

Organization Information

Project Title	Student Engagement to Improve Transportation Access in Oshkosh
Agency Name	Winnebago County Health Department
Point of Contact	Sarahjean Schluechtermann
Email Address	sschluechtermann@co.winnebago.wi.us
Phone	920-232-3013
Mailing Address	112 Otter Ave Oshkosh, WI 54901

Student Engagement to Improve Transportation Access in Oshkosh

Lack of affordable transportation emerged as an issue facing many middle and high school students in Oshkosh in 2013. Transportation is crucial for people to be able to access opportunities and services, attend school, find stable and sustaining employment, and engage in community. Traditional school buses did not serve students in Oshkosh because the city has a public transit service, GO Transit. Increasing fares (\$1.50 per one-way ride with no discounted fares for students or families) were a significant barrier for students who relied on public transit to get to and from school, work, and activities.

Local groups, families, and students came together to advocate for no-cost transportation for middle and high school students to safely get to school, a program that has been offered by Appleton School District and other districts in our area. The City of Oshkosh, Oshkosh Area School District, and private funders worked together and approved in February 2020 a two-year pilot program to provide rides to students in public and private K-12 schools in Oshkosh free of charge on GO Transit. Due to the impact of COVID-19, school closings, and virtual schooling, the pilot had a slow start and was extended to three years. Student ridership steadily increased and exceeded expectations with 7,688 rides provided in 2021 and 86,979 rides in 2022. The pilot program and free fares for students is set to expire in May 2023 unless a funding agreement can be reached.

Families suffered negative financial and social impacts such as loss of income, limited access to child care, housing challenges, and lack of access to needed community resources due to the impacts of COVID-19. Families in Oshkosh have shared anecdotally that not having childcare options during the pandemic limited their ability to coordinate transportation for older children. Additionally, high school students may have had to find jobs in addition to attending school to help with family expenses. Access to no-cost rides on GO Transit helped these students access jobs without an additional cost burden.

The goal of this grant project will be to assess the impact of the three-year student busing pilot on overall well-being for students and families, financial benefit to households utilizing the pilot in Oshkosh, increased opportunity to jobs and resources, and social impact due to increased connection and engagement of students and families. Additionally, this project will help us better understand how COVID-19 played a role in addressing transportation barriers on households with students. The findings from this project will help inform City of Oshkosh and Oshkosh Area School District decisions to extend or make permanent the student busing program in the city.

Activities of this project will include:

- Development of a team comprised of students, parents, community partners, health department intern, and a consultant to develop two surveys for student riders and families/households and to develop focus group questions to understand the impact of the free fares.
- Conduct surveys and listening sessions at schools, Oshkosh Boys and Girls Club, Oshkosh Public Library, and other community partners.
- Analyze data from surveys and listening sessions. Engage team to develop themes and prioritize findings.
- Communicate findings through the development of a report and presentations with schools, city staff, elected officials, and funders.

Engagement and leadership of students and families impacted through the busing pilot will be a critical component of this grant project. Survey participants will be compensated for their time with a \$10 VISA gift card and listening session participants will receive a \$25 VISA gift card for participation. We seek technical assistance through this grant to build skills and capacity in qualitative data analysis of the survey and listening sessions. Winnebago County Health Department has experience with qualitative data and we look to improve equity and analytical quality in our analysis.

	Project Budget	Total
1	Personnel (Direct Labor) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health Department Intern- 210 hours at \$20/hour 	\$4200
2	Fringe Benefits	
3	Travel	
4	Equipment	
5	Incentives \$10 gift cards for survey participants (200 students and 100 parents) + \$5 activation fee \$25 gift cards + \$5 activation fee for listening session participants (5 listening sessions with 10-15 students per session and 4 listening sessions with 5-10 parents/guardians)	\$4500 for survey \$3450 for listening sessions
6	Supplies and Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bus tokens (\$175) for non-students as a barrier reduction to be able to attend listening sessions and community event ● Graphic design (\$2000) and printing (\$1500) of final report to share back with elected officials and community members ● Room rental and supplies (\$1000) for community event to share back findings 	\$4675
7	Consultants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consultant - 120 hours at \$75/hour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lead a small team to develop and set up two surveys, one for student riders and one for families/households, to understand the impact of free fares ○ Lead a small team to develop and set up interviews/focus groups with student riders ○ Work with a team to develop communications plan to share findings ○ Collect data from schools and other community partners (Boys and Girls Club, library, employers of high school students) to assess the impact of free fares 	\$9000

8	Contracts and Sub-Grantees	
9	Other Direct Costs	
10	Indirect Costs	
	Total:	\$25,825