

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 23, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Motion Regarding Transportation Policy

ORIGINATOR: G. Reynolds, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Irene Billey, Richard Craig

INFORMATION

This report has been prepared in response to the motion moved by Trustee Gibeault which states *“that the district’s transportation policy be amended to make bus passes available at half the regular rate to elementary students enrolled in a program of choice at their neighbourhood school when that program of choice is no longer offered at that school and transportation is required to another location to continue in that program until the end of grade six. And further, that this policy change take effect for the 2000-2001 school year.”* The purpose of this report is to provide background information regarding the impact of this motion on district transportation.

Background

In accordance with Administrative Regulation, EEA.AR Student Transportation Services, the Board may choose to facilitate student attendance at alternative programs by providing bus transportation for elementary students leaving their local neighbourhood to attend district centres. Additions or deletions to the number of programs included in the service are at the Board’s discretion through the budget process. In providing such service, the following factors are to be considered when the administration makes recommendations during budget deliberations with respect to student transportation fees:

- the cost of providing and administering the service;
- the funds available from the provincial government;
- the fees charged for other services; and
- the fees charged for this service in the past.

Student transportation, which is funded through provincial transportation grants and transportation fees paid by students, must be provided at no additional cost to the district and with no transfer of instructional funds to subsidize student transportation. Our district’s transportation fee schedule is intended to provide students with fair and equitable access to school programs. The monthly fee of \$36 for alternative program busing reflects the fact that

student enrolment is based on parental choice, whereas other transported students are directed to school sites. The alternative program transportation fee represents a relatively low percentage (26%) of the average monthly cost of \$138 for transporting an elementary student to an alternative program.

Over the past ten years when the French immersion programs at Duggan, Elmwood, Fulton Place, Grace Martin, Griesbach, Kensington and Rundle schools were phased out due to declining enrolments, no special considerations were granted to families with children who continued French immersion programming at other sites.

There are 55 students in grades 1 to 6 registered in the French immersion at Weinlos Elementary School, of which, seven students from within Mill Woods use charter bus service to access the program. These seven students would require charter bus service regardless of whether they attended Greenview or Weinlos schools as the transportation catchment areas for both schools include all of Mill Woods. There are currently 15 students attending the French immersion program at Weinlos who live within the school's neighbourhood boundary.

Impact of Motion

There are a number of areas where the motion moved by Trustee Gibeault regarding a change in the district's student transportation policy would impact student transportation as identified below:

- Charging the 15 students a bus pass fee of \$18 rather than \$36 per month would result in a reduction in transportation revenue of \$2,700 for the 2000-2001 school year.
- Any reduction in revenue from alternative program transportation fees would have to be recovered by increasing fees for all other students who access district transportation (e.g. students who live in neighbourhoods without a local school as well as students with special needs who are directed to attend district sites).
- Administration of the names of the students who would qualify for the reduced transportation fee and collection of differentiated transportation fees would be difficult to maintain over several years. Situations of inequity may emerge as other students receiving the same service would be required to pay the full transportation fee.
- Sets a precedent for charging differentiated transportation fees for alternative, special needs and regular program receiving schools when changes such as phasing out programs, changing school boundaries and transportation catchment areas, and adding program sites, are made in the future. This would not only impact the generation of revenue from student fees, but also impacts schools that would be required to charge and collect many different types of transportation fees (i.e. Edmonton Transit pass fees as well as yellow pass fees).

IB/RC