

**THE WHEELS ON THE BUS GO ROUND AND ROUND:  
TRANSPORTATION FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

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## **Abstract**

Transportation has consistently been the largest barrier for homeless students to overcome to staying in school. With family homelessness on the rise nationally, the provision of transportation services for homeless students is an important protection of the right to public education for homeless youth, and an effort to provide students with the most stable and academically supportive option. This study aims to investigate the successes and continuing challenges in homeless student transportation services at the city-scale (Los Angeles County) in order to contribute to a national discourse on prevention of further hardship for a growing number of youth. Secondary data analysis describes the context of the issue, while surveys and interviews with school district employees reveal the solutions born of these factors and explore the dynamics of coordination and the actors involved. Public transportation is the most cited mode of transportation for children and youth to school. Frequent residential mobility and difficulty getting in touch with parents are the biggest challenges to transportation coordination. District Liaisons interact with multiple agencies in the coordination of transportation, through communication, collaboration and conducting outreach. Although the survey responses are promising in what they communicate about educational access, recommendations for improving conditions are outlined.

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## ***Introduction***

The number of homeless persons in families has increased by 20 percent from 2007 to 2010, and families currently represent a much larger share of the total sheltered population than ever before.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)  
*The 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*

Between October 2009 and September 2010, 168,227 households with children spent time in a shelter (HUD 2011). The total number of people in families (567,334) represented 35.2% of all sheltered people during that year. Newspaper articles from across the country discuss the mortgage foreclosure crisis, the recession and high unemployment as continuing factors in family homelessness, and reflect the variety of issues that cities are newly grappling with in assisting families. The broad geographic effect is apparent. Rural and suburban homelessness is on the rise (HUD 2011). Local governments are struggling to respond to family homelessness and related issues under the constraints of tight budgets. One such issue is the difficulty of staying in school for homeless youth.

Homeless youth face an array of barriers to education including registration (immunizations, residency requirements, and lack of documentation, such as a birth certificate), guardianship issues, transportation, clothing, food and school supplies access, and health issues. These barriers have been acknowledged since the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act passed in 1987. The Act was the first federal response to homelessness, and today remains the largest impetus for federal funding of homeless assistance. Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, *Education for*

*Homeless Children and Youths*, asserts the right to public education for homeless youth, providing guidelines for state and local educational agencies to facilitate educational access through mitigating the barriers to attendance, as well as providing competitive grants for services toward that end. Title VII-B also acts as a prevention tool. Youth are an especially vulnerable sub-group of the homeless population, and early experience of homelessness is a risk factor for developmental delays and health issues. Since schools are recognized as one venue for homeless youth to access support, McKinney-Vento competitive grants can be used for services, such as tutoring, before- and after-school activities access and counseling.

Transportation has consistently been one of the largest barriers for homeless students to overcome. Since 2002, the McKinney-Vento Act stipulates that homeless youth and their parents have a right to choose to stay at their *school of origin*, the school they last attended before homeless (or change in homeless locale). This provision is inextricably linked to the necessity for transportation; the decision to remain at a school despite a change of residence that may locate the student in another school district results in a need for transportation. School districts are subsequently required to coordinate transportation for homeless students. During the 2009-2010 school year, transportation was the most common barrier to education for homeless students, with 66% of school districts receiving McKinney-Vento funds reporting issues with it (National Center for Homeless Education 2011). 44% of school districts that received funding that year also reported school selection as a barrier for homeless students (National Center for Homeless Education 2011).

This study focuses on the critical barrier of transportation in Los Angeles. The reporting requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act and the annual sheltered and unsheltered homeless counts reported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) communicate the broad issue. Developing solutions necessitates moving beyond numbers in order to understand the services offered, identify what is successfully bridging gaps, and where barriers remain unmitigated. Case studies at the city-scale create opportunities for examination of specific solutions. As California has the largest homeless population of any state in the country, Los Angeles is a prime candidate for researching a range of transportation programs in varying contexts. Through interviews with local educational agency employees in Los Angeles, coupled with additional primary and secondary data collection, this research will explore the following research questions: *What transportation services are being arranged? How does access to public transportation affect transportation services for homeless students? How are these services arranged? What other sources of funding do school districts use for transportation of homeless students (whether supplementing McKinney-Vento funds, or without McKinney-Vento funds to begin with)? How does access to transportation services affect school choice?*

As the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the McKinney-Vento Act approaches, it is important to examine transportation for homeless students in order to advance better solutions. During the 2009-2010 school year, the National Center for Homeless Education reports that 939,903 students were homeless (this figure involves an expanded definition of 'homeless' beyond the HUD reported sheltered population). Certainly, geographic specificity of issues within this study restricts

application of the lessons learned here to the nation as a whole, but an awareness of successes can inform the protection of a right, and the prevention of further challenges for a growing number of people.

### ***Background***

During the 1970's, at the beginning of the contemporary period of homelessness, individuals without a home could seek shelter at a facility run by a religious group, non-profit community group, or at a single-room occupancy development. A small amount of federal dollars were channeled toward these efforts. This money was allocated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); homelessness was not explicitly addressed as a crisis unto itself. Denial and *disaffiliation theory*, the belief that homeless people were on the streets by choice, informed the public and government perspective. This perspective was also informed by the previous period of homelessness (Great Depression through post-WWII), when the homeless population was identified as relatively homogeneous (Markee 2011). People understood homeless people as older, single men with alcohol addiction issues, so it was seen as a risk for a limited number of people. Denial and disaffiliation were challenged starting in the 70's, when not only did the homeless population increase, the population shifted to include a variety of people.

The increased presence of unaccompanied youth on the streets and the acknowledgement of their vulnerability as a homeless population inspired a federal response a decade before the acceptance that homelessness justified a federal



response. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act of 1974 (originally titled the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act) designated federal allocations for youth shelters and transitional living. By the mid-1980's, the broad population affected by homelessness led to a public understanding of the multiple structural factors involved in homelessness. Although it was still understood that drug addiction and mental health issues continued to be a barrier for some homeless individuals, the increasing number of people who fell outside of that classification, and the aggregate increase in people experiencing homelessness, culminated in federal government policy.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act passed in 1987. The original legislation was drafted to include two parts composed of preventive and long-term solutions. However, only the first part entailing emergency relief was enacted. Title VII, Subtitle B of the McKinney-Vento Act is the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY). Advocates were prepared to demand enforcement, and within five months of the legislation's passage, corresponding litigation ensued. *National Coalition for the Homeless v. U.S. Department of Education* confirmed that homeless children were being denied educational access, and required the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to adhere to the deadlines for implementation. This was effective in the required provisions of the program, but most of the local provisions were funding-eligible options; the most DOE could do for local conditions was disseminate information about grants to schools (Julianelle 2003).

EHCY has evolved since 1987 through several amendments. Originally, its regulation was stringent at the state level only, calling for the establishment of the

Office of Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth in every state. Federal funding is used for these offices, as well as for the establishment of a state plan detailing programs and services. Although local education agencies were required to comply with the state plan, the minimal basic provisions of the act (requiring review of residency requirements and offering grants for programs) left much of the effective local response in the hands of the state plan. Questionable monitoring for compliance further diluted the power to ensure education for homeless youth (Rosenthal and Foscarinis 2007).

Amendments in 1990 and 1994 strengthened EHCY through specifying required actions and increased grant funding, but resistance to it built in the mid-1990's. Data collection obligations were relaxed, inhibiting monitoring for compliance. In 1995, an amendment was introduced to repeal EHCY altogether, but was defeated. By the turn of the millennium, opinion had turned back in its favor. The reauthorization of EHCY in 2002 as part of the No Child Left Behind Act provided the backbone of what it is today, laying out local requirements to be enforced by state educational agencies. The aim was to mitigate barriers homeless youth face to staying in school, as well as challenges to academic performance and overall health.

The 2002 amendment dismisses any issue with school registration of homeless children by requiring immediate enrollment of homeless youth regardless of missing records, including immunization or medical records, proof of residency or birth certificate. This guarantee is extended to unaccompanied youth to avoid delays caused by guardianship issues or disputes. Structural support for homeless

students was also mandated by the reauthorization. Access to needed programs was guaranteed, including any additional educational services, school nutrition programs or counseling offered.

Prior to 2002, school districts that qualified for funding had to create a homeless youth liaison position to coordinate services funded by the McKinney-Vento Act. After the 2002 amendment, *every* school district is required to designate a liaison responsible for the requirements of the legislation. Most school districts do not have an employee who solely addresses this work. Typically the district employee who answers to the state regarding homeless students is someone in a position that the district decided was related enough to absorb the work. It varies from district to district, and the broad spectrum of district positions which are also liable for homeless services coordination include (but are not limited to) Director of Finance, Director of Pupil Services, Child and Welfare Coordinator, School Board President or Assistant Superintendent. The liaison is trained through the state Office of Coordinator.

In addition to the day-to-day work, the liaison and the State Coordinator ideally serve to affect change at their respective scopes based on a continuing assessment of conditions. Liaisons also act as outreach to service agencies, especially shelters. However, similar to the variability of services within schools, the extent of outreach entailed in the liaison position depends on the district. Because of the variability in title, this position will be referred to as the District Liaison in this article from this point forward.

