



Revised - Transportation Update on Changes to Bell Times in 2020-21

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 29 January, 2020

Report No.: 01-20-3832

Strategic Directions

1. Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
2. Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Revised - Student Transportation Update on Bell Time Changes for 2020-21 be received.

Context

When the Board passed its 2019-20 operating budget, it included a two year implementation plan to balance the Board's budget. The plan included budget changes for 2019-20, as well as planned reductions for the 2020-21 school year.

One of the areas impacted by planned reductions in 2020-21 was student transportation. The initial plan included changes to elementary French immersion and gifted transportation but those were subsequently reversed to ensure that there was time to conduct a review of where these programs are offered and how to ensure equity of access. These changes would have amounted to \$1.9M in savings.

In addition, a second planned change to student transportation involves adjusting bell times to improve route efficiency. This was projected to save the Board \$2.5M annually. This report outlines how staff will implement the Board direction in this area.

Background

Currently, the TDSB spends approximately \$67.2M on student transportation and we receive \$63.7M in funding from the Ministry of Education. This results in a deficit of approximately \$3.5M.

While we understand that changing bell times will be difficult for some families and communities initially, we feel that this option maintains the level of transportation services for our students and is the best solution in the long run. Without these changes other reductions to services would have to be found in other areas of the Board to balance the budget. The projected impact of changing bell times and making routes more efficient will be approximately \$2.5M in annual savings.

In addition to the financial impetus for this change, several other factors were considered:

- *Driver shortages* – centralizing bell times allows us to plan routes more efficiently. An analysis conducted by our software vendor estimated that approximately 55-60 buses will be taken off the roads as a result of greater efficiency in planning resulting from bell time changes. This is done by more efficiently coupling schools to ensure the maximization of usage by each bus. This will minimize the impact of driver shortages by reducing the number of drivers needed across the system by approximately 55-60 drivers/routes. To put this in to perspective, in October, 2019, there were 50 open routes as a result of the driver shortage. The drivers that are freed up as a result of this planning could be available to fill shortages.
- *Limit Service Disruption* – By altering bell times, the Board will ensure that all students who are currently eligible for Student Transportation will continue to have the service.
- *Environmental impact* – Every bus on the road emits approximately 50 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. By removing 55 buses off the roads, over 2,750 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide could be reduced.

In the analysis of this plan provided by our software vendor, Georef, the following parameters were put on the changes:

1. Bell times would be in the following ranges:
 - a. Morning bell times would be between 8:15 and 9:15am
 - b. Afternoon bell times would be between 2:45 and 3:45pm
2. No change in bell times would be greater than 30 minutes

- Only full size (big bus) vehicles were considered that were configured to carry 70-72 students or 41 students.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

The bell time change based on the above parameters is projected to significantly reduce the number of routes required. It is estimated that routes at 145 schools would be impacted. The chart below provides a summary of the changes to bell times across those schools.

CHANGE IN MINUTES	INCREASE IN BELL TIME	DECREASE IN BELL TIME	TOTAL SCHOOLS IMPACTED
5 Minutes	6	1	7
10 Minutes	8	4	12
15 Minutes	20	9	29
20 Minutes	7	9	16
25 Minutes	24	7	31
30 Minutes	22	28	50
Total	87	58	145

Detailed information of the schools impacted will be provided as part of the information sessions.

In order to implement the changes to bell times, staff will follow the procedures outlined in PR504 – Transportation of Students, section 3.4 in Appendix B. The following chart provides an outline of the timeline and communication plans:

Activity/Event	Month	Comments
Identification of Impacted Schools	February 2020	Transportation department will prepare routing to determine impacted schools
Stakeholder Information Sessions	February to March 2020	The information sessions will include the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees • Superintendents

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • School Staff • Childcares & EDP programs • School Councils • SEAC • PIAC • Parents
<p>Completion and notification of final bell changes</p>	<p>End of March 2020</p>	<p>The transportation department will advise schools of new bell times and provide communication tools for informing parents. Both the board and transportation websites will be updated with information for parents/guardians.</p> <p>A final report on the implementation of the change in bell times will be provided to FBEC in the April round of meetings.</p>

The **information sessions** with stakeholders will be done in two different formats. A public meeting with communities in each Learning Centre will be scheduled during the month of February. **In addition, information will be posted on both school and board websites**, which will also provide background information on the impacted schools and other relevant information. **Information sessions** for principals and school staff will be done through targeted email communications and **information on board websites**.

