E D M O N T O N P U B L I C S C H O O L S

May 11, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Transportation Action Plan

ORIGINATOR: T. Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE STAFF: Kelly Hehn, Fraser Methuen, Lorne Parker, Michelle Tymchuk, Chris Wright

INFORMATION

As a follow-up to the October 2009 Stantec Service Review, Student Transportation Services respectfully submits the Transportation Action Plan. The Action Plan is in part, a follow-up to the Stantec recommendations, and also offers additional detail and clarity in several areas. The recommendations contained in the Action Plan work toward ensuring that EPSB students receive safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation services.

The parameters of the Transportation Action Plan mirror those articulated by the Superintendent as part of the Central Review: Edmonton Public is a District of Choice, local decision making will continue, and funding resources are expected to be reduced.

The formation of the Transportation Action Plan has involved extensive engagement efforts by a number of stakeholders. A group of sixteen principals and nine Central staff have been involved in a series of meetings aimed at obtaining opinions and a wide range of perspectives about the concepts being considered. Parental engagement involved four unique focus groups moderated by an external consultant. The District's carrier contractors were also engaged through a series of one-on-one meetings, with feedback and insights collected from each.

The Transportation Action Plan provides:

- rationale for the work;
- an overview of current and proposed funding levels and formulae;
- a proposed eligibility model;
- a discussion about an appropriate provision of service for different student groups;
- service delivery design standards;
- performance monitoring;
- and suggested systemic revisions.

Density of Demand

The discussion around density of demand in Sections 4.0 and 6.1.2 (Attachment I) highlights a fundamental systemic challenge that Student Transportation Services is confronted with as programming continues to diversify across the District. In many instances, an ideal design for transportation works in opposition to a desired model for program delivery. The challenge created by this juxtaposition is compounded by a proposed Provincial transportation funding model that does not recognize programs of choice; a concept clearly allowed for by Alberta Education in the School Act in Sections 21 & 31 (Alternative Programming and Charter Schools). The absence of funding for students residing within 2.4 km of their designated school also means that any effort to distribute District programs amongst neighbourhood schools would result in the provision of unfunded transportation supports or a removal of services. Student Transportation Services is not advocating for any change to the District of Choice model in favour of efficient transportation, but is tasked with bridging the gap that exists. The extent to which the gap is bridged will directly impact the transportation budget. In addition to budget impacts, extended student ride times are the direct result of lengthy routes, designed to address low student densities.

Current and Proposed Funding

In terms of funding, Student Transportation Services faces serious challenges with the probability that proposed changes to the existing Block Grant funding model will take place with the introduction of the new Alberta Metro Urban and Metro Urban Special Student Transportation Grant formula. Areas of particular concern are the significant reductions in funding that will highlight the discrepancy between the cost and funding available for:

- special needs (curb service)
- early education students which are PUF funded
- parent provided transportation

The District must work to ensure that students are afforded an appropriate level of service that aligns with their needs, yet is also supported through Provincial funding. Sections 5.1.1, 7.1.1, and 7.1.2 (Attachment I) address the need to employ District-wide criteria to assist principals in determining what type of transportation service a student should apply for: fixed route yellow bus, special needs curb service busing, parent provided transportation, ETS, or no service at all.

The introduction of eligibility into the EPSB transportation delivery model represents a paradigm shift in the District's approach to determining ridership. As noted, both fixed route and special needs busing will be impacted by the inclusion of an eligibility concept. For the fixed route system, the Graduated Service Model presented in Section 6.1.3 (Attachment I) is designed to bridge the current neighbourhood approach to determining ridership with the proposed provincial eligibility based on distance. The model will allow the current transportation system to evolve based on funding criteria and will improve sustainability in future years.

New Initiatives

Student Transportation Services will implement the Graduated Service Model (Appendix I) as a pilot program for ASAP schools in 2010-2011. The model will provide yellow bus service to elementary

students residing in accordance with the School Act. Students residing within the 2.4 km walk distance will access transportation through a series of centralized stops due to their ineligibility status for provincial funding.

A second concurrent pilot project will involve a collaborative service delivery model between Edmonton Public School District's Johnny Bright School, and Edmonton Catholic School Board's Monsignor Fee Otterson School (Appendix II). A system of double runs will be implemented whereby the hours of operation are adjusted to allow the same buses to pick up one Board's students, followed by the next Board's students.

Many additional initiatives related to the Transportation Action Plan have already been implemented during the course of the 2009-2010 school year. A complete list of initiatives planned for implementation over the next three years is included in Appendix 1 of the Transportation Action Plan Final Report. The most significant efforts undertaken during this school year include:

- A number of revisions to the manner in which data is tracked and categorized within Student Transportation Services;
- The alignment of the special needs transportation application process with the Special Needs Assisted Placement (SNAP) process;
- A continued gradual shift of mild and moderate special needs students from curb service to fixed route busing;
- Increased monitoring accountability with contract carriers due to an improved labour market;
- More drivers able to work means increased competition amongst our contract carrier partners.

Special Needs Transportation Improvements

Student Transportation Services has endeavored to improve service provision to students with special needs.

An analysis of the April 2010 curb service ride times indicates that 82 per cent of all ride times are now 60 minutes or less. This marks an improvement from 79 per cent in the Fall and a significant improvement since the Fall of 2008 when a Request For Information provided to the Board indicated that 64 per cent of curb service ride times were 60 minutes or less.

The overall average ride time for curb service students has also improved. The average ride time is currently 40 minutes. The average ride time in Fall 2009 was 42 minutes. The average ride time at the time of the Fall 2008 Request For Information was 54 minutes.

Several initiatives are responsible for the improvements in special needs ride times, and will continue to positively influence ride times in the future:

As outlined in the Student Transportation Action Plan

- Student Transportation Services involvement in the Special Needs Assisted Placement (SNAP) process has resulted in a more informed placement process for students travelling to District centres.

- Continued collaboration with Leadership Services has resulted in identification of exceptionally long ride times and resolution where possible.
- Special needs transportation zones will continue to be reviewed and amended as needed.
- Student Transportation Services has been involved in the Sector Review process and discussions around program distribution to provide input as needed.
- Student Transportation Services continues to increase accountability with contract carriers and will work to ensure greater accuracy in reporting and monitoring ride times.

Additional Elements Associated with Improved Ride Times

- The ability of contract carriers to attract and retain drivers has improved greatly over the past 2 years.
- Students transitioned from curb service to fixed route have, in most cases, experienced an improvement in ride times. Additional movement of students to alternate forms of transportation where appropriate in the future will likely continue this trend.
- Student Transportation has continued to monitor and enforce the District's position of zero-tolerance for missed instructional minutes. In instances where program scheduling has conflicted with proposed transportation arrangements, the responsibility to alter services has fallen exclusively on the carrier.

Student Transportation Services continues to improve the ability to monitor and react to late buses. Outside of school start up in September, late bus incidents were most common during December 2009 and January 2010. The extreme cold during that time was a significant obstacle to timely operations, but there were also incidents that were preventable and required direct attention. After a number of efforts to remedy a recurring pattern of late buses, Student Transportation Services took action by reassigning routes in late January and mid-February. The result has been a significant improvement in all busing services with very few late buses reported since.

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Appendix I – Graduated Service Model
Appendix II – Collaborative Service Delivery – EPSB and ECSD
Attachment I – Transportation Action Plan

Appendix I

GRADUATED SERVICE MODEL

Background

A pilot of the Graduated Service Model will be conducted on the new ASAP schools for the 2010/2011 school year. Following a review of the pilot project, Student Transportation Services may proceed with a recommendation to implement the model across the District.

The basic premise for the Graduated Service Model is a differentiation of service between students residing further than 2.4 km from their school, and students residing inside the 2.4 km walk distance. The incorporation of the 2.4 km boundary is aligned with the School Act and will serve as a partial basis for future provincial funding. In order to determine the location of the 2.4 km threshold, Student Transportation Services will employ the neighbourhood walk boundary as generated by the mapping software used in the department.

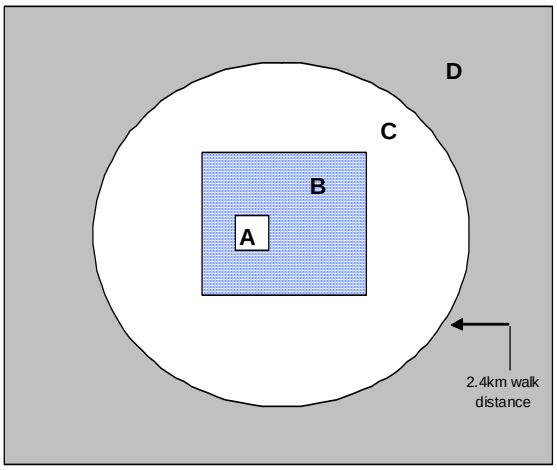
Implementation

The Model will retain the current neighbourhood approach for determining access to transportation services. As a result, the Graduated Service Model will allow for continued support of the District of Choice philosophy, and minimize the impact on existing riders by continuing transportation services to alternative programs approved by the Superintendent. Students will be able to access transportation services if their permanent resident address is outside a school's neighbourhood walk boundary, yet still within a Program Attendance Boundary and Transportation Service Area.

An important component of the Model is the 2.4 km walk distance perimeter. Students residing inside the 2.4 km walk distance will access yellow bus service at centralized stop locations within the neighbourhood. Walk distances to stops will increase modestly, more closely resembling the ETS service model. Depending on the size of the neighbourhood, the number of stops will range from 1 to 3 per community. For students residing outside the 2.4 km boundary, a current service standard will remain as outlined on the Student Transportation website and in the Student Transportation Services Handbook.

The following diagram provides a graphic description of the Graduated Service Model:

LEGEND	
Area **A**	School
Area **B**	Neighbourhood attendance area (walk boundary)
Area **C**	Outside walk boundary, but within 2.4 km
Area **D**	Beyond 2.4 km, but still with in transportation service area



Students will be accommodated for transportation based on distance from the school (A). The criteria for access will remain consistent with the current model, in that students residing outside the neighbourhood walk boundary (B) will receive transportation. For students with a permanent resident address inside of a 2.4 walk distance from the school (C), service standards will utilize centralized stops, with a set number of stops determined for each neighbourhood. Stops will be positioned on main roads, with the number of stops dependent upon the size and road configuration within each community. For students with resident addresses outside the 2.4 km walk distance (line between C and D), service will remain at current design standards. Students must reside within area (D) the attendance area (for designated-receiving students) or the Transportation Service Area (students attending both alternative language programs and programs of choice).

Note: The pilot program based on the Graduated Service Model will not include a corresponding change to the transportation fee structure for 2010 -2011. A revision to the fee structure will be required as part of the Graduated Service Model in the future, in conjunction with revisions to the Provincial funding formula Fee categories will take grade level, program and provincial distance criteria (2.4 km) into account. Students residing inside the 2.4 km walk distance, or not attending their designated school, will pay a higher fee. Maps clearly indicating households on either side of the 2.4 km boundary will be produced and distributed to schools to assist with the sale of bus passes.

Rationale

Implementation of the Graduated Service Model as a pilot project will create an opportunity to assess the service delivery model for potential District-wide application. A number of benefits for students and schools, as well as systemic efficiencies are expected through the implementation of the Graduated Service Model.

- Increased clarity and district equality in service levels
- Flexibility in service design based on the statutory obligation to transport students
- Ride times will be minimized with the use of centralized stops
- Creates a simplified user fee schedule that aligns bus pass fees with provincial eligibility (If implemented, based on changes to Provincial funding)
- The model assists with Alberta Education reporting and district awareness pertaining to provincial funding model
- Distance boundary portion of the model is easier to maintain than a fluctuating neighbourhood boundary
- Centralized stops will result in more students congregating at bus stops, thereby increasing safety
- The model resulted in feedback from some parents noting their appreciation of an attempt to bridge provincial criteria and a service delivery model
- Programs of choice, although unfunded under the proposed new funding model, will not be affected by the Graduated Service pilot project

Appendix II

COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY – EPSB and ECSD

Rationale and Background Information

This pilot project arises from the desire by Trustees and Senior Administration at Edmonton Public School Board and Edmonton Catholic School District to find efficiencies in transportation where schools and transportation service areas overlap. Collaborative research by both Boards' Student Transportation Departments has resulted in the development of a pilot project involving ASAP schools and programs where savings in the number of buses used, will be realized. Both jurisdictions determined student safety and quality service delivery to be critical prerequisites of any collaborative service proposal.

Implementation

The schools most suited to this pilot project have been identified as Johnny Bright (EPSB) and Monsignor Fee Otterson (ECSD). Conditions that resulted in the identification of John Bright and Monsignor Fee Otterson as strong candidates for collaborative service delivery included proximity, expected ridership, density of student numbers and flexibility in hours of operation because of a September 2010 opening. The neighbourhoods served would be similar for each school.

