ACTION

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY
MEETING AGENDA ITEM

TITLE: School Start Times: Decision Briefing **DATE:** February 10, 2022

PRESENTER(S): Brian Nevin, Director, Student Transportation Office
Tom Platt, Decision Support Group, LLC

Strategic Call To Action Alignment:
Operations and practices are responsive, transparent, fiscally responsible and accountable, with students at the heart of all decisions.

OVERVIEW:
On April 15, 2021, the Board of Education directed the Superintendent to review and evaluate the current student school start times and to prepare a recommendation of suggested new start times for submission to the Board of Education in December 2021.

On June 24, 2021, the Board of Education approved a contract for the consulting services of Decision Support Group, LLC to review, evaluate, and recommend revised school start times.

On January 13, 2022, HCPSS staff presented a report providing the Board with the core issues addressed within the project and summary recommendations.

On January 27, 2022, a public hearing was held to receive feedback from the community.

RECOMMENDATION/FUTURE DIRECTION:
Based upon the summary recommendations, the Board of Education will make decisions regarding implementation of school start time changes.

SUBMITTED BY:
Brian Nevin
Director, Student
Transportation Office

Bruce Gist
Executive Director,
Operations

APPROVAL/CONCURRENCE:
Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Karalee Turner-Little
Deputy Superintendent

Scott W. Washington
Chief Operating Officer

Implementation Plan

School Start Time Changes

for the

Howard County
Public School System

February 2022

DECISION SUPPORT GROUP
BETTER DECISIONS FOR A COMPLEX WORLD

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Plan Description and Explanatory Notes

Timing: Why 2023 and not 2022?

Experience indicates that systemic change requires methodical planning and execution. There are numerous interrelationships and dependencies in the tasking for the bell time change initiative, and many impacts for the HCPSS that extend beyond the specifics of the implementation workstreams. Taken together, these point to the logic behind the recommended implementation timeline. Three brief examples serve to illustrate these points:

- An "opt-in" transportation policy is one of the assumptions leading to a no-cost solution. This requires a set of tasks including changing Policy 5200; determining and implementing the technology and process changes required; and using enhanced data from these changes to plan routing efficiencies. Each of these elements requires months to execute properly, and most of the tasking must be completed sequentially.
- Bell time changes will affect every school in the system. The implications of the changes on the community will be broad and deep. Even on an accelerated schedule, school-by-school bell times cannot be determined earlier than late Spring, 2022 which would leave a very compressed timeframe for community outreach, and for families to plan and adapt prior to school startup in 2022.
- Determining how the transportation system will remain resilient to future uncertainties is a crucial implementation success factor. Bus driver shortages preceded the pandemic and are likely to linger well beyond. The no-cost solution also assumes there will be no continuation of the driver shortage. The way the system has adapted to the shortage in 2021/22 will not be available to it once the bell time changes have been implemented.

These and many other examples influenced the recommendation for implementation of the bell time changes to coincide with the start of school in 2023.

Implementation Workstreams

There are eight complementary and related workstreams comprising the implementation plan. Workstreams 1-5 relate to the process of adjusting times and bus routes together with associated reporting and outreach requirements. Workstreams 6-8 relate to the changes required to the Transportation Office that will support the initiative and ensure successful implementation and operations in 2023/24 and beyond. Each workstream is summarized here:

1. Policy 5200 revisions – A foundational element to the no-cost solution is revision to the transportation planning parameters contained within Policy 5200. These must be drafted and approved before the bell time changes and associated bus routes can be finalized.
2. School-by-School Bell Time Determination – The no-cost solution was built on a structured analysis and illustrative examples. With the approved policy revisions and this feasibility analysis as the starting point, school-by-school bell time changes for the entire system must be determined. This will serve as the basis for bus routing, and so that specific school bell time changes can be communicated to the community early in the process.
3. Establish Revised Bus Routes – The actual planning of new bus routes cannot begin until the policy revisions are approved, and school bell times have been determined. Final routing cannot be completed until boundaries have been realigned to incorporate High School 13.
4. Community Outreach – Recognizing the magnitude of the changes involved, and that every school in the system is likely to be affected, a robust and extensive program of outreach is required. This should be an inclusive process to garner and incorporate feedback, and of sufficient scope to ensure the community has time to adapt to the changes before they are implemented.
5. School Board Progress Updates – This will be a living plan with expectations for revisions and enhancements as it proceeds. A regular program to update the School Board is critical. This will be to inform, but also to seek guidance as circumstances change and clarity is gained regarding current unknowns.
6. Transportation Service Model changes – The current distribution of transportation contracts to bus companies will require changes to support the bell time initiative. Additionally, some current contractors have struggled to adapt to pandemic-induced driver shortages. Ensuring continuity and resiliency in service delivery requires a reassessment of, and associated changes to, how transportation services are structured.
7. Technology and associated process changes – Within the revised policy-based planning parameters are elements that will require that new technologies and associated processes be implemented within the Office of Transportation.
8. Organization changes – The revised bell time structure, planning parameters, and technology upgrades may require a reorganization of the

Office of Transportation to ensure successful operations. These must be determined and implemented.

