

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 24, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Changes to the Provision of Transportation Services

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Assistant to the Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Dorothy Sombach

INFORMATION

As a result of decreasing availability of funding for student transportation coupled with increasing costs and increasing demand for service the following changes to the provisions of service are planned for implementation for the 2005 – 2006 school year. These changes meet the requirements of administration regulation EEA.AR, and Board policy EEA.BP, Student Transportation (Appendix I). The changes are based on input from school principals, and trustees, and in consideration of transportation practices in other districts.

Background

Outlined below is a brief history of the evolution of Student Transportation policy and practices in the district.

- Up until the 1970's, Edmonton Public Schools operated on the basis of closed boundaries. Students attended their neighbourhood school and very little transportation was needed.
- As the boundaries of the City of Edmonton expanded, transportation became necessary because schools were not being built in all neighbourhoods. The district then designated neighbourhoods to schools and began to provide subsidized transportation.
- In 1973 the district declared open boundaries allowing parents to enroll students in any district school provided the parent supplied transportation.
- Since 1974 the district expanded program offerings to include language programs to students on the basis that parents could transport their children to the school offering the program.
- In 1995 the government announced that students could attend any school they choose in the Province of Alberta but did not provide any additional transportation funding to get the students to their school of choice.
- As the language programs expanded and new alternative programs came into the district, transportation was provided if there was a bus already going to the school that the alternative program was housed at. The rationale for this was that there would be improved service to parents at no additional cost.
- In 1997, the Board approved the transportation policy stating that the district **may** consider providing access to additional transportation services in support of the district's philosophy of encouraging parent and student choice among schools and programs. This led to a significant increase in the demand for transportation services and thus substantially increased expenditures.

- Over the years, it has come to be expected by parents that the district will provide transportation to alternative programs at a subsidized cost.
- The district has experienced extensive growth in special needs programs which has put pressure on transportation. Transportation is provided to all students who are designated by the district to attend a district site for special needs programming.
- Initially grade 1-3 students with moderate or high special needs were provided door to door transportation. This service was only provided to older students with moderate special needs on an exceptional basis. Principals were required to provide justification for this service. Over time, this requirement was dropped and door to door service was provided to essentially all mild and moderate special needs at the recommendation of the principal. Many principals believed this provided support for families in ensuring their students received appropriate programs.
- As the special needs programs expanded, the expectation grew that all mild, moderate and severe special needs students would be transported on a door to door basis if they were attending a district site for special needs programming.

This evolution of transportation service reflects a belief that:

- Students who live in communities that do not have a neighborhood school warrant subsidized transportation.
- The viability of programs of choice is supported by subsidized transportation.
- The provision of door to door transportation service helps to persuade parents to select a district site for their special need student.

Increased disparity between costs and funding have put pressure on the transportation system. These pressures are being experienced by all other boards in the province. The Alberta School Boards Association study of Metro Board's transportation indicated that all Metro Boards are experiencing significant pressure to reduce service and/or increased rates due to the growing disparity in funding as provided by Alberta Education. Costs are increasing and available funding is not keeping pace with these costs. Also, since funding for student transportation is based on the number of schools a district has, if the district continues to operate small schools with small student populations these fiscal pressures will increase.

This year, the district experienced a reduction in enrolment, therefore, the transportation grant was further reduced. Transportation funding for next year in the Alberta Education budget increased by 3 per cent whereas costs have been increasing every year at a rate of 7 per cent of total budget and these continue to rise. As a result of negotiations with the bus contractors, the yellow bus contractors have been offered a 5 per cent increase. There will be no change to the cost to the district for Edmonton Transit passes and parent provided transportation. It should be noted that increased carrier costs and decreasing levels of service would result in a net increase in expenditures of \$83,548 for the 2005 – 2006 school year. It has been the practice of the district not to transfer other operational district dollars to subsidize transportation service.

For the first time in a number of years student transportation faces a significant deficit and this will need to be addressed over the next few years. The projected deficit for the 2004-2005 school year is estimated to be \$1M.

The following background is provided regarding the requirement for transportation services as outlined in the Alberta Education transportation regulations and as currently provided by Edmonton Public School Board:

	Transportation Required by Alberta Education	Transportation Provided by EPSB But Not Required by Alberta Education
Designated Receiving School	If a student lives more than 2.4 km away from the designated school.	EPSB provides transportation for students even if they live within 2.4 km of their designated school regardless of which school they attend. Noon hour kindergarten busing is provided for students.
Special Needs	Door to door transportation for severe special needs students to their program at any school. Transportation from a local bus stop to designated schools for mild moderate special needs students.	Door to door transportation for mild and moderate special needs students.
Programs of Choice	No requirement unless attending designated school and then only beyond 2.4 km walk limit.	Transportation to any other district school within a 60 minute ride zone perimeter.

