

DRIVING CHOICE GRANT FINAL REPORT

BUREAU OF SCHOOL BUSINESS SERVICES

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
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Driving Choice Grant Final Report

Chapter [2022-154, Laws of Florida](#) (House Bill 2524 from the 2022 legislative session), created the Driving Choice Grant Program to improve access to reliable and safe transportation for students participating in public school choice programs under s. [1002.20\(6\)\(a\), F.S.](#), and support innovative solutions that increase the efficiency of public school transportation. [Chapter 2024-230, Laws of Florida](#), repealed the Driving Choice Grant program. The Florida Department of Education (department) was required to publish an [interim report](#) by December 31, 2023, and a final report by December 31, 2024, on best practices and students served by this two-year program.

The amount of \$15,000,000 in non-recurring funds was appropriated for the grant. Grant proposals included the following categories:

- Category 1: Transportation resource planning and sharing among school districts and local governments;
- Category 2: Developing or contracting with rideshare programs or developing carpool strategies;
- Category 3: Developing options to reduce costs and increase efficiencies while improving access to transportation options for families;
- Category 4: Developing options to address personnel challenges; and
- Category 5: Expanding the use of transportation funds to help cover the cost of transporting students to and from school.

Forty-five districts applied and were awarded their proportionate share of funds, for a total of \$12,617,210 for 2022-23, based on projected unweighted full-time equivalent (UFTE) students, with no district receiving less than \$50,000. Of the \$15,000,000 appropriation, \$2,382,790 was unused at the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year. Section 23 of the 2023 General Appropriations Act ([chapter 2023-239, Laws of Florida](#)) provided authority to reallocate the unused amount to the 45 school districts that participated in 2022-23. This final report on the expenditures of these grant funds will be posted on the department's website by December 31, 2024. Because the grant program has now been repealed, all remaining unused funds will revert to the state.

In recent years, the most significant barrier to school transportation operations has been the shortage of school bus operators, creating a challenge for school districts to transport students to and from school and school activities. At the same time, the growth of open enrollment and school choice options has increased the need for school districts to provide transportation services. School districts have implemented many strategies to address additional transportation demands with fewer school bus operators, including:

- Staggering school start times to allow elementary, middle and high school students to be transported at separate times, requiring the same school bus operator to drive the same route three times, thereby transporting three times more students daily;
- Having non-commercial driver's license (CDL) drivers use smaller multipurpose passenger vehicles to transport isolated and special needs students to allow school buses to be used on routes where they can achieve maximum passenger capacity;
- Establishing depot bus stops for school choice programs, which requires parents to take students to centralized locations;
- Providing vouchers or bus passes for public transportation to school choice programs; and
- Encouraging other school staff, such as teachers and coaches, to obtain a CDL and become certified to transport students on a bus so they can assist as substitute bus route drivers and transport sports teams and club members.

Grant fund expenditures for each district are provided in the table below.

