

# Turning a School Bus into Home, Sweet Home: Local woman escapes the rent economy for a home on wheels



Skyrocketing in popularity in the last year, TikTok is widely known as an app for Gen Z to learn dances and lip sync along to their favorite songs. For 26-year-old Ashlee Moffitt in West Warwick, it's the app that got her 11 million views for buying a school bus and planning to live in it.

Most folks wouldn't immediately look at their kids' daily source of transportation as viable lodgings, but Moffitt saw things differently. Seeing examples made by self-titled "schoolie" families on social media that successfully converted school buses into homes, Moffitt saw a way out of being trapped in the daunting local rent economy. "I'm honestly paying less to live on a bus and travel than I would just renting a studio apartment in Rhode Island."

Unlike other social media platforms that favor creators with massive followings, TikTok is unique in that absolutely anyone can get a fair shot at going viral. Moffitt experienced this first-hand when a video she posted on June 24 blew up, receiving more than 11 million views.

In 60 seconds, she documented the journey to Alabama to pick up a school bus she purchased through a government auction, and then learn how to drive it. Admitting to her apprehension at having made such a significant life change, the video is honest and heartfelt. At its conclusion, Moffitt excitedly beeps the horn at the sight of the Cranston exit sign off I-95, having finally finished her 1,100 mile journey back to Rhode Island in the newly christened “Dessa Daydreamer.”



As a single mother to a young son, taking on the enormous project of purchasing and renovating a bus was no simple task, and not one Moffitt made lightly. When the opportunity arose, she saw it as a chance to provide a life of adventure and culture for her son, whom she plans to homeschool on the bus while she works remotely. Moffitt sees a future where the entire country is her son’s backyard in which to learn, play and grow. “I want to give him everything in the whole wide world, so when he was on board with getting the bus, I said, “No matter what I have to do, I’m gonna make it happen!””

As eager as she is to hit the road, converting a standard school bus into a comfortable, workable living space doesn’t happen overnight. Luckily, Moffitt is armed with a family of helpers, and a knack for Googling. “I definitely don’t know it all, so I’m learning as I go.” Just as she found inspiration in the families she saw living their dream “schoolie” lives on social media, Moffitt is also able to go to her collective 205,000 followers for advice and support on the renovation process as she posts updates online. She sends out the reminder to “listen to your gut, and follow your dreams. There’s always going to be people who tell you it’s too hard, it’s too crazy, it’s never going to work, but you have to take a

risk sometimes.”

So far, Moffitt and her team of helpers have removed about two dozen vinyl seats and have stripped Dessa of the floors, interior walls and ceiling panels in order to install proper insulation. The process has been brutal, being done rivet by single rivet in the sweltering heat of a Rhode Island summer. Moffitt knows it will all be worth it to have a solid, if mobile, foundation upon which to build her and her son’s future home.

*Follow along with Moffitt’s progress on Dessa Daydreamer and their eventual travels on her TikTok account @ashleem42, her Instagram account @dessadaydreamer, and her YouTube channel Dessa Daydreamer.*