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PUPIL TRANSPORTATION COSTS AND ALTERNATIVES
IN ROOSEVELT COUNTY, MONTANA

by

RAND BRIAN ^{✓✓}BRADLEY

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

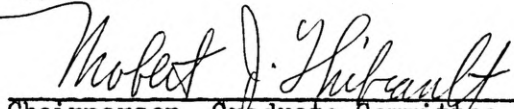
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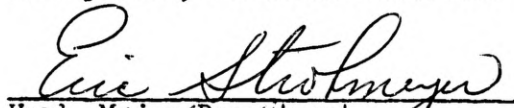
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the costs of individual transportation contracts, correspondence courses and home study arrangements to school districts in Roosevelt County, Montana, over a four-year period, 1976-77 to 1979-80. Since these programs were considered as part of the transportation budget, the total transportation budgets were also examined, as well as number of mills required from local school districts to support the transportation program.

Data were collected from the annual budgets of each school district. These budgets were submitted to the County Superintendent in Wolf Point, Montana. Figures were obtained for each district concerning the transportation budget, individual contracts, home study and correspondence courses, and mill levy requirements.

Eight school districts (62%) expended funds for individual transportation. No districts reported expenses for home study or correspondence courses during the period of this study.

It was found, for elementary districts as a group, that transportation budgets increased 72 percent. High school transportation budgets increased 82 percent. The number of dollars spent for individual transportation increased 16 percent for elementary districts, and 53 percent for high school districts. Both elementary and high school districts showed wide variation from year to year in the number of mills required from the district to finance the transportation program. All districts showed mill levy increases of 50 percent or more during the four-year period. Elementary district transportation levies were greater than high school levies.

Based upon the findings of this study, the author recommended the use of individual transportation contracts when feasible. It is also recommended that the status of home study and correspondence courses be surveyed throughout Montana.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The costs of pupil transportation have been steadily rising in the late 1970's. Certain options exist by which school districts may reduce transportation budgets. The extent of utilization and the effects of such alternatives on school budgets are essential issues for boards of education, administrators, and taxpayers to examine.

Correspondence courses are used throughout the United States as one method to improve school programs and reduce program costs (McAfee, 1973). Individual transportation contracts with parents and home study arrangements also offer economical additions to school bus programs (Axtmann, 1980). During the 1979-1980 school year, 2461 individual transportation contracts were let in Montana (Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1980). Thirty-five were let in Roosevelt County (Axtmann, 1980). The costs to a district of individual transportation contracts, home study and correspondence courses are important information for all school districts which serve rural families.

Statement of the Problem

School districts traditionally rely heavily on either district-owned or contractor-operated student transportation systems. Three additional facets to transportation programs are individual transportation contracts with parents, home study arrangements, and

correspondence courses. The focus of this study is on seven elementary and six high school districts in Roosevelt County. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the costs and changes in costs, to each district, for individual transportation contracts, home study and correspondence courses in the school years 1976-1980, and secondarily, to determine changes in mill levy expenditures required to finance pupil transportation in each district.

Importance of the Study

The cost-per-student of operating a school has increased 31 percent in the last four years (National Education Association, 1979). School transportation programs have especially been affected by increases in bus costs and repairs, and by inflation of fuel costs. In Montana, pupil transportation budgets can include individual transportation contracts made between local districts and parents, home study arrangements, and correspondence courses. These options can fulfill, in part, the State requirements for pupil transportation and affect the budget of a district. School districts in Roosevelt County use individual transportation contracts, home study and correspondence courses in varying degrees. As district mill levies are coming under increased scrutiny by taxpayers, the alternatives and supplements to a district's transportation program deserve closer attention by school administrators and boards of education. The practices of school

districts in utilizing these options can be examined in terms of the percent of the transportation budget allotted to each and the district mill levy requirements for the transportation program.

General Questions to be Answered

This study was conducted to answer the following questions regarding individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses:

1. What was the percent of the transportation budget allotted to individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses?
2. How did this cost change in a four-year period?
3. What were the mills required from each district for transportation?
4. How did the mill-cost vary over four years?
5. How did changes in costs of individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses compare to changes in the overall transportation budget?

Procedures

In order to complete the stated objectives, the budgets of each high school and elementary school district in Roosevelt County for the school years, 1976-1977, 1977-1978, 1978-1979 and 1979-1980, were examined. The County Superintendent provided additional

information on individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to one county in northeastern Montana. Roosevelt County has a student population that is approximately 22 percent rural. The period of examination included four school years, 1976-1977 to 1979-1980. This study considered only three facets of a transportation program: individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses. Provisions not considered include room and board payments by school districts and correspondence courses for which students pay the costs.

Definition of Terms

The following terms, as used in this study, are defined to avoid differences in meaning and significance.

Individual Transportation Contract. An arrangement between a school district and parents of students by which the parents are reimbursed for transporting the student all or part way to school.

Home Study Course. An arrangement between the school district and students by which the student does supervised work at home.

Correspondence Course. An arrangement between a school

student and an accredited correspondence school by which the student can earn credit toward graduation.

Summary

It is important that all phases of activity of a school system operate as efficiently as possible. If Boards of Education, administrators and community members are to understand the factors affecting the economy of the school, they must understand the costs of options available to school districts.

To determine the portion of transportation budgets allotted to busing options and the mill levy costs of these options, the budgets of school districts in Roosevelt County were examined. From the resulting data, conclusions were drawn regarding the costs of individual transportation contracts, home study courses, and correspondence courses.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The steadily increasing costs of school transportation programs and energy can be a real burden on school transportation budgets. School districts are examining all administrative procedures which can reduce costs. Districts which have large rural populations and attendant busing demands, as well as districts which have isolated students can benefit from a review of the use of individual transportation programs, home study courses, or correspondence courses. One objective of a school transportation program is economy--realizing the lowest cost within desired standards (Isenberg, 1963). Home study and correspondence courses can provide an economical way to improve a school curriculum while individual transportation contracts can directly reduce the demands made on a bus program, reduce energy costs and may reduce maintenance costs.

The Montana Codes Annotated, 1979, (Section 20-10-121) allows that transportation provided to students by a local district can include the following facets: (a) bus program, (b) reimbursement to parents for individual transportation, (c) provide supervised home study, (d) sanction supervised correspondence study.

School districts can, with this authority, design a transportation program which meets with individual district needs and

capabilities. This goal can be achieved by carefully considering and evaluating the costs and benefits of transportation adjuncts.

A search of the literature was conducted in two areas relevant to the stated problem. The first topic covered the student transportation program as related to individual transportation contracts, while the second topic concerned home study and correspondence course arrangements.

Individual Transportation

The Board of Trustees of school districts in Montana are held responsible for the maintenance of and budget for a transportation system by the Montana Codes Annotated, 1979, (Section 20-10-121). Whenever transportation is provided for any eligible student, provisions must be made for all eligible students of that district.

In compliance with this duty, trustees are empowered to tender individual contracts to the parent or guardian (hereafter referred to as parent), by which the district pays the parent to transport the student to school or to a bus stop. This arrangement fulfills the responsibility of the district to furnish transportation. A parent can provide or arrange for transportation, at his own expense, to any district that will accept his child.

Parents that contract for individual transportation to school are reimbursed by the school district at a rate determined by the

State (Montana Codes Annotated, 1979, Section 20-10-142). The payment is calculated by the formula:

$$(\text{distance from home to school}) \times (2) - (6 \text{ miles}) \times (18\text{¢}).$$

The payment to a parent can include the factors of: (a) the number of students riding in the car, (b) the number of schools located within three miles of each other, (c) overlapping bus routes, and (d) more than one district using the same bus. Reimbursement may not be less than 25 cents per day.

