

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 8, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Student Transportation Services

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Executive Director

RESOURCE
STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Dorothy Sombach

INFORMATION

Student Transportation is a highly complex system. Our intention in this report is to highlight the major issues and challenges facing the system during a time of decreasing enrolments and increasing demand for service.

This information is being brought to public board to provide an update on the transportation services offered to district students. As background information, we have outlined the transportation the district is required to provide according to the Alberta Student Transportation Regulation and the transportation currently provided by Edmonton Public School Board.

Category of Rider	Transportation Required by Alberta Education	Transportation Provided by EPSB
No Neighbourhood School	If a student lives more than 2.4 km away from the designated school.	Provide transportation for students even if they live within 2.4 km of their designated school regardless of which school they attend.
Special Needs	Severe Special Needs: Door to door transportation to their program at a designated district site. Mild/Moderate Special Needs: Transportation from a local bus stop to their program at a designated district site if the student lives more than 2.4 km from the designated district site.	Severe Special Needs: Door to door transportation to their program at a designated district site. Mild/Moderate Special Needs: Door to door transportation for students even if they live within 2.4 km of their designated district site or if they choose a site other than their designated site.
Alternative Programs	No requirement unless student resides more than 2.4 km to their designated neighbourhood school	Transportation to any other district school housing an alternative program and within an 80 minute ride zone perimeter.
Kindergarten	If a student lives more than 2.4 km from their designated neighbourhood school and attends a full day kindergarten program.	If a student lives more than 2.4 km from their designated neighbourhood school and attends a full day kindergarten program. Noon hour kindergarten busing is provided for students attending half day kindergarten program.

Alberta Education recognizes that the transportation grant does not cover the total cost of transporting students. Rules are established that limit the amount that the district may charge eligible and ineligible riders.

For Eligible Riders: The fee may not exceed the difference between the average cost of transporting a student and the average transportation funding received per eligible student.

For Ineligible Riders: The fee may not exceed the cost of transporting these students.

CURRENT SERVICES BY CATEGORY:

Yellow Bus:

Category 1 – No Neighbourhood School & Alternative Program Service Combined Routes

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	# of Buses	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
No Neighbourhood School	2,220	\$14.00 per month	70	\$2,100,000	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km from designated neighbourhood school
	260 – K	No Charge			
Alternative Program Students	265	\$42.00 per month for Alternative Program Students			

Implications and Initiatives:

- Need to reduce ride times which are increasing due to the need for transportation from outlying subdivisions where a school has not been built.
- Adjust elementary school hours of operation to allow more buses to complete double runs thus reducing the number of buses required to transport the same number of students. This would require extensive consultation with schools and parents as it would require one school to adjust the start and dismissal time to one half hour earlier and the second school to adjust to one half hour later than what is currently in place. Preliminary estimates indicate that if 20 schools change their school hours, at least eight buses could be eliminated and ride times would also be reduced because the bus would be stopping at only one school on each run.
- It will be necessary to determine the number of students in the above category that the district is required to transport by regulation. Work is in progress to calculate the exact number. This data will help us determine the extent of the number of students the district is transporting for which the district does not receive transportation funding and whether the district will continue to subsidize them.
- Assign more alternative program students to existing neighbourhood school buses. Out of the 70 buses being used for students that do not have a neighbourhood school, 20 of them are also carrying 265 alternative program students. Student Transportation and Planning staff have been working together during the program distribution process to consider the transportation implications when choosing a location for new alternative programs or the expansion of currently existing alternative programs. This initiative would help to reduce costs and ride times.

Category 2 – Dedicated Alternative Routes

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	# of Buses	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Alternative Programs	1,466	\$42.00 per month	64	\$1,900,000	No requirement unless student resides more than 2.4 km to their designated neighbourhood school
	400 – K	No Charge			

Implications and Initiatives:

- According to the district transportation policy, students attending alternative programs may be considered for access to additional transportation services. This non-compulsory service has grown to a total of 64 buses dedicated to alternative programs. It has come to be expected by parents that the district will provide transportation to alternative programs at a subsidized cost.
- The net cost to the district to transport one alternative program student is approximately \$600.00 per year.
- Passengers experience lengthy ride times because school hours are not coordinated with schools that draw students from common neighbourhoods.
- A review of the standard for ride times is necessary. Narrowing the area from which transportation is provided, will provide a better quality service.

