

DATE: April 27, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Transportation Fees for 2021-2022

ORIGINATOR: Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE STAFF: Alison Cheesbrough, Geoff Holmes, Christopher Wright

REFERENCE: [Funding Manual for School Authorities 2021/22 School Year Student Transportation Regulation](#)

ISSUE

Student Transportation submits proposed fees to the Board of Trustees for review on an annual basis. Fees were last reviewed by Trustees at the April 28, 2020, Board meeting, where a fee schedule for 2020-2021 (Attachment I) was approved following a survey of stakeholders regarding the future direction of transportation fees and service levels. Student Transportation is currently proposing a recommendation regarding fees for the 2021-2022 school year.

BACKGROUND

Student Transportation is funded from provincial transportation grants and student transportation fees. In recent years, funding has fluctuated due to factors such as the School Fee Reduction Grant, enrolment growth and new school openings. For a number of years, a combination of carry-forward reserves, additional Division funds and operational efficiencies were used to minimize increases to bus pass fees and to cushion gaps in funding.

Since 2018, Student Transportation staff have worked through the Student Transportation Framework to identify and implement operational efficiencies. This work has maintained service levels while increasing the utilization of existing resources. Some examples of initiatives implemented include a new yellow bus carrier contract which minimizes the impact of fluctuating fuel prices, shared transportation routes, a shared transportation arrangement with Edmonton Catholic Schools, and working with schools to implement minor changes to bell times to allow more schools to share buses.

These operational efficiencies, combined with changes to Student Transportation fees made over the past year, have eliminated the gap between Student Transportation's funding and costs.

RELATED FACTS

- During the 2020-2021 school year, Student Transportation was impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of March 2021, the Division saw a decrease of 45 per cent in yellow bus ridership and 69 per cent in Edmonton Transit (ETS) ridership in comparison to when in-person classes were suspended in March 2020. As a result, there was a decrease in fee revenue offset by a reduction in the resources required to maintain service levels.

- As part of the provincial re-entry strategy for the 2020-2021 school year, guidance was provided by the Government of Alberta regarding health measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 on yellow school buses. Edmonton School Division was able to reach an agreement with contracted yellow bus carriers to ensure that guidelines were implemented effectively to ensure student safety.
- One component of planned efficiencies for 2021-2022 includes increasing the number of resources shared with Edmonton Catholic Schools. Currently, the Divisions share a total of 27 bus routes. Student Transportation has identified additional routes for possible collaboration in September 2021.
- For students transported on ETS, Edmonton School Division subsidizes the cost of Edmonton Transit passes. Starting in September, the cost for the Division to purchase ETS passes will increase by \$0.50.
- The Funding Manual for School Authorities 2021-2022 confirms that Student Transportation funding is being held at 2020-2021 levels.

RECOMMENDATION

That the attached 2020-2021 Student Transportation Fee Schedule (Attachment I) be extended for the 2021-2022 school year.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

- Student Transportation currently anticipates that an operating surplus of approximately \$2.9 million will be carried forward to future years. This represents approximately six per cent of Student Transportation's proposed budget for 2020-2021.
 - The \$2.9 million surplus was accumulated through efficiencies found as a result of the decrease in ridership due to COVID-19.
 - Families are only charged monthly transportation fees when they are accessing services.
- The School Transportation regulation states: "Any surplus from fees charged under subsection (1) or (2) must be used to subsidize the cost of transportation of students referred to in that subsection in the 2 school years following the school year in which the surplus was collected."
- Overall Transportation costs are expected to increase in 2021-2022. Student Transportation anticipates that carry forward surplus funds will be used to offset these increases and hold Transportation fees at 2020-2021 rates.

NEXT STEPS

If approved by the Board, the Student Transportation fee schedule would come into effect for September 2021. Following Board approval, a communication plan will be implemented to inform families of the fee schedule.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Student Transportation Fees 2020-21 School Year

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Student Transportation Fees

2020-21 School Year

What Student Transportation fees cover

Student Transportation fees cover a portion of the Division's transportation costs.

Note: Fees are subject to change

Transportation Service	Monthly Fee
All students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 who access ETS	\$60
All students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 who are eligible for regular yellow bus service	\$38
Conditional riders	\$38
All students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 in need of specialized supports and services who are unable to use regular yellow bus transportation services	\$0

Replacement Cost (lost or stolen)	Fee
Yellow bus	\$6
ETS	\$72.50

Payment options and funding support

- To learn more about bus fees and payment options, please speak with your child's school or see administrative regulation [HNB.AR](#) on [epsb.ca](#).
- Families may be eligible for subsidized ETS passes through the City of Edmonton's Ride Transit Program. Visit [edmonton.ca/ets/subsidized-transit.aspx](#) for details.

Edmonton Transit Passes

- Students enrolled at a Division elementary, junior high or senior high school can purchase an ETS bus pass at their school.
- Passes are valid for unlimited travel on Edmonton Transit, including statutory holidays.
- Students can buy a replacement ETS pass at their school, or request a free replacement for a damaged ETS pass by turning in an identifiable piece of the damaged pass.

For more information, contact **Student Transportation at 780-429-8585** or talk to your school.