The formula for reimbursement to parents who transport children to a bus stop, instead of to school, is:

$$(\text{distance from home to bus stop}) \times (2) - (3 \text{ miles}) \times (18\text{¢}).$$

This formula is subjected to the same factors as the previous formula. The county transportation committee finalizes all individual transportation applications before they are sent to the State Department of Education for final authorization.

In cases involving excessive distances, impassable roads, or other special circumstances, the parents of isolated students may request an increased reimbursement that is one and one-half ($1\frac{1}{2}$) times the prescribed rate. The Board of Trustees are not required to grant an increase due to isolation, and state approval is required for any locally granted increase.

Districts can reimburse to parents the costs of home study or of correspondence courses. The Board of Trustees must approve such

arrangements and the district must supervise the courses.

Home Study and Correspondence Courses

School districts may, because of population densities or location, wish to supplement curriculum, staff or facilities by encouraging or financing student participation in correspondence courses. Deficiencies in curriculum offerings can be a result of an inadequate tax base or because of low student population. Some schools may simply be unable to increase the educational program which they offer.

In Montana, one solution to this problem has been found in consolidation of school districts. Consolidation can increase student numbers and broaden ANB (average number belonging) reimbursement from the state. In many counties with large rural populations, consolidation has already lengthened bus riding time to an hour or more.

Correspondence courses can provide a method for increasing student opportunities in vocational or academic training. One-thousand high schools throughout the United States use correspondence courses to broaden their curriculum in college preparation, drop-out prevention and re-entry programs (McAfee, 1973:34). Such courses must meet with the approval of the State Department of Public Instruction and of the local Board of Trustees.

Correspondence courses can meet the needs of many types of

people. The National Home Study Council has accredited 90 schools to offer correspondence courses in 500 different subjects (Lambert, 1980:31). These courses range from the esoteric (diamond grading) to special interest (courses for parents of deaf children) to vocational (auto mechanics) to high school or college credit.

Courses-by-mail can have advantages over on-campus schooling. Students complete and mail in assignments for grading. Objective tests are given during or at the end of a course. Pertinent and individualized help may be given. Students may then receive supplementary information, practice problems, or repeat examinations. Correspondence courses are felt to be as effective as resident (on-campus) training by the National Home Study Council (Mathieson, 1971). However, the motivation provided by a classroom teacher and the classroom setting is stronger than that in a correspondence course situation. Correspondence study requires strong self-discipline and study skills. Correspondence course evaluation is heavily dependent upon written objective tests. Mathieson (1971) states that students with literacy problems do not fair well with correspondence study.

Correspondence courses are increasing the use of a wide variety of audio-visual equipment (Wellman, 1970:21). This includes the use of tape recorders, micro-computers, closed circuit television, radio, and photographic slides. Home-bound students may arrange with a school to work through the local school while remaining at home to earn credit.

Students may be unable to reach a school due to physical or medical problems, or due to geographical isolation. Home study arrangements can allow these students to meet district curriculum requirements.

Biddington (1978:13-15) reported that such innovations as radio school of the air, preschool correspondence courses and a flying doctor service are being used to help students in isolated areas of Australia. A project has been established to utilize a mini-computer in sparsely populated and geographically isolated areas of Kentucky to deliver instructions to retarded preschool children (Aeschleman, 1978).

Summary

Student transportation programs can include individual transportation contracts, home study, or correspondence courses. Home study may be used by students who are home-bound or have other special needs. Correspondence courses may fill a curriculum or graduation need. Individual transportation contracts are available for isolated students who are able to reach school or a bus stop while concurrently reducing demands on a bus system.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

Introduction

The problem of this study was to determine the cost* and changes in costs of three sections (individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses) of the transportation budget of school districts in Roosevelt County, Montana, during a four-year period. This study also examined changes in the mill levy required to finance transportation for each district. This chapter deals with the procedures used to evaluate these costs and expenditures. The sections in this chapter are: population, investigative categories, method of collecting data, method of organizing data, method of analysis and precautions for accuracy. A summary concludes the chapter.

Population Description

The population studied consisted of all elementary school districts and all high school districts currently in operation in Roosevelt County. The transportation programs in these school districts consisted primarily of district-owned and operated buses, contractor-owned and operated buses, or a combination. Individual transportation contracts, home study, or correspondence courses supplemented the programs of about 62 percent of the districts

considered in this study. Since all districts in the county were included, no precautions for randomness were necessary.

Investigative Categories

The investigative categories were designed to answer the broad questions, "What were the costs of individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses to school districts in Roosevelt County?; How have these costs changed in a four-year period?; How many mills were needed from the district to finance transportation?" The categories were:

1. The expenditure for individual transportation contracts, home study and correspondence courses.
2. The number of mills required to cover the district-paid portion of the transportation budgets.

Method of Collecting Data

The portion of the budget of each district which was allotted to individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses was determined by examining the annual budgets submitted by each district to the County Superintendent. The portion of the transportation budget, paid for with district funds, was also found in the annual budgets. The number of mills was calculated by dividing district costs plus over-schedule cost by the taxable valuation of the elementary districts, or by dividing the over-

schedule costs by the taxable valuation of the high school districts.

Method of Organizing Data

The data obtained from the budgets of each district is presented in Chapter 4. Tables and graphs were constructed to show the costs, as a percent of the total transportation costs, for individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses. Each district's portion of the number of mills required for transportation is shown by tables and graphs. The data is also categorized as Elementary Districts or High School Districts. These figures are then used to present and discuss changes in expenditures and changes in the number of mills for each category.

Method of Analysis and Precautions for Accuracy

The data and all comparisons were processed with a hand-held calculator to determine the percent of district budget. All figures were double checked for accuracy.

Summary

District budgets were examined and computational methods were used to develop an accurate description of the costs of utilization of individual transportation contracts, home study, and correspondence courses by school districts in Roosevelt County. The number of mills required to fund each elementary or high school district's portion

were calculated. High school district averages and elementary district averages were computed for the costs-of-programs and mills-required. Further analysis was then made to examine the changes in expenditures or mills during a four-year period, for each of the two district categories. This information is detailed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analyses of data. The data were obtained from the annual budgets of each school district in Roosevelt County. The results are based on seven elementary districts and six high school districts. Relevant statistics are provided for each district and for both categories, elementary and high school. The amount spent for individual transportation contracts as a percent of the total transportation budget is graphed. The total transportation costs are graphed.

Graphs are presented to show changes in costs to each district for individual transportation contracts, changes in the transportation budget, and to show the number of mills needed from each district for transportation. Year-to-year changes in the cost of individual transportation contracts are then presented for elementary districts as a category and high school districts as a category.

Home Study and Correspondence Courses

No school district in Roosevelt County reported expending funds for home study or correspondence courses. Students in some districts were apparently involved with correspondence courses, but the costs of such arrangements were born by the student or their families. Since the districts were not financially involved, no data

were available as to the number of students utilizing correspondence study.

Individual Transportation Contracts

Elementary Districts. Five of seven elementary districts (71.4%) reported expenditures for individual transportation contracts. District 3 let individual transportation contracts for 1976-1977 and 1977-1978, but not during 1978-1979 or 1979-1980. District 64 let contracts during each school year except 1979-1980. The percent of the total transportation budget allotted to individual transportation contracts decreased for Districts 3, 17J, 45 and 64. The costs in dollars generally increased for Districts 9 and 17J, while staying relatively stable for District 45, and declining for Districts 3 and 64. These variations occur as a result of changes in the number of students requiring individual transportation. Steadily rising costs of the total transportation program generally forced a decline in the percent of that budget required for individual transportation contracts. Table 1, page 18, presents the individual transportation costs and the total transportation budget for each district for the school years 1976-1977 to 1979-1980.