The 2002 amendment also contributed an expansion of the definition of *homeless* to match the broader definition used by DOE after 1995. Many people experience a situation that they do not identify as *homelessness* since it does not readily fit the mainstream-held archetype. This is recognized as an issue, since youth are exposed to hardship in these situations that could be addressed through McKinney-Vento Act provisions. Additionally, these non-archetype homeless situations are sometimes unstable precursors to shelter or street-living homelessness, and the connection made with children at the unstable stage can work to keep a child in school through tougher times. After 2002, the definition of *homeless* within the EHCY includes living in doubled-up housing due to economic issues, motels or hotels, cars, trailer parks, campgrounds, abandoned buildings and substandard housing in addition to the original definition of living in shelters or public spaces.

Most relevant to this study, the 2002 amendment ensures a family's right to choose which school to attend, and requires school districts to coordinate transportation. Prior to 2002, the parent(s) or guardians(s) and the school would decide whether to change schools after a change in residence resulting from homelessness based on a determination of what was in the child's "best interest." The "best interest" designation often resulted in a change of schools. After years of experience, it is understood that a change of schools for a homeless child is detrimental to academic performance (although advocates are seeking to fill the gap in research that exists to conclusively substantiate that). Advocates also warn that it disrupts the only stable component of a homeless child's life, threatening a vital

social support, and may increase the risk of discontinuing school. The 2002 amendment addresses this concern by asserting the right of homeless youth to stay at their school of origin. If the decision is made to stay at the school of origin, and this results in difficulty getting the child to school, school districts are required to arrange transportation. This aspect was an important piece of the 2002 amendment; transportation has been identified as the largest barrier for several years.

The 2002 reauthorization largely transformed the EHCY from *encouraging* change to *requiring* change. The Educational Success for Children and Youth Without Homes Act of 2009, and companion legislation introduced in 2011 further clarify the provisions initiated in 2001.

#### *McKinney-Vento Act Research*

Previous studies of McKinney-Vento Act implementation are limited, but reveal the conditions of transportation services for homeless students. The research can be categorized by scale of examination. Anderson's (1995) methodology of state plan examination and state coordinator interviews provides a national comparison of state policy, communicating various political adaptations to the McKinney-Vento Act. Rafferty's (1992) study focuses on the state level, examining implementation of McKinney-Vento funded services in New York State. Bowman and Barksdale's (2004) research utilizes the smallest scale, analyzing transportation services coordinated by eight school districts.

Anderson finds that states are less likely to require transportation of homeless students if they cannot provide the funding for it. The family's mobility can pose challenges; if a homeless family moves frequently, coordination of transportation becomes a difficult task. This study was prior to the provision for homeless students to remain at their school of origin. During this study, schools and families were supposed to work together to choose the school in the child's "best interest." Anderson emphasizes that the difficulty of arranging coordination influenced schools to relocate the student, which often negatively impacted academic performance. This also eroded the social continuity that is important for a child's health and well-being.

Rafferty interviewed District Liaisons, other school employees, children and parents, and social service workers (including staff at shelters for survivors of domestic violence through mailed surveys) within New York State. She finds that transportation requests for homeless students in elementary and junior high schools in New York State were not being expedited as required by the Office of Pupil Transportation. This reveals that age groups may sometimes get different treatment. Other issues she illuminated were parents not receiving transportation money to fill the gap until public transportation passes were distributed, and the absence of coordinated transportation to before- and after-school activities.

Bowman and Barksdale's study addresses conditions after the 2002 amendment. They focus on what they identify as successful transportation services at eight school districts. Despite the difference in scale between this and the other studies, the challenges remain similar: Funding issues and the need for state and

local policy to translate the federal into the feasible by outlining specific means for implementation. Additionally, Bowman described the issue of jurisdictions unevenly charged with transportation coordination. The case study explorations reveal funding and coordination innovations.

In a recent discussion of McKinney-Vento Act research, Cunningham (2010) asserted:

It is unclear how many homeless children identified through McKinney Vento receive transportation services and how transportation services relate to school access and attendance, or how all of these relate to academic outcomes. (p. 10)

The McKinney-Vento Act research illuminates important points for this study and future research, among them: a need to understand the state policy context and the interaction between state and local educational agencies, funding constraints, possible disparate affects by age of students, and the transportation issue's affects on school choice. This last point gets at the core of this study. While some may feel that the school of origin provision is not reasonable given the difficulty in coordinating transportation, transportation was a common barrier even before the 2002 amendment (Rafferty 1992). The issue of homeless students transportation is not going to disappear, regardless of school choice.

### *Current conditions*

School district reporting requirements since No Child Left Behind enable a general understanding of issues and the services provided (categorized broadly, for

example: School supplies, obtaining or transferring records, staff development).

During the 2009-2010 school year, 84% of school districts that received McKinney-Vento funds reported coordinating transportation for homeless students. However, these reporting requirements do not include some important pieces of information, such as the number of homeless students receiving transportation services, what those services entail, and whether there is unmet demand. While cities have different policies on how to explore this issue, a recent experience in New York City illustrates one difficulty in articulating conditions. In a city council hearing about homeless students, the New York City Department of Education Deputy Chancellor did not have the most current data available for city council members. Other agencies had conflicting data. The New York City Office of Pupil Transportation stated that it is busing approximately 50% of the K-6 homeless students who applied for transportation services (Canal, 2011). This statistic conflicted with data presented by the New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students, which recorded a lower percentage of homeless students served. The discrepancy in data communicates a lack of coordination between organizations that inhibits an understanding of what is going on.

The next section locates the topic of transportation barriers for homeless students within spatial justice and transportation equity discourses before turning to research methods.



## ***Literature Review***

### *Spatial Justice*

Equitable access to public education for homeless youth is a specific expression of the right to public services for all residents. Uninhibited access to education is implicitly bound up in the current discourse of the Just City and the Right to the City. While these, and John Rawls' definition of justice as distribution of resources, certainly support the McKinney-Vento Act's Education of Homeless Children and Youth ideologically, Edward Soja's concept of spatial justice introduces a physical component to the discourse that provides a helpful frame for homeless student transportation.

Regardless of which living situation a homeless family is in, homelessness results in spatial injustice. Whether staying at a shelter, doubled up with another family, at a motel, or on the street, a homeless family's choice of residential location is constrained by what Soja (2011, p. 55) calls "the interplay of endogenous and exogenous influences and by the complex relations between *geographies of choice* and the *geographies of privilege*" (author's emphasis). The top-down organization of space and the location decision-making of multiple stakeholders create the geography that defines where certain groups of people are allowed. Since shelter siting depends on community acceptance, low-income neighborhoods (where families are likely doubling up) experience issues with basic amenities, and motels are often located in non-residential areas, homeless families are limited in the benefits they can draw from a city. All of these living situations present location

discrimination, the extreme of which is street living; a family with no address faces big barriers in accessing public services.

Another application of Soja's concept is in his exploration of a 'socio-spatial dialectic.' In the past, social and historical factors have informed our perspective and understanding of development, of cities, and consequently justice. Soja argues the importance of understanding spatial outcomes. The physical urban landscape is not just a backdrop for justice and injustice to take place; forces embed outcomes into the physical landscape, which in turn shapes events by further supporting that justice or injustice. In this way, the urban fabric is active. The location discrimination that homeless families experience manifests for some youth as the distance between the new residential location and school of origin. Homeless youth are presented with a problem: If they change schools, they may suffer academically and emotionally, establishing a loop of spatial injustice creating injustice. Within this loop lies the solution. Soja believes that "(s)patial analysis of injustice can advance the fight for social justice" (2011, p. 27). Understanding the physical barrier homeless students face is the key to addressing it; either the student needs transportation, or the family needs to be placed in temporary housing nearest the school of origin. In his perspective, examining spatial injustice is the way to move beyond abstract discourse by illuminating the solutions for improvement.

Although Soja most strongly asserts the need for spatial outcomes analysis, he also identifies with the Right to the City's focus on democratic processes. As the second overarching tenet in Soja's concept, it is allied with a homeless family's right to school choice. Not only is the Education for Homeless Children and Youth a

protection of a right to education, it is also an assertion of the right of a family to choose. Implementation of this right is an amazing decision-making opportunity for people who simultaneously have very little control or input in other areas of their lives.

### *Transportation Equity*

Discussions within transportation equity lead to the assertion that equitable transportation solutions are solutions to broad issues of equity. The perspectives of transportation policy as social service, civil rights, and social policy are allied with the provision of transportation for homeless students, and provide some insight into solutions.

Homeless families are affected by inequitable transportation financing. One body of transportation literature argues that financing preferences modes of transportation used by moderate- and high-income households, and consequently concentrates transportation investment in areas with lower demand for public transportation (Sanchez and Brenman, 2007; Garrett and Taylor, 1998). Low-income riders subsidize high-income riders, largely because the ridership of commuter rail is low and cities have to maintain low fares to attract suburban commuters out of their cars (Garrett and Taylor, 1998). Since homeless students are more likely to live in central cities, they are affected by the financing inequities of the central city transit networks, which result in service quality issues or lack of transit access for within some neighborhoods (Stanley and Vella-Brodick, 2009).

Transportation financing inequity speaks to the funding issues that school districts face in pursuing transportation for homeless students. In transportation equity discourse, some argue that equity entails that transportation subsidies go where they are needed. Garrett and Taylor (1999) assert that transportation is a social service, and that planning should address the needs of residents who are dependent on public transportation. Homeless youth qualify as residents that planning needs to address, since it is no exaggeration to assert that they are a vulnerable population dependent on transportation for access to education.

