

10-Year Renewal Plan

Transportation Services Study Interim Report

February 2008

Purpose:

The 10-Year Renewal Plan identified undertaking a study of student transportation to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the services, to assess the need for changes associated with renewal, and to affirm or revise current transportation procedures.

This interim report addresses the Committees' findings to date, identifies transportation-related recommendations that will be required to support renewal decisions in the 2008/09 school year, and provides direction for the further review of Board transportation services.

Background:

The *Education Act, 1995* and associated *Regulations*, identify student transportation as a Board responsibility and mandates basic provision thereof to be at no direct cost to the student. The Government, as part of its funding formula, provides a level of funding for student transportation. In the past, funding recognition was associated with the number of students transported and the distance that students traveled. More recently, the funding formula has been simplified and provides a sum based upon total enrolment and the number of French Immersion and special needs students. Provincial funding recognition for the 2006/07 was \$ 3,625,815 while transportation-related expenditures for 2006/07 were \$5,407,105.

Pursuant to current Board procedure (Appendix A) transportation services are provided to students in Kindergarten and Grade 1 who reside more than 600 metres from the school in their attendance area. Elementary students in Grades 2-8 are provided transportation if they reside more than 1.2 kilometres from their designated school (program). In addition, special education students with intensive needs are transported to designated programs.

Because all school program mergers contemplated under the 10-Year Renewal Plan afford alternate school choices for impacted families, the current Board transportation procedure may require revision in the event of certain Board decisions.

Process:

A Committee was created in early December, 2007, with the mandate to conduct the transportation review, present an interim report in March, 2008, and complete a final report prior to the end of June, 2008. The Committee terms of reference are listed in Appendix B.

Stakeholder Focus Groups

A number of stakeholder groups were identified to provide insight into this review. Stakeholder input was acquired through focus group consensus workshops that requested opinions on the key principles necessary to the foundation of a transportation procedure. Stakeholder groups were also asked for insight into what practices should be considered for future procedural revision.

Two major stakeholder groups, one representing the general public and the other representing internal stakeholders, attended these workshops in late January and early February, 2008.

Student Transportation Industry Trends

The Committee also collected information on student transportation programs from School Boards in Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg and Saskatoon. A recently completed study (February 2008) on student walking distance conducted by the Nova Scotia Ministry of Education was also reviewed, as was information on a Canada-wide pilot called “School Travel Planning” which supports the planning of environmentally friendly and safe routes to school. Introductory discussions were also held with senior officials at the City of Regina Transit Department. (It is important to note that City Transit department is also undertaking a service review over the next six-month period and a new Director of Transit has just been recruited.)

Renewal and Transportation Supports

Committee members reviewed the impact of the 10-year Renewal Plan on current Board transportation procedures, along with potential concerns and ideas raised by parents attending Renewal feedback meetings.

Findings:

Stakeholder Focus Groups

Input received from each focus group was reviewed by the Committee to identify the principles to be considered as integral to Board transportation procedures. The primary principles identified were: safety; cost; program accessibility; community-focused; procedural consistency; environmental concerns and school supports necessary (for transported students). The Committee augmented this listing with three more principles: supporting student learning outcomes; maintaining appropriate public school participation; and increasing collaboration with public transportation. A summary of the workshops is attached as Appendix C.

Student Transportation Industry Trends

The primary differences in the provision of student transportation services by school boards in the major Western Canadian Centres centered around: the extent of reliance on public transportation, eligibility for transportation, and, cost responsibility (legislation in Alberta and Manitoba allows fee-for-service charges).

Most school boards do not play as significant a role in the direct provision of transportation services and work more closely with public transit in the provision of services than is the case in RPS. Furthermore, there are increased expectations of the parents and students, including increased distances for service access (less or no door-to-door services) and greater parental responsibilities for getting student to those points than in RPS. The initial analysis would suggest that current RPS services are much more convenient for users and have far less integration and collaboration with public transit.

Further, industry trends indicate increasing concerns regarding global warming, thus encouraging less frequent use of motorized transportation in favour of walking or public transit collaboration. The adoption of environmentally-friendly practices is therefore becoming more prevalent.

Recommendations:

- 1) That the principles as identified with the input from the stakeholders focus group guide any recommended changes to the transportation procedure.
- 2) That, upon assessing the Renewal Plan actions and the feedback provided as part of the Renewal process, the Committee recommends that certain supports be provided in the event that specific program changes occur.

