



Memorandum

Date: September 6, 2019
To: Board of Education
From: Ryan Stierman, Secretary-Treasurer

Action Item: **Transportation Update – Communication and Status**

1.0 ISSUE STATEMENT

This year, the Transportation Department significantly restructured its routes and stops in order to align its service levels specified under Board Policy 470 and Regulation 470R, attached as Appendix A. Changes were made based on the direction provided by the Transportation Task Force, the Board of Education as well as an internal review of ride times and stop locations.

Unfortunately, the communication on how these changes would significantly impact practice and the enforcement of the July 31st deadline was not adequate. Also, the timeline of accepting applications until July 31st and routing/assigning eligible students in August provided insufficient time to assign students and to address late applications.

Courtesy seats were assigned on routes on August 15th based on the distance from the school. Certain routes may have had different distance thresholds for courtesy acceptance depending on how many eligible riders were on a route. Courtesy applications after this date were automatically wait listed.

As of the writing of this report, Transportation has assigned nearly every seat available on eligible routes and has been given a deadline of Monday, September 9th to inform those courtesy riders not yet on a bus that their application has been waitlisted.

Transportation is processing over 1,700 applications received after August 5th in order to determine how many eligible riders are remaining and how to provide service. This may result in additional runs or route restructure to accommodate the late application eligible riders.

Once eligible riders are on their bus, transportation will be reviewing routes and stops. Other than for stops deemed to not meet the District's safety standards, there will be no stop changes until this review has occurred.

As of September 6, 2019:

- All eligible students who applied by August 1, 2019 have been placed on a bus.
- Courtesy riders have been assigned a bus or will be informed by September 9, 2019 that they are on a waitlist.
- Transportation is currently processing all late applications in order to place eligible late applicants on to a bus.
- Once eligible riders have been assigned, Transportation will be performing a route and stop analysis.

2.0 RELEVANT BOARD MOTIONS

Public Board Meeting – April 24, 2019

Main 19P-064

THAT: The Board of Education approve the following recommendation, subject to a full transportation review in the Spring of 2020: maintain the status quo and continue to operate the 6 buses in the Canyon Falls Middle School Catchment.

Main 19P-065

THAT: The Board of Education approve the following recommendation, subject to a full transportation review in the Spring of 2020: maintain the practice of not providing transportation to a school or program of choice, except if it is the student's catchment area school and they are eligible.

Main 19P-066

THAT: The Board of Education approve the following recommendation, subject to a full transportation review in the Spring of 2020: notwithstanding the previous motion, to support the viability of the new French Immersion programs on the Westside, to accommodate French Immersion students travelling from École George Pringle Elementary to Glenrosa Middle as eligible riders on a bus route.

Main 19P-067

THAT: The Board of Education approve the following recommendation, subject to a full transportation review in the Spring of 2020: revise the eligibility limits under Regulations 470R to:

- At least 4.0 km for Elementary Schools
- At least 4.8 km for Middle and Secondary Schools.

Main 19P-068

THAT: The Board of Education approve the following recommendation, subject to a full transportation review in the Spring of 2020: continue rerouting Route 320 past École Dorothea Walker Elementary for the 2019-2020 school year.

3.0 POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

As of September 5, 2019:

6,757 applications received

Application Timelines

- 5,043 received by July 31st
- 1,714 received after August 5th, of these:
 - 1,609 applications were received after August 15th
 - 584 were received after September 1st

Application Processing

- 6,052 applications processed by Transportation
- 174 duplicate submissions also had to be processed and deleted
- 705 remaining late applications to be processed in order of receipt

Route Assignment

- 2,758 eligible students are assigned seats
- 1,790 courtesy riders are assigned seats
- 4,548 total riders assigned and riding
- 383 requests denied for school of choice transportation
- 367 requests denied due to close proximity to a school
- 705 applications remaining to be processed
- 754 courtesy riders currently on wait list and notified

4.0 SECRETARY-TREASURER/CFO'S COMMENTS

As stated in the District's communication to parents, it is acknowledged that communication could have been better to parents on the importance of meeting the deadline and the impact that the route changes would have.