The impacts of bell time optimization on local child care services will vary from school-to-school. Changes in bell times may require some licensed child care, before-and after-school programs (BASP) and authorized recreation program providers to adjust their hours of operation, capacity and staffing. The Early Years Team, working in collaboration with Communications staff, Superintendents, and Transportation teams, will create a coordinated communication plan for informing all stakeholders. The transition to new hours of operation for child care centres, before-and after-school programs and authorized recreation providers will be contingent on open and regular communication between the principal, child care supervisor and families. The Early Years team will begin **information sessions** with child care staff to fully assess the degree to which operational adjustments are required in each school. A similar process of evaluation will be undertaken regarding the operation of EarlyON Centres in TDSB schools.

Resource Implications

It is anticipated that bell time changes will result in a budget reduction of approximately \$2.5M as outlined in the 2019-20 budget plan.

Communications Considerations

We will work closely with the Communications department to ensure that all stakeholders, including parents/guardians, are provided with the opportunity **attend information sessions**, and are provided with all required information in a timely **manner on school and board websites**. Communications, as outlined in the Action Plan and Associated Timelines in this report, will be completed. Updated information will be provided on both the Board's website and the Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG) website when routing is complete.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

- i. PO20 – Transportation of Students
- ii. PR504 – Transportation of Students

Appendices

- Appendix A: PO20 – Transportation of Students
- Appendix B: PR504 – Transportation of Students

From

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Toronto District School Board

Policy P020

Title: **TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS**

Adopted: December 16, 1998

Revised: May 31, 2000, October 27, 2005

Review:

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To establish the criteria for the provision of student transportation and safety measures that will be taken

2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Executive Superintendent, Business Services

3.0 POLICY

The Toronto District School Board is committed to the provision of safe and reliable transportation for resident students in accordance with the provisions of the *Education Act*, section 21. (2), and the administrative procedure section of this policy. The means of transportation for eligible students is by school bus, the provision of TTC tickets or by taxi.

3.1. Eligibility Criteria

(a) Distance

Transportation is provided to students who would otherwise be excused from attendance at a school because of distance as provided by the *Education Act*, section 21. (2), based on grade level as of September 1 of the school year.

(i) Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5: 1.6 km or more*

(ii) Grades 6 to 8: 3.2 km or more*

(iii) Grade 9 to OAC: 4.8 km or more*+

*Distance to be measured from closest public thoroughfare of the residence of the student to nearest public access to the school building.

+ TTC tickets may be available depending on financial need.

(b) Medical Condition

Transportation may be provided, regardless of distance, for students who have a medical condition or disability that severely limits walking.

(c) Program Considerations

Transportation is provided:

- (i) for students who are placed by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee to a Special Education program that is not located in their home school and who meet the distance criteria in section 3.1 (a);
- (ii) for students who are placed in a program by the Toronto District School Board which is not offered in their home school and who meet the distance criteria in section 3.1 (a);
- (iii) for students attending a French Immersion program not offered in their home school and who meet the distance criteria in section 3.1 (a);
- (iv) for students who, for program purposes as stated in the *Education Act*, Section 190. (1), are required to attend another school during the course of the school day and who meet the distance criteria in section 3.1 (a);
- (v) for students who require treatment at an approved treatment facility during the course of the school day;
- (vi) for elementary students who are placed in a holding school by the Toronto District School Board which is located farther than a closer school offering the same program and who meet the distance criteria for JK to Grade 5 in section 3.1 (a).

(d) Alternative Attendance

Transportation is not provided for students attending any school or special program at their request, even when distance is a factor.

3.2. Method of Transportation

- (a) Transportation is provided to eligible students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5 by contracted carrier services (bus or van) or Board bus.
 - (i) School-to-school transportation would be offered.
 - (ii) Designated site-to-school transportation may be provided as a result of an Identification, Placement and Review Committee or for medical reasons.