Transportation of homeless students qualifies as a civil rights issue within some literature. For example, Sanchez and Brenman (2007) assert that the bundle of concerns within transportation equity, illuminating the negative effects disproportionately experienced by certain groups of people, is a civil rights issue. They argue for broadening the discourse to include groups often not considered, including American Indians, the elderly and disabled, women and immigrants (the latter two groups as disproportionately accessing buses in many cities). Homeless students are one such group given a transportation access challenge. Additionally, homeless students are more likely to experience a disability or non-English language proficiency than students with family residences. This further emphasizes the complexity of barriers that homeless students grapple with. Although the designation as a civil rights issue is ineffective as a plea for enforcement through litigation post *Alexander v. Sandoval* in 2001, it is a call for an alliance across groups to work for change.

Another concept illustrates that transportation solutions for homeless students have the potential to address more than just the distance between residence and school. Bullard (2004) asserts:

Transportation provides access to opportunity and serves as a key component in addressing poverty, unemployment, and equal opportunity goals while ensuring access to education, health care, and other public services. (p. 1183)

For low-income households who rely on public transportation, location of residence and the subsequent access to bus or subway dictates the ease with which they can operate day-to-day. For homeless youth, transportation to their school of origin provides a greater likelihood of access to the opportunities that schools present, as well as social continuity. In a similar discourse, the concept of *social exclusion* has recently been used to push for a broader examination of the effects of transportation access and policy. Because of transportation's affect on quality of life, Stanley and Vella-Brodick (2009) assert that transportation policy needs to have social goals. Further, they argue that effective solutions require a coordination of transportation and human services planning because of the interconnected nature of these issues. This inter-agency coordination is seen in the work between school districts, shelters, social service agencies and others to facilitate homeless students transportation, and is accepted as an important component of the solution.

Stanley and Vella-Brodick's article calls for social policy in transportation policy. Echoing the position of the 'transportation as social service' concept, they assert Amartya Sen's capabilities concept, which they summarize as:

To achieve certain levels of capability, it may be necessary to offer more to those who have less, in order to overcome the systematic disadvantage they face. (p. 94)

In applying this concept to homeless youth, supporting transportation services for homeless students to school of origin ensures maximum opportunity at school, and is the best prevention tool against future hardship.

### ***Methods***

This study examines transportation solutions for improving access to education for homeless students in Los Angeles County. Secondary data from the California Department of Education, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, and Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority illustrate the complex contextual factors shaping transportation of homeless students and school choice. Primary data through surveys and interviews with school District Liaisons describe the solutions born of these factors, and address the research questions.

#### ***Phase I: Secondary data collection and mapping of transit, shelters and schools***

Data was acquired through the California Department of Education in order to understand the conditions and fiscal resources for Los Angeles County. Data include McKinney-Vento funding allocations, 2010-2011; services provided to homeless students by school districts receiving McKinney-Vento funding, 2010-2011; homeless student counts for each school district within Los Angeles County,

2010-2011. Homeless student counts are broken down by type of homelessness (shelter, doubled up, non-shelter, hotel/motel). Additionally, the data present homeless student counts by school grade of the students. For information on data acquisition and sources, see Appendix A.

The second section of phase I aims at an understanding of the accessibility of public transportation for homeless students. Drawing on data from the California Department of Education, Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, geographic information systems (GIS) technologies was used to map the location of public transportation, homeless shelters and schools throughout the county. For information on data sets and acquisition, see Appendix A.

Here, public transportation means the network of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA). Although Los Angeles County is large, and includes several municipal public transit networks, LACMTA represents the ability of a student to cross district boundaries without changing networks. Therefore, the findings of this data do not definitively designate which schools and shelters are accessible by public transportation. Rather, the findings communicate which locations are accessible through one network, and which locations entail the challenge of homeless students accessing multiple transit networks.

Although LACMTA runs five different rail lines, the number of rail stops (80) are minimal when compared to the 14,921 bus stops. The rail stops are also located

in relative close proximity to bus stops. As such, bus stops are used as public transportation for the purposes of this study.

The term ‘accessibility’ here means within reasonable walking distance. A review of relevant studies yielded an ample literature that discusses the effects of residence-to-school distance on childhood physical activity (D’Haese, 2011; Schlossberg, 2006; Mitra and Buliung, 2012). These articles did not necessarily delineate what a reasonable walking distance may be, but D’Haese (2011) and Schlossberg (2006) both found that children are more likely to walk to school if it is within 1 mile. Falb’s study (2007) investigated how many children within the state of Georgia are able to walk to school based on distance. This study used half of a mile for children grades K-5, and 1 mile for youth grades 6-9 as reasonable walking distance. Falb’s study was examining walking distance to schools. As this section of this study examines walking distance to bus stops, it is assumed that walking is one portion of the student’s commute. Therefore, it is most appropriate to use the *half of a mile* designation of reasonable walking distance from Falb’s study.

The Network Analysis tool *Closest Facility* within GIS was used to discern which schools and shelters are within reasonable walking distance to a bus stop. For schools and shelters, one half of a mile was used for screening locations within reasonable walking distance. The margin-of-error with these functions is they do not take into account which streets are pedestrian-safe or friendly.

The third section of phase I pursues an understanding of whether people living in overcrowded housing units have access to public transportation. Homeless students are primarily living in doubled up living arrangements, so shelter locations



are only relevant to a minority of students. And a school's proximity to transportation does not indicate a solution for a homeless student if that child's residence is not accessible by transportation.

Housing units are defined as overcrowded through a few different standards. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) acknowledges these different standards, but asserts that measurements based on occupants per room is dominant in research literature (HUD 2011). This standard is particularly beneficial when using US Decennial Census data. As such, this study uses the specifications for overcrowded (between 1 and 1.5 occupants per room), and severely overcrowded (more than 1.5 occupants per room) utilized by HUD. Data from the 2010 Decennial U.S. Census was used to map both overcrowded and severely overcrowded housing units to understand the locations of doubled-up living arrangements. The GIS tools *Buffer* and *Select by Location* were used to understand the proximity of overcrowded and severely overcrowded housing units to bus stops. First, a 1/2 mile buffer was created around the 14,921 bus stops. Next, the census tracts with centroids within the bus stops buffer were selected and separated. Totals from this new file represent units within reasonable walking distance. These totals were subtracted from the original file to arrive at the number of units outside reasonable walking distance.

The results of this analysis are estimates with a higher margin-of-error than the second section of phase I. *Buffer* does not use distance along streets, and instead buffers through simple radial distance. The GIS tools *Service Area*, or *Buffer* and *Clip* used in conjunction, would provide more accurate results. However, the file of

14,921 bus stops along with the streets file for Los Angeles County proved to be too cumbersome for the Network Analyst tools of GIS. After several attempts, many hours, and many GIS program crashes, *Buffer* and *Select by Location* were used. Estimates are appropriate for this study since the purpose of this section is a general contextual understanding.

These preliminary mappings are by no means communicative of the entire picture. The challenges of addressing homelessness include the difficulty of capturing a snapshot of conditions, and the tendency for conditions to change quickly. However, this information provides the general comprehension needed to analyze the primary data.

***Phase II: Data Collection - Conduct survey of District Liaisons***

During the second phase of research, surveys were distributed to the District Liaison at school districts within Los Angeles County that had more than 10 homeless students during the 2010-2011 school year (see Appendix A for District Liaison contact source). There are 81 school districts in Los Angeles County. 61 of those school districts had more than 10 homeless students identified and enrolled during the 2010-2011 school year. Each school district has its own research protocol. Initial contact of the District Liaisons to assess the potential for parallel review processes proved the feasibility of this study; out of 20 direct contacts, only 2 identified the necessity for an internal review process. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) was one of them. LAUSD has the largest homeless student

population, at over 16,000 for the 2010-2011 school year. A research proposal submission to the External Research Unit at LAUSD was approved.

The survey questions were chosen to address funding, public and school transportation availability, transportation modes utilized for homeless students, challenges and successes, and the process of coordination. Questions were borrowed from the District Liaison and Pupil Transportation Director interview used in Bowman and Barskdale's (2004) study of homeless student transportation in order to enable this study to be a contribution to the discourse (see Appendix B for the survey). Notification of the survey was completed first through a round of phone calls, then through email with a link to the survey through Survey Monkey. This online format survey is advantageous in the ease it presents participants, and the safety against common mistakes.

The survey received 17 school district respondents. 2 indicated that despite identification of a homeless student population, no transportation services had been required. Consequently, this study analyzes the survey responses of 15 school districts in Los Angeles County.

***Phase III: Data Collection - Conduct interviews of selected District Liaisons***

The third phase of data collection consists of interviews with District Liaisons selected from the survey respondents. Interviewees were selected based on the range of conditions they represented. This sampling allows for a comparison of strategies across different factors, for example, a district that relies on public transportation for connecting homeless students to school, and a district that relies

on extended or additional school bus routes. Additionally, districts with unorthodox responses were selected for interviews (the designation *unorthodox* is assigned through an understanding of typical responses to the surveys, from previous studies and through this study). For instance, one school district was selected for an interview based on being the only school district to choose *walking* as the primary mode of transportation for homeless students. Acknowledging the possibility of low response rates, multiple districts from sampled categories were contacted for interviews until each theme or condition had at least one representative interview.

The interview questions elaborate on survey questions, with the purpose of a full understanding of the transportation solutions in use and the factors supporting it. A body of interview questions was built from the interview used by Bowman and Barksdale (2004). These questions were chosen for their open-ended nature, the topics they address, and the potential to create an alliance with the prior data that will allow for a larger discussion. Not all of these questions were used in every interview; questions from the body of questions were selected based on the planned topics of exploration for each specific interview (see Appendix C for the body of interview questions). Five school District Liaisons were interviewed.

**Data Analysis**

Table 1 shows homeless student counts for each school district in total and broken down by type of living situation. Doubled-up living situations are the most common for students that have been identified as homeless within schools.

