



MEMORANDUM

December 19, 2023
Regular Board Meeting

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| 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 2023 - 2024 |

PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

BACKGROUND

Parkland School Division operates one of the largest regional student transportation systems in the province. We provide safe, effective and efficient transportation services to Parkland students and to other organizations including 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 6:00 a.m. 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 inquiries related to transportation services and school attendance boundaries.

Report Summary

The following report outlines the Transportation Services Department for the 2023-2024 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, its 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 driver shortages.

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

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TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT DECEMBER 19, 2023

Presented to the Board of Trustees, December 19, 2023

Scott McFadyen, Associate Superintendent, Corporate Supports and Services and CFO

Resource: John Blood, Transportation Director

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 19,230 kilometers every day, which is 3,499,860 kilometers yearly. To put that into perspective, that would be equivalent to four-and-a-half trips to the moon and back. We transport 7,434 students or 2,705,976 passenger trips every year.

In addition to the 5,799 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 Specialized Program Society, Alberta School for the Deaf, and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton.

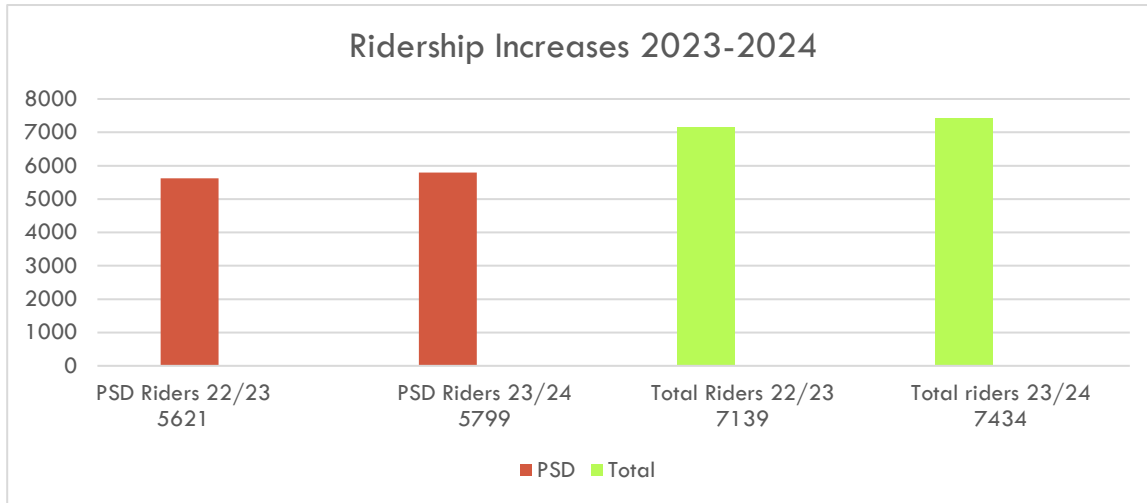
Transportation Services had a challenging start to the 2023-2024 school year as some contractors lost drivers the night before the first day of school. This created a difficult first morning trying to get students to school with a combination of both new drivers and changed routes.

This impacted startup for parents, students and transportation staff. Transportation had to consider alternatives in order to provide service, which included double running where possible, running the route late, or amalgamating possible nearby routes. None of these options were ideal as it increased student loads on the units and increased some ride times for the students however, these alternatives did allow PSD to transport all students to school.

Ridership

We have seen an increase in ridership this year in comparison to the last couple of years and we believe this is due to a combination of factors. The most significant increase is a result of the change in the eligibility distance (from residence to school). PSD chose to implement this change prior to the GOA mandate coming in for the 2025-2026 school year. We increased PSD ridership by 178, and overall ridership by 295 students, (see chart below). We are again experiencing increasing demand on specialized transportation, especially for buses that can accommodate wheelchairs. We are finding that more and more students have complex needs, and require transportation on the specialized bus routes. In consultation with contractors, we are issuing the RFP for the upcoming 2024-2025 routes earlier (December 2023) allowing contractors more time should they need to purchase a new bus. It should be noted that the lead time to order a new bus is anywhere from 8-12 months and buses equipped with a wheelchair lift are currently at twelve (12) plus months from the order date. Used buses are also in short supply because of their increased demand due to the significant price jump of new buses.