Changes to Service

The changes outlined below will begin to bring the transportation system in line with the current level of funding but will not allow the current deficit to be eliminated. The following changes to service, combined with the changes to rates in the subsequent report, will have the least impact on families of the range of possible changes that could be implemented.

1. Transportation boundaries for alternative programs typically consist of a 60 minute ride time perimeter. Transportation services are normally not provided, beyond this perimeter, however, some boundaries currently exceed the 60 minute ride zone perimeter. For those programs of choice where boundary ride times exceed 60 minutes, students and parents will be required to bring students to a stop at the edge of the 60 minute perimeter. This will impact 7 buses, approximately 7 alternative program areas, and approximately 60 families

Cost Per Year for One Yellow Bus	Reduction in Number of Buses	Total Possible Savings
\$30,000	7	\$210,000

2. Where kindergarten noon routes are running with a light load, students will be combined with already existing noon routes. This will result in a reduction of 6 buses. This will not reduce service to students. They may experience a slightly longer ride time on the noon service.

Cost Per Year for One Noon Kindergarten Yellow Bus	Reduction in Number of Buses	Total Possible Savings
\$10,000	6	\$60,000

3. Adjusted transportation service for 54 (grades 4, 5 & 6) students attending district sites for Strategy and Literacy programs will be implemented. Service will be changed from door to door service to service at a stop no more than two blocks from their homes. Students would ride the buses with classmates in regular programs and would be integrated with other students. If, for some reason, and on the recommendation of the principal, a child requires door to door service, this would be available to them. Door to door service would be maintained for all mild, moderate special needs students in kindergarten to grade 3, and for all severe special needs students in kindergarten to grade 12. It is important to implement this change gradually in order to assess any impact it might have on students.

Number of Mild/Moderate Students Grades 1 – 12 Currently on Curb Service	Change Grades 4 - 6 Mild Moderate Students to Fixed Route	Net Savings per Student	Total Possible Savings
2,000	54	\$1,000/year	\$54,000

4. A recommendation for bus pass fees for 2005-2006 will also be presented to the Board at this Board meeting. The proposed bus pass fees, if approved, would result in a projected increase in revenue of approximately \$1M. This recommendation includes providing free bus passes to kindergarten students. These young students are the population that are most in need of transportation and this incentive may result in increased enrolment to the district. Once students enrol in an Edmonton Public school, they often continue on in this school for elementary schooling. The cost to provide free kindergarten bus passes will be approximately \$120,000. This increase to service is expected to impact enrolment positively.

Over the next three years, the transportation services, revenues and expenditures will be brought in line by continuing to implement the above changes and by considering additional changes to services and/or to district practices.

- Reviewing all district policy and practices to ensure that they are based on current values and beliefs and that they support the district priorities. This review would involve input from the board of trustees and parent counsels.
- Examining the possibility of running double or triple runs which would produce a large cost savings. School hours would need to be specified in order to bring about the savings. This would require extensive consultation with schools and parents as it would require significantly adjusting school hours of operation.
- Appealing to the Province that the current funding formula is outdated and does not accurately reflect the changing environment or needs of Metro boards is another course of action. The formula has not been reviewed since its' inception in 1989 and a thorough examination of the formula would be appropriate.
- Throughout the course of next year, junior high students currently riding yellow bus will be changed over to Edmonton Transit. School hours will need to be changed in order to realize savings as Edmonton Transit does not have sufficient buses available at the current start and dismissal times of the schools. We will work closely with Edmonton Transit and principals to provide an acceptable level of service for these students.
- Considering the implications of moving towards a uniform bus pass fee. (Appendix II shows some preliminary scenarios.)
- Reviewing the funding for students who reside more than 2.4 km to their designated school. If students living less than 2.4 km and who attend their designated school were not eligible to purchase a subsidized transit pass savings would be realized. However based on discussions

with secondary principals this would create many other issues for the district. More reliable data will be available by June 30, 2005.

At this time it would be unwise to make further reductions to service. This is to ensure that changes are manageable by parents and that by implementing changes slowly and responsibly there will be limited impact on families and schools. A continued effort will be made to develop a highly efficient, customer orientated, financially sound transportation service in the district.