The collaboration will allow for:

- A system of double runs to be implemented, whereby the students from one Board would be picked up and transported to their appropriate school, followed by students from the next Board then being picked up and transported to their school
- A total of four buses to be used, with costs shared between Boards, allowing for overall savings to EPSB of up to three buses
- A 30 minute staggered bell time between the two schools would be required to allow for transport time
- An additional 15 minutes of supervision would be required at the school with first drop off and/or last pickup
- Each Board's students would be segregated, eliminating confusion regarding differences in fees, stop/service design, behavior management and grades (EPSB K to 6; ECSD K to8)
- Coordination of centralized stops between both boards, within 2.4Km boundary and neighbourhood walk boundaries, will be required to maximize time savings for double runs;
- A pilot of this nature would be ideal to leverage in terms of cost sharing regarding projects such as GPS, Smart Cards, etc
- A tight operations schedule may be adversely impacted by breakdowns, accidents, or delays due to weather extremes
- Only one carrier will be used in order to minimize late buses, missed pickups and communication mishaps

Action Required

Student Transportation Services:

- Agreement in principle with Edmonton Catholic School District
- Amendment to carrier contract and awarding to single carrier
- Route design

Principal – Johnny Bright School

- Institution of 15 minute supervision before AM bell and after PM bell
- Adjustments to School Hours of Operation, to accommodate double runs

Edmonton Public Schools
Transportation Action Plan

Final Report

May, 2010

Table of Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

As a follow-up to the October 2009 Stantec Service Review, Student Transportation respectfully submits the Transportation Action Plan. The Action Plan is responsive to the Stantec recommendations, but also offers additional detail and clarity in several areas. The recommendations contained in the Action Plan are designed to ensure that EPSB students of receive safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation services.

The parameters of the Transportation Action Plan mirror those articulated by the Superintendent as part of the Central Review: Edmonton Public is a District of Choice, site-based decision making will remain intact, and funding resources are expected to be reduced.

The formation of the Transportation Action Plan has involved extensive engagement efforts by a number of stakeholders. A group of sixteen principals and nine Central staff have been involved in a series of meetings aimed at obtaining opinions and a wide range of perspectives relating to the concepts being considered. Parental engagement involved four unique focus groups moderated by an external consultant. The District's carrier contractors were also engaged through a series of one-on-one meetings, with feedback and insights collected from each.

The Transportation Action Plan provides:

- rationale for the work;
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- a discussion about an appropriate provision of service for different student groups;
- service delivery design standards;
- performance monitoring;
- and suggested systemic revisions.

Density of Demand

The discussion around density of demand in Sections 4.0 and 6.1.2 highlights a fundamental systemic challenge that Student Transportation is confronted with as programming continues to diversify across the District. In many instances, an ideal design for transportation works in opposition to a desired model for program delivery. The challenge created by this juxtaposition is compounded by a proposed Provincial transportation funding model that does not recognize programs of choice; a concept clearly supported by Alberta Education in the School Act. The absence of funding for students residing within 2.4 km of their designated school also means that any effort to distribute District programs amongst neighbourhood schools would result in the provision of unfunded transportation supports or a removal of services. Student Transportation is not advocating for any change to the District of Choice model in favour of efficient transportation, but is tasked with bridging the gap that exists. The extent to which the gap is

bridged will directly impact the Transportation budget. In addition to budget impacts, extended student ride times are the direct result of lengthy routes, designed to address the issue of low student density.

Current and Proposed Funding

In terms of funding, Student Transportation faces serious challenges with the probability that proposed changes to the existing Block Grant funding model will take place with the introduction of the new Alberta Urban and Metro Urban Special Student Transportation Funding formulae. Areas of particular concern are the significant reductions in funding that will highlight the discrepancy between transportation costs and funding available for:

- special needs (curb service)
- early education students which are PUF funded
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The District must work to ensure that students are afforded an appropriate level of service that aligns with their needs, yet is supported through the Provincial funding process. Sections 5.1.1, 7.1.1, and 7.1.2 also address the need to employ District-wide criteria to assist principals in determining what type of transportation service a student should apply for: fixed route yellow bus, special needs curb service busing, parent provided transportation, ETS, or no service at all.

The introduction of eligibility into the EPSB transportation delivery model represents a paradigm shift in the District's approach to determining ridership. As noted, both fixed route and special needs busing will be impacted by the inclusion of an eligibility concept. For the fixed route system, the Graduated Service Model presented in Section 6.1.3 is designed to bridge the current neighbourhood approach to determining ridership with the proposed provincial eligibility based on distance. The model will allow the current transportation system to evolve based on funding criteria and will improve sustainability in future years.

New Initiatives

Student Transportation will implement the Graduated Service Model (Section 6.1.3 and Appendix 5) as a pilot program for ASAP schools in 2010-2011. The model will provide yellow bus service to elementary students residing in accordance with the School Act. Students residing within the 2.4 km walk distance will access transportation through a series of centralized stops due to their ineligibility for provincial funding.

A second concurrent pilot project will involve a collaborative service delivery model between Edmonton Public School District's Johnny Bright School, and Edmonton Catholic School Board's Monsignor Fee Otterson School (Section 6.1.4). A system of double runs will be implemented whereby the hours of operation are adjusted to allow the same buses to pick up one Board's students, followed by the next Board's students.

Many additional initiatives related to the Transportation Action Plan have already been implemented during the course of the 2009/2010 school year. A complete list of initiatives planned for implementation over the next three years is included in Appendix 1 of the Transportation Action Plan. The most significant efforts undertaken during this school year include:

- A number of revisions to the manner in which data is tracked and categorized within Student Transportation
- The alignment of the special needs transportation application process with the Special Needs Assisted Placement (SNAP) process
- A continued gradual shift of mild and moderate special needs students from curb service to fixed route busing
- Increased monitoring and accountability with contract carriers due to an improved labour market. More drivers able to work means increased competition amongst our contract carrier partners

Throughout the Transportation Action Plan, references to the input received through engagement efforts will be noted. Student Transportation responses to the Stantec Recommendations are presented at the end of each section.

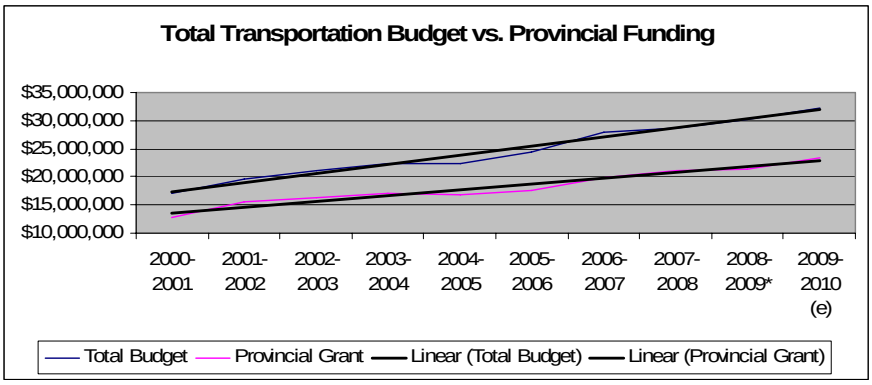
2.0 Rationale

The basis for the Transportation Action Plan is to implement constructive systemic revisions founded on principles of safe, fair, sustainable student transportation. Although a key consideration, proposed changes to provincial funding are not the primary motivation for suggested courses of action. Rationale for the Transportation Action Plan is captured very effectively in *Change Leadership*: *A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools*.

- Reaction transforms to purpose and focus. The organizational tendencies of elevating appropriate responsiveness to a position of reaction results in a significant drift in system design over time. Student Transportation's core business of safe efficient transportation depends on achieving balance between accommodating individual needs while not allowing District priorities to be diluted to the point of inefficiency.

- Compliance transforms to engagement. The Student Transportation staff is committed to avoiding compliant bureaucratic patterns. In an effort to achieve authentic and sustainable improvements, engagement and critical thinking will continue to be priorities so that new and creative transportation solutions are realized for all Edmonton Public students.

Notwithstanding the fundamentals noted, the relationship between provincial funding and the total costs associated with the EPSB transportation delivery model must ultimately be addressed. A historical comparison of the gap between funding levels and the total budget for



transportation services reveals a widening gap over the past decade. In short, user fees required to cover operating costs not included in the provincial grant have increased from approximately 20% of a $20 Million budget to approximately 30% of a $30 Million budget during that time. If changes to the District's service delivery model are not undertaken, transportation services will become cost prohibitive for a large number of EPSB families in the very near future.

3.0 Summary of Engagement Efforts

EPSB Staff

A number of individual meetings and larger group discussions were held to gain a range of perspectives from principals and central decision unit leaders regarding concepts contained within the Transportation Action Plan.

Principal participants represented a cross-section of programs, geographic locations, and grade levels. The principals involved represented approximately 40% of the District's alternative programs and 70% of the district centre special needs programs. Early Education, Kindergarten, and grades one to twelve were captured by the principal group's diversity of programming backgrounds.

Leaders from central decision units including Leadership Services, Programs, Planning, and Budget Services joined the principal group to ensure that a central perspective was brought to the small and large group discussions. Each of the central decision units collaborate with Student Transportation regularly in a variety of contexts, from the grant application process, to location of programs, to new initiatives, or the resolution of various complex student placements.

Frequently expressed opinions noted during discussions related to:

- Support for additional consultation with Student Transportation regarding items such as hours of operation and coordinated non-operational days in order to realize increased efficiency with transportation.

- An expectation that communication is critical in the successful implementation of any new initiatives.

- A common belief that redistribution of transportation resources is appropriate.

Parents

Through the expertise of an external consultant, four parent focus groups were conducted in order to obtain parental input and perspective. Johnston Consulting was contracted to advise on the assembly of parent groups, moderate the focus group sessions, and compile a final report. Parents were grouped according to the programs attended by their children; designated-receiving students enrolled in regular programs, kindergarten and early education, special needs, and alternative programs. In addition, a screening tool utilized during the recruitment of focus group participants helped to ensure a sample of socio-economic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, and resident addresses from across the City.

Of the forty confirmed attendees for the four groups, approximately half attended the focus group evenings. In the opinion of the moderator, lack of parental participation in the focus groups may allude to a degree of apathy generally around transportation issues. A written comment from the moderator stated:

It was challenging to recruit parents for this project. Recruiters noted a lack of interest in participating in this project. As well, focus group attendance rates were less than 50%. For similar projects, it is reasonable to expect 80 to 90% show rates. This may be an indication of overall apathy towards student transportation issues and may foreshadow challenges with effective communication. Parents may have little interest in communications about student transportation until it impacts them personally.

Opinions expressed during the focus groups frequently related to:

- Parents tend not to delineate between carrier performance, Provincial initiatives, and the work of Student Transportation. Dissatisfaction with carrier performance may be reflected as a level of dissatisfaction with the entire system.

- The Province's proposed eligibility formula based on a 2.4 kilometre walk distance is, "…*perceived to be inadequate and poorly suited to current realities*".

- The potential of a late bus impacts the tolerance for walk distances to bus stops. Unless the uncertainty of buses being on time is dealt with, the idea of an increased walk distance to bus stops would not be well received.

Carriers

Contract carriers were engaged through a series of one-on-one meetings. All four carriers that are currently under contract with Edmonton Public Schools were asked to provide feedback on current Student Transportation practices and forward opinions on potential new initiatives.

Frequently expressed opinions noted during the carrier engagement meetings related to:

- Support for the potential implementation of GPS and / or related technologies
- Carrier support for additional inservicing of their driver groups by EPSB personnel. Although already integrated into their training practices, additional information on areas such as student management and special needs would be valuable
- Appreciation of the historical communication and collaboration with Student Transportation
- Increased efficiencies with ride times anticipated if a greater degree of movement possible in School Hours of Operation

Throughout the Transportation Action Plan, more specific references to input received as a result of the various engagement efforts will be noted in relation to concepts being reviewed.

4.0 Density of Demand

Student Transportation's most significant challenge in sustaining an efficient transportation system is the low density of demand. Comments offered in the parental engagement revealed that buses with small loads are noticed:

In our little community, I see up to 8 yellow buses in the morning. They are almost empty. Couldn't there be a way to coordinate that a little better?

The three fundamental factors that directly impact the Density of Demand principle include:

- Density of Demand (population density / ridership concentrations)
    - Number of sites
    - Student loads
    - Distance

Edmonton has one of the lowest population densities of any city in North America. According to 2006 Canadian census data, Edmonton is ranked 104th out of Canadian municipalities, behind centres such as St. Albert, Regina, Calgary, Red Deer and Saskatoon. From the perspective of transportation services, the fact that EPSB is a District of Choice and the variety of program options offered by the District exacerbate the already fragmented demand. Low population density is further diluted when concentrations of riders are further spread out amongst a large number of sites. The result is increased route distances and lower loads for each bus, resulting in increased operating costs and extended ride times.

For the 2009/2010 school year, Edmonton Public loads average 36 (on 72 passenger buses), with loads that range from 2-70. Approximately 28% of the District's fixed route buses have daily loads under 20, and 9% have fewer than 10 riders. Situations where yellow bus support exceeds the District's criteria will be reviewed by Student Transportation during 2010-2011. Large Transportation Service Areas that serve very few students, individual classes receiving support in advance of being approved programs, and yellow bus service for junior / senior high students attending programs of choice are situations that require further review.

More specific effects of program diversity will be expanded upon in Section 6.1.2.

ETS Planning Study

The concept of demand density is not restricted to EPSB Student Transportation. A related ETS Study references a number of the same challenges. In May, 2008, Entra Consultants published the *ETS Ridership Growth Strategy and Planning Review*. The report listed a number of ongoing and emerging challenges for the transit system. The report specified:

Rapid growth in the City… Much of this growth, in both population and employment, is occurring on the periphery of the existing urban area, and in lower density urban form. Longer trip distances and lower density development present a significant challenge to transit service efficiency and promotes auto dependency.

