

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 63 (SAANICH)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Report to Board Meeting of April 19, 2023

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

Committee Meeting
Tuesday, April 11, 2023

A. PRESENTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No Items.

B. ITEMS DISCUSSED

No Items.

C. ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION

1. Transportation Policy

Motion:

The Committee recommends and I, Trustee VanWell move,
That the Board approve holding, in the fall of 2023, community consultations in each of the three district zones on the proposed transportation policy as outlined in the briefing note of April 6, 2023.

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:

- Political Meeting Attendance by Staff
- Policy 9 – Provisions for Virtual Meeting Attendance/correspondence/trustee attendance
- Policy 3 – Role of the Trustee – ProD Funds
- Policy Review – November 2024

To: Policy Committee

Prepared By: Jason Reid
Secretary Treasurer

Subject: Transportation Policy Review Consultation Plan

Date: April 6, 2023

Purpose

At the March 2023 Committee meeting, the Committee reviewed draft policy revisions and recommended that the Board approve the development of a consultation plan reflecting the proposed policy amendments. This recommendation was approved by the Board at the March 15, 2023 regular meeting.

In addition to the draft policy revisions, the March 2023 briefing note also included background on the transportation review to date. This briefing is attached for reference.

Consultation Plan

The policy development activities to date have included conducting a provincial transportation survey (completed by other BC school districts), a review of transportation policies/procedures in other BC school districts, and a district survey seeking feedback regarding transportation services from parents, students, and staff. The district survey provided useful feedback regarding where services could be improved; however, many respondents also expressed an expectation that the system should provide services beyond those intended (by policy), and beyond what is possible given the capacity of the system.

Following review of the survey results in January 2023, the Policy Committee agreed that staff be requested to assess the options and implications for policy revisions that:

- lower K-5 walk limits considering variation in school geography;
- reflect safety considerations in determining service / routes;
- encourage 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;
- clarify how courtesy riders are defined (including removing contradictory reference to serving a program catchment areas); and,
- reflects consideration of supporting vulnerable students.

In my view, the next stage of the consultation should provide the opportunity for discussion and information sharing to facilitate meaningful feedback informed by an understanding of broader context including the limitations of the transportation system and the principles underlying both the current and proposed policy language. The next stage of the consultation should also build upon the work to date.

I propose that an open house be held in each of the three zones (North, Central, South). At these meetings, district staff will present the following contextual information:

- the current transportation policy;
- issues and concerns we have heard;
- what we learned from the provincial transportation survey (of other BC school districts) and review of other BC school district policies;
- what we learned from the transportation survey to parents, students and staff; and,
- the proposed policy amendments and resulting service changes anticipated¹.

Following this presentation, the following questions will be posed to participants for feedback and discussion:

1. Do the proposed policy amendments reflect the concerns identified to date and the direction from the Policy Committee (i.e., the direction from the January 2023 Policy Committee meeting)?
2. Is there anything else that should be considered?

A survey will be distributed to participants following each meeting to more formally solicit feedback from those who may not be comfortable speaking in the meeting.

As the target is to implement policy amendments for the 2024/25 school year (the year after the next school year), I recommend that these open house meetings be conducted in the fall of 2023 following school start up. This time is preferable to spring when there are already many activities occurring including budget consultation and staffing processes, followed by an increase in graduations and other school activities as we move towards the end of the school year.

Following presentation of the final proposed policy amendments reflecting feedback from the open house meetings, the Policy Committee would then be in a position to provide notice of motion later in the fall or early winter, with final adoption following a further 2 months of consultation as per [Board Policy 6 \(Policy Making and Review\)](#).

¹ For the consultation, a point the committee wished to clarify was what would be viewed to be a nominal registration fee, and an additional fee for late registrations. Reviewing what we have seen in other school districts, a nominal registration fee could be \$25 and for late registrations \$100.

Staff Recommendation

That the Board approve the proposed Transportation Consultation Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Jason Reid
Secretary-Treasurer

JR/klg

Attachment: Briefing Note – Transportation Policy Review (March 1, 2023)

To: Policy Committee

Prepared By: Jason Reid
Secretary Treasurer

Subject: Transportation Policy Review

Date: March 1, 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to present draft policy revisions for committee consideration, and to recommend approval to develop a consultation plan reflecting the proposed policy amendments.

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 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”*. In January 2023, the Policy Committee reviewed the results of the survey and agreed that staff be requested to assess the options and implications for policy revisions that:

- lower K-5 walk limits considering variation in school geography,
- reflect safety considerations in determining service / routes,
- encourage 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,
- clarify how courtesy riders are defined (including removing contradictory reference to serving a program catchment areas), and
- reflects consideration of supporting vulnerable students.