- (iii) Special Education students in district-wide programs (formerly Metro-wide programs) will receive home-to-school transportation.
- (b) TTC tickets will be provided to eligible students from Grade 6 through to Grade 8 on parental /guardian request. Grade 6 students may be provided with bus transportation if the most direct TTC route requires more than one transfer. Students in Grades 9 to OAC may receive TTC tickets provided the distance and financial criteria are met.
- (c) Taxi service may be provided for eligible students in situations where it is warranted.

3.3. Summer School Transportation

Summer school transportation may be provided, either by school bus or TTC, for the following designated programs using the same eligibility criteria as stated in Section 3.1:

- (a) Ministry-funded Section 29 programs in treatment centres, hospitals, etc., that are an extension of the regular school year program.
- (b) Programs offered by the Toronto District School Board for Special Education students.
- (c) Students attending credit programs who are eligible for school bus transportation for medical reasons.

3.4. Appeal Process

Parents may appeal the decisions regarding transportation. All appeals will be made to the Transportation Department. Further appeal may be made in writing to the appropriate Supervisory Officer responsible for transportation who will forward it to the Appeal Committee.

3.5. Transportation Manual

A Transportation Manual will be developed to include procedures, guidelines and protocols for issues such as:

- Mandatory performance requirements
- Child care
- Staggered school hours
- Section 29 programs
- Cancellation of transportation
- Bus evacuation
- Empty seat procedures
- Accident reporting
- Safety

- Student conduct
- Medical conditions
- Consolidation of schools
- Glossary

3.6. Empty Seats

An procedure shall be established to provide a process for filling seats on school buses that are available after all eligible students have been accommodated.

4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

The Director is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this policy.

5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Operational Procedure PR504, Transportation of Students

Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR504

Title: **TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS**

Adopted: December 16, 1998

Revised: April 28, 1999, **May 25, 2009**

Authorization:

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To provide administrative processes for the transportation of students in accordance with policy P020, Transportation of Students

2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Executive Superintendent, Business Services

3.0 PROCEDURES

3.1. Medical Condition

A medical certificate signed by a physician is required. The Board reserves the right, with signed parental consent, to discuss transportation issues with the physician.

3.2. Appeal Process

- (a) The appeal committee will be comprised of three of the following people:
- Chairperson: Comptroller of Administrative Services
 - One of two designated Principals or Transportation Officers
 - One of two designated School Superintendents
- (b) Parents should first contact their local transportation office to discuss the situation and if they are not satisfied, they may file an appeal.
- (c) A standard appeal form will be provided for the convenience of the parent. A separate letter is not required and relevant information may be attached to the form.
- (d) The appeal committee will meet within 15 working days of receipt of an appeal.
- (e) Parent will be advised in writing of the decision of appeal committee.
- (f) A log will be kept of appeals to report to the Board annually.

- (g) Appeals will be made if there is a major difference of policy interpretation for eligibility regarding medical, distance or safety criteria.
- (h) An appropriate representation (e.g. preferably an out-of-school-area Transportation Officer or Principal) of appeal members should be made based on the nature of the appeal.
- (i) In order to ensure continuity, the Manager of Transportation will review all appeals for consistent application of policy.
- (j) Any exemptions outside the policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- (k) The pool of designated members for the appeal committee should be representative of all of the quadrants of the city.
- (l) A final appeal would be made to the Comptroller of Administrative Services.
- (m) A parent may appoint a fourth member to the appeal committee, someone who has no vested interest in the outcome of the appeal.

3.3. Summary Of Mandatory Performance Requirements

- (a) *Insurance Coverage* Each respondent will be required to carry a minimum \$20 million coverage, combined per vehicle, per accident, for passenger and road hazard liability insurance.
- (b) *Radio Communication* Each vehicle must be equipped with a two-way radio online to a base station at each division's Transportation Department.
- (c) *Pick-up Times* To be no earlier than 7:30 a.m.
- (d) *Drop-off Times* To be no earlier than thirty (30) minutes prior to school start time.
- (e) *Wait Time for Pick-Up* Drivers must wait a minimum of two minutes.
- (f) *Student Travel Time* To be 1.25 hours maximum under normal conditions (may be longer with Board approval).
- (g) *Seat-belts* All vehicles – 48-passenger or larger are not required to have seat-belts.
- (h) *Child Seating and Restraint Systems (Car Seat, Booster Seats)* Car seats may be used on 20-passenger buses for the daily home-to-school transportation of students where the parent provides the car seat. Trained staff from the bus company will install the child seating on the bus. The seating must remain on the bus until the end of the school year.