Driving Choice Grant Expenditures, 2022-23 through 2023-24

	District Name	Number of Students benefited from grant funds	Grant Category *	Grant Subcategory	Allocation	Unspent Balance
1	Alachua	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
2	Baker	22	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 55,249	\$ -
3	Bay	45	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 152,666	\$ 23,000
4	Bradford	55	3	Van Purchase	\$ 53,216	\$ 17,216
5	Brevard	636	2	Contracted Transportation	\$ 437,734	\$ 81,761
6	Broward	59,000	3	Routing Software	\$ 1,531,476	\$ 11,791
7	Calhoun	3	3	Van Purchase	\$ 52,263	\$ 1,196
8	Charlotte	6,050	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 97,463	\$ 1,552
9	Citrus	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
10	Clay	35	3	Van Purchase	\$ 229,571	\$ 5
11	Collier	22,000	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 281,958	\$ -
12	Columbia	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
13	Miami-Dade	400	3	Van Purchase	\$ 2,037,902	\$ 31,282
14	DeSoto	11	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 54,981	\$ 10,372
15	Dixie	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
16	Duval	24	2	Contracted Transportation	\$ 783,500	\$ 3,392
17	Escambia	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
18	Flagler	6,000	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 79,414	\$ -
19	Franklin	680	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 51,278	\$ 4
20	Gadsden	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
21	Gilchrist	12	3	Van Purchase	\$ 53,100	\$ 2,544
22	Glades	500	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 51,852	\$ 9,675
23	Gulf	15	3	Van Purchase	\$ 52,042	\$ 2,042
24	Hamilton	8	3	Van Purchase	\$ 51,790	\$ 1,774
24	Hardee	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
26	Hendry	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
27	Hernando	55	3	Bus Purchase	\$ 149,079	\$ 2,239
28	Highlands	6,000	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 73,984	\$ 4,424
29	Hillsborough	50	2	Contracted Transportation	\$ 1,332,626	\$ 1,661
30	Holmes	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
31	Indian River	4,834	3	Routing Software	\$ 100,593	\$ -
32	Jackson	6	3	Van Purchase	\$ 56,229	\$ 6,230
33	Jefferson	32	3	Van Purchase	\$ 50,863	\$ -
34	Lafayette	5	3	Van Purchase	\$ 51,256	\$ 1,434
35	Lake	94	3	Bus Purchase	\$ 283,130	\$ 14,033
36	Lee	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
37	Leon	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
38	Levy	77	3	Bus Purchase	\$ 56,171	\$ -
39	Liberty	6	3	Van Purchase	\$ 51,401	\$ -
40	Madison	9	3	Van Purchase	\$ 52,629	\$ -
41	Manatee	15,000	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 300,560	\$ -
42	Marion	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
43	Martin	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
44	Monroe	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
45	Nassau	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
46	Okaloosa	77	3	Bus Purchase	\$ 193,923	\$ -
47	Okeechobee	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
48	Orange	500	2	Contracted Transportation	\$ 1,246,422	\$ 551
49	Osceola	31,000	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 457,502	\$ 27,979
50	Palm Beach	240	3	Bus Purchase	\$ 1,130,292	\$ -
51	Pasco	42,470	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 496,997	\$ 2,858
52	Pinellas	100	2	Contracted Transportation	\$ 557,648	\$ -
53	Polk	480	2	Contracted Transportation	\$ 674,959	\$ 7,871
54	Putnam	489	3	Van Purchase	\$ 61,244	\$ -

55	St. Johns	6,161	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 291,620	\$ -
56	St. Lucie	19,680	4	Driver Incentive	\$ 269,446	\$ 1,706
57	Santa Rosa	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
58	Sarasota	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
59	Seminole	26,000	3	Routing Software	\$ 406,087	\$ 9,704
60	Sumter	16	3	Van Purchase	\$ 59,902	\$ 5,438
61	Suwannee	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
62	Taylor	8	3	Van Purchase	\$ 52,885	\$ -
63	Union	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
64	Volusia	355	3	Bus Purchase	\$ 381,466	\$ 732
65	Wakulla	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
66	Walton	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
67	Washington FAMU Lab	12	3	Van Purchase	\$ 53,631	\$ -
69	School	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
70	FAU Palm Beach	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
71	FAU St. Lucie	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
72	FSU Lab: Broward	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
73	FSU Lab: Leon	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
74	UF Lab School	0	N/A	N/A	\$ -	\$ -
TOTALS		249,252			\$ 15,000,000	\$ 284,466

* Pursuant to chapter 2022-154, Laws of Florida, the grant funds were to be used for innovative solutions such as the following to increase the efficiency of public school transportation:

1. Transportation resource planning and sharing among school districts and local governments;
 2. Developing or contracting with rideshare programs or developing carpool strategies;
 3. Developing options to reduce costs and increase efficiencies while improving access to transportation options for families;
 4. Developing options to address personnel challenges; and
 5. Expanding the use of transportation funds to help cover the cost of transporting students to and from school.
- N/A: The school district did not participate in the grant.

The following table lists the number of students served by subcategory.

GRANT TRANSPORTATION SOLUTION SUBCATEGORY	Number of Districts Using the Subcategory	Number of Students Served
Driver Incentive Programs	14	155,619
Contracted Transportation	6	1,790
Van (multi-purpose van) Purchase	16	1,111
School Bus Purchase(s)	6	898
Ridership Tracking or Routing Software	3	89,834
TOTAL	45	249,252

Chapter 2024-230, L.O.F. (HB 5101), repealed the Driving Choice Program. During the two years that the program was active, from 2022-23 through 2023-24, 249,252 students benefited. The amount of \$4,937,652.91 was spent in Category Two for contracted transportation services; \$7,144,479.85 was spent in Category Three to reduce costs and increase efficiencies while improving access to transportation options; and \$2,636,259.16 was spent in Category Four for driver incentives to address personnel challenges. No funding was spent in Category One or Five.