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# A Comparative Study of the Expenditures of the Robertson County, Tennessee, Pupil Transportation System

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James A., Sr.

1978

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPENDITURES  
OF THE ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE,  
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
the Department of Educational Leadership  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fullfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Education Specialist

by  
James A. Talley, Sr.

May 1978

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPENDITURES  
OF THE ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE,  
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPENDITURES  
OF THE ROBERTSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE,  
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

James A. Talley

May 1978

20 Pages

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Department of Educational Leadership

Western Kentucky University

This study represents an attempt to discover high cost areas in the Robertson County Pupil Transportation System by comparing the pupil transportation expenditures of Robertson County with pupil transportation expenditures of four counties of comparable size.

The data used was that submitted to the Tennessee State Department of Education by Anderson County, Franklin County, McMinn County, Roane County and Robertson County and published in annual reports for 1974, 1975, and 1976. The pupil transportation expenditures for each county were averaged for the three-year period and the mean was used as a basis for comparison to determine relative high costs. Robertson County ranked third in expenditures and showed relative high costs.

Purchasing policies and procedures were reviewed by means of interviews. Robertson County purchased from suppliers on the local, state, and federal level and usually



accepted the low bid--a policy considered by many administrators as sound management practice.

No outstanding high cost areas were found. However, a more indepth study of the high cost areas found in the related literature was recommended to determine possible areas for lowering of costs.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the early 1900's consolidation and transportation were major concerns of the state school system. However, it was not until 1933 that the state of Tennessee enacted laws making it legal to transport pupils at public expense. Following this enactment the Tennessee Transportation System grew into an item of considerable expense within the budget.<sup>1</sup>

The administration of the Robertson County schools expressed a concern for the cost of pupil transportation in Robertson County and requested that a cost comparison study be made by comparing the cost of pupil transportation in four other counties of comparable size with the cost of pupil transportation in Robertson County to determine if there are any areas of higher cost in relationship to those counties.

This study is an attempt to ascertain if higher transportation costs exist in Robertson County compared with four counties of comparable size. The data to be used will be obtained by averaging the expenditures in each county for a three-year period. The data was submitted by Anderson County, Franklin County, McMinn County, Roane County, and Robertson County and published by the

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<sup>1</sup>Rufus S. Lassiter, "A Study of School Transportation, Sumner County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, June, 1971), p. 1.

Tennessee State Department of Education for the school years 1974 through 1976.

The data was presented by categories, compared, and then broken down into averages for each year and for the three-year period. The average costs in each category were the basis for determining conclusions and recommendations.

Data on purchasing procedures for each county was secured through interviews with the school superintendent or the transportation supervisor to determine if the purchasing procedures had an influence on high costs.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Robertson County was one of the State's first counties to provide a program of pupil transportation service for its public school children. In 1916 when Robertson County first initiated transportation service at public expense, only twenty-one school systems had similar programs in operation, eight of which were in the Middle Tennessee area. The acceptance of the programs became so pronounced that by the end of the second decade (1936) all but two of the State's ninety-five counties had acceptable programs in operation.<sup>2</sup>

In 1921, the date of the earliest records found in the Robertson County transportation files, 9 wagons and 7 trucks were used to transport 407 students to 7 consolidated schools.

For the next four school years, 1922-1926, the number of wagons increased to 10; but following 1926, the number steadily decreased until their use was discontinued in 1936. The number of trucks steadily increased to 36 and were discontinued in the 1939-1940 school year.

On September 5, 1940, Robertson County put into operation thirty-two new all-steel school buses, county-owned and county-operated. These buses supplanted thirty-five privately owned buses, which were operated under contract with the county board of education.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Tennessee State Department of Education, Pupil Transportation Survey: Robertson County, (1965), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>C. F. Fisher, "Robertson County Modernizes Transportation," The Tennessee Teacher, (January 1941):28.



The Robertson County Transportation System increased the number of buses from 32 in 1940 to 68 in 1976 and the number of students transported increased from 2,200 in 1940 to 5,886 in 1976.

The increase in pupil population, number of buses and in costs have given rise to careful studies of ways and means of stabilizing costs in Robertson County. Over the past several years studies have been made in a number of other Tennessee counties that may well shed some light on areas of high costs in Robertson County.