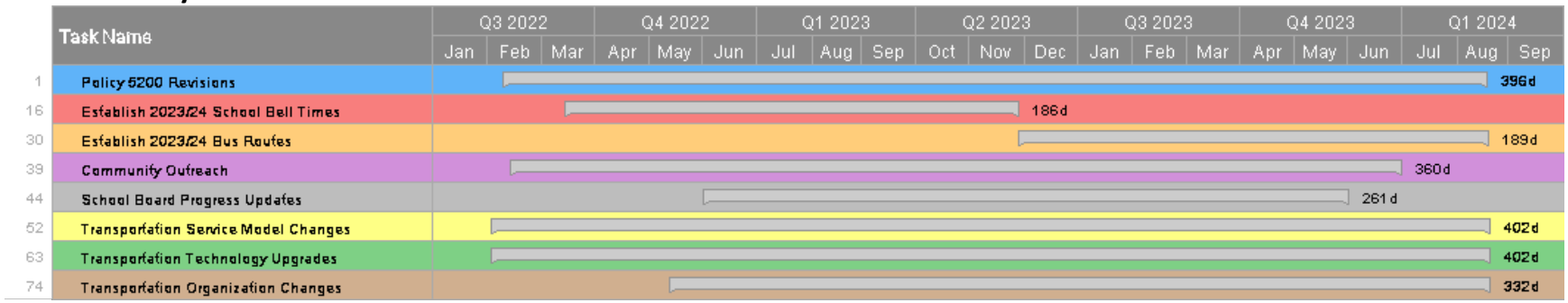
Structure of the Plan

The implementation plan itself is appended to this summary. It is constructed in a project management tool to enable active day-by-day tracking, management, and updates. The version presented here is the baseline plan as exported from that tool. Staff expects that each task will be expanded with relevant subtasks and assignments as the plan proceeds, and that additional tasking will be added as needed and in response to decisions as they are reached. Each update to the School Board will include an updated version of the plan, with progress noted on each task.

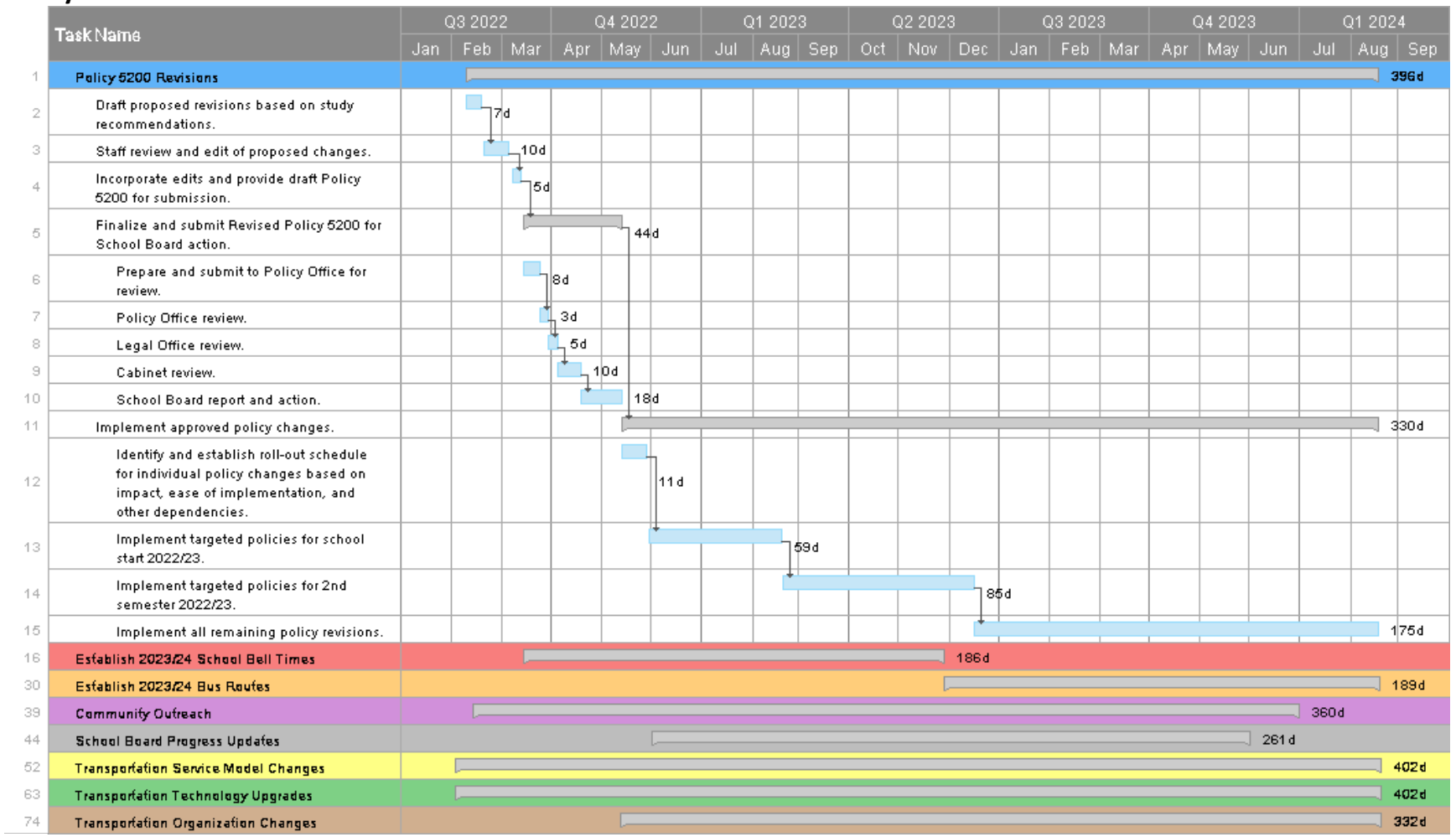
The plan is presented below first as a series of images from the Gantt charting available in the planning tool. These should be sufficient to provide a summary view of the overall implementation plan. An expanded tabular view of each individual task is, however, also included following the images. Staff will seek guidance from the School Board as to the level of detail and type of presentation desired for future updates.