Figures 1 through 5, pages 19 through 23, graphically show the percent of the transportation budget allocated to individual transportation contracts and the dollar amount of the total transportation

budget for school years 1976-1977 to 1979-1980. Information is provided for Elementary Districts 3, 9, 17J, 45 and 64.

Table 1

Elementary District Transportation Budgets
and Individual Transportation Costs
During the 1976-80 School Years

District	Individual Transportation Costs				Total Transportation Budget			
	76-77	77-78	78-79	79-80	76-77	77-78	78-79	79-80
3 Frontier	\$ 726	270	0	0	\$20744	26495	23997	26320
9 Poplar	1480	1461	690	2853	51390	56278	80381	57334
17J Culbertson	860	1200	1255	1845	8883	11491	13556	43566
45 Wolf Point	1039	430	555	445	23162	29268	35739	35268
55 Brockton	0	0	0	0	11842	9648	11773	17996
64 Bainville	416	410	0	117	11660	12560	21615	26205
65 Froid	0	0	0	0	11120	12041	17797	31778

Figure 1 presents expenditure for Elementary District 3, Frontier School.

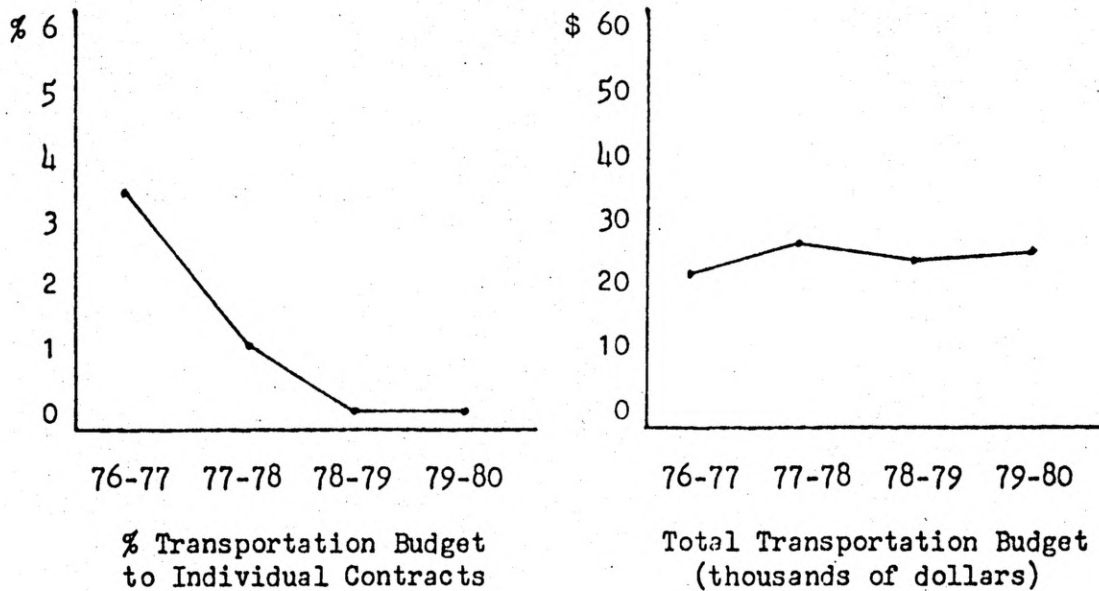


Figure 1

Individual Transportation Expenditure
and Total Transportation Budget for
Elementary District 3, Frontier

The total transportation budget for District 3, Frontier, increased 27 percent during the period 1976-1980. Expenditures varied from \$20,744 (1976) to \$26,495 (1977). The percent of the transportation budget allotted to individual transportation contracts declined from 3.5 percent (1976-1977) to 0 percent during 1978-79 and 1979-80 (Figure 1).

Figure 2 presents expenditure for Elementary District 9, Poplar School.

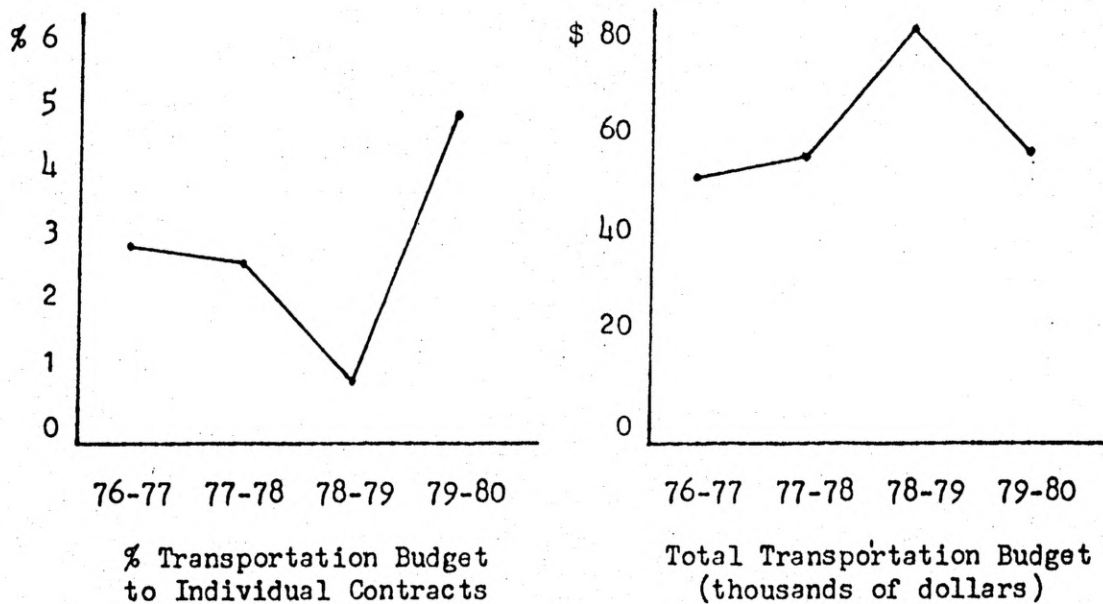


Figure 2

Individual Transportation Expenditure
and Total Transportation Budget for
Elementary District 9, Poplar

The total transportation budget for District 9, Poplar, increased 12 percent during the period 1976-80. However, during 1978-1979, the budget was 56 percent greater than was the 1976-77 budget. These increases can result from vehicle purchases, maintenance, and repairs. The percent of the budget allotted to individual transportation varied from 0.8 percent (78-79) to 4.9 percent (79-80), showing an overall dollar increase of 93 percent for the four-year period.

Figure 3 presents expenditure for Elementary District 17J, Culbertson School.