**Table 1. Homeless Student Population by School District and Living Situation Surveyed School Districts in Los Angeles County, 2010-2011 School Year**

SCHOOL DISTRICT	SHELTER	DOUBLED UP	NO SHELTER	HOTEL	TOTAL
Alhambra Unified	5 4.81%	92 88.46%	0 0.00%	7 6.73%	104 100.00%
Azusa Unified	6 0.53%	1111 97.71%	5 0.44%	15 1.32%	1137 100%
Baldwin Park Unified	2 0.08%	2348 98.66%	26 1.09%	4 0.17%	2380 100%
Downey Unified	4 4.88%	68 82.93%	3 3.66%	7 8.54%	82 100%
El Rancho Unified	8 14.04%	43 75.44%	6 10.53%	0 0%	57 100%
Lancaster Elementary	143 60.85%	62 26.38%	15 6.38%	15 6.38%	235 100%
Little Lake City Elementary	6 1.35%	433 97.09%	0 0%	7 1.57%	446 100%
Los Angeles Unified	2635 16.12%	8979 54.93%	1721 10.53%	3011 18.42%	16346 100%
Monrovia Unified	7 13.73%	29 56.86%	5 9.80%	10 19.61%	51 100%
Mountain View Elementary	4 0.69%	572 99.31%	0 0%	0 0%	576 100%
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified	159 2.74%	5603 96.62%	6 0.10%	31 0.53%	5799 100%
Pomona Unified	374 14.90%	1981 78.92%	77 3.07%	78 3.11%	2510 100%
Rowland Unified	39 1.52%	2470 96.07%	52 2.02%	10 0.39%	2571 100%
Saugus Union	5 1.51%	326 98.49%	0 0%	0 0%	331 100%
South Whittier Elementary	3 2.56%	113 96.58%	1 0.85%	0 0%	117 100%
Whittier City Elementary	2 0.32%	620 98.57%	1 0.16%	6 0.95%	629 100%
Wiseburn Elementary	1 2.56%	36 92.31%	1 2.56%	1 2.56%	39 100%

Data acquired through the California Department of Education  
 Data highlighted in red signal the living situations that school districts are responding to, given the counts

Lancaster Elementary is the only district that has a majority of students living not doubled-up; 60.85% of homeless students in Lancaster District are living in shelters. Despite high doubled-up population proportions, some districts have a large enough homeless population that students living in other situations constitute a contingent that may influence transportation services coordination. All homeless student populations in double digits are highlighted above in red in order to call attention to the districts that are responding to alternate living situations.

South Whittier Elementary and Wiseburn Elementary school districts have not needed to coordinate or provide transportation services to their homeless student populations. Because of this, they are not included in this article beyond this section. However, they are included here to discuss the implication of this finding. Wiseburn Elementary has the smallest homeless population of the districts that responded to the survey (39 students), while South Whittier Elementary has the fifth smallest (117). Both school districts provide only limited transportation to their student body generally (Wiseburn maintains special education routes, South Whittier serves special education and some middle school students). This implies that the homeless students in these districts are able to access transit that their peers are, whether it is walking, biking, taking public transportation, or using a car. This implication is most noteworthy for South Whittier Elementary since the district has 117 homeless students. Further research into the factors that contribute to districts not experiencing transportation challenges for homeless students should be pursued to understand the supporting context.

*What transportation services are being arranged?  
The Primary Modes of Transportation for Homeless Students to School of Origin*

As evident from Table 2 and 4, one-third of the surveyed school districts cited more than one primary mode of transportation for homeless students. This illustrates that transportation coordination does not always allow reliance on one solution.

**Table 2. Primary Modes of Transportation for Homeless Students**

Public transportation	11	84.60%
Additional or extended bus routes	4	30.80%
Special education buses	3	23.10%
Personal vehicles	2	15.40%
Reimbursing families for mileage	2	15.40%
Taxis	0	0.00%
Contracted transportation services	0	0.00%
Other: Walking	1	7.69%
Other: School Vans	1	7.69%

**Table 3. Survey Response Summary:**

*Is public transportation available within the area of your district?*

Yes	15	100.00%
No	0	0.00%

**Table 4. Transportation Provision, General Student Body and Homeless Students by School District Respondent**

DISTRICT	DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED	PRIMARY MODE OF TRANSPORTATION FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS
Alhambra Unified	Special education only	Public transportation
Azusa Unified	Special education only	Public transportation Special education buses
Baldwin Park Unified	Yes	Additional or extended routes Special education buses Personal vehicles
Downey Unified	No	Other: Walking
El Rancho Unified	No	Public transportation
Lancaster Elementary	Limited	Public transportation Special education buses Personal vehicles Reimbursing families for mileage
Little Lake City Elementary	No	Public transportation
Los Angeles Unified	Special education and special programs	Public transportation
Monrovia Unified	For some schools	Public transportation
Mountain View Elementary	Yes	Other: School Vans
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified	Yes	Additional or extended routes Public transportation
Pomona Unified	No	Public transportation
Rowland Unified	Yes	Additional or extended routes Public transportation Reimbursing families for mileage
Saugus Union Elementary	Special education only	Public transportation
Whittier City Elementary	Special education and special programs	Additional or extended routes

*Public Transportation*

11 of the 13 school district respondents (84.6%) cited public transportation as a primary mode of transportation for homeless students (see Table 2). Seven of those 11 cited public transportation as the sole primary mode (see Table 4).

Districts that do not provide transportation to their students generally, or that provide transportation to a limited number of students, are more likely to rely on



public transportation for homeless students. The finding that public transportation is the most common mode for homeless students among the surveyed districts is consistent with the districts' reported access to public transportation. All of the surveyed districts communicated that public transportation is available within their district area. In Los Angeles County, buses are the most abundant form of public transportation, and the majority of school districts find it effective to distribute bus tokens or passes to homeless students in need of transportation.

The mapping analysis of shelters, overcrowded housing units, schools and proximity to bus stops affirm the viability of public transportation for some homeless students. There are 11 shelters that serve families or unaccompanied youth in Los Angeles County. Nine of them are within reasonable walking distance (1/2 mile) of a LACMTA bus stop. Another shelter is within the Antelope Valley Transportation Authority network, and the last is within Pomona Unified School District. It is unknown if the latter is near any public transit (it is 5 miles from a LACMTA bus stop).

As Table 5 illustrates, this study estimates that 85.29% of overcrowded and severely overcrowded housing units are within reasonable walking distance of a bus stop. For both overcrowded and severely overcrowded housing units, the proportion of units within walking distance is higher than for non-crowded housing units, implying that occupants of overcrowded housing units are more likely to be within walking distance of a bus stop than occupants of a non-crowded unit.

**Table 5. Overcrowded and Severely Overcrowded Housing Units Within Reasonable Walking Distance to LACMTA Bus Stops, Los Angeles County**

	<b>NON-CROWDED UNITS</b>	<b>OVERCROWDED UNITS</b>	<b>SEVERELY OVERCROWDED UNITS</b>	<b>TOTAL, OVERCROWDED AND SEVERELY OVERCROWDED</b>
Los Angeles County	2,830,436 100.00%	235,086 100.00%	152,367 100.00%	387,453 100.00%
Within Reasonable Walking Distance	2,008,121 70.95%	195,191 83.03%	135,259 88.77%	330,450 85.29%
Outside Reasonable Walking Distance	822,315 29.05%	39,895 16.97%	17,108 11.23%	57,003 14.71%

In examining walking distance between schools and bus stops, the percentage of schools within reasonable walking distance was calculated. In order to explore the walking distances for bus stops outside reasonable walking distance of schools, the average distances were calculated. See table 6 below for the results.

**Table 6. Walking Distance Between Schools Within Surveyed School Districts and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bus Stops**

DISTRICT	SCHOOLS WITHIN REASONABLE WALKING DISTANCE	TOTAL SCHOOLS WITHIN DISTRICT	AVERAGE DISTANCE TO A BUS STOP FROM SCHOOLS OUTSIDE OF REASONABLE WALKING DISTANCE
Alhambra City Schools	15 83.33%	18	0.63
Azusa Unified	1 5.56%	18	2.59
Baldwin Park Unified	7 33.33%	21	0.99
Downey Unified	18 90.00%	20	0.70
El Rancho Unified	10 66.67%	15	0.80
Lancaster Elementary	0 0.00%	22	40.43
Little Lake City Elementary	6 66.67%	9	0.61
Los Angeles Unified	933 91.83%	1016	0.86
Monrovia Unified	3 27.27%	11	0.90
Mountain View Elementary	10 83.33%	12	0.68
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified	14 51.85%	27	1.08
Pomona Unified	0 0.00%	41	3.81
Rowland Unified	5 21.74%	23	1.35
Saugus Union Elementary	0 0.00%	15	10.34
Whittier City Elementary	6 50.00%	12	0.75

While the percentage of schools that are within reasonable walking distance of a bus stop is an important indicator, the average distance to bus stops outside of reasonable walking distance communicates a relatively close proximity for many

districts. Lancaster, Pomona and Saugus Union are outliers. Lancaster's large distance potentially supports its use of three different primary modes of transportation.

These data do not definitively communicate whether public transportation is a viable mode for transportation of all homeless students. Many municipalities run their own transportation network. What the data illuminate is that, because of the different transit networks, districts face the challenge of bus pass inconsistency in transporting homeless students across district boundaries. And it is not as simple as the assumption that districts without LACTMA access face this challenge the most, since districts are required to share responsibility of transportation for students. Both Alhambra and Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School Districts cited this challenge as their largest barrier to transportation coordination for homeless students despite the fact that the average distance between schools in their area and bus stops outside of reasonable walking distance is *still approximately one mile or less* (this challenge is one result of the large area of LA County).