Implementation Plan: Gantt Chart Images

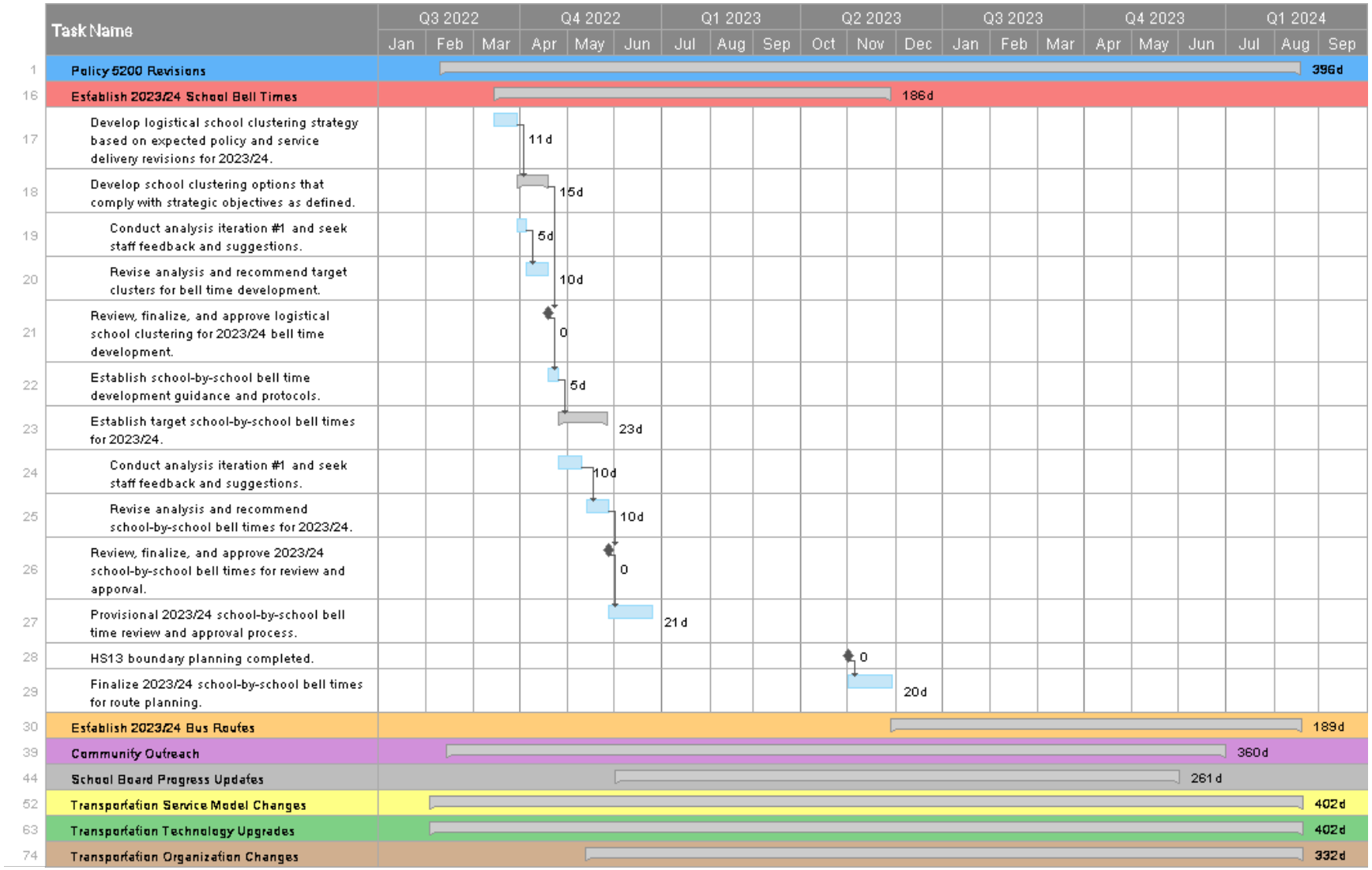
Plan Summary