Child seating and restraint systems Update: June 2005

The Ontario government's Bill 73, *An Act to Enhance the Safety of Children and Youth on Ontario's Roads*, was passed on December 6, 2004. Police officers will begin charging individuals as of September 2005. The legislation applies to private vehicles. Therefore, school principals must ensure that if students are being transported in a private vehicle and meet the requirements in section J.4(c)(i), that the legislation is followed. The Ministry of Transportation has not yet clarified issues of funding for this initiative in school boards. Requirements for taxis and other commercial vehicles is also to be determined.

- (i) *Age of Vehicles* Twelve (12) years maximum for 72-passenger buses or larger and ten (10) years maximum for all other vehicles.
- (j) *Subcontracting* No subcontracting is permitted without written approval.
- (k) *Noon-hour Drop-off Times* Kindergarten students must not be dropped off earlier than ten (10) minutes prior to start time.
- (l) *First Aid Training* All drivers must have a current and valid certificate in first aid and receive Epipen training.
- (m) *Seat-belt Cutters* All vehicles must be equipped with an appropriate number of seat-belt cutters.
- (n) *Childproof Locks* All vehicles, up to but not including 16-passenger capacity, used on a regular basis, must be equipped with childproof locks.
- (o) *Harness or safety vest* Where required and approved by the parent/guardian, the Board will provide harness or safety vests. Drivers will be instructed as to how to properly install them by the carrier.

3.4. Staggered School Hours

Altering school start and end times can result in reducing the number of vehicles required to transport students. When implementing staggered school hours the following guidelines should be adhered to:

- (a) The Transportation Department will identify the participating school or groups of schools.
- (b) Consultation to implement staggered school hours would involve:
 - Superintendents
 - Principals
 - School staffs
 - School councils
 - Parents
 - SEAC, when appropriate
 - Trustees
- (c) The consultation process will be completed by the end of March for implementation the following September.
- (d) Once a school has been identified as a staggered-hours school, the school's start and end times can only be changed by the appropriate Superintendent of Schools.
- (e) School start times shall not be altered by more than 30 minutes.
- (f) School start times shall not be altered unless vehicle reduction can be achieved.

3.5. Empty Seat Procedure

- (a) The Transportation Department will determine the number of seats available by the last week of September.
- (b) The school principal or designate (at the receiving school) may choose to identify students who live in the attendance area to fill available seats. Cancellation will occur if an eligible student requires transportation.
- (c) A list of students identified under the Empty Seat procedure will be forwarded to the Transportation Department.
- (d) Accommodation for non-eligible students will be for the current school year only and will not carry over to the following school year.
- (e) Accommodated students may be removed by the school principal at any time due to policy or funding changes.
- (f) New routes will not be established to accommodate the students.
- (g) The Empty Seat procedure does not apply to students wishing to attend special programs at their request.
- (h) Mid-day routes are intended for kindergarten students and students attending half-day programs only.
- (i) The Empty Seat Procedure is not eligible for appeal.

3.6. Transported Special Education Students

- (a) Transportation should be discussed with parents when a special education placement is offered at another school to identify if special transportation arrangements are required. If the student is not eligible for transportation according to the Policy of the Board, parents should be so informed. If the sending school is unsure about the eligibility of the student for transportation, parents should be informed that transportation staff will determine eligibility and will inform the *receiving school*.
- (b) It is the responsibility of the *sending school* to have the parent complete a current student application form and forward it to the area transportation office once the school completes the school section. The area transportation office will forward a copy of the application, with the appropriate notations, to the *receiving school*.
- (c) The *receiving school* staff should check student application forms as they are returned to the *receiving school* by the area transportation office. The form will indicate whether a student has been approved to be transported. The *receiving school* should ensure that students requiring transportation are included on the list of transported students sent to the *receiving school* in late August.