We optimized all routes once the 2023-2024 registration was completed in March 2023. We also increased routes with the introduction of the new eligibility distances anticipating the potential increased ridership requests.



Note: Rider stats up to November 16, 2023.

Transportation is experiencing increased costs for the services due to the contractors facing increased operating costs. These increases for the contractors are being subsequently passed on to PSD in the form of higher bids for routes that go to tender (RFP). Transportation provided a 5% increase to contractors to assist them with inflationary costs this fiscal year.

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 utilizes:

- 166 Buses, conducting 202 bus trip routes (to-and-from school) for the AM & PM daily trips
- 2 Buses in Fort Chipewyan
- 5 Taxi Cabs
- 167 Bus Contracted Operators, including one PSD Fort Chipewyan driver
- 10 Contractors
- 7 Office Staff
- 13 Transfer Site Bus Monitors (0.133 FTE). The biggest transfer site being Memorial where we have forty-six (46) buses routed through the site. Followed by Greystone site with thirty-eight (38) buses routed and finally Copperhaven with twenty-three (23) bus routes.

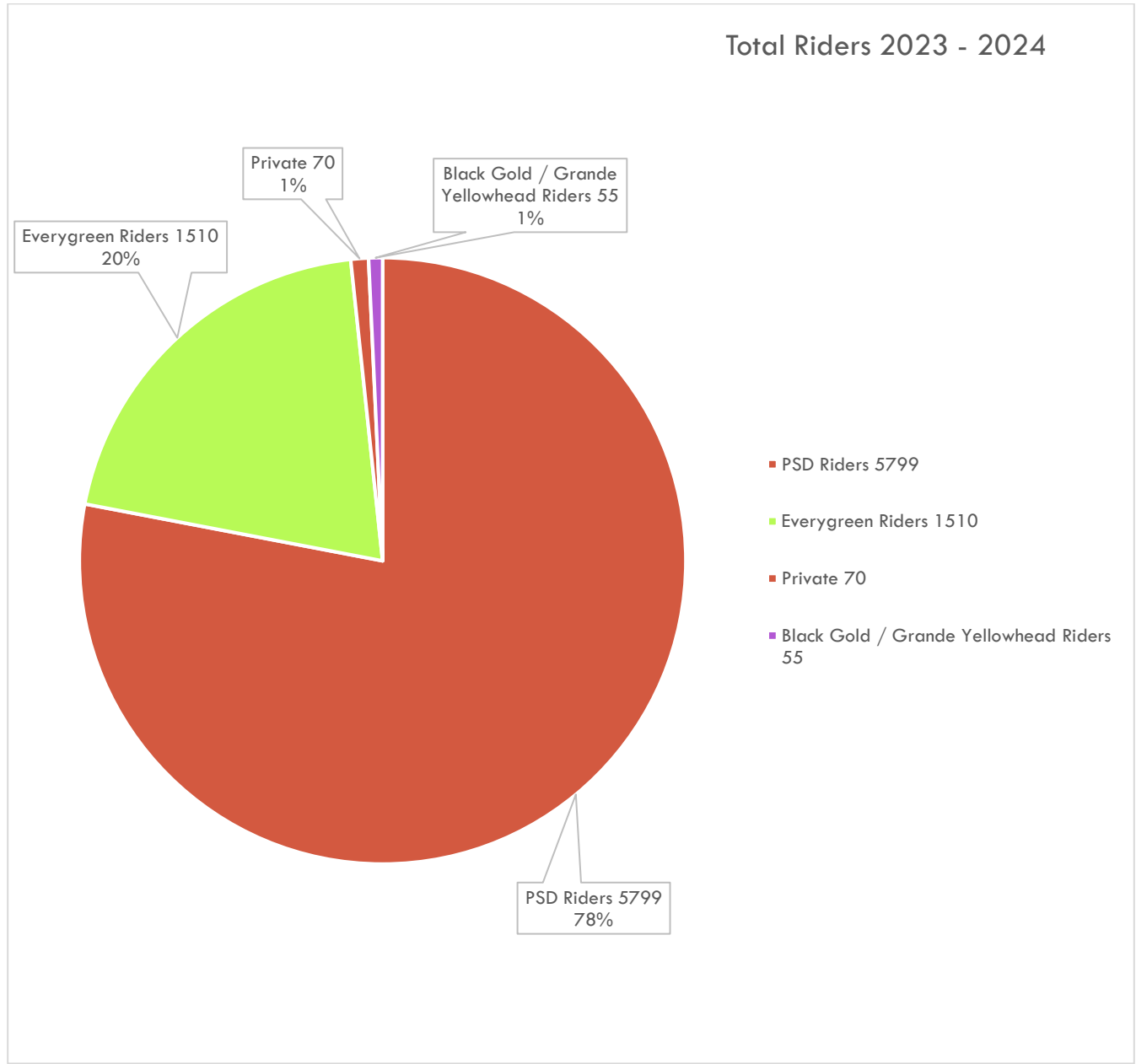
Transportation has responded to many customer service requests including:

