Austin ISD Selects Busology Parent App to Help Fulfill Goal of Running Safe and Reliable Service

Transports 24,000 students

Large volume of routes and drivers to assign

Introduction

Kris Hafezizadeh, Director of Transportation at Austin ISD in Texas, is clear on the mission of the Austin ISD organization. He says, "the first mission of my operation is to make sure I'm running a safe and reliable service."

Austin ISD transports around 24,000 students each day and has a large volume of routes to schedule, and drivers to assign. Handling that volume of transportation, Kris says, "you've got to expect you're going to have some issues. That's not a good feeling." With that in mind, Austin ISD implemented a GPS tracking system with VEO Now (now Busology Tech) to better protect its student population. I'm fortunate that I'm allowed to spend the money on these kinds of things," he explains. "But you don't put a cost on the safety of students."

How does GPS tracking help ensure the safety of students? With RFID tags, Operations can tell when and where students board and disembark a school bus. If something is amiss, staff can find out within seconds if the student boarded the bus, if it was the right bus, and if they disembarked. The parent and driver can immediately be contacted with updates and resolutions.

Kris adds, "GPS is all about security, reliability, and efficiency. Eight years ago, we went with GPS tracking based on this."

For routing and scheduling, Kris uses TripSpark's solution (now Busology Tech). He appreciates that it

synchronizes GPS and routing information. "We can see if a driver is taking some other route they're not supposed to," says Kris. Aside from tracking which routes are being followed, he appreciates the insights he gains from the extensive data gathered and reported on. "We are happy to have a report for idling, speed, and many other things."

The Challenge

It gets hot in Texas! And while most Texans may love the warmth that comes with plenty of sunshine, the stifling Texas heat can be hazardous to the health of students who are often forced to wait in the beaming sun at their transit stop. For Kris, this is a huge concern.

The Solution

Aside from the heat, there's also the possibility of rain or ice, and even the risk of overland flooding. Kris needed a way to be able to monitor his entire operation from one place and be able to act quickly in the event of an emergency.

Implementing a school transportation parent app became a priority for Austin ISD. Enabling parent to monitor the location of their children's bus and its arrival in real-time, has greatly reduced the number of "where's my kid" calls to the transportation office. Most importantly, parents feel more confident in the system.

School Case Study

Austin Independent School District

The security of student data is also incredibly important to all concerned stakeholders. Kris shared that the combination of "the parent cloud", the secure app, and the ability to only access information with a student ID, are essential to keeping private information, private.

At the beginning of the school year, Kris says that students are at risk of getting off a bus at the wrong stop. One of the things that he likes about the K–12 transportation software system is that he has access to all student information, so he can act quickly in the event of a potentially stressful situation for students and parents.

"I can see their emergency contact number, their address. That has been very, very helpful."

The Impact

Kris needs to respond quickly to issues that can develop at any time, day, or night. Buses are used to transport students to nighttime football games, for example, and he loves the fact that he can easily pull up schedule information, bus locations, and student information from his mobile device at any time. Recently, Austin encountered some severe flood conditions while Kris was away from the office. Three schools were evacuated and even the superintendent was brought in to help. Kris was still able to help run the evacuation process from his phone, saying "that was quite impressive."

The Results

Kris decided to partner with TripSpark (now Busology Tech) to ensure that future technologies would be guaranteed to integrate seamlessly. While they're using the Routing and Scheduling and Parent App solutions now, Kris is planning to add exciting new products with new functionality. For example, on-board tablets and student ridership will track if students get on the wrong bus or get off at the wrong bus stop.

"We chose TripSpark because they can synch technologies better," Kris explains.

This was an important issue when Austin ISD went to RFP. In Kris's opinion, moving towards a single-source solution would enable his operation to grow. And as his partner, we're glad to be able to work with Austin ISD to help them achieve their mission of safe and reliable service.

Kris says, "we've received many compliments from happy parents who are able to see the arrival times of their kids' buses live on the Parent App and GPS has made things run smoothly."

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