There isn't even a shoulder. On one side is a rock wall. On the other side is an old guard rail and then a drop off down a hill. I am including some photos. One photo shows two cars passing at the same time. The cars can safely pass each other but where would a 5-18 year old child with back packs and band equipment walk? ([REDACTED] and there have been various others in the past). The bus has always come to the top of the hill to pick up the kids, despite what Mr. Fritz is showing in his records. It is within direct sight of at least 5 houses. The county put a "bus turn around" sign up in the 90's. Mr. Fritz is arguing busses are bigger now. I am including photos and a video of a current bus turning around without issue. County trash, recycling, bge, delivery trucks, and other equally large vehicles come up our road daily.

Their argument about turning around is flawed in many ways. At the bottom of the hill there are often illegally parked cars which would make it challenging to turn around. They suggested we park "on the hill" which is absurd because, as we mentioned, it is a narrow road without a shoulder. We are not trying to prevent our kids from getting exercise, we are not trying to be difficult, we are concerned for their safety and will not allow them to walk down that curve. We certainly wouldn't let them wait alone on a public park road where we have seen crimes committed with our own eyes. The thought of them getting dropped off before an adult can get there is scary.

They have not explained to us what exactly is unsafe for the bus at the top of the hill. The busses have not changed size or shape in the last 6 years that my kids have been using them at the top of this hill. There has been no change to the landscape. Mr. Fritz is blaming someone who is retired for his current records, but Mr. Fritz was included in those emails each year. ([REDACTED] and I provided emails from previous years discussing this issue. I tried attaching more items earlier but the files were too large. We can provide more evidence if needed. Our neighbors, with and without young

children, have said they will be emailing in their support of returning the bus stop to the top of the hill for the safety of our children. We also have the support of the EES PTA.

We are very disappointed in the response from the school transportation office and their apparent lack of reasonable concern for the kids. I hope that the current boe can help us resolve this issue. It will only continue to grow as new homes are added and new babies are born.

Additionally, it has come to our attention that they were supposed to offered a walking route and school bus stop appeal form but we have not been offered. We have not received other records that we have requested. We have not heard from Mr. Fritz's supervisor or Mr. Barnes.

The email chain I am forwarding does not contain the many other emails sent, but represents part of the conversation we have had so far.

Thank you for your time on this matter!

[REDACTED]











Antonia Watts <Antonia\_Watts@hcpss.org>

7:57 AM  
(9 hours  
ago)

to [REDACTED] BoE, ewalsh@howardcountymd.gov, Neighbor, me, [REDACTED]

Thank you for contacting the board. Have you heard back from Mr. Siddiqui? I see that his email says he will contact you by Monday at the latest.

Thank you,  
Antonia

Thank you,

Antonia

Antonia Watts (she/her)

Howard County Board of Education

District 2

[REDACTED]

9:55 AM  
(7 hours  
ago)

to Antonia, BoE, ewalsh, Neighbor, me, [REDACTED], office

Hi Antonia,

Thank you for your swift reply! Yes, we have all seen Mr. Siddiqui's reply after [REDACTED] told them we were taking this to the boe at 6pm. We feel he only replied because [REDACTED] pointed out their procedural failures. My time stamp is off because my original email failed to send due to file size. I removed some videos and forwarded a smaller email chain. Sorry for the confusion.

For more context, here is the email from [REDACTED] to the transportation group: (see email from [REDACTED] from Thu, Sep 19, 6:00 PM)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12:08 PM  
(5 hours  
ago)

to [REDACTED], James, Bill, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Good afternoon [REDACTED],

Our team has been reviewing and corresponding with the parents impacted regarding this stop. On Wednesday, the parents asked me to review as a next step which is what I am doing currently. The next step following my review would be the appeals process.

Jahantab

[REDACTED]

2:37 PM  
(3 hours ago)

to Jahantab, [REDACTED] James, Bill, me, [REDACTED] officers, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Mr. Siddiqui,

You have been included in this email chain for weeks and aware that we were unsatisfied with all replies. You did not respond until [REDACTED] added her comments calling out specific procedures. Other parents have asked for assistance that was not given. The language of Mr. Fritz's email telling us to "be aware" that you were "already apprised of the situation" read as a warning that we would not receive help from you. You had many opportunities to offer assistance. Photos and emails have been forwarded to the board and they await your response on Monday. Neighbors are sending supporting emails to the board for their review.

[REDACTED]

**Jahantab Siddiqui**

2:51 PM  
(2 hours ago)

to [REDACTED] James, Bill, officers@eespta.com, Melissa, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED],

I was included in the email beginning on 9/12 when Ms. Marchetti emailed you. While I have followed the emails, I have not personally investigated or reviewed every detail as we have a process in place to help manage the workload within the office. The area managers are the primary points of contact and make decisions related to bus stop locations and routes within their areas, in accordance with Policy 5200. There is a process in place to appeal their decision and that is what you have done. I hope you have a good weekend and will be back in touch with you on Monday as indicated in my response acknowledging your request.

Jahantab

[REDACTED] <president@eespta.com>

4:13 PM  
(1 hour ago)

to Jahantab, James, Bill, me, [REDACTED], officers@eespta.com, Melissa, [REDACTED]

Mr. Siddiqui,

Thank you for responding to me directly. I appreciate your information about the appeal process, but in looking at the Policy 5200 implementation procedures, the appeal form should be provided after a response from the area manager. (Section V.B). As I understand it, you are a level above an area manager as the Transportation Director. Of course, our community would be happy to have this resolved at the lowest level possible and have the bus stop moved before the next BOE meeting. However, with the tone of the messages previously and the District's failure to provide a justification for refusing to return the bus stop to its previous - and safer - location, we will continue to prepare information for the Board of Education.

When you look at this bus stop objectively, bearing in mind that this is for elementary school students, you will find that this narrow and sight-limited roadway with no sidewalk or discernable shoulder is not a "suitable pathway," especially considering there is a much safer location only a few yards away. I hope that you can grant our request to move this bus stop quickly. If cooler and more sympathetic voices had prevailed earlier, we would not be in this position. But right now, the parents have lost faith in the District's willingness to work with them. Absent moving the bus stop before the Board meeting on September 26, we intend to be heard.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]  
President, EES PTA