- 1,007 transportation change requests from July 4, 2023 to November 16, 2023
- 7,482 telephone inquiries from July 4, 2023 to November 16, 2023
- 149 bus pass replacements from September 1, 2023 to November 16, 2023
- 533 transportation administration fees applied from September 01, 2023 to November 16, 2023
- 178 route change fees applied from September 01, 2023 to November 16, 2023

Transportation has taken several steps to address driver shortages:

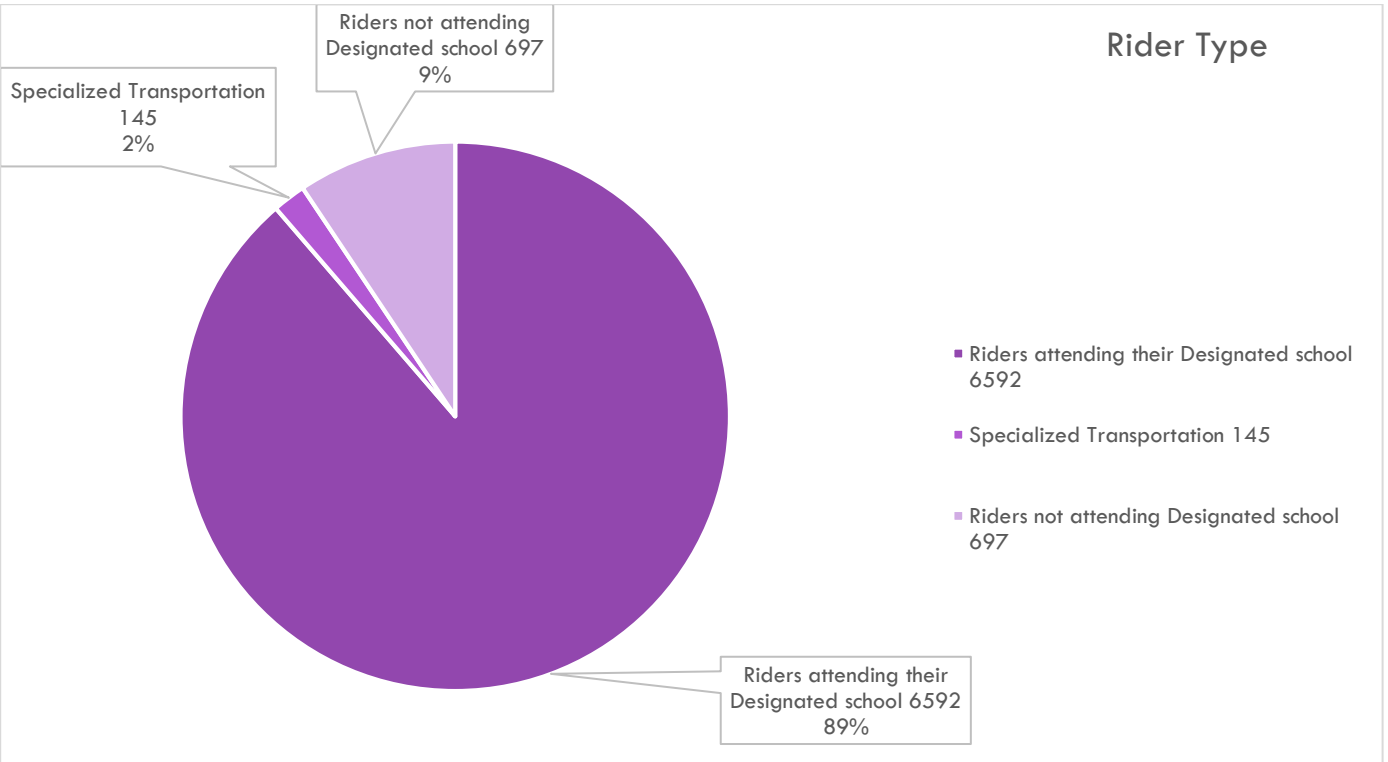
- Ensuring, where possible, routes are being fully utilized to minimize the late / double running of buses.
- Working with operators, drivers, schools, students and parents.
- Providing additional supports for any new drivers to the Division, i.e. going over the route map, in some cases doing ride-alongs to ensure they are fully trained and understand the route. We also host two “open houses” per month to allow drivers to come in and talk about their route or issues on the route.
- Drivers workshops; Emergency Evacuations, Winter Driving, and Student Management.
- Bus routes are adjusted based on the difference between registration and actual ridership at the start of the year.
- Transportation is trying to facilitate another bus driver recruitment day. Transportation designed an ad campaign last year which was sent to all schools, it was also in all school newsletters, along with being on the PSD website, Twitter, Facebook and local radio stations. Once we can bring a major contractor on board with the idea, we plan on enhancing and starting the ad campaign earlier in hopes to garner more interest from the public.

