



Oshkosh West football season off to running start

SPORTS, 8B

Oshkosh Northwestern

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Children line up for the school bus to go to Winneconne Area Schools at a park-and-ride by the Wiouwash Trail. The bus stop was eventually moved because it was located in the Oshkosh Area School District boundaries, and Winneconne used it without permission. Parents say the new bus stop location is unsafe. COURTESY OF JODIE SKADAHL

Packers' Family Night set for Friday

Richard Ryman

Green Bay Press-Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY – Having had a year to become familiar with digital ticketing, Green Bay Packers fans could discover this season how handy that can be.

The Packers during Family Night on Friday will use pedestal-style ticket scanners that should speed up the time it takes for fans to enter Lambeau Field, which means less time standing in line waiting to get in and possibly more time tailgating beforehand.

Family Night is a full-blown Packers practice. It allows the team to practice on Lambeau Field with a game-like atmosphere: crowds cheering, gameday music, scoreboards in use and the like.

The scanners were used on a test basis during the 2021 football season, and were deployed at all gates for the Bayern Munich-Manchester City soccer match on July 23 and the Packers shareholders' meeting on July 25.

Before that, tickets were hand-scanned by Packers personnel, a sometimes less-efficient method.

"We saw our attendees become increasingly comfortable and confident with the technology as the year went on," Packers ticket director Jason McDonough said of the move to mobile ticketing last year. "We anticipate that continuing this year with scanning kiosks in use at all gates. We are off to a great start with the soccer friendly resulting in very positive numbers, as well as the feedback we received."

The scanner works with Apple products, such as iPhones and Apple watches, and Android phones, using the Wallet function or QR codes.

Scanners also are installed at the entrances to suites.

Family Night tends to be more

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Safety concerns

Oshkosh parents worry the location of the new bus stop is unsafe

Bremen Keasey

Oshkosh Northwestern
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

OSHKOSH – For nine years, a school bus taking students from Oshkosh to Winneconne would stop each school day – morning and afternoon – at a small park-and-ride lot by County Y and County S, near Interstate 41 and U.S. 45 between Oshkosh and Winneconne.

Students who live in the Oshkosh Area School District but open-enroll in the Winneconne Community School District would get picked up and dropped off at the parking lot, which is owned by Winnebago County.

Come fall, though, a Winneconne school bus will still pick up and drop off students – but not at the park-and-ride



Jodie Skadahl and her children, Zoe, left; Kat, center right; and Cody at the location of their new bus stop between Oshkosh and Winneconne.

WM. GLASHEEN/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

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Stunt pilot who worked on 'Top Gun: Maverick' visits EAA AirVenture

Brad Star

Oshkosh Northwestern
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

OSHKOSH – A stunt pilot who worked on one of 2022's hottest films was in town last week to promote some of his recent work.

Kevin LaRosa Jr., a stunt pilot and aerial coordinator who has worked on a



LaRosa Jr.

slaw of well-known movies and TV shows, was present at the Experimental Aircraft Association's AirVenture convention. LaRosa recently became a brand ambassador for Bose Aviation, whom he spoke on behalf of at the Bose booth on Thursday.

On Friday, LaRosa was at the Fly-In Theater, where he introduced a trailer for "Devotion," a film he worked on that's slated to hit theaters this November. LaRosa then said a few words before a screening of another film he was very proud to be a part of, "Top Gun: Maverick."

"It's one of my most profound movies I was able to work on," LaRosa told USA

TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin of the film.

A direct sequel to the 1986 cult classic "Top Gun," "Top Gun: Maverick" released in May and has already grossed over \$1 billion worldwide. As of late July, the action film – which sees Tom Cruise reprise his role as Navy Capt. Pete "Mav-

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Bus Stop

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lot. Instead, it'll have to travel 1,000 feet north on County S to Gray Wolf Drive, near a small industrial park.

Winneconne mistakenly was using the park-and-ride, believing it was inside its district boundaries. Instead, it's just on the other side — about 100 feet — into Oshkosh's boundaries.

Picking up students in another district's boundaries, without the "home" district's permission, is against state law. When Oshkosh alerted Winneconne in March that the park-and-ride lot was in the Oshkosh district, Winneconne moved the bus stop.

But parents and nearby business owners say the new location is less safe than the old one. They contend it would be safer for Oshkosh to allow Winneconne to again use the park-and-ride lot.

"It is an accident waiting to happen," said Jodie Skadah, one of the parents.

State law forces a change from Winneconne's 'error'

On March 16, according to emails given to the Oshkosh Northwestern, the Winneconne school district told families who used the park-and-ride that the district had to move the bus stop, starting March 28.

Skadah, who lives in the Oshkosh district and has three children open-enrolling in Winneconne, was surprised the change had to happen so quickly. She messaged Winneconne District Administrator Peggy Larson to ask why. Larson replied that Oshkosh told Winneconne it had to move the location.

