

DATE: December 10, 2019

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Student Transportation Fees

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Lorne Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Alison Cheesbrough, Geoff Holmes, Christopher Wright

REFERENCE: [Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees](#)
[Education Act](#)
[Funding Manual for School Authorities 2019/20 School Year](#)

ISSUE

In June 2017, the provincial government proclaimed *Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees*, which removed the ability for school boards to charge transportation fees for some students. To offset this cost, school boards were provided with the School Fee Reduction grant for transportation. This grant was eliminated in the October 24, 2019 provincial budget and has resulted in a reduction of \$5.3 million in funds available for Student Transportation.

BACKGROUND

Student Transportation is funded from two sources: provincial transportation grants and student transportation fees. In recent years, funding has fluctuated due to factors such as the inclusion and removal of the provincial fuel subsidy, enrolment growth and new school openings. For a number of years, carry-forward reserves accumulated through a combination of bus pass fees, operational efficiencies and provincial fuel funding were used to cushion fluctuations and gaps in funding. In the 2017-2018 school year, Student Transportation exhausted all carry-forward reserves.

Since 2018, Student Transportation has worked through the Student Transportation Framework to identify and implement operational efficiencies. To date, these efficiencies have resulted in savings of approximately \$2.2 million. However, a gap remains between funding and costs. In May 2018, the Board of Trustees approved a fee increase of five per cent effective September 2018, and an additional five per cent fee increase for each year remaining in the term of this Board. The Board also directed that the five percent increase for 2018-2019, and any further funding gap (a total of \$3.8 million), was to be covered by Division surplus funds.

For the 2019-2020 school year, Student Transportation predicted a funding gap of \$2.4 million. With the removal of the School Fee Reduction Grant for transportation, the gap increases to \$7.7 million, which will continue to grow unless further actions are taken.

RELATED FACTS

- Student Transportation staff continue to look for efficiencies that will lower operational costs. In total, approximately \$2.2 million in operational efficiencies have been implemented since September 2018, which provide lower costs without erosion of Student Transportation service. They include:
 - A new yellow bus carrier contract which minimizes the impact of fluctuating fuel prices. The new contract contains predictable carrier rates until the end of the 2020-2021 school year.
 - A total of 27 bus routes using a shared transportation arrangement with Edmonton Catholic Schools. Sharing the cost of these routes results in annual savings of over \$650,000 for Edmonton Public Schools.
 - Working with schools to implement minor changes to bell times to allow more schools to share buses.
- In August 2019, the Government of Alberta proclaimed the *Education Act*. As a result, many of the limits placed on transportation fees by *Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees* have been removed.
- The Funding Manual for School Authorities 2019-2020 School Year prohibits transportation fees for students with disabilities who are not able to access regular transportation services.
- Edmonton Public Schools has waived fees for eligible Kindergarten riders since the 2005-2006 school year.

RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed Student Transportation fee schedule (Attachment I) be approved for implementation effective February 1, 2020, as it reflects current Student Transportation regulations.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

If the recommendation to increase fees is approved, Student Transportation predicts an increase in fee revenue of up to \$2.8 million during the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, which, while not closing the \$7.7 million gap, would reduce the draw on surplus funds.

Additional considerations include:

- As a result of increased fees, some riders may choose to cancel bus service which will result in a smaller increase in fee revenue.
- Several other school jurisdictions in Alberta have already approved mid-year fee increases.
- Student Transportation fees for the 2020-2021 school year will need to be reviewed following spring provincial budget.

NEXT STEPS

If approved by the Board, the new Student Transportation fees will come into effect February 1, 2020. Following Board approval, a communication plan will be implemented to inform families of the changes.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Proposed Student Transportation Fee Schedule, February 1, 2020

GH:kk

Proposed Student Transportation Fee Schedule *February 1, 2020*

	KINDERGARTEN to GRADE 6				GRADE 7 to 12			
	Yellow Bus (Monthly)	Yellow Bus (Annual)	ETS (Monthly)	ETS (Annual)	Yellow Bus (Monthly)	Yellow Bus (Annual)	ETS (monthly)	ETS (Annual)
Students attending their designated school (Regular Programming)								
Students attending their designated school and reside 2.4km away or more	\$33	\$260	\$33	\$260	\$60	\$515	\$60	\$515
Students attending their designated school and reside less than 2.4km away	\$33	\$260	\$33	\$260	\$60	\$515	\$60	\$515
Grade 7-9 students continuing to attend the same designated school as attended in elementary and reside less than 2.4 km away	-	-	-	-	\$33	\$260	-	-
Students not attending their designated school								
Students not attending their designated school regardless of distance	-	-	\$60	\$515	-	-	\$60	\$515
Students attending bilingual or immersion alternative program	\$33	\$260	\$33	\$260	-	-	-	-
Students attending other alternative programs	\$60	\$515	\$60	\$515	-	-	-	-
Special education needs curb service								
Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and students from Grade 1-12 with special needs who are unable to use regular bus routes	\$0	\$0	-	-	\$0	\$0	-	-
Conditional Riders								
	\$60	-	-	-	\$60	-	-	-
Replacement cost (lost or stolen)								
	\$6	-	\$75	-	\$6	-	\$75	-

Family Maximum (Kindergarten to Grade 6 only)								
Students attending their designated school	\$80	\$625	\$80	\$625	-	-	-	-
Students attending a bilingual or immersion program	\$80	\$625	\$80	\$625	-	-	-	-
Students attending another alternative program (no bilingual or immersion)	\$150	\$1250	\$150	\$1250	-	-	-	-