

Superintendent's vehicle use raises questions

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Superintendent Shelton Jefferies traveled more than 29,000 miles in a fleet vehicle belonging to Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools in the 2017-18 fiscal year, according to information obtained by the Rocky Mount Telegram.

That is in comparison to 1,607 miles traveled in a fleet vehicle shared by the entire cabinet staff and 2,671 miles traveled in a fleet vehicle shared by the entire technology staff for the same year.

"Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools has a fleet of district vehicles, including approximately 35 vehicles in the maintenance department, nine vehicles in the transportation department and one vehicle assigned for the superintendent's use," Nash-Rocky Mount Chief of Staff Brian Miller said in an email in answer to a request for public information.

The fleet vehicle used exclusively by Jefferies is on track to travel about the same number of miles this school year. Jefferies already has driven the vehicle 22,826 miles as of April 1, with three months left in the fiscal year.

He traveled 7,816 miles in the fleet vehicle for the entire 2016-17 school year, indicating a change in pattern. Since then, Jefferies' mileage on the vehicle has more than tripled each year.

The number of days the vehicle was used has more than tripled as well. In the 2016-17 school year, it was used 86 days. In the 2017-18 school year, it was used 272 days — which indicates it had to have been used on weekends as well as weekdays and it never rested for any holidays or vacations.

There seems to be some confusion as to why a fleet vehicle is assigned to the school superintendent. Miller said the school district contractually is obligated to provide one.

"No cabinet staff member has been issued a fleet vehicle owned by the district for their own personal use," Miller said. "The superintendent has a contractual agreement with the Board of Education for use of a fleet vehicle."

However, several perusals of the superintendent's contract with the school board — which is attached to the online version of this story — reveals no mention of access to a personal fleet. The Telegram checked with Rod Malone, the attorney for the school board. Malone sent the same contract to the Telegram with a note that verified that this was the only contract in existence.

"Please find attached a copy of the employment agreement between the Nash-Rocky Mount Board of Education and Dr. Shelton Jefferies. The attached PDF also included a copy of Addendum 1 and Addendum 2. These documents represent the entire agreement between the Nash-Rocky Mount Board of Education and Dr. Shelton Jefferies," Malone said.

Jefferies' contract does mention that the school board is to "provide the superintendent with a monthly travel allowance in the amount of \$600 a month for the purpose of job-related travel within the Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools boundary." This amount is provided in addition to the superintendent's \$172,500 annual salary and his benefits package.

Miller confirmed that the superintendent is receiving the \$600 travel allowance in addition to the use of a fleet vehicle for which a gas card is available for use.

“Dr. Jefferies receives a \$600 transportation reimbursement in lieu of mileage reimbursement,” Miller said.

There is no way of telling where the miles used on the fleet vehicle are traveled. A request for access to these logs yielded only a brief report tallying the number of days the vehicle was used and how many total miles were traveled on the vehicle.

“Our GPS data does not track where any vehicle travels, just miles traveled,” Miller said.

Jefferies did not respond to questions about the mileage or where he was going with the vehicle. He also did not answer a question concerning whether he is using the vehicle to travel to Huntersville, where he owns a family home purchased in February 2018 and where his wife and children reside. That usage could account for roughly 18,000 or more miles per year.

However, Franklin Lamm, chairman of the Nash-Rocky Mount Board of Education, did respond to a request for an interview, issuing only one statement.

“We are aware of the issues and are looking into them,” he said.

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