



MEMORANDUM

February 08, 2022
Regular Board Meeting

TO	Board of Trustees
FROM	Shauna Boyce, Superintendent
ORIGINATOR	Scott McFadyen, Associate Superintendent
RESOURCE	John Blood, Director, Transportation Services
GOVERNANCE POLICY	Board Policy 2: Role of the Board Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent Board Policy 17: Student Transportation
ADDITIONAL REFERENCE	Board Annual Work Plan
SUBJECT	TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT 2021 - 2022

PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

BACKGROUND

Parkland School Division operates one of the largest regional student transportation systems in the province. This means that we not only provide safe, effective and efficient transportation services to Parkland students, but also to other school divisions, which includes Evergreen Catholic Separate School Division, Black Gold School Division in Devon, Grande Yellowhead School Division in Evansburg, Living Waters Christian Academy, SML Christian Academy, Columbus Academy, Devon Christian School, Elves Special Needs Society, Alberta School for the Deaf and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital.

The Transportation Department is open from 6:30 a.m. (6:00 AM winter months only) to 5:30 p.m. during bus operational days. During this time, staff handle all facets of the operation including bus dispatch and all external and internal inquires related to transportation services and school attendance boundaries.

Report Summary

The following report outlines the Transportation Services Department for the 2021-2022 school term.

Transportation is continually evolving to maintain an efficient and cost effective Transportation system to all parties we serve. The report highlights the accomplishments along with some of the challenges that Transportation is facing both now and for the coming school year. The Transportation Services Department, it's contractors and Bus Operators, continue to tackle the challenges of maintaining consistent, safe, cost effective and reliable transportation service during the ever-changing hurdles of funding challenges and the ongoing COVID pandemic.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions regarding this report.

SM:rg



TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT 2021-2022

FEBRUARY 8, 2022

Presented to the Board of Trustees, February 08, 2022

Scott McFadyen, Associate Superintendent, Corporate Supports and Services

Resource: John Blood, Director, Transportation Services

Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.

BACKGROUND

Parkland School Division (PSD) is a regional transportation provider. We travel 18,630 kilometres every day, which is 3,390,660 kilometres yearly. To put that into perspective, that would be equivalent to four-and-a-half trips to the moon and back. We transport 6,887 students (7,022 previous year) or 2,506,868 passenger trips every year.

In addition to 5,432 PSD students, we also provide transportation services to Evergreen Catholic Separate School Division and a number of other organizations such as Black Gold School Division in Devon, Grande Yellowhead School Division in Evansburg, Living Waters Christian Academy in Spruce Grove, SML Christian Academy and Columbus Academy in Stony Plain, and Elves Special Needs Society, Alberta School for the Deaf, and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton.

Transportation Services made a number of operational improvements over the last few years to eliminate ongoing deficits. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year Transportation had a small surplus. Transportation is projecting a slight deficit for the 2021-2022 school year as additional funding was provided to contracted operators to offset raising insurance rates and other inflationary pressures. Due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, ridership initially decreased but we have slowly seen a return of students as the vaccine rollout has progressed. Some parents still have concerns about their children riding the bus during Covid but they have become more comfortable due to mask requirements and vaccine rollouts for children.

Department Statistics

In order to provide regional transportation services, PSD uses a variety of contracted school buses ranging from 20 to 90 passengers, taxi services and parent-provided transportation agreements.

In order to offer these comprehensive services Transportation Services utilizes:

- 155 buses, conducting 595 bus trip routes (to-and-from school) for the AM & PM daily trips
- 6 Cabs
- 160 + Bus Operators (including spare drivers)
- 16 Contractors
- 7.0 Office Staff
- 12 Transfer Site Bus Monitors (0.133 FTE each). The biggest transfer site is at Memorial where we have forty-eight (48) buses routed through the site. Next is Greystone site at thirty-eight (38) buses routed and finally Copperhaven with twenty (20) routes.