Category 3 – Noon Hour Kindergarten Routes

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	# of Buses	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Noon Kindergarten					
• No Neighborhood School	260	No Charge	27	\$ 265,000	No
• Program of Choice	400	No Charge	42	\$ 411,000	No

Implications and Initiatives:

- Effective for the current school year, free kindergarten noon transportation service is offered. Enrolment numbers indicate the district maintained the same level of kindergarten students as last year. It is believed that free kindergarten transportation has had a positive impact on enrolment, however, the challenge for future years will be maintaining free noon service.
- The district does not receive any additional transportation funding to provide noon kindergarten service.

Category 4 – Specialized Program Service

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	# of Buses	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Prince Charles Awasis	200	No Charge	6	\$ 242,000	No
City Centre Education	120	No Charge	6	\$ 240,000	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school

Implications and Initiatives:

- The Awasis Program is an alternative program and the same guidelines apply as outlined under program of choice.
- The district receives a \$70,000 Native Education grant that is applied to the transportation expenditure for students registered in the Awasis Program.
- Specialized service is given to the students with a one day turnaround on requests for changes.
- Transportation expenditures for the City Centre Education Project remain below the estimated cost of transportation before the closure of the elementary programs at Queen Mary Park and Alex Taylor schools and the junior high programs at Eastwood and John A McDougall schools.

Category 5 – Severe Special Needs

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Severe Special Needs	1,030 – Elem 325 – Jr/Sr	Elem. \$14.00 per month Jr. & Sr. High \$30.00 per month	\$4,000,000	Yes

Implications and Initiatives:

- Schools offering programs with a full city attendance area present a challenge of keeping ride times reasonable. An example of this type of transportation is included in the attached maps showing the transported students for Tevie Miller Heritage School housed at Alberta School for the Deaf and L.Y. Cairns. (Appendix I & II)
- Similar challenges are apparent when students are designated to schools outside of the zone in which they reside. A review of the zone structure has commenced with the possibility of adding more zones which will help with reducing ride times.

- School hours impact the service as a school that has two or three different programs may have two or three different start and dismissal times. Thursday early dismissal presents a significant challenge as schools that choose to dismiss early may share buses with schools that do not dismiss early. The early dismissal time does not allow the buses to take those students home and then come back on time to pick up the students that do not dismiss early.
- Inappropriate student behaviour on school buses is increasing and presents safety concerns for bus drivers and passengers. This affects all categories of the transportation system but is most prominent in the severe and mild/moderate categories. There is an increase in requests for an attendant on the bus with the driver from both the carriers and school principals. This possibility is being researched, however there are many issues associated with this that would need to be resolved before this could be considered.

Category 6 – Mild Moderate Special Needs

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Mild/Moderate Special Needs	429 – Elem	Elem. \$14.00 per month	\$5,350,000	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school
	703 – Jr/Sr	Jr. & Sr. High \$30.00 per month		

Implications and Initiatives:

- Curb service transportation is made available for students directed by principals to attend a district site or another school. Many of these students could walk to a designated bus stop. During the current school year, transportation is successfully being provided to 38 students on a fixed route bus at a designated stop. Our plan is to continue to move in this direction by designing a route for the special needs bus and establishing designated corner stops for the mild/moderate students. In order for this initiative to be successful, the mild/moderate special needs students would need to start and dismiss at the same time as the regular program students at the particular school. This will be done in consultation with the principals and the contracted bus company to determine the impact on students.
- The district is not required to offer curb service transportation to this category of student. Therefore, continued efforts will be made to move these students to fixed route busing.
- It will be necessary to determine the number of students in the above category that the district is required to transport by regulation. Work is in progress to calculate the exact number. This data will help us determine the extent of the number of students the district is transporting that are unfunded for transportation funding and whether we will continue to subsidize them.
- Student Transportation received requests from 28 schools for a change in school hours for either individual special needs students or for the full school. The requests were received after all routes were in place for September. Many schools share buses with each other and a change in school hours from one school disrupts the transportation of all students connected with that school. Although all requests were granted, this may not be possible in future years. These changes can cause timing problems and a disruption in family schedules.