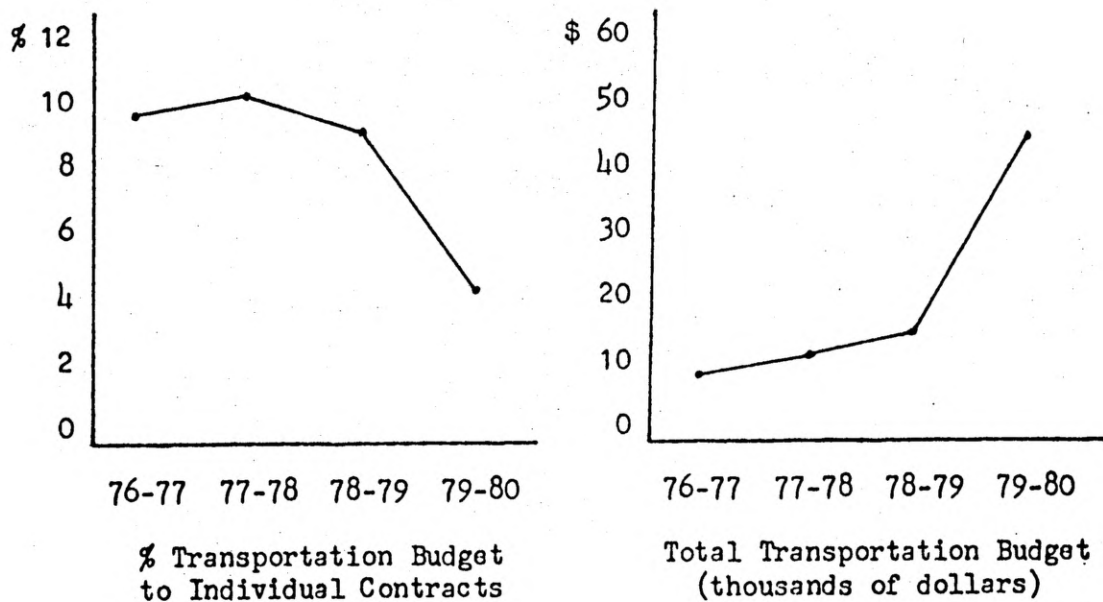


Figure 3

Individual Transportation Expenditure
and Total Transportation Budget for
Elementary District 17J, Culbertson

The total transportation budget of District 17J, Culbertson, increased sharply from 1976 to 1980, from \$886 to \$43,566, a 390 percent increase. During this same time period, the percent of the transportation budget allotted to individual contracts decreased from 9.7 to 4.2 percent. However, the dollar costs of individual contracts increased 115 percent from \$860 to \$1845 (Figure 3).

Figure 4 presents expenditure for Elementary District 45, Wolf Point School.

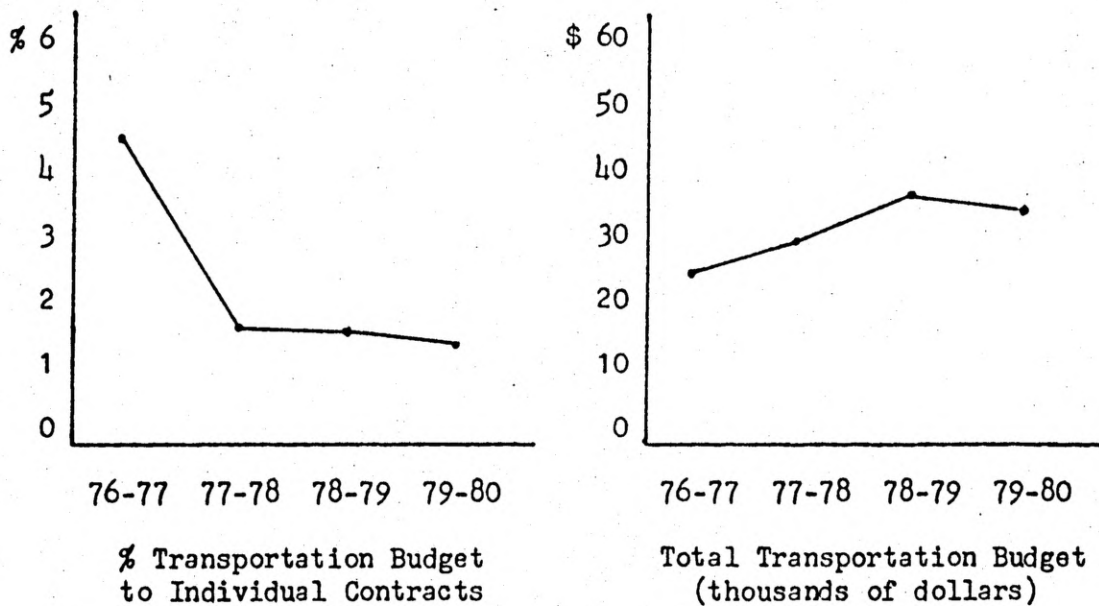


Figure 4

Individual Transportation Expenditure
and Total Transportation Budget for
Elementary District 45, Wolf Point

The total transportation budget of District 45, Wolf Point, increased 52 percent, from \$23,162 to \$35,268, during the four-year period. The percent of the transportation budget spent for individual transportation dropped from 4.5 to 1.3 percent, representing a 57 percent decrease in the dollar value, from \$1039 to \$145 (Figure 4).

Figure 5 presents expenditure for Elementary District 64, Bainville School.

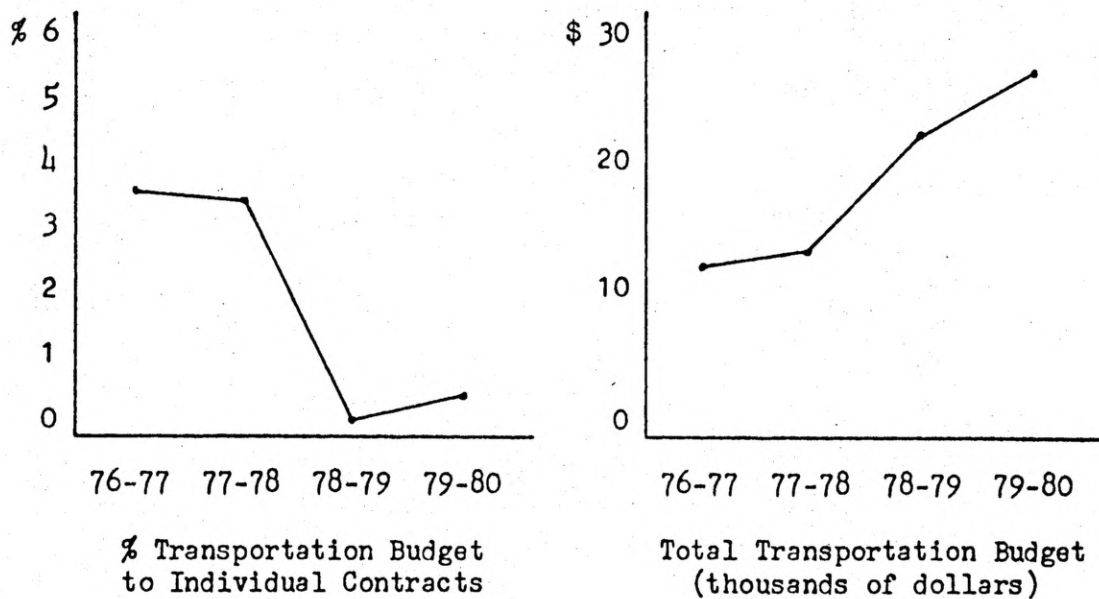


Figure 5

Individual Transportation Expenditure
and Total Transportation Budget for
Elementary District 64, Bainville

The total transportation budget of District 64, Bainville, steadily increased from \$11,660 to \$26,205 during the period of this study, a 215 percent increase. The percent allotted to individual transportation contracts declined from a high of 3.5 percent (1976-77) to 0 percent (1978-79), representing an overall change of 72 percent, from \$416 to \$117 (Figure 5).