In an interview with the District Liaison from Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District, the liaison described the specifics of the issue. Homeless Students at Norwalk-La Mirada most often deal with the separate transit of Orange County and Long Beach. At that district, the transportation department must coordinate with the other school district involved and split the cost. At some school districts, bus passes are purchased by the liaison, while at Norwalk-La Mirada, the transportation department is responsible of it.

Another challenge of public transportation is the age of some homeless students. For students under a certain age, a solo ride on a bus across the city is not appropriate. Three school districts cited this as their largest barrier. If public transportation is the available option, districts work to purchase bus tokens or passes for a parent or guardian to accompany the child. Sometimes the homeless family structure makes it difficult for just one family member to accompany the homeless student (for example, multiple young children). In these cases, districts sometimes sponsor tokens or passes for an entire family. Districts are restricted in their funding and work to minimize these costs to the essential. One school district reported only processing orders for family members to accompany the student if the child is under a certain age (“very young” was the terminology used). Another district reported that children 11 years of age and younger qualified a family member for transportation support.

The last challenge specific to public transportation that was cited as the largest barrier is getting students to school on time. Public transportation across Los Angeles County in many cases means confronting traffic. Additionally, as one district employee pointed out, the buses are not always on time. Long distances translate into a substantial commute for some students. Norwalk-La Mirada works with LACMTA to develop the most effective routes for their area through connections made purchasing bus passes, and through the State Coordinator’s office.

Sometimes there is no avoiding a cumbersome route. Although remaining at school of origin is best, a long route is not healthy either. One district liaison told the story of boy and his father who rode their bikes about 8 miles to get to the bus stop

that would connect the child to school. On occasion, staying at the school of origin isn't feasible. The strategy to prevent this from happening is to work to keep the family close by.

*Other Modes of Transportation: District Fleet Vehicles, Personal Vehicles and Reimbursement, and Walking*

District vehicles are the second most common means for transporting homeless students to their school of origin (Table 2). The district vehicles strategy consists of two different methods: Additional or extended school bus routes, or use of special education buses or school vans. All of the districts that provide transportation to the general student body use district vehicles for homeless student transportation. Four out of the seven districts that provide limited transportation to the student body utilize district vehicles for homeless student transportation. There are different approaches to additional or extended routes as compared with other district vehicles.

Additional or extended routes typically take a broad approach; two districts reported bus routes that pass through hotel corridors because homeless families often receive temporary hotel vouchers. The responsibility of planning these routes falls on the transportation department, and the impetus for including a route cognizant of homeless families can depend on the relationship between the student services office and the transportation department. At Rowland Unified, the only input liaisons have is for specialized routes, which happen infrequently. One District Liaison described their relationship with the transportation as strained, partially due to the "fiscal crunch." Further, the liaison described them as stingy, and

explained a difference in perspective: “We do not have the same point of view. We are coming from the point of view of what is best for the student, and they are coming from, well, I don’t know where they are coming from.”

Norwalk-La Mirada reported a positive relationship with their transportation department. The liaison describes it as a collaboration that took years of building a relationship to get to. They meet bi-monthly with the transportation department and local officials in order to keep up communication and coordination efforts.

Special education buses and school vans generally allow for more route tailoring. Of districts that use these modes, only one reported the number of homeless students who required transportation. In Mountain View Elementary Unified School District, 25 students needed transportation services, all of who were served by the district school vans. Even at 25 students, Mountain View Elementary cited long van routes as a challenge. Vans must get an early start to sometimes complete multiple routes before the school day starts. And here, as for public transportation, getting the child to school on time can be an issue. Potentially, special education buses and school vans are ideal for small numbers of homeless students. Only one other school district was able to use district vehicles as a sole primary mode of transportation for homeless students. Additional or extended routes have an advantage over separate vehicles through integration of homeless students with other students, mitigating any stigma the child might be facing.

A challenge that all district vehicles face is in the geographic limitations. District vehicles will not cross district boundaries, so are only effective for students that have changed school areas, not district areas. One district employee explained

that when two school districts are collaborating on a shared responsibility for homeless student transportation, they could theoretically run their bus routes to the district boundary to relay the child (assuming the districts are contiguous). That scenario is not efficient in any way.

Three of the districts surveyed cited personal vehicles and/or reimbursing families for mileage as a primary mode of transportation. In all cases there was more than one primary mode; personal vehicles and reimbursing families for mileage was never relied upon as the sole mode. Given the necessity of a homeless family owning or having access to a car, it is understandable why this would not be a sole primary mode of transportation for homeless students for the surveyed districts. Considering Lancaster is 40 miles from a LACMTA bus stop (Table 6), it makes sense for this to be one of their primary modes.

This method is not available to all districts. Not all districts have the power to purchase gas cards. If a school district without the power to purchase a gas card is sharing responsibility for transportation coordination with another district that can purchase gas cards, then the barrier can be overcome. The district can pay the other district for half of the gas card.

Downey Unified is the only district whose primary mode falls outside of the above categories: Walking. The District Liaison explained in an interview that most families are living doubled up or in hotels. The hotel corridor in the district is within walking distance of some schools. Additionally, the resource center at Downey Unified works with the family to keep them within the area. Since there are no



shelters nearby, this often means assessing with the family what family or friends are within the neighborhood that could share their home.

*How is transportation arranged?  
Challenges and Corresponding Strategies*

Table 7 below communicates the challenges by frequency of report. Some of these challenges were addressed in the chapter on primary modes of transportation for homeless students, above. The discussion following the table presents the district narratives that were revealed regarding the remaining challenges.

**Table 7. Barriers to Transportation Coordination for Homeless Students by Frequency of Survey Citation**

Recurring moves, frequent residential mobility	10	76.90%
Difficulty getting in touch with parents/guardians	9	69.20%
Funding	8	61.50%
Placement of families and youth	7	53.80%
Unavailability of parent/guardian to travel with children or youth to/from school	6	46.20%
Scheduling conflicts	5	38.50%
The size of the region served	5	38.50%
Time to make arrangements, considering the immediate enrollment provisions	4	30.80%
Lack of vehicles	3	23.10%

*Frequent Residential Mobility and Difficulty Getting in Touch With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)*

The recurring moves of some homeless families and the challenge of staying in communication with them go hand-in-hand. Frequent mobility can be a cause of communication barriers. School districts report that communication issues make it difficult to get bus tokens and passes or gas cards to students and families. With

three school districts reporting the importance of working with the family as a strategy to address barriers, it becomes clear why communication issues are a critical problem.

Some school districts (at least three of those surveyed) utilize a resource center to address this issue. A McKinney-Vento resource center, or other “one-stop shop,” acts to connect qualified families with resources. The center model is advantageous for communication with the family because it increases the chance of connecting with the family; when parents or guardians stop at the center to inquire about one issue, they can be referred to or take care of another, such as transportation. School districts surveyed also described using case managers, or case management models to maintain communication with families. Liaisons sometimes pursue home visits toward this end. Rowland Unified described liaisons spending a lot of time tracking down families in what presents as an investigatory exercise, arriving at the location on file for the family, asking neighbors, being pointed in another direction, going to another location and asking around until finally finding the family.

Although many homeless families have cell phones, many have minute packs that get used up quickly, so they may be able to be reached sometimes and not others. One strategy to improve cell phone access is the program Reach Out Wireless, a government-assisted cell phone service that low-income families qualify for. They have plans for as low as \$2.50 per month. Discussions with liaisons make it clear that knowledge of what low-income families qualify for is important, another affirmation that a resource center is a benefit.

*Funding*

In a survey, one school district referred to McKinney-Vento’s transportation requirement as an “unfunded mandate.” This sentiment is parallel to and grounded in a few contemporary happenings: Fiscal devolution, the economic crisis and educational funding issues. McKinney-Vento funds are competitive grants allocated by the State Office Coordinator, which means that not every school district serving homeless students receives funds. Districts that receive McKinney-Vento funds work in grant-funded cycles that give rise to stress. Funding constraints are a challenge to the general allocation of transportation services for districts. As mentioned in the public transportation chapter, young children riding public transit present a larger expense because they require the district sponsor an accompanying parent or guardian. *Lack of vehicles*, as reported on the survey, is another specific manifestation of a lack of funding and indicates that some districts feel they could address homeless student transportation more effectively if they had more district vehicles. Tables 8 and 9 display the relevant survey data.

**Table 8. Percentage of McKinney-Vento Funds Spent on Transportation, 2010-2011**

Did not receive McKinney-Vento funds	4	30.80%
0-10%	4	30.80%
11-25%	2	15.40%
26-50%	2	15.40%
51-75%	1	7.70%
76-100%	0	0.00%

**Table 9. Other Sources of Funding for Homeless Student Transportation, 2010-2011**

District funds	6	50.00%
Other organizations (donations), or family-qualified benefits	3	25.00%
State funds	3	25.00%
Title I	2	16.67%
None needed/used	2	16.67%
Don't know	1	8.33%

District funds are the largest source of homeless student transportation funding outside of McKinney-Vento funds. Four of the surveyed districts did not receive McKinney-Vento funds (Table 8). These school districts used Title I, district and state funds for transportation services for homeless students. Two districts did not need to seek any funding outside of McKinney-Vento funds (Table 9). One story of funding is revealed when looking at the districts that piece together funding from multiple sources. 12 out of the 17 school districts surveyed accessed more than one source of funding for transportation of homeless students.

