

Rhinebeck readies new busing policy

School board to vote Tuesday

Rhinebeck Office
Poughkeepsie Journal

RHINEBECK — Some students in the Rhinebeck district may have to set their alarms a little earlier next year if they want to meet the bus on time. The school district is in the process of tweaking its transportation policy, with test runs of new bus routes scheduled earlier this month. The school board is scheduled to vote on the new policy Tuesday. If successful, the new routes will give the district

more efficient, impartial routes, district officials said.

The old policy said students in kindergarten through second grade could walk as far as three-tenths of a mile while students in third through 12th grade could walk as far as a mile.

In some cases, third-through fifth-grade students were forced to walk varying distances based on whether a second-grader or 10th-grader lived in their neighborhood, officials said.

Routes also consisted of unnecessary door-to-door pickups and extraneous stops that forced drivers to zigzag across town.

In other cases, some students would receive door-to-door pickup while others walked.

Sharper routes

"These are quirks that have built up into the system for the past 15 to 20 years," Superintendent Joseph Phelan said. "No one really knows how it happened."

Louis Boffardi, a consultant from Transportation Adviso-

ry Services, said the new routes are shorter and more fair. TAS is the firm hired to help revamp the transportation program.

"We've consolidated the routes where feasible," Boffardi said. "We haven't eliminated all door-to-door pickups. There will still be instances in which safety issues dictate the need for door-to-door."

A simulation by the district's new VersaTrans computer transportation program shows the new routes cut the high school and middle school run times from an aver-

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age of 50 minutes to an average of 38 minutes.

A simulation done on elementary routes showed the number of routes would decrease by two. Run time decreased from an average of 45 minutes to 34 minutes.

Parul Sazena, a district parent, said while her children

were old enough to walk to the bus stop, she worried about younger children who may fall victim to bullying and injury at bus stops.

"It's an added responsibility for parents and a risk," she said.

Gina Fox, another parent, said she regretted the reduction of door-to-door pickups in the new policy. But she agreed it was necessary.

"That's a luxury that I'm not sure we can afford to have anymore," she said. "Most people need to know that it is a luxury."