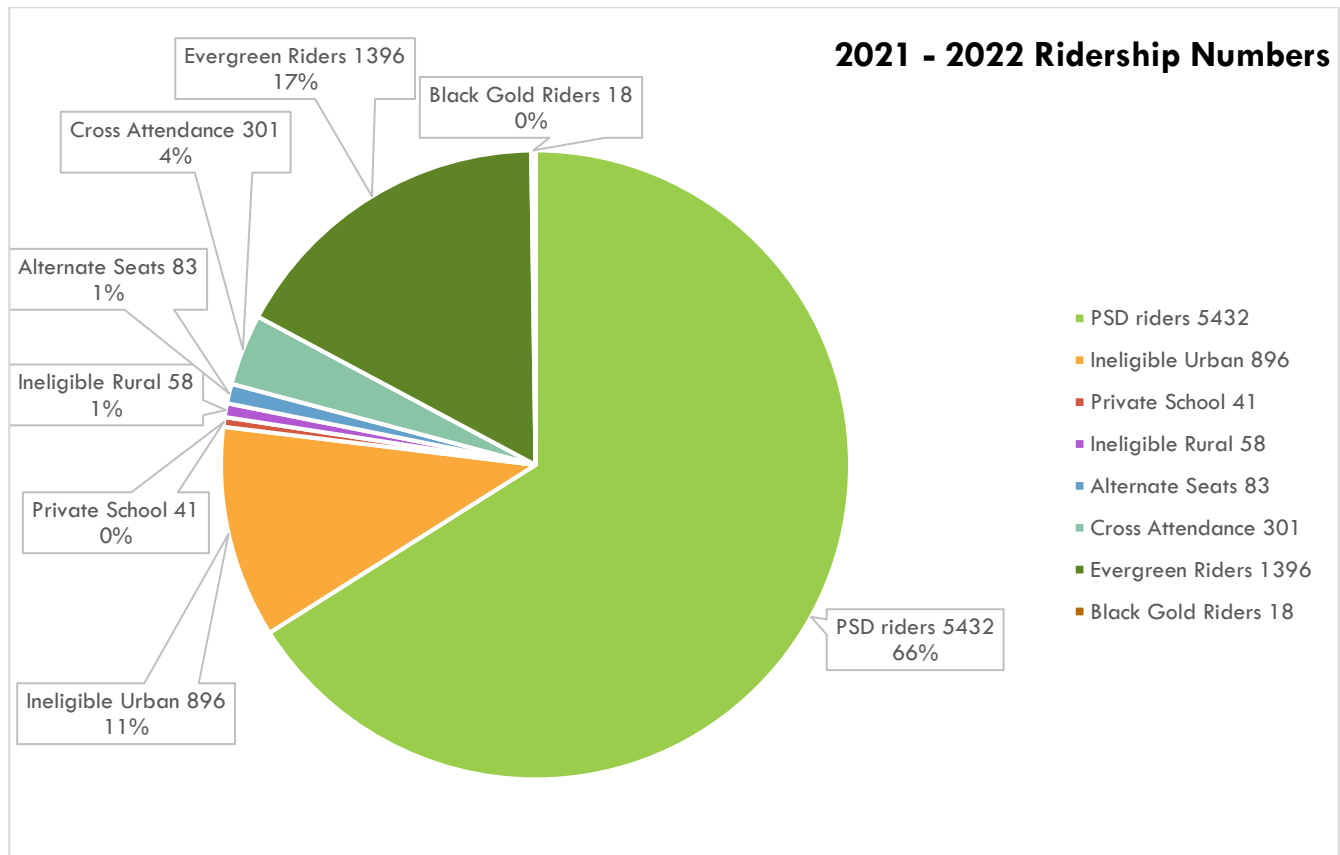
Transportation has responded to many customer service requests this year including:

- 1,395 transportation change requests from July 5, 2021 to January 4, 2022
- 7,970 telephone inquiries from July 5, 2021 to January 4, 2022
- 266 bus pass replacements from September 1, 2021 to January 4, 2022

Transportation has taken several steps to address Covid and safety of our student, staff and contractors by:

- Ensuring Public health measures are being followed on the bus
- Providing masks to operators and students, ensuring buses are thoroughly cleaned every day
- Adjusting the Transportation Services as required - bus routes are based on student numbers at the time of registration – Covid has and continues to cause the continual change in student ridership numbers.
- Detailed seating plans

2021 – 2022 Ridership Numbers



Note: The cross attendance, alternate seat & ineligible numbers are for reference only and have been included in the PSD Ridership Numbers.

Initiatives

School Bus Safety:

School Bus Safety week was from October 18 - 22, 2021. With Covid restrictions, it again stifled Transportation Services ability to conduct a fully comprehensive campaign to bring awareness to the public. We normally hold our bus evacuation procedures during the bus safety week but due to Covid we verbally instructed the students in the correct evacuation procedures. Although not ideal, it does keep the topic front and centre with the students. We also have drivers continue to remind students about safety aspects throughout the school year. Transportation provided a safety video for all schools with K-3 students, providing both visual and audio reinforcement to school bus safety for PSD's youngest learners.