Specifically, it is recommended that present student transportation procedures be followed, with the exceptions regarding renewal supports as follows:

- a) That current elementary students attending schools/programs affected by closures (and their siblings) be eligible to access transportation services to one of the educational programs (of parental choice) as outlined in the 10-Year Renewal Plan;
 - b) That students currently attending Robert Usher Collegiate be eligible to access transportation services to Thom Community Collegiate for a two-year transitional period;
 - c) That community members be assigned to school buses in the Herchmer and Stewart Russell areas for the first week of the school year, and as required following this period;
 - d) That, for those students and parents affected by program mergers and residing beyond walking distance of their school, transportation services be investigated in order to facilitate student participation in extra-curricular activities and parent involvement at 3-way conferences, concerts, and other school-related activities;
 - e) That a quadrant bussing approach for North Central Regina be investigated for possible implementation no later than the 2009/10 school year.
- 3) That the Committee continue discussions with the City of Regina to identify possible future linkages between student transportation and public transit services.
 - 4) That the Committee continue to examine the practical and financial impact of environmentally-friendly practices, which may include but not be limited to the consideration of walking distance changes to reduce transportation impacts on the environment.
 - 5) That the Committee continue to examine RPS transportation operations with consultation from stakeholders, to assess the practical and financial impact of alternative programming such as, but not limited to, varying school start and finish times to maximize the cost efficiency of the current transportation fleet and/or seasonal transportation.

Financial Implications:

The estimated increased transportation costs identified in the Renewal Plan will be sufficient to cover the cost of the foregoing recommendations, with the following exceptions:

- 1) For the provision of bus supervisors in the transportation of Herchmer and Stewart Russell students to merged programs - \$1,750 per week.
- 2) For the provision of transportation services to Robert Usher area students with drop-off times no later than 8:10 a.m. and return pick-up times after 4:00 p.m. (using existing capacity and equipment) - \$ 10,000 per year.
- 3) "Quadrant" bussing or similar additional service enhancements may require future funding requests.

Appendices:

- A. Current RPS Student Transportation procedure
- B. Committee Terms of Reference
- C. Focus Group Summary



Administrative Procedure 570

REGINA

TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Background

To ensure access to educational programs the Division may authorize the provision of the transportation for students.

Procedures

1. Transportation shall be provided for:
 - 1.1 Kindergarten students who reside 0.6 km or farther from the designated elementary school,
 - 1.2 Grade 1 students who reside 0.6 km or farther from the designated elementary school,
 - 1.3 Other elementary school students who reside 1.2 km or farther from the designated elementary school, or
 - 1.4 Students who are enrolled in a program for which transportation has been authorized by the Director or designate.
2. At the discretion of the Director or designate, transportation may also be provided for:
 - 2.1 Students where an extreme health problem exists, as certified by the provision of a medical certificate;
 - 2.2 Elementary school students required to attend schools where a major arterial road or other significant barrier presents a hazard to the students, or where the normal access road to the school is sufficiently open to weather conditions to present a hazard to students in severe winter weather; and
 - 2.3 Students warranting special consideration.
3. In cases where a student who is eligible for transportation is to be picked up at home and returned to a caregiver or daycare, or vice versa, transportation in both directions shall only be provided if the designated school attended normally serves both addresses.
4. Parents/guardians exercising the option of sending their children to schools other than those normally serving the areas in which they reside, in accordance with procedures 3, 4, or 5 of Administrative Procedure 310 – School Attendance Areas, shall be wholly responsible for any transportation arrangements and costs.
5. The provision of transportation may be limited to specific dates in instances where the distance and the weather are contributing factors to the decision to convey students to school.

6. The Director or designate, may cancel transportation assistance for any students exhibiting inappropriate behaviour or for any other serious problem affecting the efficient operation of the transportation.
7. The Director or designate, may authorize alternative arrangements at any time specific conditions make changes advisable.
8. The Director or designate, may authorize payments to the parent/guardian of a student in lieu of transportation.

