

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 63 (SAANICH)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
**Report to Board Meeting of January 18, 2023**

Committee Members:	Trustee VanWell Trustee Elder Trustee McMurphy
Staff Support:	Dave Eberwein, Superintendent of Schools Jason Reid, Secretary Treasurer
Partner Representatives:	Don Peterson, STA Nola Welsh, CUPE - regrets Suzanne Chisholm, SAA Ashley Sonosky, COPACS
Other Attendees:	Trustee Hickman, Trustee Silzer & Trustee Vandall

**Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

**A. PRESENTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

No Items.

**B. ITEMS DISCUSSED**

1. Transportation Survey Results/Review:

The Committee agreed that staff be requested to assess the options and implications for policy revisions that:

- lowers K-5 walk limits considering variation in school geography;
- reflects safety considerations in determining service / routes;
- encourages and support active transportation and environmental considerations,
- encourages timely registration and discourages ghost riders (students who register and then do not access service);
- focuses route design on optimizing service for students entitled to service by policy,
- clarifies how courtesy riders are defined (including removing contradictory reference to serving a program catchment areas); and,
- reflects consideration of supporting vulnerable students.

**C. ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

No Items.

**D. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

No Items.

**E. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

That the following remain as policies pending a review by the Board about what portions of these programs the Board wishes to retain as policy:

- Terminology for Referencing Consultation with First Nations
- Political Meeting Attendance by Staff
- Policy 9 (Board Operations)
- Policy 3 (Role of the Trustee)

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To: Policy Committee

Prepared By: Jason Reid  
Secretary Treasurer

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Subject: Bus Transportation Survey Results

Date: January 6, 2023

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this briefing is to analyze the results of the transportation survey and inform the Policy Committee's consideration of next steps in reviewing [Policy 21 \(Bus & Van Transportation\)](#).

### **Background**

At the June 15, 2022 Regular meeting of the Board of Education, the following motions were adopted:

- i. *That the Superintendent be requested to review the Bus Transportation policy considering, among other issues, walk limits, communications, and environmental sustainability.*
- ii. *That the review of the Transportation policy be discussed with COPACS.*

At the September 21, 2022 Regular meeting of the Board of Education, the following motion was adopted:

- i. *That the Superintendent be requested to provide a review of Policy 21 (Bus & Van Transportation) to the October Policy Development Committee meeting.*

At the October 18, 2022 Policy Committee meeting, the committee reviewed a staff report outlining the results of a provincial transportation survey and a preliminary review of BC school district transportation policies, and the committee discussed next steps in the bus transportation policy review. Committee members agreed that staff be requested to draft a survey for consideration at the October 26, 2022 Board meeting focusing on how service is established, student safety, environmental sustainability, and economic viability.

A draft survey (see attachment 1) was presented at the October 26, 2022 Board meeting, and the Board adopted the following motion: *"That staff be requested to distribute the Transportation Survey to all parents, students and staff as soon as possible."*

The survey was distributed November 1<sup>st</sup> and closed on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Due the high response rate it was not possible to analyze the results prior to the next policy committee meeting on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### Preliminary Review of Transportation Policies in BC (October 2022)

The provincial transportation survey and preliminary review of transportation policies presented to the committee in October is important background information. It informed the development of the survey and is also relevant for considering potential policy changes. The following are key observations from this review:

- SD63 serves a greater percentage of its students when compared to most other districts.
- About half of the districts responding (15/33) to the survey reported having lower walk limits than SD63, with walk limits typically lower for elementary schools than for middle and secondary schools. Most of the districts with lower walk limits also had policy/procedure establishing walk limits to the closest bus stop, and/or a minimum distance between bus stops. Some districts also designated certain areas as non-service areas (example: designated “urban areas” that did not receive bus service). SD63 policies do not reflect these additional parameters that restrict service levels beyond only walk limits to schools.
- Most districts (25/32) reported that they are not charging fees.

In the October briefing, I observed that applying the present walk limits in SD63 (which is relatively contained geographically being a peninsula) results in a greater number of courtesy riders than there are riders entitled to service by policy. This is particularly the case for elementary schools where the catchment areas are smaller. As a result, service for elementary schools varies depending on how the routes established for middle/secondary catchments are also able to serve elementary courtesy riders being transported to either their catchment school (from within walk limit) or to another school including for a program of choice<sup>1</sup>. As a result, there is significant variation in the service available for courtesy riders travelling to their catchment school from within the walk limit. There is also significant variation in service for courtesy riders travelling to a French Immersion program of choice, with much better service being available in the North Zone relative to the South Zone.