The District commits the following to its community going forward:

- The Task Force will ensure the community has an opportunity to be informed and to provide feedback that will inform future decisions on Transportation services. Parents are encouraged to participate in the Task Force's consultations to ensure their voice can help shape the direction of how busing is offered in the future.
- Any changes to policies and practices will be communicated broadly, frequently and with as much time for parents to adjust as possible.
- Transportation timelines will be adjusted to ensure parents who apply for transportation by the registration deadline are provided the decision on their application well before the start of the school year.

5.0 APPENDICES

- A. Policy and Regulation 470 – Transportation Services Management
- B. Frequently Asked Questions (posted on District Website)



Section Four: Students

“Together We Learn”

470 – TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Although the School Act no longer requires Boards of Education to provide student transportation services, in accordance with this Policy and Regulation 470R, the Board of Education has committed to providing subsidized transportation services.

Policy

1. The Board may provide subsidized transportation to eligible students and, where possible, courtesy riders to travel between a designated bus stop and their designated area school. At the Board’s discretion, the following options for transportation of students are:
 - a subsidized Board operated bus;
 - transportation assistance payments to parents;
 - alternate means of transportation.

The Board recognizes that many students are not eligible for bus transportation. The transportation of such students on existing bus routes is authorized, provided space is available. These students are considered courtesy riders.

2. The Board also recognizes that, in some situations, it may be necessary for the District to relocate students from one school to another. These students are eligible for School District transportation options if they are directed to a school beyond the Transportation Eligibility limits for their home.
3. The Board also authorizes the use of school buses for curricular or extra-curricular field trips for students as outlined in Policy 525: *Field Trips*. Staff who are supervising and volunteers who are assisting a field trip or an athletic event may ride a school bus.



Section Four: Students

“Together We Learn”

4. The Board believes that school buses are an extension of the school. Therefore:
 - 4.1 students travelling on school buses are under the jurisdiction of their principal and are subject to the code of conduct of their school and the District;
 - 4.2 first priority for the use of school buses shall be transporting students to and from schools to attend school in accordance with standard school hours.



Section Four: Students

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**470R – TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT
(REGULATIONS)**

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES for TRANSPORTATION
in Central Okanagan Public Schools**

Rider Eligibility

- 1) A student must be registered as an eligible or courtesy rider in order to ride the school bus. Registration will be available online year round.
- 2) A student will be considered eligible for subsidized transportation if his or her home address is at least 4.0 km (Elementary) or at least 4.8 km (Middle/Secondary) from the school or schools designated for the catchment area (measured as actual shortest driving or walking distance).
- 3) If a student meets the criterion for home-school distance after being placed by the District at a school other than his or her catchment area school(s), the student will be given the same consideration as other eligible students. These students will only be designated as “capped” students by the appropriate Assistant Superintendent.
- 4) Seats that are not required for eligible students on school bus routes will be made available to courtesy riders based on the criterion of furthest home to school distance. Courtesy ridership is subject to cancellation at any time, with a one-week notice, based on the receipt of an application for the transportation for a newly identified eligible student living within the catchment area.
- 5) In the case of a student residing with parents or caregivers in more than one home, one address will be accepted for eligibility purposes. However, where possible, consideration will be given to an alternate stop on the same route or a courtesy seat on another route within the same catchment if a parent submits an application.
- 6) In situations in which a student in Kindergarten through Gr. 3 qualifies as an eligible or courtesy rider and an older sibling travelling to the same school does not, the older sibling will be given courtesy riding privileges on the same bus if space permits.
- 7) In the event that students with courtesy riding privileges have to be displaced due to the registration of eligible students living further from the school, the first criterion for priority will be distance from the school and the second criterion will be the accommodation of an older sibling travelling with a younger student. Ties will be broken in favour of the youngest student.
- 8) Transportation will not be provided to a school elective program outside a student’s catchment area (e.g. French Immersion or locally developed courses).