2023-2024 Ridership Numbers

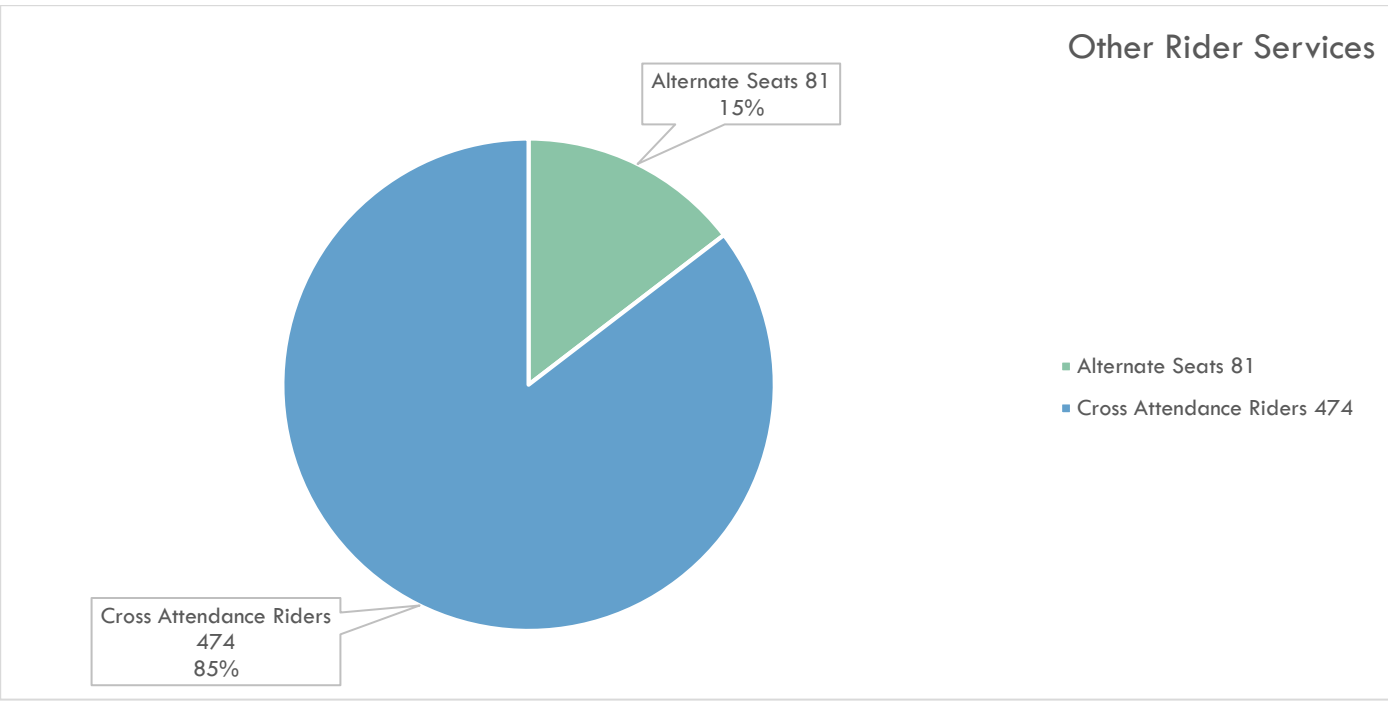


Note: Rider stats up to November 16, 2023.