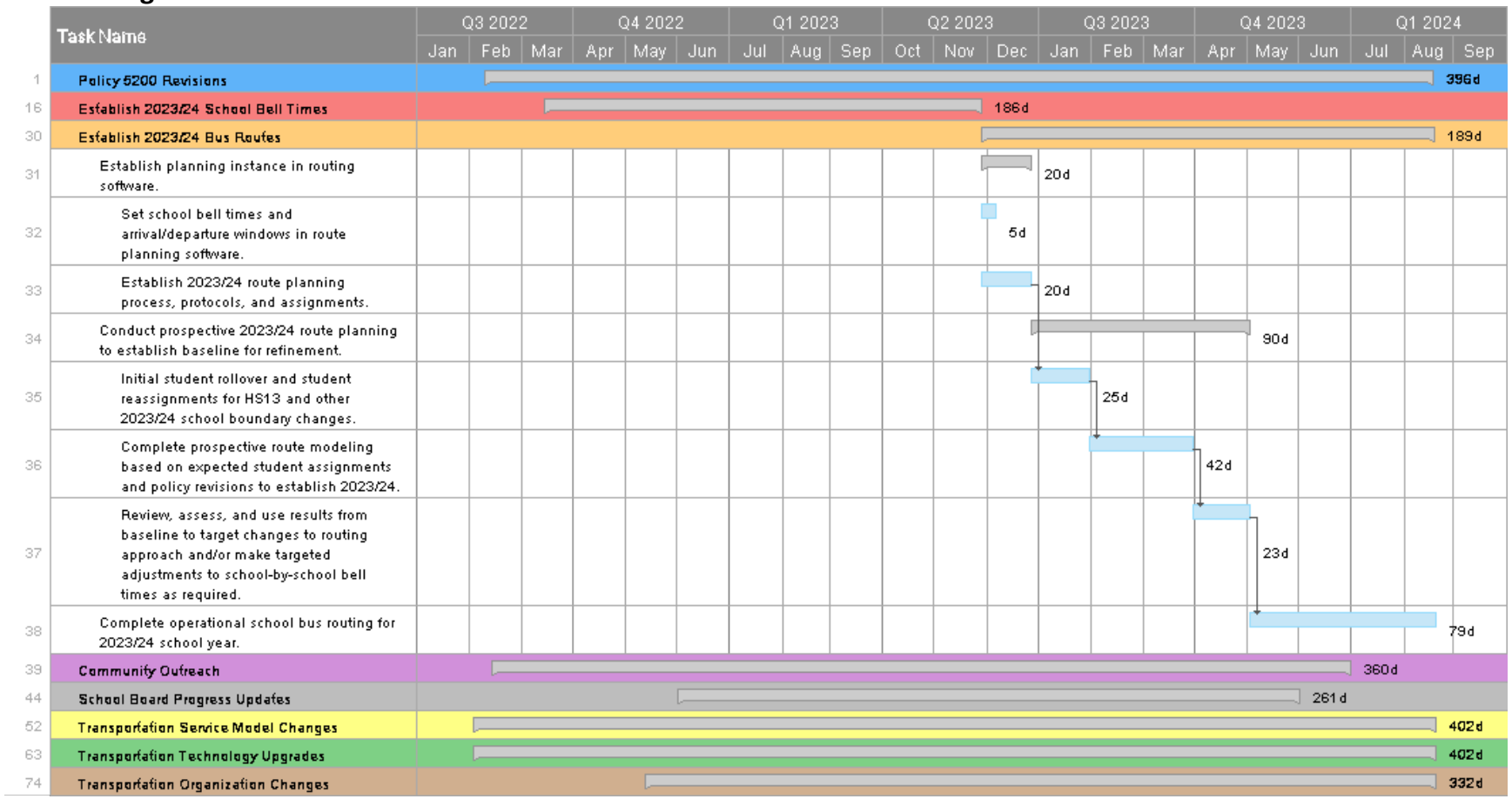
Policy Revision Workstream



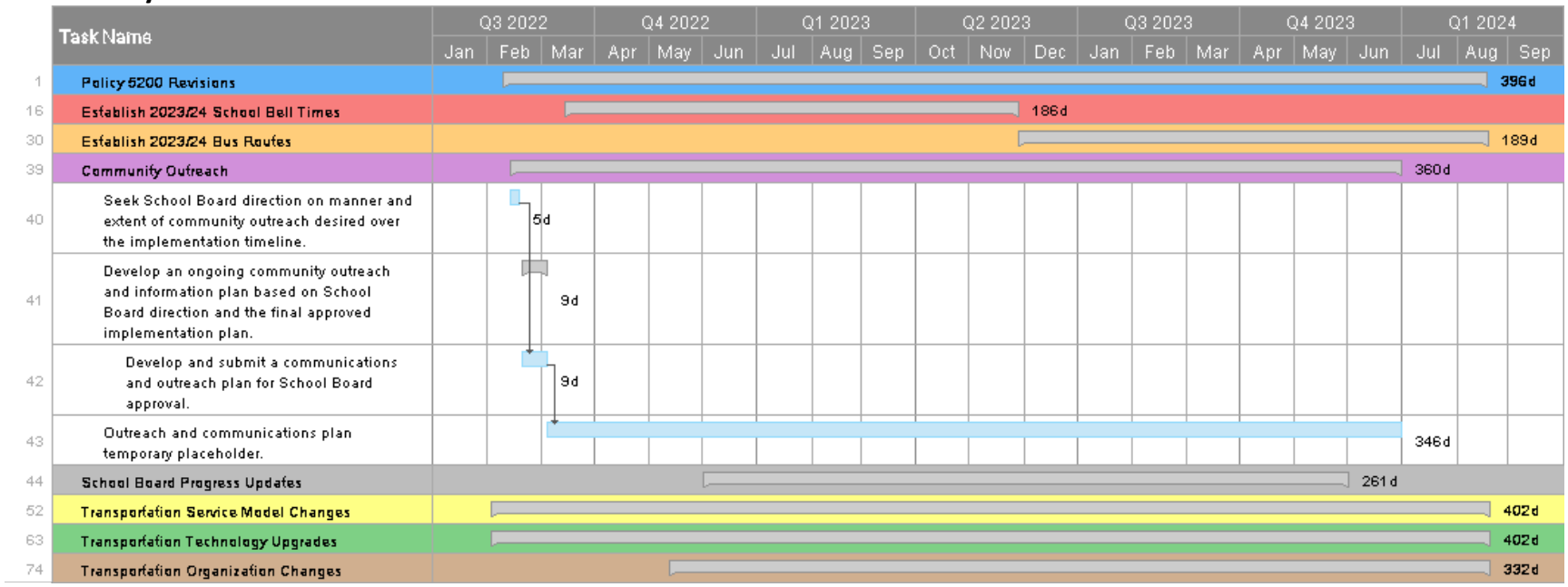
Bell Time Determination Workstream



