UPDATE: Implementation of the New Student Transportation Funding System

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Authorizing legislation: RCW 28a.160.1921

K–12 Financial Resources
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Executive Summary

Implementation of the new student transportation funding system is proceeding smoothly with school district transportation staff becoming more comfortable with the new process. A funding simulator has been developed to allow school districts to determine the impact of proposed service level changes.

Background

The 2010 Washington State Legislature passed Substitute House Bill 2776, which set the initial implementation date for the new Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS) as September 1, 2011. The General Instructions for Data Collection and the Detailed Guidance for Data Collection are available on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website, under “STARS Reference Material” at: http://www.k12.wa.us/transportation/STARS/default.aspx. The STARS system requires school districts to submit three reports per school year with the first due at the end of October, the second due February 1 and the third due May 1. The results of the reports are available on OSPI’s website on the STARS page referenced above, under “Quarterly Reports.”

Update Status

The 2013–14 school year starts the third reporting sequence. District transportation staff are becoming increasingly comfortable with the new reporting requirements. The fall ridership reporting workshops put on by the regional transportation coordinators to train school district transportation staff were also attended by the State Auditor’s Office field staff to increase their familiarity with the new system.

A funding simulator has been posted on the OSPI website at the page referenced above, under the “STARS Funding Reports” link. The simulator provides a method for school districts to determine the fiscal impact of potential transportation service changes. This is important because STARS uses logarithms for some values, resulting in non-linear impacts with changes in workload. Training on use of the simulator was conducted by the regional transportation coordinators during November and December.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Successful implementation continues with school district staff becoming more familiar with the details of the funding system. The next quarterly report will review the formula coefficients resulting from the second complete data set and the district allocations for the 2013–14 school year.
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