In McMinn County a study was made to analyze the transportation system--routes, pupils transported, equipment, road conditions and school locations. In that study Godsey found a need to recommend that several schools be consolidated and that a number of buses be rerouted in order to make the system more economical.<sup>4</sup>

Daniel, in Rutherford County, found an excessive amount of route duplications, little uniformity in the length of school days, overloaded buses, little actual supervision of students who arrived at the schools early and left late, a definite relationship between the roads and the transportation system, a definite need for larger capacity buses and for more buses and shorter routes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Reuben R. Godsey, "A County Wide Study of Pupil Transportation in McMinn County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1950)

<sup>5</sup>Ira B. Daniel, "A Study of White School Transportation in Rutherford County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, June, 1951).



Williams found a need in Hancock County for additional routes to prevent overloading and a need for route changes to give more adequate service and recommended the county eliminate short routes and feeder routes, reduce the high cost of pupil transportation by accepting the lowest bid on each route, eliminate duplication and retracing of bus routes, purchase larger buses and work to secure a better road system to bring the costs down.<sup>6</sup>

Strunk, in Scott County, found overloaded buses, differences in costs per mile per vehicle, overpayment for similar equipment in comparison to another county, and lack of a schedule as areas of concern and made recommendations to bring these costs more in line with good management policies.<sup>7</sup>

Pemberton also made an analysis of the Scott County Transportation System. He found a lack of planning and supervision, buses not operated economically, gasoline purchased at retail prices, most spare parts purchased at retail prices, a number of buses over ten years old, and a lack of an accounting system.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Drew B. Williams, "A Study of Pupil Transportation in Hancock County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1953).

<sup>7</sup>Flonnie Strunk, "A Study of Pupil Transportation in Scott County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1953).

<sup>8</sup>J. Defoe Pemberton, "A Study of School Transportation in Scott County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1962).

In his study of school transportation in Claiborne County, Nevils found that poor roads were affecting transportation from the economical standpoint. Emphasis was placed upon low bids and not upon the service received. Many of the buses were overloaded. Many bus routes with similar road conditions and equal loads were not paid on an equal basis. There was only one bus inspection per year. There were very few loop-type bus routes.<sup>9</sup>

Harless found overlapping bus routes serving different areas of Blount County. There was a serious overcrowding of buses, unsatisfactory equipment was used by the drivers, and bus routes needed to be rearranged.<sup>10</sup>

Lindsey, also in Blount County, listed as areas of concern inefficiencies in the operation and routing of school buses and overlapping of bus routes.<sup>11</sup>

In Grainger County, Jordan found that bus route planning was unsatisfactory and that buses traveled many unnecessary miles. He also found overloaded buses and excessive driving to be done before the drivers could begin their routes. He found that more than one-third of the buses were small and older than the recommended age and

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<sup>9</sup>Clyde James Nevils, "A Study of School Transportation in Blount County, Tennessee, (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1957).

<sup>10</sup>Neubert R. Harless, "A Study of School Transportation in Blount County, Tennessee" Master's thesis, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1959).

<sup>11</sup>William Edwin Lindsey, "A Study of Pupil Transportation in Four Selected Schools of Blount County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1969).

in need of repair. Also there was no accurate record keeping system.<sup>12</sup>

Huskey's study in Seveir County revealed an overlapping of bus routes, poor road conditions, a lack of written rules and schedules and need for a training program for the bus drivers.<sup>13</sup>

#### SUMMARY

The review of the literature revealed factors in each of the studies that contributed directly or indirectly to costs that should be minimized. Many of the studies revealed the same cost factors. In most studies, costs were attributed to overlapping bus routes, poor road conditions, and poor management in general. These factors, along with other cost factors, were recognized by the researchers and recommendations were made for their correction. The researchers believed the recommendations, when followed, would cut operational costs within the pupil transportation systems, saving monies that could be channeled into other areas.

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<sup>12</sup>Bruce C. Jordan, "A Study of School Transportation in Grainger County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, August, 1960).

<sup>13</sup>Larry C. Huskey, "A Study of Pupil Transportation in Three Selected Schools of Seveir County, Tennessee" (Master's thesis, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, June, 1970).



## CHAPTER III

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data presented in this chapter were taken from the annual reports published by the Tennessee Department of Education for the three-year period 1974-1976 and were submitted by each of the five counties cited in the study.

