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ELEMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

This memorandum briefly describes various elements used to determine transportation funding for K-12 education by Kansas and other states. Please note, this list is not exhaustive.

Distance

The distance a student must be transported between the student's residence and the school they attend is one element of transportation funding in Kansas and other states. In Kansas, students who reside 2.5 miles or more from the school they attend are considered "transported students" under the transportation weighting found in KSA 72-5148.

In Alabama, the transportation allowance is available for transporting students who live more than 2 miles from the school they are attending.

In Hawaii, transportation is available for students in Kindergarten through grade 5 who reside 1 mile or more from their home school and for students in grades 6 through 12 who reside more than 1.5 miles from their home school.

In Texas, the transportation allotment is based on a rate per mile, per regular eligible student who resides 2 or more miles from the student's school of regular attendance measured along the shortest route that may be traveled on public roads.

Hazardous Conditions

Several states, such as Florida, Illinois, and Texas, waive distance requirements when hazardous conditions are present and provide transportation to affected students. In Florida, there are three categories of hazardous walking conditions:

- Walkways parallel to the road along which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if there is not an area at least 4 feet wide adjacent to the road, not including drainage ditches, sluiceways, swales, or channels, having a surface upon which students may walk without being required to walk on the road surface, or if the walkway is along a limited access facility as defined by state law. If the road has a posted speed limit of 50 miles per hour or greater, the area must also be at least three feet from the edge of the road;

- Walkways perpendicular to the road which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if:
  - The traffic volume on the road exceeds the rate of 360 vehicles per hour, per direction (including all lanes), during the time students walk to and from school and if the crossing site is uncontrolled [*Note:* An "uncontrolled crossing site" is defined as an intersection or other designated crossing site where no crossing guard, traffic enforcement officer, or stop sign or other traffic control signal is present during the times students walk to and from school.]; or
  - The total traffic volume on the road exceeds 4,000 vehicles per hour through an intersection or other crossing site controlled by a stop sign or other traffic control signal, unless crossing guards or other traffic enforcement officers are also present during the times students walk to and from school; and
- Crossings over the road which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if the road has a posted speed of 50 miles per hour or greater or the road has six lanes or more, not including turn lanes, regardless of speed limit.

When hazardous walking conditions exist in Florida, there is a requirement that state or local government entities with jurisdiction over the road must correct the hazardous condition within a reasonable period of time. After the hazardous condition is corrected, funding is no longer allocated for the transportation of the students subjected to such hazardous walking condition.

Population Density

Population density is another element taken into consideration by Kansas and other states. Kansas uses a per capita allowance to calculate the transportation weighting, and the per capita allowance is based on a school district's density. Density is determined by taking the area of the school district in square miles divided by the number of transported students. (USD Density = square miles / number of transported students.)

Another state that uses density as an element of its transportation funding is Mississippi. In Mississippi, the State Department of Education calculates the cost of transportation in school districts by ascertaining the average cost per-pupil in net enrollment of transported pupils in school districts classified in different density groups. Using these calculations, the State Department of Education is required to develop a scale for determining the allowable cost per-pupil in different density groups with the greatest allowance per-pupil transported in school districts with the lowest densities and the smallest allowance per-pupil in school districts with the highest densities.

Actual Transportation Costs

Some states use actual transportation costs to reimburse school districts. Connecticut is an example of one of these states. Connecticut reimburses school districts between 0.0 percent and 60.0 percent of their eligible school transportation costs. The reimbursement percentage is dependent on the school district's wealth; therefore, a school district with less wealth would receive a higher reimbursement percentage.

[*Note:* Reimbursements are capped at the amount appropriated by the Legislature for transportation grants in each year's state budget. If the amount appropriated is less than the total transportation costs, then the grants must be proportionately reduced.]

Flat Rates

States, such as Colorado, use a flat rate to reimburse school districts for the cost of transportation services. Colorado provides a reimbursement entitlement determined accordingly:

- 37.87 cents for each mile traveled by vehicles operated by and for the school district providing pupil transportation during the entitlement period;

- 33.87 percent of any amount by which the school district's current operating expenditures for pupil transportation exceeded the school district's reimbursement entitlement based on miles traveled; and

- Not more than 60.0 percent of the costs of contracts entered into by a school district for the purpose of conserving fuel or reducing operating or capital expenditures, or both, for pupil transportation under public transportation programs compliant with federal law.

Other Elements

Other elements considered by various states when funding transportation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Students with disabilities;
- Homelessness;
- Summer school transportation;
- Students who are transported to another school center for certain programs;
- Students enrolled in state-funded preschool programs;
- Field trips; and
- Extracurricular activities.