Category 7 – Parent Provided

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Parent Provided Transportation	200 – Severe Needs 600 – Mild/Moderate Special Needs	No Charge	\$1,000,000	Severe Special Needs Yes Mild/Moderate Special Needs Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school

Implications and Initiatives:

- The daily rate paid to parents for this service is \$7.00 per day and has not increased for over eight years. Parents have been very happy to receive this payment. A review of the daily rate will be necessary due to the rising cost of fuel.

Category 8 – Conditional Riders

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
Conditional Riders	280	\$42.00 per month	Included as part of expenditure for no neighbourhood school and alternative service.	No

Implications and Initiatives:

- Conditional riders are those riders who are not attending their neighborhood school but attend another regular program school. These students are provided transportation on a space available basis on existing bus routes. Each year, approximately 750 applications are received from this category of student. Of those that apply, over 200 students are placed on routes before the first day of school and an additional 150 by the end of September and this is at no additional cost to transportation. This time lag is necessary to ensure that extra buses will not need to be added because the bus may be full with eligible students.
- Conditional riders are guaranteed service on a one year basis and need to reapply each year. Families come to expect the service as long as the student remains at the school. There is a need to define more clearly the arrangement regarding approval of the conditional ride. For next year, the conditional rider form will be amended to ensure that parents understand the timelines and processes for approval of ridership. (Appendix III)

Edmonton Transit:

Category 9

Service	# of Students	Cost to Parents	Expenditure	Required to Transport by Regulation
ETS – Preferred means of transportation for all junior and senior high students	19,000	*\$30.00 per month	\$7,680,000	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school

*The cost to the district of an ETS bus is \$42.00 per month.

Implications and Initiatives:

- Edmonton Transit works with district junior and senior high school principals to supply adequate service to students residing more than 2.4 km from their neighbourhood school plus implements service wherever possible to many of the district program of choice schools. The district is required to supply service to those students that reside more than 2.4 km to their designated junior or senior high school. Students attending a program of choice may not be attending their designated junior or senior high school. It is difficult at this time to report on the number of students this involves however work is in progress to determine the extent of this service.
- School hours affect the level of service Edmonton Transit is able to deliver. The bulk of their fleet is transporting commuter passengers, secondary and post-secondary students during the peak traffic times. If district school hours fall within that time range, Edmonton Transit does not have the capacity to carry district junior and senior high students. Meetings are held on a regular basis with principals, Student Transportation and Edmonton Transit to discuss the improved service that could be provided if start and dismissal times were later in the day.
- If schools encounter any difficulties that cannot be resolved with Edmonton Transit direct, Student Transportation works with transit through the Student Transportation Liaison Committee which consists of members from Edmonton Transit, Edmonton Catholic Schools and Edmonton Public Schools.

SUMMARY OF SERVICE BASED ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2005 PASSENGERS

Service	# of Students	# of Buses	Required to Transport by Regulation	Expenditure	Bus Pass Revenue	Costs that must be recovered through grants
No Neighbourhood School and Alternative Program Shared	2,220 260 K	70	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school.	\$2,170,000	\$310,800	\$1,747,900
	265 Alternative Program				\$111,300	
Alternative Programs	1,466 400 K	64	No	\$1,970,000	\$615,720	\$1,354,280
Noon Kindergarten • No Neighborhood School • Program of Choice	260	27	No	\$ 265,000		\$676,000
	400	42	No	\$ 411,000		
Prince Charles Awasis	200	6	No	\$ 250,000		\$250,000
City Centre Education	120	6	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school	\$ 245,000		\$245,000
Severe Special Needs	1,036 – Elem	345 buses shared with Mild/Moderate Special Needs	Yes	\$4,000,000	\$145,040	\$3,757,760
	324 – Jr/Sr				\$ 97,200	
Mild/Moderate Special Needs	1,192 – Elem	See above	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated district site	\$5,350,000	\$166,880	\$4,970,720
	708 – Jr/Sr				\$212,400	
Parent Provided Transportation	200 – Severe Special Needs 600 – Mild/Moderate Special Needs	N/A	Severe Special Needs Yes Mild/Moderate Special Needs Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated district site	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000

Service	# of Students	# of Buses	Required to Transport by Regulation	Expenditure	Bus Pass Revenue	Costs that must be recovered through grants
Conditional Riders	280		No	Included as part of expenditure for no neighbourhood school and alternative service.	\$ 117,600	Included as part of cost for no neighbourhood school and alternative service
ETS – Preferred means of transportation for all junior and senior high students	18,000	Unknown	Yes, providing student resides more than 2.4 km to designated school	\$7,680,000	\$5,400,000	\$2,280,000

