

Attachment 5
Central Zone Transportation Policy Review Open House
Bayside Middle School
Wednesday, October 18, 2023

There were 9 people who filled in the sign-in sheet (excluding Trustees and district staff).

Table Discussion Feedback

Do the proposed transportation policy amendments reflect the key concerns identified to date and the direction from the Policy Committee?

- 2016 funds – what was the purpose? Funding only eligible for those who don't charge fees.
- I think we have a solution – clarity on purpose objective - think beyond the bus
- I do think this policy needs to be reviewed from an equity bias–disabilities – families facing economic hardship.
- Policy could further outline how involvement in supporting active transportation – SD Vancouver, TransLink, and society for Children and Youth.
- They reflect the direction from the Policy Comm but not other concerns since Jan 2023. This past summer many FI students learned they didn't get bus spot. This was not an issue when the survey was circulated last winter. The policy needs to be revised to give them the same access.
- K-5 walk limits – agree with 2.5km.
- Safety considerations – has the school district consulted with local governments to ensure they can support and address road safety concerns.
- Reg fee or late fee to discourage ghost riders – agree.
- Clarify courtesy riders – amend AP560.
- I think that 4.8 km is long for middle school aged kids especially considering the lack of sidewalks within about 1.5km of Bayside.
- My kids' routes are both “milk runs” but I have no issues with bus route times. I do have a small concern that it's okay for a kindergarten student to ride with a grade 12 student.
- How does the revision address immersion school needs for the region? I understand the larger bus routes were meant to address this issue as there is no FI at Parkland and North Saanich?

Is there anything else the Policy Committee should consider in its review of the transportation policy?

- Could get more sophisticated in our scheduling.
- Conduct on buses.
- Communications.
- Drive to 5.
- Encouraging ridership on the city bus.
- Policy Comm should consider why they think it's okay not to give FI students equal bus access as the English program students. Because the policy has always been that way is no excuse and is perpetuating inequality. Equality being too expensive and not in the budget is also not sufficient rationale.
- K-5 walk limits – agree with 2.5km.

- Amendment to AP560 – amend language to reflect equitable opportunities for FI students. If the district both French and English programs they need to ensure equal bussing opportunities for FI students.
- Please consider offering an option to register manually for transportation in the event there are technical difficulties completing the registration.
- Include a terms of reference within policy – define “exceptional transportation needs”
- It sounds as though the issues in the policy come down to funding. The policy should not be determined by funds available but instead driven by safe and equitable transportation opportunities for all.
- Equal opportunity for FI students. Considering FI as a courtesy is wrong. It’s not a courtesy to learn and our other official language. I really don’t see why you must add more routes to the south just to have equal opportunity to an existing bus route. I’m sure you can find a way to write it into policy.
- A new registration system needs to be put in place. The existing one is difficult to load and read maps. Some routes are missing or incorrectly numbered.
- A small fee will be fine. But please don’t make it a deterrent.
- Both of our children use routes 8 in the morning and Routes 7 and 22 in the afternoon to get home. From Bayside to Dean Park it’s 8 km+. From Stelly’s a little less. We have been going to the schools for four years. We have concerns our children will no longer have transportation. Also Route 22 is often full in the afternoon and occasionally my son has to walk up Dean Park Road.
- Route optimization should be discussed further.
- My boys are both on routes that collect most riders outside the Bayside/Stelly’s catchment.
- If courtesy riders are unable to take the bus, then significant parts of these routes should not run as they technically can’t collect students along the route.
- If routes remain unchanged, then my kids will generally continue riding on the bus as there is space.
- Route 22 Stelly’s via Dean Park is often overpacked and while my son is allowed on the bus he often can’t get on.

Survey Feedback

Do the proposed transportation policy amendments reflect the key concerns identified to date and the direction from the Policy Committee?