Draft Policy Revisions and Next Steps

Proposed policy amendments (see attachment 1) reflect direction from the policy committee and our assessment of what can be operationalized with existing system capacity.

We considered establishing differentiated walk limits reflecting variation in school geography. This would be challenging because of the complexity of quantifying the various factors impacting road safety, and because of the diversity in views with respect to these factors. Another consideration is that the core town areas with good pedestrian access (ex. Sidney and Brentwood Bay) are contained within 2.5 km of their elementary school. As a result, we are proposing that the walk limit be lowered for all K-5 students to 2.5 km, and that additional service reflecting geographical factors be considered only where significant safety concerns exist.

As existing routes also serve middle and secondary catchments, there are limitations to the flexibility of the system to accommodate lower walk limits for K-5. We've reviewed existing catchments and routes and are confident that the lower walk limit of 2.5 km can be implemented for K-5, with only a few exceptions. The exceptions occur in a few elementary catchments where a small number of students reside outside the new lower walk limits, and where it may not be possible to alter an existing route to serve these students. While the district will endeavor to serve all students outside the walk limits to their regular program catchment school, proposed guiding principle 2 reflects that it may not be possible in all cases.

Overall, the reduced K-5 walk limit can be implemented without significant alternation of existing routes and will improve service for students attending their regular program catchment school. We expect this will reduce the number of seats available for courtesy riders as more riders register who are entitled to service. However, until we see how the lower walk limits impact registrations, it is not possible to quantify the impact on access for courtesy riders.

If the committee is comfortable proceeding to consultation with the proposed policy amendments, I recommend that a consultation plan 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 school communities will participate.

Staff Recommendation

That the Board approve the development of a consultation plan reflecting the proposed policy amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Jason Reid
Secretary-Treasurer

Attachments: Attachment 1 – Proposed Amendments to Policy 21 (Bus and Van Transportation)

Attachment 1 – Proposed Amendments to Policy 21 (Bus and Van Transportation)

POLICY 21 - BUS AND VAN TRANSPORTATION

The Superintendent shall 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.** Student safety shall be the highest priority in the provision of student transportation by the district.

The transportation system shall be provided in accordance with the following Guiding Principles:

- 1 Routes, **subject to being economically viable**, will be established to ensure:
 - 1.1 transportation **to their regular program catchment school** for those students living outside the following walk limits by traveled road or walkway from ~~the their regular program catchment school~~ **nearest school in their catchment area**:
 - i. Kindergarten – Grade 5 Students: ~~2.5~~ **4.0** kilometer
 - ii. Students of Grades 6 – 12 inclusive: 4.8 kilometers
 - 1.2 **students entitled to transportation in paragraph 1.1 will not have to travel further than 2.5 kilometers by traveled road or walkway to the nearest bus stop.**
 - 1.3 **travel times are optimized for students being transported to their regular program catchment school from outside the walk limits established in paragraph 1.1.**
- 2 **The district will endeavor to establish routes that serve as many students eligible for service under guiding principle 1 as possible. A minimum of 15 students eligible for transportation services under guiding principle 1 are required for a route to be considered economically viable.**
- 3 ~~When it is necessary to address a concern of safety or to serve a district program catchment area,~~ **Additional transportation may be provided-considered if there are significant safety concerns, such as a major highway crossing, or in support of vulnerable students.**
- 4 The transportation routes shall be established to operate within the operating budget established by the Board. Bus routes shall be published in August of each school year.
- 5 Consideration shall be given to providing service when a student is directed to attend a school other than the nearest school in their catchment area.
- 6 Courtesy riders are district students not otherwise addressed in guiding principles 1 to 5, and may be transported if the legal seating capacity of the bus has not been reached. **Seating priority is reserved for those students entitled to transportation by guiding principles 1 to 5.**
- 7 **As transportation routes are established to provide optimal service in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 5, transportation routes and bus stops will not be altered to enhance service for courtesy riders.**
- 8 **Active transportation will be promoted through a variety of means including, but not limited to:**

Attachment 1 – Proposed Amendments to Policy 21 (Bus and Van Transportation)

- 8.1 Working with local governments to address road safety concerns as well as identify opportunities to create active transportation routes to school;
 - 8.2 Providing communication to students, parents/guardians and the community on road safety issues; and
 - 8.3 Building student awareness on various active transportation options for arriving to school.
- 9 Riders will be charged a nominal registration fee, and an additional fee for late registrations. Late fees are intended to encourage timely registration and improve the effectiveness of route planning prior to school start-up. The establishment of fees and any required revisions will be approved by the Board.
- 10 The Superintendent will establish and keep current, safety procedures for the district's transportation system and for the rental of commercial buses or vans for student transportation. Passenger vans shall be limited to a maximum of 10 passengers.