Cost of Transportation Contracted Service	\$23,341,000		
Salaries and Supplies	\$ 1,000,000		
Bus Pass Revenue		\$ 7,176,940	
Provincial Funding – Block Grant		\$17,342,363	
	\$24,341,000	\$24,519,303	
Surplus			\$178,303

The calculation for bus pass revenue is based on the number of passengers as at September 30, 2005 and that number will fluctuate over the school year. The transportation department ended the 2005-2006 school year with a \$1.1M deficit. A deficit reduction plan predicts that a surplus of \$200,000 will need to be applied against the deficit this year.

There are a number of district wide challenges facing Student Transportation which will continue to grow in the coming years. The current critical issues are listed below and immediate steps need to be taken to attempt to address these issues.

Shortage of Bus Drivers

- Impacts the ride times as increased numbers of students are placed on fewer buses.
- Contracted service rates will need to go up to address the low wages for bus drivers

Long Ride Times

- Shortage of bus drivers
- Related to where the programs are placed

Transportation Deficit of \$1.1M

- Increased demand for service
- Decreased enrolment results in decreased provincial funding

Fuel Escalation

- One time funding for fuel escalation has been announced but final decisions on how this will be distributed are not yet clear.

CONCLUSION

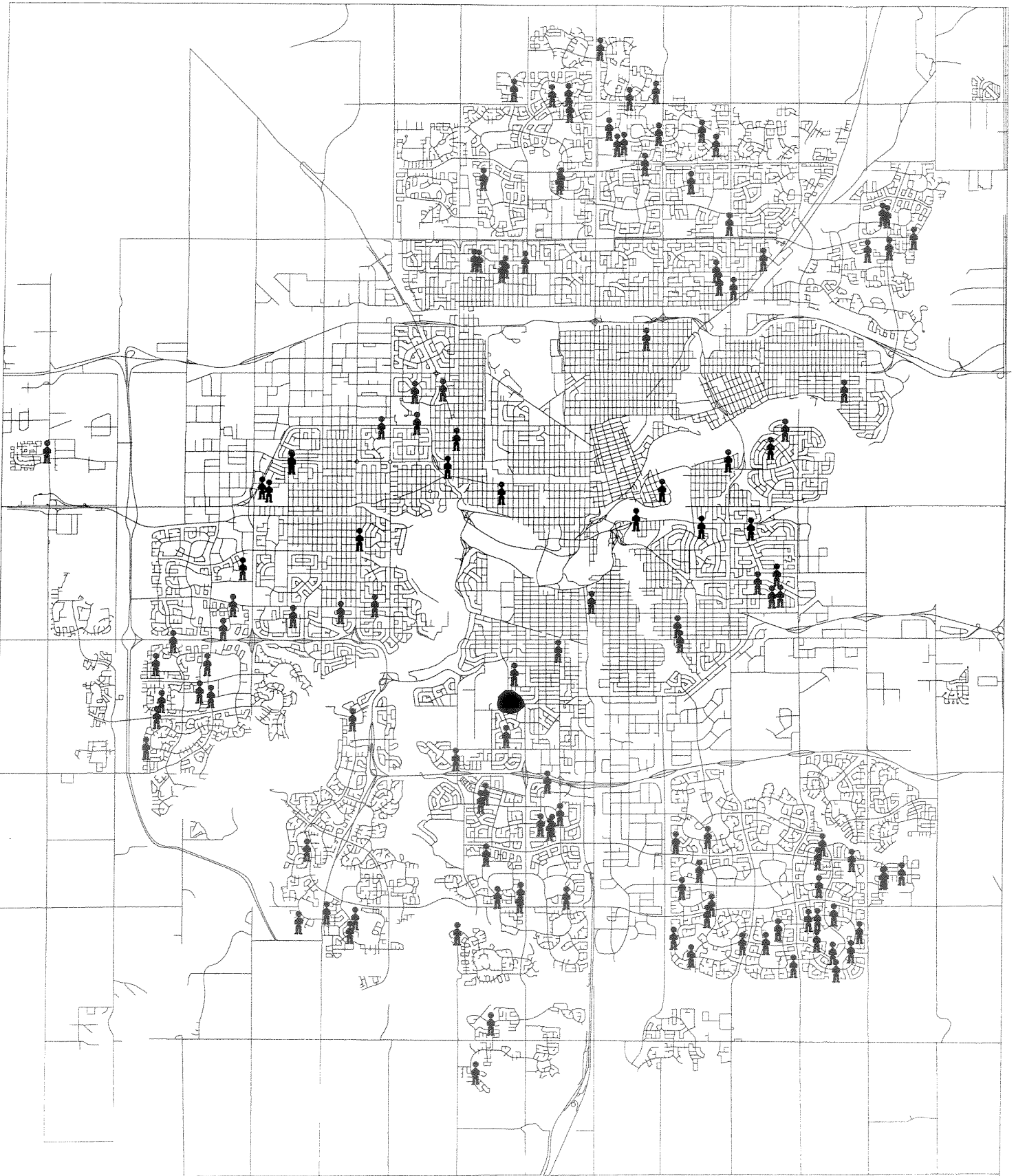
Student Transportation provides services to 8,500 students on 585 yellow bus routes using five bus companies and transports 18,000 students on Edmonton Transit busses. The staff of Student Transportation work diligently throughout the summer months to ensure busing is available at the start of the school year. Each fall there are numerous service requests resulting in very busy times for Student Transportation as many adjustments are required in order to serve the changing needs of parents and schools.

