

SHARE ➔

SCHOOL OFFICIALS WAVE THE BUSES GOODBYE ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Manatee County School District officials greeted school bus drivers on their way out Thursday on the first day of school. BY HANNAH MORSE

UP NEXT



LOCAL

Want to fix Manatee's traffic mess? Make students ride the bus to school, officials say

BY RYAN CALLIHAN

APRIL 03, 2019 03:23 PM, UPDATED APRIL 03, 2019 04:41 PM



Manatee County School District officials greeted school bus drivers on their way out Thursday on the first day of school. BY HANNAH MORSE

Manatee

Anyone with a morning commute through Manatee County knows when school isn't in session based on one major tell — traffic isn't nearly as backed up as usual.

County Commissioner Misty Servia predicted that much of the usual congestion in the morning comes from families taking their kids to school, prompting her to suggest a system that would involve a consolidated, and possibly mandatory, bus system for Manatee students.

The topic arose during Servia's roadway capacity discussion at Tuesday's Council of Governments meeting that involved elected officials, including the School District of Manatee County, the [city of Bradenton](#) and the city of Palmetto.

A few ideas considered during the debate included requiring all students to ride the bus, preventing some students from driving their own cars to school and a partnership that would have high schoolers ride Manatee County's public buses to school.

"We all noted that during spring break, the traffic was much, much better," Servia said, prompting nods from her fellow representatives in the room.



Commissioner makes plea for funding Animal Services facility



De Undre Dunn faces judge for 2nd degree murder charge

[VIEW MORE VIDEO →](#)

SHARE ➔

SCHOOL OFFICIALS WAVE THE BUSES GOODBYE ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Manatee County School District officials greeted school bus drivers on their way out Thursday on the first day of school. BY HANNAH MORSE

UP NEXT



exactly two miles from their school, which is the current threshold for bus service within the school district.

“Is there an opportunity to look at maybe reducing that distance to a mile or a mile and a half? I know that requires buses and more bus drivers but they’re just ideas I’m throwing out there to help all of us.”

School board member Scott Hopes agreed, but said it would make more sense for the district to first consider zoning children to the schools nearby.



Some facts to know about School Choice in Manatee County By [Tiffany Tompkins](#) ✉

“One thing I would like us to look at is how we create community-centric schools so that we’re not busing students from a school that’s a mile and a half from where they live to a school that’s 6 miles from where they live,” Hopes said. “I think that can reduce some of the congestion.”

His suggestion, however, would fly in the face of the state’s push to [expand school choice](#), according to County Commissioner Betsy Benac who questioned the reasoning behind one of the recent Central Manatee Network Alternatives Analysis’ key findings — that most Manatee students don’t ride the bus.

“There’s numerous reasons for that, but we know that [school choice](#) is only going to become bigger and bigger,” Benac said. “The state right now precludes us from even doing the regulations. Now the state says you have to be able to go any school anywhere.”

The Central Manatee traffic study also found that a third of the nearly 100,000 vehicles [coming over the Manatee River](#) daily via the Green Bridge and the DeSoto Bridge aren’t local trips but commuters passing through the area.

Of the school district’s 49,200 students, about 16,000 — roughly a third — of them are bused to school on a daily basis. According to data from the school board’s 2018 transportation workshop, there are 164 different routes in their system and buses travel 15,574 miles daily.

“Why don’t people have their kids [get on the bus](#)? What is the problem? What is the perception; that it’s not safe?” Benac asked. “But you can definitely tell when school is not in session. We

‘road rage’ incident. Cops say investigation still open

APRIL 22, 2019 05:14 PM

Man injured in shooting at Bradenton apartment complex, police say

APRIL 22, 2019 11:18 AM

Bradenton woman shot on Easter has died. Her boyfriend now faces murder charge, cops say

APRIL 23, 2019 12:00 PM



SPONSORED CONTENT

'Riverdale's Chad Michael Murray Explains How To Be A Cult Leader

By [Connatix](#)

Dirty dining: Dogs, mold, bad smells and more issues at Bradenton-area restaurants

APRIL 23, 2019 09:19 AM

SCHOOL OFFICIALS WAVE THE BUSES GOODBYE ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Manatee County School District officials greeted school bus drivers on their way out Thursday on the first day of school. BY HANNAH MORSE



As a result some children on school choice are being told they can no longer get "courtesy" bus rides home.
By Richard Dymond

One solution would be to tell all kids that they need to ride the bus, Benac said, but noted that it wouldn't be a realistic solution, given the personal needs of students and families. However, Servia pointed out that some districts do require students to ride buses.

"We do need to make our transportation more efficient, but a lot of the problems we have are the some problems you do," Superintendent Cynthia Saunders told commissioners. "Our goal is to make traffic more efficient so maybe more people do want to ride the bus."

In a brainstorming session, Hopes said he could see potential for the school district to work with the Manatee County Area Transit public bus system to transport high school students to school on modified routes, and Servia proposed introducing rules that would only allow 12th-grade students to drive their own cars to school.

"I know you've got activities after school and work, but that may be another thing to consider," Servia said.

At a future school board workshop, the district's transportation staff is set to present a plan to reduce their impact on county roads.

"Right now we're identifying the problem, but we definitely have to go through the process with communicating with parents, getting input and so forth," said Saunders. "It won't be done immediately, but we have identified some things that we will bring to the table."



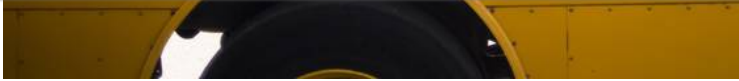
SHARE ➔

UP NEXT



SCHOOL OFFICIALS WAVE THE BUSES GOODBYE ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Manatee County School District officials greeted school bus drivers on their way out Thursday on the first day of school. BY HANNAH MORSE



At Tuesday's Council of Governments meeting, school district and county officials discussed how they could put more students on school buses to reduce congestion during busy commute times in Manatee County.

BRADENTON HERALD FILE PHOTO



RYAN CALLIHAN

941-745-7095

Ryan Callihan is the Bradenton Herald's County Reporter, covering local government and politics. On the weekends, he also covers breaking news. Ryan is a graduate of USF St. Petersburg.

[Support my work with a digital subscription](#)

SUBSCRIBE TODAY →

COMMENTS ▼



READ NEXT

HEALTH NEWS

Planned Parenthood: States should oppose