ARE WE THERE YET?
Findings from a National, Cross-Sector Survey of Parents on K–12 Transportation

Andrew D. Catt EdChoice dcatt@edchoice.org

Introduction

Prior Research:

- School choice and commuting distance to the school go hand in hand (Urban Institute Student Transportation Working Group, 2018; Sattin-Bajaj, 2018; Teske, Fitzpatrick, & O’Brien, 2009)
- The relationship between school choice and commute length is mediated by income and race (Burgoyne-Allen et al., 2019; Urban Institute Student Transportation Working Group, 2018)
- In addition to distance and time, the availability and cost of transportation is a significant factor that impacts families’ decisions regarding whether to send their child to school of choice (Burgoyne-Allen, O’Keefe, & Schiess, 2019; Teske, Fitzpatrick, & O’Brien, 2009; Glazerman & Dotter, 2017; He & Giuliano, 2018; Hamlin, 2018)

Research Questions:

1. What are parents’ experiences with transportation related to schooling?
2. What are parents’ major preferences, challenges, and concerns related to school transportation?
3. How does transportation influence parents’ decisions regarding where to send their child to school?

Methods

The online survey, conducted September 25, 2019 to January 7, 2020, solicited responses from a national sample of parents with one or more children in K–12 during the 2019–20 school year. The following samples were included in the analysis (margin of error in parentheses): traditional public school parents, N = 519 (+4.25%); charter school parents, N = 425 (+4.57%); religious private school parents, N=350 (+4.57%); non-religious private school parents, N = 200 (+6.89%).

The majority of parents are most likely to plan for their child to be driven to school by a household resident, although traditional public school parents are more likely to plan for their child to ride the school bus. Of those who changed their child’s mode of transportation, one-third of non-religious private school parents cited safety concerns, compared to 14 percent of traditional public school parents. Charter school parents are by far the most affected by transportation issues. Affordability was the largest influencer on location of residence for everyone except traditional public school parents, who were more likely to cite quality of the school district.

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