The report continues by comparing the population densities of major urban centres across Canada that support transit systems. Edmonton is identified as last in the cities noted, behind Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Edmonton's rapid geographic expansion is making effective service to outlying areas increasingly difficult, "…*either ridership (and revenue) performance in these areas will suffer as transit riders are less attracted to longer, slower urban trips, or service efficiency will decline*."

In a similar vein as the diversity of programming accommodated by Student Transportation, the ETS report notes that a recent shift towards diverse and scattered employment patterns presents a further challenge. Another parallel with Student Transportation exists with an acknowledgement that a number of improvements reside in matters that are outside the transit system's direct sphere of influence:

The network must be supported by a range of measures, often not within the control of the transit service. These include …limits to sprawl, generally, and developments that promote reduced travel and increased transit use.

Ultimately, Edmonton Transit's struggle to maintain an efficient delivery model is reflected in the current aim to recover only 42.8% of its costs, and a goal of increasing cost recovery to 45.1% within five years.

EPSB Comparison with Peer Systems

Related to the discussion around density of demand, a comparison of the EPSB fixed route system with the other three metro jurisdictions in the Province indicates a further example of the effect of diversified service.

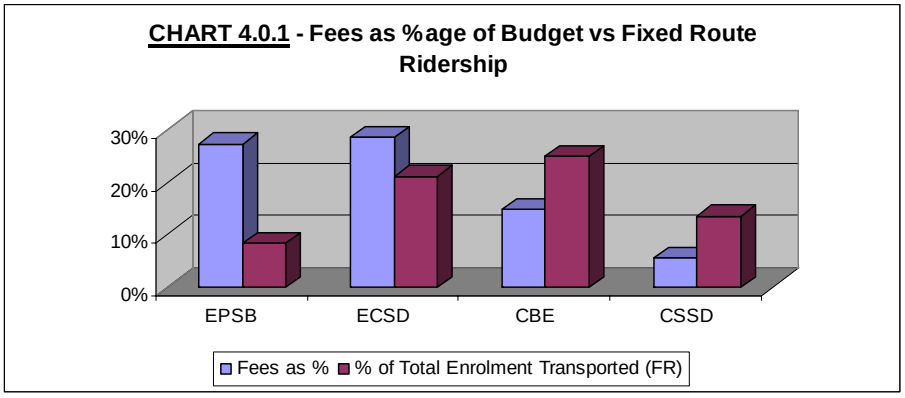


Chart 4.0.1 indicates that a significant degree of funding in the form of transportation fees collected from parents is required over and above the provincial grant for both EPSB and Edmonton Catholic Schools (ECSD). The two Calgary jurisdictions (CBE – Calgary Board of Education and CSSD – Calgary Separate School District) do not rely on fees to the same extent to augment provincial funding. The specific system design elements that result in the Calgary Boards relying less on fees are related to the cost of services provided in addition to fixed route busing (discussed further in Sections 5.1.1, 7.1.1, and 7.1.2) and the ability to create a degree of density with their fixed route service as seen in the second Chart – 4.0.2.

Chart 4.0.2 provides an overview of the relationship between the number of sites serviced by EPSB fixed route service and the average number of students transported to each site. EPSB has the second most sites serviced, behind Calgary Board of Education, yet the fewest students transported to each site. At an average of 63.2 fixed route students transported to each school, EPSB is challenged by a density of demand that is approximately 50% of that which the Calgary Board of Education experiences at 131.6 students per site.

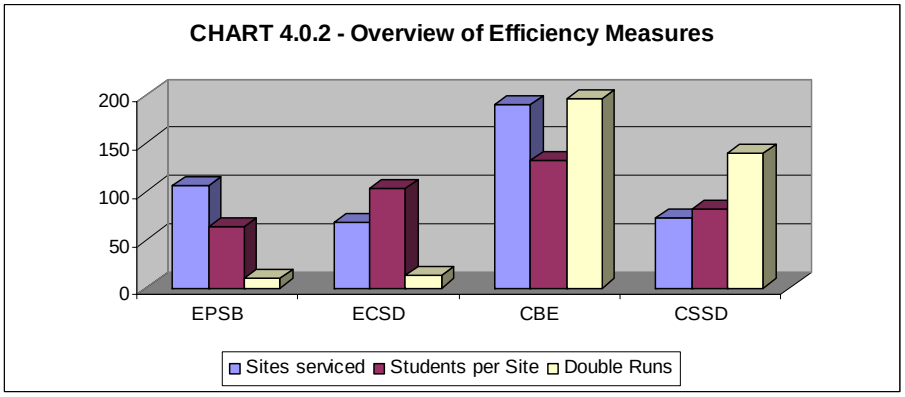


Chart 4.0.2 also reveals the effectiveness of double runs. Double runs are situations in which a bus is able to run a fixed route, deliver a group of students to their school, and then perform a

second route immediately following in which a different group of students are collected and delivered to their school. Efficiency is derived through the ability of the carrier to perform two or more routes within the three hour window contemplated in the contract price of the bus for each day. The more students collected in a short distance, the more plausible and effective the double run concept is. For EPSB routes, the distance covered in order to accommodate widespread attendance at alternative programs or new communities without schools results in little opportunity for double runs due to drive times. Double runs could, however, be accommodated to a greater extent within EPSB and will be discussed furthering Section 10.1.3.

5.0 Provincial Funding and Eligibility

Background

As noted previously in the Stantec Service Review, Alberta Education is proposing to change the funding formula for transportation in the near future (discussed further in Section 5.1.1). Based on recent conversations between the Alberta Education and the four metro boards in Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton Boards), additional meetings aimed at addressing several concerns raised by the school jurisdictions are expected in Spring, 2010. Alberta Education has indicated that the funding model for the 2010-2011 school year will continue to be the current "Block" formula. When the new funding format takes effect, significant implications on both curb and fixed-route services are expected to take place.

5.1.1 Challenges Associated with the Proposed Funding Model

1. Regular Transportation (Fixed-route)

Currently, Student Transportation receives funding through a formula known as the Metro Urban "block" Funding Formula. The "block" formula is used for the four metro boards in Alberta: Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Calgary Board of Education, and Calgary Catholic Schools. The urban metro block grant is based on a calculation to estimate the number of eligible riders that results from total enrolment. A number of factors are taken into consideration: a ratio to estimate the eligible enrolment, the number of and enrolment in schools at each division, and residential area. As new schools are opened, the funding decreases based on the assumption that fewer students will need to be transported.

Alberta Education is proposing a shift to the Urban Transportation Funding Formula (Section 1.27 in the 2010-2011 Funding Manual), which would represent a significant shift in philosophy to the "eligibility" of individual riders. Two primary criteria will be in place to determine eligibility:

- Students must attend their designated school, and
- A student's permanent resident address must be 2.4 km or greater from the designated school.

The provincial Funding Manual is clear that a “designated school” can be based on neighbourhood (community school), alternative language instruction (bi-lingual or immersion), or special needs programming. Programs of choice (such as Cogito, Logos, Sports Alternative, etc.) are not considered to be programs that students can be “designated” to.

Table 5.1

Fixed Route Busing	Current Ridership	2.4km and Desig. School	% of current
Kindergarten	1081	546	51%
Grades 1-3	2659	1401	53%
Grades 4-6	2390	1219	51%
Grades 7-9	574	417	73%
Grades 10-12	21	21	100%
Total Regular	**6725**	**3604**	**54%**

When applying these criteria against 2009/2010 Edmonton Public ridership data, two concepts become evident:

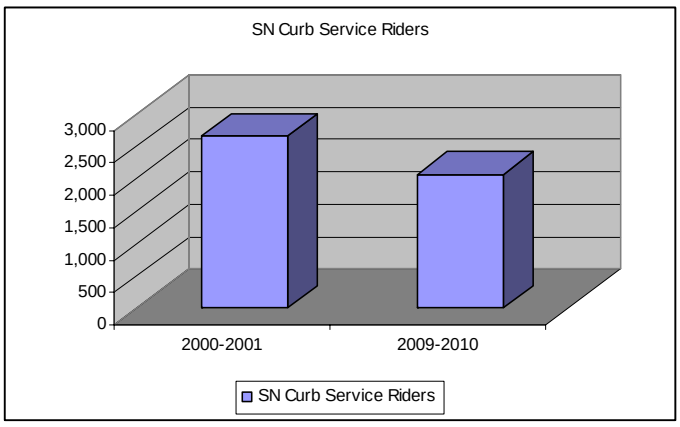
1. Approximately 46% of the current ridership on yellow bus would be considered ineligible for transportation.

2. When individual funding rates are combined with fees, yellow buses would require approximately 47-50 riders in order to cover the current daily carrier rates. 2009 average student loads are 36 students per bus.

An additional aspect that requires further investigation and dialogue with Alberta Education is a recently-introduced distance weighting calculation as part of the 2010-2011 Funding Manual. Funding unit rates for individual students will be affected by the distance of their residence from their designated school. Additional detail on current yellow bus ridership and the impact of the proposed provincial eligibility will be discussed in Section 6.1.2.

2. Special Needs Transportation (Curb Service)

A significant impact on funding will result from an adjustment to special needs transportation. Under the block grant, Edmonton Public Schools’ profile results in an estimation of special needs (curb service) riders that differs significantly from the projected number that will be considered eligible under the proposed new formula. The shift towards “eligibility” will require Edmonton Public to demonstrate that students receiving curb service are

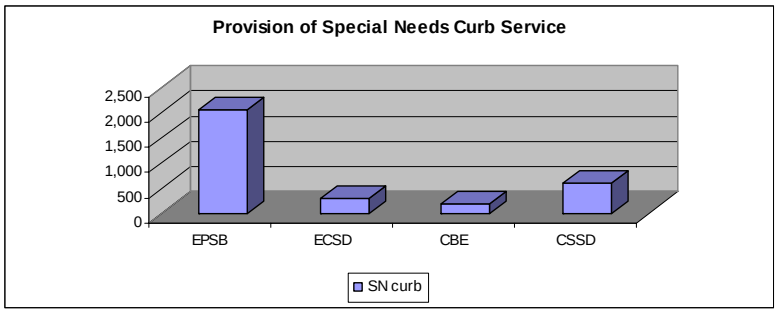


unable to access regular transportation (fixed-route) due to the severity of their disability. The Province is indicating that special needs codings will no longer be the primary consideration when determining curb service funding. In that regard, Edmonton Public will require a set of criteria in order to assist principals in the determination of curb service provision for special needs students. A consistent interpretation of "eligibility" for curb service will need to be applied across the District.

Under the current district profile in the block grant, funding for special needs curb service totals approximately $4.7M, compared to budgeted costs of approximately $7.5M. The current funding is based on a profile estimation of 1,647 curb service riders. Approximately 2,058 students currently access special needs curb service, which is a decrease of approximately 599 riders since the 2000/2001 school year. Discussions with Alberta Education indicate that less than 1000 students may be considered eligible under the proposed funding format change.

Under provincial regulations students coded as severe and eligible for the curb service grant may not be transported on the same bus that transports students being claimed for the regular transportation grant (discussed in Section 5.1.2).

Further to the comparisons drawn between the four Alberta metro jurisdictions (Section 4.0), the following chart examines the provision of Special Needs curb service by the two Edmonton and two Calgary school Districts.



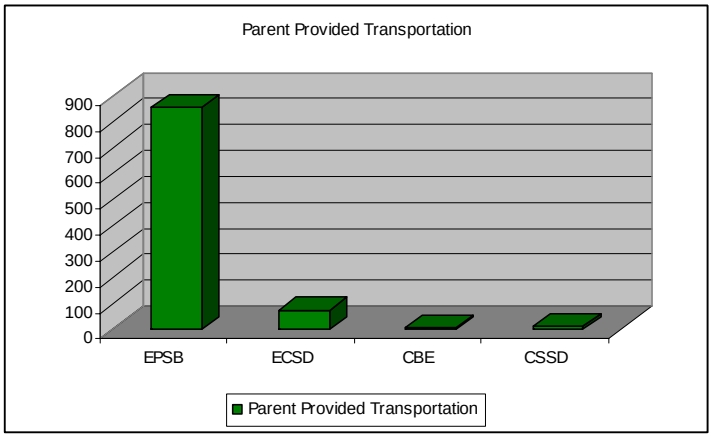
The chart illustrates that the provision of curb service contributes to the higher percentage of transportation fees collected by EPSB. With 2,058 students accessing special needs curb service, EPSB is significantly above the other jurisdictions in special needs curb service expenditures. Special Needs curb service is approximately triple the cost of fixed route service, based on the 2009-2010 average fixed route student loads.

Section 7.1.1 will review the future provision of Special Need Curb Service.

3. Parent-Provided Transportation

Alberta Education indicates that Parent Provided transportation will only be funded when it can be demonstrated that a student is unable to access any other form of transportation offered by the District. Parent Provided will be funded at the regular transportation funding rate, unless it can be demonstrated that a special needs rate is warranted due to the nature of the disability or delay. At the regular transportation rate, current EPSB parent-provided agreements would only be funded to about 25%. As of September 30, 2009, when the 2009/2010 grant data was

compiled, only 360 out of the 770 students receiving Parent Provided transportation reimbursements were severe special needs and likely to fit the Province's definition of requiring special transportation. As the District's funding format for special needs curb service shifts away from the block grant, a reduction in the number of students funded at the special needs rate for Parent Provided transportation is expected.



Currently, there are 868 Parent Provided agreements in place. The other metro jurisdictions depicted in the above graph each have between 5 and 72 Parent Provided transportation agreements.