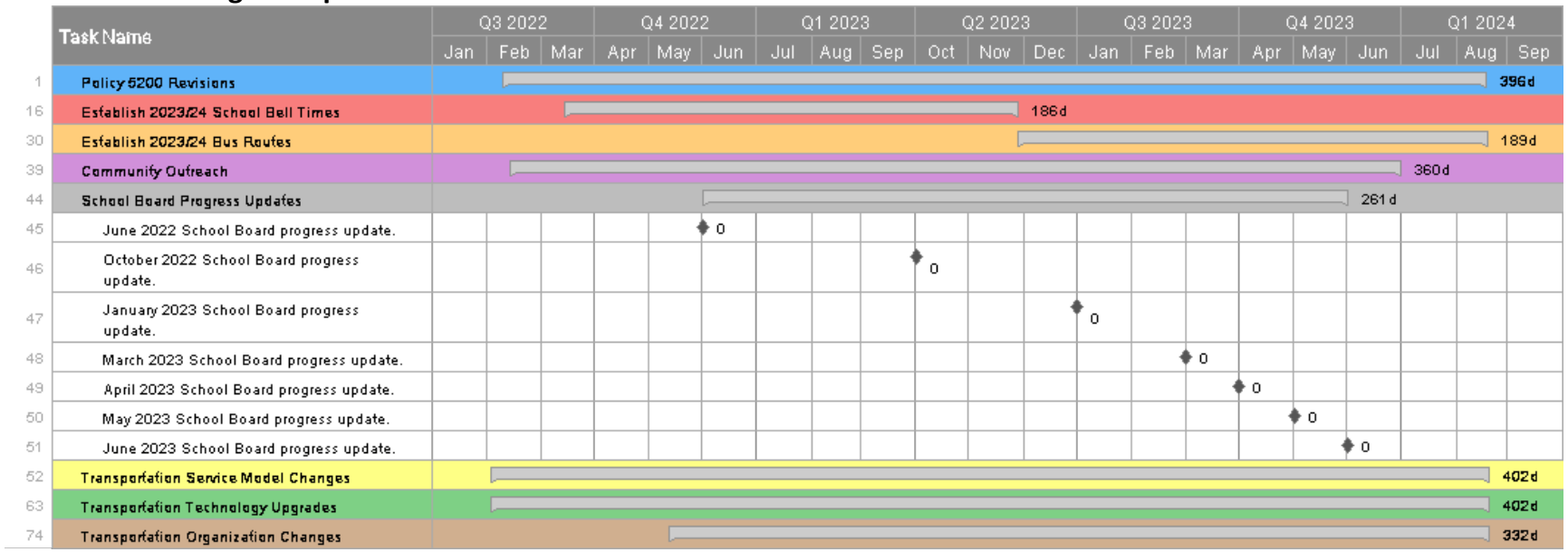
Bus Routing Workstream



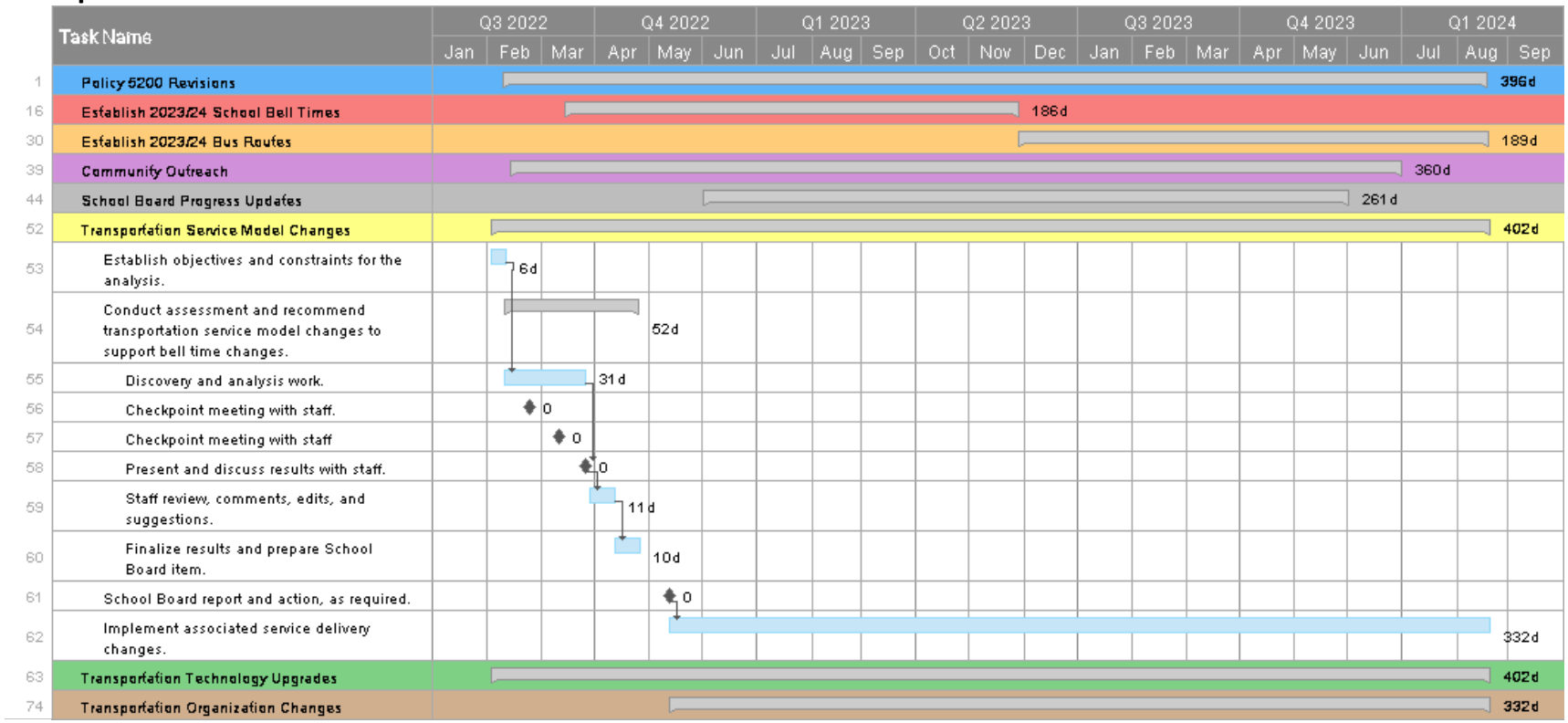