Most of the requests that we receive to enhance existing services are from courtesy riders. This is in part because they represent the majority of riders, but also because they are accessing bus routes that were not designed or intended to serve their transportation requirements. A resulting challenge has been balancing route alterations and/or new bus stops requested by courtesy riders, with maintaining adequate service for students entitled to transportation by policy (including managing route travel times and wait times between drop-off/pick-up times relative to bell times).

The current system has the capacity to improve transportation services for students entitled to service by policy; however, the trade-off will be reduced service for courtesy riders. In our

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<sup>1</sup> [Policy 24 \(Programs of Choice\)](#) clarifies that programs of choice, including French Immersion, are established without transportation assistance from the district.

review of policies in other districts, we noted that many district policies do not allow routes/bus stops to be altered for courtesy riders, restrict the addition of new bus stops (with minimum spacing or bus stop walk limits), and/or provide for minimum required travel and wait times for students entitled to transportation services.

For more information on this preliminary review refer to the briefing note included in the [October 2022 Policy Committee Report](#).

**Transportation Survey Results**

There were 542 survey submissions, although respondents did not complete every question. Parents/guardians represented 83.4% of respondents, followed by staff members (10.5%) and students (4.9%). The results for question 1 are summarized in the tables below:

Question 1 - How does your child or children currently get to school (select all that apply)?

role	Active Transportation (walk, cycle, etc.)	Private Vehicle	Public Transit	SD63 School Bus	Total
A Parent/Guardian	16% (112)	35% (245)	8% (59)	40% (283)	100% (699)
A Staff Member	24% (19)	41% (33)	6% (5)	29% (23)	100% (80)
A Student	24% (13)	30% (16)	13% (7)	33% (18)	100% (54)
No Response	20% (2)	40% (4)	0% (0)	40% (4)	100% (10)
<b>Total</b>	<b>17% (146)</b>	<b>35% (298)</b>	<b>8% (71)</b>	<b>39% (328)</b>	<b>100% (843)</b>

Other ways to get to school	
role	answer
A Parent/Guardian	Driven to school and catches the bus home.
A Parent/Guardian	Walk
A Parent/Guardian	They are enrolled in SIDEs, city bus as school bus not an option.
A Parent/Guardian	We drive her to/from the SD63 bus stop, where she takes bus to school. Keating.
A Parent/Guardian	Ferry
A Staff Member	As an Indigenous EA, I pick up many of our indigenous students daily in the IED van. It is frustrating that there is not a regular school bus for ILC Saanichton for all our kids
A Staff Member	don't have children
A Parent/Guardian	Out of school care bus
A Parent/Guardian	Boat from Piers Island, then usually private auto to Deep Cove
A Staff Member	No children going to school.
A Parent/Guardian	Walk
A Parent/Guardian	Drive and pick up some days bus the others
A Parent/Guardian	Walk, bike
A Staff Member	Walk, bike
A Parent/Guardian	Both walk and sd63 bus depending on which parent he is with!

In past surveys software has assisted in the identification of themes; however, this approach did not work for questions 2 to 5 because of the nature of the questions and the responses, which were often nuanced in communicating either support or opposition for a particular consideration. As a result, I reviewed all responses to questions 2 to 5 and summarized the observed themes. Overall observations following this review are that:

- Transportation services are important to families and many respondents spoke to how much they rely on this service; and,
- There is a desire (and for many an expectation) that policy be changed to increase overall service levels.

Question 2 - What should the Board consider when determining how transportation routes and services are established?

- There were a total of 244 responses to this questions with respondents generally focusing on the possible considerations outlined in the survey. Themes were identified through review of each response.
- The themes for question 2 and the response count for each of those themes is below:

THEME	Distance to Catchment School	Distance to Bus stop	Active Transportation Options / Road Safety	Rider Age	Student Vulnerability	Route Length / Wait Times	Courtesy Riders / Programs of Choice
COUNT	85	49	97	59	30	78	42

- Through that review I made the following additional observations:
  - As there are inherent trade-offs between many of the above considerations, many responses reflected priorities that were in direct conflict with other responses depending on each respondents’ circumstances.
  - Many respondents selected multiple considerations and some selected most or all considerations.
  - Route length/wait times was the theme most often identified as a single priority and many responses described student experience with long route times and/or long wait times between bell time and drop-off or pick-up.
  - Road safety and student vulnerability were also often a focus in many responses. A number of responses focusing on student vulnerability noted the lack of bus service for students at ILC.

