

A CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Newman-Crows Landing School District, Newman, Calif.

Overview

In 1913 the Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District (NCLUSD) began contracting their school transportation service, using a modified Model T Ford fabricated by Frank Patchett. This bus, now known as “First Student’s Number One Bus,” was one of the first school buses in the U.S. – providing service for one of the first known school bus contracts. While company ownership has changed to First Student, NCLUSD’s century-long partnership is still going strong.

Challenge

Heading into the 2011-2012 school year, Superintendent Ed Felt was faced with the same challenge as many other school administrators — he had to cut the district’s budget and he had to do it quickly so they could see immediate results in the upcoming school year. His need to trim \$1.3 million from his overall budget resulted in a significant reduction in the transportation budget.

Relationships built on trust and transparency stand the test of time - and the strain of budgets. When school district administration were faced with transportation budget cuts of up to 20 percent, they turned to First Student to help find a creative solution.

Delivering the Solution

Using data collected by GPS and other fleet monitoring technologies standard on First Student buses, our team reviewed routes, stops and ridership in search of savings opportunities. They discovered a significant portion of underutilized seating capacity on the daily routes; this was occurring on a regular basis, which in total passenger volume was equivalent to at least a single bus load of students.

First Student’s team members, being locals themselves, were able to identify opportunities for improved route efficiency, drawing on their familiarity with the community. Combining this local knowledge with the national expertise of our in-house First Planning Solutions routing team allowed for the removal of a full route and the ability to further enhance overall efficiencies in NCLUSD’s transportation system.

“When contracting out, it is important to work with people who are flexible and independent thinkers and problem solvers who can help us solve our bigger problems. And that is what First Student has been able to do for us.” said Superintendent Felt.



Community Return

In less than a month, the First Student team identified the most viable changes to allow for the necessary NCLUSD budget cuts. By working together, First Student and Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District saved the community \$116,000 without reducing access for any of the 1,500 households that rely on our transportation service.

Mutual trust and understanding forged through this long-term partnership contribute to a beneficially close relationship between the district, First Student and the community as a whole. First Student's team of local experts understands their community's needs. We listen to our partners, like Superintendent Ed Felt, when he told us the district's biggest challenge: "... support we receive from the state and federal government to operate our schools."

Through our team's local knowledge and First Student's national resources, we were able to quickly structure transportation services to the district's unique challenges — providing the full level of savings that the district needed to offset its budget deficit. Felt praised the collaboration by First Student saying, "having that kind of cooperative effort with an independent provider made my job a lot easier."

First Student Location Manager Pam Evers summarized the relationship: "Newman loves us, we love Newman." This and the community's perspective contributes to one apparent reality - when looking at First Student's team in Newman and the Newman community, more often than not, they're one and the same.