Table 1, page 9, cites information concerning numbers of miles, schools, vehicles, and pupils that was helpful in determining costs for the most recent three-year period for which the data for this study were more readily available. Each county used in this comparative study was listed and the information was supplied for each year for comparison that led to the costs presented later.

Table 1 indicates the miles one way and shows only Roane County with a steady increase in mileage over the three-year span. All other counties show fewer bus miles traveled in 1976 than in 1974.

The number of schools served by the transportation system remained the same except for decreases for 1975 and 1976 in McMinn County and Robertson County.

Anderson County and Franklin County showed a decrease in the total number of vehicles category; but McMinn County, Roane County, and Robertson County experienced increases in the number of vehicles.



TABLE 1

## NUMBERS OF MILES, SCHOOLS, VEHICLES AND PUPILS

County	Year	Miles One Way	Schools Served	Total Vehicles	Pupils Enrolled or Transported	Average Transported over 1½ Miles
Anderson	74	2,336	20	92	6,460	6,008
	75	2,155	20	88	6,861	6,390
	76	2,155	20	86	7,020	6,574
Franklin	74	1,762	19	53	5,237	4,894
	75	1,774	19	53	5,198	4,970
	76	1,713	19	52	5,248	4,985
McMinn	74	1,470	15	87	5,767	5,312
	75	1,774	19	53	5,198	5,312
	76	1,455	11	97	7,306	6,570
Roane	74	1,342	25	59	5,599	4,897
	75	1,470	25	62	5,746	4,742
	76	1,492	25	64	5,512	4,742
Robertson	74	1,323	18	63	5,880	5,202
	75	1,224	17	63	5,942	5,230
	76	1,272	15	68	5,886	5,213

Source: Tennessee State Department of Education Annual Statistical Report Nashville, Tennessee (1974, 1975, 1976).

Pupil enrollment declined in Franklin County in 1975 and the number of pupils transported over 1½ miles declined in Roane County and Robertson County in 1976.

Table 1 cited items that concerned the pupil transportation system. These were compared for the purpose of establishing a basis for the comparison of the expenditures presented in Table 2, page 10.

Table 2 presents the costs for the three-year period and then gives the total expenditures with the per capita

TABLE 2

## COSTS OF CONTRACTS, SALARIES, FUEL AND OTHER EXPENSES, AND PER CAPITA COST

County	Contract Price Nine Month Term	Annual Salary Of Bus Drivers	Fuel and Other Expenses	Operation Cost For School Term	Per Capita Cost For School Term
Anderson	\$ 2,646.00 <sup>a</sup>	\$162,161.94	\$ 88,531.86	\$253,339.80	\$39.39 <sup>b</sup>
	-----	190,372.72	144,923.11	305,295.83	47.11 <sup>c</sup>
	-----	243,482.82	159,696.52	403,179.34	60.39 <sup>d</sup>
Franklin	277,874.89 <sup>a</sup>	-----	-----	277,874.89	56.47 <sup>b</sup>
	336,111.28	-----	-----	336,111.28	67.40 <sup>c</sup>
	357,148.00	-----	-----	357,148.00	71.40 <sup>d</sup>
McMinn	-----	125,864.13	117,834.47	243,698.60	45.88 <sup>b</sup>
	-----	133,532.20	104,771.13	238,305.33	41.39 <sup>c</sup>
	-----	154,551.88	107,888.79	262,440.67	39.95 <sup>d</sup>
Roane	4,707.40 <sup>a</sup>	128,117.76	96,370.59	229,195.75	46.80 <sup>a</sup>
	-----	162,549.65	124,875.62	287,252.27	57.13 <sup>b</sup>
	-----	174,611.26	126,244.39	301,855.66	63.66 <sup>c</sup>
Robertson	-----	115,029.00	86,090.92	201,119.92	38.60 <sup>b</sup>
	-----	130,915.66	109,456.84	240,372.50	45.96 <sup>c</sup>
	-----	142,633.88	131,587.90	274,221.78	52.60 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Anderson County and Roane County had contracts in addition to county-operated buses. Franklin County had contracts but did not operate county-owned buses.

