



Customer Case Study

Scottsdale Unified School District



Organization

Scottsdale Unified School District

Industry

Pupil

Location

Scottsdale, Arizona

Website

susd.org

Operation

- 200 school buses
- 121-square-mile operating area

Solution

- Zonar Ground Traffic Control®
- Zonar V4™ TCU
- Zonar EVIR®
- Zonar Z Pass®
- Zonar tablets
- RAM® Mounts

Benefits

- No more pencil-whipped, rushed & skipped vehicle inspections
- Streamlined work order processes
- Faster defect prioritization & repairs
- Driver exoneration & accountability
- Greater visibility into bus location, departure times & on-board ridership
- Reliable tablet-to-mount connectivity

This school bus fleet went from unreliable inspections to verified peace of mind.

The Transportation Department at Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD) is dedicated to transporting students safely. Operating in the Phoenix, Arizona area—one of the hottest climates in the U.S.—makes preventing roadside breakdowns more than a goal. Reliability means safety.

When a school bus fails on route, replacement buses take time to arrive. Arizona's soaring temperatures pose a serious risk for riders waiting onboard a disabled bus without air conditioning.

SUSD saw that **Zonar EVIR** was a clear way to bolster vehicle reliability across the district's 121 square miles.

- Ensure every required inspection is performed properly.
- Speed up the reporting and repair process.
- Keep time-sensitive repairs from being overlooked.

The SUSD Transportation Director oversees the district's 200 school buses, which serve more than 6,000 student riders and cover almost 2,800 miles daily. As he explains, "It can get up to 110 degrees here, so having Zonar [EVIR] means getting those kids off a disabled bus and right into an air-conditioned replacement."

Inspections turn trustworthy.

Before implementing EVIR, SUSD's team had no way to verify drivers performed a complete inspection, inside, outside and under the hood.

- Pre- and post-trip bus inspections were being pencil-whipped.
- Routine and time-sensitive maintenance needs were overlooked.
- Work orders were left in a box or misplaced, delaying repairs.

EVIR transformed SUSD's vehicle inspections from rushed, incomplete or skipped to verifiable as having been done thoroughly and properly.

Drivers are required to physically visit each inspection zone, scan the Zonar tag, and follow the inspection process on their Zonar tablet. Once done, results, notes and photos of defects are uploaded to the cloud for online review.

No paperwork-eating inbox to delay repairs.

"Having a system like Zonar [EVIR] has become a necessity."

► David Jacobson, Director of Transportation, SUSD

Each inspection is timestamped. SUSD can tell how long each inspection took as a whole, as well as how long the driver spent at each individual inspection point.

Inspections bring peace of mind.

Drivers are responsible for inspections. Jacobson also knows he's "accountable to the district and parents and kids to make sure I'm supplying drivers with tools to do inspections properly."

Knowing each vehicle inspection is performed properly gives Jacobson peace of mind he couldn't enjoy before SUSD implemented EVIR.

"With EVIR, I know the drivers have gone around the entire vehicle."

► David Jacobson

Defect photos minimize downtime.

Small but important defects can be hard to find, even for trained eyes. When SUSD used paper-based inspections, mechanics had to spend valuable time looking for defects drivers' referred to in their handwritten descriptions.

Using their Zonar tablet to perform EVIR inspections, drivers attach photos of defects to the uploaded results. Mechanics now find and prioritize defects faster because they can see what they're looking for.

Records put their clean foot forward.

Paper forms attract what digital forms don't: messes. During annual inspections, Jacobson shares that "showing inspection records with coffee stains isn't good optics." Physical records also take up physical storage space.

Without taking up additional physical storage, EVIR inspection records comply with storage requirements and feature zero stains.

Data supports drivers and callers.

SUSD also saw how the Zonar fleet management platform enables other operational improvements.

- Exonerate falsely accused drivers.
- Enhance driver accountability.
- Enhance community peace of mind.

SUSD cares about their relationship with drivers and members of the communities. The district makes every effort to support both when people call with concerns about how a SUSD bus is being driven.

Before adopting Zonar fleet management, these phone calls put Jacobson in a difficult position. "It would be the driver's word against [the callers']," he says. "I want to believe my drivers but also serve the community as best as we can."

Visibility clears the air.

Each SUSD school bus features a **Zonar V4** telematics control unit (TCU), which captures and streams vehicle data to the **Zonar Ground Traffic Control** web portal in real time. Now Jacobson pulls up SUSD fleet data to investigate concerns.