Rider Type



Other Rider Services



Initiatives

School Bus Safety:

School Bus Safety week was from October 15 - 22, 2023. Transportation conducted a comprehensive campaign to bring awareness to the students and the public, including a full-page newspaper advertisement and space on the four Spruce Grove electronic billboards. We also, posted articles on the PSD web site and sent out the Student Transportation Association of Alberta (STAA) colouring contest to all PSD schools.

Along with the media awareness, Transportation staff visited some school and transfer sites to conduct in-person school bus evacuations. In preparation for school bus safety week, bus evacuations drills took place with transportation running an evacuation refresher course for all bus drivers. Three well attended training sessions were held for our drivers, some of whom were new and others who had not taken part since the lifting of the COVID restrictions.

We had drivers verbally instruct the students with the correct evacuation procedures prior to conducting the actual evacuations to ensure everyone was well versed. Some students had never completed this drill before due to previous COVID restrictions.

We are submitting all of the STAA safety poster entries we receive back from our schools to the STAA, hoping to win some recognition for the Division, schools and students. Videos were posted from the new exterior (stop arm) camera systems that have been installed on the buses. The videos show the views that we have available for the exterior cameras. The external views can now 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.

GPS Live Tracking App:

Transportation launched a pilot of the GPS live tracking app to parents in some rural schools along with the Millgrove area early in the 2022-2023 school year testing the system and alleviate any issues. It took a while to overcome any technical issues: we also only received limited feedback concerning the app, most of which was positive. We wanted to have a balanced approach before releasing the app division wide so we collected additional data from the pilot parents. The GPS live tracking system shows the parent / guardian that the student has scanned on or off the bus accurately, it also displays to the user when the bus is approaching their designated bus stop. During the pilot period we also encountered an issue whereby contractors / drivers would not advise us of a last-minute equipment change, this was problematic. If not informed, it meant the assigned bus would continue to issue a late warning on the app when in actuality it was on-time. When the system is operating division wide it will enable parents to look up their student's approximate bus pickup / drop off times at the start of the school year. This should alleviate some of the calls Transportation received due to routes having drivers assigned just before the first day of school and will also allow students to stay warmer a little longer during the winter months.

Route Monitoring:

Bus stops and pickup locations are always a challenge for some parents of younger students. Transportation conducts an extensive review of any concerns raised. During the annual route compilation in April and May, we review the stop locations and associated areas to ensure they are positioned in safe locations. As part of our continuous commitment to safety, field monitoring of routes including drop off and turn around areas, are completed to ensure all safety standards are met and approved by Transportation. For example, we recently had to change a Muir Lake route for safety reasons as the route crossed Highway 16 numerous times which was deemed a risk considering the traffic density on the highway. The route change initially caused some

concerns for parents when the previously assigned pickup was changed to an earlier time but safety need to be our first priority.

2023-2024 bus routes are being reviewed for both consistency and to ensure maximum efficiency of all the routes. The review is very in depth and based on the findings this information will be utilized in the generation of the basic routes for the 2024-2025 school year.

Ridership Tracking:

Mandatory scanning of bus passes is in place on all buses. Having mandatory scanning allows Transportation to ensure both parents and students understand the safety aspect of having the passes. One of the features allows for parents to check if their child has scanned off the bus.

Transportation continues to educate students and bus operators on the relevance of scanning. Having bus operators check that students have a valid scan card helps them familiarize themselves with their riders, cutting down on the possibility of students getting on wrong buses.

We still require drivers have a detailed seating plan, aiding in both student management issues and the identification of students should there be any damage to seats or if any other infraction takes place on the bus route.

