



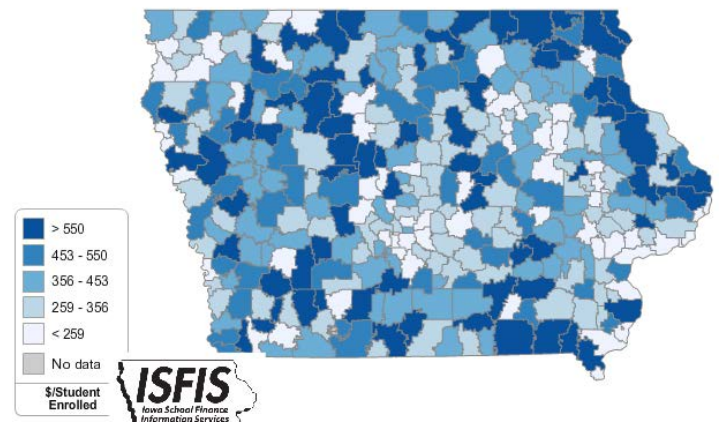
RSAI Position Paper

Transportation Equity: A 2015 Legislative Priority

Background: In the 1950s, Iowa had over 4,000 school districts. Students could walk to their neighborhood school and transportation costs were nonexistent for Iowa school districts. As budgets have tightened and enrollments continue to decline, Iowa now has 338 districts (in FY 2015) with varying square miles per pupil and hugely varying transportation costs.

Iowa's foundation formula does not recognize the sparseness of population, square mileage or route miles for school districts, or the number of students transported. As a result, districts with large transportation costs cover those costs out of the school general fund.

Current Reality: the following statistics describe current transportation inequities today.



- FY 2015 State cost per pupil is \$6,366. There are at least 36 Iowa school districts that require more than 10% of that cost per pupil for transportation.
- The range in transportation expenditures varies from a low of \$29.60 to a high of \$1,150.79 per student enrolled (FY 2013 Annual Transportation Report, Iowa DE)
- Property tax characteristics, including low valuation per pupil and higher tax rates, create challenges for districts with low tax capacity to pay for buses out of PPEL or Sales tax funds, further stressing the general fund budget. When district have larger transportation costs, both taxpayer and student inequity worsens.
- General fund dollars spent on busing would otherwise be available for staff and teachers (salary, benefits, training, and support), curriculum, programs, technology, and energy. Lack of resources in all of these areas creates an unequal educational opportunity for students in rural districts.

RSAI calls on the Iowa Legislature to address the issue of **Transportation Equity**: RSAI supports a mechanism that covers school transportation costs with state and/or local funding that does not unreasonably disadvantage property tax payers in property poor districts or compete with general funds otherwise spent on providing education to students.

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