High School Districts. Three of six high school districts (50 percent) reported expenditures for individual transportation contracts. Total transportation budgets of high school districts were generally lower than the budgets of elementary districts. District 17C allocated the greatest percent, 56 percent (1977-78), of the transportation budget to individual transportation contracts. Table 2 presents the individual transportation costs and total transportation costs for school years 1976-77 to 1977-80.

Table 2

High School District Transportation Budget and
Individual Transportation Costs
During 1976-80 School Years

District	Individual Transportation Costs				Total Transportation Budget			
	76-77	77-78	78-79	79-80	76-77	77-78	78-79	79-80
9B								
Poplar	\$ 199	231	633	967	\$16518	18459	44676	24456
17C								
Culbertson	674	1818	1257	1513	9718	3220	6615	8894
45A								
Wolf Point	96	230	155	64	14084	14359	20226	21088
55F								
Brockton	0	0	0	0	5587	1780	6452	13945
64D								
Bainville	0	0	0	0	11228	13413	21206	25954
65E								
Froid	0	0	0	0	12169	12962	18698	31779

Figure 6 presents expenditure for High School District 9B, Poplar.

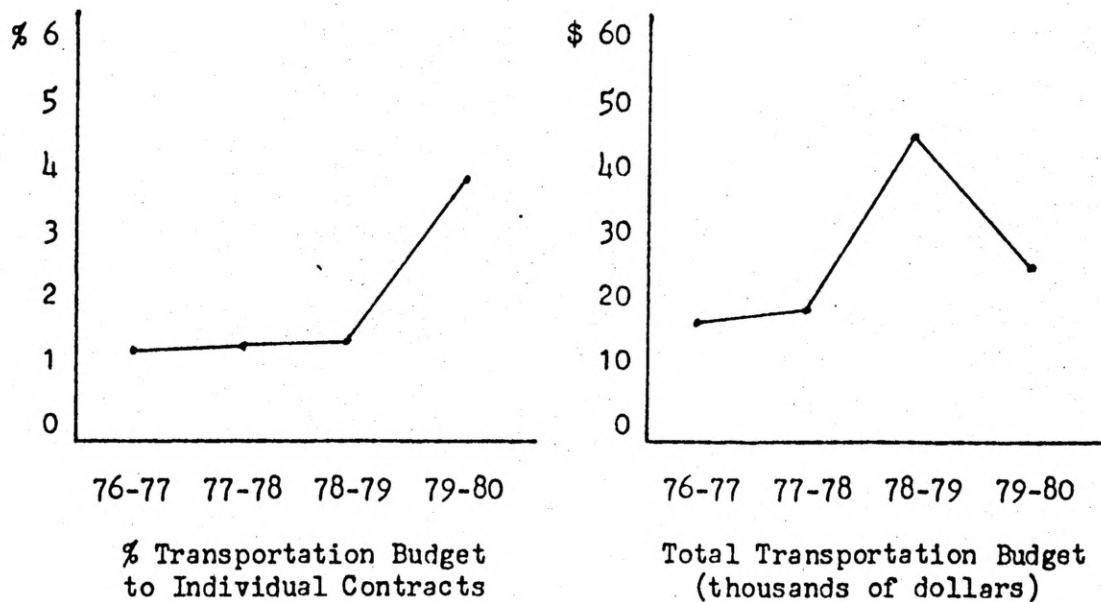


Figure 6

Individual Transportation Expenditure
and Total Transportation Budget for
High School District 9B, Poplar

The total transportation budget for District 9B, Poplar, increased 48 percent during 1976-77 to 1979-80 with a high of \$44,676 during 1978-79. This was 170 percent greater than the 1976-77 budget. The percent of the transportation budget allotted to individual transportation rose steadily from 1.2 to 3.9 percent, representing an increase in dollars of 386 percent from \$199 to \$967 (Figure 6).

Figure 7 presents expenditure for High School District 17C, Culbertson.

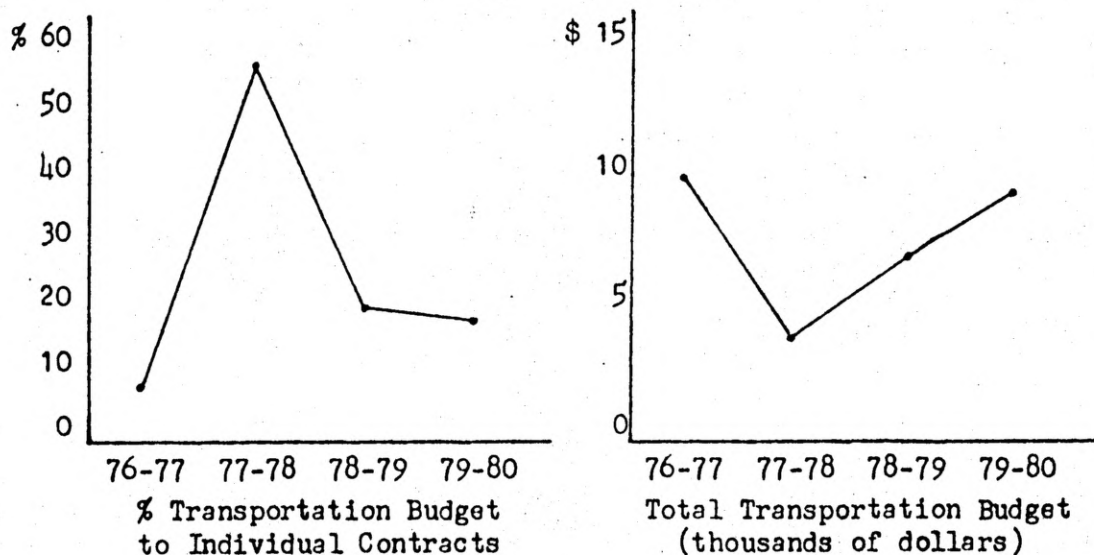


Figure 7

Individual Transportation Expenditure and
Total Transportation Budget for High
School District 17C, Culbertson

The total transportation budget for District 17C, Culbertson, declined 8 percent over four years from \$9718 to \$8894, with a low of \$3220 during 1977-78. The percent of this budget allotted to individual contracts increased from 6.9 to 17 percent, with a dramatic 56.5 percent increase during 1977-78. This increase in individual transportation and decrease of overall transportation budget during 1977-78 resulted from the elimination of one contracted bus route and replacement with individual contracts. The students involved were

seniors, consequently, a smaller percent of the budget during 1978-1979 went for individual transportation (Figure 7, page 26).

Figure 8 presents expenditure for High School District 45A, Wolf Point.