As all sources of funds are constrained by the contemporary budget crisis, many school districts are left to find innovative ways to support the needs of homeless students. Outreach to outside organizations for assistance is one tool. Although Downey Unified cited walking as its primary mode, Robert Jagielski reported that in the past they have received bus pass donations from Downey Link, the local public bus network. Other districts also reported success with acquiring donated bus passes. Sometimes, the route to assistance is not so direct. El Rancho Unified School District has connected with faith-based organizations in resources through the network of children services. In a conversation with a representative

from St. Vincent De Paul, an El Rancho liaison was referred to another Catholic church with a resource question. Once there, in a side conversation about the challenge of homeless parents needing transportation along with children, the church offered the services of their vehicle. This is another example of how the network created through a centralized resource center can be a benefit. School district responses reflected the exploration of outside resources: “We take what we can get,” “With budgets tight, we need to look out into the community for resources for the children.”

At Downey Unified, the Too Lasting Connections resource center has activated support. Various school groups are involved in fundraising for the center. Educational campaigns carried out by the center are essential to this support, and considered vital by the Downey District Liaison. Not all districts have had success with these methods. With the largest population of homeless students identified in Los Angeles County, Los Angeles Unified School District has reached out to LACMTA to acquire donated bus passes, with no success to date.

### *Placement of Families and Youth*

Shelter space is in high demand in all metropolitan areas of the US. When a family or unaccompanied youth needs a shelter space, they infrequently have input in where they are assigned space, particularly if there is limited availability. School districts report occurrences of families ending up 20, 30 or 40 miles from children’s school of origins.

Some school districts have a rapport with social service agencies that allows liaisons to advocate for the closest possible placement. A challenge for this rapport is the difficulty in placing certain family structures or people. One school district explains that a single adult with a single child is the easiest family structure to find a space for. On the difficult end of the spectrum are adolescent boys, who are viewed as a liability by shelters. This gradient of resistance to certain families or people in shelters is a barrier to districts negotiating for close placement. For some school districts, a communicative relationship with social services agencies is elusive; one school district reported a need for training on how to make that connection. In the absence of that connection, the District Liaison at El Rancho Unified has developed an informational flier with the closest shelter availabilities that she keeps updated for families. In this way, families have the information to hopefully advocate a closer space for themselves.

The 11 shelters that serve families and youth in Los Angeles County are located in four of the 81 school district areas. Two of the surveyed districts have shelters within their areas, while the other 13 have to deal with an increased distance. This means that for many school districts, negotiating a closer shelter placement is not an effective solution to minimizing distance to school of origin. In these districts, one strategy is to work with families to discern what other options they may have, either through assessing whether the family qualifies for hotel vouchers, or if they have family or friends nearby they can stay with.

### *Size of Region Served by District*

The size of the region served by the district was cited as one factor leading to the inconsistent public transportation tokens or passes (as described in the public transportation chapter). Additionally, a large district size can translate into a larger homeless student population, and it increases the likelihood that a district will have sole responsibility of transportation coordination for homeless students. Whether the latter provides difficulty depends on the ease of inter-district coordination, but it is definitively more expensive since without inter-district coordination, there is no splitting of charges.

Los Angeles Unified School District is the largest of the surveyed districts, and the second largest school district in the nation. LAUSD coordinated transportation for 1,034 homeless students during the 2010-2011 school year, at an estimated cost of \$500,000. One contributing factor in LAUSD's large homeless student population is the fact that 8 out of the 11 shelters that serve families and youth are located within LAUSD area. This also contributes to the large expense; they are required to share the cost of transportation for any children located in these shelters whose schools of origin are outside of LAUSD.

### *Other Themes Revealed Through Surveys and Interviews*

Open-ended survey questions and the interviews allowed for additional challenges to be described. The following discussion outlines themes that emerged in the process, including challenges for specific populations of homeless students,

the challenge of homeless students identification, and transportation coordination as part of a resource network involving multi-agency collaboration.

Discussions with District Liaisons illuminated the barriers that students with various characteristics face. The conclusion of these discussions is that all homeless students deal with challenges specific to their identity. This is most readily apparent in discussions about differences in challenges for homeless students based on age. The younger/youngest children present the barrier of needing an adult to accompany them if taking public transportation, and have elicited concern about the developmental effects of early experience of homelessness. However, one school district liaison believes that middle school is the most difficult age for homeless students, as they are dealing with body changes that exacerbate instability, and are more likely to present behavioral issues. Another district liaison pointed out that high school students are a persistent challenge because they are less likely to willingly identify as homeless or in need of help. The pressure to not be perceived as different is high for teenagers.

There are several other characteristics or situations that also present barriers. One school district described a recent increase in homeless families consisting of children with their grandparents, which poses complications when the aging caretaker is experiencing health issues, as well as communication issues inherent in the generational digital divide. Domestic violence shelters, with confidentiality complications and the issues inherent in that living situation, are stressful for children and can be demanding for liaisons to navigate. Foster children, when in temporary placement status (before permanent placement), are technically



defined as 'homeless.' As such, they are often temporarily the responsibility of the district's homeless services. One school district was sued for not coordinating services for a foster child, even though the district was informed that the child was in permanent placement. Liaisons sometimes struggle to connect families to resources when a family has utilized all resources that they qualify for. Southern California is home to a large Spanish-speaking population, including many Mexican immigrants. Language barrier is a challenge for liaisons assisting families. Families with undocumented members may be hesitant to step forward for help or work with liaisons. Clearly, understanding the legal framework for all relevant issues (and qualified benefits) is imperative for liaisons.

As discussed in the last section, high school age students can be resistant to homeless identification. This is not the only instance of a barrier to identification. There is a stigma attached to the homeless label that prevents some families from connecting with help. A misperception of homelessness also stands in the way; many people still recall the archetype from the first wave of homelessness. Although less contemporary homeless people are single men with alcoholism or mental health issues, some Americans still hang onto that type. After the housing bubble burst and the onset of the recession, many families have experienced homelessness that would not have been considered at-risk previously. One school district described the recent shift as a difficulty in reading physical cues of a family's situation. For example, one unemployed, homeless, single mother drops by student services wearing a full suit; up until the housing bubble burst she was working at a bank and her layoff resulted in recent homelessness. The stigma and misperception

barriers are complicated by a lack of awareness about the US Department of Education definition of 'homeless.' Families living doubled-up or using hotel vouchers may be unaware that their living situation qualifies them for services. Still others may be hesitant to ask for help. Some families feel it most appropriate to deal with issues within the family, or within the community. Additionally, families may be concerned about identification and their family; certain situations, such as living in a car, trigger mandatory reporting requirements.

Liaisons work with this through outreach, education and awareness campaigns. Schools act as a venue for information dissemination, resource centers support identification and education, and connections with outside agencies facilitate outreach and broader identification. Connecting children with resources also mitigates the concern of a stigma. Liaisons often have access to basic school supplies like backpacks and binders, as well as knowledge of local resources for necessities like shoes, clothes and groceries.

As referenced in the section, *Frequent Residential Mobility and Difficulty Getting in Touch With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)*, many districts utilize a resource center reinforced by multi-agency communication. One part of this multi-agency network is the knowledge and coordination of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS maintains networks of children's resources through Service Provision Areas (SPAs). Some District Liaisons surveyed actively supplement this network through outreach.

Lancaster Unified School District Liaison, Alicia Aguilar attends monthly meetings of a homeless coalition. Members of the coalition include several agencies

that serve the homeless, and discussion at the meetings is based around referrals (“*I met someone yesterday who needs groceries.*” “*Here is my information, pass it along to them and have them contact me.*”) The coalition enables constant communication to mitigate the lack of access to information and lack of resources. With budget constraints, resources are spread thin, and the coalition maximizes families’ connections with them. The coalition also serves to advocate and mobilize for improvements. Aguilar describes the coalition’s successful move to improve the local shelter through setting goals, and using organizational connections and skills to fundraise. The coalition also organizes a homeless outreach, which is part of an annual homeless count, and participates in needs-assessment visits. Aguilar identifies as a family advocate, considers it vital to her position to keep the network activated, and to understand what people need.

Rowland Unified School District’s Family Resource Center is involved in collaborative partnerships with outside agencies through Memoranda of Understandings. Agencies include counseling services, a partnership with the local hospital, foodbanks, the police and fire departments, and various groups for clothing needs. Downey Unified maintains multi-agency communication through monthly meetings of its advisory council, whose members represent different organizations. Through this action, Downey has been able to establish a referral network of doctors and dentists willing to do pro bono work. Downey liaisons also regularly meet with civic offices and the police department to ally children’s services and safety.

These examples of multi-agency communication and collaboration are important to this study for three reasons. First, as discussed above, it is through these networks that transportation donations can sometimes be acquired. Second, the coordination of transportation services is seated within the broader task of resource facilitation for children and families at schools and is vital to an understanding of the liaison's position. Lastly, the energy necessary to maintain communication through this multi-agency collaboration mirrors the complexity and work necessary for coordination of transportation services, whether it is through communication with the family, the transportation department, another school district, or any number of local organizations.

With the requirement that school districts split charges for students who travel across district boundaries, inter-district coordination seems like it would play a significant role. This study only leaves more questions for this topic. It rarely came up in the survey responses or interviews. In an attempt to ask a District Liaison why it had not been discussed, and if it was something that happened frequently, the response was an uncomfortable laugh. The answer may be simple; inter-district coordination may be a task that transportation departments handle. Whatever the answer, it is a topic for further investigation. Inter-district coordination is potentially at the center of a high proportion of homeless student's transportation to school of origin.

