

Strategic Shifts: Design Prototypes for LLESĐ

As part of LLESĐ's ongoing efforts to thoughtfully innovate and evolve, these one-pagers explore **ideas—not decisions**—through a human-centered design lens. They are meant to spark thinking and invite feedback as we consider ways to strengthen engaging learning, improve student success, increase efficiency, realize responsible cost savings, and surface creative solutions in the service of our students and community.



**Las Lomitas
Elementary
School District**
Inclusive. Engaging. Inspiring

The Shift	Transportation Service Reduction or Redesign	
The Design Question <i>How might we...?</i>	How might we reduce ongoing costs and ease pressure on the General Fund through a redesign of transportation services that align with legal requirements, historical commitments, and fiscal sustainability—using attrition to the greatest extent possible and avoiding layoffs, while managing potential program disruption?	
The Idea <i>What if...?</i>	What if LLESĐ reimagined its transportation services by prioritizing legally mandated (Tinsley Volunteer Program) and historically significant routes (Ladera), while gradually reducing or restructuring voluntary, non-mandated services that LLESĐ currently provides to residents for free?	
Status & Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> Early exploration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seeking feedback <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refining the concept <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Considering a pilot <input type="checkbox"/> Moving forward with the idea <input type="checkbox"/> Not moving forward at this time	The district is currently seeking feedback as it refines the concept and considers a potential pilot. The Board is scheduled to hear a presentation from the Transportation Director and Chief Business Official in January, and the district plans to administer a survey in January or February to gather community input. The timing of any pilot or implementation would be informed by this feedback and aligned with anticipated retirements in the Transportation Department, including the potential retirement of at least one bus driver in fall 2026.

How might this idea take shape?

LLESĐ currently provides four categories of transportation services:

1. Legally mandated transportation for Tinsley Volunteer Transfer students;
2. Historically significant transportation for families in the Ladera neighborhood, located across Interstate 280, and established when the neighborhood school closed, saving the district significant costs, and
3. Voluntary transportation services that are not required by the State of California and are significantly subsidized by the district's General Fund.
4. Reimbursed transportation services for a neighboring district (Woodside) that has any transportation service (this is a revenue-generating program).

A potential shift would preserve categories 1, 2, and 4. Transportation for Tinsley students would continue as required by law. Transportation for Ladera families would also remain free, recognizing that it serves as mitigation for the closure of the neighborhood school and continues to save the district significant operational costs relative to reopening or replacing that site. LLESĐ would continue to provide revenue-generating services.

The voluntary category would be the focus of redesign. Options to explore include increasing the minimum distance required for free transportation, introducing fees for non-mandatory routes, or eliminating voluntary routes over time. Many current riders live within one mile of school.

Why might we explore this idea?

LLESĐ is the only district in the immediate area that continues to offer broad, free transportation services. Most neighboring districts eliminated non-mandated transportation years ago due to rising costs, declining state reimbursement, and shifting fiscal priorities.

Although the district receives some state transportation reimbursement, it covers less than 50% of total transportation costs, leaving the General Fund to subsidize the remainder. As the district works to close its structural deficit, transportation represents a non-instructional system with meaningful potential for long-term cost reduction without directly impacting classroom programs. With anticipated retirements in the Transportation Department, the district has a rare opportunity to rethink service levels thoughtfully and proactively—using attrition to align costs with priorities rather than relying on layoffs or abrupt program eliminations.

Potential Benefits (if thoughtfully designed)?

- Reduced ongoing pressure on the General Fund
- Meaningful cost savings achieved primarily through attrition rather than layoffs
- Preservation of legally mandated and historically significant transportation services
- Reduced long-term costs related to bus replacement, maintenance, and infrastructure
- Decreased pressure for recruiting, hiring, and training an increasingly hard-to-fill job class
- Greater alignment with transportation practices in neighboring districts
- More strategic use of district resources without reducing classroom instruction
- A phased, predictable transition that allows families time to plan and adjust
- Progress toward closing the district's structural deficit while maintaining service where most needed

Key Considerations

- Clearly distinguishing between legally mandated, historically significant, and voluntary transportation services
- Engaging families early—particularly those who currently rely on voluntary transportation—to understand impacts and surface concerns
- Considering equity, safety, and accessibility when adjusting distance thresholds or introducing fees
- Aligning any changes with Board policy, state regulations, and applicable labor agreements
- Coordinating timing with anticipated retirements to maximize attrition-based cost reductions
- Communicating transparently that this shift prioritizes long-term sustainability and responsible stewardship
- Planning for potential program disruption and supporting families through transitions
- Monitoring ridership, costs, and unintended consequences and refining the approach as needed

Financial Impact

For context, the total ongoing annual costs for all **voluntary (only)** transportation services are estimated at \$450K. *This estimate does not include capital costs related to bus replacement or long-term infrastructure.* Of these ongoing costs, approximately 50% is reimbursed by the State of California, with the remainder subsidized by the district's General Fund.

Over time, a redesign of transportation services has the potential to reduce these ongoing costs and ease pressure on the General Fund by lowering staffing, maintenance, and operational expenses. Any savings would be realized gradually, primarily through attrition associated with anticipated retirements rather than layoffs. While the magnitude and timing of savings are not yet known and would depend on the scope and pace of implementation, even incremental changes—such as eliminating a single voluntary route—could generate recurring savings that help address the district's structural deficit.