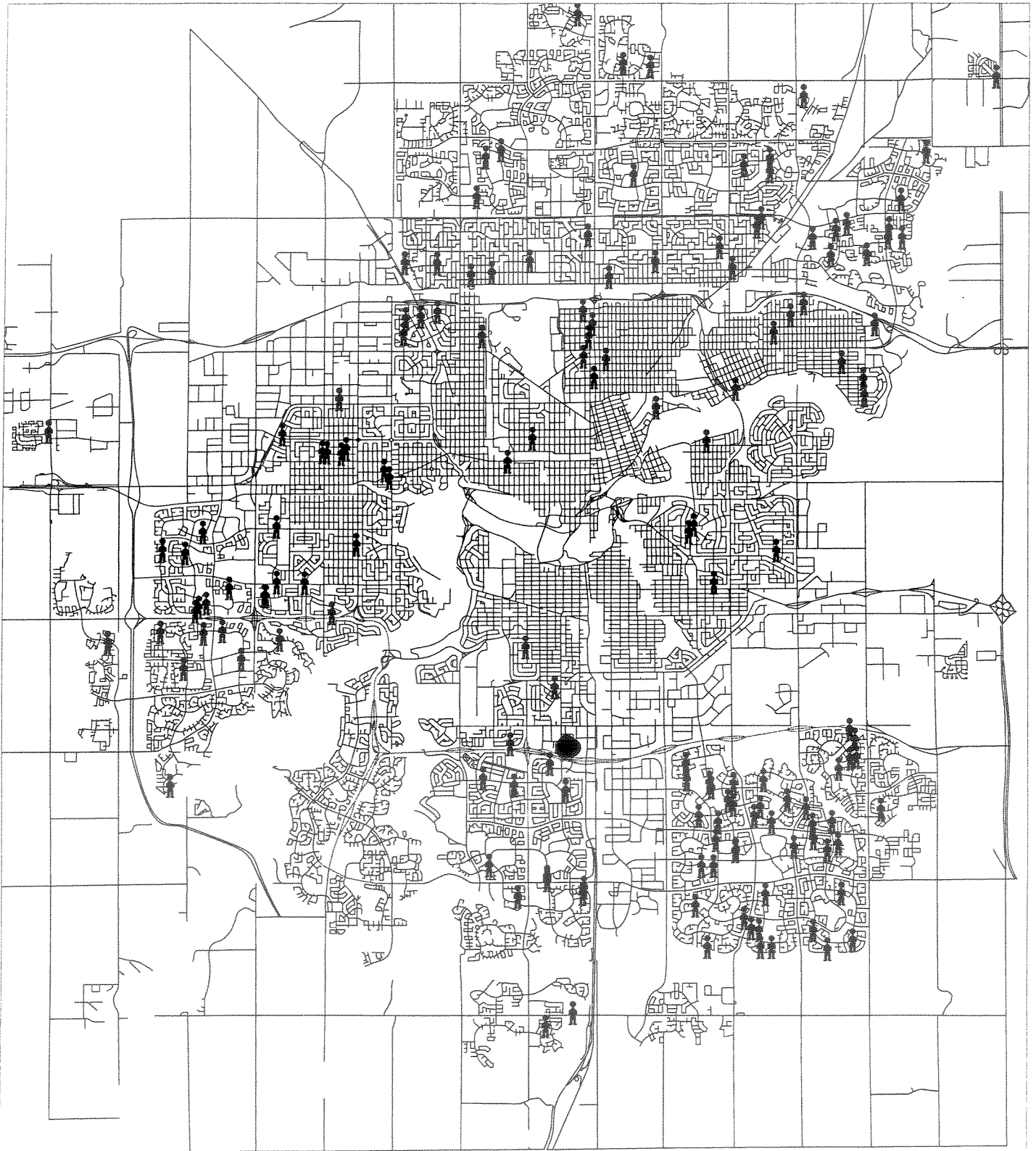
During September and October of the current school year, Student Transportation responded to and resolved 12 concerns from parents that had contacted Trustees. Transportation staff responded to and resolved over 500 calls per day related to service from August 28 to September 16. Of these requests, 75 per cent were able to be resolved to the satisfaction of customers. Throughout the year we adjust routes on a weekly basis knowing that we have to be fiscally responsible.