Section 7.1.3 will review the future provision of Parent Provided Transportation.

4. Edmonton Transit Service

ETS service is an important component of the EPSB transportation model. Section 7.1.4 will discuss the important role ETS assumes as students transition from yellow bus services and work towards independence. A recent revision to the proposed grant formula pertaining to students identified as utilizing transit services in an urban jurisdiction will have a serious impact on the overall transportation grant for the District.

Through a distance weighting formula, students that access ETS will receive a lower unit rate than students being transported on yellow bus. Alberta Education rationalizes the change by noting higher student loads on transit buses. The assumed logic is related to a perceived lower cost to transport given the higher transit rider loads. However, the cost of an ETS pass is completely unrelated to any load or distance factor experienced by ETS. Any decrease in funding unit rates for ETS riders would simply act to reduce the overall grant received from Alberta Education and further increase the potential deficit under the new funding formula.

EPSB has approximately 16,500 ETS riders each month. Of those, approximately 11,000 will be considered eligible once the funding model changes. Based on the projected reduction to each eligible student, the loss in funding resulting from the revised ETS unit rates would be nearly $1M.

5. New (ASAP) Schools for 2010 – 2011

The opening of the ASAP schools will have an impact on transportation funding regardless of the provincial funding model in place. Under the current block funding model, the block grant is expected to be significantly reduced as a result of the new schools, based on an assumption

that fewer students will require transportation. When the Province moves to a model of funding based on eligibility, the location of the ASAP schools will result in approximately 3,000 students being considered ineligible due to their permanent resident address being within 2.4 km of their newly-designated school. Under the new formula, a loss of 3,000 eligible students will equate to a reduction of approximately $1.5M in funding. Parental demand for service remains high in the ASAP school areas. Student Transportation will launch a pilot project centred around the Graduated Service Model for the ASAP school communities (Section 6.1.3) that strives to balance the possible funding challenge with the services being afforded to other schools in the City.

5. Summary

A number of current systemic challenges will be further complicated by the proposed new funding model. The combined increased deficit spending on Special Needs curb service and Parent Provided transportation may be significant. Section 6.0 will present proposed eligibility models for fixed route busing that attempt to accommodate expected changes in the funding model and guard against future impacts on service provided to eligible riders. A further diversification of service and parental expectations for transportation will need to be balanced against an attempt to increase consistent levels of service and the impact of proposed revisions to funding.

5.1.2 Continued Engagement Efforts with Alberta Education

Student Transportation is engaged in ongoing dialogue with Alberta Education Transportation Department. In order to ensure an accurate 2009 grant application, several meetings were held during the application process. Additional feedback was received from the Province following the submission.

Several outstanding concerns with the proposed grant formula are shared by the four metro jurisdictions. As a result, a formal meeting between the metro Boards and Alberta Education officials was held on February 9, 2010.

The concerns of the metro Boards can be categorized into four main areas:

- The criteria for regular transportation eligibility noted in Section 5.1.1 are seen as unrealistic and inconsistent. The 2.4 km distance criteria set in 1906 is, as noted by both EPSB parents and staff during engagement efforts, is not considered appropriate in a modern urban setting. Additionally, the requirement to attend a designated school seems to contrast the Province's allowances for choice in the School Act. Alberta Education's position appears to be that choice is not without additional cost. The School Act may reopen, meaning additional opportunities for Boards to offer input.

- The provision of service to special needs students has two distinct challenges. The absence of criteria from the Province to determine eligibility for severe transportation funding will require the metro jurisdictions to generate their own. Assurances are

required that the professional judgment of each Board will be respected and funding will be provided for those students deemed in need of curb service. A second concern is based in the metro jurisdictions' efforts to be efficient and inclusive with service provision to special needs students. For students requiring severe transportation, increased funding will be revoked if service is combined with students accessing regular transportation. Retrofitting 72 passenger buses with wheelchair lifts and accommodating the transportation needs for both severe and regular students in the same area will increase efficiency and be more inclusive, yet will result in a loss of funding for the students with severe transportation needs.

- Kindergarten Noon service is an unfunded transportation service provided by all four metro boards. Alberta Education views half day kindergarten in the same vein as programs of choice. Edmonton Public spends approximately $1.5M per year on noon curb service, with the morning and after school components being accommodated by leveraging the fixed-route system. No fees are collected from Kindergarten students to offset costs.

- As a result of factors such as community size, traffic congestion, program location, and rapid suburban growth, ride times continue to be a significant challenge for all metro boards. With the proposed funding formula being premised on a 2.4 km distance criteria, the unique challenges related to traffic movements in a metro setting fail to be recognized. Metro jurisdictions strive to keep ride times under 60 minutes, yet are forced to compromise efficiency through reduced loads in order to do so. All four metro boards noted that parental demands continue to increase. Costs continue to increase and relative funding does not, meaning that parents continue to pay the difference through fees charged by the boards.

An additional concern that has surfaced since the February conference is the funding of ETS riders as noted in Section 5.1.1. This concern will be added to the agenda of discussion points with Alberta Education.

As a result of the February 9 meeting, Alberta Education officials assured the metro boards that the information gathered will move to the next level of authority for discussion. Solutions that balance the needs of the province and the jurisdictions will be sought through additional meetings. A plan exists for a subsequent meeting prior to the end of May, 2010. The Province is indicating that the block grant formula will remain in effect for the 2010/2011 school year.

RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.1.6	Ensure identification of fee revenue spent on unfunded transportation	Sections 4.0 and 5.1.1 address factors that impact the need for transportation fees. Provincial funding accounts for approximately 65%-70% of the total

		Transportation budget, with fee revenue making up the difference. A 10-year trend line comparing provincial funding and user fees is included in Section 2.0. In general terms, fees have increased from being approximately 20% of a $20 Million budget to approximately 30% of a $30 Million budget since 2000-2001.
10.2.2	Adopt provincial coding for special needs transportation	Student Transportation supports a coding system that lends to improved programming for students within the district. Convenient correlation with provincial transportation codes are not necessarily a priority. Budget Services extremely valuable resource in the correlation of codes. Codes may be less critical in communication with Province, as the new grant application requires proof that students require curb service, independent of educational coding.
10.3.1	Involvement in review of Education Act	Student Transportation will provide the Superintendent with specific feedback pertaining to the Education Act. Specifically, recommendations will include the following: 1. Section 51(2) "The Board is deemed to have complied with subsection (1) when transportation is provided on a route that is not more than 2.4 km from the residence of the student". Proposed rewording would need to reflect that 2.4 km seriously limits eligibility in a metro setting given the condensed nature of school buildings. 2. The lack of funding proposed for programs of choice seems inconsistent with the funding of transportation for charter schools. Although not specifically noted in the Act or subordinate Regulations, charter schools are provided with transportation funding under Section 1.24 of the Alberta Education Funding Manual. Students attending Charter Schools are deemed eligible if they reside 2.4 km away. Implicit in that, any

		educational program or philosophy offered as part of the charter (ie. Programs of choice) is supported with provincially-funded transportation for eligible students.
10.4.6	Annual yellow bus pass sales only	Student Transportation does not support the sale of annual passes only. The financial hardship placed on families by requiring the initial lump sum payment would, in some cases, be onerous if mandated. The sale of annual passes increased in 2009-2010.
10.5.1	Receiving schools designated based on 2.4 km distances from student residences	Student Transportation will **not** advocate for the designation of schools based on adherence to the proposed Provincial eligibility criteria of 2.4km.
10.6.1	Board engage Province on matters relating to proposed revisions to funding formula	Student Transportation engaged in frequent discussions with the Province regarding challenges associated with the proposed funding formula. On February 9, 2010, a meeting between the four metro Boards (Edmonton and Calgary) and the Province furthered discussions about the proposed funding format and sought clarification on several key issues. Letters from the Superintendent and Board Chair will be drafted for correspondence with the Province on the District's behalf.

6.0 EPSB Eligibility

Background

The current EPSB model for fixed-route transportation "eligibility" is based on neighbourhood walk boundaries as created by Planning. Students residing within the neighbourhood where a school is located are expected to walk to school. For students residing in a neighbourhood where a school is not situated and ETS is not accessible, busing is provided to their "designated" school. Elementary students choosing to attend an alternative language program or program of choice outside their neighbourhood are also supported with busing, assuming

their resident address falls within the Transportation Service Area established by Student Transportation.

Because of the inconsistent positioning of school buildings within neighbourhoods, walk distances and busing distances vary greatly. The application of a fixed walk distance around school buildings will have a significant impact on the current ridership. A significant shift in both "eligible" students and schools receiving service will result.

6.1.1 Impact of Designated School and Distance as Isolated Factors

The information in Table 6.1.1 suggests the impact that both "designated school" and distance have on current yellow bus ridership:

Table 6.1.1

	A	B	C
Fixed Route Busing	Current Ridership	2.4km and Desig. School	2.4 km only
Eligible Riders	6725	3604	5028

When both designated school and the 2.4 km distance factors are combined to determine eligibility, only 3,604 of the current fixed route riders would be considered eligible. When the 2.4 km distance is considered in isolation, the number of riders considered eligible would increase to 5,028. There are two suggested figures that result from this comparison.

- The difference between column A and column C suggests that 1,697 riders will be ineligible based on a resident address within the 2.4 km walk distance.

- The difference between column C and column B suggests that 1,424 riders are likely to be students attending programs of choice (not including alternative language programs). This theory is supported by current rider reports that show approximately 1,635 students being transported to programs of choice. The reason for the subtle difference is likely that a small percentage of students live both 2.4 km from their designated school and also attend a program of choice that is located 2.4 km from their resident address. Those students would retain their transportation eligibility with Alberta Education.

6.1.2 Scenarios Involving Distance Criteria

A challenge for the current neighbourhood approach to transportation eligibility is that it is based on a concept that changes over time. The definition of neighbourhood school continues to evolve, as seen by the multiple communities being designated to the new ASAP schools and the historical re-designation of neighbourhoods to alternate schools as a result of closures. If transportation continues to observe the current neighbourhood walk boundary model, the potential exists for an increasing gap between funding that is based on an absolute value (distance) and riders the District accommodates. A second challenge with the neighbourhood

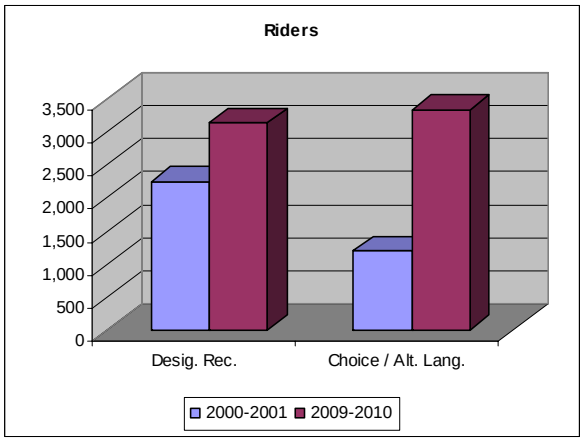
approach is that schools are not always located centrally within the neighbourhood attendance area. As such, walk distances to schools differ across the City.

Given the fluctuating nature of neighbourhoods, Student Transportation undertook several scenarios to determine the effect fixed distance criteria would have on current ridership and the number of buses required. Distances utilized in the scenarios included 1.8km (determined through a calculation of the current average maximum walk distance for neighbourhood walk boundaries), the provincial criteria of 2.4km, and 1.2km. Estimates were made as to the number of buses required and the number of students that would be considered eligible.

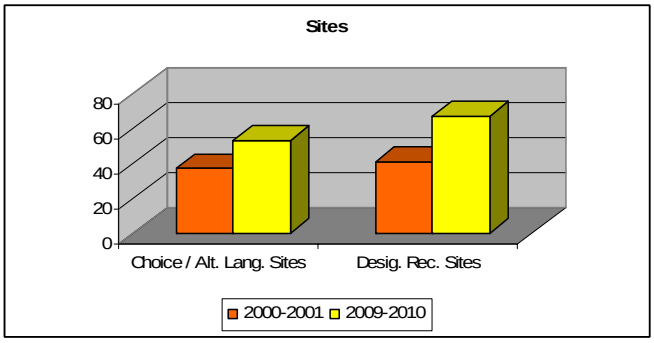
Regardless of the walk-out distance applied, an imbalance between ridership and buses resulted. The estimates in eligible fixed-route riders and number of buses are summarized below:

Table 6.1.2

Fixed Route Busing	Current Ridership	2.4km and Desig. School	2.4 km only	1.8 km only	1.2 km only
Eligible Riders	6725	3604	5028	5750	6393
Buses Required	170	136	136	170	202



The above results were scrutinized in order to understand why so many buses were retained even though eligible riders were significantly reduced. Ultimately, a return to the demand principle outlined in Section 4.0 lead to the conclusion that the transportation system is forced to accommodate land area and programs rather than student ridership. Regardless of the number of students being serviced, the allocation of resources is generally driven by the distances covered to collect students and the broad number of destinations serviced. The increasing land area of Edmonton, a related increase in the number of students being designated to a school outside their community due to new subdivision construction, and the increasing diversity of alternative programming are significant influences on the current service model design.



