



September 24, 2025

Dr. Warren G. Morgan, II, Superintendent
Cleveland Municipal (Metropolitan) School District
1111 Superior Avenue E.
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Re: Corrective Action Plan Follow-Up; New Issues

Request: District must provide requested information by October 3, 2025

Dear Superintendent Morgan:

In the past month, the Department of Education and Workforce (Department) was advised of several new issues involving Cleveland Metropolitan School District (District) student transportation services, as follows:

Executive Director Direction to Illegally Cross Railroad Tracks

- On September 3, 2025 at approximately 3:00 pm, a District bus driver was operating bus #576 with students on board waiting for a railroad crossing gate to lift.
- After several minutes with no train in sight and the gates never lifting the driver notified the Executive Director, Transportation (Eric Taylor), to seek guidance.
- Mr. Taylor instructed the driver to proceed across the railroad gate crossing, which fortunately, the driver decided not to do.
- [ORC Section 4511.62 \(B\)](#) provides: “No person shall drive any vehicle through, around, or under any crossing gate or barrier at a railroad crossing while the gate or barrier is closed or is being opened or closed unless the person is signaled by a law enforcement officer or flagperson that it is permissible to do so.”
- In the following email, Mr. Taylor admits to directing the school bus driver to engage in this offense:

From: Eric E Taylor <Eric.Taylor@clevelandmetroschools.org>

Sent: Thursday, September 4, 2025 2:36 PM

To: Michael L Bower <Michael.Bower@clevelandmetroschools.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]Re: train crossing incident 9-3-2025

The driver was instructed by me to proceed with extreme caution, and I realize that should not have been the directive. Pure transparency I am responsible for the bad decision made concerning this incident.

Thanks,

Eric Taylor

Educator: Executive Director, Transportation

The September 3, 2025 behavior of Mr. Taylor potentially placed the safety of the students on board bus #576 at risk. In addition, this behavior potentially imperiled the safety of other drivers and railroad train operators.

Driver with Disqualifying Criminal Offenses

- On September 8, 2025, the Department notified the District and its vendor, Smart Ride Global Services LLC (IRN #016986), that driver (JF) had the following disqualifying criminal convictions, which are public record and would have been evident on his pre-hire criminal record check:
 - Kidnapping (ORC 2905.01) – Convicted May 2010, **non-rehabilitative** disqualification
 - Aggravated Burglary (ORC 2911.11) – Convicted May 2010, **20-year** suspension
 - Possession of a Controlled Substance (ORC 2925.11) – Convicted October 10, 2023, **5-year** suspension

Regarding driver qualifications, criminal records checks, and disqualifying offenses, see [ORC 3327.10](#), [OAC 3301-83-23](#). When using contracted drivers to transport students, the District is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the drivers it entrusts to transport Ohio students meet all qualifications required by Ohio law, including ensuring that drivers do not have criminal offenses that prohibit them from transporting students.

District Compliance Officer Allegations

- On September 9, 2025, the District Compliance Officer, Transportation, wrote to the Department indicating that she has “been unable to continue the process that was put in place to maintain compliance”, including not being able to perform tasks including but not limited to: Conducting (transportation vendor) site visits, vehicle inspections (cab and van), and driver Clearinghouse Queries; and properly maintaining driver records.

The Compliance Officer's allegations are significant in that the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Department met with her and other members of the District's transportation services team on March 6, 2025, reviewed a number of areas of non-compliance with Ohio law and rules, and made recommendations for correcting these issues. This was followed by a March 12, 2025 request for a District action plan to address the issues. On March 24, 2025, the Compliance Officer submitted a "Cab and Van Compliance" action plan. The action plan included items that the Compliance Officer is now stating she has been unable to perform, as noted above.

Due to the serious nature of these incidents, the alleged lack of implementation of the "Cab and Van Compliance" action plan submitted by the District, and continued concerns that the District is not focused on safe student transportation, the Department is requesting that the District provide a corrective action plan by **close of business on October 3, 2025**.

At minimum, this plan should detail how the District will ensure that transportation staff are educated in Ohio pupil transportation safety and operation law and rules, that policies and procedures are implemented to ensure all contracted drivers and vehicles meet state qualifications and standards to transport students, and that transportation personnel have the means and opportunity to fully implement the District's corrective action plan elements on an ongoing basis.

Student transportation safety is a top priority for the Department. Should you have any questions regarding this communication, please feel free to contact me or the Ohio State Highway Patrol. The Department continues to stand ready to support you and your staff in ensuring these transportation concerns are promptly addressed.



Holly R. Fischer, Administrator
Office of Pupil Transportation
Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
Holly.fischer@education.ohio.gov

cc: Sara Elaquad, J.D., Chair, Board of Education c/o Kevin Burtzlaff
Kevin Burtzlaff, Board Attorney and Liaison
Eric Taylor, Executive Director- Transportation Services
Lieutenant Landis, Ohio State Highway Patrol
Sargeant Dement, Ohio State Highway Patrol

Trooper Hughes, Ohio State Highway Patrol
Heather Free, Program Administrator, Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
Carolyn Everidge-Frey, Chief Operations Officer, Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
Stephen Dackin, Director, Ohio Department of Education and Workforce