

## Client Case Study



### District Profile

South Washington County School District 833 is located Southeast of St. Paul, MN, and covers an area of 84 square miles.

Approximately 18,000 students attend the school district and 15,000 are transported to 16 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 comprehensive high schools, as well as several private schools.

### Situation

Ronald Meyer joined the school district in the summer of 2013 as transportation director. The district owned Edulog software for routing and planning, but was only using it for the regular education transportation. Despite receiving training, the complexity of the system prevented the staff from training others or using it for field trips or special education routing. As a result, the fall school opening had many complications including a significant number of students that were not routed.

The challenges of their school opening pushed the department to evaluate their options to change the current routing software. They narrowed down their decision to either upgrade their software to the latest version of Edulog or purchase the Versatrans routing software. Ron was familiar with Versatrans from his previous district, and after the team saw a demonstration of their system, Ron decided they would go ahead with Versatrans.

As Ron was reviewing their proposal, he received a call from Transfinder. Ron expressed they were not in the market since they just made a decision, but that he would look at a demonstration as a professional courtesy. On the first demonstration, Transfinder showed South Washington's maps in the software, with exact 911 address point locations for every property. Perhaps most importantly, the Transfinder consultant offered to show Ron his students loaded into the Transfinder system. The technology shown in the first demonstration, and the offer of a custom demonstration made Ron begin to seriously consider Transfinder.

Ron sent the consultant his student data to see what could be one. *Within 5 days Ron was seeing exactly what he would be looking at if he owned Transfinder, and how the software would behave with his data.* The South Washington transportation staff was able to verify that Transfinder was mapping students to their exact location, rather than approximate ranges. The team also reviewed the edge of an existing walkzone, and looked over several routes in Routefinder Pro to assess overlap, stop sequence, stop safety, etc. This exercise provided real world proof that the system could work for them.

Not only was the software appealing, but other factors began to become apparent as well. Ron asked Versatrans to present him his student data in their software, so he could make a true comparison of the two solutions. After much hesitation Versatrans finally did, and *seeing South Washington students in a system was much more useful than seeing a standard sales demonstration with staged data*. Their hesitation to provide this proof of concept encouraged Ron to investigate further, and he decided to visit some neighboring districts using Transfinder.

The visit with those districts not only showed how impressive the technology was, particularly the exact address point mapping, but there was a vast difference in customer service. The difference in customer service was the key turning point to altering his decision.

Ron had an aggressive timeline to complete implementation. He would need to do in 7 months what he knew most large schools do over the course of a full year. He could not purchase software until January, but the goal was to use his new software to plan the following school opening. *By having Transfinder map out his 18,000+ students before purchasing, he not only had proof of concept, he also knew exactly what he was facing*. Ron and his team knew they were starting the implementation already having more than 90% of their students mapped out in the Transfinder system.

After careful consideration he decided that in order to meet their goals they would need a strong working relationship with the company providing the software, and Transfinder stood out as the company to do that.

## **Solution**

Not only did Ron and his team meet their deadline for implementation, they had an exceptional first day of school. One of the key factors that contributed to their success were working together with the Transfinder project manager to develop strong

milestones for delivering and completing specific objectives. In addition, they added onsite training for the entire staff, so every person was comfortable going into the system and able to get the information they needed.

Another important factor for them to be up and running in this timeline was the ability for the existing routes in Edulog to be pulled into Transfinder. Although the best scenario for the district would have been to create all new routes based on safety and efficiency, that method would have doubled the amount of time to get up and running. By starting with the existing routes, South Washington was able to have a measurable foundation of miles, number of stops, ride time, etc. Taking a gradual approach allowed the district to then look at possible changes over time, and find improvements in measurable areas.

## **Benefits**

There was a significant reduction in phone calls to the office that school opening, as 100% of students had been routed that year. Also, on the first day of school every driver had a viable route sheet with not just stops and times, but a roster of students, including pictures for those who requested them, for each of their stops. Beyond that, drivers also received a map with the route path.

In particular, Ron cited that it is helpful to have such a user friendly system, where he can easily access the data he needs to make informed decisions. Getting an MS Excel file of all the elementary students in a given neighborhood is now a 60 second task, which helps when administration needs answers.

As a recommendation to districts who are looking at implementing new software, Ron suggests evaluating which company is going to be the most responsive to your needs, and who will be a partner that will see you reach your goals, and there every step of the way.