Over the past nine years, Edmonton Public total enrolment has decreased 1% from 80,793 in 2000/2001 to 79,472 in 2009/2010. During that same period, the total number of grade 1-12 students

accessing fixed-route yellow bus for transportation to either a receiving school (no school in their neighbourhood) or an alternative program (language or program of choice) has increased by 88% to 6,465. The number of sites these students are being transported to has also risen, with designated receiving sites having increased by 63% to 67 across the City, and Alternative Language / Programs of Choice sites having increased by 43% to 53 sites. The total number of designated receiving schools will remain fairly consistent next year, but public expectations for transportation services may increase depending on the proceedings related to school closure recommendations and the level of transportation expected to the ASAP schools (as referenced in Section 5.1.1). The number of special needs sites has remained relatively consistent. The current number of sites serviced, 149, represents a 3% increase since 2000-2001.

The additional service demands that result from geographically diverse program offerings are incorporated into existing service wherever possible. Without the ability to leverage existing service, providing the range of transportation service requested would not be possible. Students from a number of programs (excluding severe special needs) share bus service. It would be extremely difficult to separate riders that are eligible or ineligible according to provincial criteria. In that regard, Student Transportation is recommending a Graduated Service Model that continues to serve a broad range of programs within a common system. (See Section 6.1.3).

6.1.3 Proposed Eligibility Criteria

Graduated Service Model

The GSM will retain the current neighbourhood approach for determining access to transportation services. As a result, the GSM will allow for continued support of the District of Choice philosophy, and minimize the impact on existing riders by continuing transportation services to alternative programs approved by the Superintendent. Students will be able to access transportation services if their permanent resident address is outside a school's neighbourhood walk boundary, yet still within a Program Attendance Boundary and Transportation Service Area.

An important component of the GSM is the 2.4 km walk distance perimeter. Students residing inside the 2.4 km walk distance will access yellow bus service at centralized stop locations within the neighbourhood. Walk distances to stops will increase modestly, more closely resembling the ETS service model. Depending on the size of the neighbourhood, the number of stops will range from 1 to 3 per community. For students residing outside the 2.4 km boundary, a current service standard will remain as outlined on the Student Transportation website and in the Transportation Services Handbook.

The following diagram provides a graphic description of the Graduated Service Model:

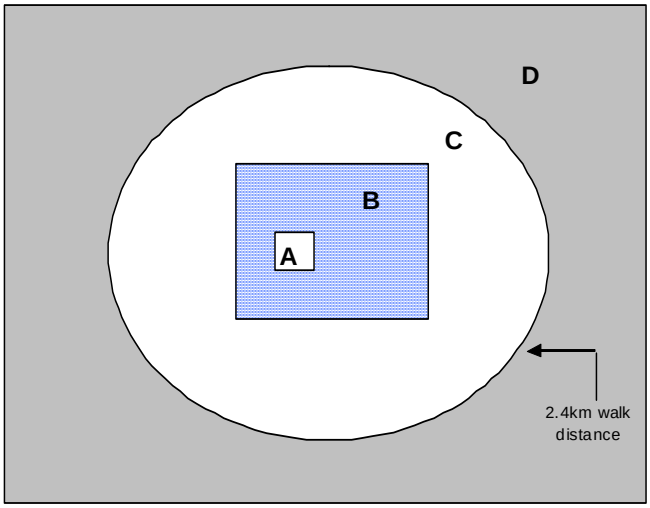


Figure 6.1.3 **LEGEND**	
Area **A**	School
Area **B**	Neighbourhood attendance area (walk boundary)
Area **C**	Outside walk boundary, but within 2.4 km
Area **D**	Beyond 2.4 km, but still within transportation service area

Students will be accommodated for transportation based on distance from the school (A). The critreria for access will remain consistent with the current model, in that students residing outside the neighbourhood walk boundary (B) will receive transportation. For students with a permanent resident address inside of a 2.4 km walk distance from the school (C), service standards will utilize centralized stops, with a set number of stops determined for each neighbourhood. Stops will be positioned on main roads, with the number of stops dependent upon the size and road configuration within each community (See Table 8.1.2 for additional service standard details). For students with resident addresses outside the 2.4 km walk distance (line between C and D), service will remain at current design standards (See Table 8.1.1). Students will still need to reside within area (D) the attendance area (for designated-receiving students) or the Transportation Service Area (students attending both alternative language programs and programs of choice).

Transportation Service Areas established for alternative language programs and programs of choice (Area D) are reviewed annually by Student Transportation for any needed revisions based on demand and available transportation resources. The scope of service is considered in relation to program enrolment boundaries and the demand for service. Student Transportation planners consult school principals so that any needed revisions are fully contemplated and clearly communicated. Similarly, initial service offerings for programs newly-established by the Superintendent are subject to the same considerations. Programs with sporadic demand, or placed at a school without existing yellow bus service will be very challenging to accommodate (discussed further in Section 10.1.3).

The extent to which services in Area C (under 2.4 km) are centralized will be somewhat correlated with Provincial funding levels. If funding were to decrease significantly, students in

Area C may experience revisions to service given that they are ineligible according to provincial funding criteria. Services to students outside 2.4km (Area D) will be retained to a greater extent since they, depending on their school designation, would be more likely eligible.

If the GSM is implemented on a city-wide basis, an accompanying revision to the fee structure will be instituted. Fee categories would take grade level and provincial eligibility into account (based both on distance and attendance at a designated program). Students that are ineligible based on provincial criteria would pay a higher fee, regardless of the level of service they received within the GSM. The concept of differentiated fees based on eligibility will be more defensible with parent groups given the general lack of tolerance for any fee increase, especially a general increase that is not associated with any discernable rider criteria.

Implementation

A pilot of the GSM will be conducted on the new ASAP schools for the 2010/2011 school year. Initial routing efforts suggest that the total number of buses used to transport EPSB students in 2009/2010 will remain the same for 2010/2011 in order to service the new schools under the pilot project. Following a review of the pilot project and additional scenario work directed towards applying the service model to the remaining City schools, Student Transportation may proceed with a recommendation to implement the GSM across the District.

Instrumental in the implementation of the GSM is a clear explanation regarding the method by which distance is calculated and the rationale for the 2.4 km. The use of 2.4 km is aligned with the School Act and the basis for the proposed funding model. In order to determine the location of the 2.4 km threshold, Student Transportation will employ the walk-out distance generated by the mapping software used in the department.

Note: The pilot program based on the Graduated Service Model will not include a corresponding change to the transportation fee structure for 2010 -2011. A revision to the fee structure will be required as part of the Graduated Service Model in the future, in conjunction with revisions to the Provincial funding formula. Fee categories will consider grade level, program and provincial distance criteria (2.4 km). Students residing inside the 2.4 km walk distance, or not attending their designated school, will pay a higher fee. Maps clearly indicating households on either side of the 2.4 km boundary will be produced and distributed to schools to assist with the sale of bus passes.

Benefits of the Graduated Service Model

The GSM results in a necessary component of eligibility being incorporated into transportation service delivery. As previously noted, Alberta Education's proposed funding model is based on two absolute eligibility criteria: distance and designated school. The current EPSB transportation model is premised on the concept of students accessing schools in their resident neighbourhood. Given the recent designation of multiple neighbourhoods to the six new 'ASAP' schools and the ongoing sector review process, it is clear that the concept of school buildings in each neighbourhood is no longer applicable across the District.

The GSM represents a necessary union between the fundamental principles of the existing neighbourhood model, the District commitment to choice, and fixed distance criteria. A service design model that remained based on the migrating principle of 'neighbourhood school' without regard for the fixed criteria that underscore the proposed funding formula would result in a continuous funding gap and increased dependence on transportation fees or alternate forms of funding.

A number of benefits for students, schools, and the transportation will be realized through the implementation of the Graduated Service Model.

- The determination of ridership will account for the current diversity in programming by not excluding programs of choice, although unfunded under the proposed new funding model
- Increased clarity and equality in service levels
- Flexibility in service design based on the statutory obligation to transport
- It will work towards minimizing ride times
- Creates a simplified user fee schedule that aligns bus pass fees with provincial eligibility. Through the identification of eligible and ineligible riders, a defensible fee differentiation can be established that corresponds with provincial funding.
- The model assists with Alberta Education reporting and District awareness pertaining to provincial funding model
- Distance boundary portion of the model is easier to maintain than a fluctuating neighbourhood boundary
- Centralized stops will result in more students congregating at bus stops, thereby increasing safety. Parent comments during the focus group process indicated a concern with bus stops where very few students are picked up.
- The model resulted in feedback from some parents noting their appreciation of an attempt to bridge provincial criteria and a service delivery model.
- The model can be paired with additional initiatives designed to increase efficiencies as outlined in Section 10.1.3

6.1.4 Collaborative Service Delivery with Edmonton Catholic Schools

In conjunction with the Graduated Service pilot in 2010-2011, a concurrent pilot project in shared service with Edmonton Catholic Schools will be undertaken. This pilot project arises from the desire by Trustees and Senior Administration at Edmonton Public School Board and Edmonton Catholic School District to find efficiencies in transportation where schools and

transportation service areas overlap. Collaborative research by both Boards' Student Transportation Departments has resulted in the development of a pilot project involving ASAP schools and programs where savings in the number of buses used, will be realized. Both jurisdictions determined student safety and quality service delivery to be critical prerequisites of any collaborative service proposal.

The schools most suited to this pilot project have been identified as Johnny Bright (EPSB) and Monsignor Fee Otterson (ECSD). Conditions that resulted in the identification of John Bright and Monsignor Fee Otterson as strong candidates for collaborative service delivery included proximity, expected ridership, density of student numbers and flexibility in hours of operation because of a September 2010 opening. The neighbourhoods served would be similar for each school.

The collaboration will involve:

- A system of double runs to be implemented, whereby the students from one Board would be picked up and transported to their appropriate school, followed by students from the next Board then being picked up and transported to their school

- A total of four buses to be used, with costs shared between Boards. EPSB will realize an overall savings of up to three buses

- A 30 minute staggered bell time between the two schools allow for transport time

- An additional 15 minutes of supervision at the school with first drop off and/or last pickup

- Segregated service provision for students from the two jurisdictions. An elimination of confusion regarding differences in fees, stop/service design, behavior management and grades (EPSB K to 6; ECSD K to8) will result

- Coordination of centralized stops between both boards, within 2.4 Km boundary and neighbourhood walk boundaries, will be required to maximize time savings for double runs;

- An ideal opportunity to pilot additional efficiency measures in terms of cost shared projects such as GPS, Smart Cards, etc

Only one carrier will be used in order to minimize late buses, missed pickups and communication mishaps. Given the tight operating schedule required to service two school sites in a short time period, the impact of challenges such as breakdowns, accidents, or delays due to weather extremes is amplified. Additional diligence in avoiding such situations will be necessary.

6.1.5 Conditional Riders

Student Transportation will continue to offer Conditional Ridership to students not eligible for transportation. Conditional Riders will be approved for a single school year, with an annual review of status required. Conditional Riders may only access fixed route busing from existing stops located inside the Transportation Service Area when there is sufficient space on a bus. Student Transportation is not able to add new stops or allocate new buses to accommodate Conditional Ridership.

RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.2.1	Revise policy, process, and participants in determining Program entitlement to transportation services.	Revised regulations required. To be forwarded following the submission of the Transportation Action Plan. Proposed regulations to include collaborative decision making for decisions affecting transportation service provision (ex. sector review, program placements, ASAP schools, etc.), and revised definitions of program types. (Additional detail in Section10.1.1 – Systemic Revisions)
10.4.1	Student entitlement to transportation service	As part of the Transportation Action Plan, student eligibility criteria for fixed route transportation services will be referenced in Administrative regulations. Regulations will also address disputes over entitlement through a formal appeal process. The concept of curb service criteria will be introduced. Regulation will retain the annual review of conditional ridership. (Additional detail in Section10.1.1 – Systemic Revisions)

7.0 Provision of Service

Background

An immediate need within the Transportation Action Plan is an increased alignment of student needs with an appropriate provision of service. Given the estimated $3-4M in deficit spending next year, the pending changes to the Provincial funding model, and a very low parental

tolerance for additional fee increases, a degree of realigned service provision is required. In particular, Edmonton Public must review the allocation of Curb Service and Parent Provided Transportation. Student Transportation will be actively involved to ensure that students identified as transition candidates by principals are supported with an appropriate level of service. Particular attention will be paid to sites with City-wide draws to determine the exact nature of any transition efforts, as well as timing and communication initiatives required.

7.1.1 Curb Service (Severe Transportation)

As noted in Section 4.1.1, the proposed changes in provincial funding will require EPSB to demonstrate "eligibility" for severe transportation services (curb service). No criteria has been offered by the Province for school districts to follow, but rather a statement in the funding manual that indicates that severe transportation funding will be funded for those students:

…who cannot, because of the severity of their disability / delay, use regular transportation services...

The Province has made it clear that educational codings do not necessarily indicate a need for severe transportation funding. They do, however, estimate that only the students with severe disabilities will have needs necessitating curb service busing. Of the approximate 2,058 special needs students currently receiving curb service, the Province may fund under 1,000 through the revised grant formula. An initial estimate of the potential impact to special needs transportation funding indicates that the current $4.75M received could be reduced to approximately $2.5M.

In response to the Province's direction, Edmonton Public Schools will employ criteria in order to assist principals in determining a student's need for curb service busing. The criteria have been developed through a consultative process involving District principals and leaders within Central Services. The criteria will likely result in more curb service riders than the Province is prepared to fund, by considering emotional and behavioral limitations, age, and long travel distances rather than strictly cognitive and physical mobility considerations as contemplated by the Province. The intent will be to limit the provision of curb service busing to students that are fully able to access alternate forms of transportation. The criteria will aim to shift a number of students with mild and moderate educational needs to other transportation forms. A copy of the proposed criteria will be forwarded in the near future.

