

Two Rivers students get cut from bus service

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By Michele Mihalovich

September cuts in Snoqualmie Valley Transportation bus service included all rides to and from Two Rivers School, an alternative high school within the Snoqualmie Valley School District.

Two Rivers Principal Amy Montanye-Johnson said she learned of the terminating service in a Sept. 10 letter from B.J. Libby, executive director of Mount Si Senior Center, which oversees SVT.

Libby told the Star in a previous SVT story that cuts to service in Carnation, Duvall and Monroe were due to a cut in funding.

But terminating service to Two Rivers students had to do with federal grant restrictions, according to an Oct. 23 letter from Libby to Montanye-Johnson.

Libby did not return email and phone requests for an interview before press time.

The reasoning in the letter from Libby to the principal said that because school bus service is available through the Snoqualmie Valley School District, and federal funds were used to purchase buses for the school district, that SVT had to discontinue transportation service for Two Rivers students or it would violate the terms of a Washington State Department of Transportation grant.

“I want to make it clear that SVT is mandated to work within the guidelines of the grant agreement,” Libby wrote in the letter. “It is with great sadness I have to tell you and your students this, Amy, but my hands are tied and I must follow the grant agreement.”

Several Two Rivers students affected by the service cuts wrote the Star a letter to the editor, saying that one student rarely makes it to school anymore, and that several are arriving late every day.

They wrote that they feared that could affect their being able to graduate.

“If it comes to that, we’ll get it figured out,” Montanye-Johnson said.

The principal said that the school district did contact her after learning about the SVT service cuts and offered a possible solution.

The district offered a bus that would pick up the affected students and get them to school by 9:15 a.m. and pick them up at 4 p.m., she said.

However, Montanye-Johnson said that Two Rivers offers a flexible schedule to its students, which is what makes the alternative format successful, and why a bus with set pick-up and return times wouldn’t work for her students.

She said she's hearing from students and teachers about the hardship the termination has caused.

One Fall City student is riding her bike to and from school, "which I consider a very dangerous, long commute," Montanye-Johnson said.

She told about another Fall City student who is a parent, and used to spend \$20 a month on SVT in order to get herself and her child to school.

In order to catch a King County Metro Transit bus, which is available, it would cost her \$100 per month, Montanye-Johnson said.

The district has provided that student and four others with Metro passes, she said.

"The situation has improved somewhat," Montanye-Johnson said. "Students are figuring out different ways to get here. Some are riding bikes, some are ride sharing ... but some students are just not going to be able to get here on a consistent basis."

She said she is reaching out to the community for possible solutions.

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