Question 3 – How should student safety, including the presence or absence of safe active transportation routes or public transit, guide how transportation routes and services are established?

- There were 183 responses to this question. Themes were identified through review of each response.
- Through review of each response, I noted the following themes:
  1. Active transportation is not safe where there are no sidewalks, street lights, etc. Specific examples were noted for numerous communities throughout the district.

2. Active transportation is challenging in winter months due to weather and darkness.
3. Bus stops should be located to maximize student safety (lighted area, safe access and waiting area).
4. Safety should be the primary driver in establishing routes.
5. Service should be prioritized for those without access to transit and/or safe active transportation routes.
6. Age of rider is a factor in assessing safety - some students are too young for public transit or active transportation.
7. The Board should work with municipalities on improving pedestrian safety/active transportation routes.
8. Safety and serving vulnerable students should be prioritized over serving programs of choice.

I did not count the occurrences of each theme as they were not as consistently described as for question #2, and there was less instance of conflicting priorities (where knowing the quantum of responses is helpful).

Question 4 - How should environmental sustainability guide how transportation services are established?

- There were 202 responses to this question. Themes were identified through review of each response.
- Through review of each response, I noted the following themes:
  1. Design bus routes to accommodate as many students as possible to keep cars off the road and reduce traffic congestion. Encourage bus transportation.
  2. Electric buses.
  3. Advocate municipalities for improved active transportation infrastructure to schools.
  4. Advocate BC Transit to improve service. Subsidize BC transit passes.
  5. Encourage active transportation where safe routes exist.
  6. Student safety and supporting vulnerable students should be prioritized over environmental concerns.
  7. There are limited active transportation routes on the Saanich Peninsula. Opportunities for active transportation are age dependent, weather dependent, and seasonal.
  8. Bus service should focus where active transportation options do not exist.
  9. If bus service is reduced where active transportation routes exist, most families will choose to drive regardless.
  10. Expecting active transportation is not inclusive because not all students are able.

I did not count the occurrences of each theme for reasons similar to question 3.

Question 5 - How should the Board manage the economic viability of maintaining bus transportation services?

- There were a total of 216 responses to this questions with respondents generally focusing on the possible considerations outlined in the survey. Themes were identified through review of each response.
- The themes for question 5 and the response count for each of those themes is below:

THEME	Yes - fees to maintain/enhance service	Financial hardship needs to be considered	Yes - fees to enhance service only (not maintain service)	Yes - registration fee (or nominal fee), and/or late registration fee	Yes - fees for courtesy riders only	No Fees - service should be free
COUNT	79	41	15	55	22	45

- Through that review I made the following additional observations:
  - Many respondents are opposed to any fees; however, more respondents were in favour of fees to maintain services if necessary or to enhance services.
  - Many respondents stressed the importance of bus transportation and their desire for services to be maintained and/or improved.
  - Many respondents that were not otherwise in favour of fees, were supportive of a late registration fee if it would improve the timeliness of registrations and the effectiveness of route planning before school start up.

The detailed survey responses are included as attachment 2 for reference only.

**Next Steps**

The next step for the committee is to provide direction to staff regarding specific potential amendments to the transportation policy for further consideration, analysis and consultation.

Based on this direction, a consultation plan should be prepared for the committee’s consideration. Review of this plan by the committee will provide an opportunity for partners to have input into the consultation process including how they and the broader community will participate.

The survey results further demonstrate how complex and inter-related the issues are, and that it is not possible to consider one aspect of service without also considering all inter-related aspects. For example, when considering a change to walk limits the related impacts on route lengths (travel time) and capacity for courtesy riders also needs to be considered. A further challenge is the divergence in views regarding what the objectives of the transportation system should be.



Because of this complexity any proposed changes to policy should be informed by thorough analysis and by a robust consultation process.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Reid".

Jason Reid  
Secretary-Treasurer

JR/klg

Attachments: Attachment 1 – Draft Transportation Survey  
Attachment 2 – 2022 Transportation Survey Results