

Perry pays startup \$24,000 to save busing money CEO fired from similar position, business ran from a home residence

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By Allie Wooton

The transportation company that Perry Township hired to manage its new three-tier bus system has been plagued with problems in Perry, Martinsville and Muncie school districts.

"What a disaster the township created!"

- Hillary Doss

Wilczynski and Schabel didn't return calls from student journalists. An unidentified man answered one FOCUS call, but quickly said: "No comment" and then hung up.

Facing mounting enrollment, Perry officials knew last year that they needed to change the bus routes to accommodate the 81 percent of students who ride the bus and the shortage of bus drivers in Indiana and nationwide, said **Ken Mertz**, Perry school board president.

Superintendent **Patrick Mapes** told the IBJ that the district would save about \$700,000 a year with the new transportation changes: The savings would come from "using fewer buses and drivers and cutting the number of routes from 122 to 94."

True Consultant, was "highly recommended" to help create the routes, Mertz said.

Its responsibility was to analyze the number of buses Perry has, its number of students, and the start times of the schools, then configure the safest and quickest routes for bus transportation in the district, he added.

During the first two weeks of school, however, Perry's buses were often late. In particular, first and second tier buses weren't arriving at elementary schools on time, infuriating some parents.

"My 9-year-old is not getting home until 5 p.m.," said Hillary Doss in a post on the district's Facebook page three weeks ago. "What a disaster the township created!"

After the troubles, the district dropped True Consultant Services after their six-month contract ended. Mertz told IBJ that, "After school opened and we realized our transportation was awful, we didn't use them anymore. Our own people just rerouted everything

where we realized there were issues with routes."

Other school districts also suffered bus route problems.

In Martinsville schools, bus drivers didn't get set-in-stone routes until the day before school started, which resulted in drivers not knowing where to go. There were also kids left out of the transportation system, leaving children with no ride to school, reported Fox 59 on Aug. 10.

After the glaring problems were publicized, Martinsville schools released a statement saying that "True Consultant Service was highly recommended to us, and we attempted to create a new busing system to meet the needs of our parents. Unfortunately, the company was not able to accommodate us." The school district went back to its busing schedule from last academic year.

Similar problems in Muncie schools caused the district to shut down on the second and third days in order to get the transportation issues fixed for the school year.

Patrick Murphy, Perry transportation director, was not available for a **FOCUS** interview, according to Keesha Hughes, the district's marketing and communications director. She referred a student journalist to the FAQ portion of the township website, but the journalist's questions were not among the ones answered there.

Mapes wasn't available for a **FOCUS** interview either. However, secretary **Ronda Meyers** said, "Transportation is running smoother. We are constantly tweaking to improve route times."

"Transportation is running smoother."

-Ronda Meyers



Writers beat wrestlers in homecoming pushcart race

(Photo above) Senior Tre Breaziel (right) propels sophomore Lizzie Richardson (in cart) as they barrel across the stadium track. In their first heat of the race, the writers of CWC bested PM wrestlers. The pushcart race was part of the Homecoming Extravaganza on Sept. 7, which included phonebooth stuffing and tug-of-war. Falcons faced Terre Haute South Friday night, losing 27-24. (Photo by Adam Crozier).

TWEET OF THE WEEK



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Ken Mertz

to map out bus routes to fit the new operating system.

Central Indiana Educational Service, a nonprofit which provides assistance with bus purchasing and other educational services, fired True Consultant CEO Justin Wilczynski as transportation director in 2011. Officials didn't disclose why. Wilczynski was also an executive for a Texas company that sells bus-routing software, reported IBJ, and a transportation administrator for Franklin Township schools, before starting this business. Tarrance Schabel, who IBJ reports as "appears to have little or no background in school transportation," serves as the chief operating officer for True Consultant Services. He previously worked at Angie's List and MEGAstream as a "creative technologist." Schabel's Twitter profile reads: "Don't tease me about my hobbies. I don't tease you about being an (expletive)."

The company's social media also offers little to no information. Four follow the company's official Twitter, and the LinkedIn account only lists two employees: Wilczynski and Schabel.

The company's website is no longer operating, even after being fully loaded. The only thing viewable online is the company's tagline: "Solutions that reduce expenses, enhance safety, and improve service."