Community Outreach Workstream



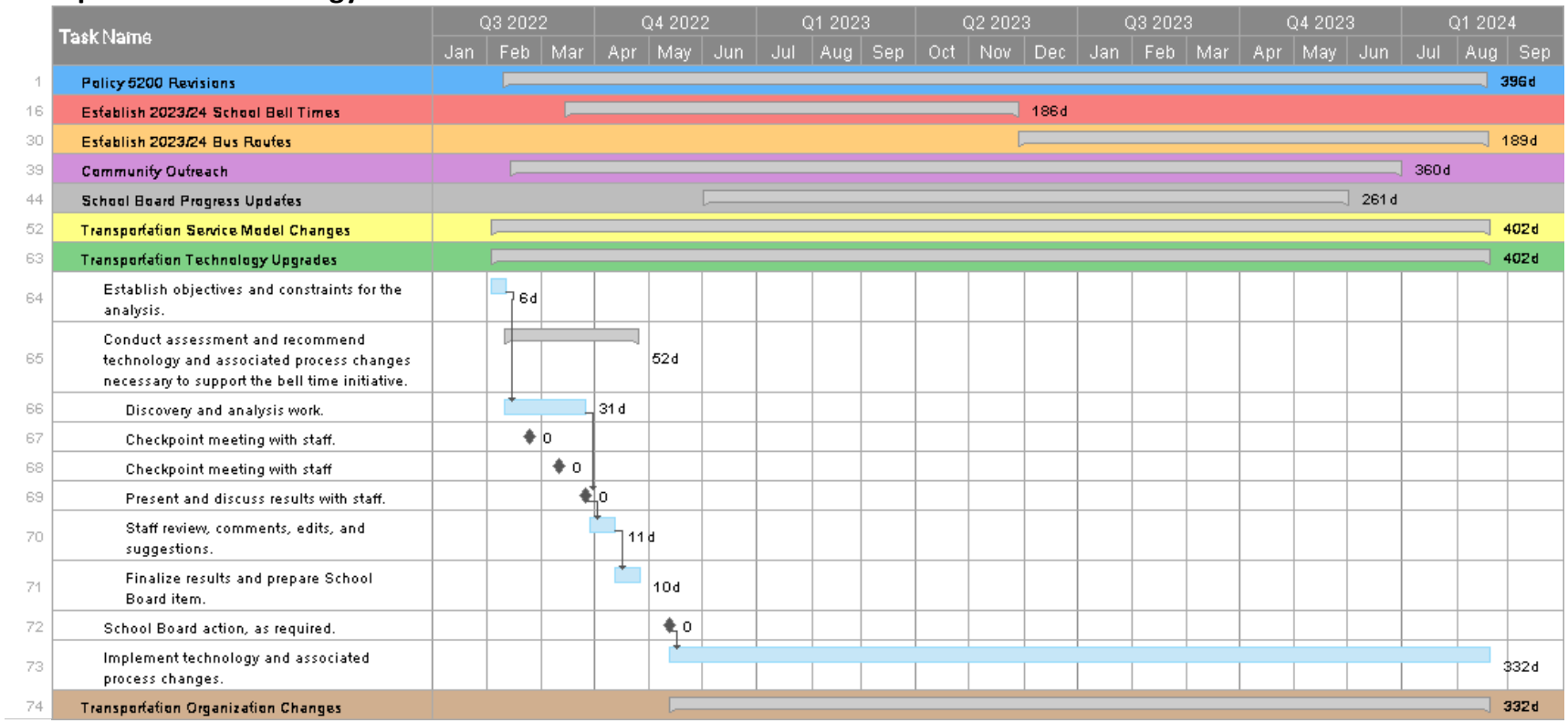
School Board Progress Updates Workstream



