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Bus-stop cuts need careful consideration

Editorial

Tulare high school officials need to be careful with a plan to cut bus stops.

The cost-cutting measure could easily backfire if attendance drops, causing schools to receive less state money that is disbursed based on how many students are in class.

The plan to cut 40 to 45 bus stops seems like a logical way to trim costs. Bus stops would only be cut within a 2-mile radius from each of the Tulare Joint Union High School District's three main campuses: Tulare Western, Tulare Union and Mission Oak. For example, the number of bus stops within a 2-mile radius around Tulare Union would be cut from 14 to four under the proposal.

So more students will have to walk, bike or find alternate routes to a school less than 2 miles away. That's not too much of a bad deal — and will give the older generations plenty of chances to drag out the walking-to-and-from-school-uphill-both-ways stories.

The district would keep the transportation budget the same as last year, despite serving an additional high school, Mission Oak. That's three campuses for the diesel fuel costs of two: \$232,000.

Schools throughout California are cutting deep to counter less money from the state in these dire economic times.

But Tulare's plan — which is being studied and is only a possibility right now — could backfire. Although we're talking about a mere 2 miles, some teenagers don't need much of an excuse to miss school. And if fewer bus stops turns into an overall drop in attendance, the plan may cause more fiscal harm than good.

It's certainly a plan worth looking into.

But it would need lots more thought to pull off — including, perhaps, loopholes to bring back some of those bus stops during bad weather — if it is ever adopted.

In short: The district needs to be very sure it wouldn't, pardon the pun, miss the bus on this cost-cutting plan.

- Note: Editorial board member Bill Ingram abstained from voting on this matter.