

▶▶ District Profile



The Oregon Community Unit School District-220 is a consolidation of the Mount Morris District and Oregon Districts in Illinois, which lie six miles apart and which merged in 1994.

Currently, 1,400 students are transported to four schools: K-2, 3-6, and 9-12 in Oregon and 7-8 in Mt. Morris. The school district is primarily suburban, and extends 25 miles east to west and 10 miles north to south.

The district purchased Transfinder's Routefinder Pro routing software in February 2009. By taking advantage of the company's exclusive GPS implementation service, RouteBuilder, the transportation office was up and running by March 2009.

Situation

Vern Welp became employed as Transportation Supervisor October 1, 2007 for the Oregon Community Unit School District-220. Vern was an active member of the district for 29 years and held several positions during his tenure, including teacher, coach, athletic director, and building principal before retiring in 2005.

After two years into retirement, Vern was asked to take on the position of Transportation Supervisor to help solve several challenges facing the transportation department. The schedule was challenging. Buses dropped off students at the K-2, 3-6 and 9-12 in Oregon and then would drive to Mt. Morris to drop off the 7-8 students. In the afternoon the pick up was reversed, with buses going to Mt. Morris for the 7-8 students and then driving to Oregon for the K-2, 3-6 and 9-12 students.

However, the district soon realized that this was having a negative impact on the 7-8 students education program, since they lost a significant amount of time in the classroom. As the last students dropped off in the morning and the first picked up in the afternoon, it nearly amounted to a loss of two full weeks by the end of the year. In order to solve this problem the school board felt that all the schools should have equal time spent in the classroom.

In an effort to tackle this scheduling challenge, Vern had to find a software solution that he could learn quickly and use easily.

Solution

Vern looked at several software systems, and in February 2009, the school district purchased Transfinder. One key reason was the company's RouteBuilder implementation service and the company's commitment to help him use the service to quickly implement routes. RouteBuilder is an implementation service, only offered by Transfinder, which uses mobile GPS devices to help track driver paths as they drive. The actual path the drivers drive are displayed and then this data is imported into Routefinder Pro where he could then compare actual versus planned routes, do some analysis, and make adjustments.



On RouteBuilder...

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Vern Welp -
Transportation Supervisor

RouteBuilder - a unique GPS implementation service offered only by Transfinder, offers a way for school districts to create routes from raw GPS data. Hand-held GPS units are mailed to a district from Transfinder. Drivers use them to track their actual routes as they drive.

At each stop the drivers press one button, and when they return from their routes, a transportation director can view their routes through the RouteBuilder interface.

The routes are then recorded in Routefinder Pro, and the Implementation Team works with transportation directors to help them determine the safest and most cost-effective driving paths.

The company sent Vern five mobile GPS devices for him to use over a two-week period. In order to reassure the drivers that the devices were strictly tools used to import routes and they were not being evaluated on their performance, he allowed the drivers to travel their routes either in the afternoon, when they were not transporting their students, or on the weekend. He simply informed them that they had to drive their normal day-to-day paths within a specific time period.

By the middle of March, only a month after purchasing the software, the drivers had completed their routes and Vern was able to view them on the map. Working with his assigned Customer Project Manager at Transfinder, they began to edit the GIS maps provided by the county for gaps that were found in some of the roads and intersections that resulted in some fragmented routes. With the map-editing tool they worked to find each gap and fill it.

At the April school board meeting, Vern was able to assure the board that the project was in motion and that he would soon propose a solution. He turned to his project manager at Transfinder and they worked together for six hours in a single sitting to complete each of the routes. It soon became apparent that starting the day at the same time in all the schools was not a viable solution, but from the information gathered, Vern found the most desirable option, and prepared to present it to the board.

Vern informed the board at the May meeting, through the Assistant Superintendent, that schools would not all have to start and end at the same time. There was a better solution. By making adjustments that became obvious in Routefinder Pro, Vern had resolved the issue. He added two drivers to his team, which helped him create a multi-tier schedule, setting different bell times for each school.

Benefits

This solution kept all students in school for the same amount of time. In this way, Vern was able to remain within the guidelines of the board and the resources they were able to provide, while giving all students in the district the same level of education.

The board was impressed and is now extremely confident in the decisions of the Transportation Department.

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