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APPENDIX I Board Regulation and Policy EEA.AR - Transportation Services and EEA.BP – Student Transportation Services

APPENDIX II Comparison of Options for Bus Pass Fees

BOARD REGULATION AND POLICY EEA.AR - TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND EEA.BP – STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Policies -> Table of Contents -> Support Services

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: EEA.AR
TOPIC: Transportation Services

EFFECTIVE DATE: 25-04-1997
ISSUE DATE: 16-05-1997
REVIEW DATE: 04-2002

A. GENERAL REGULATIONS

1. Edmonton Transit shall be the preferred means of student transportation.
2. When Edmonton Transit is unavailable or does not provide an acceptable level of service to the designated school, charter bus service shall be arranged.
3. A student shall receive no more than one transportation service from the district.
4. The school principal shall be responsible for:
 - a. student conduct on the school bus;
 - b. the sale and distribution of bus passes to students;
 - c. compliance with district and Alberta Learning requirements for collecting and reporting transportation-related information.
5. For the purpose of determining eligibility for transportation, the following shall apply:
 - a. neighbourhood boundaries shall be those determined by the district;
 - b. a neighbourhood shall be considered to have no local elementary school if:
 - such a school has not been built or the school has been closed;
 - the regular elementary program in the neighbourhood school has been closed;
 - c. a student's neighbourhood of residence shall be determined by his permanent residential address as recorded on the district's student file;
 - d. the "designated school" shall be:
 - the school(s) identified by the district as receiving schools for students residing in specific neighbourhoods with no local elementary school or areas with no junior or senior high

- school; or
 - the school which a student with moderate or severe special needs is directed to attend.
6. The following transportation services shall be available with a cost charged to parents or independent students:
- a. to a designated school from areas where such schools have been closed or have not been built;
 - b. to a designated school for any student designated by the district to attend that specific school.

B. BUS PASSES

1. For the purpose of determining eligibility to purchase a subsidized Edmonton Transit pass, the term "student" shall include all those individuals entitled to attend a board operated school excluding individuals to whom the district provides courses or programs in accordance with Section 55 of the *School Act* (Continuing Education).
2. A school shall sell an Edmonton Transit pass only to a student registered in that school, or to the student's parent or guardian on behalf of the student.
3. Procedures for the replacement of lost, stolen or mutilated bus passes shall be established by Transportation Services and communicated to schools annually.
4. The amount charged to a student to replace a lost or stolen bus pass shall not exceed the district's cost for a replacement pass.

C. CHARTER BUS SERVICE

1. The term "charter bus" includes buses or any other vehicle under contract to the board to transport students.
2. Procedures for making changes to charter bus routes shall be established annually and communicated to parents and schools in advance.
3. Each school to which students are transported by charter bus shall receive regularly updated information indicating the buses to which its students are assigned.
4. Alternative Programs
 - a. The board may choose to facilitate student attendance at French immersion, bilingual programs, academic challenge, Arts Core, Caraway, Cogito, Logos and Sports Alternative Programs by providing bus transportation for elementary students leaving their local neighbourhood to attend district centres for such programs. Additions or deletions to the number of programs included in the service are at the board's discretion through the budget process.
 - b. If such a service is provided, in setting fees, the following factors shall be considered:
 - the cost of providing and administering the service;
 - the funds available from the provincial government;
 - the fees charged for other services;
 - the fees charged for this service in the past.
5. Students who attend schools which receive transportation services provided by the board to facilitate student attendance at alternative programs, but who

are not registered in an alternative program, and, students who are not resident in a neighbourhood where regular program charter bus service is provided, may access the charter bus service under the following conditions:

- a. subject to sufficient capacity on the bus;
 - b. bus routes shall not be designed or altered to accommodate these students;
 - c. access to the service shall be granted on an annual basis;
 - d. the monthly fee is the same as for alternative program riders.
6. The district shall not be responsible for providing transportation to students with moderate or severe special needs who choose not to attend their designated school.
 7. For students with moderate or severe special needs who are attending their designated school, the administration may enter into an agreement with the parent whereby the parent transports the student and receives payment from the district for doing so.

Reference(s):

EEA.BP - Student Transportation Services

School Act Sections 51, 52 and 55

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: EEA.BP

TOPIC: Student Transportation Services

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09-1990

ISSUE DATE: 05-11-1991

REVIEW DATE: 06-1995

The board is committed to providing access to transportation for those of its resident students who are entitled to transportation under the *School Act*, or who are designated by the district to attend a specific school or program.