Student Transportation is not proceeding with a predetermined number of students that will transition. Students' ability to demonstrate skills noted in the criteria will be the primary determinant of the degree to which other transportation types are accessed. A summary of the special needs students that cause Alberta Education to note the possible over-provision of curb service includes:

Current Curb Service Riders – Initial Review				
Program	**EPSB Special Needs Coding**	**Total Riders**	**Curb Riders**	**Parent Provided**
Strategies / Literacy	31 / 131 / 63 / 163	466	283	183
Opportunity	32	628	485	143
Communication	64	130	99	31
Mod. Emotional / Behavioural	87	14	11	3
Totals		**1,238**	**878**	**360**

It is important to note that no suggestion is being made that all the student groups listed above be identified for transition away from curb service. Students that fit criteria for a transition will demonstrate abilities and independence allow the use of other forms of transportation. In many cases, students will have life skills and independence goals noted in an IPP that will be supported with the transition to fixed route or ETS ridership. Additionally, accessing either fixed route or ETS is well suited to the preference of many parents to afford integrated, community-based experiences to their children.

Students moving from curb service will access either fixed-route service or ETS depending on their skills relative to the District criteria (discussed further in Section 7.1.3). Relating back to the concept of diluting service with a diversity of sites discussed in Section 4.0, a key consideration in the transition plan must be Student Transportation's ability to design a fixed-route alternative to curb service. Ultimately, if all students with mild and moderate special needs codings were transitioned off curb service, an additional 40 sites would need to be serviced by either fixed-route or ETS. Given that a key outcome of the Service Review Action Plan is a sustainable transportation system, the extension of fixed-route service to that number of new sites may simply shift deficit spending from one service type to another. A detailed review of all potential solutions will be completed prior to a larger scale shift in curb service ridership.

The full extent of transitions from curb service will be phased in over a two year period and supported to the greatest possible extent by Student Transportation. A transition from curb to fixed route service has taken place for approximately 200 students during the past two school years. Initial hesitation with parents is common, as observed during the parent focus groups. Following the transition, however, feedback from principals and parents is usually very favourable. Ongoing communication with the schools and, in some cases, directly with parents is maintained throughout the process. Based on the feedback to date, the primary reason for parental and school support has been improved ride times.

7.1.2 Curb Service – Early Education

As with curb service transportation for special needs students in grades 1-12, Alberta Education is indicating that funding for students in Early Education special needs programs will also be reviewed. Currently, Early Education students that are PUF funded and receive transportation

are funded by Alberta Education for curb service. Under the proposed funding formula, EPSB will again need to demonstrate a need for severe transportation services (curb service). The result will again be a need for District criteria. A detailed review of individual student profiles will be required in order to estimate the impact on funding. Currently, transportation for 650 Early Education students is supported on an annual budget of approximately $2M.

7.1.3 Parent Provided Transportation

Student Transportation will continue to support Parent Provided transportation under the current terms for families that require the option of transporting students in private vehicles if:

- The severe or unique nature of a student's disability excludes access to other transportation solutions offered by the District
- Alternate forms of Special Needs transportation are not accessible due to Student Transportation's inability to offer service

A transition period is planned during the 2010 / 2011 school year in which existing Parent Provided agreements arrangements will be reviewed. District-wide adherence to the criteria noted above will be in place for September 2011.

7.1.4 ETS

<u>Elementary Ridership</u>

ETS is stated as the preferred mode of transportation for Edmonton Public Schools. Current interpretation of that position is that junior high students are only afforded yellow bus service if ETS service is not available. In order for ETS to remain the unequivocal preferred mode of transportation, all elementary students would also only receive yellow bus service where ETS service is not available. ETS rider statistics indicate that an average of 300 elementary students access ETS service each month. Should funding levels diminish significantly, Student Transportation may review the use of ETS for elementary students. An initial implementation of ETS service would likely involve Grade 5 and 6 students initially.

<u>Transition from Curb Service to ETS</u>

For students transitioning off curb service at the junior high level, ETS will be the preferred mode of transportation. As noted in Section 7.1.1, Students that fit criteria for the transition will demonstrate abilities and independence that is commensurate with the use of ETS. In many cases, students will require ETS ridership skills for employment opportunities and increased independence. Student Transportation will extend support to the transition process in a number of ways. A review of the current ETS training pass program may allow for a greater number of students to benefit from fare product generously provided by ETS. Both Student Transportation and ETS will engage in direct correspondence with principals and staff members who train students to use ETS. Additional meetings with school representatives who undertake ETS

training have taken place in order to determine ways in which Student Transportation can help to optimize the program and increase the benefit to students.

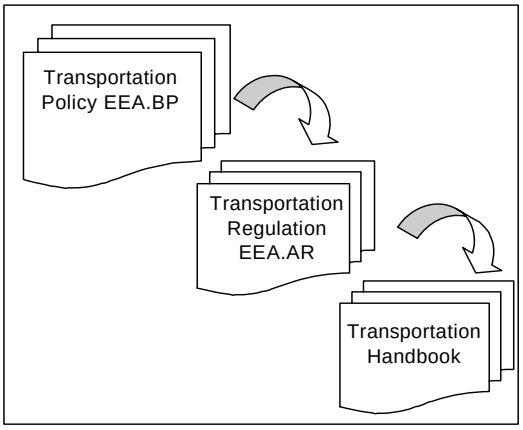
RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.1.3	Consider alternative modes of transportation	Student Transportation will review on individual basis. More wide spread use of alternate modes of transport may be recommended. Communication with DATS indicates that providing student transportation is not currently part of their mandate. Given that the City would need to review the mandate for DATS in order to engage in student transportation, DATS does not recommend that EPSB consider a service delivery model for that involves DATS.
10.1.8	Establish policies for transportation of students with severe behaviours and medical conditions	Student Transportation has initiated work on a severe behaviour procedure. The work will be finalized and implemented. Through a collaborative effort with District leaders and carriers, the resulting policy will outline steps / procedures related to: special education eligibility determination, definition of roles, graduated intervention efforts, and additional avenues for funding such as complex cases.
10.4.3	Alternative program transportation boundaries	Student Transportation does not support uniform sizing for Alternative Program Transportation Service Areas. Student service must be proportionate to demand and available resources in order to ensure sustainability of transportation to Superintendent-approved alternative programs. A gap between demand and service provision created by universally-sized TSA's would not work. The recommendation encourages a disproportionate allocation of resources and is not supported.

8.0 Service Standards

Background

Service design standards are a very important component in parental perception of yellow bus service. As noted in the rationale (Section 2.0), the effort to balance individual expectations with the feasibility of the larger system is ongoing. Route design standards are central to the efficiency of the fixed route system. Transportation routes are not designed for specific students or situations, but rather for stable, efficient routes with adequate neighbourhood coverage.

Service Design Standards



Design standards for fixed-route service are best captured in the Transportation Services Handbook, portions of which appear on the Student Transportation website. The revised Regulation (EEA.AR) will capture broad service design concepts. In order to provide additional support to the details covered in the Handbook, the Regulation will make specific reference to the Handbook and the standards contained within. The overarching document is the Board Policy, which in keeping with the nature of policy, will outline the broad intent of the District as is pertains to transportation, and act as a guiding directive for the subordinate regulation and Handbook. The interrelation between the regulation and the handbook is intended to allow Student Transportation to respond quickly to the realities of funding or new service requirements.

Table 8.1.1 – Current Route Design Standards

Primary Design Standards	Supporting Data
A best effort to maintain ride times under **60** minutes for designated-receiving students and under **80** minutes for students travelling to alternative programs.	Student Transportation is currently exceeding target ride times. • **92%** of riders have ride times under 60 minutes (approx. 50% attend alternative language or program of choice) • Average ride time is **29** minutes

	• Shortest ride time is 2 minutes (653m) • Longest ride time is 102 minutes
Best effort to place bus stops within **400m** maximum of resident address	Student Transportation is currently exceeding target walk distances to stops. • **80%** of riders have a walk distance **under 200m** • **99%** of riders have a walk distance **under 400m** • Avg. walk distance to stop is **123m**

Other Important Considerations

In addition to the criteria noted above, several additional route design standards are critical to the efficiency of the system and will continue to be employed:

- Roadway access is limited to cross sections of 11m or greater. Main arterials and collector roads are utilized wherever possible. Smaller roads and roads without a throughway (dead-ends, cul-de-sacs) will not be travelled on due to increased safety concerns and time constraints.

- As a general practice, Student Transportation does not enter private property due to safety and liability concerns. In very rare exceptions due to severe mobility restrictions for special needs students, private property access will be granted following a site visit by planning staff. Considerations such as size of the bus, width and design of the roadway, presence of multiple egress points, patterns of snow removal and parking will be weighed prior to an exception being granted

8.1.1 Additional Fixed-Route Design Efficiencies

A number of additional scenarios were examined in an attempt to discover potential efficiencies in fixed route routing and allocation of resources.

Centralized Stops on Arterials and Major Collectors Only

Although the majority of the current design adheres to arterials and major collectors only, a percentage of time is spent on smaller local roads and making numerous stops. A centralized stop system, like the one contained with the Graduated Service Model (inside 2.4 km) and being proposed for the ASAP Pilot, would utilize a design very similar to ETS. A set number of centralized stops within a community would be established, with students having to access

service at one of the pre-determined points. Initial scenario work yielded an average walk to stop distance of 341m; an additional walk of 220m for the average student when compared to the current design standards.

The main improvement in service delivery to students is a potential reduction in ride times (as noted in Section 6.1.3). The model is expected to yield savings in the number of buses needed by the District. Data collected from initial investigation is noted below.

Table 8.1.2 – Centralized Stop Design Standards

Revised Design Standards	**Supporting Data**
Placement of bus stops on arterial and major collectors. Walk to stop distances could increase to a maximum of 800m	Routes would likely cover greater distance in a similar time frame, meaning higher loads and potential savings of buses. Scenario work on a sampling of current routes revealed: • Avg. walk to stop – 341m • Maximum walk to stop – 778m • 36% of students would walk over 400m
A reduction in ride times under current standards	Ride times could be reduced due to fewer stops being made. • Avg. stops removed per route – **5** • Avg. ride time savings – **10** minutes • Avg. Load – 40 students

Through the parental engagement process, a concern with walk distances to bus stops was noted by parents. Although a maximum walk of 500 - 600m was considered appropriate to the school, the same distance was not considered satisfactory to a bus stop. One motivation for the hesitancy around walking to a bus stop is the possibility that the bus will not arrive on schedule. A wait at the stop and then a walk back home would be onerous. In an effort to provide support for the proposed increase to walk distances for ineligible students, Student Transportation is considering the following:

- Utilization of GPS for real-time schedule monitoring. Late bus website would be updated constantly and not rely on accurate or timely postings by the carrier. Updates would be posted frequently as the GPS data automatically refreshes. Automated emails could

also be sent in order to help ensure that notification was received prior to leaving the house. (Discussed further in Section 9.1.1)

- In conjunction with Communications, Planning and perhaps organizations such as Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere (S.H.A.P.E.), information could be organized and distributed to principals and community leagues on concepts such as Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train. Coordinated supervision of children between home and the bus stop would serve to reduce parental concern. Ultimately, Student Transportation relies heavily on a shared responsibility for student supervision with parents. Fixed-route design could never alleviate the need to have parents or daycare providers share in the supervision of students between the home and the bus stop.

Another parental comment regarding safety concerns when very few students are assembling at bus stops would be addressed through a larger congregation of students being picked up at each centralized stop.

8.1.2 Modified K- Noon Curb Service

Although not currently being proposed, Student Transportation conducted initial investigations into implementing a modified curb service for kindergarten noon service effective September 2010. At present, kindergarten students with resident addresses on major and collector roads typically have a stop directly in front of their home. Students residing in cul-de-sacs or other areas buses are not able to access may have a short walk to a stop. The design standards for kindergarten result in the following data:

Riders picked up at door	Riders with 10m-200m walk	Avg. walk for riders not picked up at door	Avg. load (72 pass. Bus)	Max. load (72 pass. Bus)	Total routes
37%	58%	77m	12	23	94

Under a modified curb service, stops that were positioned close together would be centralized to a minor extent. For instance, instead of making 2 stops in front of individual houses located within several metres of each other, 1 stop would be positioned between the 2 houses. The following data would be expected as a result:

Riders picked up at door	Riders with 10m-200m walk	Avg. walk for riders not picked up at door	Avg. load (72 pass. Bus)	Max. load (72 pass. Bus)	Total routes
30%	64%	79m	14	26	84

The only measurable impact of the modified Kindergarten-noon service is the number of children with a modest walk distance to a bus stop. Approximately 7% of the kindergarten children would switch from being picked up in front of their home, to a safe location within 200m of their door. It is expected that approximately 10% of the routes currently in place could be saved as a result of the modified service. Students would still have the opportunity to request a pick-up or drop-off location other than their resident address, meaning daycares and day homes would still receive service. As an unfunded service, the efficiencies gained through a modified kindergarten noon service would directly benefit the user fee component of Student Transportation's annual budget.

RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.4.2	Board-approved service design guidelines	Section 8.0 outlines the relationship between Board Policy, Administrative Regulation, and the Transportation Services Handbook. Specifics pertaining to service design are not found in Board Policy. Appropriate placement for that level of detail is in the Transportation Administrative Regulation and the Transportation Services Handbook.