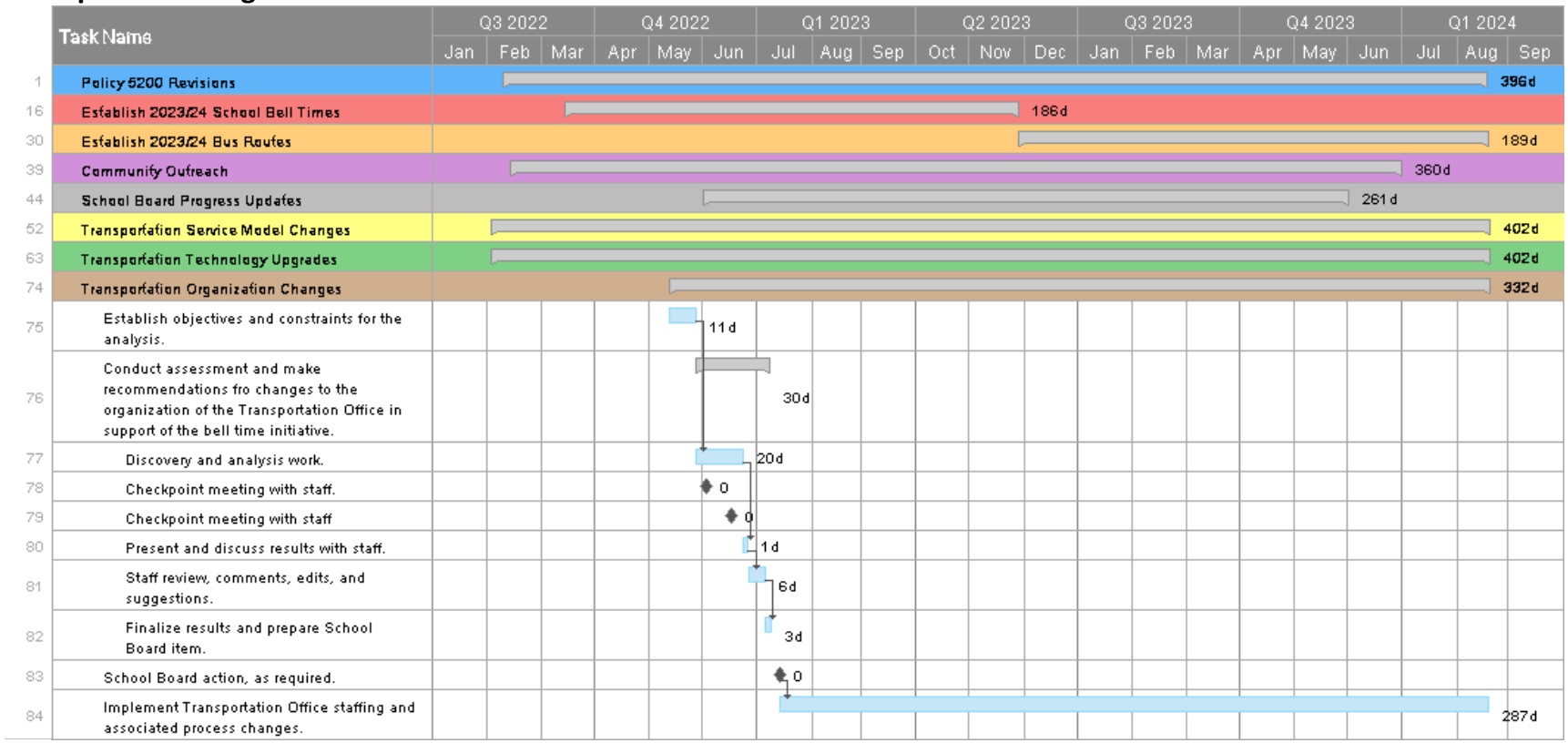
Transportation Service Model Workstream



Transportation Technology Workstream



Transportation Organization Workstream



Implementation Plan: Task Detail

At Risk	Task Name	Start Date	End Date	Assigned To	Duration	% Complete	Predecessors	Notes
	Policy 5200 Revisions	**02/10/22**	**08/17/23**	Brian Nevin	**396d**			
	Draft proposed revisions based on study recommendations.	02/10/22	02/18/22	DSG	7d			
	Staff review and edit of proposed changes.	02/21/22	03/04/22	Scott Washington	10d		2	
	Incorporate edits and provide draft Policy 5200 for submission.	03/07/22	03/11/22	DSG	5d		3	
	Finalize and submit Revised Policy 5200 for School Board action.	03/14/22	05/12/22	Brian Nevin	44d		4	Based on timeline provided by Policy Office.
	Prepare and submit to Policy Office for review.	03/14/22	03/23/22	Brian Nevin	8d			
	Policy Office review.	03/24/22	03/28/22	Policy Office	3d		6	
	Legal Office review.	03/29/22	04/04/22	Legal Office	5d		7	
	Cabinet review.	04/05/22	04/18/22	Scott Washington	10d		8	
	School Board report and action.	04/19/22	05/12/22	School Board	18d		9	
	Implement approved policy changes.	05/13/22	08/17/23	Brian Nevin	330d		5	
	Identify and establish roll-out schedule for individual policy changes based on impact, ease of implementation, and other dependencies.	05/13/22	05/27/22	DSG	11d			Work to be completed in collaboration between DSG and staff.
	Implement targeted policies for school start 2022/23.	05/30/22	08/18/22	Brian Nevin	59d		12	To be expanded with sub-tasking once schedule and plan is determined.
	Implement targeted policies for 2nd semester 2022/23.	08/19/22	12/15/22	Brian Nevin	85d		13	To be expanded with sub-tasking once schedule and plan is determined.
	Implement all remaining policy revisions.	12/16/22	08/17/23	Brian Nevin	175d		14	To be expanded with sub-tasking once schedule and plan is determined.

	Establish 2023/24 School Bell Times	**03/14/22**	**11/28/22**	Brian Nevin	186d			
	Develop logistical school clustering strategy based on expected policy and service delivery revisions for 2023/24.	03/14/22	03/28/22	DSG	11d		4	Work to be completed in collaboration between DSG and staff. Work precedes approved policies and service changes to ensure overall timeline is achievable.
	Develop school clustering options that comply with strategic objectives as defined.	03/29/22	04/18/22	Brian Nevin	15d		17	Work to be completed in collaboration between DSG and staff. Work includes prospective placement of HS13 and associated feeder school implications to ensure the overall timeline is met. This will be adjusted once actual boundaries and student placements have been determined.
	Conduct analysis iteration #1 and seek staff feedback and suggestions.	03/29/22	04/04/22	DSG	5d			
	Revise analysis and recommend target clusters for bell time development.	04/05/22	04/18/22	DSG	10d		19	
	Review, finalize, and approve logistical school clustering for 2023/24 bell time development.	04/18/22	04/18/22	Brian Nevin	0		18	
	Establish school-by-school bell time development guidance and protocols.	04/19/22	04/25/22	DSG	5d		21	Work to be completed in collaboration between DSG and staff.
	Establish target school-by-school bell times for 2023/24.	04/26/22	05/26/22	Brian Nevin	23d		22	Targeted bell times with options for minor adjustments as needed during detailed 2023/24 route planning.
	Conduct analysis iteration #1 and seek staff feedback and suggestions.	04/26/22	05/09/22	DSG	10d			
	Revise analysis and recommend school-by-school bell times for 2023/24.	05/13/22	05/26/22	DSG	10d		24, 10	Final revisions follow only after School Board action on dependent policy revisions.
	Review, finalize, and approve 2023/24 school-by-school bell times for review and apporval.	05/26/22	05/26/22	Scott Washington	0		25	
	Provisional 2023/24 school-by-school bell time review and approval process.	05/27/22	06/24/22	School Board	21d		26	Include sub-tasking as required and once known. Task presumes some level of Cabinet review and School Board action will be required. Such approval would be provisional for target school bell times with potential minor changes based on the demands of 2023/24 bus routing and other dependencies.
	HS13 boundary planning completed.	11/01/22	11/01/22	Planning Office	0			Placeholder milestone for completion of dependent process not covered under this project plan.
	Finalize 2023/24 school-by-school bell times for route planning.	11/01/22	11/28/22	Brian Nevin	20d		28	Incorporate results of HS13 boundary planning. Incorporate appropriate sub-tasking as required and once known.

