



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

August 29, 2007

Dear Superintendents:

During the 2006 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly, §16-21.1 was passed that required RIDE, RIPTA, and the Office of Statewide Planning to create and implement a plan for a statewide transportation system for students with special needs who require out-of-district transportation. The law also included a provision to eventually expand the out-of-district special education transportation system after the first year of operation to include all non-public school students, after school programs, and, ultimately, a statewide transportation system for all students that will encompass both within district and out-of-district transportation.

The intent behind this effort will be to provide an efficient transportation system for all students and reduce the fiscal and logistical burden transportation places on local school departments. The special education and out-of-district model is expected to begin September 2008.

The Rhode Island Department of Administration, Office of Purchases (on behalf of the Office of Statewide Planning and RIDE) issued an RFP from qualified organizations to design the out-of-district statewide transportation system for special needs students and to conduct additional transportation system planning. The system will hopefully be designed by March 2008 and a second RFP will be issued to acquire the services of a transportation vendor to implement the transportation system.

As this effort commences, I will be asking for your assistance in providing information to RIDE to ensure that the system developed meets the needs of all users. RIDE's contact person for this activity is Patricia Durfee. You may reach Patti at 222-4273 or Patti.Durfee@ride.ri.gov.

In light of the proposed CMS changes to eliminate reimbursement for transportation services for students with special needs and the tremendous burden on the school districts' budgets, this is one more attempt to provide financial relief for districts.

Thanks you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

Cc: Special Education Directors
Business Managers
Senator M. Teresa Paiva-Weed

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