

## Region 14 buses now said to be speeding

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WOODBURY — The superintendent of Region 14 schools has offered to personally mediate lingering problems with bus routes.

Robert D. Cronin said he will make himself available Friday to speak to any parent who has a problem or concern about their child's bus route.

The district's new three-tier bus system has been fraught with problems since the first day of school last Wednesday, when some elementary schoolers were dropped off more than two hours late.

The buses deliver and pick up middle and high schoolers first, then go to Bethlehem Elementary School for a second round of routes, and finally to Mitchell Elementary School for the final run of the day.

Cronin and Business Manager Jay Hubelbank, who is in charge of transportation for the See **BUS**, Page **B2**

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region, said employees at Laidlaw Transit Inc., the district's company, changed some routes at Bethlehem Elementary School before school opened without telling administrators. They said about 30 children were not assigned a bus the first day.

Chaos ensued when Cronin ordered the buses held at Bethlehem school until every child was assigned a bus. Even then some students were dropped off at wrong stops or put on wrong buses. Some of the youngest children wet their pants because they had no bathroom to use.

There have been gradual improvements since the first day. Administrators say all students are assigned to the proper routes, and most buses are arriving to school in the morning and dropping students off at home in the afternoon within 45 minutes, which is what administrators promised parents when the Board of Education voted to reconfigure Bethlehem and Mitchell elementary schools.

"The kinks are being worked out," Cronin said Wednesday. He said all buses were gone from Bethlehem Elementary School at 3:10 p.m., 20 minutes after dismissal, so they could complete their routes for kindergarten, first- and second-graders and head to Mitchell school in Woodbury to pick up third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders.

News of the improvements continued to be met with skepticism from some parents. There were new allegations Wednesday that bus drivers are speeding through Woodbury and Bethlehem so they can complete their routes in 45 minutes.

Bill Barber of Woodbury complained about the speeding buses in person and in writing to First Selectman Dick Crane on Wednesday. He said people have told him buses are traveling 50 mph or more on Flanders Road, Route 132 and Route 61, the three main roads between Woodbury and Bethlehem. All have posted speed limits of 35 mph or less.

"These speed limits are being grossly exceeded by the Laidlaw buses on a regular basis in order to meet the time constraints imposed by the reconfiguration plan," Barber wrote to Crane. "Numerous parents have made us aware of the fact that buses are routinely speeding on these roads, as well as Route 317, Judson Road and many other roads around town. I have witnessed it with my own eyes."

Barber said Crane, who was not available for comment Wednesday night, has received complaints from other residents, and has promised to have police officers monitor traffic.