9.0 Performance Monitoring

Background

The message that resounded very clearly out of the parent and EPSB staff engagement efforts was that the work of Student Transportation is often gauged by the performance of the contract carriers. A series of late buses will negate a number of positive steps forward in system design and improvements to services. Monitoring carrier performance is an important component in the perception of Student Transportation's efforts to address the transportation delivery model. Internally, Student Transportation will also work to implement monitoring practices to ensure that all aspects of the D.U's practices and procedures retain a high level or professionalism and efficiency.

9.1.1 Incorporation of New Technologies

Student Transportation will continue to investigate new technologies that will allow more accurate routing and an improved ability to monitor carrier performance. Of particular note, we are currently working with our software provider and the carriers to feasibility of GPS units on each bus contracted for yellow bus service to Edmonton Public Schools. The primary intent of a

GPS system will be to provide more effective and timely information to parents and schools regarding bus schedules. As referenced in Section 8.1.1, parental concerns were partially related to uncertainty around the location of a bus when considering walk distances to a stop. GPS technology would, for the vast majority of families with access to a computer, help alleviate the uncertainty surrounding adherence to the route schedule.

An additional efficiency will be realized by Student Transportation and the contract carriers. Information generated by GPS technology will be used to track bus maintenance, react quickly to inefficiencies or hazards caused by traffic and construction, ensure driver adherence to route design, track unauthorized "courtesy" stops made by drivers, and refine route design based on timing noted.

9.1.2 Additional Considerations in Carrier Contracts

Prior to the next Request for Proposal (RFP) expected in early 2011, Student Transportation will propose additional considerations to be included in the carrier contracts signed by the Board. The intent of additional contractual considerations will be to increase accountability and provide the District with predetermined courses of action should contractual parameters not be adhered to. General components that will be considered for inclusion are:

- Payment penalties for situations of non-performance, including repetitive instances of late routes
- Payment penalties for not adhering to contractual ride time parameters
- An alignment of fuel escalation payments with the Provincial allocation of additional funding
- A reconsideration of payment methods for special needs transportation. A move from payment on a per-student basis to a per-bus basis
- Should the District proceed with implementation of GPS or a similar technology, inclusion of any required equipment would be a condition of the contract. A negotiated cost share would likely be involved, yet not part of the contract.

Efforts will be made to increase the number of potential contractors that participate in the RFP process. The District will benefit from increased competition and, perhaps, more contractors as a result of the bid process.

9.1.3 Monitoring Consistency within Student Transportation

Student Transportation will retain existing practices aimed at ensuring excellent staff practices, as well as implement additional efforts related to:

- Continued expectations for staff professional development

- creation of handbook and procedure manual
- meetings to review consistent interpretation of route design standards by planners
- call centre professionalism worked into performance assessment

Additional revisions within the Student Transportation Department are noted in Section 11.0.

RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.4.4	Technology - GPS and Smartcards	Student Transportation supports the recommendation, but believes that additional study is required in order to clearly define parameters associated with implementation of the suggested technology. GPS and Smartcards are seen as positive steps to increase student safety and accurate performance monitoring. Video cameras are not recommended for implementation.
10.4.5	Performance Monitoring	Student Transportation will implement both short term and long term initiatives to immediately increase internal and external performance monitoring. Transportation Action Plan will discuss in detail.

10.0 Systemic Revisions Outside of Student Transportation

Background

As already highlighted, numerous decisions and District practices impact the transportation service model and budget. The main emphasis for revisions outside Student Transportation needs to involve increased collaboration. Several opportunities for collaboration are already utilized, and others are noted below. Student Transportation's involvement in decisions that impact transportation services will be included in the regulatory amendments forwarded with the Transportation Action Plan.

10.1.1 Regulatory Amendments

Following the submission of the Transportation Action Plan, several recommended revisions to Administrative Regulation EEA.AR – Transportation Services are being submitted for consideration by the Superintendent. Items specific to eligibility will require future revisions once a final funding formula is presented by Alberta Education.

The proposed Administrative Regulation will contain:

- A revised the definition of a designated school
- Revised definitions of alternative programs and programs of choice
- the inclusion of criteria for special needs curb service transportation and parent-provided transportation
- the addition of parent responsibilities
- details about transportation schedules, school bus stops, transportation concerns, and a proposed appeals process.

10.1.2 Establishment of Transportation Advisory Committee

Student Transportation will propose the formation of a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to commence in September 2010. The intent of the Committee would be to act primarily as an appeal body that would hear grievances from parents. Currently, parents that are unhappy with a portion of the service delivery model have no formal recourse. As a result of no predetermined avenue for appeals, members of the public often direct their concerns to the Superintendent or a Trustee. An effective committee would enlist the skills and perspectives of:

- A parent
- A principal
- A member of Leadership Services
- A contract carrier
- The Manager of Student Transportation and/or The Managing Director of Planning and Student Transportation

Through the establishment of a TAC, the District would realise a number of benefits:

- An increased public perception of transparency in decision making

- A holistic look at issues resulting from the unique perspectives of the committee members

- A consistent interpretation of the District's intended service delivery model. The result would be reduced drift away from the original design of the service delivery model over time

- An increasing body of precedent resulting from rulings and, therefore, likely fewer grievances as the TAC progressed

In order for the TAC to be successful, a number of parameters would need to be implemented. To avoid an unmanageable load of appeals, written concerns would only reach the TAC after having been vetted initially though the Manager of Student Transportation and the Managing Director of Planning and Student Transportation. The members of the TAC would need to be familiar with the practices within Student Transportation, as well as the related legislation, Board Policies, Administrative Regulations, and Transportation Services Handbook. Similar to the District's expulsion process currently employed, the decisions of the TAC would need to be final and not pursued any further within the District. If TAC rulings could simply be grieved through some other avenue within the District, then the TAC would simply represent an additional step in the process, with no degree of binding authority.

10.1.3 Opportunities for Collaboration

Special Needs Assisted Placement (SNAP) Combined with Transportation Application

An effort already taken to ensure a more efficient approval process for special needs transportation and more timely communication with schools and parents is the pairing of the SNAP process with the application for special needs. Beginning with the April 2010 SNAP application process, schools will be able to submit an electronic application for both program placement and transportation services at the same time. Both components will be approved within a 1 week period, meaning that families and schools will have increased clarity and confidence in the placement solutions generated.

The process benefits students significantly. Placements are encouraged at locations within transportation zones, meaning students have an increased opportunity to receive programming close to home. Ride times for students will continue to decrease based on reduced distances between home and program locations.

Schools will benefit from a largely automated application process, with large portions of the information required being imported electronically from SIS. Additional benefits to schools will result from an ability to finalize both sending and receiving students earlier, thereby allowing more timely programming and staffing decisions. The SNAP / transportation application initiative is being very well received by District staff attending the series of introductory pre-enrolment inservices arranged by Student Information and involving a number of D.U.'s such as Student Transportation and Leadership Services.

Subdivision of Special Needs Transportation Zones

Related to the outlined SNAP process, Student Transportation will conduct a review of special needs transportation zones. A review of transportation zones for special needs programs is complex given the variety of programming and factors noted below. In essence, the intent would be to localize parental choice between program locations to reduce the distance students are required to travel. For example, In Zone 1, Parents currently have a choice between 7 Division 2 Opportunity programs offered at 6 different schools. If a revision to the transportation zone resulted in a choice between 3 programs based on more localized transportation, the District of Choice philosophy would remain intact and the potential for reduced ride times would increase.

The review will be complex and involve factors such as:

- The impact of a potential shift to fixed route busing for some students
- Efficiencies lost for the carriers due to program pairings broken up through the process of reducing transportation zones for specific programs
- A potential shift in carrier contracts to reflect revised pricing and ride times

Any proposed revisions will include a consultation with the appropriate central D.U.'s and schools offering the impacted programs.

Coordinated Non-Operational Days

An important concept in the proposed revisions to the transportation regulation is the suggestion that Student Transportation have increased involvement in minor site-based decisions that could greatly increase the efficiency of transportation services. One of the most significant examples of this concept would be realized through a coordination of schedules for schools that share fixed route buses. If schools that share buses were required to coordinate the same non-operational (PD) days and early dismissal schedules throughout the school year, an immediate savings would be realized. Significant cost is associated with buses continuing to provide service when only one of the schools it serves has students attending classes. An additional component of involving Student Transportation in scheduling decisions needs to involve initiatives such as 4-day Early Education programming and future proposed school cohorts such as the W8 project. An estimated $235,000 could be saved each year through the coordination of non-operational days and early dismissals and the resulting ability to park buses on a rotating schedule.

Early Thursday Dismissals

Isolated early Thursday dismissals within a geographic area or school cluster represent a decrease in efficiency. Additional bus services generally need to be utilized if pairings are lost when one school has early Thursday, yet the school it is paired with for busing does not.

Through the process of obtaining approval for early Thursday dismissals, schools utilizing yellow bus service should be required to receive a comment from Student Transportation prior to their submission to the Superintendent. A measure of efficiency may be gained if all applications for early Thursday were required to have sign-off by Student Transportation.

Revised School Hours of Operation (SHOP)

As indicated on Chart 4.0.2, the inclusion of double runs in a fixed route system can greatly increase cost efficiencies and reduce ride times for students. The situations in which double runs are effective require rider density, smaller geographic areas, and a degree of separation in the hours of operation between sites. There are not a great number of opportunities for double runs within the District, but greater flexibility in setting school hours would greatly increase Student Transportation's ability to seize opportunities for efficiency. During the 2010-2011 school year, suggested revisions to school hours of operation for the 2011-2012 school year will be discussed with principals and forwarded to the Superintendent should additional consideration be required.

Student Transportation Engaged on Decisions Impacting Transportation Services

The Stantec recommendation 10.1.5 noted below is narrow in scope by referencing increased Student Transportation engagement in programming decisions, yet references an important component related to collaborative decision making on matters related to transportation services. Revisions to the Transportation Regulation outlined in Section 10.1.1 are intended to ensure that Student Transportation is engaged on any recommendations that impact transportation services. An important detail is that only the Manager of Student Transportation will be included as Resource Staff on recommendations, thereby eliminating confusion over the D.U.'s support for various initiatives.

Student Transportation has been engaged in several discussions this year around matters such as new program of choice and District centre offerings, early education, the sector review process, requests for early Thursday dismissals, and the SNAP process. Historically, programming decisions that consider existing transportation services have resulted in a number of sites having several types of programs and have aided in the density of demand concept. The inclusion of Student Transportation in such discussions benefits the District a great deal. Reduced student ride times, decreased costs, and fewer parental and school frustrations result from a proactive engagement process. Involvement in initiatives such as Setting the Direction, the 2012 ASAP schools, future sector review work, proposed school cohorts, significant changes in school scheduling, site activation and deactivation, work with attendance and program enrolment boundaries, and new alternative programming initiatives will remain an important part of Student Transportation's work within the District.

RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.1.2	Carrier contracts for special needs service to be paid on "per bus" basis	In conjunction with shift towards increasing mild/moderate special needs fixed-route, greater percentage of carrier compensation will naturally gravitate towards payment per bus. Any change to future curb service payment would need to involve other parameters including minimum ride times and minimum number of students per bus. 3-Year implementation logical and must be done in conjunction with implementation of curb service criteria. Implementation of provincial funding model may have an impact. More immediate revision to costs will involve consistent application of curb service criteria.
10.1.5	Assume more active role in site and program distribution	Transportation Regulation revisions noted 10.1.1 and collaborative decision making noted above will help increase Student Transportation's participation in decision affecting service delivery. Student Transportation has been involved in the Sector Review discussions. Provision of grandfathered services or dual-designated attendance areas are additional service provision concepts that have significant impacts on transportation budget and the consistent delivery of transportation services. As noted in Section 10.1.3, application for transportation service for new special needs applicants now part of the integrated SNAP placement request.

11.0 Systemic Revisions within Student Transportation

Background

A large number of new initiatives and improvements will reside within the Student Transportation Department. Relating back to the rationale discussed in Section 2.0, Student Transportation staff is demonstrating a conviction to decision making that is engaged and the result of critical thinking. New measures implemented will work towards

- Increased communications with schools and parents
- Greater efficiency, safety, and accuracy with internal systems and service provision
- Diminished reliance on hard copy information where appropriate
- Improved ability to monitor carrier performance (noted in Section 8.0)

A detailed list of all initiatives being implemented over a three year period is included in Appendix 1, however the most notable initiatives to date this year include:

- Electronic transportation application incorporated into the Special Needs Assisted Placement application process
- Routes moved away from non-performing carrier with drastic improvements noted in service as a result
- A continued investigation into the use of electronic media for improved communication and efficiency.
- Proposed revisions to Regulation EEA.AR – Transportation Services, an update of the Transportation Services Handbook, and creation of an internal Procedure Manual that outlines expectations and practices for Student Transportation staff. The three documents inter-relate to increase the consistency and serve as training / information pieces for new staff.
- Continued discussions with Alberta Education regarding concerns with the proposed funding formula and improved accuracy with the annual grant application

Transportation Department to Investigate Alternate Routing Configurations

In addition to the Graduated Service Model discussed above and related the centralized stop concept presented in Section 8.1.1, Student Transportation will continue to review other potential concepts. The Transfer Station System utilized in other jurisdictions may prove beneficial if incorporated into EPSB's service delivery model.

