

Matthew Akin, Ed.D.
Superintendent



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August 21, 2017

Thank you for your inquiry of August 10, 2017, to School Board President Elisa Ferrell, in which you expressed your desire for school bus transportation for your children to Grissom High School and Mountain Gap P-8 School. I know that you initially reached out to Dr. Jennie Robinson at the City Council, who forwarded your concerns to Board President Ferrell, who forwarded them to me. When the matter came to my attention on August 11, 2017, I instructed my Director of Operations, Dr. Jeffrey Wilson, to research the situation and provide me a recommended course of action.

My staff has extensively analyzed the situation on Green Mountain Road, resulting in a consensus that Green Mountain Road is unsafe for school buses. In order to ensure that our local transportation professionals are synchronized with the State of Alabama Department of Education, we asked the ALSDE Director of Pupil Transportation to send a Transportation Specialist to Huntsville in order to conduct an independent assessment. As you can see from the attached letter from Chad Carpenter, the ALSDE Pupil Transportation Administrator concurs with our assessment that it is not safe to operate school buses on Green Mountain Road. This current assessment is consistent with an assessment made by ALSDE in 2014, in response to another inquiry we received from a Green Mountain resident. I attach the 2014 letter from ALSDE for reference, as well.

I appreciate your understanding of our position on this matter—one which places the safety of our students as the primary screening criterion for routing school buses throughout the District.

Sincerely,

Matthew Akin, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Enclosures:

Encl.1 – ALSDE letter from Chad Carpenter

Encl.2 – ALSDE letter from 2014

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STATE OF ALABAMA
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Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent of Education

September 4, 2014

Mr. Scott Gillies, Transportation Director
Huntsville City Schools
P.O. Box 1256
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Dear Mr. Gillies:

On August 29, 2014, Mr. Joe Beams, a transportation specialist with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Pupil Transportation Section, reviewed a potential school bus route in the Green Mountain Road area in Huntsville. This site visit was scheduled at your request due to safety concerns on this particular road. This correspondence is to provide you with information regarding this site visit and the safety of this potential bus route.

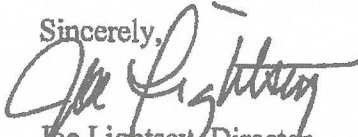
According to Mr. Beams, the following concerns exist for a school bus route on this road:

1. A school bus traveling a route on this road would be required to navigate a very steep incline of approximately 15-17 degrees. The gradient of this hill poses serious safety concerns for any size school bus even in perfect weather conditions.
2. The road is narrow with many curves. Both of these conditions present safety concerns for any school bus required to transit this road.
3. It is our understanding that this road has been deemed unsafe for school buses by both your transportation contractor, the Director of Engineering for the City of Huntsville, and the Madison County Director of Operations.
4. There are no sidewalks on Green Mountain Road.

Due to the safety concerns noted above, Mr. Beams recommended that a school bus route not be established on this road. I am in agreement with Mr. Beams' recommendation and, in light of the school system's responsibility for safe routes and safe school bus stops, feel that establishing a bus route in this area could unnecessarily endanger the safety of the students, the school bus driver, and other motorists.

Please contact me at 334-242-9730, if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,


Joe Lightsey, Director
Pupil Transportation

cc: Mr. Joe Beams
Dr. Jeffrey Wilson

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STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Michael Sentance, J.D., LL.M.
State Superintendent of Education

August 11, 2017

Mr. Scott Gillies, Transportation Director
Huntsville City Schools
P. O. Box 1256
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Dear Mr. Gillies:

On July 25, 2017, Mr. Bill Oliver, a transportation specialist with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Pupil Transportation Section, review a potential school bus route in the Green Mountain area in Huntsville. This site visit was scheduled at your request due to safety concerns on this particular road. This correspondence is to provide you with information regarding this site visit and the safety of this potential bus route.

According to Mr. Oliver, the following concerns exist for a school bus route on this road:

1. The road is quite steep on both ends, with numerous sharp turns having limited sight distance.
2. The shoulder of the road is extremely narrow with no room for a vehicle to travel on any surface other than the paved roadway.
3. The road does have guardrails on some sections but many, if not most, provide no protection should any vehicle leave the roadway.
4. The downhill side of the roadway, at both ends, is a very steep incline with numerous trees. In most areas a vehicle could travel a long way down the mountain side should it be forced to leave the road.
5. The speed limit in some areas is 20 mph but some cars were observed to be traveling at speeds well in excess of this in some areas.
6. We encountered two vehicles on our side of the roadway on the way up the northern end of the trailer, was on our side of the road because the curve was so tight the driver could not make the turn and remain completely in the correct lane.

Due to the safety concerns noted above, Mr. Oliver recommended that a school bus route not be established on this road. I am in agreement with Mr. Oliver's recommendation and, in light of the school system's responsibility for safe routes and safe school bus stops, feel that establishing a bus route in this area could unnecessarily endanger the safety of the students, the school bus driver, and other motorist.

Please contact me at 334-242-9730, if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Chad Carpenter, Administrator
Pupil Transportation

cc: Mr. Bill Oliver

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