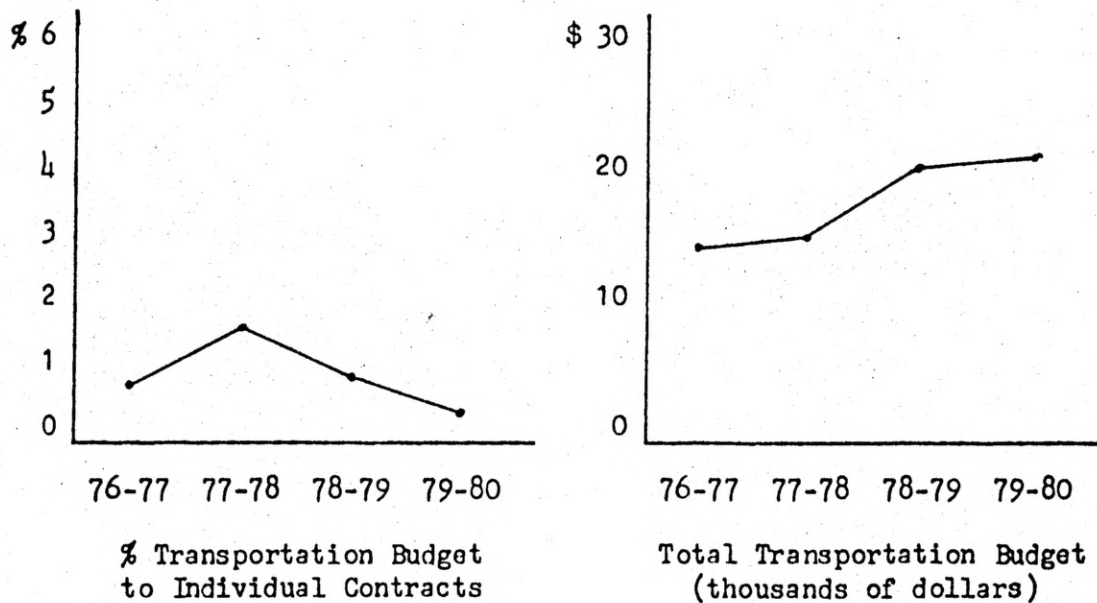


Figure 8

Individual Transportation Expenditure and
Total Transportation Budget for High
School District 45A, Wolf Point

The total transportation budget of District 45A, Wolf Point, increased 50 percent, \$14,084 to \$21,088, during the period 1976-77 to 1979-80. The percent of the transportation budget allotted to individual transportation declined from 0.7 to 0.3 percent, with a high of 1.6 percent during the 1977-78 school year (Figure 8).

The amount spent for individual contracts varied from \$196 (1976-77) to \$115 (1977-78).

District Mill Levy Costs

Revenues available to a school district to fund transportation come from the district levy, county reimbursements, state reimbursements, federal impact money for districts on Indian reservations, and payments from other districts.

The Montana system of school finance provides that elementary districts must pay one-third of transportation costs plus any amount over the schedule of state and county equalization payments. The remaining two-thirds of transportation costs are shared equally by the state and county. Cash balances remaining at the end of the year must be used to reduce district, county, or state contributions for the following fiscal year when these balances exceed statutory limitations.

Scheduled costs of high school transportation programs are funded one-third by the state, two-thirds from the county and the district pays any overschedule amount. Any cash balances carried forward are used to reduce district and county reimbursements.

Table 3 (page 29) presents the elementary and high school district mill levy requirements for the 1976-77 to 1979-80 school years. A milllevy of zero (0.00) indicates that there was enough

cash carryover from the previous year to fund the district's share of the transportation expenditures. Mill levies are reported only for districts utilizing individual transportation contracts.

Table 3

District Mills Levied for Transportation
During 1976-1980 School Years

Elementary District	76-77	School Year		79-80
		77-78	78-79	
3, Frontier	2.96	0.00	4.78	2.63
9, Poplar	3.06	3.89	4.49	4.88
17J, Culbertson	0.72	1.18	1.10	4.32
45, Wolf Point	2.99	2.78	4.06	4.99
64, Bainville	3.65	0.67	7.05	6.35
High School District				
9B, Poplar	0.74	0.38	1.99	1.44
17C, Culbertson	0.56	0.00	0.00	1.03
45A, Wolf Point	0.07	0.61	1.61	0.76

Note: A mill levy of zero (0.00) indicates that enough cash carryover existed to cover the district's portion of transportation costs.

Elementary Districts. Figure 9 presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 3, Frontier, for school years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

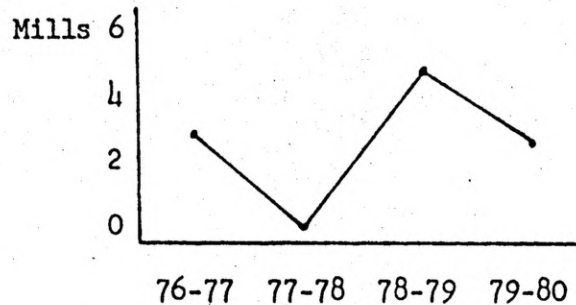


Figure 9

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
Elementary District 3, Frontier

District 3, Frontier, showed an 11 percent overall decrease of the district transportation mill levy, from 2.96 (1976-77) to 2.63 mills (1979-80). However, during 1977-78, no mill levy was required and during 1978-79, the mill levy was 61 percent higher (4.78 mills) than during 1976-77.

Figure 10 (page 31) presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 9, Poplar, for school years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

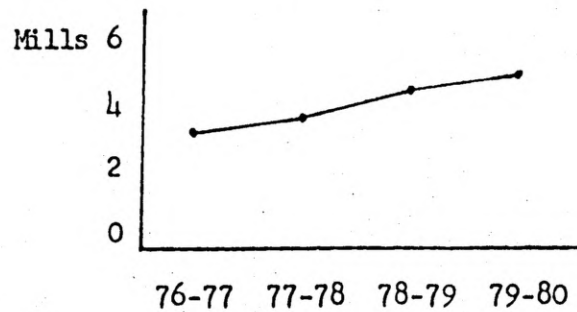


Figure 10

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
Elementary District 9, Poplar

District 9, Poplar, showed a 59 percent increase in the district transportation mill levy, from 3.06 to 4.88 mills during the four-year period (Figure 10).

Figure 11 presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 17J, Culbertson, for the years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

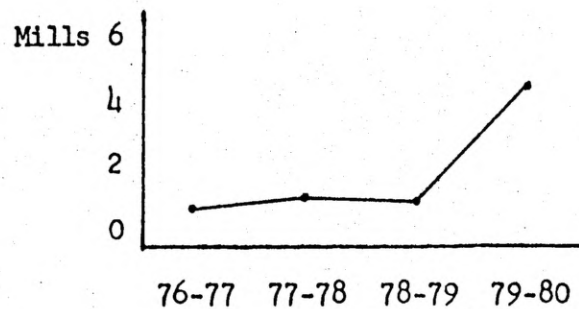


Figure 11

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
Elementary District 17J, Culbertson

The mill levy of District 17J, Culbertson, increased 53 percent from 0.72 to 1.16 mills, during the 1976-77 to 1979-80 school years. The levy increased to 4.88 mills for 1979-80, a 577 percent overall increase (Figure 11, page 31).

Figure 12 presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 45, Wolf Point, for the years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

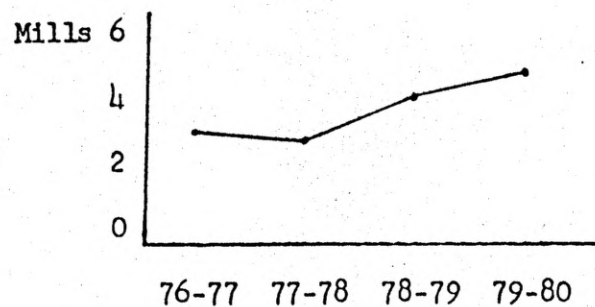


Figure 12

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
Elementary District 45, Wolf Point

District 45, Wolf Point, showed a gradual 67 percent increase from 2.99 to 4.99 mills during the period 1976-77 to 1979-80 (Figure 12).