We held the School Bus Transportation Association of Alberta (STAA) safety poster competition in the schools and posted some entries on the website. We have also posted the video footage from the new exterior (stop arm) camera system we are currently installing on the buses. The video shows the views that we have available for the exterior cameras. The external views can be submitted to law enforcement agencies when a person goes through the red "student loading" lights along with the driver's report. This footage can be requested by law enforcement agencies should it be required to support the issuance of a traffic tickets or for any other law enforcement aspect or court case.

First Ride Program:

As Covid restrictions change frequently making it difficult to plan for a "First ride event", Transportation is taking a different approach this year. In the spring time we are going to make a video with some Kindergarten students. The video will go through the process of safely loading and unloading both at home pickups and at the school or transfer sites. We will have transfer site monitors go through what happens at the site when the students transfer buses. The transfer site monitors will also explain how they assist any students who may forget which transfer bus they ride as well as the importance of the student having their bus pass.

The aim of the video is to educate both new students and allay any fears new parents may have with their child taking the bus for the first time. We plan to show what actions the site monitors, bus drivers and staff take should a student forget their bus route etc. The video is a valuable tool for parents as it goes through the process and shows them that their child is guided where required to board the right bus. The video also explains about the role of site monitors and how they look after and assist the students.

GPS live tracking:

Transportation is encountering technical difficulties with the GPS live tracking system implementation. Transportation is working with the vendor to resolve the issues. The trial period and test students we have been monitoring, have proven to be accurate to within 20-30 seconds. The GPS live tracking system shows that the student has scanned on and off the bus accurately. The problem lies with the comments that are displayed to parents, when the bus passes the students stop.

Route Monitoring:

Bus stops and pickup locations are always being reviewed to ensure the stop locations and associated areas are positioned in safe locations. As part of our continuous commitment to safety, field monitoring of routes, drop offs and turn around areas is completed to ensure all safety standards are met and approved by transportation.

Bus routes for the 2021-2022 school term are being reviewed extensively and this information is being used to generate the basic routes for the 2022-2023 bus routes. The review is conducted to ensure the routes are being operated to maximum capacities and to ensure efficiencies and that we have adequate route coverage within the division.

Student Tracking:

Mandatory scanning of bus passes is in place on all buses. Transportation continues to educate students and Bus Operators on the relevance of scanning. Bus Operators are responsible to report infractions to both the Transportation Services and school administration. This allows the schools to both support Transportation and educate students and parents in the safety aspect of having the passes.

We are still requiring detailed seating plans to be submitted for each bus route. These seating plans are required to be updated whenever students are added or removed from bus routes. They aid for both student discipline issues and if Covid tracing gets reintroduced.

Communication

In the event of any bus delay greater than ten minutes from the planned schedule or in the case of a bus route cancellation, Transportation Services notifies all registered bus students through parent provided contact information and updates the Transportation Services information on the PSD website. This provides easy access for parents/guardians to be able to check on the most current status of their child's bus route(s), inclement weather policy, transportation fees and general information.

The introduction of the new "bus status" app for all buses this year, has greatly enhanced the ability to accurately report lateness, etc. to parents in a timely manner. We continue to encourage all parents and staff to download the app, as it gives almost instantaneous alerts to all users.

The Transportation office has a dedicated phone line, the "parent/guardian hotline", for any emergencies regarding a student or bus route to provide quicker response to situations such as a student not reaching their intended destination. We also have a "contractors hot line" to enable contractors or Bus Operators to call in regarding any issues for their route allowing them access to transportation office staff without tying up the main transportation phone line.

All buses are equipped with two-way radios, along with the transportation office and the Transportation Department vehicles. This allows staff members to maintain radio communication whether in the office or in transit to the scene of a busing incident.

Transportation Services conducts regular virtual meetings with contractors to keep them up to date on relevant issues and to receive feedback from them on issues that may affect them. This has allowed our office to maintain communication with our contractors and Bus Operators on any emergent issues. We requested feedback from the contractors, regarding the value of virtual meetings, and the consensus is still overwhelmingly positive.

Safety and Compliance

Safety / compliance issues are all handled by the Transportation Supervisor, with assistance from both the planners and the Director when required. The supervisor has been dispatched on numerous occasions since the start of the school year to review or witness a variety of issues regarding pickup locations, road hazards, etc. All issues after being investigated, are then reviewed with a Transportation Planner or other transportation staff to offer a coordinated solution to the issue. This also ensures that transportation staff are aware of any of the issue(s) should they arise again, ensuring a consistent approach to all concerns.