Section Four: Students

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Conduct

- 9) Students must abide by their school’s Code of Conduct expected of all riders.

Routes

- 10) School bus routes are established on the basis of safety and efficiency of service for students who meet the criteria for eligibility.
- 11) Route changes must be approved by the Director of Operations or delegate.
- 12) A minimum of fourteen (14) eligible students is required for the establishment of a bus route.
- 13) Where possible, routes will be designed to minimize the time students spend on a bus with an upper limit of 40 minutes as a guideline.
- 14) Where reasonable, a bus driver will be assigned to the morning and afternoon routes for a given run.
- 15) Where reasonable, bus stops at sites other than school sites will have 15 or fewer students.
- 16) Where reasonable, routes will be planned so that students are able to travel without having to transfer from one bus to another in a single direction.

Fees and Payments

- 17) Eligible riders and courtesy riders registered on bus routes must pay the student transportation charge; however, Board Policy 425 – Student Fees and 425R – Student Fees (Regulations) is in place for those families who are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to pay the transportation charge.
- 18) Special Education students identified by the Student Support Services Department as requiring a specially equipped bus will be considered as eligible students.
- 19) Families with more than two children assigned to a bus will receive a 50% subsidy of the Student Transportation Charge for the third and fourth child assigned to a bus and a 100% subsidy of the Student Transportation Charge for the fifth and any additional children that are assigned on a bus.
- 20) Once the Board has established a student transportation charge for a year of service, a minimum 50% of the charge must be paid by June 30th of the year prior to the year of service, and the charge must be fully paid by October 15th of the year of service.
- 21) If there are less than fourteen (14) eligible students for a bus route, the individual providing transportation of the student(s) to the catchment school may be eligible for transportation assistance payment based on mileage from the home address to the school.



Section Four: Students

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- 22) Transportation assistance payments described in the above guideline are calculated at the rate of 60% of the rate paid to staff for personal use of vehicles for Board business to a maximum of 100 kilometres per day, based in one round trip per day, for the days on which the student(s) attend(s) school. To a maximum of \$625 per year, per family. This annual maximum transportation assistance rate will be adjusted as the five (5) year average cost/student changes.
- 23) If a family has more than one student attending a given school, only one transportation assistance payment will be made.
- 24) If transportation or a transportation assistance payment is provided on behalf of a student on the wait list for his or her catchment area school and the invitation to return mid-year is declined in favour of a September entry, school bus transportation or the transportation assistance payment will be continued for the balance of the current school year. However, if the student remains at this school in the following year the student transportation charge will apply or transportation assistance payments will be discontinued.
- 25) Students must be registered and assigned to a route by the Transportation Department before the student transportation charge will be accepted.
- 26) The student transportation charge is to be paid before the bus pass will be issued.
- 27) Students added to a route midyear will be required to pay for the current and remaining months before the pass will be issued.
- 28) A current identified eligible student who does not register by the established new year registration date and has not submitted the student transportation charge by the cut-off date will not be eligible to ‘bump’ a courtesy rider. Upon registration such a student will be placed at the top of the waiting list for the next available seat.
- 29) If a courtesy rider is ‘bumped’ by a newly identified eligible rider, the courtesy rider will receive a refund pro-rated from the last day of service.
- 30) If an eligible rider or courtesy rider discontinues using the transportation service prior to March 31 of any year, a prorated refund will be issued upon request and once the bus pass is surrendered to the School District. The refund will only cover the months after the month in which the pass is surrendered. No refunds will be issued after March 31.
- 31) The student transportation charge and lost and damaged bus pass charge will be communicated each year in accordance with Policy 425 – Student Fees
- 32) Students will not ride the bus unless they have been registered, have paid the student transportation charge and have received a valid bus pass.
- 33) Additional Service Routes - parent requested routes will be charged the minimum of the student transportation charge or actual cost if higher than the student transportation charge.