In brief, the Transfer Station involves the transfer of students from one bus to another during their transport to and from school. Transfer stations are very secure, well supervised assembly areas for school buses to convene and conduct a transfer of students. Bus routes can be more localized and shorter in duration as a result.

A more detailed analysis is required before the merits of the Transfer Station System can be weighed against the demands of the EPSB system, but parental response to the concept during the engagement process was favourable. Potential benefits to the District resulting from the Transfer Station Model may include:

- Multi-layered efficiencies, meaning fewer buses used and increased capacity to absorb additional riders without adding buses / increasing costs
- More predictable routing because of set arrivals and departures
- Reduced ride times

In order for the Transfer Station to be successful, Student Transportation will need to determine that enough density of demand exists in certain areas of the City or with certain school sites to merit the system's implementation. Well situated transfer station sites will be a critical component of the plan. Without a centralized transfer point with immediate access to an adequate road network, additional travel for students in order to access a transfer station will be a waste of time and resources. A pilot project for the system will need to be conducted following additional research and scenario work. If the pilot proved successful, wider application could be considered in certain situations. The Transfer Station System is not expected to be suitable for use in all parts of the City, so will likely represent only a portion of the service delivery model.

RELATED STANTEC RECOMMENDATIONS		
10.1.1	Assume routing for special needs	3-Year implementation being considered with continued annual shift of students from curb service over the first 2 years. Natural migration of routing in-house will occur through shift of some students to fixed-route. Ultimately, once curb service is adjusted to appropriate scope, final phase of adopting curb service routes will be considered for implementation.
10.1.4	Customer Service Training	A customer service consultant was contracted to provide a full day professional development opportunity for the entire D.U. Follow-up initiatives ensured application of concepts covered and will be linked to performance

		indicators for staff.
10.1.7	Consider software upgrade	Student Transportation will ensure that MapNet / Trapeze program (in conjunction with IT's work) does not inhibit our ability to mine data and respond to proposed changes to grant application process. Software upgrade issue not an immediate consideration given the functionality of current program. Greater concern is the organization of data within the system to allow for accurate, rapid reporting and overview of operations. Ongoing passive research into available software options to be continued. Functionality of MapNet continuing to improve with system upgrades provided by supplier.
10.5.2	Collaborative service delivery with neighbouring jurisdictions	Initial meetings have occurred with Edmonton Catholic to investigate opportunities for combined service delivery. Potential areas for follow-up investigation were identified and are being analyzed. Subsequent meeting dates this Spring to review findings are being scheduled. This is the second time in recent years the collaborative delivery of service has been investigated.

12.0 Implementation and Communication

Implementation

A summary of the staging for measures noted in the Transportation Action Plan is included as Appendix 1. Student Transportation is keenly aware that the collaboration with parents and schools, as well as the pace of change is an importance balance and critical to the successful implementation of any revisions to the service delivery model. Time allowance for effective communication have been incorporated into the staging

Communication

Student Transportation will focus on increased communication with schools and parents. Communication of new initiatives will be accomplished in collaboration with Communications and through a series of inservices and school visits. Additional avenues through which efforts to communicate will be augmented will include:

- A collaborative effort with Communications to develop and awareness and information campaign relating to transportation services and specifically highlighting new initiatives
- Updated Transportation Services Handbook will be published electronically and posted online. Schools will be encouraged to download hard copies for more immediate reference.
- The Student Transportation Newsletter has been shifted to an electronic format and is posted on School Zone and on the Student Transportation website. Hard copies are sent out as requested.
- Student Transportation will pursue an increased use of School Zone, both for the registration and change request processes. School Zone will also be leveraged as a communication tool wherever possible.
- A re-design of the Student Transportation website
- Formalization of Spring and Fall inservices for schools
- Use of the First Riders event in August to introduce new concepts or expectations
- Continued attendance at as many open house events as possible
- Increased emphasis on individual school visits by Student Transportation staff throughout the year
- Continued engagement with the Planning and Student Transportation Principal Committee
- Continued involvement with District committees
- Additional ad-hoc committee work to explore the feasibility of individual components of the Transportation Action Plan as they withstand further review and appear to be feasible.

The initiatives discussed in the Transportation Action Plan are for the short and long term benefit of students and the District's long-term ability to provide a sustainable, comprehensive transportation system to the families that choose Edmonton Public Schools. A logical staging of improvements and clear communication efforts will directly impact the success of

implementation. Student Transportation is committed to ensuring that every reasonable effort to communicate is undertaken to provide leadership through transition efforts yet will rely heavily on the collaborative efforts of other Central Departments and schools.

APPENDIX 1

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

YEAR 1 2009 - 2010	
Description	**Details**
Align Special Needs Assisted Placement (SNAP) application process with new electronic transportation application form	SNAP application now includes an electronic application for transportation services. Transportation application now on same timeline as placement requests, rather than a separate process conducted 2 months later. Results in smoother transition planning and more timely transportation solutions. A series of three inservices have been offered to all District staff. Very well attended and concept very well received.
Complete research and budgeting for GPS and swipe card technologies	Initial product research has been conducted for software upgrades and GPS units. Additional studies of required infrastructure needed before decisions and final budgeting can be completed.
Purchase additional software upgrades	Possible upgrades related to GPS. Software upgrades to assist with presentation materials also important. Both purchases possible prior to end of fiscal year.
Detailed map edits on base map for routing	Student Transportation planning staff has undertaken a detailed investigation of required map edits for base map. Resulting efficiencies and accuracies should be significant. Very time consuming work as a result of number of details (addition of walkways, pedestrian overpasses – all items not included on City map)
Complete revisions to Transportation Handbook and post electronically	Student Transportation planning staff has undertaken complete review of Transportation Services Handbook. A compilation and updating of previous versions has taken place. Will be produced electronically and posted to website / School Zone. Hard copies will also be available to schools upon request.
Continue to investigate increased use of electronic communication	**1.** Meetings to initiate the use of School Zone have been ongoing. **2.** Transportation newsletter published on both website and School Zone for Winter 2010. **3.** The

media	creation of an electronic application for special needs busing is now integral in the SNAP process for all new special needs placement requests. **4.** Use of School Zone and website to facilitate application process and change requests by end of 2010 / 2011 school year. **5.** Paper system remains intact and intended as back-up for instances where computer access is limited.
Ongoing discussions with Student Information to ensure greater accuracy of data	Continued focus to ensure that data coming from schools is as accurate as possible from student information system. In particular, possible measures to ensure more accurate addressing will be explored.
Professional development inservice for Call centre	December inservice offered by Achieve Global taken by all Student Transportation staff. Invitation to the inservice was extended to dispatchers from each of our contract carriers. Intent is to have a common understanding and expectation for customer service, regardless of point at which contact is made.
Creation of administration procedure manual	To help ensure that procedures within Student Transportation are consistently taught to new employees and followed by all staff, a formalized Procedure Manual will be completed. Initial information has been collected and organized. The manual will encompass daily practices within the D.U., and also act as a historical reference for less frequent matters that staff encounter.
Revisions to Transportation Regulation EEA.AR	Significant revisions to the Transportation regulation are being forwarded to the Superintendent for consideration as part of the Transportation Action Plan. Closey linked to detailed information in the Transportation Services handbook.
Continued investigation of opportunities for collaborative service delivery with Edmonton Catholic Schools	Initial meetings with Edmonton Catholic Schools in mid-March resulted in numerous scenarios for further investigation. The resulting collaborative effort to provide busing to students in Rutherford will be piloted in September, 2010. Additional follow-up meetings will occur during the 2010-2011 school year to evaluate the pilot project and discuss additional opportunities for collaborative service delivery.
Finalization of criteria for shift from	A DRAFT copy of the criteria for the transition from curb

curb service to fixed-route / ETS	service will be generated in the near future. Finalization of the criteria will occur shortly, with communication and transition planning taking place during the 2010-2011 school year. Through a natural graduation of students to other services, a more appropriate allocation of service for new students, and the transition of existing curb riders if appropriate, a complete transition is expected by September 2012.
Transition of 40 students from curb service to fixed route	Completed in February, 2010. Parental and school feedback very positive. A continuation of a shift initiated during the 2008-2009 school year.
Continued discussion with Alberta Education regarding proposed funding formula	Comprehensive overview provided in Section 5.1.3 of Service Review Action Plan. Additional meetings to discuss continuing concerns of the 4 metro boards expected prior to the end of May, 2010.

YEAR 2 **2010 - 2011**	
Description	Details
Develop electronic application process for all transportation services	Utilizing the platform upon which the SNAP application was constructed, Student Transportation will extend the electronic application process to all other application forms in place. Conventional hard copy systems will remain in place for instances where computer access is not available. Ongoing collaboration and dialogue will continue with the entire IT D.U.
Leverage School Zone and website to fullest extent possible for application process and change requests.	
Initiate staged implementation of GPS / updated late bus website	The District will negotiate a cost share approach to the installation of GPS (or similar) technology by all carriers under contract with EPSB. The requirement will be reflected in the 2011 RFP. A deadline for full compliance will be set for September 2011, assuming implementation

	of the system is finalized.
Complete detailed investigation of Graduated Service Model for potential City-wide implementation. Launch of ASAP School – Graduated Service Model Pilot Project	Effective September, 2010, the new ASAP schools will operate under the Graduated Service Model pilot. Additional updating of the model will factor into the overall evaluation of the model.
Finalize transition plan for shift from curb service to fixed route / ETS	Staged? Or all at once? Confirm fixed route possibilities and ETS scheduling (attn. City-wide draws), provide time for ETS training, communication plan for schools / parents
Implement Route Risk Assessment initiative	As directed by Alberta Education, all jurisdictions in the province will implement a formal Route Risk Assessment process for September 2010. Student Transportation is working to create an efficient system that adheres to provincial requirements. Additional opportunities for electronic medium through which information can flow may be explored. Official notification to the Superintendent from Alberta Education is expected.
Finalize details associated with Alberta Education funding formula	
Initiate RFP for all contracted services with carriers	

YEAR 3 **2011 - 2012**	
Description	Details
Student Transportation to consider assumption of routing for all special needs students on curb service	
Implementation of Graduated Service Model for entire District	

APPENDIX 2

CURRENT VS. PROPOSED FUNDING SUMMARY

PROGRAM / RIDER DESCRIPTION	CURRENT FUNDING FORMULA	PROPOSED FUNDING FORMULA	COMMENTS
Early Ed. Special Needs	Within the Metro Block - Sec. 1.28 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual	ECS Special – Sec. 1.31 in 2010/2011 Funding Manual	**1.** Eligibility currently based on District Profile established several years ago. Majority are severe PUF funded. **2.** ECS Special grant topped off by PUF funding to cover transportation costs. **3.** Note regarding the provision of "special transportation" (curb service) in Section 1.31 of the Funding Manual states that the higher funding rate will be provided for, "…children with disabilities / delays who cannot be accommodated by regular transportation because of their disabilities and, therefore, require special transportation, such as a handi-bus."
Kindergarten - Regular	Within the Metro Block - Sec. 1.28 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual	Urban Trans. Grant – Section 1.27 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual	**1.** Fixed-route ridership currently based on District Profile established several years ago. Part of total District estimated ridership calculated in block grant. **2.** New proposed grant submission will require fixed-route eligibility to be determined based on 2.4km from school and attendance at designated school. **3.** K-noon curb service unfunded. **4.** No fees collected from Kindergarten students.
Grade 1-12 Regular Transportation	Within the Metro Block - Sec. 1.28 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual	Urban Trans. Grant – Section 1.27 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual	**1.** Fixed-route ridership currently based on District Profile established several years ago. Part of total District estimated ridership calculated in block grant. **2.** New proposed grant submission will require fixed-route eligibility to be determined based on 2.4km from school and attendance at designated school.
Special Transportation	Within the Metro Block - Sec. 1.28 of	Special Transportation – Section 1.29 of	**1.** Curb service ridership currently based on District Profile established several years ago. Part of total District estimated ridership

(Curb)	2010/2011 Funding Manual	2010/2011 Funding Manual	calculated in block grant. **2.** New proposed grant submission will require curb service eligibility to be determined based on inability to access fixed-route transportation services.
Parent Provided	Within the Metro Block - Sec. 1.28 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual	**1**. Regular students - Section 1.27 of 2010/2011 Funding Manual **2**. Special Transportation – Section 1.29 of 2010/2011	**1.** Parent-provided transportation currently funded through special transportation portion of block grant (based on District Profile for special needs). Students not funded for special needs transportation do not result in funding to cover parent-provided. **2.** New proposed grant submission will require parent-provided eligibility to be determined based on inability to access all other transportation services. **3.** Unless able to prove an inability to access all other forms of transportation offered by District, provincial funding for parent-provided to be at regular transportation rate (significantly less than current parent-provided reimbursement to families).

APPENDIX 3

SAMPLE MAP DEPICTING THE GRADUATED SERVICE MODEL

As outlined in Section 6.1.3, the Graduated Service Model will be piloted on the 6 new schools for the 2010-2011 school year. The colour-coded map for the Johnny Bright attendance area below depicts a practical application of the concept. Students residing within the walk boundary (Rutherford) would not be eligible for transportation services. Students residing in the pink areas (beyond the 2.4 km walk distance) would receive service designed to current standards, while students residing in the yellow area (under 2.4 km) would access yellow bus service at centralized stops in the community.

Fees will be based on eligibility, with programs, walk distance from the school, and grade level being considered.