Transact
CONFIDENCE IN ACTION

Salem City Schools Improves Productivity—and Community Service—with TravelTracker-Routing

The Salem City (Virginia) School district prides itself on its commitment to creating a loving and engaging environment that inspires children to reach their full potential. The school system provides valuable services to nearly 4,000 students, including daily bus transportation for approximately 2,000 students in its elementary, middle, and high schools.

Yet in the past, creating and managing bus routes was not always as easy—or as effective—as it should have been. Lewis Armistead, Salem City's Supervisor of Transportation, notes that Salem City didn't even use a software solution for many years, but when it did, their first experience left a lot to be desired.

"Our previous routing application just didn't work for us," Armistead explains. "It was hard to use and required so many inconsistent methods to create routes or add a student to a different bus." This particular challenge was made worse by the fact that the previous vendor's customer support team was hard to reach, often leaving Armistead without an answer to a pressing question for days at a time.

Additionally, the first software application was not cloud-based. Not only did this mean that Armistead could only work on bus routing when he was in the office, but this situation also required the school's IT staff to maintain the system and troubleshoot more technical issues. Armistead knew there had to be a better way, so when the previous system came up for renewal, he decided to pass and started to look for a new transportation routing solution.

Many Options, but Just One Solution: TravelTracker

After evaluating many other vendors and competitive products, Armistead and Salem City selected the TravelTracker - Routing solution.

TravelTracker stood out for a number of reasons. First, Armistead loved the fact that it was cloud-based. "It is great that I can use it anywhere," he says. "I recently went on a vacation where I spent a few hours each day working on new routes to get ready for the upcoming school year. I never could have accomplished this with our old system." The entire Salem City team immediately saw an improvement in training, support, and overall service.
"The support portal on TravelTracker has been great, especially to tackle common issues that other customers have faced," says Armistead.

TRAVELTRACKER

Company: Salem City Schools (Virginia)

By the numbers: Year-round busing services for 2,000 students on 24 different routes for elementary, middle and high schools plus 9 special needs routes.

Challenge: A previous on-premise routing application was difficult to use and led to ongoing troubleshooting and maintenance issues.

Solution: TravelTracker-Routing

Benefits: By gaining an easier, more intuitive solution, Salem City has been able to save time, increase productivity, and provide better transportation services to students and their families.

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Lewis Armistead
Supervisor of Transportation, Salem City Schools

"But if I have more detailed questions, I can actually send an email directly to my customer service representative at TransACT (formerly App-Garden). She replies right away and either answers the question or books a quick video call to address it. The entire experience with App-Garden's service has been phenomenal."

The team also enjoyed how intuitive TravelTracker is, including its use of drag-and-drop and other powerful functionality. "It is so easy to create new routes, create or modify a bus stop, or add students to any bus or route," Armistead explains. "TravelTracker is extremely user friendly and quickly gives me a big picture view of all of our routes."

Major Improvements Right from the Start

Armistead notes that TravelTracker delivered significant benefits in two other important areas: productivity and time savings. "TravelTracker just makes it so much faster to create bus routes and use the Parent Portal feature to communicate the right information to our entire community," he explains. "This will help us increase productivity, save time, and provide a better experience for students and their families."

As evidence of this success, Armistead describes just how impactful TravelTracker was, right from the start.

"Normally, I dread the first week of the school year since we tend to get a flood of emails and calls with questions about bus routes," he says. "In our first year with [TransACT], we exported all of the existing routes from TravelTracker and sent them to parents. We also created a Google form so parents could communicate if they had a question or an issue that needed attention. We could easily access this information and quickly implement any changes in TravelTracker."

Armistead reports that they had nearly 800 responses from parents, a number that might have overwhelmed them without TravelTracker. "In the past, we might have been tempted to use something like Microsoft Word to collect their feedback and then manually modify the bus routes. But with TravelTracker, we can easily make the requested changes and provide better service to our entire community."

Unlimited Licenses = Unlimited Potential

Salem City also appreciates how TravelTracker offers unlimited licenses, a clear difference--and advantage—over their previous application. "I've been able to push TravelTracker out to many different users in each of our schools," says Armistead. "As they continue to learn how to use it, I'm confident that this will help us eliminate phone calls and improve our ability to resolve issues even more. We'll get to the point where parents shouldn't have to call us to get their questions answered since we can manage it all much more proactively."

Armistead is already planning how to maximize the results. "Our staff can already enter data, which means we don't have to maintain multiple spreadsheets or databases. Also, TravelTracker offers unlimited user-defined fields so we'll continue to create even more custom fields to get even better at collecting and sharing vital information using TravelTracker."

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The Future Looks Bright

When asked to summarize his overall experience with TransACT, Armistead points out a single regret: that he didn't implement TravelTracker sooner.

"I wish I started with TravelTracker much sooner," he says. "By this time next year, all of our processes will be completely different and so much better, and we owe it all to TravelTracker."