Transportation – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why has there been delays in receiving notification about transportation?

Central Okanagan Public Schools apologizes to families who have yet to receive a response to their school bus application. We understand that this uncertainty about transportation is unacceptable and can cause anxiety. As a district, we are committed to doing better in the future, especially in regards to better communicating information to families and the community.

Several challenges combined to cause transportation being behind by approximately two weeks:

- An increase in service requests over previous years
- Courtesy stop realignment
- Restructuring of routes due to a new school

There were almost approximately 1,700 applications that were submitted after July 31, 600 of which were submitted after September 1. Transportation is currently working to get late applicant eligible students on to a bus.

2. Why have bus stops been restructured and consolidated this year?

Board policy dictates that *where possible, routes will be designed to minimize the time students spend on a bus with an upper limit of 40 minutes as a guideline*. Courtesy and eligible stops have been restructured to improve efficiency of service and to provide eligible students with better ride times. Courtesy stops, whose frequency in the past has increased ride times for eligible students, have been consolidated to streamline bus routes.

3. Did the District cut routes?

No, this year there will be the same number of buses running as there was last year. Per Board policy, *a minimum of fourteen (14) eligible students is required for the establishment of a bus route*. Routes have been restructured to ensure Board policy is being followed when setting routes and have been moved to provide service to Canyon Falls Middle School. Due to the increase in eligible riders, there are less spots for courtesy riders this year.

4. How is it determined who gets a seat on a bus?

All students who are 4km away from their designated school in elementary and 4.8km for middle and secondary are guaranteed a spot on the bus. Bus routes are structured to efficiently transport eligible students.

Per Board policy, *seats that are not required for eligible students on school bus routes will be made available to courtesy riders based on the criterion of furthest home to school distance*. Priority is also given to courtesy riders that are siblings of eligible K-3 students. Spots are awarded until the bus is full and any remaining applications served by that route are placed on a waiting list.

5. Is my child that isn't eligible and didn't get a courtesy seat expected to walk to school?

The eligibility distances reflect the distances that were historically used by the Province when it provided targeted transportation funding and guaranteed service for eligible students. The School Act was changed and now places the responsibility for transportation solely on parents. The Board of Education has made a choice under policy to transport students who meet the historical eligibility distances.

The distances are not a reflection of where a child could reasonably be expected to walk to school, they reflect the distance where the parent remains responsible to ensure their student safely makes it to school.

6. Why is the District reviewing Transportation?

Spending on Transportation has been steadily increasing year over year, while targeted funding for Transportation has remained status quo. This means more and more money has to be taken from the classroom. Last year, the District subsidized Transportation by \$475 per rider from operating funding, or \$2.9 million. This represents the equivalent of 29 additional teachers or 60 CEAs.

With the provincial funding framework review expected to announce significant changes for next school year, it is vital that the District contains its costs, preserves educational services to students and reviews its service levels to ensure it is operating an equitable and sustainable transportation system.

In the first phase of the Transportation Task Force, the task force had two community consultations, reviewed board policy and determined that existing practices that exceeded the policy needed to be discontinued with the exception of practices approved by the Board of Education on April 24, 2019.

In Phase II this year, the Task Force will be engaging the community to make recommendations to the Board of Education in the 2020/21 school year on the following:

- Impact of 2020/21 Government funding changes
- Registration and routing timelines
- Bell times and early dismissal
- Parental Responsibility Distance Limits
- Transportation service levels
- Transit service
- Fee structure

7. What can parents expect from Central Okanagan Public Schools going forward?

The District acknowledges that communications to parents on what changes to practices would occur should have been done better. The District commits the following to its community going forward:

- The Task Force will ensure the community has an opportunity to be informed and to provide feedback that will inform future decisions on Transportation services. Parents are encouraged to participate in the Task Force's consultations to ensure their voice can help shape the direction of how bussing is offered in the future.
- Any changes to policies and practices will be communicated broadly, frequently and with as much time for the parents to adjust as possible.
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