

AFD Ep 322 Links and Notes - School Buses

- School Transportation Landscape from Bellwether
 - https://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/The%20Challenges%20and%20Opportunities%20in%20School%20Transportation%20Today_Bellwether.pdf
 - 480,000 buses used each day (in 2013)
 - Average cost per student was about \$1000 in 2015
 - Ideally contracts would save districts money by spreading out fixed costs across multiple contracts, in reality it's not always that simple - efficiency problems still aren't solved, hidden costs in contracts, and districts have little leverage once they sell their busses
- Different Types of School Bus Contracts
 - <http://www.yellowbuses.org/school-administrator/contract-models/>
- Study from PA on Bus Contracts
 - <https://www.keystoneresearch.org/publications/research/school-bus-transport>
 - 72% of PA districts contracted out their service in 2008
 - "In analyzing school district transportation costs, we control for the impact on costs of school district enrollment, fuel costs, spending for transportation of special education students, and the wealth and income of the school district. We find that:
 - Contracting out significantly increases total costs. For example, if the "typical" district (with enrollment and other variables equal to the average for all districts) shifts from contracting out none of its transportation services to contracting out for all of its services, costs increase an estimated \$223,861 (in 2008 dollars).
 - Contracting out also increases costs to the state, in part because the state reimburses contracted transportation services at a higher rate than district self-provided services. In the typical district, increasing contracting out from zero to 100% increases costs to the state by \$231,903.
 - For local school districts, there is no statistically significant difference (at the 5% level) between what they pay for transportation services when they contract out versus when they self-provide transportation—in effect, the more generous state reimbursement of contracting out compensates for the increase in total costs."
- NYC Bus Contracts (this is wild)
 - <https://www.wnyc.org/story/284319-why-new-york-city-school-busing-is-so-expensive/>
 - Contracts haven't been put out for bid since 1979
 - As of 2013, average cost per year was \$6,900/ child
 - In 2008, the head of the bus drivers union was sent to jail for connections to the mob
 - The lucrative contracts don't appear to be benefiting drivers, although they are paid for their summertime off which is unusual in most school contracts
 - Current: NYC DOE maybe buying school bus companies ?!
(<https://qns.com/story/2020/05/14/rumors-of-doe-buying-out-school-bus-companies-cause-concern-in-industry/>)
- Urban Institute Paper on Transportation in "choice-rich" cities. More about public transportation use than school buses.
 - https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/88481/transportation_brief_final_errata_3.pdf

- Plenty of news stories on contracted bus drivers not getting paid during COVID
- Blog on why regular transportation systems can't handle school transportation (hint: bell times)
 - <https://humantransit.org/2017/08/the-problem-of-school-transportation.html>
- School Bus History
 - <https://americanhistory.si.edu/america-on-the-move/school-bus> - The 20th century featured a transition as rural American populations declined and suburban populations increased. The remaining rural population needed to be bused to consolidated schools and rural schools were shifting away from the one-room-all-grades model. The new suburban population also needed transportation if they couldn't walk to their schools. Though in many suburbs there were public transportation options initially before they were replaced by city-contracted or city-run dedicated school buses.
 - <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-how-school-buses-became-yellow-180973041/> - In 1939, Frank Cyr convened a meeting to standardize school buses nationwide to facilitate mass production specifications and to improve safety by making school buses easily identifiable. Yellow was already a popular color for school buses in some parts of the country but was selected to become the (voluntary) national standard for safety reasons.
 - *The school bus transportation system is the largest mass transit system in the United States, yet school buses account for less than one percent of traffic fatalities each year. Students on school buses, NHTSA says, are 70 times safer than those who travel to school by car "because [school buses] are the most regulated vehicles on the road; they are designed to be safer than passenger vehicles...; and in every state, stop-arm laws (referring to the mechanical stop-sign arm that swings from the side of the bus when stopped) protect children from other motorists." Kinney, says, "If you look at fatalities, it's not the occupants of the school bus that have fatal injuries, it's the people that run into the school bus."*
 - The Boston Busing Crisis (and Southern Busing too)
 - <https://www.history.com/news/desegregation-busing-schools>
 - <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED571629>
 - court-ordered busing effort, which applied to fewer than 5 percent of the nation's public school students, "failed to more fully desegregate public schools because school officials, politicians, courts and the news media valued the desires of parents more than the rights of black students."
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 - <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/30/737393607/a-history-of-school-busing>
 - It did. So there's a lot of, I say, lip service given to the ideal of integration, but there's an extreme lack of political will and urgency and leadership to try to make any real integration happen in America's schools. Over

the last decade and a half, both courts and politicians and local school officials have really kind of backtracked on trying to live up to the mandate of the Brown v. Board decision and trying to make good on the constitutional promises of equal education opportunities for all students. The reason I think it's sold out is because it's - it is a controversial issue. And it requires people to make a set of choices that are going to benefit not just their own students, not just their own children but all the children within a city or within a region.

