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Report No. 05-17-3118

**TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION CONTRACTS**

**TO** Finance, Budget and Enrolment Committee 10 May 2017

**RECOMMENDATION** **IT IS RECOMMENDED that the report be received.**

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

- Fiscal stability and accountability.

**RATIONALE**

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is part of a coterminous agreement with the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) and works jointly through a consortium, the Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG), located at 2 Trethewey Drive.

The 2016-2017 school year start-up was an extremely challenging one. There were driver shortages experienced throughout the Province of Ontario and the consortium had recently gone through a new tender for bus operators. The tender resulted in two new operators being added to the system and therefore all operators' territories were shifted to accommodate these changes. As a result, many of the bus operators were running in new areas they had not previously operated before. The above also impacted the timing of when routes were assigned to operators, exacerbating an already strained system.

As a result of the issues above, approximately 70 routes across the consortium (TDSB and TCDSB) were not assigned a permanent driver and there were a limited number of spare drivers to cover the routes. While efforts were made to prioritize special needs for busing and to find alternatives where possible, such as taxis or other vendors that did not initially bid, the driver shortage issue continued throughout the Fall.

This report is to provide a status update for the current state of Student Transportation and to outline many of the actions taken to ensure a more effective start-up in the 2017-2018 school year, and beyond.

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### **Current Update on Open Routes (Drivers Assigned to Routes):**

In September, there were approximately 70 routes between both Boards without a primary driver and only a handful of spare drivers in the system, therefore approximately 60 routes were left without a solution. Currently, there remain 25 routes not covered with a permanent driver, however there are over 80 spare drivers in the system, thus all routes are serviced by either a spare drivers or a very small proportion with a taxi. Neighbouring Boards also continue to struggle with driver shortages and are continuing to use spare drivers.

### **Preparation for 2017-2018 School Year and Beyond:**

- A number of meetings have been held with bus operators since December 2016 to discuss concerns, planning for the coming year, and to collaborate on how to improve the system (such as moving up the date for routing, etc.). Meetings will continue leading into the new school year.
- Concerted efforts have been made through numerous communications to the system to receive the bussing verification lists earlier (98% returned as of 1 May 2017). This allows Student Transportation to move up the date to distribute routes to bus operators by one month to give them more time to ensure they have drivers matched with routes.
- Weekly updates with providers on driver coverage will occur throughout the summer. If any concerns arise, contact will be made between Operators and the TSTG.
- The contracts will not be changing this year, thus there will not be the additional turnover of routes that was experienced this year.
- Peak load staffing will be enhanced to take calls during the start-up phase.
- GPS will be fully operational for the 2017-2018 school year, allowing bus operators to track the status of their fleets, which will allow the Board to better inform parents of the status of a bus.
- A Transportation portal has been developed which will allow parents to receive the bus delay updates from operators directly. The portal will be launched by the start of June. TSTG will be sending material to the Communications Department to review and assist in disseminating.
- Efforts are underway to link the above Transportation portal to

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the GPS through new software to allow real time data through a “where’s my bus” app. As this will require a further connection to the software, there is still some work to be done on this and as further information is secured, updates will be provided.

- Principals from the special needs congregate schools have been each paired with a specific operating division at a bus operator to provide advice and insight on school issues with transportation. They will assist with training and of bus operators.
- A Transportation Working Group consisting of Superintendents of both Boards, SEAC representatives, Transportation staff, School Principals and school bus operators has been established and will assist with identifying system related bus service issues.
- A review and update of the Transportation policy in the upcoming school year will be commenced.

**Other Updates:**

- A tender has gone out for new software and there is an opportunity to enhance the automation of routing to reduce time and to be more efficient. Proposals have been reviewed and a vendor has been selected to proceed with the next step of testing the software to ensure it will perform as expected (proof of concept). Once the step has been completed, the award will be brought forward to committee for approval. If approved, full implementation of the software is expected for the 2018-2019 school year with a soft launch to pilot in January 2018.
- Efforts to continue to improve the governance structure through increased harmonization between both Boards will be continued.
- Over \$250,000 in penalties have been issued to bus operators for non-performance resulting in cost avoidance for the Board.

**IMPLEMENTATION  
AND REVIEW**

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