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Emery School District Saves Time and Optimizes Route Management with Travel Tracker

The Emery School District (Emery) is a public school district located in Huntington, UT with nearly 2,500 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through K-12. Emery provides vital year-round busing services to approximately 1,200 of those students, an effort that requires 29 hardworking drivers and more than 50 different routes.

Jenny Durrant, Emery's Transportation Department Secretary, recently joined the department, and was immediately confronted with one clear challenge: A manual approach to managing the district's bus routes. "It was difficult to keep up with constant change," she explains. "We used to rely on data that existed in paper forms, spreadsheets, and a Microsoft Access database and it simply took too much time and effort."

Durrant estimates that up to 90% of her time was spent trying to manage the routing calendar each day, especially since she had to react to changes that inevitably affected Emery's morning and afternoon routes. "It got to the point where we couldn't assign a substitute driver to our route without a lot of communication, and even then, I was always worried that something would go wrong," Durrant says.

The final straw was a sudden rush to complete Utah's state-mandated transportation report. Durrant learned that her predecessor required three months to prepare this report in the past, and after Utah changed its filing deadline, she realized she wouldn't have this luxury. "I knew there had to be a better way to streamline our manual data collection efforts and improve the way we were managing data and the routes themselves," Durrant says. "I quickly became determined to find the right solution."

Customer Service that Surpasses Other Technology Providers

As Durrant started her initial research, she discovered the ideal solution was already in place. "We had been using the App-Garden's Travel Tracker-Field Trips solution for years to manage field trips and similar school events," she said. "At that time, I didn't realize they also offered a Travel Tracker Routing solution to eliminate manual efforts and simplify all routing processes. The more I learned, the more I liked what I saw, and I was convinced this was the perfect solution for us."

According to Roger Swenson, Transportation Director, implementing and adopting Travel Tracker-Routing could not have been easier—or more effective.

Fast Facts:

District Name: Emery School District

Product: Travel Tracker

By the numbers: Year-round busing services for 1,200 students on 50+ routes with 29 drivers

Challenge: Past manual routing efforts took too much time and effort and couldn't provide the visibility transportation staff needed to optimize routes and gain true peace of mind.

Solution: Travel Tracker-Routing

Benefits: Eliminating manual efforts helped Emery automate all aspects of its route management processes and provided powerful tools to optimize routes in the future.

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Jenny Durrant, Transportation Department Secretary, Emery School District

"I simply can't say enough good things about the entire experience," he says. "Even though we were already an App-Garden customer, Travel Tracker-Routing was still a new product to learn. Yet everyone on the services team over-delivered and exceeded our expectations every step of the way with hands-on training, videos, constant follow-ups, and so much more. I know some companies may think of vendors as partners, but I truly consider all of the App-Garden employees to be friends."

Durrant agrees. "I specifically remember two times I was up against a deadline, and for some reason, I just couldn't get completely accurate mileage. The App-Garden's services team replied in less than five minutes and already had the issue resolved. It was a tremendous relief, and I can say that the App-Garden's support team has been phenomenal. I can't imagine not having access to this team going forward."

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>
> Jenny Durrant, Transportation Department Secretary, Emery School District

Detailed Automation Saves District Transportation Time and Resources

Now, with Travel Tracker, Durrant can enter addresses and other manual data (just once) into Travel Tracker and it automatically produces highly accurate routes. Not only does this eliminate the need to explicitly walk substitute drivers through routes in painstaking detail, but it gives the Transportation Department the data they need to optimize routes in the future. For example, Emery can see if students are in walk zones that may be close to pick-up zones to maximum service and efficiency. "We just couldn't do this in the past," says Swenson.

Emery's use of Travel Tracker has also helped it take advantage of even more data to continue to make routes easier to understand for its drivers. "In the past, if a driver didn't recognize an address or a stop, it could lead to confusion and inefficiency," explains Durrant. "We were able to work with the App-Garden team to add a new type of data for our reports. This now included very specific descriptions and landmarks, which are very helpful for all of our drivers."

This has helped overcome past routing issues. For example, in the past, a new substitute driver usually had to ride the routes a few times to learn them completely. "We can now give any driver any route from Travel Tracker—even one who's never driven before—and he/she can do it very easily," explains Durrant. "This has been a huge boost for our confidence."

In turn, all of these benefits have paid off in one important way: parent communication and satisfaction. "Travel Tracker has really helped us provide better service to the community," says Durrant. "In the past, in the beginning of each school year, we would get calls all day from parents who wanted to know their child's bus and route number. It actually used to take up much of the day for a few weeks each fall. Now Travel Tracker produces this information for us so we can send it to them before the school year even starts. Travel Tracker has been a huge time saver."

"I simply can't say enough good things about the entire experience. Everyone on the App-Garden's services team went out of their way to over-deliver and exceed our expectations every step of the way. I know some companies may think of vendors as partners, but I truly consider all of the App-Garden employees to be friends."

Roger Swenson, Transportation Director

Continuous Improvement Enabled with Travel Tracker

As Emery looks to the future, it is optimistic it can achieve even more with Travel Tracker. "I am looking for even new ways to be more efficient and automate additional steps related to route management," says Durrant. "For example, we are planning to use Travel Tracker's Optimization feature to see how we can make routes shorter, eliminate inefficiency, and reduce fuel costs."

For now, both Durrant and Swenson are completely convinced they made the right decision. "Today, we know that our routes are highly accurate and that alone has taken a huge weight off our shoulders when it comes to student safety and serving the community," explains Swenson. "We simply couldn't have achieved this peace of mind without Travel Tracker."

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