

WHEN THE  
WHEELS ON  
THE BUS

# STOPPED

From permanently canceled routes, to breakdowns and rotating missed routes, the bus system causes trouble for riders and families. What's going on, and what can be done?

Story By Aleah Bettles and Elizabeth Robertson

The bus driver shortage was no joke. 74.4% of Drake students ride the bus to and from school and suffered from shortened and canceled routes.

Bus depot employee, Tina Bilstein, stated, "The routes are being canceled due to driver shortage. We've had seven bus routes permanently canceled for the whole year with no guaranteed time to bring them back." This was stressful for Bilstein as well as students' guardians.

"When I found out my bus got canceled, my mom was very stressed and upset because my bus was canceled for about two weeks," Reya Gonzalez (6) said. Pickup was difficult for multiple students, but Gonzalez was able to work it out. "My grandparents work all day as well as my mom, but I do have a lot of aunts and uncles to pick me up, so it's not too difficult."

Faith McMahon's (6) neighborhood car pooled when their route was canceled. "Most of the drivers were mad because we had to be at the bus stop by 6:20 AM. Most of the parents in my neighborhood didn't even get the email that the bus was canceled, so they still showed up anyway," McMahon said.

Principal Mindi Feir had to manage the extra stress that it put on school traffic. "All those 70 kids that now need to have a ride to school are in our drop off instead of coming to school by bus. What ends up happening is it makes everybody late because the line is so long," Feir said.

A hassle for the entire district, it was a reflection of shortages in education across the nation. For a position with lower pay and seasonal working hours, sadly, there seemed to be no easy answers in sight.

**LONG DAY.** After the last bell, Cambryn Henderson (8) walks to her bus. There were some days it wasn't that easy. "My parents were both working, and my bus got canceled, so I had to walk home in the snow, and it was really cold that day," Henderson said.



photo by gijones

I had to stay home on the late start day because my bus just never picked me up. I guess there was a problem, and my mom was already at work.

-Caleb Eroen (7)

## CALLING HOME

It wasn't unusual to get an announcement mid-day that buses had been canceled for that afternoon. Here's the fallout for kids and parents when that happened.



"Well, I didn't really feel bad about telling my parents. They are pretty forgiving. I don't really think my parents minded. It was just an adjustment of plans."  
-Brendan Marquardt (6)



"I didn't feel really anything when the buses were canceled because I have a lot of family, so it's kinda' easy. My parents probably felt a little nervous because one of them sometimes had to leave work early."  
-Reya Gonzalez (6)



"I just texted them at first when I heard, so I wasn't too worried. It was more of my mom worried because she still needs to drop my brother off at school."  
-Cora Thome (6)



"My parent were for sure mad, and I felt anxious because I thought nobody could've brought me home."  
-Peyton Nguyen (6)



**ALL ABOARD.** Carpooling was a help when buses got canceled. Kaiya Mestemaker (8) and Esme Allison (8) have carpooled since the beginning of the year. **STOP THAT.** Mr. Sean Hoorelbeke mans the crosswalk on 52nd Avenue for Tristen Lintz (7) and friends. The busy street was the only way in and out of Drake for cars and buses and was treacherous. "We try to be timely and make sure we get all our students in and out as safely as possible," Hoorelbeke said.



**"CAN YOU TAKE ME HOME?"** Bus driver Laura Owen stands in front of her bus at pick up. "When routes are canceled, I think of the parents. That's the most challenging part emotionally for the drivers because you want to get kids to and from school safely," Owen said.

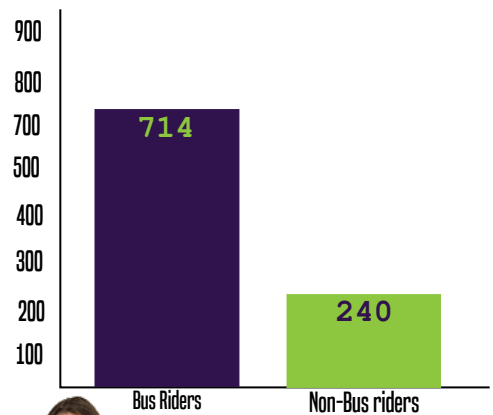


**RUSHING OUT.** As Drake students rush out the doors and load onto their buses, Timothy Donovan (8) makes his way through the crowd. Donovan was one of 150 students who choiced into Drake this year, so busing was not an option. The fact that these students lived in neighborhoods where most kids attended another school made carpooling difficult as well. **TIME'S TICKING.** On an especially frigid morning, Elise Weicher (7) waits in the dark at her bus stop. This was not an uncommon occurrence in winter months since the tardy bell rang at 7:30 AM. Some kids, like Weicher, who were at the first stop of the route, got picked up at 6:20 AM. "It's so early I can still see the stars," Weicher said. "But I do get to pick my seat and listen to my music on the way to school."



## WHO'S BUSSIN'?

How many people actually ride the bus anyway? We uncovered the answer.



"I get up at 5:00 AM, and I have to be at the bus stop by 6:20 for a 45 minute bus ride."  
-Boston Patton (7)