*Comparison with Bowman and Barksdale's 2004 Study*

As explained in the methods chapter, the survey questions used for this research were selected from the 2004 study, *Overcoming Challenges to Providing Transportation to the School of Origin*, in order to enable this research to contribute to an ongoing dialog. The questions in that study were delivered in interview format with liaisons at eight school districts selected through referral as districts that have successful homeless student transportation services. Although the sample for this current study is selected based on geography, a comparison of themes is still vital. The eight school districts researched in the 2004 study are located in Anchorage, Cincinnati, Houston, Putnam County (Florida), Spokane (Washington), St. Paul and Vancouver (Washington).

There are two differences in the overall themes of the studies. The first is in the designation of biggest challenge. For the eight school districts in 2004, funding was the biggest challenge. Los Angeles County school district respondents find funding an issue (in third place), but frequent residential mobility is the biggest challenge. The second difference is in the modes of transportation most often used. The school districts in the 2004 study were able to primarily rely on additional or extended bus routes, while supplementing with public transportation, reimbursement and taxis. Los Angeles County school districts surveyed rely on public transportation, with additional and extended bus routes taking a distant second place. The difference here could be affected by a difference in school transport capacity, access to public transportation, the size of the homeless student

population or the size of the region served by the district. Delineating the weight of these factors on this difference is beyond the scope of this study.

Districts in both studies rely on their own district funds to support transportation services (in addition to McKinney-Vento funds). The necessity for collaboration (intra- and inter-district, as well as multi-agency) is the dominant theme of the 2004 study, which is echoed in the responses of the Los Angeles County school districts. Communication and partnerships with shelters is described in the efforts of four of the school districts in the 2004 study.

### ***Conclusion***

Public transportation is the most common mode of transportation for homeless students, which is an accessible mode for some schools. The accessibility of public transportation in Los Angeles County may be a surprise to some who have the perception of Los Angeles as auto-centric. The challenges and strategies exposed in this study reveal the necessity for a case-by-case approach to homeless student transportation against a backdrop of funding issues. Although strategies are specific to the context and family, common themes arose and are discussed in the chapter, *Challenges and Corresponding Strategies*, including the one-stop shop resource center, working with the family, and coordination with the district transportation department, other school districts and outside agencies. District liaison positions involve multi-agency communication, coordination, and outreach, as well as knowledge of local resources and relevant legal framework. District Liaisons are advocates and activists. For the complete survey results, refer to Appendix D.

This study's research questions were addressed in the sections that they were titled for. One last research question remains: *How does transportation to school of origin affect school choice?* Of the school district respondents that track the relevant data, the proportion of homeless students enrolled who remained at their school of origin is high. Answers vary from estimates (80%, 85-90%), to statements ("Most of them," "We work to keep almost all of our students at their school of origin," "All"). Despite working under funding constraints, liaisons effectively connect students and sometimes families with transportation to continue children's education uninterrupted by a change in residence.

The difficulty that homeless students face in getting to school is an example of Edward Soja's 'socio-spatial dialectic'; one inequitable outcome leads to another. Resolving this loop of injustice involves an understanding of what is the most stable, advantageous option for the child. The right to school of origin is path to the best opportunity for the child. Transportation to school of origin occasionally presents bigger barriers to a child's stability than a change in school would. Adding 2 hour's commute to the beginning and end of a child's school day contradicts the stable benefits that remaining at the school of origin entails. However, changing schools cannot be relied upon. Survey results show that frequent residential mobility is the largest barrier to transportation; a highly mobile family faced with switching schools at every move proves a strain on children.

If there is a means of transportation to school of origin without the burden on a child's day, it should be the option chosen. Homeless students are a vulnerable group. It is unjust to hinder equitable access to education. Funding should not stand

in the way of what is feasible, and the school district employees who work with them should not be charged with pursuing funding. This study clearly illustrates that District Liaisons have a lot of responsibility already. Planners and policymakers need to support social policy in transportation. It is appropriate to insert Stanley and Vella-Brodick's (2009) summary of Amartya Sen's capabilities concept again here:

To achieve certain levels of capability, it may be necessary to offer more to those who have less, in order to overcome the systematic disadvantage they face. (p. 94)

While one finding of this research is that there is no universal transit solution for homeless student transportation, this study reveals broad policy recommendations for planners and policymakers.

*BROAD POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:*

**Municipal Discourse and Accountability**

**Free public transit passes for homeless youth**

**Dedicated funding for homeless student transportation**

**Participatory Transportation Planning**

As referenced in the introduction, a recent New York City Council hearing illustrated that the agencies responsible for transportation of homeless students are not communicating with each other (Canal 2011). Planners and local elected officials could facilitate regular meetings to extend awareness and continue the discourse of effective solutions already established by the National Center for Homeless Education. While it is beyond the scope of this study to recommend the means of



financing free transit passes for homeless students, or discuss the sources of dedicated funding for transportation of homeless students, the results of the study warrant the recommendations. To reiterate, District Liaisons should not be responsible for securing the funding for the services they are coordinating for homeless students. The last broad policy recommendation, participatory transportation planning, was inspired by survey responses indicating attempts to work with LACMTA on improving bus routes. District Liaisons work closely with homeless families, and therefore understand the transportation needs of people who otherwise have restricted input.

The study's data represent a sample of school districts in Los Angeles County. The findings support the following recommendations.

*LOS ANGELES-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:*

**Bus token or pass compatibility**

The challenge of coordinating multiple bus passes for children and parents who must utilize more than one public transit network could be addressed through the implementation of a universal pass. This recommendation is supported by this study's finding of public transportation as dominant mode for homeless student transportation, and the mapping analysis results that illustrate the accessibility of LACMTA bus stops. Currently, LACMTA is already working to have their Transit Access Pass (TAP card) applicable to other local transit networks. The Antelope Valley Transportation Authority and Foothill Transit are phasing in applicability, which will benefit Lancaster Unified School District. Stakeholders should work to

continue this project implementation to all local networks. The creation of a universal bus pass is a transportation consolidation that will support environmental efforts, as well as equity issues such as homeless student transportation. Ideally, the passes would decrease the cost of a trip by providing transfers between the networks for homeless students and parents. At the very least, they would decrease the coordination needed for the trip, and simplify advocating for price reduction or donations.

### **Gas cards authority for school districts**

As mentioned in the section, *Other Modes of Transportation: District Fleet Vehicles, Personal Vehicles and Reimbursement, and Walking*, some school districts do not have the option of reimbursing families for mileage because not all districts have the authority to purchase gas cards. Although gas prices are an exorbitant expense for some districts to consider, the ability to process gas card orders should be an option for all districts. There are specific cases where it is the most viable solution to transportation for a homeless student. This option involves a set of challenges that districts must work through, but the decision of what is best should be based on *what is best*, not *what is available to the district*. Districts should not have to work with a district that has the ability to purchase gas cards in order to offer that option.

### **Continue educational and support resources for District Liaisons, while remaining receptive to District Liaisons' needs**

Through the State Coordinator's office, and the National Center for Homeless Education (of which many liaisons are members), liaisons are provided the

opportunity to pool knowledge and learn the latest in best practice. With an understanding of the changing nature of both legal frameworks and the landscape of resources for homeless families, it is easy to see the importance of this ongoing educational resource for liaisons. Hopefully, these venues are or will become the sites for liaisons to improve upon outreach, multi-agency communication and innovations in funding. The State Coordinator's office and the NCHE should remain receptive to requests for training and support, such as one school district liaison's comment in an interview that she would appreciate training in establishing a relationship with social service agencies.

### **Continue the one-stop resource center model**

The use of a resource center is vital in mitigating the biggest challenges to transportation coordination (frequent residential mobility and difficulty getting in touch with the parent(s)/guardian(s)), and to the common strategy of working with the family. Additionally, the center acts to centralize communication with multiple agencies, and creates a resource network for children and families.

The study of transportation coordination and services for homeless students in Los Angeles County has many implications for the planning field. The topic is part of the discourse on equitable access to public services, with all the implicit questions that planners and policymakers must grapple with in supporting cities. The funding issue that school districts face is a result of an economic crisis, and complicated by a fiscal devolution, both of which all municipal functions are navigating. Urban planners are struggling to do the same thing that District Liaisons are struggling to

do: Get more with less. The specifics of transportation solutions have implications for transportation planning. For example, the strategy described by one school district of working with LACMTA to improve bus routes speaks to the potential for transparency and participation in equitable transportation planning. Lastly, the amount of communication and multi-agency coordination that District Liaisons pursue mirrors that of planners. The energy and conviction with which the interviewed district liaisons spoke about their work could be an inspiration to all who work in public service.