- I was very surprised. As someone who studies these issues, it has not been a national topic in the presidential debates for the last few cycles. But I think what was important about Harris bringing it up was the fact that she was speaking from her own experience but then the way in which she was able to link it to the importance of federal intervention. Biden's response that this idea that local communities can only do this themselves, it can only be voluntary, that the - so the federal government has no role to play in trying to advance school desegregation - really runs counter to everything we know about how schools became integrated. So I was very surprised to hear Harris mention it, but I think it does speak to, hopefully, a new moment to talk again about these issues.
- Biden
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/11/politics/joe-biden-busing-letters-2020/index.html>
 - "My bill strikes at the heart of the injustice of court-ordered busing. It prohibits the federal courts from disrupting our educational system in the name of the constitution where there is no evidence that the governmental officials intended to discriminate," Biden wrote to fellow senators on March 25, 1977. "I believe there is a growing sentiment in the Congress to curb unnecessary busing."
 - <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/6/28/18965923/joe-biden-school-desegregation-busing-democratic-primary> "It's only when busing gets linked to school desegregation

that it becomes an issue,” Delmont explained in an interview with Vox. Busing “becomes a political codeword and a way for white parents to say ‘we oppose this change’ without saying that they oppose their children going to schools with black and Latino students.”

- One of the earliest instances of black and Latino students being bused to predominantly white schools [was in the 1950s](#), Delmont said. New York tried to reduce overcrowding in predominantly black schools by sending a small amount of students to white schools. Those efforts quickly led to protests from white parents.
- “Biden in some theoretical sense was in support of school integration,” says University of New Hampshire historian Jason Sokol, who wrote a [2015 Politico article on Biden’s busing record](#). But after seeing how angry his constituents were, Biden “fashions a politically expedient stance where he could claim he supports integration while opposing busing, which was the means to bring that integration.”
- In 1975, shortly after Boston residents protested and rioted over the city’s desegregation order, Biden came out in favor of an amendment [introduced by North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms](#), a staunch opponent of civil rights legislation and desegregation efforts. Helms’s amendment would bar the then-active Department of Health, Education, and Welfare from collecting data about the race of students or teachers, and also prevented the department from requiring schools “to classify teachers or students by race.” Helms proudly announced that the measure would effectively end any federal oversight or enforcement of busing.
- “I have become convinced that busing is a bankrupt concept,” Biden said as he stood to support Helms’s amendment. He added that the Senate should instead focus on “whether or not we are really going to provide a better educational opportunity for blacks and minority groups in this country.” Helms [responded](#) by welcoming Biden “to the ranks of the enlightened.”
- The Helms amendment was defeated, but Biden then introduced a similar amendment. Here’s how Sokol [described](#) Biden’s proposal:

- Biden proposed his own amendment to the \$36 billion education bill, stipulating that none of those federal funds could be used by school systems “to assign teachers or students to schools ... for reasons of race.” His amendment would prevent “some faceless bureaucrat” from “deciding that any child, black or white, should fit in some predetermined ratio.” He explained, “All the amendment says is that some bureaucrat sitting down there in HEW cannot tell a school district whether it is properly segregated or desegregated, or whether it should or should not have funds.” Finally, Biden called busing “an asinine policy.”
- The measure passed, outraging Massachusetts Republican Edward Brooke, who at the time was the only black senator in Congress. Brooke called the Biden amendment “the greatest symbolic defeat for civil rights since 1964.” Biden later introduced a second amendment that explicitly barred the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare from ordering busing, but left other integration measures intact.
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General Articles on School Bussing

- NYT: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-bussing.html>
 - “That we even use the word “busing” to describe what was in fact court-ordered school desegregation, and that Americans of all stripes believe that the brief period in which we actually tried to desegregate our schools was a failure, speaks to one of the most successful propaganda campaigns of the last half century. Further, it explains how we have come to be largely silent — and accepting — of the fact that 65 years after the Supreme Court struck down school segregation in [Brown v. Board of Education](#), black children are as segregated from white students as they were in the mid-1970s when Mr. Biden was working with Southern white supremacist legislators to curtail court-ordered busing.”

- Chalkbeat: <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/7/1/21121022/did-busing-for-school-desegregation-succeed-here-s-what-research-says>

- “What do we know? In the most basic sense, they did succeed. School segregation dropped substantially as courts and the federal government put pressure on local districts to integrate. But those efforts also sparked bitter, sometimes racist, resistance that shaped political discourse for decades.

“Busing as a political term ... was a failure, because the narrative that came out of it from the media and politicians was almost only negative,” said Matt Delmont, a Dartmouth historian who wrote a book titled “Why Busing Failed.” “It only emphasized the inconvenience to white families and white students.”

A political failure does not necessarily mean an educational failure, though, as Delmont and others have pointed out. Indeed, research has consistently shown that integrated schools offered, and still offer, tangible benefits to students of color.”

- Prince Edward County: <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/closing-prince>
 - On May 1, 1959 the county opted to close all public schools, rather than integrate them. The county created private schools and supported them via tuition grant for white students. No public education was provided for black student until 63-34, when a school was opened for some black students. In 1964 the Supreme Court ruled against the tuition grant program and schools were reopened and were integrated. Many black students missed out on their education for five whole years.
- The destruction of Newark DE’s historically black pre-Civil War neighborhood for student housing for University of Delaware including demolitions of 19th century homes:
<https://www.delawarepublic.org/post/demolitions-make-way-student-housing-historic-center-newarks-black-community>