- Look up current and historical bus location.
- See rate of speed at any point during the trip.
- Avoid interrupting the driver to inquire.

SUSD responds to concerns appropriately if data substantiates the caller's observation. And exonerates drivers when data does not.

"More often than not," Jacobson says, "the caller perceives a bus is traveling at a high rate of speed, but the GPS data shows that isn't the case." Sometimes, Zonar GPS shows no SUSD buses were even in the area at the time.

Whatever the case may be, community members feel heard. And SUSD drivers feel supported.

Community confidence grows.

"When the community member learns about our technology," Jacobson says, "it gives them peace of mind to know we know everything our buses are doing without sitting on them."

Geofencing protects buses.

Zonar real-time tracking enables SUSD to define geofenced areas within Ground Traffic Control to help keep buses on approved routes.

Jacobson explains why this matters. "We have some narrow streets our buses can't fit. Driving down these streets puts the vehicle at risk of sideswiping cars. Or creating a blockage if someone is driving from the opposite direction."

Now, entering a geofenced street triggers a notification. And drivers get to be coached about avoiding those streets.

Geofencing also protects service.

Buses that leave their dispatch point too early risk arriving at stops too early. Riders who aren't ready might miss their bus. SUSD defined geofences for these dispatch points. And receive alerts when drivers leave too early.

Based on data, SUSD can also determine if an early departure is a one-off or if the driver needs coaching.

Ridership visibility protects students.

SUSD enhanced inspections with student riders in mind. The district also adopted **Zonar Z Pass** ridership tracking with the same goal: greater safety.

Before SUSD adopted Z Pass, bus drivers—especially new and substitute drivers—were unfamiliar with their riders. They had to take it on faith students knew their stops.

Unfortunately, some students got off at the wrong stop. And some parents forgot about their child’s afterschool plans. Anxious staff and frantic parents had to search.

That was then. Z Pass is now.

- Students scan their district-issued Z Pass card to the Z Pass reader inside the bus door.
- The reader captures basic information such as ID number, date and location.
- And uploads that data to Ground Traffic Control for secure, real-time visibility.

Learn how Z Pass keeps ridership data safe.

Authorized SUSD personnel to know who’s on which bus, as well as where and when they disembarked. Students are accounted for and more easily located sooner. Parent call volumes have declined.

Sturdier mounts maintain connectivity.

SUSD drivers use Zonar tablets for essential tasks such as EVIR inspections. School buses are tough environments. One of drivers’ biggest complaints was the tablet mounts weren’t sturdy enough to maintain physical connection with the tablets.

When the district adopted Zonar fleet tech, they also switched to tablet mounts from our partner, RAM® Mounts. Jacobson saw the difference. “These are serious mounts. They are solid, with a fine structure that really holds the tablet perfectly and snugly. No connectivity loss.”

We always answer their calls for support.

SUSD has been a Zonar customer since 2017. Over time, any fleet is going to need support. Zonar provides U.S.-based support around the clock, every day of year—no exception.

By phone or by email, Jacobson says, “someone always answers right away, whether it’s to answer a question or work through some challenges.”

“They jump right in, identify the problem, and solve it. Best of all, sometimes [Zonar] support will call to just check in.”

► David Jacobson

Our partnership continues.

Today, SUSD continues using Zonar fleet technologies to enhance operations, keep vehicles healthy, serve its communities and safeguard riders.

- EVIR inspections keep buses healthy.
- Ridership visibility safeguards all riders.
- Greater fleet visibility supports drivers, parents and community members.

SUSD also plans to add faculty, staff and coaches to their Z Pass system to account for everyone riding the bus.

“I tell people all the time—having a telematics provider is a necessity, and they should look at Zonar first.”

► David Jacobson

About Zonar

Since 2001, Zonar has pioneered smart fleet management and mobility solutions so pupil transportation fleets of every size can safeguard student riders, operate more efficiently and serve the community. Now, we're a leading provider of solutions that enhance visibility, fleet health, bus and route utilization, student rider safety, driver efficiency, utilization, and on-time reliability. We also partner with OEMs and other industry leaders to provide seamless integrations and deeper insights.

We were founded on safety, and Zonar remains committed to keeping our roads—the same ones we share with other families—safe. Our complete, award-winning platform fits virtually any fleet and features our 60+ patented technologies. We develop solutions with an innovative spirit, and back them with our award-winning 24/7/365 U.S.-based Zonar Customer Success team.

Zonar is headquartered in Seattle, Washington. We also have locations in Cincinnati and West Chicago.

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