

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 7, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: L. Thomson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Student Transportation Services Update

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Dorothy Sombach, Kelly Hehn, Michelle Tymchuk

### INFORMATION

This report is being brought to public board to provide an update on the service that Student Transportation provides to the district.

The district's transportation department is composed of twelve staff members that provide customer service to parents and students in the City of Edmonton and supports schools in their instructional focus by ensuring that our students are transported in a safe and timely manner and arrive at school ready to learn.

Outlined below are facts and figures indicating the extent of implementation of student transportation for the start up of the 2006-2007 school year.

- 8,407 students travel daily by yellow bus service
- 17, 376 students travel daily by Edmonton Transit Service
- 725 parents provide transportation for students with special education needs
- Over 25,000 students bused daily or 33 per cent of student population
- Breakdown of 8,407 students using yellow bus service:
  - 2,412 special needs curb service
  - 185 special needs fixed routes
  - 75 special needs integrated on regular routes
  - 927 language program
  - 873 alternative program
  - 162 city centre
  - 2,533 designated receiving
  - 462 early education
  - 778 kindergarten curb service at noon
- 140 yellow bus routes designed using MapNet software
- 300 yellow bus routes designed by bus contractors
- Six yellow bus routes designed by bus contractors for Awasis program

- Between August 15 and October 15, Student Transportation staff provided the following customer service:
  - 2,338 requests for new service
  - 3,680 requests for cancellation or change
  - More than 3,000 e-mails were either sent or received
  - More than 6,000 telephone calls
- 12 service requests were received from Trustees from September 5 to October 15 and the vast majority were already in the process of being resolved
- More than 800 kindergarten students and their parents attended the First Rider Safety Program conducted by Student Transportation and bus contractors
- Route designers completed over 300 site checks for safety of bus stops and visited schools over 50 times to offer assistance, provide information and support
- 4,972 students or 96 per cent of students riding on regular transportation experienced less than a 60 minute one way ride time
- 214 students or 4 per cent of students riding on regular transportation experienced more than a 60 minute one way ride time
  - Breakdown of one way fixed route ride time by number of students:
    - 80 to 89 minutes – 6
    - 70 to 79 minutes – 39
    - 61 to 69 minutes – 169

The bus contractors who provide service to students with special education needs are required by contract to report ride times to the district twice per year. This information is not available at this time because the deadline for reporting is November 15 and April 15. A follow-up report will be provided to trustees after the information has been compiled.

During September, a number of buses experienced a late arrival time at school due to road construction, increased demand for service and new drivers who were unfamiliar with the routes. This problem has since diminished and all routes are arriving on time.

The district's Student Transportation department has responded positively to increasing communication with all stakeholders by launching a new website on August 22, 2006. Between August 22 and September 22, Edmonton Public Schools – Student Transportation was the most popular page on the district website. 1,658 visits to the website were made by the public and 425 by district staff.

School principals worked cooperatively with Student Transportation staff and bus contractors during the process for submitting school hours of operation. Many principals adjusted their school dismissal time in order to narrow the gap between the dismissal times of the other schools being transported on the same buses. This reduced the time students are waiting at the school for the buses to arrive and also reduced the time the students are riding on the bus.

The September bus pass sales have remained similar to last year's sales. The department has received very few calls with concerns about the increase in fees. Once the schools submit the revenue for the bus pass fees to Finance, an analysis will be done of the amount the schools are subsidizing to pay for the passes that parents have not paid for. The introduction of an annual bus pass fee has become very popular with 550 students purchasing an annual pass. This will reduce the amount of time schools will need to spend administering the bus passes.

The final revenue and expenditures figures have been completed for the 2005-2006 school year and Student Transportation experienced a surplus of approximately \$554,869. This amount will be applied to reduce the current \$1,007,107 deficit down to \$452,238.

<b>2005-2006 SCHOOL YEAR</b>	
Revenue	\$24,846,160
Expenditure	\$24,291,291
Surplus	\$ 554,869
Deficit Carried Forward From Previous Year	\$ (1,007,107)
Current Deficit Balance	\$ (452,238)

This deficit reduction was made possible because of the additional fuel funding.

The additional grant announcement by the provincial government for the 2006-2007 school year will help to further reduce the deficit, stabilize bus pass fees, reduce ride times and update the routing software.

At the start-up of the school year, district bus contracted carriers were short approximately twelve bus drivers in total. Since that time, contractors have been successful in hiring a bus driver for each route. They continue to experience a shortage of spare drivers which causes problems when the regular driver is ill or on vacation. The contractors reported that school start up for this year was much better than last year due in part to the driver minimum wage clause included in the contract. They continue to receive new applications and have a few people being trained each week.

In summary, the September/October start-up for students on bus transportation has been extremely successful. Plans are in place to continue to improve service to all transported district students.

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