

Learn how a Pecos, Texas school district is transforming its transportation fleet with innovative communications tools and student tracking

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah Independent School District (ISD) is based in Pecos, Texas, and serves 2,630 students across three neighboring communities. With a recent influx of new students in the district, Pecos ISD now operates a fleet of 30 school buses. The district's population increase resulted in a rise of student safety incidents - students missing their buses, falling asleep and missing stops, or being delayed after extracurricular activities. This caused concern and stress for parents and school officials alike.

Tracking students and providing reliable communication among drivers, schools and parents became a larger priority for Transportation Director, Lee Serrano, who found himself looking for ways to improve fleet safety for his district. In addition to everyday operations, Serrano recognized the need to integrate seamless communications to bolster the District's readiness for emergency situations.

The Challenge

Previously, if a student was missing, Serrano and his staff manually contacted each bus driver via cell phone while also managing contact with the parents. Serrano sought a solution that would allow the District to more effectively track students on school buses and communicate with both drivers and parents. Serrano wanted their drivers focused on the safety of their students — which had been challenging in the old model using multiple devices and processes.

It was around this time that Serrano was introduced to FirstNet and Sonim Safe-bus.



Moving to an Integrated Solution

FirstNet is the only nationwide, high speed broadband network designed specifically for public safety, including school resource officers, campus police and school transportation personnel. School safety officials receive priority access to the network in emergency situations and keep the lines of communication open with school district and public safety personnel.

“Now, if the parents call the school about a missing student, I can send out a message and everyone gets it at one time,” said Serrano. “That cuts the time finding a student in half.” With the help of FirstNet and integrated technology and safety solutions, school districts like Serrano’s now have access to critical situational awareness uniting an ecosystem of students, schools, bus drivers, parents and first responders.

Since their initial implementation, Pecos ISD’s use of FirstNet tools is bringing peace of mind to parents, administrators and bus drivers. The team has consistent, integrated and seamless communication, which is critical for both day to day operations and emergency situations alike.



Getting On Board

Sonim Safebus transforms FirstNet Ready™ devices into a modern student and vehicle tracking transportation management system without the need for additional equipment. The system includes push-to-talk solutions which offer instant communication with multiple drivers in the field from one screen, as well as Parent App, which sends notifications when the student boards and exits the bus.

Together, the technologies provide a highly dependable network and communications platform.

It sounded like something that we needed,” said Serrano. “I presented it to the board, my supervisors, my superintendent, and my district manager, and they were all on board.

“The safety aspect is really what sold that product, as well as the efficiency and how easy and simple it is to operate.”