	Establish 2023/24 Bus Routes	**11/29/22**	**08/18/23**	Brian Nevin	189d			
	Establish planning instance in routing software.	11/29/22	12/26/22	Brian Nevin	20d			
	Set school bell times and arrival/departure windows in route planning software.	11/29/22	12/05/22	Transportation Office	5d		29	
	Establish 2023/24 route planning process, protocols, and assignments.	11/29/22	12/26/22	Brian Nevin	20d		29	
	Conduct prospective 2023/24 route planning to establish baseline for refinement.	12/27/22	05/01/23	Transportation Office	90d			To be expanded with additional sub-tasking as needed and once staff assignments and process is detemined.
	Initial student rollover and student reassignments for HS13 and other 2023/24 school boundary changes.	12/27/22	01/30/23	Transportation Office	25d		33	
	Complete prospective route modeling based on expected student assignments and policy revisions to establish 2023/24.	01/31/23	03/29/23	Transportation Office	42d		35	
	Review, assess, and use results from baseline to target changes to routing approach and/or make targeted adjustments to school-by-school bell times as required.	03/30/23	05/01/23	Transportation Office	23d		36	
	Complete operational school bus routing for 2023/24 school year.	05/02/23	08/18/23	Brian Nevin	79d		37	To be expanded with additional sub-tasking as needed and once process is refined.
	Community Outreach	**02/14/22**	**06/30/23**	Brian Bassett	360d			
	Seek School Board direction on manner and extent of community outreach desired over the implementation timeline.	02/14/22	02/18/22	Scott Washington	5d			
	Develop an ongoing community outreach and information plan based on School Board direction and the final approved implementation plan.	02/21/22	03/03/22	Brian Bassett	9d			
	Develop and submit a communications and outreach plan for School Board approval.	02/21/22	03/03/22	Brian Bassett	9d		40	
	Outreach and communications plan temporary placeholder.	03/04/22	06/30/23	Brian Bassett	346d		42	To be further developed in consultation with HCPSS Communications as part of the development and submission of a recommended communications and information strategy.
	School Board Progress Updates	**06/01/22**	**06/01/23**	Scott Washington	261d			Regular updates are also required for specific tasking elsewhere in the plan. Formal updates begin once initial bell time recommendations are determined. Quarterly updates to start, with an accelerated schedule as the implementation date draws closer.
	June 2022 School Board progress update.	06/01/22	06/01/22		0			
	October 2022 School Board progress update.	10/01/22	10/01/22		0			
	January 2023 School Board progress update.	01/01/23	01/01/23		0			
	March 2023 School Board progress update.	03/01/23	03/01/23		0			
	April 2023 School Board progress update.	04/01/23	04/01/23		0			
	May 2023 School Board progress update.	05/01/23	05/01/23		0			
	June 2023 School Board progress update.	06/01/23	06/01/23		0			

	Transportation Service Model Changes	**02/03/22**	**08/18/23**	Scott Washington	**402d**			Task grouping 1 of 3 related to Transportation Office changes required in support of the bell time initiative.
	Establish objectives and constraints for the analysis.	02/03/22	02/10/22	DSG	6d			Established in collaboration with staff. Analysis assumes approval of policy 5200 changes to ensure overall implementation timeline is achieved.
	Conduct assessment and recommend transportation service model changes to support bell time changes.	02/11/22	04/25/22	DSG	52d			
	Discovery and analysis work.	02/11/22	03/25/22	DSG	31d		53	
	Checkpoint meeting with staff.	02/25/22	02/25/22	DSG	0			
	Checkpoint meeting with staff	03/11/22	03/11/22	DSG	0			
	Present and discuss results with staff.	03/25/22	03/25/22	DSG	0		55	
	Staff review, comments, edits, and suggestions.	03/28/22	04/11/22	Scott Washington	11d		58	
	Finalize results and prepare School Board item.	04/12/22	04/25/22	DSG	10d		59	Staff to assist.
	School Board report and action, as required.	05/12/22	05/12/22	School Board	0			
	Implement associated service delivery changes.	05/12/22	08/18/23	Brian Nevin	332d		61	Include sub-tasking once changes are known and approved.
	Transportation Technology Upgrades	**02/03/22**	**08/18/23**	Scott Washington	**402d**			Task grouping 2 of 3 related to Transportation Office changes required in support of the bell time initiative.
	Establish objectives and constraints for the analysis.	02/03/22	02/10/22	DSG	6d			Established in collaboration with staff. Analysis assumes approval of policy 5200 changes to ensure overall implementation timeline is achieved.
	Conduct assessment and recommend technology and associated process changes necessary to support the bell time initiative.	02/11/22	04/25/22	DSG	52d			
	Discovery and analysis work.	02/11/22	03/25/22	DSG	31d		64	
	Checkpoint meeting with staff.	02/25/22	02/25/22	DSG	0			
	Checkpoint meeting with staff	03/11/22	03/11/22	DSG	0			
	Present and discuss results with staff.	03/25/22	03/25/22	DSG	0		66	
	Staff review, comments, edits, and suggestions.	03/28/22	04/11/22	Scott Washington	11d		69	
	Finalize results and prepare School Board item.	04/12/22	04/25/22	DSG	10d		70	Staff to assist.
	School Board action, as required.	05/12/22	05/12/22		0			
	Implement technology and associated process changes.	05/12/22	08/18/23		332d		72	Include sub-tasking once changes are known and approved.

	Transportation Organization Changes	**05/12/22**	**08/18/23**	Scott Washington	**332d**			Task grouping 3 of 3 related to Transportation Office changes required in support of the bell time initiative.
	Establish objectives and constraints for the analysis.	05/12/22	05/26/22	DSG	11d		61, 72	Established in collaboration with staff. This task grouping follows, and is dependent on, School Board approval of policy revisions, service model changes, and technology upgrades.
	Conduct assessment and make recommendations fro changes to the organization of the Transportation Office in support of the bell time initiative.	05/27/22	07/07/22		30d			
	Discovery and analysis work.	05/27/22	06/23/22	DSG	20d		75	
	Checkpoint meeting with staff.	06/03/22	06/03/22	DSG	0			
	Checkpoint meeting with staff	06/17/22	06/17/22	DSG	0			
	Present and discuss results with staff.	06/24/22	06/24/22	DSG	1d		77	
	Staff review, comments, edits, and suggestions.	06/27/22	07/04/22	Scott Washington	6d		80	
	Finalize results and prepare School Board item.	07/05/22	07/07/22	DSG	3d		81	Staff to assist.
	School Board action, as required.	07/14/22	07/14/22		0			
	Implement Transportation Office staffing and associated process changes.	07/14/22	08/18/23		287d		83	Include sub-tasking once changes are known and approved.