

EDUCATION

CPS board member calls mayor's comments about students using Metro 'totally inappropriate'

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Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

Mayor Aftab Pureval suggested the school district should consider using yellow buses instead of public transit for students.

The suggestion came after a double shooting in Fountain Square prompted discussions about Downtown crime.

A school board member called the mayor's comments "totally inappropriate," saying they unfairly scapegoat young people.

A Cincinnati Public Schools board member said it's "totally inappropriate" for the city's mayor to suggest the district move students off of [Metro](#) buses in the wake of a [double shooting at Fountain Square](#).

Eve Bolton, CPS Board of Education vice president, responded Oct. 15 to Mayor Aftab Pureval's remarks, saying he should not have suggested "that Downtown crime is related only to our young people."

Pureval's comments, made at an Oct. 14 monthly meeting of the [Downtown Residents Council](#), came at the tail end of a list of short-term solutions he [proposed to curb crime Downtown](#), including adding officers from Cincinnati's Civil Disturbance Response Team and SWAT and bumping the youth curfew from 9 p.m. to 6 p.m. The mayor's appearance came a day after a [shooting near the CityBird](#)

[restaurant on Fountain Square](#) that wounded two people, prompting discussions about ongoing violence in Cincinnati's urban core.

No one has been arrested for the shooting as of Oct. 15 but police are looking for a 24-year-old man, who they say fired a handgun into the restaurant, on charges of felonious assault and illegal possession of a firearm.

"I've reached out to CPS to have a conversation about the yellow buses," Pureval said at the community meeting. "Let's figure out whether we can reinstitute those, how much that costs, what the logistical challenges are."

"You know our CPS students are, by and large, wonderful kids. Bus riders are, by and large, wonderful people who we just want to go about their day without being harassed by violence. But there's no doubt that this confluence of events is contributing to the challenges," he said.

When asked where the money for the shift would come from, Pureval said he didn't yet "have a dollar figure or a strategy to solve it," but it's important for him to "put that issue back on the table."

"Because currently the status quo from my perspective as both the mayor and also a CPS parent is leaving a lot to be desired," he said.

School board, teachers union respond to mayor: 'We take offense'

Bolton called the mayor's suggestion "unreasonable" and "not financially feasible" given the major cost savings the district has gained from moving kids from yellow buses to public transit.

Yellow bus service costs an average of \$3,085 per student, while Metro costs approximately \$364 per student, [The Enquirer previously reported](#). Currently, the district uses both yellow school buses and Metro to [transport over 35,000](#) district, charter and private school students daily. And [roughly 10,500 students rode](#) Metro buses for school transportation last school year.

Julie Sellers, president of the Cincinnati Public Schools teachers union, also described Pureval's idea as unfeasible, calling it "impossible" given a shortage of drivers and state and federal funding cuts being at "crisis levels."

[The union led protests during the summer of 2021](#) when Metro eliminated school-specific bus routes. That's how CPS students came to and from school until Metro canceled them four years ago, opting for existing routes.

"Our students are citizens who deserve respect and opportunity –not blame. And it's important to remember that not all community violence involves CPS students," Sellers said.

What's more, Bolton said, Pureval's comments use the city's youth as a scapegoat given that the person police say fired into CityBird at the Fountain Square shooting is 24 years old, she said.

"We're tired of being scapegoated by the city and we're not going to allow our children be scapegoated in such a way," Bolton said.

The district and Metro have worked together extensively to ensure students can safely use public transit with one or fewer transfers, she said.

Bolton estimated that only 200 or so students use the Downtown transit center, the same station that [the mayor suggested at an Oct. 14 press conference](#) diverting buses from as a means of improving safety. As it stands, [CPS transports its students as well as](#) students attending some private and charter schools, a process she called an "unfair burden to begin with, and we're not going to find ways to make it worse."

CPS board president Kareem Moncree-Moffett said she's "deeply saddened" by the Oct. 13 shooting at Fountain Square, emphasizing the district will continue working with the Metro and city leaders to ensure "student safety and accountability."

CPS and Metro collaboration goes back years, helps district save millions

The mayor's mention of how to transport students in Cincinnati's largest school district follows [years of collaboration between CPS and Metro](#) to transport students using existing Metro routes as a significant cost-cutting measure for the district. Just this summer, [in June, the board approved](#) moving seventh- and eighth-grade students from yellow school buses to the Metro in a move that saves CPS almost \$3 million per year.

Most of CPS' high school students already ride Metro buses, as did some seventh and eighth-graders. [CPS reports that](#), in total, about 15,000 CPS, private and charter school students ride yellow buses contracted out by the district and 9,000 students ride the Metro.

Breaking news reporter David Ferrara contributed to this report.