Reference: Section 85, 87, 108, 109, 110, 194, 195, 196, 197 Education Act
Highway Traffic Act

APPENDIX B

Student Transportation Study

A. Objectives

As part of the Renewing Regina's Public Schools 10-Year Plan, Regina Public Schools is conducting a Transportation Study with the mandate to

- To ensure the effective and efficient operation of the student transportation system;
- To assess the impact of Renewal Plan on the transportation system; and,
- To affirm or revise the current Transportation Procedure (AP 550).

A Transportation Study Committee was formed in December 2007. Members include: Bruce Lipinski, Joe Maierhoffer, Brad Dimen, Dave Hutchenson, Laurie Belick, Lori Hartness, Mark Whiting, and Jason Coleman (focus group facilitator)

B. Scope

1. Assess Transportation Procedure and Practices with respect to: government legislation and regulations, the mandate of the school board; accessibility; equity, and the current application of attendance and transportation boundaries.

2. Assess External Transportation Environment, with respect to: industry trends; standards, environmental issues, and the practices of other service providers.

3. Assess the impact of the Renewal Plan on Transportation Procedure, with respect to: grandfathering and school choice; community based needs; mobility and transience of students.

4. Assess Regina Public Schools' Transportation Operations with respect to: organizational structure, decision making, and effective use of resources – staff and equipment.

5. Make recommendations to the Administration regarding any revision to current transportation procedure.

D. Interim Report – Board March 4th

- Committee Research
- Feedback about transportation from Renewal Feedback meetings
- Input from Workshops
- Preliminary recommendations

APPENDIX C

Transportation Review – Stakeholder Focus group Value Summary

Summary of Internal and external meetings

SAFETY (bus monitors, driver training)

COST (sustainable and reasonable use of resources)

PROGRAM ACCESSIBILITY (ability to access the educational program)

COMMUNITY FOCUSED (not all communities are the same)

PROCEDURAL CONSISTENCY/STANDARDS (clarity and fairness)

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS (less bussing)

PROGRAM SUPPORTS AT SCHOOLS (before, lunch, after school)

Summary of Committee additions

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

APPROPRIATE PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Principles of Transportation - Internal Focus Group

Title **Circle**
Communication - between Admin, parents, teacher, bus drivers
Proactive -procedures and training
Communication
Policy Governance
Equity
Continuity of procedures
Fairness - Collaborative and Responsive
Environment
Clear Procedures

Title **Triangle**
Cost (numerous times)
Financially viable
Keeping students with RPS
Efficiency
Cost effectiveness
Lunch - Supervision, costs, who pays
Budget
Economic
Lunchroom cost

Title **Rectangle**
Circumstances- responsiveness, collaborative, supervision
Needs of the students - Special needs and community
Special Needs
Lunch Programs for bus students, not transportation cost
After school programs
Community needs (numerous times)
Bus drivers that meet the needs of students in special programs
Not all schools have the same needs
Different Areas, Different needs
One size does not fit all
Equity vs. Equality (numerous times)
Flexibility for special circumstances
Provision for students with special needs
Attendance

Title **Plus Sign**
Safety (numerous times)
Accessibility of supervision- before and after lunch and school
Support for all stakeholders
Supervision (numerous times)
Supervision Costs
Area of city
Positive environment on the bus
Support and training for drivers

Principles of Transportation - Internal Focus Group

<u>Title</u>	<u>Star</u>
	Program Accessibility
	Environment Needs
	Community needs
	Availability
	Optimizing Educational Opportunities
	Impact on Programs
	Student educational needs should "drive" transportation decisions
	Focus on educational programming not on scheduling
	Program Availability

<u>Title</u>	<u>Squigly Line</u>
	Time waiting for bus
	Time from school
	Distance for the school property
	Family/siblings - Grade 2 doesn't qualify but Kindergarten does
	Actual distance
	Age
	Time management
	Clear parameters and Guidelines
	Distance
	Time being transported
	Age to go on the bus



Transportation Specific Actions - Internal Focus Group

Title

Star

Administrative Supervision (Proactive) - Check-ins
Handover Procedures
Behaviour Procedures
One choice of pickup and drop off places per student
Clear boundaries
time on bus has specified limit
Timelines-communicating/sharing information
Weight limits for car seats and booster seats

Title

Square

Training
Driver training - including allergies
Standards for behaviour and procedures on how to respond
Support for Transportation Department