- (d) The Transportation Policy of the Board applies to all students including special education students, except as noted in this document. JK-5 students living 1.6 km or more from their designated school are eligible for school bus transportation. Students living less than that distance who either have a physical disability that severely limits walking or who function at less than the JK level may be eligible for transportation. Parents who are required to walk students to different schools in different directions for more than 1.6km may have the special education student transported by school bus.
- (e) Depending on distance and traffic conditions, students travelling long distances may be on the bus for up to 1.25 hours as allowed by Board Policy.
- (f) Eligible students in DD (formerly DH), ME, Diagnostic Kindergarten, Physical Programs, KELI, KIP, Primary LD, Primary Gifted, Primary Behavioural, Primary Diagnostic, Primary Autism Transition will receive **automatic door-to-door services**. Other students, except at the specific request of the principal, will receive **school-to-school transportation**.
- (g) Students in grade 6-8 and living less than 3.2km from their designated school are not eligible for transportation unless they have a physical condition that severely limits walking, or their conditions are such that they would be at risk traveling to and from school. If a student functions at less than grade 6, the 1.6 km distance criteria may be applied and school bus transportation may continue. Students beyond 3.2km are required to use public transit unless the principal identifies these students as being unable to handle public transit. The cost of the tickets is covered by the Student Transportation budget. Please refer to operational procedure PR668 on how to order tickets.
- (h) Students in grades 9-12 and living less than 4.8km from their designated school are not eligible for transportation unless they have a physical or other condition that severely limits walking. Students beyond this distance would normally be required to use public transit unless they are attending programs that are clearly identified as serving students who are not capable of handling public transit on their own. The cost of the tickets is covered by the Student Transportation budget if the family has financial need.
- (i) There is no need to complete a new student application form for students who will remain in the same school for the following year. The area transportation office will send rollover lists including students on buses, wheelchair vehicles, mini-vans, taxis or TTC to principals. Included in the memo to principals will be instructions to cross off the names of students not returning, and to complete transportation forms for students transferring to new schools and requiring transportation. School staff should contact parents to confirm that the address information will be valid for the following September.
- (j) It is critical that the rollover lists returned to the area transportation office include a notation for students with special circumstance; i.e. a grade 5 student who is unable to use public transit for grade 6 or does not meet the 3.2km criteria and requires school bus transportation. Please check with your area trans-

portation office if in doubt about distances and eligibility. In the case where the student attends school A and is identified to attend a special program at school B, school A is the *sending school* and school B is the *receiving school*.

- (k) Only **new** students entering into a Special Education Program for the first time need to complete a Student Transportation Application form. The form can be obtained from your child's local school and submitted to Student Transportation Services no later than the end of May. Parents will be advised by the local school regarding a student's eligibility for bus service.

NOTE: Changes or additions received the last week in August may result in a waiting time of up to ten business days before students receive transportation. Please provide parents with Student Transportation Department contact numbers so parents can call to confirm their child's status during the summer.

3.7. Guidelines for the Transportation of Special Education Students to Section 27, Psychiatric and Day Treatment Centres

(a) Within Toronto

- (i) Transportation may be provided when the following criteria have been met:

- The student shall qualify by reason of residence and age for admission to a public elementary or secondary school within Toronto.
- The student shall have been recommended by a psychiatrist.
- The appropriate department within the Board shall recommend or concur with such placement.

- (ii) The provision of transportation shall be governed by the following:

- A student may be provided with up to two trips per day (home to program and program to home).
- A half-day entitlement (4- and 5-year-olds) does not preclude transportation to a Section 27, psychiatric or day treatment centre the other half-day.
- Transportation will be provided for full or half-day programs.
- In very special circumstances, deviations from these guidelines may be made if approved by the Special Education Committee of Superintendents.

(b) To and From Facilities Outside Toronto

Students attending a facility in a residential setting outside Toronto, such as an Ontario school for the blind or deaf, a developmental centre or a psychiatric facility designated as such under the Mental Health Act, and who qualify by reason of residence and age for admission to a public elementary or secondary

school within Toronto, will be transported to and from such facilities on weekends. Requests for such transportation shall be reviewed by the Special Education Committee of Superintendents and recommendations made to the Board.

4.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Policy P020, Transportation of Students

Forms

504A, Student Transportation Application

504B, Student Transportation Application (Developmental Disability)

504C, Safety Vest Permission Letter

504D, Appeal Form