Response 1

No they do not. You are building your policy to meet some needs but more specifically due to your budget restraints. It’s irresponsible to build a Policy around a budget that is not sufficient to meet the needs of the community. The policy you’re proposing may address some of the concerns parents had, however, meeting those concerns will also create hardship for those that will be excluded from the policy. Your policy proposal will create inequity between English and French immersion students. Your policy will benefit English learners and exclude French learners. Please do better. Do the work needed to seek additional budget money so that you can provide appropriate transportation to meet the needs of all those that require it.

Response 2

No

Response 3

I think the Policy's Committee's direction should include giving all students equal access to bus ridership priority, regardless of the language program that they pursue. To maintain inequality in the bus policy is completely inappropriate and does not reflect modern day education programs. I know this policy has been in place for a very long time, but that's no excuse for not correcting it, even if it poses budgetary challenges for the school district.

Response 4

I believe that there is an opportunity to broaden the language of the policy to support children to get to school, whether by School bus, active transportation, carpooling, city buses etc. by expanding the name of the policy to reflect this larger goal: "Student Transportation Policy" perhaps?

The policy states that the purpose of the program is to "establish an efficient and effective student transportation system to provide for the transportation of students to and from their nearest catchment school. Support for active student travel is an important part of a comprehensive approach to student transportation"

I would request clarity on whether the 'student transportation system' includes only buses? I think that is what comes to mind at the moment, but my hope is that the scope of this policy can be expanded such that the 'system' includes school buses, but also active involvement in active transportation initiatives and programs as well as support/encouragement of the city bus system (which is free for youth!).

I would suggest that the program purpose be more explicit in terms of what is meant by 'efficient and effective'. Some suggested wording being to "maximize the number of children served, particularly those facing barriers or challenges getting to/from school while reducing carbon emissions and traffic congestion around schools through operation of a network of school bus routes (established according to the principles listed later in the policy), promotion of the city bus services and actively developing/delivering programs and initiatives aimed at supporting active transportation for students as a means of promoting their physical, mental and social wellbeing."

The different ways the school district can promote active transportation identified in bullets 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 should be further expanded to the potential for the district to play a more active role in active transportation programming and initiatives (e.g. walking school bus/riding school bus programs, bike skills programs / training opportunities and others). We invest significant staff, physical infrastructure and monetary resources on our road-based bus services, could investments in non-bus transportation programming and partnerships that reflect our shared goals and strategic plan goals of supporting mental health and global citizenship be a possibility?

The policy doesn't mention that students who face challenges to getting to school will be accommodated/supported in any particular way. I was told that such students will always be supported in practice, but if I were a parent in need and read this policy, I wouldn't know that I could reach out for additional supports. This program is an optional 'nice to have', so I think it's important that the families and kids that really need it are able to access it.

One more technical question: The policy says that the bus routes will be published in August. How can families register in the spring if the routes are not published until August?

Is there anything else the Policy Committee should consider in its review of the transportation policy?

Response 1

[no entry]

Response 2

French Immersion students should not be considered courtesy riders. They should have equal opportunity to secure a spot on the bus. Also, the results from the previous survey are inaccurate. The issue of wait listing French Immersion students last summer occurred after the survey was conducted. Being waitlisted never occurred before in all the years our children have been taking the bus. "Courtesy Riders /Programs of Choice" would score higher if respondents were given the survey today. If the Board is unable to secure the necessary resources to meet the entire ridership demand, either through fees (Families are prepared to pay registration/transportation fees) or provincial funding, then a chronological registration process should be considered. Confirm seat on the bus by order in which paid registrations are made, regardless of whether a rider is in the English or French Immersion stream. Thank you.

Response 3

The Policy Committee should consider why they think it's ok not to give French Immersion students equal bus access to the English program students. When the bus survey took place last winter, French Immersion students were not experiencing bus enrolment issues. It was this past summer where this issue became apparent because of increased bus enrolment. The Policy Committee needs to consider these more recent issues when reviewing the Transportation Policy. This issue was know (over the Summer) at the time that the revised policy was being developed for the Board.

Response 4

Thank you for your work and your attentive and careful review.