

Region 14 bus woes persist

Second day better but many pickups are late

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WOODBURY — Some Region 14 students were picked up and dropped off on time Thursday but the district's new transportation system continued to be plagued with problems on the second day of school.

Except for a few cases where students were not picked up or buses arrived late, the morning routes went more smoothly than Wednesday, said Cindy Kostas, director of curriculum and instruction.

There still plenty were of problems in the afternoon. Region 14 has a three-tiered bus system; buses bring high- and middle-schoolers home first, then drive to Bethlehem Elementary School to pick up kindergarten, first- and secondgraders. After those runs are completed they go to Mitchell Elementary School in Woodbury to take the third-, fourth and fifth-graders home.

Kostas said some high- and middle-school bus routes took longer than expected Thursday, which meant the buses were See **BUSES**, Page **A9**

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late getting to Bethlehem school, which dismisses at 2:50 p.m. Two buses didn't arrive until 3:22 p.m., and another got there at 3:26 p.m.

Those buses were then late getting to Mitchell school, which lets out at 3:35 p.m. Some youngsters waited until 4:30 p.m. to get on the bus, then didn't get home until 5:30 p.m.

"We're getting there. We're certainly not satisfied and we're looking for continuous improvement," said Kostas, who spoke on behalf of Superintendent Robert D. Cronin and Business Manager Jay Hubelbank, who were not available for comment Thursday.

There were noticeably fewer students on most of the buses Thursday — one that left Bethlehem school had only two children on board.

Many parents chose to drop off and pick up their children because they worried about a repeat of Wednesday, when some students rode buses for two hours and were two hours late getting home.

Administrators blamed Laidlaw Transit Inc., the district's bus company, for Wednesday's problems, saying a new bus manager changed several routes last week without informing school officials or parents.

Vincent Cappiello, district manager for Laidlaw, only would confirm there was a "miscommunication" between school officials and Laidlaw. He would not specify what the miscommunication was.

"There are still a few (students) who have slipped through the cracks," he said. "Overall, today was a much better day."

Tennessee Weeks, 7, a second-grader from Woodbury, was given a new bus number Thursday after being put on the wrong bus Wednesday, said his father, Steve. The new bus number turned out to be wrong, too.

"I'm very frustrated," Steve Weeks said. "I don't know who to blame. I can't start yelling at the receptionist."

Buses began leaving Mitchell school about 4 p.m., nearly a half-hour after dismissal. The last bus departed at 4:30 p.m., an hour earlier than Wednesday but still 55 minutes after students were let out.

Some teachers and staffers were visibly upset by the late departure times and shared

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