Further, in support of the district's philosophy of encouraging parent and student choice among schools and programs, the board may consider providing access to additional transportation services.

All transportation services' expenditures will be recovered through provincial transportation grants and student transportation fees.

The board's goal for district-arranged transportation services shall be to minimize the number of students who have a one-way ride of more than 60 minutes.

At least every three years, proposals shall be called for the provision of transportation services to district students. In the Interim years, the administration shall attempt to establish rates with the contracted carriers.

Reference(s):

[EEA.AR](#) - Transportation Services

[IC.BP](#) - Student Accommodation

[IC.AR](#) - Student Accommodation

School Act Section 51

COMPARISON OF OPTIONS FOR BUS PASS FEES
2005-2006 SCHOOL YEAR

Service	Grade	# of Students as at 12/31/04	2004-2005 Current Bus Pass Rates		2005-2006 Proposed Free K, Awasis & City Centre \$5 Inc. Reg & Alt, \$6 Inc ETS		Uniform Bus Fee of \$25.00 except Free K, Awasis & City Centre		Uniform Bus Fee of \$26.00 except Free K, Awasis & City Centre		Uniform Bus Fee of \$28.00 except Free K, Awasis & City Centre	
			Cost of Pass	Revenue	Cost of Pass	Revenue	Cost of Pass	Revenue	Cost of Pass	Revenue	Cost of Pass	Revenue
Regular	K	180	\$ 7.00	\$ 12,600.00	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	1-6	982	\$ 7.00	\$ 68,740.00	\$12.00	\$117,840.00	\$25.00	\$245,500.00	\$26.00	\$255,320.00	\$28.00	\$274,960.00
	7-12	641	\$ 24.00	\$ 153,840.00	\$30.00	\$192,300.00	\$25.00	\$160,250.00	\$26.00	\$166,660.00	\$28.00	\$179,480.00
Rural	K	50	\$ 7.00	\$ 3,500.00	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	1-9	650	\$ 7.00	\$ 45,500.00	\$12.00	\$78,000.00	\$25.00	\$162,500.00	\$26.00	\$169,000.00	\$28.00	\$182,000.00
Alt. Prog.	K	255	\$ 42.00	\$ 107,100.00	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	1-6	800	\$ 42.00	\$ 336,000.00	\$47.00	\$376,000.00	\$25.00	\$200,000.00	\$26.00	\$208,000.00	\$28.00	\$224,000.00
	Fr. Imm.	230	\$ 42.00	\$ 96,600.00	\$47.00	\$108,100.00	\$25.00	\$57,500.00	\$26.00	\$59,800.00	\$28.00	\$64,400.00
Awasis	K-6	230	Free		Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
Curb Serv	K	450	\$ 7.00	\$ 31,500.00	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	1-6	1,914	\$ 7.00	\$ 133,980.00	\$12.00	\$229,680.00	\$25.00	\$478,500.00	\$26.00	\$497,640.00	\$28.00	\$535,920.00
	7-12	956	\$ 24.00	\$ 229,440.00	\$30.00	\$286,800.00	\$25.00	\$239,000.00	\$26.00	\$248,560.00	\$28.00	\$267,680.00
City Cent	K-9	123	Free		Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
ETS	K	50	\$ 7.00	\$ 3,500.00	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	1-6	450	\$ 7.00	\$ 31,500.00	\$12.00	\$54,000.00	\$25.00	\$112,500.00	\$26.00	\$117,000.00	\$28.00	\$126,000.00
	7-12	17,635	\$ 24.00	\$ 4,232,400.00	\$30.00	\$5,290,500.00	\$25.00	\$4,408,750.00	\$26.00	\$4,585,100.00	\$28.00	\$4,937,800.00
Awasis Conditional	K	23	Free		Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	1-12	25	\$ 42.00	\$ 10,500.00	\$50.00	\$12,500.00	\$25.00	\$6,250.00	\$26.00	\$6,500.00	\$28.00	\$7,000.00
		270	\$ 42.00	\$ 113,400.00	\$50.00	\$135,000.00	\$25.00	\$67,500.00	\$26.00	\$70,200.00	\$28.00	\$75,600.00
		25,914		\$ 5,610,100.00		\$6,880,720.00		\$6,138,250.00		\$6,383,780.00		\$6,874,840.00