

Headline: Change of Plans

Subheader: Students face challenges due to late and missing buses

While sitting in her last period class of the day doing her homework, senior **Alisha Bibi** said she heard the announcement over the speaker. Her bus was late once again. Stress filled her body as she struggled to make arrangements to get home, she said.

“I feel like I should have known [it would be late] earlier,” Bibi said. “I could have arranged some way to go home or come to school [beforehand].”

Bibi said her bus has been late four times now. Bibi said the missing buses caused her to miss work and messed up her schedule. It had also affected her family’s schedule, she said, since her parents had jobs to attend as well.

“How are [family members] going to come early if they are at a job or something,” Bibi said. “Sometimes I feel like I should have just gotten my own license.”

Associate principal **Leah Vomhof** said she saw an increase in bus issues which encouraged her to advocate for students.

“When I started noticing some gaps in transportation, I officially got involved,” Vomhof said. “Because I see a problem, and I won't let it exist without trying to solve it.”

Vomhof said a shortage of workers across the district caused the bus issue. The district hired a bus company, Durham, for transportation that was separate from our school. It concerned her that students waited in the cold for up to an hour for their bus before school, and they had to miss after school commitments due to being dropped off late, she said.

“I can't really solve the labor shortage, but my problem solving is advocating for our students with our district office, and putting pressure on them to send somebody sooner,” Vomhof said.

This disruption caused a lot of issues for junior **Mags Hoyt** who said their life was negatively impacted by the labor shortage. They said it frustrated them along with their family members.

“My mom has had to pick me up when she can, which is difficult due to her job as a nurse,” Hoyt said. “My father does not even live in this state, so picking me up from school is needless to say also a big task.”

Hoyt said that in many cases they had to wait outside for their bus to arrive due to staff kicking students out of the commons after school.

“Both of my parents have relied on the bus to get me to school for years,” Hoyt said. “I have things I need done, and my family has things that need to be done.”

Hoyt's mother, **Erin Mead**, said the late and missing buses caused a lot of disruptions to her mornings.

“It was definitely frustrating, not being able to rely on a service we as parents are paying for,” Mead said. “School transportation for your child is one of those things you really need to trust is going to be pretty consistent.”

Mead said the bus company tried to fix the issue by having other bus routes pick up the slack, but it was not a long term solution.

“That, to me, was an inappropriate short term fix, because it cut into learning time,” Mead said.

Jason Gillam, the director of business operations, said Durham offered the highest pay in the region to motivate new drivers to join the company. More benefits included referral bonuses, sign on buses and paid training, Gillam said. Overall, many efforts were made to solve the delayed bus issue.

“Nobody wants a late bus,” Gillam said. “We are thankful to the bus drivers that volunteer to cover an additional route after their own to help make sure all students get picked up and taken home.”