In an email provided to the Northwestern, Oshkosh Superintendent Bryan Davis told Larson he learned that Winneconne was picking up students inside the Oshkosh district without permission.

Larson told the Oshkosh Northwestern via email the situation was Winneconne's "error."

"There were not discussion (sic) to allow Winneconne to use the space as we were in the wrong," she said.

Parents concerned about safety at new stop

During the first week at the new bus-stop location, families became worried that it wouldn't be as safe as the park-and-ride lot.

The new location on Red Fox Road — lined with tall wild grasses and buildings that house businesses and storage units — soon became crowded by the approximately 20 students and 15 cars waiting for the bus.

Skadah said the moment parents lined up their cars on both sides of Red Fox, it basically became a "one-way road," with the bus sometimes having to move out of the way for vehicles from some of the businesses.

Shortly after the move to the new spot, Mike Dillman was waiting with other families to drop off his granddaughter when the bus had difficulty squeezing through the narrow lane between the parked cars. The bus took the mirror off the side of Dillman's pickup truck.

Dillman, a former Winneconne school bus driver, said he didn't blame the bus driver, saying the issue was caused by the parked cars crowding the road.

He said he's concerned about other scenarios that could lead to a more serious accident.

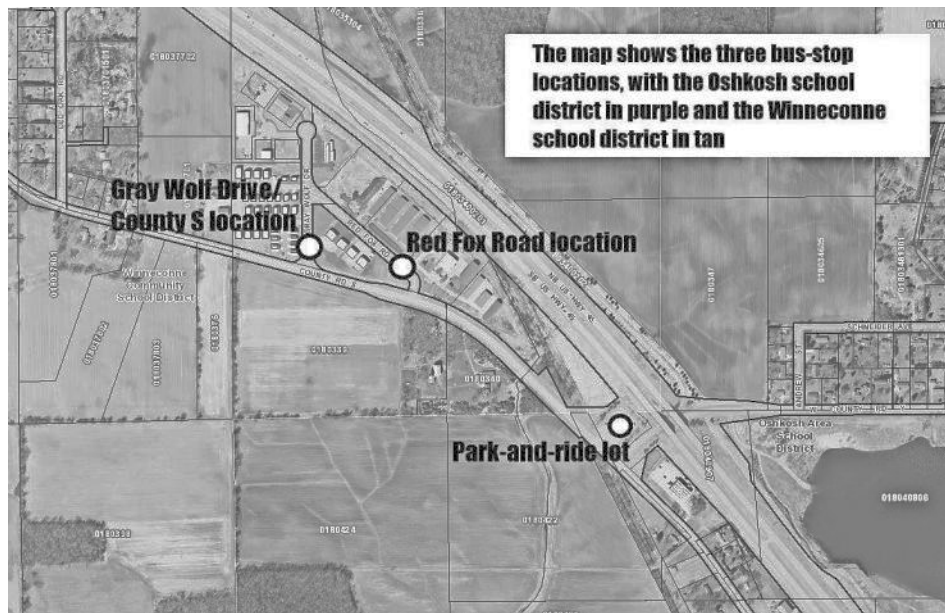
"It makes me shudder thinking about them," Dillman said.

A new solution that 'isn't better'

On April 4, the Winneconne district sent another note to the parents, changing the bus stop to Gray Wolf Drive and County S.

At first, Skadah said she hoped the district had reevaluated safety and made a better plan, but she said the new stop has its own problems.

Lindsay Carney, who has two children who open-enroll in Winneconne, said she's seen kids running down the county road, which has a 55 mph speed limit, to catch the bus.



This map shows the locations of the three bus stops used by Winneconne to pick up students who have open-enrolled from Oshkosh. WINNEBAGO COUNTY/OSHKOSH NORTHWESTERN



Children lining up at the bus stop for pick up on County Road S and Gray Wolf Drive. Parents have said the new location is not as safe as the old stop at a park-and-ride. COURTESY OF JODIE SKADAH

According to parents, to limit the possibility of kids who are running late to catch the bus, the bus was only allowed to start pickup in the morning at a specific time.

That meant when the bus arrived earlier than that time, it would sit in the park-and-ride lot — the same one that used to be the bus stop — and wait to arrive at the new location.

Carney also worries about the possibility of kids being left behind if their parents are late picking them up. When the bus could use the park-and-ride, the driver could wait and make sure all the students were picked up. But since it has to stop and drop off the kids quickly so it doesn't back up traffic, the bus can't wait.

"You don't want them left behind at the bus stop. It just doesn't make sense," Carney said.

"This isn't better," Skadah said.

Families, businesses say park-and-ride is safest stop

Frustrated about the change, several families addressed the Oshkosh school board during the public comment portion of its March 30 meeting.

Dillman stressed that, as a former bus driver, getting the bus off a busy road into a "safe haven" is crucial for children's safety, and the new location was unsafe.