Figure 13 (page 33) presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 64, Bainville, for the school years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

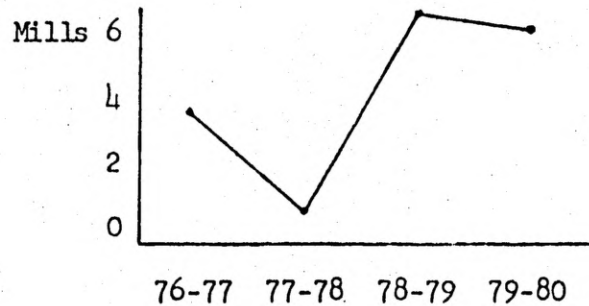


Figure 13

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
Elementary District 64, Bainville

District 64, Bainville, increased its mill levy 74 percent from 3.65 to 6.35 mills for the period 1976-77 to 1979-80. However, only 0.67 mills were required during 1977-78 while 7.05 mills were needed for 1978-79 (Figure 13).

Elementary districts showed increases in district mill levies ranging from 11 to 74 percent during the four-year period considered by this study. Mill levies for individual districts varied widely, notably for Districts 3 and 64.

District 3 required no mill levy (0.00) for the 1977-78 school year. A mill levy was not required since enough cash carryover existed from the previous year to fund the district's portion of the transportation costs. District 64 levied the largest number of mills (7.05) for the 1978-79 school year.

High School Districts. Figure 14 presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 9B, Poplar, for the years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

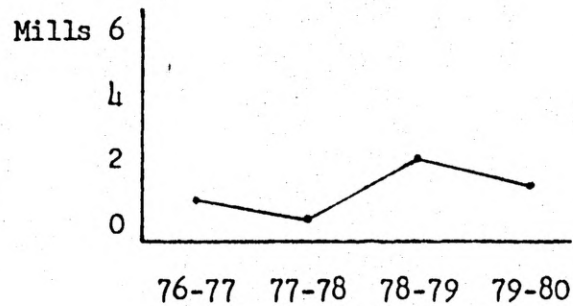


Figure 14

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
High School District 9B, Poplar

District 9B, Poplar, showed a 54 percent increase in the district transportation levy, from 0.74 to 1.14 mills, for the years 1976-77 to 1979-80. During 1977-78, the levy was 0.38 mills, 49 percent lower than 1976-77. The levy was 61 percent higher, 1.19 mills, during 1978-79 (Figure 14).

Figure 15 (page 35) presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 17C, Culbertson for the years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

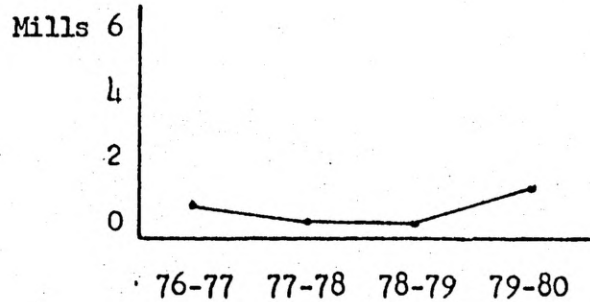


Figure 15

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
High School District 17C, Culbertson

District 17C, Culbertson, showed an 84 percent increase of the mill levy, from 0.56 to 1.03 mills, during 1976-77 to 1979-80. No mill levy was necessary during 1977-78 and 1978-79 (Figure 15). District 17C eliminated one bus route after 1976-77, thereby reducing the transportation budget and reducing the number of mills needed to support that budget.

Figure 16 (page 36) presents the transportation mill levy requirements of District 45A, Wolf Point, for school years 1976-77 to 1979-80.

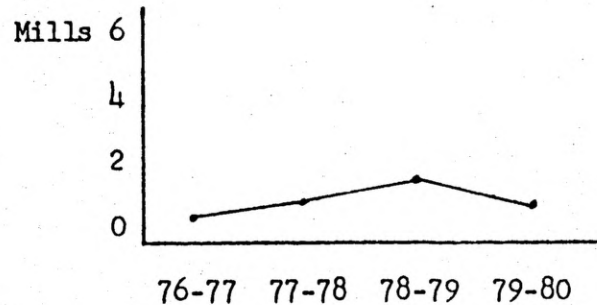


Figure 16

Transportation Mill Levy Requirements of
High School District 45A, Wolf Point

The transportation levy of District 45A increased 986 percent from 0.07 to 0.76 mills during the period 1976-77 to 1979-80 (Figure 16).

The transportation levies of high school districts fluctuated considerably during the period of this study. All districts considered demonstrated increases of over 50 percent. The transportation levies of high school districts were significantly less than were those of elementary districts.

Comparisons

The costs of operating a transportation program increased for all elementary districts. Increases ranged from 12 to 215 percent. During the same time period, district transportation mill levies increased from 11 to 74 percent. Elementary districts collectively

increased transportation budgets 72 percent over the four-year period. This represents a total budget increase of from \$138,801 to \$238,467 (Figure 17). Mill levy changes are difficult to compare for elementary districts as a category, due to individual variation in cash carryover from year to year and because the taxable valuation varied from district to district and from year to year.

Figure 17 presents the percent of transportation budgets spent for individual contracts by elementary districts combined for years 1976-77 to 1979-80. The expenditures for individual contracts declined 33 percent from 3.3 to 2.2 percent. This represented a dollar value increase of 16 percent, \$4521 to \$5260, over the four-year period.

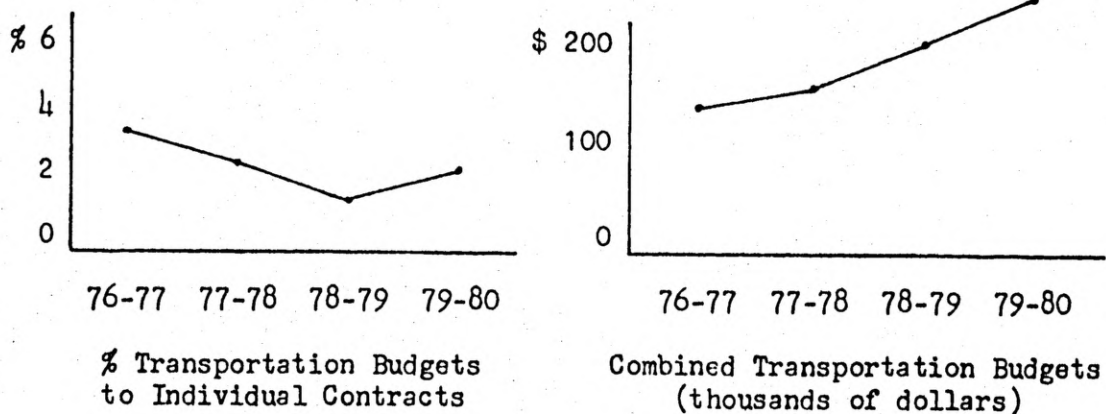


Figure 17

Individual Transportation Expenditure and
Transportation Budgets of Elementary
Districts Combined

The costs of operating a transportation program increased for all high school districts except District 17C. Expenditures for District 17C declined 8 percent during the four years of this study. This decline is attributed to a drop in the number of bus-transported students and the elimination of one bus route.

Increases for the other districts ranged from 48 to 50 percent. Concurrent with budget increases were mill levy increases for all districts. These increases ranged from 54 to 986 percent.

High School districts collectively increased transportation budgets 82 percent. This represents a total budget change of \$69,304 to \$126,116 (Figure 18, page 39). Mill levy changes were not compared categorically.

Figure 18 (page 39) presents the percent of transportation budgets spent for individual contracts by high school districts. The expenditures for individual contracts increased overall by 54 percent. This represents a dollar value increase of 163 percent from \$969 to \$2544.