Communication

In the event of bus delays greater than ten minutes or in the case of a bus route cancellations, Transportation first posts the delays on the Bus Status 4 app which pushes out updates extremely quickly. Transportation may also notify all registered bus students through parent provided contact information. Depending on the situation, updates may also be posted to the PSD website. The PSD website allows easy access for parents / guardians to be able to check on items like the Inclement Weather policy, transportation fees and other general transportation information. We continue to encourage all parents and staff to download the app, as it provides instantaneous alerts to all users.

The Transportation office has a dedicated phone line, the "Parent / Guardian Hotline", for emergencies regarding a student or bus route providing quicker response to time sensitive situations such as a student not reaching their intended destination. Once the myStop app is live, parents will be provided with another way to verify the bus has reached their stop and to see if their child has scanned off the bus. This should reduce the volume of calls we receive from parents as they will have the ability to check through the app. We have also utilize a "Contractors' Hotline" that enables contractors or bus operators direct access to Transportation office staff should the need to call in regarding any route issues.

All buses are equipped with two-way radios and all staff in the Transportation Department can access the radio via a software program on our computers. The Transportation Department vehicle is also equipped with a two-way radio which allows office staff to maintain radio communication while the person responding to the scene of a busing incident is en route.

Transportation initiated bi-monthly "open houses" this year along with regular contractor meetings to keep them up to date on relevant issues, to receive feedback from them, and to allow our office to maintain communication with all our contractors and bus operators on any emergent issues.

Safety and Compliance

Safety and compliance issues are all handled by the Transportation Supervisor, with assistance from both the planners and the Directors when required. The supervisor has already been to a number of areas within our

operating boundary this year to investigate pickup locations, road hazards, and turn-a-rounds, to name a few. All issues are then discussed with the relevant people to be able to offer a group solution. This also ensures that Transportation staff are aware of any of the issue(s) should they arise again, ensuring consistency to all concerns.

Safe Stop Assessments:

Every year we are required to submit to Alberta Education a completed route assessment form for every route in operation. Each bus operator completes the form assessing the conditions along their route, including any potential obstacles or barriers that may cause the bus driver or students difficulty with the safe operation of their route. Transportation planners extensively review the forms and follow up with any route operators that may have listed concerns. After soliciting feedback, we bring forward potential solutions which we believe could rectify the issue providing an effective resolution to the operator’s concern. In some cases, resolutions may also include liaising with local agencies or the County in order to correct any listed deficiencies. This route assessment shows that the routes have been designed in a safe and logical way and that drivers are aware of any potential issues on their route.

School Bus Rodeo:

PSD held a local School Bus Rodeo at the Memorial transfer site on May 27, 2023 inviting bus drivers from other divisions, including Paul First Nation, to attend. Along with the rodeo event, Transportation staff and Executive Administrators hosted a Driver and Staff Appreciation BBQ as a thank you to the drivers and all school staff for their dedication and continued commitment to transporting and educating students all year. This year we also had a special event whereby some members of the Board of Trustees and senior executive were invited to complete the rodeo course. This event garnered a lot of support from the spectators along with some good-natured heckling for some competitors.

We had fourteen (14) participants at the PSD rodeo and the top three were eligible to attend the Provincial School Bus rodeo in Nisku on June 03, 2023. Of the three drivers who represented PSD at the Provincial Rodeo, one of our drivers received a top ten placement! The event was well attended and a fun event for PSD staff and contractors.

Transportation Department Safety Statistics September 01, 2023 to November 16, 2023

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| 1. Reported stop arm violations | 9 |
| 2. Student management event | |
| • Behavior issues | 122 |
| 3. S-Endorsement drivers trained, classroom only | 12 |
| 4. Service reviews / concerns investigated | 459 |
| • Service reviews conducted. This would include fee questions, stop locations, alternate requests and school of choice concerns | 278 |
| • Service concerns. This would be safety concerns, late buses, full buses / waiting lists, ride times, driver issues, environmental issues-bus to hot / cold, and bullying | 201 |

Professional Development

This year, Transportation hosted four “startup / safety meetings” in early August for all drivers and contractors. Three meetings were for the regular route drivers / contractors and one meeting was for the specialized transportation drivers. We received positive feedback from the drivers and the contractors regarding the meetings.

We have the annual professional development for drivers scheduled for February 8, 2024, it is being held at the Heritage Centre in Stony Plain. The guest speakers will be giving presentations on student management issues, bus evacuations, and various other topics.