<sup>b</sup>1974

<sup>c</sup>1975

<sup>d</sup>1976

cost for all the counties used in the study. Table 2 shows that Franklin County contracted for pupil transportation each year during the three-year period and that Anderson County and Roane County let contracts for 1974. For those years fuel and other expenses were included in the contracts.

With the exception of McMinn County, which had the lowest cost during the three-year period in 1975, all of the counties had increases in operating expenses.

Table 3, page 12, was prepared to give a better over-all view of the expenditures and to present averages for comparisons. Table 3 reduces the data to averages of distance, bus load, cost per bus per year and over a three-year period, and shows the change in dollars from 1974.

Columns 1-6 of Table 3 are used as data for the computing of the averages found in columns 7-11.

Column 7 shows that all counties are operating under a maximum miles one-way average of 25.5 miles except for Franklin County. The average for Franklin County, 32.94 for 1976, exceeds Anderson County which holds the next highest average by as much as 7.86 miles in all three years. Franklin ranked the highest in the average number of students per vehicle with 95.87 in 1976. Robertson County was the next highest in 1975 with 83.02.

By comparing columns 9 and 10, it was found that Robertson County ranked third in the cost per vehicle in



TABLE 3

AVERAGES OF DISTANCE, BUS LOAD, COST PER BUS PER YEAR AND OVER A THREE YEAR PERIOD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
County	Year	Miles One Way	Number of Vehicles	Average Trans-ported Over 1½ Miles	Operating Cost For School Term	Average Miles One Way	Average Number Of Students Per Vehicle	Average Cost Per Vehicle	Average Cost Per Vehicle For 3 Year Period	Total \$ Change Over 1974
Anderson	74	2,336	92	6,008	\$253,339.80	25.39	65.30	\$2,753.69		
	75	2,155	88	6,390	305,295.83	24.49	72.61	3,459.27		
	76	2,155	86	6,574	403,179.34	25.06	76.44	4,688.13	\$3,633.80	\$1,934.44
Franklin	74	1,762	53	4,894	277,874.89	33.25	92.34	5,242.92		
	75	1,774	53	4,970	336,111.28	33.47	93.77	6,341.72		
	76	1,713	52	4,985	357,148.00	32.94	95.87	6,868.23	6,150.96	1,625.31
McMinn	74	1,470	87	5,312	243,698.60	16.90	61.06	2,801.13		
	75	1,118	94	5,757	238,303.33	11.89	61.24	2,535.14		
	76	1,455	97	6,570	262,440.67	15.00	67.73	2,705.57	2,680.61	-95.56
Roane	74	1,342	59	4,897	229,195.75	22.75	83.00	3,884.64		
	75	2,470	62	5,031	287,252.27	23.71	81.15	4,633.10		
	76	1,492	64	4,742	301,855.66	23.31	74.09	4,716.49	4,411.41	831.84
Robertson	74	1,323	63	5,202	201,119.92	21.00	82.57	3,192.38		
	75	1,224	63	5,230	240,372.50	19.43	83.02	3,815.44		
	76	1,272	68	5,213	274,221.78	19.71	76.65	4,032.67	3,680.16	840.29



the three-year period. Column 11 shows the average change in dollars in 1976 from that in 1974 and, again, Robertson County ranked third. McMinn County ranked the lowest with \$95.65 less on the average cost per vehicle than in 1974.

Table 3, page 12, shows Franklin County ranked the highest in the average cost per vehicle for the three-year period. Franklin County contracted for pupil transportation during each of the three years; and the cost for pupil transportation exceeded that of the other counties in all three years including McMinn County which operated thirty-five more vehicles than Franklin County but ranked lower in the operating costs for the school term.

Table 3 shows the dollar increase each year in salaries, fuel, and other expenses. The exception to increase in costs was McMinn County in 1975 with a decrease in fuel costs and other expenses of over \$1,000 less than 1974. These costs increased only slightly more than \$3,000 in 1976. The drop in fuel costs and other expenses in 1975 represented a savings of 11% contrasted with the increase of over 27% in salary expense and the increase of 39% in fuel and other expenses.

#### PURCHASING AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Information on purchasing and management policies was secured through interviews with the county school superintendent or pupil transportation supervisor. (See the appendix for the guide used in the interviews).

