

## TJ COMMUNITY:

As many of you know, the impending budget cuts will affect afternoon bus transportation significantly at TJ. Presently the proposal involves a plan to provide **only depot busing** from school to homes in the afternoons. Students would be dropped off at a base high school. Transportation to their homes would need to be arranged by individual families.

This is a significant issue of concern for many reasons:

### **1. Thomas Jefferson would be the ONLY high school where students would no longer have bus transportation provided to within walking distance of their homes.**

- The savings for this change to our afternoon bus service would amount to around \$400,000 from a budget which overall totals approximately \$110 million (.3%). We have been unable to find out what portion of the total TJ transportation budget this savings represents, or what the precise plan is for TJ.

-Students coming to TJ already have generally long commutes and a longer school day. Now there would be a further transportation burden added to their commute which some would find unmanageable.

- So far jurisdictions for Loudoun, Arlington and Prince William plan to maintain bus service to TJ. Only Fairfax County is considering this partial amputation of services.

### **2. With the proposed change, there would be a safety and security issue for our kids.**

- Depot buses with up to 50- 60 students or more would arrive after base high schools are dismissed for the day. Presently there would be no planned supervision for our students, no cover during inclement weather, no bathroom facilities.

-During a portion of the year, kids would be waiting or walking home in the dark. Those who live nearby would be walking home alone or in small numbers.

-Funds needed to create adequate supervision and shelter for students waiting to be picked up would likely partially offset the proposed savings.

### **3. Working and economically disadvantaged families would suffer the greatest burden from the loss of afternoon transportation.**

- Families with two working parents would be most affected by this change
- Though many upper classmen choose to drive to school, students who can not afford cars or gas continue to take the bus.
- On unplanned (e.g. snow) early dismissal days this problem would be magnified greatly.

**4. Freshman and Sophomore students who can not drive are particularly dependent on the bus for transportation to within walking distance of their homes.**

- The incoming freshman class can not advocate for themselves as next year's class has not yet been selected and is largely unaware of this potential problem.

**5. The loss of afternoon transportation may affect the ability of some students to attend or continue at TJ thus threatening the diversity and integrity of our program.**

-Again students with two working parents, or those unable to afford or arrange other transportation, would be especially impacted.

Though many of our present families will not be affected by this change because their students will be graduating, driving themselves next year, or parents are at home to pick up their children, it is important that we advocate as a group to preserve the diversity and success of our program. We need to ensure that those who depend on the present transportation system are not hindered or prevented from taking advantage of the opportunity to come to TJ because of a busing problem.

Thank you,

Liz Ross

TJ PTSA President on behalf of the executive committee