Title

Rectangle

Look for Effeciencies with other transportaation systems (City bus)
Collaboration with City transit and RCS and Associate Schools
Environment vs. Conveniece
Ownership vs. Tendered Service
User Pay Options - If not within the guidelines
Considerations must be made to recognize the diversity of different communties
List specific considerations on policy ie. Siblings, illness, grade, area safety
Number of Lunchrooms
Parents with students who have special considerations may supplement costs
Pre-Kindergarten Transportation Concerns
Hiring of Bus Ride Supervisors

Principles of Transportation - External Focus Group

Economic Feasibility

Affordability

Cost: Cost of providing safe, supervised transportation

Cost: Cost of gas if more transportation is required (Renewal Plan)

Ensuring Safety

Safety

Why do we allow children into vehicles that are not equipped with seat belts?

Safety on the buses

Where to find qualified bus drivers - there is already a shortage

Safety

Parents made aware of safety mishaps

Uncontrolled cross balks on big streets

Supervision on buses

Safety

Safety

Children's safety & comfort

No overcrowding - 2 per seat

Needs of school/community

Respecting individual needs outside of the mainstream. We are not all circles, some are squares how to fit them into the equation (consideration)

Children needs are always considered

Making the school day comfortable/fun/safe

Boredom on bus - even short rides (not allowed to do anything)

Children in extra-curricular activities. If children are bussed, how do they get home if they are in a different community once regular bus is gone

Minimize the time/distance required for transportation prior to school starting

No pick up before 8:30

Time spent on a bus is value less time

Time for homework, family time, work time, playtime is taken away

Consideration of children's time (length of bus ride)

Transportation available to "bussed" students for way home from extra-curricular

Needs of school/community

Not necessarily systemic consistency

High School bussing - it's hard enough to keep kids in school. For families a bus pas is an issue \$\$\$\$

Meets needs of students and their families

Principles of Transportation - External Focus Group

Program Accessibility

Access to programs/schools that offer special programs, that others don't
Structured guidelines for each school and the buses that go to them
Policy exceptions identified
Bussing to high schools
Boundaries Must be made available to all students effected by any school closure, including high schools
Bussing High School students - fairness of availability (public & separate)
Change some boundaries to lessen the number of buses to school
Fairness and availability (high schools, boundaries, compared to RCS)
Access to programs without requiring transportation

Expectation Consistency

Equality for students bussed and non-bussed
Special consideration - no discretions made...clear reasoning
Lunch program

Environmental concerns/impacts and fitness impacts

Value to physical fitness
Don't close neighbourhood's schools and don't bus more kids

Value of "childhood". Whatever happened to walking in one's neighbourhood - picking up friends on the way, skate boarding, etc.....you get the picture
Offer programs at local schools to prevent the need for transportation
Keeping environmental concerns in mind - big bus 1/2 empty
Overcrowding/under crowding

Community: impact of moving kids out of their communities (unable to attend local programs)

Value for the "environment" and for "neighbourhoods". Don't close schools and therefore don't bus our kids

Minimize transportation

Recognize that increased bussing from closing of schools is harmful to the environment and conflicts with government vision

Environmental concerns/impacts

Physical Fitness and environmental responsibility

Minimize the number of children requiring transportation

Transportation Specific Actions - External Focus Group

Supervision

Monitor(s) on bus
Supervisor on bus (in addition to driver)

Proactive Boundaries and Guidelines

Discretionary Use - not clear guidelines for everyone
Be proactive in determining transportation boundaries in newly developed areas
Where beneficial - area bussing vs. school-based bussing (ie. North central area)
Allow schools to be fed by bus routes instead of geographical boundaries

Monitor student safety

Monitored pick-ups points
Larger number of kids at drop-off /pick-up points

Safety guidelines

2 children on a seat - 30 to a bus
30 minutes on bus

Programming considerations

More coverage throughout the school system to have ESL in all schools. Eliminates busing, cost, lunch program

Minimizing the need for extra transportation

Keep dual-track schools to minimize transportation
Keep local schools open to minimize transportation

Continued Support

More Board support i.e., resources, policies, staff, etc.) for related issued - lunch room, before & after school programs, supervision, etc.

Renewal Concerns

Timelines - why are we just now talking about changes to a transportation policy when closures will be decided on March 11th

What are the parents of Herchmer, Usher, Wilfred Walker and Stewart Russell to plan for? I would want more lead time. The procedure/plan cost could have been communicated by now