In reviewing purchasing and management policies, it was found that Anderson County purchased gas and oil through local bids and did not take bids outside the county. Batteries and other spare parts were purchased locally through a central purchasing plan. As a rule, Anderson County buses were parked at the drivers' homes, but there were some cases in which buses were clustered. There was no central parking area for all buses.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast with Anderson County, McMinn County took statewide bids on gasoline and oil, as well as tires, batteries, and spare parts. Drivers were not required to park their buses in central parking areas. McMinn County had buses that were over the state recommended load but none exceeded the 20% overload allowed by the state.<sup>15</sup>

The reduced operations cost in McMinn County was due to several innovations: Two central refueling centers were set up to eliminate the extra driving to a central refueling station. Routes were changed to eliminate backtracking and route duplication and routes were rezoned. Centralized bus parking was eliminated to cut excessive driving from the schools to parking areas. As many drivers as possible were hired to serve in other areas of the school--janitors, for example--to cut expenses by the employees in traveling to and from their homes. It was

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<sup>14</sup>Interview with Paul Bostic, Clinton, Tennessee, 9 December 1977.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Bruce Jordan, Athens, Tennessee, 6 December 1977.



also noted that this was a low employment area and the cost of labor was not as high as in other counties.<sup>16</sup>

Roane County handled all purchases of gasoline, oil, batteries and spare parts on local bids. The county permitted its drivers to park their buses at their homes.<sup>17</sup>

No comparison in fuel and other expenses was made with Franklin County since the contract price included all transportation expenditures. It can be noted, however, that the cost of the contracts was higher per vehicle than the costs of the county-operated buses.

Robertson County took local bids on gasoline, oil, batteries, and other spare parts. Spare parts were secured through price quotations and, generally, the lower quotations were accepted. When local bids were in excess of the State and Federal contract the latter was taken. Some buses were parked on school grounds; but as a rule, the drivers parked them at their own homes. No central parking area was maintained.<sup>18</sup>

#### SUMMARY

As a rule, there was an increase in mileage, total vehicles, pupils enrolled and the average number of pupils transported over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles; however, the total number of

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Edward B. Williams, Kingston, Tennessee, 6 December 1977.

<sup>18</sup>Interview with Thomas McPherson, Springfield, Tennessee, 13 December 1977.



schools in each county remained the same except for the decrease in the number of schools in McMinn County and in Robertson County.

There was an increase in the total dollar costs for transportation in all counties except for McMinn County. The decrease in costs in McMinn County in 1975 brought the costs more in line with the transportation costs in the other counties.

McMinn County was the only county to take statewide bids on all transportation items. Robertson County extended invitations for all bids and for quotations on spare parts from local, State, and Federal suppliers.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The comparison of the expenditures of the Robertson County Pupil Transportation System with the expenditures of the pupil transportation systems of the other counties chosen for this study revealed no areas of higher costs within the Robertson County Pupil Transportation System. The comparison revealed that among the five systems surveyed, the Robertson County system ranked third in expenditures.

The Robertson County Pupil Transportation System has a policy of accepting the lowest bids on purchased items, whether local, State or Federal. Drivers are allowed to park the buses at their homes thus minimizing the costs of centralized parking and lessening the chance of theft and vandalism.

In view of the findings of this study, the author found no reason to advance recommendations relative to the policies and procedures of the Robertson County Pupil Transportation System. However, it might be advantageous for the administration to consider the areas of high costs that were identified in the related literature to discover possible ways of lowering the costs of pupil transportation in Robertson County.

APPENDIX  
 INTERVIEW GUIDE  
 FOR REVIEW OF  
 PURCHASING AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES

\_\_\_\_\_  
 County

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Superintendent or Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

Your average cost of pupil transportation for the three-year period 1974-1976 was \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

I. In fuel and other expenses your average was \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you take bids or quotations? b or q local other

- |                                       |       |       |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Gasoline                           | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Tires                              | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Batteries and<br>other spare parts | _____ | _____ | _____ |

II. Your average miles was \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have parking facilities? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Central? \_\_\_\_\_ Individual campus? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Drivers' homes? \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have buses for which it was necessary to get permission for overloading? \_\_\_\_\_ How many? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have buses serving two or more routes? \_\_\_\_\_  
 How many? \_\_\_\_\_

III. Does your system have a transportation supervisor?  
 \_\_\_\_\_



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