

Supporting Parents and Students with Adaptable Technology

Georgia School District Uses FirstNet-Powered App to Launch Resource Delivery Program Amid Pandemic



With school re-opening plans varying from state-to-state and county-to-county, school officials continue helping parents and students adjust to a new world of learning. Like many professions, schools are utilizing technology to ease the change, while still prioritizing security and safety.

Along with thousands of schools across the nation, City Schools of Decatur—an independent public school district in Georgia serving 5,700 students—needed to quickly adapt operations when campuses closed amid the pandemic. Transportation Director Lawanda Bowman was most concerned for students who depend on the National School Lunch Program (NLSP)—a federally funded initiative that affords low-cost or free meals to 29.7 million children daily.

Adapting Technology to New Needs

Decatur became a member of FirstNet, a dedicated wireless broadband communications platform, earlier this year in an effort to improve the district's ability to connect and coordinate transportation operations.

With these capabilities, Bowman knew the network could provide a solution for getting food and supplies directly to her students most in need. She quickly found that one of FirstNet's certified mobile apps, SAFEBUS Powered By Predictable Ryde, could assist with the process.

SAFEBUS, running on the reliable FirstNet network, allows school districts to leverage the capabilities of multiple technologies—including FirstNet's Enhanced Push-to-Talk, ruggedized wireless devices and GPS tracking—in one platform to efficiently manage transportation operations.



“We worked with FirstNet and Decatur personnel to help deliver school lunches and other important items to their students,” *said CEO and Founder of Predictable Ryde, Matt Vuturo.* **“We wanted to ensure the technology supported their goal of improving the wellbeing of students and parents communitywide.”**

Using FirstNet and SAFEBUS, Decatur launched a delivery system to provide more than 400 student lunches daily, all managed by transportation personnel via the SAFEBUS app. This streamlines tracking the delivery of meals and other supplies to students, monitoring buses on dedicated routes, and providing continuous updates to parents and drivers.

A Network Parents Can Trust

This innovative approach to supporting students has helped Decatur greatly improve its relationship with parents, providing them increased visibility to school resources during these uncertain times.

“The main focus has been maintaining open communication with parents,” said Bowman. “With FirstNet, we’re able to confidently broadcast real-time updates via the SAFEBUS app to parents, including meal delivery status, bus location and more.”

Bus drivers can easily use FirstNet’s Enhanced Push-to-Talk—a feature integrated into the SAFEBUS app that enables one-touch communication—to easily interface with dispatch without bulky radios and remain focused on the safety of students.

This instant communication is essential to the district’s delivery program, but it’s primary purpose for the district is to enhance student safety and emergency response. This includes communicating bus delays, student location and emergencies to parents supported with the reliable coverage of FirstNet.

Decatur continues to integrate all of the capabilities of the FirstNet network into its transportation operations for the normal academic calendar. And for now, the district is dedicated to providing the utmost confidence to parents and students with every unanticipated challenge.

Innovative School Transportation Technology Inspired by Personal Experience

With more than 20 years of software development experience at the state and federal level, that idea for Predictable Ryde actually came from Matt Vuturo’s personal experience as a parent. One morning he walked his kids to the bus stop only to find them still standing there waiting after their scheduled pick-up.

He thought, “there has to be a better way to do this,” and created the app to deliver more accurate information to parents needing to get their kids to school safely.

“Being able to have SAFEBUS operate with the priority connectivity of FirstNet allows us to help schools across the country make student transportation healthier and safer,” Vuturo said.



Matt Vuturo
CEO
Predictable Ryde