Also, this year we reintroduced the First Ride program after not hosting it for several years due to COVID. This is training given to new kindergarten students on all aspects of the bus ride, including scanning and sitting in the seat. We delivered three training / information sessions in August which included a child friendly video presentation followed by a bus ride to the Memorial transfer site. Aiming the training at the children as opposed to the parents, really aided in the success of this program and we received fantastic feedback and compliments from parents who attended with their children.

Specialized Bussing:

We continued both training and auditing for the specialized transportation routes this year. With the influx of new and larger mobility aids, we found that we had to conduct extensive research into securement methods for the new devices. Training was provided to ensure all staff, including those at Memorial Composite High School (as they recently obtained a wheelchair bus for transporting students enrolled in their specialized programs), are familiar and confident with securement methods and systems. Over the 2 days in August, training was provided to all specialized bus drivers to ensure they had the correct and appropriate training on the different types of mobility devices we encounter on a daily basis.

In addition, safety vests for all students were individually fitted to ensure the appropriate size was being used. At the same time, parents received brief training on the correct way to fasten and secure the vest. Transportation also provided vest fitment as well as securement and wheelchair training to new school-based staff, to ensure students were properly fastened when they leave school.

We are continuing to schedule between three and four audits a month for the specialized routes, this guarantees that drivers remain current on the differing securement methods for the multitude of mobility devices we are now transporting and other requirements.

“S” Endorsement Training:

Two (2) Transportation staff are certified as “S” Endorsement Instructors with a third waiting for a training date possibly in early 2024. They all share the training sessions in order to maintain the required training hours to keep their certification.

Transportation ran three “S” Endorsement courses in 2023: comprising of two days of classroom instruction with a knowledge test after each module and then an on-bus pre-trip and a road evaluation. We also ran an “S” refresher course and have another “S” endorsement course planned for March 2024 to assist the schools with getting school staff trained.

We are in the planning stages of arranging additional endorsement and refresher courses for drivers in 2024.

Equipment / Systems

Cameras:

Cameras are installed on busses to assist in both managing student behavior and providing video to law enforcement agencies to support the issuance of a traffic ticket should any drivers encounter vehicles going through the student loading lights. This year ensuring all buses were equipped before startup was a challenge as we have limited availability with the equipment installer.

Cooperation with local authorities and Alberta Transportation is ongoing in helping with bus stops and locations that may be experiencing frequent stop arm infractions. This coupled with the installation of the stop arm cameras across the fleet will aid in the safety aspect for both students along with educating the general public.

Transportation has replaced some two-way radio equipment, upon assessment, this equipment was past its useful life. Having new equipment enhanced the clarity of the radio transmissions.

Bus Registrations:

Transportation is already in the planning stages for the 2024 registrations which is expected to start on February 12, 2024 for all students, with a registration deadline of March 22, 2024. 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:

We initiated cross position training starting September 2023. This is where all three Transportation Associates rotate through the two dispatch shifts and the customer service position allowing greater flexibility as it ensures all of the Associates receive full training in all aspects of the dispatch position. This aids us, should we have staff members off due to illness and also gives each Associate the training to handle any and all unexpected emergencies as well as contributing to the efficiency of the department.

Challenges

Bus Operators:

Bus operator shortages are extremely prevalent at this time and affects PSD on any given day. The driver shortage across the province is not expected to improve over the short term despite the additional training funds provided by the government.

Budget / Contracts / Inflation:

In consultation with the contractors, PSD initiated changes in the Standard Bus Contractor contract. Changes include a variable contract term and the ability to add inflationary escalation into the contract pricing. This allows the contractor more stability regarding pricing and inflationary costs, it also allows the contractor more of a financial certainty when looking to obtain credit for the purchase of new buses.

The challenge for PSD is there is more uncertainty regarding operating costs and our ability to provide services at the current levels if funding does not match the inflationary pressures.

Equipment:

Buses and associated equipment are still very difficult to obtain in a timely manner and continue to increase in price.

Operations:

Revenue from the Government of Alberta will always be an issue for the Transportation Department, especially at this time, as we await the finalized results of the Transportation Grant funding document we submitted to Alberta Education.

The changes introduced by the GOA regarding eligibility distances may impact service levels and ride times for students. We will need more drivers and buses to accommodate the increased ridership.