

School Buses Bring Wi-Fi to South Bend Students & Residents During COVID-19 Pandemic



District repurposes Cradlepoint-connected vehicles as Internet hubs

Solution: NetCloud Service for Mobile ■ **Industry:** K-12 Education ■ **Use Case:** In-Vehicle Wi-Fi

Challenge

Once K-12 students in South Bend, Indiana, were sent home as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, online learning became essential — along with dependable Internet access. With some students lacking access and many community members challenged by network congestion, South Bend needed a way to connect kids to their schoolwork and adults to critical activities such as paying bills, applying for government aid, and accessing news coverage.

Solution

In March 2020, South Bend Community School Corporation (SBCSC) began sending dozens of buses — connected by Cradlepoint NetCloud Service for Mobile and purpose-built LTE routers — to strategically selected locations. With the vehicles parked near benches or covered areas, students and residents could safely gather near the buses — with proper social distancing — to utilize the Wi-Fi. The students' Chromebooks automatically connect to one SSID, while a second SSID is reserved for the general community.

NetCloud enables SBCSC to centrally monitor network performance, data usage, and students' online activity, and to easily make fleetwide configuration adjustments related to CIPA compliance and other factors.

Benefits

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, SBCSC used Cradlepoint's wireless networking solutions in school buses so students could utilize their school-issued devices to read, learn, or complete other schoolwork. When crisis struck, the organization discovered a new way to leverage its fleet — not just for connecting children to schoolwork and food trucks for free meals, but also for helping the public access everything they need.

For years to come, South Bend has the technology in place to help children and residents stay connected whether they're in a classroom, on the bus, or even in the middle of a national emergency.

“Cradlepoint was by far the easiest solution. One phone call and 5 minutes later the school buses had everything they needed.”

Patrick Stalvey, CTO, South Bend Community School Corporation

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