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Appendix A.  
Research Methods, Secondary Data Sources

Phase I: Secondary data collection and mapping of transit, shelters and schools

- McKinney-Vento funding allocations, 2010-2011  
Publicly available data acquired through the California Department of Education website,  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r16/homeless10result.asp>.
- Services provided by school districts receiving McKinney-Vento funding, 2010-2011  
Acquired through the California Department of Education by email communication and agreement with Leanne Wheeler, Title I Policy and Program Guidance Consultant
- Homeless student counts for each school district within Los Angeles County, 2010-2011 and the current homeless student counts  
Acquired through the California Department of Education by email communication and agreement with Leanne Wheeler, Title I Policy and Program Guidance Consultant
- Schools within Los Angeles County school districts  
CDE school directory website,  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/index.asp>
- GIS shapefile, schools within Los Angeles Unified School District  
Acquired through Los Angeles Unified School District by email through a public records request with Vincent Maffei, Master Plan Coordinator
- Public transportation networks  
LACMTA maps and timetables website,  
<http://www.metro.net/around/maps/>  
LADOT transit map website,  
<http://www.ladottransit.com/map/dashmap.php>
- Shelter locations  
LAHSA year-round and winter shelter locations listing,  
[http://www.lahsa.org/year\\_round\\_shelter.asp](http://www.lahsa.org/year_round_shelter.asp),  
[http://www.lahsa.org/winter\\_shelter\\_program.asp](http://www.lahsa.org/winter_shelter_program.asp)
- Housing units with between 1 and 1.5 resident per room; Housing units with more than 1.5 people per room, Los Angeles County Census Tracts 2010 Decennial U.S. Census Bureau

**Phase II: Data Collection - conduct survey of District Liaisons**

- Current school district liaisons, with contact information  
California Department of Education's Homeless Children and Youth Education information webpage, under Homeless Liaisons,  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>.

Appendix B.  
District Liaison Survey

1. School district:
2. Your name:
3. Your position/title:

4. Is public transportation available within the area of your district?

Yes

No

Comments:

5. Is transportation provided to school children in your district generally?

Yes

No

If necessary, please explain.

6. Are transportation services for homeless children coordinated in your district?

Yes

No

[IF THE ANSWER TO 6. IS NO, SURVEY STOPS HERE]

7. What specific strategies or systems has the district implemented to provide transportation to the school of origin?

8. In your district, which of the following modes is most frequently used for transportation to school or origin? (Choose one unless dominant mode is evenly split)

Additional or extended bus routes

Public transportation

Taxis

Contracted transportation services

Special education buses

Personal vehicles

Reimbursing families for mileage

Other:

9. How long does it generally take for transportation services to be arranged once a parent/guardian requests for his/her child (or an unaccompanied youth requests) to remain in the school of origin?

10. What are the biggest challenges to providing transportation to the school of origin?



11. Which of the following also present challenges? (Mark as many as you feel appropriate)
- The size of the region served by the district
  - Placement of families and youth
  - Scheduling conflicts
  - Lack of vehicles
  - Unavailability of parent/guardian to travel with young children to/from school
  - Funding
  - Recurring moves/family residential mobility
  - Difficulty getting in touch with parent(s)/guardian(s)
  - Time to make arrangements, considering the immediate enrollment provisions
12. How has your district addressed these challenges?
13. Which strategies do you consider the most successful?
14. How many homeless children and youth were enrolled in your school district during the 2010-2011 school year? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Of those students, how many remained at their school of origin? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How many required transportation services to reach their school of origin?  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What was the estimated total cost of transportation to the school of origin for homeless children and youth in your district for the 2010-2011 school year?
18. If your district received McKinney-Vento subgrant funds for 2010-2011, what percentage of the grant did you spend on transportation?
- N/A
  - 0-10%
  - 11-25%
  - 26-50%
  - 51-75%
  - 76-100%
19. What other sources of funds did your district use to transport children and youth to their school of origin (for example, district, state or other federal funding, private funding, other non-traditional)?
20. Any additional comments or feedback?

Appendix C.  
District Liaison Interviews

1. What is your role, and that of the pupil transportation director, in facilitating transportation of homeless students?
2. Who else is involved in arranging transportation to the school of origin (parents, caregivers, social workers, etc.)?
3. How do all those involved work together (regular meetings, homeless coalitions, local policies)?
4. What agreements or policies exist between social service agencies or other placement agencies to ensure that homeless families are placed close to school where their children are attending? Is there flexibility in placement to allow this discussion?
5. How does access to transportation services affect school choice for families?
6. What state and local policies support keeping homeless children in their school of origin? What additional support do you get from the state level?
7. What policies and arrangements exist for the inter-district transfers?
8. Are there specific challenges to transportation services experienced by homeless children with certain characteristics? Are their challenges presented by coordinating transportation for unaccompanied youth, or homeless children of certain age?

Appendix D.  
Survey Results

Is public transportation available within the area of your district?

*15 respondents*

Yes	15	100.00%
No	0	0.00%

Is transportation provided to children in your district generally?

*15 respondents*

Yes	4	26.67%
Limited, or special education only	7	46.67%
No	4	26.67%

What specific strategies or systems has your district implemented to provide transportation to the school of origin?

*14 respondents*

Bus passes or tokens	8	57.14%
Work with family to determine best plan	3	21.43%
Individualized solutions	2	14.29%
Extended bus routes, district vehicles	2	14.29%
Extended bus routes, areas with hotels and motels	1	7.14%
11 or younger, need parent/guardian transport support	1	7.14%
Collaborate with other school districts	1	7.14%

In your district, which of the following modes of transportation is most frequently used for transportation to school of origin? Choose one unless dominant mode of evenly split.

*13 respondents*

Public transportation	11	84.60%
Additional or extended bus routes	4	30.80%
Special education buses	3	23.10%
Personal vehicles	2	15.40%
Reimbursing families for mileage	2	15.40%
Taxis	0	0.00%
Contracted transportation services	0	0.00%
Other: Walking	1	7.69%
Other: School Vans	1	7.69%

How long does it generally take for transportation services to be arranged once a parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth requests to remain in the school of origin?

14 respondents

1-2 days	9	64.29%
3 days to one week	4	28.57%
more than one week	1	7.14%

What are the biggest challenges to providing transportation to the school of origin?

14 respondents

Can only provide funding for parent/guardian accompaniment if the child is very young	3
Distance: Different transit networks have incompatible passes or tokens	2
The time it takes to process bus pass orders	1
Getting to kids to school on time	1
Distance: Different transit networks have incompatible passes or tokens	2
Transportation Department is stingy	1
Traffic	1
Residential mobility	1
Shelter placement	1
Funding	1
Not enough buses	1
Size of the region	1
Number of homeless	1
Getting tokens to students	1
Long van routes necessitate leaving early	1

Which of the following also present challenges? Mark as many as you feel appropriate.

13 respondents

Recurring moves, frequent residential mobility	10	76.90%
Difficulty getting in touch with parents/guardians	9	69.20%
Funding	8	61.50%
Placement of families and youth	7	53.80%
Unavailability of parent/guardian to travel with children or youth to/from school	6	46.20%
Scheduling conflicts	5	38.50%
The size of the region served	5	38.50%
Time to make arrangements, considering the immediate enrollment provisions	4	30.80%
Lack of vehicles	3	23.10%

How has your district addressed these challenges?

*13 respondents*

Collaboration with outside agencies	5	38.46%
Working with family	3	23.08%
Centralized resource center	3	23.08%
Collaboration with the transportation department	2	15.38%
Advocacy	2	15.38%
Case management	2	15.38%
Referrals to agencies for assistance	2	15.38%
Donations	2	15.38%
Collaboration with other districts	1	7.69%
Homeless coalition meetings	1	7.69%

Which strategies do you consider the most successful?

*13 respondents*

Note: Most school districts replied to this question with the same answer as given for the previous question, or explicitly referred to their previous response. The following responses summarize the strategies that appeared as a response to this question that did not appear in the questions' responses.

Monthly bus pass has been a great incentive for students and their parents to maintain attendance. Students not in attendance will go back to daily tokens, which is harder for them and more expensive for us.
Home visits
Partnerships with faith-based organizations
Patience, problem solving, communicating and compromising

Transportation for Homeless Students in Los Angeles County

The next four questions (questions 14-17 on the survey), involving homeless student counts and transportation costs, are presented in the following table.

District	Homeless Student Count*	How many students stayed at their school of origin?	How many required transportation to reach their school of origin?	What was the estimated total cost of transportation to school of origin?
Alhambra Unified School District	104	120	25	\$6,000
Azusa Unified School District	1,137			
Baldwin Park Unified School District	2,380			
Downey Unified	82	All	0	\$0
El Rancho Unified School District	57	52	5	\$1,000
Lancaster School District	235	all who chose to	mostly all , if chose to stay, they stay	Unknown
Little Lake City School District	446	4	4	\$2,300
Los Angeles Unified School District	16,346	not collected in this manner	1,034	\$500,000
Monrovia USD	51	80%	8 students	\$200
Mt. View School District	576	between 85-90%	approximately 25 were transported by district vans/buses	unknown
Norwalk -La Mirada Unified School District	5,799	most of them		
Pomona Unified School District	2,510	no data	40	\$10,000
Rowland Unified School District	2,571	We work to keep almost all of our students at their schools of origins	When we need to transport back to school of origin, we have tried to limit the number of services required, but we have used up to two public bus routes for one student/family.	A lot. Because we are not directly connected to transportation, I am unsure of the cost.
Saugus Union Elementary	331	all	none	
Whittier City School District	629			

\* Where district responses differed from the counts recorded by the California Department of Education (CDE), the CDE numbers were used for consistency of data.  
 Blank spaces indicate no answer.  
 A couple of the responses show potential for error.

If your district received McKinney-Vento subgrant funds for 2010-2011, what percentage of the grant did you spend in transportation?

13 respondents

Did not receive McKinney-Vento funds	4	30.80%
0-10%	4	30.80%
11-25%	2	15.40%
26-50%	2	15.40%
51-75%	1	7.70%
76-100%	0	0.00%

What other sources of funds did your district use to transport children and youth to their school of origin (for example, district, state or other federal funding, private funding or non-traditional)?

*12 respondents*

District funds	6	50.00%
Other organizations (donations), or family-qualified benefits	3	25.00%
State funds	3	25.00%
Title I	2	16.67%
None needed/used	2	16.67%
Don't know	1	8.33%