

cellular network provided by the likes of Sprint, Verizon or other wireless telecommunications company serving local areas. This fall, Shulman said, Bus Radio will also offer a console that allows bus drivers to select the district's pre-approved music program real-time based on the age of children on specific routes. Currently Bus Radio burns programs on CD and distributes them to school districts to manage. Added Gifford: "One particular driver who's really strict and never uses the radio noticed the kids were really quiet and she said, 'Didn't you notice the radio was on?' The kids said, 'We were afraid to say anything because we thought you left it on by accident.' They even remembered the safety messages."

Nearby Lowell Public Schools was equipping the new consoles on two buses for testing and hopes to outfit its remaining 51 regular route buses for the start of the 2006-2007 school year.

"We're very anxious to see how this all works," said John Descoteaux, transportation director for Lowell, which buses 7,000 regular education students a day.

Ed Burman, an assistant safety officer with the Framingham Police Department and a well-known local and national opponent of school bus advertising, agreed the current Bus Radio buzz indicates the programming could benefit onboard child behavior management without ad exploitation. He said the local school district is very interested in including the service in its bus bids for next school year and only needs concrete information on exactly how much money could come its way.

"It's no brainer," he said. And another selling point is Bus Radio consists of many former employees of school bus companies like Atlantic Express, First Student and Laidlaw. "I worked with some of these guys. They come from this industry," said Gifford, adding they have the proper understanding and real-world knowledge of school bus operations.