Safe Stop Assessments:

The completion of an annual route assessment, for every route being operated is required by Alberta Education-Transportation to show that the routes are safe and that drivers are aware of any issues on the route. Once the route assessments have been reviewed by Transportation Services, we follow up with any route operators that may have listed concerns. We present solutions to the Bus Operator(s), which we believe will rectify the issue and discuss and solicit feedback in order to provide an effective resolution to the

operator’s concern. Resolutions may also include liaising with local agencies in order to correct any listed deficiencies.

School Bus Rodeo:

We are unsure yet if we will be able to host the 2022 School bus Rodeo as the Rodeo has been cancelled for the last two years due to Covid gathering restrictions. PSD has been given a tentative date of May 28, 2022 for the local school bus rodeo as well as the driver appreciation day BBQ. We will wait and see what will happen with Covid restrictions along with the direction the School Bus Transportation Association of Alberta (STAA) takes in regards to the Provincial School Bus Rodeo.

Transportation Department Safety Statistics August 30 to December 23, 2021

- 1. Stop arm violations4
- 2. Student management event..... 127
 - Behavior Issues.....73
 - No Mask.....54
- 3. S-Endorsement Drivers Trained.....2
- 4. Service reviews / concerns Investigated380
 - 247 Service reviews conducted. This would include fee questions, stop locations, alternate requests & school of choice questions.
 - 133 Service Concerns. This would be safety concerns, late buses, full buses / waiting lists, ride times, Covid concerns, driver issues, environmental issues-bus to hot / cold, bullying.

Note: The statistics for “Student Management events” are due to a different reporting structure that transportation has adopted to increase the amount of reporting. Masks and behavioral issues are now being better reported to us. Service reviews & service concerns are now being tracked in order to build solid data for both the future and to have historically information available.

Professional Development

Bus Operators Safety Seminar:

This year, Transportation hosted two startup / safety meetings in early August for all drivers & contractors. The meetings were hosted at Memorial school, while observing all Covid protocols we still managed to host a very productive start up meeting. The meeting was informative and well received.

The annual professional development that is normally available in February / March, directed towards drivers receiving the “S” (School Bus) Endorsement may not be held this year. We currently have two Transportation Services staff are certified as “S”- Endorsement Instructors.

A recent “Insurance lunch & Learn” session hosted by our insurance broker was very informative and answered a great deal of the contractor’s questions surrounding the insurance topic.

Equipment / Systems

Cameras

- To assist in managing student behavior, we are in the process of upgrading the camera systems across the fleet. We are going from four and five cameras per bus to seven and eight cameras per bus. The

upgrade is allowing us to add two exterior stop arm cameras along with a “dash camera”. The stop arm cameras will capture footage of any vehicles that go through the student loading lights. We are aiming to have the entire fleet upgraded by July / August 2022.

- Cooperation with local authorities and Alberta Transportation is helping with bus stops that may be experiencing frequent stop arm infractions. This coupled with the eventual installation of the stop arm cameras across the fleet will greatly aid the safety aspect for both students and drivers.
- Transportation replaced all the Zonar GPS units installed on all buses in September & October 2021. This upgrade was required due to the provider (Zonar) no longer supporting data from the 3G network come February 2022.

Bus Registrations

Another year of registrations will commence on February 14, 2022 for all students, with a registration deadline of March 18, 2022. Registrations completed after the deadline may experience a delay in receiving their bus passes, but every effort will be made to ensure bus passes are received in time for student’s first day of school.

Operations Optimization

Cross training has been undertaken and continues to be ongoing within Transportation Services. This will be of benefit to the department to assist with any and all unexpected emergencies and aid in efficient optimization of staff.

Challenges

Bus Operators:

Bus Operator shortages are extremely evident at this time. Fortunately, it has only resulted in minimal impact to PSD this year but this could change. Bus Operator shortages are expected to continue to hamper the student transportation industry for many years to come.

Operations:

- Revenue from the Transportation fees introduced in March 2021 were a little lower than anticipated mostly due to the parents adapting to the Covid environment. Parents have become very creative in getting their children to and from school and are therefore not using some of the services we provide. In stating the above, we are still receiving transportation request throughout the year so despite the lower numbers at the start of the school year, ridership is not greatly affected. Final costs / estimates will be available after all the payment installments have been received in February 2022.
- Future changes to the Transportation funding model along with increases in the carbon tax levy and insurance may affect routes and ridership.