

Overcoming Challenges and Embracing Innovation in Student Transportation

Northern Express Bus Service



Northern Express Bus Service provides student transportation services to four school districts across the state of Wisconsin. Its 59 employees, including drivers and administrative staff, transport approximately 2,500 students every year.

Owner Jeff Walker is actively involved in the daily operations of the Berlin-based bus company. From driving buses to planning routes—Jeff wears many hats. But not everything has been seamless.

Like many of its peers, Northern Express Bus has experienced challenges with driver shortages and driver recruitment strategies. However, the positive impact TravelTracker-Routing has had on their operations, driver retention, and more. TravelTracker-Routing is a comprehensive web-based software solution for bus routing and management.

Challenges with Previous Software Systems

Prior to moving to TravelTracker-Routing, Northern Express Bus Service faced numerous challenges with their previous routing software. Their former desktop- and server-based system posed limitations in terms of accessibility and created difficulties when trying to work from Northern Express Bus' multiple locations.

Additionally, a purported “all-in-one solution” they tried to implement turned out to be far less than ideal. Jeff states that “the software would also do unannounced updates. I’m dead serious when I say they would put out a notice on—usually sometime around Wednesday or Friday—updates coming this weekend and we would literally have anxiety all weekend long because we did not know what 7th Circle of Hell we were walking into on Monday morning. It was awful.”

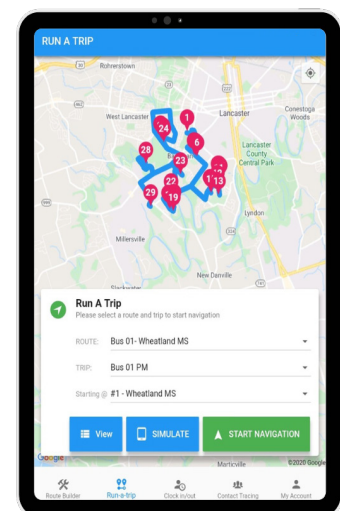
The solution had a clunky interface, crashed frequently, and offered poor customer service. These issues led to high-stress levels, inefficiencies, and increased labor costs.

“But on initial login, because I was admin, I could see the whole thing,” begins Jeff. “Rather than an integrated system, it was just very slow, poor programming created in different modules. Modules didn’t match each other as far as look and feel and how they functioned. Errors. It was just a complete waste of time and money.”

“I ultimately oversee each terminal. I try to help and assist as needed while letting everybody else do their own thing. I do routing, field trip planning, maintenance when I have to, drive all the time with the shortage. Billing, accounting, HR, you name it—it’s in the job description, so every day is different.”

Jeff Walker

Owner of Northern Express Bus Service, Wisconsin



Transition to TravelTracker-Routing

The decision to switch to TravelTracker-Routing was driven by the need for a reliable, web-based solution that offered seamless access across multiple locations. Although initially hesitant due to the purported “all in one” features of their previous software solution, Jeff recognized the power and convenience of TravelTracker-Routing as well as its potential to streamline their operations.

Quantifiable Benefits and Impact of TravelTracker-Routing

While Northern Express Bus Service is still working to tap into the full potential of TravelTracker-Routing, Jeff acknowledged that the cost savings achieved by eliminating downtime caused by crashes and TravelTracker’s time-saving features have reduced the burden on both managers and staff.

“We’ve definitely experienced cost savings because I’m no longer paying staff to sit around and do nothing because the software is crashed,” states Jeff.

TravelTracker-Routing’s speed, functionality, and optimization capabilities have impressed Jeff and his team, enabling them to experiment with route optimization and discover new possibilities. Additionally, the elimination of the stress and anxiety associated with their previous software has been a welcome relief for the team.

TravelTracker-Routing’s powerful optimization capabilities have brought fresh perspectives to route planning and led to potential cost savings in routing. “The time and the ease of use of TravelTracker-Routing, which saves time for our managers and myself, is adding up,” states Jeff. “The optimizations that TransACT has to offer are incredible.”

Looking Ahead to Parent Communication

Jeff expressed excitement about further utilizing TravelTracker-Routing’s communication capabilities to streamline parent communication. TravelTracker-Routing software ensures that everyone involved receives the information they need when they need it. Notifications for delays, emergencies, and changes can be sent to drivers and parents directly.

The online Parent Portal feature also enables parents to easily update student information and request transportation changes, reducing incoming calls and increasing accuracy. Although they have yet to fully utilize this aspect of the software, Jeff believes it will be a valuable tool in enhancing communication efficiency between the bus company and district parents.

[TransACT's TravelTracker-Routing] is by far the most powerful, easy-to-use web-based software I've ever seen in my life...the speed of it is incredible and especially compared to what we were used to. My anxiety level has dropped since switching to TransACT.

Jeff Walker

Owner of Northern Express Bus Service, Wisconsin



When asked for advice for other bus contracting companies considering TravelTracker-Routing, Jeff emphasized the value and functionality of the software. He also highlighted the exceptional customer service provided by the TravelTracker-Routing team and encouraged potential users to embrace the software's capabilities.



"I cannot tell you enough how much I love the change, what a great decision it was, and what an incredible product you have," says Jeff. "I truly believe that TransACT has the power to help my company grow and work with districts of any size and I'm just getting started in it. I'm sure I haven't even gotten to the full potential yet!"

With its powerful features, ease-of-use, and exceptional customer support, TravelTracker-Routing has transformed the company's operations and provided a solid foundation for future growth. As Northern Express Bus continues to explore the software's full potential, they eagerly anticipate reaping even greater benefits and delivering an enhanced experience to their district customers and their communities.

Owner of Northern Express Bus
Service, Wisconsin