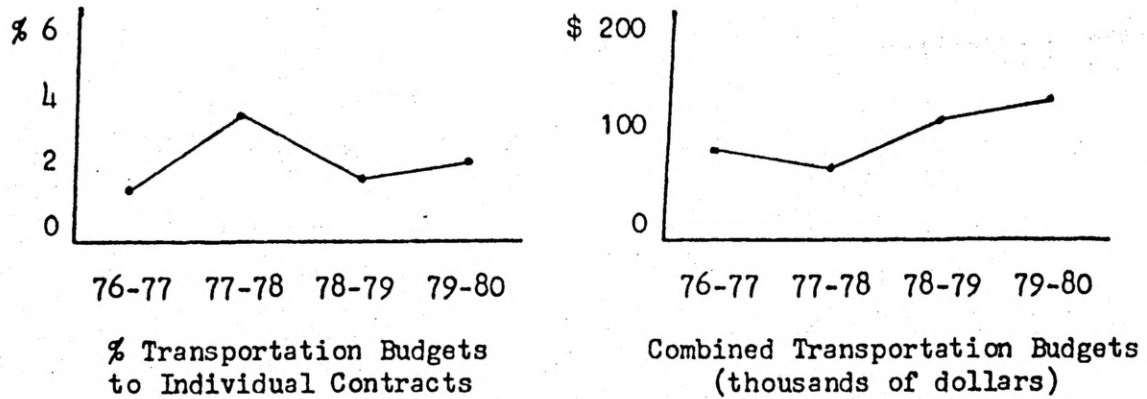


Figure 18

Individual Transportation Expenditure and
 Transportation Budgets of High School
 Districts Combined

Summary

Sixty-two percent of the school districts in Roosevelt County expended funds for individual transportation contracts. This represents five of seven elementary districts, and three of six high school districts. The portion of the elementary budgets required for individual contracts varied from 0.4 to 10.4 percent. The percent of the transportation budget spent for individual contracts declined over the four-year period. The actual number of dollars spent increased 16 percent for all elementary districts. Increases in elementary district transportation mill levies ranged from 11 to 64 percent. Individual districts showed wide variations in mill levies during the four-year period.

High school district expenditures for individual transportation also increased during the period of this study. The percentage of high school transportation budgets spent for individual contracts varied from 0.8 to 56.5 percent. This percentage increased categorically for high school districts by 53 percent. This represents a 163 percent increase in dollars spent. The decline in relative requirements for individual contracts resulted from an 82 percent increase in high school transportation budgets. The high school district transportation mill levy, although generally lower than that for elementary districts, increased from 54 to 986 percent. As with elementary district levies, high school district levies varied widely from year to year.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reader is reminded that this study focused on seven elementary districts and six high school districts in Roosevelt County, Montana. The fiscal years considered were limited to the period 1976-77 to 1979-80. Conclusions and considerations involving costs and changes in costs of transportation programs and mill levies were limited to Roosevelt County.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the expenditures of public schools for home study arrangements, correspondence courses, and individual transportation contracts. Since these arrangements were part of the transportation budget, the district's portion of the transportation mill levy was also examined.

Data were obtained from the annual district budgets. These budgets were submitted to the County Superintendent of Schools in Wolf Point. The data for each school district in Roosevelt County were analyzed to determine changes in expenditures and changes in transportation budgets. The number of mills required from each district to finance transportation were also examined. The data were graphed for each elementary and high school district. Graphs were constructed for elementary districts and high school districts as categories. These

graphs presented total transportation budgets and expenditures for individual transportation as a percent of that budget.

A review of the literature was conducted using the resources of the Montana State University library. The investigator did not find any information on cost impact concerning individual transportation arrangements. Montana Codes Annotated (1979) detail the procedures by which individual transportation, home study, or correspondence courses may be administered.

Correspondence courses have been utilized by students throughout the United States. Correspondence study has provided school districts with curriculum supplements and/or allowed students to fulfill course work requirements for graduation from high school (Lambert, 1980). In Roosevelt County, students were using correspondence courses, but school districts were not paying the cost of such arrangements.

The literature indicated that home study arrangements have been utilized primarily for preschool, handicapped, or isolated students (Biddington, 1978; Aeschleman, 1978). Home study is legal and acceptable in Montana for pupils that are physically or geographically home bound. This has fulfilled the state and local obligations to provide an education for pupils. No school districts in Roosevelt County were involved with home study as defined by this study and the codes of Montana.

Individual transportation contracts with parents were used, between 1976-77 and 1979-80, by 62 percent of the school districts in Roosevelt County. Districts let such contracts to rural families whose farms or ranches were near country roads which were either excessively rough or impassable or when the distance a bus must travel increased disproportionately to reach that family. There was no formula by which to decide to whom contracts were let.

Conclusions

The costs of transportation programs have risen dramatically for both elementary districts and high school districts in Roosevelt County. From this study the author can only conclude that transportation budgets have had to increase to keep pace with the costs of transportation. Too many factors existed--inflation, vehicle purchase, maintenance and repair, increased fuel costs, increased bus driver wages, etc.--to allow this writer to specify and prioritize the cost increasing variables.

Conditions which existed within individual school districts--activity buses for high school and elementary districts, road conditions, bus route length, location of rural families--also complicated the picture of pupil transportation costs.

The variation of high school district and elementary district budgets showed that elementary districts spent more for transportation

than did high school districts.

Montana school districts have been allowed to include the costs of home study and correspondence courses in the transportation budgets. The literature review in Chapter 2 indicated that these programs were used by school districts and students throughout the nation. A lack of district financial involvement indicated that the use of home study or correspondence courses was minimal during the time period of this study.

A third segment of the transportation budget was individual transportation contracts between parents and the district. This option was utilized by the majority (62%) of the Roosevelt County School districts. Although the percentage of the transportation budget required for individual contracts was generally small, this option appeared to offer an economical method for transporting hard-to-reach families. District 17C, Culbertson, sharply reduced its transportation budget by eliminating one bus route and arranging individual contracts with those families. This occurred at a time when the transportation budgets of most other districts were increasing. Elementary districts did not spend significantly more for individual transportation than high school districts.

Since the majority of districts considered let individual contracts, it is concluded that such arrangements play an important, though minor, role in transporting rural students. Revenue for

transportation programs comes in part from a district mill levy. This levy increased for the majority of the districts considered. Since elementary districts required a greater levy than high school districts it is concluded that elementary districts must spend more district tax money for transportation. A comparison of mill levies between districts is meaningless due to variations in property valuations and changes in total transportation costs from year to year and from district to district. Cash carryover from year to year occasionally reduced or eliminated the need for a district transportation levy.

Recommendations

Individual transportation contracts can provide an economical alternative to pupil transportation where bus service is seasonally difficult or not practical. Lehman and Hartkin (1979) indicated that owned or contracted bus service costs averaged \$1.00 per mile in Montana. School districts are authorized to reimburse parents 18 cents per mile for individual transportation. It is, therefore, recommended that school districts not presently utilizing individual contracts, consider doing so with eligible families.

It is recommended that correspondence courses and home study be seriously considered when such arrangements are in the best interests of students and the district.

The writer found no information or statistics which concerned

the use of individual contracts, home study or correspondence courses in other areas of Montana. It is, therefore, recommended that the status of these transportation adjuncts be surveyed throughout Montana.

It is recommended that a study be done to examine the extent to which students enroll in and complete correspondence courses for which they pay. The perceived benefits of correspondence courses to a school district's curriculum would be useful information, especially for rural Montana districts.

Further information concerning transportation programs and costs could provide administrators and boards of trustees with information by which to evaluate and consider additions to school curriculum and transportation programs.

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