Student Transportation continues to evaluate all of our processes and are doing an in depth review on how we can better meet the needs of our students, parents and schools in a fiscally responsible way. This work will include extensive communication and discussion with school principals.

DS:cp

APPENDIX I – Tevie Miller Heritage School Program Students Transported
APPENDIX II – L.Y. Cairns School Students Transported
APPENDIX III – 2005-2006 Conditional Rider Transportation Application Form





2005-2006 CONDITIONAL RIDER TRANSPORTATION APPLICATION FORM

TRANSPORTATION TO: _____ PROGRAM: _____
SCHOOL NAME D.U. #

EPSB STUDENT ID: _____ DATE REQUIRED: _____
DAY MONTH YEAR

LAST NAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____

BIRTH DATE: _____ GRADE: (SEP/05) _____ KINDERGARTEN: AM PM FULLDAY
DAY MONTH YEAR

HOME/STREET ADDRESS: _____ POSTAL CODE: _____ HOME PH: _____

WORK PH: _____ EMERGENCY PH: _____ CELL PH: _____ DAYCARE PH: _____

PICK-UP REQUIRED: YES NO **CIRCLE ONE** ADDRESS: _____
(Complete **ONLY** if different from home address)

DROP-OFF REQUIRED: YES NO **CIRCLE ONE** ADDRESS: _____
(Complete **ONLY** if different from home address)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Conditional Riders are reviewed and may be approved based on the following conditions:

- ◆ All eligible students have been assigned and there is sufficient space on the bus, and
- ◆ Bus routes shall not be designed or altered to accommodate Conditional Riders, and
- ◆ Approval is granted on an annual basis, and is guaranteed for that school year, from the original pick-up and/or drop-off address, and
- ◆ Ridership and stop locations are not guaranteed from year-to-year.

PLEASE PROVIDE THE REASON FOR YOUR REQUEST: (CHECK ONE)

- Sibling is attending the alternative program at the same school, or
- student chose to attend another alternative program other than the one identified for their residential area, or
- student resides in the school's designated catchment area but transportation is required outside of the catchment area, or
- student requires transportation to this school although our child is not registered in the alternative program.
- Other _____

COMPLETION OF THIS FORM DOES NOT GUARANTEE APPROVAL TO RIDE THE YELLOW BUS.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL ONCE EXISTING ROUTES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED

BUS ROUTE #: _____ STOP ADDRESS: PICK-UP _____
 DROP-OFF _____

Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) gathers and maintains the above information for the purpose of arranging transportation for your child and providing information to contracted school bus carriers. FOIP Act (Sec 33 (a-c): This information is being collected to provide transportation services and grant eligibility information under the School Act. *I hereby agree to pay transportation fees to the school and to comply with all of EPS requirements for transportation of my child, and understand that failure to comply with any requirement may result in loss of busing privileges.*

It is the responsibility of the parent to advise the school **IMMEDIATELY** when the bus service is no longer required.

 PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

 PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

 DATE