Skadah's two children spoke at the meeting, saying they "do not feel safe" at the new stop and asked the board to change it back. Skadah asked the board to add an agenda item to discuss allowing Winneconne to use the park-and-ride lot.

In emails obtained by the Northwestern, Davis told Oshkosh school board members March 29 that it's a "Winneconne issue, not an OASD issue."

Business owners in the area of the current location, on Gray Wolf Drive, have asked parents questions about the change, according to Skadah. She said she suggested they contact the county with their concerns.

Winnebago County Executive Assistant Ethan Hollenberger said some people connected with the businesses did

contact County Executive Jon Doemel's office about the change, including a minor complaint about families parking in private parking lots to stay off the road.

Some employees of businesses in the area told the Northwestern that they were less concerned with the extra traffic since it occurred at off-hours for their business.

But most agreed the park-and-ride lot is a safer solution for the bus stop, with multiple employees at businesses saying it was "stupid" to move the spot by their business park.

Oshkosh school board declines to discuss the issue

Skadah and the other families also turned to Doemel for help.

Doemel exchanged emails with Davis several times between March 29 and April 1 about the issue. In an April 1 email to Doemel, Davis wrote:

"Peggy Larson, Winneconne Supt. and I have found a solution that is safe for the students and abides by state statute. There is no more work needed on this topic. Change is difficult at first but will be fine in time."

On April 28, Doemel sent a letter to the Oshkosh and Winneconne school boards, again expressing concern about the safety of the bus-stop change.

"I am asking you to official (sic) discuss this item on an agenda and to make the best determination for the safety of our kids," Doemel wrote.

In a follow-up email to both school boards sent April 29, he said the county would allow the park-and-ride lot to be used as a bus stop.

Skadah said that, after the April school board election, she wrote to each member of the board, asking them to put the issue on the agenda for their May meetings. But her request was denied because, she was told by school board members, "an agreement had been reached between districts."

The Oshkosh school district, through communication director Katie Nieman, sent a statement to the Northwestern about the issue:

"The Winneconne Community School District (WCSD) was previously

picking up/dropping off Oshkosh resident students who choose to open enroll in to (sic) Winneconne within the Oshkosh Area School District's (OASD) boundaries. This is prohibited by the Department of Public Instruction without permission from the resident school district; Winneconne did not have permission to do this.

"More specifically, the Department of Public Instruction rule on Out of District Transportation is: 'Generally, parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from school for students attending school under a tuition waiver or the public school open enrollment program. While school districts may provide some transportation for such students, the nonresident school district is prohibited from picking up or dropping off students within the boundaries of the resident school district without permission from the resident school district.'

"The OASD informed the WCSD of the situation and the WCSD changed their pick-up/drop-off location to a space within their district boundaries. This is a WCSD matter and the OASD appreciates the WCSD's ownership of it."

The statement also said the district "welcomes those who have previously chosen to open enroll out of Oshkosh to enroll and experience the exceptional education available in Oshkosh."

Oshkosh school board president Bob Poeschl told the Northwestern that, because the issue is governed by DPI rules, it's an operational issue for the district. He declined further comment.

Parents ask a law firm for help, too

In her search for more help, Skadah was referred by Hollenberger to a lawyer with the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, a conservative law firm that has taken on high-profile cases across the state in recent years.

Libby Solic, WILL's director of education policy, said she's been working with the families "behind the scenes" since the end of last school year, helping them navigate the laws about school transportation.

She, too, suggested they ask the Oshkosh school board to take action.

Solic said neither school district seemed concerned about solving the safety issue. She said she's exploring the option of going through the state Legislature to work on a solution, but emphasized the problem should be addressed locally.

"The community should say ... we want our kiddos to be safe, whether they are going to Oshkosh or Winneconne," Solic said.

As a new school year nears, safety is still a concern

With the new school year about a month away, Skadah said she's frustrated with the inaction and that she and other families weren't being listened to over the safety concerns.

"I don't care if it's in your district or whatever, your job is to keep kids safe," Skadah said. "This is not a safe solution."

Carney said her family is moving closer to Winneconne in August, but she said that for families still waiting for an answer, being able to go back to using the park-and-ride is "common sense."

"We tried to go to the (Oshkosh) school board," she said. "They know that concern is out there and choose not to do anything about it."

Dillman said he's worried about kids waiting at the bus stop for parents if they're running late.

"When winter comes, you're going to have snow banks on each side of the road," he said. In the park-and-ride, "you wouldn't have kids slipping, stumbling to the bus and possibly getting hurt that way."

In the end, Skadah said she hopes the Oshkosh school board will at least discuss allowing Winneconne to use the park-and-ride lot.

"All Oshkosh has to do is give Winneconne permission to enter their district," Skadah said. "They're making this way more complicated than it has to be."

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